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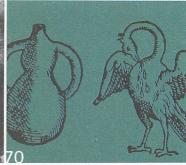
Detail from Plate XXII – The Fifth Treatise, Part I, Fourth Chapter of Splendor Solis by Solomon Trismosin, adept and teacher of Paracelsus (1582). London, England.



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Our next themed issue in March 2010 (Vol.11 No.1) will explore the ALCHEMIES OF ASIA. During November and December 2009, the editor will consider submissions towards this themed issue. Contact the editor to discuss the thematic focus or to submit your essay, article, interview, or review.

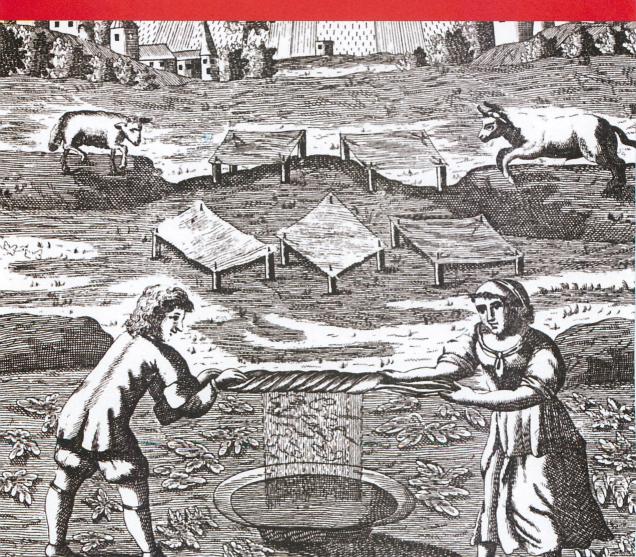


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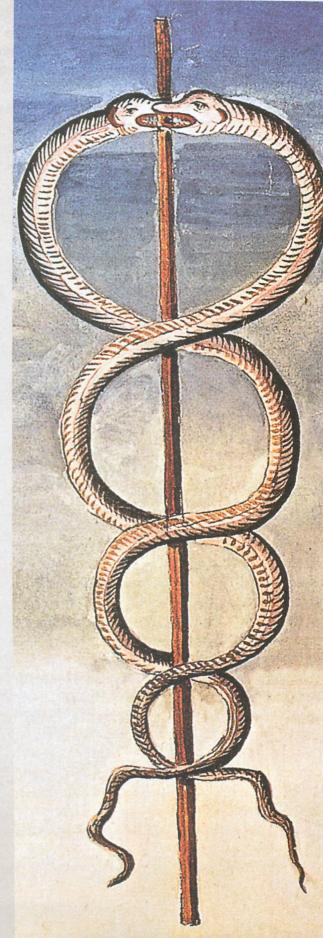
FROM THE FIRE

eaders familiar with the writings of that most famous student of abbot and cabbalist Johannes Trithemius, Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, called Paracelsus, would be familiar with the views of Einsiedeln's favourite son with regards to the art and science of healing: "The art of medicine is rooted in the heart. If your heart is false, you will also be a false physician; if your heart is just, you will also be a true physician. No one requires greater love of the heart than the physician." According to the Monarch of the Arcana, the true physician must possess qualities of altruism, intellectual honesty and purity, and "should be free of ambition, vanity, envy, unchastity and self-conceit, because these vices are the outcome of ignorance and incompatible with the light of divine Wisdom which should illumine the mind of the true physician." Selfless, of an irreproachable moral nature and guided by the highest ideals, the true practitioner of medicine must use his or her own knowledge and experience as a foundation upon which can rest the four pillars of medicine: philosophy, astronomy, alchemy, and virtue (or ethics). The first pillar of medicine philosophy - consists of a knowledge of physical Nature (i.e. of earth and water). The second pillar astronomy - entails a knowledge of the powers of the mind (i.e. that which is fiery and airy in nature). The third medical pillar - alchemy - requires a knowledge of the divine powers in man (i.e. the properties of the cosmos, including the four elements and the quintessence - an introduction to the Art of Transformation). The fourth pillar - virtue or ethics - supports and completes the three other pillars, and relates to the personal virtue (or holiness) of the physician, present until his or her physical death. The Prince of Physicians and Philosophers by Fire elaborated upon this further when he said, "The physician ought to be an Alchemist ... that is to say, he [or she] should understand the Chemistry of

Life. Medicine is not merely a science, but an art; it does not consist merely in compounding pills and plasters and drugs of all kinds, but it deals with the processes of life, which must be understood before they can be guided. All art, all wisdom, all power, acts from one centre towards the periphery of the circle, and whatever is enclosed within that circle may be regarded as medicine ... Alchemy - i.e. the employment of a strong will, benevolence, charity, patience, etc. - is, therefore, the principal cornerstone in the practice of medicine." And so it is that in these days of increasingly hostile (or at least increasingly sensationalised) viral epidemics, drugresistant biological agents, psychopathic (in the truest sense of the word) pharmaceutical companies and related corporations, a crude and unnecessarily toxic pharmacopœia, mandatory vaccination programmes, and devastated and deficient health care systems and infrastructure, the opening pages of this Alchemy Journal reconnect with these now neglected pillars of medicine - the art aspiring to maintain and restore health via the prevention and treatment of illness - through the writings of the American Paracelsian, Gabriel Quinn Maroney. Although strongly emphasising the second and third medical pillars, Maroney also plunges, Theseus-like, into the labyrinth of the alchemical feminine, sword and ball of red fleece thread in hand, this time gifted not by Ariadne but by Tiamat, that Great Matrix who bore great dragons or serpents: a prima materia is She. Via the alchemical paradigm, Emma Restall Orr details her devotional connection with the Dark Goddess, and Dr. Robin L. Gordon continues to engage the thematic emphasis of our previous issue as she investigates female alchemists. Psychospiritual alchemist Paul Cowlan shares two visions - fifteen years apart - of the Philosopher's Stone, and Duane Saari catches that tail devourer, the ouroboros, by the tail (or perhaps by the jaws?) in an attempt to unravel its mysterious nature as portal between

what is known and what is unknown. Pathways towards the transmutation of the self, as followed by both the 'traditional' mystic and the 'spiritual' alchemist, are navigated by Dr. James Rodgers, and the use of cosmological and metaphysical gnosis by each path discussed. The Belgian-born adept, Artofferus, extracts two severely decayed teeth - one each from the mouth of 'religion' and the mouth of 'science' - and tells us more about his treasured, medicinal Stone, and its formulation according to his Easy Way. Building upon the earlier dibikos and tribikos of Maria Prophetissa, alchemist and Western medical herbalist Daniel Coaten details his development and use of the tetrabikos, along with his passion and practical prowess with the famous pelican and kerotakis alchemical apparati. Our Modern Magister, Rubaphilos Salfluere, talks about "the literary heart and soul of the acetate path" -Sir George Ripley's The Bosome Book - his teacher, a woman whom he describes as "the last properly trained and active lab alchemist in New Zealand," and significantly more besides. Thanks are extended to the Philosophical Research Society for granting permission to include in this Alchemy Journal the image 'The Celestial Virgin with Sun God in Her Arms' by J. A. Knapp, from the late Manly P. Hall's meisterwerk, The Secret Teachings of All Ages. Gratitude also to the numerous alchemical practitioners and authors whose work has necessarily been held over for inclusion in subsequent issues of this publication, including Dr. Thom Cavalli, Master Mantak Chia, Dr. Bruce Fisher, Joshua Madara, Andrew Kettle, and Karen Bartlett, amongst others. The writings of these Faithful Secretaries of Nature are forthcoming, for the patient reader. A

Paul Hardacre Editor



Great Mother Tiamat: Prima Materia of the Second Medical Pillar

GABRIEL QUINN MARONEY

From the Epic of Creation

During the time when skies above were not yet named nor the earth below pronounced by name, Great Mother Tiamat, creator of all things and counterpart to the first one Apsu, brought forth powerful guardians as she gave



The Celestial Virgin with Sun God in Her Arms

birth to devouring serpents with blood of venom. She cloaked dragons with radiant embellishments of divine brilliance. Whoever looks upon them will collapse in petrifaction. This great force shall be unyielding. Tiamat prepared for battle and stationed a horned serpent, mushussu-dragon, lahmu-hero, ugallu-demon, rabid dog, scorpion-man, aggressive umu-demons, fish-man, and a bull-man all fearlessly wielding great weapons. Her orders would not be disobeyed. In addition she created eleven powerful guardians ... Marduk, the champion son of gods, spoke as the constellation vanished and reappeared as he spoke again, proclaiming him king. He must now take battle and attempt to slay the sea of chaos itself ... Supported by the divine fathers; he lifted a great mace with his right hand then slung a bow and quiver at his side. Lightning was before him as his body blazed and filled with an immortal flame. He created a net to ensnare Tiamat and directed the four winds of south, north, east, and west so that she would be entirely contained. He mounted the great chariot and clutched spells and herbs to counteract Tiamat's poisons ... Face to face they came, the raging Tiamat and Marduk, the sage of gods. Tiamat cast a spell without even turning her head. Lord Marduk spread out his great net and encircled Tiamat with it. The dark waters opened her mouth and attempted to devour her victim. The winds filled her belly causing her jaw to open wider as the great champion seized the trident and arrow, piercing her belly and dividing her in two while penetrating the heart. Now vanquished, Tiamat's life-force was drawn from her. Marduk threw down her corpse and stood upon the microcosm as he tossed the net over Tiamat's guardian brood, trapping them. With Marduk's victory, he reclaimed the tablet of destiny and held it to his chest ... He lifted Tiamat's corpse to roof the heavens and tore Tiamat's body in two. Of the two halves heaven and earth were made. The Sun God Marduk crossed the heaven upon her body to seek out his shrine.

Condensed, interpreted and edited translation of the Mesopotamian creation myth from Tablets 1,3, 4, and 5 12

Forging a Cosmological Compass

It is a culture's specific tradition of cosmology that most directly and dramatically influences day to day activity of both social and individual practice; scribes who recorded the given origin of creation must have understood this all too well. Dating back what is suspected to be over 4,000 years, the oldest surviving Epic of Creation was found in the Middle East on fragmented clay tablets etched in an ancient Babylonian language of the wedge shaped Akkadian cuneiform.3 It is thought to have been part of a new year's ceremony forged by the king to celebrate and highlight the essential process of bringing order from chaos by way of a solar hero. Although a complete understanding of the social, ceremonial and political influence that the Epic of Creation was meant to carry out is not fully realised, it is clear that it attempted to explain and lay a foundation of cosmology. Its account of the battle between Tiamat and Marduk has both engendered and mirrored an archetypal mythos that should be considered within any discussion attempting to understand the origin of modern cosmology, astrology and zodiacal constellations. Rupert Gleadow writes in The Origin of the Zodiac that, "The Zodiac is a circle of twelve constellations, each of exactly thirty degrees extent, lying along the path of the sun, and by means of which the position of the sun, moon and planets can be measured. It has often been said that it originated in Babylon, and this, though not entirely true, is not implausible, for no other ancient civilisation believed so implicitly in the doctrine 'as above so below.'"4 Our Western constellational zodiac figures such as Scorpio, Capricorn, etc., at least partially originated in Babylonia, to be influenced later by the ancient societies such as Greek and Egyptian, which helped set their role within our heavenly skies. The scorpion-man, fish-man, and bull-man guardians may be a reference to the origin of Scorpio, Taurus, and so forth. The Epic further details Marduk altering the anatomical

remains of Tiamat to form mountains, rivers, weather patterns, and the Moon, forging a newly shaped universe of cycle, space and time. Furthermore, Marduk "designated the year and marked out its divisions, apportioned three stars each to the twelve months."5 The clash between Tiamat and Marduk is considered the paragon of dragon slaying tales, yet Tiamat is more accurately described as one who bore great dragons or serpents. Joseph Campbell points out within his The Hero with a Thousand Faces that Tiamat is "a female personification of the original abyss itself: chaos as the mother of the gods, but now the menace of the world." Alchemically speaking, Tiamat represents a prima materia, or primal elemental substance that becomes distilled and separated into various volatilities by a great solar flame personified as Marduk, just as the Sun itself separates night and day, creating specific cycles and seasons. A sacrifice of raw potentiality becomes resurrected within the manifestation of both Heaven and Earth engendered by the same origin. In one sense, Tiamat is crucified upon the four winds and then resurrected anew as her elements come together to form a newly transformed state for which process Joseph Campbell comments, "Tiamat though slain and dismembered, was not thereby undone. Had the battle been viewed from another angle, the chaos-monster would have been seen to shatter of her own accord, and her fragments move to their respective stations. Marduk and his whole generation of divinities were but particles of her substance." This specific incantation of cosmology seems to be explicitly expressed by bringing to life astrological constellations and elements of Nature to become purified and survive beyond the great flood as Marduk "pushed back with a ceiling the waters above, and with a floor the waters beneath. Then in the world between he created man."6 The people who celebrated this new year's ceremony considered their genetic lineage to be celestial and very much acknowledged the stars to be living organisms, unlike modern biological scientific theory. Our current university systems and places of knowledge now struggle between two polar oppositions of personification versus objectification, vitality versus rigour, practicality versus spirituality, and action versus observation, because the seemingly inseparable cosmological aspects of art and science have been divided into broken segments, rendering its synthetic rite of passage a grand disillusionment. A people's understanding of the origin, structure and evolution of the Universe is what gives directional influence towards customs, rites and rituals that project, reflect and reclaim what is currently best described as Nature. "As above so below," suggests a cosmology of unification that is guided by the patterns within Nature as our true teacher of wisdom, tradition and ancestry. The insights gained through the scientific method may be rendered inadequate and perhaps even detrimental if there is no directional intent towards wellbeing, Nature medicine and the unified rhythmic harmony amongst all elements within any given system.

