

SPICA

POSTGRADUATE JOURNAL FOR COSMOLOGY IN CULTURE

Vol. VI No. I

SPRING 2018

The treatment of the Moon compared in three astrological primary sources

Sky and water in Minnesota: A sky journal

Can theurgy be considered as a form of magic?

The Sophia Centre Press
in partnership with

The Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

VOL VI
NO I

IN THIS ISSUE



Editorial

Rod Suskin

[PAGE 2](#)

A critical review of the treatment of the Moon in Plutarch's *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon*, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.

Selina White

[PAGE 3](#)

Sky and water in Minnesota: A sky journal

Jessica Heim

[PAGE 14](#)

Can theurgy be considered a form of magic?

Elisabetta Castelli

[PAGE 37](#)

Cover image: *Phases of the Moon from Athanasius Kircher's 'Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae (The Great Art of Light and Shadow), 1645-60.*



The moon is appropriately amongst the most attractive and important focuses for the human fascination with the sky. Its important role in astrology reflects this central role in our culture, but even that role in the mystical and astrological world is by no means universally defined.

In this edition, Selina White explores the role of the moon in three critical primary sources that identify the cultural meaning of the body as well as the dark and negative connotations that are also attributed to it, showcasing the diversity of sources and approaches the study of cosmology allows.

Our series of personal explorations of the sky continues in Jessica Heim's study of sky and water in Minnesota, and Elisabetta Castelli examines the question of whether theurgy can be considered a form of magic, in the process exploring the roles and meaning of both magic and theurgy in history.

As always, a fine representation of the diversity of studies pursued by the students at the Sophia Centre.

Rod Suskin

EDITOR: Rod Suskin

EDITORIAL BOARD: Student volunteers at the Sophia Centre

ADVISORY BOARD: Teaching staff at the Sophia Centre, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Published bi-annually by the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, with the Sophia Centre Press.

Published and available at: <http://www.sophia-project.net/Spica>

A critical review of the treatment of the Moon in Plutarch's *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon*, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.

by *Selina White*

By comparing and contrasting three astrological primary sources, namely Plutarch's *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon* (*De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*), Blavatsky's 'The Secret Doctrine, the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy', and Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* ('*De occulta philosophia libri III*'), this paper explores the treatment of the Moon by the authors of these primary sources. Some common themes that emerge in this exploration of the treatment of the Moon in these three primary sources are the scientific and alternative investigation of the Moon, the role of the Moon in the myths of ancient and modern cultures, and the mysterious, dark, or negative aspect and influence of the Moon. The result is that the authors of all three primary sources treat the Moon as an object of importance worthy of exploration.

Introduction

This essay will compare and contrast the treatment of the Moon in three primary sources and through the lens of three core themes, namely; 1.) Science and the Laws of Nature; 2.) Myth and the Moon; and, 3.) The Dark Side of the Moon. The first primary source is *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon* (*De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*). It was written by Plutarch (Plutarchus) (ca. 45–120 CE) who was born at Chaeronea in Boeotia in central Greece and became a scholar of Platonic philosophy at Athens. It was written in ca. 100 CE and appears in Plutarch's larger treatise entitled *Moralia* which contains a collection of essays and speeches on various subject matters which influenced later European Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophy. It was originally written in Greek and then Latin and translated into English by Harold Cherniss and W. C. Helmbold and published by Loeb Classical Library as

Moralia Vol. XII in 1957. This is the edition I will be referring to for the purposes of this essay.¹

The second primary source is *The Secret Doctrine, the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*. It was written by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (Helena Petrovna von Hahn) (1831-1891 CE) who was born in the then Russian Empire (now Ukraine) and who became a well-known 19th- 20th century occultist, medium, author and founder of the esoteric organisation, the Theosophical Society, in 1875. It was written in English in 1888 and was originally composed of two volumes; the first volume entitled *Cosmogogenesis*, the second volume entitled *Anthropogenesis*. It is an example of 'revealed' literature which contained a synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophical and spiritual thought and resulted in reviving interest in esoteric and occult study in modern times. The edition that I will be using for this essay is the Theosophical University Press Online Edition which contains both volumes.²

The third and final primary source is *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (*De occulta philosophia libri III*). It is a composite collection of three books written by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535 CE) between 1509-1510. Book I is entitled *Natural Magic*, Book II *Celestial Magic* and Book III *Ceremonial Magic*. Agrippa was a Renaissance scholar influenced by Hermetic and Neoplatonic philosophy and his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* became an invaluable source of Western ritual and astrological magic. All three volumes were printed together for the first time in Cologne in 1533. They were originally written in Latin and were translated into English by one J.F. and were published by Gregory Moule in London in 1651. The translation that I am using for the purposes of this essay is that of Joseph H. Patterson made in 2000 from the transcription of the Moule version, and which is available as a digital edition.³ It is to be noted that a Book IV entitled 'Of Magical Ceremonies' was later discovered and attributed to Agrippa, although its provenance remains

¹ Plutarch, *Moralia* Vol. XII, trans. by Harold Cherniss and W. C. Helmbold (Harvard University: Loeb Classical Library, 1957).

² Helena Petrovna, Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine, the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 2014): <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sd/sd-hp.htm>, accessed on 5th June 2017.

³ Heinrich Cornelius, Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans. by Joseph H. Patterson, 2000: <http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agrippa1.htm> accessed on 5th June 2017.

spurious. I have therefore confined my analysis to the original three books for the purpose of this essay.

Science and the Laws of Nature

A common theme appearing in these three primary texts is the authors' treatment of the Moon from a scientific standpoint as a natural phenomenon requiring investigation. Plutarch's *De facie* begins by stating that standard scientific theories and scholarship do not answer or explain what the figure visible on the face on the Moon is and so 'when the ordinary and reputable and customary accounts are not persuasive, it is necessary to try those that are more out of the way [...]'⁴. Therefore, the Moon in this regard is viewed by Plutarch as a kind of scientific anomaly that requires alternative investigation. Various alternative theories for the existence of the apparent face on the Moon are then discussed in the text, including ideas of optical effects, geometry, mirrored reflections, and layers of shadow, air, fire, water creating shapes.⁵ However, a more concrete understanding of the Moon is given later on in the text when scientific details are discussed regarding the motion of the Earth 'revolving along the ecliptic and at the same time [...] rotating about its own axis' and the fact that 'the earth is a great deal larger than the moon', as well as in-depth reference to transits and lunar and solar eclipses and how they occur.⁶ This shows, according to scholars such as Karamanolis, that, in *De facie*, 'Plutarch shows quite some interest in the explanation of natural phenomena [...]'⁷.

Agrippa similarly emphasises an exploration of nature and the natural world in his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, to the extent of dedicating the whole of Book I of this treatise to natural magic, which according to Yates, 'teaches how to arrange substances in accordance with the occult sympathies between them, so as to effect operations in natural magic.'⁸ Agrippa acknowledges the influence of the Moon on Earth as well as there being a line of communication between the two based on their close connection in

⁴ Plutarch, *Moralia*, Line 920C, p. 35.

⁵ Plutarch, *Moralia*, Line 920C – 923, pp. 35-55.

⁶ Plutarch, *Moralia*, Line 923 p.55-59.

⁷ George, Karamanolis, "Plutarch", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/plutarch/> accessed on 10th June 2017.

⁸ Frances, Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), p. 53.

space.⁹ The Moon also features in Agrippa's discussion of the number seven where he outlines the natural process of the changing phases of the moon based upon four sets of seven days.¹⁰ This is as scientific or technical as Agrippa gets in his treatment of the Moon. For the most part of the remaining coverage of the Moon by him, he refers to it in the context of natural laws, sympathies and correspondences, which is very much illustrative of the Hermetic and Neoplatonic influences present in his work through his referencing of numerous Hermetic and Neoplatonic scholars throughout the text. Yates puts it very aptly in stating that Agrippa's aim is to provide 'the technical procedures for acquiring the more powerful and "wonder-working" philosophy, [...] a philosophy ostensibly Neoplatonic but including a magical Hermetic-Cabalist core.'¹¹ In this regard, he establishes "enmities" and "friendships" between the Moon and each of the other planets¹² which can be employed in magic and astrology, as well as listing a number of creatures and features of the natural world, such as plants, trees, stones, animals, and indeed certain humans, which are lunar in nature.¹³ Despite the strong use of symbolic connections and natural laws as opposed to hard science, Agrippa incorporates an intellectual and scholarly methodology in his treatment of the Moon and other planets, leading Yates to describe *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* as 'a matter-of-fact text-book'.¹⁴

Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* also approaches the Moon from an alternative scientific standpoint, similar to Plutarch's "alternative theories" approach in *De facie*. Blavatsky considers that the Moon is the Earth's satellite only in its function of physically revolving around the Earth. However, 'in every other respect it is the Earth which is the satellite of the Moon [...]. Startling as the statement may seem it is not without confirmation from scientific

⁹ Agrippa, 'Chapter (viii) How the Elements are in the Heavens, in Stars, in Divels [devils], in Angels, and lastly in God himself', Book I *Natural Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*: <http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agrippa1.htm#chap8> accessed 5th June 2017.

