

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

Talismans, Fumigations and Rings

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHY · NOTEBOOK 4

How the ancients tried to catch the powers of the stars



BOOK I · CHAPTERS 37-48

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Talismans, Fumigations and Rings

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA · THREE BOOKS OF OCCULT
PHILOSOPHY · BOOK I, CHAPTERS 37–48

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. The recipes must not be tried. This book does not
replace medical advice.*

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FOREWORD

In the third notebook Agrippa divided the whole world among the planets. Now he asks the next question: **if the powers of the stars dwell in things, can they be gathered and set to work?**

This is the **fourth notebook** in the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy". It contains **Book I, chapters 37–48** — Agrippa's "practical" part: drawing down heavenly gifts, bindings and sorceries, **fumigations** for each planet, ointments and love potions, **amulets, rings and the powers of places**.

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. Many substances named here are poisonous: this is a book of history, and none of the recipes should ever be tried.

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 XXXVII

HOW BY CERTAIN NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL PREPARATIONS WE DRAW CELESTIAL AND VITAL GIFTS FROM ABOVE

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

The Academics, together with Trismegistus and the Brahmin Iarchas, and the Hebrew Kabbalists, acknowledge that **everything beneath the sphere of the Moon, in this lower world, is subject to generation and corruption.** The same is true in the celestial world too, but in a certain manner; then also in the intelligible world, but far more perfectly and in a better manner; and finally, most perfectly of all, in the archetype.

And so every lower thing answers to its higher one and, through that, to the highest, each according to its kind. And from these it receives from the heavens that celestial power which is called the quintessence, or the spirit of the world, or the middle nature; from the intelligible world, a spiritual, living and lively power that surpasses every quality; and finally from the archetype, through these intermediaries and according to its degree, the original power of all perfection.

Hence every thing can be skilfully led back: from these lower things to the stars, from them to their Intelligences, and from there to the archetype. From this series flows all magic and all occult philosophy.

For every day something natural is drawn by art, and every day something divine is drawn through nature. Observing this, **the Egyptians called nature a**

magician, that is, the very magical power that draws like by like and the agreeable by the agreeable.

Such drawing, which comes about through the mutual agreement of things, the higher with the lower, **the Greeks called sympathy.**

So earth agrees with water in coldness, water with air in moisture, air with fire in heat, and fire agrees with the heavens in matter. And fire does not mix with water except through air, nor air with earth except through water. **So too the soul does not mix with the body except through the spirit, nor the understanding with the spirit except through the soul.**

So we see that when nature has formed the human foetus, by this very preparation it at once draws down spirit from the universe. This spirit is the kindling in the spirit and the body, so that it may be divinely joined with the understanding and the mind, **just as in wood dryness is prepared so that oil may soak in; the oil that has soaked in is food for the fire; and the fire itself is the bearer of light.**

By these examples we see how, by certain natural and artificial preparations, we can receive celestial gifts from above. For stones and metals agree with herbs, herbs with animals, animals with the heavens, the heavens with the Intelligences, and these with the divine properties, and with God himself, **after whose likeness and image all things are created.**

But the first image of God is the world; the image of the world is man; of man, the animal; of the animal, the zoophyte; of that, the plant; of the plant, the metals; and the images and likenesses of these are shown by stones.

And again, in spiritual things the plant agrees with the animal in growth, the animal with man in feeling, man with the demon in understanding, and the demon with God in immortality.

Divinity is joined to the mind, the mind to the understanding, the understanding to intention, intention to imagination, imagination to sensation, sensation to the senses, and the senses at last to things themselves.

For such is the bond and continuity of nature that every higher power, sending out its rays through every lower one in a long and unbroken series, flows down to the very last; and the lower are so joined to their higher ones that they reach up to the highest.

For the lower are so joined to the higher that the influence from their head, the first cause, goes forth as if along a stretched string down to the very lowest end.

If one end of it is touched, the whole trembles, and such a touch resounds at the other end. And when some lower thing is moved, the higher one to which it answers is moved too, just like the strings of a well-tuned cithara.

IN PLAIN WORDS

Here Agrippa sets out the basic idea of his whole magic. The world is built like a staircase: on the lowest step are stones and metals, above them plants, animals and man, then the stars, then the spiritual Intelligences and, at the very top, God. Each step reflects the one above and receives power from it. That is why things which "agree" with one another can draw one another, and it is exactly this drawing that the Greeks called sympathy. If a thing on earth is rightly prepared, it becomes a kind of vessel into which a higher gift flows, just as dry wood soaks up oil and the oil feeds the flame. The chapter ends with the famous image: the world is like a stretched string, and if you touch one end, the whole of it trembles.

TERMS

Academics (Lat. *Academici*) — followers of Plato's Academy; in Agrippa's time the name for Platonists and Neoplatonists.

Archetype (Lat. *archetypus*) — the first pattern after which everything is made; for Agrippa, God himself and his thoughts.

Quintessence (Lat. *quinta essentia*) — the "fifth essence": a subtle substance, or spirit of the world, that is none of the four elements and links heaven with earth.

Sympathy (Gk. *sympatheia*) — "feeling together": the hidden mutual attraction of things because of their likeness or agreement.

Cithara (Lat. *cithara*) — an ancient stringed instrument, a kind of lyre.



ILLUSTRATION 1

Preparations believed to draw down heavenly gifts — like herbs that take in the power of the sun.