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Chaos Magick Theory

Chaos Magick remains a unique discipline in the clutter of occult practices, theories and methods, which litter the landscape of modern magical endeavors. It resembles no other system because it purports to not be a system. Chaos Magic eludes the boundaries, clichés and preconceptions, which cling to every previous system of enchantment devised by man. It holds to no dogma, foists no belief or lifestyle upon the practitioner, prescribes no limits to the aspirant, and presumes no one set of beliefs is inherently better than any other set of beliefs.

Chaos Magick arises out of meta-paradigm theory. Which is to say, that everyone exists within a set of beliefs (a paradigm) and that it takes something greater (meta) to explain the parallel workings of multiple belief systems. Chaos Magick Theory, therefore is only that - a theory. It does not function as a paradigm, a set of beliefs.

An error made by many who have read the works of Peter Carroll, Phil Hine and other chaos magick authors, is to partially digest the writings of these men and then go around claiming to be a chaos magician. Nothing could hold a higher degree of inaccuracy than this fallacious claim. Upon further examination of chaos magick theory, one realizes that its core ideas themselves preclude it existing as a self-sustaining belief system. One may practice chaos magick theory within a belief system (i.e. a paradigm), one may even use the tenets of CMT to create a paradigm and then to dwell within it, however; one cannot live within a meta-paradigm. One cannot live within a theory.

So there really exists no such thing as a chaos magician per se, although, others and I will use that term in order to distinguish practitioners of CMT from other magicians. So how can you tell a chaos magician apart from your run-of-the-mill occultists?

There is a litmus test. Quite simply ask of yourself, or another, the question, "Do you believe in

an ultimate truth or being?" A 'wrong' answer consists of "yes" or "god" or "goddess" or "self" or "country" or whatever. A 'right' answer may fall along the following lines: "Maybe" or "no" or "not today", depending upon the respondent.

The litmus test is based upon the oft-coined and misunderstood phrase, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted." A statement, which pretty much describes the universe in which we all seem to share an existence in. To some, it means: "Nothing - not even this statement holds objective truth, and therefore every conceivable action can and will occur." To others it means, "The absence of existence (void) exists and therefore reality consists of complete subjectivity." To others, "Everything I've been taught up till now is a lie, therefore I can do whatever the hell I want to do." **A license to revolt.**

There exist many other possible interpretations of the statement, the above only applies to my so-called "litmus test." Others have stated that it implies: "Believe Nothing, Dare all, on Earth there is no reckoning", and I find this makes sense. Others hold that the phrase is not a rejection of responsibility but a statement of freedom.

To Thelemites restriction is a sin. To a chaos magician restriction means self-imposed limitations in order to fully enjoy life. For a while, a chaos magician may understand that the only thing stopping him or her from committing rape, murder, arson, assault, lies, etc. etc. is him or herself. The chaos magician understands that the only thing keeping him or her from getting killed, raped, set on fire, assaulted, lied to, etc. etc. is the restraint that others impose upon themselves. (Whether or not they understand this.)

Chaos Magick Theory also distinguishes itself from non-meta-paradigm magical theory in that it first and foremost attempts to obtain results. Chaos Magick itself holds that several techniques have been known to produce magical results regardless of the belief system in which they were practiced. These techniques have been classified under the term "Gnosis" (Greek for 'direct knowledge', connoting 'direct experience of god') and are sub-divided into two categories. Excitatory is best described as pushing physical, mental and emotional limits to their breaking point (without losing complete control. Examples include, but are not limited to: drumming, dancing, chanting, extreme states of anger, fear, etc.. The other category is termed inhibitory, the best example of which is a state of total quittance brought about by prolonged meditation.

What Pete Carroll and other chaos magick authors observed, is that extreme states of consciousness often lead to para-psychological events. That extremes of stress often precluded unexplainable events and happenings. The supernatural intruded upon the lives of individuals who had the capacity of whipping themselves up into a frenzy or of stilling themselves to single-pointed consciousness.

Chaos magic is the conscious effort to harness these states to produce controlled results. While

it remains difficult to quantify these results and the states which cause them, chaos magicians will obtain results on a regular basis. A claim which few others in the occult world will make. Chaos magicians might even be the first to respond to, "well prove it", with something besides an evasive answer. Asking a chaos magician to "prove it" just might garner the rather frightening response "I'll see what I can do."

Chaos magicians will also do something that few others in the occult world will do. A chaos magician will take responsibility for his success or his failure to achieve a result. You'll NEVER hear a chaos magician say, "it was not god's will" or "the stars were not right." (Oh alright, you may hear a chaos magician say these things, but I think that they'll be having a laugh.) Chaos magicians also walk through the world gleefully ignoring such 'powerful' lines of dogma like, "that's bad karma dude" or "if you do evil it will come back on you three times."

