

Preface and Introduction to Mermaids, Sylphs, Gnomes, and Salamanders © 2012 published by North Atlantic Books

Preface

The nature spirits that I work with in this book are described briefly by the Czech magician Franz Bardon in his book *The Practice of Magical Evocation*. Franz Bardon also offers an extensive training system in his book *Initiation into Hermetics*. Any serious student who wishes to probe the mysterious energies underlying nature might do well to study this work.

My task in this book, however, is more contemplative. It relates to presenting a spiritual psychology that unites nature, human, and divine awareness. To that end, I engage the kings and queens of the four elements in dialogues. I ask them questions such as “What is your innermost essence and the dreams at the core of your being?” and “What are your secret desires?”

In doing this, however, I am not practicing something that is esoteric, occult, or magical. Rather, I am studying human nature. The beauty and power underlying nature on this marvelous planet are also found within us. These spirits of the four elements embody the love, the harmony, the endurance, and the will that is hidden within ourselves.

The gift I would offer to each reader is the experience of how to look upon nature and see within it the nurturing and quickening power of what we as a race are meant to become. This world is our home. The elemental beings are like us in many ways. They seek to take nature itself and to bring it to perfection. Through better understanding what motivates them, we become wiser and more inspired as we seek to shape our own destiny.

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Introduction

The Four Elemental Beings

Who or what are elemental beings? On the astral plane of our planet, there are a vast variety of spiritual creatures one may encounter. Traditionally, some of these beings have a very special connection to nature and are called elementals. The four kinds of elemental beings are each composed of one element such that mermaids are water spirits, sylphs are air spirits, gnomes are earth spirits, and salamanders are fire spirits.

Human beings, by contrast, are considered in many traditions to be composed of five elements—water, air, earth, fire, and a fifth element called akasha or spirit. Within the human psyche, the soul, or astral body, the water element increases our ability to feel and to love. The air element enhances our artistic sensitivity and appreciation of harmony and balance. The earth element embodies the desire to work with physical matter, reshaping the world we are in so as to leave things of enduring value. And the fire element relates to will and power. Fire is intense, expansive, and constantly seeking to overcome anything that limits its self-expression.

We might look at a volcano and imagine a being who seeks to understand everything that it is possible to learn about fire as well as how to master every aspect of will power. In a similar way, we might look at the sea and imagine beings who are like water—it is their very nature to love, to bring forth life, to renew, to purify, to heal, and to make whole.

If we look at the sky, we might imagine spirits of the wind that are masters of every kind of atmospheric condition. But having the sky in which to roam, they tend to remain very detached and they love freedom. Or we might look at mountains, trees, rocks, and minerals and imagine beings who dwell in the earth. They are very silent inside and once they begin a task they no longer count time, for the only thing on their minds is pursuing what they have begun until they are done.

The psychological qualities I have just used to describe these elemental beings describe human beings as well. The difference is that the elemental beings have been striving to understand nature for millions of years. The kings and queens of the elements we might consider, then, to have mastered various secrets of nature as well as aspects of will, love, harmony, and inner silence that we as a race have only begun to explore. In this sense, the elementals are our teachers. They stand ready in any moment to speak with us and to share their secrets if only we still our minds and sharpen our senses so that we can perceive their presence.

In this book, I ascribe gender to the elementals. These beings, however, do not reproduce in any way similar to human beings. The mermaids, for example, may appear to be extremely sexy and attractive. And if you put a mermaid inside of a woman's body, she would indeed be very sensual and loving. But mermaids are not mammals or fish. They do not reproduce physically.

Consequently, when mermaids do in fact assume human form and live among us, they bring with them no tradition or morality for understanding what sex is. For example, a mermaid woman sees no relationship between sex and love. Love is an energy exchange between individuals. She can perceive love directly since she sees energy. In human form, she may consider sex to be a great experience. But having no ego or need for attachment, sex generates no bonding for her. If she is loyal to an individual in an intimate relationship, she is responding to the other person's need for her to present herself in that way.

