The Unthought of Modernity

Magical Thinking in Science, Philosophy, and Theology

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Abstract

The modernity of the West has generally tended to construct the relation between magic and religion according to a developmentalist schema, chiefly as a movement from the primitive to the modern, from superstition to enlightenment. However, recent developments in the study of religion, intellectual history, critical theory, as well as theology demonstrate that such a dualism might be unsustainable. The persistence of the magical into the discourses of modernity (e.g., science, philosophy, and theology) undermines any framing narrative of this sort. In this essay, which serves as an introduction to a special section in *Religion & Theology* on magic, science, philosophy, and theology, I put forward both a descriptive and constructive account as to why the construct of "magic," in the words of Randall Styers, may be considered "the unthought of modernity."

Keywords

magic – modernity – philosophy – science – theology – causality

1 Playing the Trump Card

The psychic upheaval unleashed after Donald Trump's election did more than animate the already-existing polarisation within the American culture-wars. In the chthonic regions of Web 2.0, it reignited what Egil Asprem has dubbed "the magical theory of politics."[1] On 16 February 2017, the occultist Michael Hughes published a text via the online platform *Medium* entitled "A Spell to Bind Donald Trump," and set off what eventually would come to be called *#MagicResistance* or *#BindTrump*, a movement covered in popular media and energised by the social capital of celebrities like the singer-songwriter Lana Del Ray. This occult resistance to the advent of Trumpian politics in turn instigated a pro-Trump reaction, especially amongst members of the reconstituted Golden Dawn. The development of so-called "meme magic" within online com-

munities, associated with Reddit, 4chan, and 8chan, also galvanised a "post-ironic" theopoetics and virtual subculture linked to the totemic signifier of Pepe the Frog; this movement later – recircuited by the gaming culture of *World of Warcraft* as well as tenuous associations with Egyptian mythology – became centred around the amphibian deity of Kek, complete with online liturgies parodying Christianity.[2] These digital exercises in Durkheimian "collective effervescence" are often self-consciously placed within a right-wing Gramscianism; that is, they are subcultures seeking to destabilise the framing conceits of "the metapolitical" through online bombardment, memefication, and trolling, rather than through traditional avenues of political diatribe. Herein, *meme magic* becomes what Asprem calls a "weaponized social epistemology"[3] that seeks to transform analogue reality through the deployment of disinformation tactics.

But in many ways, this form of explicit magical practice was simply the unconcealment of magical assumptions present throughout popular culture and politics: from the "glamour" of fashion, the "fetishisation" of branding, to economic "forecasting," cultural theorists have alerted us to the ways that magical discourse continues to permeate "modern" society.[4] Trump himself has been labelled as a preeminent "trickster" politician who charismatically embodied the inherent contradictions of unfettered capitalism, simultaneously embodying an extreme form of deregulated market theory, while also promoting solidarity with its economic victims.[5] The name "Trump" exhibits a certain magical aura as well, with its mere invocation, for some, betokening a kind of preternatural success, even as it remains connected to an affective economy of "enjoyment" and masochistic attachment.[6]

This trajectory towards a magical theorisation of the socio-political once more demonstrates the limitations of the secularisation thesis.[7] Anthropologists have stressed that, according to the canons of Mauss and Malinowski, many of our reflexive cultural habits are structurally analogous to magic. Indeed, magical discourse penetrates all levels of our social and economic operations.[8] The fact that the increase in magical discourse is happening, even amongst the religiously non-affiliated, tells us that secularity does not remove intimations of transcendence, or effectively erase the magical.[9] It also gives lie to one of the conceits of modernity that the modern gains ascendence as the magical declines. For various reasons, this is not a sustainable description of where we have come from and where we find ourselves within our "Western" modernity. For what the above intimates is that, maybe, "we" have never

