

# Fade to Grey: Chaos and Mediocrity

by Rex Monday

Chaos Magic claims to reflect the present western cultural zeitgeist, which has been given the label of Post-modernism. This in itself sends out some rather telling messages about Chaos Magic. Post-modernism is characterised by an all-pervading 'depthlessness' - beneath the swirl of surface styles and images, there is little of enduring value. There is an increasing cultural obsession with 'instant' fixes, rather than long-term solutions; with a multi-culturalism which ignores or tramples on national identities; with a concern for surface 'image', beneath which everything and everyone fades to gray. Post-modernist theorists have claimed that all sense of 'history' and 'future' have been collapsed, providing material for the imageers and style-gurus to re-invent. Modern society is pervaded with a sense of going nowhere.

Chaos Magic does indeed seem to reflect these trends. The emphasis which some of its exponents have placed on 'belief-shifting', or the misplaced term 'paradigm shift', leads to a situation where practitioners believe that they can adopt a magical system and use it temporarily, with no more than a passing acquaintance to its structures and symbolic forms. This in itself erodes the concept of magical attainment as a result of discipline, study, and will. By treating magical systems as 'paradigms' which can be apparently picked up or dropped at will, Chaos Magic is transferring the very 'depthlessness' of Post-modern culture into the occult milieu. By seemingly offering its adherents access to a wide range of magical systems, it is eroding the power of those systems by encouraging 'magicians' to chop and change with no more regard than they would give to changing TV channels.

The leading exponent of Chaos Magic, Peter J. Carroll, claims that technical competence in magical practice is superior to mysticism. Whilst there is some value in discouraging the excessive mystical speculations to which many occultists are overly prone, the point must be made that technical competence alone is not sufficient. By attempting to reduce magic to what amounts to a set of engineering propositions, Carroll has chosen to ignore the usefulness of Mysticism - that it is primarily an emotional engagement, rooted in the desire to merge oneself with something 'greater', or to write oneself large upon the void. Wilhem Reich recognised the difference between technicalism and emotional appeal when he analysed the appeal of National Socialism over Communism in Weimer Germany. The Communists based their appeal to the populace largely on economic theory, whilst the National Socialists provided a powerful vision, echoing essential values and aspirations. I do think it significant that the exponents of the so-called "Chaos Current" have had little to say about values or aspirations. Surely the whole point of being "on the path" is that one requires something to aim for - a clear vision which, whilst it changes at the edges, serves as a beacon to strive towards.

I draw the reader's attention to the relationship between "mysticism" and "mystery." To be a magician requires a deep relationship with the mysterious - from which all magic springs. It requires a deep drive to "Know" - a knowledge which is formed from one's unique experience and insights, many of which can only be gained through a direct perception of numinosity. It is this knowledge, this inner certainty, grasped like fire from heaven, which spurs the magician

forwards. The desire to be a magician must flame from within.

Whilst Chaos proponents do claim that responsibility for developing a personal belief system rests with the individual, it is my suspicion that, in the majority of cases, this will not encourage the appearance of vital magicians. It takes a great deal of Will to disentangle the beliefs and attitudes which one has accumulated over one's lifespan, and whilst I recognise the value in what Chaos exponents call "deconditioning", there does seem to be an implicit idea in Chaos Magic theory that all cultural conditioning is suspect, which of course is not necessarily the case. It is even greater an act of Will to stick up for one's beliefs in an age of mediocrity and political correctness, where to show pride in one's heritage, race or culture is to attract the hue and cry of liberals and socialists who, in their obsession with equality, ignore the very real differences which drive societies and in which personal identity is rooted.

Chaos Magic exponents have also done much to expound the idea of a multiplicity of selves which somehow give rise to a sense of individual identity. This again, is very Post-modern concept, reflecting the cultural obsession with schizoid fragmentation. I cannot see how the claim to be 'many selves' can be seen to be superior to the feeling of being a single person, capable of doing many things. As it is, this multiple self concept seems to provide a neat get-out clause for those who wish to avoid responsibility for their own failures and dysfunctions. The Chaos Magic obsession with reductionism, like all such obsessions, leads to absurdity.

Whilst Carroll has demonstrated (in Liber Null) that the practical basis of magic can be distinguished from the philosophies that surround (and in some cases, limit) them, he has ignored the emotional thrust that engagement in a magical philosophy gives. His comment to the effect that beliefs are untrue may well be the case in the general sense, but this is only important for those who seek refuge in religiosity. If a magician is only paying lip service to a belief, and does not regard it as a basic fact of his existence, this amounts to little more than intellectual masturbation. It is the ability to make beliefs into personal truths which distinguishes the magician from the masses. If a would-be magician cannot grasp the concept that beliefs should be worth sacrificing one's life for; worth dying for, even, then one's commitment will always be somewhat limited. The pursuit of magical prowess requires this depth of purpose, else how can it carry you through the challenges that your oath to yourself compels you to face? Thus I declare myself a brother of Satan. This is not a mere surface belief, but a gut-level feeling which belies all intellectual equivocation.

Magic, as I pointed out in a recent letter to Chaos International, is about the "Triumph of the Will." By this I mean that by virtue of developing the will, the magician seeks to overcome the petty weakness of the mass of humanity. The magician stands alone in the crowd, taking joy and strength in his assertion of power. He exudes his darkness as he would wear a cloak. To do so requires Will; it requires a strength, and joy of purpose almost unknown in this present era. No matter how much so-called 'paradigm-shifting' one does, it is useless if one does not develop the strength to believe in one's own inherent power. In an age where commitment to any one philosophy or doctrine is devalued, surely it would be more revolutionary to adhere to an empowering personal philosophy as an act of defiant will, rather than accede to the mediocrity of surface style and transient image?

This is the essential nature of the Left-Hand Path, that it is for individuals whose strength of belief, value and vision enables them to pursue their aims with a single-mindedness of purpose that overcomes any barrier or obstacle. This requires the expression of one's beliefs to the bitter end, without making compromise or acceding to the equivocating of lesser beings. Chaos Magic exponents seem to be advocating a "go with the flow" mentality which has always been a sop to peasants, thralls and slaves. They offer no way out of the Postmodern cultural decay, only total immersion in the mirage. When, as is inevitable, reaction to the current social stasis engenders rapid cultural change, I suspect that Chaos Magic will be left floundering.

Many moderns have made a fundamental mistake concerning the nature of Satanic magic. In no way does it resemble a 'system' in the way that occultists are increasingly encouraged to approach magic. Satanism begins and ends with the primacy of the Self against the world. The task of the Satanist is to become "his very own self". It is not enough, and will never be enough, to simply accrue a 'satanic image' vicariously. It must arise naturally, or not at all. Invariably, it is a decision which is taken at a fairly early stage in life, and which endures beyond all ephemeral changes.