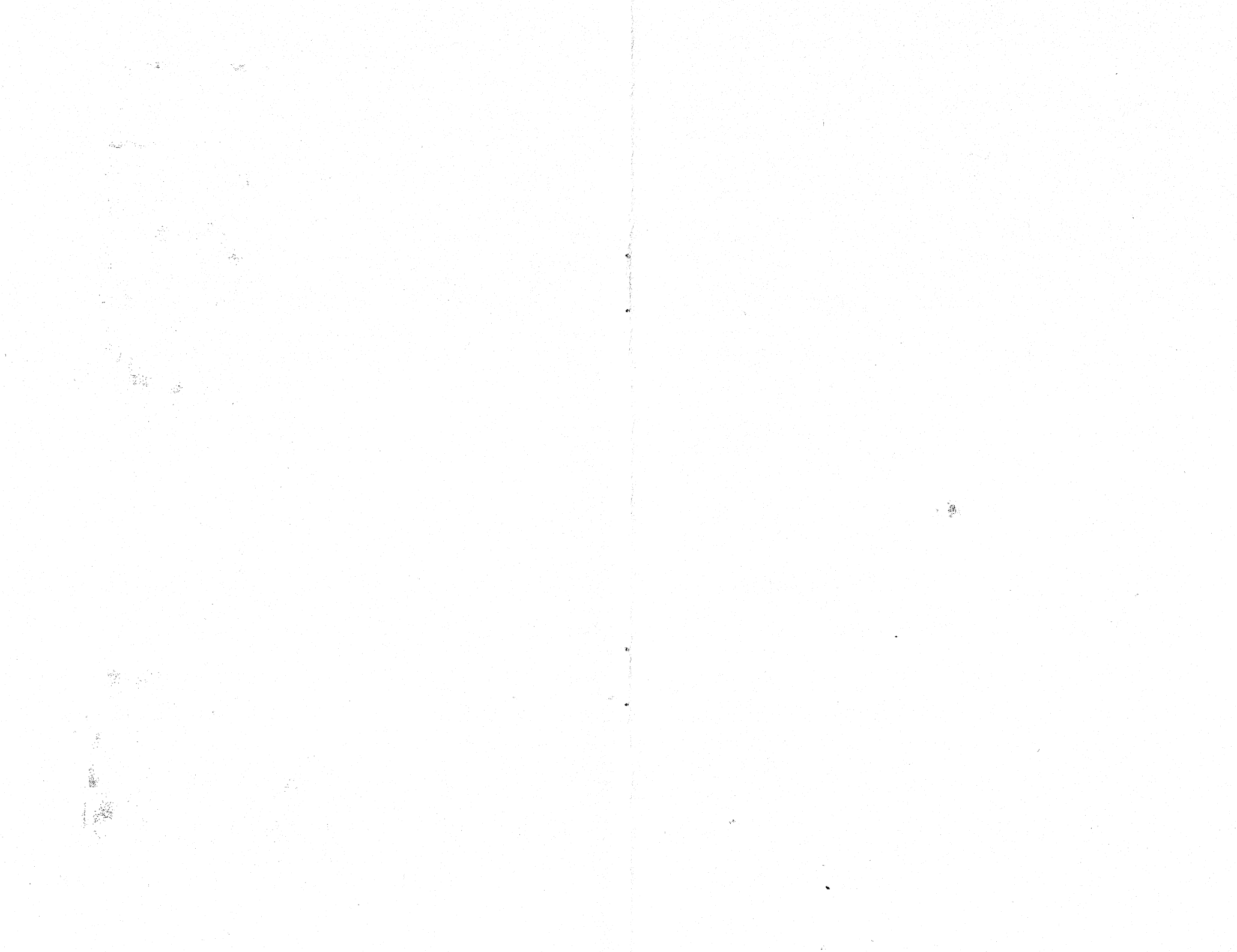


Enemy Combatant Publications

LIBER NIHIL



The Book of Nothing – Magickal Nihilism



can be practiced as often as you can remind yourself to throughout the waking day. By habit, you will hopefully remember to think to perform a reality check while you are dreaming, to cue yourself in hopes of becoming lucid. Another test that I often perform is simply seeing if you can fly off the ground at will—though I admit the excitement from this actually working will often awake you from the dream.

