

WORDS AND ACTS

AT THE END of this journey through ancient magic, two questions that have long intrigued historians of magic have been regularly brought up without being fully clarified. What is the nature of magic ritual, and, more generally, what makes magic seem something quite specific? It is time to address these questions—not so much in order to propound a definitive theory than to bring up some suggestions for future debate.

SYMPATHEIA

One of the most prominent features of magic ritual, which has been stressed already by ancient observers like Theocritus, is what is still called out of convention, laziness, or for want of anything better “sympathetic” magic. That term, made familiar by Frazer’s highly influential scholarly work, is much older than this work.¹ As a good Hellenist, Frazer took it from the Greek Stoics, who explained the functioning of astrology by *sympáttheia*, that is, an intimate orchestration that connects the whole

cosmos and the planets to our everyday life. But it is particularly the alchemists and magicians of the imperial epoch who thus explain the "relationships established . . . between the fires of the sky and the occult forces that fill with attractions and repulsions the most distant kingdoms of nature."² Or, to cite Plotinus, that magician's enemy who had an intimate knowledge of theurgy: "Magical actions, how does one explain them? Certainly by sympathy, because there exists both harmony between similar things and repulsion between dissimilar ones, and because there exist numerous forces which are focussed unto one living being. Many things are being attracted and enchanted, although no one sets them in motion: true magic, thus, is the love there is in the cosmos and its opposite, the hate."³ It is thus a term already considered technical in the occult arts of later antiquity that Frazer took up and adapted for his own purposes. He used it to describe the cosmology of "primitive man" whose "magical thinking" started with the same assumption that there is a sympathetic cohesion among things; this thesis forms the basic supposition for Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and his *"La mentalité primitive"* (1925). Since the notion of "primitive thinking" has melted away like snow in sunlight, sympathy also will have to disappear. An explanation is still needed, however, for the ritualistic facts to which it referred. As Theocritus could have taught us, the so-called "sympathetic" rites constituted, for the contemporary observer, a prominent feature of ancient magic.

Among the explanations of the moderns, one of the most recent ones that have seemed appealing is the one given by the ethnologist Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah. Tambiah, who has always been concerned with problems of ritual, introduced into the contemporary debate about the nature and function of ritual what he called the dimension of "performativity."⁴ The term has been coined in general linguistics: here, it denotes a special aspect of verbal use in which the verb does not describe an

action (as in "the witness swears an oath") but where action and linguistic utterance coincide (as when I am a witness taking an oath with the words "I swear to God"); it was Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his critical remarks on Frazer, who would introduce the concept into linguistics.⁵ Any rite has theatrical aspects, and what matters to the participants is the way in which they take part in the rite: this interest in the theatrical aspects brings Tambiah (who in other domains sometimes seems rather an heir of Frazer) closer to Victor Turner.⁶ Tambiah has written a fascinating article on the magic of words in which he draws the attention of ethnologists to the set of ritualistic acts and words that constitute the magical rite.⁷ He also has reexamined the Frazerian terminology and established a distinction between "empirical analogy" and "persuasive analogy." The former characterizes the science used to predict the future, whereas magic has the aim of influencing future events.⁸ Although this reasoning is indisputably appealing, it must be rethought in relation to antiquity.

The texts of the *defixiones* recorded both on the lead tablets and in the papyri are prayers, ritualistic utterances to which writing gives an unalterable permanence. At the same time that the spell was engraved on lead, it was spoken. The simple sentence "I bind so and so (to Persephone, and so on)," or "Persephone, bind so and so in order that he be unable to appear in court," or the *similia similibus* formula "that so and so be also twisted as this writing, as cold, as useless as this lead," are all three oral rites that both accompany and describe the ritual action.

There is a set of rites that should be compared, although they, according to general opinion, have nothing to do with magic.⁹ When the people of Cyrene founded their city, they took an oath never to return to Thera, from which they had emigrated. Later, under unstable political conditions, they repeated this

oath; an inscription from the fourth century B.C. has preserved it for us. This inscription thus described the central rite: "After making figures of wax, they burned them, uttering together an oath and performing together a sacrifice, men, women, boys, and girls: 'Let him who breaks this oath and commits contrary acts, let him melt and be liquefied like these figures, him and his descendants and his fortune.'"¹⁰ Livy tells how the Romans concluded an alliance (*foedus*). They sacrificed a pig, and in killing it with a silex blade, the priest made the following vow: "Let him who breaks the alliance be killed like this pig."¹¹ These are only two examples of the same conception of the oath. One could easily cite other cases from Greece, Rome, or other cultures—especially from the Near East—that attest to the same ritualistic behavior.

In all cases, a solemn oath is taken. The oath is always conceived as an imprecation against the one who utters it and against his entire group. This imprecation is always accompanied by a rite whose meaning is clarified by the accompanying words: what happens to the object of the ritual act will happen to him who breaks the oath. It would be tempting to speak of a rite directed against an object that was the substitute for a person. This was done for Cyrene: the manikins (*kolossoi*) are unmistakable substitutes for the Cyreneans.¹² But the presence of the pig for the Romans or of the ewe in another oath, in Homer's *Iliad* III, cannot be explained in this way, not to mention the onion in a cathartic Hittite ritual in which one peels an onion while saying the following words: "Let the offender be dismembered in this way."¹³ In fact, it is not the object manipulated by the rite that ought to hold our attention, but the action itself: one kills, one dismembers, one melts, and one liquefies. Aside from the sacrificial animals, the object is very often chosen in function of the action performed on it. The onion with its detachable layers can be easily peeled, and wax melts at a low temperature; in

another rite of the Cyreneans, in the course of which the manikins are deposited in the countryside, they are made of unburnt clay so that they will not last very long, as the ritual expects.¹⁴

These acts, moreover, do not all have the same significance. There are those where the jump from the signifier (the rite) to the signified (the future transgression) is easily made: whoever breaks the treaty, will be annihilated by the wrath of the gods, as the pig is killed by the priest; the Roman *foedus*-ritual could almost be described as allegorical. There are other rites for which the translation is not as simple, and that are metaphorical expressions, like "melt" and "liquefy" in the rite of the Cyreneans. It is a matter, moreover, of metaphors that are not common, even in indigenous use. It is the context that gives them all their semantic value.

In all these cases, someone could, as was done in other oaths, confine himself or herself to speaking these words: "Let any person who breaks this oath be struck by such and such a calamity—himself, his descendants, all his house and his fortune." But we see what the ritual act that accompanies these words can bring. The message of the rite takes on quite a different intensity; the recipients of this message receive it through other codes than just the linguistic one. They must first decipher the metaphor, and, above all, they see, hear, and feel the figurines melt and the pig die. They receive an overdetermined message, accompanied by redundancies that have an emotional character. The result is perfectly clear: the message will be better committed to memory.

It is necessary to be more precise about what is meant by persuasive analogy. Persuasion requires a recipient. Someone always persuades someone else, and in our rites it is the group that persuades itself. The rite is an act of communication, which must be understood like other acts of communication. As always

in the art of persuasion, a person plays on different registers to get the message across. It is enough to read Quintilian to measure the complexity reached by the different ways of signifying.