¹⁰ Agrippa, 'Chapter (x) Of the Number Seaven', and the Scale thereof, Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*: <http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agrippa2.htm#chap10> accessed 5th June 2017.

¹¹ Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, p. 55.

¹² Agrippa, 'Chapter (xvii) How by enmity and friendship the vertues of things are to be tryed, and found out',

Book I *Natural Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agrippa1.htm#chap17> accessed 5th June 2017.

¹³ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xxiv) What things are Lunary, or under the power of the Moon', Book I *Natural Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp1b.htm#chap24> accessed 5th June 2017.

¹⁴ Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, p.55.

knowledge. It is evidenced by the tides, by the cyclic changes in many forms of disease which coincide with the lunar phases; it can be traced in the growth of plants, and is very marked in the phenomena of human gestation and conception.' She also states that '[...] so far as Science knows, the Earth's action on the Moon is confined to the physical attraction, which causes her to circle in her orbit.'¹⁵ It appears therefore that Blavatsky considers herself to have debunked the standard scientific view of the relationship between the Moon and Earth and instead treats the Moon as being the dominant player in the relationship between it and the Earth, the Moon being a kind of magnetic force that exerts a constant influence on the Earth, akin to a mother exerting authority over its child. However, William Quan Judge, a contemporary theosophist of Blavatsky, seems to take a more positive attitude towards the role of science and its exploration and understanding of the Moon, where he says that '[m]odern and ancient science alike unite in watching the night's great light as she performs her journey round us.'¹⁶ On balance, all three texts do acknowledge the scientific nature of investigation required of the Moon, however, for the most part, it appears that the authors' believe that scientific laws do not fully explain the true nature of the Moon.

Myth and the Moon

Another shared feature of each of the three primary texts is their treatment of the Moon's role in the context of myth. In Plutarch's *De facie*, the role of myth is central to the title and overall theme of the text, namely an explanation for the apparent visibility of a man-like figure in the moon. This myth of "a man in the moon" has saturated the imagination of many cultures since time immemorial. According to Brunner, '[...] there is not one moon but many, each particular to a different culture.'¹⁷ Each culture therefore interprets what the moon is to them and it follows that '[o]nly a small step [is] required for stories to evolve from these images.'¹⁸ The interconnection between the Moon and the development of myth is even evident in the name for the study of the moon,

¹⁵ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 180.

¹⁶ William Quan Judge, 'Moon's Mystery and Fate', *William Q. Judge Theosophical Articles, Vol. I*: <http://www.blavatsky.net/index.php/moon-s-mystery-and-fate> accessed on 8th June, 2017.

¹⁷ Bernd, Brunner, *Moon: A Brief History*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 25.

¹⁸ Brunner, *Moon: A Brief History*, p. 27.

“selenology”, which comes from the name the Greek goddess of the Moon, Selene, a prominent figure in Greek mythology.¹⁹

The influence of myth is evident in *De facie* in the discussion on humanity’s fear that the Moon is unsupported in the sky and is liable to fall, whereas the Earth is supported by ‘Atlas, [who] stands, staying on his back the prop of earth [...]’ or alternatively that the Earth is supported by ‘steel-shod pillars’²⁰. However, probably the greatest influence of myth in *De facie* in the context of the Moon is in what Karamanolis calls ‘the eschatological myths [...] [which] integrate cosmological, psychological, and ethical considerations’, particularly ‘the role of the moon in the world and its role in the life of souls [...]’.²¹ Plutarch describes the Moon’s mythical role as being a storehouse and conveyer of souls from one world to the next.²² Hamilton also alludes to the express references to myth in Plutarch’s text which relate to the nature of the soul and argues that such references are influenced by the story of Atlantis in Plato’s *Timeus*.²³

Agrippa describes a number of images of the Moon which can be created for particular magical petitions.²⁴ These images make use of mythological symbolism taken from ancient cultures, such as dragon and serpent symbolism. A specific image of the head and tail of the Dragon of the Moon is illustrated where Agrippa states that the Egyptians and Phoenicians ‘do extol this creature [the image of a serpent] above all others, and say it is a divine creature and hath a divine nature [...]’.²⁵ He also presents the Moon’s mythological association with the sacred feminine by outlining that the Moon is associated with numerous mythological goddesses.²⁶

¹⁹ Brunner, *Moon: A Brief History*, p. 32.

²⁰ Plutarch, *Moralia*, Line 923C p. 59.

²¹ George, Karamanolis, “Plutarch”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/plutarch/> accessed on 10th June 2017.

²² Plutarch, *Moralia*, Line 943 p. 207-209.

²³ W., Hamilton, ‘The Myth in Plutarch’s De Facie (940F-945D)’, *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Jan., 1934), pp. 24-30.

²⁴ Agrippa, ‘Chapter (xliv) Of the Images of the Moon’, Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*: <http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp2c.htm#chap44> accessed on 5th June 2017.

²⁵ Agrippa, ‘Chapter (xlv) Of the Images of the head and taylor of the Dragon of the Moon’, Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*: <http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp2c.htm#chap45> accessed on 5th June 2017.

²⁶ Agrippa, ‘Chapter (lix) Of the seven governors of the world, the Planets, and of their various names serving to Magically speeches’, Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult*

Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* is also a strong advocate for the power of myth over science in the context of the Moon. She states that ‘[f]rom the archaic aeons and the later times of the witches of Thessaly, down to some of the present tantrikas of Bengal, her [the Moon’s] nature and properties were known to every Occultist, but have remained a closed book for physicists.’²⁷ She appears to be implying here that science has not been able to break through the threshold of mythical knowledge that exists in relation to the Moon. She also espouses the power of religion in culture over that of science where she says ‘[t]he importance of the Moon and its influence on the Earth were recognized in every ancient religion [...] and have been remarked by many observers of psychical and physical phenomena.’²⁸ It may be argued here that she considers the Moon as having more of a connection to occultists and those studying myth and occult science than to exoteric scientists, and that the former category are more able to penetrate the myths and mysteries of the Moon to attain a true understanding of it. Overall, all three texts provide a strong and positive approach towards the Moon’s role in myth.

The Dark Side of the Moon

Finally, all three texts directly express the theme of the Moon being of a mysterious, even insidious nature. In common with his earlier inference of the Moon being a kind of scientific mutation requiring alternative investigation, Plutarch’s *De facie* goes on to negatively describe the Moon as: ‘[...] misshapen, ugly, and a disgrace to the noble title, if it is true that of all the host in heaven she alone goes about in need of alien light [...]’.²⁹ He also states that ‘[t]he sun imparts to the moon her brilliance [and the Moon] often has concealed and obliterated him [the Sun]’.³⁰ These references appear to imply that the Moon is kind of parasite attaching itself to the Sun, constantly feeding off the Sun’s light in order to emit light itself.

Philosophy: <http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp2d.htm#chap59> accessed on 5th June 2017.

²⁷ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume I, p. 156.

²⁸ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 180.

²⁹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, Line 929, p.99-101.

³⁰ Plutarch, *Moralia*, Line 929, p.99-101.

Agrippa takes on a more positive handling of the Moon than Plutarch by constantly conveying the importance of the Moon in magical workings³¹ and disseminating copious amounts of information and lunar correspondences for such magical working, such as figures of divine letters or characters of the Moon³², the Moon's positive influence over divination and dreams³³, the seal, table, divine names, intelligences and spirits of the Moon³⁴, names of ancient cult centres associated with Moon deity worship³⁵, and the angel of the Moon and angels of the twenty-eight Mansions of the Moon³⁶. Agrippa lays emphasis on the importance of the Moon and urges the reader to acknowledge and respect the Moon in its role as conveyor of magical power: '[...] for thou shalt do nothing without the assistance of the Moon [...] thou shalt take the Moon [and its patterns, aspects and conjunctions] for that I conceive must in no wise be omitted.'³⁷ According to Yates, 'Agrippa's occult philosophy is intended to be

³¹ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xxx) When Planets are of most powerful influence', Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp2c.htm#chap30> accessed on 5th June 2017.