Another check worth mentioning involves looking at a clock! Look at clocks as often as you can think to, then look away, and look back again. During the day, the time will be linear and the clock will have only progressed normally—obviously. In dreams, when you look at a clock for the second time it will virtually always be totally different! Even more screwed-up in dreamland is text, which is also something to be mindful of during the day in terms of consistency. In dreams, if you actually try to read blocks of text like the menu or book held before you, all of the text will be total nonsense! Not just silly sentences, but letters will be spinning and twisting around on the pages, many of them will be made-up symbols or backwards and upside-down. It's pretty interesting and fairly psychedelic, like many other details that are totally out of place that you will notice once you become lucid.

Notes:

- 1) Aleister Crowley – *The Book of the Law* - 1904
- 2) Alan Moore - Interview with Peter Bebergal, *The Believer* - 2013
- 3) Austin Osman Spare – *The Book of Pleasure* - 1913
- 4) Peter Carroll - *Liber Null* - 1987
- 5) Max Stirner – *The Ego and His Own*
- 6) The Creative Nothing, term coined by Max Stirner in the introduction to *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum* (roughly *The Ego and Its own*) - 1844;
Phrase also appears in *Towards the Creative Nothing* by Renzo Novatore - 1924
- 7) Alan Moore interview by Matthew De Abaitus, 1998, harrybravado.com/articles/alan-moore-interview
- 8) (anonymously as “Simon”) – *Simon Necronomicon*, formally titled *The Necronomicon* - 1977

LIBER NIHIL

The Book of Nothing

Magickal Nihilism

Nothing here holds claim to Truth; no path described is the Way; may the heat of insanity overcome the cold calculations of normativity.

of your body falling asleep (much like your foot falling asleep from sitting on it). Resist any sensation of discomfort that tells you to adjust or move, maintaining absolute motionless. Looking into the darkness that your closed eyes creates as though it were a three-dimensional space is helpful, which one can do by imagining a sphere the size of a baseball or so suspended roughly a foot in front of you. Utilize a meditative focus-on-nothingness, or in this case single-mindedness if you are focusing on a sphere—though try to only think of the simple shape and not the metaphysics behind it. Eventually, you should be able to coax your body to sleep while your mind remains awake, which can be quite the rollercoaster ride! The key is to stay on the tracks while you thrust forth into your imagination. With success you may achieve sleep paralysis, from which you can initiate an out-of-body experience (into what some refer to as the astral plane), which you can potentially transition into a lucid-dreaming state without the intermediary step of non-lucid dreaming. The most difficult parts for me involve maintaining fluid transitions between the various stages without allowing the rushes of excitement that seep into your consciousness take control, dissolving into loss of control over the experience. The further you get the harder it gets to hold on, especially as you begin to float from your bed and are thinking “holy shit—gravity is failing me!” Still, it becomes even more difficult when you realize that you are completely immersed within a dream: that you can chose to fly, create castles to explore, climb into famous paintings, or simply look around at what your mind has created!

Another method I am proud to share is my take on the brutally-titled “skullfucking” method, which is fairly popular in lucid-dreaming guides I have read, and entails you imagining your spine sliding up-and-down into the base of your skull, focusing on visualization and imagined tactile sensations. The H.R. Giger (whose paintings I very much admire) aesthetic is not one I am particularly interested in sexualizing deep into my subconscious or what have you, so I prefer the following alternative, which I find contains the same key elements and is richer iconographically as a symbolic connection to consciousness. The Human Ouroboros! I find you can consume yourself by bending whichever way feels (in your mind, that is) natural at the time, in order to swallow your feet, followed by your body, up around the spine and over your chest, around your throat, head, and—having cosmically flipped inside-out—continuing to repeat the same process until you have flipped yourself into the dream-state. Once you notice a change in scenery, perform a reality check!

Reality checks revolve around dream elements that are commonly different from waking details. A simple check involves looking at your own hands. They will appear strange and will bend and distort, or even lack or have extra fingers. Perhaps you have claws or talons! This or other checks

Lucid Dreaming

Lucid dreaming is an amazing medium for magickal activity. Dreams allow for endless potential for exploring desires and situating feelings, confronting fears, stirring up adventures, and realizing a vast array of other indescribable experiences. Dreaming actively is an easy thing to overlook and pass by if you are not naturally inclined to remember them or don't think to engage with them.

