

Ethens

OVERVIEW

Ethens is a prosperous maritime thalassocratic city that flourished thanks to its success in mastering the arcane arts. The city defines itself a *magic democratic republic* founded on knowledge, especially magical knowledge. Complex social and political structures are enshrined in its Constitution, designed to tap and exploit magic for the benefit of the entire community. The citizenry of Ethens is wealthy and well-educated, versed in magic, and proud of the heights achieved by their city. Selective and intensive institutions breed some of the best spellcasters in the world, while the political machinery in place ensures that the magical resources are used to the benefit of the entire collectivity. The civil society of Ethens is very lively and it is criss-crossed by a variety of currents and movements, from guilds promoting the magical education of every citizen through art, to groups fighting against uses of magic that they deem immoral or irresponsible.

PAIDEIA

The education of the youth of Ethens is highly structured and formalized, and it takes the name of *paideia*. A well-defined, state-managed programme has been designed to guide and train kids starting from the age of four upward. At the age of four, all the children of the citizens of Ethens, without any distinction of gender, race, or economic status, are inducted in the *historikon* (School of History), the basic schooling institution, for six years. At the end of this period, when they reach the age of ten, kids are presented with a choice: the most talented are offered a place in the *College of Arcane Magic*, where they will be able to study the magic arts for the following fifteen years; other gifted youngster will join the *College of Divine Magic*, where they will train for a similar number of years; most of the remaining will continue studying first in the *ethikon* (School of Ethics), *politikon* (School of Politics), and finally, possibly, in one of the *lycei*, for a total of eight years.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By *public schools*, the city of Ethens refer to the most comprehensive educational institutions that are open to all the citizens, and that are normally funded by the state.

School of History (grade 1-6). The School of History (*historikon*) denotes the overarching governmental organization devoted to the education of the youngest. Every son and daughter of Ethens is offered free education from

the age of four to the age of ten. No fee is required to attend one of these schools, and everyone, regardless of their condition, is expected to partake. On some occasion, when places are available, the children of foreign ambassadors or visitors are also offered a free place in the classes. Education in the School of History is a trait that is common to the poorest of the beggars and the most powerful wizard in Ethens; it constitutes a widely shared experience that provides a strong common background and mutual understanding among the population. During the six years of this course, pupils are taught to read and write, as well as the foundations of the history of Ethens, its laws and its political customs. Theoretical foundations of magic theory are also explained. The main mission of the school is to grow a citizenry fond of its homeland, ready to partake and contribute into the public life. Furthermore, these six years act as a testing time to observe and discover those young kids who may become great wizards. Every citizen who successfully passes the last year final exam is granted the right of legislative vote at the age of eighteen.

School of Ethics (grade 7-9). The School of Ethics (*ethikon*) represents the most natural continuation in the education of the citizenry of Ethens. During the three years of this school, students continue learning about the history of Ethens, but they are also presented with more problematic issues that require their own judgment. At the same time, they are introduced to more advanced topics on magic theory, although no practice of magic is yet taught. The aim of this course is allow kids to grow in their wisdom in everyday situations, as well as in the understanding of daily uses of magic. Every citizen who successfully passes the last year final exam is granted the right of judicial vote at the age of twenty-one.

School of Politics (grade 10-12). The School of Politics (*politikon*) brings the programme of the *historikon* and the *ethikon* to its conclusion. In the last three years, specific historical events from the past are analyzed in great detail, magic theory is presented in all its complexity, and basic practical spellcasting is practiced at school. At the conclusion, students are ready to become full members of the society of Ethens, or to join a *lyceum* for a further two years of specialization. Every citizen who successfully passes the last year final exam is granted the right of executive vote at the age of twenty-five.

Lycei (grade 13-14). Lycei are optional schools providing high-specialized training. These institutions may be public, but a few of them are managed by guilds or enterprises. They offer a

wide selection of topics of study, from bureaucracy and accounting to shipbuilding. Two types of lycei are particularly important. The first one is a martial lyceum, where participants are taught the arts of war; this sort of training is usually preparatory for joining the standing army of Ethens. The second one is a practical magical schools, where learners are taught applied magic that may be used in their daily life or in their business.

