

Magic

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Magic is a topic of constant fascination and interest which can be described in various ways - supernatural, superstition, simple illusion, religious miracles, and fantasies of the imagination

Wide-ranging overview of how magic has been defined, understood, and practised

Highlights the controversy, conflict, and debate it has caused over the last two millennia

Considers how magic and science are intertwined

Split into two main sections: theory and practice

Part of the bestselling Very Short Introductions series - over three million copies sold worldwide

Defining 'magic' is a maddening task. Over the last century numerous philosophers, anthropologists, historians, and theologians have attempted to pin down its essential meaning, sometimes analysing it in such complex and abstruse depth that it all but loses its sense altogether. For this reason, many people often shy away from providing a detailed definition, assuming it is generally understood as the human control of supernatural forces.

'Magic' continues to pervade the popular imagination and idiom. People feel comfortable with its contemporary multiple meanings, unaware of the controversy, conflict, and debate its definition has caused over two and a half millennia. In common usage today 'magic' is uttered in reference to the supernatural, superstition, illusion, trickery, religious miracles, fantasies, and as a simple superlative. The literary

confection known as 'magical realism' has considerable appeal and many modern scientists have ironically incorporated the word into their vocabulary, with their 'magic acid', 'magic bullets' and 'magic angles'.

Since the so-called European Enlightenment magic has often been seen as a marker of primitivism, of a benighted earlier stage of human development. Yet across the modern globalized world hundreds of millions continue to resort to magic - and also to fear it. Magic provides explanations and remedies for those living in extreme poverty and without access to alternatives. In the industrial West, with its state welfare systems, religious fundamentalists decry the continued moral threat posed by magic. Under the guise of neo-Paganism, its practice has become a religion in itself. Magic continues to be a truly global issue.

This Very Short Introduction does not attempt to provide a concluding definition of magic: it is beyond simple definition. Instead it explores the many ways in which magic, as an idea and a practice, has been understood and employed over the millennia.

Readership: General readers interested in magic, and students of history.

作者介绍:

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2: Historical perspectives

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Conclusion

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评论

在第一章批判了一通弗雷泽，然后在第五章又详细讲解了一遍law of sympathy。不过还是不失为一本好的入门书。

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书评

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