

The Occult

The word *occult* comes from the Latin word *occultus*, which means “hidden” or “secret.” The occult is the belief that one can gain hidden, esoteric knowledge that is outside the natural or rational way of thinking. This knowledge will allow one to connect to spiritual beings, perform magic, and gain a deeper understanding of the universe.

The Characteristics of the Occult

The occult is not a religion with an official founder, leaders, or orthodox belief system. The occult does not mean “Satanic” to those who practice it; rather, it is the belief that esoteric knowledge will gain one power and enlightenment. Many different religions and people have adopted this belief and pursued it in different ways throughout history. Tribal shamanism, Hinduism, mystery religions, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Freemasonry, and witchcraft are all occult belief systems. Yet all those who practice the occult agree there are basic characteristics of what is called the occult.

The main characteristics of the occult:

- Esoteric knowledge being necessary for power and enlightenment
- The belief in and ability to interact with the spiritual realm
- The ability to have divine knowledge of other people, the past, and future
- The ability to create action at a distance, known as magick

Though many different people have practiced the occult throughout time and in different ways, this paper will look at how the occult developed and changed throughout history to become the modern-day occult.

Early Shamans and Magicians

In the ancient tribal world, many people were not only polytheists but were also animists. Animists believe that every object, place, and creature possess a distinct spiritual essence, which is also connected to everything else. Humans believed they could communicate with spirits of the objects of creation. Thus, they believed that the spirit of an entity could enter into totem poles or idols to watch over and guide humans. They believed that they had to appease the spirits through some kind of sacrifice in order to receive a blessing over their home, family, crops, or the hunt so that they could survive.

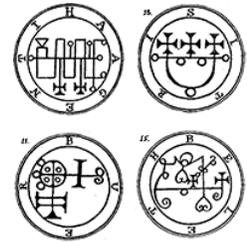
But not all had the ability to connect to the spirits of creation. Only certain privileged and gifted people, known as shamans, were called by the spirits through dreams or signs to represent the spirits to their tribe. The shaman would enter into altered states of consciousness through the taking of drugs in order to perceive and interact with the spirit world so that they could channel these transcendental energies into this world.

This happened by the spirits appearing to them, by the spirits entering into their body and using it as a vessel of communication, or by receiving visions. Many times, these visions came through astral projection. Astral projection is when a person’s spirit (“astral body”) leaves the physical body and then travels through and sees the universe.

Through this channeling of the spirits, the shaman could predict or control disasters or events and heal other people. But the only way one could do this was by binding himself to the spirits through elaborate and theatrical rituals involving drugs. They were dependent upon their connection to and the will of the spirits. Shamans were known to have many spirits at once living in them on a continuous basis.

This was the beginning of the occult, for only a few had this knowledge or gift that was hidden from all others. Thus, this gave the shaman authority and power over the tribe as the people's leader. Yet, the shaman believed himself to be a medium connected to the spiritual and material realm and that he was to benefit the tribal community and maintain harmony in nature.

As cultures grew in size to city-states, these shamans became powerful, known then as magicians, who advised kings and aided in directing the path of kingdoms. These magicians practiced what would later be called Goetia magic. Goetia magic works through conjuring and binding of intermediary good and bad spirits through incantations and sigils to get them to do things for the magician. A sigil is a pictorial signature of a spiritual deity or a concept that represents the magician's desired magical outcome.



Magick is the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with one's will. Because magicians believe they are connected to God and the universe, then they believe their will can change and manipulate the universe as well. So, if they want to make money, get someone to fall in love with them, heal someone, etc., then they merely need to focus their will on the thing they desire. However, the magician has not truly become one with the universe yet, so he needs the aid of a spiritual being. Through a ritual or incantations, the magician will bind a spirit to himself so that he can use the power of the spirit. Then by focusing his will on the thing he desires, he can cause a change to happen. Ceremonial magick is the need to do rituals and speak incantations.

During the Greco-Roman world, these magicians became known as esoteric mystics. They believed that occult esoteric knowledge would aid them in escaping the material realm and become spirits and divine beings just like the spirits they were connected to through ritual and meditation. Their primary desire was to reach "God" as directly and quickly as possible; anything else was unimportant. This would later become known as the right-hand path.

During the medieval period came the rise of Hermeticism, which emphasized two new concepts. First was that all religions are equal, teach the same truth, and lead to the same God and salvation. Second was that science is the path to esoteric knowledge. Hermeticism put more of a focus on harnessing the power of and controlling the material realm, but the ultimate goal was still to connect to the spiritual realm. Both the mystic and the Hermetic believed that this knowledge was to remain hidden from those who were not worthy of it.

The Occult and Christianity

Since Hermeticism believed that all religions were the same, there were many Christian occultists during the medieval period who believed that occult practices would allow one to connect to the Christian God and His angels, hidden or invisible to humanity. John Dee is the most well-known example of this.



John Dee (1527–1608) was a mathematician, astrologer, and navigator. Dee attended and taught at many universities and believed that hermetic occult practices could bring Christianity to its ultimate fulfillment.

In 1547, while at the University of Louvain in Belgium, Dee became interested in Pythagorean esoteric mathematics, occult magic, and, specifically, scrying with the use of crystals. He was never able to scry himself but went to others who could scry on his behalf. Scrying is the practice of looking into a reflective surface (crystal balls, water, mirrors, etc.) in order to see spirits in the spiritual realm, visions of other places, or visions of the future.