MAGIC SCHOOLS

Although mostly public, institutes where magic is taught are simply known as *magic schools* in opposition to the *public schools* discussed above. While every kid studies in the School of History, not everyone goes on through the School of Ethics and then Politics. Young pupils who show propensity for magic are offered a place in the College of Arcane Magic or in the College of Divine Magic.

College of Arcane Magic (grade 7-21). The College of Arcane Magic is the most important and respected institution in Ethens. Whenever someone in Ethens speaks of *the College*, he or she refers to the College of Arcane Magic. Founded over a millennium ago, the aim of the College is to select the most promising magical talents within the city and the allied territories, and to transform young apprentices into proficient and responsible wizards. The College is extremely competitive, and being selected is considered one of the greatest honours possible. Once chosen, a young student is paid a public scholarship for the entire duration of her or his training: fifteen years, from the age of ten to twenty-five. The contract, however, expects an equal number of years of service to repay for the education; newly-graduated wizards are expected to serve the state for the following fifteen years, until the age of forty. As long as they stay on course, students of the College are granted the right to legislative, judiciary and executive vote when they reach the appropriate age.

College of Divine Magic (grade 7-21). Fashioned after the College of Arcane Magic, the College of Divine Magic was formed more recently, in the time of the Tenth Constitution. The arcane spellcasters had recognized the importance of a sister institution devoted to divine magic for a long time, but internal strife among the clergy of the three main patron deities of Ethens prevented the formation of a unified College of Divine Magic until later in time. The College of Divine Magic follows closely the organization of the College of Arcane Magic, but its internal structure is actually still in flux, as the clerics

have struggled in coming up with a programme that could cover the long span of time of teaching (fifteen years) and provide a training that would be as rich and dense as the one offered in the College of Arcane Magic. While no one doubts the importance of divine magic, the reputation of the clerics is far from matching those of the wizards. As in the case of the College of Arcane Magic, as long as they stay on course, students are granted the right to legislative, judiciary and executive vote when they reach the appropriate age.

SORCEROUS MAGIC

The city of Ethens contemplates only one form of arcane power: that which is acquired by study through its institutions. Sorcerers are considered unreliable and untrustworthy magicians. Although specific individuals can always rely on their innate magic ability when casting spells, subordination to the norms and curricula defined by the College of Arcane Magic is expected from all casters. Actually, since talented children who might become sorcerers are integrated and educated in the College of Arcane Magic since early age, they learn to inscribe their spells in spellbooks, study them in the evening, and cast them during the day, thus ending up practicing magic as wizards. The aversion of Ethens for sorcerous magic has historical origins, as the fifth Constitution of Ethens was brought to an end by the anarchic use of magic done by a splinter group of *Derwinian* sorcerers who opposed what they considered the regressive institution of the College of Arcane Magic. Following the disastrous collapse of the fifth Constitution, sorcerous magic has always been kept in high suspicion.

BEYOND SCHOOL

The majority of the population graduates at sixteen from the School of Politics, although some citizens end later because they started at an older age or because they failed some exams. Indeed, each one of the three schools ends with a challenging exam meant to grant a right to vote and, so, inevitably, some pupils are left behind. Although the rate of failure is not negligible, the rate of dropouts is very low. Obtaining the rights to vote is considered a duty and a honour, and most citizens work hard to gain it. Not having full rights to vote is not seen as a stigma, but certainly is considered an oddity.

Graduates of the public schools find occupation in the city or in its colonies from the age of sixteen. Their training allow them to pick up many kind of jobs (from agricultural to commercial) and then to rely on their knowledge and rudimentary magic ability to progress in time through the ranks of their occupation.

With their more specialized programmes, lycei welcome a student body with a wider range of ages. While a good number of students enroll immediately after the end of the School of Politics, other citizens go back to school at a

later age, either to learn new skills or improve their knowledge. Graduates of the lycei provide specialized skills to the city, finding an occupation wherever trained and finetuned talents are in demand. Some of them end up working for the government of the city, while others join guilds or enterprises.

