

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

Ecstasy, Prophecy and Dreams

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHY · BOOK III · NOTEBOOK 9

Four frenzies, rapture, dreams and lots



BOOK III · CHAPTERS 45-52

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Ecstasy, Prophecy and Dreams

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA · THREE BOOKS OF OCCULT
PHILOSOPHY · BOOK III, CHAPTERS 45–52

Every chapter — four parts

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

*the complete chapter, from the Latin
edition of 1533*

IN PLAIN WORDS

what Agrippa actually claims

TERMS

the chapter concepts explained

HISTORICAL NOTE

*where the idea comes from and what
modern science says*

A historical text, not a manual.

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CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	4
I Of divination and frenzy	6
II Of the first kind of frenzy — from the muses	10
III Of the second kind of frenzy — from dionysus	17
IV Of the third kind of frenzy — from apollo	22
V Of the fourth kind of frenzy — from venus	29
VI Of rapture and of divinations at the hour of death	34
VII Of the prophetic dream	41
VIII Of lots and signs having the power of oracles	49
<i>Closing words</i>	55
<i>Printable pages — two pages</i>	56
<i>Glossary</i>	59



FOREWORD

How can a person know what has not yet happened? **Agrippa's answer: the soul, freed for a moment from the body, can touch the divine light** — in ecstasy, in rapture or in a dream.

This is the **ninth notebook** in the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy · Book III". It contains **chapters 45–52 of Book III**: divination and ecstasy; the four kinds of divine frenzy — from the Muses, from Dionysus, from Apollo and from Venus; rapture and the prophecies that come in sickness, in a swoon or at the hour of death; the prophetic dream and how to receive it; and lots and signs that possess the power of oracles.

How to read it. Every chapter has four parts. *In Agrippa's words* — the complete chapter, translated from the Latin edition of 1533. *In plain words* — what Agrippa actually claims. *Terms* — the concepts of the chapter; all of them are collected in the glossary at the end. *Historical note* — where the idea comes from and what modern science says about it.

In the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy · Book III":

1. The Path of the Magus — dedication and chapters 1–7
2. God and the Holy Names — chapters 8–13
3. Gods, Spirits and Demons — chapters 14–19
4. The Guardian Angel and the Language of Angels — chapters 20–23
5. The Names of Spirits — chapters 24–28
6. Seals of the Spirits — chapters 29–33
7. Man, the Image of God — chapters 34–40
8. The Soul after Death — chapters 41–44

- 9. Ecstasy, Prophecy and Dreams — chapters 45–52
- 10. Purity and Preparation — chapters 53–57
- 11. Sacrifices, Consecrations and Holy Days — chapters 58–65

CHAPTER I

OF DIVINATION AND FRENZY

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

Divination is that whereby priests, or others being struck, do discern the causes of things and even foresee things to come — namely, when oracles descend into them from the gods or from demons, and these deliver spirits unto them.

This descending the Platonists call the influences of superior souls into our souls; but Mercurius calleth them the senses of demons and the souls of demons.

Demons of this kind the ancients called **Eurycleans** and **Pythons** — such as were wont to enter into the bodies of men and to use their voices and tongues for the foretelling of things to come. And antiquity constantly believed this; whereof Plutarch also maketh mention in his *Dialogue of the Causes of the Ceasing of Oracles*.

But Cicero, following the Stoics, affirmeth that the foreknowledge of things to come belongeth to the gods alone. And Ptolemy the astrologer saith: **only they that are inspired by a deity do foretell particular things.**

Hereunto agreeth Peter the apostle, saying: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

And that the divinations of things to come belong unto God and to divine influences, Isaiah affirmeth, saying: "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."

But such influences or senses do not pass into our soul when it is earnestly busied about some other thing — **they pass into it when it is free.**

And of this freedom there are **three kinds**: namely **frenzy** (*furor*), **rapture** (*raptus*) and **dream** (*somnium*) — of each of which we shall now speak in order.

IN PLAIN WORDS

With this chapter Agrippa opens a new theme: how a person can learn what cannot be learned by his own powers — the hidden causes of things and the future. His answer is clear: a person does not obtain this from himself. Such knowledge comes from outside — from God, from the gods or from demons, who as it were pour their power into the human soul. The Platonists call this an influence of higher souls, Hermes calls it the presence of demons. Antiquity even believed that a spirit could enter a person and speak with his voice. To support his idea, Agrippa sets side by side very different witnesses: the Stoics, the astrologer Ptolemy, the apostle Peter and the prophet Isaiah. All of them, in his view, say one and the same thing: true **prophecy** belongs to the deity, not to human wisdom. The most important sentence of the chapter, however, is about a condition. The soul can receive such an influence only when it is **free** — when it is not occupied by everyday cares and the senses of the body. Agrippa finds three such freedoms: **frenzy**, rapture and dream. That is why this short chapter works as a table of contents for the whole section that follows.

TERMS

Divination (Lat. *divinatio*, from *divinus* "divine") — the revealing of hidden things or of the future; the Latin word itself shows that it was regarded as a divine ability.

Frenzy (Gr. *ekstasis* "standing outside oneself"; in Agrippa Lat. *furor* "inspired madness") — a state in which the soul as it were leaves ordinary consciousness and receives a higher power.

Python (Gr. *Pythōn*) — a spirit or a person through whom a prophesying voice speaks; the word is connected with Delphi, and in the Latin Bible, in the Acts of the Apostles (16:16), the servant girl at Philippi has "a spirit of python".

Eurycleans — most likely a garbled Greek *Eurykleis*: so, after the name of the famous seer Eurycles, the ventriloquist soothsayers through whom a spirit was thought to speak were once called.

Mercurius (Lat. *Mercurius*) — here Hermes Trismegistus, the legendary Egyptian sage to whom the Hermetic writings were ascribed; Latin authors often called him by the name of Mercury.

Stoics (Gr. *stoa* "portico, colonnade") — a school of philosophers named after the Painted Portico in Athens, where Zeno taught; the Stoics defended divination as part of a lawful, ordered world.

Rapture (Lat. *raptus* "a seizing away") — a state in which the soul is as it were torn by force from the body and the senses; Agrippa treats it as the second kind of the soul's "freedom".



ILLUSTRATION 1

An empty tower room with an open window — divine influences pass into the soul only when it is free.