In this book, I describe mermaids, the female form of water elementals. I could just as easily have written about merman. The mermen often have the ability to control storms at sea and are aware of the location of sunken ships. The water element, however, because of its extreme receptivity, favors the female form. The mermaid queens have astonishing powers that are greater in scope than those of the mermen. All the same, mermen are very active and creative in their own right.

Males can be found among the air elementals, but sylphs are mostly female. I describe members of both genders in this book. The feminine form carries with it a heightened sensitivity and female sylphs can easily

establish rapport with a human being if they wish to do so. The sylphs in masculine form tend to oversee, control, and change weather conditions.

Earth elementals too can easily be either masculine or feminine. As feminine, the gnome is more interested in nurturing—feeling an inner connection to the life force in trees, flowers, and living beings. In masculine form, the gnome is compulsive about investigating and transforming physical matter and working with the magical aspects of precious stones.

Fire tends to favor the masculine form in that fire is dynamic, explosive, and intense. Fire elementals in male form are constantly aware of the need to gather support from outside of themselves in order to maintain their power—fire needs external fuel. However, the greatest elementals within any of the four elements, the kings and queens, possess such understanding of magic and are so creative they are free to engage in activities that are either masculine or feminine. But as individuals, they specialize in one role or the other--taking control and changing something or else receptively embracing and becoming one with something.

Writers of fairy tales often imagine elemental beings to have human motives. But mermaids, for example, are not at all like human women. The extreme receptivity of mermaids and their magical empathy have never been described accurately in world literature. But in terms of active and passive, if we are discussing an elemental who can control the explosion of a super volcano-- that would be a male salamander. And if we are discussing an elemental who can in this moment instantly perceive the feelings and often the past and future of any living being on earth--that would be a mermaid queen.

Mermaids

Consider our relationship to the element of water. We have oceanography. We explore the seas, name the fish, and study habitats, the ocean currents, the tides, and so on. We know from fossils about fish that lived hundreds of millions of years ago. We can reconstruct and run simulations on how the ocean was formed and operates.

Does this not give us some understanding of mermaids? A mermaid can sense immediately what another mermaid is feeling. She can do the same with any life form, including human beings.

We use the water to wash ourselves, cleanse a wound, drink, and water plants and fields. It is essential to our industries. But when a mermaid puts her hands in water she feels the seas and the life within them. She has visions of past, present, and future. She has the power to take a feeling, a dream, or a vision and amplify it so that it appears before her in its full power and perfection. When a mermaid puts her hands in water, if she relaxes, she feels united to a sea of ecstasy.

Mermaids occasionally appear in mythology, fairy tales, and legends. They have various names: nixies, naiads, ondines, undines, water spirits, water nymphs, and so forth. They are composed of one element—water. Mermaids embody the fluidity, nurturing, soothing, releasing, receptivity, and beauty of water in nature.

Mermaids are often visualized as being half fish in their lower bodies and half woman in their upper. This image has become popularized by women who put on a mermaid body suit and swim with a monofin. These women can often swim faster than swimmers who wear separate fins.

However, the more evolved mermaids on the astral plane, the mermaid queens, are free to appear to human beings in the form of beautiful women. As spirits, they can assume different shapes to put at ease those with whom they are interacting.

This is easier to understand when you observe a woman who has a mermaid's aura. Between one shot and another in a photo shoot it can appear as if she changes her appearance into that of a different woman. But she is just utilizing the magic of water to appear in a different way for each situation she enters. She can do this because she has changed the ways she feels—

One moment a child; the next moment an ageless goddess; then flirtatious and playful; then familiar like a life-long friend; next attractive enough that the physical distance between the two of you seems to vanish; and then innocent and free as if a butterfly or hummingbird has just paused from its flight to land in your open palm.