Members of the College of Arcane Magic or Divine Magic join at the young age of ten and return to the civil society only at the age of twenty-five. Selection is very strict and regulated; it is extremely rare that a kid is allowed in the College at an age younger or older than ten; this may happen only when some unique talent has been fatally missed by the Far-Seeing Eye Council at the right time. Graduated wizards and clerics are expected to serve the city for the following fifteen years. Normally, no enforcement is necessary, as this service is considered a privilege. After forty, wizards and clerics are free to follow whatever path they want. The most brilliant wizards remain in the College to further their studies beyond the current limits of knowledge; many exploit their knowledge and networks to devote themselves to the politics of Ethens; others invest their talents in profitable enterprises. Clerics typically are not so enterprising; normally they become tutors at the College or Divine Magic, join a local temple, or become missionaries in far-away colonies of Ethens.

LAW OF THE LAND

Nowadays Ethens has a complex set of laws and rules. Its legislation is the result of centuries of debates, changes and, at times, revolution. Legal historiographers enumerates at least eleven major *constitutions*, each one defining a different political and legal setup for the city. Some of these constitutions would not even be considered forms of magical democratic republic by contemporaries.

The body of laws is roughly tripartite, comprising a civil code, a penal code, and a magical code. Although the first two codes are interesting in themselves, most legal scholar of Ethens devote their time to the study and the development of the magical code. This code of law is unique for its breadth and comprehensiveness, and the delicate balance of guarantees, limitations and affordances is what has allowed the flourishing of Ethens. After all, the use of magic is very common in city: from the magical tricks cast by individual citizens to the powerful spell bought from magical service companies. A thorough legislation is needed so that the rights of everyone are respected. For this reason, the city has developed specific laws

regulating the use of magic within the limits of the city.

The actual magical code is very intricate, full of exceptions and precedents accumulated in time. It is said that a wizard or a scholar must grow to be very old before he or she can hope to master the code. To simplify the study of magical law, scholars compares the structure of the legislation to a tree:

- *Constitution*: at the root of the magical legal system lies the Constitution, which enshrines the few basic principles on which the entire magical legislation is grounded.
- *Laws of Magic*: from the roots sprouts the trunk of the Laws of Magic, a collection of regulations that broadly apply to all forms of magic.
- *Codes of School Law*: from the trunk, comes a set of branches in the form of the collection of the Codes of School Law, each one defining more precise rules for the practice of specific magic schools.

JURISDICTION

According to the courts of Ethens, the laws of the city apply to everyone within the boundaries of Ethens. Since the boundaries of the city are not well defined, the jurisdiction of these laws may extend very far: it includes not only everyone within the city walls, but it has been enforced in the larger countryside controlled by Ethens, in its colonies, in its representative buildings abroad, in military camps and on military vessels. In certain instances, the foreign residence of a citizen who sojourned abroad but kept doing business within Ethens has been considered territory of the city where all the Laws of Magic had to be enforced.

THE CONSTITUTION OF ETHENS

The current constitution of Ethens is normally enumerated as the Twelfth Constitution of the city. This document, now more than a century old, is the bedrock of the civil society and it defines the political and legal ordering of the city.

The first section of the document defines the rights of the citizens, including their voting rights (see Section *Political Rights*). The second part enshrines the ways in which magic can be used by outlining the principles of Magical Law (see Section *Principles of Magical Law*). The third part details the governing structure of the city: the two legislative bodies of the Council and the Magic Senate (see Section *Legislative Bodies*); the judiciary arm of state (see Section *Judiciary Bodies*); and the members of the executive (see Section *Executive Bodies*).

The Constitution of Ethens is the founding document of the political and civil life of the city. While arguments around it and proposal for

reform may often arise, the document itself is held in high regard. Changes to its articles or even to its wording are hard to enact, requiring a wide agreement between different administrative organs of the state. Such a protective attitude follows by the historic experience of the city, as times of unrest and revolt have often been connected to a crisis and a breakdown of the norms stated by the Constitution.

