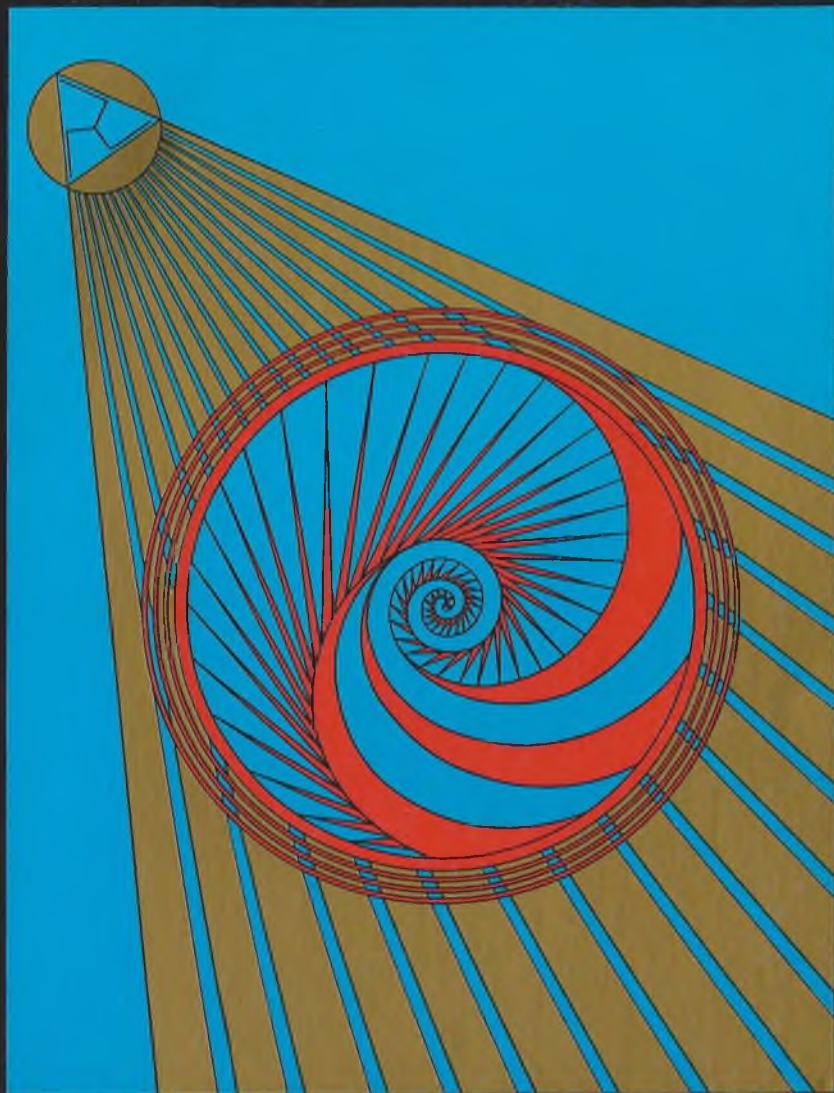


An Introduction to Chaos Magick



Adrian Savage

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Chaos — the absence of form and order — above all other words chaos haunts Western man. It fills his mind with visions of seas running into rivers, men giving birth to frogs, fish flying through grassy clouds. It is the unnamed heart of every horror story — the unexpected, the unpredictable, the uncontrollable, the lawless — chaos.

From the very beginning of his history, Western man has sought to defeat this most relentless of enemies — chaos. He has searched for words and gestures to tame the chaotic, arbitrary wills of his earliest Gods. He has created the image of an all powerful deity who not only brought order out of nothingness but is the essence of the law. He has chosen innumerable tyrannies, preferring the loss of his very soul to the sight of dogs running wild in his streets. He has

examined the world around him, hoping to find inflexible laws. He has almost destroyed the original conditions of his planet — the very processes that make his life possible — in order to control every facet of his existence, often sacrificing his deepest instincts on the altar of his need for stability. And where he could neither find nor impose order, he has devised myths, dogmas, convoluted philosophical speculations, occult formulae and sterile scientific theories, murdering anyone who dared question these fancies — all to deny the terror he feels when faced with what he cannot understand.

From the darkest past to this very second, his image of the wise one has been of someone who knew the secret law hidden beneath the seemingly arbitrary world around him. His vision of the magician

has been of someone who could exploit that law to bend to his will the ever-changing event of life.