The easiest way to tell when you are with such a woman is that when you are with her it seems that you are the only thing that exists in her awareness but you. But then you notice she gives herself to everyone in the same way without discrimination. However, unless she keeps her energetic giving in check, her actions are misunderstood and others often try to possess her or attack her.

In the story, *Caelius Aurelius Luscus and the Mermaid*, the mermaid is of high rank in that she embodies an awareness of entire oceans. The story explains how she acquired a human soul so that she now incarnates among us. My genre of fairy tales requires that I actually meet and interview elemental spirits from the astral plane who are here among us in human form. Though she looks, talks, and acts human, if you ask her the right questions she will discuss abilities she possess which are not known to human beings.

After talking to this particular woman, I have learned to wait five hours before getting into a car and driving home. Her effect on me is that I feel like I am floating in water such that I lose all sense of weight, direction, and momentum.

The story of the mermaid queen Isaphil discusses the great mysteries embodied in some of the mermaid queens. Isaphil is custodian of a sacred treasure the divine world seeks to give to the human race. Christopher Columbus said, “The sea will grant each man new hope ...” If you meet a mermaid queen like Isaphil, it is easy to say more—“The dreams within the sea offer each intelligent race that appears on earth the opportunity to attain its highest destiny.” The love of the mermaid queens is saturated with divine power.

Sylphs

Sylphs are nature spirits composed of one element—the air element. They are invisible to normal sight. They live in the sky. And they are invariably involved in some way with weather control.

When an individual has a surcharge of airy energy, there are feelings like wanting to dance, sing, perform, and express oneself in artistic ways. In other words, the air element in an individual produces

feelings of festivity and celebration. Qualities associated with the air element are cheerfulness, levity, laughter, amusement, and delight. Such individuals are aware of the beauty of being alive. Human beings with these airy qualities often turn to art and music as a way to allow these feelings to flow through themselves.

In the legends of elves and fairies, these beings are often pictured as dancing, singing, and partying all night. They dwell in a world of enchantment and sensual intoxication though they never seem to have a hangover or withdrawal symptoms from whatever it is that takes away their inhibitions and changes their mood to joy. But of course what they have is the air element in their souls in large supply.

If you feel dragged down, in a rut, or burdened by life's responsibilities, contact with the air element might offer a remedy. It has the power to lift you up. It enables you to feel detached, clear, and gain perspective.

It conceals the ability to feel light and playful. We can develop the sylph or airy qualities that are latent within us. Then we can regard conflict and confusion in a different light. With more of the air element active within us, we are able to see humor and delight in life's unexpected happenings. Where others perceive frustration and dissatisfaction, the airy temperament responds with art, being overwhelmed with curiosity and wonder in the drama of life unfolding. Where others cannot find a way to solve a problem, air will offer you ten different suggestions for moving forward. Air loves freedom. Harmony is its passion.

If you wanted to interact with a sylph like Parahim, you might imagine that your mind is open and clear like the sky. She loves the purity of an open mind free of all attachment. But you will also have to have a sensitivity and an appreciation of harmony. A sylph can sense the faintest shift in wind, humidity, temperature, and air pressure. Understandably, sylphs like those who are like themselves.

The sylph Capisi tells me of a time when she assumed human form to become the lover of a great poet. Though sylphs may love detachment and being in balance, Capisi is a sylph who loves beauty even if great conflict accompanies it.

The sylph Cargoste is one of the great wonders of our planet. His mind is so strong and clear that without the use of thought or mental action he is aware of the entire atmosphere of our planet. It is natural for a sylph of his power to oversee climatic changes such as the onset and the end of ice ages.

Gnomes

Gnomes are elemental beings composed of one element—earth. In nature, the earth element is seen in the forests, vegetation, mountains, plateaus, and plains—the planet earth in its physical being. The earth element emphasizes shape, weight, density, and mass. As such, the earth element provides minerals, building materials, resources, shelter, and food. The gnomes are astral spirits who have very close ties to the densest forms of matter in nature.

