

AGRIPPA VON NETTESHEIM



THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
NATURAL  
MAGIC

# **The Philosophy Of Natural Magic**

**Henry Cornelius Agrippa Von Nettesheim**

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## **The Philosophy Of Natural Magic**

### **Agrippa.**

Mr. Henry Morley, an eminent English scholar, in his Life of Cornelius Agrippa, makes these tributary statements:

He secured the best honors attainable in art and arms; was acquainted with eight languages, being the master of six. His natural bent had been from early youth to a consideration of Divine Mysteries. To learn these and teach them to others had been at all times his chief ambition. He is distinguished among the learned for his cultivation of Occult Philosophy, upon which he has written a complete work.

### **Sublime Occult Philosophy.**

JUDICIOUS READER: This is true and sublime Occult Philosophy. To understand the mysterious influences of the intellectual world upon the celestial, and of both upon the



terrestrial; and to know how to dispose and fit ourselves so as to be capable of receiving the superior operations of these worlds, whereby we may be enabled to operate wonderful things by a natural power--to discover the secret counsels of men, to increase riches, to overcome enemies, to procure the favor of men, to expel diseases, to preserve health, to prolong life, to renew youth, to foretell future events, to see and know things done many miles off, and such like as these. These things may seem incredible, yet read but the ensuing treatise and thou shalt see the possibility confirmed both by reason and example.

--J. F., the translator of the English edition of 1651.

## **Preface.**

In the last half of 1509 and the first months of 1510, Cornelius Agrippa, known in his day as a Magician, gathered together all the Mystic lore he had obtained by the energy and ardor of youth and compiled it into the elaborate system of Magic, in three books, known as Occult Philosophy, the first book of which--Natural Magic--constitutes the present volume. Agrippa published his Occult Philosophy, with additional chapters, in 1533. The only English translation appeared in London in 1651. It is a thoroughly edited and revised edition of this latter work that we produce. Some translating has been done and missing parts supplied. The reader is assured that while we have modified some of the very broad English of the seventeenth century, that he has a thoroughly valid work. Due care has been taken to preserve all the quaintness of the English text as far as consistent with plain reading. We have endeavored to do full justice to our author, the demands of those purely mystical, and the natural

conservatism of the antiquary and collector. In this we believe we have fully succeeded.

The life of Agrippa, up to the time of writing his Occult Philosophy, is also given, drawn mostly from Henry Morley's excellent life of Cornelius Agrippa.

That part of the volume credited to Mr. Morley maybe designated as an honest skeptic's contribution to Mysticism, and his chapters are produced entire, as justice to both him and Agrippa cannot be done otherwise, and they are an especially valuable part of Mystic literature.

The table of the Cabala, newly compiled for this volume, will be found to possess superior features over all others.

Following the above we give a chapter on the Empyrean Heaven, which will explain much that our author has written. It is derived mainly from an old occult work on "Physic."

The Symbols of the Alchemists will be found both useful and instructive. The chapter on the Magic Mirror, which ends the work, is believed to be the best contribution on the subject extant.

All the original illustrations and some new and selected ones will be found, as also various etchings of characters. That one on the Empyrean Heaven contains, we have cause to believe, some of the very hidden knowledge relating to the Lost Word. It is a much older plate than the work it was taken from.

Some parts of the volume will interest those who love to work out hidden things.

The editor conveys his warmest thanks to those friends who have encouraged him in the work--on the Cabala table, the illustration of the Grand Solar Man and the translating--outside of which he has not asked or received any help. This being the case our friends will please excuse any particular thing that may not sound pleasantly to the ear.

