

BLACK MAGICK AND THE LEFT-HAND PATH

By Haramullah

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

La ilaha illa 'Llah. Assalam alaikum, my kin.

Introduction

A shroud of mystery, suspicion, and heresy hangs over the subjects of Black Magick and The Left-Hand Path. Those who travel in such ways are often greeted with a mixture of fear and trepidation, especially where they profess such engagement.

It is the purpose of this essay to relieve some of the unnecessary fear associated with them, not to dispell the mystery upon which their foundations rest (which alone would be quite an impossible task!). In many cases the reaction people have toward aspirants of the left-hand becomes a discipline for those that tread them. In some small measure I do a disservice to explore them. However, aversion and antagonism can be inspired in many people and there are alternatives to these methods of austerity. Let those who would retain their antisocial shroud seek alternate methods of inflaming the insecurities of others if this essay reveals too much.

There is no doubt that certain individuals within society exhibit sociopathic behaviors and some of these claim their actions to be in accord with an anti-spiritual path (e.g. Satanism). This is said especially about 'black magick' (with or without the 'k', which serves to separate it from stage magic).

There is supposed by many to be a smattering at least, a network at most, of black magicians who work at great cost to society at large and to the safety and health of those individuals who cross their path. Their way consists of an egocentric accumulation of power (say many) at the expense of others, for the sake of power itself or in order to feed the ego of the mage.

It is the purpose of this essay particularly to argue against the accuracy and efficacy of this notion and to propose alternate meanings for the terms 'black magick' and 'left-hand path' such that better than an insecure, warrior mentality may be an option for serious mages

in their studies.

Part One: Unjustifiable Moralism

Given serious investigation, no extensive organization formed for the purposes of malevolence has yet been discovered. At times small groups of people have banded together with an intent to harm. Yet this has been done under many proffered labels, including those of major movements ostensibly dedicated to health and balance (witness the Christianity taught by Christ as compared to the Inquisition).

What can be established at most is that some individuals and small groups do experience popular antisocial images (e.g. Satan) as personally meaningful in their psychosis when they manifest their destructive desires. This does not mean that all who appreciate or use these images are involved with the same sociopathic activities.

The sequence of cause and effect has not been established. With respect to Satanism, it is not known that devotion to Satan necessarily leads to dementia or violence. Popular media publicizes antisocial acts, but fails to investigate or make known any socially uplifting results of this activity (by 'Satanic' organizations for example).

Such is also the case with those involved in black magick. Where Satanism arises in Judeo-Christian cultures which partake of this great mythological symbol (largely Christian or Muslim), black magick spans the many cultures which accept the premise of magick generally. These are largely technologically undeveloped cultures whose ideas about spiritualism and psychic power have become infused throughout the society, rather than held solely by an esoteric elite (Voudoun or Yaqui are good examples here, especially as portrayed by popular texts).

Typically, magick is said to be a focus of psychic power, perhaps through formulae, in order to affect an environment. At times this may involve an interaction with noncorporeal or other-worldly entities (the dead, nature spirits, or powerful 'deities'). The relationships vary from a humble appeal to a powerful being to a concerted enslavement of a demon or spirit by the mage.

Regardless of power source, often magick is divided into two or three

categories: black, white, and sometimes gray. Recent occult practitioners have further divided it, classifying it by color in accordance with its intent, source energy and style.

Labels and Categorization

Whatever the label, the classification scheme follows a system of moral values for the culture of its origin. Therefore, in speaking of magick, one would call a magical act 'malevolent' (often 'black') when it intends an 'harmful' result. When the intent is of a 'beneficial' nature, then it is called 'white magick'.

It is of no consequence, for the purposes of this essay, whether or not the forms of the magical enactments are qualitatively similar (and in some cultures this is the case - i.e. the magical processes are the same for white and black yet the two have different objectives).

Many of these ideas about magick are commonly accepted within the occult community. That magick can be a science of cause and that the intent of such cause determines the 'color', if you will, of said magick, are two of the major themes. Different ideas about magick do in fact exist, yet these two seem extremely popular.

It is argued here (as in many modern tomes which discuss the ethics of magick) that morality varies from culture to culture and that ethics vary from person to person based on subjective standards and desires. Note that this does not rule out a broad correspondence between ethics, making democratic laws possible.