really been modern at all.[10] Modernity in fact continues to create the magical.[11] For as Bruno Latour has argued, modernity was constructed on a dualism between nature and culture, the social and the scientific, transcendence and immanence. And so modernity has, by and large, attempted to police these borders and construct artificial barriers, even as such formal distinctions are not sustainable in practice, for continuously there is the creation of hybrids, of mediations between the natural and the artificial. The relation between magic and modernity is similar: scientific modernity has attempted to banish magic, within a construct of historical developmentalism, and tries to deny the persistence of hybridity and the continuance of the magical. However, despite these attempts at banishment, moderns continue to create magic: one is reminded of Ludwig Wittgenstein's discarded comment in his *Remarks on Frazer's The Golden Bough* that "canceling out magic has the character of magic itself."[12] The story of disenchantment and the purported departure from myth has the structure of a fairy-tale, a mythology which the moderns repeat regarding their origins.[13] For the narrative of disenchantment is analogous to the flight of the fairies, recounted in folklore at the dawn of the industrial era. Inspired by these myths of a mythless society, many theorists after Max Weber have said that we live in an age of *Entzauberung*. But we have cause to be suspicious of such a narrative. For as Latour has said, in a statement widely disseminated in the critical theory of magic, "Do not trust those who analyze magic. They are usually magicians in search of revenge."[14] The ritual of banishment, as we know, is one of the oldest tricks in the book.

2 "Magic" and "the Moderns"

Attempts to define "magic" are as old as Plato, and the implicit ambiguity of its reference begins already at this point where "magic" enters philosophical discourse.[15] Originally, the term μαγεία was used as an approbative term by Xenophon and Herodotus against the Medes and their religious practice; for them, a *magus* was a member of the Persian tribe or a practitioner of Zoroastrian religion. In *The Persians*, one of the early plays of Aeschylus, "magic" is correlated with the first usage of the term *barbarian*, thus instituting one of the mainstays of the philosophy of magic throughout history, namely, as a counterfoil to "religious" practice and an identity marker for "our" religion versus "foreign" deviations.[16] In Plato, μαγεία may be defined more positively as θεόν θεραπεία ("worship of the gods") in *Alcibiades* 1 120e–122c, or with a distinctly negative slant as φαρμακεία in *Laws* 933c–e, with those practicing sorcery (γοητεία) being accused of blasphemy (ασέβεια). The amphiboly of "magic" thus

has a long history: for example, is magic finally about "submission," that is, the ordering of oneself within a hierarchy of higher powers, or about "control," the seeking of power for oneself? This distinction will continue to be used, most famously in the categorical pivoting between the axis of "religion" and "magic" within the history of religious studies and theology, usually refracted through the developmental narrative which seeks to chart the evolution of religion and culture beyond the alleged 'primitivism' of magic.

Pliny the Elder[17] already gives us a developmental narrative of how Rome moved beyond the magical and monstrous rites of old; texts such as these suggest that our constructs of passing beyond the magical are not so "modern" after all and in fact are replayed again and again throughout history – as a form of sociological "othering" for instance. This can be seen within the history of Christian theology, but also within the domains of cultural anthropology, philosophy of religion, and religious studies. In this regard, Randall Styers – particularly in relation to religious studies and anthropology – has shown that various attempts to reify magic have been done by juxtaposing magic precisely as a counterfoil to "the modern".[18] Such modernity is of course not value neutral but often colonialist, capitalist, and Protestant. Adopting the developmental and positivist approach of the Marquis de Condorcet and Auguste Comte, anthropologists of religion such as E.B. Tylor and James Frazer constructed a trajectory of movement from the magical, through the religious, to the scientific. This evolutionary structure was beneficial to colonial and capitalist expansionism, since it could be applied to indigenous populations, with the implicit assumption of the backwardness of "magical practices," thereby buttressing the moral rights of the "civilising mission." This was often despite the fact that local cultures and dialects, like in South Africa,[19] did not have distinct terms for "magic" or "witchcraft," but were constructed through a process of colonialist translation – as in seen in biblical vernacularisation.[20] However, to complicate this picture even further, this process of "scripturalization" – as already pointed out by Olaudah Equiano in the eighteenth century – can be seen as the operation of "white man's magic", a kind of 'fetishizing' orientation by which colonial societies organised themselves and the colonial other.[21] Indeed, "modernity" – and its economic correlate of capitalism – can be read as a process of magical operation, even as it forms an attempt to dispel any occult presence within nature.