When Queen Elizabeth I took the throne in 1558, Dee became her trusted advisor on occult, astrological, and scientific matters, and he even chose Elizabeth's coronation date based on the positions of the stars. From the 1550s to the 1570s, he served as an advisor to England's naval voyages of discovery and provided the ideological backing for the creation of a "British Empire" (a term he coined).

In 1564, he wrote the Hermetic work *Monas Hieroglyphica*, a Cabalistic (Christian Kabbalah) interpretation of a glyph of his own design, meant to express the mystical unity of all creation. Dee was a devout Christian who believed that the occult and Christianity were compatible. As a Hermetic he believed that God had given man the potential for divine power, which came through esoteric mathematics. His ultimate goal was to help bring forth a unified world religion by uniting ancient pagan beliefs, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Protestant churches.

In 1582, he began to dive deeper into occult practices and began to scry with Edward Kelley. Dee was convinced that angels were talking to him through the Enochian language, the language of angels that he learned over time. He recorded these conversations in his diaries. He believed that these angels were sent by God to help him accomplish his goal. Together, Dee and Kelley developed Enochian magic, a system of ceremonial magic to conjure and command spirits.

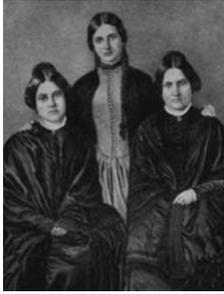
Over time, Dee allowed his professional life and career to fall apart as he became more obsessed with communicating with the angels, which he believed would help him solve the mysteries of the heavens through mathematics, astrology, and science. Later, Dee and Kelley parted ways.

In 1588, Dee came home to discover his house had been vandalized and his library of sciences and occult books destroyed. He received increasing criticism in England for his occult and magical practices. He died a few years later poor and unsupported by his colleagues in academia.

After his death, John Dee's conversations with the angels were published and became very popular. His writings promoted the idea that the spirits of the shamans and angels were the same and that occult practices could connect one to the angels of God.

Spiritualism

Overall, with the influence of the Catholic Church and the illiteracy of most people, the occult was not accepted nor available to most people throughout the medieval period. The Enlightenment (Age of Reason) of the 1700s sought to discredit anything spiritual and magical. All that was considered real were the material realm and reason. Yet after denying an essential part of humanity for so long, the Victorian age of the 1800s saw a huge occult revival that swept America and Europe and would evolve into the modern-day occult. This revival began with the Spiritualism movement.



The Fox sisters were three sisters who lived in New York and started the Spiritualism movement through their séances. The oldest was Leah Fox (1814–1890), and the younger two were Margaret Fox (1833–1893) and Kate Fox (1837–1892).

Margaret and Kate convinced other people that they were talking to spirits through the sounds of what they called “rappings” in their house. They would snap or knock the table in code and the spirits would use rappings to communicate back to them. Leah became their manager, and they began to do séances for hundreds of people, including notable authors and politicians who wanted to talk to the dead and to spirit guides.

A séance is led by a medium, who, like a shaman, is a unique person gifted with the ability to connect to spirits. The medium forms a circle of people holding hands with each other so that the energy of the medium can flow through them and create an unseen portal for an apparition to appear and speak. Sometimes the medium channels the spirit into his or her body, and the spirit speaks through the body of the medium.

Another way that the spirits communicated was through automatic writing, which is when a person produces written words from the subconscious or a spiritual force. The most popular form of automatic writing is through the Ouija board. The Ouija board is a flat board with the letters of the alphabet, the numbers 0–9, and the words “yes” and “no” printed on it. It uses a spade-shaped piece of plastic called a planchette on which the participant place their hand, and it is guided by the subconscious mind or a spiritual force to spell out a message. It was first used in China around 1100 AD to talk to the dead and was known as *fúji* (“spirit or planchette writing”). It was forbidden by the Qing Dynasty but was popularized by the Spiritualism movement. It has been demonstrated to work faster when participants are blindfolded and the letters are scattered randomly on the floor.



By the mid-1850s, many other people began to claim that they were mediums and held their own séances. The Spiritualism movement was birthed, claiming 2 million followers in America and even spreading to Europe. No longer were séances seen as a forbidden or demonic practice.

Over time, Margaret and Kate became alcoholics and began to feud with Leah. In 1888, Margaret, in the desire to hurt Leah, revealed that she was a fraud and had made the rappings through the cracking of her toes and ankles. This did not affect the Spiritualism movement, which continued to grow. However, by the late 1800s many mediums proved to be fakes, and the Spiritualism movement died down. Yet in the 1980s, with the rise of the New Age Movement, Spiritualism reemerged, becoming even more socially accepted and popular through movies and television. The Spiritualism movement of the 1800s not only made spiritualism socially acceptable but introduced the idea that one could talk not only to some distant spirit guide but also to dead loved ones.

The Modern Magician

The Spiritualism movement created a new appetite for the occult and paranormal activity. But it was a new century, and many thinkers would build off the ancients while also developing a new understanding of the spiritual realm, magic, and its connection to humans.



Éliphas Lévi Zahed, born Alphonse Louis Constant (1810–1875), was a French occult author and ceremonial magician who would redefine the meaning of the occult.

