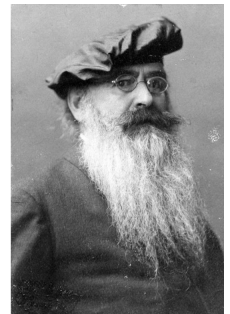


Gnostic Runology – List and the Modern Runic Revival

<http://www.GnosticStudies.org/Runes>

Völkisch Ideas, Guido von List and his Influence

Guido Von List (1848-1919) is one of the most well known figures who promoted Germanic or Runic Occultism. From an early period in his life, he claims to have given up Roman Catholicism in favor of worshipping the Germanic *Wuotan*. He apparently spent a lot of time in the countryside of Austria as a youth, hiking and enjoying nature. From the 1870s to the 1890s, he began to write articles and novels placing a *völkisch* emphasis on the folk culture and customs of rural people, believing that many of them survived from the pre-Christian native Germanic religion.



During an 11-month period of temporary blindness (after a cataract operation) in 1902, List became increasingly interested in occultism, in particular coming under the influence of the Theosophical Society. During this time, he contemplated questions surrounding the origins of the German language and the use of the runes. After publishing a number of articles in various magazines, the popularity of his article *The Mystery/Secret of the Runes* (in 1906) in the German Theosophical magazine "New Metaphysical Review" led to it being published as a booklet the following year.

The popularity of his work among the *völkisch* community resulted in the establishment of a "List Society" [*Guido-von-List-Gesellschaft*] in 1908. Other occult-*völkisch* groups, such as the "Thule Society" [*Thule-Gesellschaft*] (founded in 1911), the "German Order" [*Germanenorden*] (founded in 1912) which had members from List's inner circle, and the "Edda Society" [*Edda-Gesellschaft*] (founded in November 1925 by Rudolf J. Gorsleben), were all inspired by List. Many of these organizations or their off-shoots became increasingly political and were partly involved in the creation of the Nazi party NSDAP.

The List Society produced a number of booklets authored by List as well as others over the next few years. They covered List's opinions on topics such as: the meaning and magical power of runes, the ancient Germanic priesthood, Austrian folklore and place-names, and the secret messages within Shields, Coats of Arms, Family Crests, etc:

- The Mystery/Secret of the Runes. [*Das Geheimnis der Runen*].
- The Priest-Kings of the Aryo-Germans. [*Die Armanenschaft der Ario-Germanen*].
- The *Rita* of the Aryo-Germans. [*Die Rita der Ario-Germanen*].
- The Names of the Tribes of Germania and their Interpretation. [*Die Namen der Völkerstämme Germaniens und deren Deutung*].
- The Religion of the Aryo-Germans in their Esoteric and Exoteric. [*Die Religion der Ariogermanen in ihrer Esoterik und Exoterik*].
- The Pictographic-Script of the Aryo-Germans: Aryo-Germanic Hieroglyphics. [*Die Bilderschrift der Ario-Germanen : Ario-Germanische Hieroglyphik*].
- The Transition from Wuotanism to Christianity. [*Der Übergang vom Wuotanismus zum Christentum*].
- German-Mythological Landscape-Pictures. [*Deutsch-mythologische Landschaftsbilder*].
- The Primordial-Language of the Aryo-Germans and their Mystery-Language. [*Die Ursprache der Ario-Germanen und ihre Mysteriensprache*].

Overview of Guido von List's Spiritual System

List claimed (like Johannus Bureus 200 year before) that there are hidden meanings in the runes, emphasizing that they had three different levels. The first level is the outer exoteric level. The second is the inner esoteric and the third is the most secret, which he called the "Armanen" level. The Armanen level was (according to List) only for the initiated runic priests.

He promoted a spiritual system which he called "Wuotanism" (which he saw as the exoteric or outer form), while "Armanism" was the term he applied to the more secret teachings. He claimed that while Wuotanism taught polytheism for the wider population, those who were members of the Armanist elite (or *Armanenschaft*) were aware of the reality of monotheism.