For if magic transcends the *Gestell* of capitalist technicity, then this also will have to be extirpated, since the reality of unseen and hidden forces undermines the idea that nature herself may be regulated as a perpetual "standing-reserve."[22] This is despite the fact that capitalism, as we saw earlier, continues to operate within magical frameworks, so that all of this can be read as a kind of deployment of what Styers calls "countermagic," an attempt to deny the

interpenetration of the material world and immaterial agencies. And so he writes: "While the logic of modernity seeks to impose stark boundaries among the psychological, the sociopolitical, and the material, magic works instead to disrupt those boundaries, to affirm the complex ways in which these realms interpenetrate one another." It demonstrates how "[d]esire is constitutive of all human signification, meaning, and behavior," and how "human subjectivity plays a formative role both within the array of circumstances to be transformed and as a causal force contributing to transformation."[23] It is this imposition of duality, and the denial of continual mediations and interpenetrations, that makes magic "the 'unthought' of modernity".[24] Styers shows that the persistent attempt to define "magic" over-against "religion" and "science" continually reveals these dualistic tendencies that have proved unstable under a careful analysis of material and textual history, both as regards the history of religion and science. The "occult" origins of religious studies, and its connection to "rational" scientific inquiry, is slowly beginning to drift into the self-awareness of the guild, showing that one cannot separate a discipline from its historical and semantic context.[25] A similar history could be recounted for modern philosophy as well.[26]

3 From Homeric Gods to Quantum Particles: Science as "Magical" Discourse?

The cultural and pragmatic overdetermination of the scientific and empirical, as indicated by Latour and Styers, was already anticipated by the likes of Willard van Orman Quine, who in his seminal text on the two dogmas of empiricism[27] – that is, the so-called analytic-synthetic distinction and the principle of reduction – argued already how physical theories of the world are pragmatic adjustments that involved a blending of empirical observation and the system of beliefs that overdetermine them. In practice, there is never a hardened separation between analytic judgements according to *a priori* definitions or synthetic judgements according to *a posteriori* discovery. The meaning and inferences we import to empirical observations are always determined by the cultural deposits and linguistic communities in which we are actors – including scientists. Such undermines any uncomplicated theory of reference which asserts a correspondence between naked reality and human interpretation. One of the implications this argument had for Quine was that the discourse of "physical objects" or something like "irrational numbers" only have purchase to degree that they exist already within a system of interconnecting assumptions and theories about the world (e.g., the existence of rational numbers). Surd elements within the system can often be explained away or adjusted through a redefinition of terms. This leads Quine to suggest that "physical objects" or

"irrational numbers" have a quasi-mythical status insofar as they serve a function within a web of beliefs that attempt to explain our observations. Quine compares such "myths" to belief in the Homeric gods: even though physical theories are better pragmatically at projecting scientific and experimental outcomes, they belong to the same qualitative register as mythical beings or occult forces.[28] Their difference is only of qualitative degree, not radical distinction. The interplay between socio-cultural forces and what counts as "science" has also been taken up by the likes of Paul Feyerabend[29] as well as in Shapin and Schaffer's seminal text *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*,[30] showing that the distinctions between "nature" and "culture" are practically unsustainable. In this vein, new genealogies of science have been put forward that seek to narrativise their continuing interpenetration throughout history.[31]

John Milbank for instance has argued that the mechanistic image of science was largely the project of a certain theological response to the threat of pantheism, which he links broadly to a "disenchanted transcendence" that sought to dualistically relate physics and metaphysics, here against a Christian Neoplatonist tradition that paradoxically related the infinite and the finite through ontological participation and creative effulgence. Through a genealogical tracing of the concept of "ergetic knowledge," Milbank demonstrates that there has been a substantial metaphysical tradition, found in early moderns such as Giambattista Vico and Nicholas of Cusa, as Eriugena before them, that asserted the inseparability of making and knowing, of the artificial and the natural, inspired by the fundamental trinitarian insight that God knows Godself through an eternal act of self-generation and self-spiration. Thus, there is no truth without artifice. The real is also the made – eternally so, even within God.[32] This gives forth to a renewed natural philosophy – a central topic of a recent volume edited by Peter Harrison, John Milbank, and Paul Tyson.[33] The scientific implications of this should be noted: echoing Latour, there is no "science" apart from the network of relations that occur between various actors and local constructs of experimentation, which thereafter are generalised and conjectured as universally applicable. This itself is a kind of magical process. For as Latour says, "If magic is the body of practice which gives certain words the potency to act upon "things," then the world of logic, deduction, and theory must be called "magical": but it is *our* magic."[34] And this generalisability always remains something of an informed conjecture, because the most one can say is that under certain conditions, with a certain observer and particular equipment and set of relations, these results have been observed, recorded, and thereby projected as generic results. However, we cannot assume that such results have always and will always be the case: for as theoretical physicists like Lee Smolin have suggested,[35] as well as biologists like Rupert Sheldrake,[36] the