In 1830, Constant entered the seminary of Saint Sulpice to become a Roman Catholic priest. It was during this time that he got interested in Kabbalah and magic and began to excel in his understanding of both. In 1836, he fell in love and left the seminary and spent the following years with his socialist and Romantic friends. He became a radical socialist and activist who believed that Socialism was the new Christianity (the Neo-Catholic movement).

During the 1840s, Constant published many pamphlets and books criticizing the French government and was arrested on several occasions. After the failed revolution of 1848, he became convinced that the uneducated “masses” were not able to liberate themselves and establish a harmonious order without some kind of instruction. Constant believed that Kabbalah and occult magic were the foundation to a superior socialism that could instruct and lead the masses into a harmonious society.

During the 1850s and 1860s, he wrote many books on kabbalah and magic under the name Éliphas Lévi in an attempt to educate people. The magic he taught became very popular, especially after his death, due to the popularity of the Spiritualism movement in America and England. Lévi never pretended to be the initiate of some ancient or fictitious secret society and did not try to sell his secret knowledge to anyone. He was one of the first who was interested in moving beyond the elitism and secretiveness of the occult.

Lévi criticized the spiritualists of his time and redefined the occult. He taught that after people died, they were not autonomous spirits (the spiritualist view), rather that they were only mental images, an “astral force” that persisted after the individual died. These astral forces could be manipulated by skilled magicians to accomplish what they wanted. Unlike the shamans and in Goetia magic, he did not believe that you had to bind and control a spirit to do magic. Rather, the magician could visualize an image, thought, or action that he wanted and, through his will of intent, he could manifest the thought into reality. He called this thought or visualization the astral light. Unlike the ancients, he believed that the power of the magician was not based on the spirits but on one’s own innate power and will. Influenced by the Hermetics, he believed that since man was a microcosmos of God, then man could create his own reality.

He moved away from the idea of the mystic, who was focused on becoming an enlightened being and escaping the material realm. He believed that the magician was an individual, who through his own will could control the world around him and create his own reality. Thus, there was no reason to escape the material realm. The modern occultists want to interact with and use the forces of nature, along the way to God and the spiritual realm, to explore and master the world within themselves and around them.

Lévi was the first to declare that the pentagram with the point up represented good and that the pentagram with the point down represented evil. He also integrated the tarot cards into his system of magic, resulting in their popularity with magicians in the west. The tarot cards were originally a deck of playing cards created and used to play games in Europe in the 1400s. It was not until the late 1700s that they were used for gaining insight into people's lives, the past, and the future. The magician focuses his or her will toward the cards and formulates a question, and the universe responds by revealing the answer in the upturned card.



Éliphas Lévi's ideas influenced many magicians and gave birth to the modern-day occult that emphasized the magician as an individual who through his own will had the power to reshape the material realm rather than escape it. This would later become known as the left-hand path.

Theosophy

Theosophy is an esoteric religious movement established in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky that would make public the teachings of the occult and spread it throughout the western world.



Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) was a Ukrainian noble who traveled extensively across the world as a child with her family. This led to her nomadic travels all throughout her adulthood. It was during her teenage years that she became extremely interested in Tibetan Buddhism, esoterism, spiritualism, and the occult.

As a young adult Blavatsky met and befriended a “mysterious Indian” known as Master Morya, who was a part of the Masters of the Ancient Wisdom. These masters were enlightened, ascended, perfected beings who had great spiritual powers and sought to guide humanity along its spiritual evolution to godhood. Throughout her life he sent letters to her and met with her, at times guiding her to different parts of the world to learn and master her own spiritual powers. In the 1860s, Morya led her to Tibet, where he and Koot Hoomi (another master) helped her develop and control her psychic powers of telepathy, mind control, dematerializing and rematerializing physical objects, and astral projections.

In the 1870s, Morya sent Blavatsky to New York in America with the mission to validate and spread the Spiritualism movement. Influenced by Éliphas Lévi's writing, she had adopted his view of spirits and rejected the views of the Spiritualism movement on the essence of spirits. In 1874, she met the American reporter Henry Steel Olcott, who was investigating séances for the Daily Graphic newspaper. Claiming he was impressed by Blavatsky's own spiritual powers, Olcott wrote an article on her, and they became close friends. He made her famous through the articles and books he published on spiritualism. Together they held their own séances for the public.

During these séances, they met the spiritualist William Quan Judge. In 1875, the three of them formed the esoteric organization the Theosophical Society. In 1877, she published her most influential book *Isis Unveiled*, which was a huge success, with its initial print run of 1,000 copies selling out in a week. The book developed the idea that all the world's religions stemmed from a single “Ancient Wisdom.” It also developed the idea of spiritualism and criticized Darwinism for

ignoring the spiritual realm. By 1880, Theosophical lodges had been established all through America and England, with famous people like Thomas Edison as members.

In 1879, Blavatsky and Olcott were led by Morya to India, where they established many Theosophical lodges. There, she did many séances and materialization of objects that impressed the people of India. The people of India were also impressed that the Theosophists embraced Hinduism in the face of British imperialism and Christian missionaries. In India, Blavatsky converted to Buddhism and began to publish the monthly magazine *The Theosophist*, which obtained a large readership.

In the 1880s, Blavatsky was diagnosed with Bright's disease, and she and Olcott returned to Europe. During the 1890s, she published many books that further developed her beliefs about humanity and the afterlife, including a monthly magazine called *Lucifer*. She spent her final years dealing with infighting within the Theosophical lodges and the criticism of others that her claims about her life and abilities were false. Blavatsky eventually died in England during the influenza epidemic. After her death, Theosophy split into many different branches, all taking different interpretations on her teachings.