Improving dream recall is the first step towards lucid dreaming, or dreaming with the conscious knowledge that you are dreaming. Ultimately, consciously dreaming can lead to actively participating in and formulating your dreamscape. An essential tool is a dream journal and pen which should be kept next to your bed (mine is often actually on my bed) in a place that will cue your memory to think about and record your dreams the night before. There are multiple techniques I have read, been told about, or stumbled upon for enhancing dream recall. One that I find works great is to lie in bed while you are falling asleep and act out (in your mind's eye) your entire day, step-by-step, from start to finish and with as much detail as possible. So for example, you would begin with "I woke up, thought about that dream that ended with me doing such-and-such, wrote in my dream journal for five minutes, threw on my comfy shorts, rushed to the bathroom, brushed my teeth, peed, washed my hands, walked to the kitchen, stopped and talked to my roommate about making breakfast, walked down the street for flour, stole some from the 7-11, set fire to the 7-11", and so forth! Envisioning the actions are fine without having to say it all out to yourself—the point is that you are creating a linear timeline of your waking experience up until the point where you fall asleep, so that when you dream and suddenly are not in a logical position relative to the timeline of your day (e.g. you're suddenly outside mid-day when last you remember you fell asleep in bed last night) you will hopefully become cognizant to that dynamic and realize you are dreaming, becoming lucid. This has given me pretty good success, though it is surprisingly easy to drift off into hazy retrospection as an aside to recalling your day's actions, which can in turn drift into falling asleep into a non-lucid dream state. Stay focused and keep at it—don't expect it to work the first or every time! I find that utilizing this and other tactics I can go from non-involved low-to-zero recall and non-lucid dreaming to becoming lucid within four to five days if I'm vigilant about the process.

After reviewing your day there are multiple techniques you can utilize based on how you're feeling or what comes to mind. Becoming mindful and present within your body, allow your entire body to relax completely and attempt to notice the weightlessness of your extremities, beginning simultaneously from your fingertips, toes, and the tip of your nose, and spreading outwards and inwards until the weightlessness becomes the tingling sensation

The Cemetery of Truth

Science and religion are modern despots of truth—padlocks of thought that deny any shape of the individual which doesn't fit conveniently through the keyhole of their design. Truth is presented with confidence and clarity, locked beyond the gate of knowledge and only the prestigious academic players or righteous clergy members hold the key. What flourishes outside these gates of certainty remains unbound; wild forests of thought, uncharted ideas, hidden pathways, experiences unknown and yet to be reduced to description. Seeds scatter through the wind and grow along unbeaten paths as the rains of the unconscious water and nourish personal thought into a vibrant and dynamic forest—all while the fences of science, religion, and truth contain and organize thought and understanding into a calculated grid of graves and tombs. Knowledge is etched into stone; epitaphs of deadened ideas. Tombs seal away curiosity and suffocate any further cognition, leaving us to mourn over the loss of mysterious wonder and without creative perspectives while hallowed ground holds truth six feet under to rot, untouchable. All that is left is the conquest of new ideas and uncertainties that await meticulous study and classification outside the gates—trophy prizes of truth—to be hunted and mounted, or otherwise killed and buried away. Scientific understanding demands that only the truly knowledgeable are the gravediggers here, though they dig the graves for us all.

The fences of this cemetery of truth are constantly shifting outward to accommodate even newer truths, enclosing more and more, laying barren the wild fruits of collective consciousness. The few unbeaten paths beyond the heavy gates are the unfound paths of wonder. The thought and emotion that sparks when confronted with the end of the marked and paved path, which forces either exploration or the return to the trail which only travels directly towards the grave—these are the routes of the occult—of hidden ways to understand and interact with the world. These paths appear more burdensome, requiring newly beaten roads and undrawn maps, yet the effort is not totally lost; the symphony of the unknown drowns out the dirge of certainty.

Representation Dismantled - Introverted Realms & Extroverted Sorcery

There is no single magickal path; many can be explored, and despite the claims of adepts, messiahs, or the Buddha himself there is no end point of so-called wisdom or enlightenment but that which may serve as an arbitrary and illusionary cap on thought or experience. There is no godhead at the end of the astral plane, but only the elusive void, which is not a vacuum of emptiness but an endless pool of *that which lies beyond* and therefore escapes omniscience by nature.

