Better Wizardry

Peter J. Carroll, from "Both the Ones" No.2

A review of my records of the last fifteen years coupled with a prolonged meditation upon innumerable verbal and literary anecdotes leads me to conclude that many magical failures and disasters share a common factor. The confusion of *Invocation* and *Evocation*. There is little clear distinction between these two words in civilian usage and many occult authors fail to adequately separate the two forms of conjuration in their writings beyond some general notion of invoking "gods" and evoking "demons" or lesser beings. The following definitions are offered:

Invocation means conscious identification with a complex entity.

Evocation means the use of simple entities with which identification is avoided.

There is little point in debating the existence or non-existence of spirits in the traditional sense, in this context. The phenomena of invocation and evocation are both explicable in terms of either the spirit hypothesis or the hypothesis that the subconscious/unconscious is the actual source of parapsychological and inspirational effects. For convenience the latter hypothesis will be used exclusively during the remainder of this argument. Thus in invocation a conscious identification with the entity is used to provoke the manifestation of its ascribed powers from the magicians subconscious (or unconscious, I see no value in making a distinction). In evocation the magician directs his conscious mind only at the sigil, image, or name of an entity to provoke the release of its of its ascribed powers from his subconscious. Evocation differs from simple enchantment (spellcasting) in that part of the subconscious is expected to exercise a degree of independent intelligence to achieve the enchantment or divination that the magician is conjuring for. Invocation can similarly be used for enchantment and divination and also to provide inspiration with the ascribed qualities of the entity. Additionally invocation can be a prelude to evocation allowing the "god" to command the "demon".

However the use of evoked forms for inspiration represents theoretical confusion and a serious practical mistake. The magician should avoid accepting inspiration from entities he does not consciously identify with. It is, for example, useful to build into ones subconscious a demon program for executing death spells with a degree of subtlety and cunning, but disastrous to allow such an entity to start offering advice or choosing its own targets. So many of the reverses experienced by occultists arise from allowing the kind of limited ability entities that should have been handled by evocation alone, to start behaving as though they had been invoked. Conscious identification with, or inspiration from, anything as limited as say the medieval grimoire demons or the cthulhu mythos "gods" is to invite a serious reduction of the totality of ones usable selves. One is likely to end up with a lot less than one started with, for the simple minded programs that such entities consist of will rarely tolerate the existence of more sophisticated selves or "gods" on the conscious level and power has a tendency to flow most freely through the simplest circuits.

The result is inevitably that narrowing focus of lifestyle and behaviour we recognise as obsession. One should only invoke entities sufficiently complex to occupy the conscious mind to capacity. Such entities are traditionally known as "gods" and should be sufficiently sophisticated not to resist being readily banished so that other selves may take control of the organism when appropriate. We are, after all, not a unity but a rich collage of multiple selves, who, in a sane organism, recognise, respect, and cooperate with each other. To continue with the saturnine examples, my own deathself, known to its friends as the god Thanatos, is a repository of all kinds of data relating to Entropy, Senescence, Decay, Death, Decomposition, Terror, Sacrifice and Murder, yet it is also something of a philosopher with a wry sense of Mortality and Futility. It can be invoked to provide inspiration on many a thanatological topic, as a vantage point from which to perform divinations or enchantments of congruent nature, and from which to perform the evocation of saturnine demons. However it is a a mistake to employ such a complex god form using the techniques of evocation.

This is the second major form of error arising from a confusion of the two types of conjuration. Complex entities, from which the magician expects sophisticated responses, can only successfully be handled by conscious identification or possession as it is more traditionally known. The attempt to eschew identification usually leads to one or two failure modes. The result may simply be disappointing if the entity fails to establish itself in the subconscious. Alternatively if it does become established, the magicians conscious will become subject to erratic intrusions from the source that his other selves do not recognise as one of them. To paraphrase the old adage; when a man talks to a god its invocation, when a man talks as a god its a successful invocation, but when a god talks to a man its religious mania or schizophrenia.

In Crowley's work one detects evidence of both errors at various points. The invocation of Choronzon in the north african desert produced bizarre and useless results, because Choronzon, as Crowley conceived it, was a far too simplistic being to warrant possession by, although it could have made a useful servitor.

Conversely, Crowley's approach to the Aiwass being was not initially characterised by full possession and identification, and so led to a multitude of personal difficulties and results which are of debatable rather than obvious value.

So, in summary, for best results Invoke for possession, Evoke for servitors, and avoid those half-assed compromises in between which lead to messy results.

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