



The Hermetic Rose emerging from the philosopher's stone, under the influence of the Universal Agent. From *La clef des grands mystères* by Eliphas Lévi (G. Baillière, 1861).

PREFACE

from THE DOCTRINAL BASIS
OF TRANSCENDENTAL MAGIC

Witchcraft Fundamentals

A Translation of
Dogme Et Rituel De La Haute Magie
By Arthur Edward Waite

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With annotations and notes by
Benebell Wen

PREFACE

Hello. I'm Benebell. I will be your guide navigating you through the first 13 chapters of Eliphas Levi's Part I: *Doctrine of Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual* (originally *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, published between 1854 and 1856).

"Chapter 0. Introduction" is the first unnumbered chapter of *Doctrine*, working from Arthur Edward Waite's 1896 English translation published by George Redway, London. Chapters I through XII represent the text of those corresponding chapters in *Doctrine*. The narrow column to the right of the main body in each chapter will include additional information to help give context to what Levi is conveying. Those are my annotations of *Doctrine*. You'll also want to write in your own notes along this column of space. Where I have put Levi's text in boldface, I hope you will read twice before continuing on, will take pause to think about how you personally react to those statements.

You are holding the textbook to a beginner-level course on the fundamentals of witchcraft and ritual magic. Specifically, Levi instructs on one particular point of view and approach to magic, which he calls transcendental magic. The one who seeks to learn transcendental magic is a Candidate, though there are prerequisites for determining whether one even qualifies. If and when a Candidate is prepared to commit to a dedicated practice of this sacred art, then the Candidate becomes the Initiate. All the while, the Path is leading to achievement of the Great Work.

Part I, *Doctrine* and Part II, *Ritual of Levi's Transcendental Magic* are both organized into 22 chapters, which correspond with the sequential 22 Keys of the Major Arcana in the tarot. In doing so, Levi attributes his Chapter 1 to Key 1: The Magus and the Hebrew letter Aleph, whereas in the Golden Dawn system, and what both Waite and Crowley assert, Aleph is assigned to Key 0, the tarot Fool card and Key 1: The Magus is Beth, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Waite includes a footnote in his English translation of Levi's text that refers to Levi's chapter-to-tarot assignments as "utter confusion."

For the purposes of this fundamentals course, the precise assignments won't be relevant, and when they do become relevant to you (assuming they ever do), you will be informed, researched, and practiced enough to confidently decide for yourself how you will navigate the discrepancy.

Although the primary feature of this textbook is Levi's Part I, *Doctrine*, after annotating a given chapter, I turn to its parallel chapter in Part II, *Ritual* and integrate into my annotations and the end sections of that chapter any points or principles from Part II that I discern as important for rounding out the discourse from Part I. So, for instance, after annotating Chapter XI: The Magic Chain from Part I, *Doctrine*, I turn to Chapter XI: The Triple Chain from Part II, *Ritual* to then integrate into this textbook any relevant sections from Part II, *Ritual*.

We will also be cherry-picking from *Clavicula Salmonis: The Key of Solomon*, a prerequisite text that will be a companion to your coursework. When I refer to the *Key* or *The Key of Solomon and Collected Studies on Spirit Conjure*, I am referring to the book by that name that comes with your course materials. You're going to find passages and principles from *La clef des grands mystères* or

The Key to the Great Mysteries (1861) by Eliphas Levi, Aleister Crowley's 1959 English translation, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy or Magic* (1531) by Henry Cornelius Agrippa, the 1898 English edition by Willis F. Whitehead, and *The Tarot: A Key to the Wisdom of the Ages* (1947) by Paul Foster Case. The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram and the Invoking Ritual of the Pentagram from Israel Regardie's *Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic* (1984) is also cited herein.

At this stage of your study, the content covered will be mostly theoretical. However, it would not be a witchcraft fundamentals course if we did not delve into practicum. Yes, give the instructed magical operations a try. Your skepticism, your doubts, and your cynicism are all welcome, with the caveat that you also bring an open mind. Go through the motions of the rituals as instructed anyway, and when you get to the workbook prompts to revise or adapt those traditional rituals to reflect thoughts, words, and actions that are more *you*, do so.