The model of ritual communication follows the model of any communication: there are senders, receivers, and a message. Usually, the senders of the ritual message are also its agents, whereas the recipient is the social group that attends the ritual, and the message is always important for the group. In this scheme of communication, ancient magic assumes a slightly aberrant form: the group is missing. There is no doubt about this for the papyri. Only the sorcerer performs the rite, alone, and there is never a group; the very rare cases in which the sorcerer allows a colleague to participate do not contradict this fact, so rare are they. The situation may be somewhat less clear in the Attic binding spells from the classical era, but we still have the impression, even though the documentation on this point is incomplete, that the *defigens* acts alone. The magic rite thus seems to short-circuit the communication: the sender and the recipient are identical. The corollary would be that the message concerns only the sorcerer and is of importance only for the sorcerer. These reflections are still pertinent even if it is admitted that the differences are exaggerated for the sake of the argument. It might just be that in the communal rite too, there is not always a very clear distinction between the sender and the recipient, for the rite does not separate as clearly those who are acting from those who are observing. Ovid's *spectandum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut ipsae* would be rather the rule of any communal ritual. But the essential fact remains: the message of the communal ritual concerns everyone, agents and onlookers, whereas the message of the magic ritual concerns only the isolated agent who is the sorcerer.

Hence arise all the psychological explanations that follow a similar pattern. The magician is someone who speaks only to and of himself and herself, an eternal narcissus. When the magician pierces the lamella of lead and says, "I bind down, I nail down all these persons," this is not a demonstration meant for others, but a satisfaction, a personal "abreaction." The difficulties connected with this conception have already been mentioned: a magic ritual is anything but spontaneous. Even worse, the psychological approach construes magical acts as products of mental degeneration; from there comes the view that magic is debased religion, where the sacrifice of the noble bull has degenerated into the immolation of a common cat.¹⁵ This theory, to say the least, misunderstands differences in structure for historical developments. Magic does not historically follow after religion, neither is it earlier: religion contains magic, as one specific religious form.

We must not disregard another difference between the rites of oaths and these magic *similia similibus*. The case just cited—"I nail down all these people"—is rather close to the situation of the oath, witness the Roman *foedus* ceremony, except that here the comparison is not made explicit and the metaphor "to nail" rests unexplained; but its sense is clear. More important, the same semantic structures in the magic rites and in those oaths that are self-imprecations virtually never coincide. Whereas the communal imprecations emphasize action, the magic rites of the *similia similibus* kind concentrate on an object and its quality: "Let so-and-so be like the dead, as is this leaf . . ." The lone exception is the rites brought onstage by Theocritus, who puts the accent on the action: "Let Delphis burn, melt, turn in the same way as such-and-such an object." It is this difference that confirms the importance of differentiating the communicative situation. In literature, magic is addressed, like the oath, to a human group,

to the public of the listeners and readers who follow the literary rite. That is why its dramatic structure corresponds to that of the oath and not to that of the magic rite.

This communicative situation has its own effects. In all the cases considered here, the message uttered and brought on the scene does not record a fact, as do the nuptial or funerary rites that announce and perform a change of status, but is a means for influencing the course of future events. Hence the important problem: how can the words and acts be made to remain living and efficacious after the rite? For the oath, the thing is easy. All the participants in the oath of Cyrene saw the manikins melt, and they heard or uttered together the formula of comparison that accompanied the ritual and by which they condemned themselves in the case of a transgression. All this will remain in everyone's memory, and as the rite is repeated, each generation commits itself anew and preserves the memory. It is only in the fourth century that people began to distrust the collective memory and put the rite in writing; it is telling that this event happened in the century of Plato, who, in his *Phaedrus*, made this decline of memory manifest. The situation of the magician is much more precarious. When confronted with the crisis that he too wishes to resolve, by influencing the course of events, he has only his own memory to keep alive the words and also the perpetuity of the objects that he manipulates. That is why he does not melt the figurine of wax but ties it up, saying, "I bind so-and-so"; by doing so, he makes a kind of icon, a lasting condensation of his words, and he hides it in a place protected from the (accidental or voluntary) destructive effects of people. As the magician inclines toward the powers from below, it is in a tomb, in a sanctuary of the internal divinities, or, later, in the sea, a river, a well that he is going to hide them. Or the magician inscribes the words on a lamella of metal, a tablet of wax, or a sheet of papyrus, on which he "freezes" his words into

a text that preserves the memory of the ritual act. Again, it is not by chance that these written rituals appear at about the same time as the so-called Orphic gold leaves that perpetuate ritual instructions for the afterlife.¹⁶ But the writing does not simply perpetuate the ritual by saying, "I bind so-and-so." The *similia-similibus* formula makes explicit what the sorcerer wishes, and does so by using again things that guarantee duration: "Let so-and-so be like this lamella of lead." Then the magician pierces the tablet with a nail of which the holes remain, and often even the nail (which disappeared only because iron disintegrates in the soil much faster than lead): "I bind such-and-such a person." This is not a metaphor for "I kill this person," but for "I immobilize this person," for the nail is not a weapon, but a means for making things fast. The sorcerer even uses the dead person as a durable sign whose tomb served as a hiding place. There are rare indications of this intention of the sorcerer in the Attic formula that does not make use of the term "I bind," but of "I register," a quasi-juridical formula: the victim's name is deposited with the gods from below. Some centuries later, a comparable concept is found in the Cypriot binding spells in which the binding spell is a "deposit" (*parathêkē*), an object left with the demons who, in their tombs, are prayed to in order to transmit it to the infernal divinities.¹⁷

Seen from this perspective, the *similia similibus* rites as well as the existence of these texts of *defixiones* are a consequence of the isolation in which the magician acts, an isolation that seems to constitute the fundamental difference between the rites of magic and those of the civic religion.

These formulas draw our attention for another reason. In the context of communication established by the ritual, there exists, in addition to the horizontal axis connecting the human interlocutors, the vertical axis of the relationship established between humans and the gods, those on high or down below. Even if we

admit that the communication conveying messages functions only at the horizontal level and that the gods are only symbolic objects making it possible for the communication to exist, it is still no less true that in the fiction of the ritual—theatrical, if you will—action there is another, vertical communicative axis. Humans address the gods through the intermediary of prayers and sacrifices, through the smoke that rises, and through the blood that flows, and we expect a certain number of reactions from the potential recipients of the rite. First, we expect immediate signs that the sacrifice has been accepted or rejected, perceived through the inspection of the entrails and the observation of the flame; then we expect signs that the gods will grant the wishes for the future, will grant the help and benevolence prayed for. This vertical communication is played out differently from the horizontal one and is conscious and carefully staged by the human actors: it is this communication that is spoken about by the indigenous people. The chance observer from outside, uninformed about theology and mythology, perceives only the interaction of the horizontal ritual messages whose signifiers are determined by an ancestral cultural tradition.

