

A Lecture on the Philosophy of Magick

By
Aleister Crowley

[Ed. note: Bro. Richard Kaczynski, a serious student of Crowley's unpublished work who recently completed his biography of Crowley, obtained this lecture from Christina Foyle, a member of the English bookdealing family renowned for her literary luncheon lectures. Her family's London shop remaindered Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practice*. He noted in his diary for August 17, 1932 "Saw Foyle - asked to speak at lunch Sept. 15 on "The Philosophy of Magick." His hope was, as he wrote an acquaintance a few days later, "to sell a few hundred sets of my treatise *Magick*." Christina Foyle told Kaczynski that she arranged the luncheon at Grosvenor House even though many people warned her off because of Crowley's reputation (her usual fare was Auden, Eliot et al.). One attendee, Rode Macaulay, remarked "I don't mind what he does, as long as he doesn't turn himself into a goat." Crowley's diary for Sept. 15, the day of the luncheon, records "Made a good speech!!!!!" - HB]

I am sorry if I am not as frivolous as might be required by the exigencies of the occasion, but Magick is a very serious subject, and I have a very serious message to bring you. It is very little understood what Magick is. It is connected in the minds of some people with conjuring. In the minds of others it is connected with charlatanism. I want to tell you that Magick has been since the very earliest ages of humanity the tradition of the wise men. I want to tell you what the essential doctrine of the magician is with regard to man's place in the universe and that it is given in The Book of the Law that every man and every woman is a star. What is a star? Philosophers have always agreed about one thing - that is that the Universe to be intelligible at all must be considered as one and homogeneous. Therefore you can understand the position of the mystic who says that each of us is a member of the body of God. You can understand what is written in the Bible, "your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost." It is upon these postulates that the general theory of Magick is founded.

Why should this be so? We are all agreed, no doubt, that everything that happens is in some philosophical sense a necessary happening. Let us consider the adventures of an atom of oxygen. That atom of oxygen is not different from any other atom of oxygen in itself. For it is identical in the same sense that we are all of us identical. The question is - why alter that state? Why descend from the absolute to the material? And the answer is that we will suppose the atom of oxygen is self-conscious and becomes aware of this possibility only by entering into combination with all other atoms. Nothing in making that combination can destroy the oxygen.

The oxygen will remain oxygen and can be extracted as oxygen, but in the process of combination it has got experience and the magical theory of the Universe is that we have all come to the particular star or planet we happen to be living on in order to get experience. We all go through stages in that experience. Some of those stages are pleasant and some rather unpleasant, but they are all necessary in order that we may obtain the full comprehension of ourselves.

This is the reconciliation in the magical theory between freewill and destiny. It is true, as the determinist has told us, that our actions are all automatic - that we are no more capable of thinking original thoughts or performing original and willed actions than any other piece of machinery. That is the doctrine of the materialist. And we say, "Yes, very good, but who invented this machinery?" And the answer is, "We ourselves. Each one of us." We are in the middle of a world crisis. It is a very good world crisis - better than any crisis we have had before and there is no man alive with an intellect big enough to grasp the threads of the problems which confront the world today. There are two ways out of that. Either consult a superior intelligence which Magick shows you the way of doing, or you can develop your own mind, for it has a faculty which is as superior to the intellect as the intellect is superior to the emotions.

All magical operations require a very elaborate training of one kind or another, but I think the only way out is that we have got to put men in charge of this planet who are really more than men. We must get back to the times of the prophets or we must make ourselves prophets. And we must look at world problems from a standpoint which is entirely alien to that existing at present.

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