³² Agrippa, 'Chapter (xxxiii) Of the Seals, and Characters of Naturall things', Book I *Natural Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp1b.htm#chap33> accessed on 5th June 2017.

³³ Agrippa, 'Chapter (lix) Of Divination by Dreams', Book I *Natural Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*: <http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp1c.htm#chap59> accessed on 5th June 2017.

³⁴ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xxii) Of the tables of the Planets, their vertues, forms, and what Divine names, Intelligencies, and Spirits are set over them', Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp2b.htm#chap22> accessed on 5th June 2017.

³⁵ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xiv) Of the Gods of the gentiles, and souls of the Celestiall bodies, and what places were consecrated in times past, and to what Deities', Book III *Ceremonial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agrippa3.htm#chap14> accessed on 5th June 2017.

³⁶ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xxiv) Of the names of Spirits, and their various imposition; and of the Spirits that are set over the Stars, Signs, Corners of the Heaven, and the Elements', Book III *Ceremonial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp3b.htm#chap24> accessed on 5th June 2017.

³⁷ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xxix) Of the Observation of Celestiall, necessary in every Magical Work', Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp2c.htm#chap29> accessed on 5th June 2017.

a very white magic.³⁸ However, despite the corresponding lunar connections, he does acknowledge that the Moon's influence is changeable like a fitful mistress: 'the Moon changeth her nature according to the variety of the Signe which it is found in'.³⁹ He also describes that '[...] the Moon by vertue of the Sun is the mistress of generation, increase, or decrease'⁴⁰, which is a subtle allusion to the symbiotic relationship between these two luminaries which Plutarch regards as parasitic. There is also a reference to the more negative '[...] Lunatick passions which proceed from the combustion of the Moon.'⁴¹

Comparable to Plutarch's consideration of the parasitic nature of the Moon towards the Sun, Blavatsky envisions a similar understanding of the Moon with regard to its relationship with and influence on the Earth. In *The Secret Doctrine*, the Moon is treated as a dead planet having an unhealthy influence over our living planet Earth and this is extremely evident in Blavatsky's use of potent language in this regard: 'The Moon is now the cold residual quantity, the shadow dragged after the new body [...] doomed for long ages to be ever pursuing the Earth, to be attracted by and to attract her progeny. Constantly vampirised by her child, she revenges herself on it by soaking it through and through with the nefarious, invisible, and poisoned influence which emanates from the occult side of her nature. For she is a dead, yet a living body. The particles of her decaying corpse are full of active and destructive life, although the body which they had formed is soulless and lifeless. [...]'.⁴² Blavatsky gives concrete albeit grim examples of this influence in the physical world in the fact that grass growth thrives on the graves of the dead and that 'the moon is the friend of the sorcerers and the foe of the unwary'⁴³. C.W.

³⁸ Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, p. 55.

³⁹ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xvii) How by enmity and friendship the vertues of things are to be tryed, and found out',

Book I *Natural Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agrippa1.htm#chap17> accessed on 5th June 2017.

⁴⁰ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xxxii) Of the Sun, and Moon, and their Magicall considerations', Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp2c.htm#chap32> accessed on 5th June 2017.

⁴¹ Agrippa, 'Chapter (xli) Of the Images of the Sun', Book II *Celestial Magic, Three Books of Occult Philosophy*:

<http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agripp2c.htm#chap41> accessed on 5th June 2017.

⁴² Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume I, p. 156.

⁴³ Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume I, p. 156.

Leadbeater, a contemporary theosophist of Blavatsky, equally approaches the Moon in an abysmal manner, stating that ‘it is a “dead end,” a place where only refuse gathers, and it is a kind of a dust-heap or waste-paper-basket to the system - a kind of astral cesspool into which are thrown decaying fragments of various sorts, such as the lost personality which has torn itself away from the ego [...].’⁴⁴ Overall, Plutarch’s parasitic view of the Moon and Blavatsky’s treatment of the Moon as an insidious, blood-sucking being conjures up a far from alluring, admirable and magical image of the Moon that we see in Agrippa’s *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.

Conclusion

Taking everything into consideration, it is evident that all three texts regard the Moon as an object of significance. Concerning science and natural laws, all three texts acknowledge the role of science in investigating the Moon. However, for the most part, all three authors convey the need for any investigation of the Moon to go beyond ordinary scientific methodologies, advocating for the Moon to be explored magically through natural laws and occult studies. Regarding the role of myth, all three texts positively convey the role of the Moon in the myths of different cultures, both ancient and modern. Finally, all three texts acknowledge to varying degrees the Moon’s negative side and influence, Agrippa at the lesser end of that scale in flagging only the Moon’s changeable, “lunatic” nature but Plutarch and Blavatsky at the upper end of that scale imparting the parasitic, vampiric and insidious nature of the Moon.

⁴⁴ Charles Webster Leadbeater, *The Inner Life Vol. II*, (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Press, 1942), p. 184.

Bibliography:

Agrippa, Heinrich Cornelius, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans. by Joseph H. Patterson, 2000: <http://www.esotericarchives.com/agrippa/agrippa1.htm>

Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna, *The Secret Doctrine, the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 2014): <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sd/sd-hp.htm>

Brunner, Bernd, *Moon: A Brief History*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 2010).

Hamilton, W., 'The Myth in Plutarch's De Facie (940F-945D)', *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Jan., 1934), pp. 24-30.

Judge, William Quan, 'Moon's Mystery and Fate', *William Q. Judge Theosophical Articles, Vol. I*: <http://www.blavatsky.net/index.php/moon-s-mystery-and-fate> accessed on 8th June, 2017.

Karamanolis, George, "Plutarch", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/plutarch/> accessed on June 10th 2017.

Leadbeater, Charles Webster, *The Inner Life Vol. II*, (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Press, 1942).

Plutarch, *Moralia* Vol. XII, trans. by Harold Cherniss and W. C. Helmbold (Harvard University: Loeb Classical Library, 1957).

Yates, Frances, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2010).

Sky and Water in Minnesota: A sky journal research report

by Jessica Heim

This paper explores the relationship between the sky and bodies of water in my home state of Minnesota, U.S.A. The aim of this research was to delve into the myriad ways in which the sky is reflected in the water and what it is like to be in this environment. Using a phenomenological approach, I regularly spent time by two bodies of water which I had a particular fondness for, recorded my observations, feelings and insights regularly during a three month summer period, and took many photographs of the water and sky. I then analyzed my findings in the context of literature discussing the value of this method of inquiry, that of immersing oneself in an experience of the sky and the natural world, giving particular attention to the writings of nineteenth century American transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. I found that experiencing the reflection of the sky on lakes and rivers, both during the day and at night, and in a variety of weather conditions, may allow one to not only feel a part of the environment in which one is immersed, but also to connect to past times, to those who have come before, and to the larger universe as well.

Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between sky and bodies of water in my home state of Minnesota and to consider the reflection of aspects of sky to be found in water. By reflecting the light and colors of the sky, lakes and rivers make the heavens more tangible, pulling them down to earth. This research, approached from a phenomenological perspective, involves reflection upon my own personal responses to experiencing the sky and water in various times of day and night and under differing weather conditions.

Academic Rationale

In *Walden*, nineteenth century American transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau reflects upon the two years (1845-1847) he spent living in a cabin he built outside Concord near Walden Pond.¹ In this work, Thoreau writes

¹ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, in *Walden and Civil Disobedience*, Introduction and Notes by Andrew S. Trees (New York: Barnes & Noble: 2012), pp. 1- 258.

extensively about his observations of nature and includes substantial commentary about his thoughts on Walden Pond and its reflections of its surroundings. Thus, in the tradition of Thoreau, my research aims to delve into the experiences, thoughts and reflections one may experience as a result of extended observation of sky and water.

Methodology

This research will utilize a phenomenological approach, as discussed by Christopher Tilley and Belden Lane.² It will draw upon my experiences with the sky and natural bodies of water in Minnesota, USA. The majority of my observations are of the Mississippi River and the sky as seen from my backyard in central Minnesota, though some are of a small lake by my grandma's house in northern Minnesota. As part of this research, I have kept a sky journal, in which I have written my thoughts on observations of the sky and water from June through August 2017. In addition, to provide a visual reference to this journal and to more comprehensively capture my experience in the field, I have taken photographs of the sky and water throughout this period. I made prints of my favourite images, placed them in a specially designated photo album, and selected those most relevant to this essay to include here.

