

# The Art of Magic: Exploring Esoteric Kabbalah

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Magic is a Western philosophy of great depth that incorporates a practical approach to self-realisation that is workable in everyday life. Whilst it has misty ancestral links to the ancient world, and particularly Egypt, it is more firmly rooted in Alchemy, Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism, and other similar hermetic disciplines. Magic has been described as the mysticism or yoga of the West. Whilst there are similarities, and the ultimate aim of complete self-realisation is the same, the major distinction is that magic focuses on coming to earth rather than transcending it. Magic stresses that the world just as it is, although it may sometimes appear impure or valueless, is our most precious tool for transformation. You do not have to go somewhere else to attain self-realisation; instead you can uncover its abiding presence in the apparently mundane. Magic is found within one's life as it is, in both its heights and its depths.

Magical philosophy says that the two most important powers in the human psyche are will and imagination, both properly tempered by the greatest cosmic force, love. Imagination is what we use to create the world in which we live, and will is the force by which we create it. In bringing these two forces together, magic can be defined as making something intentional happen. The key to success is using your intention aligned with your true will or innermost sense of purpose. Putting this viewpoint in a nutshell, the Hermetic philosopher Goethe said: 'Reality is that which is effective.' All methods for transforming oneself and the world, whether considered spiritual, mystical or mundane, that change your inner reality and outer behaviour, are considered valid approaches to self-realization.

A medieval treatise called 'The Magic of Abra Melin the Mage' is based around the notion that to have 'knowledge and conversation of your guardian angel', the equivalent to 'illumination', it is essential to first go into your depths, to face 'the demons of darkness', and bring them under your control. From a magical perspective, we can come to understand and experience that the light of the Self can be found shining in the darkest places and, when found, its light, brighter for being experienced in the darkness, may illuminate us. In the Oxford English Dictionary, magic is defined as 'the pretended art of influencing the course of events, and of producing marvellous physical phenomena, by processes supposed to owe their efficacy to their power of compelling the intervention of spiritual beings, or of bringing into operation some occult controlling principle of nature.' If you remove the qualifying words 'pretended' and 'supposed' from this definition you are left with:

The art of influencing the course of events, and of producing marvellous physical phenomena, by processes that owe their efficacy to their power of compelling the intervention of spiritual beings, or of bringing into operation the occult controlling principle of nature.'

In other words, Magic is a way of making happen what you want to happen, using imagination (the intervention of spiritual beings) and will (the occult controlling principle.) As mentioned above, magicians believe that imagination and will are the two most powerful human faculties. Israel Regardie says that through imagination 'we are capable of being united to the gods, of transcending the mundane order, and of participating in eternal life. Through this principle, therefore, we are able to liberate ourselves from fate.' Regardie goes on to reflect that 'it is a great mistake to consider imagination to be the same as fantasy and daydreaming. Imagination is the image-making faculty, an image creating power which when developed may prove of the utmost importance as assisting the soul in its forward journey.'

What distinguishes magical imagination from daydreaming is that the imagination is being directed by the will. When in *The Secret Doctrine*, Helena Blavatsky writes of imagination that it is 'the mysterious power of thought which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy,' this energy is the will in action. The act of will is a natural process, the very spark of life itself, and how every choice or decision you make is an act of will. The definition of Magic most widely used in esoteric books is from Aleister Crowley who defines it as 'the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with your will', which is another way of saying making happen what you want to happen. Of course to make magic work can be a complex task. To make happen what you want to happen, many different circumstances and conditions need to be taken into account. If what you want is, for instance, a bar of chocolate, you have to decide on the degree and kind of force to use; the shop is only a short distance away so you may decide upon walking as the kind of force, forward at approximately four miles per hour as the degree. You have to exert this force in the correct manner and through the correct medium - it would be no use walking in the wrong direction and up the garden path. This decided upon, you only have to apply your force to the correct spirit - the shopkeeper - using a magical link, in this case money, and you have succeeded in your magic as you now have a chocolate bar to eat.

In this example, the spirit you have involved in your magic is a shopkeeper, the best kind of 'spirit' to invoke when you want to purchase something. You might not know exactly what they are or why they exist at all, but you can experience the presence of 'spirits.' Despite there being many different ideas and opinions about what the spirit world is, or whether it even really exists or not, the shared experience of magicians and shamans of all persuasions is that alongside our everyday reality there is a realm (or realms) of spirits populated by innumerable different types of entities. These range from the powerful to the weak, from the bright to the dim-witted, from benevolent through cheeky to downright malicious.

A magician's power to communicate with a spirit, in either their world or ours, depends upon knowing the names, strengths, weaknesses, and correspondences to the spirit in question. This knowledge enables you to call or dismiss spirits, and compel them to perform tasks for you. Thus in the example of summoning up a shopkeeper to acquire a bar of chocolate, your knowledge that a shopkeeper spirit will exchange a bar of chocolate for money enables you to communicate with the spirit and make your Magic work. Learning the most appropriate means to communicate with a spirit is equally valid on the spirit plane as in our mundane realm, perhaps more so. Magic is generally more oriented towards using the will rather than not and thus concentrates on developing our ability to choose. Some Eastern approaches to self-realisation suggest that it is better to simply accept things as they are and surrender to the unfolding nature of life. A good magician will certainly choose to do just that at times, to let things be, wait and see what unfolds. The point is, however, that the magician has a choice in the matter, whether to act or not, and that is what defines Magic as the ability to choose. The nineteenth century magician Eliphas Levi, defining magic as 'the traditional science concerning the secrets of nature transmitted to us from the magicians of the past' is affirming that Magic is a tradition, a science, natural and transmittable. Indeed, there is nothing unnatural about magic, as making happen what you want to happen is a basic human desire.

Magic is about moving to the place beyond your everyday and ego-led limitations, to discover ways to make the right things happen for you, then to put this into practice. Your birth, early development, family upbringing and education affect your abilities as a magician but you can effectively clear these blocks from the past. Some occultists complain that this work is too psychological in nature, but it is truly the ground stone of Magic. Indeed, in Kabbalistic Magic, to work through the sphere of the past (Yesod) is the only way to truly become oneself, both in a spiritual and a material sense. To that aim, it is vital to explore your journey from the past, and consider ways to release energies for your magical development. Then the realm of potential - all the potential of who you are and what you may be - is opened and, as a magician, you can step confidently into each present moment, knowing your future is assured.