## **Early Life Of Cornelius Agrippa.**

AT Cologne, on the 14th of September, 1486, there was born into the noble house of Nettesheim a son, whom his parents called in baptism Henry Cornelius Agrippa. Some might, at first thought, suppose that the last of the three was a Christian name likely to find especial favor with the people of Cologne, the site of whose town, in days of Roman sovereignty, Marcus Agrippa's camp suggested and the colony of Agrippina fixed. But the existence of any such predilection is disproved by some volumes filed with the names of former natives of Cologne. There were as few Agrippas there as elsewhere, the use of the name being everywhere confined to a few individuals taken from a class that was itself not numerous. A child who came into the world feet-foremost was called an Agrippa by the Romans, and the word itself, so Aulus Gellius explains it, was invented to express the idea, being compounded of the trouble of the woman and the feet of the child. The Agrippas of the sixteenth century were usually sons of scholars, or of persons in the upper ranks, who had been mindful of a classic precedent; and there can be little doubt that a peculiarity attendant on the very first incident in the life here to be told was expressed by the word used as appendix to an already sufficient Christian name.

The son thus christened became a scholar and a subject of discussion among scholars, talking only Latin to the world. His family name, Von Nettesheim, he never latinised, inasmuch as the best taste suggested that--if a Latin designation was most proper of a scholar--he could do, or others could do for him, nothing simpler than to set apart for literary purposes that half of his real style which was already completely Roman. Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim became therefore to the world what he is also called in this narrative--Cornelius Agrippa.

He is the only member of the family of Nettesheim concerning whom any records have been left for the instruction of posterity. Nettesheim itself is a place of little note, distant about twenty-five miles to the southwest of Cologne. It lies in a valley, through which flows the stream from one of the small sources of the Roer. The home of the Von Nettesheims, when they were not personally attached to the service of the emperor, was at Cologne. The ancestors of Cornelius Agrippa had been for generations in the service of the royal house of Austria; his father had in this respect walked in the steps of his forefathers, and from a child Cornelius looked for nothing better than to do the same.

It is proper to mention that among the scholars of Germany one, who before the time of Agrippa was known as the most famous of magicians, belonged to the same city of Cologne; for there, in the thirteenth century, Albertus Magnus taught, and it is there that he is buried.

Born in Cologne did not mean in 1486 what it has meant for many generations almost until now--born into the darkness of a mouldering receptacle of relics. Then the town was not priest-ridden, but rode its priests. For nearly a thousand years priestcraft and handicraft have battled for

predominance within its walls. Priestcraft expelled the Jews, banished the weavers, and gained thoroughly the mastery at last. But in the time of Cornelius Agrippa handicraft was uppermost, and in sacred Cologne every trader and mechanic did his part in keeping watch on the archbishop. Europe contained then but few cities that were larger, busier, and richer, for the Rhine was a main highway of commerce, and she was enriched, not only by her manufacturers and merchants, but, at the same time also, by a large receipt of toll. Commerce is the most powerful antagonist to despotism, and in whatever place both are brought together one of them must die.

Passing by the earlier times to about the year 1350 there arose a devilish persecution of the Jews in many parts of Europe, and the Jews of Cologne, alarmed by the sufferings to which others of their race had been exposed, withdrew into their houses, with their wives and children, and burnt themselves in the midst of their possessions. The few who had flinched from this self-immolation were banished, and their houses and lands, together with all the land that had belonged to Cologne Jews, remained as spoils in the hands of the Cologne Christians. All having been converted into cash, the gains of the transactions were divided equally between the town and the archbishop. The Jews, twenty years later, were again allowed to reside in the place on payment of a tax for the protection granted them.

In 1369 the city was again in turmoil, caused by a dispute concerning privileges between the authorities of the church and the town council. The weavers, as a democratic body, expressed their views very strong and there was fighting in the streets. The weavers were subdued; they fled to the churches, and were slain at the altars. Eighteen hundred of them, all who survived, were banished, suffering, of course, confiscation of their property, and Cologne being cleared of

all its weavers--who had carried on no inconsiderable branch of manufacture--their guild was demolished. This event occurred twenty years after the town had lost, in the Jews, another important part of its industrial population, and the proud city thus was passing into the first stage of its decay.