Consciousness, the mind, or whatever you may wish to call or think of it as, is a looser system of nuts and bolts than most would like to believe. The elasticity of experience is stiffened by the limited expression of the collective consciousness that reigns over the individual. Theology is inherited within rigid family lines, or rejected in favor of beliefs posited by some other socially entrenched form of ideology. It may be socially acceptable, for some, to choose from the list of ideologies at their leisure, though to stray from the list—to deny the available options in favor of internal, idiosyncratic ways of understanding and interaction—is to accept the charge of insanity. It is the denial of a fixed reality or a shared objective plane of existence. In a world where the lunatic is one to be imprisoned to the point of normalization within socially acceptable or societally functional standards, the idiosyncrasies of the sorcerer are often forced to be exhibited intelligently and likely clandestinely. The marginalization and suppression of magickal impulses or tendencies remains strong under the heavy weight of western materialism and the scientific, psychological, and medical practices that spawn from it. If you fall into a group ideology outside the confines of science, you are at least viewed as possessing some sort of common rationality—the key element being the *common* one. Outside of the group experience lie the taboo planes of existence, the loose threads of the social fabric fraying wildly at the end of what is acceptable: schizophrenics, the publicly intoxicated—the type of people who are considered better off receiving formal, institutionalized care. Perhaps the taboo nature of magickal practice explains in part the secretive nature of magickal orders, groups and gatherings. I could imagine creative and explicitly magickal interactions or interventions with various forms of the public, though I would suggest keeping an eye out for the police or mental health professionals, lest we forget the older methods of being drowned or burned at the stake, or the historically successful tactic that destroys dissenting perspectives by force of genocide. Assimilation is the preferred tactic of our times, being an ultimate defeat which acknowledges the total submission of the dispossessed or relinquished outsiders to the absorbing mass—the extermination of the individual.

Sigil Magick

I want to briefly describe the implementation of sigil magick to illustrate an explicit example of magickal way of structuring our experience, though I will leave it to other sources to provide more detailed methods. Pioneered by Austin Osman Spare and elaborated on by many practitioners since, the details of the method applied are not as pertinent as the personal importance that one applies to them. Sigils can be created to carry out specific magickal intent, which you would then carry with you on sort of unconscious but magickal level. For example, say you want to accomplish some particular desire such as “successfully owning a business” or “successfully destroying a business”. A common method is to write the desire out on paper on a single line (no spaces are necessary) then cross out any letters that are repeated, perhaps also removing vowels, or altering the statement to be spelled out phonetically. So the statement “successfully destroying a business” could become “scflydtrngb”. Then re-draw the letters in a connected design (imagine conjoining the shapes of the letters together much as one would connect line-elements when playing the game Hang-Man on paper, while maintaining the abstract nature of the image as opposed to visually embodying it.) Aesthetic liberties can and should be taken! With the design in hand you have created a personal and symbolic interpretation of your intent that re-structures your subconscious (for lack of a better word) interpretation of the intent which can be “charged” and subsequently casted. Abstracting into a symbol, charging and casting allow you to convert the conscious thought into metaphysical intent. A strong method for charging sigils can be practiced during orgasm (to yourself or along with company if it is a group or joint-ritual). Clear your mind of everything when you are climaxing, including sexual desire or interpretation of sensations, to focus solely on the sigil, burning it into your vision. After climaxing, immediately fold the paper containing the sigil to hide it from view, then forget the image. It has been charged! Then to cast it and complete the ritual you would destroy or hide the paper. A similar method of utilizing the moment of orgasm can be implemented to practice the previously mentioned meditative state-of-nothingness or vacuity, which should collapse into thoughts or inspiration produced from within the creative and magickal nothing. I will often stare at an unfinished artwork at this moment to spark creative exploration. Employing further creativity and experimentation, there are countless ways to abstract or restructure our symbolic and subconscious interpretations of reality with similar functions to sigil casting.

the active manipulation of language and symbolic thought. Only through a deeply penetrating skepticism and embracing a nihilistic belief in *nothing* have I found it possible to balance magickal intent while remaining comfortably grounded and clear of the wandering forms of insanity that magick is more than capable of providing. Returning to the virtues of laughter and non-attachment can be crucial for remaining keen against neurotic fixations and manic obsessions. For these reasons also, the immense power to make-believe must always be constructed on non-belief, and remain suspensions of belief rather than entrenchments of such.

