A GENUINE WORKING MODEL OF RITUAL MAGIC IN I/52 SCALE

All parts pre-painted and ready to snap together Needs no adult supervision

Design Credit

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Those of us practicing magic these days suffer from a disadvantage that the pre-literate magicians avoided. We insist an understanding what we're doing. Back in the tribal times, if there was a drought and the tribe believed that rain could be brought by standing on one leg, chanting the appropriate cantrip and throwing a black rooster into the air, the tribe's shaman would do so and then get an with the regular portion of his life. Either the rain would come because of the ritual, or it wouldn't because something wasn't done quite right. Why the ritual should work in the first place was a question at unconcern to everyone involved. That it worked was the important thing, and those idiots who concerned themselves with foolish questions of why, would have pointed out that the reindeer needed milking, the hut rethatching, and that it was time to go hunting.

The asking of why requires a magician with enough leisure time to devote to the question and both a cultural tradition and a personal predilection that encourages such worries, otherwise the leisure time gets sensibly used in play or creative loafing. These days, those of us practicing magic do have the leisure time (else we wouldn't be into magic in the first place), are products of a cultural tradition that's very heavily into why, and are, for the most part, the curious and enquiring sort who do ask such questions.

So, here we are asking why.

The real disadvantage of the question is (as orthodox Islam discovered in the thirteenth century) that such questions are quite capable of bringing about a loss of faith. Maybe I didn't throw that black rooster into the air wrong; maybe the whole rigamarole has nothing to do with whether or not it rains. Being victims of a tradition of logic, we often tend to assume that if there is no reason for something to work, then it doesn't work despite all the empirical data to the contrary. Rather like John deciding that he doesn't really love Mary because he can't find any reason why he loves Mary. Of course, on the other hand, maybe John really doesn't love Mary, and maybe throwing a black rooster in the air really doesn't effect the weather. All very good, but the logic used is actually somewhat faulty. Inability to determine causality only establishes that data is lacking. Please keep this in mind, since a number of the things we'll be getting into are such that we can't determine why they work.

The advantage of asking why in regard to magic is that it allows us to establish a descriptive and predictive base on which to build further practices. New rituals are relatively rare in tribal magic traditions, simply because nobody is concerned with why a ritual works. The modern day practice of cobbling together one's own rituals requires a certain theoretical view, however hazy, as to just what is going on.

Before we can determine how something works, we first need to come up with a model that gives us some idea of just what it is that we're dealing with.

For starters, let's consider magic. For what I'm going to be talking about, magic will be considered as that body of knowledge and techniques used for the alteration of consciousness for the purpose of producing some result.

I'll be getting to purpose and result in a bit. For the time being, let's consider the alteration of consciousness. In the broadest sense, this means any change in the operation of the mind.

Any such change brings about alterations in the body's biochemistry and bioelectricity. Puharich, in Beyond Telepathy, links two general biochemical states with what he sees as two major divisions of psi-phenomena. Specifically, psi-reception is linked with cholinergia which is produced during states of mental relaxation, and psi-transmission is linked with adrenergia which is produced during states of mental stress.

Several extrapolations pop off of this, most of which I'll get to when I start talking about rituals. One, however, is of some immediate significance, if stress produces transmission and relaxation produces reception, then the constant low-grade stress induced by the modern social environment inhibit any effective reception of the available data out there. In addition, since most of this stress is unfocused, most of the available data is in an incredibly muddled and fuzzy state. Getting out of the pattern of law-grade, unfocused stress, so that you'll either be receiving or, at least, transmitting clearly, is a primary and constant bit of consciousness alteration you need to work on.

From the above, it should be fairly obvious that alteration of consciousness is not a particularly exotic activity. It happens when you relax after a stressful day, when you go to sleep, and when you wake up. Successful military recruit training and religious conversion are, essentially, alterations of consciousness. The process is an essential part of growth and education. Death is a heavy duty alteration.

The rise of computer systems has provided us with the first really useful means of modeling how are minds work, particularly in regard to meta-programs, those systems which generate, test, and either select or reject their own sub-programs. What rapidly becomes obvious is that no system can perform a function for which it lacks a program, and that no system can recognize data that it is not programmed to handle.

