THE SACRED DOMAIN:
A SEMIOTIC AND COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF RELIGION AND MAGIC IN
THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

DISSERTATION
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Throughout the corpus of texts scholars have decided to call the *Greek Magical Papyri* (*PGM*), most simply defined as a “recipe-book” for ancient magicians, there are many spells describing the manufacture and use of sacred images that, by the end of the ritual actions incorporated throughout the spell, become invested with essences and traits that are not necessarily ontologically apparent or natural. For example, there are statues invested with social agency that can perform all manner of fantastical feats. There are engraved rings that are ritually invested with great powers and come to be specifically described in terms of adjectives such as “beneficent,” “merciful,” “sexually pleasing,” and so forth. This dissertation takes a close look at the specific ritual actions that allow for objects in the profane world – such as clay or stone, for example – being ascribed these kinds of powers and abilities.

For this purpose, I use cognitive and semiotic frameworks to draw out deeper meanings, analyses, and typologies of ritual action. I use the *PGM* as my primary source, although part of the semiotic theory that I incorporate also involves looking at how these images fit into a wider conception of the portrayal of divine interaction in literature and iconography in the ancient world. A second important aspect of this dissertation is a closer look at the practitioner of magic himself as a figure who also has (or comes to
have, through the course of the ritual action) an inner essence that bestows upon him special and divine powers.

An essential contribution of semiotic domain theory to this topic is the manner in which it allows us to analyze the practitioner of magic as a “specialist” thinker within the domain of religion. In this way the practitioner of magic can be compared to other “specialists” who also create new content within the semiotic domain of religion, such as the figure of the poet. Both of these figures create new content, however one happens to create very marginalized content, in the form of magic, while the other creates what is commonly interpreted as more normal “religious” content, in the form of epic and hymns about the gods. I use semiotic domain theory to offer an explanation as to why this is the case. How is it that the way magic “works,” on semiotic and cognitive levels, especially, results in it being something specifically marginalized in terms of what defines religious action? The theories I present and the topics under discussion help to explain this, thus fitting my dissertation into the ever-present debate about the definitions of magic and religion.
To my family, for their love.

To my mother, for her spirit.
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My interest in ancient religion began when I was an undergraduate at the Ohio State University and took an introductory mythology class with Sarah Iles Johnston. It was this class, and Sarah Johnston’s enthusiasm for the subject material in particular, that sparked my determination to study Classics in an official manner, and thus began a journey that has led me to this dissertation.

The seeds of this particular project were sown during a joint seminar between the Department of Art History and the Department of Greek and Latin, led by Fritz Graf and Mark Fullerton, that had as its topic Sacred Images. Thus what began as a seminar paper on sacred images in the *Greek Magical Papyri*, through the thoughtful insights and ever-present help of my instructors, developed into an article. The research and topics of this paper-turned-article ultimately provided the springboard to this dissertation.

I am especially grateful to Sarah Iles Johnston for her feedback, patience, and inspiration both through this endeavor, and also through my entire graduate career. She has provided unyielding support and the best introduction to the study of religion a graduate student could ever hope for. I am also especially grateful to Fritz Graf for the astute insight that has never failed to challenge my assumptions and keep me thinking, as well as for the unswerving commitment to providing support and aid to graduate students like myself in his role as department chair.
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Most importantly, I am especially thankful to my friends and family, for their laughter, love, support and confidence. Last but certainly not least, my mother, who has taught me hard work and sincerity, to think and to dream without limits, and to push myself beyond what I thought possible. It is to them I dedicate this dissertation, a small gift for many received.
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INTRODUCTION

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

-Arthur C. Clarke, Profiles of the Future

The above quotation from a well-known science fiction author is relevant to my dissertation because I plan on questioning the basic interpretation assumed by its direct meaning. This meaning is centered on the idea that if something is advanced enough such that one cannot understand rationally or logically how it works, then an understanding of that particular something is often interpreted in terms of “magic.” By this interpretation, magic works outside of our understanding and is a force powerful enough to explain the unexplainable. Of course, this interpretation can be used by a culture that does understand a given technology as a way to define a culture that does not understand as “primitive,” a practice that coincides with the evolutionary definitions of magic as put forth by previous scholars of magic Edward Tylor and James Frazer.¹

However magic is more than simply some undefined, or loosely defined, force

¹ Both Tylor and Frazer attempted to explain the differences between magic, religion and science in terms of progressions in cultural evolution. See Tylor 1871 for an analysis of primitive peoples as “primitive philosophers” attempting to explain the mysteries of life and the vicissitudes of fortune through their interactions with magic and magical rituals. See Frazer 1911 for discussion of sympathetic and contagious magic as methods of thinking underlying primitive magical actions.
that is capable of explaining the unexplainable. Magic itself represents a particular set of practices and beliefs that, as I will show, can be understood and explored on its own terms. Through the course of this dissertation I will be using cognitive and semiotic frameworks to draw meanings out of magic, as well as the elusive practitioners of magic. The specific cultural milieu I will be considering is that surrounding a corpus of ritual texts scholars title the *Greek Magical Papyri*. Within this corpus of texts, which I will introduce more fully in the first chapter, we can catch a glimpse of a wide variety of magical ritual actions and practices, the totality of which seem to represent a sort of advanced technology of its own, especially in the manner in which interactions with the sacred realm seem to change and evolve, for dealing with the world and finding new solutions to problems and desires.

My specific interests within this corpus of texts originally stemmed from a curiosity regarding the representation of certain objects as particularly powerful or as having the ability to perform feats outside of the realm of natural expectations. My interest in applying cognitive and semiotic frameworks to such aspects within these spells is twofold.

For one, these theories and cognitive discussions are interesting in their own right as representative of universal modes of thinking. The ability of the human mind both to be rational and to think of objects in terms of strange abilities or emotions is fascinating, and is not exclusive to ancient “primitive” beliefs of magic alone. Take, for example, the field of robotics. Robots, in line with Arthur Clarke’s quotation above, can have a certain technological magic to them, and human treatment of robots can highlight trends in
thinking that will, in turn, help me introduce the importance of applying theories of the mind to ancient practices of magic.

Peter Singer, author of *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*, researched the use of robots in modern military tactics. He relates several compelling stories of soldiers interacting with and becoming attached to their robots, usually a type of Packbot responsible for disabling explosives. Examples include a soldier who ran over 150 feet under machine gun fire to retrieve a robot that had been knocked out of action, several teams giving their robots promotions, Purple Heart awards for being wounded in combat, and even a military funeral, and one sad soldier who brought in a robot for repairs with tears in his eyes and asked the men at the repair shop – or, the “robot hospital,” as the soldiers call it – if they could put "Scooby-Doo" back together. Despite being assured that he would get a new robot, the soldier remained inconsolable. He only wanted Scooby-Doo. Singer also discusses surveys of people who owned Sony AIBO, a little robotic dog, in which almost half of the people surveyed described their robot as having a “life-like essence,” and seventy-five percent said they felt their robot was more than just a machine.²

This kind of ascription of feelings, emotions or “life” does not only stem from close experiences with a robot leading to a build-up of emotional connection. At the Los Alamos National Laboratory a robot was invented that was modeled after a stick insect. This robot was responsible for walking through minefields in order to step on mines and blow them up. The robot would crawl along blowing up mines until it was, literally, on

its last leg. During testing, the robot worked exactly as intended, but when the army
colonel in charge came to inspect the robot, the robotics physicist at the facility, Mark
Tilden, reported that he called the tests “inhuman” and ordered them stopped. “The
Colonel could not stand the pathos of watching the burned, scarred, and crippled machine
drag itself forward on its last leg.”

Singer notes that this attachment to robots stems in part from the human brain's
mirror-neuron system, which fires up whenever watching kinetic movement. The system
helps form the foundation for empathy and understanding, and can also lead people to
project personalities and emotions onto objects, or ascribe them essences.

It also stems from the human tendency to anthropomorphize both objects and
concepts. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson discuss the human tendency to describe or
treat physical objects like people, through the metaphors of personification, which allow
for humans to “comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in
terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities.” They use as an example the
personification of Inflation, as exemplified by the following sentences: “Inflation has
attacked the foundation of our economy. Inflation has pinned us to the wall. Inflation has
robbed me of my savings. The dollar has been destroyed by inflation.” In these
texts, “Inflation is personified, but not just in the metaphor of INFLATION IS A
PERSON, but more specifically INFLATION IS AN ADVERSARY. This metaphor

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5 Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 33.
“gives rise to and justifies political and economic actions on the part of our government: declaring war on inflation, setting targets, calling for sacrifices, installing a new chain of command, etc”\textsuperscript{6}

The flexibility in thinking of objects and concepts in terms of anthropomorphism is not limited to language alone, but is reflective of the manner in which we think about and interact with the world and objects within it. This tendency to anthropomorphize and ascribe life-like essences to objects and concepts does not belong to the realm of modern robots alone. Christopher Faraone discusses the almost “robotic” creations of Hephaestus, described in various ancient sources, such as dogs, a bronze lion and the massive Talos. All of these creations exist for the purpose of guarding, and are usually placed at thresholds or on the border of a place or territory. The most interesting thing, for our purposes, is the manner in which these objects are often portrayed as having a psyche, or soul. Faraone states that,

All of the statues are said to be alive, with the notable exception of the bronze lion buried on Lesbos; both Talos and the golden dog are described as “animated” (\textit{empsychos}); Hephaestus gives a soul (\textit{psychēn entithenai}) to the bronze dog; and the Homeric adjectives “immortal” and “unaging” used to describe Alcinous’ dogs presuppose an animate, even immortal state.”\textsuperscript{7}

These examples illustrate the flexibility of human cognition, especially through metaphorical and metonymic methods of understanding. These statues, created by a divine entity, are conceived as entities having a soul, as alive.

Moving on to the magical papyri, there are several examples in which some

\textsuperscript{6} Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 34.

\textsuperscript{7} Faraone 1992: 20.
object, whether a ring or a statue, is described in terms that would seem to be counter-intuitive to the ontological traits that one would expect these objects to have. There are statues that can perform fantastical feats and rings that are described in terms of powerful ascribed essences.

All of the above examples can, in part, be explained through a study of certain universal cognitive functions. Such an exploration of the ancient evidence in terms of semiotic and cognitive frameworks can be especially revealing in light of the proposed universality of these patterns of thought. My second reason for applying these types of theories to ancient magic stems from the lack of such an application of these studies to the realm of classics in particular. It is my hope that an application of some of the semiotic and cognitive theories that are understood to be universally applicable to the human mind in general, whether from modern times to the ancient past, will prove a valuable stepping stone in our understandings of this ancient material and the minds that created and used it.
CHAPTER 1

Mind Your Magic!:

Introduction to Ancient Magic through Semiotics and Cognition

It's still magic even if you know how it's done.
Terry Pratchett, A Hat Full of Sky

i. Chapter introduction

As mentioned in the general introduction above, my interest in the application of semiotics and cognition to ancient magic stems from my understanding of magic as a domain of expertise that can facilitate certain interpretations of meaning, in addition to my understanding of the ancient practitioner of magic as a specialist within that domain who creates content with an eye towards these very “interpretations of meaning.” Understanding these meanings does not make magical actions and intentions any less “magical,” as could be implied by the earlier discussion of magic as an explanation of the otherwise unexplainable.

In order for me to highlight the manner in which magic works as a domain, and how exactly it works this way, I must first introduce the relevant sources and theorists that form the backdrop of my dissertation research. I will begin, however, with an introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri, followed by a discussion of the debate that surrounds the definitions of magic and religion.
The study of ancient Mediterranean magic and religion can be an interesting journey through a wide variety of source material and scholarly resources. For my own interests in studying both magic and the practitioner of magic in semiotic and cognitive terms, I will use a variety of sources. The main primary text for this study is the corpus of texts subsumed under the name of the Greek Magical Papyri, a collection of papyrus texts that span the period between the last century BCE and the fifth century CE and consist of “a variety of magical spells and formulae, hymns and rituals.”

The “recipes” included in this collection of rituals vary from the creation of love rings and protective amulets, to various methods of divination and communing with divinity, to spells that help cure dog bites, scorpion stings, runny eyes or headaches. The spells of the PGM also reflect influences from a multiplicity of ancient Mediterranean cultures, including a syncretism of Egyptian, Greek, Jewish and Near Eastern religious beliefs.

This amalgam of primary evidence amounts to what Hans Dieter Betz, in his introduction to The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation calls, “more than just a hodgepodge of heterogeneous items. In effect, it is a new religion altogether, displaying unified

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8 Betz 1986: xli.

religious attitudes and beliefs.”

This syncretism of material provides a compelling springboard for a discussion of magic as a specific domain of knowledge and understanding, and it especially reflects the ability of the ancient practitioner of magic to leverage this knowledge to suit his intentions and purposes.

I would offer as a preliminary example one particular spell found within this corpus of texts, *PGM XII.270-350*, within which is described the creation of a very special, and ultimately very powerful, ring. Wearing the ring can make you famous, or rich as can be. According to the spell there is nothing greater in the world. Anything you say will be believed. You can use the ring to break chains, rocks, or doors. The ring has great powers, and the stone within the ring is described as “beneficent, divine, holy,” among other things. The ritual action used to create this powerful object is specifically referred to as a rite that can “enliven with fire” (*zôpyreitai*) all modeled images, engravings, and statues.*

The user of the ritual is informed to keep the spell in a safe and secret place, “as a great mystery,” and later in the spell the practitioner prays to a god to “give spirit to the mystery I have prepared, O gods whom I have named and called on. Give breath to the mystery I have prepared.” The practitioner is instructed to carve an image of the god Helios in the form of a serpent and scarab beetle surrounded by rays. The practitioner is then instructed to offer various prayers at certain times of the day, while offering libations and the sacrifice of a rooster. These prayers consist of calling upon the “Greatest

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10 Betz 1986: xlvi.

11 *PGM XII.320.*
god, who exceeds all power” to give power to the image and the ritual action. This “greatest god” is addressed with a long series of appellations, some of them recognizable (Abraham, Issac, Jacob), and some of them not as familiar (MASICHIOR IOTABAAS CHENOUCHI).

I begin with this spell because it represents three different aspects of ancient magic that I wish to address throughout the course of this dissertation. The first is the nature of magical language, as represented by the list of unfamiliar appellations as well as by the use of iteration and redundancy, since the spell is to be spoken three times a day for fourteen days. The voles magicae are an important aspect of spells all throughout the magical papyri. Although they seem semantically vacant in terms of their direct meaning, an exploration of their use and function through semiotic and cognitive frameworks will show not only the manner in which these words do have meaning, but also how the practitioner of magic used this kind of language to facilitate the effectiveness of the ritual action.

The second feature I will be analyzing is that of sacred images. In our example above, the image inscribed on the ring, according to the ritual descriptions, seems to become “alive” in some way. One of the particularly fascinating aspects of the spells in the PGM is the manner in which certain objects are invested with great power and agency. By the end of the ritual action, this ring in particular is invested with essences and traits that are not necessarily ontologically apparent or natural. For example, the ring

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12 PGM XII.307ff: “When you perform this rite, say [the spell] three times each day, in the third, sixth, and ninth hour, and this for fourteen days, beginning when the moon begins its third quarter” (Translation Morton Smith in Betz 1886: 164). The importance of redundancy and iteration to creating a sense of the “magical” in a semiotic sense will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.
is described as “beneficent,” “merciful,” “sexually pleasing,” and so forth. As in the case of magical language, I will show how these types of sacred images generate specific meaning through an analysis using the frameworks of semiotics and cognitive theory.

And finally, in the course of this spell, and others of the PGM, we can catch murky glimpses of the figure of the practitioner of magic himself, through the lens of the ritual action. The exploration of meaning behind the use of magical language and sacred images within the PGM will form the backdrop for a discussion of the practitioner of magic as a specialist who leveraged these particular meanings to suit his needs and those of his clientele.

As a specialist, a concept that will be discussed in detail in my final chapter, the practitioner of magic was also adept at utilizing a blend of diverse cultural elements. Ian Moyer and Jacco Dieleman argue that PGM XII.270–350 adapts an Egyptian ritual known as the “Opening of the Mouth” in which mummies and cult statues of the gods were vivified. However, despite the similarity between the spell and the Egyptian vivification ceremony on the level of general intention, we should not mistake an influx of Egyptian concepts into this and other magical spells for wholesale adoption of Egyptian techniques.

The spells of the papyri draw upon a wide variety of ethnically diverse ideas and techniques, and we must attempt to understand them from a vantage point that does not inappropriately privilege any one culture – Greek, Egyptian, or otherwise. According to Betz, “The historian of religion will be especially interested in the kind of syncretism

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13 Moyer and Dieleman 2003: 40. This spell and the Egyptian precedents will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.
represented in the *Greek magical papyri*. This syncretism is more than a mixture of diverse elements from Egyptian, Greek, Babylonian, and Jewish religion, with a few sprinkles of Christianity. Despite the diversity of texts, there is in the whole corpus a tendency toward assimilation and uniformity.”\(^{14}\) While it is likely that those using the spells I will be examining utilized rituals drawn from a variety of cultural influences, and despite the fact that Betz claims the spells are “Hellenistic in outlook,” my approach here is built on the assumption that we will better understand the spells of the papyri if we set aside concerns of historical priority and instead focus on how the spells themselves work.\(^{15}\)

### iii. Definitions of Magic

Before I further discuss theories of magic, I need to have a working definition of what I mean by “magic.” I return to the spell introduced above, keeping in mind the question of how we know that this spell is “magic” anyway, outside of the fact that the spell is found within a corpus of texts that we have chosen to call the *Greek Magical Papyri*. When we start to look closely at the features of the spell, perhaps in general curiosity about how the spell “works,” we can notice the manner in which this spell

\(^{14}\) Betz 1986: xlvi. Graf 1997: 6 concurs, “Rather than look for a single source, we should note the varied origin of the constituent elements of these texts – Greek, Jewish, Assyrian, Babylonian, and even Sumerian – that make them evidence as exciting as it is complex for what is still readily called ‘late pagan syncretism.’ In short, it would be too narrow-minded and cautious to treat these books only as documents of Egyptian religion – nearly as narrow-minded as the pan-Hellenism of which our predecessors were largely guilty.”

\(^{15}\) Betz 1986: xlvi.
intersects with other types of evidence. How do the images on the ring compare to cultic statues of the gods in the ancient city of Athens or in an Egyptian temple, for example? What about the ritual actions within the spell, the sacrifices and spoken prayers and incantations? How are they similar to or different from what is found elsewhere in ancient religious ritual practices?

These types of questions have already been asked by other scholars, regarding the nature of magic in general and the nature of spells in the PGM in particular. It is my intention in this dissertation to make a new attempt to answer them, and I use as my framework new theories in semiotics and cognition to do so. However, I will not be using these theories in isolation, but rather in applying them to the ancient material I will be working within the long-established discussions of ancient magic and religion within the theoretical fields of anthropology and religious studies.

Scholarship on magic in general and in ancient Mediterranean cultures more specifically has run the gamut of possible answers to the question of how, if at all, we can distinguish the category of “magic” from the category of “religion.”¹⁶ There are several theories and definitions of magic as something distinct from religion, some applied to the ancient Greco-Roman world more specifically, and others to the topic of magic and religion more generally, although each has been criticized in some way or another. Perhaps the most succinct summation is provided by H. S Versnel, who points out four distinctions generally applied to magical practices.

The first is intention, since magic can be seen to achieve immediate and individual goals, as opposed to religion which can focus on intangibles, long term desires, and collective issues of society. The second is attitude, since the magician is seen as manipulative and coercive, in contrast to a submissive and supplicant "religious" devotee. The third distinction is in action, since in magic there is a strong focus on precise formulas and techniques utilized by professional specialists. The fourth common distinction involves social or moral evaluation, with an emphasis on magic as immoral, anti-social and even deviant, in opposition to what are considered the cohesive and socializing functions of religious practices.\(^\text{17}\)

Most of the theories associated with these distinctions are large-scale theories that attempt to encompass all of magic, or all of religion. All have come under attack and, as Versnel points out, some scholars go as far as to conclude that "any distinction between religion and magic is an illusion based on a variety of fallacies, especially ethnocentric projection and historical distortion."\(^\text{18}\) This perhaps swings the pendulum too far in the opposite direction, and I would agree with Versnel and other scholars who maintain that the magic – religion distinction is an important heuristic device, without which it would be impossible to properly study and analyze magic and religious practices.

Traditionally scholars have focused on the differences, although recent trends have attempted to analyze the ways in which the practices of magic parallel the practices of religion, with differences to be found only in the details. For example, a practitioner of

\(^{17}\) Versnel 1991: 178-179.

\(^{18}\) Versnel 1991: 180.
magic in the ancient world performed sacrifices with similar intent and practice to religion, but could use “miniaturized” versions of sacrifices or sacred spaces as more fitting to a personal or domestic sphere.19

Jonathan Z. Smith posits one aspect of ancient Greek magic as the miniaturization or domestication of mainstream religious practices, emphasizing the practical and material side, in which “smaller” objects are used, such as small-scale temples, shrines, altars, and offerings, with largely the same functions and intentions as religious practices. He states,

Alternatively, while the small shrines resemble the portable naïskoi commonly carried in religious processions, the little shrines, ritual implements, small statues and ritual practices have their closest parallels, as Fritz Graf has convincingly argued, in small-scale, private, domestic rituals conducted by ordinary householders for their household deities and/or ancestors....What is different about the Greek Magical Papyri is that these practices have been divorced from a familial setting, becoming highly mobile and professionalized. 20

Thus we can see one manner in which “magic” does not consist of rituals that are in opposition to “religious” practices, but in fact are smaller derivatives of various religious elements. The distinction of “mobile and professionalized,” however, is very relevant to the practitioner of magic as a specialist within his domain of knowledge, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Other scholars have approached the “magic or religion” question on a smaller scale, with an eye to this interpretation, looking not so much at all-encompassing theories but at a specific cultures or groups of practices within one culture. Often these scholars


have attempted to step away from the distinction between magic and religion to show the ways in which magic uses or highlights religious practice, instead of being distinct from it in one of the four ways categorized by Versnel. In studying magic in the ancient Greek world, scholars looking at the corpus of texts in the *Greek Magical Papyri* have taken a step back from large-scale theories to look at individual spells or sets of spells. Sarah Iles Johnston shows that what may seem like reversal or distortion in two specific spells is actually an example of the practitioner attempting to enhance certain aspects thought to be important, or extending underlying ideology in a new direction. Her examples include offerings to Aphrodite consisting of burning pellets made of white dove’s blood and fat, myrrh and other ingredients meant to be pleasing to the gods, which is entirely in line with normative cultic ideology.\(^{21}\)

Fritz Graf closely examines certain prayers in the *PGM* and shows how their overall structure conforms to Greek religious prayer. They are tripartite in structure, with an invocation, a middle narrative part and the third part consisting of the actual wish to divinity. The magical phrases used are thought to be special names of gods, used not for coercion but thought to be especially pleasing to the gods or to serve as credentials of knowledge.\(^{22}\) These methods of analyzing a particular ritual or spell in isolation and

\(^{21}\) Johnston 2002: 349-350. Johnston goes on to point out that if these offerings meant to be pleasing do not work, the practitioner then attempts to “compel” rather than persuade the goddess by burning the brain of a vulture (*PGM* IV.2895-97). She points out, though, that “the general outlines of the compulsive offering are clear: if pleasing things delight the gods when burnt, unpleasant things such as brains will make them uncomfortable and perhaps...willing to cooperate...The ideology that underlies the procedure is traditional, and simply has been extended along logical lines: all materials can be burnt in order to send messages to the gods – unpleasant as well as pleasant.”

attempting to understand the way in which it responds to or changes more traditional or religious practice or ideology are perhaps the most instructive with regards to teasing out meanings in any particular spell, myth or practice.

However, the pervasiveness of the idea of magic as something distinct from religion, whatever that something may be, is hard to deny or abolish entirely. Hugh Parry succinctly states that,

Whatever the vocabulary, magic seems everywhere to be a ‘complex of phenomena loosely organized,’ a jumble of beliefs and actions, overlapping with other organizations of human experience, especially, as we formally categorize two of the most important, religion and science. On the other hand, magic is sufficiently coherent to be recognized in its own right without much difficulty, its language, forms and functions peculiarly its own.\(^{23}\)

Thus “magic,” regardless of similarities and overlaps we may find with “religion,” still remains a concept that, however difficult to define, is somehow bounded by an existence all its own. The separation of “magic” from the practices of “religion” is useful as a heuristic device, whether one accepts the practices of magic as distinct from those of religion or not. Although the adage “One man’s magic is another man’s religion” may hold true, I will show how an understanding of rituals in the *PGM* through semiotic

\(^{23}\) Parry 1992:4, following Mauss 1950. Sørensen 2007: 2 states something similar in, “…scholars have attempted to abolish the concept, but they have faced the problem that even if undesirable, they find it difficult if not impossible to avoid using the concept of magic as it seems to cover a recurrent and persistent type of observed human behavior.” See also Johnston 2008 and Versnel 1991 for another discussion of the importance of keeping the distinction as a heuristic tool. Also Collins 2003: 18, “Part of the reason magic has yet to be dissolved as a concept…and reformulated in terms of social, institutional, symbolic, or other categories, is that there is a fundamental conceptual division between scholars who see the basis of magic as objective and material and those who see it as subjective and psychological; there is no unified concept to dissolve.”
and cognitive frameworks can highlight the coherence of these practices as a distinct domain.

iv. Semiotic domain theory

The important backdrop for thinking about how spells like the one above work in semiotic and cognitive terms is the semiotic domain theory of James Paul Gee, a scholar known for his work in the New Literacy Studies movement and applications of cognitive science to such topics as education, literacy and even video games. Gee has developed theories based upon various findings and research done in the area of cognitive science, but the particular aspects of his theory I would like to focus on for my own research are those surrounding what are called “semiotic domains.”

Recent scholarly research in the areas of cognitive science and literacy studies has changed our interpretations regarding both the ways in which we understand and conceptualize the content of the world around us, and the ways in which new content is created. This trend is influenced by wider interpretations of what it means to “read” or “write” the world around us, especially when one interprets certain aspects of society in terms of semiotic domains.

Gee defines a semiotic domain as “any set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g. oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artifacts, etc.) to communicate distinctive types of meanings.” A semiotic domain is, more or less, the content of the world around us and the meanings that that content
conveys to us (the “semiotics” part) as restricted to some particular area of expertise or set of activities where people think, act, interact, and form judgments and values in certain ways.\textsuperscript{24} Semiotic domains are not limited to traditional “print” literacy and can include things such as, “cellular biology, postmodern literary criticism, first-person-shooter video games, high-fashion advertisements, Roman Catholic theology, modernist painting, midwifery, rap music, wine connoisseurship -- through a nearly endless, motley, and ever-changing list.”\textsuperscript{25}

People can be “literate” in any particular semiotic domain by either recognizing and/or producing meanings in the domain. People can thus “read” in a domain, or in other words, they can understand and recognize meaning in the domain. People can also “write” in the domain, in other words, they can create new meaning or content in the domain. Gee is primarily interested in creating new conceptions of literacy, so that one can be a “reader” and/or a “writer” in a domain that doesn't necessarily involve traditional “print” literacy, so when we are discussing “readers” and “writers,” this does not mean in the literal sense of reading and writing literature, but in a broader sense of being able to recognize and understand the content of any particular domain.

