

Winter Magic



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*"This being human is a
guest house
Every morning is a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!"*

- from "The Guest House," by
Coleman Barks, based on the
original poem by Jallaludin Rumi

Around the world and for many thousands of years, humans of different cultures have created rituals of sympathetic magic intended to invoke unknown powers to act in our world. This kind of spiritual work asks us to make connections between objects and actions and the ways in which we want to affect the world.

In the northern hemisphere, it is winter now, and the farther north one goes, the shorter the days become at this time of year. Where I live in the northeastern United States, the darkest days of the year, clustered around the Winter Solstice, have just over nine hours of daylight in them, a full six hours less daylight than we enjoyed in June.

Our bodies feel that difference. For some of us, it is a welcome feeling of cozy darkness as the long nights

wrap us like blankets. For others, it is a dreadful feeling of loss as the light dwindles and comes at sharper angles from a sun closer to the horizon.

And the sympathetic magic that many cultures from the farthest north places have developed to face the winter involves light. We adorn trees, festoon our houses, hang lanterns, and light bonfires. We welcome the fullness of the moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow. We bask in the warmth of the blazing Yule log (or the psychological warmth of its digital equivalent on our TV and computer screens).

The Christmas trees that became traditional in the United States began as pagan German celebrations, hung with dried fruits to capture the color and scent of summer and lighted softly with candles. Throughout the Northern Hemisphere, people are celebrating in ways that were designed by the ancients to convince the sun to be reborn, to return to us and give us light and warmth. And, lo and behold, it worked, every year.

And yet, we cannot escape the reality that many people greet the winter—and the many holidays celebrated at wintertime in order to bring cheer to this desolate season—with dread, with fear, and with a profound sadness that no amount of merry-twinkle lights can break. Our spiritual houses are

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Quest

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*"The world
is full of magic
things, patiently
waiting for our
senses to grow
sharper."*

W.B. YEATS

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MAGIC
Multiple authors

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MAGIC

Do you believe in magic? What does magic mean to you?



PHOTO BY JOHN PRICE ON UNSPLASH

SEAN

CLF member, incarcerated in UT

As a daily practitioner, I very much believe in Magick. Though I still have much to learn, which I will spend the rest of my life on this Earth doing, I am a leader in the Pagan community in my facility. I'm a shaman, but in an eclectic way, as I learn from many traditions from the East and West, old and new. In fact, in just a few weeks, I will begin teaching a new class, which I've titled Occult Philosophy, where I will look at Magick through a scientific lens (I am also a scientist in training).

So what does Magick mean to me? Most definitions of Magick use the word "intent" in them, and I feel that is accurate. For decades now, quantum physics has shown over and over the responsiveness of the Universe to human intent, specifically to human observation. Somehow, our conscious act of looking at and measuring a system fundamentally alters that which we observe. This is, to me, merely Magick on the micro-scale.

The art and science of Magick on a larger scale is the practice of this same principle on the scale of our daily lives. But it's not the flashy stuff you see in movies and books. Magick

is a subtle power, one that usually works behind the scenes. And yet this in no way diminishes its power and effectiveness. Magick is a direct connection between our hearts and minds, our passion and will, and the Universe. It is the power of faith, the power of hope, the power of Love. When someone prays, they invoke Magick. When someone wishes, they invoke Magick. When someone dedicates and commits themselves, they invoke Magick. Magick is the manifestation and expression of the force of Life itself. It is Life creating and shaping the Universe. Magick is what it means to be alive and human. It is our very DNA. ■

ROBERT

CLF member, incarcerated in MA

Do I believe in Magic? As a Pagan, I think I'm legally required to do so. Jokes aside, yes, I always have, in its myriad of forms.

One of the initial forms of magic that come to mind when people hear "magic" is that of the stage illusionist, your Copperfields and Blaines. That's the first kind of magic I was exposed to, that of entertaining. To deliver shock, awe, and laughter to people, to take them outside of the mundane and bring them into a world of suspense.