THE CONSTITUTIONS AND THE NUMBERING OF YEARS

The number of the constitution is important for tracking time. Historians mark the years by reference to the current constitution: for instance, II.14, that is the fourteenth year since the adoption of the Second Constitution, is usually taken to be the year of the foundation of the College of Arcane Magic. Negative years, or *before the Constitution* are used to refer to the time preceding the first Constitution; the era before the Constitution is normally regarded as a dark age of barbarism and tyranny.

PRINCIPLES OF MAGICAL LAW

Properly regulating the use of magic is a hard problem: magic confers power, and deciding how this power should be limited and administered is not simple. The citizens learn in the School of History of several approaches that have caused severe troubles in the past of Ethens or of other cities. Unchecked practice of magic has frequently lead to negative outcomes such as instability bordering anarchy, exploitation of magical energies for the sake to enforce oppression, or magical curfews that have suppressed or limited the initiative and the opportunities of individuals.

Although debates on how magic should be regulated is still very lively, most of the inhabitants agree with a set of principles that are nowadays enshrined in the constitution of Ethens.

The first principle is the *Principle of Responsibility*. It states that *magic should not be used where its effects can not be fully controlled and predicted*. This is probably the most obvious of the principles: a caster, be it an individual or a state office, is in charge of the all and every magical effect generated. Therefore, if there were to be side effects that can not be controlled or predicted, magic should not be used. This principle puts the whole responsibility of a spell on the caster, who is going to be liable for any damage or harm that can ensue from the use of magic. Clearly, the principle leaves some gray areas that are left to the judgment of specific judiciary bodies. It is well known that, despite the efforts of magician studying *exact magic*, the effects of a spell always have some random component; to what degree a caster should be able to predict the consequences of its action is

often a matter of dispute in the chambers of law. Similarly, how far the responsibility or the chain of effects of a spell should go, is another topic of debate; if a spell sets off a chain of events leading to an accident, when should the original caster be taken into account for the accident?

The second principle is formally known as the *Principle of Precedence*, but it is often referred to also as the *Noble Principle* or the *Principle of Mortal Initiative*. It states that *magic should not be used where non-magical alternatives are voluntarily available*. The core idea of this principle is that, whenever a task or an enterprise may be undertaken with standard means provided by one of the citizens, then magical means should give precedence to such alternative. Although this principle may seem to limit consistently the use of magic, it has proven to be a reliable egalitarian principle that has promoted the general elevation of the citizenry, and, with it, the diffusion and the advancement of the overall magical culture of Ethens. The history of this principle is long, and its development is normally ascribed to different reasons. Politically, this principle has been explained as a way to limit the overwhelming power and influence of great spellcasters; at one time or another, cliques of magicians had gathered so many resources that they had become vital to the city, and this had allowed them to rise to the position of tyrants; the principle of precedence aims at avoiding this situation by allowing common citizens to take the place of casters whenever possible. From an economic point of view, the principle is meant to safeguard the economic initiative of common people; if their autonomous means of sustenance are undermined because a spellcaster can perform their work more efficiently, the citizenry risks being left without means of sustenance very quickly; in the past, this has lead to many being reduced into servitude or to political unrest. Although almost everyone would agree with the principle of precedence in theory, wide disagreement exists over its limits and application. Many voices, especially the ones of large magical enterprise, question the principle of precedence demanding when and to what point a non-magical alternative can really be considered to be a proper substitute for a spell; what if magic can achieve better results than other alternatives? Is forging a mediocre sword a non-magical alternative to summoning a masterwork blade? Critics of this principle often argue that a principle of alternative should account for the quality and the efficiency of the results, and the availability of magical resources (ingredients, money) be the only limitation.

Supporters of the principle counters that so doing would void the principle of any use, as magic is, by default, much more efficient than other means; further, that would not prevent the concentration of power in few hands, as spellcasting ability, magical resources and monetary means tend to concentrate fast if not restrained.

