



The Tree of Life: An Illustrated Study in Magic

Israel Regardie, Chic Cicero, Sandra Tabatha Cicero

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Israel Regardie wrote *The Tree of Life*, a book many consider his magnum opus, in 1932. It has continued to sell for decades. And no wonder. Up until the time this book was published, very little information about true high magic was available to the public.

In this book, Regardie reveals the secrets of real magic. He begins with an explanation of what magic is and, just as importantly, what magic is not. He explains that it is a spiritual study and practice which, along with forms of yoga, forms the two branches of the tree that is mysticism. Magic is not being a medium or a psychic. Then he explains the tools of the magician, what they mean, and how to use them. He explains the techniques of evocation and invocation, skrying, and astral travel. He shows how the Qabalah unites everything. He even gives a description of the secrets of sexual magick. All of this is in a clear, lucid writing style. This book is simply a must for anyone who is, or aspires to be, a real magician.

Although Chic and Sandra Tabatha Cicero were friends of Regardie and are Senior Adepts of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, what changes could they have made to this classic book? Well, they did change the spelling from British style to American. And they did change his transliterations of Hebrew into the more popular style he used in his later books. But nothing vital was changed or removed. Everything else they added was complementary to the text that was there. And what incredible additions they are! Extensive annotations throughout every chapter; over 100 illustrations; more descriptive contents pages; a glossary, a bibliography and an index. They've even added a biographical note on Regardie and the importance of this book to him and to the occult world.

This book contains some of the finest occult writing that has ever been produced. And with the new material by the Ciceros, it becomes a must-have for any magician!

The Tree of Life: An Illustrated Study in Magic Details

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Joey Talese says

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Stewart says

This is a monumental work on the Tree of Life and the practical side of esotericism. There is no such thing as a quick read through of this and there is much to be mined again and again

Malini Chaudhri says

Very valuable teachings on spiritual elevation and practises towards attainment for theurgists. Differentiation between good and bad magic, evil in the heirarchical tree, as opposed to mastery and adeptness of genuine methodology for god people.

Rites and rituals, their associated experiences during the upward elevation of the spirit from dense form to radiant form, is remarkably communicated in this work.

This document must be read several times. Those in the system of yoga and salvation, who wish to become adepts through mantra, commitment, sustained prayer and spiritual merit, may benefit from the lessons it offers.

Linda Maddocks says

A bit torturous but worthwhile if only for the sense of accomplishment in finishing, lol.

Heather says

Reading this now. Regardie is more accessible and easier to understand than Crowley. He was his secretary and has really organized the systems for us. Pure Golden Dawn stuff.

N.E. Johnson says

What a slog. Some credit should be given that this is basically the book that founded a genre, but any book you read since then on the subject will probably convey more information in 1/10th the words.

Sam Davidson says

Very good resource on magic(k), incorporating Qabbalah with Crowley, by Crowley's secretary Regardie.

A little hard to read at times and lacking in a sense of humour - partly understandable in that it was written by a young zealot - but comes into its own in the final chapter, on invocations. Here are numerous beautiful and powerful pieces of sacred poetry, often calling on the gods of ancient Egypt, and quoting the Book of the Dead. Worth reading if only for this and contains a useful bibliography pointing you on to further works of reference on matters magical.

I read this spurred on by Illuminatus to do more reading into western occultism. Next, or soon, I plan to revisit Crowley, since this is very much an offshoot of his work, and he remains the undisputed master. His poem, quoted in the section above praised, is the most beautiful part of this well-composed grimoire.

I am, parenthetically, glad that Leary and Wilson showed up to inject a little humour into magick, else likely the practise would not have survived the hilaritas of the '60s.

Josh Anderson says

A pretty big elephant whose outline is described quite clearly yet never actually addressed directly is: the power of the Catholic Church comes from very ancient techniques of magic. Theurgy is divine union by way of following instruction given in revelation, like say, the instructions God gave to Moses about the tabernacle. In fact, the Old Testament describes theurgical practice extremely well in Exodus 36-39. The Hermetic system written about here, however, is based on more ancient Gods, such as the ones that Moses learned about when he was a child. The meat of this book is Regardie's defense of the Egyptian Faith and the description of St. Ignatius' intense imaginative system.

Here's a trick: do you want something to go really well? An event, or question you need to ask your boss? Put your will into it. Think about what this means. Think about what it means to be alive (this may require you getting up before sunrise.) If you are up early, draw a symbol that you feel adequately describes the situation going well for you. This may be an abstract feeling, or an actual formula or recipe of words you want to hear from the other person or from your own mouth. Create this symbol as if it were putting that situation into itself, becoming a microcosm of the event. There's a bunch of hogwash out there on what to do next, but the very act of you focusing your will and intent on this symbol will direct your energy to the event, and it will seem supernatural.