This is especially important due to the fact that meaning can be communicated through visual symbols such as images, graphs and artifacts. Thus the concept of “visual literacy” becomes relevant. Gee provides the example of advertising, in which being able to “read” the images constitutes one type of visual literacy. He points out that “there are different ways to read such images, ways that are more or less aligned with the intentions

\textsuperscript{24} Gee 2003: 36.

\textsuperscript{25} Gee 2003: 18.
and interests of the advertisers. Knowing how to read interior designs in homes, modernist art in museums, and videos on MTV are other forms of visual literacy.”

Gee also states that often words and images are integrated into “multimodal” texts, within which the combination of the words and images can communicate meanings different from and beyond the meanings that the two modes can communicate individually. In general, we can see that religion is a semiotic domain in that it recruits a specific set of practices (rituals) and beliefs that utilize several kinds of modalities – sacred cultic images or artifacts, sacred texts or myths about divinities, the specific prescribed rites themselves, and so forth – and in that each of these modalities can communicate distinctive types of meanings to anyone participating in that domain.

In addition, throughout the PGM we find spells that utilize both words and images together to communicate meaning to practitioners. In the following two chapters I will be discussing the manner in which both language and image can communicate a certain kind of meaning within the domain of magic, a domain that I will ultimately suggest is a sub-domain within the greater and encompassing domain of religion. But for now I will continue to introduce the defining factors of a “semiotic domain” in general.

The specific importance of semiotic domains to the way people understand and create content has to do with the fact that there are different ways of reading and writing, and various domains have their own rules regarding the meanings of various modalities. “Literacy is multiple, then, in the sense that the legal literacy needed for reading law


books is not the same as the literacy needed for reading physics texts or superhero comic books.”

Since meaning can be dependent upon understanding of a particular semiotic domain, it is important to analyze the words and images within the PGM in terms of the domain of magic. It is also important since those who can create or write texts within a particular domain can potentially make better readers within the domain. New content and change in a semiotic domain stem from those participants who are “writers” or “producers,” meaning that they do not merely “read” in the domain, but read in an active and critical way. Active and critical awareness within a particular domain – that is, being a good and conscious “writer/producer” – can leverage a particular design grammar at a meta-level, leading to “critique, novel meanings, or transformation of the domain.”

This meta-level thinking, I would argue, is a characteristic of the ancient practitioner of magic, if we accept that religion and magic can both be understood in terms of semiotic domains. Gee goes on to state that “semiotic systems are human cultural and historical creations that are designed to engage and manipulate people in certain ways. They attempt through their content and social practices to recruit people to think, act, interact, value and feel in certain specific ways…to get people to learn and take on certain sorts of new identities, to become, for a time and place, certain types of people.” Thus, those engaged in the specific practices of religion or magic can be thought of as thinking and acting in certain specific ways, influenced by the meanings

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29 Gee 2003: 41.
30 Gee 2003: 36.
that the domain conveys. So, for example, the manner of offering gifts and sacrifices to a cult image is an action that reflects an understanding of that image as a sacred representation of a divine entity in the domain of ancient Greek religion. For a modern academic who studies ancient statuary, a particular cult image will carry a different meaning in the domain of art history. The same modality communicates different meaning depending on the present domain. In the following chapters I will be discussing how both language and image within ancient magic, or within the PGM in particular, communicate meaning that is specific to their role as magical elements.

This semiotic domain theory is important for my analyses in two distinct ways. In the following two chapters I will be looking at two modalities within the domain of religion: language and image. Both language and images can convey meaning to participants within the domain, or in the terms we just discussed, languages and images can be “read” in certain ways by participants within various domains. I will be discussing the manner in which language and image can be “read” within the domain of religion, but more specifically how they can be “read” within the domain of magic. Not only will these analyses contribute to a deeper understanding of the spells under discussion, but they will also highlight important distinctions in the magic-religion debate.

In addition to the manner in which language and image can be “read,” I will also be discussing how such modalities are “written” through the practitioner of magic as one participant in the domain of religion who embodies specialist ways of thinking about the various modalities. I specifically focus on how and why change and innovation might come about in the domain of religion through the agency of the practitioner of magic as
one type of figure who embodies “meta-level” ways of conceptualizing elements within the domain. This meta-level thinking about “religious things,” – thinking about religion as “design space” with various pieces that can be taken apart, joined, and rejoined in different ways – is what ultimately allows for a magical practitioner to develop non-static methods of interacting with the sacred.

Although the semiotic domain theory of Gee provides the backdrop for my analysis of the PGM, I will be using other theories to highlight my discussion. Jesper Sørensen, in his book A Cognitive Theory of Magic, explores advancements and theories in cognitive science and attempts to develop from these a comprehensive cognitive theory to explain magical behavior, specifically magical ritual action. His specific interests lie in exploring the incredible pervasiveness of conceptions of magic throughout all cultures and time periods. Although he points out that scholarly attempts to study and define magic often result in *ad hoc* definitions, which leads to problems in finding an exact definition and applying definitions across cultures, he ultimately concludes that getting rid of the category of “magic” is equally problematic.\(^{31}\)

Sørensen states that, concepts such as magic and religion are not explanatory concepts, but rather descriptive concepts that subsume a particular range of observable phenomena, in this case human behavior, under a common heading. Such observable behavior is not explained by reference to the concept but can only be explained by recourse to theories explaining the observable behavior.\(^{32}\)

\(^{31}\) Sørensen 2007: 2.

\(^{32}\) Sørensen 2007: 2.
For this reason Sørensen chooses to focus on applying cognitive theories to explain the complex phenomena underlying magical practices. He points out that there are no specific or special cognitive processes that can be applied to magic, but that magic draws upon cognitive processes used for general cognition, just applied in a certain way. His exact definition of magic is as follows,

> Magic is about changing the state of essence of persons, objects, acts and events through certain special and non-trivial kinds of actions with opaque causal mediation. This manipulative and transformative aspect of magical action will place a substantial part of the analysis of magic in the realm of the psychological or cognitive theories and explanations.\(^{33}\)

Sørensen’s definition emphasizes action as a distinguishing feature of magic, as opposed to an institutionalized symbolic system defining the parameters for religion. While I do not think that this distinction can hold up in all cases, it does provide a productive heuristic tool when looking at the cognitive and semiotic aspects of magical action. For Sørensen, much of magical action focuses on highlighting iconic and indexical interpretations of words and images and de-emphasizing any potential symbolic interpretations. These interpretations will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, but

\(^{33}\) Sørensen 2007: 32. Sørensen’s emphasis on the opaqueness of magical ritual stems from his analysis of aspects of ritual that seem to have no direct semantic reference or interpretation in a causal sense. Examples include the magical forms of language such as abracadabra or voces magicae, which will be discussed in my next chapter. While I agree that these kinds of elements form an important part of magical ritual, I would not agree that they form a distinguishing marker between magic and religion. In fact, much of what Sørensen ultimately describes as “magical” ritual, such elements of the Eucharist, might easily be regarded as traditional religion. Therefore, while I use many aspects of Sørensen’s definitions of magical ritual to understand and analyze elements with ancient Greek magic and the Greek magical papyri, in particular, I do not necessarily agree with Sørensen’s theoretical distinction between magic and religion. I will put forth my own interpretations of a possible distinction between magic and religion using the semiotic domain theory of James Paul Gee in my final chapter.
for now it is important to point out that Sørensen’s theories of the different types of semiotic understandings will be used to highlight the manner in which words and images are “read” within the domain of magic.

Due to the difficulties in studying cultures that are ancient, an accurate assessment of the manner in which ancient peoples “read” or understood content within their domains is a careful endeavor. Using the universal methods of cognition as presented by Sørensen provides a unique manner of augmenting the semiotic domain theory of Gee. This allows me to present a more complete picture of how content was both understood and created, not in an abstract or theoretical manner as presented by the theorists I use, but in a concrete manner that is both highlighted by, and relevant to, one particular cultural milieu.

v. Chapter introductions

Now that I have constructed the theoretical frameworks for the material presented in the rest of this dissertation, I would like to provide a brief summary of the arguments in the remaining chapters. Chapter Two has as its springboard for discussion the nature of magical language found in the *PGM*. This chapter will also introduce Charles Peirce’s semiotic theory and elaborate on the differences between icon, index and symbol. I will also elaborate on Sørensen’s cognitive theories as the general framework for my presentation. I will specifically present the theory of blended space and Sørensen’s application of these theories to magical ritual as a blend of the sacred and the profane.
Sørensen argues that a practitioner of magic during the course of the ritual action does not interact with sacred space directly, but with a blended space consisting of profane and sacred elements.\(^{34}\) Once the theory is presented in detail, I will analyze magical language in the *PGM* following Sørensen’s application of blended space to the linguistic blend. Language in the *PGM*, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, often consists of specialized language that seems to have no direct semantic reference. It also consists of “normal” words and phrases that do have direct semantic reference. I will show how the ritual language, in this manner, coincides with Sørensen’s theory of blended space and the linguistic blend. In addition I will discuss the specialized magical language as one modality within the domain of magic that can, in fact, be interpreted (“read”) in ways specific to the domain.

In Chapter Three I look at a different modality within the *PGM*, that of sacred images. Previously I had studied these sacred images as artifacts that presented indexical links to divine power.\(^{35}\) In this chapter I will push these arguments further using the theories presented in Chapter Two to show how sacred images within the *PGM* incorporate meanings, facilitated by the blended space of the ritual action, that are specific to the domain of magic.

In Chapter Four I will continue looking at sacred images and the blended space. In addition, I will further apply Sørensen’s theory of transformation of essence to show

\[^{34}\] Sørensen 2007: 64ff.

\[^{35}\] Haluszka 2008. In this article I argue that sacred images act as indices, or pointers, to divine power. As indices, in the semiotics of Charles Peirce, these images serve as a point of interaction for the practitioner between himself and the divine realm.
the manner in which objects within certain spells of the \textit{PGM} come to be thought of in terms of the powerful “essences” that allow them to aid the practitioner in obtaining his goals and desires.

And finally, in Chapter Five I return to the topic of the practitioner of magic and his ability to create new content within the semiotic domain of religion as a “meta-level” thinker in the domains of magic and religion. Parallel to the magician is another “writer/producer” in ancient Greco-Roman culture, and that is the poet – the closest approximation to a religious specialist – as one claiming to have special knowledge or access to divine power, and who could think about interactions with and between divinities at a meta-level.

The poet is an important figure for giving individual myths a fixed and memorable form and creating a modality (poetry) upon which the “spiritual unity of the Greeks was founded and upheld.”\textsuperscript{36} Much of the material the poet had at his disposal already existed in the form of traditional tales and myth, and thus the poet creates new content in much the same ways as the magician, drawing upon what is familiar and considered part of the established religious tradition, while on a smaller level creating modalities through the addition of his own content and style.

Yet there are distinct differences between the content that the poet creates and that created by the magician. The former seems to create a more stabilizing modality within the domain of religion, and the latter a more fluid and non-static approach to relationships with the divine. I will explore this difference further in this final chapter through a comparison of the magician and the poet as meta-level thinkers within their respective

\textsuperscript{36} Burkert 1985: 120.
domains. I use the semiotic frameworks I set up previously to offer an explanation as to why this is the case. How is it that the way magic “works” (on semiotic and cognitive levels, especially) results in it being something specifically marginalized in terms of what defines religious action?

In addition this chapter will further explore the idea that religion and magic can be understood in terms of semiotic domains. Not only will I continue the discussion of the practitioner of magic as a specialist within the domain, and “magical” language and images as modalities within the domain, I will also be introducing other aspects of semiotic domain theory not discussed in my first chapter, such as the distinction between the internal and external design of the domain. These elements will be important in looking at the differences between the actual content found within each domain and the manner in which this content is perceived and interpreted by the participants within the semiotic domain.

My presentation of the specific meaning that magical language and sacred images incorporate in terms of semiotic domains will thus be especially relevant to the distinction between magic and religion as separate semiotic domains. Finally, through this analysis, I will return to the discussion of the ever-present analysis of the definitions of magic and religion and how the semiotic and cognitive frameworks I present can contribute to the debate.

A study in terms of semiotic domains incorporates the everyday “life-world” domain as an important factor informing meanings and identities in the domain of
religion, or whatever other particular domain a person may be in at any given time.\textsuperscript{37}

This will be especially important to the study of ancient Greco-Roman religious practices when one considers the multiplicity and embedded nature of religious myth and ritual in the ancient world, and in particular the precise manner in which the spells of the \textit{PGM} seem to draw upon this multiplicity of belief and practice.

\textsuperscript{37} Gee 2003: 36-39.
CHAPTER 2

The Power of Words and the Power in Words:

Semiotics and Cognition of Magical Language in the *PGM*

He could understand why they worried people. Put us together the right way, they seemed to say, and we can be anything you want. We could even be something you don’t want. We can spell anything. We can certainly spell trouble….And the wizards and priests didn’t like it because words were important. An engraved page was an engraved page, complete and unique. But if you took the leaden letters that had previously been used to set the words of a god, and then used them to set a cookery book, what did that do to the holy wisdom? For that matter, what would it do to the pie? As for printing a book of spells, and then using the same type for a book of navigation – well, the voyage could go anywhere.

-Terry Pratchett *The Truth*

i. Chapter introduction

The above quotation from sci-fi fantasy author Terry Pratchett highlights a concept essential to this chapter, namely, the power in words. The topic of Pratchett’s book, *The Truth*, is the invention of the printing press and, ultimately, journalism. Certain citizens of Ankh-Morpork, the mythical realm where the events of the book take place, have a bit of trouble with the concept of the printing press. The idea that one could use words for something sacred, such as a holy text, and then take apart those words and
make something that seems to them less illustrious, like a cook book, made holy men uncomfortable. The concept that Pratchett plays with is the idea that words, once formed and used, have a certain power and existence. If words are used in a magical spell book, those words might come to have an existence as magical words, with a certain power. You certainly would not want those kinds of words messing around in your book of maps.

The idea that words can be powerful and can contain power is found in the PGM as well. Smith emphasizes the importance of writing as follows,

Rather, the chief ritual activity within the Greek Magical Papyri appears to be the act of writing itself. The vocabulary of inscription constitutes one of the larger groups. Alongside the evident concern for the accurate transmission of a professional literature marked, among other features, by scribal glosses and annotations is an overwhelming belief in the efficacy of writing, especially in the recipes which focus on the fashioning of amulets and phylacteries—themselves, miniaturized, portable, powerful written texts of papyrus, metal, stone and bone.

In addition to the importance places on the act of writing, there are also words that seem to take on an even higher status as special “powerful” speech, words that were thought to be particularly efficient for communicating with the gods. Scattered predominantly throughout the entire corpus of texts we can find words and phrases, these voces magicae that seem to have no direct semantic reference. In other words, they are meaningless. Often these nonsense phrases are thought to be special names of gods or goddesses, and we find reference to the practitioner claiming to know a particular

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38 I should point out that although we find evidence that “magical” words in the PGM were thought to contain a powerful essence that could be used or consumed in various ways, as I will be discussing throughout this chapter, there is no sense that these words could retain their sacredness if taken apart and used in other contexts, as represented by the concerns of the “holy men” in Pratchett’s fictional universe.

divinity’s *onomata barbara*.\(^{40}\)

There are countless examples of these nonsense words contained within various spells of the *PGM*. A majority of these phrases are interpreted as representing the secret or magical names of the divine forces being addressed in the course of the ritual action. For example, we find in *PGM IV*.1716-1870 the instruction to use “these names: ACHAPA ADONAIE BASMA CHARAKO IAKOB IAO EPHARPHAREI,” which includes some recognizable names in Iakob, Iao, and Adonis. But later in the spell the practitioner claims, “I call upon you…by your great name: AZARACHTHARAZA LATHA /IATHAL…” In *PGM IV*.2359-72 the practitioner is instructed to write the following “names” on papyrus: “CHAIOCHEN OUTIBIMMEMNOUOTH ATRAUICH.” In *PGM VIII*.1-63 the practitioner claims to know Hermes’ “names in heaven: LAMPHTHEN OUTHI OUASTHEN OUOTHI OAMENOTH ENTHOMOUCH.”

In addition to the special “magical” names of divinity, the *PGM* also includes spells which incorporate vowel strings and other types of sound generation that were thought to be efficacious but do not have direct sematic reference, although in many cases these types of utterances were also attributed to be sacred names. In *PGM IV*.475-829 the practitioner speaks, “I invoke the immortal names, living and honored, which never pass into mortal nature and are not declared in articulate speech by human tongue or mortal speech or mortal sound: EEO OEEO IOO EO EEO EEO OE EO IOO OEEE OEE OOE IE EO OO OE IEO OE...” and so forth. Examples such as these abound

\(^{40}\) For discussions on the power of words and specialized magical language see Frankfurter 1994. Versnel 2002 also provides a summary of typology and uses of magical language and will be discussed further throughout this chapter.
throughout the papyri to such an extent that perhaps no further examples are necessary, so I would like to move on to possible interpretations and functions of these “nonsense” words in the papyri.  

What is the meaning of the meaningless words? H.S. Versnel asks this same question, and considers three possible interpretations in his analysis of the use of *voces magicae*. One possibility is that the words once had a concrete meaning but now that meaning has become lost. Two, the phrase does have meaning but it belongs to a language that we do not know or no longer understand. And Three, the words did actually contain meaning but are either archaic or warped forms that we cannot decipher. However after discussing these three options Versnel ultimately concludes that, “there can be little doubt that *none* of these series of *voces magicae*, whatever their origin, in their historical context carried any lexically semantic meaning usable in human communication.”

Yet even though they have no semantic meaning, these expressions still have a purpose, and Versnel discusses the following comment from Pliny in an attempt to find what that purpose might be,

“It is not easy to say which of the two detracts more from the credibility of a formula: foreign and unpronouncable words or Latin words which however are unexpected, and which must appear ridiculous to our mind, since our mind expects something immense, something adequate to move a god or rather to impose its will on his divinity” (*Neque est facile dictum externa verba atque ineffabilia abrogent fidem validus an Latina et inopinata, quae inridicula videre cogit animus semper aliquid immensum expectans ac dignum deo movendo, inmo*

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Versnel points out that Pliny finds normal words meaningful but “insignificant,” whereas abnormal words, despite the fact that they are meaningless, can be immense, “that is sublime, majestic, hence highly significant!” Thus one possible meaning for this kind of language is the ability for it to create a sense of the significant. Yet the question still remains how, exactly, this sense of weightiness and significance comes about.

In this chapter I will be exploring the idea that these meaningless words have a meaning, and what exactly that meaning might be, by analyzing them in semiotic terms. These magical words, however, do not necessarily just “point” to a potentially powerful meaning, but in fact we can find examples where they actually contain some sort of power in themselves. In addition to the voces magicae as a special kind of word, there are also spells that instruct the practitioner to write down magical words, and then lick off the inscriptions or eat the object that is inscribed. For example, in PGM IV.475-829, the juice of an herb mixed with honey and myrrh is used as ink to write a special eight-lettered name on a leaf. The practitioner is then instructed: “And having kept yourself pure for three days in advance, come at morning to face the sunrise; lick off the leaf while you show it to the sun, and then he [the sun god] will listen to you attentively.”


44 Versnel 2002: 120-121.

45 Translated by M. W. Meyer in Betz 1986.
There are also examples in which *voces magicae* are inscribed on a papyrus, then washed off and consumed, such as *PGM* I.232-47, in which “Hermaic myrrh ink” is used. “And once you have written them as they are prescribed, wash them off into spring water from seven springs and drink the water on an empty stomach for seven days while the moon is in the east. But drink a sufficient amount.”

We can see from these examples that words, once written, can come to have a certain power, and this power can ultimately be consumed and transferred to the practitioner.

I will show how we can understand these two aspects of magical language, the meaning in meaningless words and the potential power contained in written words, through semiotic and cognitive frameworks. I am going to introduce two theories that will be important for my understanding of magical language in this chapter, and they will be extended to my analysis of sacred images in chapter Three. These theories include the difference between an icon and an index in the semiotics of Charles Pierce and Jesper Sørensen’s theory of blended space.

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46 Translated by E. N. O’Neil in Betz 1986. The idea that words can be “washed” in some manner and then consumed belongs to Egyptian tradition, in which water, poured over stelae upon which Horus was engraved, or upon which mythical narratives of Horus and Isis were inscribed, was thought to be efficacious. According to Frankfurter 1994: 198, “These *cippi* of Horus demonstrate that in Egyptian ritual and medical tradition, the power inherent in the image of Horus triumphing over reptiles, the images of other salvific deities, and the mythological narratives themselves inscribed in hieroglyphs could be ‘washed off’ and transferred to water for ingestion or amuletic protection against the bites and stings of certain Egyptian fauna.”
I have already discussed the idea that participants within a particular semiotic domain can “read” modalities within that domain. Remember, by modalities I mean anything that can convey meaning within the domain. A sacred image of the god in statue form, or words that are addressed to a divinity in the form of a prayer, are both examples of modalities within the domain of religion.

For example, let us look at the figures of divinity themselves. Burkert discusses four different factors that constitute and mediate the “personality” of any particular god: “the established local cult with its ritual programme and unique atmosphere, the divine name, the myths told about the named being, and the iconography, especially the cult image.”47 All of these elements can point to a god or goddess, but they can also point to each other. The iconography of Apollo – his bow, his lyre, or a sprig of laurel, for example – can remind one of the myths told about Apollo, such as how he came to acquire the lyre or his affair with a nymph, an example that will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Burkert reminds us, however, that it is very difficult to write the history of any particular god, as each of these factors interrelates with other factors in various ways, such as mythology relating to ritual, images pointing to characteristics of either cult or mythology, and so on. Images are able to transcend even barriers of language, that is, they can be “read” and interpreted outside of any written textual descriptions of any

particular god. So this begs the question, what are some of the ways in which things such as words or images create meaning? And following upon that, how do these same elements work as we see them in the *PGM* specifically?

I will begin by discussing the theory of signs as formulated by Charles Peirce. This will set up a background as to how elements such as words and phrases and iconography provide links to a particular god or divine concept. The difference between an iconic sign and an indexical sign will become especially important later in this chapter and in the next chapter when I move on to discuss sacred images within the *PGM*. As we will see, both language and images in the *PGM* rely on iconic and indexical links to sacred things, but they do so in special and different ways.

First, a look at Peirce’s definitions. A *sign*, or what Peirce also calls a “representamen” is “something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity.” It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign.” This equivalent sign that is created in the mind of a person is called the *interpretant*, while what this sign stands for is the “object.” According to Peirce, “A Sign is a Representamen with a mental Interpretant,” and he emphasizes that, “thought is the chief, if not the only mode of representation.”

For example, Mark sees a painting of a young woman with brown hair and blue eyes and is reminded of his sister Anne, who also has brown hair and blue eyes. The

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49 Words that are first introduced in bold can be found listed in the Appendix for review.

50 Peirce 1940: 99-100.
painting is the sign. The mental reminder that Mark has of his sister Anna, when he looks at this particular sign, is the “interpretant,” while Anna herself is the Object that the sign comes to stand for in this example.

This is just a simple example, and there are many different types of signs that depend to various degrees on similarity between the sign and the object, or causal connections between the sign and the object, and so forth. A distinction regarding the types of signs that are important for the purpose of my discussion is the difference between the icon and the index. According to Peirce, an icon “is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses…Anything whatever, be it quality, existent individual, or law, is an Icon of anything, in so far as it is like that thing.” Icons include such things as images, diagrams, and metaphors.

An icon represents its object primarily through similarity. An image represents an object through perceptual similarity of qualities and attributes. A diagram can represent an object through analogous relations between its respective parts. And finally, metaphors work through a representation of parallelism of the object with something else. The important thing to note about icons is that they are based on some aspect of perceived similarity between the sign and the object. The photograph of a young woman that reminded Mark of his sister Anna, in the example above, because of the similarity in features such as brown hair or blue eyes, is an example of an icon. A pie chart does not necessarily resemble its object directly, but it is through the relations of their parts that

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51 Peirce 1940: 105.
likeness can be found, with a “slice” of the pie representing a certain percentage of whatever is represented.

In contrast to the icon, an index is “a sign which refers to the Object it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object…In so far as the Index is affected by the Object, it necessarily has some Quality in common with the Object, and it is in respect to these that it refers to the Object.”\(^{52}\) An index, in strong opposition to an icon, does not have a significant resemblance to its object, whether in whole or through analogy or metaphor. Peirce defines an index further as a sign,

“which refers to its object not so much because of any similarity or analogy with it, nor because it is associated with general characters which that object happens to possess, as because it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the senses or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand.”\(^{53}\)

Examples of indices in the semiotics of Peirce often include causal interpretations. For example, observing a man with bowlegs indicates he is a horse-jockey. The bow-leg is often the result of riding for long periods of time throughout life, so it becomes an index of this endeavor. A rap on the door focuses the attention and indicates that someone is at the door. The rap is an index for someone’s presence. Indices also incorporate the idea that elements are in actual contact with each other. Peirce goes on to state,

A weathercock is an index of the direction of the wind; because in the first place it really takes the self-same direction as the wind, so that there is a real connection between them, and in the second place we are so constituted that when we see a weathercock pointing in a certain direction it draws our attention to that direction, and when we see the weathercock veering in the wind, we are forced by the law

\(^{52}\) Peirce 1940: 102.

\(^{53}\) Peirce 1940: 107.
of the mind to think that direction is connected with the wind.\textsuperscript{54}

Thus we see how a weathercock can serve as an index of the wind both through being in actual contact with the wind as well as through the cause-and-effect sequence that we understand is involved in how the wind affects the weathercock. This “law of the mind” that Peirce mentions assumes that cultural constructs and pre-conceived notions will be part of the equation that helps to form the mental “interpretant.” So, for example, knowledge that riding leads to bow-legs and how weathervanes work is incorporated in the conceptualization of the interpretant. This is true for both index and icon, though the most important aspect and difference in the case of indices, in the cognitive sense, is that they depend on association through contiguity, and not upon association by resemblance.\textsuperscript{55}

Let us go back to Mark and Anna from our painting example above. The painting serves as an iconic sign to Anna as object due to perceptual similarity. The woman in the painting and Anna both have brown hair and blue eyes, and to Mark they look similar. But let us consider another painting, one that was a gift to Mark from his sister Anna. Regardless of what image is on the painting, it reminds Mark of Anna when he sees it, because it was a gift from her. This painting is an index, it indicates Anna through Mark’s association of her with the gift, and not due to any similarity between the gift and Anna. If Mark also had a lock of Anna’s hair as a memento, this would also be an index, based on \textit{pars pro toto} metonymy, namely, the hair is a piece of Anna that can represent her as

\textsuperscript{54} Peirce 1940: 109.

