

## The Rosicrucian Volume One – My Favorite Part

### The Theurgic Neoplatonism of Iamblichus the Divine (pp 39 – 48)

Pages 46 and 47 reproduced here:

away the darkness of duality to produce the cremation ground of emptiness. To be a receptacle of divine Light, we must be empty, but not obliterated.

Sacrifice mimics cosmogony as the gods, sacrifice some of their divine life to embodiment: I, a mortal being, offer a sacrifice to the gods, but at the same time, I am the god who sacrifices my divinity through the altar of a material body. Sacrifices are usually done over an altar and the body-altar complex expresses this two-way interface. We both ascend to the divine and simultaneously descend from the divine. We are homeward bound to God but only because we are fully exiled from God.

The soul gradually transformed the chaos of its embodied experience into the perfect measures of the cosmos. The intensity of the soul's contact with the gods is in direct proportion to its receptive capacity. The higher the divinity, the more completely it consumes matter. Continual prayer renders the soul ready as a pure receptacle soul for the energies of a god.

### SYNTHĒMATA

Iamblichus describes *symbolata*, *synthēmata*, and *logoi*; in English: symbols (or signs), tokens, and words. The signs or symbols are equated with the Platonic Forms. They are sown throughout the cosmos by the Paternal Demiurge and are his thoughts. Plato says only the Form of Beauty is revealed, so it is Beauty that instigates man's *anamnesis* (remembering) of things before its descent. When the soul remembers the pure Paternal token, it returns to the Paternal Nous. To reach the intelligible, you must cast the entire token into your imagination. The receptacle must be pure: assembled from sympathetic objects that bare synthēmata and have to meet two criteria of fitness: connaturality with the soul who offers it and with the god that receives it. This allows the theurgist to enter the god's energies when the sacrifice is properly performed.

There are many kinds of synthēmata, from the material to the noetic, and this is where the concept of magical correspondences arises. These can be material objects, such as colours, stones, incenses, plants, and animals; as well as words, sounds, geometric forms, and numbers. The words are often nonsensical to humans and are called *nomina barbara* (barbarous names), and they should not be changed. There is a difference between horizontal correspondences between families of similar tokens (helpful for finding alternative items) and vertical correspondences between a token and a god. Iamblichus emphasised the latter – what matters isn't that the tokens are all horizontally sympathetic, but they are vertically sympathetic with the god to be worked.

## THEURGICAL OPERATIONS

There are four principal theurgical operations, in increasing order of difficulty: ensoulment (*telestikē*); binding and releasing (*desmos kai eklusis*); liaison (*systasis*); and theurgic ascent (*theourgikē anagōgē*).

**Ensoulment:** A statue (*agalma*) is carved to look like a god and be a reflection (*eidolon*) of divinity, but it should not be mistaken for divinity. To ensoul the statue, *synthēmata* were carved onto it or talismans or *pharmaka* were placed inside it. Through purifications, fumigations, and invocations, the statue becomes a true image (*eikon*) of the god. The rite of ensoulment is much like the ritual for talismancy, though usually more formal.

**Binding and Releasing:** A god or daimon acting on behalf of a god is called to take temporary possession of a human. It requires two people: a caller to perform the rite and a seer who receives the visions. The goal is to tune the caller and seer so they are receptive to the divine power. A more advanced form of this is *autodesmos*, where the caller and seer are the same person. Releasing is the polite process of terminating communion with a god, as gods cannot be banished.

**Liaison:** This is a meeting between a divine entity and a mortal to form a cooperative alliance. Usually, this starts with the previous two operations and then meeting a daimon as a mediating spirit to a god, though it can eventually involve the god itself (indeed, *systasis* can be translated as "recommendation"). *Systasis* can also be with one's own personal daimones. These can reveal the mode of worship proper to the mortal, the daimones' names, and how they should be summoned. The personal daimon, also called the Holy Guardian Angel, is responsible for binding the human soul to its body. The work dealing with contacting this is *The Book of Abramelin*, although books for acquiring assistant daimones for theurgic purposes are described in the Greek Magical Papyri (PGM), and a ritual for theurgic evaluation is described in Lewy's *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy*.

**Theurgic Ascent:** This is the last and most advanced operation. It results in *henōsis* with a god, even the Demiurge or The One, and subsequent descent. In summary, it requires purification of the soul, its luminous vehicle, and the body. Parts of the soul that are more like The One are separated from those that are less like it, which requires a symbolic death and burial. Thereafter, the candidate ascends through the celestial spheres, chanting the *nomina barbara* to aid their ascent. Upon ascension through the empyrean spheres, the initiate may encounter visions of the gods before reaching final *henōsis*. This state cannot exist for very long, and the candidate redescends back into the cosmos and is reborn, transformed, with a permanent connection to the Transcendent Source of Divinity and now consciously embodies Divinity on Earth as a perfected being.