In 1388 an university was established at Cologne, upon the model of the University of Paris. Theology and scholastic philosophy were the chief studies cultivated in it, and they were taught in such a way as to win many scholars from abroad. Eight years afterwards, churchmen, nobles, and traders were again contesting their respective claims, and blood was again shed in the streets. The nobles, assembled by night at a secret meeting, were surprised, and the final conquest of the trading class was in that way assured. A new constitution was then devised, continuing in force during the lifetime of Cornelius Agrippa.

The Von Nettesheims were likely to be on better terms with the archbishop than with the party who opposed him, and they were in the emperor's service. This must have influenced the early years of Agrippa. In these early years he displayed a rare aptitude for study, and, as Cologne was an university town and printing, discovered shortly before his birth, was carried on there in the production of Latin classics, the writings of ascetics, scholastics, and mystics like Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, it was only natural he should avail his eager desire for knowledge at these sources. He was remarkably successful in the study of European languages also, becoming proficient in several. Thus his years of home training were passed until he arrived at the age when princes are considered fit to be produced at court. He then left Cologne and became an attendant on the Emperor of Germany, Maximilian the First, whom he served first as secretary, afterwards for



seven years as a soldier. At the age of twenty he was employed on secret service by the German court. At this time Spain was in a chaotic political condition. Ferdinand, the widower of Isabella, was excluded from the crown after his wife's death, that inheritance having passed with his daughter Joanna, as a dower, to her husband Philip, who was the son of Maximilian. In September, 1506, Philip died, shortly before having declared war against France. Thus it was that Cornelius went to Paris, ostensibly to attend the university there, but in reality to keep Maximilian advised of the important news regarding the French. In the capacity of secret service, in which he was engaged more than once, he showed himself abundantly able to preserve diplomatic secrets, though concerning his own affairs he was open, frank, and free. Thus he is silent in regard to official duties at this time. In attending the university Agrippa came in contact with several other minds who had a love for the occult--mystics who found in him a natural leader to guide them into the realms of the unknown. With these he organized a secret band of Theosophists, or possibly Rosicrucians. Among these mystics was one more prominent as the friend of Agrippa, who might be regarded as second in leadership, an Italian by the name of Blasius Caesar Landulphus, who afterwards became noted in medicine, and also a professor in the University of Pavia. Among them were MM. Germain, advocate, and author of a history of Charles V., etc.; Gaigny, theologian, linguist, Latin poet, and successively procurator, rector, and chancellor of the Paris University; Charles Foucard, M. de Molinfor, Charles de Bouelles, canon, professor of theology, and author of works on metaphysics and geometry, among which he treated of the quadrature of the circle and the cubication of the sphere, and other unusual matters; Germain de Brie, canon, linguist, and writer of Greek verse; MM. Fasch, Wigand, and Clairchamps; and Juanetin Bascara de Gerona, a young Catalonian nobleman,

temporarily at Paris while on his way to the court of Maximilian.

Disturbances in Spain had spread to Aragon and Catalonia, and in the district of Tarragon the Catalonians had chased one of their local masters, the Senor de Gerona, the last named of the secret band above.

Agrippa and his friends devised a plan whereby Gerona could be restored to his estates. The capture of a fortification known as the Black Fort was necessary to the enterprise, and to effect this a daring stratagem was decided upon. As the whole province of Tarragon could thus be held against the rebellious peasantry it was believed the emperor, Maximilian, would sanction the enterprise in behalf of his kin, and Gerona went to the German court for this purpose. Agrippa also returned to Cologne for a season early in 1507.

