

Magick is the oldest planet-wide spiritual discipline. It is spelt with a 'k' herein to distinguish it from illusion or stage show magic, and to remind the reader that magick begins in the quest for knowledge. It is not a religion, nor is it a science. As anthropologists have demonstrated, magick is the proto-form from which both of those methodologies developed. As such it holds a very unique place in both humanity's past and, as I'll argue here, our future.

Recently we've come to respect and appreciate the value of other spiritual techniques like Zen meditation, Sufi whirling, and shamanic journeying. We've found them to be measurably beneficial in the healing process when coupled with Western medicine and/or psychotherapy. However, we continue to dismiss, ridicule and shun the West's oldest spiritual technique. That technique is magick.

There are a plethora of reasons for such shunning. Rather than muddle my thesis by digressing into how magick's reputation became sullied, I will state that ignorance and arrogance have been major contributors. Moving forward I want to focus on the jewel that we have and continue to ignore.

Let me start at the beginning. Shamanism is recognized by academics as the world's oldest cross-cultural spiritual technique. The shaman is, as M. Eliade defined him/her, "a technician of the sacred" whose special gift for communicating with the spirits/divine forms enables him/her to benefit his/her tribe/community. It is that special gift for communicating with the world of the unseen that has always defined the practitioner of magick as well.

Shamanism freely uses the tools of magick too (ex: spells in the form of sacred songs/prayers, animal spirit helpers, potion making, shape shifting). It is fair to say that shamanic technique represents magickal technique in its purest, most fundamental forms. Shamans are the world's first magickians. To appreciate the significance of those statements a bit more unraveling is necessary.

In contemporary magick there are basically two extant world views. One I've termed the *Fear School* and the other the *Wonder School*. Both are products of humanity's desire to understand and protect itself from the unseen/ unknown. Both are also based (originally) on the same cosmology, considered to be the world's first and found cross-culturally: *Animism*.

Animism holds that everything, whether animate or not, contains individual spirit (a.k.a. energy). All spirits are equal. While god forms, like demi-gods in Greek mythology, do exist all are still products of the Creator. The Creator is just that, a creator without a role as judge, king or scapegoat. Being the universal creative force it is by definition pansexual.

In an animistic world understanding and protection can follow in one of two ways: either by controlling or harmonizing. Harmonizing has also been negatively perceived in the literature as

placating. Since the anthropologists were not there to question the early cave dwellers, it is unlikely that their actual intent can be known. Thus 'placating' may well have been their way of harmonizing'. My point is that magickal practices have been historically defined not by their practitioners but by their observers. That has left our culture thinking that if it isn't forced, commanded or threatened it isn't magick. I've always thought just the opposite.

From those two methodologies: controlling vs. harmonizing, come two ways of practicing magick. I'm sure you've guessed which is which. The Fear School found prominent representation historically in Babylon. From there it infused Jewish, Roman, Christian, Pre-Islamic and possibly even Celtic cultures with negativity. It dominates our view of magick even today. It held that, like the chaotic, unpredictable currents of the Tigris-Euphrates Rivers, our world was overrun by capricious, malevolent spirits bent on destroying us. Our only hope of survival (unless we were members of the ruling class) was to control and negate those forces by employing the aid of even more powerful forces.

Those could best be harnessed by locating an even scarier specialist – the magickian. He/she had already forced even stronger, more malevolent entities into submission. Those were now under his/her control and could battle back the forces threatening the client - for a fee.

Thus magick became a security blanket of sorts. It could only be purchased from either a swindler or psychopath. No wonder magick is treated with such scorn. Rather than participating in the Cosmic Dance we're being asked to take sides in a Cosmic Power Struggle.

By contrast, the form of magick that I was taught, have taught for decades, and existed millennia before me, is what I want to spotlight here. My *wonder school magick* finds its first recorded expression in Ancient Egypt where a non-dualistic animism prevailed. Unlike the turbulent Tigris-Euphrates, the more graceful Nile was known for its predictability.

Its annual rhythmic flooding brought fertile abundance rather than destruction. The magickal paradigm in Ancient Egypt thus reflected the nature of the Nile. The goals of magick were not dominated by control or forced submission. Instead their focus was on cultivating a relationship with the unknown (a.k.a. the sacred).

Such communion would produce knowledge and catalyze a tranquil yet dynamic equilibrium (balance) between the practitioner and the unknown/unseen. Such an ever adjusting harmony mirrored the lessons which came from observing the Nile. The wonder school approach was thus about learning the steps in a Cosmic Dance. It had nothing to do with subjugating forces which by definition can't be subjugated. Nor would it require spending one's life terrorized by one's environment. Those latter goals and life choices not only reflect the Tigris-Euphrates but have been thrust onto magick by its observers, not its practitioners. It is an historically one-sided view. I, for one, am finished accepting it in silence.

My hope is that our “first world” culture will look more humbly into the value of our whole world’s spiritual techniques, including the oldest of them all. After all, from a non-dualistic magickal perspective humans first became aware that:

- we are all interconnected;
- spirit and matter are interchangeable;
- the unseen is more powerful than the seen;
- being in harmony is the only way to survive/thrive;
- such harmony obliges us to honor and respect the natural world which can aid or destroy us;
- our actions effect the world around us; and,
- human beings are but one life form – not the greatest, the best or the noblest.

All of those latter lessons our culture is only starting to acknowledge. Humans were aware of them in the Stone Age, then we began systematically denying them with the introduction of Dualism, the 3 great Western religions, Mechanism and the Industrial Revolution.. Now, in the 21st century while all of those earlier perspectives have been vindicated by a mix of the new Physics, the new Biology and climate change, we still choose to ignore most of them. Think of how much further along our culture could be had we chosen not to abandon them in the first place?

As for my magickal colleagues, our change is also at hand. One of our time-honored virtues is *To Keep Silence*. Yet should we do so and march into oblivion? I hope not.

I dream of a time when magick will again be more than an entertainment. Yet as long as we allow ourselves to be defined by outsiders not only will we empower their negativity, we will limit our own cultural scope. Consider, for instance, how psychotherapy could benefit from realizing that Alchemy is much more than a fumbling, primitive Chemistry.

Alchemy stands as perhaps the world’s finest system for helping ordinary individuals to discover and maintain their personal psychological balance (and I’m not referring to the work of Jung). Once its tools are learnt an individual can use and fine tune them over a lifetime, expanding upon that initial balance and even unveiling an all encompassing spirituality. That spirituality does not require any particular religious allegiance. Such knowledge could be truly helpful, relevant and liberating. Perhaps though it would lessen therapy dependence, yet isn’t that the goal?

To return to my colleagues and this may be near impossible but, I think it’s time for us to take up the mantle of the historic shamans. Before we were anything else we were healers responsible to our communities. Let’s not wait for our respective cultures to catch up; let’s speak up; let’s re-engage in whatever ways call to us. Perhaps now is the time to employ two other of our 4 Virtues: *To Will* and *To Dare*.