So step forth magicians, witches, wizards, and other self-proclaimed sorcerers, and embrace the magickal void, spin your own webs of magick and attempt to reclaim a grip on the reins of experience and understanding. We can create our own mythologies, steer our apparent realities, and aim to dwarf the mythologies and realities falsely presented as truth that loom all around us. Tear free from the ties that bind us to thoughts which are not our own and serve those before and supposedly above us. Life may hide potentials for realizing dreams and visions not provided by the common book of spells, or just as easily and effortlessly devolve even further into witnessing our lives as they continue to be driven and defined by the alienation and compulsory servitude towards series of spectacular abstractions—prescribed, enforced by, and in the interests of the dominate moral authorities.

Towards the magickal nothing!

The path to exploring magick through language is strong and accessible, surrounding us in most of our waking life. Language forms the fabric of our thought and understanding by encompassing all that we can contemplate, enveloping our formulation of perception as the wheels of thought spin uncontrollably, formulating biased or preconceived interpretations of the world around us. The moment the Thing is spoken or written of, i.e. the moment it is touched by language, it becomes trapped within this inescapable web of representation. It defines our notions of the cosmology that describes the universe around us. But these thoughts via language and representation are not yours or mine—they are inhaled like a virus, airborne and infectious. All within its grasp fall ill, quarantined by its nature and separated from those who carry the virus in any of its endless alternate forms. Language is a cornerstone of morality laid by those before us. It is the creator of the ideal which will always subjugate our experience like a hologram of hope hovering high over our heads, leaving its disillusioned subjects beneath it to desperately grasp for what can't even be touched.

Particularly in its chaotic form, magick is a tool that can unhinge the preconceptions laid out before us, to obtain some form of control over the way we interpret reality. All language, art and communication, from blatant displays of propaganda to small conversation or subtle hand gestures can be infused with magickal intent. It is up to you to thrust the magickal stone into the void, as opposed to simply being pelted with them like meteorites from some alien source. Rather than fall prey to the sorcery and mysteries presented by another—be it a priest, scientist, or political propagandist—we may create our own realms of mystery that lie outside of the representative grasp of others. It is within this space of the unknown that magick blooms, within the hidden—the occult.

Aleister Crowley classically defines magick as “the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will.”(1) Author and magician Alan Moore describes this approach to causing change by explaining that “we perceive our own perception, and that perception is to us the entirety of the universe. I believe magic is, on one level, the willful attempt to alter those perceptions.”(2) Much of Peter Carroll's *Liber Null* (a text which refined Austin Osman Spare's practices into what has become known as chaos magick) and other grimoires such as Crowley's *Book Four* stress the importance of disciplining one's thoughts to a point of nothingness—of not-thinking—through meditative and yogic practices.

Austin Osman Spare, inventor of sigil magick, rejects Crowley's school of magick, despite approval by Crowley himself. Opposing the ritualized form that emphasizes a rigid path to an enlightened magickal state, he favors a stark individualist strain of magick that emphasizes the faulty nature of virtues such as belief, morality, and idealized desire. He emphasizes the notion

of the *Neither-Neither* as a virtue-of-negation. Invoking the Neither-Neither highlights the lack of a center or truth by exposing the contradictory claims held by either position and is promoted as a weapon to be utilized against all fronts of knowledge. He rejects the notion of the will as another master to submit to, advocating instead self-love. Notably, the concept of self-love contradicts (as most if not all of Spare's writing so cleverly and intentionally does) both the traditional image of the self as well as the virtue of love, exposing their servile nature. He argues not to seek out and separate the will or the self, but rather "the desire, will, and belief ceasing to exist as separate." (3) He opposes the imposition of a supposed duality within nature and thus denies the separation of the self and the other. Spare elaborates his method of intentionally make-believing as being superior to claims of truth (perhaps justifying practices such as past-life regression), yet was against the empty state of total belief that accepts all possible beliefs as truths—a path to insanity. In contrast to the asceticism of religious monks which emphasizes deep thought and abstinence, Spare promotes the indulgence of desired experiences by advocating a state of vacuity (or thoughtlessness) obtained by exhausting the mind and body by some means or another. As examples he offers the advice that "a personal or traditional means serves equally well, depending on temperament; choose the most pleasant; these should be held in favor, Mantras and Posture, Women and Wine, Tennis, and the playing of Patience, or by walking and concentration on the Sigil, etc., etc." The emptiness of the mind in vacuity provides a trance-like state of gnosis from which magickal action or intent can spring forth, without losing momentum by the friction of conscious thoughts, doubts, beliefs (as mere conditions for disbelief in what is not believed), morality, and so forth.