It was over a year afterwards when the plans of the conspirators were carried out. The Black Fort was captured, as planned, by a stratagem. After remaining there for a time, Agrippa was sent with some others to garrison the place of Gerona at Villarodona. Landulph had, meanwhile, gone to Barcelona, and it was deemed prudent that Gerona, the peasants of the whole country being now in arms, should join him there. Gerona was, however, captured by the infuriated rustics, who immediately organized themselves in great force to storm his castle and exterminate the garrison there, who-, in Gerona's absence, were under the charge of Agrippa. Timely warning of the attack was conveyed to the garrison. To escape by breaking through the watches of the peasantry was madness, to remain was equally futile. But one way of escape presented itself-an old, half-ruined tower three miles distant, situated in one of the mountain wildernesses which characterize the district of Valls. The tower stood in a craggy, cavernous

valley, where the broken mountains make way for a gulf containing stagnant waters, and jagged, inaccessible rocks hem it in. At the gorge by which this place is entered stood the tower, on a hill which was itself surrounded by deep bogs and pools, while it also was within a ring of lofty crags. There was but one way to this tower, except when the ground was frozen, and these events happened in the midsummer of 1508. The way among the pools was by a narrow path of stone, with turf walls as hedges. The site of the tower made it inexpugnable in summer time. It was owned by an abbot, who gave them permission to occupy and fortify it. This they accordingly done, having a poor bailiff, in charge of the place, for company.

The retreat to the tower was safely accomplished under cover of night. Gerona's place was sacked the next day by the peasants, who sought fiercely for the German, as they termed Agrippa. The hiding place of the conspirators becoming known, the flood of wrath poured down towards the tower, but the strength of the position was then felt. With a barricade of overthrown wagons the sole path to the besieged was closed, and behind this barrier they posted themselves with their arquebuses, of which one only sufficed to daunt a crowd of men accustomed to no weapons except slings or bows and arrows. The peasantry, discovering that the tower was not to be stormed, settled down to lay strict siege to the place and thereby starve its little garrison into surrender.

Perilous weeks were passed by the adventurers, but more formidable than actual conflict was the famine consequent on their blockade. Perrot, the keeper, taking counsel with himself as how to help his guests and rid himself of them at the same time, explored every cranny of the wall of rock by which they were surrounded. Clambering among the wastes, with feet accustomed to the difficulties of the

mountain, he discovered at last a devious and rugged way, by which the obstacles of crag and chasm were avoided and the mountain top reached. Looking down from there he saw how, on the other side, the mountain rose out of a lake, known as the Black Lake, having an expanse of about four miles, upon the farther shore of which his master's abbey stood. He found a way to the lake through a rocky gorge, but from there to the abbey was a long way, and, to men without a boat, the lake was a more impassable barrier than the mountain. He returned to the tower, where the little garrison heard the result of his explorations. It was seen that a boat was necessary to effect an escape, and to procure that a letter would have to be sent through the ranks of the vigilant besiegers, whose sentries were posted at all points, and who allowed no one to approach the tower; not even the good abbot himself, who had vainly tried to turn the peasants from their purpose.

Under these circumstances the ingenuity of Agrippa was severely tested, and he justified the credit he had won for subtle wit. The keeper had a son, a shepherd-boy, and Agrippa disfigured him with stains of milk-thistle and the juice of other herbs, befouled his skin and painted it with shocking spots to imitate the marks of leprosy, fixed his hair into a filthy bunch, dressed him like a beggar, and gave him a crooked branch for a stick, within which there was scooped a hollow for the letter. Upon the boy so disguised--a fearful picture of the outcast leper--the leper's bell was hung, his father seated him on an ox, and led him by night across the marshes by the ford, where he left him. Stammering, as he went, petitions for alms, the boy walked without difficulty by a very broad road made for him among the peasantry, who regarded his approach with terror and fled from his path. The letter was safely delivered, the boy returning the next day with the desired answer, ringing his bell at the border of the marsh at dark for his father to

bring him in. Agrippa and his companions spent the night in preparations for departure. Towards dawn they covered their retreat by a demonstration of their usual state of watchfulness, fired their guns, and gave other indications of their presence. This done, they set forth, in dead silence, carrying their baggage, and were guided by Perrot, the keeper, to the summit. There they lay gladly down among the stones to rest, while their guide descended on the other side and spread a preconcerted signal, a white cloth, upon a rock. When he returned they ate the breakfast they had brought with them, all sitting with their eyes towards the lake. At about nine o'clock two fishermen's barks were discerned, which hoisted a red flag, the good abbot's signal. Rejoicing at the sight of this, the escaped men fired off their guns in triumph from the mountain-top, a hint to the besieging peasantry of their departure, and, at the same time, a signal to the rescuers. Still following Perrot, they next descended, along ways by him discovered, through the rocky gorge, to the meadows that bordered the lake. Entering the boats, before evening they found themselves safe under the abbot's roof. The day of this escape was the 14th of August, 1508. They had been suffering siege, therefore, during almost two months in the mountain fastness.

