THE PHENOMENON OF MIRACULOUS HEALING THROUGH SUGGESTION IN THE CONTEXT OF FAITH AND MAGIC -PSYCHOLOGICAL-THEOLOGICAL APPROACH

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SUMMARY

The example of the practices of three eighteenth and nineteenth century physicians, the author points out the importance of the profile of healers whose role (suggestion) in the healing process was more effective than their controversial methods. The following represents the impact mechanisms of suggestion (placebo effect) on the amazing healing phenomenon, indicating the possibility of the fatal consequences of suggestion in the context of (black) magic (nocebo effect), corroborating the facts stated. It warns of the frequent confusion of the fields of psychology and religion (the resuscitation of Mesalianism, the ancient misconception of confusing authentic spiritual experiences with psychological states), which has become the dominant feature of New Age self-help literature and psychology. It concludes with Christian miracle theology and features of Christian prayer for healing, suggesting guidelines useful for the pastoral and therapeutic work that has been derived from this research.

Key words: faith - magic - suggestion - miracle - healing

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of miraculous healings seems to be of greater interest to medics today than to theologians, though it is a challenge for both. Medicine is so advanced today that it is said that it works wonders, too. The notion of miracles in the scientific world is related to the obsolete (magical) conception of God as a hypothetical cause of phenomena that science is currently unable to reasonably explain. According to the advancement and spread of science, the space of God's activity will be narrowed, until science reaches the stage at which God becomes superfluous.

As a sign of the times, the International Medical Commission in Lourdes has not met since 1973. The last five miraculous healings she acknowledged were rejected by the bishops responsible for the canonical court of healings. And while the President of the Medical Office in Lourdes questioned whether medically unexplained miraculous cures could be expected at all, testimonies about them continue to attract public attention, being an integral part of both the beatification (two miracles) and canonization (one miracle) processes (Leone 1997). The phenomenon of miraculous healing was actualized by the Charismatic Movement (Laurentin 1979), to which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith also addressed the Instruction on Prayer Praying from God for Prayer (Instruction).

It is evident that the phenomenon of miraculous healings can hardly be escaped by the Church because she inherited Jesus' command "heal the sick" (Mt 10:18) with the promise "they will lay their hands on the infirm, and they will be well" (Mk 16:18), and among the gifts of the Holy Spirit are explicitly classified "miracles, then gifts of healing" (1 Cor 12:28).

The testimonies of miraculous healings suggest (and encourage) the conclusion that in exceptional cases, the faith of the sick can defy even the darkest diagnoses and medical prognoses, which is a phenomenon worth exploring.

In this paper we will problematize the influence of suggestion (placebo effect) in the service of miraculous healings, point out the possibility of fatal consequences of suggestion in the context of (black) magic (nocebo effect), warn about the dominant confusion of the fields of psychology and religion (resuscitation of mesalianism, ancient misconceptions of the confusion of authentic spiritual experiences with psychological experiences), present the theology of the miracles and characteristics of Christian prayer for healing, suggest guidelines useful for pastoral and therapeutic work.

HEALER'S PROFILE

The history of medicine is mainly a history of the "placebo effect" (O'Mathúna & Larimore 2009). The success of the doctor, in Tolstoy's words, whether he is a charlatan, a homeopath or an allopath, lies in this: to satisfy the patient's need to meet, understand, empathize. No less is expected of a priest or psychotherapist. Therefore, before any talk about scientific competence, the therapist should have the competence to establish communication with the patient at the level of the success of many great physicians throughout history (from Paracelsus to the three we will present) is probably in the successful unconscious control of emotions and patient expectations.

New England physician Dr. Elisha Perkins (1741-1799), who smoothed diseased body parts with metal

rods (called Perkinson rods), reported great success, convinced of their effectiveness by the magnetic properties of metals (O'Mathúna & Larimore 2009). At the time of the yellow fever epidemic, he went to treat them in New York, where he became infected and died. The skeptical Dr. John Haygarth (1740-1827) coated the metal paint with a wooden bar and achieved equally good treatment results.

German physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), the originator of animal magnetism, "magnetized" everything that came to his hand: water, pools, trees, laundry, mattresses, even the sun, to increase their power! Instinctively using his narcissism, he achieved certain results in the treatment of psychologically unstable persons (Vinchon 1972).

