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October 21, 2011

Sorcery For Scientists

By lincoln stoller

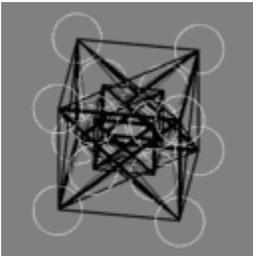
An exhortation to expand your understanding beyond the bounds of reason.

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Sorcery for Scientists

by Lincoln Stoller, [Tenger Research, LLC](#)

*Presented at the [Memorial to Jerry Lettvin](#)
Sept. 25, 2011 at Stata Hall, MIT, Cambridge, MA*



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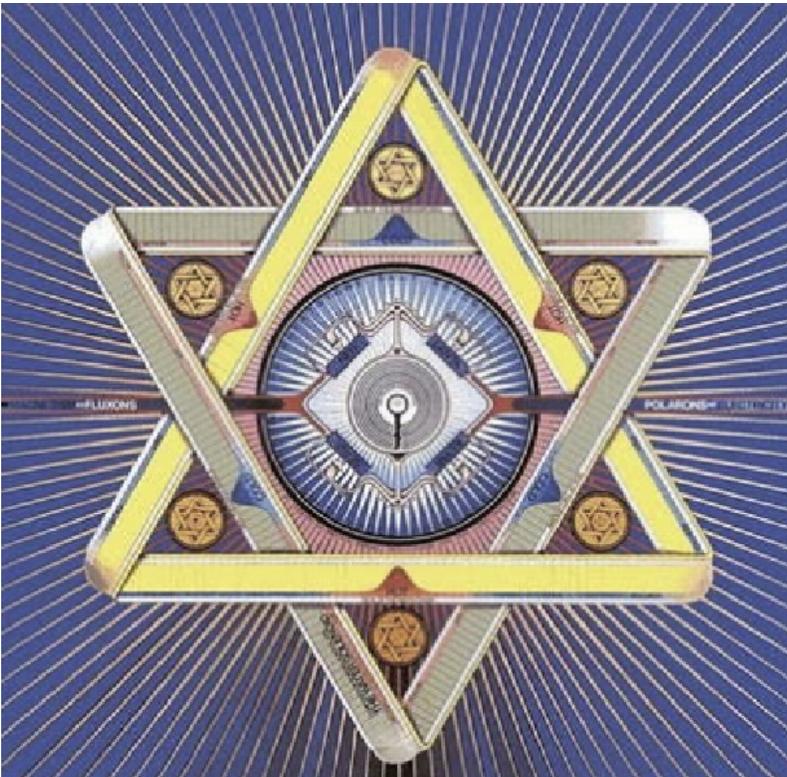
Our scientific world view is rooted in the power of governments and corporations. A cosmology first institutionalized in schools and universities as an abstract study, with little more authority than the early doctors had in medicine, now dominates our world uncontested. Scientific arguments and formulas provide the guidance once read from chicken entrails by oracles and priests.

Science depends upon interaction because interaction precedes observation. The method of science: observe, predict, verify, and reproduce, presumes interaction with the environment. The differentiation between the observer and world he or she observes is a prerequisite for observation. Experience is a necessary prerequisite for anything.

Science proscribes the scope of experience acceptable to its consideration. Originally, so as not to intrude upon the domain of the church, science avoided astronomy, biology, and medicine. The range of scientifically allowable observables has greatly expanded, but the range of human experience has not.

Scientific thought requires the exclusion of a wide range of subjective human experience. Questions pertaining to social and personal consciousness are discouraged. When these phenomena are excluded from consideration, they are also excluded from recognition. Direct human experience has drifted ever further from the reach of our scientific society.

The modern scientist is a golum built from the mud of trainable skills and social attitudes, viewing the world according to the invocations written upon his or her forehead. Scientific thought does not potentate the scientist if the scientist is not his or her own master. And if they are not their own masters, then their power lies in the hands of those who control them.



Science will undermine itself not because it fails to realize its power or achieve its goals, but because it ignores what it does not see. When power inevitably turns to serve values other than the corporation and the state, scientists will be asked to see what they have overlooked. Those who cannot will be dealt with as the communists dealt with the monks: to return to the mud from which they were created. Systems that cannot bend will break.

We can avoid the destruction that results from a clash of values by reconnecting with a shared point of view, a common experience. We should return to magic because magic is the unfiltered, uncensored experience of the world. In order to see the world as more than what is illuminated under Nasrudin's street lamp -- recognizing only what fits our preconceptions -- we must swim

in the dark sea of experience without expecting knowledge. We don't have to abandon reason, but we must experience a richer world. We must learn to experience what we can't understand.

Magic is everything that science is not. Magic is the unfiltered experience. Magic never asks "why," or "how," or "if." And where science excludes and reduces, magic strives to include everything and anything that makes a richer, more inclusive, disintegrated experience. The only rule is that you must come back, though you may return a changed person.

It is an historical lie that science overthrew magical thinking, as science is based on the primary magical experience. But whereas magic empowers the magician to define his or her own reality, science retracts this authority with the tether of method and the scrutiny of peers. Without this a scientist has no connection to the ineffable and no spiritual authority. To regain spiritual authority scientists must return to magic.

Practice sorcery as the root of unadulterated human experience. Strive to develop contact with everything that science denies, ignores, and excludes. Yes, magic involves spirits, visions and the supernatural. This is how our minds work when conflating the irreconcilable. This is how we deal with what we cannot understand. In this realm the questions of lucid science are destructive, blowing away the motes of experience and blinding us to the shadows of consciousness. Is magic real? Do not ask.

Our appreciation of the magic in the world equals our appreciation of the world. Only in magic can we find beauty. Only in magic can we become more valuable than the mud of our intellects.

Lincoln Stoller, September 2011

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Submitters Bio:

Physicist, neurologist, neurofeedback practitioner, junior sorcerer, enthusiastic participant in extreme explorations involving mind and body. Believer in the idea that individuals find meaning in bettering and helping to evolve the ecologies in which they participate.

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