The third and last principle is the *Principle of Freedom*, which some scholars name as the *Principle of Human Narrative*. It states that *magic should not be used where possibilities are available*. This principle vaguely states that the use of magic should be limited if it interferes with the freedoms and the choices of individuals. Because of its general formulation, this is both one of the most appealed to and contested principles. It is, for instance, at the base of widely-agreed laws that condemn the use of mind-controlling spells on citizens; but it is also at the foundation of the regulation that prevents judges from using scrying or mind-reading spells during trials. The reasoning behind the latter regulation is particularly representative and instructive: accused citizens can not be subject to mind-probing not just because this could reveal private information legitimately held secret by a citizen, but also because, if the subject were indeed guilty, they would be left without the *possibility* of recognizing their guilt and confess. The *possibility* of making amend is a right that the law recognizes as a space for the individual to express its freedom. Therefore, except extreme circumstances, an accused citizen or a witness can not be object of divination magic for the sake of ascertaining truth more quickly or efficiently. Like other principles, the application of the principle of freedom requires evaluation of limits and trade-offs concerning which sort of freedoms should be respected. After all, any magical action causes consequences that inevitably curtail some possibilities. Thus, determining what possibilities are important enough to be safeguarded is crucial for the application of the principle. Another thorny question is raised when the protection of individual freedoms clashes with the interest and the safety of the community; in such cases, for instance if the city is in danger because of a grand betrayal plot, judges are usually willing to suspend some of the guarantees provided by this principle.

All these principles hold strong during peacetime, but they may be partly suspended in times of crisis, although this requires the convergence of decisions by legislative and executive bodies. Times of existential crisis may allow for taking risks in casting magic and for

overriding the initiative or the freedom of individuals.

Debate around the relevance and the extent of these principles has coalesced into various political identities. Staunch defenders of the principles describe them as a bulwark against degeneration towards tyranny or unrest, and as a guarantee for every citizen to partake in the economic, political and cultural life of the city. This, so far, has been the official position of the College of Arcane Magic, thus lending its authority and prestige to the principles. Extreme supporters of this line sometimes wander off to more religious positions, holding that the principles are the best defense against a *magical apocalypse*. Supporters of reforms of the principles hold instead that they are stifling the development of magic; magic is the main resources and strength of the city; limiting its use for abstract and dubious principles would just lead in time to the decay of magical competence and expertise, thus leading Ethens to ruin. A number of these critics are powerful magicians or leaders of magical enterprises who would enjoy having their magical power unleashed.

THE MAGICAL APOCALYPSE

Folk tales and gloomy prophecies speak of a coming magical apocalypse that will mark the end of Ethens forever. A common representation of this event imagines a city where few holds disproportionate amount of magical power, every need and desire is satisfied by spells, people are growing detached from reality by living in illusions summoned by spellcasters, and slowly the entire city fades and shifts towards other remote and immaterial planes of existence.

THE LAWS OF MAGIC

On a lower and more practical level, the Laws of Magic regulates the overall legal and economic aspects of spellcasting. The Laws of Magic are again subdivided in two parts: the *moral principles of magic* and the *economic programme of magic*.

The *moral principles of magic* establish that magic has to be used to foster individual and social welfare. Any form of magic that is harmful to the individual, dangerous to the community, or hostile to the environment is prohibited. The city of Ethens undertakes the responsibility of prosecuting offenders and supporting the use magic to the advantage of everyone.

The *economic programme of magic* is the practical way in which the city tries to make magic accessible and useful for everyone. The programme is a catalogue of spells published by the city every year and classifying spells into four categories: (i) *free spells*: essential spellcasting

that is provided for free to the citizens (assuming certain conditions are satisfied); (ii) *city-funded spells*: spells that may be cast by state magicians for discounted prices in order to foster the development of the city and its individuals; (iii) *regular spells*: spells that may be cast by individuals according to their own initiative and means; (iv) *forbidden spells*: spells that are not allowed in the city.