Yet, beginning in the late Sixties and continuing into the present, voices from England — that least chaotic of countries, home of manicured gardens, tea at four, and a class system that fixes each person's place with their first breath — have proclaimed chaos the only reality, the true source of all Magick. Angry, and at times shrill, they scream denunciations at those who proclaim the quest for divine order. They worship that most ancient enemy — chaos.

To understand this rebellion, we must first explore the traditions that spawned it. Since in a work of this scope we cannot examine the entire body of occult though we shall have to limit ourselves to those streams most

relevant to Chaos Magick.

Let's begin in Medieval Europe. It was during this period that three branches of occultism developed that still influence Western magical thought to this day — Wicca, Satanism, and Ceremonial Magick.

Of the three, Satanism is the easiest to discuss — and dismiss. Because of the Church's continuous interest in the subject, Satanism is the most carefully recorded and best researched of the three branches. Its basic concepts are also the simplest: the complete reversal of Christian beliefs. The Satanist performs the Latin Mass backwards, mocking it. He extols greed instead of charity, revenge instead of forgiveness. Just as the Christian views Christ as a personal savior who will reward a lifetime of servile deprivation with an eternity of bliss after

death, the Satanist sees the Devil — whom, by the way, the Christian identifies as the enemy of divine order, Chaos Incarnate — as a personal savior who will reward him with earthly power and riches for raping his neighbor's wife. In both cases, the object of worship is viewed as an external master whose will must be obeyed. Unlike Wicca and Ceremonial Magick, Satanism seems to have changed little since the day of its birth. From the beginning to the present, its strongest current has been a cry against the unnatural sexual morality advocated by Christianity. In the Middle Ages, it might have been an extreme and rather dangerous form of therapy for sexual hang-ups. In the succeeding ages, it seems an excuse to party and, perhaps, a way of gaining the less physically attractive a greater number of sex partners. As soon as the Church

stopped burning its advocates, Satanism has been a pose to shock the more socially conventional. This is especially true today, when Satanism is the slogan of a number of rock bands — a device by which to offend the parents of pimply faced adolescents, stir up their already overactive hormones, and add the illusion of substance to shrieking wails and infernal noise.

Unlike Satanism, until recently Ceremonial Magick has not presented itself as a rebellion against Christianity.

Ceremonialists had, in fact, been careful to avoid anything the Church would consider heretical. Often they were devout men who felt they were exploring the deeper mysteries of the Christian faith. In his rituals, he invoked the protection of the God of the Jews and the Christians and the aid of the archangels and angels of the Judeo-Christian pantheon. If

he had to evoke demons, he did so in the name of the Lord and he only called upon those devils his God had bound to the service of mankind. He was never persecuted by the Church. There was and is a strong class and sex bias within Ceremonial Magick — its practitioners have traditionally been aristocratic men. This bias permeated the entire field. Its rituals were addressed to male entities; they were long, practical only by those with a great deal of leisure; they were often in Greek and Latin and involved knowledge of geometry and mathematics, all hallmarks of the learned class; and it required lavish robes and tools which only the rich could afford. Most indicative of its class bias was its curiously scientific orientation. Like a scientist, the Ceremonialist believed the desired effect could only be

attained by using the proper tools in the proper procedure — any deviation brought certain failure. Like the scientist — which he often was, by the way — the Ceremonialist sought knowledge. Having little material need, he often sought the secrets of the visible and invisible universe purely for the knowing. Though the Ceremonialist most often worked alone, he usually learned his art in a lodge — moving up through its ranks, guarding the secret teachings of his own station, while slavishly obeying his superiors in hopes of eventual promotion. The lodge's hierarchial structure paralleled the Ceremonialist's view of the universe, every rank representing a clearly defined plane that he had thoroughly examined and mastered.

Though it has retained much of this bias — the lodges, the

expensive equipment, the hierarchial view of the universe — unlike Satanism, Ceremonial Magick has evolved and changed. The agents of these changes were the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and its best known member Aleister Crowley. The first change came in relation to the beings addressed. While retaining the Judeo-Christian hosts, the Golden Dawn also addressed gods from the Egyptian and Greco-Roman pantheons, often dressing in robes and headgear suggestive of the deities invoked. After Crowley went on his own, he continued to address the old gods.