The Green Language of Universal Medicine Signatures

Today, the term doctrine of signatures (DOS) is most notably associated with a specific theory within botanical medicine: that therapeutic qualities of any certain plant can be determined by way of organoleptic (sensory organ) observation alone. The doctrine of signatures could be described as an inherent language that may be read upon any facet of Nature, revealing its inner virtues. A most recent scientific discussion was put forward by an experienced ethnobotanist, Bradley C. Bennett, attempting to challenge the viability of plant signatures within his study, Doctrine of Signatures: An Explanation of Medicinal Plant Discovery or Dissemination of Knowledge? His five point conclusion states that, "(1) as classically defined by morphology, signatures seldom if ever led to the discovery of medicinal plants.

Considering DOS in this manner is unproductive and largely untestable. (2) Most signatures are post hoc appellations rather than a priori clues. Seeing a particular signature often required a vivid imagination. (3) A broader concept of signatures that includes organoleptic properties associated with therapeutic values is productive ... (4) DOS should be considered for what it primarily is - a way of disseminating information. Fundamentally, the DOS is a mnemonic and therefore it is exceedingly valuable in traditional cultures. A fifth point warrants investigation ... signatures may enhance the 'placebo effect' of medicines."7 Most, if not all, traditional medical systems incorporate some form of doctrine of signatures theory, yet practical scholarly discussions have been notably promoted by Paracelsian literature as well as other practitioners such as Nicholas Culpeper.8 9 Further commenting upon Bennett's conclusions would seem to lead in broadening the 'classical' definition he describes, as it has never been limited to a consideration of morphological features alone; plant pigment by itself goes beyond this limit. A 'vivid imagination' is prevalent and very active within young and vibrant Homo sapiens; perhaps this remains a healthy state for our species in general. Bennett mentions about placebo effect, "those species with characteristics resembling the disease being treated may be perceived to be more effective by patients," yet we may also want to consider the theory that a plant's signature is an important part of the medicine itself; for who has not at some point gazed at the geometry and spectrum of those within the plant kingdom to then experience stress reduction or other therapeutic qualities? Bennett investigated the therapeutic value of heart shapes in plant morphology and found little connection to heart organ therapies. Signs, symbols and signatures must be understood from the perspective of peoples' given cosmology and tradition; from this ethic, an investigation would focus upon a specific tradition's

language of signature-symbols and medical-ethnobotanical knowledge without speculation that a heart shape represents the heart organ to all or even most cultures. The doctrine of signatures should be seen for what it primarily is: an essential therapeutic process that involves maintaining a vitally viable connection to Nature. It seems perhaps a great mystery to the culture of science that humans would have the ability to perceive function / therapies and relationship instinctually towards other species which we have potentially evolved alongside. This may be due to denial about our loss of perception of connection to the surrounding environmental elements, a connection referred to by

a medical *praxis*, a chemical philosophy, and spiritual doctrine that united man to God and both to the Universe." The acknowledgment of this connection to Nature elements may be far more important now than when first written, given recent environmental devastations. Paracelsus has averred that every plant is medicinal, but we have only to discover the hidden virtue through signatures and experience taught by Nature. It may be productive for the language of nutrition to include substances (sound, light, taste) gained by way of sensory organs as nourishment processed through organoleptic circulatory systems. Plant signatures are holographic, in that any given perspective or vantage point of

"Plant signatures are holographic, in that any given perspective or vantage point of observation continues to express influential patterns, no matter if they are interpreted by our sight, taste or external chemical analysis."

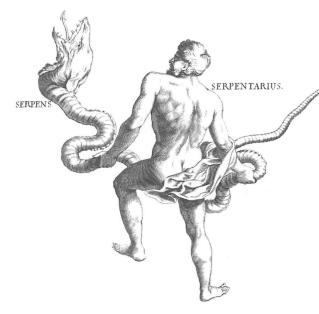
Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim (Paracelsus) with the words, "because the human being comes from the earth and comes from the heavens, he must suffer what they suffer and must attract to himself the very things that are in them ... For why else is it that the human being desires to eat than that he is made of earth? Why else does he desire to drink? Because he is of water. Why breath? Because he is of air. Why warmth? Because he is of fire." Within A Philosophical Path for Paracelsian Medicine, Joel Shackelford explains, "in short, the ideas of Paracelsus were of interest to healers weather they were ministers to the sick, ministers of faith, or menders of natural philosophy, which many in the early modern period saw as in need of repair. Thus we find Paracelsian concepts embedded in a variety of social and intellectual contexts, providing an ideological justification and a metaphysical foundation for observation continues to express influential patterns, no matter if they are interpreted by our sight, taste or external chemical analysis. We can be influenced by signatures as it remains our relationship dynamic to these other living organisms that determines how we imprint or affect one another biologically, both in the short term as well as towards the evolutionary process. Known as medical astrology or astro-medicine, this universal system has utilised its own superstring brand of the signatures doctrine linking all aspects within the Macrocosm and Microcosm as one complete, harmonising, transmutational relationship. A pharmacist, medical herbalist and astrologer, Jane Ridder-Patrick writes in her Handbook of Medical Astrology that "astrology is one of the most accessible and reliable methods of pinpointing and analysing those factors that permeate inner and outer circumstances at any given moment, the individual's relationship to them, and the adjustments that need to be made to maintain a dynamic balance. Health is the state of inner harmony that comes from co-operating with these forces." I Just as Paracelsian alchemical medicine has provoked tremendous unintentional influence towards the engenderment of our chemically isolated pharmaceuticals, the cultural practice of medical astrology, theoretically being the ultimate preventative medicine, has influenced the modern phenomenon of genetically testing patients to gain insight towards potential health risks of the future. Judith Hill explains within Medical Astrology: A guide to Planetary Pathology, "from the standpoint of health, the astrological birth chart can cosmology itself. Paracelsus put forward an elaborate and controversial medical system in his writings, such as Paragranum, that includes astrology as the second fundamental pillar before which it stands. Upon his opening remarks, Paracelsus states that astrology "is the upper part of philosophy by means of which human beings are altogether knowable," and that "the corpora can be thoroughly studied with reference to the upper sphere as well as in the lower one of the microcosmus. These two are the two heavens: chaos and astra," in speaking about the elements of air-female and fire-male celestial influences. His words, which were often coupled amongst slanders and outrage towards the medical community of the day, seem to have the

"... the philosophical virtue of this constellation [Serpentarius or Ophiuchus] engenders a praxis of bringing all zodiacal influences into our anatomy, acknowledging both the bodily organs and zodiacal virtues as circulatory systems and not stagnantly fixed."

be seen as a garden with seeds lying dormant in the ground. Only when the appropriate season arrives do the seeds sprout and produce either weeds or roses ... More importantly, negative planetary weather would do less harm if we have taken precautions to prevent the seeds of ill health from sprouting in the first place!"12 Consider, for example, how similar our medical biochemical constituent symbols are structured compared to astrological constellations; both connected with lines through negative space and assigned potential virtues of influence. This thought may lead us to inquire about the connection between our DNA, cultural cosmology and the symbol of the caduceus, or benzene ring chemical structure and the ouroboros. The overall philosophical advantage of medical astrology is that it also takes into consideration the largest scope of environmental factors, being the entire

suggestive tone of unification and direct access. Paracelsus invokes an ever unifying cosmology with the phrase, "For the heavens are the human being and the human being is the heavens; and all human beings are the same heavens; and the heavens are indeed but a single human being." A flow of cosmological influence was maintained from the Father Macrocosm, Mother Matrix and Child of the Microcosmic Realm. Certain illnesses within the Microcosm (human anatomy) could then be explained, "For as the star, so the disease; and whoever knows the stars also knows the diseases." There remains a striking contrast between the medical philosophies of the traditional humoural physicians of his time, for which individualised treatment with contraries is specified. Paracelsus made the counter-cultural assertion that there is a universal way of knowing the corpora, or microcosmal anatomy, "the

humores must be thrust aside, and the qualities of elements brought to the fore." Reflective of the upper heavens, this Microcosmal anatomy would then also include the zodiac, which Paracelsus points out, "the number in the heavens matches that in the body," regarding human anatomical structures relating to signs of the zodiac. Dr. C. Richardson-Boedler explains in an article published by the British Homeopathic Journal, entitled The Doctrine of Signatures: a historical, philosophical and scientific view (I), that "Paracelsus linked the forces of the moon to the brain, the spleen to Saturn, the heart to the sun, the kidneys to Venus, the liver to Jupiter, and the gallbladder to Mars. Various botanical species, resonating with these forces, were distinguished in this unique application of the Doctrine of Signatures. In this view of the Doctrine, the planets determine the plants' specific curative potential."13 Regarding the twelve relations of fixed organs coinciding with planetary influence, medical astrologers would be wise to also note a type of tredecitessence towards a thirteenth zodiacal constellation known as Serpentarius or Ophiuchus which is represented as a celestial man entwined within a cosmic serpent; the philosophical virtue of this constellation engenders a praxis of bringing all zodiacal influences into our anatomy, acknowledging both the bodily organs and zodiacal virtues as circulatory systems and not stagnantly fixed. As Paracelsus further personified these celestial philosophies of medical praxis, with it came angelic medicine; a treatment could have included personalised zodiacal amulets inscribed with the language of the magi by means of integrating celestial influences as a cure. What remains most important towards this dynamic within universal medicine is the triangular relationship between spagyria materia medica (transmuted medicinal material) and the linking influence between both anatomies of the heavenly bodies. Paracelsus referred to the praxis of this cyclic body relationship as corpora microcosmi astralia



(Microcosmic astral body), which becomes the practitioner's zero point of connection to universal influences. Andrew Weeks, the editor who translated from the original German a noteworthy Essential Theoretical Writings of Paracelsus, summarises within the introduction, "his new medical theory could only rest on the authority of Nature itself: [quoting Paracelsus] 'Who is a better teacher in this than nature itself?' 'Now that we have concluded that the physicians must be educated by nature, we must ask, what is nature but philosophy? What is philosophy other than the invisible nature?' ... In a sense peculiar to Paracelsus, natural philosophy leads to human self-recognition: [quoting Paracelsus] 'That is what philosophy is: [things] are in the human being in the same way that they are outside, intangibly, as if one were looking at oneself in a mirror." This attempt to understand the unknown self through a reflection of Nature, along with the other pillars of medicine, is what has seeded the harvest of biochemistry and the scientific method itself; to study the mystery of our own ignorance. Within discussions on medicine, Paracelsus spoke intimately regarding the role of belief and faith toward health: "... you believe in whatever it is that you do not know; and because you do not know it, neither does your belief know it. For as you are, so is [your belief] too. It may be the case that in belief we are like the spirits and all things are known to us. But not all things need to be revealed to the body. Hence, if we believe credulously, it turns out for us just that way: [the truth is that] we should always believe our capability and not [believe] in that which we wish to have happen ... For [the same] medicine that serves health can also be used to bring about death."15 A serpent encircling the staff of Aesculapius (Son of Apollo and Coronis, instructed in the art of medicine by the centaur Chiron), often associated with medical practitioners, was said to have the ability to reveal healing plant properties as it moved close to the ground. 16 As Paracelsus observes, "the external heavens are a guide to the inner heavens ... yet the heavens within us do not lie before our eyes, but rather behind our eyes, so that we cannot see them." To attempt this sense of vision is to embrace our vital ability to unveil an unknown influential wisdom or arcanum within the vitalistic patterns of Nature, know by alchemists as the Green Language of the Birds.

