

# Advanced Magick for Beginners

Alan Chapman



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by

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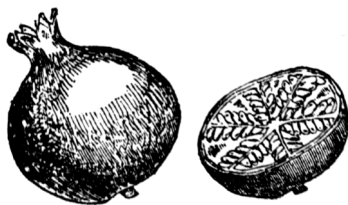
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*Om Gam.  
I bow to Ganapati.*





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## INTRODUCTION

OR:

'THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK'

**I**nvestigating the Western tradition of magick can be confusing at the best of times, let alone for a person who is at the beginning of their magical journey. There is the near-impenetrable transcendentalism of early twentieth-century magical texts, the moralistic environmentalism of the modern Pagan movement, the popular naive sentimentality of the New Age and the almost cartoon-like practical materialism of some postmodern authors. Where are we supposed to look for a basic introduction to magick, when there doesn't appear to be a consensus on what magick is, let alone a reason for why we might want to practice it?

However this confusion around the fundamental nature of magick is in itself a fairly recent development. Historically, magick has a very specific purpose as a two-thousand-year-old sacred tradition peculiar to the West. Beginning in Hellenistic Greece, where it was taught by the likes of Plato and Plotinus, it was absorbed into Christianity by

pseudo-Dionysius, then forced underground to become alchemy during the Dark Ages. It resurfaced through John Dee and Rosicrucianism in the sixteenth century, and later manifested as the European occult revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Over the years it has survived near extinction through religious persecution and deliberate misrepresentation. Today it has to contend with the rot of extreme postmodernism, which is the principal cause of the tradition's current obfuscation.

Postmodern thought is often misunderstood, and the concept of pluralism—the recognition of many contexts and the understanding that no one context is privileged in and of itself—is often confused with the absurd notion that every approach, culture and tradition is commensurate and of equal merit. In terms of magick, the purpose and teachings of our magical heritage in the West has been replaced with this extreme ethical standpoint, and some magicians even claim that the Western Tradition is actually a syncretic mish-mash of any and all of the magical religions practiced in the West. Is it any wonder we can't find a basic consensus on what magick is?

Thankfully, as inconvenient as extreme postmodernism may be, the truth of the matter doesn't require a democracy, nor is the Western Tradition simply a body of work that requires recovery. On the contrary: direct, personal experience of its core practice can teach us everything we need to know.

Therefore the fresh perspective on magick presented here is the result of over a decade's per-

sonal research, experiment and revelation. The fundamental purpose and practice of magick is the same as it ever was, and so although this work appears to offer a new paradigm it should be noted that this is nothing more than a timely rejuvenation of the surface features of the Tradition, something which has already occurred periodically throughout magick's long and troubled history.

### CHAOS MAGIC

The publication of Peter Carroll's *Liber Null* in 1978 ushered in the last revolution in the surface features of magick, spawning a movement that eventually became known as 'Chaos Magic'. With its emphasis on practicality and on looking at what actually 'works', *Liber Null* was different to previous magical texts, in that for the first time a commonality of technique behind magical effects was revealed.

However a subtle shift in focus came about as a result of this experiment in reductionism. Magick became the technology of using belief as a tool, and any given world view could be commandeered to provide personal satisfaction for the post-modern magician.

The influence of Chaos Magic has been pervasive, and present day occultism is essentially comprised of a handful of techniques endlessly recycled and translated by fame hungry 'occult

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1. For more on Chaos Magic see *Liber Null and Psychonaut* and *Liber Kaos* by Peter Carroll; *Condensed Chaos* by Phil Hine; and *Chaotopia!* by Dave Lee.

stars', who actually believe they are offering transformation for the masses. It is a testament to Carroll that these techniques can be found in the first five pages of *Liber Null*. It is also telling of where reductionism has led magick when we see that the rest of *Liber Null* (which covers topics such as 'The Great Work', morality, reincarnation and permanent 'magical consciousness') is no longer considered magick at all.

Now, thirty years on, Chaos Magic (like much of magical culture) has fallen prey to extreme post-modernism. The Tradition has degenerated to such an extent that many of its practitioners now claim it is just a theory, despite the fact that it is clearly synonymous with a body of work and an unquestionable aesthetic. Instead of attempting to understand magick by *discovering* what the practice has to offer *through experience*, these extreme postmodern magicians deconstruct our rich and varied magical heritage *to one correct answer* ('all truth is relative'—except for their omniscient knowledge that this is so) with the benefits of magical practice reduced to immediate material effect: 'I *already* know everything magick has to offer—and anything else that isn't a material result isn't magick'.

Before Chaos Magic came along the Western Tradition was in danger of being lost behind a wall of overly complex symbolism and antiquated morality, more or less existing as the pastime of ridiculous armchair eccentrics. Chaos Magic breathed new life into it, making it a practice once again, and this time in a manner accessible to all. The contribution of postmodern thought to Western

magical culture should therefore be celebrated. Nevertheless, it is time to address the detriment of extreme postmodernism. I hope this book will do this through providing a new, revitalised expression of our magical heritage.

### THE NEXT BIG THING

Today, 'occult' no longer means 'hidden'. The torture and murder of magicians is now quite low on the government's list of things to do. Although magick is still not accepted as a bone fide spiritual discipline by the media at large, the number of people investigating it as a valid world view is evident from the steady growth of popular interest in dumbed-down versions of magical traditions, such as Rav Berg's Kabbalah, or the proliferation of published works by the 'next generation' of young magicians, where scholarship is considered inappropriate, sentimentalism rife and reasoning power painfully absent. Yet this is not to be mourned; for the occult as a commodity—just like the popularisation of alien abductions, the return of Buddha and increasingly complex crop circles—is indicative of a growing trend towards a proliferation of magical thought in the public sphere, and a re-orientation of Western culture towards the esoteric.

At present, magick may incur ridicule—this is clearly demonstrated through the embarrassment felt by the current occult scene towards the term itself. However this very embarrassment indicates an increasing openness towards magical practice—

something that has never occurred before on such a scale. Some feel that calling it 'a technology' saves their blushes, but this is an unnecessary exercise in finding public acceptance. Increasingly, the word 'magick' is being used more and more in its original sense. Ask yourself—do you think that our forebears who were burnt at the stake would have been embarrassed to call themselves 'magicians'?

### SIGNING ON

Magick is now an opportunity for more people than ever before.

This book is a sign-post.