While describing the steps for performing a banishing ritual, Peter Carroll touches on this state of vacuity by explaining that "the magician aspires to the infinite void by a brief but determined effort to stop thinking." (4) It is the embracing of the void that provides the magickal state of consciousness! He makes a strong point by describing two virtues-of-negation to bear in mind whilst conducting or engaging with magick: Laughter/Laughter, and Non-attachment/Non-disinterest, the second of which he describes as "the magical condition of acting without lust of result", essential—he claims—to executing magical acts. Carroll then goes on to explain how "It is not for us to question the universe's apparent lack of taste. Seek the emotion of laughter at what delights and amuses, seek it in whatever is neutral or meaningless, seek it even in what is horrific and revolting. Though it may be forced at first, one can learn to smile inwardly at all things." I tend to feel quite a strong affinity with his notion of seeking out the humor within the generally unforgiving and existential nature of lived experience... A grin often hides my scowl towards the person who demands a serious tone in any given conversation or situation—if I can't joke around about the generally fucked situation we're in then kill me now, please!

(though deep enough into a magickal trance or upon other scenarios that may not be presently available such a feat may be feasible to accomplish). Alternatively, talks of curses, invocations of invisible yet powerful spirits, conjurations of sinister monsters that lurk in the shadows, spells that promise subjective outcomes such as good fortune—these assertions hold much power over the subject or practitioner. They feed into our routinely conditioned understanding of language as a framework of thought, plucking the same strings that usually organize our minds but hitting different notes. This manipulation of the architecture of the mind is the spark of magick—a repurposing of our metaphysical building blocks into creative and innovative sculptures and structures. The *Necronomicon* provides an easily accessible framework to absorb and integrate into a trance-like shifting of consciousness, with a creative narrative summarized in part on the rear cover's description, describing how

"The accursed volume is filled with myths and rituals that have survived the darkest days of magic and occultism—long-forgotten formulae for evoking incredible things, being, and monsters into physical appearance. Editor Simon overcame huge obstacles during his daring efforts to bring to light this, the most famous, the most potent, and potentially, the most dangerous Black Book known to the Western World."

The book's content brilliantly encompasses the entirety of the lived cosmos, from creation through destruction, placing the reader in the position of the one who controls the fate of the universe via their supposedly fated discovery of this occult text. This enables the willing reader to insert this framework into their believed understanding of the universe in a potent, or even seemingly *omnipotent* manner. Of course the *Necronomicon* is a made-up text, taken from H.P. Lovecraft fiction, but its power as a magickal text reveals the flimsy nature of reality and the ways we interpret and interact with it. As someone who has ventured into this realm, I can say first-hand that these are not mere suggestive influences that change your perspective in the traditional sense of understanding concepts differently—these practices, rituals, fantastic conjurations can actually materialize into lived mystical experiences. With magickal intent, and through developing the practices of willed-consciousness from nothingness, I have moved the moon across the sky, seen waking visions of plagues of locusts and hair turning to snakes, and actively configured my reality in all-encompassing and indescribable ways. Which of these actually occurred outside of my reality? Which of these happened at all? I have indeed experienced intense and seemingly mystical events that have been shared by others alongside me, yet would be written off as hysteria by any given psychiatrist. The tangible and realistic nature of these experiences, seeming no different from what would be deemed ordinary experiences, has only deepened my mistrust in truth or objectivity, and increased my understanding of our power to control our reality through

expressed creatively. This imagery saturates metal genres of music lyrically and visually, along with historical occult references, displaying itself as satire and symbolism—ancestors of Christian allegorical works. There is a point, however, when the symbolism crosses into the realm of magick. A certain *assertion* occurs on behalf of the presenter, where the distinction between what is supposedly real and what is supposedly mythological or surreal is removed. This assertion of make-believe parallels the magick intent promoted within the vacuity of Austin Osman Spare's state of gnosis as a rejection of truth, though promotes the make-believe process in a semi-ritualized manner that takes the audience along for the journey, should they chose to step onto the boat. The lack of explicit instruction for dogmatic adherence to the creative meta-narrative, such as that within the occult-oriented doom metal of Sleep or Electric Wizard, leaves the audience to impress their own position and desires onto the metanarrative. Within these fictions lie bleak, disillusioned perspectives that recount the suffering of burned witches, the abandonment of our destroyed planet, and other examples of storytelling that immerse the listener into a form of gnosis that increases with the multimedia's ability to encapsulate the senses. Film more than any communication devours my senses whole and dominates my conscious will to control my own emotional relationship to the elements at play, affecting my perspective and therefore my actions long after the film has ended.

