

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

Observations of the Heavens

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHY · BOOK II · NOTEBOOK 5

Stars, mansions of the Moon and planetary hours



BOOK II · CHAPTERS 29-37

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Observations of the Heavens

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA · THREE BOOKS OF OCCULT
PHILOSOPHY · BOOK II, CHAPTERS 29–37

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 notebooks before this one were about numbers, figures and concords. Now Agrippa raises his eyes to the sky and asks a practical question: **when** will a work succeed? For him the power of every work depends on the moment: where the planets stand, which mansion holds the Moon, whose hour is running.

This is the **fifth notebook** in the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy · Book II". It contains **Book II, chapters 29–37**: why the heavens must be observed; when the planets are strong; the fixed stars; the Sun and the Moon; **the twenty-eight mansions of the Moon** with their names and effects; the planetary hours; how things made by art receive celestial power; and the images of the zodiac, the decans and the constellations.

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 OBSERVATION OF THE CELESTIALS IN EVERY MAGICAL WORK

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

Every natural virtue doth work things far more wonderful when it is not only compounded of a natural proportion, but also chosen by an opportune observation of the celestials — namely, when the celestial power is most strong unto that effect which we desire, and when it is helped also by many other celestial things.

For inferior things are subject unto the celestial, as females unto their males, to be made fruitful by them.

Wherefore in every work there must be observed:

- the **situation and motion** of the stars and planets
- their **aspects** in the signs and degrees
- and how all these stand in respect of **the longitude and latitude of the region**

For thereby are varied the qualities of the angles which the rays of the celestial bodies describe upon the figure of the thing, and according unto these is the celestial virtue poured in.

Wherefore, as often as thou art about to work anything which pertaineth unto any planet, thou must place it in its dignities, fortunate and powerful — both in the day and in the hour — and ruling in the figure of the heaven.

Neither shalt thou expect the effect from the signicator of the work alone: **thou must observe the Moon also, and direct her opportunely** — for without the favour of the Moon thou shalt bring nothing to pass.

But if thou shalt obtain more patrons of the work, see that they be all powerful, and that they behold one another with a friendly aspect. If that cannot be, it is convenient at least to obtain them in the angles.

The Moon thou shalt observe thus: when she either beholdeth them both, or is joined unto the one and looketh upon the other; or when she passeth from the conjunction or aspect of the one unto the conjunction or aspect of the other.

And one thing more I will by no means omit: **that in every work Mercury is diligently to be observed.** For he is the messenger between both — the inferior and the superior gods: when he is with the good, he increaseth their goodness; when with the evil, he poureth in their malice.

We call that sign or planet unfortunate which is in the aspect of Saturn or Mars — most of all in opposition or in quartile, for these are aspects of enmity. But the conjunction, the trine and the sextile are aspects of friendship; and amongst these the conjunction is the stronger.

The conjunction of the Sun all the planets do fear, but they rejoice in his trine and sextile.

IN PLAIN WORDS

Here Agrippa lays down the basic rule for the whole celestial part of Book II: the natural power of things is not enough on its own; they must also be put together at the right moment — when the heavens are strongest for exactly the effect we want to achieve. He compares lower things to a woman made fruitful by a man: the heavens give the power, the earth receives it. So in every work you must follow the position of the planets, their aspects, and even the geographical longitude and latitude where the work is done. An **aspect** is the angle that two planets form with each other as seen from the Earth: 0° is a conjunction, 60° a sextile, 90° a square, 120° a trine, 180° an opposition. The planet that "rules" the work must be in its dignities — the places in the zodiac where it is considered strong. Nothing succeeds without the Moon, so you must watch which planet she is joining at that moment or which one she is "looking at". Special care is needed with Mercury, because he takes on the nature of the planets he joins. The squares and oppositions of Saturn and Mars are hostile; the conjunction, trine and sextile are friendly. Only a close conjunction with the Sun is something the planets "fear", because they vanish in his light.

TERMS

Aspect (Lat. *aspectus* "look, gaze") — the angular distance between two planets on the circle of the zodiac, which astrology regards as their mutual "gaze" and the manner of their influence on each other.

Conjunction (Lat. *coniunctio*) — the position in which two planets stand practically in the same place in the zodiac, that is, about 0° apart.

Square and opposition (Lat. *quadratus, oppositio*) — an angle of 90° and of 180° between planets; in the tradition both count as the hostile or "evil" aspects.

Trine and sextile (Lat. *trigonus, sextilis*) — an angle of 120° and of 60°, a third and a sixth of the circle; in the tradition the friendly or "good" aspects.

Significator (Lat. *significator*) — the planet that, in a horoscope or at a chosen moment, "signifies" a particular thing or work, and whose position must therefore be judged first.

Electional astrology (Lat. *electiones*, Gr. *katarchai* "beginnings") — the branch of astrology that does not predict from the moment of birth but looks for the most favourable moment to begin some undertaking.



ILLUSTRATION 1

An astrolabe and a star map — for Agrippa, no magical work is possible without the state of the heavens.