When I was a kid, I was taught to recite a particular mantra. Lots of miraculous, fantastical things were promised to me if I recited the mantra with frequency. I was skeptical, doubtful, and cynical, but reluctantly—and with zero religiosity and faith—muttered the mantra. When I was told I was mispronouncing the words, I rolled my eyes and corrected the pronunciation just to humor the adults.

In terms of the recitation's immediate effects—or lack thereof—I felt validated in my skepticism. The mantra did not produce any instant changes to me, my environment, or my circumstances.

But...there was just the slightest ounce of comfort to the recitation. So I kept up with the recitation not out of any religious devotion and certainly not with the belief it would perform miracles for me, but because it was comforting.

I don't know when the shift happened, but there was a shift. I first noticed the shift in the material world around me when I recited the mantra. Then when I stopped to think about myself, I realized there was a shift in my heart rate and my state of mind as well, and my sense of personal power. My religious devotion came only after I observed the shift. For me, it was not because of faith that I pursued magic; it was because magic happened first, and then after, I found my faith. That is why I am a firm believer that you do not need to believe in magic or gods to make any of this work wondrously for you.

So no, you do not need faith or devotion before you start working on these rituals. When you get to the rituals with instructions on calling upon four directional guardian spirits, there is no need to force use of specific names of divinities or angels that you do not recognize for yourself. Use the names of the four winds of classical antiquity—Eurus, Zephyrus, Auilo, Auster, or the four powers of the soul—Intellectus (Intellect), Ratio (Reason), Phantasia (Imagination), Sensus (Perception). In the place of invoking four archangels, invoke the four directives of the magus: Invoke and summon from within you an Intrepidity which nothing can check, a Will that nothing can break, Intelligence illuminated by study, and Discretion that nothing can corrupt.

What fuels the power of your words is the force of your conviction, inspired by how much you value the ideas you're speaking aloud. Religiosity is tied with magic because when you are religious, you easily conjure the emotional psychic-generated force needed to give your words power. Yet religiosity is not the only way. Your love of the liberal arts, sciences, of scholarship, of

enlightened knowledge and using classical references that express that love will work just as potently. Your faith in the logical, methodical systems and order of the universe is just as powerful as someone's faith in a god. The power rests not with the precise words you are using, but with the force with which you are able to push those words outward.

Is magic merely the placebo effect? I wonder how well we fully understand what the placebo effect even is. I would be disingenuous if I did not acknowledge that yes, I am very sure that some of what we call magic is the placebo effect. But I also wonder what ancient irreligious skeptics from another time thought about their observations of the world, when they didn't want to accept that gods and demons were at play, but didn't quite have the scientific knowledge to explain what they were seeing either—how did they grapple with the unknown?

The only way to attain the logical explanation that you seek is forward. The only way to determine for yourself whether it's gods, angels, and demons or if it's science as Eliphas Levi claims it is, is for you to lean in to your doubts, your skepticism, but also bring your open-minded curiosity, and your willingness to investigate the unknown. If you don't at least explore that unknown, then you will never know.

As you work through this fundamentals course, do not sacrifice your logical reasoning to indulge in fantastical notions of magical operation. The only way to understand and work with magic as a science is if you approach it systematically the way you would a science. Perhaps you will be the one who breaks barriers and exhibit new heights of personal capability. Perhaps none of your agnostic views change at all, but at least you leave knowing quite a bit more than you knew before—that much I am very sure of will happen.

When it comes to my own philosophy, the question "Is magic real?" is not quite as important as "Will magic measurably improve my life?" As you make your way through the course materials, reframe the inquiry from "Is any of this real?" to "Will this measurably improve my life and livelihood?" My own training in these arts have endowed me with a work ethic, a confidence, a magnetic presence, an attractive force field, and command of my environment that has empowered me to achieve all that I set my mind to. Whether it's "real" (whatever that even means, right?) or whether it's a placebo effect is an insignificant issue to me if I am seeing and measuring increases, gains, and fruition in my life, and if it's positively changing me in all the ways I want to see myself change.

There is no point to studying magic or any of the sacred arts if it does not lead you to achievement of your Great Work. That is how you hold fast to your True North: is what you're doing leading you closer to achievement of that which will most reward you?

Final words of orientation: This course is not a key; it is the instructional manual that will guide you to forge your own Key, and that is the core objective of this book.

The next level of coursework advancing from this one will be on how to use that Key and to discover for yourself all that such a Key may unlock.

BENEBELL WEN