Reflexive Considerations

I am a Caucasian woman, and the location which I have spent the most time for this research is an area where I have lived for most of my life (about three decades). Watching the changing reflections of the sky upon the water in various times of day, weather, and seasons is not a new experience for me. For as long as I can remember, I have enjoyed watching the play of light upon the water. What is new to me for this research is the more structured aspect it has given this pastime - the heightened focus of regularly writing about my experiences with this environment and of more intense reflection on what these experiences mean to me.

² Christopher Tilley , *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); Belden C. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*, Expanded edition (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 26.

Literature Review

Christopher Tilley has argued that a phenomenological approach is of much value in understanding the world and our relationship to it.³ Phenomenology is, as Belden Lane describes, a way of interacting with the world in which one 'listens to the place itself.'⁴ As Tilley elaborates, with a phenomenological approach, 'We experience and perceive the world because we live in that world and are intertwined within it. We are part of it, and it is part of us.'⁵ Aspects of the world which are typically seen as inanimate, such as stones, are seen to essentially have a sense of agency, as they influence one's consciousness.⁶ Tim Ingold also utilizes a phenomenological perspective to consider the nature of the sky and human perception of it. He observes that without air's transparent qualities, perception of sky, or anything at all, would be impossible.⁷ He considers the difficulty of defining 'sky,' but suggests, 'the sky is the kingdom of light, sound, and air.'⁸ Thus our perception of sky is influenced by the light we see, the sounds we hear, and the movement of air we feel.

Though Thoreau does not make use of terminology such as 'phenomenology,' he clearly values the importance of regularly being out in the world and experiencing it first hand - obtaining knowledge from books alone is not sufficient.⁹ As he observes, 'What is a course of history or philosophy . . . or the best society . . . compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen?'¹⁰ Thoreau explains why he went to live at Walden Pond. He says, 'I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately . . . and not, when I came time to die, discover that I had not lived . . . I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.'¹¹ In the course of 'living deep,' Thoreau makes

³ Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, p.31.

⁴ Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, p. 44.

⁵ Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, p. 2.

⁶ Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, p. 16.

⁷ Tim Ingold, 'Reach for the Stars! Light, Vision, and the Atmosphere,' in *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Darrelyn Gunzburg (Bristol, Connecticut: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016), p. 225.

⁸ Ingold, 'Reach for the Stars!' p. 231.

⁹ Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 86.

¹⁰ Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 86.

¹¹ Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 20.

extensive observations of the natural world around him and reflects on the significance of what he sees and experiences.

Similarly, astronomy enthusiast Fred Schaaf points out the importance of naked eye observation of the sky. He notes, 'the best way to learn them [the many features visible in the sky] is though your own personal, intimate discoveries of them. In the most ultimate sense, there is no true replacement for direct observation in astronomy.'¹² Like Thoreau, Schaaf makes the argument that direct personal experience with the world is essential for better understanding and appreciation of it.

Field Work and Discussion

Undertaking phenomenological research on the combination of water and sky in Minnesota seemed very appropriate. The name, 'Minnesota' is derived from the Dakota *Mni Sota Makoce*, translated as 'sky-tinted water' or 'the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds.'¹³ The state's nickname is 'Land of 10,000 Lakes' (there are actually 11,842) and the state motto is *l'étoile du nord* (star of the north).¹⁴ Given the ubiquitous presence of lakes, rivers and streams in the state, experiencing where the water meets the sky seemed like the perfect way to immerse oneself in a Minnesotan experience of sky.

A few points to note - first, I live on the west bank of the north-south flowing Mississippi River. Thus when I face the river, I face east. The same is true for my grandma's house – the sun and moon appear to rise above the lake. Also, area where I live is near a bend in the river where the river is unusually wide compared to its width just a few miles to the north or south. Due to this,

¹² Fred Schaaf, *The Starry Room: Naked Eye Astronomy in the Intimate Universe* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1988), p. 2.

¹³ Warren Upham, *Minnesota Place Names: a Geographical Encyclopedia*, 3rd edn (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), p. 4; Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce: the Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), p. 13.

¹⁴ Explore Minnesota Tourism, *Five Ways to Enjoy Minnesota's 10,000 Lakes*, <<http://www.exploreminnesota.com/travel-ideas/five-ways-to-enjoy-minnesotas-10000-lakes/>> [accessed 13 August 2017]; State of Minnesota, *State Motto*, <<https://mn.gov/portal/about-minnesota/state-symbols/flag.jsp>> [accessed 13 August 2017].

the opposite shore is quite distant, and it consequently, aside from the current, has more of the feel of being on a lake. In addition, I live several miles north of a medium sized city, thus for most of my life, the light pollution affecting the view of the sky at night was restricted to the southern part of the sky. My grandma lives in a very small town much further from larger population centers, hence, at her house, the sky is darker at night and is significantly less affected by light pollution.

Reflection, Light, and Perception

A central theme which repeatedly came up throughout this research was the idea of reflection. The water acts as a mirror which it reflects what is going on above it. As Thoreau muses, 'Walden is the perfect forest mirror . . . Sky water.'¹⁵ When the skies are blue, the Mississippi is a rich hue of marine blue (Fig. 4). During stormy weather, the water turns slate grey, even darker than the storm clouds above it (Fig. 5), and it is a wonderful reflector of the light of the rising sun and moon (Fig. 6). One morning, I photographed the rising sun, and the sun's image reflected in the water was blazingly bright! (Fig. 7) I thought of this experience when I read Thoreau's comment about watching the sun set above Walden Pond. He notes, 'you are obliged to employ both your hands to defend your eyes against the reflected as well as the true sun.'¹⁶ Similarly, the purples and pinks visible in the eastern sky at sunset are reflected upon the water (Fig. 8). As Thoreau observes, water is 'continually receiving new life from above,' as it reflects the quality and appearance of the air and sky which it lies beneath.¹⁷

¹⁵ Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 147.

¹⁶ Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 145.

¹⁷ Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 147.



*Figure 1: A sunny day in my backyard on the Mississippi River. 31 May, 2017, 3:31 p.m. .
Photo: Jessica Heim.*



Figure 2: An approaching storm in my backyard on the Mississippi River. 9 July, 2017, 8:47 p.m. . Photo: Jessica Heim.



*Figure 3: The rising moon from my backyard on the Mississippi River.
8 July, 2017, 9:30 p.m. . Photo: Jessica Heim.*



*Figure 4: Sunrise seen from my backyard on the Mississippi River.
8 June, 2017, 5:52 a.m. . Photo: Jessica Heim.*



***Figure 5: The colors of sunset: facing east in my backyard on the Mississippi River.
1 August, 2017, 8:50 p.m. . Photo: Jessica Heim.***

As beautiful as all these scenes are, the one that I found myself writing about with the most excitement was the sight of the light of the morning sun, once it has gained sufficient elevation, bouncing off the gently flowing water. As I wrote on the morning of 5 June, 'The light sparkling on the water is so beautiful, so magical... One cannot begin the day in a better way (Figs. 6 & 7).' Thoreau too, makes note of the play of light upon the water, noting, 'White Pond and Walden are great crystals on the surface of the earth, Lakes of Light.'¹⁸ To me, the light of the rising sun or moon makes the river appear as if it is covered in thousands of sparkling diamonds. This is made possible not only by the light of the celestial body, but also by the combination of a light breeze and slight current, which causes the water to move and thus the light to sparkle.

¹⁸ Thoreau, *Walden*, p.155.

Consequently, the air and sky are both acting upon the water which in turn reflects back these stimuli to the observer. Thus is it is not only that the environment and observer can act upon each other, or as Tilley describes, 'I touch the stone and the stone touches me,' but also that different parts of the environment interact with one another.