Furthermore, he denied the existence of an all powerful godhead at the top of the universal hierarchy. He proclaimed the goal of the Magician to be “the attainment of the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel,” the

fulfillment of his “true will,” and the realization of his own divinity. Although some Magicians were influenced by the work of Carl Jung, who considered all gods to be archtypical images projected by a collective unconscious, and by Eastern philosophies, which we shall touch on later; others were beginning to take a more psychologically oriented approach to their work. There is little doubt that Crowley believed the Holy Guardian Angel to be an entity external to oneself, one of a number of intelligences operating from other dimensions of existence. To Crowley, the realization of the Magician’s divinity did not mean his absorption into the absolute; it meant the fulfillment of his individual line of evolution. Tirelessly, Crowley worked — writing new rituals in English, founding the *Astrum Argentum* and

restructuring the Ordo Templis Orientalis, adapting Oriental concepts, synthesizing the various magical traditions — Greek, Egyptian, Hermetic, Cabalistic, and Masonic — into a new system, which he publicized in endless books. Aside from bringing Magick back into the public eye, Crowley's greatest contribution was his forthright admission of the true source of Magical Power — sexual energy. Having openly proclaimed the secret, he reveled in the notoriety that followed — acknowledging his use of drugs and orgiastic indulgence to facilitate entry into altered states of consciousness, espousing Thelema, a philosophy of absolute personal freedom (or license as his critics charged) and styling himself "The Beast 666," Crowley went out of his way to shock. In so doing, he opened himself to needless misunderstandings and, in many

quarters, was branded a Black practitioner. In spite of his evil reputation, and despite the existence of more traditional Judeo-Christian oriented ideas — notably those of Dion Fortune and Israel Regardie, both Cabalists — Crowley is widely considered the fountain from which flows all modern Ceremonial Magick.

Wicca, the third branch, is perhaps the hardest to write about. Without lending undue credence to its Medieval persecutors, who associated it with Satanism, the works of Margaret Murray, who considered the religion of prehistoric man, and the mostly self glorifying “traditions” of its modern adherents, almost nothing can be said of its past. A few things, however, seems readily apparent — the most important of which is, that in every way the Wiccan stood in contrast to the Ceremonial

Magician. First and foremost, the Wiccan practiced a religion opposed to Christianity, doubtless a continuation of ancient local beliefs, though what these beliefs were is hard to say with certainty. It was because of their rejection of Christ that Wiccans were murdered by the Church. In an age where Church and state were one, religious tolerance was considered the gateway to anarchy. Where the Medieval Ceremonialist was an aristocratic man of the city, the Wiccan was always a peasant and most often a woman; where the Ceremonialist practiced alone, performing complicated rituals in Latin and Greek, summoning Angels and Demons to teach him the mysteries of the universe, the Wiccan commonly celebrated the phenomena of the changing seasons, chanting simple rhymes in order to secure a better harvest or a mate.

The Ceremonialist practiced the mystic "Art," the Wiccan practiced "The Craft." Much of these differences continue to this day. The modern Wiccan still works within a coven and, though he may live in an urban apartment and have no knowledge of agriculture, he still celebrates the precession of the seasons, chanting in rhyme for whatever he may need. Where modern Wicca differs from its Medieval roots is difficult to say — hereditary Witches, descendants of Wiccans who survived the "Burning Times," are incredibly secretive about the beliefs and practices that they have inherited from their ancestors. Even if they were not, it would be impossible to tell how much the original ideas were distorted, added to, and subtracted from as they were handed down from generation to generation. Therefore, it is also impossible

to tell how much Gerald Gardner — the father of modern Wicca — preserved from the past and how much, despite his claims to the contrary, he actually created. Whatever the case might be, just as most modern Ceremonial Magick flows from Crowley, modern Wicca derives from Gardner. Although agricultural symbolism abounds in Gardner's rituals and, by extension, those of most modern Wiccans, much of it seems so much like rhymed and simplified versions of Ceremonialist rites that rumor assigns their true authorship to Gardner's good friend, Aleister Crowley. In contrast to Ceremonialism, however, what distinguishes modern Wicca is its relentless feminism. Wiccans worship a dual godhead — a God, often identified with the Sun, Mars, Pan, or Horus, and a Goddess, often identified with the Moon, the Earth, Venus, or Isis.