laws of nature themselves maybe be the products of natural habit, rather than mechanical necessity. Moreover, the anarchic conclusions of quantum physics and entanglement (especially in the Copenhagen interpretation[37]) suggest that things are connected across incomprehensible distances of time and space, in violation of general relativity. Here it might be worth remembering that Plotinus, who probably gave the first general theory of magic, thought that the magical was predicated on the natural sympathy and enchantment between like and like, all connected through a universal harmony within the All.[38] It is this picture of sympathetic magic that would lay the foundation for the revival of natural magic among Renaissance philosophers like Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola.[39] However, the discoveries of quantum mechanics and entanglement might tell us today that such strange sympathy may exist across space and time, between the conscious workings of mind and the movements of the cosmos. Indeed, there are things like "spooky action at a distance," as Albert Einstein infamously *denied*.

4 Causality as "Spooky" Action

But maybe all causation is a kind of spooky action. For what indeed is the relation between cause and effect? The ancients and medievals thought that, in general, every agent causes something similar to itself.[40] But what is the nature of causation, of the relation of the cause to the caused? Post-Humean philosophy, of course, has puzzled over this whole question, and Leibniz's influential theory of causation as "sufficient reason", while widely accepted, has also been deconstructed as lacking logical "sufficiency" for its own deployment. For to say that the relation of A to B can always, potentially, be reconstructed through the logical syllogism is to invoke the spectre of logic's own limits. For would this law of sufficiency not also require its own causal explanation, and so on *ad infinitum*? Would we not here have an *a posteriori* judgement of sufficiency disguised as a transcendental *a priori*? Since Kurt Gödel, the prospect of giving "complete" logical reconstructions, without remainder, has also been curtailed drastically – and with it any uncritical deployment of the principle of sufficient reason. Moreover, it seems in fact that within every causal act lies the mystery of the whole relation between cause and effect, since every act of causation betokens a kind of emergence: every cause exceeds its effect even as every effect exceeds its cause. As Milbank writes:

> every cause exceeds its effect and every effect its cause – for the *aitia*, or "sufficient ground of donation," really indicates a mutation whereby it is the case that both an original something stays the same and yet something emanatively new, something else, emerges. Everything is fun-

> damentally *modal*, such that essence cannot be thought apart from its modes or "ways" of expression, nor the individual thing apart from the individual "ways" in which it has come to be ... If cause were only the mechanical impact of one thing on another, then (as with the case of motion broken up into a series of fully actual phases not being any longer motion) there would be no causality, only an inexplicable occasioning, since any force passing over into a new condition is really the original force transfigured. All real causation then paradoxically involves a transgression of causal priority ... The cause neither reaches nor touches its effect, nor does not do so (as with the candle and its flame), rendering what we soothe ourselves by naming "cause" in fact an incomprehensible, but everyday, magical effect.[41]

The chief philosopher of Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, knew something of this. In his pre-critical text *The Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics* (1766), Kant had articulated an early formulation of his later critical project in which metaphysics is identified with *the limits of human reason*.[42] Kant's "anti-cabbala" is concerned with undercutting Emmanuel Swedenborg's allegorical and spiritualist philosophy, which he saw as being inaccessible to public reason. But similarly, after Hume, Kant thinks that the metaphysical concept of "causation" cannot simply be deduced from empirical observation: some may, he says, "think that the eel of science can be caught by the tail" so that "if enough empirical cognitions are acquired, they may then gradually ascend to higher general concepts."[43] But this empiricism *a posteriori* precisely cannot give us the transcendental concept of causality. Kant will later in his post-Critical period use the concept of the synthetic *a priori* to deduce the necessity of causality, but as a matter of rational understanding it belongs to the same agnostic region of immaterial entities: "If something is a cause, then *something* is posited by something *else*." But as he goes on to say, "That my will moves my arm is no more intelligible to me than someone's claiming that my will could halt the moon in orbit."[44] This post-Humean and Kantian puzzlement regarding causality has had a significant reception history, especially recently amongst the so-called speculative realists and proponents of object-oriented ontology, who while attempting to break the spell of Kantian *correlation* – that is, the irreducible correlation of mind and world – nonetheless cannot avoid invoking enchantment themselves.[45] For instance, Quentin Meillassoux's assertion of the necessity of an anarchic contingency beyond any "correlation" nonetheless admits, within its Mallarméan throw of the dice, the possibility of some world in which god and enchantment are real, since any metaphysical postulation that denies this option must assert the impossibil-