THE CODES OF SCHOOL LAW

Specific codes of law have been developed to rule the use of the magic from specific schools.

- *Abjuration*: The Code of Abjorative Law deals with the use of protective spells. This is one of the most liberal codices, decreeing the free use of protective spells by citizens. However, the law imposes a few conditions on the individual use of abjuration: (i) No abjorative spell shall cause deadly damage to a trespasser; (ii) no abjorative spell shall exile a citizen from Ethens; (iii) abjorative spells that may interfere with the activity of other citizens must be properly notified and advertised, possibly being approved by the responsible office.
- *Conjuration and Transmutation*: The Code of Conjunctive and Transmutative Law is one of the most complex and intricate collections of rules, deliberations, previous judgments and exceptions, which has grown in size over the centuries. The main aim of this piece of legislation is to control the use of these spells for economic activities within the city; in particular it sets the principles that allow the use of conjurations and transmutations to boost the productivity of the city and avoid possible slumps due to overproduction. While the principles are expressed in the Code of Conjunctive and Transmutative Law, the actual practical measures that control and limit the use of these spells are usually implemented in the economic programme of magic. The Code of Conjunctive and Transmutative Law also includes the extraplanar treaties that the city of Ethens has established with different extraplanar races and which limit the number of members of that race that can be summoned and the type of tasks they may be given. Notice that these treaties are sometimes bilateral (like the agreement with the modrons establishing that summoned modrons will be employed only on computational tasks and never on physical tasks), other times unilateral (like the decision of the city to limit the number of demons that may be summoned by a single individual).
- *Divination*: The Code of Divinative Law establishes the legal uses of magic for

divination. On one side, it invests the government of the city, especially the All-Seeing Council, with the authority to use divinative magic; on the other side, it enshrines the right of the citizens of Ethens not to be the target of divination. Much of this legislation rests on the Principle of Human Narrative. The city government tries to enforce and protect the personal and private space of every citizen, although that is easier said than done. It is indeed hard to discover all the misuses of divinative magic, and normally only a few random sampled cases are detected. Severe punishments, ranging from hefty fines to being forbidden to use magic for some time, are often imposed in the attempt to signal and disincentive illegal uses of divinative magic.

- *Enchantment*: The Code of Enchantive Law deals with the use of magic to affect other people's mind and opinions. As a general rule, the use of spells to control citizens is forbidden; this restriction is particularly strong in the public arena: use of enchantments in public courts, fora, or meetings is severely persecuted. Use of enchantment in the private sphere is also frowned upon, although many exceptions are contemplated: willing citizens can accept to be the target of enchantments in order to improve their relationships; some entrepreneurial mages sell their enchantment spells to individuals who might want to make up their old grudges; enchantment spells are even sought out for their entertainment value in some less reputable drinking establishments in the city. The Code acknowledges these uses although it stresses the need for consent and puts limits on the power of enchantment potions that can be consumed. The use of enchantments in business constitutes a particularly thorny legal sub-area of the Code: as commercial enterprises are often private initiatives with effects on the public welfare, deciding whether the use of enchantments is legal or not presents a serious challenge; a long list of precedents analyze particular cases, in which sometimes the right of willing trading parties was acknowledged, other times denied and fined.
- *Evocation*: The Code of Evocative Law establishes the occasions, the modes, and the measure in which energies may be summoned and manipulated. Since spells of evocation normally deals with raw energies that, if unleashed, could cause damage, the norms set clear restrictions on the places and the use of these spells. Any evocation which could cause damage to persons or properties can not be

employed within the city limits. Exceptions, such as the use of evocation in public works, needs to be approved by the government and always be cast safely by securing the area affected. The study of evocation is popular among young apprentices, but given the existing constraints most successful evokers end up as members of the Rose Cabal, where they can practice the art to their heart's content. Other evokers work in guilds, especially those engaged in public works and constructions.