When we consider the situation of the magician, who is both the sender and the lone recipient of the ritual message, we understand how in such a situation the vertical axis, which leads to the gods and to the demons, can assume some importance, for it is indeed necessary, after all, to have interlocutors. That is precisely what the writers of the imperial era, Apuleius and Iamblichus, confirm for us. Magic is the search for a close communication with and participation in the divine sphere—the *communio loquendi cum dis* of Apuleius or the *methousía tôn theôn* of Iamblichus: both insist on the dialogue that is established between the magician and the gods.¹⁸

A theoretical consequence of this construction is that the separation between the agent practicing magic and the external

observer is not as clear as the theory would have it. By a pirouette à la Magritte, the two spaces enter into communication.

THE MAGICIAN'S PRAYER

While revealing his difficulties, the orator Libanius makes a curious remark. He resisted his friends who implored him to counteract ritually the magic of his enemies and was content to offer prayers. There thus were countermeasures, presumably magic rites, about which, however, the orator had scruples, probably religious ones. We glimpse the existence of a contrast between the different forms of ritualistic behavior; and from this perspective, it appears that the prayer constitutes the most religious and the least reprehensible means, the furthest from superstition, which Libanius, in an enlightened spirit, wished to avoid. He is not at all alone: some centuries earlier, Plutarch had attacked magic as part of superstition and excessive dread of the gods.¹⁹

Perfectly comparable reactions are found in the modern history of research on the magic papyri. The papyri contain a certain number of hexametric hymns that are interesting documents for imperial religious poetry that otherwise is badly attested to and not well-known, thus accounting for the scholarly interest in them since Albrecht Dieterich.²⁰ Nonetheless, for Dieterich's generation, these hymns seemed to have such a "religious" color that most contemporary scholars, from Dieterich to Martin Nilsson—and especially Richard Reitzenstein—were convinced that these hymns were written in and for a context that was not magical, but religious, and that the magicians appropriated them, satisfied to insert in them those primitive elements that are the magic words.²¹ For these scholars, it was inconceivable that magicians, deeply involved in a world

of superstition and barbarism, were capable of conceiving documents that give such impressive evidence of a spiritualized religiosity. This attitude derives from the Frazerian dogma, according to which the magician is distinguished from the religious person by the lack of humble and disinterested submission to the divine will, and by the magician's will to force and constrain the divinity. This position still has its partisans.²²

We find the same preoccupation in the famous thesis of Dieterich, that the magicians transformed and introduced into their world a whole liturgy of mysteries, the so-called "Liturgy of Mithras." It was obvious that this text expresses in its prayers a religious search for which the Greco-Egyptian sorcerers were denied credit. Dieterich thus preserved the Frazerian dichotomy without giving up the attempt to find traces of the true religion in the magicians. But we should not be surprised to read in Father Festugière, another defender of religion against magic, that the "Mithras Liturgy" was not a text of mysteries, but a simple text of Osirian magic ornamented by a bit of hermetism.²³ This point of view is inscribed in the argumentation of Festugière, who combats all those who, like Reitzenstein or Nilsson, claimed to find in the papyri vestiges of "true" religion; in his eyes, the papyri contain nothing other than magic, and to recognize in them the slightest trace of religiosity smacks of delusion. We can understand his position. For Father Festugière, who has lived in a system that still is acquainted with and sometimes even practices exorcism, the struggle against magic is a much more tangible reality than for his Protestant German colleagues.

It must be repeated that there is no doubt that the sorcerers uttered prayers. Nor did the ancients doubt it. In Lucan, the witch Erictho formulates a prayer that could belong to a textbook on religion; more important is that Plato already speaks of the "prayers" (*eukhaí*) as well as of the "incantations" (*epōidai*) uttered by the begging priests and seers. What is more, prayers

as formally correct as that of Erictho are found on the curse tablets as well as in the papyri. Although here the term currently used for this oral rite is *lógos*, "speech," the attestations to "prayers" and "to pray" are not lacking.²⁴ The human actors are well aware of these religious stances, and they often enough make use of formula attested in prayers as well—as in a spell from the first half of the first century B.C., which was found in Sevilla and which ends with a current formula from religious dedications: "When you do it, then I will fulfill my promise to you according to your merits," *si faciatis, votum quod facio solvam vestris meritis*.²⁵

One example will suffice to introduce us to the specific problems posed by the magic prayer; it is a spell from the third century A.D. found in a Cypriot tomb.²⁶ The spell begins with the invocation to the dead formulated in more or less perfect hexameters: "Demons who live on earth and demons who are the fathers of fathers and mothers, similar to men, who reside and have their seat here, who previously received in your heart, a soul full of pain . . ." The prayer is thus more and more precisely addressed to the dead who have become demons: the spell proceeds from all the dead to those of the cemetery in question and finally to those who feel the weight of their death more than the others, those who died before their time.

Next comes not the *pars epica*, but the third part of the canonical prayer, the *preces*, a perfectly legitimate and functional inversion of the traditional formula. To stress the urgency of the prayer, the supplicant first omits the long narrative part: "Receive the animosity and anger that Ariston has against me, Soteirianos, also called Limbaros, take away his energy and his strength, make him cold, mute, and breathless, cold toward me, Soteirianos, also called Limbaros." The coldness being sought is not that of death, but the coldness accompanying the disappearance of the "hot" anger against the performer of the spell, a judiciary *defixion*.

What follows constitutes the so-called *pars epica* intended to show the credit of the person who prays: "I entreat you in the name of the great gods . . ." Next follow magic words, then new *preces*, which concern another victim and repeat the preceding structure. In our example, the *pars epica* is thus constituted of magic words alone instead of containing that reference to the earlier sacrifices that we encountered in Erictho, or that reminder of the help previously furnished by the personal goddess as she appears in the famous prayer of Sappho.²⁷ An identical process is sometimes found in the papyri, and we have already referred to it. The magic words are the secret, barbarous names of the divinity, and the sorcerer demonstrates by the knowledge that he has of them that he is worthy of receiving divine assistance. The most instructive case is found in a prayer of the *Charm of Astrampsychus*, whose objective is to obtain success and happiness. The prayer begins with a beautiful invocation: "Come to me, Lord Hermes, like babies in the belly of their mother, come to me, you who collect the food of the gods and men, come to me, Lord Hermes, to the so-and-so." Next comes the expression of the wish: "Grant me charm, food, victory, happiness, sexual attractiveness, beauty of face, strength regarding all women and all men." Instead of the *pars epica*, there is another list, each section of which is introduced by "I also know your forms, your wood, your identity, your origin, your homeland"; and, at the end, after the repetition of the invocation and of the wish, comes the affirmation: "I also know your barbarous names."²⁸