In addition, while I admired the light sparkling, reflecting off the water that morning, I realized that was not all that was sparkling. I 'noticed how the play of light was appearing not only on the water, but on the leaves of the huge cottonwood tree in our backyard. It looked like there were diamonds in the water as well as the tree.'¹⁹ This cottonwood tree is a tremendous presence in my backyard and its leaves rustle in the slightest breeze. I reflected further on cottonwood trees, noting, 'It's like they are connected to the sky in several ways - their leaves reflect the light of the sun, the wind makes this light move and sparkle (Fig. 8).'²⁰ The wind blowing the leaves not only results in a beautiful display of light, but of sound as well. As I described, 'I've always loved the sound of cottonwood leaves rustling in the wind. My dad (who passed away when I was in my early twenties) did too. He often commented on how he loved to hear the sound of the wind rustling the leaves of these trees. So when I hear this sound, fond memories of my dad always come to mind.'²¹ In describing the ideas of musicologist Victor Zuckerkandl, Ingold makes an observation quite pertinent to this scene, 'in opening our eyes and ears to the sky, vision and hearing effectively become one. And they merge with feeling, too, as we bare ourselves to the wind.'²² This perfectly describes my experience observing the sky, river, and environs. As I wrote shortly after a description of the interaction of light and wind upon the water and the cottonwood tree, 'Though I feel differently depending on the weather and time of day, one thing is consistent, the river makes me *feel*. I always feel more alive by it.'²³ Thus in being immersed in 'the kingdom of light, sound, and air' - seeing the light upon the water, hearing the leaves in the wind, and feeling the breeze against my skin

¹⁹ Jessica Heim, *Sky Journal*, June - August 2017, 5 June journal entry.

²⁰ Heim, *Sky Journal*, 10 June journal entry.

²¹ Heim, *Sky Journal*, 5 June journal entry.

²² Ingold, 'Reach for the Stars!' p. 231.

²³ Heim, *Sky Journal*, 5 June journal entry.

– in feeling these physically in my body, I feel, too, in the emotional sense of the word.²⁴



***Figure 6: Light of the morning sun sparkling on the Mississippi as seen from my backyard.
5 June, 2017, 11:39 a.m. . Photo: Jessica Heim.***

²⁴ Ingold, 'Reach for the Stars!' p. 231.



Figure 7: Light of the morning sun sparkling on the Mississippi with trees in the foreground, as seen from my backyard. 5 June, 2017, 11:50 a.m. . Photo: Jessica Heim.



***Figure 8: The Cottonwood tree in my backyard.
5 June, 2017, 11:40 a.m. . Photo: Jessica Heim.***

Time

Another theme which repeatedly surfaced in my reflections on my experience with the water and sky, was that of time and its connection to place. Particularly when observing the sky from my backyard and reflecting upon how I felt about it, I found that many memories of that same place from my childhood came to mind. As Alexandra Harris observes in her book about

weather in the lives and works of English writers and artists, 'Our weather is made up of personal memories and moods: an evening sky is full of other evenings.'²⁵ During this research, I frequently recalled time spent on or near the river with my dad (Fig. 9). As I recalled, 'We would sometimes boat up the river at night, to better enjoy the moonlight on the water (Fig. 10).'²⁶ Reflecting on watching the river in the morning, I noted, 'When I am looking at the morning light dancing as sparkles across the water, I could just as easily be five years old. It feels much the same to be with the sky, trees, and water as it did then.'²⁷ Thoreau similarly remarks upon such timelessness of a place, 'Why, here is Walden, the same woodland lake that I discovered so many years ago; . . . it is the same liquid joy and happiness.'²⁸ As he goes on to describe, 'I see by its face that it is visited by the same reflection; and I can almost say, Walden, is it you?'²⁹ Thus, by being immersed in a landscape which appears relatively constant over the years, one can, in a way, connect back to a past time.

²⁵ Alexandra Harris, *Weatherland: Writers & Artists Under English Skies* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015), p. 13.

²⁶ Heim, *Sky Journal*, 15 July journal entry.

²⁷ Heim, *Sky Journal*, 5 June journal entry.

²⁸ Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 150.

²⁹ Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 150.



Figure 9: Boating on the Mississippi River with my dad, June 1996. Photo: Sister Orlean Pereda.



***Figure 10: My dad and me boating on the Mississippi River at night.
Summer 1996? Photo: Sister Orlean Pereda.***

The idea of connecting to other times via sky observation also came up in another way during this research. When I observed the sky at night from the end of the dock (Fig. 11 - photograph taken during the day, since those I took at night did not turn out well) at my grandma's house, the sky was quite dark, many faint stars were easily visible, and the Milky Way stretched as a gigantic arch above me, from Sagittarius on the southern horizon, through Cygnus overhead, to Cassiopeia in the north. As I laid on my back at the end of the long

dock, essentially surrounded by the water around and beneath me and by the starry expanse above me, I pondered the idea that, even more than a lake or river, the view of the night sky can be seen as a relatively unchanging place. As I wrote that night, 'Sky is a primary source, which, when experienced as truly dark, can be experienced very similarly to how ancient people saw it. A way of connecting to the past and transcending time.'³⁰ Clive Ruggles, in a discussion about striving to comprehend the way past peoples viewed the world around them and their place in it, notes the value of the sky in this endeavour, as, 'unlike the rest of their perceived world, the sky is a part that we can visualize directly.'³¹ Thus by immersing oneself into a night-time environment such as this, one can connect more closely with the earth and sky as it was experienced long ago.

³⁰ Heim, *Sky Journal*, 24 July journal entry.

³¹ Clive Ruggles, *Ancient Astronomy: An Encyclopedia of Cosmology and Myth*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2005), p. xi.



Figure 11: My grandma's dock on the lake. 25 July, 2017, 10:21 a.m. Photo: Jessica Heim.

Darkness

When thinking about all the experiences I had with the sky, river, and lake at night this summer, the importance of darkness came to mind. For darkness at night is essential in order to continue to experience the wonder of the night sky, and in so doing, to feel a sense of connection to both those that have come before us and to the universe itself. As Tyler Nordgren points out, when we lose the night sky, 'we lose our place in the Universe' and 'a direct visible connection to our ancestors . . . In short, we lose a tangible link to ourselves that gives life meaning beyond the here and now.'³² In my journal, I reflected upon the loss of the night sky, recalling memories of 'Sitting on the dock with my dad - looking at the river as it grew dark. . . I remember my dad

³² Tyler Nordgren, *Stars Above, Earth Below: A Guide to Astronomy in the National Parks* (Chichester, UK: Praxis Publishing, 2010), p. 428.

telling me how when he and my mom had first moved here, the only light visible on the opposite shore of the river was a little green light . . . I would always ask him to point out that light to me. As time went on, more lights appeared, and he was no longer able to make out that light.³³ As frustrating as that was, it was relatively minor compared to the recent influx of bright white LEDs which are much more effective at obliterating the view of the stars. Though the daytime view of the sky and the Mississippi remains much the same as in years past, the night-time version has changed substantially, and it is no longer possible to see the stars reflected in the waters below. In not being able to experience a dark, starry sky, I have lost the ability (unless I drive a considerable distance to a remote area) to directly experience the night-time sky in the same way - it's akin to trying to experience what a forest is like after most of the trees have been cut down, the animals have left, and the understory plants have been trampled. Thoreau wrote in his journal, 'I should not like to think that some demigod had come before me and picked out some of the best of the stars. I wish to know an entire heaven and an entire earth.'³⁴ In my own sky journal, I found myself repeatedly expressing my frustration with the rapidly declining accessibility of the night sky and lamenting that if current trends continue, future generations will not 'know an entire heaven.' As astrophotographer Dietmar Hager argues, if people cannot see the stars, they will 'have no relationship with the sky.'³⁵ Consequently, something which has been a fundamental part of humans' experience on earth, their connection to the larger cosmos, will have been lost.

Final Thoughts

Though distinct themes can be found in my sky journal, I found that when immersed in the 'weather-world,' as Tilley terms it, all the diverse qualities of the elements around me are intertwined and inseparable.³⁶ When I

³³ Heim, *Sky Journal*, 15 July journal entry.

³⁴ Henry David Thoreau, *The Journal: 1837-1861 by Henry David Thoreau*, ed. by Damion Searls, Preface by John R. Stilgoe (New York: New York Review of Books, 2009), entry from March 23, 1856, p. 373.

³⁵ Dietmar Hager, 'Ethical Implications of Astrophotography and Stargazing,' in *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Darrelyn Gunzburg, pp. 305-318 (Bristol, Connecticut: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016), p. 307.