What are being challenged, however, are any 'black' and 'white' categorizations of motive and action beyond this correspondence. The meaning for the term 'harm' varies tremendously and this is in no way clarified by temporary harm which makes further healing possible (e.g. surgery or immunization).

What most modern, literate mages classify as 'black magick' are those forms which are coercive. Those which do more than bind manipulative or destructive energies are considered destructive in themselves and are often rejected.

The problem with all of this is that when speaking of these subjects one cannot make accurate generalizations about actions and their

classification. It is impossible to condense from these abstracted ideas any concrete knowledge concerning specific people engaged in specific activities, especially when using subjectively interpreted evaluations of 'good', 'evil', 'black' or 'white'. This is precisely the mistake made in all travesties of society in the name of 'cleansing' or 'spiritual purgation' (The Inquisition, Holocaust, Red Scare and Japanese Internment are a few good examples).

While we may classify certain actions within our culture as 'illegal' through social agreement, extensions or presumptions about the absolute value of any action requires a degree of knowledge which cannot be obtained. We may see immediate harm (i.e. the surgeon's incision) yet be unaware of the overall healing effect (the removal of diseased tissue). Thus, absolute labels without delineation concerning the nature of our judgement (i.e. 'black magick' rather than 'harmful magick') are misleading and inefficient.

Note also that these terms are most often used in their negative sense. A black magician does not often announce or display this label or quality. If she did so it might forewarn prospective victims....

Effectiveness as Criteria

There is a need for effective labels (when we must apply any) and there is a shortage of positive aspects of those labels we do use. In describing magick, the term 'black' is inadequate when we wish to indicate that a specific quality about the magick is abhorrent, rather than indicating the attitude of whoever may be using the term.

To begin with, simple labels inspire abuse through their inadequacy. Eliminating them or expanding them toward precision can only help to increase communication and understanding generally. The same is true of the label 'left-hand path'. It is inadequate to describe the activities of those involved with groups that are classified in this way. The decision about whether or not labels themselves are desirable is left for the contemplation of the reader.

Secondly, some self-described members of these groups (followers of the left-hand path or Satanists, and black magicians) behave in ways and express ideas which do not suggest the stereotypic behaviors attributed to them (i.e. violence and abuse). Thus, the label fails again to distinguish those that adopt it who are violent from those

who are not. Most likely those who are violent receive a majority of the attention and people generalize in prejudice thereafter.

In sum, the two main arguments presented here are that the phrases 'left-hand path' and 'black magick' are inadequate to describe the activities or character of particular mages, and, of those who adopt these labels, some or many do not fit the stereotype which is commonly associated with them.

Part Two: Reclaiming the Terms

Part of the problem with these terms is that there is no popular, positive meaning for them. This can be remedied through careful, imaginative expression. One may derive a useful meaning by examining many occult tomes in which they could be used effectively.

The current, popular interpretation follows a narrow, fundamentalist character that accepts moral absolutes and authoritarian biases. Stripped of any symbolic value they ever had, they have been applied in judgemental categorization. Rather than retain moralistic meanings for the labels 'left-hand' or 'black', a mythological substitute is more appropriate and meaningful.

The Left-hand Path

The left hand has quite a history, ranging from a specific position in Tantric ceremonies involving ritual sex magick to its association with the word 'sinister'. Our Western society discriminates against left-handed people in its mass-production and mass-education systems.

The left side of the body is connected to the right hemisphere of the brain. The left hand is also popularly associated with emotional, fantastic, intuitive, nonlinear, simultaneous, diffused, integrative, timeless, imaginative, inductive, tacit, receptive, synthesizing, analogous, experience-centered consciousness. Activities associated with this consciousness include seeing metaphors, unifying concepts, combining ideas or objects in unusual ways, exploring feelings, wondering, creating, dreaming, drawing and singing.

This is the mode of consciousness of the Dreamer, the Artist and the Visionary. It has often been associated with the feminine. This is

certainly supported by the popular stereotypes of the 'emotional woman' and the 'intellectual man'. In many symbolic systems the feminine is linked with the receptive, the intuitive, and generally with 'right-brain' qualities. Reclaiming the left hand is an important step in realizing the value of not only the entire body (through revaluing the feminine), but the many modes of consciousness which we may experience.