In all guises, the Goddess is considered dominant. She gives birth to the God, who is both son and consort. She is considered eternal, while the God suffers continuous death and rebirth, symbolized by the procession of the seasons. The phases of the Lunar Goddess — waxing, full, and waning — are identified with the three phases of a woman's sexual life cycle — maiden, mother, crone. The basic ideas are elaborated upon in a variety of ways. Women are always considered wiser, more psychically powerful, and spiritually developed than men and, while Wiccan rituals are performed by a Priest and a Priestess, the Priestess is always the absolute authority. The Priest is always her servant. An observer well versed in psychology might detect in Wiccan rituals a subtle form of female sadism and male masochism. Many Wiccans

advocate Martiarchy — a social system in which women hold ultimate political power. Unlike the Ceremonialists, who tends to time his rituals according to intricate astrological calculations, the Wiccan performs her Magick to the phases of the moon — works of expansion are begun during the new, and culminate during the full moon; works of constriction are done in reverse. Identifying the Earth with the Goddess and seeking to keep close to its agricultural roots, modern Wicca is keenly interested in Ecology. Wicca today is highly image conscious, always downplaying its popular association with curses and orgies. Much work is done for psychic healing. It's feminism and concern for public opinion gives it a unique attitude towards sex — on the other hand, its alleged derivation from ancient fertility

cults and its feminist focus on women's sexuality force it to acknowledge sex as a source of Magickal power; on the other hand, its regard for appearances makes it champion monogamy. The perfect coven is comprised of loving, deeply committed couples. No Crowleyite orgies, please. In regards to the God and Goddess, most Wiccans are unclear as to whether they are to be considered as the male and female aspects of a single deity, or as two distinct entities. Though the Wiccan Grace has a line stating that the Goddess is to be found within oneself, most Wiccans treat her as an external being. Beginning with Alex Sanders, many have broken away from Gardnerianism, forming endless offshoots, almost all of which have retained the Feminist emphasis. Modern Wicca could be called the religion of the Women's Liberation Movement.

The three streams of Western Occultism described above can be considered the orthodoxy — from which Chaos Magick derives and against which it rebels. Before we can explore Chaos Magick more fully, we must pause briefly to examine four other trends that have influenced it deeply: Jungianism, Parapsychology, Physics, and Eastern Philosophy.

Of Carl Jung's work, we need say little, except that his theory of archetypes — universal images that symbolize human experiences and aspects of the human mind — has definitely determined Chaos Magick's view of all Gods. Though most Chaos practitioners might consider science as just another system, they cannot help but be influenced by parapsychological research, which suggests that psychic ability may be a function of the human mind — making possible the idea of Magickal

power without disembodied assistance. Quantum Physics, with its indeterminate and often theoretical particles, must find a cozy corner in his heart. But Easter philosophy is his biggest source, and we cannot understand his special definition of Chaos — the cornerstone of his ideas — and how it differs from the traditional, Western view without understanding Asian thought.

Whatever their superficial differences in terminology and practical approach, the three great streams of Eastern philosophy — Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism — are united in proclaiming that the Universe is one vast, ever-changing whole, beyond all concepts, categories, and definitions. The Hindu calls it Brahman, and his gods, like the theoretical particles of Quantum Physics, are merely symbols of its cosmological aspects. To the

Buddhist, it is the Void — that beyond all designation and description — and his pantheon of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are, like Jung's archetypes, symbols of psychological states. The Taoist simply calls it the Tao, the Way. Furthermore, they agree that man's inner nature — which the Hindu calls "Atman," the Buddhist "no soul," and the Taoist "Non Self" — is identical with that of the universe. In all three religions to existentially know these two things is considered Enlightenment — liberation from views and opinions, all of which can only be falsehood, bondage, and illusion.

Here lies the difference between the traditional and the Chaos practitioner's definition of that fearful word — Chaos. To the Chaos practitioner, Chaos is not the absence of order, but — to paraphrase Henry Miller — an order beyond understanding. It is

analagous to the Hindu's Brahman, the Buddhist's Void, the Taoist's Tao, and the Ancient Anglo Saxon's Wyrd. It is constantly changing — it can be experienced, but is beyond intellectual categorization. Order is, at best, the aspect of indescribable reality that our sensory equipment permits us to perceive — the bee sees the flower differently than a human being. At worst, Order is simply an illusionary pattern projected by our prejudices. To Albert Einstein's claim that God does not play dice with the Universe, the Chaos practitioner might answer that the universe is god — if one has to use such an emotionally loaded word — and He's the only thing He can ever play with. Since he believes that reality is ultimately indescribable, he renounces all dogma, taking ideas and practices from everywhere,

combining them as suits the situation, dropping them when they no longer apply. In an unknowable universe no belief is valid — yet every belief is valid so long as the believer recognizes it as a tool, a necessary illusion, and so long as it continues to work for him.