³⁶ Tim Ingold, 'Earth Sky, Wind, and Weather,' *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13 (2007), 19-38.

see the light of the sun or moon reflected on the water, I simultaneously feel the touch of the wind and note its effects on all that I see. At the same time, I can hear the water lapping at the shore and the call of a bird soaring overhead. Thus Tilley's understanding of sky as 'the kingdom of light, sound, and air,' perfectly encompasses the entirety of my experiences in this environment.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the intersection of water and sky using a phenomenological approach. The first theme discussed was how the water's reflection of the sky changes markedly based on time of day and weather, as well as how light and the movement of air affects not only the appearance of water, but the trees at its bank and an individual immersed in this environment. The idea of place and its relationship to time was also explored. As Tilley observes, memories are an integral part of one's experience and being in a place routinely can be seen as a series of 'biographic encounters.'³⁷ In addition, I found that viewing a dark, starry sky can serve as a means to connect one to both those who have come before and to the larger cosmos. The continued existence of dark night skies is essential in order to maintain this connection. In conclusion, to understand all facets of the relationship between sky and water, they must be able to be experienced in all conditions - in both stormy weather and fair, in both the brightness of the noontime sun and in night so dark that the stars and the Milky Way can be seen in the sky above and in the waters below.

³⁷ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), p. 27.

Bibliography

Explore Minnesota Tourism, *Five Ways to Enjoy Minnesota's 10,000 Lakes*, < <http://www.exploreminnesota.com/travel-ideas/five-ways-to-enjoy-minnesotas-10000-lakes/> > [accessed 13 August 2017].

Hager, Dietmar, 'Ethical Implications of Astrophotography and Stargazing,' in *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Darrelyn Gunzburg, pp. 305-318 (Bristol, Connecticut: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016).

Harris, Alexandra, *Weatherland: Writers & Artists Under English Skies* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015).

Heim, Jessica, *Sky Journal*, June - August 2017.

Ingold, Tim, 'Earth Sky, Wind, and Weather,' *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13 (2007), 19-38.

Ingold, Tim, 'Reach for the Stars! Light, Vision, and the Atmosphere,' in *The Imagined Sky: Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Darrelyn Gunzburg, pp. 215-233 (Bristol, Connecticut: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016).

Lane, Belden C., *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*, Expanded edn (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Nordgren, Tyler, *Stars Above, Earth Below: A Guide to Astronomy in the National Parks* (Chichester, UK: Praxis, 2010).

Ruggles, Clive, *Ancient Astronomy: An Encyclopedia of Cosmology and Myth*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2005).

Schaaf, Fred, *The Starry Room: Naked Eye Astronomy in the Intimate Universe* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1988).

State of Minnesota, *State Motto*, < <https://mn.gov/portal/about-minnesota/state-symbols/flag.jsp> > [accessed 13 August 2017].

Thoreau, Henry David, *Journal*, in *The Journal: 1837-1861 by Henry David Thoreau*, ed. by Damion Searls, Preface by John R. Stilgoe (New York: New York Review of Books, 2009).

Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden*, in *Walden and Civil Disobedience*, Introduction and Notes by Andrew S. Trees, (New York: Barnes & Noble: 2012), pp. 1- 258.

Tilley, Christopher, *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994).

Tilley, Christopher, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

Upham, Warren, *Minnesota Place Names: a Geographical Encyclopedia*, 3rd edn (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001).

Westerman , Gwen and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce: the Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012).

Can theurgy be considered a form of magic?

by *Elisabetta Castelli*

This paper examines the relationship between theurgy and magic in the ancient world. It discusses what theurgy and magic are, despite the former remaining somewhat an enigma to modern scholars and the latter being notoriously difficult to define. Ancient philosophers such as Iamblichus considered theurgy a way of life, representing 'Gods work' rather than 'Gods talk' while the attitude towards magic was at best ambiguous. It is argued that the relationship between theurgy and magic can only be analysed by comparing and contrasting the practices of each, rather than their respective philosophies. What emerges is that the level of intent of the practitioner is key in differentiating theurgy from the most commonly practiced magic, as well as the inner disposition and learning of the theurgist versus the magician.

Introduction

This paper explores the question of whether theurgy can be considered a form of magic. Theurgy, literally meaning 'gods work' or 'divine work,' in Greek *theourgia*, was embraced by prominent Neoplatonist philosophers over a period of some 300 years beginning with the Chaldaean Oracles (second or third century AD).³⁸ The Chaldaean oracles consisted of a compilation of mystical pagan oracles, which Neoplatonist philosophers such as Iamblichus (c. AD 245-c.325) and Proclus (AD 410/412-485) regarded as the sacred text of theurgy.³⁹

Iamblichus was perhaps the first Neoplatonist philosopher to expound theurgy as both a religion and philosophy, involving extensive ritual practices. For E.R. Dodds, theurgy was 'Magic applied to a religious purpose and resting on a supposed revelation of a religious character.'⁴⁰ Modern scholars like

³⁸ Addey, Crystal, Oracles, Dreams and Astrology in *Seeing with Different Eyes: Essays in Astrology and Divination*, ed. by Curry, Patrick, and Voss, Angela (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) ch.3, p.1.

³⁹ Dodds, E.R., Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol.37, Parts 1 and 2 (1947) p.55.

⁴⁰ Dodds, Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism, p.61.

Dodds have used terms like religion and magic to help define the scope of theurgy and its practices. The problem, as Gregory Shaw points out, is that theurgy still represents an enigma and scholars have tended to apply their cultural values to define the subject to fit neatly into their world view.⁴¹ The first part of this paper is dedicated to discussing what theurgy is, its aim, scope and practices.

The term magic is complex to define. According to Owen Davis, a social historian, defining magic 'is a maddening task.'⁴² Many scholars often appear to dismiss magic as an irrational manifestation of primitive societies and what appears to be the problem is that attempts to understand what magic is, are often confounded by the fact that the experience of magic falls outside the field of conscious/rational human experience.⁴³ Immanuel Kant commented that 'though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience,' and this exemplifies the difficulty in defining magic.⁴⁴ An inclusive definition of magic requires that meaning can be applied universally to different cultures and traditions, and Davis achieves this when he states that 'magic is far more than a venerable collection of practices. We need to understand it as a language, a theory, a belief, an action, a creative expression, an experience, and a cognitive tool.'⁴⁵ In the context of magic in antiquity all these factors may have been present and may explain their different usage, as well as, the various meanings ascribed to the term.

Part two of this paper will compare and contrast theurgy and magic with the aim of assessing their potential relationship. This essay mainly relies on Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis (DM)* as the main primary source on theurgy and seeks to clarify the debate as to whether theurgy was a form of magic through an

⁴¹ Shaw, Gregory, *Theurgy: Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus, Traditio*, Vol.41 (1985), p.3.

⁴² Davis, Owen, *Magic, A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Kindle Edition, p.1.

⁴³ Starck, Rodney, *Reconceptualizing Religion, Magic and Science, Review of Religious Research*, Vol.43, No.2, (Dec. 2001) p.102.

⁴⁴ Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Smith, N.K., (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) pp., 42-43.

⁴⁵ Davis, *Magic*, p. 111.

analysis of modern scholarly literature.⁴⁶ Because of the difficulty in encapsulating the term magic in a simple definition, and because the theory of magic remains inherently elusive despite the existence of fragments of ‘magical’ texts like the Chaldaean oracles, this paper will focus more on how theurgy differs from the more profane forms of magic.

What is theurgy?

According to Crystal Addey ancient philosophers considered theurgy ‘as a way of life or, strictly speaking, as a way of being, as well as a nexus of ritual practices.’⁴⁷ The emphasis on living and experiencing theurgy meant that it was unlike theology in the sense that it represented ‘God’s work’ rather than ‘Gods talk.’⁴⁸ Addey suggests that it was a life-long endeavour which was experiential, subtle, as well as mysterious.⁴⁹ Iamblichus states that theurgical questions ‘require experience of actions for their accurate understanding’ and that ‘it will not be possible to deal with adequately by words alone.’⁵⁰ The emphasis on experience suggested a way of life in which there was individual spiritual development, a type of development that was inner rather than outer since the goal of theurgy was the soul’s union with the divine. Addey adds that theurgy involved ‘a set of ritual practices alongside the development of ethical and intellectual capacities which aimed to use symbols to reawaken the soul’s pre-ontological causal connection with the gods,’ functioning mainly through divine love and ‘subordinately through cosmic sympathy’.⁵¹ If the goal of theurgy was the ascent of the soul to the divine, the means by which this could be achieved was through the purification of the intellect, the attainment of moral virtues and symbols made active through cosmic sympathy. Cosmic sympathy was however in turn rendered possible by divine love.

⁴⁶ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, Trans. Clarke, Emma C., et al. (Atlanta, USA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

⁴⁷ Addey, Crystal, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, (London & New York, Routledge, 2016) Kindle Edition, p.24.

⁴⁸ Shaw, Gregory, *Theurgy of the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1995) p.5; Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, Clarke Introduction p. XXIX.

⁴⁹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.24.

⁵⁰ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, 1.2-3.