The earth element is also analogous to consciousness. The earth element unites thought (air), water (feeling), and fire (will) into productive activity. We use this form of consciousness to make things that endure.

When strong in an individual's personality, the earth element makes that person solid, grounded, stable, steady, and persevering. The individual loves to work. He takes something and he makes it more valuable. He fixes things. He transforms them. The world is a better place because of what he accomplishes. We could say this person is down to earth.

The earth element embodies a quiet ecstasy. Within yourself, you sense your connection to something of enduring value. This inner silence empowers you. It protects you. It shelters you. It separates you from those whose values are transient and of little consequence.

To have inner silence is never to be separate from your ideals, your dreams, your visions, your hopes, and all that you would make real. It is to have these things alive within you in every moment. Like a knight in the legend of King Arthur who sits at the round table, you represent the

kingdom of the heart. It surrounds you, and when you speak you speak with its power.

Avatars and world teachers enter history to remind us that divinity is everywhere. Those with inner silence join the spiritual world and earthly existence. This is because amid the routines and activities of life, silence maintains an open space inside them. In this space the highest ideal can be present without being contaminated, compromised, or put off to the side. Silence strengthens inner visions so there is never any doubt or uncertainty about their reality.

The gnomes I describe are in some ways familiar to us. If you attended a Medieval Fair, it would not be difficult to imagine Musar being there. He would have a booth where he trades and barter antiques or ancient things found in the earth for whatever human beings currently consider to be of value. He is down-right curious about the human race. He wants to understand where we are going and what we are able to accomplish.

The gnome Erami could give lectures at Harvard on horticulture, genetic engineering, biochemistry, and longevity. I think he could translate his direct perceptions of life, matter, and energy into scientific language without too much effort. And if Mentifil walked the earth in human form, he simply would not stop until he taught us how to extend our life spans so we live two or three hundred years longer. And this he would do simply by showing us how to increase our awareness of our bodies, of water and food, and of the life force in breathing. For Mentifil, a still mind in combination with concentration and imagination can reveal the deepest keys to understanding health and vitality.

Salamanders

Working with salamanders is somewhat different from working with mermaids, sylphs, and gnomes. Each kind of elemental being presents unique challenges. Since salamanders specialize in power, interacting with them requires something more. You must resolve in yourself the conflicts between love, power, and wisdom.

Being exposed to the fiery energy of these beings may produce any number of side effects. It may give a sudden boost to an individual's will. If the individual has a solid and balanced character, a wide range of experience, and high commitments, then he or she will feel comfortable with the expansive and dynamic qualities of fire.

On the other hand, if the individual has repressed anger or is otherwise hostile or easily irritated, the fire may have bad effects. An individual may fall into fits of rage and demand others comply with his wishes. Or, he may overreact and respond with paranoia when someone threatens his security.

Then again, exposure to the fire element may cause an individual to become passive. The experience with fire is so powerful it overwhelms the individual's will. He does not know how to respond to, absorb, or direct this new energy that has entered his aura. He is temporarily paralyzed while his nerves are recovering from the shock.

The salamanders have different interests. For example, Amtophul gives a practical meditation for better understanding how fire expands will power. Working with Pyrum results in discovering the power hidden deep within you. Itumo offers an outlook on life that is electrifying—he offers the motivation to do the impossible. With Tapheth, your enthusiasm and your desire to act and change the world are vastly expanded. Since Orudu moves continents, he embodies the kind of will required to overturn entrenched institutions or governments. Such distinctions help us to understand how fire influences us individually.

In discussing salamanders, we are pursuing questions about will and power as they exist within nature, as they exist within human beings, and as they exist within divinity. We ask about the relation of the external world to the internal—to what extent fire, which symbolizes light and will, is an actual energy we possess and can develop within ourselves. And we are pursuing how matter and spirit interact and the way desire can be refined and transformed to fulfill the purposes of spirit.

Note: The four sections of this book—mermaids, sylphs, gnomes, and salamanders—are independent of each other. You can begin the book in any one of these four sections.