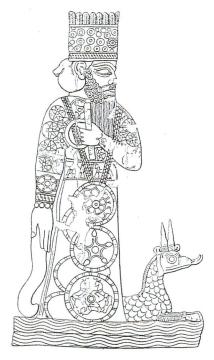
The Quintessential Rites of Arcanum: Macrocosm and Microcosm as a Spagyric Ritual

The longest standing scientific predictive theory remains the *doctrine of transmuting elements* of which a first principle was observed by Aristotle towards an original unifying primordial substance described further as *prima materia* (prime material). Hugh R. King challenges this in his 1956 publication, *Aristotle without Prima Materia*, "[f] or all serious scientific philosophy and physics the doctrine of First Matter, or *prima material*, has, after a long and illustrious life, died quietly and ignobly. In exhuming the body in this paper my purpose is to show that the doctrine does not go back so far as Aristotle, that no trace of it can be found within his philosophic remains, and that it developed early in the

Aristotelian Tradition out of an elementary error in interpretation."17 This challenge was rebutted by Friedrich Solmsen in his publication, Aristotle and Prime Matter: A Reply to Hugh R. King, as he states, "The question at issue is whether Aristotle's physical (and metaphysical) system included the concept of pure matter without form - and whether he actually operates with it in physical deductions and constructions."18 Solmsen explains according to Aristotle that, "[t]his prima materia underlies the opposites." Aristotle discusses prima materia as a mercurial force leading one element to another, and a common substratum matter to the four elements. It is fitting that Paracelsus was named Theophrastus by his father after Aristotle's pupil, as he continued, reformed and evolved the language for the purpose of medicine, retaining prima materia as essentially vital. What remains essential amongst the treasured concepts that Paracelsus advocated for is the idea that wisdom comes from the source of one's own experience and relationship with Nature while maintaining a compassionate heart for others, as apposed to blindly following conventional leanings such as book knowledge alone. A French anthropologist and sociologist, Arnold van Gennep, published the highly influential work, Rite of Passage, around 1906. This work acknowledged the three fundamental stages of ritual. Van Gennep explains, "I have tried to assemble here all the ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another. Because of the importance of these transitions, I think it legitimate to single out rites of passage as a special category, which under further analysis may be subdivided into rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorparation ... Consequently, I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, preliminal rites, those executed during transitional stage liminal (or threshold) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world postliminal rites."19 These writings inspired works

"Within the Epic of Creation we find a telling of the original rite of passage that set the Universe separated, yet ultimately linked together by the influence of Tiamat or prima materia."

such as Joseph Campbell's A Hero with a Thousand Faces, which describes the hero's journey within the rite of passage context as departure, initiation and return, as well as Victor Turner's The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, which focuses and expands upon van Gennep's mercurial or liminal rites. Turner insightfully explains about ritual, "[t]he gaps between the positions, the interstices, are necessary to the structure. If there were no intervals, there would be no structure and it is precisely the gaps that are reaffirmed in this kind of liminality. The structure of the whole equation depends on its negative as well as its positive signs."20 Within the Epic of Creation we find a telling of the original rite of passage that set the Universe separated, yet ultimately linked together by the influence of Tiamat or prima materia. Our current Big Bang theory of cosmology is remarkably similar, with the Universe being birthed from an ever potent and contained original substance that explodes out into the darkness of time and space. Specific discussion by van Gennep illustrates how Tiamat and her guardian brood enhance the ritual process, "when 'guardians of the threshold' take on monumental proportions, as in Egypt, in Assyro-Babylonia (winged dragons, the sphinx, and all sorts of monsters), and in China (in the form of statues), they push the door and the threshold into the background; prayers and sacrifices are addressed to the guardians alone. A rite of spatial passage has become a rite of spiritual passage; a personified power insures it through spiritual means." In the final words of van Gennep's



Marduk and Tiamat

conclusion, he shares the profound realisation that, "the series of human transitions has, among some people, been linked to the celestial passage, the revolutions of planets, and the phases of the moon. It is indeed a cosmic conception that relates the stages of human existence to those of plant and animal life and, by some sort of pre-scientific divination, joins them to the great rhythms of the universe." Although hundreds of years after Paracelsus coined the term spagyria (Greek: separate, then bind together), van Gennep's rite of passage is remarkably similar within his given pattern description, "for groups, as well as for individuals, life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn." Paracelsus speaks of his tria prima as a cosmology for matter, "[t]hree are the substances that thus give each [being or thing] its corpus. That is to say that each corpus stands in three things. The names of these three things are sulphur, mercurius, [and] sal. When these

three things are put together, there is that which is called corpus and nothing is added to them but life and that which pertain to it. Thus when you take a corpus in hand, you have invisibly three substances in one form (sulphur, mercurius, sal) ... reducing these same corpora externally into ultima material by means of his spagyric art."21 Combining both the language and principle of cosmology reveals what can be termed a quintessential rite of arcanum; a vitalistic ritual that brings all separated elements into balance by way of an immortal cycle (life, death and rebirth). This, in virtue and essence, is represented by the ouroboros. One classical depiction of the serpent devouring and regenerating itself shares parchment with a kerotakis distillation instrument and constellations on what is known as The Gold-making of Cleopatra. Within the center of the serpent that is divided in two by light and dark is proclaimed, "One is the All." Greek words written in two circles declare, "One is the Serpent which has poison according to two compositions ... One is the All and by it the All and in it the All and if it does not contain All it is nothing."22 23 This reference emblematises the process of turning poison into medicine by way of a holistic expression. Within his book, The Alchemist of Nature: Being the Spagyric Doctrine Concerning the Entity of Poison, Paracelsus highlights relationship as having the transformative quality of turning poison to health or vise versa, "We are endowed with a body which is devoid of poison. But that which we administer by way of nourishment to our body has poison combined therewith ... Hence, observe that the other animals and fruits are for us designed as food, and so, also, as poison. They are not in themselves either foods or poison, but, as regards themselves, and inasmuch as they are creatures, they share their perfection equally with us. When they are taken by us as food they are thus poison to us. Thus a thing becomes poison to us which in itself is by no means poison."24 The ouroboros, a fundamental symbol within the

tradition of astrology and alchemy, represents a cosmological structure of immortality depicted as a rite of passage and may in fact be a relic from the Epic of Creation as Tiamat separated, yet still whole. Similar representations throughout the vast majority of traditional cultures indicate a shared origin, and/or evidence, of a collective cosmological conscious. The light and dark portions of the serpent represent separation in general and, specifically, Macrocosm-Microcosm, matter-antimatter, outer-inner, and quintessence-arcanum. This sentiment is mirrored within an elucidation given by Paracelsus, "For the external heavens and his own heavens are a single heaven, though in two divisions." The Fourth Book of the Archidoxies typifies quintessence as "a certain matter extracted from all things which Nature has produced and from everything which has life corporally in itself, a matter most subtly purged of all impurities and mortality, and separated from all the elements ... a force, a virtue, a medicine." The arcanum Paracelsus is noted for outlining is said to wield the influence of "like treating like" within medical theory and praxis as he describes, "it is not indeed just vegetation, but rather the celestial arcana that help. There is no disease that is not to be counteracted with all due force employing solely that property, not the complexion, but rather making use of the very same property in turn."25 Here Paracelsus suggests a unification of properties without elemental opposition as a medical philosophy. The Fifth Book of the Archidoxies reads, "that is called arcanum, then, which is incorporeal, immortal, of perpetual life, intelligible above all Nature and of knowledge more than human ... They have the power of transmuting, altering, and restoring us ... the arcanum is the whole virtue of a thing, excelling a thousandfold the thing itself."26 If quintessence is the pure transmuted life force, then arcanum is a gravitationallike influence directing the purified essence through an immortal cycle of transmutation; it is the unrevealed principle. The arcane

"Science too must be guided by a strong ethical compass towards wellbeing, less it become destructive."

represents a universal pathway or 'invisible' astrological influence guiding the astra or cosmos of the stars and elements into a perfecting state, as a black hole may bring order of flow to a solar system or holding space such as dark matter. Seen traditionally as the unknown mind of God or Nature, arcanum may more accurately be described as the space within and around the classical ouroboros depiction, as the light and dark illustrate a quintessence prevailing over specific elements of Macrocosm and Microcosm to remain whole within an alchemical marriage. Towards the paradigm of medicine, arcanum is a materia medica that has been brought through the spagyric ritual process of the alchemical tradition to purified quintessence under a transformative astra (seed-like stars) influence which induces a harmonisation in accordance with the prima materia or original intent cast upon matter. Medicinal substances deemed arcanum do not treat opposite afflictions as they have gained a universal virtue that simply has no opposition; it operates with complete integration of all contrary elements. To heal by the holism that exists between what seem to be opposing forces of like qualities, to continue a cycle towards an immortal virtue, is the arcanum. This quintessential cosmology expresses a ceremony of the perfecting process seeking insights into the great mystery towards unification by, among others, connecting to and honouring the feminine principle. This process is examined by authors Sally G. Allen and Joanna Hubbs in Outrunning Atalanta: Feminine Destiny in Alchemical Transmutation: "In the Babylonian myth of creation the original demiurge was the Mother-Tiamat. In fact, the alchemists' work on the prima materia - materia



Paracelsus, the Prince of Physicians and Philosophers by Fire

being etymologically traceable to mater or mother - suggests not so much a collaboration as an operation, in Aristotelian terms, in order to force that matter to deliver its perfect child, gold." The authors essentially accuse alchemists of having 'womb envy' and although this gross interpretation of alchemy seems to be interested in psychologically diagnosing a cultural practice, it does however highlight the vastly important role that the feminine principle plays within the alchemical tradition: "[t]he origins and evolution of alchemy contain further evidence of an identification with the maternal feminine as a source of creativity. This parallels the alchemical vision of the absorption of the initiate into the body of the monster or into the womblike darkness called nigredo in order to begin the process of rebirth. Like the alchemist, the shaman in his rite de passage submits to ritual death and rebirth, a process of reintegration with a primordial totality followed by a repetition of the creation of a cosmogony through the breaking up of primitive unity. Out of the dismemberment which he undergoes, the shaman receives a new body from spirits who in early lore were in the service, or even in the shape, of the Mother of the Universe." They illustrate this point with words from Mircea Eliade's The Forge and the Crucible, "[b]y conquering nature through physio-chemical sciences, man can become nature's rival ... The alchemist becomes the master of time when with his various apparatus he symbolically reiterates the primordial chaos and the cosmogony or when he underwent initiatory death and resurrection. Every initiation was a victory over death, i.e., temporality. The initiated proclaimed himself immortal, that is, he had forged for himself a post mortem existence which he claimed to be indestructible."27 Masculinity, femininity and androgynous qualities are all celebrated within both alchemical and astrological traditions. The striking observation that alchemists would "force matter to produce gold" is seemingly paralleled by humanity's general destructive attitude and action towards Nature in the name of advancing 'civilisation' or virtual currency. Alchemy must absorb these projections while considering self intention, for in the simplest terms of praxis the lexicon of prima materia represents an original intent towards manifestation. Therefore, we must simply ask our selves, "What is our intention?" Within Paracelsian medicine the intent is guided by a compass that points our technological pillars of philosophy, astrology, alchemy, and the virtues towards the footsteps of Nature in order to achieve a transformation of dynamic relationship between elements, known as quintessence. Science too must be guided by a strong ethical compass towards wellbeing, less it become destructive. This balance is gained via the rite of arcanum, as it remains much like a chalice or grail, functionally containing the influence of quintessence towards holism simply by holding potential space for Nature's intent. The medicine of Paracelsus was firmly rooted in his experience of Nature and cosmology forged by what he described as the limbus: "The human being did not originate from the human being. For the first human being would have had no human precursor, but rather only [some created substance]; and out of the created arose the limbus, and the

limbus became the human being; and the human being has remained the limbus."28 The definition of limbus found within the Lexicon of Alchemy, by Martinus Rulandus, reads: "The Universal World, the four Primal Elements of the World, and of all things, Seed and Matter."29 It remains a type of cosmology that links all primal elements similar to the depiction of zodiacal human anatomy, as commentary within Essential Theoretical Writings: "As used by Paracelsus, it refers to a substance formed from the first things (heaven and earth) which in turn constitutes the essential prime material of the human creature ... the elements of earth but also the essences or astra of the stars ... limbus in Latin could refer to the zodiacal circle." Paracelsus writes on women's medical issues in his On the Matrix as he discusses feminine cosmology: "Therefore, the matrix is the earth and is its special vessel." Editors of Paracelsus' Essential Theoretical Writings clarify with notations that, "the Matrix accords with Paracelsus' microcosmic-macrocosmic reasoning and implicates 'material' as the female source of all things."30 Each medication he prepared was imbued with this prima materia influence of intent towards bringing the sick or wounded through a quintessential rite of arcanum in order to once again become whole and centered upon the Universe, "[f]or take note of the true source of disease which is made by the centrum, for which reason each and every disease is centered; moreover, outside of that center no disease arises ... Know the course of the spheres: the stars must follow its course, nothing else does any good."31 To produce a spagyric tincture, for example, its material is taken on this same rite of passage, as is the anatomy that ingests the substance. The prima materia cycle is that which connects all things and is no thing; Tiamat, the great mother element of the Universe for which Paracelsus says we shall return to: "And the body comes from earth, and passes back into it. In this way each thing returns to its prima materia."