Then of course you have the magic of faith, though in my case it's more magick than magic. You need not be of my faith, you can be of any faith, or of even no faith, to experience this. The coming together of people, with nothing more than the desire for a better world, can effect change on the world.

The third kind of magic I've experienced is the most powerful of all. That's the magic of a child, of life itself. How is it possible that a squirming, squalling, smelly, little bundle can become a person, with wants and desires of their own? To go from laying there to running rampant through your heart? To go from just existing to creating ideas that can change the world? To see the world through their eyes, all the newness and wonder? It is a joy, it is magic all its own. ■



PHOTO BY AARON BURDEN ON UNSPLASH

GEORGE

CLF member, incarcerated in TN

Let me start with a quick differential. Magic is generally thought of as stage magic. Card tricks, illusions, etc. While Magick is the manipulation of one's environment to bend it to one's will.

Magick is often referred to as black or white. The truth of the matter is that magick in itself is neither. What makes it black or white is the person's intent. Example: You have a friend that really wants a job they just interviewed for. They ask you to do a little magick to help them out. Is that good or bad? Well your intention is to help, so that makes it good. But what if another person also interviewed for the same position, and they really need that job. Well, now it's bad. So how can one protect themselves from doing bad? If I were asked, I would work the magick as, "if this will cause no harm to others, let this be done." That way you are being responsible with your actions.

So, does magick work every time?

No, it does not. Magick is not a toy or a game. When you put something out to the Universe, expect to pay for that sooner or later. For magick to be effective you must possess three essential skills; Emotion, Feeling, and Imagination. The amount of emotion you place into your works will heavily influence the result. Your emotion comes from how passionate you are about the work you are doing. Feeling is based on your belief system. If you truly believe you can do it, then most likely you can. But if you doubt your abilities, then you are doomed before you begin. And Imagination is key. When doing works, one should visualize the outcome they desire. The clearer the image is in the mind, the more emotion and feeling one can push in that direction.

Magick is real. It comes in all forms and we deal with it everyday. Some people call it miracles, or wonders of science, or kismet. Every day if you pay attention you can find something that you just can't explain, and once you stop trying to explain it and just let it be, then you see the magick. ■

An Art & Science Misunderstood

LEIF REDWOLF

CLF member, incarcerated in TX

Magick (spelled with a “k” to differentiate it from stage magic) is an inherent part of every human’s life, whether we choose to acknowledge it or not. You can’t escape gravity simply because you don’t accept it, and the same applies to magick. While gravity and the other laws of physics apply as Natural Law, Magick is under what I call Metanatural Law. The prefix “meta-” simply means above or beyond, so magick is under the laws of things beyond nature. It functions with reason, though most do not understand the parameters under

which it operates. Most of us are still just guessing.

Magick is, most simply put, the manipulation of natural energies in order to accomplish a certain goal. We have our own personal stores of energy, we can garner energy from the natural world, or we can ask for it from whatever form of Spirit (if any) you have a relationship with. We shape and mold these energies to add fuel to our ventures. The problem is that people stop there. Magick is a supplement, not a replacement. If magick has been done, for example to find a new job, then the traditional legwork of job-hunting must still be done, the magick is just

swaying the odds in your favor.

Think of it this way: a car can move pretty fast on its own if tuned well and taken care of, but it will move way faster after introducing nitrous oxide (NOS), right? Still, adding NOS won’t guarantee a win in the race, it just sways the odds in your favor. Such it is with magick. You still have to tune the car, take care of it, and race it with the confidence of a competent driver. Doing this is an art and a science. Cars, we have figured out, but even after millenia, magick, regardless of how many analogies are made, is still an art and a science misunderstood. ■

Understanding Magic

LIAM

CLF member, incarcerated in SC

The existence of the supernatural forces is to me a concept that evades our perception of the physical. Magic is a means to use the forces of nature and even forces beyond our current knowledge to achieve some sort of desired outcome. It is a manipulation of the universe we are residing in, and doing so in such a way that is not immediately obvious or detachable by the human sense or any other current perception device. That is not

to say magic could not one day be understood. After all, aren’t hosts seen infrequently, since before the time of recorded human history? Who is to argue that the spiritual is not magical and could even be examined, measured, and understood by using some sort of device or mathematical concept? Bacteria, cells, and atoms were completely unknown to us 2000 years ago. Instead, any illness was attributed to magic of a force from the gods. Why should the spirit or any magical force not be subject to such open minded scrutiny?