This brings us to a theme already mentioned. The use of "foreign names" in magic goes back to the classical era, and it is Euripides who first mentions this phenomenon. Iphigenia, preparing the sacrifice of Orestes, "shouted barbarous words, as a true witch": it is a supreme irony to put this in the mouth of an indigenous messenger of the Taurians.²⁹ Much later, there were

to be some theoretical reflections. The skeptical Pliny proposes a psychological explanation: "It is not easy to tell whether foreign and unpronounceable words take away belief in magic, or rather the unexpected Latin ones which sound ridiculous, because one always expects something which is immense and which is able to influence the gods or rather to give them orders."³⁰ In Iamblichus, the neo-Platonist philosopher, the theory is more serious and more detailed; he speaks of these names in the seventh book of his treatise on *The Mysteries of Egypt*, a philosophical defense of magic. In reality, they are not barbarian names, even less of names with no meaning, as his interlocutor has it, but the Assyrian and especially Egyptian names of gods. The gods love to be called by these names because they are "co-natural" to them: they are the most ancient names that were preserved without change; what is perpetual and unchangeable is appropriate to the nature of the gods, which is itself eternal and immutable. It is also necessary to read the passage that follows. "If it was a convention that decided the establishment of the names/words [the Greek *onómata* has both meanings], one could readily use some for others. But if these names/words depend on the nature of beings, those that come closer to it are more agreeable to the gods. Which shows how right it is to prefer the language of the sacred peoples to the languages of other men, for in translation the names/words do not perfectly preserve the same meaning."³¹

This passage recalls a text by Origen, mentioned already much earlier. Like Origen, the neo-Platonist philosopher is opposed to the common practice of *interpretatio graeca* (or *latina*) of divine names, for he believes in the existence of nonarbitrary relations between signifier and signified, name and divinity. That does not mean that any historical language is the language of the gods; Iamblichus states, "So leave aside the ideas that depart from the truth. As if the god invoked was Egyptian or spoke

that language! Rather, say: because the Egyptians were the first to receive the prerogative of communication with the gods, the latter love to be invoked according to the rules of this people. This has nothing to do with the contrivances of sorcerers."³² Because the gods have an absolute existence, one cannot speak of the "gods of the Egyptians" or of the "gods of the Greeks," and because they are beyond human nature, they do not speak a human language. The magicians would agree to this; the final sentence underscores that once again Iamblichus is writing within the framework of an apology of magic.

The use of a special, supposedly ancient, language for the invocations is not so rare in magic. Tambiah has collected examples concerning India in which a rather complex system is used, employing several levels of ancient languages for the invocations to the gods.³³ More simply, the use of Coptic in Greek, of Greek in Latin spells, like that of Latin in Reformation England, could provoke an accusation of magic.³⁴ The Greco-Egyptian papyri write only of "barbarian, foreign names," while the learned Iamblichus is in a position to specify that the names are Egyptian, and the Christian Jerome suggested a Jewish origin (both theories are partly correct).³⁵ Structurally, the use of these foreign languages once again consists in a reversal of regular linguistic behavior, of the ordinary prayer formulated in a language understood by everyone; the not very rare practice of writing a Latin spell in Greek letters comes rather close.³⁶

There is still something else. In the ordinary "religious" prayer, it is the ritual act that legitimates the asking for divine favor: to emphasize one's own merits in order to commit the divinity to help, a person mentions the sacrifices or dedications that the person has already offered. In the magic of the papyri, it is knowledge that makes possible communication with the gods. The person who knows the intimate details of divine nature thereby demonstrates that he or she is close to the god and

commits the god to react favorably. Magic thus has a well-defined theological and epistemological aspect. It could be thought that this is a late, neo-Platonic or gnostic development, but the author of the book *On the Sacred Disease* has already noted that the ritual healer was laying claim to a higher knowledge. In this respect, the gap between magic and civic religion exists already in the fifth century B.C. On the other hand, this theology makes magic close to the mystery cults; the initiated also used a higher knowledge to gain access to the divinity. A case in point, again, are the so-called Orphic gold leaves, which in fact belong to the Bacchic mysteries; the special fate, the eschatological happiness promised to initiates, depends on the right answer that they could give to the infernal guardians of the Lake of Memory or to Persephone and her court. Another feature shared by magic and mysteries is the quest for memory. The magicians seek to acquire a good memory so as not to forget what the god or the demon reveals to them in a dream, while for the initiate it is essential not to forget the instructions received during the initiation in order to be able to conduct oneself properly in the world beyond.

This circumstance explains why terminology specific to the mysteries is so often found in the papyri. It is not just a superficial embellishment nor even a relic of the older use of these same texts in mystery rites, nor is it only the result of a structural similarity between the initiation of the magician and the initiation of the follower of a mystery group. The spirituality of the magicians is akin to the spirituality of the followers of the mysteries, in that both take part in this quest for the divine that is characteristic of imperial antiquity.

We thus encounter, and not just in the hexametric hymns, the expression of what to a Frazerian is the sole prerogative of religion, the simple submission under God's wish and will. It is not rare that the god is called "Lord" (*kúrios*), which expresses

some hierarchical subordination. The corollary, the fact that someone describes oneself as a slave, is not absent either: "Lord gods, give me an oracle on such-and-such a business this very night, during the coming hours. I pray to you with all my heart, I implore you, I your servant whom you have placed on the throne," an expression that once again refers us to the mysteries, this time those of Corybants and of their rite of enthronement.³⁷ The sorcerer again calls attention to himself as an initiate in order to benefit from the intimate relationship between the gods and the initiates.

This intimacy between the god and the magician finds other, more direct expressions as well, such as in a passage from the *Charm of Astrampsychus*: "Come to me, Lord Hermes, as babies do to the womb of women"; or in the "rite of encounter," the *sústasis*, with Helios where the rite culminates in the common meal of man and god, both sitting "face to face"; we have also read the prayer in the papyrus Mimaut: "Come close to me with a kindly face, on a bed that you yourself have chosen . . . I pray to you, Lord, accept my prayers"—another *sústasis* where god and human meet for a common meal.³⁸

We therefore cannot separate the hymns from the rest of the corpus of magical papyri, thus creating a simplistic dichotomy between magic and religion. Sentiments of this kind are found in prayers in prose as well as in the metrical hymns. The distinctions—if distinctions there are—obey other laws.

MAGIC AND COERCION

A great number of binding spells from the imperial period address the god with the formula "I entreat you." This time, it is not a matter of convincing the gods through a higher knowledge; the magician coerces them simply through an invocation. This seems to confirm a modern opinion that sees coercion of

superhuman beings as the defining property of magic. In the words of a contemporary scholar, "The magician does not implore the gods, he forces them; he has no intention to obey the gods or to submit himself on his knees and with a guileless heart." Is this correct, and where does this concept, which today appears to be firmly linked to the name of James G. Frazer, have its origin?³⁹ The question has, up to now, been touched on here and there in this book, but never properly discussed.

Already in the papyri, we find spells, which their authors called "spells that constrain," *epánankoi*: the idea of constraining superhuman powers is not unknown to magicians. We have also noted, in Lucan and in the papyri, that this coercion is simply an additional process that is used only if a more benign charm has not achieved its goal. Magicians had thought about ritual coercion and judged it a dangerous action; they always preferred to act without it.