⁵¹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.24.

Iamblichus stated that undefiled divine worship ‘brings the pure to the pure and the impassive to the impassive,’ suggesting the principle that “like attracts like.”⁵² Thus theurgic ritual involved the soul ascending to the gods rather than the gods descending to the human/natural realm.⁵³ It is also perhaps, as Gregory Shaw argues, one of the reasons why Iamblichus has often been misunderstood by modern scholars since post enlightenment culture is more attuned with the idea that the Gods reach down to men rather than vice versa.⁵⁴ The question of ascent and descent of the gods is important when comparing theurgy to magic since the latter, according to James Frazier, often involved manipulating or constraining the gods to do the will of the *goes* or sorcerer, while the theurgist invoked the epiphany or manifestation of the gods. Iamblichus called the *goes* bidding of the gods a ‘transgression’ that reflected ‘the audacity of men.’⁵⁵

Although it was humans that performed theurgic rites, Shaw observes that ‘...it was the gods who directed the work’ through a subordination of human will to divine will.⁵⁶ Subordination suggests an abandonment of individual will to serve something greater and it can be inferred from this that for the theurgists humanity was composed of two natures, one that potentially sought to ascend to or reach the gods while the other descended or was attracted to matter. In fact, Iamblichus seemed to believe that this duality was caused by the damage the soul encountered on its descent into the material world, which would explain the dual attraction to what is above and what is below. According to Iamblichus, theurgy was the only means by which the soul could return towards God.⁵⁷

⁵² Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, 1.11.

⁵³ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, IV.10.

⁵⁴ Shaw, *Rituals of Unification*, p.3.

⁵⁵ Frazier James, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, (New York: MacMillan, 1922). pp.65-68; Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, IV.10.

⁵⁶ Shaw, *Rituals of Unification*, p.1.

⁵⁷ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, Clarke, Emma et al. Introduction, p. xxvii.

The cosmology and practice of theurgy

The cosmology of theurgy was based, according to Iamblichus, on three principles which included *philia* (divine love), the Platonic derived concept of *sympatheia* (universal or cosmic sympathy) and *symbola* (symbols).⁵⁸ It was, however, divine love that caused cosmic sympathy, and cosmic sympathy, in turn, charged the symbols used in theurgic rituals with divine meaning. Divine love permeated all things binding them together to form sympathetic connections that were 'activated' through symbols. Thus, according to Proclus 'the wise men of old brought together various things down here with their heavenly counterparts, and brought down Divine Powers into this mortal place, having drawn them down through similarity (*homoiôtêtos*).'⁵⁹ Proclus suggested that through the agency of *sympatheia* all 'things are full of Gods', and what connected the gods to theurgic rituals were the symbols or what Proclus called the physical expression of 'divine chains.'⁶⁰ The symbols could be anything in nature like stones and plants and could also be a physical object (like a statue) in sympathy with a particular god and include what Iamblichus refers to as secret names of the gods or "barbarian names"⁶¹. The latter were non-Greek words invoked during theurgic rituals, but which could also be inscribed on cultic statues (*telestika*) and other talismans.

Was theurgy a form of magic?

The meaning of the term magic cannot be separated from the context of culture and scholars, as already stated, are not unanimous on its definition.⁶² Thus, it is more straightforward to focus on some of the practices of magic and how these potentially compare and contrast with theurgy. The Greek word for a range of magical practices was *goeteia* (sorcery), and these included spells, curses and the making of amulets as well as other practices more associated with sorcery. The usage of the term *goetitia* was however ambiguous even in

⁵⁸ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, 1.12, 4.3, 4.9.

⁵⁹ Proclus, *On the Sacred Art*,

<http://www.brynmawr.edu/classics/redmonds/645w12.html>, (accessed 08/07/2017), p.3.

⁶⁰ Proclus, *On the Sacred Art*,

<http://www.brynmawr.edu/classics/redmonds/645w12.html>, (accessed 08/07/2017) pp.3-4.

⁶¹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, pp.114-115.

⁶² Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, pp. 31-32.

antiquity because a distinction was made and often a judgemental attitude taken, whether implicit or explicit, between the different forms that magic took. Iamblichus in *DM* was concerned with distinguishing theurgy from the more vulgar *goeteia* and says of the latter that 'there are some who overlook the whole procedure of contemplation...they disdain the order of the sacred observance, its holiness and long protracted endurance of toils.'⁶³ What Iamblichus indicated was that in contrast to theurgy, *goeteia* lacked a right attitude towards the divine, potentially questioning the purity of intent of the *goes* or sorcerer.

Not just Iamblichus, but also some modern scholars like Addey and Shaw focus on separating theurgy from the commonly practiced and basic magical ceremonies of the time, going against the consensus which saw little difference between *goeteia* and theurgy.⁶⁴ According to Addey, theurgic rituals were old and derived mainly from the religious traditions of Greece, Egypt and Babylon rather than from magical techniques practiced at the time.⁶⁵ Georg Luck believes that compared to magic, 'theurgy was supposed to be grander, more exalted, full of deep religious feeling.'⁶⁶ Two themes emerge from these observations and, will be discussed below. The first concerns the question of intent behind the practice of magic versus theurgy and the second focuses attention on the possibility that there are different levels of magic to which theurgy was potentially a higher form.⁶⁷

Similar to magic, theurgic rituals were performed by human beings but what theurgy stressed was that it was the gods who directed the rituals and controlled the symbols.⁶⁸ Thus, the ceremony involved the subordination of the person performing the ritual to divine will.⁶⁹ Iamblichus stated, 'and do not furthermore compare the clearest visions of the gods to the images produced artificially by magic,' once again distancing *goeteia* from theurgy.

⁶³ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, 3.13.

⁶⁴ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, pp.31-40; Shaw, *Rituals of Unification*, pp.1-28.

⁶⁵ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.32.

⁶⁶ Flint, V., Gordon, R., Luck, G. and Ogden, D., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), p.149.

⁶⁷ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, pp.33-34.

⁶⁸ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, IV 2-3.

⁶⁹ Shaw, *Rituals of Unification*, p.1.

Addey observes that there are three substantial differences between magic and theurgy. The first has to do with the receptivity and way of life of the person practicing theurgy, the second relates to the use of symbols that contain divine love and sympathy and the third, that the capacities of the theurgists are gifts from the gods.⁷⁰ The question of the intent of the person practicing theurgy was important since according to Addey, theurgy 'focused on an intellectual or spiritual turning upwards' or what Iamblichus states as a 'procedure of effective contemplation.'⁷¹ The intent of the theurgist versus the magician was critical in differentiating the two practices. In antiquity, the term magic attracted a negative reputation mainly due to its ubiquity and the associated qualitative decline of its practice.

The separation from religion and the commonplace nature of its activity, suggest that magic was not truly comparable to the uncontaminated/pure aspect of theurgic ritual that was defended by Iamblichus.⁷² The unfair trial against the philosopher Apuleius (c.124 AD – c.170 AD) for purportedly practicing magic to bewitch into marriage the wealthy widow Pudentilla, was a perfect example of the mundane or banal level to which magic was held accountable.⁷³ What the Apuleius case suggests is that the authorities were concerned about the spreading of magic outside the boundaries of official religion and that its practice was potentially considered self-serving, as well as, a means of preying on the weak and gullible.

The theurgist was required to be receptive and ritual practice demanded an inner/spiritual preparation, and as already stated a pure motivation or intent. Addey suggests that the theurgist had to make his or her 'soul as similar as possible to the upper, divine realms, by assimilating himself or herself to the purity and eternal nature of the gods.'⁷⁴ Contemplative practices allowed the theurgist to develop receptivity but what was also important to reach the divine realms was intellectual purification. Here lies perhaps one of the significant

⁷⁰ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.34.

⁷¹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.34; Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, 3.13.

⁷² Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, II. 10-11, 11.

⁷³ <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/apuleius/>, accessed 09/07/2017.

⁷⁴ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.26.

differences between magic and theurgy, the fact that theurgy stresses the development of intellectual capacities for the ascent of consciousness to take place. The final goal of the theurgist was *anagoge* or the raising of the soul to the *nous* or pure mind, and according to Iamblichus only a theurgist who was also a philosopher could attain this.

