

## Spelling: The Craft of Witches, Magicians and Psychotherapists

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**P**eople who are called magicians and witches often describe their path as 'The Craft', the underlying intention of which is to know oneself. The Craft, whether that of witches, alchemists, shamans, psychotherapists, freemasons, magicians, or others following the path of soul-making is the same. Firstly, to somehow uncover what has been previously covered or hidden, and secondly, to increase connection to potential energy. The techniques used are usually different, ranging from quasi-mystical gobbledygook (much of which goes under the name of 'transpersonal psychology') to serious attempts to create psychological and spiritual health (of which there is a lot more undertaken by magicians and witches than many people realize.)

Of course, some witches stick pins in dolls and recite magical incantations to disrupt and harm the lives of others (often disguised, of course, as harmless 'folk craft'.) Some counsellors and therapists behave in a similar manner (for instance when creating power bases within organizations and denigrating others). But what the vast majority of practitioners of all these disciplines perform are rituals and procedures that attempt to promote healing. That is, they undertake the Craft. The craft is not the techniques, it is not the training, it is not the obvious. It is not being a Gardnerian Witch, an Adept of the Golden Dawn, or a graduate of a particular school of psychotherapy. To be 'Crafty' is to see the 'something else' that is inherent in everything. You may call that something else 'soul' or 'meaning' for it is the language of insight and understanding.

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The magician's Grimoire (book of magic spells) is the grammar of this language, and the words used are those of 'spell'-ing. The Craft is what is learned in a counselling and psychotherapy training that does not fit into the prospectus: it is the stuff of dreams and myths, of relationship and presence.

A magician works in a temple, the external universe as it is found. This corresponds to the therapy room and the previously unexplored territory of the new client's psyche. It is the sacred space of the shaman, or of the goddess worshipping wiccan. In this temple a circle is drawn upon the floor to define the limitations of the work, to create a container and to announce the nature of the Great Work (of 'knowing oneself'.) This circle is the appropriate boundaries the therapist keeps, and the vessel (or 'field') in which the work of relationship unfolds. The circle is protected by divine names (the therapist's ethics and own oath to Self.).

All Craft has tools to make it visible and effective. Within a magical circle stands an altar, which is described as the solid base or foundation of the work. It is the past experience of the client (and the therapist), upon which all the work is inevitably based, and which offers a ground or base for understanding. Upon the altar are a wand for will, a cup for love, a sword for reason and a pantacle which represents the body. A magician uses oil which consecrates everything it touches. The oil represents aspiration, and in the Craft all acts performed in accordance with this are said to be Holy. In the therapeutic container, it is the joint aspiration of the therapist and client, working together to create a new future (which allows for the 'Holy' presence of soul). A magician also uses a scourge to excite sluggish nature (challenge), a dagger which calms too great a heat (support), and a chain to bind the wandering thoughts (focused attention). These keep the aspirations pure.

Above the altar hangs a light, representing the light of pure soul. It is a reminder not to be too confident or clever, that something in the Craft is always unknown and beyond '... and I am more than this.'). For the therapist it is a reminder to honour the divinity of the client. A magician also wears a crown (to affirm his or her divinity), a single robe (to symbolize silence and protection) and over the heart a special seal (to remind the practitioner that the secret keys of power and love are found in the heart.) A magician carries a magical record or journal (both the personal journal of the therapist and the client notes), and a bell (which

summons and alarms). For the therapist the clock is the reminder of the passage of time (it summons the hour's end and can be a timely reminder of the impermanence of all things.)

In an essay entitled 'The Witchcraft' written in the 1940s, John Parsons (a magician and founder of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory) wrote: 'The way we show is not easy; it is hard because to know one's self is always hard. To break through the shell of the little world and undo the hypnotization of generations is difficult. We have no soothing syrup...' and, later; 'in fairy tales and playing cards, in myths and legends, in strange poems and old songs, we hid the secret knowledge. Now and then an adventurer into dark ways and lonely lands of the soul has come amazed upon the 'pearl of great price'. That pearl is the Craft embodied; it is the Great Work, the work of the heart.

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