

[Ed. Note: “Some Key Books” [Lecture Notes on magic, the occult, kabbalah, poetry and prophecy] is a provisional title at best, as is the inclusion of all these pages under it. The text(s) grows increasingly fragmentary in nature; Indeed, the last few pages should each be read as separate from yet sympathetic to its neighbor.]

“SOME KEY BOOKS” [Lecture Notes on magic, the occult, kabbalah, poetry and prophecy]

Some key books that allowed me entry into complete worlds: Jane Harrison, Scholem, Yates on Bruno, *Stolen Lightning* by O’Keefe, Maya Deren’s *Divine Horseman*. In them the enthusiasm of pursuit & discovery; it’s watching the map draw itself & draw you into the process. Magic squares.

Knowledge=magic. Visualizing yourself in the center of a magical realm, a circle, nucleus of invention.

Magic—data—systems; encoded symbols embody our historical concept of magic. Western magic paralleling its 2 religions. O’Keefe points out that magic precedes religion, i.e. , magic is first & from it emerges religion which sets out to erase all evidence of its magical past.

Our ideas of magic are not necessarily the same as another culture’s, yet similar structures, attitudes & method exist in all magic. Symbols & vocabulary are the main difference.

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An ongoing history; a tradition there at the beginning, no doubt here at the end.

Religion has to conceal its origins. Magic is a human possibility which in turn parodies religion; as O'Keefe says, it defends self, the idea of self, from erasure into behemothian corporate anonymity, magic defends self from society.

The fact [is] that texts are historically misdated & misread & that counter-history persists as an occulted myth. (Yates on the Hermetica; Scholem on the authorship of the Zohar.)

Magic—writing; M[agic]=reading.

Magic & prophecy linked to language as the most potent mode of action (expression)

Both disciplines are a dynamic continuum composed of 2 primary elements: the passive of receiving/the active of transmitting

Poetry was part of those two processes of magic & prophecy

Magic attempts to transform the present

Prophecy attempts to transform the present

Poetry attempts to transform the present

Each serves the gods & symbols of a specific social situation

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Even in serving gods & symbols counter to a specific social situation

The passive/active is service; in accumulating materials to [en]lighten & clarify worship, the disciple hopes to achieve mastery, i.e., embody that which he worships & then transmit his teachings back to others

Invariably the great mythic or actual magi and prophets are contrary to their colleagues, they are invariably individuals who move out of the mainstream & by doing so become venerated

O'Keefe says magic defends the self against society

Prophecy defends self (or society) against society

So does poetry, or should

The sub-plot to the course is the early (or ancient) unity of magic, prophecy & song; these the first arts shaped by man despite history's cruelties & progressions, remain & often are renewed through a creative voice

It is & was & will be an individual matter — receiving or transmitting these primary arts

To revalue words which once worked

To restore words which once worked

To reveal words which once worked

All in acts (all as acts) of praxis

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To read arid hear and feel through body
Magic and prophecy wed as one song
Psalm'd or spelled back from source
Now self as creator creating self anew

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In Ficino there are pages of particulars: what to take, when to take it; to deal w/
poet/philosopher/magi melancholia and the good doctor so familiar w/ all gloomy aspects of his
black bile condition, writes his remedies for we beyond the page — but we at the other side &
Marsilio [Ficino] inside the page are products of each others' imagination, or imaginative
consciousness, as Corbin states it.

In fact Corbin lists cognitive Imagination/spiritual imagination, to further distinguish levels of
mind-soul activity from the imaginary, or unreal, as our minds grasp the word's meaning.

The spirit's topography mapped by magi & brought back from inward pilgrimage inevitably
reflect profoundly ideal cities of human activity; call them utopias or City of the Sun —

▪

For many, the only tradition is history

The only traditions left in what is/was remembered

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Memory is imagination's fire

Corbin states we're no "longer participants in a traditional culture. We are living in a scientific civilization, which is said to have gained mastery even over images."

Gilbert Durand: Moments when Western thought turns away from man's traditional image owing to an excessive concern w/ the world of things.