A human child arrives in the world pre-programmed to a very limited extent in comparison with, say, a mud dauber wasp. The child, however, is set up to develop a broad range of programs, all of which will allow it to get through the mental processes of life without having to think about these processes. Note that thinking is not programmed. The framework within which we think, however, is programmed. Who I pick as a sexual partner is, hopefully, a matter of reasoned choice. The categories that I use to distinguish possible choices from those individuals I would never even consider are part of program developed somewhere around puberty.

Alteration of consciousness involves either the temporary or permanent change of any of the myriad programs of which our minds are composed. This can be as simple as shifting out of an anger response at your next-door neighbour's habit of letting his dog howl all night, or as difficult as broadening your range of erotic stimuli to break the restrictions imposed by a fetish engrained in your childhood. In either case mentioned, part of the change will be in selecting and interpreting data, you'll remember that your next-door neighbour is basically a nice fellow who's trying to get the dog mellowed down, or you'll notice that the lady talking to you is not only interested and willing, but also desirable, even if she doesn't wear high-heal boats.

On more magical and personal consideration, let's look at an evocation I did quite a few years back. Now my normal day-to-day theory regarding gods is that they are things we create, anthropomorphism's of qualities and attributes. In this particular case, I was trying to get ahold of Cerrunous to bolster up my sexual confidence (this being back in my desperate-to-get-laid college days). What I eventually got was the impression of a looming, shadowy, cloaked and helmeted figure behind and to the left of me. I was picking up a strong sense of identification of this being Cernunnos, despite the manifesting attributes being totally different from those I had been expecting. It wasn't until several years later, that I discovered that in addition to being a fertility virility god Cernunnos was also a war gad. The shift in consciousness to allow acceptance of the reality of a god had managed to reassimilate all the incoming data of mood and shadow, which normally would have been ignored as irrelevant data, as the manifestation of a deity with attributes proper to himself, but of which I was, at the time, totally ignorant.

The question then arises as to which one of these programs, the one that says that gods are a projection of human attributes, or the one that says that Cernunnos is as real as the household cats, is a true reflection of reality. This is an important question since I have vested interests in both programs. The first is part of a larger program which has provided me with such useful little items as the word-processor and stereo, and allows me to get through my days without being bothered by the pesky demands of obstreperous deities. The second manages to explain how I was able to pick up valid data that I was not aware of at the time of the evocation.

So, how do I decide ?

Certainly not on the basis of moss acceptance. My barber and his brother Al have both never met Cernunnos, but neither have they met my uncle Wernar, and I'd hate to have to tell him that he doesn't exist because only a limited number of people are willing to admit to having met him. For that matter, did the world only start orbiting the sun once the heliocentric theory was accepted ?

The fact that the second program appears to contradict the first is also no reason to dump the second. Relativity and quantum mechanics also appear to contradict each other. Each, however, is certainly quite valid and useful in the area for which it's designed to apply. (Of course, for the theoretical. physicists who are trying to deal with both, it's a whole different nightmare.)

Now, if physicists can get away with that sort of thing, I don't see why I can't. So, we'll declare both programs to be real in the respective areas they're set to deal with. And that, I think, needs emphasizing. IN THE AREAS THEY'RE DESIGNED TO DEAL WITH. No program exists that is adequate to deal with every situation. This is obvious enough in the computer field where nobody would try to use the Navy's AEGIS target designation and weapons' control program to do statistical analysis an the degree of anthropometry similarities between pithecine and hominid skulls. (However, the software sales people are perfectly willing to sell you programs that don't fit the situation. But then, that would appear to be a feature of sales people in general.) Once we start dealing with human programs, however, things start to get a bit ridiculous. On the one hand, devotees of a particular program will declare areas in which their program is non-functional to be irrelevant, meaningless, or even non-existent. On the other hand, they will do their damnedest to apply their program in its non-functional areas and ignore the rather garbagey state of their results. (I don't give a damn how good your astral communication is, if you've got an important message for me, use Ma Bell or the Postal Service.)

