

Opus Magicum

Fire

Fire is regarded as the most important element in the magical ritual, though not the only one.

Several different meanings have been attributed to it, according to the particular functions for which it is employed. Foremost among them is that of vivifying principle and of purifying element, which we will now discuss.

We should mention, among the many symbols referring to *fire*, that of *ignis centrum terrae* (14), the central fire, which is common to every tradition. In man, the heart is at the center of his being, red with warm blood departing from there to permeate the entire organism with the waves of life. The heart is portrayed as luminous and blazing, radiating loving flames and light. But in order to better understand this, let us remember that in ancient Egypt the heart was indicated as the organ of intelligence, which is an exclusively spiritual faculty. The heart is the most perfect and immediate manifestation of the spirit, and it is inviolable in its peculiar character of absolute harmonious spontaneity. In hieroglyphics, the heart is portrayed as a *vase* (h'tj), with its two handles or *ears*. This precision of meaning, gradually subverted over the course of the past twenty centuries until the organic function of ordinary thinking and also of *intelligere* came to be attributed to the brain, has accurately been conveyed in Dante's *intellect of love*. Notice again how in modern language there are terms that refer to a particular function of intelligence, such as the verb "to remember" and the expression "to learn by heart." (15) Notice also the difference between *recordari* and *meminisse*, between *remembering* and *recalling*. The science of language could make a remarkable contribution to modern psychology, shedding light on some hitherto mysterious points and suggesting to the careful observer the lost meaning of many symbols.

Thus it is necessary that during the ritual, all the functions of the spirit, in its relations with the material body, be reduced to the state of primitive and perfect harmony and consciousness. Not only is it necessary to become persuaded about this or that truth, but one must act in such a way as to put the spirit in full control of what it does.

The ritual mentioned here is connected with the practice of breathing, which is executed according to the formula 2n (inspiration), n (retention), 2n (expiration), n (retention) in an early phase; and 2n, 4n, 2n, n in a later phase. The ritual can be performed in the first phase, too. This will be discussed later on. For now it is enough to know the meaning of the spirit, assumed in concentration and in silence, which, as an animating and sustaining essence of man, is symbolized by breath. Breath is necessary to bodily life, just as fire is indispensable to any form of physical life, hence the "breath of fire" in various symbolisms. This is mentioned here as a guide in experiences that sometimes have various simultaneous aspects.

Lying down, after achieving the perfect rhythm of breathing in the above-mentioned phases, so that this organic function can continue with absolute spontaneity and without requiring any particular attention, one descends to the roots of being through

“concentration” and “silence.” When one reaches the supreme phase and frees the spirit, this is realized as a small flame burning in one’s heart. The body must be experienced as pervaded by a *wave* of subtle warmth, flowing through the veins and nerves. The flame burns, stating: “I AM!” The heart will feel as if it is burning and will be dissolved in the element of the magical Fire.

In this process, the greatest difficulty (if “difficulty” is the most adequate term in relation to such an act of the spirit) consists in the consciousness’s, the spirit’s, or the Self’s *descent* into the heart. In fact, we are very accustomed to feel and to experience ourselves in the brain. Someone may even feel himself in a sense organ, when the perception is of such an intensity and violence that it attracts every attention toward a given point of the body. Thus, one momentarily feels like *sinking*, wherever the sensation of pain or pleasure has arisen. The process of descent into the heart is analogous to this, although none of those sensations is felt. (16) Let us recall the spirit’s, “sense of infinity and unconditional freedom,” which is the last state of ritual *silence*. There should be no difficulty there in operating perfectly; causing the spirit to concentrate and *coagulate* anywhere it wills. However, the habit of consciousness tied to an organ like the brain is such that the spirit to is almost automatically attracted wherever it finds its habitual dwelling place. It is therefore necessary, in this case, to realize and to feel oneself as a mass of light consistency that descends from the brain, through the centers of the larynx and pharynx, down to the heart, slowly following an ideal rather than a physical line, gently and effortlessly. The spontaneity itself is actualized in the magical action and in its most perfect and complete form.