The foundational concept of Helena Blavatsky's Theosophy (developed in *Isis Unveiled*) was that all religions had developed from one "Ancient Wisdom," which could be found all over the world. She connected this ancient wisdom to the Hermetic monistic philosophy that all things emanated from God and therefore all religions are true. The great enemy was Christianity, which had ignorantly tried to stomp out the ancient wisdom and assert its own narrow-minded and oppressive philosophy on the world. But the ancient wisdom survived in India and Africa. The goal of Theosophy was to revive and spread this ancient wisdom across the world.



The Theosophical Society has three main objectives:

- To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color
- To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy, and Science
- To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man

Blavatsky is considered the founder of the modern-day occult because she really sought to make its teachings and practice public and popular. Her goal was to aid in the evolutionary process of humans developing their full psychic human potential. It would be her efforts that would lead to the secrets of the mystery religions and Hermeticism being published first in books and then the internet.

She also originated the use of the terms "Right Hand-Path" and "Left-Hand Path." She defined the former as those who pursue the path of Spiritual enlightenment in order to ascend into the spiritual realm as quickly as possible. The latter is defined as those who pursue the power of the spiritual realm in order to gain power in the material realm and master their own life and the reality around them. Eventually they would ascend into the spiritual realm. The western world began to interpret this as the path of good versus evil.

In her book *the Secret Doctrine*, she taught that in the beginning of time there was nothing. This primordial essence divided itself into seven intelligent beings known as the seven rays, which then created the material realm. Her idea of humanity is found in a concept she called "Root

Races.” She believed that humanity would evolve through seven root races, each divided into seven sub-races. Humanity has already evolved through five of them.

The first Root Race created by the seven Rays were merely ethereal spirit beings of light who reproduced through emanating another out of themselves. They lived on a continent known as the “Imperishable Sacred Land.”

The second Root Race were also ethereal spirits who reproduced through self-dividing. They lived in the northern part of the earth known today as Scandinavia, North Canada, and North Asia, which had a mild climate.

The third Root Race were higher beings who descended to earth and began to develop human bodies and divide into sexes. They began as giants, some reproducing by laying eggs and others later by giving birth like humans. They lived on the continent of Lemuria in the area of the Indian Ocean, South Pacific, and Australia. It sank due to volcanic activity.

The fourth Root Race appeared and had physical bodies, psychic powers, and advanced technology. They lived on the continent of Atlantis. The Atlanteans were immoral and abused their power and knowledge, so Atlantis sank into the sea. However, some Atlanteans escaped and created new societies in Egypt and the Americas. They were both light and dark skinned.

The fifth Root Race are the Aryans who came from the Atlanteans. They began about 100,000 years ago and are the current races living on the earth today. The Masters of the Ancient Wisdom are currently guiding the evolution of the sub-races of this current Root Race. The current fifth sub-race are the Teutonic, who are the German, Slavic, and Russian people. During the 1900s and 2000s, they are evolving into the sixth sub-race through migration to Canada and America. During the 2000s, these people will begin to develop occult powers and psychic abilities and become the beginnings of the sixth Root Race.

The sixth Root Race will come with the arrival of Lord Maitreya, a figure from Mahayana Buddhist mythology (kind of like the second coming of Buddha). He will guide the world to a one-world government and religion led by an enlightened being. A new continent will rise up in Pacific Ocean and become the home of the sixth Root Race. They will evolve into the seventh Root Race, who will be humans fully in control of their reality and will create a utopian society. Though Helena Blavatsky would not be the first to use the term “New Age,” she defined it the most and began to popularize the use of it.

Some people have misinterpreted Blavatsky’s concept of Root Races as racism, but that was not her intention. Though she did believe the white-skinned people were the next step in evolution, she also believed that they originated from the dark-skinned Africans and that the dark-skinned people of India were the most spiritual people; she admired them the most. However, she did discriminate against Christianity and the Jewish people, whom she saw as the embodiment of oppression of all other religions. She stated that Jews were “degenerate in spirituality,” although she still viewed them as Aryans.

Blavatsky’s concept of Root Races became the basis for the New Age movement, many superhero comic books, and modern sci-fi movies. Adolf Hitler twisted the concept of Root Races and combined it with Social Darwinism as the basis of the Third Reich to fit his own personal agenda.

The Golden Dawn

Despite Blavatsky's desire to make the secrets of the occult public, there were still those who believed these secrets should remain hidden and that only people who were committed to rigorous study and practice would be able to become a master magician. In the spirit of the ancients, they maintain their secret societies and initiations.



The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was an elite secret society of freemasons and magicians devoted to the study and practice of the occult, theurgy magic, and paranormal activities in England during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The order was founded in 1887 by William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Westcott, and Samuel Liddell Mathers (the driving force in the society), who were Freemasons. Greatly influenced by the Hermetics and the writings of Éliphas Lévi, they believed they had found ancient Egyptian magical texts connected to Kabbalah. The translation of these texts became the basis for their magical learning. They created a three-tiered order based on the hierarchy and initiation of the Masonic lodges; however, women were admitted on an equal basis with men.

The First Order taught Hermetic Qabalah, mastery of the four elements, astrology, and the tarot cards. The Second Order taught magic, scrying, astral travel, and alchemy. The Third Order taught spirit communication with the “Secret Chiefs,” enlightened spirits that directed the activities of the Golden Dawn.