What I'm basically trying to get across is that the best way to deal with "reality" is from as many different programs as possible. Look at something; alter your consciousness; look at it again; alter your consciousness; look at again. There are literally an infinite number of programs from which to look at things. You can always find something new in something old. And before we go an to talk about the ritual end of magic, let me strongly recommend that before dealing with a situation, particularly if the dealing you're planning an involves the use of magic in any of its forms, you reprogram a few times and find out a little bit more about the situation. You might have more information on which to base your magic. You also might decide that you really don't need to do anything at all.

Some time back in my interminable blathering, I mentioned that I'd eventually get around to discussing purpose and result. And here we are, which means that I'll have to talk about ritual.

Since I like the programming metaphor, I'll be defining a ritual as a program designed to alter the consciousness towards the end of producing some result. Those of you who remember how I defined magic (the rest of you are free to flip back a few pages and look it up; this is not a test) should be able to combine the two definitions and determine that a ritual is a program to do magic. Going in the direction of greater detail, we can also say that a ritual is a program that reprograms one or more mental programs and focuses the results of that reprogramming towards a desired result.

Anyway, we seem to be using the term result a lot, mainly because the categorisation of rituals is going to be based an what sort of results are desired. We can divide rituals into three broad categories: celebratory; thaumaturgic, and theurgic.

Celebratory rituals give recognition, honor, or worship to a particular entity, event, or concept. The Catholic mass is celebratory ritual as are the solar and seasonal rituals of neopaganism. The end result of such a ritual, often unbeknownst to the people doing the ritual, is a transfer of mana from the thing being worshipped to the worshippers.

And now, a lengthy digression to talk about mana.

Mana is one of those concepts that has taken far more than its fair share of abuse, largely because of sloppiness in how it is used in the literature. The term came into English with the ethnographers of the cultures of the Pacific Ocean, who at least understood what the Islanders meant when they used the term. The ethnologists, the cross-cultural studies fellows, broadened the term a bit when comparing it to similar concepts such as Baraka in North Africa. After that, mana came into popular misuse.

Larry Niven's excellent stories to the contrary, mana is not the exhaustible energy source for magic, nor is it something that can be stored up battery-fashion in the woodwork of a haunted house. The one thing obvious from the studies of how it functions is that mana is not subject to the law of conservation of mass-energy. Mana, like stupidity, is inexhaustible.

Mana is the qualitative attribute recognizing past, present, or potential capability of something or the other. It is a projection of the human mind onto the object or event considered to hold it and is linked with our memory functions. Both humans and baboons recognise lions as dangerous beasts. To a baboon, the skull of a lion, once rid of any lion-odour, is simply another rock. Human memory, on the other hand, can link the attributes, of the living lion to the dried-out skull of one. Thus, the skull can be seen as having the carnivorous attributes of a living lion and in a far more approachable form. On a more involved level, the descent from the heavens in light and flame of a meteor can be linked to the cooled-off meteorite, which can then become a repository of the power of the sky, and a powerful one, at that. Consider that both prayer and pilgrimage for the devout Muslim is centered upon the Kaabah in Mecca which contains only one item from its days as a pagan shrine, a meteorite.

Being attributable, mana is transferable from a source to something else without loss of any mana to the source. I can keep that lion skull in my hut with my weapons displayed about it and gain for myself and my weapons some of the qualities of the original lion. Were I a Muslim, I could go to Mecca and acquire some of the holiness of the flaming messenger from heaven. And in both cases, there is no loss to the source. Neither the skull nor the stone will be any the less for what they've given me.

Celebratory magic involves essentially two steps, the recognition of mana in something, and the transferring of some of that mana to the celebrants. A bull can be recognised as embodying the fertility god and then killed and eaten, thus passing the mana onto those sharing in the meal. A handful of seeds can be filled with the attributes of the spring equinox and then planted by the magician identifying herself with the forces of

rebirth and growth. Snakes, as Christian symbols of evil and temptation, can be handled by a congregation which will partake of the divine power that bruised the head of the original in Genesis and forced it to crawl an its belly. Two differing mana sources can be united and the results spread out to the worshippers as in the proper performance of the Great Rite.

Celebratory rituals tend to be regarded with a bit of contempt by quite a few magicians, largely, I feel, because they are often nothing more than excuses for a social get-together of the participants, and because it allows indolent priests to cobble together a ritual without too much thought or work. This is hardly, however, a reason to avoid them. As a participant, you can always be aware of the mana transfer you should be getting out of the ritual. As a priest, you should be putting out just as much preparation and thought as for any other ritual to make sure that participants are aware of what is happening.