\textsuperscript{55} Peirce 1940: 108.
a whole.

I will close this section by presenting a brief definition of Peirce’s third type of sign, the symbol. A symbol, for Pierce, “is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object…Not only is it general itself, but the Object to which it refers is of a general nature.” Peirce elsewhere describes a symbol very simply, as “a conventional sign…one depending upon habit,” and later states that it, “cannot indicate any particular thing; it denotes a kind of thing.”

Thus a flag can become a symbol for a nation, or a symbol for an idea, such as freedom or oppression. It comes to be a symbol for these objects not through direct similarity or through a dynamical connection, but through an association of established cultural ideas. These distinctions will become important later in my dissertation, in my discussion of Sørensen’s theory with respect to magic “signs,” which he argues tend to highlight iconic and indexical interpretations as opposed to symbolic ones. Now, with the backdrop of Piercian semiotics established, I would like to move on to the cognitive theory of blended space.

**iii. Blended Space**

Now that I have discussed the semiotic theory of Charles Peirce I would like to discuss the cognitive theory of Jesper Sørensen. The cognitive theories most relevant to

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56 Peirce 1940: 102, 113, 114.
my discussion of magical language and magical images involve the ways in which our minds use metaphors to help us understand and conceptualize our world. According to Sørensen,

Metaphorical projection is one of the basic mechanisms guiding the construction of complex concepts…Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors are not mere stylistic functions of language, but point to a much more fundamental level of cognition in which metaphorical mapping is used to construct and structure conceptual domains and to project structures between domains. We construe arguments as war, love as a journey and theories as buildings, not to make superfluous stylistic expressions, but in order to understand a less ordered and more abstract domain by means of structures from a more ordered and more experientially concrete domain.57

Thus metaphors are much more than stylistic flourishes of rhetoric, they are in fact fundamental to how we conceptualize and understand the world around us. But thinking in terms of metaphors involves a blending of concepts. For example, if we look more closely at “love as a journey,” the abstract notion of love is structured by an understanding of journeys. But this construct becomes more complicated than simply understanding an abstract domain (love) in terms of a more concrete one (a journey). This can be exemplified through the linguistic metaphor of the “dead end relationship.”

The idea of a “dead end relationship” is a linguistic expression within which “elements from both target domain (“relationship”) and source domain (“a dead end”) are blended,” allowing for conceptions such as couples either having to “‘split up’ (“leave the vehicle”) or ‘go back’ in order to find the ‘right track.’”58 To restate, this flexibility of

58 Sørensen 2007: 52.
conceptual mapping – of conceptualizing different aspects of the relationship with various aspects of a journey – according to Sørensen and others, is more than simply understanding of one thing in terms of another, but reflects a deeper type of conceptual blending.\(^{59}\) Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner have developed the concept of conceptual blending to explain these kinds of metaphorical mappings that exist in more than one direction and integrate various elements into one mental construct. Conceptual blending is dependent on the theory of **mental spaces** developed by Fauconnier, which are “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action.”\(^{60}\) These mental spaces are not equivalent to an entire conceptual domain, but rather they “activate elements and structures from these that are necessary for pragmatic and inferential reasons. Activation of elements…of a given conceptual domain facilitates the retrieval of additional elements from that particular domain should it prove necessary.”\(^{61}\)

So, for example, if we think of Mark looking at a painting that reminded him of his sister, the mental “interpretant” of his sister appears in his mind. Perhaps this is only a brief reminder of her features, and the mental space will consist of those elements, and not of everything Mark knows and remembers about his sister. But in the event that Mark

\(^{59}\) Sørensen draws his discussion on the topic of metaphorical projection leading to the construction and understanding of complex concepts from the work of Gentner 1983; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; and Johnson 1987.

\(^{60}\) Fauconnier and Turner 1998: 137.

\(^{61}\) Sørensen 2007: 52.
remarked upon the similarities to a friend, which then sparked a discussion about his sister within which Mark was asked questions about his sister, then that situation would activate the retrieval of other elements contributing to the widening of the mental space.

**Conceptual blending** involves the projection of elements from two or more mental spaces into a new emergent structure. The conventional model of blending incorporates four elements, which include,

(1) two input spaces with all relevant elements, frames, and models, with some of these mapped from one input space to a counterpart in the other input space; (2) a generic space accounting for the mappings between the two input spaces at a very abstract or fundamental level; and (3) the blended space, consisting of elements and structures projected from both inputs, and containing an emergent structure not present in any of the input spaces.\(^62\)

The **input spaces** thus correspond to two separate mental spaces that each themselves correspond to a certain domain of meaning. A tidy example provided by Sørensen is the mental image of the centaur, a beast that fuses elements from the domain of horse and domain of man.\(^63\) Thus, conceptions about the horse form the packet of information contained in one input space, while conceptions about man form the packet of information in the second input space. The resulting projection of the mental image of the centaur consists of elements and structures from both input spaces – the **blended space**.

The **generic space** consists of important aspects of human cognition that facilitate a common format or interface between different cognitive domains. This includes an

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\(^{63}\) Sørensen 2007: 53.
abstract conceptualization of such categories as time, location and participants as well as basic cognitive elements that are responsible for human cognition. The easiest way to think about the generic space at this time, before wading into specific cognitive processes, is as a space containing the building blocks for how we conceptualize the world around us at a very general level. So, for example, horses and men are both animate creatures that are subject to basic biological processes. Conceptions of animate creatures and biological processes are part of our cognitive processing, and they inform the generic space of the blend. Thus, the idea that the centaur is a biological creature with certain natural requirements and motivations, such as the need for food, for example, can stem from the generic space and inform the blended space.
The above figure is an abstract illustration of the four elements of blended space, using the model of the centaur as an example. Again, the blended space is a conceptual space that is informed by elements from three other conceptual spaces, the two input spaces in conjunction with and facilitated by elements in the generic space. The line between the two input spaces represents the mapping that occurs between specific elements within each input spaces. I will be discussing relevant examples below, but it is important to note that elements in the generic space do not map onto other elements but

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64 The framework for this illustration is copied from those created by Sørensen: 2007.
instead exist as a conceptual backdrop to elements in the other three spaces and thus serve to facilitate and encourage the mappings that occur.

iv. Blended ritual space

Sørensen theorizes that both religious and magical rituals consist of blended space, specifically a blending of elements from the sacred and profane domains. The sacred domain, refers to a conceptual domain containing concepts, frames, idealized cognitive models, and knowledge that by participants are given a special status as: (1) containing a breach of ordinary ontologies, properties and/or abilities, (2) being connected to fundamental myths and narratives explaining the creation and/or the nature of the world and its relations, and (3) being interpreted as belonging to a distinct part of reality that one must perform special kinds of actions in order to interact with. The sacred domain thus involves special beings violating ordinary ontological assumptions, special and privileged discursive repertoires, and special modes of interaction.65

The important thing to highlight is that, according to Sørensen’s definition, the sacred domain is a conceptual domain. The profane domain, in contrast to this definition, contains objects and concepts that structure our perceptions and knowledge of the everyday world, which includes both universal assumptions that are independent of the culture in which they exist as well as conceptual structures that are specific to any particular cultural system. Universal assumptions are often found to be based on certain cognitive functions that our minds use to help categorize and understand the world around us, and some of these functions will be discussed in the next chapter.

65 Sørensen 2007: 63.
Very simply, when we think about religious ritual in general, (and specifically in the case of spells in the *PGM* that I will be discussing in detail in the next chapter), the participant performs actions such as eating, sitting, or speaking, and he utilizes stones and knives and creatures that all exist for him in the profane world. However, all of these elements are used in a very specific type of framework that is culturally determined regarding what is sacred. For example, a white dove to an ancient practitioner of magic who utilized spells like those found in the *PGM* could be a ritual object sacred to Aphrodite, but to a modern American could simply be a symbol of peace.

In any particular ritual, the division between the sacred and profane domains is not rigid, and elements between them can interact. This is what allows participants to use ritual to access and manipulate aspects of reality that would normally be considered out of reach in the profane world alone, such as powers and gods or goddesses that are considered to be divine and to belong to the sacred domain.

Sørensen states that, “ritual participants do not move into or directly manipulate a sacred space as such, but rather interact with a locally constructed blended space consisting of a mixture of sacred and profane elements giving rise to an emergent structure.”66 This emergent structure is a new conceptual domain that is created in a process that combines both conceptual and ontological domains.

Sørensen provides a diagram representing how these input spaces relate to the resulting blended conceptual space created over the course of the ritual action, which I copy below and discuss following.

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66 Sørensen 2007: 64.
Blended Space ← Completion by ritual frame

Figure 2.2: The genetic blend\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{67} Sørensen 2007: 75.
According to Sørensen,

The input spaces are temporary spaces created from elements of the profane and sacred domains respectively, and they are constrained by both pragmatic considerations and conceptual models. Pragmatic, in reference to the importance of the local purpose and motivation driving the specific ritual and the element present in it, and conceptual in reference to the pre-established conceptual connections that promote the evocation of whole conceptual clusters from a given domain. The elements in the generic space are...general instances that enable, but do not determine, the connection between elements of the profane and elements of the sacred space.\(^68\)

Thus these “temporary spaces” are influenced by the specific circumstances of the ritual at hand, which are themselves informed both by specific cultural constructs that govern the ritual (for example, the dove as a sacred offering to Aphrodite) as well as universal modes of thinking and conceptualizing in general. Sørensen describes a conceptual domain as a type of “convergence zone” wherein meets “universal cognitive methods of categorization” and culturally pre-specified configurations of meaning.

The aspects listed in the generic space are various elements existing in the ritual process that can influence the conceptual blend. For example, Time and Location are relevant when one considers that the rituals often happen at certain times or places that are considered to be especially auspicious. “The elements of Time and Location refer to cases in which sacred periods of time or bounded physical areas are either a pre-requisite of performing magical rituals, or elements that will endow the actions performed with extra force.”\(^69\) All of the elements listed in the generic space are not necessarily present in

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\(^{68}\) Sørensen 2007: 76.

\(^{69}\) Sørensen 2007: 74. Discussions regarding sacred time and place, for religious ritual in general can be found in Smith 1987. For an overview of sacred times and places in ancient Greek religion see Burkert 1985; for Egypt see Frankfurter 1998.
all ritual actions, they simply represent elements that help to facilitate mappings between the two input spaces.

The “cognitive methods of categorization” will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, but they basically entail the manner in which a modern observer in a museum can recognize a statue as a physical and inanimate object, and can thus make assumptions and presuppositions about the statue even if he or she has never seen one before. It is these “base-line” aspects of cognition that make up elements within the generic space.

Cultures influence conceptual domains to a significant degree insofar as the domains comprise symbols that have been given conventional meanings by those cultures.70 So the casual observer in the museum may conceptually interpret a statue of Apollo differently from a scholar of Classics, and both might interpret the statue differently from an ancient practitioner of magic. More specifically, a statue of Apollo in the profane domain can represent Apollo himself in the sacred domain. But this potential link between the statue as a profane object and the god in the sacred domain will only exist for an observer with pre-established cultural constructs regarding Apollo as a divine figure, in addition to having notions regarding the relationship between god and image, also culturally established.71 If someone were to look at the statue who did not know who the god Apollo was, or what he was supposed to look like – if he or she, in other words,

70 Sørensen 2007: 51.

71 I should perhaps make the distinction here that although a cult statue of a god or goddess may be considered a “sacred” object within the particular semiotic domain of religion, this conceptualization is the result of a blended space. The statue itself still exists as an object in the profane sphere, made of wood, marble, wax, or what have you. In other words, a “sacred” statue does not exist as a purely sacred object in the sacred domain, but is a blended conceptual construct. This will be discussed in more detail below.
did not have the “pre-established conceptual connections” – then this link would not occur.

Both basic levels of categorization and culturally pre-established configurations of meaning can influence the relationship between the two input spaces that ultimately leads to the creation of the conceptually blended space. Of course, any statue of a god or goddess has the possibility to provide an iconic link to sacred mythic narratives about that particular god or goddess. While in some situations this is sufficient to create a blended conceptual space within which the participant in a ritual can interact with the sacred, the actual blending is also dependent on other cognitive processes that are established and guided by expectations of a temporal sequence of events within a ritual framework.

For now, it is important to note that ritual action consists of ontological and conceptual elements from the profane domain in addition to conceptual elements from the sacred domain. Certain cognitive processes, both established and constrained by the events in the ritual itself, leads to the creation of a blended space. In the following section I would like to discuss the cognitive mechanisms for connecting the two input spaces of the profane and sacred domains in further detail.

v. Counterpart connecters

There are a variety of elements existing in the profane space of the ritual action that can be thought to have connection with sacred space. A participant in the ritual, a certain action designated as especially important, or language itself as a speech act can all
serve to provide links. There are several examples within the magical papyri in which a specific action within the profane domain provides a metaphoric link to intended action in the sacred domain.

A counterpart connecter is a link formed between the two input spaces that relates specific elements from different domains based on some sort of similarity or connection either in function or characteristics. The iconic or indexical links discussed above can work to create this connection, although Sørensen discusses two wider categorical distinctions that will elaborate upon Peirce’s distinctions between index and icon a bit further.

The first class of counterpart connections are those centered on interpretations of metaphor, similarity and icon, often referred to by Sørensen generally as metaphorical mappings. These connections are based on similarity and iconic references, including categorizations of “perceptual resemblance and entrenched experiential and conceptual association.” Perceptual similarity is thus the defining link leading to metaphoric connections. A statue that looks like the object to which it refers gives rise to a metaphoric connector. Even in metaphoric mappings where there is no obvious similarity, individual elements based on aspects such as category membership will be mapped to each other. An example is the metaphor “Love is a Journey,” which may not directly have perceptual similarity in the overall mapping of “love” and “journey,” but is

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72 Sørensen 2007: 55.

73 Sørensen 2007: 57.
based on individual mappings such as “lover” mapping onto “traveller.”

It is important to note within this discussion, though it may be obvious from some of the examples, that metaphors are not just references to metaphors of language but metaphors of ideas and concepts. These two different types of metaphor can influence and inform each other. Gerard Steen and Raymond Gibbs, Jr. state in their introduction to *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics* that “Metaphor in cognitive linguistics is a two way affair: it can go from linguistic metaphor to conceptual metaphor, or from conceptual metaphor to linguistic metaphor.” One of the examples they cite is the conceptual metaphor IDEAS ARE MONEY, which is an abstraction of the idea lying behind the common usage of such expressions as: “Let me put in my *two cents worth*. He’s *rich* in ideas. That book is a *treasure trove* of ideas. He has a *wealth* of ideas.”

Steen and Gibbs also point out that “Conventional linguistic metaphors reflect pervasive conceptual metaphors and are perhaps the best source for discovering these metaphoric schemes of thought.” My purpose, however, is not to analyze ancient linguistic metaphors to find underlying conceptual metaphors, but rather to point out that the metaphors can in fact be concepts that inform manners of thinking and speaking. My analysis of metaphoric and metonymic links is thus moving forward from this assumption.

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74 Sørensen 2007: 57.

75 Gibbs and Steen 1997: 1-2. Gibbs and Steen cite the studies of Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 46ff. Lakoff and Johnson argue that, through an analysis of cognitive linguistics, that the very persistent presence of metaphors in speech and language reflect underlying conceptual metaphors. In other words, linguistic metaphors are indicative of conceptual metaphors.

A second class of counterpart connections are those centered on interpretations of metonymy, identity and index, often referred to by Sørensen generally as **metonymic mappings**. An important cognitive function that underlies connections based on identity and metonymy is psychological essentialism. **Psychological essentialism** is based on the conception that biological creatures, and to a certain extent inanimate objects, are thought to contain a certain type of “inner essence” that is specific to their respective categorical associations.\(^77\) Regarding biological creatures, psychological essentialism is very strong while physical objects and artifacts, especially tools, are predominantly judged on external qualities, such as function and look, with only a weak essence ascribed.\(^78\) Psychological essentialism is responsible for the idea that certain elements can have the same essence, based on some sort of perceptual similarity or shared categorization, which can link objects across mental spaces.

An understanding of connection through a metonymic link is often “dependent on background knowledge and beliefs linking the salient feature that is chosen as metonymy to the thing referred to as the whole.” These connections can be motivated by associations based on “pragmatic, contextual, conventional, episodic, and causal relations.”\(^79\) An example provided by Sørensen is that of “flag-burning” understood as a type of attack on a nation. Although a flag is a conventional symbolic sign for a nation,

\(^77\) An overview of the concept of psychological essentialism is presented in Sørensen 2007: 36ff. This concept as it relates to biological creatures as represented as having an “inner essence” is introduced and formulated in Medin and Ortony 1989. Hirshfeld 1994 applies psychological essentialism to the manner in which human beings apply essences to social categories.

\(^78\) Sørensen 2007: 44.

\(^79\) Sørensen 2007: 56-57.
the flag can also be understood as an “outward manifestation of the inner essence of the nation,” as represented by the assumption that flag-burning is an affront to the nation the flag represents. Thus, “In a semiotic perspective the metonymic counterpart connectors give rise to indexical interpretations because of the motivated character of the link between the part and the whole or the sign and the object of the sign”\textsuperscript{80}

Lakoff and Johnson offer this distinguishing factor between metaphor and metonymy: “Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding. Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another. But metonymy is not merely a referential device. It also serves the function of providing understanding.”\textsuperscript{81}

They point out, as I already discussed for metaphors above, that, metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thoughts, attitudes and actions. And, like metaphoric concepts, metonymic concepts are grounded in our experience. In fact, the grounding of metonymic concepts is in general more obvious than is the case with metaphoric concepts, since it usually involves direct physical or causal associations. The PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy, for example, emerges from our experiences with the way parts in general are related to wholes. PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT is based on the causal (and typically physical) relationship between a producer and his product.\textsuperscript{82}

They provide an example of the manner in which metonymic concepts are grounded in specific experiences, thoughts and attitudes by way of a work of art that can come to represent more than just itself. They state,

\textsuperscript{80} Sørensen 2007: 56-57.

\textsuperscript{81} Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36.

\textsuperscript{82} Sørensen 2007: 39-40.
When we think of a Picasso, we are not just thinking of a work of art alone, in and of itself. We think of it in terms of its relation to the artist, that is, his conception of art, his technique, his role in art history, etc. We act with reverence toward a Picasso, even a sketch he made as a teen-ager, because of its relation to the artist. This is the way in which the PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT metonymy affects both our thought and our action.\(^\text{83}\)

An example of this type of metonymic understanding in the realm of ancient religion occurs in instances in which the name of gods or goddesses can stand for their respective works or areas of power. The following inscription is found on the so-called Cup of Nestor, dated to around 725 BCE:

I am the cup of Nestor that is good for drinking.

Whoever drinks from this drinking cup, straightaway

Shall desire for/of fair-crowned Aphrodite seize him.

This inscription is described by Albert Henrichs as a “magical text, a love charm that promises immediate gratification. The desire is caused by wine and aimed at Aphrodite. It is a desire for intercourse, because Aphrodite stands metonymically for the works of Aphrodite, that is, for sex.”\(^\text{84}\)

It is through mappings created by these metaphoric or metonymic counterpart connectors between elements in the profane domain and elements in the sacred domain that the blended space is constructed. Within this blended space, the ancient practitioner of magic can interact with and influence elements within the sacred space. Throughout

\(^{83}\) Sørensen 2007: 39.

\(^{84}\) Henrichs 2003: 45-47, citing CEG 454. While Henrichs assumes that this cup represents magic, I am not so sure. Rather, I use this example as one which represents the metonymic ability of the name of divinity to represent an area of expertise or a type of “product,” which can help to emphasize a blend between the profane and sacred domains whether in the realm of religion or magic.
the rest of this chapter and the next I will be discussing examples of how these connections are formed for various modalities within the domains of religion and magic, as well as discussing their potential meanings within the locally constructed blended space. I will begin with a more generic example to illustrate the basic concepts, then move on to a discussion of the linguistic blend in particular.

vi. Empirical Example of connectors by way of Apollo

Now that I have introduced the various possibilities for establishing counterpart connectors, I would like to illustrate how these connections might work through the specific example of a statue of Apollo, existing in the profane world, as a representation of the god Apollo, existing as a sacred concept. The god Apollo has a corpus of myths and iconography that are associated with his existence as a divine entity. In the introduction to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* we hear the poet describe him as follows,

Mindful, ever mindful, will I be of Apollo the Far-Darter. Before him, as he goes through the hall of Zeus, the gods tremble and rise up from their thrones as he approaches and draws his shining bow. But Leto alone abides by Zeus, who delights in the thunderbolt, and she unstrings Apollo’s bow and closes his quiver. Then taking with her hands from his mighty shoulders the bow, she hangs it on the pillar beside his father’s seat…

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And later in the hymn the author addresses Apollo directly and debates further regarding what to sing of next, musing as to whether he should sing either of “you in love and dalliance” or “how first, seeking a place of oracle for men, you came down to earth, far-darting Apollo.”

A statue or painting that represents the god Apollo with his iconographic associations of the bow, the lyre or a sprig of laurel as a memento of a past “love and dalliance” all serve to bring to mind conceptions of his divinity and the stories that were sung of him, of which the above quotations were only a very small part. The statue, an object in the profane domain, has the ability to bring to the mind of the observer of the statue some of the conceptual elements that exist for the figure that the statue represents, in our case the god Apollo.

The statue will always remain in the profane domain, as an object made of natural material. If the statue is dedicated and installed in a sacred temple or precinct, it still remains an object made of natural material, and thus always connected to the profane domain. For an observer of the statue with “culturally pre-specified configurations of meaning” regarding the sacred location of the statue, this will remain part of the
conceptual blend. It is in this manner that religion often consists of modalities from both
the sacred and profane domains together in a blended conceptual space.

In addition to iconic links (Sørensen’s “metaphoric mappings”) to the sacred
domain from elements in the profane domain, there are also examples of indexical links
(Sørensen’s “metonymic mappings”). In *PGM* II.64-83, we find a ritual that incorporates
the use of laurel sprigs in conjunction with an hymn to Laurel herself as a divine being.
The sprigs of laurel are inscribed with magical phrases and sacred names, and then worn
as a garland held together by intervals of white and red wool. The hymn is as follows:

Laurel, Apollo’s holy plant of presage,
Whose leaves the scepter-bearing lord once tasted
And sent forth songs himself, leios,
Renowned Paian, who live in Kolophon,
Give heed to holy song. And quickly come
To earth from heaven and converse [with me].
Stand near and from ambrosian lips inspire
My songs; come, lord of song, yourself; renowned
Ruler of song. Hear, blessed one, heavy
In wrath and stern. Now, Titan, hear our voice,
Unfailing one, do not ignore.86

As is evident through this hymn, the sprig of laurel can serve as a link to the
conception of Laurel as a divine being, in a manner similar to a statue of Apollo with the

86 Translation by E.N O’Neil as presented in Betz 1986.
relevant iconographic elements that represent mythic representations of him as the lord of the bow. But the sprig of laurel can also serve as a link to Apollo, as an object thought to be in a contiguous connection to the god himself, a conceptualization that draws upon mythical narratives of Apollo’s relationship with the laurel as his sacred emblem.

Thus a statue of Apollo or a sprig of laurel are both objects in the profane space that can provide counterpart connectors to Apollo in the sacred domain. This connection is facilitated by aspects in the generic space, such as essentialism, discussed earlier. The statue serves as a metaphoric connector based on assumed perceptual similarity and iconic reference. The sprig of laurel serves as a metonymic extension of the essence of Apollo as an object thought to be specifically sacred to and in contact with the god.  

Sørensen points out that there is not always a strict differentiation between metaphoric and metonymic connections. Since perceptual similarity often leads to conceptions of a shared essence, according to the theory of psychological essentialism discussed above, metaphoric connections can often turn into metonymic extensions. Sørensen claims,

This is of great importance in the analysis of magic, as it is a common procedure to create metonymic links, able to transport essential qualities, through the establishment of similarity-based connections. Thus, similarity will be understood as an index of underlying essential identity, enabling manipulation of one object through a similar object.  

87 Sørensen 2007: 58.

88 Sørensen 2007: 58.
Thus the perceptual similarities between the statue and the object it signifies can give rise to the conception that they share an essence. This shared essence, based on an iconic link can also lead to metonymic connections due to the way in which the statue as an object is thought to share some kind of internal essence with whatever it might represent. The practitioner can interact with or affect the god Apollo through a statue of Apollo, in a manner that burning a flag can be understood as an attack on the nation that the flag represents, as discussed above.

Ritual action can work in the same way as ritual objects, providing links to sacred actions based on metaphor or metonymy. Sørensen provides the example of the Eucharist. A priest performing the actions preparing for the consumption of bread and wine is a link to an original, sacred action, that of Jesus Christ consuming bread and wine during the Last Supper. “In this case, the ritual action and the identification of bread and wine as the flesh and blood of Christ are both legitimized by a mythical narrative. The ascribed efficacy of the ritual action arises by virtue of it being an iconic reproduction of the mythical action of Jesus Christ…”

In PGM IV.296-466 the practitioner is instructed to make two wax or clay figurines, one male figurine in the form of an armed Ares, holding a sword that he threatens to plunge into the neck of the female figure, who is to be depicted as bound and on her knees. The purpose of this spell is that of the binding of a lover. On one level the statue serves as an iconic link to a mental conception in which a divine force is imagined to compel the mortal female at whom the ritual is directed.

89 Sørensen 2007: 100.
But this “divine force compelling a woman” conception is further facilitated by other ritual actions within the spell whereby the practitioner is instructed to pierce the female figurine with thirteen copper needles and say, “I am piercing such and such a member of her, NN, so that she may remember no one but me, NN, alone.” The practitioner is also instructed to tie a lead tablet inscribed with this recitation to the figurines with a thread that has 365 knots. The inscription of the recitation, in addition to the specific relevance of the number of knots have been discussed elsewhere, however I would like to draw attention to the actions of piercing and tying the figurine in addition to the tying of the lead tablet, the repetitious and precise manner of which actions serve as another metaphoric link to the conception of the ability of a divine figure to have power over a mortal female.  