There exist, moreover, different ways of constraining the divinity. First, there is the constraint by trickery; we recall the initiatory ritual in which Seth-Helios comes to the aid of the sorcerer who claims to be the victim of an attack led by Isis and Horus,⁴⁰ or the "slander rites," *diabolai*, in which a person brings down the divinity's wrath on another person whom the person defames by accusing him or her of an impiety, ritualistic or otherwise. Then, there is the constraint by extortion, so to speak. In a divinatory rite described in the papyrus book in the Bibliothèque Nationale, a trap is set for a (unspecified) god or demon. In the middle of a circle of food—the leftovers from the sorcerer's meal—which is supposed to attract the demon to a common meal, a beetle is suspended above a lamp arranged in such a way that the flame does not yet touch the animal: "Stay calm after you have thrown out the morsels, enter your house and close yourself in; the one you have summoned will arrive and by threatening you with his weapons, try to force you to

release the beetle. But you, you will not move it or release it before he has given you an oracle."⁴¹ The beetle is the sacred animal of Helios, the superior god whom all the demons are thought to obey, from which comes the demon's interest in the animal. Incidentally, the coercion of a divinity in order to obtain an oracle, as this rite puts it to work, is a well-known mythical theme in Greece and Rome; to obtain an oracle or any other vital information, in a situation of crisis Menelaus or Aristaeus seizes the divine prophet Proteus, and king Numa captures the gods Picus and Faunus by force or trickery.⁴² The narrative structure and the structure of the ritual are rather close, whatever their exact relationship is. Another rite makes it possible to seize hold of Persephone by resorting to blackmail. The sorcerer calls the goddess, but when she approaches, torches in hand, a charm will extinguish her torches. "The goddess will thus be sad and will complain," and the sorcerer promises to relight the torches if she helps him by sending him a dream or by killing an enemy.⁴³ (We notice the ease with which the magicians move in the two religious worlds: in the Egyptian one, Helios and his scarab; and in that of the Greeks, Kore and her torches. It is obviously inaccurate to attribute such stories to a uniquely Egyptian origin.)⁴⁴

And finally, there is the purely verbal coercion of the coercion spells, the *epánankoi*. Ordinarily, these threats as well are accompanied by special rites, rites that can symbolically forestall the tortures with which the demon is threatened. The magician draws a portrait, wraps it up in a piece of cloth, and then throws it into the oven or a bath or suspends it above a lamp.⁴⁵ Other rites are reversals of the sacrificial rites: one offers the brain of a black ram; one fumigates with the dung of a black cow; as a final resort, one suspends the normal rules of worship.⁴⁶ Besides the direct threat, there is also the myth. A coercion spell of the papyrus of the Bibliothèque Nationale is addressed to a long list

of the infernal gods and implores them to send "gladiators and heroes" (that is, those who have fallen in combat). It continues thus: "Isis came, bearing on her shoulders her husband, her brother. Zeus came down from Olympus and stood awaiting the phantoms of the dead who were lead to such-and-such a woman and did such-and-such a thing. All the immortal gods and goddesses came to see the phantoms of these dead. So do not hesitate and do not delay, gods, but send the phantoms of these dead."⁴⁷ Here we have a little mythical story, a *historiola*, partially modeled after the famous story in the *Odyssey* that tells how the gods came running to gaze at Ares and Aphrodite who were caught in a trap.⁴⁸ Because, according to our myth, the gods from on high already have come to witness the spectacle of the dead attacking a woman, their example will prompt the infernal gods to do the same. Thus, the spell does not apply crude coercion, rather persuasion by an *exemplum*; it is a well-known rhetorical strategy to which these *historiolae* own their popularity. Whereas this *historiola* blends Greek elements with Egyptian ones, juxtaposing Isis and Zeus in a quasi-Homeric situation, another coercion spell in the Paris book presents another blend. The magician threatens Aphrodite: "But, if as a goddess you act slowly, you will not see Adonis rise from Hades: immediately, I shall run and bind him with steel chains; as guard, I shall bind him on another wheel of Ixion; no longer will he come to light, and he will be chastised and subdued. Wherefore, O Lady, act, I beg." Although the Greco-Phoenician cult of Adonis was popular in Hellenized Egypt, the netherworld here is purely Greek.⁴⁹

There is no doubt that coercion belongs to magic.⁵⁰ But it constitutes only one element in a set of religious behaviors that range from the cruelest constraint to the most obsequious submission. The variety of religious behavior that the magician makes use of is accompanied by a very precise organization that

structures the superhuman world that the magician addresses. The following coercion spell gives an illustration of it: "Listen to me, I am going to say the great name, AOΘ, that every god reveres, that every demon fears, to which every messenger (*ángelos*) obeys."⁵¹ We see a very strict hierarchy: at the top there is the "great name," the name of the supreme god to whom the other gods are subject, then come the demons and finally the messengers. It thus suffices for the sorcerer to become the intimate of the supreme god to get himself obeyed by the whole hierarchy; this intimacy manifests itself through the knowledge of the name. Another coercion spell of the Paris book is no less revealing: "If he delay, after the prayer to the gods, say these words once or three times: 'The great god, he who lives, who commands you, who exists from eternity to eternity.'"⁵² The magician can claim even the powers of the supreme gods. Demons are dumb.

The hierarchy of the superhuman world is thus perfectly functional. But it does not belong only to the theology of the magicians: it is a hierarchization that finds its most subtle expression in neo-Platonic thinking, from Plotinus to Proclus, in much more elaborate and complex constructions. From neo-Platonic thinking, this hierarchization spread in the religion of the era, where it constituted a theological response to the growing hierarchization of the imperial society. For the magicians who draw their theology from this religious stock, already present, moreover, in the texts earlier than the fourth century, like *Moses VIII*, what matters is only the existence of two levels. On the one hand, there is the Supreme God with different names (among them, the Israelite ΙΑΩ, or Jahweh, is not without importance) toward whom all want to ascend and with whom they seek to become intimate; he is exempt from coercion. On the other hand, there are those demons and messengers whom the magician calls into his service with the help of the supreme

god; towards them, constraint can be used in the last resort. There is also an intermediate area, that of the minor gods, which is rather poorly defined: some gods—Kore or Aphrodite—can be coerced; Hermes, the holder of a supreme knowledge, is treated much better.

An analysis of African systems by Clifford Geertz addresses the question of hierarchies. He pointed out that there existed, in a certain number of African societies, a magic theology distinguishing two levels of superhuman beings.⁵³ But there is one crucial difference towards the Greco-Roman material. The African dichotomy is a function of the aim pursued by the magic rite: the lower level includes the demons and the lesser beings invoked in everyday magic and minor affairs, whereas the second degree includes the highest beings, the gods, who are invoked only in important matters. The Greek dichotomy, on the other hand, is one of ontological status; in order to command the lower beings, the Greco-Egyptian sorcerer always needs access to the higher gods. Instead of being a real parallel, the African cases help to sharpen our understanding of the specificity of Greco-Egyptian theology.

Thus, coercion, although present, is not really constitutive of Greco-Roman magic, but is only one of the elements of a much more complex ideology. Why, then, is it invested with such importance in European thinking about magic?

The first time this notion becomes visible is in the treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, whose author censured the healers for claiming powers that belong only to the gods, for even claiming to have a power higher than that of the gods, the power to coerce them and use them like slaves. All this reduces the gods to nothing, for the divine is defined by its absolute superiority relative to humankind.⁵⁴ Thus, the theological thinking of the sophists' epoch interprets the magicians' affirmations in this sense and uses them as an argument against magic. Plato follows suit.

Although he does not speak of "coercion," he does say that the magicians "persuade" the gods. Now, persuasion is nothing other than a subtle form of coercion that resorts to words. We have seen that well-chosen *exempla* can coerce the gods.