The entire pattern of Chaos Magick can be readily seen at a quick glance at the thoughts of the man its practitioners consider its father — Austin Osman Spare. Once a member of the Golden Dawn and an associate of Crowley's until disagreement severed their relationship, Spare ceaselessly denounced religion, science, and Ceremonial Magick. His attacks on all three were founded upon the same premise: in a universe that defies description, all systems of belief can only be false. Since man is part of the universe and therefore already God, all

religion can offer him is false idols that keeps him from sensing his true divinity. From the very first, Spare saw that science is itself a form of religion, an attempt to name the unnamable, a system of categories that dismisses anything it cannot contain. Ceremonial Magick, he considered an overly complicated waste of time — perpetrated upon the gullible by greedy charlatans — that keeps man from discovering his true source of power, which is within himself. Spare preached the need for absolute simplicity in all magickal workings and, instead of prayer and ritual, he considered as the ultimate Magick technique the creation of and meditation upon the Sigil — a personal design of stylized letters expressing a desire yet concealing it from the conscious mind. Sigils have traditionally been the design on Magick

talismans, but Spare asserted that their power was not intrinsic to the lines and figures of the design — their power came from their effect upon the deepest layers of the unconscious mind. Therefore, one had to create one's own design, which had to be simple enough to be easily visualized and complex enough for the conscious mind to forget its original meaning.

In his work on Sigilization, we see the Eastern influence on Spare's ideas. Though the Sigil is to be created under the influence of a desperate desire, and is to be visualized and meditated upon while the obsession persists, it can have no Magical effect until one has exhausted the desire, forgotten the meaning of the Sigil, and become completely in different to the desire and the symbol that represents it. To Spare, meditation meant to hold

the Sigil in the mind's eye until it gradually excluded all other thoughts and then faded from consciousness, leaving the mind vacuous — the polar opposite to fixing one's mind upon a symbol, pondering its meaning, fighting off all other ideas, and focusing all of one's concentrated will upon its realization. Anyone with even a superficial knowledge of the Hindu or Buddhist tantra will recognize this as the practice of the Tantrika, who performs identical visualizations upon Yantras — geometric designs representing cosmic and psychological forces, Yantras are the basic patterns behind Mandalas — and considers the fulfillment of a desire as a step towards detachment from all desires.

As if that were not enough, Spare's concept of the universe seems like Asian ideas rephrased. The absolute, he called Kia — a

word that has no meaning in any Western language and resembles the Japanese word "ki," which means the vital breath behind all life. Note how closely Spare's words echo those of Lao Tzu. Spare: "Of name, it has no need, to designate, I call it Kia . . .the Kia which can be expressed in conceivable ideas is not the eternal Kia." Lao Tzu: "The Tao that can be said is not the Tao . . . Of itself, it has no name . . . for lack of a better word, I call it "The Tao." The Kia — which could just as easily be called Chaos — is beyond description, a complete whole, without divisible parts, an inconceivable zero. Yet it manifests itself in apparent dualities — male and female, light and darkness, birth and death. In Spare's formula, from nothing comes two. But the poles of each duality are not absolute

unto itself; each is like an arm linked together by a torso, which in this case cannot be described. The dualities always arise together. Joy emerges with anguish, faith with doubt. Therefore, the mind cannot avoid conflict and contradiction. Spare's solution is not to choose between opposing urges but to observe them simultaneously — a state of mind which fixes its consciousness, for example, upon dawn and dusk, twilight hours that are neither day nor night. "Neither-Neither" at once recalls the Hindu "Neti-Neti," not this/not that, Nargajuna's dialectical negations whereby nothing can be said to exist or not to exist, the non choosing of the Taoist hermit, and the nondiscriminating awareness of the Zen Master. He also urges that the ego rests in a state of self-love — which is not to be

confused with narcissism — a state wherein it is happily absorbed in the joy of its own existence and does not have the need to continuously aggrandize itself by endless conquest and acquisition. As the Upanishads say: “Let the Self find refuge in the Self.”