This can involve any number of connections, based on personal experience and cultural pre-suppositions, such as conceptions of bound prisoners or convicts as mapped onto the intended female, or of Ares as a dangerous and dominant figure mapped onto the practitioner of the ritual action. The action can also represent conceptions regarding the nature and effects of emotions connected to love. John Winkler states that,

First, insofar as the operations are a wish that she, NN, come to feel eros as deeply and disturbingly as the operator himself feels it, the binding and piercing represent not a will to dominate but a replication in her of his own experience. The submission in this case is portrayed as a submission to eros itself, to a painful state of being in which one is afflicted by ‘affection, desire, pain’ (PGM XVI.5–6).

90 For a more comprehensive discussion of this spell see Graf 1994: 137ff. See also Winkler’s discussion 1991: 230 ff. Graf also discusses several spells that rely on an analogous relationship between actions that are performed over the course of the ritual and the expected outcomes of the ritual action 1994: 209ff.

Thus actions, as well as objects and persons, can facilitate connectors between the sacred and profane domains, with ritual actions in the profane domain being mapped onto mythical actions in the sacred domain. I will be discussing objects, specifically statues and engraved images, in more detail in the next chapter. For the remainder of this chapter, however, I will return to the topic with which I opened this chapter, and that is magical language. Language is a type of action, namely a speech action, and thus language itself can serve to facilitate blended space and connections between the profane and sacred domains. In the final sections of this chapter I would like to discuss the manner in which ritual language can serve as indexical and iconic links to sacred space, and it is through this analysis that we can gain a clearer understanding of voces magicae.

vii. The semiotics of “magical” language

I will start with an example of song as an action that provides a link to the divine and then move on to a discussion of voces magicae and onomata barbara as specific kinds of language with a special purpose. Let us take PGM III.282-409 as an example. This is a ritual with the intended purpose of bringing special knowledge to the practitioner, as well as being able to grant power over passions and emotions. The spell involves an invocation, “Continue without deception, lord, the vision of every act, in accordance with the command of the holy spirit, the [angel] of Phoibos, you yourself being pliable because of these / songs and psalms.”

92 Later, the practitioner is instructed

to set up a tripod, a table of olive or laurel wood, and construct a hollow figurine of Apollo made out of laurel wood.

In this spell we again see the importance of the laurel in connection with the god Apollo, similar to our example discussed above. In this case, the statue itself comes to provide a link to Apollo both through its iconic similarity with the features of Apollo and through an indexical link with the sacred essence of Apollo through a perception of laurel as a plant sacred to Apollo and containing its own sacred essence. Also important to note in this spell is the emphasis on the ability of songs and psalms to please a divinity and make him or her receptive to subsequent requests.

This provides a nice parallel with the invocation discussed above from *PGM* II.64-83, in which “Holy Song” is mentioned and linked to the divine nature of Apollo as a divinity who excels in this art. The act of singing itself thus provides another link to the sacred space because of this association. Song is thought to please the gods and make them pliable, but in singing the practitioner also re-creates an action not only thought to be sacred to Apollo but also thought to be an action that Apollo himself participates in. Thus the act of singing re-creates an action of Apollo thought to be especially sacred to him.

As a reminder, the beginning of the invocation in this spell, this association with song is connected with Apollo’s association with the laurel: “Laurel, Apollo’s holy plant of presage./ Whose leaves the scepter-bearing lord once tasted/ And sent forth songs himself.” Connections to Apollo in the sacred space are thus threefold in these two examples. They can be facilitated by metaphoric mappings based on similarity to iconic
features or mythical narratives, or by metonymic mappings based on possible connections between the laurel as a plant intimately connected to the god.

The act of singing as a divine heritage is not exclusive to the *PGM*, of course. Poets such as Homer and Hesiod also made claims to participating in a divine endeavor through their songs and invocation to the Muses as their own connection to the sacred space. In addition to this, song is not the only linguistic method of facilitating links to the sacred. The magical language, the *voces magicae*, found in the *PGM* can work in a similar manner to song. According to Sørensen, language in magical rituals can be understood as a blend between natural, everyday, profane language (input space 1) and idealized sacred or magical language (input space 2). Sørensen points out that the nonsense words used in magical rituals often do not have semantic reference for the participants, and instead they are,

believed to be a compelling force alone by their material or performative aspect, as a sign or as a sound, or by their ascribed function as a communicative medium of the sacred space. Knowledge of special words and languages enables the magician to communicate with elements belonging to this space and enable these elements to be active in the ritual space.

Sørensen goes on to argue that aspects such as archaism, ungrammaticality, and senselessness are all dependent on the default understanding of language as a medium of communication. If these expectations are broken three things follow: “(1) the highlighting of the indexical and iconic aspects of language…(2) the creation of a pragmatic context marked off from everyday language, and (3) a social differentiation,

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93 Sørensen 2007: 88.

94 Sørensen 2007: 88. For further discussions of song in ancient magic see also: Depew and Obbink 2000; Frankfurter 1994; Furley and Bremmer 2001; Pulleyn 1997; Versnel 1981.
based on possible access to understanding of the sacred language.” I offer Sørensen’s abstract illustration of the linguistic blend below.

\[\text{Figure 2.3: The linguistic blend}^{95}\]

\footnotesize{\text{The original illustration is found in Sørensen 2007: 88.}}
In addition to the nonsense words, spells and formulas are also often recited in a very special manner. Sørensen argues that aspects of language such as iteration and redundancy are yet another means to distinguish the ritual language – not necessarily only in magic rituals, but as can be seen in religious hymns and prayers as well – from everyday natural language. Nonsense words and special manners of speaking create for the participant a deprivation of meaning in the normal and profane sense. It is through this deprivation of semantic sense that these speech actions provide a reference to sacred space, because this in turn emphasizes their indexical links to the sacred domain in their ascribed function as a communicative medium of the sacred space.96

Versnel comes to a similar conclusion in his analysis of magical language of the ancient Greco-Roman world specifically. He states,

_Voces magicae_, being semantically vacant, can be applied (or interpreted) on more than one level and in different functions. One is, I would suggest, that of ‘open-ended’ performative utterances. Normally, performative enunciations are expressions that are equivalent to action: the verb itself is the accomplishment of the action which it signifies. Since the voces have _no communicable_ meaning, however, they cannot denote one explicit – and consequently restricted – course of action, but give voice to a choice of imaginable (or perhaps rather unimaginable) avenues towards the desired effect.97

Thus it is the lack of specific semantic meaning in the profane domain that allows for the magical language to be interpreted as possible sacred language. This corresponds to the manner in which Harvey Whitehouse describes ritual as a type of action that often lacks specific technical reference, especially the “aesthetic frills” coined by anthropologist

96 Sørensen 2007: 92.

97 Versnel 2002: 146.
Edmund Leach, the elements within the ritual that are, “superfluous to any practical aim and, thus, are irreducible to technical motivations…Since rituals are actions that lack intrinsic meanings, in terms of both what they intend and what they accomplish, they open floodgates to an indefinite flow of possible interpretations or symbolic motivations.”98

Although I would like to emphasize that this lack of specific semantic reference, while it does seem to allow for a wider variety of possible interpretations, conveys important and specific meaning though the iconic and indexical associations facilitated by the linguistic blend. These kinds of associations become all the more compelling when one considers that certain magical words could also be consumed in order to bring about a transfer of power or ritual effectiveness.

The indexical nature of words in the PGM can be inferred from the situations in which words are instructed to be written on a certain material, then licked off or dissolved in a substance and consumed, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This puts a focus on the “essence” that the words contain. These words are not only efficacious in speaking, as an iconic reproduction of sacred speech, but they become containers of a special kind of power that can ultimately be consumed and transferred to the consumer.

In conjunction with this idea, Versnel points out that, “For the later Roman period three great literary works were the most favorite sources of powerful exempla: Homer, Vergil and the Bible. It need not be the power of the divine or heroic protagonists that was referred or resorted to: the works themselves, so it was believed, contained a deep,

98 Whitehouse 2004: 3-4.
hidden wisdom and force‖99 The idea that the words found within the great literary works could also contain special knowledge and power is found in the interpretations of the words as both an iconic reiteration of the “sacredness” of these texts in conjunction with the assumption that the words themselves contained some kind of inner powerful essence.

viii. Conclusions and Looking Forward

In this chapter I have presented Sørensen’s definition of the sacred and profane domains as well as his theory that ritual action creates a blended conceptual domain consisting of elements from both the sacred and profane domains. I have also discussed the manner in which iconic and indexical links between these domains contribute to the conceptual mapping that results in the blended ritual space. I explored this blended space first of all using Sørensen’s discussion of the linguistic blend. Certain aspects of magical language that seem to have no direct semantic reference can instead serve as iconic or indexical connectors to sacred space.

This creation of blended space within which a magical practitioner can interact with the sacred domain through manipulation of objects, actions, or concepts within the profane domain sets the stage for my discussion of sacred images. In the next chapter I will present a summary of spells that utilize either three-dimensional statues or two-dimensional engraved images. I will also discuss the links that these images facilitate between the profane and sacred domains. In so doing I will suggest that the nature of the

images as either statues or a two-dimensional engravings results in two distinct types of ritual action. As we will see, images serve to create iconic and indexical links to sacred space in ways that are specific to the domain of magic. As I will show, the discussion of language above becomes almost a microcosm of what happens in general throughout the PGM.

I have already briefly mentioned above the manner in which J. Z. Smith interprets ancient Greek magic as the miniaturization or domestication of mainstream religious practices. Smith looks as miniaturization in two ways. The first, more literal way regards the practical and material side, in which “smaller” objects are used, such as small-scale temples, shrines, altars, and offerings, with largely the same functions and intentions as their counterparts in religious practices, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The second method of considering miniaturization is the way in which Smith sees it as a “ritual of ritual,” and it is important for my analysis in the remainder of this dissertation, but in the next chapter in particular. Smith paraphrases both Freud's and Levi-Strauss' theories of ritual as "exaggeration of everyday activities, but an exaggeration that reduces rather than enlarges, that clarifies by miniaturizing in order to achieve sharp focus." 100 Smith ultimately concludes that since the object or action that receives ritual attention is often commonplace, ritual is "no big deal." He goes on to state that, “The object of action that receives ritual attention is, more often than not,

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100 Smith 1987b: 194-195.
commonplace. The choice of this or that object for ritual attention often appears arbitrary. But what is of prime importance is its infinite and infinitesimal elaboration...”\textsuperscript{101}

Smith elaborates these conclusions further in reference to the miniaturization of rituals in the *Greek magical papyri* as miniaturization of ritual itself, a sort of *ritual of ritual*, often occurring in the discursive or intellectual space of the practitioner of magic. He states,

If ritual, with its characteristic strategies for achieving focus, with its typical concern for “microadjustment,” often is, itself, a miniaturization that is, at one and the same time, an exaggeration of everyday actions, as major theorists of ritual from Freud to Levi-Strauss have rightly maintained, then miniaturization, when applied to ritual, as is the case in the Greek Magical Papyri, becomes a sort of *ritual of ritual*, existing, among other loci, in a space best described as discursive or intellectual.\textsuperscript{102}

This distinction becomes especially relevant when one considers both religion and magic in terms of semiotic domains, since the meaning that these “miniaturized” objects convey is specific to the domain in which they are found.

In the next chapter I will be discussing the meanings that one of these miniaturized elements convey, specifically the smaller scale sacred images and statues. In my final chapter, I will return to how these miniaturized elements inform the specific semiotic domain of which they are a part, and I will also return to a deeper discussion of the “discursive” space of the practitioner of magic.

\textsuperscript{101} Smith 1987b: 195. Smith is not saying, of course, that ritual “doesn’t matter,” but rather that ritual signifies relevance in the focus it obtains through the “infinite distinctions” and “micro-adjustments” in the course of the ritual action.

\textsuperscript{102} Smith 1995: 27.
CHAPTER 3

Sacred Images I:
How Ritual Objects in the PGM facilitate Blended Space

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"
-Emma Lazarus, The New Colossus

i. Chapter introduction

The above poem written by Emma Lazarus can be found inscribed on a tablet within the pedestal on which the Statue of Liberty stands. It is a poetical reflection of one possible meaning closely tied to the statue itself. For Emma Lazarus and those who would agree with her portrayal, the Statue of Liberty seems to speak, not literally, but “with silent lips.” What the statue “says” is tied up with various associations within the
mind of the viewer of the statue. In this particular poem, the statue serves as a symbol, in the Peircian sense, of freedom and refuge to be found in the land where the statue stands.

In the previous chapter I used a statue of Apollo to show how a material object in the profane domain can provide a link to the god Apollo himself in the sacred domain, and I emphasized the iconic nature of this particular link. Any statue can, in various contexts and to various observers, facilitate iconic links to an object and/or symbolic links to something else.

Sacred images of the gods form one type of modality that communicates meaning to participants within the semiotic domain of religion. The meanings that one can take away from any particular sacred image, just as with any piece of art, are diverse and varied. These images carry the weight of their religious associations for the viewer who is a part of the culture within which the statue plays such a role, and it is the sacred image’s connection with the divine that will be the focus of this chapter.

The Greek magical papyri contain several spells detailing the creation and use of both three-dimensional statues and two-dimensional carvings and prints of divine creatures and sacred images. These images have been argued to literally contain divinity, to harness divine power, and to influence the workings of the profane world through manipulation of the divine entities which the images seem to represent.103

I will begin by first presenting an introduction to the typology of evidence found

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103 Steiner 2001: 119 argues that rituals in the magical papyri instruct “the practitioner of the rite first to shape the statue out of some inert material and then to place a particular set of objects or a certain text in the interior cavity; the finished product, thus vivified, becomes a source of omens and oracles.” Cf. Dodds 1951: 293: “The magical papyri offer recipes for constructing such images and animating them.” Also see the more detailed discussion of Johnston 2008.
within the *PGM* and used for my analysis. There are both three-dimensional statues and
two-dimensional images and there are distinct differences between how these images
“work” within their respective spells. In looking at this evidence, and following upon the
theories of Peirce and Sørensen, I will highlight the way in which, in the *PGM* in
particular, the sacred images emphasize iconic and indexical links to the sacred domain.

In a manner similar to my discussion of the nature of magical language, sacred
images in the *PGM* allow for the practitioner to interact with the sacred space by using
something in the profane space. This kind of interaction through the blended space of the
ritual is facilitated by an emphasis on iconic and indexical interpretations, as was
exemplified in the previous chapter. However, the iconic and indexical links to sacred
space become more complicated in the case of sacred images than in the case of *voces
magicae*, because images are made to represent something in particular or are used in
particular ways that do have a specific meaning. I begin with a detailed typology of the
two types of sacred images found in the *PGM*, either three-dimensional statues or two-
dimensional engraved images.

**ii. Typology of Evidence**

As mentioned above, one can divide the sacred images described in the *PGM*
between three-dimensional statues and two-dimensional images, typically engraved
images. Although each of these two types of sacred image can serve as indices to divine
power, a concept that will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section, there are
distinct differences between the two beyond whether they are of two or three dimensions – such as the complexity of the consecration rituals that are found with two-dimensional images as compared to a deeper focus on the creation and dimensions of the statue itself with in the case of three-dimensional images. I will begin with a discussion of the two-dimensional engraved images.

Engraved images are commonly carved on some type of stone, the type of which is usually specified by the spell itself, and form part of a ring or amulet. They are typically engraved with images of divinity, such as the familiar Greek divinities Aphrodite and Eros, or with other things that signify divinity. For example, an Egyptian scarab is engraved surrounded by rays and an Ouroboros serpent as a representation of the sun god Helios. The charms resulting from such engravings have a wide range of functions, typically giving their user protection, strength, and power. Sometimes the use can be specific, such as a charm to bind the heart or soul of another, but most of the time the charms are for general use, whatever the practitioner wishes at the time, and thus they were no doubt considered to have great power and efficacy. I include a table (Table 3.1) which outlines the salient features of these spells, to be discussed following.

\[104\] PGM XII.270-350.
**Table 3.1: Engraved Two-dimensional Images in the PGM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PGM passage</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Ritual Actions of “Consecration”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV.1596-1715</td>
<td>An invocation/prayer</td>
<td>A consecration for all purposes, for whatever the user wishes.</td>
<td>Prayer only, calling upon divinity to bring power and strength, etc, to a stone, ring, or engraving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.1716-1870</td>
<td>Magnetic stone engraved with Aphrodite, Psyche and Eros</td>
<td>To attract or bind a soul</td>
<td>Invocations to divinity, burnt offering of manna, storax, opium, myrrh, frankincense, saffron, bdella, fig, wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.213-303</td>
<td>A stone engraved with a scarab and Isis, set in a ring</td>
<td>To know what is in the minds of all men</td>
<td>Burnt offerings of aromatics, anointment with a salve, offering of bread, fruits, incense, prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.429-58</td>
<td>A lead plate engraved with what the user wants to happen</td>
<td>Works for whatever the user wishes</td>
<td>Consecration of aromatics such as myrrh, bdellium, styrax, aloes and thyme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.201-69</td>
<td>A jasper engraved with a snake, sun, and moon, to be set in a stone.</td>
<td>Works for all things, especially success or good fortune.</td>
<td>Burnt offering of a goose, 3 roosters and 3 pigeons, incense, libation of wine, honey, milk and saffron, prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.270-350</td>
<td>A heliotrope stone engraved with a snake, scarab and sun-rays</td>
<td>Works for many things, such as power over other men, souls, demons and even inanimate objects.</td>
<td>Invocation, libations, sacrifice of rooster, ring is to be placed inside the guts of the rooster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With very few exceptions, these spells that involve the use of engraved images make use of the Greek word *teletê* and its cognates, which can be defined most generally in the *PGM* as reflecting the concept of “perfecting.” The idea of “perfecting” something is often tied to a series of ritual actions that lead to this end result. In the following discussion of the rites associated with these engraved images, I will use the terms “consecration” or “consecrate” to translate *teletê* and any other cognates related to this word. This translation will reflect the ritual process leading to the newer, “perfected” end result. The perfection or consecration implies a change of status or nature, and the rituals associated with these terms imbue objects, and sometimes even people, with divine power, efficacy and agency. The use of these terms in association with actual three-dimensional statues is rare in the *PGM*, but very common in association with rings and amulets.\(^\text{105}\) More importantly, the rituals that are associated with engraved images involve a complexity that is not seen in most of the spells describing the manufacture and use of statues.\(^\text{106}\)

A spell to Helios seeks the consecration of a stone and asks the god to fill the stone with things such as strength, honor, success, luck and power (IV.1596-1715). A stone upon which Aphrodite, Eros and Psyche have been engraved is consecrated with a burnt offering of manna, storax, opium, myrrh, frankincense, bdella, fig and wine (IV.1716-1870). Also common is the anointing of the object, especially in the case of

\(^{105}\) Although this distinction exists within the *PGM*, there is evidence that three-dimensional images are associated with a more complex series of ritual action in theurgic texts. For a fuller discussion see Johnston 2008.

\(^{106}\) Throughout this chapter I will use translations, as needed, from Betz 1986.
stones, such as a costly green stone upon which a scarab has been engraved. Several aromatic substances are burned as offerings to this scarab image, and the stone is left in a salve of lilies, myrrh and cinnamon. Fresh bread and fruits are also offered, along with more incense and the recitation of a spell (V.213-303). A lead plate is engraved with whatever one desires and is then consecrated with a burnt offering of several aromatic substances such as myrrh and thyme, among others (VII.429-58). Another stone, upon which has been engraved a snake, Helios, and several magical names, is consecrated with the sacrifice of a goose, three roosters and three pigeons along with a libation of wine, honey, milk and saffron. The ring into which the stone has been set is held over the smoke of these burning substances while a rather long prayer is recited (XII.201-69). A stone engraved with a snake and a scarab, later placed in a ring, is consecrated with a lengthy invocation and the stone is placed in the guts of a rooster for a day (XII.270-350).

All of these engraved items, once they have been consecrated, give their users incredible powers, and most of these amulets and rings are multi-purpose (see Table 3.1). They are expected to control and influence not only people and inanimate objects, but even the divine powers themselves. The complicated rites of consecration and perfection associated with these objects serve to endow them with great power and efficacy, and in some cases this power is envisioned as life or soul. For example, in IV.1716-1870, the burnt offering is expected to make the engraving and the entire rite empsychon. XII 270-350 is specifically referred to as a rite which can ‘enliven with fire’ (zōpyreitai) modeled images, engravings and statues. It is likely that the rituals of consecration associated with engraved images, rituals that endow power and agency, are connected to the function of
the amulets or rings of which they are an important part.

As mentioned earlier, the spells in the *PGM* that involve three-dimensional statues seem to focus less on rituals of consecration and more on the description of the creation of the statue. These statues are constructed out of very specific materials, and many of them are purposefully constructed to be hollow, with other objects placed inside (see Table 3.2). The construction of the statue begins with the use of the correct wood, such as mulberry or olive wood, or with a special type of wax that can be mixed with other ingredients, such as other fruits and plants and sometimes even animal parts. One spell, for example, calls for the mixture of bat eyes within the wax (*PGM* IV.2943-66).

Other examples include a hollow wooden statue of Eros, with the words “Marsaboutarthe, be my assistant and supporter and sender of dreams” written on a piece of papyrus and placed inside (IV.1716-1870); a hollow wax and plant figure of Hermes with “Chaiochen Utibilmennooth Atrauch, Give income and business to this place, because Psentebeth lives here” written on a piece of papyrus and placed inside (IV.2359-72); a hollow three-headed wax statue with a magnetite heart and a list of eighteen names including an invocation for prosperity, fulfillment of future favors and oracles inside (IV.3125-71); a hollow plant, egg and dough figure of Hermes with about six lines of sacred text placed inside (V.370-446); a clay, sulfur and blood statue of Selene, to which is recited several times an incantation involving secret names and phrases (VII.862-918); a red wax hippopotamus statue with gold, silver, a special magical substance called *ballatha* and papyri with instructions for what one desires placed inside (XIII.1-343); and a wax and plant statue of Eros in front of which seven birds are strangled so that their
*pneuma* can enter the statue (XII.14-95). A few other spells involving statues not of divinity but of dogs, and one of a “begging” man, are not separately discussed but included in the table of statue spells (Table 3.2).
Table 3.2: Three-dimensional statues in the *PGM*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PGM passage</th>
<th>Description of Statues and their purpose</th>
<th>Material placed inside hollow statues, if applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV.1716-1870</td>
<td>Eros statue made of mulberry wood (this statue is part of a sub-spell included within a larger spell); to be an assistant and sender of dreams</td>
<td>Inscribed gold leaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.1872-1927</td>
<td>Dog statue made of wax, fruit and manna; a man’s head-bone is placed inside it’s mouth; for binding</td>
<td>Nothing is placed inside, however the statue is set upon an inscribed piece of papyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.2359-72</td>
<td>Hermes statue made of orange beeswax, juice of aeria plant and ground ivy; for better business</td>
<td>Inscribed piece of papyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.2373-2440</td>
<td>A statue in the pose of a beggar made of unheated beeswax, then cut into three sections; for better business</td>
<td>Nothing placed inside, but a spell is inscribed on papyrus for each of the sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.2943-66</td>
<td>Dog statue made of dough or wax with the eyes of a bat, <em>ousia</em> is threaded through the eyes; for binding</td>
<td>Nothing is placed inside, the dog is set in a sealed cup with a piece of inscribed papyrus attached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.3125-71</td>
<td>Three-headed statue (falcon, baboon and ibis) made of Etruscan wax; for prosperity wherever the statue is placed</td>
<td>Magnetite heart and inscribed piece of papyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.370-446</td>
<td>Statue of Hermes made from laurel leaves, virgin earth, seed or wormwood, wheat meal, various herbs, and ibis egg; for prophetic purposes</td>
<td>Inscribed piece of papyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.862-918</td>
<td>Statue of Selene made of clay, sulfur and the blood of a dappled goat; for sending dreams and binding lovers</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.1-63</td>
<td>Dog-faced baboon statue made of olive wood; for favor, prosperity, etc.</td>
<td>An inscribed piece of papyrus is placed in a box on the statue’s back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.14-95</td>
<td>Eros statue made of Etrurian wax and all kinds of aromatic plants; multi-purpose assistant statue</td>
<td>Seven birds strangled so that their <em>pneuma</em> can enter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII.1-343</td>
<td>Hippopotamus statue made of red wax (this statue is part of a sub-spell included within a larger spell); for sending dreams</td>
<td>Gold, silver, and ballatha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The importance of knowing the right substances and names to use, when constructing one of these statues, is found in other texts as well. In a fragment that some argue belongs to the *Chaldean Oracles*, Hekate herself gives instructions as to what her statue is to be made out of, specifying plant and animal material, including lizards, myrrh, gum and frankincense (*Ch. Or. fr. 224*). There are also several spells in the *PGM* that express the importance of secret names, and the power that comes with this knowledge. To state only one of many examples, in a spell to Hermes, the magician, after claiming knowledge of the god’s forms, plant, wood and city, finally exclaims, “I also know your foreign (barbarian) names” (VIII.1-63).

There are other examples in the *PGM* in which it is made even clearer that certain substances are cognate with certain divinities. In the spell called the "Eighth Book of Moses," for example, each god has a very specific kind of incense associated with him or herself (XIII.1-20). In fact, preceding this list of types of incense there is a reference to things that are pleasing to the gods, things that are “born/associated with” the gods (*synegenikos*), a concept that can facilitate indexical links to the sacred domain.

An important feature of the three-dimensional statues that is lacking for two-dimensional images is the creation of a hollow space within the statue with the purpose of inserting some other object inside of it. In almost all cases what is placed inside of the statue in the spells of the *Greek Magical Papyri* is a papyrus with special, “magical” incantations and names of the gods written on it, as well as instructions for what one wants to be accomplished. In addition, statues are made out of very specific materials,

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107 Other examples which express the importance of knowing secret names include XII.87 and XIII.55ff.
and thus in a certain sense can be understood to "contain" these materials as well.

In conclusion, there seems to be a difference between the creation and description of three-dimensional statues versus two-dimensional engraved images in the *PGM*. Three-dimensional statues focus on the construction of the statue itself, what it looks like, what it is made out of, and what goes inside of the statue, if applicable. Engraved images seem to involve a wider and more involved variety of ritual actions focusing on conceptions of “*teletê*.” The difference in form does not seem to be tied to a difference in function, but rather to a difference in the ways in which each of these types of sacred image provide both iconic and indexical links to the sacred domain, and it is these links that I would like to discuss in the following section.

### iii. Images as Icons and Indices

In the previous chapter I distinguished between signs as icons and signs as indices. Sacred images created to specifically represent a particular divine entity are an example of the image as an icon. This is based on perceptual similarity between the statue and the “Object” that the statue represents, according to Peirce, and was introduced in the previous chapter using the example of an image of Apollo. I will now discuss examples of the manner in which these sacred images also provide indexical links to the sacred domain.

In the previous section I have detailed the ritual focus on the materials used for the construction of a statue, as well as the special names and prayers that must be recited
and written on papyri to be placed inside. In my previous work I had suggested that these materials work in a manner similar to that of the ousia—essence—used to construct the so-called “voodoo dolls” that are also described in the Greek Magical Papyri.  

