

STUDI E TESTI

237

MÉLANGES
EUGÈNE TISSERANT

Vol. VII

BIBLIOTHÈQUE VATICANE

Deuxième partie

CITTÀ DEL VATICANO
BIBLIOTECA APOSTOLICA VATICANA

1964

64/943

LYNN THORNDIKE

IMAGINATION AND MAGIC

THE FORCE OF IMAGINATION ON THE HUMAN BODY
AND OF MAGIC ON THE HUMAN MIND

In this paper I shall describe a discussion of the force of imagination upon the human body in one manuscript of the fifteenth century, then the effect of magic upon the human mind as presented in another manuscript of the same century. Both manuscripts are anonymous. That upon the force of imagination is found at the Vatican; the other is in the Staatsbibliothek at Munich.

The question whether change can be produced in the human body by imagination alone is argued in an anonymous *Utrum*¹ which occurs alone and ends incomplete in Vatican Latin 1121, fol.212^{r-v}, opening, "Utrum circa corpus humanum potest fieri aliqua immutatio ex sola ymaginatione, ut puta circha aliquod organum particularis potentie absque hoc quod immutetur ab obiecto proprio..." and closing, "... quod contingit ex eo quod infectio oculorum infectorum per lineam rectam directius deriuatur ad...". Our manuscript is a later copy of an original composed at some time after the condemnation at Paris in 1277 of 219 articles, to which it refers.²

First, it is argued in the negative that such change without a material cause or physical contact can be effected only by God. But then affirmatively it is held that such change is proved in three ways by experience: 1) watching another person eating something sour

¹ So catalogued by AUGUSTUS PEIZER, *Codices Vaticani Latini*, Pars prior; Codices 679-1134; 1931. For it and the other contents of MS. 1121 see pp. 745-749.

² Fol. 212^v: «Ad hoc etiam facit articulus 3 13' ca' qui talis est, Quod materia exterior obedit substantie spirituali. Error, si intelligatur simpliciter secundum omnem modum transmutationis». Numbered 210 in *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, I (1889), 543 *et seq.* The designation by chapter and article is found in CAROLUS DU PLESSIS D'ARGENTRÉ, *Coll. iud. de novis erroribus*, I (1755).

sets one's own teeth on edge; 2) persons with sore eyes injure children; 3) disease may be brought on by the patient's imagination.

The question is then said to present two aspects: 1) whether my imagination can alter the body of another person; 2) or merely affect my own *body*. Avicenna in *Sextus Naturalium*, Particula 4, chapter 4, answers the first question in the affirmative:

Since the soul is constant, noble, and similar to *principia*, matter, which is in the world, obeys it and is affected by it, and whatever shall be formed in the soul will be found in matter. The soul is not tied to its own body or matter, but is free to affect external matter

and to alter the elements, so that what is not fire becomes fire for it, and what is not earth becomes earth for it, and at its will come rain and fertility ... and mortality. Nature ... is much more obedient to the soul than to contraries acting upon it. And this is also one of the properties of prophetic power. This much Avicenna.

Algazel was guilty of the same error, as is shown by the fourth book of his *Physics*, chapter 9, where he says

Sometimes the impression of a soul passes to another body so that it destroys it by thought and kills a man by thinking. This is called fascination. Whence the saying that the eye sent a man into the ditch, and a camel into a hot bath. And it is said that men really are fascinated. The implication back of the saying is that, because the camel pleased him greatly and he admired it, his malign and invidious soul concentrated on the fall of the camel, and killed the body of the camel by mere thought, and it straightway fell. This much Algazel.

Four criticisms are made of these views of Avicenna and Algazel. First, the human soul may operate upon another body, but not with the same force as upon its own, where the connection between the two is essential, whereas in the other case many intermediate stages are requisite for change. Secondly, it is denied that the Aristotelian Intelligences which move the heavenly spheres can impress forms on matter; much less can the human soul do so. Augustine, 3 *de trinitate*, is cited that neither evil nor good angels can create, although by their superiority of sense and body (that is, of the bodies assumed by them), they know of seeds of things hidden from us and how to mix these with the elements, so as to generate and to accelerate growth. Third, the views of Avicenna and Algazel imply that the human soul is not the substantial form of the body

but its mere administrator. This opinion our anonymous author considers false and heretical. A marginal note, however, which is in the same hand as the text, takes issue with it upon this point, holding that Avicenna's opinion was just the contrary. This indicates that our manuscript is not the original text but a subsequent copy.

Fourth, the opinion that the intellectual soul of one person can transmute matter, make fire of non-fire, perform miracles, and at will kill a man, or cause a camel to fall into a hot bath, is called most false and heretical. Such action is for God alone according to the safer view, which is mentioned for the benefit of those who hold that Intelligences move the spheres by mere exercise of intellect and will. Against the latter opinion is cited the article condemned at Paris in 1277,

That superior Intelligences impress inferiors just as one intellectual soul impresses another and sensitive nature. And by such impression an enchanter by his mere gaze cast a camel into a pit.³

Finally, our author indicates how far he is ready to go in conceding the action of spirit upon body and the power of fascination. The evil spirit in the body of one possessed by a demon can kill or injure another person, for which he cites a gloss on X Corinthians and Augustine upon the 96th Psalm. As for fascination, it is attested by Paul's query to the Galatians :

O foolish Galatians, who has fascinated you?

and may be performed either by a person with the evil eye infecting the air breathed in by this victim, or by direct linear effect on the other's eye.