During his lifetime Spare — a brilliant artist, who produced a series of striking automatic drawings — never received the attention that was given his former associate, Crowley. What little notice came his way was mostly bad. Art critics hated his work and many occultists, including Crowley, considered him a Black Magician. His ideas — which he communicated in short books, written in an exhortatory, denunciatory, declamatory style reminiscent of “Thus Spoke Zarathrusta” — have only recently been given the consideration they

deserve.

Perhaps it is the highest compliment to a man who hated doctrine that those responsible for the rediscovery of his work do not take him as an absolute authority. While Ray Sherwin, Julian Wilde, and "The Circle of Chaos" may praise Spare's work, they consider him a point of departure, an influence on a forerunner of their own endeavors. Unlike the followers of Crowley, they have not turned Spare into a Golden Ass. Spare's disciples — how they would probably hate that term — differ from him as much as they differ from each other. The major difference is that Spare's successors, while critical of it, do not reject ritual out of hand.

Before we go into a point by point examination of how Chaos Magick differs from conventional occultism, a brief review of the work of the practitioners who have

become known in America would be helpful.

Of the “Circle of Chaos,” we can say very little. They are an eclectic collection of diverse occultists who came together in the middle Sixties — partly in reaction against the growing sectarianism and commercialism within the occult world. They have created a set of rituals weaving different strands from the traditions of their various members. So far, they have published only one book, “The Rites of Chaos,” copywritten under the name “Paula Pagani.” It is a collection of seasonal rituals, rhymed celebrations of the traditional Wiccan holidays. Originally known as “The Circle of the Wyrd,” the “Circle of Chaos” is basically Wiccan in style, if not completely in substance.

In the truest sense, the same cannot truly be said of Julian

Wilde. He considers himself a Shamanistic Tantric Wiccan and is every bit as eclectic as that designation implies. By his own account, he has studied Wicca, Cabala, Shamanism, Zen and Tibetan Tantric Buddhism, has used sex and drugs and Rock n' Roll as aids to achieving trance, and has been influenced by the writings of Carlos Castenada and Michael Moorcock. His "Grimoire of Chaos Magick" — a fragment of his personal Book of Shadows which he has had published as a collection of suggestions to like-minded souls — is a slim, yet extraordinary book. His writing style is even fiercer and more denunciatory than Spare's. His invocations are free verses, full of striking images conveyed in a barbaric yet majestic language — between their lines one glimpses a man who has survived almost every kind of personal catastrophe. As

if to prove the sincerity of his commitment to eclecticism, his book contains both a bitter attack on and a ritual by — Aleister Crowley. Wilde is the founder of the Church of Ka'atas, an entity that does not exist in the legal sense of the word and is just a name for those who more or less share his views. He is truly, as he describes himself, a Chaos Warrior.

Ray Sherwin is perhaps the most conventional of the Chaos practitioners. As a member of the I.O.T. — an English lodge that broke away from the O.T.O. — he is a Ceremonial Magician. Unlike Spare and Wilde, his books are written in a calm, analytical style, systematically exploring points of practical concern to the Magician. A point worth noting is that the I.O.T. — unlike other Chaos practitioners — considers Chaos as one end of a duality, the

other end being Cosmos/Order. Sherwin does not seem to fully subscribe to this view, but he does not completely refute it, taking a stance of maybe/maybe not.

Having gotten a general view of Chaos Magick, now we shall take a point by point look at how its practitioners differ from orthodox occultism and from each other. Unfortunately, we shall have to limit most of this discussion to the views of Spare, Wilde, and Sherwin, since "The Circle of Chaos" has only published their seasonal rituals.

Source of Power: What the Magician considers the source of his power determines the rest of his practice. Obviously, the Satanist believes that his power is a gift from his master, the Devil. The Ceremonialist believes that his power derives, through a

series of astral entities, ultimately from the Lord of Hosts, the most high God — a Crowleyite would say that only the astral beings exist and give power. And the Wiccan places his trust in the Goddess, the God, and the elementals. But all of the Chaos practitioners agreed that as yet undiscovered energies within the human subconscious are the true source of Magick. They share this view with Eastern philosophy, parapsychology, and such modern theorists of Magick as Isaac Bonewitz.