The Golden Dawn required new members to first get in touch with the inner self, through yoga and meditation, before they could move to the next level of performing magic. They abstained from alcohol and emphasized self-control found in the Jewish morality of Kabbalah and Hermetic Christianity. Their emphasis was on white magic.

By the mid-1890s, the Golden Dawn was well-established in England, with over one hundred members from every class of society, including celebrities, notable authors like William Yeats and Brom Stoker, businessmen, and politicians. By 1910, many lodges had been established in America. The Golden Dawn was responsible for the training of many magicians and the spread of magic in the western world. Eventually, infighting in the London branch in 1899 led to its collapse, and by the 1930s most of the lodges had closed.

Thelema

Aleister Crowley was a highly intelligent and gifted man who would become an expert in every area of the occult he pursued. He took the ideas of Goetia magic and Éliphas Lévi to their logical conclusion. If humanity was truly an emanation of God and capable of great powers, then one could pursue any means desired to accomplish his own will, even if it meant joining Satan. Even though much of his life was dark and immoral, it is important to understand because he has had such a huge impact on western culture. It is also important to see the real fruit of his pursuit of his own will.



Aleister Crowley, born Edward Alexander Crowley (1875–1947), was born to a devout Plymouth Brethren family in Warwickshire, England. The Plymouth Brethren taught that any excess beyond what one needed to survive was a sin. Crowley greatly admired his father, who had retired from the family brewery and spent his time as a traveling preacher.

In 1887, his father died, which he described as the turning point in his life, and he began to misbehave at school and was continually punished. Edward's mother referred to him as "the beast," a name in which he took pleasure. At the age of 11, he began to abandon Christianity and became fascinated with the occult. He believed that this was ordained by the gods, for eleven was one less than the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve disciples, which was in opposition to God. Eleven became his "magical" number, and he popularized the spelling of magick with a "k" at the end (the eleventh letter of the alphabet). He even had a wand that was eleven inches long.

He swore an oath to the devil, if the devil would give him great power. He named himself the Great Beast, 666, and began to live a life that was completely contrary to Christianity.

"Indeed, my falling away from grace was not occasioned by any intellectual qualms; I accepted the theology of the Plymouth Brethren. In fact, I could hardly conceive of the existence of people who might doubt it. I simply went over to Satan's side and to this hour I cannot tell why... I was opposed to an omnipotent God... I was not content to believe in a personal devil and serve him, in the ordinary sense of the word. I wanted to get hold of him personally and become his chief of staff." (Aleister Crowley. *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, p. 66-67.)

"My first step must be to get into personal communication with the devil."

"Beneath the standard of objectivity, I serve my great master Satan and the council of nine composed of Beelzebub..."

"I swear to work my work abhorred, careless of one reward, the pleasure of the Devil our lord." (Aleister Crowley. *Satanic Extracts*, p. 2.)

He transferred from college to college all the while rebelling against Christian morality by smoking, drinking, and having sex in the dorms with prostitutes, from whom he contracted gonorrhea. He became very sick and went to live in the countryside with his uncle, who got him interested in chess, poetry, and mountain climbing.

In 1895, he attended Trinity College in Cambridge, where he started to use the name Aleister. There he studied literature and pursued his interests in chess, poetry, and mountaineering. He continued to sleep with female prostitutes but was also in a homosexual relationship with a fellow classmate, Herbert Charles Pollitt, who dressed in drag and performed in night clubs. Crowley got bored with his studies, even though he had high marks academically, and poured himself completely into the occult and secretly published pornographic poetry. When he inherited his family's wealth, he left Trinity college without a degree and became a full-time occultist.

In 1898, he joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, excelled in his learning, and quickly moved up the ranks. But many people in the order did not like him because of his indulgent lifestyle; he was fascinated with demons and black magic and took psychedelic drugs to increase

the experiences he had when doing magical rituals. He moved into a flat with a fellow Golden Dawn member who, though it was not allowed, privately taught him Goetia magic.

In 1899, he bought a mansion on the shores of Loch Ness in Scotland so that he could perform the Abramelin Ceremony, which involves six months of fasting and elaborate and difficult rituals in order to reveal to the magician his guardian angel. He stopped partway through due to the intensity of the ritual.

Crowley believed that the greatest demonstration of power was the ability to manipulate one's surroundings, destroying something and then creating something new out of the ashes. This was the true purpose of demonic black magic. So, because of Golden Dawn members' resistance to him, he manipulated and turned them against each other so that eventually the London lodge collapsed, and he went on to create something new. He continued to practice magic, working with John Dee's Enochian invocations and Éliphas Lévi's writings, and was initiated into Freemasonry.

In 1903, he married Rose Kelly to save her from an arranged marriage and soon fell in love with her and wrote poetry for her to win her love. In 1904, they went Egypt, and in their hotel room they began to ritually conjure up the god Horus. Rose began to hear a voice saying, "They are waiting for you." She saw an apparition and said that the "they" was Horus. Crowley was angry that though he was a magician, it had not appeared to him but to his wife. The voices led them to the Cairo museum, where she pointed to a stele of Horus and said it was him. Crowley took it as a sign that the exhibit number was 666.