Later writers repeat these criticisms, the pagans in a more qualified way than the Christians.⁵⁵ It is thus not surprising that Iamblichus devotes a paragraph to coercion of the gods to respond to his interlocutor who has noticed (which the enlightened doctor had already said) that it was incompatible with the divine nature to allow itself to be forced. This, therefore, is an argument that was widely used in the polemic against magic. The philosopher's response is revealing: "In sum, the so-called 'obligations of the gods' are obligations of the gods that manifest themselves in a way fitting to the gods. It is thus not from the outside nor by violence, but because the good is necessarily useful, that they use their ever-even and unvarying dispositions."⁵⁶ Iamblichus does not deny that there are "obligations of the gods" (he knows magic well enough). But he reverses their interpretation; it is not the sorcerers who force the gods, instead it is their own divine nature, which is pure good. We think of Seth, who feels compassion for the presumed victim of Horus.

There thus existed a whole ancient polemical tradition that accented this definition of magic by the coercion of the gods, a tradition first adopted by Platonism—and which on that account belongs to an important stream of ancient thought—then upheld by the polemic of the Christians. So it is not surprising that both the intellectual Frazer and the religious Father Festugière had recourse to this definition. Another, less shocking definition disappeared from sight: the one given by Apuleius. According to him, the magician derives his powers from the *communio loquendi*, the conversation and dialogue with the gods: "magus is properly he who, doing business with the immortal gods, has the power to effect everything he wishes through the

mysterious force of certain incantations."⁵⁷ This definition would have been much less vulnerable to Christian polemics.

MAGIC AND REVERSAL

In the course of this analysis, we have come across a number of those reversals that characterize magic and especially magical ritual—intentional inversions of everyday practices or ordinary ritual.⁵⁸ Already in the binding spells from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., we noticed several of them, like the retrograde writing or the use of the mother's name; for lack of more precise facts about contemporary magical rites, we must confine ourselves to this sketchy information. The later texts attest to the magician's isolation in the performance of the rite, the specific form taken by these rites and the role played by the infernal divinities—which can be seen as so many reversals. The following paragraphs try to present them more comprehensively.

The isolation in which the magician finds himself when performing the rite contrasts the magical with the communal rite, which is performed in a group—the household, the tribe, the entire town—but also with the mystery rites. The differences, however, must not be exaggerated. Though the magician's isolation is indeed real in the *defixio*, that harmful magic condemned by Plato, one will be less affirmative for the magic of healing of which the doctor speaks in the treatise *On the Sacred Disease*. In most cultures, ethnographic or European, ritual healing concerns the entire group—the patient, the patient's family, the village; the same holds true for ancient exorcisms. Healing thus represents a domain that must be considered separately. Especially in this domain, the divisions between religion and magic are far from clear-cut and seem to have varied considerably with time. Behind the polemical description of the author of the treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, we glimpse not only the dietary prescrip-

tions of the cathartic priests but also extensive healing rituals. Later, the description of such rituals appears in literature, for example, in Cato (who, however, does not range them with magic) or in that curious little rite performed by Tibullus for his sick Delia, which again has no negative connotations:⁵⁹ the negative evaluation is confined to the Hippocratic doctor. Nor is it in these cases ever a matter of rites performed by an isolated healer, but always rites performed in groups made up of the healer, the patient, some assistants (at least in Cato and in Tibullus), parents, and family. In other cultures, ritual healing may take the form of ritual drama, requiring the presence of a proper audience.⁶⁰

In the papyri, on the other hand, although there is a whole series of magic recipes against illnesses (migraine, gout, fever, scorpion stings, dog bites), they are never rites performed in groups, but simple oral or written prayers. "To fight migraine, take some oil in your hands and say this formula: 'Zeus planted a grape seed, it parts the soil; he doesn't plant it, it does not sprout.'"⁶¹ It is again one of those *historiolae* that gave an exemplum. Here is another one: "Against the same: write on a piece of scarlet parchment ABRASAX (and what you desire). Dunk it and put it on your temple."⁶² A wet piece of parchment against headache makes sense, with or without a spell. In the eyes of the people who wrote the magical books, all these recipes belong to the same domain of magic as that of the other magic instructions in their books: nothing justifies our separating them.⁶³ And what they have in common with the other rites is the fact that they do not refer to group actions, but instead constitute small aids for the isolated individual.

In the world of the papyri where we grasp the rite with a rare precision, we see a whole set of reversals, which, however, must be distinguished from each other. Fumigations and libations are

perfectly regular rites—only that, in the common worship, one burns incense, one pours wine, milk, or honey; the libations of milk, water, and honey already are extraordinary rites, confined to a few specific rituals. Magic ritual thus uses the common ritual forms, changes only the substances to be burned or libated; at least the slander spells make deliberate use of rather disgusting substances.⁶⁴ The differences are more unmistakable in the bloody sacrifices, first of all in the choice of animals. Those of the civic rites—pig, sheep, and cow—are absent, and in their place we find birds, especially the rooster, or the donkey, rare victims that as such express a clear-cut reversal in relation to civic religion. The magician uses signs that are easily identifiable. Sacrificial meals are not lacking, but the magician eats the sacrificial meat without human company. A different form of meal is used in the *systasis*, the "ritual encounter"; it is conceived as a banquet where the sorcerer and the god dine together and can be seen as transformation of the ordinary Greek symposium, only that it never includes the meat from a previously offered sacrifice. Nor is the way of killing the victim the same. When the victim is meant to be eaten in the magic rite, it is strangled; blood, the carrier of vital energy, may not be shed. In an initiatory rite, on the other hand, one drinks the blood of a sacrificial victim; on the banks of the Nile (in a marginal place), the sorcerer builds an altar, lights a fire with some wood from an olive tree, cuts off the head of a rooster, throws its head into the Nile, and then drinks the animal's blood.⁶⁵ Finally, there is the holocaust offering in which entire animals are burnt, as in the ritual consecration of a magic ring. Outside the town or in a graveyard (again in a marginal place, that is), a large hole must be dug, an altar is built above this hole, a fire is lit with the wood from fruit trees, and then the magician burns a goose, three roosters, three pigeons, and incense, a sacrifice explicitly

described in the papyrus as holocaust.⁶⁶ Here again, magic uses traditional forms, sometimes organized in new combinations.