Cornelius Agrippa being safe could quit the scene, and done so without waiting to see how the difficulty would be solved between the Catalonian peasants and their master. It perplexed him much that he had no tidings of Landulph, his closest friend. The abbot advised him to go to court again, but Agrippa replied that he had no mind to risk being again sent upon hazardous missions. After remaining several days in the abbey he set out, with an old man and his servant Stephen, for Barcelona. Antonius Xanthus, the companion of Agrippa, had seen much of the rough side of

the world, was useful as a traveling companion, and became a member of Agrippa's secret league.

Not finding Landulph at Barcelona they traveled to Valentia. From there they sailed for Italy, and by way of the Balearic Islands and Sardinia they went to Naples, where, disheartened by not finding Landulph, they shipped for Leghorn, and then traveled to Avignon. There they learned, from a traveling merchant, that Landulph was at Lyons. The friends now corresponded, Cornelius writing December 17th--nearly four months after he had left the abbey in search of his friend, the 24th of August. We may imagine many of the things these friends wrote each other. It was the suggestion of Agrippa that all the members of their league be called together that they might be absolved of their oaths regarding the Spanish conspiracy and to resume, once more, their former pleasant relations. He also hoped that Landulph might be able to visit him at Avignon and talk their secrets over, as he was unable to leave for Lyons, his funds being exhausted, until after the lapse of a little time.

The foregoing account, which has been condensed from Mr. Henry Morley's excellent Life of Cornelius Agrippa, is continued in that part of this volume that starts with the heading of "Agrippa and the Rosicrucians." Agrippa's life now becomes so interwoven with mysticism that we give Morley's account in full. The next chapters in his life are replete with the fruition of his mystic nature, its full-blown flower being The Occult Philosophy, or Three Books of Magic, the writing of which completes his early life.

## **Cornelius Agrippa To The Reader.**



I do not doubt but the title of our book of Occult Philosophy, or of Magic, may by the rarity of it allure many to read it, amongst which, some of a disordered judgment and some that are perverse will come to hear what I can say, who, by their rash ignorance, may take the name of Magic in the worse sense and, though scarce having seen the title, cry out that I teach forbidden Arts, sow the seed of heresies, offend the pious, and scandalize excellent wits; that I am a sorcerer, and superstitious and devilish, who indeed am a Magician: to whom I answer, that a Magician doth not, amongst learned men, signify a sorcerer or one that is superstitious or devilish; but a wise man, a priest, a prophet; and that the Sybils were Magicianesses, and therefore prophesied most clearly of Christ; and that Magicians, as wise men, by the wonderful secrets of the world, knew Christ, the author of the world, to be born, and came first of all to worship him; and that the name of Magic was received by philosophers, commended by divines, and is not unacceptable to the Gospel. I believe that the supercilious censors will object against the Sybils, holy Magicians and the Gospel itself sooner than receive the name of Magic into favor. So conscientious are they that neither Apollo nor all the Muses, nor an angel from heaven can redeem me from their curse. Whom therefore I advise that they read not our writings, nor understand them, nor remember them. For they are pernicious and full of poison; the gate of Acheron is in this book; it speaks stones--let them take heed that it beat not out their brains. But you that come without prejudice to read it, if you have so much discretion of prudence as bees have in gathering honey, read securely, and believe that you shall receive no little profit, and much pleasure; but if you shall find any things that may not please you, let them alone and make no use of them, for I do not approve of them, but declare them to you. But do not refuse other things, for they that look