Preparatory Exercises: Most Magical traditions contain a body of exercises designed to open the novice to Magical influences, which must be mastered before he's allowed to progress to ritual work. Doubtless, the modern Satanist considers a few orgies and a couple of hundred pounds of

the strongest grass he can buy sufficient to the task. Both modern Wiccans and Ceremonialists concentrate on astral projection and on visualization — usually on the tattwas and the Major Arcana of the Tarot. Spare, on the other hand, places all the emphasis on the death posture — in which one totally relaxes one's body and keeps one's mind as blank as possible for as long as possible, a practice useful in developing the neither/neither state of mind. And Wilde has created a whole new set of exercises. The most interesting of these is a meditation, based on Tibetan Tantra, in which one visualizes one's body melting down completely then rebuilding itself from nothing, and another meditation in which one visualizes the chakras — psychic centers arranged one atop the other on the spine, a yogic concept — as modern rooms

connected by a spiral staircase. True to form, Wilde says that one does not have to believe in the literal existence of the chakras. The noteworthy aspect of all these exercises is that they attempt to put the practitioner in touch with his deeper self — not with external entities and planes.

Divination: Usually, the next step in the novice's training is learning various methods of forecasting coming events. Wiccans tend to concentrate on the Magick Mirror, the crystal ball, and occasionally on reading the patterns of tea leaves and the like. Both Ceremonialists and Wiccans place great store by the Tarot. In recent years, the I Ching and the Runes have become popular, and in some quarters the Ouija board is experiencing a revival. Medieval occultists thought that divinatory methods

were channels through which the Gods, Demi Angels, and spirits communicate with men. Even Crowley believed that their operations depended upon astral intelligences. Though there are still those who hold to the older view, most modern practitioners view divinatory devices as means to focus the conscious mind, allowing the subconscious to present its knowledge of the future. All Chaos practitioners agree with the modern view. Wilde takes it a step further by suggesting that palmistry and astrology, which most occultists see as objective “sciences,” are also focusing devices. To Wilde — who has designed his own version of the Major Arcana of the Tarot for his private use — the arrangement of planets on a horoscope or lines on a palm probably have no meaning other than what they suggest to the

interpreter's psychic faculties.

Initiation: In all occult traditions, both Western and Eastern, initiation is considered the death of the old being and the simultaneous birth of the Magickal Person. Usually, it is thought that Magickal power is conferred — either by a disembodied entity or, in the Eastern tradition, by the teacher — upon the initiate during the ceremony. Chaos practitioners have a more complex view of the process. To Spare, initiation was as much of a farce as any other ceremony. Sherwin and Wilde agree that in an of itself initiation means nothing more than acceptance into a particular group of practitioners. Wilde takes the Shamanistic view that real initiation is a product of severe personal crisis — caught in a situation from which there is no normal avenue, of escape, the

individual spontaneously summons up previously unsuspected power from his subconscious. While agreeing with Wilde's view, Sherwin believes that it is the responsibility of the initiating group to artificially produce a controlled crisis in the initiate — a practice employed by the ancient mystery schools of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and the Masonic orders.

Ritual and Ceremony:
Traditional practitioners of Magick have seen ritual as a performance that pleased the Gods so much that they would grant the performer's request as a kind of rewiring of cosmic circuitry towards a specific goal. Getting every detail of the ceremony has always been considered of utmost importance to the success of the operation — one mistake meant failure. Modern Wicca, however,

acknowledges that intent determines the effectiveness of the rite more than perfection of its form. Chaos Magick agrees with modern Wicca — and again goes quite a few steps further. Both Wilde and Sherwin view ritual as a form of theater, designed to arouse the performer's emotion to a fever pitch and then discharge it outwards — a catharsis that leaves the magician drained of the obsession and puts his mind in Spare's detached "neither/neither" state. They believe that Magick cannot do its work so long as the magician consciously wishes the operation to succeed. In order to get his wish, it must no longer be his wish. Unlike the various traditions of Ceremonialists and Wiccans, all of which employ specific methods of casting a Circle, each of them claiming that their way is the only right one — Wilde, Sherwin, and the Circle of

Chaos advise the practitioner to cast his/her Circle any way they want. While traditional magicians of all persuasions demand that rituals done for specific goals must be performed with the appropriate incenses, oils, and colored candles, Wilde suggests using the most mind-blowing incenses and the most garishly colored candles one can find — for all rituals. He also suggests visualizing various animals as the Guardians of the Circle, instead of the traditional Lords of the Elements. Sherwin suggests visualizing either beings from outer space, garbed in appropriate “B-movie” costumes, or naked sex objects at the four watchtowers. Believing that the source of power lies within the practitioner, Wilde suggests that the Magician arouse her/his anger, hatred, sadness, grief and, most especially, lust — suggesting

that before the ritual one either masturbate or have somebody fellate one, stopping before orgasm, saving sexual release until the high point of the rite. He believes that petitionary prayers to the gods should be composed spontaneously at the ritual's high point. Sherwin, for his part, refutes the theory that specific rituals should be done at specific times, reasoning that not all people are observably affected by the phases of the moon and that the tables assigning certain days and hours to certain planets were drawn up before the discovery of Neptune, Uranus and Pluto and are therefore invalid. The best time to perform a ritual is when the need and opportunity present themselves.