It has been stated that List's spiritual system consisted of "an original synthesis of his reading of Germanic mythology combined with Theosophy" and to that could also be added a sliver of Freemasonry (or what List understood Masonry to be).

Scholars suggest that List's early Theosophical influence came mostly from the writings of German Theosophist Max Ferdinand Sebaldt von Werth, who had combined Theosophical ideas with his own interpretations of Germanic mythology and emphasis on racial doctrines. In List's later works, scholars claim that the Theosophical influence over his philosophical ideas grew, and that he began referencing Helena Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* and even expressed the view that Nordic Mythology agreed with the cosmological teachings of Theosophy.

List's spiritual system was constructed largely on his interpretation of various passages in the *Havamal*, the *Prose Edda*, the *Poetic Edda* (which appear to have been composed in Iceland during the late Middle Ages). He saw them as accurately reflecting the belief systems of the Germanic refugees fleeing Christian persecution. Prior to the spread of Christianity into Northern Europe, List believed that there had been a culturally unified Germanic civilization which was spread across much of Europe, but that had been degraded under the impact of Christianity.

He initially emphasized the idea that ancient German society had been led by the hierarchical system of initiates: the Armanist elite (or *Armanenschaft*), who acted as teachers, priests, and judges. He claimed that the ancient Armanist brotherhood had consisted of three degrees (each with their own secret signs, grips, and passwords), similar to the 'Blue Lodge' of Freemasonry.

In List's interpretation of history, the Christian missionaries persecuted the Armanists, resulting in many fleeing northward into Scandinavia and Iceland. He believed that they developed a secretive language for transmitting their teachings, known as 'Kala'.

List claimed that, after the Christianization of Northern Europe, the Armanist teachings were passed down in secret, resulting in their transmission through later esoteric traditions such as Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism. The Armanists imparted their secret teachings to the Jewish rabbis of Cologne in the eighth century, hoping to preserving them from Christian persecution. He believed that these teachings became the Kabbalah, which he therefore reasoned was an ancient German (and not Jewish) innovation, thus legitimizing its usage in his own teachings.

For List, the basic teachings of the original Germanic religion were found in the runic alphabet and could be deciphered by linking these runes with particular 'runic incantations' which appear in the *Havamal* Poem (in a section called the *Runatal* or "Odin's Rune Song"). List emphasized the importance of a mystical union between humans and the universe, viewing divinity as being immanent in nature, with all life being an emanation of it. Connected to this, he believed in a close identification between the racial group (the *volk* or folk) and the natural world. For List, humans had an immortal soul that it would be 'reincarnated' according to the laws of karma until eventually uniting with divinity (a concept based on a spiritual idea of 'evolution').

Guido von List's Mystery Language, the *Kala* and Vocalization

In the last work published during his lifetime, *The Primordial Language of the Aryo-Germans and their Mystery Language* (1914), List gave his esoteric theories on the hidden meanings of sound. His system depends upon the phonetic values (instead of the numeric, such as in Kabbalah) in order to unlock the secret meanings of language.

He says that Primordial-Language or "*Kala*" is founded upon 16 sounds or vocalizations, of which five count for the Vowels or "self-sounding" sounds: A, E, I, O, U; one for the *Hauchlaut* or Aspiration sound: H (which is to pronounce the letter "h" at the beginning of a word); and the rest are attributed to the Consonants: F, R, K/G, Th/D, N, S, T, B/P, L, M.

