

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

Images, Talismans and Characters

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHY • BOOK II • NOTEBOOK 6

Planetary images, lunar mansions and geomantic figures



BOOK II • CHAPTERS 38-52

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Images, Talismans and Characters

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA · THREE BOOKS OF OCCULT
PHILOSOPHY · BOOK II, CHAPTERS 38–52

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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FOREWORD

In the previous notebook Agrippa taught when to work. Now he shows how that knowledge of the heavens was turned into **objects**: images cut in stone, metal plates, seals and characters that were believed to "receive" the influence of the stars.

This is the **sixth notebook** in the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy · Book II". It contains **Book II, chapters 38–52**: the images of the seven planets; the image of the dragon's head and tail; the twenty-eight talismans of the mansions of the Moon; the fifteen images of the Behenian stars; **the sixteen geomantic figures**; images made "after the mind of the maker"; the celestial observations for their practice; and the characters drawn from figures and things — with the tables of the 1533 edition.

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 THE IMAGES OF SATURN

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

What images they attributed unto the other planets, of these there are very large volumes written amongst the ancient wise men, so that there is no need to recount them here; **yet some few of them I will recite.**

From the works of Saturn they made, Saturn himself ascending, in a stone which is called the **Lodestone**, the image of a man having the face of a hart and the feet of a camel, sitting upon a chair or upon a dragon, holding in his right hand a **sickle**, in his left a **spear**. This image they hoped would be profitable unto them for **length of life**.

They made likewise another image of Saturn for length of life, in a **Sapphire**, in the hour of Saturn, he ascending or being fortunately placed: the figure whereof was an old man sitting upon a high chair, having his hands lifted up above his head, and holding in them **a fish or a sickle**, and under his feet **a bunch of grapes**; his head covered with a black or dusky cloth, and all his garments black or dusky.

The same image they made also **against the diseases of the stone and of the kidneys** — namely, in the hour of Saturn, he ascending with the third face of Aquarius.

From the works of Saturn they made also an image **for the increase of power**, Saturn ascending in Capricorn: the form whereof was an old man leaning upon a staff, holding in his hand a crooked sickle, clothed in black garments.

They made also an image of **copper**, Saturn ascending in his rising, namely in the first degree of Aries — or, which is more true, in the first degree of Capricorn. **And this image they affirm to speak with the voice of a man.**

They made also, from the works of Saturn and of Mercury together, an image of molten metal in the form of a beautiful man, **which promised to foretell things to come.** This they made on the day of Mercury, in the third hour of Saturn, the sign of Gemini ascending — the house of Mercury, which signifieth prophets — Saturn and Mercury being in conjunction in Aquarius in the ninth part of heaven, which is also called **God.**

Moreover, let Saturn behold the ascendant with a trine aspect, and the Moon likewise, and let the Sun look upon the place of the conjunction; let Venus be powerful in some angle and in the western part; let Mars be combust of the Sun, but let him behold neither Saturn nor Mercury.

For they said that the splendour of the powers of these stars is poured forth upon this image, and it speaketh with men and declareth unto them things profitable.

IN PLAIN WORDS

*Agrippa begins with an honest admission: there are so many descriptions of planetary images that he mentions only a few. The images of Saturn follow a single logic. Saturn is the slowest of the ancient planets — it takes about 29.5 years to go round the zodiac — so it was imagined as an old man. The Greek Cronus overthrew his father with a sickle, the Roman Saturn was a god of sowing and the fields, and later he was confused with Chronos — time. From this come the **sickle**, the dark clothes and the promise of a long life. The material is not chosen at random either: in Book I the lodestone and the sapphire are counted among Saturn's stones. Each work has its set moment — the hour of Saturn, when the planet is rising or stands in its own sign. The boldest claim is the last one: a metal figure cast during a conjunction of Saturn and Mercury is supposed to **speak and prophesy**, because the power of the stars "pours" into it.*

TERMS

Lodestone (Lat. *magnes*, Gr. *magnēs lithos* "stone of Magnesia") — a natural iron-ore stone that attracts iron; in the tradition it was counted as a stone of Saturn.

Sapphire (Lat. *sapphirus*) — a blue gemstone of corundum; in antiquity the name may also have been used for lapis lazuli flecked with golden sparks.

Cronus (Gr. *Kronos*, Lat. *Saturnus*) — the Greek Titan who overthrew his father Uranus with a sickle, and whom the Romans identified with their god of sowing, Saturn.

Planetary hour (Lat. *hora planetaria*) — one of the twelve parts of the day or of the night, which the seven planets "rule" in turn; the first hour of the day belongs to the planet of that day.

Face or decan (Lat. *facies*, Gr. *dekanos*) — a third of a zodiac sign, a 10° span, to which a planet and an image of its own were assigned.

Ninth house (Gr. *theos* "god") — the place in the horoscope that Hellenistic astrology called "God" and associated with religion, dreams and prophecy.



ILLUSTRATION 1

A sickle, a lodestone and grapes — the things of the image of Saturn: an old man, time and harvest.



HISTORICAL NOTE

A story about a speaking image was nothing new to Agrippa's readers. The Hermetic dialogue *Asclepius*, preserved in Latin, describes Egyptian statues into which people had "drawn down" divine power by means of rituals and substances, so that they foretold the future and sent diseases or healed them. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance read this text as ancient Egyptian wisdom, although it was written in late antiquity.