The Gods of Chaos: Because Chaos practitioners consider their gods as projections of their own minds, their attitude towards them

is eclectic and — orthodox Magicians would say — irreverent. Wilde's Grimoire lists a potpourri of divinities from a hodgepodge of pantheons. He says that Gods can be adapted from the words of writers such as Tolkein, and further states that any God who doesn't provide a minimum of service should be forgotten. In general, Chaos practitioners prefer to concentrate on recently rediscovered or newly created deities. Among the rediscovered, some favorites are Baphomet, an androgynous horned god who, in the 12th century, the Knights Templar used as a Cabalistic symbol, was written about in the 19th century by Eliphas Levi, and is considered by Wilde as the sum total of all universal forces and the personification of active Chaos. Another favorite is Eris, Goddess of Discord, a long-forgotten Greek divinity who was considered (in

Hesiod's "Theogeny") as being the more savage, female half of Eros, God of Love. To the ancient Greeks, Eros and Eris together comprised an androgynous Aphrodite. The Circle of Chaos pays reverence to Thataneros — a divinity created by Thessalonius Loyola — who represents the Freudian principle of Sex and Death. Wilde has created K'atas — a wise old Oriental man with green eyes, who functions as a calm guide through the Chaotic storm. Taking Chaos theory to its furthest extreme; it might be said that a comic book hero like Superman might be the best protector for someone who can feel no affinity with a classic warrior god such as Mars.

Magickal Works: Unlike Wilde, who has nothing new to add to the techniques of Practical Magick — he suggests that one buy

traditional spell and candle-burning books and adapt their teachings to one's need. Sherwin's experiments have led him to some interesting innovations. As if to send a shiver through Spare's body, Sherwin maintains that Sigils are best vitalized through intense rituals. Taking Spare's work yet another step further, Sherwin believes that one should excerpt certain syllables from the sentence that has been sigilized and then chant them as a sort of nonsense mantra while meditating on the Sigil.

As we can see, the practitioners of Chaos Magick are both united and distinguished from each other by their emphasis on experimentation and individual experience. Chaos Magick is not a new or different kind of Magick. It is a set of working principles — some new, some ancient, — which

the individual practitioner can creatively reinterpret to suit his own needs.

What effect such a personalized approach will have on American occultism is difficult to say. Who can predict Chaos? It may very well appeal to American individualism. It may prove a useful bridge between Eastern and Western occultism — a link-up that in the past has been sabotaged by the liberal white man's fawning search for the exotic savage — the conservative white man's atavistic inability to accept the wisdom of anyone who does not resemble him or possess his technology, and the inferiority complex that drives Asian teachers to treat Westerners as rich retards. At worse, it may prove to be just another slogan spewed by Mohawk-headed morons who, being too stupid to see the true Chaos within the order of

everyday life, inivoke Chaos by breaking beer bottles on the sidewalk and vomiting in other people's hallways. Even this ugly possibility is tolerable, however, if Chaos Magick will silence the man-hating mouthings of the maxi matriarchal Wiccans, end the need to authenticate ancient traditions that were created the day after tomorrow by ethnically minded Witches, and stop the endless debate indulged in by rival occult factions over how many planes reality has and which is the one true color scheme to work Magick with — all of which presently dominate American occultism. If Chaos Magick can stop American Ceremonialists from licking the toes of their Aleister Crowley statues. . . but, perhaps some things are too much to wish for.

No matter. Whatever may come of it, the British are invading us

again. This time their banners
say:

CHAOS CONTROLS

Suggested Reading

**Grimoire of Chaos Magick, by
Julian Wilde**

Book of Results, by Ray Sherwin

Theatre of Magick, by Ray Sherwin

**Collected Works of Austin Osman
Spare**

**Cardinal Rites of Chaos, by the
Circle of Chaos**

Real Magick, by Isaac Bonewits



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