Resurrection of the Limbus towards Transmutational Evolution: from Conquering the Divide to Recombining what has been Separated

Practical philosophies of evolutionary genetics have been discussed eloquently and practiced far before Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Random mutations and survival of the fittest philosophy, which seemed to be simple distortions of Darwin's observations, may have been detrimental within comparison to the original alchemical theory of transmutation by way of *Nature Unity*. As we emerge from an industrial dark age, our connection to Nature must be a guiding force from which an *Emerald Renaissance* occurs. Para-

the *limbus* knows also what the human being is. This is how the physician should be brought into being. Now the *limbus* is the heavens and earth, the upper and lower sphere, the four elements, and whatever is within it [the world]. This is why he properly bears the name *microcosmus*, for he is the entire world. From this it follows that insofar as he indeed is this, the physician must know both spheres, [the ones] above and below, in there element and essence, their properties and nature."³³ The paramount *arcanum* tictures of Paracelsian medicine can express, for example, a *limbus* connection between specific planet, organ and plant relationships with the intent of bringing about transmutational

"As we emerge from an industrial dark age, our connection to Nature must be a guiding force from which an *Emerald Renaissance* occurs."

celsian language and cosmology is riddled with medical genetic references, most often with the intent of avoiding disease or contrary forces, such as he describes the limbus or father genetics, and matrix being genetic qualities from the mother: "This is why from now on it will be necessary to understand two [kinds of] disease with respect to the cause, as shown, in the generation of children: the one either inborn or accruing to the limbus, the other inborn or accruing from the matrix. This difference is why I have presented to you the [nature of] generation, in order to prevent error."32 The limbus is a cosmological binding element that must be resurrected within the culture of medical science for true reformation to occur. It is a reference to multiple elements being understood as unified and illustrates a common lineage of origin between all. Paracelsus explains, "[s]ince the limbus is [the] prima materia of the human being, the physician must know what the limbus is. For what the limbus is, is what the human being is. Whoever understands

co-evolution. A comparison is made by Paracelsus of a base metal transmuting into gold, as the arcana tincture restores health, "none otherwise is the arcanum of the tincture to be understood, namely, that it takes away all the inconvenience from old age, all diseases, and whatever corrupts the health or has an influence contrary to it. This arcanum is a certain tincture of such properties and conditions that it operates and induces health, not in the same way as the preceding three arcana, but according to its own name ... Yet it should be noted that the tinged body no longer lives in its own form, but, like a metal, is transmuted into another, as into copper or some other ... by the tincture, but far nobler, better, and more healthful is the condition of the body and the form than its native origin was; and it is like natural gold made out of iron by the tincture, as we have also written concerning transmutaions."34 In this sense, the process of expelling disease is an evolutionary event. With this Theory of Transmutational Evolution, one

could cyclically evolve almost endlessly within a single generation, hence immortality. Still, the limbus connection between Nature's elements remains centrally important. When will it be asked once again, how our medicines, environmental poisons, foods, and traditions affect our evolutionary process; a process aspiring towards harmonisation? These transmutations are related to the living Philosophers' Stone from which a gem of many facets remains as one ever transmuting Nature Self. This is reflected within the arcanum of the Philosophers' Stone, another medicinal preparation for which Paracelsus avers genetic benefit, "[f]or the most choice and excellent medicine effectually renews and purifies, and introduces an incorruptible life, which cannot be contaminated by any kind of life. It suffers nothing to become enfeebled, but secures that men shall live in the highest nobility of Nature, while it advances their offspring to the tenth generation. This Philosophers' Stone not only transmutes one weight, but this transmutes another, and this again another, and so on, in so far that these mutations might be extended almost endlessly, just as one light kindles a second, and this second a third. So it should be understood of the Philosophers' Stone in relation to health, as out of a good tree good seed and good shoots are born, out of which again good trees are produced."35 Paracelsus often wrote of the prima materia as an original father seed which parallels the Mesopotamian creation myth of Apsu being the first male element before the feminine Tiamat, yet each represent polar prima materia elements similar to limbus and matrix, as expanded upon in the following Paracelsian Creation Myth found within his writings, On the Matrix:

Paracelsian Creation Myth

"Before heaven and earth were created, the spirit of god hovered upon the water and was carried by it. This water was *matrix*. For in this water heaven and earth were created, nor in any other *matrix* other than this ... For this reason, the spirit of God enters into the human being; and it is from God and it will also return to him ... When the world was nothingness, nothing except a water, and the spirit of the Lord was upon the water, the water turned into the world, which is the *matrix* of the world, and in it are all further creatures. Now it was yet again a *matrix* of the human being, in which God created for the human being, for his spirit, a housing in flesh. The same *matrix* of the human being was the entire world; his seed was the *limbus*, a seed in which the entire world was present. That is the origin of the first human being."³⁶

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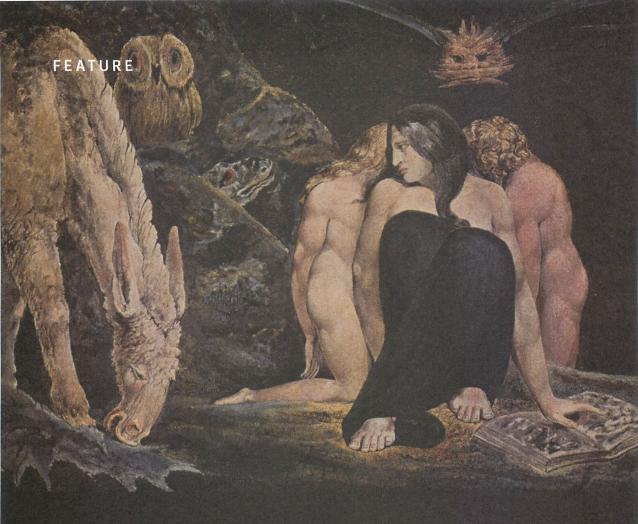
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Image on page 6: 'The Celestial Virgin with Sun God in Her Arms' by J. A. Knapp, from The Secret Teachings of All Ages by Manly P. Hall (copyright @ PRS, Inc.), reprinted with permission from the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., Los Angeles, CA, www.prs.org

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In the Presence of the Dark
Goddess: the
Transformative
Journey of
Darkness and
Devotion

EMMA RESTALL ORR

n most mystical and spiritual paths and religions, ensuring that there is a balance in the practical form of our seeking is deemed valuable if any tenable progress is to be made. While long hours of meditation, intellectual study and scientific consideration may open glorious doors of revelation, it is also necessary to counterpoise these with equally dedicated times given to feeling the earth beneath our feet, breathing deeply the music of the natural world, and letting its colours and currents move through our experience of being.

Indeed, and with only a faint whisper of irony, there is validity in suggesting that this is what underlies that very British tradition of 'going for a walk': whether meandering through a city park or striding the windy tracks of the hills, pausing to watch the sunset or sitting at the roots of an old tree, when we put down the books and head out for a walk the experience

calms and heals, offering a precious solitude in the poignant company of nonhuman Nature.

Where such experiences are profound, many acknowledge them to be encounters with the very soul of Nature, with Mother Earth, the Great Goddess: the divinity of the feminine. Nature's anima touches our own soul, allowing us a wakefulness that is acute, nourishing and often memorably and softly saturating. Such experiences can be so intense that we don't easily narrate them; they feel wordless, their sanctity better preserved if we don't catch

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Nature's essence, in

them in the clumsy nets of language necessary to relate them to others. This wordlessness, as an inherent quality of nonhuman Nature, can also feel fundamental to female divinity.

Yet having drunk deeply of the goddess of the grey scented moors, having felt her fecundity in the rich mud of the meadows, having slipped into the erotic trance of her music in the wildwood, or simply bathed in her wonder in the verdant sanctuary of a city park, too often we quickly return to the frustration of what we perceive to be a

mundane world. Within us or before us, we face the feminine as an obstacle: the manipulative, deceptive, disingenuous, and incomprehensible; the screech of the bitch that ricochets within our soul. Our spiritual vision, the great *opus*, is cast to one side as we tumble into another stream of reactive justifications, of vitriolic defensiveness, loathing all that distracts us from what we believe to be the higher task. Yet, the power of these destructive and obstructive female forces should perhaps not be so easily dismissed.

In much alchemical thinking, particularly that influenced by Carl Gustav Jung, gods are understood to be archetypes; simply put, a deity as archetype provides an ideal if exaggerated human form that guides thinking, behaviour and development. Perceiving archetypes as existent within the human psyche and the collective human soul, Jung was interested in the connecting threads that allow us to sense our individual place within the whole, thus enabling us to achieve a fuller sense of wellbeing and integrity. However, his thinking (or the published expression of such) is often deemed to stall a little short of the mark: to many alchemists and others exploring the subtle qualities of Nature's essence, in Jung's writing there is still

too much distance between the individual and true power. For me, this has much to do with the limitation of perceiving deity as archetype.

With no scientific certainties about the nature of consciousness or mind, and accepting that there is no way of knowing the *a priori* world but through the processing of our own perception, after millennia, the fundamental questions about metaphysical reality remain unanswered. Though thinkers will assert possibilities, sometimes with the conviction of

believing that they have found a certainty, it is the moral extension of our beliefs about the world that best measures a person in terms of his or her achievement and honour. For this reason, I would suggest that the crafting and experience of relationship, the exploration of true interaction, is a most valuable and necessary parallel study to that of the metaphysical nature of existence.

It is through engaging with another distinct entity, an Other, that we craft a functional experience of our own identity or Self: we discern our edges. Where the Other, however, is merely an abstract or conceptual being, I have no moral obligations towards him or her: he or she is an idea, a tool with which I can continue to sculpt my own reality. As human beings, selffocused, we too often treat other people in this way, engaging with them as unfeeling or insignificant representatives of some notion. With political detachment we judge how best to gain what we require, while remaining safely separate and uninvolved.

With an archetype, it is equally easy to believe that we are dealing with an abstract, an idea, a reference point by which we can reckon our own comprehension and progress. Furthermore, if the gods and goddesses are archetypes, we can safely ignore them for years, now and then pulling out some deity's constellation of meanings and ideas, like a book from a shelf, when it occurs to us that such a consideration may be beneficial to our personal journey of development.

However, when the gods and goddesses are recognised to be conscious and powerful entities, independent of humanity - forces both human and nonhuman in nature, humming with inherent purpose and coherent identity the brilliance of wakeful interaction with such gods and goddesses inspires life itself. Here there is no conceptualisation; instead, the gods are with us - always - and such perpetually active engagement guides us to craft sustainable and exhilarating relationships with them.

That the majority of writings on alchemy are male oriented is overt particularly in this respect: the desire for visceral interaction is not a primary (or at times, an evident) focus or concern. Female nature tends to rise and fall on far higher seas than does the male, with hormonal and emotional tides that ebb and flow, flooding and receding; the experiential is often more important to a woman than any related theories that may be discussed. With blood monthly upon her hands, through the rough and fetid practicalities of birth and mothering, in her position as the carer within most cultures of the world and throughout human evolution, it is not surprising that a woman's focus is primarily often guided by what she feels. That this is as true within mystical exploration is equally appreciable.

From the point at which her fertility starts to pace out her life in periods of bleeding, for some 30 to 35 years a woman rafts the tides of life over the course of each 28 or so days. Even when her monthly cycles ebb away, the memory of those years does not disappear, particularly for a woman who has consciously embraced her bleeding, crucially placing it as an invaluable part of her spiritually transformative journey.

Premenstrually, the shadows creep in and a woman's willingness to cope and compromise within an imperfect world slips away; the nigredo blackening her soul, the raw honesty of her immediate experience, begins to flood through her. As she bleeds, so much is released in the dark red vibrancy of her blood, and the more awake she is to this the more the blood contains, and the more the pain transforms into an emptying relief; the turning of the cycle offering a sweet new month ahead. Those fresh albedo days, like the energy of a new moon, are light and easy in comparison with what has passed, inspiring a naiveté and gentleness which rises in creativity to the point where her world is shimmering with potential fertility. The rubedo of ovulation, the flush of life that in many women evokes vitality and loving affection, the fullness of company and sexuality, can last a whole week or just a few hours. Once her temperature starts to fall (if she hasn't conceived), the slide begins, down again towards the time of shadows.

To lay out the journey over the menstrual cycle is to generalise the experience of women, but there is value in exploring the pattern. In temperate climes the solar cycle offers a similar opportunity: the cold darkness welcomed in as winter allowing us a beneficial annual opportunity to face death and decay. However, with the tides rising and falling every four weeks, the woman seeking a life of deep transformation is offered the cycle in an immediate, deeply

"Those fresh albedo days, like the energy of a new moon, are light and easy in comparison with what has passed, inspiring a naiveté and gentleness which rises in creativity



need do is listen, for with the menstrual cycle comes the Dark Goddess, calling her invocations to the hag that lies within us in every shade and guise of her being - the manipulative and deceptive, the disingenuous and incomprehensible, the caustically truthful, the thoughtlessly independent, the exhaustingly demanding; the hag is the selfish martyr, the whore, the prig, the tedious old bag, the screaming bitch.

The Dark Goddess: as deity not concept, as a force of Nature that shimmers with distinct and inherent purpose, humming upon the currents of her own intention, constantly communicating with all who would hear her song, she is part of the broad female deity we might also perceive in Earth. But here her manifestation is not calmly healing. She is not the nourishing mother whose gifts can lead us to imagine she actually cares. Here she is night's obliteration, smothering and suffocating, the celebration of destruction. Here she is obstruction, negation, rejection, gloriously immovable. She is elusive, devoid of compassion. She is commanding and demanding, threatening to devour us, yet all the while remaining infuriatingly intangible.

