Spells and incantations are forms of "intensified" speech used in all primitive and traditional cultures for protection from others and their baleful influences or from the malign forces of the surrounding environment. Spells are said to have been cast when, after the performance of an oral form, a regime of protection is set up around the pertinent individual, preventing him from being victimized or harmed. An incantation, on the other hand, is used after the individual has fallen into harm's way and must be rescued.¹ For this purpose the incantation is most often employed as a healing device.

Plato was intrigued by the healing powers of incantations (Charmides, 156-157; Phaedrus, 270d; Republic, X, 618b), and although he seems to have been repulsed by the hint of irrationality implicit in the physiological effects of the word, he recognized the crucial role of poetic order in certain psychological conditions. Indeed, the venerable history of the metaphor drawn between medicine and poetry began with Plato's inquiries into the relationship between "beautiful discourses" ("tous logous einai tous kalous," Charm. 157a) and healing.²

The "beauty" of incantations is, of course, the intensification of normal speech patterns through poetic ordering. This intensification is signalled in the verbs "to exorcise" or "to charm" in many languages by the derivation from a basic "to speak" or "to sing" verb through an augmentive prefix: Gr. αἰων > ἐπιδην, Lat. cantare > incantare, Ger. sprechen > besprechen, singen > besingen, Rus. govorit' > zagovorit', Cz. říkat > zaříkat, etc.

The point of the following comments on a Czech sickness incantation against erysipelas (nádecha in Czech)³ will be that the poetic intensification is felt, as

² Ibid., p. 115.
³ Called ignis sacer by Pliny, Natural History 28:20 passim, and in English dialects variously, "St. Anthony's fire" (cf. my translation of the incantation) and "the rose." It is caused by a hemolytic streptococcus, accompanied by fever and pain; erysipelas is marked by a swollen reddening of the skin, usually on the face. In addition to the red dis-
well, in the intimate relationships of movement, control, and presence between the narrative level and the linguistic-poetic level of analysis. The narrative of an incantation is, of course, very simple. Just as the "story" of deflecting a blow or warding off a bothersome fly is "told" by the performance of the activity itself in the respective abductions and adductions of pertinent limbs to the accompaniment of appropriate expressions of fear or annoyance, so too in the sickness incantation the story of healing is told directly in the performance or manipulations of the constituent elements of the act. But the constituent elements of incantations are words and poetic systems. And the manipulations of these kinds of word collections (verba concepta) provide us a view of an especially direct link, even a primitive one, between conation and poetic order.

Any reading of an incantation will be required to account for the phenomenology of presence, movement, and control, because the incantation tells...