

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

Light, Fascination and Divination

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHY · NOTEBOOK 5

Colours, the gaze, birds and thunder



BOOK I · CHAPTERS 49-57

BLUSABOOKS



Light, Fascination and Divination

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA · THREE BOOKS OF OCCULT
PHILOSOPHY · BOOK I, CHAPTERS 49–57

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's concepts explained

HISTORICAL NOTE

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

A historical text, not a manual of fortune-telling.

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FOREWORD

In the fourth notebook Agrippa tried to "catch" the powers of the stars with smoke, ointments and rings. Now he turns to what can be seen and heard: **can a colour carry the power of a star? Can a gaze bewitch? Can the flight of a bird or a clap of thunder foretell the future?**

This is the **fifth notebook** in the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy". It contains **Book I, chapters 49–57**: the power of light, colours and lamps, **fascination** by the eyes, the features of the face and the lines of the hand, **augury** from birds and beasts, signs from lightning and thunder, and the divinations of the four elements.

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 gathered in the glossary at the end. *Historical note* — where the idea comes from and what modern science says. This is a book of history, not a manual of fortune-telling.

In the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy":

1. Magic and the Four Elements — Book I, chapters 1–12
2. Occult Virtues, Sympathies and Antipathies — chapters 13–21
3. The World of the Planets — chapters 22–36
4. Talismans, Fumigations and Rings — chapters 37–48
5. Light, Fascination and Divination — chapters 49–57
6. Dreams, the Soul and the Imagination — chapters 58–68
7. The Power of Words and Letters — chapters 69–74

CHAPTER XLIX

OF LIGHT AND COLOURS, OF LANTERNS AND LAMPS, AND WHICH COLOURS ARE ASSIGNED TO WHICH STARS, HOUSES AND ELEMENTS

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

Light is a formal quality, a simple act and image of the understanding. First it is poured out from the divine mind into all things, but in God the Father himself, who is the father of lights, it is the first true light. Then in his Son, a shining brightness and abundance; in the Holy Spirit, a burning splendour that surpasses every understanding, even, as Dionysius says, the understanding of the seraphim.

Therefore in the angels it becomes a shining understanding and a joy that overflows all the bounds of reason, yet in different degrees according to the nature of the understanding that receives it. After that it descends into the celestial things, where there is abundance of life, effective increase and visible brightness. In natural fire a certain liveliness is implanted from the celestial things. And finally in men there is the clear course of reason and the knowledge of divine things.

In the eyes it becomes visible clearness. Passing through transparent bodies, it produces colour and a shining beauty in them; but in opaque things, a certain beneficent and generative power that presses in as far as the centre, where its rays, gathered into a narrow place, produce a dark heat that torments and boils. **So all things feel the liveliness of light according to their capacity.**

For this reason the magicians have forbidden that the shadow of a sick man, or a sick man's urine, be poured out towards the Sun or the Moon: **for the penetrating rays of light suddenly carry off from the sick body the harmful qualities that they bring with them, and cast them back.** This is the reason why those who practise fascination are watched, so that their shadow may not touch anyone, just as the shadow of the hyena makes dogs dumb by its touch.

Certain lights are also made by art, by lamps, lanterns, candles and the like, from certain things and liquids chosen at a favourable time according to the rule of the stars and compounded with one another according to their agreement. When these are lit and shine by themselves alone, they are wont to produce wonderful and celestial effects, which men often marvel at.

So Pliny reports from Anaxilaus that the seed of mares, burned in lamps, monstrously shows the appearance of horses' heads; the same happens with the seed of asses. And wicks dipped in wax and lit make flies appear; and the skin of a snake, burned in a lamp, makes snakes appear.

And they say that when grapes are in flower, if someone ties to them a little bottle full of oil and leaves it so until they ripen, then this oil, afterwards lit in a lamp, makes grapes appear. The same holds for other fruits as well.

But if **centaury** is mixed with honey and the blood of a hoopoe and put into a lantern, those present will appear larger than the Sun; and if it is lit at night in clear weather, the stars are seen running to and fro. **The ink of the cuttlefish** too has this power, that when it is added to a lantern it makes Ethiopians appear.

It is also said that a candle made of certain Saturnine things, **if, once lit, it is put out in the mouth of a man lately dead, then afterwards, whenever it shines alone, brings the greatest sadness and fear upon those present.** Of many such lamps and lanterns Hermes, Plato and Kyranides tell, and among the more recent Albert, who wrote a separate work about it.

Colours too are certain lights, which, mixed with things, are wont to expose them to those stars and heavenly bodies with which they agree.

Here we shall tell how the colours of lower and mixed things are distributed among the various planets:

PLANET	COLOURS
Saturn	all black, gloomy, earthy, leaden, dull
Jupiter	sapphire, sky-blue, evergreen, clear, purple, darkish, golden, mixed with silvery
Mars	red, glowing, fiery, flaming, violet, purple, bloody, and the colour of iron
Sun	golden, saffron and purple, and the brightest
Venus, Mercury and Moon	all white, fair, many-coloured, green, reddish, slightly saffron or purple

Moreover, from the houses of heaven:

HOUSE	COLOUR
1st and 7th	white
2nd and 12th	green
3rd and 11th	saffron
4th and 10th	red
5th and 9th	honey
6th and 8th	black

The elements also have their colours, by which physicians judge of the complexion and property of a nature. The colour of earth, which comes from cold and dryness, is dull and black, and betokens black bile and a Saturnine nature. Bluish, tending towards white, signifies phlegm, for cold whitens what is

moist, but dryness blackens. A reddish colour points to blood. But the fiery or flaming colour, which burns, points to yellow bile.

And since yellow bile, because of its subtlety, is easily mixed with everything, it produces various colours in turn. If it is mixed with blood and the blood prevails, it blooms red; if the bile prevails, it makes a reddish brown; if the mixture is equal, it makes a yellowish red. But if it is mixed with the juice of black bile, it stains to blackness; with black bile and phlegm in equal parts it makes the colour of hemp; if phlegm is in excess, yellow; if black bile wins, a bluish grey.

But all colours are more powerful when they are in silk, or in metal, or in transparent substances, or in precious stones, and in those things which more closely imitate the likeness of the heavens, but most of all in living beings.

IN PLAIN WORDS

In this chapter Agrippa describes light as a divine power that flows down through all the degrees of the world: from God to the angels, the stars, fire, the human mind and finally the eyes. Each thing takes in light as far as it can. From this he concludes that light can also carry away sickness, so a sick person's urine must not be poured out towards the Sun or the Moon. Then come recipes for lamps that supposedly make those present see horses' heads, snakes or grapes, and a candle that brings sadness. The second half of the chapter is a catalogue of colours: which colours belong to which planet, which house of heaven and which element, and how physicians judged from the colour of the skin which bodily humour ruled in a person.