This association constitutes an effective meaning of 'left-hand' without morality. It describes a way that is based on intuition rather than on logic, on imagination rather than on verbal knowledge, and on dreams and feelings rather than on plans and goals. It is the way of the Natural Mystic; less structured, more attuned to spontaneous rather than artificial organization; less born of regimen and more attuned to receptive intuition; less involved with bureaucratic business progress and more akin to cyclic, artistic growth.

Magicians on the left-hand path practice for pure enjoyment, inner experience, or no reason whatsoever. The activity expands to become the goal. Even the illusory 'enlightenment' or 'transformation' is abandoned in a spirit of pure play. The left-hand path is an art rather than a science, arising on its own rather than as a preplanned, intellectual project.

Black Magick

Black and the Dark have been maligned and shunned prior to and since the dualism encouraged by Manichaenism, and were redressed little by the Judeo-Christian mythic and political teachings. Largely equating Light with being, wisdom, intuition or awareness, the Western Mystery Tradition has done little to help the situation. Intellectually and symbolically, Darkness has been associated with ignorance, malevolence and deception.

Occasionally mystics have divulged the esoteric significance of Darkness, yet have often identified it with a lacking (i.e. of image, certainty, or psychic strength). In very few Western writings (e.g. some Hermetic or Gnostic) and in some Eastern traditions (notably Taoism and Neo-Confucianism) do we encounter any useful positive meaning for Blackness or Darkness.

Thus, to redefine the significance of black magick is to defy much traditional symbolism based on cultural bias. However, not to do so jeopardizes our potential understanding of Death and Mystery.

Black is associated with negative things. Negation is quite valuable in our world. It is part and parcel of Nature. The destruction of waste and form allows the recreation of All. While many see negation as a force to be combatted, avoided or destroyed, the value of embracing negation and negativity as valuable and integral elements of universal flux can never be overestimated.

Darkness is often associated with the unconscious mind. Light, as the symbol of conscious illumination, is often contrasted with this directly. Rather than the traditionally popular black = negative = bad perspective of fear, it seems both wise and instructive to associate Blackness and Darkness with magick that originates in the unconscious.

'Black magick' therefore becomes a description of occult practice with respect to the source of its form. To intellectually predesign, plan, control and consciously arrange ritual is white magick, while to enjoy unconsciously-guided ritual is black magick.

Source and Type

Combining the expansive meanings of both 'left-hand path' and 'black magick' allows us to describe various mystical and magical practices more effectively. Comparing the source of magical style with the type of path, we obtain a more descriptive and less biased evaluation. Morality ceases to be an issue. Instead, we can use descriptors which reflect the activities of the mage. These terms say nothing about the value of either evaluative pole and do little to bias our view.

Black magick need only mean that its origin is the unconscious mind, regardless of any structure it may have. A left-hand path can mean that it is emotive and artistic, whether arising from conscious or unconscious sources.

For example, black magick of the right-hand path would describe a very structured path which has its origins in the unconscious mind (and so might prove very unorthodox, though no less organized). A left-handed, white magick would include an emotive and preplanned

practice.

This language serves the purposes of both scholars of magick and networkers in the field of the occult. The scholar can more clearly view the differences in structure and method among the many occult and religious practices. The networker can decipher similarities among them so as to appropriately guide a client and more quickly satisfy their needs.

Conclusion

It is both ineffective and foolish to relegate the descriptors 'black' and 'left-hand' to the criminal, the deviant or the psychotic. This is an association too extreme to be of any real use to the serious mage. There is far too great a depth of meaning in these terms to accept them as moralistic adjectives.

Regardless of any alternatives to those suggested above that one might use for the task, it is time to transcend this extremity and move toward unifying, elaborative associations that will promote a synthesis of mind and body, intellect and emotion, self and society, Microcosm and Macrocosm.

References

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General

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Haramullah rasulu 'Llah. Alaikum assalam, my kin.
Love is the law, love under will.

Haramullah

Tyagi Nagasiva

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Tyagi@HousEofKAos.Abyss.com (THE KA'AB)

House of Kaos

871 Ironwood Dr.

San Jose, CA 95125-2815

"Behold! the rituals of the old time are black

Let the evil ones be cast away; let the
good ones be purged by the prophet! Then shall
this knowledge go aright." _Liber Al vel Legis_