The importance of metaphysical and intellectual knowledge was suggested by Iamblichus when he stated, 'Effective union never takes place without knowledge...but divine union and purification actually go beyond knowledge.'⁷⁵ The emphasis on learning as the means by which the soul can ascend to higher realms distinguishes common forms of magic from theurgy, and also suggests the existence of a class (social) divide between practitioners of both disciplines. Luck observes that Neoplatonist philosophers who were also priests and practiced theurgy were different from ordinary street magicians and diviners, stating that they were 'more priest like figures than the ordinary *magos*.'⁷⁶ There seems to have been a clear intellectual, as well class distinction, between those who practiced theurgy and those who practiced magic.

Addey's second and third distinctions between theurgy and *goeteia* relate to the belief in cosmic sympathy and that theurgic ability was given to humanity by the gods. As Iamblichus states 'The whole of theurgy presents a double aspect. On the one hand, it is performed by men, and as such observes our natural rank in the universe; but on the other, it contains divine symbols, and in virtue of them is raised up to union with the higher power.'⁷⁷ This double aspect is important since it suggests, as Shaw points out, that all theurgical activity was vertical with the aim of lifting human souls up to the gods through using symbols whose identities were horizontal (in nature/material), but imbued with cosmic sympathy or a divine cause.

The importance of the relationship with a divine cause was what potentially also differentiated *goeteia* from theurgy, and Emma Clarke observes that magic mainly operated within the confines of nature manipulating and exploiting natural forces rather than 'demonstrating the causative power

⁷⁵ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, 2.11.

⁷⁶ Flint, V., Gordon, R., Luck, G. and Ogden, D., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), p.149.

⁷⁷ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, IV 2-3.

behind and beyond them.’⁷⁸ In this context, Dodd’s comparison of the sacred rites of theurgy to modern spiritualist phenomena is questionable since there is little evidence to support the view that theurgy attempted to control the gods and fate through ritual practice. This leads to a final question raised by scholars, which is can magic be divided into a higher and lower form? And on this basis, can theurgy be regarded as a higher form of magic?⁷⁹

Since many of the theurgic rituals involving oracles, prayer, and sacrifice originated from the polytheistic religions of ancient Greece, Egypt, and Babylon, Dodds argues that theurgy can be considered a higher form of magic.⁸⁰ Some of the ritual techniques used by theurgy derived from mystery cults such as that of Pythagoras who employed both symbols and aphorisms in ritual ceremonies.⁸¹ Furthermore, the manufacture of ‘magical statuettes of gods’ was not a monopoly of the theurgist but was a practice widespread in ancient Egypt. Therefore, if all ritual was magical, then theurgic ritual was as Dodds says, ‘magic applied to a religious purpose,’ rather than vulgar magic which primarily served a profane end.⁸² Dodds considers that the charging of statues and divinatory practices were magical acts, and it is a compelling argument. Theurgic rituals involved practices that could be considered forms of magic measured against Davis’ inclusive definition of the term, mentioned in the introduction, which stressed the experience, the creative expression, the action, and belief of magic.⁸³ However, beyond the actual practices themselves, which raise more questions than answers, the key was the disposition and intent of the practitioner. The motivation of the practitioner was perhaps the only clear and net separation that existed between theurgy and magic.

Conclusion

This paper examined the question of whether theurgy could be considered a form of magic. The difficulty in establishing a connection between the two lies

⁷⁸ Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, Clarke, Emma, Introduction, xxvii.

⁷⁹ Shaw, *Rituals of Unification*, p.61-62 ; Sheppard, Anne, Proclus’ Attitude to Theurgy, *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol.32, No.1, (1982), pp. 212-224; Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, pp.38-39.

⁸⁰ Dodds, *Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism*, p.55.

⁸¹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, p.32.

⁸² Dodds, *Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism*, p.63.

⁸³ Davis, *Magic*, p.111.

in the elusive nature of the term magic, and also in the fact that theurgy, despite dedicated texts, remains a mysterious subject. As an esoteric discipline that stressed inner spiritual development, theurgy needed to be experienced to be understood. Therefore, it meant different things to initiates of theurgy compared to outside observers. From an outsider's perspective, some parallels can be drawn between the rituals engaged by both theurgists and magicians.

It is possible to suggest that theurgic rituals using statues, divination, oracles, amulets, words and prayers, and sacrifice were also the tools of magicians practicing both inside and outside the context of a particular religion. What differentiates the two are the inner disposition, the learning and the intent of the theurgist versus the magician. The problem is one of meaning since the term magic remains difficult to define across cultures. Mystery can breed faith, but also doubt and suspicion and in the ancient world the disassociation of magic from religion was perhaps incremental in giving magic a negative reputation.

Theurgy was a lifelong endeavour or as Shaw observes a 'lifelong labor,' which consisted of a process of inner development that potentially led to the ascent of consciousness to the divine realm.⁸⁴ It was more than a philosophy since it was experiential and could not be intellectually understood. Ritual served to link the divine and the material through 'chains' of cosmic sympathy. Magic, and in particular, *goeteia* separated from religion could be viewed as a vulgar expression of a profane science where the practitioner manipulated forces that were not linked to divine causes. Thus, magic stripped of religious context does not seem comparable to theurgy, although magic practiced in the context of mystery cults or within the confines of religious practice may well correspond to types of theurgic ritual. In the end, the question of whether theurgy was a kind of magic depends on the form of magic under analysis, the context in which it was practiced, and the motivation of the practitioner. Iamblichus stressed this last point beyond all others in differentiating the theurgist from the sorcerer.

Lastly, the double aspect of theurgy combining a vertical and horizontal activity that fed on each other to ascend the soul towards god makes it different from magic or *goeteia* whose aim was often to gain practical/material goals. Seen as such, theurgy was an esoteric discipline in which the spiritual predominated.

⁸⁴ Shaw, *Rituals of Unification*, p.22.

The same cannot be said for *goeteia* whose primary concern was the attainment of tangible results.

Bibliography

Addey, Crystal, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism*, (London & New York, Routledge, 2014) Kindle Edition.

Addey, Crystal, Oracles, Dreams and Astrology in *Seeing with Different Eyes: Essays in Astrology and Divination*, ed. by Curry, Patrick and Voss, Angela (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) Ch.3, pp.35-58.

Athanassiadi, Polymnia, Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol.83 (1993), pp. 115-130.

Davis, Owen, *Magic, A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Kindle Edition.

Dodds, E.R., Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol.37, Parts 1 and 2 (1947) pp. 55-69.

Flint, V., Gordon, R., Luck, G. and Ogden, D., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999).

Frazier, James, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, (New York: MacMillan, 1922).

Johnston, Sarah Iles, Riders in the Sky: Cavaliers and Theurgic Salvation in the Second Century A.D., *Classical Philology*, Vol.87, No.4 (Oct., 1992), pp.303-321.

Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, Trans. Clarke, Emma C., et al. (Atlanta, USA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Smith, N.K., (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007)

Merlan, Philip, Plotinus and Magic, *Isis*, Vol.44, No.4 (Dec. 1953), pp.341-348

Proclus, *On the Sacred Art*, <http://www.brynmawr.edu/classics/redmonds/645w12.html>, (accessed 08/07/2017)

Shaw, Gregory, Theurgy: Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus, *Traditio*, Vol.41 (1985), pp.1-28.

Shaw, Gregory, *Theurgy of the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1995).

Sheppard, Anne, Proclus' Attitude to Theurgy, *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol.32, No. 1 (1982), pp. 212-224.

Starck, Rodney, Reconceptualising Religion, Magic and Science, *Review of Religious Research*, Vol.43, No.2, (Dec. 2001) pp. 101-120.

Versnel, H.S., Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion, *Numen*, Vol.38n Fasc. 2 (Dec., 1991), pp.177-197.

The papers in SPICA were written by students of the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, as partial requirement for the attainment of the degree

MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology

offered by the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture located within the school of Archaeology, History and Anthropology.

The MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology is a unique course which deals with the ways in which human beings attribute meaning to the planets, stars and sky, and construct cosmologies which provide the basis for culture and society. There is no need to live in the UK to study this MA. Much of our work is historical but we are equally concerned with contemporary culture and lived experience. If you are interested in the way we use the sky to create meaning and significance then the Centre may be the best place for you to study. By joining the Sophia Centre you enter a community of like-minded students whose aim is to explore humanity's relationship with the cosmos.

'The work of the Centre is as broad as possible and the MA syllabus is ground-breaking, unique and innovative. We study the many ways in which human beings endow the cosmos with value and use the sky as a theatrical backdrop to tell stories and create meaning.'

- Dr Nicholas Campion, Director of the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture.

Inquiries and further information:

Dr Nick Campion at n.campion@tsd.ac.uk.

