

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

The Soul of the World

THE OCCULT PHILOSOPHY • BOOK II • NOTEBOOK 7

Divination, the celestial souls and the ascent of the mind



BOOK II • CHAPTERS 53–60

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The Soul of the World

HEINRICH CORNELIUS AGRIPPA · THREE BOOKS OF OCCULT
PHILOSOPHY · BOOK II, CHAPTERS 53–60

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

After numbers, squares, images and characters, Agrippa asks in his last eight chapters **why any of it should work at all**. His answer is not practical but philosophical: the world is alive, it has a soul and a mind, and all its parts are joined like the strings of a single instrument.

This is the **seventh and last notebook** in the series "Agrippa · The Occult Philosophy · Book II". It contains **Book II, chapters 53–60**: why no divination is complete without astrology; what a lot is and where its power comes from; **the soul of the world** in the poets and in reason; the names of the celestial souls and the seven governors; and finally how the human mind ascends step by step to the first author. With it **Book II comes to an end**.

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

THAT NO DIVINATION IS PERFECT WITHOUT ASTROLOGY

IN AGRIPPA'S WORDS

In the foregoing chapters we have spoken of divers kinds of divination. **But this must be observed: that they all require the use and rules of astrology, as the most necessary key for the knowledge of all secrets** — and that all kinds of divination have their roots and foundations in astrology itself, so that without it they seem to be of little or nothing.

Wherefore, **whether the physiognomist behold the body, the forehead or the hand; or the augur have searched out a dream or the sign of a bird — if the judgement of things to come be right, the figure of the heavens must likewise be searched out**, by whose indications, together with the likenesses of the signs, true or probable opinions are born concerning that which is signified.

And if any prodigy hath appeared, a figure of the heavens must be erected; and there must also be searched out what hath happened in the revolutions of the years, from the great conjunctions and eclipses; then also the nativities, origins, foundations and courses of those princes, peoples, kingdoms and cities where it hath appeared, and into what place of each figure of the heavens it hath fallen — **that from all these we may at last come to a reasonable and most probable signification.**

After the same order, though with less labour, we must proceed also in the interpretation of dreams.

And also **geomancy itself, the most exact of lots**, which divineth by points of earth, or by anything written upon some surface, or by chance — this also first bringeth its figures unto celestial things, namely unto those sixteen which we named before, and from their properties and foundations frameth its judgement after the astrological manner.

And hither look all the divinations of natural lots: **whose whole power can be from nowhere else than from the heavens, and from the mind of those that work.**

For whatsoever in these inferior things is moved, stirred and brought forth by any motion, **doth certainly imitate the motions and influences of the superiors**, unto which it is bound as unto roots, causes and signs.

Hence dice, the tetrahedron, hexahedron, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedron, made with certain numbers, signs and stars in convenient times under the celestial influences, and inscribed with the wonderful art of prophesying, **do by their casts obtain the power of divination** — as those dice of Praeneste, in which, as we read, the fates of the Romans were contained.

IN PLAIN WORDS

*This chapter is a kind of summary of all the previous kinds of divination. Agrippa claims that physiognomy, dream interpretation, watching birds and even geomancy are incomplete on their own — they need astrology as a **key**. The logic runs like this: everything that happens on earth imitates the movements of the heavens, so every sign — a feature of the face, a dream or the flight of a bird — is only an echo of what was first written in the stars. That is why the diviner must erect a figure of the heavens, that is, draw up how the planets and signs are arranged at a given moment. If a prodigy has appeared, for example a strange birth or a comet, one must look even more widely: the great conjunctions of the planets, eclipses, the "birth" horoscope of a city or a ruler. For dreams a simpler check is enough, but the principle stays the same. Even a throw of dice gains power only if the dice were made at the right moment, with set numbers and the proper signs. So for Agrippa **chance** is not empty — it is a reflection of the heavenly order that one must know how to read.*

TERMS

Physiognomy (Gr. *physiognōmonia*, from *physis* "nature" and *gnōmōn* "one who knows") — the art of judging a person's character and fate from the features of the face and the build of the body.

Augur (Lat. *augur*) — a Roman state priest who determined from the flight and cries of birds and from other signs whether the gods favoured an intended undertaking.

Prodigy (Lat. *prodigium* "portent") — an unusual phenomenon, such as a deformed birth or a "rain of blood", which the Romans regarded as a warning from the gods

that had to be expiated with rituals.

Great conjunction (Lat. *coniunctio magna*) — the meeting of Jupiter and Saturn in the same place of the zodiac, which recurs roughly every 20 years and which Arabic and medieval astrologers connected with changes of kingdoms and religions.

Platonic solids — the five regular polyhedra (the tetrahedron, the hexahedron or cube, the octahedron, the dodecahedron and the icosahedron), which Plato in the *Timaeus* connected with the four elements and the universe.

Lots of Praeneste (Lat. *sortes Praenestinae*) — oak tablets bearing ancient characters, which were mixed and drawn in the temple of Fortuna at Praeneste to answer questions.



ILLUSTRATION 1

An armillary sphere and knucklebones — for Agrippa, every divination rests at last on the figure of heaven.