

The Principles of Magic

Writing: Jasyn Jones

The background of magic presented in the Torg Rulebook and Ayslish Sourcebook hint at a world where magic is an academic discipline and has been formalized and codified, where the magical laws of Torg are known and understood. The Principle of Definition. Linfir's Maxim. And so forth.

This article attempts to represent the rules of Torg magic as a coherent and integrated body of academic magical work, to coin various "Principles" and give academic or "in-world" definitions.

Definition of Magic

In Torg, the word "magic" is a shorthand way of describing a complex of related concepts and ideas. In the core rules, "magic" itself is never directly defined.

Still, there is one concept underlying magic, one common concept that all types of magic share:

Magic is the use of symbols to cause specific results, the symbols representing the desired result.

Simply stated, universally true.

Magical Laws of Torg

The natural world has laws, the laws of physics. Magic has its own laws, called Principles. These Principles amplify on the basic concept of magic, and explain how magic works in Torg.

There is a great deal of variety in Torg's magic systems. Magic varies from cosm to cosm, and even from Tradition to Tradition. What spells a mage can use, what magic is to him, and what accouterments he uses differ as well.

Despite all these differences, the Principles of Magic still hold sway. They hold true for all manifestations of magic, in all realities, because they define what magic is- and isn't.

To understand magic, one first has to understand its Principles.

The Principles of Magic

There are a number of principles, but the first three are the most important. These- the General Principles of Magic- detail how magic works and why. They are ranked in order of importance, from First to Third.

The Fundamental Principle of Magic

This is the first principle of Magic, the fundamental Principle of Magic. It is the foundation on which all other magical rules, principles, and phenomena are based. Other Principles refine this concept or explain how magical effects manifest, but all are secondary to the Fundamental Principle.

This principle arises from the common conception of magic: symbolic manipulation.

“Magic is the use of mystically significant symbols to evoke effects. The symbols used emblemize or represent the effect.”

A symbol is something that is linked to a supernatural effect because it is associated with the effect by a specific culture, body of lore or Tradition. Symbols can be words, gestures, items, thoughts, actions, locations, times, individuals, characteristics, properties, or anything else that is symbolic of any of the following: the effect itself, where the effect will manifest, when it will manifest, its target, or any of the effect's other characteristics and properties.

Examples: Water is linked with supernatural effects that create water, destroy water, locate water, and so forth. A given pictogram represents fire. Therefore, it is symbolically linked to fire effects. A mathematical equation represents love, and so is a symbol linked to emotion-altering supernatural effects. A rock is linked to spells that affect the ground- earthquake, locate ore, etc. Water from the Danube is related to all effects that affect the Danube, such a sinking a boat in the river.

The Principle of Independent Existence

“Magic is defined only by the Principles of Magic, and is not limited by

any other laws or restrictions.”

Magic doesn't work according to natural laws. They do not limit it or affect it in any way.

The Principle of Supernatural Action

“Magic is capable of accomplishing a variety of results without regard to and in violation of mundane causality and the laws of the natural world.”

In order to create its effects, magic overrides the laws of the natural world. Within the spell's boundaries (or “extents”), it suppresses or subverts how the natural world works.

The spell effect dictates exactly what happens within its extents (said extents including its duration, range, and the spell's purpose). All natural laws that would prevent the spell effect from occurring are negated, but all others remain in place.

Example: The reason a "bullet" spell does damage is that the spell effect makes this happen. Within the bounds of the spell, hunks of metal behave differently than they normally do, because magic makes it so. The damage such pieces of metal cause is determined solely by the strength of the spell (its Effect Value) and is entirely unrelated to the metal's mass, speed, composition, kinetic energy, point of impact, shape, or any other consideration.

Taken together, the first three Principles describe magic perfectly:

“Magic is the ability to affect the natural world through supernatural means. It involves the manipulation of supernaturally significant symbols to evoke effects. The effects evoked by magic are created and operate in defiance of causality and the laws of the natural world.”