That aside, it's time to talk about thaumaturgy.

A thaumaturgic ritual is one designed to produce a result that a non-magician would be capable of recognizing. A Catholic priest dedicating a mass to St Christopher to protect a party of pilgrims, a Siberian shaman calling game towards the tribe's hunters, Pueblo Kachina dancers summoning rain, and a modern coven doing a ritual to up the community's ecological awareness, are all doing thaumaturgy. The results, if successful are such as can be noticed by the most hard-headed skeptic, though he will, no doubt, utter the magic ward "coincidence" to refute the claims of the magicians to having had anything to do with the result.

The pilgrims will arrive safely in Jerusalem; the hunters will bag enough game to feed the tribe; the rains will come in time to save the village's crops; the city council will turn dawn the request for a zoning variance to build a paper mill. Thaumaturgy deals in "real" world results.

A theurgic ritual, an the other hand, is one set up for the purpose of experiencing the "other" Incidentally, that's a carbon copy of a definition used for mysticism, and doesn't actually say too much. Let's try this an in comparison with celebratory rituals. In these, I decided, there's a transfer of mana from a source to the celebrant. In a theurgic ritual, the attribute that makes the whatever a mana source is experienced. If I were doing a theurgic ritual with that lion skull a placed in my hut, I would experience the power, courage, and ferocity of the lion.

This may seem like a trivial enough distinction, but it is highly important. Part of the spiritual exercises of St John of the Cross involved taking the stations of the cross, an essentially celebratory ritual to acquire holiness by meditating on the passion of Christ, and vividly experiencing each one of the stations vividly as an active witness. The key nation with theurgy is experience, intense, direct, and intuitive, and also usually one that manages to do one hell of a lot of reprogramming of the magician. In short, the magician, in a theurgic ritual, is working on herself. The dividing line between these categories is not actually quite as solid as it would appear from the above. Let's take the case of a good Catholic priest (someone who certainly not consider himself to be doing magic) who develops the stigmata while performing mass. Here we have a celebratory ritual (indeed, the correct term is "celebrating" mass) which has produced a theurgic experience which, in turn, has produced thaumaturgic result. Pretty damn good for one ritual, though the priest may find himself regretting the whole thing as he tries to explain it to his bishop.

Now, in cobbling together rituals of whatever sort, certain factors, largely determined by the definitions we've established, come into play. Since we've decided that a ritual is a program to achieve a certain result, it follows that a ritual must have unity, there should be one purpose, and it should be expressible in one sentence. If you can't define what you want to do for Beltane, I'd recommend you get the group together for a party, just as much fun as a ritual without all the preparatory work. Conversely, if you have two results you want to produce, do two separate rituals. You'll get better results this way, than if you have to shift in mid-ritual. If, as a priest, you're blessed with the bright sort who suggests at the planning stage that, "we can also. . . you have two options. You can be authoritarian and quash the heretical vermin, or you can hear him out and decide on which idea you want to go with. In the interests of peace and group harmony, I'd think the latter the better approach to use. But, one goal.

Unity of goal gives us the guidelines for what elements need to be included and what need to be banished. That which points to the goal needs to be present. That which distracts from the goal needs to be banished. There's also a middle ground of those things that, while not painting towards the goal, are accepted as mana sources and can be used to enhance the ritual. These require a sharp sense of symbolic understanding, as it becomes a matter of balancing the value of mana attributions against the possible destructive effect of the attributions. In fact, the entire matter of what does and does not get included requires a downright artistic feel for symbology. It also requires a group consensus as to symbolic values. Some people might be rather revolted by my lion skull and weapons. (I'd tend to see one of the definitional factors of a successful group as being an agreement on the symbolic vocabulary. Schisms over whether the dagger is air or fire may seem damn silly, but they boil down to a question of what language is being spoken.)