André Breton writes in his 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism*, "I believe in the future resolution of these two states, seemingly so contradictory, of dream and reality, in a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, so to speak. That is the quest I am about, certain not to find it, but too heedless of death not to weigh a little the joys of its possession."

An excellent example of the blurred line between truth and fiction can be found within the contemporary grimoire known as the *Simon Necronomicon*. (8) Written anonymously and supposedly edited under the pseudonym Simon, it has been openly acknowledged as a hoax by many including its credited illustrator, Khem Set Rising. It is, however, a brilliantly crafted grimoire, blending narrative elements surrounding its supposed author and the origins of its secrets, along with instructions on conjurations and ways to carry out the magickal practices described within it. Like many well-known grimoires (e.g. the Lesser Key of Solomon), it is actually compiled mostly with elements taken from or inspired by past grimoires, ancient mythologies, and religious texts. In a dynamic similar to that of the placebo affect successfully relieving the expected symptoms of an illness, the asserted truths (i.e. make-believe) enter the practitioner's realm of consciousness in the same manner that any other assumed truths would be absorbed. Of course, such assertions would likely be rejected from waking experience if they were extravagantly abstract suggestions, for instance a spell that will instantly turn someone into a frog

The sorcerers that desire and seek to control others are bound to their own lust for blood, vampiric in that their power rests upon the control of others. The more power the other claims in dictating success within an act of magick or otherwise is all the more power removed from the magician or actor. Creative, experimental engagement within the countless realms of interaction and artful and provocative interventions which stir the imagination or inspire with awe embody successful and powerful displays of magick. It is my ever-growing suspicion that what Crowley and others referred to as the Will is embodied in the creative gesture as art, particularly that which is sparked by a mysterious sort of creative aesthetic desire. But these creative and aesthetic desires have become consumed by commercial interests in the form of marketing and consumer-targeting forms of design. The powerful wizards of marketing enchant the masses by appealing to our most unconscious desires with seemingly unrivaled mastery and success, conjuring aesthetic desires (among other things) towards capitalist ends. They too understand the power of language and symbols. Creating various forms of art and developing the capacity to think critically about one's aesthetic desires can be a powerful tool in demystifying the way we understand imagery and desire, and possibly a better awareness of how these things are used to control us. These can be practiced expressed personally, such as with a magickal journal or sketchbook, or as experimental forms of communication such as an art book or zine, or graffiti or publically displayed art or performance, or by approaching and contributing to a form or genre in dialogue with other artists. Art may be obvious and shallow often or at times, but to assume anything under the banner of art lacks some sort of seriousness or is only for the so-called bourgeois-yuppie-hipster-types is to be naïve to its power and capacity. There is much magickal appeal in aesthetics that arouse and intrigue yet evade a so-called logical explanation for their appeal, i.e. *simply finding something to be beautiful, for no reason, and from nowhere*. "Inspiration is always at a void moment," proclaimed Spare. Thus the *creative nothing* which spawns from the individual is also the *magickal nothing*. As Max Stirner describes, "I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything." (6)

Moore draws this connection between art and magick as synonymous with each other—being the creation of something from nothing. From a 1998 interview with Matthew De Abaitus, Moore explains that "a lot of the magic [he does] tends to gravitate toward the practical end, toward something that is tangible. Where you've got a record at the end of it, a performance at the end of it, a painting at the end of it. You've conjured some energy, some idea, some information from somewhere and put it in a tangible form. You conjure something into existence in a literal sense. A rabbit out of a hat. Something out of nothing." (7) Moore is quick to point out that to spell and to cast a spell are no different, and that grimoire and grammar extend from the same root

etymologically. I'm particularly fond of his manner of integrating the practice of magick seamlessly into creative forms of expression, and his utilization of magickal intent within his writing and comics as a method of sorcery. Similarly, I much prefer the cutting spells from the like of wizards such as Bill Hicks or George Carlin, whose humorous attacks serve as potential recipes for potions that may counter the enchantment driven upon us by consumerism!

