

Mousing, Swiping, Thinking

Magical Conquest Techniques in the Context of Electronic Communications Media

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Some of the physical, chemical and technical possibilities of the modern age are very similar to magic. They appear to be able to overcome perception and awareness. This text approaches the issue of magic both from a sociological perspective and in relation to the world of electronic media. It first identifies and analyzes the criteria that determine the magical to then answer the question whether the new technology results in the old technology of magic making an invisible reappearance.

Keywords: electronic media, religion, magic, structural coupling, meaning

ALL: Double, double toil and trouble, Fire burn and caldron bubble.

2ND WITCH: Fillet of a fenny snake, In the caldron boil and bake. Eye of net and toe of frog, Wool of bat and tongue of dog, Adder's fork and blindworm's sting, Lizard's leg and howlet's wing, For a charm of powerful trouble, Fire burn and caldron bubble.

ALL: Double, double toil and trouble, Fire burn and caldron bubble.

3RD WITCH: Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf, Witches' mummy, maw and gulf of the ravined salt-sea shark, Root of hemlock digged i' the dark, Liver of blaspheming Jew, Gall of goat and slips of yew Slivered in the moon's eclipse, Nose of Turk and Tatar's lips, Finger of birth-strangled babe Ditch-delivered by a drab, Make the gruel thick and slab. Add thereto a tiger's chaudron, For the ingredients of our caldron.

ALL: Double, double toil and trouble, Fire burn and caldron bubble.

2ND WITCH: Cool it with a baboon's blood, Then the charm is firm and good.

—Macbeth, IV, 1

Preliminary Remarks

The title of this article is quite strange. It sounds magical in itself, like an old incantation. But this is exactly how it is intended to be. Although sociology has hardly any doubts that magic has a social function—especially that of world domination technique—it certainly does doubt the fact that magic actually can, for example, transform people into donkeys or pugs into dragons.

Nevertheless, some of the physical, chemical and technical possibilities of the modern age are very similar to magic. They appear to be able to overcome perception and awareness. Even a simple mobius strip dupes everyday perception of the world: inside is outside, outside is inside—at the same time. If you cut through the loop lengthwise in the middle, you don't get two bands —only one.

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the subject. More precisely: The swiping determines the possible moves, therefore enchanting the subject. Magical from our perspective, then, is the idea that what can be swiped—the symbols, and so forth—constitute the very form of swiping; conditioned coproduction or structural coupling as usual. It would be similar, if the tablet screen would be able to retain “bumps” from the force of touch that controls the movement of the fingers. Another example: The keyboard of my computer is littered with tobacco flakes. I now have to hit some keys five times to get a particular character to appear on the screen. It feels as though a magician is limiting my time so that I work less.

Coda

Many more questions can arise, for example, about the role played by swiping and similar techniques in social systems. How will interaction change, for example organization or society? What happens (and it is happening right now) if the experience of magic is forgotten because we no longer need to remember it, what happens if you can suddenly swipe a blackboard and nobody is surprised that the form of magic is repeated in the process? Is progress possible through all of this? An epochal break?

As a researcher, I do not entertain any progress mythologies. They have shown themselves fruitful since Darwin’s time. What happens is always subject to chance. Niklas Luhmann always tended to sober people who are too focused on progress with the remark that everything is getting both better and worse at the same time. And I would like to add: You can seldom know what is worse and what is better. Moreover, both adjectives are in the comparative. The “worse or better than WHAT?” is missing.

There is no doubt that computer technology has changed many things, simplified a lot and (to say it with systems theory) reduced complexity. On the other hand, complexity does not disappear in the face of time. It only shifts and goes elsewhere. Problems that are solved create other problems elsewhere. Sometimes old solution patterns are revitalized when modern solutions develop their own game. The question at stake here was whether the new technology would not result in the old technology of magic making an invisible reappearance in the precise paradoxical understanding.

Answer: It would seem so.

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