Perhaps the most famous example of a spell of this type is a binding spell in which the magician is instructed to make two figurines, a kneeling and bound woman and a figure of Ares holding a sword. Magical ousia is to be applied to the female figure, things which have been in contact with the woman who is the victim, her fingernails or hair for example.  

Fritz Graf has argued that this ousia could serve as a “pointer which establishes a symbolic relationship between two points, of which one is the object referred to (the ‘signified’: in our case, the actual girl) and the other is the sign (the ‘signifying’; in our case, the figurine).”  

The special names recited and written on papyri, in addition to the special substances used to construct the statues, serve a similar purpose. Each can serve as an indexical link to the sacred space, in a manner similar to my previous discussion of laurel as a link to the god Apollo.  

The magical ousia in the voodoo doll example, the fingernail or lock of hair, as natural pieces of the person involved, are clear indices, and obviously much easier to obtain from a mortal victim than such ousia would be to obtain from a god. Indices that point to the gods, rather than being parts of their bodies, must somehow be found among the objects available to humans in the material world – plants, stones, incense and animal  

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109 Graf 1997: 137-145 discusses this spell in some depth.  
110 Graf 1997: 140.
parts for example. *PGM* XIII.1-20, mentioned above, tells that each god has a specific type of incense that is associated with him or her. Substances such as specific types of aromatic plants used to manufacture a statue, or specific types of wood used, could parallel this example. An Eros statue, for example, is to be made out of mulberry wood (IV.17-16-1870). A statue of Hermes is constructed out of orange beeswax, ground ivy, and the juice of the aeria plant (IV.2359-72).

This concept exists outside of the *PGM* as well. For the Presocratics, divine essence was a part of nature and therefore could already be considered part of any particular stone or other object found in nature. Derek Collins details the Presocratic tradition of attributing divinity to nature, citing the conception of a daimones-filled natural world as found in Thales of Miletus and Heraclitus in particular.¹¹¹

However, throughout the corpus of the *PGM*, we can see many more specific instances in which certain substances are cognate with certain divinities. In the spell called the "Eighth Book of Moses," for example, each god has a very specific kind of incense associated with him or herself (XIII.1-20).¹¹² In fact, preceding this list of incense types there is a reference to things that are pleasing to the gods, things that are “born/associated with” the gods (syngenikos), a concept that highlights the indexical relation between the objects used in the profane domain with specific divine powers in

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¹¹¹ See discussion in Collins 2003.

¹¹² Graf 1997: 6-7 for an introduction to the books of Moses and Moses as a magical figure according to ancient belief, and general bibliography. According to Graf, “We know of books I through V of Moses, however, we have no information about books VI or VII, and it is thought that these never existed. We are in a world in which the symbolism of numbers is important – after Moses VIII, only book X is attested, IX again is lacking.” *Moses* VIII, as discussed here, consists of a single, but lengthy, ritual.
the sacred domain.

The fact that many spells cite the use of very specific material can be due to the association of divinity with objects in nature. In addition, according to theurgic practices, there existed chains of associations that linked gods to particular substances. Sarah Iles Johnston discusses how the Father god of theurgic cosmology was believed to have sown *symbola* throughout the cosmos. She states,

> These *symbola* depend from the ontological ranks that lie between the Father and the material world in which humans dwell – ranks that include the gods, the angels, the daemones, and the planets, for example – but that also include all kinds of creatures and objects in the material world itself. As Proclus, and later Michael Psellus and Ficino tell us in detail, there are in fact whole ‘chains’ (*seirai*) of creatures and objects depending from the Father, each of which includes, near its top, a god familiar from traditional cult…From the chain that includes the Sun depend lions and laurel…and also various other plants, animals, and minerals such as gold, heliotrope, roosters…

Thus these *symbola* were thought to partake of a shared essence with other elements within the chain through shared ontological origins. It certainly seems feasible that the spells of the PGM, and the associations of various materials with divine beings, existed within the same mindset that these other specialized domains of knowledge – namely, philosophy and later theurgic practices – incorporated and acknowledged.

The papyri pieces with special names and instructions for what one wants to be accomplished can also be interpreted as indices. Graf discusses the importance of “freezing” the words on wax or papyrus in order to preserve the memory of the ritual act

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and to make explicit what the magician wants.\textsuperscript{115} It follows that similarly, according to my analysis, the names and instructions written down on the papyri and placed inside a statue can thus serve to perpetually invoke and entreat divine power. The names of divinity in particular, however, can serve a different purpose, in addition to the preservation of the ritual act. Names in general work as indices, in all spoken spells and prayers, and, for our purposes, in the spells in which special names are inscribed and placed in or near the statue.

Names are in fact the indices \textit{par excellence} for establishing a connection with divinity.\textsuperscript{116} The most common feature placed inside of the hollow statues created in the \textit{PGM} is either a piece of papyrus or a lamella, which has been inscribed with special “barbarian” or foreign names and instructions. Even when the statue is not made hollow,  

\textsuperscript{115} Graf 1997: 212-213.

\textsuperscript{116} The importance of names as indices can also be seen in examples outside of the \textit{PGM}, and not only to divine statues but also to statues of the dead as well. I offer as one example a Cyrenean inscription preserving purificatory rituals validated by Delphic Apollo. One of the many rituals in this inscription is one involving the manufacture of statues to avert a ghost. If one knows the name of the ghost, he is instructed to proclaim the name for three days. However, if one does not know the name, he is instructed to address the ghost with, “O person (\textit{anthr¯opos}), whether you are a man or a woman.” Then follows the instructions to make statues, \textit{kolossai}, of wood or earth, offer these statues portions of food, and finally take the statues and deposit them in a forest that is utter wilderness. Scholars have stated that the ghost, through this rite, is imagined to be contained in the statue somehow and that then this “container”, and thus the ghost, is moved to a marginal location. Whether or not this is actually the case (and in fact I have argued against this in my previous work on semiotics and statues), the important feature is that the statue does serve as an index to the ghost, both in the use of the name (if it is known), and in the association of moving the statue to a marginal location with the successful aversion of the ghost. In the course of the ritual action the statues are connected to the ghost through the indexical use of the name. Then, these statues are offered sacrifice with the expectation that ghost is appeased, in a manner similar to sacrifice being offered to a cult statue in order to appease or please a god or goddess. The statue serves as a point of reference, or a focal point of the rite, and calling out the name to get the attention of the ghost is one of the ways to accomplish this connection. Sokolowski 1962.no. 115. This text and its interpretations are further examined in Haluszka 2008; Faraone 1991: 180-188; Johnston 1999: 58-63; Parker 1983.
it can be placed on or near an inscribed piece of papyri.\footnote{In \textit{PGM} IV.1872-1927, a dog statue is placed upon a strip of papyrus, upon which has been written special names and what one desires to happen.} Similar to our engraved examples, the god is never explicitly called upon to \textit{enter} the statue, but is called upon by name to be present and, in some cases, asked to perform special functions.

It is interesting to note that the instructions for these statues are not often complex, in other words, they do not involve rites of “consecration” as discussed earlier in connection with the amulet or ring spells. The statue spells are simpler in that they often describe the manufacture of the statue, what materials are used in its construction, its appropriate size and shape, and finish with instructions regarding what is to be inscribed on the piece of papyrus, which is then either placed inside or near the statue, if applicable. The statue is then deposited in a specific place, and a sacrifice or libation is offered. The majority of the spells focus on the steps taken to manufacture the statue and the prayers that should be spoken to the god or goddess. In opposition to the engraved images, there are few examples of consecration and an invocation to divinity to give power to the three-dimensional statues, for reasons I will discuss in the final section of this chapter.

Many of these statues, once made, can be used, and reused, after the proper recitation of prayers and the offering of libations or sacrifices. Thus the manufactured statue or image becomes the recipient of subsequent rituals, much like cult statues in larger scale religious practices. But in any case, all of these indices work by pointing to the god or other entity who is to be involved with the ritual and who is represented by the statue that the practitioner has created. As we have seen, sacred images provide both
iconic and indexical links to sacred space, and as such they provide a certain scenario for conceptual blending and mapping. But there is yet another element to the conceptual blend that was left undeveloped in the last chapter, the generic space. Next I would like to discuss elements of the generic space that help to facilitate the creation of the conceptual blend.

iv. Generic Space of the Conceptual Blend

According to Sørensen’s theory of blended space in magical rituals, there is another element that forms the backdrop to the conceptual blend in addition to the two input spaces, and that is the “generic space.” As a reminder, the generic space consists of important aspects of human cognition that facilitate a common format or interface between different cognitive domains. This includes an abstract conceptualization of such categories as time, location and participants as well as basic cognitive elements that are responsible for human cognition. I would like to discuss some of the elements that exist within this generic space in a bit more detail.

One important cognitive element that informs blended space in the case of sacred images is that of psychological essentialism, a concept already introduced in the previous chapter. Psychological essentialism is based on the conception that biological creatures, and to a certain extent inanimate objects, are thought to contain a certain type of “inner essence” that is specific to their respective categorical associations. This cognitive function can be responsible for a base level of metaphoric blending in situations where,
for example, a priest is thought to have a special “sacred” essence that can be mapped onto a divine figure, in the case of a Catholic priest performing the ritual of the Eucharist mapped with the figure of Jesus Christ and the narrative of the last supper.\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 85-87.} This is especially important for what happens in magical rituals.

Another element in the generic space that enables the establishment of counterpart connections with respect to our sacred image spells are image schematic structures.\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 40 presents an introduction to the concept of image-schemata, although he cites that the concept is more thoroughly analyzed in Johnson 1987. See also Alverson 1991.} Statues, as images, though they are made out of inanimate material such as clay, become in their making more than just clay. They are iconic representations of something, and in many cases they are specifically anthropomorphic representations of divinity. But beyond this iconic link to the sacred domain, the statues that serve as “containers” can map with the conception of divinity, both as containing an essence as well as literal “containers” for something else. Examples include Hesiod’s narration of Zeus containing Metis in his belly and thus incorporating her cleverness as part of his divine power, and the practice of “belly-talkers” who were thought to contain prophetic demons in their bellies.\footnote{Hesiod, \textit{Theogony} 886-900; Plato, \textit{Sophist} 252c; Plutarch, \textit{On the Obsolescence of Oracles} 9.414e.} There are also several examples within the \textit{PGM} that prescribe the ingestion of elements (such as dough figurines or the licking of inscribed figures) for ritual effectiveness, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The idea that a body or a statue can be a literal container for something is simply a more obvious incarnation of the ability to “contain” an essence. Both of these concepts
are based on image-schema of containment. A schema, another important element in the way we categorize the world around us, is discussed by the philosopher and linguist Mark Johnson as follows,

In order for us to have meaningful, connected experiences that we can comprehend and reason about, there must be a pattern and order to our actions, perceptions, and conceptions. A schema is a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of, these ongoing activities.\textsuperscript{121}

Image-schemata are one of the most basic cognitive tools used in creating order and organization in human experience and in connecting different experiences through recurrent patterns, but they are also flexible enough to apply to different sorts of experience – they are a second example of domain-general aspects of human categorization.\textsuperscript{122}

The image-schemata relevant for our purpose is that of containment. This schema involves many different experiences, for example, coffee being in a cup, a person being in a room, the farmer being in the field, the man being in love, etc. Despite their differences, all of these instances have a common schematic structure, that of an inside (where the entity is located), an outside, and a boundary between the two.\textsuperscript{123} In addition, certain assumptions can be inferred for all examples, such as you have to cross a

\textsuperscript{121} Johnson 1987: 29.

\textsuperscript{122} Sørensen 2007: 39-44.

\textsuperscript{123} Sørensen 2007: 41.
boundary to get inside the container, that if you are in A, and A is in B, then you are in B, and so forth.\textsuperscript{124}

This schema of containment can be combined with others to form richer structures and impose important inferential potentials and constraints, and can enable conceptual blending. Thus, placing objects within a divine image, in the context of the blended ritual space, can be linked with conceptions of divine forces containing a divine essence. The most common feature placed inside of the hollow statues created in the \textit{PGM} is either a piece of papyrus or a lamella, which has been inscribed with special “barbarian” or foreign names and instructions.

I’ve already mentioned above the importance of “freezing” words on wax or papyrus in order to preserve the memory of the ritual act and to make explicit what the magician wants. The names and instructions written down on the papyri and placed inside a statue can thus serve to perpetually invoke and entreat divine power. Although this element of ritual “freezing” has been presented by other scholars, as discussed earlier, I would also add that the names of divinity work as indices to divine power. They do not simply “re-enact” the ritual actions and words, but often serve to provide a constant link to the sacred domain in the manner in which they are “contained” within the image. In addition, statues are made out of very specific materials, as discussed above, and thus in a certain sense can be understood to "contain" these materials as well.

Lakoff and Johnson discuss certain universal metaphors in thinking, citing as one example Container Metaphors. “We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the

\textsuperscript{124} Sørensen 2007: 41.
rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. Each of us is a container, with a bounded surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces.″¹²⁵

Thus these two cognitive conceptions of essentialism, the idea that objects can contain some kind of “inner essence,” and the image schema of containment, both inform the generic space that contributes to the blended space of the ritual action, especially with regards to three-dimensional images which are made hollow for the purpose of placing objects inside. These two conceptions within the generic space help to facilitate the ritual blend by encouraging the iconic and indexical links to sacred space.

v. But I can’t put my papyrus in my sacred stone!

Engraved two-dimensional images have this “container” aspect to serve as a component of the generic space, but not in the same manner as the three-dimensional statues. It is likely that the two-dimensional images were thought to contain a certain type of essence, but they utilize a different kind of metonymic connector to facilitate the blend. With very few exceptions, we find in these spells the Greek word teletê and its cognates, which can be defined most generally in the papyri as reflecting the concept of

¹²⁵ Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 29. They cite as examples rooms and houses as obvious examples, but further discuss the manner in which we impose the inside-outside orientation on our environment and on solid objects as well, citing the action of breaking open rocks to see what is inside or a clearing in the woods as having an inside and outside, “even when there is no natural physical boundary that can be viewed as defining a container.”
‘perfecting.’ The perfection or consecration implies a change of status, and the rituals associated with these terms imbue objects, and sometimes even people, with divine power, efficacy and agency. The use of these terms in association with actual statues is rare, but very common in association with rings and amulets. More importantly, the rituals that are associated with engraved images involve a complexity that is not seen in most of the spells describing the manufacture and use of statues, which typically focus on the specifications of how the statue is constructed and with what materials.

I argue that these engraved images create a link to sacred space within the conceptual blended space of the ritual through a metaphorical mapping of the general idea of teletē rituals that already contain notions regarding changing states of essence, such as mystery initiations, which are facilitated by the specific elements that these spells incorporate, which often involve the touching of the consecrated object to some other element within the spell. Psychological studies indicate that metonymic relations that are responsible for the transfer of essence are also at work in beliefs in contagion – beliefs that are further strengthened by concrete physical contact.\(^{126}\) I would argue that the iconic links to divinity as engraved on the stones, the metaphorical mapping with “teletē” concepts, and the incorporation of physical contact of the engraved image with other elements of the ritual thought to be efficacious, all allow for and in fact encourage the blended conceptual space of the ritual.

In looking at some of these cognitive elements of essentialism, image-schemata, and metaphorical mapping in general, we can gain insight into how these sacred images

\(^{126}\) Sørensen 2007: 56.
were thought to be efficacious. In other words, we can get a better understanding of how they “worked,” so to speak. Three-dimensional statues made out of specific material and/or made hollow for the purpose of placing objects inside, rely on containment image-schema in conjunction with essentialism, or the idea that objects can “contain” an essence. Having the statues “contain” certain materials already thought to be efficacious or materials that provided indexical links to divinity, such as their special names, could lead to a conceptualization of the statue itself as a container for a newly ascribed divine essence within the blended space of the ritual action, the exact process of which I will detail in the following chapter.

Images that are engraved on two-dimensional objects, such as stones, were also thought to “contain” an essence. In some instances we can see the incorporation of a special type of stone thought to be particularly efficacious, thus in a manner parallel to the creation of three-dimensional statues out of very specific materials, the stones could have already been thought to have connections to the sacred domain through their own special “natural” essence. These objects did not provide any further space for literal containment in the same way that the three-dimensional statues did.

However, these types of images often involve a different type of conceptualization of essence within the blended space of the ritual action. Again, these engraved two-dimensional images incorporate actions involving rubbing the object, soaking the object, or fumigating the object in smoke. All of these elements focus on the touching of the two-dimensional image to something else in the course of the ritual
action, and again, in the case of *PGM* IV.1716-1870, the burnt offering is explicitly identified as an action that can endow the image and the ritual itself with “soul.”

Some of these actions, especially the use of incense and spices, were already established as an effective means of communicating between the profane and sacred worlds. Marcel Detienne discusses the specific purpose of spices to attract the gods and establish this communication. He states,

> In the religion of the city state the sacrificial ritual is the normal channel of communication between earth and heaven... Man’s share of the sacrificed animal is the dead, corruptible meat; the gods’ share is the smoke from the charred bones, the smell of perfumes, and the incorruptible spices. The ritual that brings men and gods together at the same time sanctifies the fact that it is impossible for man to have any direct access to the divine and to establish with it a true commensality. Thus in the context of blood sacrifice, the cornerstone of the state religion, spices and myrrh represent the portion allotted to the gods alone, the portion which man could never assimilate and which remains outside their nature and alien to it despite the place they assign to it in their dietary rituals.127

Thus the use of spices and myrrh within ritual action facilitate connections with sacred space. I argue that these actions work in a parallel manner to actions that incorporate “containment” in the three-dimensional images. This is also exemplified by instances in which a piece of papyrus with inscriptions is not placed directly inside of the statue, the practitioner is instead instructed to in some way touch the statue to the piece of papyrus.

For example, in *PGM* IV.1872-1927, the practitioner is instructed to create a dog statue out of wax, fruit and manna, fashioned with its mouth open. A bone from the head of a man who has died violently is placed inside of the mouth, and special characters are

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127 Detienne 1977: 38.
inscribed on the side of the dog. In a way, we can see that all of these elements are “contained” within the dog statue in a manner similar to three-dimensional statues in general.\textsuperscript{128} Yet in addition to all this, the practitioner is instructed to “write on a strip of papyrus these names and what you wish: IAO ASTO IOPHE.”

The strip of papyrus is placed on a tripod and the dog statue is placed directly on top of this. As a spell is addressed to this statue, a censor of frankincense is to be burning directly beside the statue. Within the blended space of the ritual action, connections to the sacred space, in this particular spell, are facilitated both by the conceptions of essentialism and containment within the generic space. The fact that the papyrus is not placed directly inside of the statue but is only touching the statue does not necessarily take away from the conceptions of essence and containment, which are not dependent on literal containment, despite the fact that literal containment, I argue, is one element that can help to facilitate the blend.

Two interesting examples of note include three-dimensional statues that incorporate a form of the term teletê in addition to teletê type rituals. In neither of these spells are the statues made hollow for the inclusion of objects. In \textit{PGM} VII.862-918 the practitioner is instructed to create a statue of Selene from clay, sulfur and goat’s blood. The statue is anointed with lunar ointment after the completion of “the ritual that works

\textsuperscript{128} Another statue incorporates bringing the statue in contact with another item that contains an inscribed piece of papyrus. In \textit{PGM} VII.1-63, the practitioner is instructed to make a statue of a dog-faced baboon out of olive wood and wearing the winged helmet of Hermes with a box on its back. Special names and prayers are written with myrrh ink in a piece of papyrus, which is subsequently placed inside of the container on the statue’s back. Here there seems to be an interesting incorporation of the statue carrying a container, and thus serving as a container itself.
for everything.” In *PGM* XII.14-95, the practitioner forms a statue of Eros out of Etrurian wax and a variety of aromatic plants. After this begins a three-day long *teletê* ritual involving the offering of fruits, cakes, votives, honey-wine. Finally, several birds are sacrificed. However, they are not burnt, but instead choked so that their *pneuma* can enter the statue.

In this spell we see a new type of containment. Although the statue is not made explicitly hollow, the *pneuma* of the birds is somehow expected to enter it through the course of the ritual action. Thus the statue “contains” this *pneuma* in addition to the other elements from which the statue was formed. Even though the Eros and Selene statues contain elements in this fashion, it is interesting to note that they are not made purposefully hollow but they do incorporate ritual actions associated with *teletê*.

Thus it seems that *teletê*, as a consecration ritual, has connections with changes of essence-state. But for now I would like to emphasize that the conceptions of *teletê* rituals as a type of action specifically associated with changing states forms a backdrop to these actions in the *PGM* that incorporate elements of touching. Thus the conception of transfer through touching forms an image-schema connected to that of *containment*.

In sum, we have seen that rituals of the *PGM* involving creating sacred images with powerful abilities and functions that are facilitated by the image-schema of containment. What is placed inside of the three-dimensional statues can serve as an index to divine essence in the sacred realm, and thus in the blended space of the ritual this essence can be connected to the statue itself. When sacred images do not involve containment in a literal fashion, such as in the case of images engraved onto stone, the
connection to sacred space can be established in a different manner. It is for this reason that I argue that conceptions of teletê type rituals as especially capable of creating new essences become an essential alternative in attempts to make the images into powerful agents, a topic I will leave for now but pick up again in the following chapter.

As we have seen regarding the use of sacred images within the PGM, these images that exist as ontological objects within the profane domain provide links to the conceptual space of the sacred domain. The images as images provide iconic links to the sacred, while the conception of certain ontological objects as connected to the divine sphere, as a sacred type of ousia, provide indexical links to divinity. This link is reinforced by the cognitive mechanisms of psychological essentialism and image-schematic structures.

At the end of the ritual, the statues and engraved images are thought to contain a new ontological status as a “magical” object with power and agency, and the ability to help the practitioner accomplish his goals. In my previous work, I argued against animation rituals in a definitive sense and emphasized indexical links to divinity as a sufficient outcome of the ritual action. However, in looking at this material with cognitive processes in mind, one can begin to see the possibilities for an entirely new ontological status and ascribed essence for these physical materials.

This new status is reflected in the agency that the images are given, with respect to their ability to accomplish for the practitioner a wide variety of tasks. This new status is facilitated by the creation of a conceptually blended space wherein the magical

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129 Haluszka 2008.
practitioner can interact with the sacred domain through a manipulation of objects in the profane domain. Through the totality of links, the statue not only comes to signify a divine power but could even be thought to contain that power. The specific process that allows for such a transfer of power from the sacred domain to an element of the profane domain is the topic of the following chapter.

The index to divine power created within the blended space of the ritual action is not necessarily a pointer to a specific divine entity in the manner in which a statue of Apollo or a sprig of laurel can point to the god Apollo, but instead works in a manner similar to the *voces magicae*. Without a specific semantic reference certain sacred images within the *PGM* can come to represent an undefined but powerful essence. I will now be exploring the manner in which this essence is ascribed to the sacred images, and what exactly this essence entails for sacred images in general as a modality within the semiotic domain of magic.
CHAPTER 4

Sacred Images II: Essence Transfer

Ray: As I explained before, we think the spirit of a 17th century Moldavian tyrant is alive and well in a painting at the Manhattan Museum of Art.

Psychiatrist: Uh-huh, and are there any other paintings in the museum with bad spirits in them?

Egon: You're wasting valuable time. He's drawing strength from a psychomagnotheric slime flow that's been collecting under the city.

Psychiatrist: Yes, tell me about the slime.

Winston: It's very potent stuff. We made a toaster dance with it.

-Ghostbusters II

i. Chapter introduction

In my general introduction to this dissertation I presented a certain flexibility in terms of human cognition. The above transcription of a scene from the movie Ghostbusters II incorporates a concept that I will be discussing throughout this chapter, namely, the manner in which inanimate objects are represented as animate. Although in the context of this movie scene, a painting and a toaster are “alive” and can talk or dance due to being inhabited by spirits and “magical” slime, the manner in which ancient images are considered to have agency or power is quite different, as I will show.
The important idea to begin with, however, is the ability of our minds to think of physical objects as alive or as having a certain “inner essence” that is not necessarily ontologically natural. This works in the case of robots projected to have emotions or feelings, and also in the case of sacred images to which are ascribed special abilities and functions. In this chapter I will be presenting more of Jesper Sørensen’s cognitive theory regarding the function of magic ritual to facilitate this transfer of essence in the minds of the practitioner of the ritual action.

I will also be using these theories to push some of the conclusions made regarding the blended space created within the rituals of the PGM even further. While I use Sørensen’s theory to show how these statues are ascribed a new essence, I also present my own arguments regarding the specific nature of this essence in a semiotic understanding that is particular to the magical milieu of which the spells are a distinct part. But before I discuss fully the manner in which human cognition over-turns ontological assumptions, I need to first present the manner in which we categorize the world according to these very assumptions.

ii. Methods of Categorization

According to cognitive theories regarding basic level categorization, humans “categorize the world in relation to distinct cognitive domains that guide expectations of such things as causal behavior and essential properties.”\textsuperscript{130} These types of domains are

\textsuperscript{130} Sørensen 2007: 33-34.
“universal and not constrained by explicit cultural representations about the ontology of the objects represented.”\textsuperscript{131}

It is important to note that the meaning of “domains” used here is different from the meaning of “domains” used with respect to “semiotic domains.” Semiotic domains represent a set of practices and modalities (language and image, for example) that communicate certain types of meaning to people engaged in the set of practices within the domain. These domains consist of both content and a set of social practices surrounding the content (such as first-person shooter video games, role-playing games, and simulation games as content within the semiotic domain of video games, which also consists of the gamers who play and understand the games as content within the domain).\textsuperscript{132}

One important aspect of semiotic domain theory as argued by Gee is the manner in which different terms can have different meanings and implications depending on what semiotic domain is at hand. Thus is the case with the term “domain.” I have just reviewed what “domain” means in terms of semiotics, but in terms of human cognition, the “domains” of basic-level categorization carry a slightly different meaning. The meaning here does not involve a set of social practices and people engaged in those practices, but instead carries the more general meaning of “domain” as an area of shared similarities within a wider sphere of existence.

\textsuperscript{131} Sørensen 2007: 33-34.

\textsuperscript{132} See Gee’s discussion 2003: 18-19.
Thus the biological domain would consist of all living things, but not rocks, within our cognitive categorization of the world around us. We can push this flexibility of definitions even further to discuss what “domain” means in terms of computer science, or what “domain” means in terms of territory or authority, but I think the point is clear.

Returning to basic-level categorization, there is a broad consensus regarding four basic ontological domains that are common to human cognition: physical, biological or animate, mental or psychological, and social. The physical domain is characterized by objects that are inanimate, have no internal source of energy and are often conceived of as non-agents. The biological or animate domain includes objects that are animate, have an internal source of energy, and are often conceived of as agents with instrumental or teleological causality. The mental or psychological domain includes perceptions and understandings of other people’s mental states. The social domain includes social categories based on the human tendency to classify groups of human beings based on a perceived common essence.