ity of enchantment in any possible world. But it is his idea of the necessity of contingency, that is that idea that the only thing we can know for certain is that things could always be otherwise, without any sufficient reason, it is that which undermines any absolute claim that a disenchanted world is the only one which *must* exist.[46] Timothy Morton, from the perspective of object-oriented ontology, seeks to undermine correlationism through a kind of ontological Kantianism. In order to ground the realism of objects, Morton postulates the absolute withdrawal of the object from the knowing mind. Kant's phenomena-noumena distinction here no longer belongs to subjectivity, but precisely is predicated of objects in themselves. We can never know what makes something to be what it is. No action can penetrate its depths, and no object can touch the essence of another. The candle is not the flame, and the flame is not the candle. And yet, there is causation. The one is related to the other, even as they remain radically distinct. Things somehow cause other things to happen. For Morton, causation and explanation are finally an aesthetic phenomenon, with the connection between things being a kind of inexplicable and continuous miracle.[47] For to be enchanted is in some sense to be attracted and drawn towards the beautiful, even as enchantment grounds the perpetual lure of attraction.

But how to explain this aesthetic beckoning which, it seems, descends all the way down? Morton theorises a kind of proto-agency within objects themselves and invokes, here following Graham Harman,[48] the metaphysical occasionalism of Arabic theology and Nicolas Malebranche, as well as the spectre of vitalism and panpsychism. He thus drifts, despite his fundamentally atheistic persuasions, towards a secularised theology in order to imagine how his magical theory of causation might be possible. This raises again the question as to what theology, and here particularly Christian theology, might have to do with magic.

5 Invoking the Divine

It is hard to deny that from early on, Christianity has had a decidedly negative view of the magical. From at least the time of Augustine (cf. *De civitate dei* 21.6 and *De doctrina christiana* 2.20–24), magic has been associated with demonic workings and *superstitio*, a view which exerted much influence into the mediaeval period through Isidore of Seville's entry *De magis* in his *Etymologiae*. But already in the *Suda*, the tenth-century Byzantine encyclopaedia, μαγεία can be described as "an invocation of beneficent spirits for the production of something good" such as in the prophetic action of Apollonius of Tyana, here opposed to the operations of "goetic" magic.[49] It is also clear that early Christian thinkers such as Pseudo-Dionysius, under the influence of Neopla-

tonism (e.g., Iamblichus), appropriated the language of θεουργία ("theurgy") to develop his account of mystical and sacramental theology, often paired with the thaumaturgical category of natural magic ("white magic"), even as it is continually distinguished from goetic magic ("demonic" or "black" magic). It is also now recognised that our current usage of the term "theology" (θεολογία) owes a significant amount to its deployment in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, insofar as he sought to unite rational reflection with a theurgic and liturgical celebration of divine action in the sacramental and scriptural mysteries, often connecting it to the idea of deification.[50]

The Neoplatonist tradition is visible also within the Christianity of the late mediaeval and Renaissance period. Cornelius Agrippa, in his influential text on occult philosophy, argued that magic is a "the most perfect, and chief science, that sacred, and sublimer kind of philosophy, and lastly the most absolute perfection of all most excellent philosophy" and that, moreover, it is able to supremely unite the disciplines of natural, mathematical, and theological philosophy; according to him, one cannot practice magic without a knowledge of all these fields; one cannot ascend to the heights of magical knowledge without a corresponding ascent through all the realms of the elementary, the celestial, and the intellectual.[51] From a more traditional and less esoteric perspective, Thomas Aquinas follows the Augustinian trajectory in associating magic with *superstitio*, linking it with the use of certain "signs" which may attract demonic attention and cooperation; but he does not disapprove of the usage of occult or hidden forces to bring about beneficial outcomes, as long as they are "natural" energies that produce proper effects that belong to the natural form, essence, and potency of the things in question – which sounds more or less like natural magic.[52] He does not reject the deployment of amulets and incantations if they are explicitly drawn from the language of scripture; additionally, the symbol of the crucifix may also be used in such invocations.[53] But Aquinas's dualism between nature and artifice does stand in tension with the Neoplatonist tradition and the metaphysics of nature found amongst early modern theologians such as Nicholas of Cusa. If natural and artificial bodies cannot be conceived, metaphysically or practically, without interpenetration or entanglement, then the Thomistic distinction cannot be absolutised – and magic enters the picture once again. In fact, this is the being taken up by some contemporary theologians, such as John Milbank and Paul Tyson, in their attempts to reconcile Christian Platonism, natural magic, and theological orthodoxy.[54] If, as Bruno Latour has argued, the interplay between nature and culture is one of dynamic interpenetration, and mind and matter are not

