PREAMBLE

On February 14th, 2019, a conference on the theme "Magic in the History of Ideas" took place at the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology (FISPPA) of the University of Padua. The conference was attended by scholars from different universities, both Italian and foreign. Given the high quality of the presentations, the idea was born to publish the Conference Proceedings in the form of a special issue of *Orbis Idearum*.

The concept of magic is most often considered a foil by scholars in the fields of philosophy and religious studies, or it is discussed as part of the investigation of "primitive" systems of belief and ritual. In this special issue, authors were invited to present Magic as a system of inquiry and explanation unto itself, connected to, but distinct from, both philosophy and religious studies.

Historical analyses may help to understand systems of magic as both natural and rational outgrowths of a particular perspective on reality. The magical traditions of Paleolithic hunters and contemporary indigenous peoples, and those found within classical Greece and Rome, medieval Judaism, and the European Renaissance, can be investigated as important and more or less disciplined attempts to understand the structure of the cosmos and the place of humankind therein. Far from representing irrational or superstitious systems of belief, key esoteric traditions have played a central role in the rise of the art in the Old Stone Age, and of philosophy and science in the ancient, and early modern periods.

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