As warm and vaguely bright silence (the body, as the spirit determines itself, acquires a bituminous consistency, the limits of which cannot be determined in space), the spirit becomes denser, brighter, warmer. Despite the absence of the *perception* of bodily space, the spirit is aware of finding its place in it (a wave of warm, fluctuating light). The body becomes denser as the spirit turns toward the heart (a conscious act: “I am in the heart, I feel it, *I live it*”). One becomes aware of it as a new wonderful immensity, of which few people are aware: it is no longer restricted to the usual physical limitation, extending its igneous mass to the uttermost darkness.

And now a clarification that needs to be deeply understood: man’s life is ordinarily such that his action does not assign to itself its own objects, but rather receives them through the physical senses, as being imposed on it by them. So, in reality, man comes to depend on everything that is external and extraneous to him, on everything that is not himself. Not even the complex functioning of nervous reflexes is sufficient to affirm his own true freedom.

From this state of affairs derives the fundamental notion of *impurity*, which, according to the classical rituals of various initiatory systems, must be resolved into the original purity of the burning of the secret flame, before the neophyte can acquire the knowledge and use of magical power. The fire of the spirit is thus initially directed to the catharsis of those dark elements that until now have ruled uncontested; to burn in the supreme act of a perfect “knowledge” everything that is “ignorance”; to penetrate into the bowels of the “Earth” and to purify “metals” from various drosses; “Gold,” which through the help of “Sulfur” raises the inferior elements up to its dignity; Sperm, which mingled with the menstruum of the Whore, generates the Divine Child. (17)

Ritually speaking, once the spirit has been established in the heart (which appears as an igneous mass), waves and bright flashes surface in the consciousness, beyond the boundaries of darkness, as symbols and mediums of the formless passive life. In the heart the spirit creates a small flame, turning its essence into the latter's essence. Let the flame burn, *by itself*, without any other support than its own wonderful power--- a light shining in the red cavity of the heart.

This is the timeless moment.

Then, let the flame-spirit-consciousness grow by itself, slowly and gradually growing bigger and more intense, more tenacious, alive, and vivid, harder than a diamond...

More and more.

Let it burn and consume beyond the limits of the heart, expanding until it pervades the entire bodily nature, dissolving it into itself.

The purification of the elements is thus fulfilled, and the spirit gradually acquires the immediate control, the conscious perception of each organ, of each smallest part of the physical body.

Having reached and *fixed* the last state, one needs to proceed backward and return to normal consciousness, following the spontaneous succession of phases, analogous to the previous ones, until one gets to the form of a small flame in the heart. Then suddenly end the ritual, remaining in this state.

After some time it will be easy to move rapidly to the heart and to arouse a flame in it. This flame will eventually remain burning as an inner act throughout the day; it will also be easy, starting from the heart, to penetrate any part of the body and to live in its complex functions. Thus, consciousness, once definitely reinstated in its natural seat, will be able to experience states that are very different from the past habitual ones, and to operate in consequence, realizing what has been expressed in the symbols of the inextinguishable flame.

The ritual should be performed in the middle of the day, when the sun is at its zenith.

(14) Symbolically speaking, the "earth," as also the "stone," represents the human body, with special relation to its being Matter for the Great Work: "Upon this stone I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18. (Note by UR)

(15) Dante has clearly indicated this in several passages, particularly in his *Vita nova*, where he speaks of the "spirit of life, which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart..." Among the Romans, Plautus said: "Mihi sunt tria corda" (I have three hearts) to indicate that he knew three languages---- Oscan, Latin, and Greek.

(16) In this regard, we find useful the following instructions found in an ancient codex of a monastery of Mt. Athos, attributed to the abbot Xerocarca: "Sit by yourself in a corner. Pay attention to what I say. Close the door and raise your spirit above every vain and temporal thing. Then lower your chin on your chest and with all the strength of your soul open the perceiving eye which is in the middle of your heart. Restrict your exhalations, so as not to breathe too easily. Try hard to find the precise site of the heart, in which experience resistance of impenetrable masses; but if you persevere day and night, you will eventually experience an inexpressible joy. As soon as you find the heart's location,

the spirit sees what at first it was never able to see. It sees the air, between itself and the heart, shining clear and being permeated by a miraculous light.” (Note by UR)