The Austrian psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), a follower of the Freud School of Psychoanalysis, the originator of organotherapy, invented "orgone accumulators" and sold wooden booths where patients spent some time healing. After refusing to withdraw these cabins from sale, he was sentenced to two years in prison (in which he died) in 1956, on the grounds that he had "fraud without premeditation" (Grakalić 1994).

The suggestive effect of leaving a patient in contact with a doctor, therapist, healer or priest is unknown to the profession, just as belief in a favorable treatment outcome is an important factor that favorably affects the outcome of the disease. Emile Couré (1857-1926) questioned the method of suggestion treatment, instructing his patients to repeat, "I feel better and better every day." The extent to which the influence of autosuggestion and heterosuggestion is intertwined (Stankovic 1988).

HEALING BY FAITH OR SUGGESTION?

Modern science does not know the concept of miracles. By its definition, a miracle is an inexplicable phenomenon. It ceases to be a wonder when it becomes explanatory, when the mechanism of its action within existing cognition is explained and must become repeatable at any place and at all times (Muzur 2001).

In the following an overview of the phenomenon of miraculous healings, we refer to an interesting master's thesis at the Central European University in Budapest by the physician Amir Muzur (2001). Although the work is a reflection on the miraculous healings that took place in the Middle Ages, it is still relevant to our subject. The prevalence of the phenomenon of miraculous healings can be observed in all cultures, religions and times (Muzur 2001).

Muzur classified the mechanism of "true" healing (as opposed to "false") into four categories. The first category of "true" cures are those achieved by suggestion (self-suggestion or heterosuggestion); the second healing by regular medical procedures; the third, psychoanalytic treatments, and, fourth, radiesthesia and other bioenergy treatments (Muzur 2001). He defined

the suggestion as "affecting one's spiritual, physical, physiological and/or social activities, triggered by another person's own imagination or emotions" (Muzur 2001). Autosuggestion defines the process in which one's own emotion or imagination is the source of suggestion (long-distance, dream, or vision treatments). Heterosuggestion defines the process in which the other person is the source of suggestive influence (in direct contact).

All kinds of suggestive influences are based on the law that every thought strives to its fulfillment (Baudouin 1923). If every accepted thought strives to its fulfillment, then the accepted belief of healing must result in the same, whereby all negative (opposite) thoughts or doubts must be removed (Arnold 1892). Prolonged repetition of the affirmative suggestion aloud achieves self-suggestion that hypnosis can intensify. The factors of healing are the activated power of the psyche over the body, triggered by an interpersonal relationship, which is more than a suggestion in the traditional sense of the word.

The incidence of peptic acid healing by cimetidine (a H2 receptor blocker used in various types of gastric acid overproduction), for example, is 76%, while the incidence of healing with placebo (in the control group) is 48% (Moerman 1983).

Muzur accepts the possibility of disease remission, but asks what does "spontaneous" disease remission mean? In the natural nothing happens "spontaneously". "Remissions are the result of man's internal capacities, and they are driven by suggestion." »Patricia Norris of Menninger Clinic, known for her work with a nine-yearold man who was cured of a brain tumor in the final stages (using biofeedback and mental imagination and after failing all medical procedures), says:" It is completely natural to heal. Spontaneous remission sounds too mystical; resembles the medieval notion of 'spontaneous generation', when they did not have enough science to see germs. Doctors think that mind/body factors are a smaller part of cancer treatment. But patients who are healthy say these are the most important factors." (Barasch 1994, Muzur 2001).

Suggestion can affect not only the pyramidal tract, but also the activity of sensory systems (causing analgesia) as well as the vegetative system (sympathetic and parasympathetic) causing death due to cardiac arrest (Granone 1989).

What diseases can be affected by suggestion? According to the results of the research, the suggestion can affect all human diseases, since all diseases, whether causal or symptomatic, are in relation to the immune and/or vegetative system. Suggestion can have an effect, temporary or permanent, on all known diseases, from neuroses and psychosomatic diseases, through infectious diseases, tumors, diabetes, allergic and autoimmune diseases, to all other conditions associated with fever, disorders of vegetative functions, pain, etc. (Muzur 2001, Pavese 131).

