

THEORIES ON THE NATURE OF MAGIC

—From the Manual of Practical Thaumaturgy, 32nd edition

On the Three Realms

Magicians are aware of three “realms” of existence. The first is the physical realm, our natural physical world, and all of its corresponding physical laws.

On one “side” of us, we have the astral realm. The astral realm occupies the same “space” as the physical plane, but has different “physical” (“astral?”) laws. It is always there, right next door, just a step sideways. It thrives on life, and so emotion, thought, and spirit are emphasized on the astral. Without life, there is no astral space; and so without a thriving giasphere to support it, the astral plane does not extend into space.

On the other side (and curving around, as it were, to meet the astral plane on its far edge) we have the meta-planar realm. The metaplanes are not one place but many, and their true nature and purpose are beyond the ken of ordinary magicians.

Each realm is separated by a barrier, a wall of sorts that stops us from randomly wandering from one realm into another. Magicians have learned to extend their senses onto the astral realm, to astrally perceive what goes on there. Full magicians can actually leave their physical bodies and project their spirits onto the astral plane. Psychic travel to the metaplanes is also possible, but is a much more complicated affair.

On Mana

Mana, the essence of magic, saturates all three realms. It is everywhere, connecting everything—one big mana field linking all life together.

Some compare mana to a flowing river—an analogy useful to describe the ley, dragon, and chi power lines. It is more accurate to describe it like the waves of an ocean, circulating in currents throughout the three realms. In the physical realm, we know that mana flows in cycles—sometimes the ambient mana is rich and magic is possible (like now), but sometimes the level is poor and magic becomes difficult if not impossible (as it was before the Awakening). According to research, myth, and the accounts of some great dragons, we currently live in the sixth cycle of magic—the Sixth World.

On the physical plane, mana cannot be seen, tasted, or touched, but the Awakened can sense it and manipulate it. The mana here seems inherently tied to the mana on the astral plane, flowing in the same eddies and currents.

Mana casts reflections of living things, called auras, from the physical plane onto the astral. Auras are intangible on the astral plane—astral entities pass right through them—but those who can assense them can gather information from them. Anything magical in nature also casts a reflection on the astral; spells—the manipulation of mana—on the physical plane have a visible aura on the astral plane. Non-living things have no aura.

Certain creatures and items (especially active foci) that are infused with magic lend a certain resonance to the mana

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Ritual Spellcasting

Ritual Spellcasting is the process of casting a spell over a longer duration, usually with a group of magicians. Ritual Spellcasting allows the magicians involved to cast a spell at a target they cannot see.

Hits scored on a Magic + Ritual Spellcasting roll determine the success of a ritual spell. Additional magicians on the ritual team grant bonus dice to the Ritual Spellcasting Test.

Ritual Spellcasting is a Complex Action that requires an extensive length of time to complete (as long as 12 hours). For more information, see p. 175.

Counterspelling

Counterspelling is used to interrupt other spells, either as they are being cast or while they are sustained. For spell defense, Counterspelling dice are added to each protected defender’s dice pool. When dispelling, a Counterspelling + Magic Opposed Test is made against the target spell’s Force + caster’s Magic, with net hits reducing the hits scored to cast the spell. For more information, see p. 175.

CONJURING

Conjuring is the skill group used to deal with spirits. The group is comprised of the Summoning, Banishing, and Binding skills.

Summoning

The Summoning skill deals with the calling and commanding of spirits. When a magician summons a spirit, she first chooses the Force of the spirit she wishes to summon and then makes an Opposed Magic + Summoning Test against the spirit’s Force. Other sources of power (such as Summoning or Power foci) may add to the summoner’s dice pool. Net hits scored determine the number of services that the spirit owes. The services of a summoned spirit remain only until sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first, unless the spirit is bound to the magician (see *Binding*, p. 180).

Summoning is a Complex Action. For more information, see p. 179.

Banishing

The Banishing skill is used to sever the magical ties between a spirit and its summoner, freeing the spirit to return to its native metaplane. In order to banish a spirit, the magician makes an Opposed Magic + Banishing Test against the spirit’s Force (or Force + summoner’s Magic for bound spirits). Each hit reduces the services owed by that spirit by one. If the services are reduced to 0, the spirit returns to its home unless a magician immediately moves to summon it once again.