Back at the hotel, he heard the voice of Aiwass, the messenger of Horus, and for three days he wrote down everything that the voice said and published it in *The Book of the Law*. The book proclaimed that humanity was entering a new Aeon, that Crowley would be its prophet, and that this Aeon would bring a new moral law: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." At first, he resisted the commands of the book and ignored it. But eventually he would embrace it, and its philosophy would become the foundation to his new religion, Thelema ("the will").

The key philosophical ideas of Thelema:

- Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.
- Love is the law, Love under will.
- Every man and every woman is a star.



Crowley believed that one had to find their true self or will by freeing the desires of the subconscious mind from the control of the conscious mind and the restrictions placed on it by society. Then one would know their true will, which would connect them to the divine will. When this happened, they were truly able to live out the divine will, which would lead to liberation and utopia. The greatest obstacle to this was Christianity and the traditional structure of family that restricted one's true self. When this was destroyed, then one could be rebirthed out of the ashes. He really believed if one did what they really wanted, this could produce only good and a utopian society.

"I am the snake that giveth knowledge and delight and bright glory, and stir the hearts of men with drunkenness. To worship me take wine and strange drugs." (Aleister Crowley. *The Book of the Law*, p. 37–38.)

“...things like heroin and alcohol may be used and should be used for the purpose of worshipping, that is, entering into communion with the ‘Snake that giveth knowledge and delight and bright glory.’” (Aleister Crowley. *Diary of a Drug Fiend*, p. 364–65.)

“They must accept The Book of the Law as the word and the letter of truth, and the sole rule of life. They must acknowledge the authority of the Beast 666 and the Scarlet Woman as in the book it is defined...and accept their will as the constituting the will of the Whole Order. They must accept the Crowned and Conquering Child as the lord of the Aeon, and exert themselves to establish his reign on the Earth.” (Aleister Crowley. *Magick: In Theory and Practice*, p. 335.)

“That religion they call Christianity; the devil they honor they call God. I accept these definitions, as a poet must do, if he is to be at all intelligible to his age, and it is their God and their religion that I hate and will destroy... With my hawk’s head I pick out the eyes of Jesus as he hangs upon the cross.” (Aleister Crowley. *The World’s Tragedy*, p. 31.)

“I say today: To hell with Christianity... I will build me a new Heaven and a new Earth... I want blasphemy, murder, rape, revolution, anything bad...” (Israel Regardie. *The Eye of the Triangle*, p. 287.)

“I shall fight openly for that which no living Englishman dare defend, even in secret – sodomy! And in truth there seems no better way to avoid a contamination of women...sodomy is an aristocratic virtue, which our middle class had better imitate if they wish to be smart.” (Aleister Crowley. *The World’s Tragedy*, pp. 32-33.)

“Let me seduce the boys of England, and the oldsters may totter unconverted to their graves. Then these boys, become men, may bring about the new Heaven and the new Earth...but without any army I am useless.... Give me an army, young men; and we will sweep these dogs into the sea.” (Aleister Crowley. *The World’s Tragedy*, p. 25.)

Like Helena Blavatsky, Crowley desired to share the knowledge of the occult with everyone so that all humans could achieve their full human potential and create a utopian society wherein everyone was truly free to “do what thou wilt.”

In 1905, he and Rose had a child and named her Lilith. They began to travel throughout China, where Rose became an alcoholic and he became addicted to opium. His family returned to England without him. When he later returned to England, he learned that his daughter had died of typhoid. He blamed his wife for Lilith’s death and began to have affairs and bring prostitutes home, having sex with them in front of his tied-up wife. He had a second daughter with Rose, whom he named Lola Zaza.

With his inheritance running out, Crowley began to teach magic to people who were interested. He entered into a sexual relationship with Victor Neuburg, and they engaged in sex magic, which would become the basis to his religion Thelema.

In 1907, Crowley decided to embrace *The Book of the Law* and formed the magic society A·A· to replace the Golden Dawn. He copied the structure and rituals of the Golden Dawn but incorporated his teachings of Thelema. In 1909, he and Neuburg began to perform Enochian magic and performed an invocation to the demon Choronzon involving blood sacrifice. He considered the results to be a watershed moment in his magical career.

“The animal should therefore be killed within the circle.... For the highest spiritual working one must accordingly choose that victim which contains the greatest and purest force. A male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim... But the bloody sacrifice, though more dangerous, is more efficacious; and for nearly all purposes human sacrifice is best.” (Aleister Crowley. *Magick: In Theory and Practice*, p. 220.)

He also further developed and published works on Thelema and sex magic. He divorced Rose Kelly and eventually put her in an asylum for mental illness. Not interested in being a father, he left his daughter in boarding schools and began to travel.

In 1912, he was placed in charge of the magical Ordo Templi Orientis, largely based on Freemasonry. He took on the magical name of Baphomet, made Thelema the basis of the order, and incorporated his homosexual sex magic into the initiation of the 11 degree.

In 1914, with very little money, he moved to New York in America and began to write for *Vanity Fair* and promote Thelema in America. In America he joined the pro-German movement and wrote for a propaganda magazine called *The Fatherland*. He experimented with hashish and peyote and had affairs with men and women. During this time, he became friends with and performed sex magic with Jack Parsons and L. Ron Hubbard, who would later create the religion of Scientology.

In 1920, he was destitute and moved back to England. Diagnosed with asthma, Crowley was prescribed heroin by his doctor, and he became addicted. He entered into a relationship with Leah Hirsig, who already had a newborn daughter, and began to practice sex magic.