"All of our autonomic (vital functions, digestion...) endocrine (stress, reproduction, regeneration...) and immune potential (resistance to infectious diseases, tumors...) is dominated by the hypothalamus and amygdala, which are themselves influenced by the cerebral cortex therefore of our mind" (Muzur 2001) which is why there is no negligible influence on the mind that all profiles of healers can execute.

Muzur's work sheds light on and demystifies the phenomenon of "miraculous healings", most notably in the light of suggestion mechanisms. He well emphasized the interaction of faith and miracles, mind and body. "Miracles provoke faith and faith is a major factor in the success of miracles." (Muzur 2001). The weakness of the study is more of a theological nature. The author approaches miracles critically, from the positions of historical sciences, medicine and psychology, without equally critical approach from the position of theology of miracles, thus suggesting the wrong conclusion how Christianity accepts miracles uncritically, infantile, which is serious negligence. By the term "miracles", the author refers to all healing that in any way relates to a saint or his relic, which is also theologically unacceptable. The author, in short, deals with the "miracles" of psychology, not the wonders of faith, whereby the relationship with the transcendent God is reduced to the level of psychology, replacing the notion of "divine grace" with "human individual spiritual potential" condemned by the old Christian heresy under the name Mesalianism (Muzur 2001). His work is not a depiction of miraculous healings by faith, but of a suggestion activated by either faith or superstition. Even though the author confused spiritually and psychologically, he showed very well the influence of the psyche on his physical health and encouraged the most severe patient to never give up on illness, exhaustion and powerlessness.

MAGICAL CONTEXT SUGGESTION (NOCEBO)

Today, various healers deal with magic. A special category is represented by sorcerers, shamans and ferns, who use different forms of magic, not only for the sake of achieving health and happiness, but also to deface it (black magic). Suggestion is also their preferred instrument, but with nocebo effect, they may not necessarily be aware of it.

In the true sense of the word, magic is not power, but the delusion of the sorcerer, who is a victim of his own self-suggestion, while magic is a complex social phenomenon, the fruit of different components, the social perception of the sorcerer, suggestions, different states of consciousness, parapsychological phenomena.

Following we are interested in the fatal effects of spells as a result of adopting negative thoughts. Many studies confirm that ineffective substances can cause negative effects (nocebo effect). "It is well known that

expectation of death can kill" (Rossi, E.L. - David, B., 1988). In the tribes of the primitive nations, the devotees do indeed cause disease and death because they are afraid of the victims. Among all magic practices, the most common are spells.

"A spell is the most famous form of magic attack that does direct damage, most often with a one-time effect." (Iolar, 2013) The purpose of the spell is to harm humans and animals, to break one's relationship or marriage, to cause infertility or death.

The noun "spell" is semantically derived from the verb "say", which means that the spell is inflicted with speech, magic formulas.

The controversy surrounding the spell does not wither today. Europeans met them in encountering primitive peoples and cultures in which no one doubts their effectiveness. An early immigrant to New Zealand reported in 1890: "I saw a strong young man dying the same day he was cursed; the victim was dying because his strength was suddenly leaving him like water pouring out." (Clark, C.A., 1986) Similar testimonies are found not only in Dahomey and Haiti, voodoo countries, but also in New York, London and Croatia. Various wrappers with hairs, cropped nails, photographs of the victim, and similar objects, in pillows or clothing, chicken eggs below the doorstep, cause fear and anger, wreak havoc, and cause the person to dry for no apparent cause. (Iolar, 2013)

Symptoms of spells and curses have also been reported in medical circles (Clark 1986). "Vagal inhibition is known to doctors who have seen 'voodoo death'. Initially, the victim shows all the signs of panic the adrenaline rises, the heart rate speeds up, the movements are wild, and the victim bathes in sweat. But when the realization of the hopelessness of the condition prevails, the reaction is reversed - known as the parasympathetic reaction - the heart slows down, the breathing is slow, the blood pressure is continuously dropping. Sometimes death occurs very quickly. "(Clark 1986) Confronted with mysterious deaths as a result of spells, Professor Kenneth M. Golden of Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1977 reported the voodoo of death in the" American Journal of Psychiatry "and immediately applied a" placebo "remedy. He convinced patients that the potion, which had no cure, had a miraculous power against spells and achieved enviable success (Clark, CA, 1986). Hope was returned to the victims, they believed in the power of a miracle cure for spells, and no one died.