List says "The law of becoming and development (Progression) is subdivided into ten levels" which correspond to the Vowels sounds in an interesting way:

Table 1: Vowels

1	┘	A	<i>Ursache oder Kraft</i>	Cause or Power
2	┘	A	<i>Wille zur Kraftäußerung</i>	Will to Express-Force
3	┘	A	<i>Können (Kunst) als Kraftäußerungsfolge</i>	Capacity (Art) as a Consequence-of-the-Expression-of-Force
4	┘	A	<i>Verwirklichung des Zweckes in der Tat</i>	Realization of the Objective in Action
5	┘	E	<i>das Gesetz, nach dem die Kraft wirkt (Verhältnis zwischen Kraft und Tat, die Macht oder Magie)</i>	the Law by which the Force works (Relationship between Force and Act/Action, the Power/Might or Magic)
6	┘	E	<i>die Ordnung, in der die zur Tat gewordene Kraft naturgesetzesmäßig wirkt</i>	the Order, in which the Act which has become Force works in accordance with the fundamental-law-of-nature
7		I	<i>im geistigen Innern (psychische Ordnung)</i>	in the spiritual Interior (psychic Order)
8	⌘	O	<i>im körperlichen Äußern (physische Ordnung)</i>	in the physical Utterance (physical Order)
9	⌘	O	<i>die Eigenschaften bildend</i>	the forming of Characteristics
10	┘	U	<i>in der Vollendung des Planes der Ursache (1.) oder der vorgefaßten Idee.</i>	in the Completion of the Plan from the Cause (1.) or the preconceived Idea

These ten vocalizations of the Consonants have the corresponding attributes:

Table 2: Consonants

I	⌘	(F)	<i>das Urfyr, als Ursache oder Kraft</i>	the Primordial Fire, as Cause or Force
II	ᚱ	(R)	<i>das Urluft, als der Wille</i>	the Primordial Air, as the Will
III	┘	(K/G)	<i>das Uerde, als das Können</i>	the Primordial Earth, as the Capacity
IV	ᚢ	(Th/D)	<i>das Urether, als die Tat</i>	the Primordial Ether, as the Act/Action
V	┘	(N)	<i>das Urwasser, als das Gesetz</i>	the Primordial Water, as the Law
VI	ᚱ	(S/Z)	<i>die Sonne und der Blitz, als Himmelsfeuer, als die Ordnung</i>	the Sun and the Lightening, as Heavenly-Fire, as the Order
VII	┘	(T)	<i>die Sonne und der Blitz, als Himmelsfeuer, im geistigen Innern</i>	the Sun and the Lightening, as Heavenly-Fire, as the spiritual Interior
VIII	ᚢ	(B/P)	<i>die Erde (Mittgart), im körperlichen Äußern</i>	The Earth (<i>Midgard</i>), in the physical Utterance
IX	┘	(L)	<i>das Alleben, die Eigenschaften bildend</i>	Universal-Life, the forming of Characteristics
X	ᚱ	(M)	<i>der Mond, die Vollendung</i>	the Moon, the Completion

The Aspiration sound (corresponding to the *Hagal* rune ✱) does not seem to have been given a value.

The *Kala*: Combinations of Sounds and ‘Seed-Words’

The Vowel and Consonant sounds are combined together to make syllables or sound formulas that List calls ‘Seed-Words’.

Each one of them, according to List, has an esoteric significance and he dedicates a considerable portion of his final book to each syllable, sometimes giving 2-3 (or more pages) for a single syllable.

The ordering of the sounds does not matter (it can be vowel-consonant or consonant-vowel), because the power and meaning is in the combination of sound qualities, and not in their ordering:

Table 3: Combinations of Vowels and Consonants creating ‘Seed-Words’