As with all gods and goddesses of Nature, merciless and untamable, to submit to her power is suicide. However, the reactive instinct that provokes any attempt to control her is simply delusory. Instead, we must learn to observe her, to feel her within us, and to find her in the human and nonhuman world around us - we must seek out those connecting threads that Jung was reaching for. For in doing so we can learn just who she is, her currents, tides and patterns, her creativity and manifestations. We can learn how to ride her waves. And when her darkly divine song evokes the hag within us, instead of losing control, we have the choice as to how to move with her. In the daily journey of living, we can learn how to manage the emotions - breaking through the numbness to fully engage with life, reining in the anger in order to utilise its energy for our creativity, responding to the surges of energy instead of reacting as we fight for survival: making choices.

In the deeper journey of discovery, we can

learn to use her dark power to better comprehend our identity, as individuals and as a part of the collective soul of woman, of humanity, of Nature; discerning those edges which maintain our coherence of Self. Yet we must not forget that she is a force of darkness, and it is in darkness that edges disappear.

Here too are elements of woman's nature that further lend to the alchemical and mystical journey. For annihilation of Self, and the desperate defence against that annihilation, is a part of the female exper ience of subjugation: integral to the story that each girl inherits in her

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in this relationship is

essential being is the breaching of her walls through sexual intrusion, the obliteration of her independence through marriage and slavery, the nonconsensual use of her body as a tool of reproduction, the negation of her identity through the demands of childrearing, the loss of her place in society with the fading of her beauty, and the loss of her essential purpose with the expiration of her fertility. The strong woman may

well overcome each one of these by weaving her self-assertion with the threads offered by fate, but the female heritage is not to be dismissed, not least because the spiritual value of such a heritage is so very potent.

The Dark Goddess, seething within, is not then simply provoking the manipulative bitch or the smothering mother of our female soul. With her erotically charged yet dark sly smile, she offers us an exquisite wisdom of the path of true Being. We can fail upon that path, stumbling with the self-negation of martyrdom and altruism, and decisions most often made through weakness and egotistic self-pity. Or we can walk with her, into the darkness, where the Self dissolves.

When crafting our sense of Self, making

a place for ourselves in the world, learning to make a difference and find joy and purpose, our relationships most often succeed when we have a good awareness of our own identity and that of the Other. We find love through acknowledgement, appreciation and respect. However, when love or trauma crash into our world, compromising or obliterating the distinct edges of our soul, we can find ourselves thrown into extraordinary experiences, and often through profoundly positive or negative connections. Yet such moments are usually beyond our control, and not comprehending their nature, we can

feel exhilarated and annihilated concurrently. In such a state we are often thoughtless and dysfunctional, making mistakes with regard to the other relationships in our lives. Being out of control, we can equally find ourselves thrown from that place, landing awkwardly in a condition where we are closed in with more walls than we had before. Or we may find it a long hard road to clamber out of the dysfunction, reconstructing our

Self and our relationships in a responsible and respectful way once more.

When that path is taken through choice, however, in the company of the Dark Goddess, the experience is quite different. If our understanding of the goddess is as an abstract, an archetype, the discipline required to dissolve the Self is extreme: we must overcome the powerful innate layers of self-preservation, our very instinct to survive. Yet if we acknowledge her as a force of Nature, coherent in her inherent consciousness, vibrant with her own purpose, it is the process of crafting a relationship with her that leads us upon that extraordinary path: we fall in love, and go with her in delicious trust wheresoever she would take us.

I say love, and indeed love itself can be an

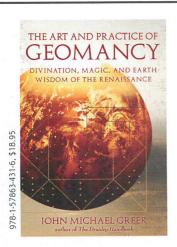
invocation of her, for love is not sweet and caring; love can drive us to the depths of despair. A better word for what is needed in this relationship is devotion. If we are to find the commitment and trust to take this path, the journey starts with the exploration of her nature; as we come to know her, our fascination grows, awe fills us, inspiring us to walk a little further, to give a little more, and eventually our devotion to her deepens to the point where we are willing to do what it takes to step from the last glimmer of light, utterly letting go.

In many teachings the guidance speaks of the union of the male and female qualities of Nature, and in some the male is perceived as the spirit or energy, the female the body or matter. In devotional connection with the Dark Goddess, within the cloak of her darkness, our experience of Being, without Self, without edges or identity, is one of both wholeness and nothingness. And as we emerge from that divine darkness, it is into a perception of a world that is crafted by integration: spirit and matter are one.

Such visions may last moments, within meditation, ritual, lovemaking or some such sacred practice, or they may extend for months. The effect may be fleeting, or the depth of experience may change us, altering our perception and behaviour completely. The measure of their depth and value is solely in how they transform us.

Whether as women managing the dark sides of our nature and heritage, or as men exploring the power of the anima within, the process of recognising that the bitching and hysteria, the womb-storms of our nature, are but invitations of the Dark Goddess, can be helpful, healing, teaching. To take up such invitations can be quite literally a mind-blowing thrill. To walk the road into the darkness and beyond, drenched in the openness and trust of true devotion, is to experience the nature of pure Being. A

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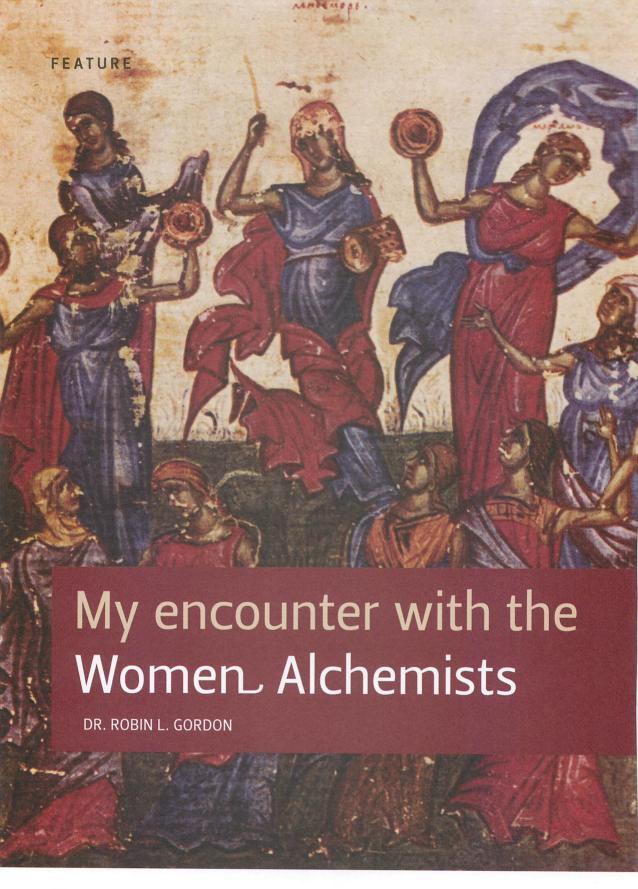
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icture, if you will, the workspace of an alchemist from the 17th century. There are oddly shaped jars scattered about the workroom that contain samples of minerals and herbs. A fire burns gently under a brick oven, maintaining a constant temperature. The alchemist is stirring a mixture of ingredients that has been soaking in human urine for many days and is now ready to distill. There are a few precious books stacked in the corner that describe hundreds of sets of directions on how to do the work. It is quiet in the workroom today and the alchemist, noticing that the mixture is nearly ready, brushes the hair out of her eyes and peers at the fire to be sure it is burning at the right heat for the next step in the work. It would be quite understandable if, at first, you pictured a male alchemist. Women alchemists' stories have been neglected until recently, but are emerging in contemporary research on women's early work in science. Here I will discuss why it has been so difficult to document women's practice in alchemy.

The history of women alchemists spans centuries, reaching backward and forward in time, merging with the history of women's contribution to Western science. At the hands of the established, Western patriarchy, many of these women endured physical suffering, usurpation of their work, humiliation, and death. Hypatia, for example, was a mathematician, astronomer and philosopher. She lived in Alexandria in the 4th century and became a target for a religious fanatic. For her work, she was drawn and quartered - in a church.1 Anna Maria Zieglerin (circa 1550-1575) met a similar fate as Hypatia, being strapped to an iron chair and burnt alive as a result of her failure to create the Philosopher's Stone.2 Yet, some women did attain a degree of scholarly respect. A young Jewish woman of Alexandria (1st century CE) known as Maria Prophetissa, or sometimes as Maria Hebraea, conducted her alchemical research unharmed and was accorded great acclaim by her alchemical brothers.3 Furthermore, a group of lesserknown women strode through the scientific and philosophical developments of the 17th and 18th centuries right alongside more familiar names such as Tycho Brahe, Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Voltaire (François Marie Arouet), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

These women alchemists, as well as many others, sought to make sense of the nature of their world, their theology and their science. They seemed to have found an outlet for their tremendous intellect and their exploration of profound, spiritual matters; yet, they have received scant attention, and there has even been outright denial that they studied their craft and that it was true alchemy.

How my search for the soror mystica began

Investigating the story of the soror mystica leads the researcher down disparate paths. The term soror mustica usually refers to the female helper of the alchemist. For example, in Psychology and Alchemy, the noted depth psychologist Carl Jung identified a young woman named Theosebeia as a soror mystica and the helpmate of Zosimos of Panopolis. 4 Possibly the actual sister of Zosimos as well. Theosebeia assisted him in writing one of the first alchemical encyclopædias, Cheirokmeta, circa 300 CE. The encyclopædia consisted of 28 books and included references to the work of both Maria Prophetissa and Cleopatra (another alchemical investigator, not necessarily the well known queen).

Another source of information on the soror mystica is the Mutus Liber. 5 This work consists of a series of 15 engravings that illustrate the steps in accomplishing alchemical work. The author is unknown except by the name 'Altus - the high, deep, or profound one.' The Mutus Liber is unusual in that it depicts the alchemist working alongside his wife, although the term, soror mystica is not used in the treatise. However, besides the women pictured in various woodcuts and engravings in the alchemical literature such as in the Mutus Liber, and references to the work of Maria Prophetissa, I initially found very little evidence of female alchemists.

A few unfamiliar names, however, did emerge in my research on the aforementioned men. For example, Lady Katherine Ranelagh (1614-1691), sister of the famous scientist Robert

Boyle, opened her home to her brother and his alchemical colleagues.6 Perhaps I projected my own scientific curiosity onto her, but I could not help but think that someone who was associated with their stories of research into natural philosophy would surely be involved with the work itself. There is evidence of her work in what some historians have described as medical chemistry or iatrochemistry. Katherine also studied the qabbalah and I wondered if she linked this Jewish mysticism to understanding the nature of the Philosopher's Stone. Does the dearth of written evidence that she worked as an alchemist herself mean that she acted only as an assistant for her notable brother?

Months of combing through the collection at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, proved fruitful in my search for these women practitioners. For example, Marie Meurdrac was described by historian Lucia Tosi as the first woman to publish a book on alchemy or early chemistry in La Chymie charitable et facile, en faveur des Dames Charitable (or Easy Chemistry for Women) in 1666.7 In addition to providing detailed instructions for the creation

of medicines and cosmetic ointments, Marie exhorted her readers to follow her example and distribute these remedies free of charge to the poor, a practice that I eventually learned was common for many of the women alchemists. Marie also offered to teach women in her own laboratory if they were unsure about attempting the alchemical work on their own.

Theosebeia and Zosimos

The stories of women who studied the natural world have been given greater examination as described elegantly by writers such as Margaret Alic, Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton. and Tara Nummedal. Certainly, there were fewer educated women than men prior to the 20th century, but many women, nonetheless, found a way to challenge their minds and immerse themselves in a sincere study of the natural world. Thus, intrigued and fortified, I continued to look for these elusive sisters in science. I have since compiled the names and stories of many women who were both skillful alchemists as well as researchers in numerous fields of science. I am working on describing

the numerous ways in which they manifested their practice; ways that were not always obvious and which have been largely disregarded in traditional alchemical literature.

I had been researching and writing on women alchemists for nearly five years when I made my first trip to the United Kingdom to see and experience the places where many of these women lived and studied. I had been feeling stuck and unable to go forward with finishing my book that was about two thirds complete:

thus, I eagerly anticipated traveling to Oxford and Cambridge to soak up what I thought would be a heady atmosphere of discovery and learning. After a brief stay in Edinburgh, I set off for Oxford, looking forward to experiencing the historical imagination described so beautifully by Ruth Meyer in her book, Clio's Circle. She writes:

"We historians are placed in a deeply frustrating position, continually chasing ghosts and trying to reconstruct events from shadows and fleeting glimpses of the past ... historians need to learn to live in two worlds at once. In their work, they are required to travel back in time by means of their imagination. They must try to dialogue with the ancestors, even if the ancestral voices are forever just out of earshot, and the ancestral forms appear as mere shadows."8

grew up in a very modest, middle class home where private school was not even an option. How could these 'wealthy people' need my £5, which (at the time) translated to 10 American dollars? However, I paid my entrance fee, as I wanted to get inside.