"Learned helplessness," a term coined by American psychologist Martin Seligman, denotes a passive acceptance of his own helplessness experienced by a victim of a spell or other calamity, without the motivation to take the situation into his own hands and master it. Previously accumulated negative experiences lead the victim to depression and hopelessness. These are also regular symptoms of the victim who believe

they are affected by the spell. "Once a victim learns of a prediction, a spell or a curse, and when his threat of death and belief in its power are embedded in his brain, the goal seems to be achieved in different ways – sometimes by losing the victim passively and perniciously, sometimes of great horror. Because, fear itself can be deadly." (Clark 1986) It is a nocebo effect with a possible fatal outcome.

Side by side spells are classified as "to bind a spell" or "binding spell" (as the "mildest" form of condescension to a person), treads (a more dangerous form of attack), curses (the most serious kind of magic attack that calls the victim the greatest possible accident) and a conspicuous eye (Latin "oculus malus", "evil eye").

A specific type of spell is a "nagaz" whose term derives from the Arab tradition. It is usually placed below the doorstep, next to the front door, or at an intersection through which the victim should walk. Beliefs in the upheavals in Europe date from the time of the Ottoman Empire and have persisted in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are considered dangerous because they can also affect the person who accidentally crosses them, at least with less intensity. Arabic mythology cites examples of royal magicians who made raids on the battlefield to harm an enemy army (Iolar 2013).

There is a widespread belief in the magical power of the human gaze (conspicuous eyes). Some people (especially those with grown eyebrows, redheads, scythes) have been attributed the magical power of intense gazing to cause illness or kill people. For the same reason, death row inmates were blindfolded before being executed so as not to insult anyone with their eyes. (Hiller 1989)

The imparting of magical properties to the human gaze has taken its toll in Croatia, and beyond, with the advent of the indigenous Croatian healer "Brace" (Josip Grbac from Srebrenica) from Zagreb, whose worshipers go to the Temple of the Sun for a gaze therapy.

What happens in all the above cases? Paveseus categorically refuses to believe in the existence of the "magic powers" of the spell or the effectiveness of the "magic formulas", which is substantiated by the fact that most spells only become effective when the victim learns that they were made against her. The rest is the doing of suggestion and fear. (Pavese, 1990)

Who is immune to magic? You can't attack people with magic who are free of egoism, narcissism, vanity, envy, etc. The sorcerer regularly relies on the evil present in the victim (instinct for revenge, hatred, unforgiveness ...) on a conscious or unconscious level. Persons persistent in faith, affirmative attitudes toward life (love life, people, animals, nature), positive thinking (optimistic, believe that it is worthwhile to sacrifice and suffer, live for higher ideals), strive to live and do good (give, they volunteer), are resistant to such perfidy traps of evil. (Pavese 1990).

PRAYER FOR HEALING IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT

As much as that miraculous healings are not the focus of contemporary theology, they are an integral part of the Christian faith. Jesus' miracles are the archetype of every true miracle, its source, norm and center, and the key to understanding all other miracles (Latourelle 1990). Outside of Jesus Christ, and without relationship with Him, miracles have no value to the Church, however spectacular or inexplicable it may be. Instead of a systematic account of the theology of miracles, we shall confine ourselves here to a few ecclesiastical documents as a theological basis for understanding Christian prayers for healing.

Encyclical Qui pluribus Pius IX. (November 9, 1846) ranks among the motives for the credibility of the Christian religion miracles (Denzinger-Hünermann, abbreviated: Dz 2779). The ecclesiastical Magisterium of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries miracles in the sense of omens (Greek sēméia) is cited as a guarantee of the divine origin of the Christian religion. The dogmatic constitution of Dei Filius on the Catholic Faith (April 24, 1870) proclaims the First Vatican Council of Miracles and Prophecy as "the surest signs of divine revelation, adapted to the understanding of all" (Dz 3009) and the Church "a raised sign among the nations" (Dz 3014). The same council anathema speaks to one who says, "that miracles cannot happen, and that therefore all accounts of them, even those contained in Scripture, should be placed among stories or myths" (Dz 3034). On the same lines and the Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum on Divine Revelation (18 November 1965) the Second Vatican Council states that "the overall appearance of their presence and, by words and deeds, signs and wonders ..." Jesus "revelates and completes it" (DV 4). Pius X. motu propriom Sacrorum antistitum (September 1, 1910) cites miracles and prophecies as external evidence of revelation and the surest signs that the Christian religion is of divine origin (Dz 3539). In the encyclical Humani generis (August 12, 1950) Pius XII repeats the same argument (Dz 3876).