Structure of a ritual is going to be shaped by what sort of goal is in mind. Since any particular act can be seen as either stressing or relaxing, producing, respectively, adrenergia or cholinergia, resulting in, respectively, either psi transmission or reception, whether you want to be sending or receiving is going to be critical in determining what you want to do in the ritual. Thaumaturgy requires transmission. The other two are little more complex, since they appear to require transmission at first of the parameters of what is expected to be received later. A corollary of this is that the greater the stress, the greater the transmission and the greater the subsequent relaxation with the accompanying greater reception.

With activities for a ritual, you should be able to determine empirically which are stressing and which relaxing, so potential disagreement on that matter should be avoidable. Of course, the question of desirability of particular activities is another ball of wax entirely. Ritual flagellation is one hell of a stresser, but some people seem to have an aversion to it.

Now, go do a ritual.

Are you Sure you want to know what a ritual is ?

Are you Sure you want to know what a ritual is ?

Siodurat

Webster's- that bible of our patron deity of language- says that the root of the word 'rite' means "number" or 'counting', while Crowley equated a magical act with an intentional act, uniting these definitions, we may state that a ritual is a sequence of actions to achieve an intentional purpose. This can be as mundane as shaking hands with someone.

But this doesn't take into account that sense of sacred, Of mystery and the unknowable. Somehow, through an experience of deep meaning, that unknowable becomes known, in a very personal way. What I'm trying to do here, with some admittedly thick language, is to seek some way a+ understanding HOW and, out of that, give a practical, working model we can use to DO IT !

We will imagine that we are in a room, and in that room we see a door. We use the door, we go through it, and we are not in the original room any more.

The walls of the room are the boundaries which we must crass to get cut of the room. The image of the door is a signal for a way to cross cut of the roam, and if we put into operation its meaning, we fulfil its purpose and exit.

Notice that the image of the roam was defined as a space with a door. With our knowledge of what a door is, we used it, with its intentional purpose, to leave the room. We can imagine our knowledge of the doors contents as another room, into which we Cross. This becomes a room within a room, and crossing into the central one allows you to leave the main one.

But where to go now? If there's nothing outside the roam, there's a bit of a problem, Y'see. But by saying that there's another room outside the main room, you can give yourself someplace to go. This can be visualized as, say, a room with a painting and a door.

As we go from room to room, we are coming across images which have some sort of meaning to us. But if one of them had no meaning to us, what would charging through one of them do? By doing so, if we were suddenly in a room with a painting, we would have some data about what that image of the door dues, Ad through this learning process, we come to accumulate a knowledge of the content of the images. But in order to do this, we have to move through the images and see where they lead to.

The construction of knowledge through the practical application of symbols and images is a fundamental tenet

of a magical system. A ritual seeks to produce this knowledge through actually experiencing the logical form, the implicational structure of the system.

A person's sense of self relates to the experiences that person has gone through in the past, and the operations being done in the present; those operations, in large part, define who we think we are, and what role we may play in a given situation. By emplacing in someone's psyche a logical structure as an experience, that person's sense of 'I' becomes altered.

The emplaced structure also sets a series of expectations about the world and how it will function. It allows the use of the structure as a model of how the world will operate, and thus is used in the interpretation of our perceptions.

The image is a signified object; we only know an object by the operations it performs. For example, a particle of light causes an excitation of the optic nerve. This transformation in the state of the nerve tells us something about the particle. The object is therefore an operator, and we come to understand its purpose by using it, by putting it through its operations and processes. This movement through the operation is the reason the images have been of doors and tunnels.

If we go in to the tunnel, WE MOVE out of the room. Therefore, using the door implies leaving the room. These implicational structures may be used in classification systems, which are of great importance when conceives of as magical correspondences. Their impact upon our ways of thinking may become clearer to the western mind by considering causality as an implicational system (if you drop something it will hit the ground.) It takes properties as indications that an event has or is occurring; if a light is has the property of radiating, then its underlying circuit is complete. (Note that the property must go through an effect to be perceives as such, since the light has to hit our eye. The light and the eye are both operators, and the division into properties is a matter of level and convenience only.)

As we move into a new space, we cross out of our old space having gone through a portal, we're no longer within the originating boundaries. We have crossed from inside to outside, and the old room is now thought of in passed tense.