			1-4	5-6	7	8-9	10	1-4	5-6	7	8-9	10
			𐌲	𐌺	𐌴	𐌸	𐌹	𐌲	𐌺	𐌴	𐌸	𐌹
			A	E	I	O	U	A	E	I	O	U
I	𐌸𐌺	(F)	FA	FE	FI	FO	FU	AF	EF	IF	OF	UF
II	𐌹𐌺	(R)	RA	RE	RI	RO	RU	AR	ER	IR	OR	UR
III	𐌲𐌴	(K/G)	KA/GA	KE/GE	KI/GI	KO/GO	KU/GU	AK/AG	EK/EG	IK/IG	OK/OG	UK/UG
IV	𐌲𐌸	(Th/D)	ThA/DA	ThE/DE	ThI/DI	ThO/DO	ThU/DU	ATh/AD	ETTh/ED	ITh/ID	OTTh/OD	UTTh/UD
V	𐌲𐌹	(N)	NA	NE	NI	NO	NU	AN	EN	IN	ON	UN
VI	𐌹𐌴	(S/Z)	SA/ZA	SE/ZE	SI/ZI	SO/ZO	SU/ZU	AS/AZ	ES/EZ	IS/IZ	OS/OZ	US/UZ
VII	𐌹𐌸	(T)	TA	TE	TI	TO	TU	AT	ET	IT	OT	UT
VIII	𐌸𐌴	(B/P)	BA/PA	BE/PE	BI/PI	BO/PO	BU/PU	AB/AP	EB/EP	IB/IP	OB/OP	UB/UP
IX	𐌲𐌴	(L)	LA	LE	LI	LO	LU	AL	EL	IL	OL	UL
X	𐌲𐌹	(M)	MA	ME	MI	MO	MU	AM	EM	IM	OM	UM

The Seed-Words for the vowels are derived from either [1] the sound it makes (similarly combining with the five vowels) or [2] the name of the rune (although List calls these ‘inauthentic [*uneigentlichen*]’ because they already appear in the previous combinations):

Table 4: ‘Seed-Words’ for Vowels

			1-4	5-6	7	8-9	10	Name or Derivation
			𐌲	𐌺	𐌴	𐌸	𐌹	
			A	E	I	O	U	
1-4	𐌲	A	Aa	Ae	Ai	Ao	Au	<i>Ar or Ra</i>
5-6	𐌺	E	Ea	Ee	Ei	Eo	Eu	<i>Eh</i>
7	𐌴	I	Ia	Ie	Ii	Io	Iu	<i>Is or Si</i>
8-9	𐌸	O	Oa	Oe	Oi	Oo	Ou	<i>Os or So</i>
10	𐌹	U	Ua	Ue	Ui	Uo	Ui	<i>Ur or Ru</i>

These syllables or ‘Seed-Words’ [*Keimworte*] can then be combined to form “*Ur-Words*”, or Primordial-Words (the German word *Ur* is related to Primordial, Original, Before, etc).

A third kind of word is the Root-Word and can be the same as an *Ur-Word* or even a Seed-Word. The rune names themselves are all considered Root-Word.

Summary of Guido von List's *Kala*

When we put all of this together, List explains that we can derive the esoteric meaning behind words. These are some of the examples he gives:

FA = I + 1-4, which is: 'Primordial-Fire' + 'Cause or Force, the Will to Express it, Capacity as a Consequence, Realization of the Objective in Action'

BAR = VIII + 1-4 + II, which is: 'The Earth (Midgard) in the physical Utterance' + 'Cause or Force, the Will to Express it, Capacity as a Consequence, Realization of the Objective in Action' + 'Primordial-Air'

NOTh = V + 8-9 + IV, which is: 'Primordial-Water' + 'in the physical Utterance (physical Order), the forming of Characteristics' + 'Primordial-Ether'

UOTAN (Wotan) = 10 + 8-9 + VII + 1-4 + V, which is: 'in the Completion of the Plan from the Cause (1) or the preconceived Idea' + 'in the physical Utterance (physical Order), the forming of Characteristics' + 'Cause or Force, the Will to Express it, Capacity as a Consequence, Realization of the Objective in Action' + 'Primordial-Water', etc.

List saw the Runes not only as letters, but also as phonetic values, which he said was related to an ancient language (the *Kala*) and that by breaking words down into their syllables (or 'bud/kernel-words'), one is able to extract their esoteric meaning.

The use of these consonant & vowel combinations with a particular rune is something that many other runologists have continued to use, effectively becoming the associated Vocalization or Mantram for each rune. This is probably one of the reasons why List has been described as the pioneer of *völkisch* rune occultism.