conceived dualistically, then this suggests metaphysical options in which the interplay of transcendence and immanence, the spiritual and the material, cannot be simplistically mapped or regionalised. Metaphysics and physics, as it was for Aristotle,[55] might, once again, form part of a holistic organon rather than competitive models. Because of this postmodern retrieval of Aristotelianism, a revived "natural philosophy" or "trans-physics"[56] does not appear so outlandish today, even as it remains something of a marginal presence within the scientific guild.[57] Such a model has of course strong connections to teleological accounts of physical laws, implying that "intention" or "appetition" may extend beyond organic beings towards the broader field of material potentiality itself.[58] Overall, it suggests that the mutual implication of "nature" and "culture" may permeate all the way down, so to speak – as seen in how processes of signification form part of natural endowment and are not merely the result of human imposition.[59]

So, in sum, we see that modernity has in fact not banished the magical, and that maybe we have never really been "modern". As regards the scope of this journal, which centres on the relationship between the discourses of "religion" and "theology", we hope to show in the following pages how the critical study of religion and theology may be fruitfully juxtaposed – especially regarding the theme of "magic". Constructive and dogmatic theology have rarely unpacked some of their "occult" histories, and religious studies has not always been reflective on its own metaphysical and theological conceits – as regards, for instance, its "perennialist" and "theosophic" influences.[60] In the studies to follow, drawn from the ranges of critical genealogy of religion, biblical exegesis, the history of philosophy, and philosophical theology, amongst others, we will see that "magic" – contrary to the developmentalist narrative – has not disappeared from the discourses of "modernity". Magic continues to play mischief with our attempts to reify and reduce, and in the rest of the articles collected in this special edition, demonstrate how the magical has been entangled in the histories of religion, philosophy, the sciences, and theology, and continues to haunt the stories we tell about them.

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1 Egil Asprem, "The Magical Theory of Politics: Memes, Magic, and the Enchantment of Social Forces in the American Magic War," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 23, no. 4 (2020): 15–42, http://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/10926690/v23i0004/15_tmtopmfitamw.xml.

2 Some esoteric "Kekists" even imagined that an *egregore* could be summoned through social memeification – possibly predicated on the implicit Hegelian idea that "quantity" eventually gives way to emergent "quality" (even as I have doubts that these witchy subcultures are versed in *The Science of Logic*).

3 Asprem, "The Magical Theory of Politics," 26.

4 Brian Moeran and Timothy de Waal Malefyt, eds., *Magical Capitalism: Enchantment, Spells, and Occult Practices in Contemporary Economies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74397-4.

5 Jacob Krause-Jensen and Keir Martin, "Trickster's Triumph: Donald Trump and the New Spirit of Capitalism," in *Magical Capitalism*, 89–113, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74397-4_4.

6 See William Mazzarella, "Brand(ish)ing the Name, or Why Trump is so Enjoyable?" in *Sovereignty, Inc.: Three Inquiries in Politics and Enjoyment*, eds. William Mazzarella, Eric L. Santner and Aaron Schuster (Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 113–160.

7 See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, IL; London: Harvard University Press, 2007).

8 In distinction from the evolutionary perspective of Tylor and Frazer, Moeran and Malefyt argue that "magical practices are alive and well in contemporary industrialized societies, where finance and trade, government gatherings, the law ... medicine and health, technology, advertising, marketing, cultural production, and consumption all, at one time or another, operate according to magical premises ... It is not that the world is now *dis*enchanted, as Weber suggested; rather, it has been *re*-enchanted. The modern world is no less mysterious, more rational, knowable, predictable, and thus ultimately manipulable, than the premodern world. Magic has not declined, to be replaced by science, bureaucracy, law, and power," Brian Moeran and Timothy de Waal Malefyt, "Magical Capitalism: An Introduction," in *Magical Capitalism*, 1, 3.