I believe that to use magic means to be in tune with the forces of nature and to persuade it to perform some task, a means to an end. Whether that is simply granting good luck to another or casting a charm, or even increasing one’s prospects in seeking love with another is just an arm of magic. From casting lightning bolts to repelling wicked spirits from a home, magic can take many forms and wears many faces. It is not to be fully understood now but perhaps one day in our history, it could be. ■

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too often visited at this time of year by the guests of grief and sadness, loneliness and fear.

Sometimes the role of the religious community is to inspire us to action. Sometimes, it's to mark the important moments in the cycles of our life. And sometimes, religious community exists just to hold us together for a little while. Sometimes, we come together in community despite the unwelcome guests knocking at our doors. Sometimes, because of them.

We need the touchstone of community, the embrace of love, the practice of reverent stillness, in order to summon

the courage to welcome in those guests. To welcome in the crowd of sorrows that persists in knocking on our door again and again, demanding a room for the night.

To welcome in those guests, though, goes against our nature. Rumi suggests to us that such guests have something to teach us if we sit with them a while. To welcome these guests in, however, doesn't mean we have to resign ourselves to their permanent residence in our spare room. Listening to our pain and learning from it is not the same as letting it take us over.

We have to learn how to encourage these guests to move on when they've overstayed their welcome. Nature

does this automatically. The darkness builds through the fall, and peaks at the Winter Solstice. And then the light returns. We can learn from nature, especially at the darkest time of the year.

But we have to do this work ourselves. There is no tilt to our axis that leans us away from the sun—and then towards it again as we revolve around it.

Luckily, we don't have to do it alone.

We do it together, beloved. Together, we create winter magic. We sing, we light candles, we bear sacred witness to one another. May your life be filled with magic this winter. ■



PHOTO BY RAY HENNESSY ON UNSPLASH

MAGIC

TIA

CLF member, incarcerated in MA

Magic is using will and faith/belief to affect change/transformation. It doesn't matter what religion you are, if you can't imagine something different, or have faith or believe you can change, or have the willingness to do something about it, nothing will change. Only by changing ourselves first, seeing the need and imagining what could be, will the world around us, or our view of it, change. Nowhere in any book does it say that the divine has to do it 100% alone and that you can't help.

Imagination or visualizing what could be, or what could be different is the first step. You only have responsibility for what you do or don't do. Only by changing yourself and your viewpoints will anything change. ■

CHRISTOPHER

CLF member, incarcerated in FL

Magick, to me, isn't something that science is unable to understand. After all, we can use the "scientific process" to prove that magick works, and even how.

All of the universe is energy. Our bodies generate an electromagnetic field (aura) that certain types of photography can view.