Avicenna and Algazel had been cited more than once by Albertus Magnus concerning fascination and the power of soul over body. Engelbert of Admont in the early fourteenth century had done so again in his treatise on fascination. Indeed, both passages from Avicenna and Algazel were well known and much cited. But a discussion to which our anonymous *Utrum* bears a closer resemblance is that by Nicole Oresme in the fourth chapter of his *Quotlibeta* (dating about 1370) whether the soul can produce effects in external objects. Oresme also in other of his works represented

³ Numbered 112 in *Chart. Univ. Paris*. See further my *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, II, 710.

Avicenna and Algazel as proponents of the attribution of marvels of magic to the power of imagination and the control of mind over matter, and he as well as Engelbert discussed fascination. But our anonymous text seems independent of these other similar discussions of the same topic, and they of it. Consequently it would be rash to attempt to date it with reference to them.

Codex Latinus Monacensis 849, is a fifteenth century collection of incantations, exorcisms and fascinations of which the first two leaves are missing, while fols. 119-132 out of the original 156 are in Low German. Of especial interest are two to ruin and to restore a man's intellect and knowledge, which occur at fols. 6^r-7^v. You ought first in a waning moon on a Saturday go to him whose mind you wish to affect and in his presence say in a loud voice, "May An'ael (?) enter your brain and dilute and abolish all wisdom, sense, discretion, cogitation." The demon is then conjured to do so, or be sent to the bottom of the sea, "quod non egredieris in seculo." The conjurer is to cut a pen from his fingernails, write with it and cat's blood, and make further use of a candle and other paraphernalia. He should write on a cloth with his name in the middle of a circle. Then, « I conjure you, ten malign demons, viz. ... (fol. 7^v) "And thou Mirael from his brain never depart, till I tell you to." Which thus said, thrice again in the same night return to his house with the said cloth and a knife. And when you get there, turn your shoulders towards his house and, bending to the ground, piss in his direction like a camel digging a ditch, placing the said cloth in its limit. Say thus: "I put you underground in the name of the demons written around you." Then go home and make a wax candle on which are written all the contents of the circle, and prick the name (of the victim) with a needle. Light it and say, "As it burns away, so may his mind deteriorate." Then extinguish it, saying, "So may all his virtue be extinguished." This ceremony is to be repeated for seven days. On the eighth day you will see him quite demented, at whom all will marvel... It is marvelous too that he is not conscious of any defect and thinks all the others mentally off. Hold fast then to this experience, because it is of great virtue.

It is indeed remarkable that, although some at least of the conjuring and ritual has been performed in the presence of the victim, its success was statedly not due to the power of suggestion but to the demons who were invoked. Similarly, its reversal is effected by the demons and destruction of the paraphernalia employed in invoking them.

To restore him you should go on a Thursday night to his house where you buried the cloth, which should have been put in a vase to prevent its putrefying, and call on the demons to restore him. Take the cloth home, kindle a fire of olive wood and *provincula* and the herb vervain, throw the cloth into it, and say, "as it is consumed, so may all done against him be consumed." Throw the ashes into running water, and the victim will be restored to his right mind, and will attribute his previous state to sickness.

Further objects of our text are to win a woman's love (8^r), to gain dignity and honor (11^v), to arouse hatred and enmity between friends (13^v), "artem quam in tua curia vidisti me tociens exercere videlicet ad provocandum dapiferos" (15^v), to make a most beautiful castle appear (18^r), that wherever you are, you can have a ship (21^r), to make the dead seem alive (25^v), to become invisible (28^r), At 32^r we hear of "this experiment," at 33^r of "Speculum Floron,"⁴ at 43^v of "Experimentum cristalli ad inveniendum furtum."

At 47^v the rubric, "Explicit 2^m capitulum," is followed by the incipit: "De omni re dubitabili etiam incerta veritate habenda ..." and instruction to take the right shoulder-blade of a ram anointed with olive oil. After other explicits on 49^v and 50^v, and names of demons, the rest of 50^v is left blank. Between 50 and 51 several leaves have been cut out, while 51^v is left blank. At 52^r begins the prologue of a book of consecration; at 53^r the first of a series of *Orationes*; 60^r, "Adiuro te..."; 61^v, "Coniuro et costringo..."; at 62^v instruction to go to the cemetery, collect as many stones as there are verses (the margin says 47), make a circle with them, put vervain in it, and make use of the psalm, *Miserere*.

On 65^r, "Incipiunt experimenta bona et probata et verissima. Primo de modo scribendi..." and "Nota in feria quinta novis vestibis indutus et balneatus." On 65^v, "Barbarus magnus comes et dux et apparet in signo Sagitarii silvestris cum 4 regibus ferentibus tubas ..." and similarly for ten other names of demons. At 68^v "Incipiunt coniurationes dierum super compositionem sacrificiorum ..." At 72^r-74^v characters are intermingled with the text. At 79^v, "De operibus ymaginum diei," followed by instructions for making magic images of the hours of day and of night. At 87^r, "Sapientes philosophi et experti qui composuerunt istum librum confidentes in deo qui est super omnes deus Ordinaverunt ymagines vii dierum ebdomade..." The first image for Sunday ends at 91^r.

⁴ Concerning the demon Floron see my *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, II, 965.

At 96^v, "Incipiunt experimenta verissima et probata primum ad omnia indaganda que volueris sive presentia sive preterita sive futura."

At fols. 109^r-118^v, the last Latin item before the German text begins is all in one hand and continuous. It opens, "Per invocationem nominis domini Iesu Christi..."

New York.