Many so-called adept practitioners of magick, such as Aleister Crowley and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, believers of Wicca, Kabbalah, the Tarot, Freemasonry, and so forth may possess powerful magickal tools and practices, though their ultimate reliance on dogmatic beliefs or supposedly apparent cosmological truths (such as the importance of any certain symbol such as a pentagram, deity such as a god, goddess, demigod, or demon, or superstition such as the need to use a certain type of stone or crystal) binds them to the limitations created by such realms of belief. Their tactics and methods, however, may still be powerful tools for altering one's experience, and many can be applied practically through methods of chaos magick, which entails a more ad-hoc, flexible approach. But these rituals shouldn't be taken as truths or become essential and mechanized actions. Ritual should be balanced with eternal experimentation and re-evaluation due to the constant and *chaotic* change in conditions. This implies being open to changing any aspect of the act that seems better fitting to the situation in order to suit the individual's desire. Maybe you perform an act similarly because you've noted positive outcomes in the past, but the tendency to slip into a tightly-bound ritual over any given task should be kept in check, as ritual can easily become compulsion, and desire turns to obsession. It's too easy to obsess over which elements you may be performing wrong that seemed to have worked so right in the past, which stars must be out of alignment, and other details which are always changing and beyond control. Hint: the stars are *always* out of alignment; when are we ever in the exact same position or trajectory as the previous time we passed beneath the same stars? Even if you performed the same exact ritual on the same solstice in the same spot every time, everything else is in full motion beyond the position things were in upon the previous solstice—so why would you want to utilize a ritual that basically amounts to using an old key for a new lock? Astrology is devoid of truth, functioning by manipulating the creative interpretation of the subject. It is a sort of sleight-of-hand style of magic that draws your attention towards things you may not have noticed, but behold—have been right before your eyes all along! This function of astrology does highlight an apparent magickal quality of language however, in that language can steer and direct a person's experience on many levels depending on the interpretation of others and the intent of the speaker, actor, author, horoscope-writer, tarot-card illustrator or reader, and so forth. I gravitate towards aesthetically-driven experimental acts, *playful acts*, as opposed to the ritual. The ritual is an attempt to confine the chaotic, and as such should be performed towards open-ended means, or retain aesthetic appeal.

The Bankruptcy of Post-modern Creative Expression

In this social atmosphere, the arts provide a sort of sanctuary for magickal practices within the cloak of creative expression. This terrain is the ocean of symbolic thought contained within writing, visual art, music, poetry, and other creative expression that stirs and ripples the collective realm of thought. There seems to be a dissonance within the arts currently between mysticism in the form of symbolic gestures and appropriated iconography, and a more sincere venture into mysticism—though there are certainly individuals and groups who are exceptions. The superficial bonds between us as consumers and commodified ideas, products, and identities perpetuate the easiest ways such relations can spread, which remain the most washed-out, basic, most easily reproducible tenets. The fine arts are dominated by conceptual works that seek to strip the desire for creative expression from the individual through deconstructive practices, forcing iconographically-driven works that emotively convey the language of imagery into the margins, behind the art object. Even the perhaps once-interesting deconstructive elements of most conceptual works have become predictable and formulaic ways to counter the previous entries, or otherwise mimic previously made works out of the sheer number of so-called artists intelligent enough to implement the algorithm of reactionary negation. Symbolic irony dominates sincerity, separating us from our ideas that are repeatedly re-appropriated and stripped of any former substance. Within the context of occult iconography the reaction seems fixed within counter-cultural aesthetics as a rebellion and reaction against the dominant Christian ethos. It is occult, but not magickal; a fascination rooted in nostalgia for what came before, not a way of living—powers reduced to striking images to be used as fodder for corporate design firms! As mere rebellious counter-cultural iconography lacking the secret ingredient, the *personal* or perhaps shared element relating to experience, the imagery remains hollow like a crudely absorbed TV show. Rebellious imagery is also the ripest for marketers to utilize for expanding current or opening new markets and demographics, and is thus easily recuperated into profit!

Deeper connections with personal forms of mysticism provide a much more intriguing basis for creative expression. Thoughtful and creative inversions and negation grounded in the trajectory of the personal, which is more organic than a straight and rigid line steered opposite of the opponent. Not many competitive fields of the social award apparent victories to the participant who merely runs away from the current champion, placing pure negation more along the lines of pacifism rooted in *ressentiment* than a form of creative attack. Rather than simply communicating a shared affinity for pentagrams, Satan, skeletons, and the macabre (all of which I am fond of aesthetically despite the following critique), there exists an exciting and vastly unexplored plane of metaphysical idiosyncrasies waiting to be