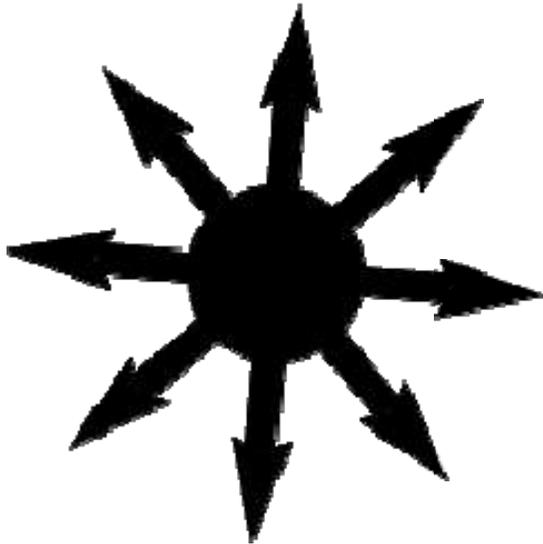


Chaos magic

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The chaosphere is a popular symbol of chaos magic. Many variants exist. For more, see [Symbol of Chaos](#).

Chaos magic, sometimes spelled **chaos magick**, is a school of the [modern magical tradition](#) which emphasizes the [pragmatic](#) use of [belief systems](#) and the creation of new and unorthodox methods.^[1]

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General principles



A chaos magic [ritual](#) that uses [videoconferencing](#).

Although there are a few techniques unique to chaos magic (such as some forms of [sigil magic](#)), chaos magic is often highly individualistic and borrows liberally from other belief systems, due to chaos magic having a central belief that [belief is a tool](#). Some common sources of inspiration include such diverse areas as [science fiction](#), [scientific theories](#), traditional [ceremonial magic](#), [neoshamanism](#), [Eastern philosophy](#), [world religions](#), and individual [experimentation](#). Despite tremendous individual variation, chaos magicians (sometimes called "chaotes"^[2]) often work with chaotic and humorous paradigms, such as the worship of [Hundun](#) from [Taoism](#) or [Eris](#) from [Discordianism](#). Some chaos magicians also use [psychedelic drugs](#) in practices such as chemognosticism.^[3]

Chaos magicians are often seen by other occultists as dangerous or worrisome revolutionaries.^[2]

History

Origins and creation

This magical discipline was first formulated in [West Yorkshire](#), England in the 1970s.^[4] A meeting between [Peter J. Carroll](#) and [Ray Sherwin](#) in Deptford in 1976 has been claimed as the birthplace of chaos magic,^[citation needed] and in 1978 Carroll and Sherwin founded the [Illuminates of Thanateros](#) (IOT),^[4] a chaos magic organization. *Liber Null* (1978) by [Peter J. Carroll](#) further developed this new, experimental perspective on magic. This book and Carroll's *Psychonaut* (1981) remain important sources.

Influences

[Visionary artist](#) and [mystic Austin Osman Spare](#), who was briefly a member of [Aleister Crowley's A∴A∴](#) but later broke with them to work independently,^[5] is largely the source of chaos magical theory and practice. Specifically, Spare developed the use of [sigils](#) and the use of [gnosis](#) to empower these. Most basic sigil work recapitulates Spare's technique, including the construction of a phrase detailing the magical intent, the elimination of duplicate letters, and the artistic recombination of the remaining letters to form the sigil. Although Spare died before chaos magic emerged, many

consider him to be the father of chaos magic because of his repudiation of traditional magical systems in favor of a technique based on gnosis.

Following Spare's death, magicians continued to experiment outside of traditional [magical orders](#). In addition to Spare's work, this experimentation was the result of many factors, including the [counterculture](#) of the 1960s and early 1970s, the wide publication of information on magic by magicians such as [Aleister Crowley](#) and [Israel Regardie](#), the influence of [Discordianism](#) and [Robert Anton Wilson](#), and the popularizing of magic by [Wicca](#).

Early days

The first edition of *Liber Null* does not include the term "chaos magic", but only refers to magic or "the magic art" in general.^[6] Texts from this period consistently claim to state principles universal to magic, as opposed to a new specific style or tradition of magic, and describe their innovations as efforts to rid magic of superstitious and religious ideas. *Psychonaut* uses the label "individual sorcery as taught by the [IOT](#)".^[6]

Chaos came to be part of this movement defined as "the 'thing' responsible for the origin and continued action of events[...]. It could as well be called [God](#) or [Tao](#), but the name Chaos is virtually meaningless and free from the [anthropomorphic](#) ideas of [religion](#)."^[6] The [Symbol of Chaos](#) used to signify it was apparently, but not explicitly, lifted from the fantasy novels of [Michael Moorcock](#). Carroll wrote that the chaotic aspect of this magic aims for "psychological anarchy[...]. The aim is to produce inspiration and enlightenment through disordering our belief structures."^[6]

Proliferation

Although organizations such as the IOT exist, chaos magic in general is among the least organized branches of magic and best described as a loose movement. Individual practitioners extend the existing material by incorporating other concepts, such as [chaos theory](#), [cognitive science](#), [hypnosis](#) and others.

Modern practitioners are experimenting with retro-chronal magic, or changing past events. This is a skill peculiar to chaos magicians, requiring a deep understanding of the nature of memory and belief and is also the proposed mechanism through which all magic works.^[*neutrality is disputed*] It requires the practitioner to maintain a careless memory of how things used to be, with a belief that things are in chaotic flux, an expectation that change will occur and the ability to accept the changes as they occur. [Terry Pratchett](#) describes the process as the "zipper in the trousers of time".

