

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE



THE TURBA PHILOSOPHORUM

THE FELLOWSHIP EDITION

The Turba Philosophorum

Arthur Edward Waite

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www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

The Turba Philosophorum

The Epistle of Arisleus, prefixed to the Words of the Sages,
concerning the Purport of this Book, for the Benefit of

Posterity, and the same being as here follows:-

Arisleus, begotten of Pythagoras, a disciple of the disciples by the grace of thrice great Hermes, learning from the seat of knowledge, unto all who come after wisheth health and mercy. I testify that my master, Pythagoras, the Italian, master of the wise and chief of the Prophets, had a greater gift of God and of Wisdom than was granted to any one after Hermes. Therefore he had a mind to assemble his disciples, who were now greatly increased, and had been constituted the chief persons throughout all regions for the discussion of this most precious Art, that their words might be a foundation for posterity. He then commanded Iximidrus, of highest council, to be the first speaker, who said:-

The First Dictum.

Iximidrus Saith:- I testify that the beginning of all things is a Certain Nature, which is perpetual, coequalling all things, and that the visible natures, with their births and decay, are times wherein the ends to which that nature brings them are beheld and summoned. Now, I instruct you that the stars are igneous, and are kept within bounds by the air. If the humidity and density of the air did not exist to separate the flames of the sun from living things, then the Sun would consume all creatures. But God has provided the separating air, lest that which He has created should be burnt up. Do you not: observe that the Sun when it rises in the heaven overcomes the air by its heat, and that the warmth penetrates from the upper to the lower parts of the air? If, then, the air did not presently breathe forth those winds whereby creatures are generated, the Sun by its heat would certainly destroy all that lives. But the Sun is kept in check by the air, which thus conquers because it unites the heat of the Sun to its own heat, and the humidity of water

to its own humidity. Have you not remarked how tenuous water is drawn up into the air by the action of the heat of the Sun, which thus helps the water against itself? If the water did not nourish the air by such tenuous moisture, assuredly the Sun would overcome the air. The fire, therefore, extracts moisture from the water, by means of which the air conquers the fire itself. Thus, fire and water are enemies between which there is no consanguinity, for the fire is hot and dry, but the water is cold and moist. The air, which is warm and moist, joins these together by its concurring medium; between the humidity of water and the heat of fire the air is thus placed to establish peace. And look ye all how there shall arise a spirit from the tenuous vapour of the air, because the heat being joined to the humour, there necessarily issues something tenuous, which will become a wind. For the heat of the Sun extracts something tenuous out of the air, which also becomes spirit and life to all creatures. All this, however, is disposed in such manner by the will of God, and a coruscation appears when the heat of the Sun touches and breaks up a cloud.

The Turba saith:- Well hast thou described the fire, even as thou knowest concerning it, and thou hast believed the word of thy brother.

The Second Dictum.

Exumedrus saith:- I do magnify the air according to the mighty speech of Iximidrus, for the work is improved thereby. The air is inspissated, and it is also made thin; it grows warm and becomes cold. The inspissation thereof takes place when it is divided in heaven by the elongation of the Sun; its rarefaction is when, by the exaltation of the Sun in heaven, the air becomes warm and is rarefied. It is comparable with the complexion of Spring, in the distinction of time, which is neither warm nor cold. For

according to the mutation of the constituted disposition with the altering distinctions of the soul, so is Winter altered. The air, therefore, is inspissated when the Sun is removed from it, and then cold supervenes upon men.

Whereat the Turba said:- Excellently hast thou described the air, and given account of what thou knowest to be therein.

The Third Dictum.

Anaxagoras saith:- I make known that the beginning of all those things which God hath created is weight and proportion, for weight rules all things, and the weight and spissitude of the earth is manifest in proportion; but weight is not found except in body. And know, all ye Turba, that the spissitude of the four elements reposes in the earth; for the spissitude of fire falls into air, the spissitude of air, together with the spissitude received from the fire, falls into water; the spissitude also of water, increased by the spissitude of fire and air, reposes in earth. Have you not observed how the spissitude of the four elements is conjoined in earth! The same, therefore, is more inspissated than all.

Then saith the Turba:- Thou hast well spoken. Verily the earth is more inspissated than are the rest. Which, therefore, is the most rare of the four elements and is most worthy to possess the rarity of these four?

He answereth:- Fire is the most rare among all, and thereunto cometh what is rare of these four. But air is less rare than fire, because it is warm and moist, while fire is warm and dry; now that which is warm and dry is more rare than the warm and moist.

They say unto him:- The which element is of less rarity than air!

He answereth:- Water, since cold and moisture inhere therein, and every cold humid is of less rarity than a warm humid.

Then do they say unto him:- Thou hast spoken truly. What, therefore, is of less rarity than water?

He answereth:- Earth, because it is cold and dry, and that which is cold and dry is of less rarity than that which is cold and moist.

Pythagoras saith:- Well have ye provided, O Sons of the Doctrine, the description of these four natures, out of which God hath created all things. Blessed, therefore, is he who comprehends what ye have declared, for from the apex of the world he shall not find an intention greater than his own! Let us, therefore, make perfect our discourse.

They reply:- Direct every one to take up our speech in turn. Speak thou, O Pandolfus!

The Fourth Dictum.

But Pandolfus saith:- I signify to posterity that air is a tenuous matter of water, and that it is not: separated from it. It remains above the dry earth, to wit, the air hidden in the water, which is under the earth. If this air did not exist, the earth would not remain above the humid water.

They answer:- Thou hast said well; complete, therefore, thy speech.