Chaos magicians practice magic which center on obtaining results. Those results are dependent of several factors; the first is the ability of the magician, the second is the probability of the event occurring naturally. Novice chaos magicians begin by obtaining reasonable results, experienced chaos magicians have been known to do achieve what some might consider impossible.

Paradigmial Piracy

This act of eclectic gathering combined with the habit of never staying within the confines of one paradigm too long, is what we call paradigmial piracy. The chaos magician takes on the belief system necessary to obtain the desired results. As the chaos magician grows within that system he or she will add elements from other paradigms. Conversely speaking, the chaos magician will also ignore or "delete" elements of the paradigm which are spiritual 'clap-trap' or do not produce the desired results.

Chaos magicians may practice the techniques of chaos magick but they must do so within a specific paradigm, which roughly means that a chaos magician must believe in something in order to obtain results. What specifically the chaos magician believes in is entirely up to them. I've seen those that think the Cthulhu mythos of H.P. Lovecraft is a powerful paradigm. Others have worked within the Wiccan paradigm for years and obtained fantastic results. Still others are hardcore atheists (like the author). Chaos magicians are Setians, Satanists, Santeros, Sorcerers, Kitchen Witches, Thelemites, Cabalists, etc. etc.

A simple way of understanding chaos magic theory vis a vis any paradigm is to think of a meta-paradigm and a specific paradigm in the following manner: Consider the paradigm itself as the explanation and the meta-paradigm as the action. Chaos Magick Theory consists of a series of techniques, actions if you will. The results of which depend upon what the practitioner desires as an outcome. The paradigm, and it can be any paradigm, consists of how we explain our universe to

others. The paradigm is the why. "Why did you do that?" "Why did you want that?" The meta-paradigm is the how. "How did you do that?" The techniques are devoid of meaning. The paradigm, in many cases, devoid of method. Everyone exists in a paradigm. Some people who exist in a paradigm use a meta-paradigm theory to move through that paradigm.

Perhaps this is why many occultists who are ONE THING fear chaos magicians. The chaos magician will take what they need from a paradigm and then move on. Don't like something about being a Wiccan? Ignore it! Don't like treating Set as an objective entity while being a Setian? Believe that he is a metaphor.

What rather frightens non-chaos magicians is the ability for chaos magicians to get results while treating the paradigms in which they dwell with such a cavalier attitude. Nothing frustrates a 'true believer' more than someone who acts like a 'true believer', because he has to do it in order to get what he wants; and then is no longer a 'true believer' once he gets what he needs.

While a 'true believer' will stomach the idiocies of his or her paradigm without complaint, a chaos magician will simply ignore them BECAUSE they are idiotic. A chaos magician will never accept, "that's true because I/the bible/the high priestess said so." The chaos magician will treat things as true when it suits him and ignore them when it does not.

The fact that various god forms, egregores, demons and goddesses don't strike down chaos magicians left and right must really be starting to annoy some people! What's worse is that chaos magicians are currently having their cake and eating it too when it comes to the beliefs of others. We take what we need and then move on. Works for you? Maybe it will work for us. Doesn't work for you? Too bad. The chaos magician will move onto something that does work.

Many existing occult groups have come up with tons of useful magical material. The chaos magician should feel free to use whatever system works best for him. The chaos magician should also not hesitate to join a group of non-chaos magicians in order to learn what they are teaching.

One more point on the subject of paradigmal piracy. Attitude is everything. You'll never gain an ounce of real knowledge from anyone or any group by going in cock-sure and know-it-all. Show these magicians deference and respect; many of them have been at this magick thing for decades and could possibly teach you a lot, if your mind is open to it. While their beliefs are a matter of convenience for you; it is a matter of lifestyle for them. I've found many groups open to me even though I was a chaos magician. I was honest with them, up front and they still shared everything.

Nuts and Bolts

As mentioned above, chaos magick theory involves the use of altered states of consciousness in

order to effect magical change upon the world. While many paradigms use altered states in order to obtain results, they do so in a rather haphazard fashion usually attributing the results of the magician to "the goddess/god, the stars, true will" and not giving credit (or blame) where it is due.

Peter Carroll outlines chaos magick theory in a precise (and pedantic) fashion in Liber Kaos, with several magical formulas. I like these formulas for their simplicity and the obvious absence of any extraneous forces, but then I'm an atheist magician. I've included them here so that the reader can get a taste of the underlying theory. A far better explanation of these formula comes from the author himself.

$$M = G \times L(1-A)(1-R)$$

$$P_m = P - P \times M \ 1/(1-p)$$

All factors are between 0 and 1.