Are you a Christian? Be a better one by living with Christ and His suffering the way St. Ignatius dares us to. The imagination and the will are just as mysterious as ever, and this book can really inspire one to a system such as Yoga or Magic. I believe that Regardie is trying to remain faithful to his one time employer, but that at heart he is ultimately a Christian, something I don't think Crowley would ever let anyone know of, if it were true about himself as well. The significance of Christ should be made more apparent through studying this book, as a transformational tool rather than dried up dogma. If you don't like the ring of that "Judeo Christian" hullabaloo, there are plenty of options including just invoking the ideas of numbers themselves, which Pythagoreans practiced as communing with the Divine.

I believe that Regardie sees the Osiris cycle as being an antitype to Christ, as the historicity of Osiris is never

spoken of, the idea of God becoming a man, to die the death of a God-king should speak for itself. I think he sees Egyptian religion as having the flexibility of a pantheon to which the poets can be inspired like the Greeks, but with more intuitive beauty. Also, it's worth noting here that Egyptian religion in ancient times could mean theurgic devotion, initiation, crop rituals, and just downright superstition. Which is a great mirror for our western world as well and how we treat the spiritual world.

I would say aside from a few things, like trying to describe the Enochian system of John Dee in a short chapter, this book is a triumph. I've tried to read Barrett's Magus, and Bardon's IIH, and Lord, even some Levi myself. Regardie's style and voice is a lot of AE Waite, Manly Hall, with a little bit of The 666 thrown in for lineage's sake, I guess. I heard C and R had a falling out, in which C berates R for adding the Catholic name of Francis to the beginning of Israel. A decision he made as an adept, no doubt. One in which C treats with his usual anti-church attitude, telling R that he must have done it because he's ashamed to be Jewish. That's not the only story I've heard about The 666 being a total asshole, so I tend to believe he was an ego- and megalomaniac. Nevertheless, Regardie had nothing but kind words to say about the man who taught him about Yoga and Hermetics, calling him a great poet at times, and a completely misunderstood genius for a new age. Whatever you views are on the infamously diabolical Aleister Crowley, this book is completely outside of that sphere. There is nothing Thelemic about this book. This is a system of getting in touch with your higher self by making your world sacred, calling to the universe's deep history for guidance, and asking them/it/He/She to aide you in The Great Work of Art. It's also not Thelemic in the sense that this system is ascetic at times, and is about detachment from this sub-lunary world, in order to commune with the divine, not about some drug induced vision to write a new Holy Book for a New Aeon.

Why don't more adepts make great works of art and make a lot of money? Regardie asks, and his response is, because these people have tasted the divine gift and they don't want to spoil it for themselves with distractions such as money. They want to make their entire life a work of art that is not marketable, but increases the goodness in this world by the value bestowed through each interaction and encounter one has with the adept who has tasted the sweet ecstasy of letting go, but chooses to stay here for his fellow man, and for the higher Will. It is a true Socratic stance to pop the emptiness of false ego's bubble, and I believe that Regardie was in the lineage of Socrates or St. Paul rather than the Great Beast he's usually associated with.

Laura Marx says

I was about 17 when I read this. I had been floating around different texts from Crowley and Eliphas Levi and different websites here and there for a few years before my guitar teacher, of all people (who was, coincidentally, a member of the O.T.O.), found out about my interest in the occult and gave me this book. I went from being totally lost to, well, still being lost (no book is gonna help you with that one, I guess!), but having a clear view of what I was actually trying to do.

As Regardie says somewhere, this was really one of the first (perhaps the first) book on magic intended for ordinary people. Regardie's supreme struggle, to de-mystify the mysteries! It presents itself very clearly, introduces all of the ideas non-doctrinally, etc. - encourages the student to approach the subject at their own pace, in a self-directed way. Regardie is so down to earth its a breath of fresh air after all the usual occultist hand-waving. He is like someone you might actually meet in your day-to-day life, and explains the philosophy and practice in a very clean and plainspoken way. And ah, suddenly it all falls into place! I think this is definitely the best introduction to the subject in general. And Regardie's writing is charming, as well - it's super formal in an endearing way, he even calls himself 'the author'!

That's his real name, too. Israel Regardie. (Well, 'Regurdy'). Some people were born to be magicians I guess. I bet old Edward Alexander Crowley (you pronounce 'Crow' like the bird, by the way) felt a little embarrassed. (I bet he didn't really.)