I loved the old buildings and the beautiful campuses, but my complexes were further stirred as I was informed that many areas of abundant grass were only open for walking to Fellows of the College. I wrote in my journal:

"It's nutty because despite having two PhDs, I feel out of place and very intimidated by this ancient place of learning. I'm convinced that even the undergrads are more educated and smarter than I!"

I continued my exploration of Oxford, exhilarated with the town and at the same

"... Marie Meurdrac was described by historian Lucia Tosi as the first woman to publish a book on alchemy or early chemistry ..."

I hoped that walking in some of the same cities and places visited by these women, who now seemed like friends to me, would provide the inspiration that I needed to pick up my writing again with more focus and purpose. As Meyer reminds us, Clio is a Muse, and Muses do not make our work so simple.

I arrived in Oxford and began wandering the ancient streets that are utterly enchanting for one who has seen the colleges and old streets in film. Yet I also began to feel disgruntled and out of sorts with the old colleges that seemed to hold answers that were unavailable to me. Many of the colleges were closed to visitors due to final examinations and I was astonished that these venerable institutions, to which I had attached a kind of numinous quality, stooped to charge visitors to stroll the grounds. "What is this?" I thought. "These are wealthy, private schools and they are charging me to see inside?" I was put off and my complexes emerged in full force. I time battling my complexes around money and privilege. While having tea, I overheard some students having a conversation that was disappointing to me as this seemingly heady discussion also included some highly offensive, racist rhetoric. I began to feel very uncomfortable with my own research as the women alchemists I was studying were often from the upper social classes and would be considered highly privileged. I began to ask myself why I wanted to write about women who very likely would have thought me unsuitable for the friendship I had imagined. How would I finish a book about people who I might find I did not even like? This was not a good omen for my writing. Yet, my work in depth psychology has taught me to hold conflicting notions in balance and to let matters cook awhile before making a decision.

I continued to visit the places I had read about and longed to know. I felt no closer to the women alchemists, however, and in fact felt a

little abandoned by them, and deflated. I did not find them at the History of Science Museum and neither were they walking the halls of Christ Church. Taking some time to sit in the grass by the River Thames where the Oxford rowers were working hard in the warm sun, I finally understood a piece of my question. I wrote an email to my family where I described my epiphany.

"I headed to the Museum of the History of Science and it is pretty small but a good half hour spent. There are tons of telescopes, astrolabes, chemistry, and physics paraphernalia and even some alchemy items but not much. I enjoyed running across a painting of the astronomer, Tycho Brahe, but his sister, whom he loved always be straightforward but fraught with twists, turns, and unexpected insights. That was where I would find my way, either into the work or perhaps, out of it. Perhaps the women alchemists and I would not be going any further. Yet I knew these women's struggles had animated me in the beginning of my search for their stories. I thought about Margaret Cavendish, sitting through demonstrations by the distinguished Fellows of the Royal Society, only to have her dress be the focus of criticism. Sophie Brahe's devoted admiration of her older brother mirrored my own.

It became clear to me that of course I could not find the women in the universities, as they

"We do have examples of women's early medicinal work in the rare, surviving copies of their recipe books or 'receipts.' These women boiled herbs, made poultices, and processed curative food, using the identical operation and implements used by the alchemists."

dearly, and who worked with him a lot, was not even mentioned. Typical. It is strange, but I had kind of hoped that wandering the streets of Oxford would put me in touch with the women alchemists but then realised that this wasn't going to happen as they weren't allowed to attend school here! I think I found them walking along the river, reading under a tree, while sitting on the soft green grass."

This grass was not on a campus and the public was not excluded from wandering among the trees and meadows by the river. Anyone could sit and think both great and minor thoughts.

My trip taught me much about myself, and the contribution to working out the why and what of my research was profound. My work in depth psychology began to emerge as a new voice to which I had not been paying enough attention. I could carry out my research and writing off the linear path. It was time to move into the labyrinth where progress would not

were not allowed to attend. A few of them were found in the library if they wrote recipe books that recorded their alchemical work, and if someone had gone to the trouble of preserving them. Sometimes their voice emerged in stories people had written of their relationships.

Therefore, I am also examining the nature of what some writers disparagingly label 'women's alchemy' – as if it were of lesser value, less meaningful, not sufficient. We do have examples of women's early medicinal work in the rare, surviving copies of their recipe books or 'receipts.' These women boiled herbs, made poultices, and processed curative food, using the identical operations and implements used by the alchemists. Alchemical practices such as distillation were, in fact, commonly used by non-alchemists as well as the traditional alchemist that comes to mind when we imagine some fellow working in his laboratory.

The notion that alchemy could manifest in

different ways seems clear to me and is a central argument in my work. Robert Multhauf argues that telling the story of chemistry, the child of alchemy, necessitates examining how medicine and chemistry are completed by each other. ¹² This entails embracing alchemy as a legitimate science, rather than pretending that the work was an uncommon, occult practice. Margaret Alic discusses the role of alchemy in the manu-

facture of perfumes and cosmetics, and acknowledges that, "the work of the early alchemists was sometimes called opus mulierum - 'women's work'"13 - thus diminishing alchemy's importance. Lynn Thorndike, however, quotes Libavius, a German alchemist who wrote Neo-Paracelsica (1594) and Alchymia (1597). Libavius defined alchemy as "the art of accomplishing masteries and extracting pure essences from compounds by separating the body, while Chymia or chemistry was the second part of Alchemia and concerned

with making chemical species."¹⁴ Thus alchemy subsumes chemistry, rather than vice versa.

It became clear to me while reading 16th and 17th century recipe books that the directions for creating medicines were identical with traditional alchemical instructions for making gold written by alchemists. Women were, of course, practicing alchemy. Tara Nummedal asserts that the lack of traditional evidence, that is, the dearth of writing by women alchemists, has misled historians to believe that few, if any, women practiced alchemy. She argues:

"If, however, we shift our focus beyond printed alchemical texts and toward the archival sources characteristic of the new social history, suddenly we do find women alchemists. Letters, contracts and criminal trial dossiers reveal that both noble and common women engaged in the patronage, theory and practice of alchemy."15

I have, indeed, found that an expansion of focus to include archival research has been extremely fruitful and illuminating. For example, reading the letters exchanged between Kather-

> ine Boyle and her brother, Robert, allows their personal voices to be heard and gives deeper insight into their work. One can see clearly that Katherine understood what was needed in a laboratory and how alchemical operations worked.

> Another example of the benefits of archival research is illustrated by reading women's diaries. Women's diaries and memoirs began to be published with much greater frequency in the 1600s. ¹⁶ Granted, most of the writing originated with upper and middle class women

who could both read and write, although their work was not always met with approval. For example, the great diarist, Samuel Pepys, upon hearing his wife Elizabeth's description of her life with him, furiously ordered her to tear up the insulting piece. Women's published autobiographies were meant to be read by the public and were edited as necessary and thus often lack details that might have caused embarrassment for the family or might suggest that the writer held heretical beliefs. Many women went to great pains to keep their diaries private. Some used indecipherable shorthand so that after their death, the contents of their writing would



The alchemical couple harvesting the dew

remain vague. Several families destroyed journals that they deemed to be unfair to them.

A number of women just wanted their writing to be secret until their death, but if they were really worried destroyed their work when they felt that death was imminent. However, personal memoirs, commentaries on women's personal reading tastes, and inclusion of household notes in their journals describe the sometimes boring but always enlightening goings-on in the household. Many upper class women were intimately involved in the oversight of their homes and often participated in actual chores being accomplished on their estates. Women's reflections on religious themes, recording fears and

feminine role, despite feeling intimidated by men's education and being subject to criticism from those who disapproved of their work.

Lynette Hunter and Sara Hutton also examine why it has been so difficult to document women's contributions to alchemy, as well as to science in general. They remind us that in the 17th century, when the scientific method was in its infancy, much of what women were doing in the context of early chemistry, which I am arguing should really be labeled alchemy, was accomplished in their kitchens. If the patriarchy, represented by the scientific community, was to validate that work, the alchemists had to move from the kitchen to a laboratory. Cer-

"... much of what women were doing in the context of early chemistry, which I am arguing should really be labeled alchemy, was accomplished in their kitchens."

joys surrounding marriage, childbirth and child rearing give an intimate view of their lives. In reading these accounts, we do find evidence of alchemical knowledge and practice.

Women also wrote more formally during the years 1600-1700 CE, although with less frequency than men.17 Keeping in mind that English printed books date from the 1400s, and that women did not write anywhere on the scale of men, it is not surprising that there were very few published works during the time covered by my research. Furthermore, some publications were first credited to men. For example, William Leibniz's work of 1690, Opuscula Philosophica, is more accurately based on Anne Conway's work. Van Helmont was given credit for Conway's 1692 manuscript, The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy, but what he really did was translate her work into Latin.18 In the 17th century, only 231 women were responsible for the 653 books published in England. Their commitment to writing is laudable considering that by doing so, they stepped outside their accepted

tainly, gentlemen scientists were not going to create something so important as the Philosopher's Stone in the kitchen!

Thus, women's alchemy, if that term is to be embraced, and its influence upon experimentation, learning about the nature of the universe, and developing healing medicines for one's neighbours, is not the problem it has been made to be. Ironically, Paracelsus, a well known male alchemist and physician, is accepted quite readily in the alchemical literature, despite the fact that he practiced what is called iatrochemistry or chemistry that dealt with healing. There appears to be a disconnect on how alchemy has been perceived and defined. The problem is further exacerbated when women's practice of alchemy is compared to a masculine norm, created by mostly male historians.

Hunter and Hutton propose that the more general definition of scientist needs reconsideration. They suggest that the tale of the evolution of science, passed down through generations, has focused upon famous men at the

expense not only of women, but also of other practitioners considered of lesser class, such as craftsmen, midwives and numerous types of assistants. Historically, women's studies in science have been under-represented, which indicates a culture out of balance and signifies an incomplete understanding of society's psychic development. To paint a broad picture that women were not educated and rarely published their work ignores the many who did find ways to pursue their studies. In the same manner, the story of alchemy and its connection to psyche is incomplete if we ignore or dismiss a group of its practitioners, whether their intent was to further science, to cure the sick or to produce gold. A

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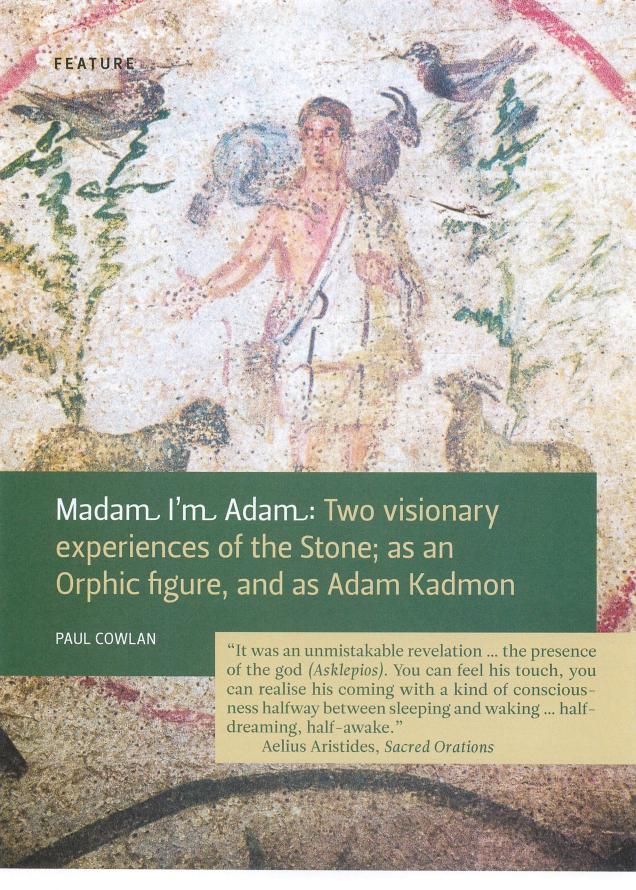
⁶ Hunter, L. & Hutton, S. (editors). Women, Science and Medicine 1500 - 1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society. Sutton: Gloucestershire, 1997.

⁷ Tosi, L. Marie Meurdrac: Paracelsian chemist and feminist. Ambix, 48 (2): 69-82. 2001.

⁸ Myer, R. Clio's Circle: Entering the Imaginal World of Historians. Spring: New Orleans, 2007: 22-23.

⁹ Braybrooke, R.L. (editor). Memoirs of Samuel Pepys, Esq. F.R.S.: Secretary to the Admiralty in the Reigns of Charles II and James II. His Diary from 1659 -1669 (Second Edition.) Vol 3. Henry Colburn: London,

¹⁰ Thoren, V.E. The Lord of Uraniborg: A Biography of Tycho Brahe. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990.



ll authorities, ancient and modern, are in agreement that there's something Aspecial about that intermediate state of consciousness, neither wakefulness nor sleep - which often coincides with the equally significant last hours of dreaming, when "dawn's left hand is in the sky" - and my own experience has unfailingly borne this out. The first of the two following visions is a perfect example of this. It was also in these ambiguous borderlands of sleep that, in 1976, I first encountered Spirit Woman, the mysterious central mover of this first vision.