THE SEARCH for contact with the infernal divinities and the dead, that is, the ritual movement downwards, always constitutes a radical reversal, both in the framework of Greek or Roman civic religion as in that of magic. Once more, it is necessary to be specific. The fixation of magic on the powers from down below is totally true only for the classical era, and solely for the domain of binding spells. For the other rites, we lack information, apart from the too-general remark in Plato that magicians "convince the gods": more precision would damage his polemical position.⁶⁷ It is more important to note, in a diachronic perspective, that in the epoch before the papyrus books, we have no indication of the two-level system in which the magician addresses the divinities on high to use their aid in order to coerce the dead, the heroes, and the demons. Basically, these two levels correspond to the common dichotomy that opposes the Olympian gods (whom the magician does not touch) and the chthonic ones, whom the magician addresses; but it would not be legitimate to project this system back into hellenistic, classical, or archaic times.⁶⁸ The emergence of the two-level system constitutes the most important change that can be noted in the development of ancient magic. First, it reflects the transition from a more or less homogeneous pantheon to the extremely hierarchical pantheon of the imperial era. Moreover, it also refers to the fact that the magic of the imperial era went from a technique intended (not without the influence of the Near Eastern books of exorcism) to harm one's adversaries to a technique that approaches the gnostic and neo-Platonic quest for the knowledge that derives from the experience of the divinity. Although already the polemical author of *On the Sacred Disease* noted some signs of an epistemological claim of the cathartic

priests, this aspect seems to have gained considerable ground only after the Hellenistic epoch. It was only in imperial times that magic became a knowledge providing access to the Supreme God, and it was only at that moment that the sorcerer acquired, through this knowledge, an assistant that accompanied the sorcerer throughout his or her career. From this derived that attempt of the neo-Platonic theurgy to use magic techniques to acquire knowledge about the Supreme God; from this also derived the ambiguity in the status of the philosopher and the charismatic "divine man," Apollonius of Tyana or Jesus, who, depending on the viewpoint adopted, could be presented as a great sage or a great sorcerer. It is obvious that this change reflects a fundamental change in society; the earlier, agonistic society with its low hierarchy and its large need for support in competition changes into a much more highly hierarchized society in which competition is the concern of a narrow elite, while the rest of society turns to the care of spiritual well-being.

"Greek Magical Papyri," in Nock 1972, p. 186ff. (originally *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 15, 1929).

7. WORDS AND ACTS

1. See Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London: Routledge 1994), p. 103f, who underscores that the term was important in ancient medicine already before the Stoa.
2. Quotation taken from Bidez and Cumont, 1938: I, p. 193ff.
3. Plotinus, *Enneads* 4,4,40. See Philip Merlan, "Plotinus and magic," in *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin: De Gruyter 1976), pp. 388–395 (urspr. *Isis* 44, 1954, 341–348) and esp. his own polemics against the magicians in *Enneads* 2,9, for which see Karin Alt, *Philosophie gegen Gnosis: Plotins Polemik in seiner Schrift II 9* (Abhandlungen der Akademie Mainz 1990:7) (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1990).
4. See the synthesis Tambiah 1985, pp. 123–166, "A performative approach to ritual." The discussion about ritual is immense, a first sensible help in Daniel de Coppet (ed.), *Understanding Rituals* (London: Routledge, 1992) and Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
5. Tambiah 1990, p. 58. Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion is published in "Bemerkungen über Frazers 'The Golden Bough,'" *Synthese* 18, 1965, pp. 236–258.
6. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) and id., *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982).
7. S. J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3, 1968, pp. 175–208; reprinted in Tambiah 1985: pp. 17–59.
8. Stanley J. Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View," in Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan (eds.), *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies* (London: Faber, 1973), pp. 199–229; reprinted in Tambiah 1985: pp. 60–86.
9. Christopher A. Faraone, "Molten wax, spilt wine and mutilated animals: Sympathetic magic in Near Eastern and Early Greek oath ceremonies," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113, 1993, pp. 60–80.

10. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* IX, no. 3 (lines 44ff.; the manikins are called *κολοσσοί*).
11. Livy, *Roman History*, I, 24; see Georg Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, 2nd ed. 1912 (repr. Munich: Beck, 1971).
12. Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks* (London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983); id., *Figures, idoles, masques. Conférences, essais et leçons du Collège de France* (Paris: Julliard, 1990), pp. 25–30.
13. Quoted by Burkert 1987: p. 62.
14. Frantisek Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques: Supplément* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1962), no. 115.
15. A synthesis of this discussion in S. Sharot, "Magic, Religion, Science, and Secularization" in Neusner, Frerichs, and Flesher 1989: pp. 261–283; not very helpful is the thesis of I. M. Arkin, *Roman Magism at the End of the Republic: A Reevaluation in the Light of the Degeneration Theory of Wilhelm Schmidt*, Dissertation St. Louis University, 1964 (See *Dissertation Abstracts* 25, 1965, 5915).
16. Synthesis: F. Graf, "Dionysian and Orphic eschatology: New texts and old questions," in Thomas Carpenter and Christopher Faraone (eds.), *Masks of Dionysos* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 239–258. For the significantly earlier date of the first Sicilian curse tablet, see earlier, Chapter 5, n. 176.
17. Audollent 1904: no. 22 (Gager 1992; no. 45), line 39, "I deposit with you this charge to make Ariston silent, and you give over his name to the infernal gods." Similar phrases in no. 26, line 27; no. 27, line 23.
18. Apuleius, *Apologia* XXVI, 6; Jamblichus, *The Mysteries of Egypt*, VII, 5. An anecdote introduces Jamblichus during such a dialogue, Eunapius, *Life of the Sophists* V,2,2; see Michel Tardieu, *Les paysages religieux* (Louvain/Paris: Peeters, 1990), pp. 11–13.
19. See Libanius, *Oratio* I, 248, and Plutarchus, *On Superstition* III, 166 B; both Pliny, *Natural History* XXX, 18, and Tacitus, *Annals* XII, 59, use the term *magicae superstitiones*.
20. That is why E. Heitsch, a specialist in late Greek poetry, became interested in them, "Zu den Zauberhymnen," *Philologus* 103, 1959, pp. 215–236; "Drei Helioshymnen," *Hermes* 88, 1960, pp. 150–158; see also Paolo Poccetti, "Forma e tradizione dell'inno magico nel mondo classico," in Albio Cesare Cassio and Giovanni Cerri

- (eds.), *L'inno tra rituale e letteratura nel mondo antico*. Atti di un colloquio (Napoli 21–25 ottobre 1991) (A.I.O.N. 13, 1991) (Rome: GEL, 1993), pp. 179–204. The previous bibliography PGM vol. 2, p. 264.
21. Richard Reitzenstein, *Poimandres Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1904), p. 14: "die Gebete . . . die zum Teil ohne Rücksicht auf den Zweck der magischen Handlung aus älteren Quellen übernommen und für sie nur durch Aufnahme unverständlicher Formeln erweitert sind"; Martin P. Nilsson, *Die Religion in den griechischen Zauberpapyri* (Lund: Gleerup, 1949).
 22. See the communication of M. J. Vermaseren to the Congress of Rome, "La sotériologie dans les Papyri Graecae Magicae," in Ugo Bianchi and Maarten J. Vermaseren (eds.), *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell'Impero Romano: Atti del Colloquio Internazionale* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), pp. 17–30: "The magician does not implore the gods, he wishes to constrain them; he does not wish to obey the gods or subject himself on his knees in all simplicity of the heart." The magician's behavior was meant despite everything to transmit to the gods the evidence of his soteriological search ("cries of the heart")—at the cost of a *salto mortale*: the magicians did not, in fact, succeed in formulating in friendly terms what they felt, but they expressed themselves "like impudent boys." The strategy that consists in comparing with childish behavior those cultural facts that are unacceptable according to the criteria of one's own culture, but that one does not for all that wish to find fault with, goes back at least to Fontenelle.
 23. Dieterich 1923; Festugière 1981, pp. 281–326. ("Excursus E: La valeur religieuse des papyrus magiques"; his position: "A magic action . . . is of a magical essence . . . It is not a prayer, a request, but a summons. One forces the divinity to act.")
 24. Further details in Fritz Graf, "Prayer in Magic and Religious Rituals," in Faraone and Obbink 1991: pp. 188–213.
 25. Josep Corell, "Defixionis tabella aus Carmona (Sevilla)," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 95, 1993, pp. 261–268; another example in a spell from Cremona, Heikki Solin, *Arctos* 21, 1987, pp. 130–133, see earlier chap. 5, n. 128; more D. Maltomini, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 107, 1995, p. 297, n. 3.