The domains most important for my discussion here are the physical and biological domains, with the important distinction being the agency and animation that is found in objects belonging to the biological domain. These are base levels of categorization, and there are tests that show that as early as three months of age, infants have expectations concerning the behavior of inanimate objects as opposed to animate objects.

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133 For further discussions on basic-level categorization see Boyer 1994 and 2001; Carey and Spelke 1994; Cosmides and Tooby 1994; Gelgman, Durgin and Kaufman 1995; and Keil 1994.

134 Søreens: 35-38.
objects, especially the interpretation of biological objects as having some kind of inner essence.\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 36.}

Boyer states a similar conclusion in different terms,

Domain specific principles deliver intuitive explanations for observed states and expectations about future states of affairs…There is evidence for the presence and salience of categories like HUMAN, ARTEFACT, ANIMAL from infancy. These same categories are found at the end-point of cognitive development…Obviously, intuitive categories and principles are then completed with a wealth of information inferred from direct experience and cultural transmission.\footnote{Boyer 1999: 207-210.}

These cognitive functions of categorization by external perceptual similarity and internal theory-driven essentialism allow for the human mind, when presented with a previously un-encountered object, to place the object within its proper category and make assumptions regarding unknown aspects of it based on shared similarities within a domain. They also allow for propositional reasoning in changing perceptual environments. For example, you can trust that a person remains the same regarding their ascribed internal essence, despite changes in perceptual features due to factors such as age.

However, these two cognitive methods of categorizing and understanding the world according to ontological status are only one side of the cognitive coin, since human cognition is ultimately more flexible, or else we wouldn’t have these examples of counter-intuitive ontological statuses, such as the ascription of animate powers to inanimate objects that we see in the \textit{PGM}, or in the case of animals, most especially pets,
beating treated as if they are humans, with the appropriate emotive and moral abilities and responses, or even in the case of robots.

### iii. Blended domains and essence transfers

I have shown in the previous chapters, using the theoretical frameworks presented by Sørensen, the way in which ritual creates a blended conceptual space, and how language and images provide various links between the sacred and profane domains within the blended space of the ritual action. I would like to extend these ideas even further to show how these links lead to the end result of sacred objects as powerful divine forces in their own right. I would like to begin with a review of Sørensen’s definition of magic. He states,

> Magic is *about changing the state of essence of persons, objects, acts and events through certain special and non-trivial kinds of actions with opaque causal mediation*. This manipulative and transformative aspect of magical action will place a substantial part of the analysis of magic in the realm of the psychological or cognitive theories and explanations.¹³⁷

Keeping in mind the “changing of the state of essences” as a function of magic, I offer a section of *PGM XII.270* in which an engraved stone undergoes a long ritual process to become part of a powerful ring. The practitioner is instructed:

> So at dawn stand facing the sun, holding the well-planned, beneficent, divine, holy, useful, economical, merciful stone which provides your needs, the beautiful and becoming one, and say “Greatest god, who exceed all power, I call you…I have called you, greatest god, and through you on all things, that you give divine and supreme strength to this image.

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¹³⁷ Sørensen 2007: 32.
We can see in this spell that a material object is represented as having characteristics such as agency, power, and divinity. This description is counter-intuitive to expectations that we may have regarding how material objects such as stones should behave, or in our case, not behave. I have already presented theories of cognition that offer explanations as to why anyone assumes rock and stone to behave certain ways in the first place. Now I would like to delve further into the ways in which human cognition allows for the ascription of new essences or traits not normally associated with material objects.

Again, according to Boyer, “the ontological assumptions found in most religious systems, in otherwise diverse environments, generally constitute direct violations of intuitive expectations.” Thus they are seen to have counter-intuitive physical, biological or psychological properties. Sørensen discusses the manner in which magical ritual action actively facilitates this ascription of counter-intuitive features through the blending of profane and sacred space. Due to the combination of the sacred and profane elements within this blended space, and facilitated by conceptual blending of the connectors between the sacred and profane “input” spaces, as was discussed in my first chapter, a new emergent conceptual structure arises. This emergent conceptual structure

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allows for the possibility of transfer of essence and magical efficacy through the course of the ritual action.

For the ritual to have effect, some element within the ritual must be invested with magical agency – that is, an element within the ritual, either an object, an action, or a specific agent, that is responsible for the transfer of power from the sacred to the blended space. This agency is created in the minds of the participants through a mapping between the sacred and profane domains that occurs during the magic ritual.\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 64-65.}

The Agent refers to the actual agent performing a magical ritual action. An example of a personal agent of this type is a shaman “modeled in mythical narratives or other types of authoritative discourse.”\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 66.} The shaman gains his power through traditional and culturally entrenched narratives that associate him with essential qualities which enable him to provide magical agency to a ritual. Specific objects within the ritual action can also be assumed to inherently contain the efficacy needed to complete a magical ritual action, such as the magical stones among the Aguaruna Indians of the Amazon, thought to have a special and powerful essence based either on where they were found or what they look like.\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 70.} And finally, a specific set of actions performed in a certain way, and thought to be “a reproduction of a similar sequence of action ascribed to the sacred space,” such as a Catholic priest performing the actions of the Eucharist in imitation of...
Jesus Christ during the Last Supper, can be seen to have direct agency or efficacy with regards to the successful completion of the ritual action.\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 67.}

This magical agency, whether it be found in agent, object, or action, is an essential quality within the sacred domain that is understood as either “(a) an ‘inborn’ or ontologically ascribed aspect of the element in question, (b) a result of a metonymic relation to the sacred space, or (c) a projection of magical agency to the element obtained through the performance of another ritual,” which ultimately facilitates the “transfer of ‘sacred essence’ to an element stemming from the profane domain that formerly did not contain any magical agency.”\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 97.} This last case involving the transfer of essence changes the ontological assumptions associated with a particular element in the ritual, for example, the ascription of characteristics such as “beneficent, divine, holy, useful, economical and merciful” to a gemstone, as will be discussed in detail in the following section.\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 97; PGM XII.283-284.}

It can be the case that objects used within the ritual action of the PGM spells drew upon conceptions of a variety of magical agencies. In some cases the agency is either inborn or ontologically ascribed, as was demonstrated in my discussion of sacred images made up of materials thought to be associated with the sacredness of certain divinities in Chapter Three. However some of these spells also seem to incorporate ritual elements that have the purpose of actively transferring a divine essence of the sacred space to the

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\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 67.}

\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 97.}

\footnote{Sørensen 2007: 97; PGM XII.283-284.}
profane object. The blended space forms the backdrop to this transfer, and for the remainder of this chapter I would like to discuss Sørensen’s explanation of how exactly this transfer works on a cognitive level.

**iv. A Re-visitation of *PGM XII.270-350***\(^{145}\)

In order to flesh out some of the cognitive frameworks with empirical examples, I will take a closer look at one spell in particular that has already been discussed many times throughout the course of this dissertation. In *PGM XII.270-350*, we find the description of the creation of a ring that can give the bearer great and many powers when combined with a special invocation, spoken whenever the ring is to be used. The first step is the creation of the gemstone itself and the carving of sacred imagery of the sun god in the form of a sacred scarab surrounded by rays and a serpent. The practitioner is instructed:

> Helios is to be engraved on a heliotrope stone as follows: A thick-bodied snake in the shape of a wreath should be [shown] having its tail in its/mouth. Inside [the circle formed by] the snake let there be a sacred scarab [beetle surrounded by] rays. On the reverse side you are to inscribe the name in hieroglyphics, as the prophets pronounce [it]. Then, having consecrated [the ring], wear it when you are pure.\(^{146}\)

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\(^{145}\) For other scholarship on this spell see Moyer and Dieleman 2003, cited more thoroughly in the following discussion, as well as Bonner 1950 and Thissen 1991.

\(^{146}\) All translations from this spell are from Morton Smith in Betz 1986: 163-165.
After the engraving of the stone, a long invocation is recited calling on sacred divinity to give divine and supreme strength to the image, a very lengthy invocation that involves about ninety five appellations (some recognizable names and epithets, not all), thus invoking a very universal god to whom is ascribed great power. The conclusion of this invocation lays out the multi-faceted purpose of the invocation.

I have called upon you, greatest god, and through you on all things, that you may give divine and supreme strength to this image and may make it effective and powerful against all and to be able to call back souls, move spirits, subject legal opponents, strengthen friendships, produce all sorts of profit, bring dreams, give prophecies, cause psychological passions and bodily sufferings and incapacitating illness, and perfect all erotic philters. Please, lord, bring to fulfillment a complete consecration.

The practitioner of the rite is also instructed in the sacred times and places within which to complete the ritual. This includes descriptions of the ritual actions to accompany the repeated invocations, consisting of libations and incense offerings. “Also when you are
performing the consecration, each time/ you recite [the spell] pour as libation the [fluids]
specified above and all kinds of perfumes except frankincense.”

The ritual action then culminates in sacrifice. The practitioner is instructed to
sacrifice a live rooster “either white or yellow; keep away from black. And after the
consecration cut the rooster open and stick the [stone with its] image well into the guts of
the rooster, taking care that the entrails of the animal be not broken.” The image is to be
left like this for one day.

This is the first half of the ritual action within which the inscribed stone comes to
have a new ascribed essence of power and agency. The final lines of the spell depict the
use of the sacred object. When the practitioner wants to use this sacred object, he is
instructed to say the OUPHOR invocation, which is described as the rite “by which all
modeled images and engravings/ and carved stones are made alive (δι’ οὗ ξωπυρεῖται
πάντα πλάσματα καὶ γλυφαὶ καὶ ξόανα).” It would seem that the first half of the
spell serves as the consecration for the object, while this last invocation is to be used
“Whenever you wish to command the god (ὅσαίς ἂν βούλει ἐπιτάσσειν τῷ θεῷ).”

Ian Moyer and Jacco Dieleman suggest that the gemstone works as a cult image in
miniature, arguing that the spell itself functions as a small-scale version of a temple-
based ritual. They conclude that this ritual corresponds to an Egyptian temple ritual called

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148 Τελοῦντος δὲ σου καθ’ ἐκάστην κλήσιν ἐπίσπευδε τὰ προκείμενα καὶ μύρων
παντοδαπῶν χωρίς λιβάνου.
the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony, which was used to consecrate temple cult statues and endow them with life and power.\footnote{Moyer and Dieleman 2003: 67-68. For further scholarship on this ritual, see Otto 1960; Smith 1993; and Cruz-Uribe 1999.}

The traditional elements familiar from the religious domain, such as the function of including prayer and offerings to please the divinity through interaction with a sacred image, serve to establish the ritual as recognizable (readable) within sacred space. In some ways certain aspects of the ritual action are constrained by these culture and context specific methods through the practitioner of magic’s utilization of structures and elements of traditional religion.

The cult statue in religious practice can represent institutionalized and symbolic power. Moyer and Dieleman state that “By constructing a personal divine image and offering it worship and hymns, the practitioner asserted his claim to the functions and prerogatives of an Egyptian priest, and the special relationship to the divine inherent in that status.”\footnote{Moyer and Dieleman 2003: 67.} Thus they argue that the consecrated ring becomes a “miniature” and highly portable cult statue.\footnote{Moyer and Dieleman 2003: 67-68.}

This model of a temple ritual in miniature is useful on several levels, especially when we consider the specialized power to which the practitioner of magic lays claim. It is this potential claim to traditional statues that helps to invest the practitioner of magic with a specific power and agency, and it is this magical agency that helps, through the course of the ritual action, to facilitate a transfer of essence to the magical ritual object.
For the ritual to have effect, some element within the ritual must already be invested with magical agency – that is, an element within the ritual, either an object, an action, or a specific agent, that is responsible for the transfer of power from the sacred to the blended space. This agency is created in the minds of the participants through the mapping between the sacred and profane domains that occurs during the magic ritual.¹⁵²

In this example we can see evidence of the three types of magical agency discussed above. I have already discussed in the previous chapter the manner in which certain materials were thought to be either ontologically related to sacred power or to particular divine beings. I have also shown the various types of metonymic relations to the sacred space that the images provide through both iconic and indexical links. In our amulet spell, these three types of magical agency are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For the ancients, divine essence was a part of nature and therefore could already be considered part of any particular stone or other object found in nature, as discussed in the previous chapter.

In this spell the practitioner is instructed to use a heliotrope stone.¹⁵³ Although there is no explicit reference to this stone as sacred to Helios, it does provide an etymological link to the god in the instruction to ἥλιος γλυφεται ἐπὶ λίθου ἥλιοτροπίου (“Helios is to be engraved on a heliotrope stone”).¹⁵⁴ The name of the stone thus provides an indexical link to the sacred space, specifically to Helios as the sun god.

¹⁵² Moyer and Dieleman 2003: 64-65. The various types of agency ascribed in a given ritual are detailed in Chapter 2.

¹⁵³ This stone is a green colored stone containing specks of red jasper. See also note 152.

¹⁵⁴ Pliny NH 37.165
within the sacred space, in conjunction with the iconic reference created in the course of the engraving.

Although these two elements connect the image with the sacred domain, and could be a source of agency, the image is also subjected to a series of ritual actions that serves to ascribe an even greater powerful essence than the image would have been thought to contain through its metonymic relations to sacred space alone. In the course of the ritual action, divine power is asked, through the complex invocation, to give essentially its own power and strength to the ring, so that it becomes an object described by the practitioner as something divine, holy, useful, merciful, etc. (XII.283-4). In the blended conceptual space that is created during the time frame of the ritual, the material appearance of the stone is attributed with powerful and divine essences. Within the ritual the stone is explicitly identified with these divine essences, both through the descriptive adjectives applied to the stone and through the power and uses that the practitioner demands that the stone be given.

The ritual action of our example ring spell incorporates a transfer of essence, or in other words, it involves a changing of an element in the profane world (in this case a gemstone) into a magical ring full of strength and power, by means of interaction with elements of the sacred domain. The salient features of this spell that facilitate this transfer have already been discussed. They include, in the first half of the ritual action that involves the construction and consecration of the image: iconic references to the sun god, the lengthy and oft repeated invocation detailing the universality of the god and his many names, an offering of libations, and a closing act in which the stone is soaked in the
innards of a sacrificed rooster for a full day. The second half of the ritual action, the OUPHOR invocation, enhances these connections even further through the reference to the use of “OUPHOR” as both a divinity and a divine action, as well as the use of specialized magical language.

v. Sørensen’s Example of transfer of essence during the Eucharist

In order to exemplify this transfer more concretely, I will discuss an example provided by Sørensen and then return to this spell. Sørensen explains the Christian ritual of transubstantiation as a type of ritual that ascribes new essence to an object in the profane domain. Through the ritual itself, which first requires the investment of magical agency in the priest present to perform the ritual action, “the new complex concepts of sanctified bread and wine are constructed through the connection established between cognitive models belonging to two conceptual domains.”155 The two conceptual domains are those of the profane and sacred domains that serve to facilitate the blended space of the ritual action.

In addition, the ritual action and the identification of bread and wine as the flesh and blood of Christ are both legitimized by the mythical narrative of the Last Supper. Sørensen finds that the ascribed efficacy of the ritual action “arises by virtue of it being

155 Sørensen 2007:100.
an iconic reproduction of the mythical action of Jesus Christ if performed by a legitimate ritual agent.”

Sørensen presents a diagram, which I copy below, detailing the two input spaces, which represent the profane and sacred domains, respectively, in addition to the elements that exist in the generic and blended space. The lines connecting the circles represent the counterpart connectors that facilitate mappings between the two domains. For example, the priest as ritual agent maps onto the mythical figure of Jesus Christ just as the actions performed during the ritual map onto the mythical narrative of the previous and sacred actions of Christ and his apostles.

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^156 Sørensen 2007: 100.
Thus, in the example of the Eucharist, both the priest and the ritual action are invested with ritual agency through their connections with sacred space. The action is based on an iconic reproduction of a mythical act of Christ, thus creating an identity connector to the sacred space. The counterpart connection between the priest and the

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Figure 4.1: Catholic genetic Blend

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figure of Christ and the apostles is also especially relevant, as a central element of the ordination of the priests is the dogma of apostolic succession according to which the bishop ordaining the priest is directly connected all the way back to the apostles, if not to Jesus himself.\textsuperscript{157} And finally,

Image-schemata ensuring the right iconic representation of the ritual action, essentialist notions establishing a metonymic link by apostolic touching, and psychological essentialism ensuring the right essential disposition of the priest to function as a value of the sacred role, are all present in the generic space facilitating the counterpart connections linking the sacred and the profane space.\textsuperscript{158}

In certain types of ritual action this mapping of the sacred and profane domains, with the inclusion of an object, person, or action already thought to contain some magical agency, is enough to facilitate the intentions of the ritual action. However, there are also rituals that exist specifically to ascribe a magical essence to an object that was thought to previously contain none, and this transfer is facilitated by one of the aforementioned aspects of the ritual already being invested with magical agency through the counterpart connectors to the sacred domain, whether it be action, object or agent. Sørensen cites the transformation of bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist as an example. Throughout the course of the ritual action, the material objects of bread and wine are explicitly identified as the flesh and blood of Christ. This serves to de-emphasize their automatically ascribed essence, allowing for the bread and wine, after a certain point in the unfolding of the ritual frame, to work as indices not to the “breadness

\textsuperscript{157} Sørensen 2007: 87.

\textsuperscript{158} Sørensen 2007: 86-87.
of bread” but to the essence of Christ.

Sørensen provides an abstract illustration of the elements involved in this mapping of the blended space that leads to the ascription of a new essence to the bread and wine, which I also copy below. The mappings that were illustrated in the above figure serve to facilitate the mappings in the figure below, such as the mapping of the “essence” of Christ ascribed to the profane objects of the bread and the wine. Again, I will re-iterate that the blended space is a conceptual space, existing in the minds of the practitioner, and it is in the mind that material objects are ascribed this essence.
Generic Space
A: container
B: essence

Input Space 1
A1: appearance of bread/wine
B1: essence of bread/wine

Input space 2
A2: flesh/blood of Christ
B2: essence of Christ

Blended Space
A3: bread/wine
B3: essence of Christ

--- Generic mapping
------ Mapping
---------- Projection

Figure 4.2: Sanctification of bread and wine
vi. An application of transfer of essence theory to PGM XII.270-350

I would like to return to our example “magical ring” spell from the PGM and demonstrate how the ritual elements fit into the model presented above. The engraving of Helios on a heliotropic stone provides both iconic and indexical links to the god Helios in the sacred domain.\(^{159}\) As discussed above regarding Moyer and Dieleman’s interpretation of PGM XII.270-350, the magician takes on the role of a priest in a temple ritual, performing sacrifices and libations to the engraved image as the temple priest would to a cult statue. As they state, “Elements of traditional religion are transformed and adapted in a conceptual shift from the archaic temple to the ‘holy man’ as point of access to the power of the divine world.”\(^ {160}\) Thus the magician can be seen as one specific source of ritual agency in his role as performer of the ritual action.

Evidence of the magician as a specialist with access to specialized knowledge is also found in other spells throughout the PGM. As mentioned in Chapter One, they lay claim to knowledge of the secret names of the gods, special plants, and sacrificial rites that give them greater access to the sacred domain. I offer one spell that was discussed in the previous chapter as an example. In PGM VIII.1-63, the practitioner proclaims the names of Hermes and goes on to claim, “I also know what your forms are…Your plant is the grape which is the olive. I also know your wood: ebony. I know you, Hermes, who you are and where you come from and what your city is: Hermopolis. Come to me, lord

\(^{159}\) According to Betz 1986: 163, n.80, a heliotropic stone is a “green chalcedony with small spots of red jasper.”

Hermes…I also know your foreign names…”\textsuperscript{161}

As we can see, the magician thought himself someone with greater access to and knowledge of the sacred realm. The magician in general was also likely invested with magical agency though transformative rites that he himself experienced, which I will describe in the next section. The reference to \textit{Ouphor}, as Moyer and Dieleman argue, provides an identity connector with a traditional Egyptian ritual having the power to animate objects in the profane domain, specifically cult statues in the Egyptian sacred temples. Thus both the stone as object, the magician as person, and the action as sacred ritual action all contain magical agency in the blended space. It is this combination of elements, among others, that provide the cognitive backdrop for the ascription of a new essence to the sacred image.

The language of the ritual action also provides an indexical connection to sacred space. The invocation itself consists of several examples of sacred speech, including extreme iteration and redundancy as well as nonsense terms, as discussed above. All of these features indicate the specialized status of the “sacred” language within the ritual action as a method of communication with the divine. Like the figure of the magician himself, these phrases were thought to give a special link to divine power, and in the case of the \textit{onomata barbara} in particular, they served as even further proof of the magician’s claim to specialized knowledge and power.

And finally, the ritual actions of the spell correspond to conceptions of consecration rituals as discussed in the previous chapter, especially with respect to the

\textsuperscript{161} \textit{PGM} VIII.5-20. Translated by E.N. O’Neal in Betz 1986: 146.
use of libations and perfumes and, most especially, the soaking of the stone in the guts of the rooster. The main link for these ideas is that of transfer through physical contact, a conception found in the generic space consisting of pre-conceived understandings of all of these experiences in totality, as discussed in Chapter Two. I present below an abstract figure of these conceptual mappings that occur during the space of the ritual action.
Generic Space
A: agent and object: ESSENCE
B: action: IMAGE-SCHEMATA

Ritual Space: Completion by the ritual frame
A3: magician
B3: ritual actions
C3: objects – sacred image with new ascribed essence

Present Social Space
A1: person
B1: actions
C1: objects (engraved image)

Sacred Space
A2: “traditional” temple priest
B2: Ouphor rituals
C2: Helios

Figure 4.3: Helios ring genetic blend
These connections between the profane and sacred domains, facilitated by the general cognitive processes of image-schemata and psychological essentialism, allow for an entirely new essence to be ascribed to the heliotropic stone, as illustrated by the second diagram that I provide below.

Just as in the case of the Eucharist example provided above, the mappings created by the practitioner of magic as divine agent, the iconic and indexical links to divinity created through the engraving of a sacred stone, and the ritual actions themselves all serve to facilitate the blended space. It is these mappings that open the door for an ascription of a new and powerful essence to the stone.
Similar to Sørensen’s example of the Eucharist, in the course of the ritual action the stone is explicitly identified with a divine essence. “So at dawn stand facing the sun, holding the well-planned, beneficent, divine, holy, useful, economical, merciful stone which provides your needs, the beautiful and becoming one…”\textsuperscript{162} The stone is identified with descriptors more closely associated with the sacred realm, or at least the

\textsuperscript{162} PGM XII.283-284.
animate/biological domain. Most importantly, these adjectives are not normally and ontologically associated with stones in general. We can see that the stone as a sacred image within the blended ritual space becomes something more than just stone.

Conceptions associated with the idea of containment as a recurring pattern in the profane and sacred worlds together form a backdrop to the conception that everything contains some sort of “essence” that allows for it to take on certain characteristics. Again, as I stated in the previous chapter, these are cognitive processes that allow for the human mind to both conceptualize the world according to perceived patterns as well as make projections and assumptions that aid in such things as problem-solving or learning through analogy and metaphor.

vii. The nature of the ascribed essence

I would like to conclude this chapter by discussing the exact nature of this new essence. Previous scholars have stated that sacred images in the PGM become “animated.” Deborah Tarn Steiner argues that rituals in the magical papyri instruct “the practitioner of the rite first to shape the statue out of some inert material and then to place a particular set of objects or a certain text in the interior cavity; the finished product, thus vivified, becomes a source of omens and oracles.”\textsuperscript{163} These comments follow upon those of Dodds, who made the sweeping statement that “the magical papyri offer recipes for

\textsuperscript{163} Steiner 2001: 119.
constructing such images and animating them.\footnote{Dodds 1951: 293.}

However I would like to point out that the essence is more specific than animation
\emph{per se}, but less specific than assuming that whatever god is represented is thought to be
“inside” of the statue as container. It does not seem to be “life” that is given to these
sacred image objects, but a power and an agency linked to divine power and agency, and
it is through this ascribed power and agency that it gives the holder or wearer of the
object a great many powers.

Yet it is not explicitly divinity within the statues either, I would argue. It is only in
the discussions of the theurgists that we find our first, clear evidence of divinity imagined
to be contained in some sort of receptacle. For example, Iamblichus explains how
materials found on earth can serve as a receptacle (\emph{hypodochê}) or dwelling for divinity, if
it is pure and appropriately suited to the gods.\footnote{Iamblichus, \textit{Myst.} 5.23.}
Proclus states more explicitly that
statues can be made suitable receptacles for the gods through the use of the proper
materials.\footnote{Proclus, \textit{in Cra.} 19.12.}

However, this explicit identification does not happen in our examples from the
\textit{PGM}. The newly ascribed essence is often general and wide-ranging in its functions, not
limited to whatever specific divinity that is portrayed. Nor do we have any evidence that
any god is ever explicitly called to enter the statue.\footnote{For a further discussion of the evidence, or lack of evidence, for rituals specifically expecting that a god actually enter the statue before late antiquity, see Johnston 2008.} Instead, I would argue that these
sacred images became objects in the profane world containing a very sacred and powerful essence, and they obtain this new essence through their links to sacred space and sacred essence in the blended conceptual space of the ritual action.

There are other examples of this process of essence transfer in spells throughout the *PGM*, especially in those that incorporate the use of sacred images. In a spell to gain Eros as an assistant, *PGM* XII.14-95, a statue is to be formed in the likeness of Eros. As in our “magical ring” spell discussed above, there are several invocations to be spoken that address a wide variety of divinities and sacred powers, and the consecrated image becomes useful for many things outside of the purview of eroticism. “He sends dreams or causes sleeplessness; and he releases from an evil spirit, if you use him in a proper and holy manner, for he can perform every operation.”

The practitioner is also instructed to create a Psyche, “of the same sort as Eros,” presumably meaning of the same materials and of the same size, although the ritual actions prescribed throughout the remainder of the spell refer only to Eros. The sacred images provide an iconic link to the divine in their features, but the spell incorporates additional elements that provide a situation which facilitates essence transfer.

The ritual actions directed at this statue not only involve the fashioning of the statue, but also a three-day ritual of consecration that employs fruits, several kinds of cakes, dates, wine, and even votive offerings of daggers, tablets, and a bow and arrow. In addition, the ritual prescribes the sacrifice of nine birds in total, seven of which are

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168 *PGM* XII.15-17. Translated by Hubert Martin, Jr in Betz 1986: 156.
strangled on the first day in order that their *pneuma* may enter the statue, and the other
two of which are burnt on the subsequent two days.