There are a few little things - Regardie is very keen to differentiate this oh-so-serious white, divine magic, the art of "theurgy", from despicable witchcraft or reckless spiritism! We're magicians but we're the "good" magicians! The distinction is artificial; it's all the same thing. But you couldn't say that if you wanted ordinary people to read your book, at least in the 30s. It's not really a bad thing - even Agrippa wanted people to believe that his "occult philosophy" wasn't "really" magic, etc. There is also some fossilization of that Enlightenment thinking that so infected Crowley, that we will pretend magicians are really scientists [rolls eyes] (Marxism suffers the same problem, btw!) - and yet, at the same time, wants to ground itself in total idealism and sincere mysticism, and so attempts to appropriate the entire Enlightenment under one dogma, and also lay claim to all pre-enlightenment revelation, and to the revelations of all non-western cultures, in all eras. Such is the outlook of the occult - which articulates itself as the 'key to the mysteries' - the 'secret philosophy of all ages'. In other words, it shows its old age (and privileged social positioning) in parts, but only in parts. Take its universalising with a pinch of salt, but take the rest seriously.

Anyway, it covers all the important topics a 'study in magic' should: its philosophical bases, its history, its mythology, and so on, in addition to a great number of practical subjects: Yoga, Kabbalah (under that ridiculous spelling, 'Qabalah'), correspondences, appropriate magical tools, exercises in training the will, mantras and magical names, skrying and astral projection, godforms, the knowledge and conversation of the holy guardian angel, the use of old grimoires, evocation, initiation, alchemy, and finally a series of historical prayers and invocations. It introduces the subjects very rigorously, but not so much that it functions as a manual or grimoire of its own - only enough to provide an understanding of how to learn more about practicing them. The book is a jumping off point for most areas of occult practice, but not a full curriculum in-and-of-itself, and shouldn't be approached that way.

It references not only recent teachers like Crowley, Waite and Levi, but also the teaching of the tradition's founders themselves - Agrippa, Abremelin, Iamblichus, Hermes himself, the Chaldean Oracles, and so on, as well as introducing captivating figures from other traditions, like the wide-eyed Saint Ignatius or the famous Swami Vivekananda, and particularly the Irish poet A.E.

Almost more useful than the book itself is the extensive suggested reading section at the end, pointing towards more advanced works or works on more particular topics. Following only on from the suggestions in this book one would find themselves a well-read and well-developed practitioner!

Anyway, as the author always says: invoke often! Inflame thyself with prayer!

.dora says

have to read this one several times... in life

Kevin says

One of the first books I ever read dealing with the practical side of ritual practice and construction. It proved

to be a highly influential and important read for me.

I should preface, the early version of the work, before the Cicero's got a hold of Regardie's materials. I've seen what they've done with his other writings, but not this. I am thankful for that fact.

There is a treasure house of information that can be gleamed from this work, though the language and style will make you work for it. Regardie is sadly styling his writings on the 19th century style of Esoteric literature, similar to that found with Levi as well as Meade and the Theosophists.

The greatest benefit that I drew from this work is the attention to detail that the good dr shows in referring us back to the forerunners of the magical tradition he inherited and the interest he piqued in me to go back further than his writings and to start reading the sources like Iamblichus and Porphyry and building up that foundation of knowledge that would help me build my understanding of Western mysteries.

Luke Specht says

Anything by Regardie is great if you're a western occultist. I wish the Cicero's would not have messed with some of the text, but the majority of the original text is here.

Regardie can be difficult to get through, but all of his works are worth it, this one in particular.

Octavian says

Written in a delightfully anachronistic style, specifically the plodding & oververbose brand of English that prompted George Orwell to write a hate rant around the same time period. Within these chapters you'll find lots of phrases like "the adept may find himself swirling in the empyrean, not unlike a spirit himself in appearance", or "this practice is not altogether without efficacy". Lots of description by negation of the opposite - kind of quaint really, I'm a sucker for such charms.

Anyway, on to the meat of the book:

This is a very clear picture of the Western Mystery tradition & forms a steady-handed introduction to the practice of that brand of magic. The editors Mrs & Mr. Cicero, especially, have provided helpfully verbose footnotes at the end of each chapter, which are a must read for those struggling to figure out what all this occult claptrap is all about.

All of the basics are covered here, the Tree of Life, the Sephiroth, various consensus interpretations of their organization and meanings, Solomon, Eliphas Levi quoted heavily, Dee, Pentagram rituals, a whole chapter devoted to the work of Abramelin the Mage, elementals, the weapons of the magician, pretty much all of those things you may have heard about the Western alchemists. Of significant note is the level of depth and emphasis in the presentation of the Egyptian roots of magic. Often this is a subject that bores me and turns me away, but here for the first time I've encountered a very reasonable set of arguments for investigating the Egyptian root of the practice with a renewed fervor.

There seem to be precious few works in this canon which are respectable and worthy of being read cover to

cover, this is one of them.

Justin says

Not for me

Nicole says

A must-read for new adepts.