Jesus' miracles are in the service of establishing the Kingdom of God and inseparable from Him. His resurrection is a lasting and fundamental miracle of the Christian faith with which Christianity stands and falls. The Old Testament Scriptures for miracles use the term térata, and the book of Deuteronomy and the New Testament often combine sēméia kái térata to indicate that it is a holy miracle. In his Gospel, John uses the term érg (works) to refer to the works of Christ as the Son of God, belonging to the great work that God began with the creation of the world and ended with the redemption in Jesus Christ, by which he created a new creation. Mark and Matthew express the manifestation and effects of Divine power through the term dynámeis (power). Exorcisms are a sign of the coming of the

Kingdom of God and the defeat of the kingdom of Satan. Jesus' healing, instantaneous and of all diseases, "heals all the sick" (Mt 16), "and he healed the sick and there were many and various diseases" (Mk 1,34), testifying to God's triumph over sickness and death, as well as over sin and Satan, are eschatological signs of the creation of a new heaven and a new earth already made in Jesus Christ. By his miracles, Jesus confirms (legitimizes) his divine mission proclaimed in the Old Testament. In miraculous gifts, Jesus stands in favor of a hungry multitude (Mk 6:36), a wedding feast without wine (Jn 2: 3), a fisherman without a catch (Lk 5: 5), seeking discretion about them. Apart from Christological, miracles have an ecclesiological and sacramental meaning. In the event of a silent storm in a boat on a turbulent sea (Mt 8:26; Mk 4:39), we see the image of the Church in the storms of this world, which Jesus protects from danger. Present in His Church all over the world and "until the end of the world" (Mt 28:20) Jesus continues his salvation work through the sacraments today, especially in the Eucharist and healing through the sacrament of Anointing of the sick. Tracing the above shows that the miracle for the Church is not any inexplicable or spectacular healing. "A miracle is a religious act, which in the cosmic order (man and space) represents a special and free interception of God's power and love, and sends to the people a sign of his constant presence in the light of his saving Word" (Latourelle 762). The miracle, then, is the holy act, the eschatonlogical sign of God's invisible presence in the world, the extraordinary intervention for the benefit of man, the fulfillment of the Word given by God himself.

In the light of the above, let us also consider the Christian understanding of the prayer for healing. The Church, above all, recommends to the faithful the healing power of the sacraments. "As the sacrament is the pledge and promise of the future kingdom, healing is also the proclamation of the resurrection when 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor cry, nor pain, for - the former have died" (Rev. 21: 4). Note, 2001)

Man is a pneumo-psycho-somatic being. Christian prayer therefore always has two components, the divine and the psychosuppressive, which cannot be mutually exclusive without compromising human integrity. For the first refers to the spiritual soul (pneuma) and the second refers to the psychological soul (psyche). The spiritual soul is a divine aspect of the psychological soul with which it is firmly united (Pavese 1990). Pope John Paul II claimed in the Encyclical Dominum et vivifycantem that God was at the same time a "psychological and ontological reality" in man (DV, 53). "Therefore, there is a strong connection between the reviving Spirit and the sanctifying grace and the multiple supernatural vitality that originates in man: between the uncreated Spirit and the created spirit of man" (DV, 52). The divine in man is prepared for eternity, and that is all his existence. It is magically entrenched in natural laws, in the still partially unknown dynamics of the unconscious into which God has "installed" structures for the self-healing of man. God has prepared, by faith, a natural law, which is seated in unconscious processes and is for the benefit of man. The stronger the "stimulus" of faith, the stronger the response of the unconscious, the mechanisms of psycho-energy interaction. Personal or communal prayer is a spiritual force that acts through certain unconscious mechanisms and achieves miraculous healing.