Sadly, space does not permit further description of this metaphysical soror mystica, working unobtrusively behind the scenes and whispering prompts whenever I seem in danger of losing the plot. I introduce her here because she played such a specific role in the account which follows that it would have been difficult, and dishonest, to omit her.

Excerpts from diaries and dream diaries have all been transcribed exactly as written. I've corrected any spelling errors and sometimes tidied up the punctuation, but nothing else has been changed.

The First Vision Saturday 24/08/1985

Because of the forthcoming drive to England (from Germany) we get an early night but, most irritatingly, the phone rings at about 3.30 a.m., just a mumbling voice with music in the background, but it has effectively shattered our sleep. I'm particularly angry because I know that, my sleeping pattern being what it has been recently, I'm going to have problems getting back to sleep.

And so it turns out. I keep dipping in and out of dreams at least five times, and at last hear the clock striking seven. I get up and go to the bathroom. Spirit Woman promises to give me the rest I need in the form of water from below, which she assures me is already seeping up. I suddenly feel greatly rested, but Gabriele keeps snoring, which completely dissipates the feeling.

When I return from the bathroom I am so desperate and fed up that I lie uncovered on the bed, with a draught blowing over me. Spirit Woman tells me to cover myself, but I'm so consumed with self-pity that I make no move to do so, saying that I don't care if I'm ill, if it will give me some peace. She's quite sharp with me, telling me not to be so stupid and eventually I cover myself. Gabriele, bless her, not realising her part in the proceedings, strokes my back tenderly.

Spirit Woman assures me, against my skepticism, that she will give me three hours rest, though by now the clock has struck eight. So, with nothing to lose, I say, "Alright then. Do it!" And again I try to relax the mind. She is true to her word in no uncertain manner.

(Here I leave out a dreamed verse relevant to spiritual water, and an out-of-the-body experience from which I had just returned when the narrative recommences. These will be briefly mentioned later).

... There is the usual vibration, sensation of rising, etc., but this time I do not see anything resembling reality. I hear Gabriele moving about in the flat and am afraid she may come in and disturb me, but then, suddenly, I am looking at a beautiful picture. A long painting in soft pastel colours showing: to my left, two women; then a central, blonde, god-like being with one arm raised and a toga over the left shoulder. Then, to his left, a wolf and a bear. The picture is very clear indeed, though the two women later become a woman and child. The following sentence, perhaps written, perhaps spoken, describes the picture.

"The child (later this changes to 'man'), in the midst of his mind is not the possession of Creation. For the Lord of Life has set him there, with the wolf and the bear."

The 'god' himself is, as I say, blonde and wears a yellow toga.

I survey the picture for a long while, and then dream of Gabriele cautiously entering. I welcome

"This merely underlines the fact that, for most of us, such gifts are given very much when the inner time is right, and although you might do your best to create congenial conditions you can never consciously orchestrate a manifestation."

her in and fall back gently into the body.

Slowly I wake, feeling truly rested. The church clock strikes 11:00 a.m. Exactly three hours. Just as I'm ready to open my eyes Gabriele enters quietly, exactly as I dreamed.

The numinous quality of this experience was emphasised by its intensely visual nature, combined with a clear awareness of what was happening in the waking world. Furthermore, it occurred when circumstances would have initially seemed to be resolutely against it. This merely underlines the fact that, for most of us, such gifts are given very much when the inner time is right, and although you might do your best to create congenial conditions you can never consciously orchestrate a manifestation.

I was out-of-the-body for the second time that night, but whereas the first occasion had given me a one-eyed and unnaturally focused view of the actual room, for which I would normally have needed both eyes and my contact lenses, what I saw this time bore no visual relation to the physical reality of my surroundings.

I've often noticed a difference between the colours featured in a normal dream and those in what I call an 'astral' dream; a dream experienced on a different level of consciousness from that of normal dreaming and often accompanied

by the catalepsy, vibrations and rising sensation associated with out-of-the-body experiences, plus a rational awareness of what is happening, even though this awareness may remain within the dream. This epiphany was certainly on the 'astral' level with regard to the awareness, intensity of colours and sublimity of mood, but how does it relate to alchemy?

Taking the central figure first; he has gold, Sun and sulphur written all over him and is possibly the Lord of Life himself. He is certainly the very essence of the Work, both the raw material and the finished product; the personified aurum non vulgi; sulphur, the divine soul, the 'pure fire hidden in the mercury,' the Great Flame, the 'prima materia of the Sun'; a projection of the unconscious Self, the Unity; the Macrocosmic Son; the Christ-lapis. As prima materia of the gold he is, according to Philalethes, the Key to the Work; but he is also the completed Work, none other than the Stone itself.

Interestingly enough alchemical sulphur was also called the *aqua divina*, the divine water, and in the first dream of that night a chorus of extremely beautiful women, their faces flickering past in a rapid, hypnogogic panorama, sang the following quatrain:

"There's a drink called water, As every girl should know. I discovered it the other night, And you must drink to grow."

This is probably a reference to the previous night when, just before sleeping, I had experienced "the very succinct image of a bar of fine gold, immune to all attacks, which at one end became pure, flowing water." It would be difficult to devise a better representation of the aurum potabile than this. "That philosophic water," referred to by Sendivogius, "that was shown to you a number of times in a dream."

Christ too associates himself with 'living water'; and further underlining the water/fire identity, Martinus Rulandus, in his *Lexicon of Alchemy* of 1612, states that, one of the "two

kinds of water ... is truly fire, and even stronger than fire, for it is a universal solvent." In the same entry he also quotes Geber's dictum, "Burn it in water and wash it in fire."

But we're in danger of being overwhelmed by the inexhaustible and often contradictory associations of the Secret Art. Having established the connection of alchemy with this visionary god we can draw back again and refocus.

In terms of Tibetan Buddhism this figure was surely my yidam, described by Francesca Fremantle as "the expression of one's basic nature, visualised as a divine form in order to relate with it and express its full potentiality." Western alchemists would have immediately associated this with Christ; the paragon, the cornerstone, the wounded, slain and resurrected lapis; the very goal of the Work, but like the cornerstone itself, initially unrecognised.

Eight months previously (Tuesday 15/01/1985), I had had a dream in which a Christian woman asked me whether I had ever considered Christ.

"At great length," I replied, "He's not for me." "Oh, but he is," she insisted.

A timely reminder that, however decidedly we may, or may not, distance ourself from Christianity and the whole lumbering juggernaut of institutional religion, we must still accept that whatever he may mean to his followers, Christ, as an archetype, alchemical or otherwise, is still very much alive in the collective Western psyche. In this context it is extremely important to clearly differentiate between the archetypal Christ figure, and the official version(s) of the Christian church.

Well and good. But this was not a vision of Christ, it was a classical deity of some description. Surely there can be no connection.

Early Christian portrayals of Christ are, as might be expected, very much in the style of contemporary Roman painting, and there is a representation of 'Christ, The Good Shepherd' from the 3rd century Catacomb of Priscilla, to the

north of Rome, which resembles my visionary figure to a remarkable degree. He too is beardless, he too wears a toga (white, incidentally), which leaves his right arm and shoulder bare. His arm is similarly extended and he is likewise flanked by animals.

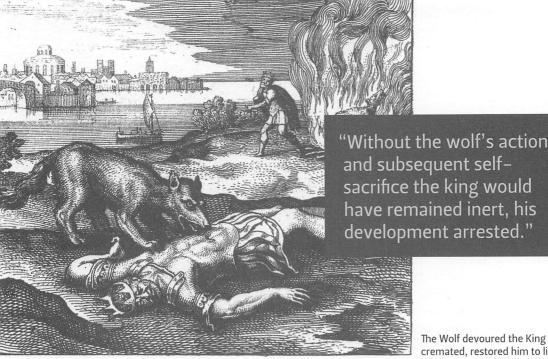
So, an early portrait of Christ, depicted in the costume of the period; off-the-shoulder toga, outstretched arm, and accompanied by animals. But this is still Christ, not a pagan deity.

A poem, probably of Essene origin, found among the manuscripts discovered at Qumran, establishes a deliberate parallel between the deified classical hero Orpheus and King David, both harpists of course. Christ, The Good Shepherd, as the new David, was therefore frequently portrayed in a pose identical with Orpheus, the latter surrounded by the animals who had been charmed by his music. It might also be pointed out that, like Christ, Orpheus too had descended into Hades, the kingdom of Death, and had returned alive.

My 'Lord of Life' is initially flanked by two women on one side, and a wolf and a bear on the other. The two women then become a woman and child.

Without pursuing the meaning of these figures beyond what is necessary to relate them to alchemy it may be said that according to Basil

"Western alchemists would have immediately associated this with Christ; the paragon, the cornerstone, the wounded, slain and resurrected lapis; the very goal of the Work, but like the cornerstone itself, initially unrecognised."



The Wolf devoured the King and, cremated, restored him to life

Valentine, while quicksilver is the mother of the tincture, its grandmother is the mercurial water. This is illustrated in Mylius' Opus Medicochymicum of 1618, in which the purified adept is shown accompanied by two angels. At a stretch it might be suggested that the two women and the child resemble a grouping of Saint Anne, the grandmother, Mary the mother and Christ the child, but they never appear together in a group of three and I suspect their major significance is non-alchemical.

Such is not the case with the woman and child. Michael Maier's 1617 Symbola Aureae Mensae shows the infant Stone suckling at the breast of a virgin, and the lac virginis, or virgin's milk - so essential to its nurturing - is that very mercurial water referred to by Basil Valentine as the grandmother. In other manuscripts the infant is called sulphur, and the virgin is Earth, but the meaning remains the same. The product of the union has been born and is now being nourished.

The fact that the number of accompanying figures is always four is certainly important. The quaternary is representative of wholeness. a combination of all four elements, and the quintessence is, literally, the fifth essence, the product of these four, embodying them all in one

substance; the tincture, the Stone, the elixir, or any one of its numberless names. The god is the fifth figure.

The wolf has very specific personal significance, a long and interesting history, and a vital place in my own ongoing process of individuation, but alchemically, from the 16th century onward, he represents antimony, a metallic sulphide of stibnite used in purifying gold, and he is therefore also seen as the ravenous, mercurial prima materia which devours the golden king, delivers him to the assaying fire and is himself then burned away, imparting his vitality to his victim even as he is consumed. The king, reborn and rejuvenated, then emerges from the flames. Without the wolf's action and subsequent selfsacrifice the king would have remained inert, his development arrested.

The wolf is the animal of Ares, or Mars, god of war and the metal iron, and he shares a tenuous link with the bear because, as Johannes Braceschus asserts, iron is "begotten in the earth by virtue of the most high and mighty Pole Star called the Great Bear." But there is a more obvious connection.

Bears don't figure largely in alchemy, but on the rare occasions they appear they are representative of either the element earth, the fiery water, component of the Secret Fire, or the dangerous aspect of the prima materia. In this latter role, unlike the wolf, they lack the compensating virtue of purification. They may consume, but they do not transform. Even so, the necessary ingredients for commencing the Great Work and carrying it to a successful conclusion are all there, difficult though it may be to perceive them. Nothing is missing.

So the central Lord of Life figure is both the prima materia and the completed Stone, and he is flanked by representitives of the early stages of his development; the dark, dangerous, devouring aspects of the nigredo, on his left, and the successful birth and nurturing of the young Philosophers' Stone, his immature self, on his right. A quaternary of figures, completed by himself as the quintessence.

Such dramatic revelations don't come ten a penny, and it was to be a further 15 years before such a figure appeared again. By this time I had, with great reluctance, followed my allotted path out of the comfortably indulgent moonlight and into the full glare of sunlit realities - announced by yet another synchronicity in which the globe of the Moon, suspended above my bed, fell on me, waking me, painlessly, in the small hours of my thirty-eighth birthday morning. Of course, my dreams had long anticipated the necessary changes symbolised by this! So, it was absolutely in keeping that the following vision should be experienced while I was not only fully awake, but behind the wheel of my van.

The Second Vision Friday 10/11/2000

On the drive from Radstatt to Linz this afternoon I explore the links and symbols of recent dreams, speaking aloud to express the insights as they arise. This is very instructive, and helps me to understand much better the present state of mind, soul and spirit ...

Having discoursed with the inner variations for over an hour, observed their interconnections and indications, I then experience a waking vision of wonderful power.

Out of the waters of the beautiful sea featured in last night's dream emerges the figure of a man. I don't initially realise how large he is, but see he is handsome and glowing with health. The water gleams and sluices from his body. He is, at this point, still immersed from the solar plexus downward.

I then see that in his right hand he holds the white shark (also from the previous night's dream), grasping it effortlessly as it twists and wriggles.

Looking at his left hand as it emerges from the water, I see it holds a silvery sphere, which rapidly turns gold.

Now the water sinks away, exposing the entire, perfect, naked form. He is now standing on dry land and is a representation of male perfection on a Macrocosmic scale.