“I dedicate myself wholly to the great work. I will work for wickedness. I will kill my heart. I will be shameless before all men. I will freely prostitute my body to all creatures.” (Leah Hirsig. *Diary of Leah Hirsig*, 1921.)

In 1920, he bought a house with Leah Hirsig in Sicily and established the Abbey of Thelema in Sicily. Many people including celebrities moved into the Abbey. Every morning and evening, they were required to perform homosexual sex magic, and lots of children were born, who were required to watch the rituals. No cleaning was allowed, and wild dogs and cats came in and out, making the place very unsanitary. Drinking the blood of sacrificed animals and cutting oneself was required. Crowley believed that if you destroyed a person's ego, then they could be rebirthed to a new and enlightened person. The majority of people got deathly ill or committed themselves to a mental institution. Some left and shared their stories with the press. John Bull, a journalist, proclaimed Crowley “the wickedest man in the world” and “a man we'd like to hang.” The Italian government learned of Crowley's actions and deported him out of the country.

In poor health and destitute, he moved to France but was eventually deported by the French government. He met Maria Teresa Sanchez in France, and they moved to England and married. There he had many affairs with men, which were often violent. In 1932, he sued several publishers and newspapers for defamation of character, and lost.

Deidre Patricia Doherty approached Crowley after the trial and said that she had read all his books and wanted to have his child. He married her, and they had a son whom he named Randall Gair. He continued to publish works, including his own tarot card set, and lived off the donations of members of the Ordo Templi Orientis. During this time, he became friends with and taught Gerald Gardner, who would later develop the religion of Wicca. At the end of his life, Aleister

Crowley was a destitute drug addict living in a boarding home when he died of chronic bronchitis aggravated by pleurisy and myocardial degeneration.

In the 1960s and 1970s, artists and musicians read Crowley's works and were inspired to live their lives the way they wanted. His writings became the basis for the hippie "free love" movement, as people like Elvis, John Lennon, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendriks, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, and Ozzy Osbourne showcased a lifestyle and music inspired by Crowley's writings. These and many others would take the teachings of Aleister Crowley (a man most people have never heard of) and reshape the modern western world into his image. A culture of "Do what thou wilt" translated into "follow your heart," "have it your way," and "just do it."

The Church of Satan

Aleister Crowley's teachings truly reshaped the western world in an even more individualistic society interested only in its own selfish pursuit. It was only logical that his teachings would lead to the birth of an organized satanic philosophy.



Anton LaVey (1930–1997) grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area of California as a musically talented boy. He claimed that at age 16 he left high school to work in the traveling circus as the cage boy and then playing the organ. He claimed that he saw churchgoers go to the burlesque shows and then the Sunday tent revival meetings, which led to his cynicism of religion. However, historians have found no records or evidence of this. Most of LaVey's life up to the 1950s is undocumented and suspect. The only thing that is clear was his interest in the occult and paranormal activity.

In 1951, LaVey married Carole Lansing and had a daughter whom they named Karla LaVey. In 1960, they divorced because of LaVey's infatuation with Diane Hegarty. LaVey and Diane Hegarty never married but remained together for 25 years. In 1963, they had a daughter whom they named Zeena Galatea LaVey.

During the 1960s, he played the organ at the Lost Weekend cocktail lounge and became a local celebrity through his paranormal research and lectures. He attracted many San Francisco notables to his parties and began to form a following, including Sammy David Jr. who influenced Frank Sinatra.

In 1966, LaVey founded the Church of Satan and pronounced it year one of the age of Satan. The newspaper called him "The Black Pope," and he began to do Satanic weddings, baptisms, and funerals at his house, known as the "Black house."



In the 1960s and 1970s, he merged the philosophies of Aleister Crowley, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ayn Rand, and social Darwinism with the philosophies and rituals of the Church of Satan. In 1969, he published *The Satanic Bible* with reworked excerpts from Ragnar Redbeard's *Might Is Right* and a Satanized version of Enochian magic. The Church of Satan had a great influence on the thinking of many artists in the movie and music industry. During the 1980s, his daughters Karla and Zeena became the public face of the Church of Satan.

In 1984, Diane Hegarty issued a restraining order against LaVey. He became romantically involved with Blanche Barton. In 1993, he had a third child named Satan Xerxes Carnacki

LaVey. Anton LaVey died of pulmonary edema, and Blanche Barton succeeded him as the head of the Church of Satan. In 2001, Peter H. Gilmore became the high priest.

Anton LaVey is considered the founder of modern Satanism and was directly responsible for the beginning of Satanism as a serious religious movement. Yet, LaVey's Satanism is atheistic Satanism, in that one does not believe in Satan as a literal being, nor do they believe in God. Satanists are skeptical atheist. Nor did he believe in the spiritual realm or magic. The idea of Satan is a positive archetype who represents pride, individualism, and enlightenment, and is a symbol of defiance against the religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

He embraced the image of Satan because of its association with social non-conformity and rebellion against the dominant system, and because it shocked people and caused them to think. In *The Satanic Bible*, Satan is seen as a metaphor for the true self of humans, and God and Satan are used interchangeably. The rituals done in the Church of Satan are not a form of worship but are meant to focus the will of its members in order to bring about change in their lives.