When we focus our thoughts and

A Season of Magic

GARY

CLF member, incarcerated in SC

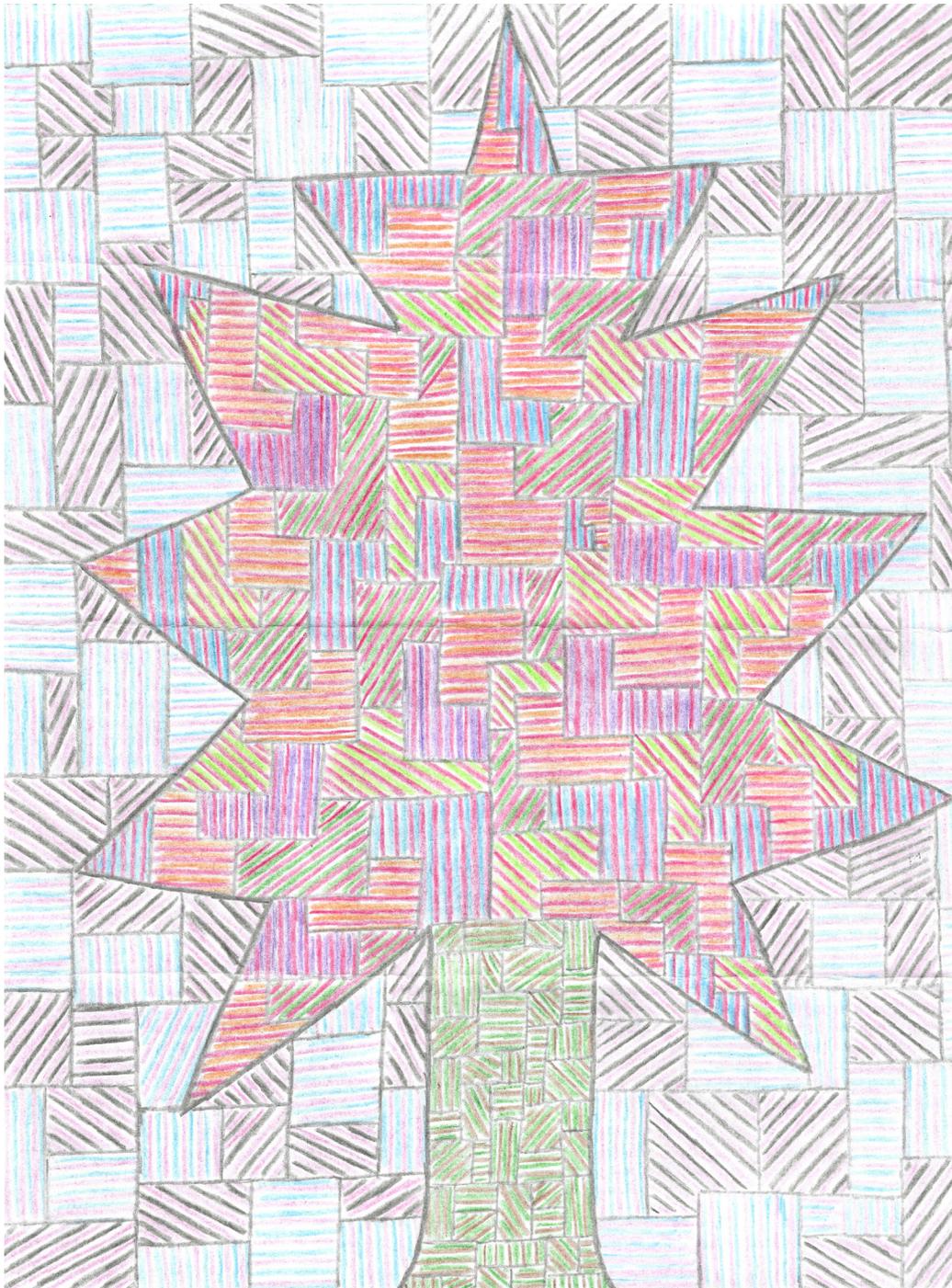
Months of sun, hot and hazy
melt slowly away
to days bright and cool;
nights of the harvest moon.
Mother Nature, she knows well the change
as leaves turn from green to gold.
The Magic Season has come again.
The hoot of an owl, howl of a wolf,
carried on the air,
the crunch of crisp leaves
Like steps of passing spirits
enthraling the very soul.
The veil between the worlds
thin as a cauldron's gurgle.
It is the moon,
shining full and ghostly pale.
The stars,
like a blanket of spangles on a velvet sky.
The rustle of nocturnal creatures,
the owl, bat, and wolf.
It is the night,
It is Magick.

desires (ritual becomes meditation), we generate energy into the universe geared towards those thoughts and desires. This is why so many "mystery" traditions explain that even a negative thought will bring about negative actions.

At the end of our ritual/meditation,

we break our focus by sending the "thought" away. Dwelling negatively on the thought (thinking that it won't happen, etc.), will cause a counter current to negate your "magick." Positive thinking will boost the speed and/or effect of success.

This is "magick." ■



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