- **Illusion:** The Code of Illusionistic Law defines the purpose and the place where illusions may be used. Beyond their martial uses, the law states that illusions can be used within the city only with the consent of the affected person or party. Two very distinct areas of use are identified by law: education and entertainment. According to the principle of "*under consent, as a mean to educate*", the law allows teachers to use magical illusions to illustrate and guide their pupils in learning. Similarly, according to the principle "*under consent, as a mean to entertain*", illusions may be employed to create diversion and pasttime for a willing audience. At the intersection of the two fields, theater is considered as the occasion where illusions may be used both to educate and to entertain. The study of illusion is what may be considered a true art under every point of view. The use of illusions for education and entertainment has given rise to a class of illusionist that are talented not only in summoning illusions, but also in shaping them into beautiful and majestic forms. Few could compete with the beauty of the shapes crafted by Phedias, or with the stunning visuals evoked by Sefocles.
- **Necromancy:** The Code of Necromantic Law establishes and protects citizens from necromantic experimentation: no one, alive or dead, may be the target of necromancy, not even if he or she willingly and consciously accepts to be part of such experimentation. Exception is allowed only in the most extreme circumstances; under martial law, if the city is in danger, the government of the city has the authority to allow for the use of necromancy as an extrema ratio. The Code of Necromantic Law is however undefined when it comes to prisoners of war or enemies of the city. Ruthless casters may exploit this gray area in the legislation to practice necromancy on unwilling subjects. The practice of necromancy on non-citizens is still considered, if not against the letter of the law, against the spirit of the law; trespassers usually have to rely on

powerful connections and friends to perform necromancy without legal repercussions. In any case, because of the hard legal restrictions, it is almost impossible to find any necromancer outside The Black Cabal. Even the members of this official state division are often seen with suspicion, sometimes suspected of being deranged or morbid. Despite this, the study of necromancy is reputed very important for the safety of the city; necromancers are said to be able to obtain any concession and any amount of funding for their work from the state. Necromantic studies are covered by secrecy and so the actual prowess of the city in this field is unknown, but few doubt it.

FOREIGNERS

The law of Ethens requires all the foreigners visiting the city to register at arrival, independently from the mean of their arrival (road, sea, or magical teletransportation). Spellcasters, in particular, are expected to report and declare the full list of spells at their disposal. Resident foreigners are usually allowed to cast magic as local citizens abiding to the Laws of Magic. Temporary residents may be given a very restricted subset of spells they are allowed to use. Control of foreigners, especially if magicians, is very strict, and any violation of the rules on spellcasting is severely prosecuted; severe infringements of the law may easily lead to banishment from the city.

MAGIC RESEARCH

Magic is the primary source of life and wealth in Ethens, and it should not be surprising that so many resources and study has been devoted to get a better understanding of its nature. Luminaries in the College of Arcane Magic daily discuss and investigate the possibilities of magic.

THE NATURE OF MAGIC

One of the topics widely discussed not only by the most expert magicians, but even on the streets, concerns the nature of magic. As magic is so pervasive, and since everyone interacts with it, everyone has an opinion about it.

Divine Origin Theory. A large number of theories go under this heading; what they have in common is that they trace the origin of magic to some supernatural entity of great power, normally a god. Magic is often conceived of as the manifestation of a supernatural will, the bending of a divine force, or the exploitation of a divine source of energy. These theories are nowadays looked down with skepticism, even in the case of divine magic; high-level wizards believe magic is a *will-less* system independent from any *will-ful* being. Whoever holds that magic has a divine origin is normally considered superstitious.

Hydrodynamic Theory. Another set of common theories tend to describe magic as a form of continuous perennial essence permeating reality. Magic is sometimes described as a fluid that may be controlled by the user (hence the name hydrodynamic theory), as a weave whose threads may be pulled, as a field that can be manipulated, or as a music that may be changed. All these systems explain magic as a fundamental force to which a wizard is given access and that can be manipulated with the right knowledge. These theories are very popular across the multiverse, and many visitors coming from other planes often support these systems.