LaVey taught that the basic nature of humans was selfishness and therefore one should pursue their innate carnal desires. Guilt for one's actions is the result of social conditioning and fear of religions to suppress the natural nature of humanity. Therefore, you should do whatever you want as long as you do not hurt anyone who does not deserve to be hurt. If you want to do something bad, then do it, and do not feel guilty about it. The only sin is self-deceit.

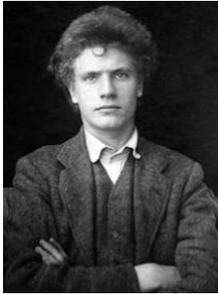
In 1975, Michael Aquino, LaVey's righthand priest, left the Church of Satan because he disagreed with LaVey's atheistic Satanism, and he believed that the Church of Satan was filled with fad-followers and egomaniacs. Aquino did a ritual asking Satan for advice on what to do next. Satan appeared and revealed that he wanted to be known by his true Egyptian name, Set. He then established the theistic Satan Temple of Set.

Theistic Satanism states that Satan is the real and only true God. All other gods are a result of humanity's imagination. In his book *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, given to him by Set through automatic writing, he states that the name *Satan* was a corruption of the name Set. The Temple of Set does not worship Satan but reveres him as a great teacher and role model. There are, however, many theistic Satanists who do worship Satan. They fully embrace Aleister Crowley's belief in a real devil and his philosophy of Thelema in *The Book of the Law*. Satanism is about humans truly seeing themselves as gods, meaning, therefore, that there is no authority over their lives and, thus, they are free to do whatever they want.

However, many followers of Thelema or Satanism will argue that you can do whatever you want as long as you do not harm someone who does not deserve it or wish to be harmed. The problem with this is that as humans we can so easily rationalize that other people deserve to be harmed for almost anything that they do to us. Almost every harmful thing humans do to others, they claim to have done because they believed the other person deserved it. So, this is an empty restriction.

Chaos Magick

The human-centeredness of Thelema and the Enlightenment would eventually lead some magicians to reject all structured systems of magic and do whatever they wanted to create their own magical outcomes.



Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956) was born to a Christian family in Yorkshire, England, and at a young age showed a great talent for art. In 1900, he attended the Royal College of Art in South Kensington. It was there that he rejected his Christian upbringing and became interested in Theosophy. His art was often dark and mystical with surrealism, which would help inspire the Surrealism movement.

After college, Spare worked as a bookplate designer and illustrator and started publishing his own books. In 1907, he held his first major exhibit of his art, which was a huge success. His art attracted the interest of Aleister Crowley. They became friends, and Spare joined Crowley's order A∴A∴. Eventually he left the order, disliking Crowley and his structured hierarchal ceremonial magic. He found it too dogmatic, constraining, and unnecessary.

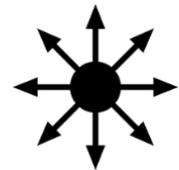
He began to do automatic writings and drawings that were very mystical and developed his concept of magic. These publications were widely accepted and did well. He became interested in Buddhism and spiritualism.

For the remainder of his life, Spare developed his own system of magic that he called Zos Kia. In 1949, he befriended Kenneth Grant, a former disciple of Aleister Crowley who got him interested in witchcraft and helped him develop his system of magic. Zos Kia magic focuses on one's individual universe and the influence of the magician's will on it. *Zos* represents the human body and mind (material and conscious mind), and *Kia* represents the universal mind or ultimate power (the unconscious mind), similar to the idea of Brahman or the Tao.

Spare believed that the unconscious mind was the true self and source of inspiration. He believed that the impulses, desires, and true being of the unconscious mind were repressed by the conscious mind. The use of sigil magic, designed by the magician, allowed one to focus their meditative thought (sometimes through Yoga) and project the ideas and power of the unconscious mind onto the material realm. Spare completely rejected all the incantations, ceremonies, and rituals of traditional magic and believed that all that was needed was to focus the will in whatever way worked for the magician. He embraced the concept of Thelema but rejected its structure of magic.

Peter James Carroll (1953) and Ray Sherwin (1952), two British occultists, became dissatisfied the state of modern magic and its cumbersomeness. In the late 1970s, they had created a new form of magic based on a fusion of Thelema and Zos Kia called Chaos Magick. In 1987, they created the order of Illuminates of Thanateros (combination of the Greek gods Thanatos, death, and Eros, sex), an international organization that focuses on workings of chaos magic.

The ancient ceremonial magician uses specific rituals and incantations in order to bind a spirit, focus the will, and produce change. Chaos magick rejects all the systems of magic as unnecessary and teaches that the magician use the ideas and practices that are helpful to them at the moment. A person borrows from multiple sources to construct a new and personal system that works for them. A personal system is never developed, for what applied yesterday may be irrelevant today. The magician drives himself into a mystical and extremely focused state of concentration and can then empty his mind of all desire other than the one idea or endeavor on which he is focused. Then he can release that idea into the universe, which ripples through the universe, effecting change.



The term *chaos magic* comes from the mathematical chaos theory, which states that within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems are underlying patterns and order. The butterfly effect explains how one tiny action can create a cause-and-effect chain of reactions that ripple through the universe and effect a large change somewhere else.

Chaos magick is a postmodern idea that rejects the existence of absolute truth and views all occult systems as arbitrary and meaningless. It is agnostic about whether or not the spiritual realm or magick exists as a supernatural force. All that matters is the willpower of the individual to make things happen. This has become very popular in America and England among those who merely believe they have the power to make things happen and want to do it however they want.

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