Take also on the first day 7 living creatures and strangle them: one cock, a
partridge, a wren, a pigeon, a turtledove, and any two nestlings that you can get
hold of. Do not make a burnt offering of any of these; instead, you are to take
them in hand and choke them, all the while holding them up to you Eros, until
each of the creatures is suffocated and their breath enters him (καὶ τὸν θνοῦν εἶναι εἰς αὐτὸν ἐπὶ ἔλθεν).169

I would like to focus on the *pneuma* that becomes in a way part of what is “contained” in
the statue. The spell uses the singular, *pneuma*, in spite of the fact that there are lots of
birds, and this suggests that *pneuma* does not, in this instance, mean anything close to
“individual spirit” or “soul.” Rather it is the birds’ collective “breath” or “strength” that is
thought to enter the statue. The sending of their *pneuma* into the statue could be
understood as another way of “mixing” ingredients into the composition from which the
statue is created.170

This action of mixing the *pneuma* of the birds so that this breath is contained
within the statue has its counterpart in the sacrifices of the next two days, which involve a
burnt offering and the consumption of a second offering:

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169 *PGM* XII.30ff.

170 This *pneuma* of birds is not so much a strict type of “divine” essence, but it does represent a type of
“life” essence that is not originally ascribed to the ontological status of the statue. As such it can be
thought to contribute to the new essence of agency which the statue is later ascribed. Another
interpretation can be found in the *comparandum* of *PGM* XIII.343–646, in which *pneuma* is used as an
offering to divinity. The god accepts whatever *pneuma* is most pleasing, either that of a rooster offered by
the practitioner or that of a pigeon. Thus the offering of the *pneuma* of birds is similar to the use of other
substances associated with the god or pleasing to the god, such as red wax or myrrh or any of the other
materials used to construct these statues. In this manner the *pneuma* can serve as an index to the sacred
domain.
On the second day, strangle a male chick before your Eros and burn it as a whole offering. On the third day, place another chick on the altar; while conducting this portion of the ritual, consume the chick by yourself, allowing no one else to be present. I assure you, if you perform the above actions in a holy and pure manner, you shall have complete success.

The practitioner is instructed to recite a formula during the process of the offerings. The formulas, of which there are three, all call on divine power to bestow upon the practitioner the fulfillment of his desires. The burnt offerings serve as gifts to the gods, and work in a different manner from the choked offerings, which I suggest are better understood as a way to fill the statue with some sort of essence, thus incorporating these elements within the statue as “container.”

Overall, we can see that this ritual incorporates iconic reference to the sacred domain, as well as indexical links based on the schema of “containment” and the cognitive function of essentialism. By the end of the ritual action the Eros statue is ascribed powers and functions that show that this sacred image is conceptualized as an object greater than the sum of its parts.

As we can see in these two examples, through the course of the ritual action stone or wax is no longer just a physical object but animate and social, capable of agency and power. These objects come to be described in terms that imply a new and powerful essence from the sacred domain has been ascribed to them in the course of the ritual action, and facilitated by the conceptual blending. By the end of the magical ritual the engraved stone or carved wax becomes an index not to the “stoneness” of stone or the “waxness” of wax, but to the very essence of the divine power invoked.

In *PGM IV.3125-71*, a wax statue with three heads is made hollow and a heart of
magnetite is placed inside, in addition to a piece of papyrus with special names. The three heads of the statue are those of a sea falcon, a baboon, and an ibis bird, and each of these heads is wearing a crown: a crown of Horus, a crown of Hermanubis, and a crown of Isis, respectively. These specific accoutrements provide iconic links to the sacred domain and to these gods in particular.

The objects placed inside of the statue are also interesting. The first object is a heart of magnetite. The magnetite stone in particular had associations with life or agency but in addition to this, the stone is specifically referred to as a “magnetic heart,” an explicit association with its placement and function (βάλε δὲ ἐν τῇ κοίλῃ αὐτοῦ καρδίαν μαγνητικήν), providing a link to an essence connected to a sense of life and agency.

The last item inserted into the statue is a papyrus upon which has been written special onomata barbara. After all of this is done and the statue is fixed into whatever place the practitioner chooses, there are instructions to perform a sacrifice and offer libations from the “milk of a black cow, the firstborn…and the first she suckled.” Then there is instruction to feast and sing the names written earlier on papyrus in addition to the following: “Give me all favor, all success, for the angel bringing good, who stands beside Tyche, is with you. Accordingly, give profit [and] success to this house. Please, Aion, ruler of hope, giver of wealth, O Holy Agathos Daimon, bring to fulfillment all favors and your divine oracles.”

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171 Hermanumbus is a combination name consisting of both Hermes and Anubis cf Betz 1986: 99.

The practitioner is urged to recite the names that have been written on the papyrus, in addition to an invocation for prosperity, each morning, as part of the purpose of the overall rite, which is to bring prosperity to wherever the statue is placed. The words of the papyri, in other words, exist outside as well as inside of the statue. This recitation of a prayer, in conjunction to the sacrifice and libation, reflects practices common to civic religion, and in this manner the statue is not treated any differently from a cult statue. These ritual actions also serve as a link to established cultic practice, in a manner similar to the “Helios ring” discussed above as connected to the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony in traditional Egyptian temple ritual.

Despite the fact that we can see parallels to civic religion in the manner in which the statue is subsequently treated, there are also important differences that must be noted. Most especially relevant is the manner in which the particular statue in this last example signifies a multiplicity of divine forces. The statue created is not a statue of one particular divinity, such as a statue designed to represent Apollo and Apollo only. Instead this sacred statue provides iconic links to Osiris, Horus and Isis. The magnetite heart provides an indexical link to some sort of undefined power or life essence. In addition, the placing of words inside of the statue, written on a piece of papyrus, also does not reflect civic practice, and also serves to facilitate indexical links to the sacred space. Through this multiplicity of connections, the statue overall comes to represent something vague on a semiotic level, in a manner similar to the voce magicae. This semantic “vagueness” could help to facilitate, I argue, the conception of a essence that is undefined specifically but associated with great power and agency on a general level.
In all of the examples discussed above, we find a few things in common. Within the course of the ritual, objects, agents, and actions all facilitate associations with the sacred space and as such provide necessary magical agency for a transfer of essence. This agency, in conjunction with the cognitive associations provided through essentialism and image-schemata, working as envisioned by Sørensen within the blended conceptual space of the ritual action, allows for the ascription of a new essence to these sacred image objects.

This application of Sørensen’s theories of blended space and essence transfer at a cognitive level illustrates the manner in which sacred images of the *PGM* can take on new and distinct meanings. These meanings, in turn, demonstrate a difference between sacred images of the *PGM* and sacred images of Greek religion generally. I will be discussing this distinction in semiotic terms in the next chapter, in accordance with the semiotic domain theory of James Paul Gee that was introduced earlier in this dissertation.
CHAPTER 5

The Magician’s Design:

Meta-level Conceptions of Space and Culture

A good designer must rely on experience, on precise, logical thinking; and on pedantic exactness. No magic will do.
-Niklaus Wirth

1. Chapter introduction

There are two interesting observations from the above quote with which I would like to begin this chapter. Niklaus Wirth is a computer programmer who wrote such computer programming languages as Pascal, among others. For Wirth, writing a computer program is a very precise and logical process, requiring strict training, specific knowledge and a meta-level awareness of all elements within the “language” of the program, including such factors as how each element relates to the next, and how it all relates to the end program.

There are no “tricks” or sleights of hand involved. Of course, Wirth was no doubt referring to the common definition of magic as some sort of trick for show and entertainment. Yet I include the quote because I hope to show in this chapter that the
ancient magician was, in fact, a good designer. A designer, moreover, who did have a precise and learned manner of thinking that relied on an understanding of magic as having an internal logic of its own.

Throughout the previous four chapters I have attempted to show how religion and magic, as a semiotic domain consisting of elements such as words and images, can be “read” and understood by those within the domain in different but important ways. In Chapter Two I presented Sørensen’s argument that religious and magical ritual consists of a conceptual blend of profane and sacred space, and that practitioners of ritual action interact with the locally constructed blended space, and not the sacred space directly. I also showed examples of how language and images within the PGM facilitate this blended space in providing indexical and iconic links to the sacred space.

In this chapter I will be discussing the presentation of sacred images as a detailed case study on the manner in which one can “read” and “write” in the semiotic domains of religion and magic, with a return to the semiotic theory of James Paul Gee. I hope to answer questions regarding both the “readers” (practitioners) and the “writers” (specialists). What is the specialist doing that both draws upon traditional understandings of statues in normative cultic practice and at the same time creates new readable content? Although statues in the PGM work to facilitate iconic links to the sacred domain in a similar manner to the way cult statues as part of Greek civic religion, they also facilitate differences in semiotic interpretations. These differences relate to their content and function (e.g., smaller versions for greater portability and access to divine), but also regarding the identity of the specialist within the domain (as someone looking for special
access to the divine sphere).

These kinds of distinctions are important with regards to the bigger picture of religion as a semiotic domain, keeping in mind the ever-present question of how precisely we can define and have defined magic, and how semiotic domain theory can offer a new take on a possible framework. The question of if and how magic can (or should) be defined as something distinct from religion has long been debated, as was discussed in Chapter One. Often enough we, as scholars, can see similarities in practices between religion and magic, such as the functions of sacrifice or the forms of prayer.\textsuperscript{173} Thus we can talk about the manner in which the “content” of the two domains are similar.

However, we can see nuances of difference within these similarities of content, especially in light of the fact that the practitioner of magic exemplifies specialist and meta-level ways of thinking about the elements within the domain. Thus we can discuss differences through the precise manner in which certain modalities, such as language or images, are leveraged within the domain of ancient magic.

Versnel discusses the “drive for alienation” through the example of magical spells in which he sees a marked drive for repetition, rhyme, alliteration and variation. Versnel describes this as an almost poetic desire and temptation to change formulas to make them “more magical.”\textsuperscript{174} Versnel also discusses a trend in the imperial period for strange words, these voces magicae, to be understood as the secret names of the deities invoked

\textsuperscript{173} I have presented examples of this through Smith’s interpretation of ancient magic as the “miniaturization” of mainstream religious practices, citing the discussions of Graf on the similarity of prayer in the PGM to religious prayer, and Johnston on the uses of sacrifice in the PGM as a basic extension of religious ideology. See Smith 1885; Graf 1991; Johnston 2002.

\textsuperscript{174} Versnel 2002: 138-139.
in the spells.

In other words, we perceive a new theogonia, a process of explosive creativity in which divine powers emerge from powerful words. The names of these new gods and demons easily amalgamated with other existing names that were also characteristic of magical formulas but which, from the beginning, were imagined as names of real gods or demons…Here too a process of associative creativity produced a profusion of new divine names.\textsuperscript{175}

We can see these trends exemplified within the \textit{PGM} in the ubiquitous presence of \textit{voces magicae} throughout the corpus. This focus on specialized language is both an attempt to create better access to divine power through iconic and indexical links to sacred space, as well as a way for the practitioner of magic to obtain privileged methods of interacting with the divine.

Again, one important result discussed by Sørensen of specialized magical language is a social differentiation that is dependent on access to knowledge and use of the language.\textsuperscript{176} According to Sørensen,

\begin{quote}
“Secret” or archaic language, unknown to anyone besides the ritual agent, functions as an index of the real authority of the agent, no matter whether this agent knows the meaning of the words uttered or not. The use of a special sacred language in magical rituals not only sets the ritual apart from normal interaction and communication, but also functions as an index of the status of the ritual agent.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{175} Versnel 2002: 114-115.

\textsuperscript{176} Sørensen 2007: 89.

\textsuperscript{177} Sørensen 2007: 91.
In seeing the practitioner of magic as a type of “religious specialist” and magic as an area of specialized knowledge, then magic itself can be analyzed and discussed as a separate semiotic domain. I will argue, however, that since much of the content can often overlap between the two domains, that magic be considered as a sub-domain within the domain of religion, rather than a separate domain entirely. Such a model allows both for a discussion of the similarities of the content between the two domains, but it also highlights important distinctions that are centered on how meaning is created and emphasized by practitioners of magic as participants and specialists within their own domain.

It is this heuristic model I will be using to discuss the practitioner of magic in the ancient Mediterranean world, as exemplified through the closer look at spells within the PGM with the semiotic frameworks previously discussed. While the model of the domain of magic as a sub-domain within the parent domain of religion could be applicable to other milieus, it is not my current intent to argue a wider, sweeping theory of magic and religion in a general sense. Instead I limit my model to the PGM as reflective of practices of ancient magic which are specialized and cohesive within the wider religious world of which they form an integral part.

Part of this discussion relies on a focus on spells from the PGM in terms of their “content” as appropriate to the domain of magic, and how such content draws upon various modalities in the domain of religion. It also, however, relies on an analysis of the identities of the practitioners of magic as specialists within the affinity group of the domain, who exhibit specific ways of thinking, valuing and acting within the domain.
This includes a consideration of ancient sources depicting the magician as a marginal figure in order to gain closer insight to how certain aspects both within and across domains can become marginalized or considered deviant.

**ii. Internal and External Design**

In order to better understand the manner in which “thinking and acting” are relevant to a semiotic interpretation of ancient magic and religion, I must present the difference between the internal design and the external design of a semiotic domain more fully. According to Gee, “There are two different ways to look at semiotic domains: internally and externally. Any domain can be viewed internally as a type of content or externally in terms of people engaged in a set of social practices.”¹⁷⁸ In other words, the internal design refers to the actual content and the type of content within the domain, while the external design refers to the actions and behavior of the affinity group associated with the domain, and what is seen as appropriate behavior or identity within the domain.

The people associated with a given semiotic domain are called an affinity group. People within a particular affinity group can recognize others acting within the group, “as well as recognizing certain ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, and believing as more or less typical of people who are into the semiotic domain.”¹⁷⁹ The internal and

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¹⁷⁹ Gee 2003: 27.
external aspects of a semiotic domain work in a reciprocal relationship with each one
influencing and affecting the other.\footnote{Gee 2003: 29.}

The internal content of any particular domain gets made by real people through
their social interactions, and they build the content in the way that they do because of the
ways of thinking, acting, valuing, etc, that defines their identities through social
interaction. Developing identities both introduce new content and transform old content
in new ways, while the new content works to create new identities in turn.\footnote{Gee 2003: 29.} This
interaction between the internal and external aspects of the domain will be important for
my discussion regarding new content and change within the domains of religion and
magic and will be analyzed further in the following sections.

iii. Readers and Writers

I have already discussed the manner in which certain modalities within the
domain of magic can create limits to access to specialized knowledge. The various ways
in which magic as a domain exemplifies specialized knowledge and specialists who have
access to and understand how to leverage this knowledge are a defining factor in my
presentation of magic as a separate sub-domain.

Let us return our discussion to the “readers” and “writers” of the domain, those
who form the affinity group of the domain and are able to recognize content and behavior
associated with that domain. To offer a quick review, a semiotic domain is a set of practices that utilize various modalities to communicate meaning that is distinctive to the domain. An example provided by Gee is that of basketball, along with the sentence “The guard dribbled down court, held up two fingers, and passed to the open man.” Gee states,

It might seem odd to call basketball a semiotic domain. However, in basketball, particular words, actions, objects, and images take on distinctive meanings. In basketball, “dribble” does not mean drool; a pick (an action where an offensive player positions him or herself so as to block a defensive player guarding one of his or her teammates) means that some defensive player must quickly switch to guard the now-unguarded offensive player; and the wide circle on each end of the court means that players who shoot from beyond it get three points instead of two if they score a basket. If you don’t know these meanings – cannot read these signs – then you can’t “read” (understand) basketball. ¹⁸²

So what does all this mean for religion? Religion is a semiotic domain in that it recruits a specific set of practices (rituals) and beliefs that utilize several kinds of modalities - sacred cultic images or artifacts, sacred texts or myths about divinities, the specific prescribed rites themselves, and so forth - and in that each of these modalities can communicate distinctive types of meanings to anyone participating in that domain. In the previous two chapters I have presented examples of the manner in which two modalities, magical language and sacred images, can be “read” within the domain of magic, and specific to this domain.

Those living or participating in a particular domain of "religion" can be a "reader" and/or a "writer." I imagine a "reader" in the domain to be the average person who acts within the system from moment to moment, from festival to festival, from ritual action to ritual action. This reader can understand the meaning behind and inherent in any

¹⁸² Gee 2003: 18.
particular modality, such as a certain hymn, or cultic image. The meaning that he or she takes away from any modality does not necessarily have to be one specific meaning that is standardized across the culture; each person can have their own, more personal meaning that they use to understand the "system" and how it works for them in their interactions within the system, although it is likely that personal interpretations will be influenced by pre-conceived cultural presuppositions.

The ability to recognize content as valued or appropriate social practices within the affinity group can be conscious or unconscious. The reader does not necessarily have to actively “read” and contemplate within any particular domain to understand or recognize content and actions as appropriate to the domain. Participants not only color domain values with personal values, as mentioned above, but they can also merge and color them with those goals, desires, feelings and values connected to other semiotic domains of which they are a part.\(^{183}\)

Gee discusses the manner in which “life-world” domains affect other domains. In contrast to specialist domains of knowledge, people also form experiences in the “everyday” or “ordinary” life, talking and interacting as “everyday” people. People can move between lifeworld domains and specialist domains quite easily.\(^{184}\) According to Gee,

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\(^{183}\) Gee 2003: 36-39.

\(^{184}\) Gee 2003: 36.
If we look at lifeworld domains internally, we can say that their content is just the wide range of nonspecialist experiences of the world that people share with other people with whom they share various group memberships, up to and including the human race. Once a group has carved out an area of this experience (whether this is playing in the guise of video games or dealing with the weather as a science) and created “specialist” ways of talking and thinking about it (“policed” by themselves as “insiders” who determine what is acceptable and what is not, who is adept and who is not), then they have left the lifeworld (and the rest of us behind) and created a specialist semiotic domain.\footnote{Gee 2003: 37.}

Gee also emphasizes, as has been discussed, that any particular "reader" in a domain may not necessarily be a "writer," but "writers" are and typically make better "readers." Writers in a domain are more aware and better equipped both to understand the material they "read" and also to take this understanding of what was read to create ("write") new material. In his discussion of learning within semiotic domains, Gee finds that active and critical awareness within a particular domain -that is, being a good and conscious "writer" or producer within the domain - can leverage a particular design grammar at a meta-level.\footnote{Gee 2003: 18-30.}

With this meta-level awareness, the participant in the semiotic domain is able to think about the domain as a complex system of interrelated parts, and is able to conceive of these parts as units or concepts that can be transformed or used in various innovative ways.\footnote{Gee 2003: 23.} That is, the participant who has this kind of awareness within the domain is able to produce new meanings in the domain that are both recognizable to other participants in the domain as still belonging to the core meanings of the domain itself, but also introduce
novel and transformed features as well. It is this meta-level awareness of the domain that can lead to critique, novel meanings, or transformation of the domain. ¹⁸⁸

The “expert” practitioners in any given semiotic domain also have to be able to form an appreciative system relevant to that domain in terms of which action in the domain can be evaluated as appropriate to the domain. This appreciative system is the “set of goals, desires, feelings, and values in respect to the domain being engaged with.” ¹⁸⁹ Thus expert practitioners in a given semiotic domain have to be able to form the kinds of goals, desires, feelings, and values that the affinity group within the domain embody as typical and recognizable to that particular domain. This requires a much more specialized recognition of the domain as a domain, as well as a good deal more of conscious reflection and critique within the domain. ¹⁹⁰

One key participant, or “writer,” within the domain of religion is the practitioner of magic, who as an active producer of new knowledge, recipes or techniques, and new ways of interacting with the gods, creates new content resulting in a domain that comes to be a specialist sub-domain within the greater domain of religion, namely, that of magic. ¹⁹¹ Often, as seen in the discussion of prayer and sacrifice within the spells of the PGM, this content does not necessarily deviate from religious practices in terms of their internal design. This follows the conclusions of scholars who find that many instances of


¹⁸⁹ Gee 2003: 97.


¹⁹¹ The poet, as well, is a “writer” in the domain of religion, and will be analyzed along with the practitioner of magic in the following sections.
perceived difference are often just a matter of perception or degree, especially in terms of Smith’s “miniaturization.”

Religion consists of ‘specialists’ and specialist ways of thinking within the domain. Some religions have official specialists set up within the religious system, such as priests, as caretakers and upholders of the creeds and rituals that make up their particular religious domain. So who were the specialists in ancient Greco-Roman religion? I will present an analysis in the following section of the ancient poet and magician as two examples of “writers” within the domain of religion, who each form their own specialized sub-domains of knowledge, that of poetry and magic, respectively.

iv. Creating New Content: The Magician and the Poet

Walter Burkert states that,

Greek religion might almost be called a religion without priests: there is no priestly caste as a closed group with a fixed tradition, education, initiation, and hierarchy, and even in the permanently established cults there is no disciplina, but only usage, nomos…Among the Greeks, sacrifice can be performed by anyone who is possessed of the desire and the means, including housewives and slaves. The tradition of rites and myths is easily learned through imitation and participation; much can be acquired of the specialist arts of the seer simply through observation.\(^{193}\)

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\(^{192}\) See the scholarship of Graf 1991 and Johnston 2002 on prayer and sacrifice in the PGM, for example, as presented in Chapter One.

\(^{193}\) Burkert 1985: 95. This situation stands in marked contrast to ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian cultures in which sacred books as canon and specialized or ordained priesthoods.
Major cultic occasions required someone to assume the leadership or beginning of any particular rite, although often this role could be assumed by someone of authority or power within the house or the city. And there were priesthoods as well in ancient Greece, but these officials worked in the service of one particular god or goddess at one particular sanctuary. This usually was not considered as a general status of priesthood in general, and in most cases these types of priests ensured that things were done properly and worked as they should at particular sanctuaries or at specific sacrificial festivals. It was in most cases not a way of life, but rather an office with an either part-time or temporary commitment.194

So where did new content and new identities stem from? The reformation of the various cultic and mythic elements of any particular god or goddess is what can lead to changes in content and identity within the religious domain or any particular religion sub-domain. Changes can happen through new situated meanings as interpreted by participants within the domain, leading to new identities, new values, new actions and new knowledge as associated with the affinity group within the domain. Yet very often this change can happen in a passive or unconscious way, without “readers” in the domain actively or critically reflecting upon the domain specifically as a design space.

There were figures, however, who did think in the religious domain at a meta-level, and one of these figures was the ancient poet. Burkert states that, “Only authority could create order amid such confusion of traditions. The authority to whom the Greeks appealed was the poetry of Hesiod and, above all, Homer. The spiritual unity of the

194 Burkert 1985: 95.
Greeks was founded and upheld by poetry – a poetry which could still draw on living oral tradition to produce a felicitous union of freedom and form, spontaneity and discipline.”

Burkert emphasizes that epic is both more and less than myth, with myth being defined by him as traditional tales consisting of significant human situations forming a polyvalent semiotic system used in a variety of ways to illuminate reality. Epic, however, often focuses on more specific heroic motifs, but also shapes these stories with a very specific formality and technique. It is in this very specific and specialized way of creating and formalizing myth which allows for poets such as Hesiod and Homer to become one kind of “specialist” in ancient Greek religion who “writes” new content for that particular domain.

The poet is an important figure for giving individual myths a memorable form and creating a modality (poetry) upon which the “spiritual unity of the Greeks was founded and upheld.” Much of the material the poet had at his disposal already existed and thus the poet creates new content in much the same ways as the magician, drawing upon what is familiar, while creating new elements through the addition of his own content and style. The poet is an active, critical learner of the gods, and both understands and recognizes what is appropriate content for his domain (the internal design), and what is

195 Burkert 1985: 95.

196 Burkert 1985: 95.

197 Burkert 1985: 120. Burkert’s definition of myth here is general and does not specify the need for the divine to separate myth from other types of traditional tales, although a great majority of Greek myth does, in fact, incorporate divine entities.
typical social practice and identity for those in the domain (the external design).

In looking back at the practitioner of magic, however, we can begin to discern that there are problems with the content he creates with regards to the internal design. The tendency to create new and different methods of interacting with the divine, as exemplified by my presentation of certain spells within the *PGM*, is often one of the reasons why magic is analyzed by scholars, and represented by the ancients themselves, as a distinct practice from that of religion. I would like to explore this idea further, but first I need to discuss the practitioner of magic as a “writer” within the domain of religion.

The practitioner of magic, like the figure of the poet, was a figure capable of creating new content within the religious sphere. Sarah Iles Johnston discusses two divinatory spells from the Greek magical papyri that invoke the help and presence of Apollo, but that in addition call upon “Laurel” herself, as a divine being, to help out. Johnston points out that laurel as the sacred plant of Apollo has good mythological and cultic precedent. However, it was the magicians who thought of “turning the tree back into a nymph” (Daphne), so to speak, and invoking her aid as they would invoke the aid of other gods. Thus Johnston concludes that the magicians brought themselves into much more intense contact with whatever divine force was imagined to lurk within the laurel than did the prophets who only carried it or wore it.

The magician as a “reader” understood the myths and rituals surrounding the god

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198 *PGM* II.81–3 and III.251-4.

Apollo and the laurel at a meta-level. Not content to simply recognize and reflect upon accepted art or myth or cultic ritual, he becomes a “writer” or creator of new content within the domain, by creating a *new* divine entity – the laurel as a divine being – with whom he can interact and from whom he can gain more (or new) powers. This new divinity can still be read and recognized as such by other participants within the domain. Its internal design – the fact that it is “content” within the domain that can be recognized as an appropriate modality – coincides with other internal content. This divinity is one who has power and a narrative history and with whom one can interact - she is treated and invoked in the same matter as the old content, namely, Apollo.

However, Johnston emphasizes that by means of this new content, the magicians now have better or more intense connections with the sacred domain through their use of laurel as not only a plant sacred to Apollo but also as a divine being in itself. It is this particular attempt to gain better access to the sacred domain that often distinguishes the magician from other affinity groups within the domain, and it is also what contributes to the figure of the magician as a problematic figure, which I will discuss more at the end of this chapter.

The magician therefore becomes a “writer” by creating new content within the domain, by creating a *new* divine entity which aligns with the internal content of the domain, and can still be read and recognized as such by other participants within the domain, despite the fact that it is new content. In this fashion the magician becomes an active designer and producer of new knowledge, new recipes or techniques, and new ways of interacting with the gods or obtaining the powers of the gods in his interactions.
within his domain.

The difference for the magician, as a “writer” and not just a “reader,” is in his desire and ability to “produce” or “design” new content within the religious domain that allows for greater access, or greater ease of access, to the sacred domain. The many examples within the *PGM* of “miniaturized” sacrifices, sacred spaces, and cult statues all speak towards this purpose. The magician thus opens himself up to a wider variety of possibilities for interacting with divinity and acquiring a desired response if one method or another does not work. In fact, several spells in the Greek magical papyri offer alternative methods or materials if one is not useful or available.