Specific Principles of Magic

There are other Principles in addition to the General Principles. The secondary principles are known as the Specific Principles of Magic. They describe the specifics of magic- how it manifests, its limitations, and so forth.

They are not numbered, as no one of these is any more important than the other.

Principle of Evanescence [Formerly the Principle of Limitation]. Magic can override the laws of the natural world, but this requires the expenditure of energy, and the energy available to any one supernatural effect is limited. When the energy is consumed, the laws of the natural world reassert themselves and the effect ceases to be. Even “permanent” effects are in fact only persistent, they require a constant link to an external source of magical energy and if that link is disrupted, the effect lapses.

Principle of Effect. Magic manifests as supernatural effects. These effects vary in purpose, the amount of magical energy present, and other characteristics. These varying characteristics determine which results a given effect can achieve and to what extent it can achieve them.

Principle of Futility. Each supernatural effect evinces a purpose- that which the effect is intended to accomplish. If the supernatural effect cannot achieve its purpose, the effect expires.

Principle of Persistence. The result of a magical effect will fade after the effect expires, unless the result could exist naturally.

An item moved, stays moved. An item floating in the air, falls. Something damaged or destroyed, stays damaged or destroyed. Something created, will cease to exist.

Principle of Symbology. Symbols are not universal.

Symbols are a product of culture and folklore, so different cultures have different magical symbols. The differences manifest as Traditions: bodies of magical lore specific to a given culture. Mages of one Tradition cannot cast spells of another, because the symbols involved are meaningless.

Principles of Spells

These principles define the nature of spells and what limits them.

Principle of Restricted Intent. A spell can only have one purpose, all other purposes are excluded. This purpose is built into the spell at the time

of its creation and cannot later be changed.

Spells, by their very nature, are limited tools. For while magic can do nearly anything, this Principle limits what any one spell can do: A spell that produces a fireball cannot also raise the dead. A spell to summon a creature cannot also compel it to obey.

Principle of Restricted Action. Spell effects can only enact their own purpose, not any other. Side effects and consequences can occur, but these are not enacted by the spell.

Principle of Defined Extents: Spells have specific extents, defined at the time the spell is created: how long it is in effect, how much it affects the natural world, how far away the effect can appear, and so forth. These extents can be altered during casting, but only temporarily. Defining different extents requires writing a new spell.

Principle of Definition. Any specific object may not be subjected to two active spell effects at the same time if both spells are based on the same arcane knowledge.

Downloaded from:

Jasyn Jones' STORM KNIGHTS:

<http://web.me.com/stormknights/index.html>

Cutting edge TORG game design, home of the definitive "Glass Jaw Ninja" solution.

Distribution

All Workshop files are posted so they can be read, analyzed, and commented on. Comments can be posted on the TORG List or sent to the author at: stormknights@me.com. Any comments sent to the author might be re-posted to the List or other TORG fora, and by sending such comments the sender gives permission for this to occur.

As a courtesy to the author, please don't post these articles, or portions

thereof, on other web pages (if you very much want to incorporate it, please contact me first).

The author grants permission for the recipient to share, but not publish, the text of this document, provided the full text is unaltered, and the Copyright, Distribution, and Downloaded From sections are intact.

Copyright

This electronic document (and all other contents of the STORM KNIGHTS website) is copyright © 2001-2010 by Jasyn Jones. All Rights Reserved.

TORG is ®, TM, & © 2007 by Purgatory Publishing, Inc.

Angar Uthorion, Aysle, Baruk Kaah, Core Earth, Cosm, Cosmverse, Cyberpapacy, Darkness Device, Dr. Mobius, Gaunt Man, Gospog, Heart of the Coyote, High Lord, Infiniverse, Kanawa, Living Land, Maelstrom, Maelstrom Bridge, Nile Empire, Nippon Tech, Orrorsh, Occultech, Pella Ardinay, Possibility Raiders, Possibility Storm, Possibility Wars, Ravagon, Stormers, Storm Knights, Tharkold, TORG and the TORG Logo are trademarks of Purgatory Publishing, Inc.