M equals the force of your magic. Which is dependent upon your G (Gnosis) and L (magical Link) multiplied by two negative factors. (Things working against you). Your conscious awareness of the desired result (1-A) and your subconscious resistance to doing magic (1-R) -i.e. "Mommy told me magick doesn't work."

In the other formula, P equals the chance the event you desire occurs by itself; (1/(1-p)) equals the chance that the result you desire will not occur. P_m equals the combination of the Probability that the event will occur combined with your magical effort to make it occur.

So we're really looking at the two steps of magical activity. The first step is "How good was my magical act?" The second step is "Did it work?" These formula have the nice component of including the rather random nature of the universe. For example, you do a really good magical rite.

Absolutely great. However, it was to make the your High School Principle disappear in a big "poof!" on graduation day. As your High School Principle is not in the habit of going "poof!" this event has a ridiculously low probability of occurring naturally, thus dragging down significantly (but not eliminating) the probability of him going "poof!" during graduation.

Regarding the first formula, to get a really good magical result you have to get M as close to 1 as possible. So the better the Gnosis and the stronger the Magical Link, the better. The factors of conscious awareness (1-A) and subconscious resistance (1-R) are factors which must be reduced or brought closer to 0.

As anyone who does magick knows, it is not hard to get a good magical link, if you want something bad enough, odds are you are close enough to get a piece or representation of it. As many chaos magicians know, it is also fairly easy to obtain a state of Gnosis. So these bases are covered. What separates the "men from the boys" are the negative side of the equation. Chaos Magicians are aware of the annoying fact that a lot of things will come to be a long time AFTER we have desired them to be. Conscious Awareness hit 0 and the event occurred. How often have you heard anyone, not just a magician say, "It happened when I least expected it", or, "I had completely forgotten about it, then it happened." No lust for result anymore, objective manifests.

Subconscious resistance is a factor which vanishes with time and success. The more magick you do, the better your results; the smaller this factor becomes. More experienced magicians simply get better results more frequently. They BELIEVE in themselves and that contributes to their success. The same factor comes into play for faith healers - they and the patient BELIEVE that the patient will be healed and thus, it happens.

The second formula brings the capricious nature of the universe into play. Lets face it, we want something bad to happen to someone and it happens. Now, did it happen because we cursed them or did it happen because they finally pissed off one person too many and someone in a bar took a swing at them?

This question should remain an academic one for the novice chaos magician. He should take credit whenever possible. Not in order to build up an inflated ego, but in order to get into the habit of thinking "Heh, I did that!" Slowly wearing down that factor of subconscious resistance in the first formula. With time, and in an effort to stave off megalomania, the more experienced magician should ask themselves, "Did I do that or did it occur by chance?"

The most experienced magicians realize, in my opinion, that magical results are usually a combination of chance and magick. Accepting that things just sometimes happen, but that the magician may also be playing a part, keeps the mind balanced and the goals of the magician reasonable.

Another thing, which the novice chaos magician should keep in mind, uses the nature of the universe to help you achieve the results that you desire. Enchant for events that have a high degree of probability of occurring naturally. This will get you used to success and will allow you to build confidence for more difficult workings. Flowers don't bloom in the dead of winter. Don't attempt to cut your teeth on making the impossible happen, you will fail and your magical ego will suffer accordingly.

Another gem of wisdom from the mind of the man whose been there before. Don't enchant for something and then DO NOTHING about it. You can't meet the man/woman of your dreams by sitting at home all night, you can't pass that physics test by not studying. You can't get a big pay raise by

always showing up late for work etc.. As your workings become progressively more difficult seek to tip the hand of chance by creating "avenues of manifestation" - help the universe give you what you want.

Chaos magick theory is a meta-paradigm theory. Specifically it contains the techniques necessary to accomplish successful acts of magick. Chaos magick theory will not, in and of itself, make a successful magician. That is up to the practitioner himself. However, there exists within chaos magick theory the idea that only RESULTS are the measure of a successful magician. Results take time, energy and effort. A little fact that many may ignore to their own peril.

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About the author:

Fra. Ratatosk is an Adept in the I.O.T. and has been practicing chaos magick theory for about 11 years. His real name is Josh Wetzel and he resides in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is happily polyamorous and is a successful computer engineer. The author would also welcome any and all feedback on the subject of chaos magick. He can be reached at: "geistlos@goetia.net" and will gladly answer any and all questions.