9 See Tara Isabella Burton, *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2020).

10 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

11 See Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, trans. Peter Geschiere and Janet Roitman (Charlottesville, VA; London: University of Virginia Press, 1997).

12 Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Remarks on Frazer's *The Golden Bough*," in *The Mythology in Our Language: Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, trans. Stephan Palmié, eds. Giovanni da Col and Stephan Palmié (Chicago, IL: HAU, 2018), 30.

13 Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

14 Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. Alan Sheridan and John Law (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 212.

15 Peter Kingsley has demonstrated the entwinement of ancient philosophical discourse with mystical and magical practices; see *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and the Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995); *In the Dark Places of Wisdom* (Richmond: Duckworth, 1999).

16 Brian P. Copenhaver, *Magic in Western Culture: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 25–51.

17 *Historia Naturalis* 30.1–6.

18 Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World*, AAR Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004).

19 Where the original conference that generated these papers was hosted (namely Hugenote Kollege in Wellington).

20 Dale Wallace, "Rethinking Religion, Magic and Witchcraft in South Africa: From Colonial Coherence to Postcolonial Conundrum," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 28, No. 1 (2015): 23–51, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24805679.

21 Vincent L. Wimbush, *White Men's Magic: Scripturalization as Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

22 Cf. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. and intro. William Lovitt (New York, NY; London: Garland, 1977); Federico Campagna, *Technic and Magic: The Reconstruction of Reality* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

23 Styers, *Making Magic*, 225–226.

24 Styers, *Making Magic*, 170.

25 E.g., Yves Mühlematter and Helmut Zander (eds.), *Occult Roots of Religious Studies: On the Influence of Non-Hegemonic Currents on Academia around 1900*, Okkulte Moderne 4 (Berlin; Boston, MA: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021).

26 Cf. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, 177–268.

27 W.V. Quine, "Main Trends in Recent Philosophy: Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *The Philosophical Review* 60, no. 1 (1951): 20–43, https://doi.org/10.2307/2181906.

28 It is worth mentioning here, in passing, that there has been a persistent allusiveness to "the demonic" within the scientific discourses, up until the modern period; cf. Jimena Canales, *Bedevilled: A Shadow History of Demons in Science* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020).

29 Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 1993).

30 Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*, Princeton Classics (Princeton, NJ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2011).

31 As in in the work of Peter Harrison.

32 John Milbank, "Religion, Science and Magic: Rewriting the Agenda," in *After Science and Religion: Fresh Perspectives from Philosophy and Theology*, eds. Peter Harrison, John Milbank, and Paul Tyson (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 75–143.

33 Cf. Harrison, Milbank and Tyson, *After Science and Religion*.

34 Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, 180.

35 Lee Smolin, "Temporal Naturalism," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Modern Physics* 52.A (2015): 86–102, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsb.2015.03.005.

36 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Science Delusion: Freeing the Spirit of Inquiry* (London: Coronet, 2012), especially chapter three.

37 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Half-Way: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2007).

38 *Enneads* 4.4.40–44.

39 Notable *lumières* such as Denis Diderot, in his entry on magic in the *Encyclopédie*, did not deny the existence of divine magic (e.g., prophecy, miracles, etc.) or natural magic (e.g., mysterious forces in nature, animals, etc.), even as he rejected supernatural or ceremonial magic as superstitious and regressive, promoting witch-hunts and scapegoating.

40 Philipp W. Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile: A "Repetition" of Scholastic Metaphysics*, Louvain Philosophical Studies 12 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996).

41 Milbank, "Religion, Science and Magic," 123.

42 Immanuel Kant, "The Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics (1766)," in *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, trans. and ed. David Walford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 354 (2:368).

43 "The Dreams of a Spirit-Seer," 344 (2:358).

44 "The Dreams of a Spirit-Seer," 356 (2:370).