In the Western kabbalistic & hermetic traditions we've studied many basic propositions occur. One being the divine & creative properties & function of the Hebrew alphabet. The other being unity, the equilibrium brought by its realisation, the symbolic & actuality of man being indivisible from all God-spoken elements of the micro-macrocosm, everything interacting w/ everything else, the great chain of being as Prof Lovejoy dubbed it. We are aware of two nodes of spiritual imagining and activity, 1), embodied by Merkavah mystics who use language incantatory hymns & mnemonic maps of Heaven's progressions complete w/ of the angel entities filling each zone w/ proper hymns & codes to greet & win them over, all in an ascent (or 'descent') to God's throne, the object of the adepts difficult internalizations — though active in the ascent, the goal is passive, to reach the Throne is enough, one grabs as much light as possible & systematically returns. The internalization, imaging elaborate meditation. 2), the kabbalah called the work of Creation, ma'aseh braysheet, The realization of & the participation in One[ness], as Zolla writes, "Oneness is abidingly equal to itself & is therefore eternal. It contains potentially the endless series of numbers & is therefore infinite."

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See through the page, that's when the mystery begins.

Take Roman alphabet, impose a number for each letter, A=1, B=2, etc. Not the same as w/
Hebrew where Aleph=1 but the letters of its name, A.,L.,Ph., =831.

Who is inside the page, who's there?

Some books easily read many times and each time not the same. Is text neutral? Self certainly
isn't.

The soferim must ink each letter w/ kavanah devotion. What soferim for each hand, for the one
that writes or the two that type?

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It is through letter & word man makes his magic; he protects himself, projects himself against others, confronts his deities & announces his powers. Letter, word, book are magic's core & also serve the center of religion. The sound of words, the waves of their Bounding, are an additional element to participating & experiencing the mysteries.

We organize/defend/maintain our culture with words, an overlay of vocabulary, a hard shell we live inside of responding & creating alternative words to organize/defend/maintain a concept of self, a persona. From our position w/in a cultural shell we're able to acquire knowledge from other cultures & translate them into our own terms to further amplify self & its position in interior/exterior universe. We learn that the art we call "self-expression" in an African culture is unheard of; the magics we work w/ reflect a Western historical tradition & are not the magics worked by the Bushman or Mongolian shaman.

In our civilization, it is said that man participated in a tradition which not only revealed his relationship to the universe but to the earth as well. Man was in the center of' the cosmos as in the Renaissance emblems of man in the zodiac & the zodiac in man. The body an emblem, a symbol, & also a reality to maintain, heal protect. It is said there was an orderliness to things, all natural entities had their correspondences which could, when balanced, affect whatever might be necessary. The scenario relates the rise of the scientific rationalists & the Cartesian exile of man from the cosmos & from his tradition of being in the world & imagining & magicing; man became equated to a machine, he became a material entity entirely.

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Letter: the most basic element; the container of breath, the sound of its tone compressed into a sign, a mark we agree upon, an abstraction, a code, an analogy. That which in Sanskrit is called “seed.” Something about letter which in many cultures can’t agree on, so many alphabets exist today, whereas number & musical notation are (almost) universal (today).

In the enormous hour.

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Misdated texts transform the Renaissance, provide systems of correspondence which tune the world, balance it, make anyone fortunate enough to have access the books, an entity in the center of 7 rungs of universe where any natural object finds it match w/in the soul or psyche of a person. Ideas of the person as person subsequently become transformed; a person's path to power book-related and word-fixed, the magus meaning also "learned man . . . someone w/ a large library." Yates tells us of the vast libraries of Ficino, Dee, Bruno; their range of knowledge akin to the diversity of texts at their at their disposal. The greater the knowledge of all things, the easier to correspond them, include them in the magical operation which, in Ficino's case according to Yates, was more of a spiritual meditation whose result was writing; whereas Pico Mirandola used his to express the magician's self-realized power over both the natural and supranatural realms, which led into Agrippa's Crowley-esque attitude to the various "secrets" he partially exposed in his magic cookbook, *Philosophy of Natural Magic*, a compendia of Renaissance lore set out in systematic fashion and in print almost continuously since its arrival into being.

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