into the books of physicians do, together with antidotes and medicines, read also of poisons. I confess that Magic teacheth many superfluous things, and curious prodigies for ostentation; leave them as empty things, yet be not ignorant of their causes. But those things which are for the profit of men--for the turning away of evil events, for the destroying of sorceries, for the curing of diseases, for the exterminating of phantasms, for the preserving of life, honor, or fortune--may be done without offense to God or injury to religion, because they are, as profitable, so necessary. But I have admonished you that I have writ many things rather narratively than affirmatively; for so it seemed needful that we should pass over fewer things, following the judgments of Platonists and other Gentile Philosophers when they did suggest an argument of writing to our purpose. Therefore if any error have been committed, or anything hath been spoken more freely, pardon my youth, for I wrote this being scarce a young man, that I may excuse myself, and say, whilst I was a child I spake as a child, and I understood as a child, but being become a man, I retracted those things which I did being a boy, and in my book of the vanity and uncertainty of Sciences I did, for the most part, retract this book. But here, haply, you may blame me again, saying, "Behold, thou, being a youth, didst write, and now, being old, hast retracted it; what, therefore, hast thou set forth?" I confess, whilst I was very young, I set upon the writing of these books, but, hoping that I should set them forth with corrections, and enlargements--and for that cause I gave them to Trithemius, a Neapolitanian Abbot, formerly a Spanhemensian, a man very industrious after secret things. But it happened afterwards that, the work being intercepted, before I finished it, it was carried about imperfect and impolished, and did fly aboard in Italy, in France, in Germany, through many men's hands; and some men, whether more impatiently or imprudently I know not,

would have put it thus imperfect to the press, with which mischief, I, being affected, determined to set it forth myself, thinking that there might be less danger if these books came out of my hands with some amendments than to come forth, torn and in fragments, out of other men's hands. Moreover, I thought it no crime if I should not suffer the testimony of my youth to perish. Also, we have added some chapters and inserted many things which did seem unfit to pass by, which the curious reader shall be able to understand by the inequality of the very phrase, for we were unwilling to begin the work anew and to unravel all that we had done, but to correct it and put some flourish upon it. Wherefore, I pray thee, courteous reader, weigh not these things according to the present time of setting them forth, but pardon my curious youth if thou find any thing in them that may displease thee.

When Agrippa first wrote his Occult Philosophy he sent it to his friend Trithemius, an Abbot of Wurtzburg, with the ensuing letter. Trithemius detained the messenger until he had read the manuscript and then answered Agrippa's letter with such sound advice as mystics would do well to follow for all time to come. Trithemius is known as a mystic author and scholar.

## **Agrippa To Trithemius.**

TO R. P. D. JOHN TRITHEMIUS, AN ABBOT OF SAINT JAMES, IN THE SUBURBS OF HERBIPOLIS, HENRY CORNELIUS AGRIPPA OF NETTESHEIM SENDETH GREETING:

WHEN I was of late, most reverend father, for a while conversant with you in your Monastery of Herbipolis, we

conferred together of divers things concerning Chemistry, Magic, and Cabala, and of other things, which as yet lie hid in Secret Sciences and Arts; and then there was one great question amongst the rest--Why Magic, whereas it was accounted by all ancient philosophers to be the chiefest science, and by the ancient wise men and priests was always held in great veneration, came at last, after the beginning of the Catholic Church, to be always odious to and suspected by the holy Fathers, and then exploded by Divines, and condemned by sacred Canons, and, moreover, by all laws and ordinances forbidden? Now, the cause, as I conceive, is no other than this, viz.: Because, by a certain fatal depravation of times and men, many false philosophers crept in, and these, under the name of Magicians, heaping together, through various sorts of errors and factions of false religions, many cursed superstitions and dangerous rites, and many wicked sacrileges, even to the perfection of Nature; and the same set forth in many wicked and unlawful books, to which they have by stealth prefixed the most honest name and title of Magic; hoping, by this sacred title, to gain credit to their cursed and detestable fooleries. Hence it is that this name of Magic, formerly so honorable, is now become most odious to good and honest men, and accounted a capital crime if any one dare profess himself to be a Magician, either in doctrine or works, unless haply some certain old doting woman, dwelling in the country, would be believed to be skillful and have a divine power, that she (as saith Apuleis the satirist) "can throw down the heaven, lift up the earth, harden fountains, wash away mountains, raise up ghosts, cast down the Gods, extinguish the stars, illuminate hell," or, as Virgil sings:

She'll promise by her charms to cast great cares,  
Or ease the minds of men, and make the Stars  
For to go back, and rivers to stand still,

And raise the nightly ghosts even at her will;  
To make the earth to groan, and trees to fall  
From the mountains--

Hence those things which Lucan relates of Thessala the Magicianess, and Homer of the omnipotency of Circe. Whereof many others, I confess, are as well of a fallacious opinion as a superstitious diligence and pernicious labor; for when they cannot come under a wicked art yet they presume they may be able to cloak themselves under that venerable title of Magic.

These things being so, I wondered much and was not less indignant that, as yet, there had been no man who had either vindicated this sublime and sacred discipline from the charge of impiety or had delivered it purely and sincerely to us. What I have seen of our modern writers-- Roger Bacon, Robert of York, an Englishman, Peter Apponus, Albertus [Magnus] the Teutonich, Arnoldas de villa Nova, Anselme the Parmensian. Picatrix the Spaniard, Cicclus Asculus of Florence, and many other writers of an obscure name--when they promise to treat of Magic do nothing but relate irrational tales and superstitions unworthy of honest men. Hence my spirit was moved, and, by reason partly of admiration, and partly of indignation, I was willing to play the philosopher, supposing that I should do no discommendable work--seeing I have been always from my youth a curious and undaunted searcher for wonderful effects and operations full of mysteries--if I should recover that ancient Magic (the discipline of all wise men) from the errors of impiety, purify and adorn it with its proper lustre, and vindicate it from the injuries of calumniators; which thing, though I long deliberated of it in my mind, I never durst undertake; but after some conference betwixt us of these things, at Herbipolis, your transcending knowledge and learning, and your ardent

adhortation, put courage and boldness into me. There selecting the opinions of philosophers of known credit, and purging the introduction of the wicked (who, dissemblingly, and with a counterfeited knowledge, did teach that traditions of Magicians must be learned from very reprobate books of darkness or from institutions of wonderful operations), and, removing all darkness, I have at last composed three compendious books of Magic, and titled them Of Occult Philosophy, being a title less offensive, which books I submit (you excelling in the knowledge of these things) to your correction and censure, that if I have wrote anything which may tend either to the contumely of Nature, offending God, or injury of religion, you may condemn the error; but if the scandal of impiety be dissolved and purged, you may defend the Tradition of Truth; and that you would do so with these books, and Magic itself, that nothing may be concealed which may be profitable, and nothing approved of which cannot but do hurt; by which means these three books, having passed your examination with approbation, may at length be thought worthy to come forth with good success in public, and may not be afraid to come under the censure of posterity.

Farewell, and pardon these my bold undertakings.

### **Trithemius To Agrippa.**

JOHN TRITHEMIUS, ABBOT OF SAINT JAMES OF  
HERBIPOLIS, FORMERLY OF SPANHEMIA, TO HIS  
HENRY CORNELIUS AGRIPPA OF NETTESHEIM, HEALTH  
AND LOVE:



YOUR work, most renowned Agrippa, entitled Of Occult Philosophy, which you have sent by this bearer to me, has been examined. With how much pleasure I received it no mortal tongue can express nor the pen of any write. I wondered at your more than vulgar learning--that you, being so young, should penetrate into such secrets as have been hid from most learned men; and not only clearly and truly but also properly and elegantly set them forth. Whence first I give you thanks for your good will to me, and, if I shall ever be able, I shall return you thanks to the utmost of my power. Your work, which no learned man can sufficiently commend, I approve of. Now that you may proceed toward higher things, as you have begun, and not suffer such excellent parts of wit to be idle, I do, with as much earnestness as I can, advise, intreat and beseech you that you would exercise yourself in laboring after better things, and demonstrate the light of true wisdom to the ignorant, according as you yourself are divinely enlightened. Neither let the consideration of idle, vain fellows withdraw you from your purpose; I say of them, of whom it is said, "The wearied ox treads hard," whereas no man, to the judgment of the wise, can be truly learned who is sworn to the rudiments of one only faculty. But you have been by God gifted with a large and sublime wit, and it is not that you should imitate oxen but rather birds; neither think it sufficient that you study about particulars, but bend your mind confidently to universals; for by so much the more learned any one is thought, by how much fewer things he is ignorant of. Moreover, your wit is fully apt to all things, and to be rationally employed, not in a few or low things, but many and sublimer. Yet this one rule I advise you to observe--that you communicate vulgar secrets to vulgar friends, but higher and secret to higher and secret friends only: Give hay to an ox, sugar to a parrot only. Understand my meaning, lest you be trod under the oxen's feet, as oftentimes it falls out. Farewell, my happy

friend, and if it lie in my power to serve you, command me, and according to your pleasure it shall without delay be done; also, let our friendship increase daily; write often to me, and send me some of your labors I earnestly pray you. Again farewell.

From our Monastery of Peapolis, the 8th day of April, A. D. MDX.

In January, 1531, Agrippa wrote from Mechlin to Hermann of Wied, Archbishop of Cologne, to whom he dedicated his Occult Philosophy. In this letter he says: "Behold! amongst such things as were closely laid up--the books Of Occult Philosophy, or of Magic," "a new work of most ancient and abstruse learning;" "a doctrine of antiquity, by none, I dare say, hitherto attempted to be restored." "I shall be devotedly yours if these studies of my youth shall by the authority of your greatness come into knowledge," "seeing many things in them seemed to me, being older, as most profitable, so most necessary to be known. You have therefore the work, not only of my youth but of my present age," "having added many things."

The etching inserted at this place is made from the title page of the only complete English edition of the Occult Philosophy of Magic heretofore published.

## **Chapter I. How Magicians Collect Virtues From The Three-Fold World Is Declared In These Three Books.**

SEEING there is a Three-fold World--Elementary, Celestial and Intellectual--and every inferior is governed by its superior, and receiveth the influence of the virtues thereof, so that the very Original and Chief Worker of all doth by

angels, the heavens, stars, elements, animals, plants, metals and stones convey from Himself the virtues of His Omnipotency upon us, for whose service He made and created all these things: Wise men conceive it no way irrational that it should be possible for us to ascend by the same degrees through each World, to the same very original World itself, the Maker of all things and First cause, from whence all things are and proceed; and also to enjoy not only these virtues, which are already in the more excellent kind of things, but also besides these, to draw new virtues from above. Hence it is that they seek after the virtues of the Elementary World, through the help of physic, and natural philosophy in the various mixtions of natural things; then of the Celestial World in the rays, and influences thereof, according to the rules of Astrologers, and the doctrines of mathematicians, joining the Celestial virtues to the former. Moreover, they ratify and confirm all these with the powers of divers Intelligence, through the sacred ceremonies of religions. The order and process of all these I shall endeavor to deliver in these three books: Whereof the first contains Natural Magic, the second Celestial, and the third Ceremonial. But I know not whether it be an unpardonable presumption in me, that I, a man of so little judgment and learning, should in my very youth- so confidently set upon a business so difficult, so hard and intricate as this is. Wherefore, whatsoever things have here already, and shall afterward be said by me, I would not have anyone assent to them, nor shall I myself, any further than they shall be approved of by the universal church and the congregation of the faithful.

## **Chapter Ii. What Magic Is, What Are The Parts Thereof, And How The Professors Thereof Must Be Qualified.**