Notable published authors on chaos magic include [John Balance](#), [Peter J. Carroll](#), [Jan Fries](#), [Jaq D. Hawkins](#), [Robert Anton Wilson](#), [Phil Hine](#), [Alan Moore](#), [Grant Morrison](#), [Jozef Karika](#), [Ian Read](#), [Ray Sherwin](#), [Lionel Snell](#) and [Ralph Tegtmeier](#).

Terms and practices within chaos magic

Belief as a tool

Chaos magic theory says that [belief](#) can be an active magical force. It emphasizes flexibility of belief and the ability to consciously choose one's beliefs, hoping to apply belief as a tool rather than seeing it as a relatively unchanging part of one's personality.^[7] Various psychological techniques are employed in order to induce flexibility of belief.^[8] Other chaos magicians suggest that people do not need "belief" to work magic.^[9] Austin Osman Spare asserts in the *Book of Pleasure* and various other works that Will formulates Desire which promulgates Belief.

The gnostic state

A concept introduced by Peter Carroll is the gnostic state, also referred to as [gnosis](#). This is defined as an [altered state of consciousness](#) that in his magic theory is necessary for working most forms of magic.^[6] This is a departure from older concepts which described energies, spirits or symbolic acts as the source of magical powers. The concept has an ancestor in the [Buddhist](#) concept of [Samadhi](#), made popular in western occultism by Aleister Crowley and further explored by [Austin Osman Spare](#).

The gnostic state is achieved when a person's mind is focused on only one point, thought, or goal and all other thoughts are thrust out. Practitioners of chaos magic each develop their own ways of reaching this state. All such methods hinge on the belief that a simple thought or direction experienced during the gnostic state and then forgotten quickly afterwards bypasses the "psychic censor" (faculties averse to the magical manipulation of reality) and is sent to the subconscious, rather than the conscious mind, where it can be enacted through means unknown to the conscious mind. Three main types of gnosis are described:^[3]

- [Inhibitory gnosis](#) is a form of deep [meditation](#) into a [trance](#) state of [mind](#). This type of [gnosis](#) uses slow and regular [breathing](#) techniques, absent thought processes, progressive [muscular](#) relaxation, self-induction and self-[hypnosis](#) techniques. Means employed may also include [fasting](#), [sleeplessness](#), [sensory deprivation](#) and hypnotic or trance inducing drugs.
- [Excitatory gnosis](#) describes a mindlessness reached through intense [arousal](#). It is aimed to be reached through [sexual](#) excitation, intense [emotions](#), [flagellation](#), [dance](#), [drumming](#), [chanting](#), [sensory overload](#), [hyperventilation](#) and the use of disinhibitory or hallucinogenic drugs.
- [Indifferent vacuity](#) was described by [Phil Hine](#) and [Jan Fries](#) as a third method. Here the intended spell is cast parenthetically, so it does not raise much thought to suppress.^[10]

According to this belief, specific [rituals](#), [meditations](#) and other elements of more traditional forms of magic are not to be understood as valuable by themselves, but only as gnosis-inducing techniques.

Magical paradigm shifting

Perhaps the most striking feature of chaos magic is the concept of the magical [paradigm shift](#). Borrowing a term from philosopher [Thomas Samuel Kuhn](#), Carroll made the technique of arbitrarily changing one's [world view](#) (or [paradigm](#)) of magic, a major concept of chaos magic.^[6] An example of a magical paradigm shift is doing a [Lovecraftian rite](#), followed by using a technique from an [Edred Thorsson](#) book in the following ritual. These two magical paradigms are very different, but while the individual is using one, he or she believes in it fully to the extent of ignoring all other (often contradictory) ones.

The shifting of magical [paradigms](#) has since found its way into the magical work of practitioners of many other magical traditions, but chaos magic remains the field where it is most developed. Changing belief systems at will is also sometimes practiced by followers of [Discordianism](#).

Some chaos magicians like to operate in what is sometimes called a meta-paradigm. This is much akin to syncretism but with the consideration that flexibility of belief is a means of personal power and freedom. A more or less syncretic reality tunneling. Even more removed from this, being a post-meta-paradigmatic view, or an abstention from the notion of any view being absolute, compare [Nietzsche's Perspectivism](#).

Emphasis on creative ritualism

Modification and innovation of ritual take place in all magical and religious traditions at varying paces. In the case of chaos magic, the idea that belief systems and gnosis-inducing techniques are interchangeable has led to a particularly wide variety of magical practices evidenced in large and diverse directories of rituals.^{[6][11]} Many authors explicitly encourage readers to invent their own magical style.^{[12][13][14]} The basic chaos magic training manual *Liber MMM*, mandatory for membership in the IOT, requires the original creation of a [banishing ritual](#).^[6]

See also

- [Coil](#)
- [Egregore](#)
- [Epistemological anarchism](#)
- [List of occult terms](#)
- [Psychic TV](#)
- [Reality hacking](#)
- [Splinter Test](#)
- [Thee Majesty](#)
- [Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth](#)
- [Thoughtform](#)
- [Throbbing Gristle](#)

People

- [Jeff Burk](#)
- [William S. Burroughs](#)
- [Peter Christopherson](#)
- [Paul Feyerabend](#)
- [Kenneth Grant](#)
- [Timothy Leary](#)
- [Pat Mills](#)
- [Genesis Breyer P-Orridge](#)
- [Douglas Rushkoff](#)

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