The practitioner of magic may have attained this knowledge and ability to think about the modalities within magic and religion at a meta-level through his interaction with a wider variety of cultures and their myths and rituals than the average ancient person. Walter Burkert has proposed that wandering priests were the main source of transmission of religious ideas and technologies from the Near East to Greece in archaic times. Burkert notes that the recitation of cosmogonic literature in the ancient Near East took on magical functions, such as the ability to cure a toothache or aid in childbirth. Professional craftsmen of all sorts must have been the main avenue for the exchange of ideas and technologies as they deliberately and consciously created and traded ideas and crafts.

\[200\] See discussion in Burkert 1992.

\[201\] For a discussion of the various contexts for the sorcerers as itinerant specialists stemming from their roles as Egyptian temple priests see Frankfurter 1991, or as innovators within the Hermetic tradition see Fowden 1986.
Itinerant religious specialists provide an interesting parallel with the poets in this manner, as both were important in their deliberate and conscious re-working of ideas, and their various methods of promoting these ideas. Before there were written and formalized epic narrations of myths depicting the personalities and stories of the gods, there were wandering poets who delivered their work orally, and who were thought to both form and reform their themes in an improvisational fashion depending on the particular audience or locale. These types of bards would have been well trained in the myths and stories of not only their own religious system, but that of other cultures, and thus would have been eminently capable of conceiving their domain in a meta-level fashion. The magician as well would no doubt have a strong knowledge base in various cultures and religions and languages and his adoption of new practices would be more deliberate and conscious, and it would include a greater awareness and articulation of what it implied about the religious identity of the worshipper and his or her relationship to the gods.\textsuperscript{202}

There is an important difference between the figure of the magician and that of the poet, in addition to distinct differences between the content that the poet creates and that created by the magician. While the poet seems to create a more normative modality within the domain of religion in the form of epic narratives that were very often embraced and actively taught within the affinity group, the magician creates new content with an eye to specialized and limited interactions with divinity.

As exemplified in my discussion of sacred images in the \textit{PGM}, the magician can

\footnote{\textsuperscript{202} For an analysis of the transmission of cosmogonic knowledge by religious specialists and leaders, such as Near Eastern wisdom and myths adapted to Greek myths, for example, see López -Ruiz 2010, especially Chapter 5, and Bremmer 2008.}
make access to divinity more portable, or expand upon sacred time and space to create more accessible interactions with divinity—for example, the engraved heliotropic ring that bestowed upon the wearer great power and access to the sacred sphere. This can be due, in part, to both the manner in which the magician, as a religious specialist, conceptualizes elements within the religious domain at a meta-level, as well as to the manner in which magical spells in particular seem to draw upon indexical links to divine forces. But the flexibility of the magician’s conception of elements in the religious domain could contribute to his portrayal as a marginal and problematic figure.

I discussed PGM XII.270-350, in which a ring is ritually engraved and consecrated, and subsequently offered prayer and sacrifice in a manner similar to a cult statue in a temple. In analyzing this ring I agreed with Moyer and Diehlman in their finding that the ritual used in the spell, in its correspondence to an Egyptian temple ritual, becomes a “miniature,” and highly portable, cult statue. Thus the magician incorporates traditional priestly functions associated with sacred agency.203

In this particular magical spell, one can see elements of traditional religion “transformed and adapted in a conceptual shift from the archaic temple to the holy man as the point of access to the divine world,” allowing for greater portability of religious services and contact with the divine.204 The ritual is "miniaturized" in the sense of making and using objects that are physically smaller, and this adaptation of the ritual requires someone to have had a deep understanding of the original, "normative" ritual and


204 Moyer and Dieleman 2003: 67.
to have been able to actively and consciously change and adapt the ritual in a fashion that could keep the original meaning behind the act but also add new aspects to it.

An important feature incorporated within a meta-level awareness of the domain is the manner in which it allows for the magician to avoid “ritualizing” solutions and methods of interacting with divinity if one method or another does not work. In fact, several spells in the *PGM* offer alternative methods or materials if one is not useful or available. The magician can make access to divinity more portable, or create sacred time and space in a wider variety of times and places. The magician also had a very broad knowledge of religious domains of a wide variety of cultures, and his ability to recognize and utilize myth and ritual that was both foreign and familiar no doubt helped to create new content that was an amalgam of cultural ritual responses.

It is this meta-level awareness of the various modalities within the domain as well as an avoidance of static responses to interactions with divinity that facilitates the creation of new content within the religious domain. From the scholarly standpoint we can often pull out these various parallel structures for discussion, such as rituals directed to sacred images, or the similar manner in which prayers and addresses to divinity are organized. However magic also incorporates what is new and different, especially from an emic perspective, and these new shifts in the various modalities – if they push the allure of the foreign too far – can often be interpreted negatively by the affinity group associated with the domain.
v. Affinity groups and Specialists

Plato’s derision of the itinerant priests in the Republic is an example of one man’s interpretation as based on his understanding of a more spiritualized conception of the divine within the religious domain, despite the fact that his peers, the men whom these magicians solicited, most likely utilized new techniques that were offered.205 Here we have an example of the previously mentioned adage “One man’s magic is another man’s religion.”

This matter of perception, though, becomes important in relation to the external design of a semiotic domain. Although I have already mentioned the manner in which content, the internal design of the domain, can be similar when discussing the difference between magic and religion, often this content can create problems with regard to the external design of the domain.

The practitioner of magic creates for himself specialized access to divine power, not limited to the temple or a particular religious festival. The problem of carrying around sacred space with you – in the form of the magician himself or his “miniaturized” accoutrements invested with agency – is that the practitioner of magic can thus claim unlimited access to special powers. The ring spell I have already discussed, in particular, is capable of many things:

The world has nothing greater than this. For when you have it with you you will always get whatever you ask from anybody. Besides, it calms the angers of masters and kings. Wearing it, whatever you may say to anyone, you will be believed, and you will be pleasing to everybody. Anyone can open doors and

205 Graf 1997: 27; Plato Republic 364b.
break chains and rocks if he touches them with the stone, that is, the gem, and says the name written below. It also works for demoniacs. Just give it [to one] to wear, and the daimon will immediately flee.  

As we can see just from this one spell alone, the magician makes great claims to power. He gains control over political leaders and daimones alike. And there seems to be no means to restrain him, as he can break chains and locks, a hint regarding his ability to go anywhere and be anywhere. All of these claims problematize the holder of such great powers with respect to their role in society.

In Graf’s analysis of prayer in the PGM, which I discussed in my first chapter, Graf finds a distinction between magic and religion in the nature of the ritual action found in the spells he examines. Although even in this case he is careful to note that the difference is not in form, but in function, which he ultimately defines as a reversal of civic religion. In the Prayer to Selene spell (PGM IV.2785), if the practitioner wished to work harm, he is instructed to offer the ousia of a dog, a dappled goat, and of an untimely dead virgin. In the Slander spell to Selene (PGM IV.2642), designed with the intent to arouse divine aggression, these same type of materials are offered in order to arouse Selene’s wrath against an opponent.  

In addition, Graf points out that the magician is socially isolated from human interactions, as examples of holocaust offerings in many spells can attest, which offer a distinct contrast to the communitas of cultic sacrifices followed by a common meal. These kind of functional distinctions have the possibility to be interpreted by the affinity group within the wider domain of religion as not

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206 PGM IV.2785, 2642; PGM XII.279-284.

representing what was considered to be typical or acceptable behavior or identity – in other words, they are not fitting to the external design grammar of the domain.

The internal design, the actual content within the domains of religion and magic as defined by the ancient Greco-Roman world, is often perceived by scholars as similar, with differences only being a matter of perception or degree. However, both modern scholars and ancient members of the affinity group found certain behaviors and identities problematic. In other words, the two domains have different conceptions regarding what is appropriate to the external design of the domain.

The potentially deviant methods of interaction (or non-interaction) with human beings and potentially dangerous expectations regarding interactions with divine beings no doubt contributed to the marginalization of magic despite the fact that we can find so many parallels within the content itself. The power of the gods is problematic, close interactions with the gods can be dangerous, and most of all, attempting to acquire the powers of the gods is especially dangerous. Even in the course of the PGM we find many spells littered with warnings or creations of talismans designed to protect the practitioner from potentially dangerous encounters. This perception of divine interaction as dangerous and problematic contributed to the marginalization of the practitioner of magic due to his claims to a specialized and higher power.

Peter Kingsley discusses Empedocles’ claims of obtaining remedies that can act as a defense against sufferings and old age. Kingsley calls this “scandalous” in terms of traditional Greek religion. He states,
Apart from death itself, nothing was a more certain reminder of the sharp dividing line between human and god than the unavoidability of old age. Old age was a deliberate imposition on mortals by the gods so as to keep them in their place...Even in the choice of his wording (γήρας ἄλκαρ, 'defense against old age') Empedocles made it clear that he was issuing a flagrant challenge to the standard Greek view, embodied in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, of humanity as 'senseless and helpless, incapable of finding a remedy for death and a defense against old age (γήρας ἄλκαρ. 192-3). In turning the words of the hymn on their head Empedocles was affronting not only literary tradition but also – to the extent that the Homeric poems were viewed as the major repository of Greek values and wisdom – the most fundamental of religious attitudes and assumptions.

It is precisely these attempts to overturn traditional identities and behaviors associated with traditional religious and social practices that create a disparity between the external designs of the two domains of religion and magic.

vi. Orpheus: Magician and Poet

Yet before there was disparity between the “religious” and the “magical,” one can see, and even trace, some common roots. According to Parry,

The Archaic age, from Homer to the end of the Persian Wars (700-479), had no language to distinguish systematically between what later emerged as religious, magical, rational, and wholly imaginative interpretations of energy in the universe. It knew no words for, and therefore had no formal concept of, “magic” and “magician.” At the same time, archaic gods or men could “enchant” through “spells” and other means.

Parry goes on to detail the many instances found in the archaic poets of “a wide range of phenomena we would now isolate as magical or superstitious but which the poets

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208 Kingsley 1995: 222-223. Kingsley further points out that, “Essentially there is little to choose between his implied message here and his declaration elsewhere that he was no longer human but a god.” Empedocles ultimately elides all distinction between his abilities and sacred, divine power.

themselves did not,” especially instances of “beguilement” in which Homer uses the term *thelgein*, in addition to the many instances in later contexts in which singing and song are associated with magical power.\(^{210}\) Parry states,

> The archaic singer (*aoidos*), then, is a magician (*epoidos*) of sorts. As form, song is a performance of arresting beauty. As content, song is the memory of the group (as each individual singer remembers the past in his own way). Both the form and the content are the gifts of the divine Muses, and so instinct with enormous and hence dangerous energy. The legendary Orpheus embodies such power. The bard of the Homeric court, then, must make sure that the effects of his songs do not get out of control and that he channels his performance into socially useful ends.\(^{211}\)

Thus we can see the manner in which the poet, as a specialist within the domain of religion, as well as the sub-domain of poetry, had the ability to create new content. This new content, stemming from conceptions of “song” as a possible source of enchantment – in addition to idea that song was divinely descended, as detailed by Parry – had the potential to be thought of by the affinity group as either belonging to the domain of poetry, or magic, or even both.

The legendary Orpheus is an excellent example of the power of the poet to create modalities that can be used in various domains, and the overlap that exists between various sub-domains as part of the greater domain of religion. Another sub-domain that can be considered within the religious domain is that of mystery cults. Mystery cults form a particularly compelling point of evidence, as supplementary and optional forms of practice and worship in the ancient world, in their place on the intersection between the marginal and the officially “religious.” It is relevant to note that many of these

\(^{210}\) Parry 1992: 22ff.

\(^{211}\) Parry 1992: 28.
specialized cults, especially those of Dionysus, consisted of rituals thought to be derived from Orpheus, who according to mythology was considered to be the “earliest poet the Greeks claimed to have.”

Orpheus was not only attributed with founding mystery rites, the Orphikai teletai as described by Diodorus of Sicily, but he was also, in his role as poet par excellence, the originator of cosmogonic and theogonic myth. The Orphic material, whose content scholars such as Burkert date back as far as the sixth century BCE, presents a contrast to the cosmogonic myth of Hesiod in its strong connections to ritual, especially to magic and mystery cults. I have already mentioned Plato’s derision of priests who present books of Orpheus and Musaeus, according to which they perform their sacrifices.

Burkert gives a workable summary of this passage, neatly explaining the functions of these priests as follows.

These are wandering people making money (agurtai), wherefore they go to the ‘doors of the rich’; they perform ‘purifications’ (katharmoi) and ‘initiations’ (teletai); they claim these are effective for the living as well as for the dead, and they refer to terrible sufferings awaiting the uninitiated after death; they can make amends for an evil deed committed by a person or his ancestors; they can as well bring evil upon an enemy by ‘binding’ him or raising a demon against him; they use sacrifice and magical formulas (epoidai).

Orphic material was thus associated with both magical rituals and initiatory rites.

Johnston and Graf sum up Orpheus’ powers in relation to the conception of song as

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212 Graf and Johnston 2007: 50.
213 Diodorus, Bibl. 3.65.6.
214 Burkert 2004: 89.
215 Burkert 1982: 5; Plato Republic 364be.
something that has the ability to charm and enchant as follows,

In Orpheus’ case, this power went well beyond the fascination of poetic entertainment. The poet Simonides (late sixth/early fifth century BCE) described how Orpheus had power even over nature: ‘Countless birds were flying over his head and the fish jumped straight out of the blue sea when he sang his beautiful song.’ Later authors would add that even trees and rocks gathered around the singing Orpheus. It should not surprise us that the singer of such powerful spells – epōidai, a variation of ōidai “songs” – could perform all sorts of strange deeds, as soon as magic was conceptualized as something special during the late sixth century BCE.\(^{216}\)

Thus Orpheus embodies the power of poetry as both a magical force and a special modality that can generate new modes of association and meaning, most especially in the manner in which he was attributed with not only creating poetry, but founding mystery rites and, finally, rituals of divination and healing. This is a very informative example of both poets and practitioners of magic as meta-level thinkers who were able to create new material based on extent myth and ritual.

It also emphasizes the importance of considering Orphic mythmakers as what Johnston has termed “bricoleurs,” persons who “consciously created myths to accompany cults or rituals” in a manner similar to how literary and visual artists borrowed and innovated upon what came before.\(^{217}\) The practitioner of magic, as a religious specialist, represented this type of bricoleur, and one manner of innovation of modality that I have already presented throughout the course of this dissertation is that of the use and creation of sacred images.

\(^{216}\) Graf and Johnston 2007: 169-170; Simonides, frg 567 PMG.

\(^{217}\) Graf and Johnston 2007: 70.
vii. One Modality: Sacred Images

Sacred images of the gods form one type of modality that communicates meaning to participants within the semiotic domain of religion. The meanings that one can take away from any particular image, just as with any piece of art, are diverse and varied. Sacred images in particular, while they can be appreciated purely in an aesthetic sense, also carry the weight of their religious associations, depending on the perspective of a particular semiotic domain. This coincides with Gee’s emphasis that meaning is never general, but always specific to particular domains and situations. “Meaning for words and symbols is specific to particular situations and particular semiotic domains. You don’t really know what a word means if you don’t carefully consider both the specific semiotic domain and the specific situation you are in.”

I already presented the example of a statue of Apollo, which can signify different meanings depending on whether a person is in the domain of ancient Greek religion, or that of art history. Sacred images are one modality that exists within the larger sphere of religion and also within the sub-domain of magic. I have discussed several spells within the PGM detailing the creation and use of both three-dimensional statues, as well as two-dimensional engravings of divine creatures and sacred images. Images in both domains can serve to provide iconic links to the sacred domain, but I have also discussed the manner in which images of the PGM can offer a nuance in meaning and function that is particular to the domain of magic as a specialist sub-domain.

I have argued, using the frameworks set up by Sørensen, that very often images in

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the *PGM* serve as indices to an undefined sort of powerful essence. This more fluid understanding of how ancient magical statues work as indices to divine power provides a general springboard from which to focus more closely on the transformative implications of these rites of consecration and the process of creating statues out of specific materials with the purpose of placing other objects inside. Through this analysis of the cognitive underpinnings of ritual, presented in Chapter Four, one can see that the images created in the *PGM* can be understood as more than just cult statues in miniature. Their uses are often complex and powerful, pointing to an essence containing components beyond the physical domain.

I argue, however, that in certain cases this essence is that of divine power in a general sense, not necessarily a specific link to a specific god in the manner in which a cult statue of Athena would provide an iconic link to Athena herself. This type of ascribed essence can give certain images a multi-purpose indexical link, and in extension of this, a multi-purpose use and power.

**vii. Conclusions: Magic as a Sub-domain**

In this chapter I have presented the magician as a figure who could think about sacred elements at a “meta-level.” He thus had the ability, and the need, to create new content within the sacred domain that was thought to be particularly efficacious for his purposes. The new content that the magician created was often drawn from general elements that existed within the wider religious domain. Thus the internal design of the domain of magic in many ways coincided with the internal design of the domain of
religion. However, the external design, which focuses on expected and proper behavior within this domain, created a distinction between the magician and other members of the affinity group.

The affinity group found practitioners of magic to be potentially problematic, even though it was likely that many may have used the services of the magician. Literary depictions reinforce this conception of practitioners of magic as holders of especially dangerous power.²¹⁹ Magicians, in their attempts to have specialized relations with divine forces, even to the point of attempting to acquire powers belonging to the sacred domain, often come to claim a role parallel to the gods themselves; they can provide access to sacred powers and special modes of acquiring certain needs, but they were particularly problematic in their ability to do so.

My dissertation as a whole has aimed at using semiotic and cognitive frameworks to illuminate certain trends within the PGM. I have demonstrated the effectiveness of these frameworks to both draw out new meanings in addition to highlighting their intersections with other means of analyzing ancient magic. In Chapter One I presented my application of the semiotic domain theory of James Paul Gee to the realm of ancient magic and religion. A trademark of this theory is the manner in which it both encourages new ways to think about the manner in which participants in a domain understand (read) and create (write) within the domain, in addition to allowing us to consider the relationship of the internal and external content of the domain.

This general framework forms the backdrop to a specific analysis of the PGM as

²¹⁹ Lucan, Pharsalia VI, 507-830; Pliny the Elder, Natural History, XVIII, 41-43; Apuleis, Apologia sive de magia.
representative of a specialized domain centered on the practitioners of magic as “specialist” meta-level thinkers within the domain. As such, it encourages thinking about how the modalities represented within the *PGM*, such as language and image, are interpreted (read) in a specifically “magical” way.

In Chapter Two I discussed one modality within the domain of religion, that of sacred language. I used Sørensen’s presentation of the theory of blended space to exemplify the manner in which language within the *PGM*, with its emphasis of semantically vacant structures, stresses indexical and iconic links to sacred space. These links in particular are central to the ascription of magical agency and power to the ritual action of the spells.

In Chapter Three I introduced a distinction between three-dimensional and two-dimensional sacred images that, I argue, has an origin in the different ways these counterpart connectors encourage associations between the profane and sacred domains. Although the concept of psychological essentialism is one cognitive aspect present in the representation of magical objects as particularly efficacious, the manner in which this “essence” is ascribed to the object varies slightly depending on the nature of the magical object.

Three-dimensional images, such as statues, encourage both iconic and indexical associations between the profane and sacred space, but they depend more heavily on the image-schemata of containment than do two-dimensional engraved images, which overall are associated with more complicated rituals of “consecration” and “perfection.” Although we can see examples of the manner in which these magical sacred images are,
on a general level, cult statues in miniature, they still both reflect and encourage an understanding that is specific to their roles within the *PGM*. It is these iconic and indexical associations that facilitate connections between the profane and sacred domains, leading to a transfer of new essence and agency through the course of the ritual action, as was discussed in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Five, I have demonstrated how a semiotic analysis of religion coincides with modern and ancient observer’s assumptions that magic is a potentially dangerous source of power in social terms. This is explained through the framework of differences in the external design grammars of the two domains of religion and magic. Thus, the domain of magic as reflected by practices within the *PGM* often overlaps with the domain of religion in terms of content (internal design), but creates a division between the affinity groups within the domain (external design).

In other words, the domain of magic, as a sub-domain, contains all the elements of the parent domain of religion but in a specialized sense. As a specialist “meta-level” thinker within the domain of magic, the practitioner of magic was no doubt able to use and combine the various elements within the domain of religion to create new elements with specialized meaning to the domain of magic. I have already discussed Johnston’s example of the creation of a new divinity, Laurel, to show one way this process worked. We can see other evidence of the creation of new divinities as well, such as the “blended” divinities mentioned in a few spells, such as Helioros as a combination of Helios and

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220 Other sub-domains, I would argue, also existed within the greater domain of religion. One example is that of mystery cults, which also have been argued to work within the parameters of the religious domain, but reflect a specificity of knowledge and understandings that is particular to that domain.
Horus, or Hermanubis as a combination of Hermes and Anubis.\textsuperscript{221}

The practitioner of magic is thus one who has the ability to think of “blended” space at a meta-level. Elements that can be “blended” are many and varied, such as the blend of sacred and profane, the blend of two gods within the sacred domain, the blend of various cultural elements from different cultural milieus, the inclusion of terms and practices from other sub-domains within the domain of religion, such as mystery cults, and so on. Once we consider the practitioner of magic as a meta-level thinker, and magic as a specific semiotic domain, we can see the potential to consider magic as a technology of its own merit.

\textsuperscript{221} PGM I.42-195, PGM IV.3125-71. Also, as was pointed out to be by Sarah Iles Johnston, Hermekate as a combination of Hermes and Hekate.
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APPENDIX

Review of Key Terms

**Affinity Group** is defined by Gee as the “group of people associated with a given semiotic domain.”\(^{222}\) They are able to recognize others as belonging to the affinity groups as well as recognize “certain ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, and believing as more or less typical of people who are ‘into’ the semiotic domain.”\(^{223}\)

**Conceptual blending** involves the projection of elements from two or more mental spaces into a new emergent structure. The conventional model of blending incorporates four elements, which include:

1. two input spaces with all relevant elements, frames, and models, with some of these mapped from one input space to a counterpart in the other input space; (2) a generic space accounting for the mappings between the two input spaces at a very abstract or fundamental level; and (3) the blended space, consisting of elements and structures projected from both inputs, and containing an emergent structure not present in any of the input spaces.\(^{224}\)

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\(^{222}\) Gee 2003: 27.

\(^{223}\) Gee 2003: 27.

**Counterpart connecter** is a link formed between the two input spaces that relates specific elements from different domains based on some sort of similarity or connection either in function or characteristics.

**Generic space** consists of important aspects of human cognition that facilitate a common format or interface between different cognitive domains. This includes an abstract conceptualization of such categories as time, location and participants as well as basic cognitive elements that are responsible for human cognition. It is most easily understood as a space containing the building blocks for how we conceptualize the world around us at a very general level.

**Icon** is defined by Peirce as “a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses…Anything whatever, be it quality, existent individual, or law, is an Icon of anything, in so far as it is like that thing.”\(^{225}\) Icons include such things as images, diagrams, and metaphors. Icons refer to the Objects they designate primarily through associations of similarity.

**Image-schemata** are one of the most basic cognitive tools used in creating order and organization in human experience and for connecting different experiences through recurrent patterns A schema is defined by Mark Johnson as follows:

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\(^{225}\) Peirce 1940: 102.
In order for us to have meaningful, connected experiences that we can comprehend and reason about, there must be a pattern and order to our actions, perceptions, and conceptions. A schema is a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of, these ongoing activities.  

**Index** is defined by Peirce as “a sign which refers to the Object it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object…In so far as the Index is affected by the Object, it necessarily has some Quality in common with the Object, and it is in respect to these that it refers to the Object.” An index, in strong opposition to an icon, does not have a significant resemblance to its object, but draws upon associations of cause and effect or contiguity.

**Input space** is a mental space that corresponds to a certain domain of meaning, and contributes to elements within the blended space.

**Internal and External Design** refers to the manner in which, according to Gee, the way a domain can be viewed internally as a type of content or externally in terms of people engaged in a set of social practices.” In other words, the internal design refers to the actual content and the type of content within the domain, while the external design refers to the actions and behavior of the affinity group associated with the domain, and what is seen as appropriate behavior or identity within the domain.

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227 Peirce 1940: 102.

Mental spaces are “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action.” These mental spaces are not equivalent to an entire conceptual domain, but rather they “activate elements and structures from these that are necessary for pragmatic and inferential reasons. Activation of elements...of a given conceptual domain facilitates the retrieval of additional elements from that particular domain should it prove necessary.”

Metaphorical mappings are one class of counterpart connections that are centered on interpretations of metaphor, similarity and icon. These connections are based on similarity and iconic references, including categorizations of “perceptual resemblance and entrenched experiential and conceptual association.” Perceptual similarity is thus the defining link leading to metaphoric connections.

Metonymic mappings are a class of counterpart connections that are centered on interpretations of metonymy, identity and index. An important cognitive function that underlies connections based on identity and metonymy is psychological essentialism. An understanding of connection through a metonymic link is often “dependent on background knowledge and beliefs linking the salient feature that is chosen as metonymy to the thing referred to as the whole.” These connections can be motivated by

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230 Sørensen 2007: 52.
associations based on “pragmatic, contextual, conventional, episodic, and causal relations.”\(^\text{231}\)

**Psychological essentialism** is based on the conception that biological creatures, and to a certain extent inanimate objects, are thought to contain a certain type of “inner essence” that is specific to their respective categorical associations. Regarding biological creatures, psychological essentialism is very strong while physical objects and artifacts, especially tools, are predominately judged on external qualities, such as function and look, with only a weak essence ascribed. Psychological essentialism is responsible for the idea that certain elements can have the same essence, based on some sort of perceptual similarity or shared categorization, which can link objects across mental spaces.

**Sacred domain** “refers to a conceptual domain containing concepts, frames, idealized cognitive models, and knowledge that by participants are given a special status as:

1. containing a breach of ordinary ontologies, properties and/or abilities, 2. being connected to fundamental myths and narratives explaining the creation and/or the nature of the world and its relations, and 3. being interpreted as belonging to a distinct part of reality that one must perform special kinds of actions in order to interact with. The sacred domain thus involves special beings violating ordinary ontological assumptions, special and privileged discursive repertoires, and special modes of interaction.”\(^\text{232}\)

\(^{231}\) Sørensen 2007: 56-57.

\(^{232}\) Sørensen 2007: 63.
**Semiotic domain** is defined by Gee as "any set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g. oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artifacts, etc.) to communicate distinctive types of meanings." A semiotic domain is, more or less, the content of the world around us and the meanings that that content conveys to us (that’s the “semiotics” part) as restricted to some particular area of expertise or set of activities where people think, act, interact, and form judgments and values in certain ways.  

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233  Gee 2003: 36.