

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

Harmony and the Measure of Man

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHY · BOOK II · NOTEBOOK 4

Figures, music and the proportions of the body



BOOK II · CHAPTERS 23-28

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Harmony and the Measure of Man

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA · THREE BOOKS OF OCCULT
PHILOSOPHY · BOOK II, CHAPTERS 23–28

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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FOREWORD

The three notebooks before this one were about numbers — their meaning, their holiness and their writing. Now Agrippa asks how number shows itself **in form and in sound**: why certain figures are said to work in magic, why two strings agree, and why the human body is measured by man himself.

This is the **fourth notebook** in the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy · Book II". It contains **Book II, chapters 23–28**: geometrical figures and the five Platonic bodies; musical harmony and its powers; sound and concord, and where the force of music comes from; the agreement of harmony with the celestial things; **the proportion and measure of man's body**, with seven figures from the original edition; and finally the composition of the human soul, which, for Agrippa, is itself built upon musical ratios.

How to read it. Every chapter has 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, all gathered in the glossary. *Historical note* — where the idea comes from and what modern science says.

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

1. The Power of Numbers — Book II, chapters 1–9
2. The Sacred Numbers — chapters 10–15
3. Marks and the Tables of the Planets — chapters 16–22
4. Harmony and the Measure of Man — chapters 23–28
5. Observations of the Heavens — chapters 29–37
6. Images, Talismans and Characters — chapters 38–52

7. The Soul of the World — chapters 53–60

CHAPTER I

OF GEOMETRICAL FIGURES AND BODIES

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

The geometrical figures also, which arise out of numbers, are accounted no less powerful.

Amongst these, first, the circle answers unto unity and the denary: for unity is the centre and the circumference of all things; and the denary, being gathered together, returns into unity, from whence it had its beginning, being the end and the fulness of all numbers.

The circle is called an infinite line, wherein there is neither bound from which nor bound to which, and whose beginning and end is in every point. Whence also the motion of a circle is called infinite — not indeed in respect of time, but of place.

Hence the figure of the circle is accounted the largest and the most perfect of all, and the fittest for bindings and drivings out. Therefore they who conjure the evil demons are wont to fortify themselves with a circle.

The **pentangle** also, by the power of the number five, has dominion over the evil demons — as well from the fabric of its lines, wherein within there are five obtuse angles and without five acute, as from the hexagons of the five triangles wherewith it is encompassed. **The inner pentangle contains in itself a great mystery.**

In like manner concerning the other figures — the triangle, the square, the hexagon, the heptagon, the octagon and the rest — is it to be searched out and understood, for many of them are made by manifold and divers intersections and get divers significations and powers according to the divers manner of the lines and the proportion of numbers.

THE FIGURE OF THE CROSS

Unto the figure of the cross the Egyptians and the Arabians ascribed the highest power, and that it is the firmest receiver of all the celestial powers and intelligences — because it is the most right of all figures, containing four right angles, and it is the first description of a surface, having length and breadth.

And they said that it was conspired by the strength of the heavens, for their strength comes forth through the rightness of angles and of rays. **And the stars are then most powerful when they possess the four corners in a celestial figure and by the mutual crossing of their rays make a cross.**

Moreover it has the greatest agreement with the five, the seven and the nine — the most powerful numbers, as we showed before.

The Egyptian priests also, from the very beginning of religion, reckoned it amongst the sacred letters, and it signified unto them allegorically the life of the salvation to come. It was imprinted also upon the breast of Serapis, and amongst the Greeks it was held in great honour.

But this is to be noted: that whatsoever figures do work wonders when we write them upon paper, plates or images, **they work no otherwise than by the power which they have received from more noble figures** — by a certain love or natural fitness or likeness, so far forth as they are conformed unto them.

Even as an echo arises from a wall set over against; or as in a hollow glass the beams of the sun are gathered together and afterward, striking against a body or a tree set over against, do kindle it; or as one harp raises a sound in another harp, only because there is set over against it a figure answerable and like; **or as two strings of a lyre, stretched at an equal distance and tuned unto one pitch — when the one is touched, the other suddenly trembles also.**

GEOMETRICAL BODIES

The like is to be understood also of the geometrical bodies: the sphere, the tetrahedron, the hexahedron, the octahedron, the icosahedron, the dodecahedron and such like.

Nor is that to be passed over, what figures Pythagoras and, following him, Timaeus Locrus and Plato assigned unto the elements and unto the heavens:

ELEMENT

BODY

Earth	the cube — eight solid angles, six bases, the form of a square
Fire	the pyramid — four triangular bases, as many solid angles, twelve planes
Air	the octahedron — eight triangular bases, six solid angles, four and twenty planes
Water	the icosahedron — twenty bases, twelve solid angles
Heaven	the dodecahedron — twelve pentagonal bases, twenty solid angles, sixty planes

But he that shall know the powers of these figures and bodies and their mutual relations and properties, shall be able to work many wonderful things in natural and perspective magic — and most of all in glasses.

And I know how to make of them wonderful things, and glasses wherein a man may see whatsoever he will, from the greatest distance.