26. Audollent 1904: no. 22 (Gager 1992: no. 45)(Amathus).
27. Sappho, frg. 1 Lobel-Page.
28. PMG VIII, 1–60 (what is translated as "sexual attractiveness," is *ἐπαφροδίσια* in the Greek text. The wish to "come like babies in the belly of their mother" refers to the wish of a peaceful possession by the god; the sacred wood of Hermes is ebony; see also Apuleius, *Apologia* LXI.
29. Euripides, *Iphigenia among the Taurians* 1336f.
30. Plinius, *Naturalis historia* 28,20, "neque est facile dictu externa verba atque ineffabilia abrogent fidem validius an Latina et inopinata, quae inridicula videri cogit animus semper aliquid immensum exspectans ac dignum deo movendo, immo vero quod numini imperet."
31. Jamblichus, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum* 7,5. See John M. Dillon, "Jamblichus of Chalcis (c. 240–325 A.D.)," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II: 36:2 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 1987), pp. 862–909; Beate Nasemann, *Theurgie und Philosophie in Jamblichs "De Mysteriis"* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1991). Jerome, the Christian, makes fun of those "names meant to excite the spirits of the ignorant and women" and taken "in some way from Hebraic sources," *Letters* 75,3.
32. Origen, *Against Celsus* I, 24; see also Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I, 143, 1.
33. Tambiah 1985: pp. 18–21.
34. Greek in Latin spells: a fine example from Autun, from the 1st century A.D. J. Marcillet-Jaubert, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 33, 1979, p. 185f.; ead., *Mém. Soc. Éduenne* 54, 1979, pp. 1–25; there are entire Greek spells from the Latin west, see Dorottya Gáspár, "Eine griechische Fluchtafel aus Savaria," *Tyche* 5, 1990, pp. 13–16. Latin in England: Thomas 1971: p. 179.
35. Jerome, *Letters* 75,3.
36. Examples Audollent 1904: no. 231 (Carthago); 252 (id.); 270 (Hadrumetum); Kotansky 1994: no. 7.
37. PGM VII, 742, a charm for receiving dreams.
38. PGM VIII, 1f. (Astrapsoukhos); I, 40 (*sústasis*); III, 574–583 (*sústasis*).
39. The citation from M. J. Vermaseren, "La sotériologie dans les Papyri Graecae Magicae," earlier n. 22, p. 21. For the connection

- with Frazer see, among others, John Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory: A Philosophical Study of Theories of Religion in Social Anthropology* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 130–134; or Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge/London: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 52f.
40. PGM IV, 155–222 (letter of Nephotes).
 41. PGM IV, 65–70.
 42. Proteus: Homer, *Odyssey* IV, 383ff.; Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 387ff; Faunus and Picus: Ovid, *Fasti* III, 291ff; Silenus: Theopompus, *FGrHist* 115 F75 and the references in the commentary of G. Bömer to Ovid's *Fasti*.
 43. PGM XII, 1ff.
 44. See Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993).
 45. PGM II, 45–50.
 46. PGM IV, 1438.
 47. PGM IV, 1472–1481.—Another *historiola* about Isis in the coptic text PGM IV, 95; a third one in the spell of the Syrian woman from Gadara, PGM XX, 6f., see Ludwig Koenen, "Der brennende Horusknahe: Zu einem Zauberspruch des Philinna-Papyrus," *Chronique d'Égypte* 37, 1962, pp. 167–174; a fourth one on the spell against headache Kotansky 1994, no. 13. See Anthony A. Barb, "Antaura: The Mermaid and the Devil's Grandmother," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29, 1966, pp. 1–23.
 48. Homer, *Odyssey*, VIII, 266–367; once again, thus, we note the mixture of Greek and Egyptian.
 49. PGM IV, 2900–2907; for Adonis in Egypt, see PGMTr 93 n. 363.
 50. See also H. Philsooph, "Primitive Magic and Mana," *Man* 6, 1971, pp. 182–203.
 51. PGM XII, 117f.
 52. PGM IV, 1035f.
 53. A. F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in R. Van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religion Presented to Gilles Quispel* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 349–375.

54. *On the Sacred Disease* IV.
55. Pagans: Seneca, *Oedipus*, 561–563; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XXVIII, 20 (earlier n. 30); Pseudo-Quintilian, *Declamations*, 10,19; more examples in *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* VIII, 587,7. Christians: for example, Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation*, V,8,6 (referring to *Oracula Chaldaica* 220, 221, 223 Des Places); Hippolytus, *Refutation* VII, 32; Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, I,25,3.
56. Jamblichus, *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians*, I, 14.
57. Apuleius, *Apologia*, XXVI, 6.
58. The concept has been used esp. by Max Gluckman and Victor Turner; see the introductions by Peter Weidkuhn, "The quest for legitimate rebellion: Towards a structuralist theory of rituals of reversal," *Religion* 7, 1977, pp. 167–188; A. Barbara Babcock (ed.), *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society* (Ithaca, N.Y./London: Cornell University Press, 1978); Brian Morris, *Anthropological Studies of Religion: An Introductory Text* (Cambridge/London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 246–263.
59. Cato, *On Agriculture*, 156 (see earlier, Chapter 2, n. 57); Tibullus I, 4,11f.
60. Still exemplary are the remarks of Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic," in Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Development and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 71–73.
61. PGM VII, 199f.
62. PGM VII, 201f.
63. The same holds true for the Middle Age, Kieckhefer 1989: pp. 3f. and 57–75.
64. Fumigation with disgusting substances as a rite of reversal plays a role in the medieval "fête des fous," a festival belonging to the New Year cycle: "thurificare de fumo fetido ex coreo veterum sotularium" in a letter from the Theological faculty of the Sorbonne of 1445; see Heinrich Denifle, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* 1 (Paris: Erères Delalavia, 1889), no. 2595.
65. PGM IV, 26–51, a τελετή, a ritual of initiation (at the end, "you will be an initiate," τετελεσμένος).
66. PGM XII, 201–269 (όλοκαυστών 213).

67. Plato, *Republic* 364 B.C.

68. See Renate Schlesier, "Olympian versus chthonian religion," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 11, 1991/92, pp. 38–51; ead., "Olympische Religion und chthonische Religion," in Ugo Bianchi (ed.), *The Notion of "Religion" in Comparative Research*. Selected Proceedings of the XVI IAHR Congress (Rome: L'Herma di Bretschneider, 1994), pp. 301–310.

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