To claim that prayer has a therapeutic feature, and to function according to the natural laws of our unconscious, does not in the least diminish the meaning of prayer as an actual act of communication with a transcendent God. This attitude eliminates the temptation of confusing God with our unconscious present in the widespread self-help literature (Murphy, Byrne...) and New Age psychology (transpersonal psychology). Moreover, prayer becomes a means of a more genuine communion with God because we are aware of its double grace:

- *the transcendental aspect of prayer* that elevates us to relationship with God;
- the therapeutic aspect of prayer that puts us in a relationship with the immanent forces of the unconscious that respond to the existential stimulus of faith with yet partially unknown mechanisms of action. (88)

It should be made clear that the spiritual soul is immune to the (bizarre) manifestations of unconscious processes whose effect is also extraordinary psychokinetic phenomena, if they occur. The Church has never taken such phenomena as confirmation of one's holiness. In the prayer for healing, a crucial aspect of grace is the gift, which means that any kind of "powerful" prayer directed to God cannot force Him to heal, so whether it was addressed to a saint, I do not know how "specialized" in healing. The theology of the cross enables the Christian to penetrate faithfully into the meaning of suffering, especially when his prayer for healing remains unanswered. "Even the most intense prayers do not receive healing from all diseases. So St. Paul must learn from the Lord, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for strength is perfected in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12: 9), and the sufferings to be experienced may make sense to "complete in my body what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for His body, for the Church. '(Col. 1,24)'. (Note, 2001).

CONCLUSION

A child when he reaches adulthood, an equally uneducated man, when he reaches the appropriate cultural and intellectual level of development, should become able to critically reject magical beliefs (Pavese, 1990). Therefore, at the end of this paper, it is justified to ask what is going on in the depths of the souls of

those people who nevertheless go to the sorcerers in search of their services, what kind of image of God do they have, and what fruits do they hope to receive (Pavese 1990)? Past experience calls for caution. The only true magic is the power of suggestion that rests in the unconscious in which it represents true magic. Believe it or not, man is always right, because it will be according to his faith.

From what has been said so far it is evident that modern unconventional healers would benefit more from a better understanding of the mechanisms of unconscious processes than mystifying gestures and preparations in the context of their complex mythological cosmologies and anthropologies. Paradoxically, they are least interested in these findings, because even without them they are satisfied with the results achieved.

It is worth reflecting on Muzur's suggestion that it would be useful for modern physicians and therapists to adopt some of the gestures of medieval saints for the purpose of reaching a stronger suggestion as a partner in the healing process, such as the "complexity" of the healing procedure, the use of placebo, touching the patient, "materializing" his disease (extracted tooth, removed tumor), making authoritative, encouraging (affirmative) statements, which can be repeated without any danger or harm. Certainly, one should abstain from declaring that certain diseases are incurable, or difficult to cure, which unnecessarily weaken the psychoneuro-immunology potential of the individual.

"God is both medicine and healer," repeated St. Leopold Mandic to the penitents who treated him with confidence in the confessional. It is useful for priests and pastoral ministers to take Jesus' command "heal the sick" more seriously (Mt 10:18). "The history of the Church lacked holy miracle workers who were miraculously healed." (Note, 2001). God remains faithful to his promise that on His behalf, "they will lay their hands on the infirm, and they will be healed" (Mark 16:18). Contrary to the limited reach of the power of suggestion, God's power is limitless. "Faith is not only the source of illusory or true ideas: it is a working force, capable of striking a balance with natural forces." (Le Roy 1906).

A doctor, a priest, and any other empathetic and assertive person, regardless of any scientific qualification, assist in the healing process through ordinary listening, understanding and empathy. He who can listen and understand he himself becomes a cure that heals. The therapist is successful to the extent that he succeeds in establishing a relationship with the patient because, according to Jacob Grimm, strength is in the words: "Even greater power than in grass or stone lies in the word, and from all people flow blessings or damnations. But if they are to act, cohesive, solemnly composed words, song and singing are required; therefore, all the power of speech by which serves as a priest, doctor or magician associated with forms of poetry." (Hiller 1989).

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