As you move into a new space, you are aware of a transformation, or a series of transformations. Your awareness is that of a self-conscious observer moving through a sequence of images, or operators, or states. (To be marvellously ambiguous, we can define you, the Observer, as The Operator, who is charged with running the operation.) You see these transformations from your own particular Paint of view as you go through the series of operations. The very fact that you are doing those operations says quite a bit about who you are, in the same way that an object is defined by its operations. Carpenters hammer, politicians lie, and magicians imagine. That role which you take' on, your sense of Identity, contains implicit possible activities to which you give some value, or identify with.

This is basically a technique of classification, in this case of nouning a verb. By someone's judging something, they become a judge. A magician is in the position of defining any act as a magical act (absolutely free, no down-payment). To do a magical act implies that one is a magician. This can be formally stated as 'IF magical act THEN magician'. When seeking to identify an unknown, this form may be used as a knowledge base; but it is more within the domain of magic to use the form actively in seeking to operate upon the reality of the magician.

The impact of this technique can be made clear to western minds by considering the dogma of causality as an implicational system. It takes properties as indications that an event has or is occurring. If a light has the perceives property of radiating, then the underlying circuit is considered closed, though the circuit must be closed before the light can go on. (Note that the 'property' of the radiation, that 'effect', is also an operation in its own right, using operator 'photons' which strike our eyes, charging our retinal nerve cells, and thus making our very perception of the 'causal event' a causal event in its own right.)

The descriptive technique of causality uses a set of sequential prerequisites (the need for one event to happen "before' another), which break down to the implicational structure. This essentially turns causality into a method of temporal implication, which makes it a classification system, let this 'mere" classification system, when placed into action, has created a massive amount of 'miracles' which we, as indoctrinated westerners, have very little trouble accepting.

The operator in causality is considered to be a 'structure' or a 'structured process'; as an object is defined by its operations, so a structure is defined by its conceives processes. 'Structured process' may be synonymous with 'program', which has been equated with 'ritual'; we define it as the experience of a logical structure, whose contents are the components of a classification system.

The observer undergoes these experiences, seeing them from some perspective, seeking to understand its situation by creating continuity. As there is movement from space to space, there is a constant redefinition of the situation and the self. That role that is one's sell is defined by the current relationship with the world, and by the accumulated history of events.- But the sense of 'I' is consistent throughout all the events, and this is a key to an understanding (from one perspective) of an initiation rite.

In an initiation rite, the role of the self as it has been maintained is transformed into a new one which contains a higher (or different) order of identity. For a 'brief' period, that role is negated, while a sequence of operations is cone through. Once having gone through these operations, one returns to the self having the ability to do them, and thus the sense of oil contains the role which is allowed to do them.

For example, in an initiation rite towards being a witchdoctor, we can represent the transitions in the following manner, moving left to right:

((I) Witchdoctor) I

The subject-self 'I' transits out of its normal 'space' into the realm of the actions of a witchdoctor. Having gone through these operations, the paint of consciousness transits back to 'I'; but now 'I' contains as a possibility an entirely different role which may be made use of 'I' now has a new identity, and the more time that is spent within that role, the more valued and stable it becomes.

The above form may also be used to indicate a ritual sequence or indeed any sequence of operations. If you have to go to the bank and the store, and having money is a prerequisite for buying things, then you will go to the bank, do some appropriate actions there, and then go to the stare. Likewise, when doing a ritual, one goes to an appropriate place and moves from there. The space may be physical, it may be imaginary; it may also be an alternate state of consciousness or paint of view. But it is defined, from the very first, as a magical operation, and this awareness maintains throughout the rite.

The form can be taken down to the level of individual association of word/ideas as well. For example, we may desire to classify 'Horus' as containing the concepts of 'hawk' 'son', 'avenger", and 'warrior'. Following the above form, we get:

(Horus (hawk) (son) (avenger) (warrior))

When calling Horus in a ritual, we may (with minor manipulation of the above form) cry 'Oh, Horus, thou hawkson avenging Warrior!' (It's not necessary to finish with a final 'Horus' (though it does have rhythmic value), as long as it is clear that a new concept has taken over.) The sequence accumulates and interpenetrates meanings as class relations, and at the same time provides a focus for our awareness to concentrate and build upon. I would suggest that explicit visual images be used initially whenever possible-it's much easier to imagine the form of a hawk into which one can place some abstract concept like 'strength' than the other way around.