45 "Correlation" is Meillassoux's catch-all term for any philosophical position – especially of the post-Kantian variety – which asserts the necessary interrelation of mind and world (e.g., idealism). For him, we are able to theorise realities that exist apart the entanglement of mind, such as the *arche-fossil*, which exist whether they are known are not. Meillassoux's position is achieved through a kind of radicalisation of Humean and Kantian epistemology insofar as the indeterminacy of the noumena and causation is absolutised into a kind of transcendental contingency which undermines any principle of sufficient causation. Rather, natural laws exist through a contingent arrangement of habituation, and not through any necessary development or teleology. And since there is no necessary rationale for any modally actualised world, such as ours, there exists the possibility of a world with very different natural laws and habits than the current one we inhabit. For a summary and critique of Meillassoux's "speculative realism," see Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2014), 108–133. An explicitly divinatory/magical reading of Meillassoux along these lines can be found in Joshua Ramey, "Contingency Without Unreason: Speculation after Meillassoux," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 19, no. 1 (2014): 31–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2014.920638.

46 Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London; New York, NY: Continuum, 2008).

47 Timothy Morton, *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality*, New Metaphysics (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2013).

48 Graham Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Ropley: Zero Books, 2010).

49 Anonymous, "μαγεια, γοητεια" in the *Suda*. Taken from Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg, eds., *Defining Magic: A Reader*, Critical Categories in the Study of Religion (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 47.

50 Andrew Louth, "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism in Denys the Areopagite," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (1986): 432–438, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23962458; Olivier Boulnois, "The Concept of Theology", in *Christian Platonism: A History*, eds. Alexander J.B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 101–121.

51 Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* 1.1–2. Taken from Otto and Stausberg, *Defining Magic*, 55–58.

52 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *De operationibus occultis naturae ad quemdam militem ultramontanum* (On the Occult Workings of Nature or Concerning the Causality of Heavenly Bodies), trans. J.B. McAllister (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1939).

53 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 2.2.96.1–4.

54 Milbank, "Religion, Science and Magic"; Paul Tyson, *Seven Brief Lessons on Magic* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019).

55 See Jean-François Courtine, *Inventio analogiae: Métaphysique et ontothéologie*, Problèmes & Controverses (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2005), 45–107. It is commonplace in scholarship on Aristotle to recognise that the *Metaphysics* was originally given without a title and was only later (most likely by Eudemus of Rhodes) given the title μετά τα φυσικά. Originally, as best as one can reconstruct it, this most likely implied that "metaphysics" was concerned with what came "after physics," in accordance with the Aristotelian procedure that one begins with the more known before migrating to the less known – and was not simply a question bibliographical shelving, as has been suggested by some. Recognising this fact is also important for another reason, since it is the interlacing rather than a hard bifurcation between of these two branches of science, namely "physics" and "metaphysics," that remain fundamental for Aristotle's aporetics, and moreover, its later reception. For arguments as regards the genesis of the title, see Anton-Hermann Chroust, "The Origin of 'Metaphysics'" *The Review of Metaphysics* 14, no. 4 (1961): 601–616, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20123845; Hans Reiner, "The Emergence and Original Meaning of the Name 'Metaphysics'," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 13, no. 2 (1990): 23–53, https://doi.org/10.5840/gfpj19901322. On Aristotelian aporetics, see Joseph Owens, The *Doctrine of Being in Aristotelian Metaphysics: A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978); Edward Booth, OP, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Third Series 20 (Cambridge; New York, NY; Cambridge University Press, 1983); Pierre Aubenque, "Sur l'ambivalence du concept aristotélicien de substance," in *Ontologie et dialogue: Mélanges en hommage à Pierre Aubenque*, ed. Nestor L. Cordero, Tradition de la pensée classique (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2000), 93–106; Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy*, Interventions (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 9–24.

56 Cf. Milbank, "Religion, Science and Magic," 87.

57 For one example (among many) of this neo-Aristotelian approach, see William M.R. Simpson, "Cosmic Hylomorphism: A Powerist Ontology of Quantum Mechanics," *European Journal for Philosophy of Science* 11, no. 28 (2021): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13194-020-00342-5.

58 Cf. Simon Oliver, "Teleology Revived? Cooperation and the Ends of Nature," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26, no. 2 (2013): 158–165, https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946812473020.

59 Nathan Lyons, *Signs in the Dust: A Theory of Natural Culture and Cultural Nature* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019); Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA; London: University of California Press, 2013).

60 John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (2nd ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mühlematter & Zander, Helmut eds., *Occult Roots of Religious Studies*.