Many-world Theory. A more recent theory that has quickly gained traction suggests that magic does not really exist in itself, that there is no *real* energy that wizards control. Magic is just a way to select among possible alternative universes and outcomes. When casting a spell a wizard does not evoke some specific form of energy *in the world*, but it instead handles an energy *out of the world* that guarantees the actualization of a specific reality. At every crossroad of reality, whenever the world may evolve in one direction instead of another, magic is the tool that allows a wizard to affect these outcomes. The effort of the wizard is what allows to select an outcome among the many. The Many-world theory is nowadays at the foundation of much research done at the College of Arcane Magic.

EXOTIC THEORIES

The Bedlian Library of Ethens collects several tomes suggesting alternative and exotic theories about magic, including *nihilistic modron theories* asserting the inexistence of magic, *voluntaristic Limbo theories* and *randomic slaad theories* both proposed by githzerai, translation of *Netherese studies*, *sarrukh magical theories*, and a collection of *baatezu and tanar'ri theories*. These works are studied by small groups of spellcasters always seeking for potential truths and new spells.

THE FORMS OF MAGIC

The College of Arcane Magic prides itself in pursuing revolutionary studies on magic aimed at providing the city with the most refined knowledge of magic and the most powerful spells. Recently, the formulation of the Many-world theory has opened new fields of study, and groundbreaking results are within the reach of the spellcasters of Ethens. Many wizards feel that the Many-world theory will address questions that the previous theories could not solve.

Polyphonic magic. One of the most anticipated achievements of the Many-world theory is polyphonic (or multi-user) magic. For generations, wizards of Ethens have been

puzzled by why it is so difficult to cast spells jointly. If magic is simply the manipulation of a weave or a field, why is it so hard for two wizards to join their effort and modify together the reality? The Many-world theory offered a satisfying answer to this question: every spell select a possible future outcome among the many available; if two wizards cast their spells aimed at actualizing different possible futures, their effect will never sum, but one will normally prevail; in order for the two spells to combine it is necessary a perfect agreement among the casting wizards. Reaching such an agreement is extremely difficult - everything, down to the minimal details must coincide - but not impossible. Preliminary experiments seem to have obtained dazzling success: the casting by two wizards of a simple *Magic Missile* as a combined spell can achieve effects far more destructive than the casting of two individual spells. Great expectations are put in the development of polyphonic magic. Elcibiades himself has stated: "So far magic has been like playing a single instrument; we are now learning to play as an orchestra". If the predictions of Elcibiades turn out true, Ethens may soon wield an incomparable magic power.

Exact magic. Another problem that the theory of Many-world tries to solve concerns the precision of spells. Often, magic is approximate: its effects, the range and the duration of spells are hard to predict. This variability does not compromise the overall usefulness of magic, but, in some occasions, it may make the difference between life and death. Attempts to address this uncertainty have already been undertaken by several wizards; for instance the study and the development of meta-magic crafts allows a caster to finetune with high precision its magic, although usually, at a high-cost; the price makes indeed meta-magic-transformed spells quite unusual. The wizards of Ethens believe that the theory of Many-world may help explain the trade-off between precision and cost of spells in terms of selecting among different worlds, and, consequently, point out ways to make spells more reliable at a reasonable cost.

Magic of randomness. In a way that is opposed and complementary to the study of exact magic, many spellcasters are studying ways to create magical effects that are truly and completely random. This study was initially spurred by the role that random selections have in the political process, for instance in the random matching of schools of magic for the election to the Magic Senate or in the allocation of juries; in all these cases, a fair execution requires true and trusted random processes. Beyond the political interest,

however, magicians have explored ways in which making spells more unpredictable could render them more effective and, potentially more lethal. On one side, having magic that is completely random may provide an edge against those spellcasters bent on foresight and counterspells, by making them unable to catch those telling signs that allow them to prepare their countermoves. On the other hand, as noted by scholar of exact magic, there is a price between the cost of a spell and the precision of its effect; by letting the effects to be completely random, the burden of casting a spell might be reduced (or, by keeping the effort constant, the power of the magic manifestation may be enhanced).