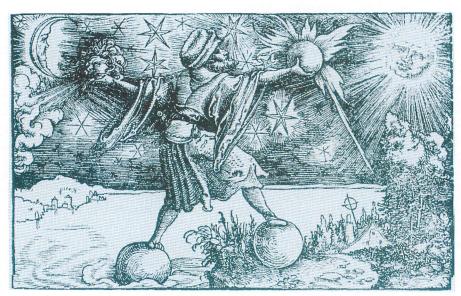
In the hollow of his right hand is now a pool of clear water in which a silvery fish, with hints of green, is circling. Sometimes it revolves horizontally, sometimes vertically - half in the water, half in the air - but always anti-clockwise.

The golden sphere in the left hand has now become a living fire, and I see that his feet and legs are rooted to the ground in a manner suggestive of two tall, beautiful trees. (By now the Earth had become spherical).

Then above his head appear two airy wings, and I realise he now incorporates all four elements.

This image has a powerfully numinous quality, and is a delight to contemplate.

The Macrocosmic scale and fourfold elemental composition of this being immediately identifies him as the beautiful Adam Kadmon, the Primordial Man of the Jewish qabbalistic tradition; pre-existant and containing everything necessary for the forthcoming Creation. He is often considered to be hermaphroditic, as befits an embodiment of all opposites, but this is not always the case, and here he seems to be



Man and the four elements

unequivocally male. In Johannes Mangetus' *Bibliotheca Chemica* of 1702, the Dicta Belini speaks of Mercurius as the "man rising from the river," and another text, purportedly by Abraham le Juif, openly equates him with Adam Kadmon. Both are identified with the *filius philosophorum*, the Philosophers' Stone.

In Basil Valentine, Adam Kadmon is depicted in the bath where "Venus found her companion," and in my vision, a hint of Venus can be detected in the fish, one of her emblems, with the coppery green glint on its scales.

Ruland states that "The Water is Adam, the Earth is Eve, and these two are one flesh." So it is not surprising to find this particular Adam not only emerging from the water but also apparently rooted to and, by implication, emerging from, the Earth.

Earth at his feet, water in his right hand, air above his head, and fire in his left hand; all harmoniously present and recalling Paracelsus' statement that, as Archeus, he "consists of the four elements."

According to Zosimos, the Greek letters of Adam's name enumerate the four quarters; anatole (sunrise, east), dysys (sunset, west), arktos

(the Great Bear, north), mesembria (noon, south), and once again we encounter the bear.

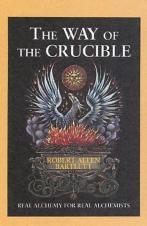
But there, for reasons of space, we must leave Bruin and his associates, perhaps with a last glimpse, from a dream of the previous month, in which a large black bear lumbers up from a site of roadworks to the higher woods beyond. "Something about the bear's jaw suggests a link with the kind of wolf who used to frighten me as a child." And, as Vergil reminds us, "Habitarunt di quoque silvas" (Even gods have dwelt in woods). \triangle

PAUL COWLAN is a professional singer-songwriter-poet, who has practiced psychospiritual alchemy since the early 1980s, predominantly guided by a combination of his own dreams, the community of books, and a pragmatic application of the insights thus acquired. He gives illustrated talks and workshops on the subject, and has published two pamphlets: Alchemy by Night: An individual's experience of Alchemy, and Tabula Smaragdina: An Introduction to the Emerald Tablet. A practitioner of yoga since the late 1970s, he has also developed a system of alchemical yoga, using selected asanas in combination with Tantric and alchemical imagery. More at www.paulcowlan.co.uk and www.alchemical-yoga.co.uk

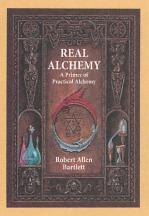


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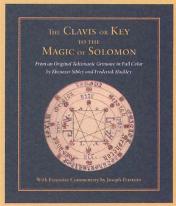
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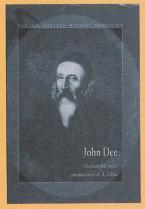


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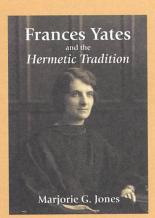
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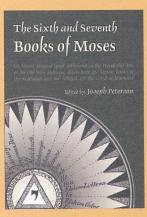
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The Mystery of the uroboros

DUANE SAARI

he Greek word ouroboros is the name of one of the most ancient and enigmatic symbols humans have created and nurtured through recorded time. The Greek word means tail devourer and this is a straightforward, clear description of this symbol. While ouroboros has been depicted in many forms throughout time and across different cultures, a snake swallowing or eating its tail is one of the most recognisable signs on the planet.

The snake, particularly in its more mythic form as the serpent or dragon, plays a role in many of the world's myths and legends. This creature has been associated with both good and evil and represents creation as well as destruction. The ancient Chinese connected serpents with life-giving rain. Traditional beliefs in Australia, India, North America, and Africa have linked snakes with rainbows, which in turn are often related to rain and fertility. Many snakes shed their skin at various times, revealing a new skin and, for this reason, the snake or serpent



Figure 1: Ouroboros from The Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra

has become a symbol of rebirth, transformation, immortality, and healing.

But there is more to the story of the ouroboros. Listen to the words of Theophrastos, whose poem was composed between 700 and 900 A.D., as he describes the first step in the process of

transmutation:

"A dragon springs therefrom which, when exposed In horse's excrement for twenty days, Devours his tail till naught thereof remains. This dragon, whom they Ouroboros call, Is white in looks and spotted in his skin, And has a form and shape most strange to see. When he was born he sprang from out the warm And humid substance of united things. The close embrace of male and female kind, - A union which occurred within the sea - Brought forth this dragon, as already said; A monster scorching all the earth with fire, With all his might and panoply displayed, He swims and comes unto a place within The

currents of the Nile; his gleaming skin And all the bands which girdle him around Are bright as gold and shine with points of light ..."1

The ouroboros is one of the earliest symbols in alchemy. The famous ouroboros drawing (see Figure 1) contained in the early alchemical text from 2nd century Alexandria, The Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra, encloses the words Hen To Pan, "One is the All." However, the history of this distinct image can be traced back much earlier.

The meanings attributed to the ouroboros are as varied as its history. Some of these are: infinity, unity, eternal return, purification, self renewal, union of opposites, as well as the above and the below. A number of important questions are raised even by this introduction to the tail devourer. Are there significant similarities among the many images of ouroboros? If so, what are they? Do the many different meanings of this symbol in very different cultures and times contain a consistent and meaningful message for us today? What is the significance of the ouroboros to alchemy? By exploring this universal symbol, can we begin to unravel some of the mystery it holds for human kind down through the ages? This article is a search for the answers to these questions and an exploration of the unfathomable mystery of this symbol. The first place to start is the beginning of ouroboros' story as we know it at this time.

The zhulong, or pig dragon, of the more than 6,000 year old Hongshan culture of China is one of the earliest known occurrences of ouroboros. A pig dragon is a zoomorphic form with a pig like head and elongated limbless body coiled around to the head in the manner of an ouroboros. Early pig dragons are thick and stubby; later examples have more graceful, snakelike bodies. Its image has the classic and traditional features of the ouroboros - a serpent-like creature in the act of swallowing its tail. One style of these dragons, in the shape of a complete circle (see Figure 2) was found on the chest of deceased in Hongshan graves.2



Figure 2: Zhulong or pig dragon

The meaning of this image for the Hongshan is, however, lost to us. Although the placement of jade carvings of the zhulong in the graves of the deceased is a clue, the significance of this amulet cannot be reduced to one meaning. We can speculate that there was a connection between this early form of the ouroboros and the perspective these Neolithic people had of death, the afterlife, possibly eternity, and even reincarnation and return to the material world. As we will see, these are all associations of the ouroboros in its many forms today.

On the west wall gable of the Sarcophagus Chamber in the Pyramid of Unas, the Pyramid Texts were engraved in hieroglyphs more than 4,000 years ago. The hieroglyphs state that "A serpent is entwined by a serpent" and "the male serpent is bitten by the female serpent, the female serpent is bitten by the male serpent, Heaven is enchanted, earth is enchanted. the male behind mankind is enchanted."3 While there is no symbol that captures the exact meaning of Utterance 233 of the Pyramid Texts, the statement seems to describe an image that is very reminiscent of later images of the ouroboros showing two snakes each biting the other's tail. Figure 3 shows one version of this image. The Pyramid Texts were funerary inscriptions so it is possible that the meaning of the two serpents biting each other is related to the views of ancient Egyptian culture about the afterlife and

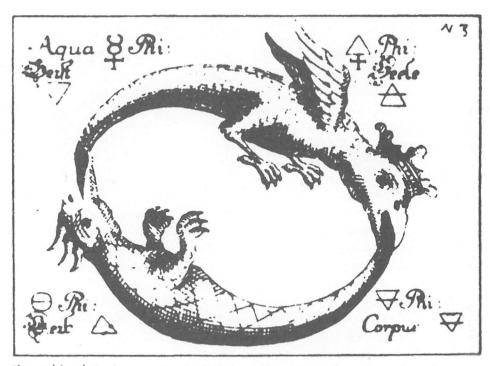


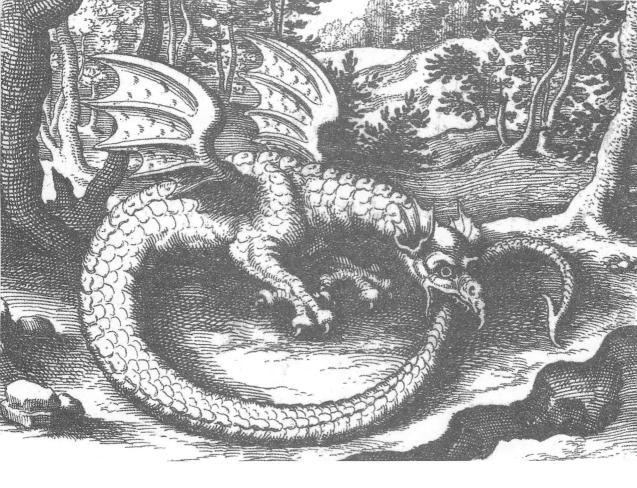
Figure 3 (above): Ouroboros as winged and wingless serpents; **Figure 4 (opposite page):** Ouroboros as a venomous dragon in which there should be a great medicine

their view of eternity and immortality. However, Utterance 233 mentions enchantment, which calls forth an image of a magical act of creation. Could it be that the bite of the snake creates something new? Enchantment is also related to attraction and the feeling of delight. We have only the handful of words from the Pyramid of Unas about the bite of the snake, but a new element of the significance of the ouroboros has been added to the picture.

In *Timaeus*, Plato (circa 400 B.C.) described a self-eating, circular being as the first living thing in the Universe – an immortal, perfectly constructed animal:

"The living being had no need of eyes when there was nothing remaining outside him to be seen; nor of ears when there was nothing to be heard; and there was no surrounding atmosphere to be breathed; nor would there have been any use of organs by the help of which he might receive his food or get rid of what he had

already digested, since there was nothing which went from him or came into him: for there was nothing beside him. Of design he was created thus, his own waste providing his own food, and all that he did or suffered taking place in and by himself. For the Creator conceived that a being which was self-sufficient would be far more excellent than one which lacked anything; and, as he had no need to take anything or defend himself against any one, the Creator did not think it necessary to bestow upon him hands: nor had he any need of feet, nor of the whole apparatus of walking; but the movement suited to his spherical form was assigned to him, being of all the seven that which is most appropriate to mind and intelligence; and he was made to move in the same manner and on the same spot, within his own limits revolving in a circle. All the other six motions were taken away from him, and he was made not to partake of their deviations. And as this circular movement required no



feet, the universe was created without legs and without feet."4

The sense of self-sufficiency and immortality is inherent in this image envisaged and described by Plato. He emphasises that the snake-like creature in the form of a circle defines two separate spaces. One is the space that is contained by the snake and encircles and holds all that it is. The other is outside and contains nothingness. Here we have the ouroboros forming a portal between what is known and what is unknown. In this capacity it holds the cosmos together, and perhaps the serpent may even play a role in the creation of the known world from chaos. We will revisit this concept of two very different realms defined by the circular serpent in later versions of the ouroboros.

The concept of these two separate and distinct spaces described by Plato lies at the heart of alchemy, which involves the fusion of opposites. Returning for a moment to the Chrysopoeia ouroboros (see Figure 1), we cannot avoid the obvious distinction between the solid black head and neck of the snake contrasted with the white tail with black dots. This contrast calls to mind the Gnostic concept of the duality of Nature. Marie-Louise von Franz, the famous student of Jung's who wrote extensively about alchemy, put it this way:

"There is a great deal said about the head and the tail, and how they should relate to each other, therefore it well describes the opposites which are secretly one. It is a kind of European tai-gi-tu - the Yin-Yan symbol, the opposites in one."5

Put another way, as the ouroboros eats its tail, these two opposites flow one into the other.

The Book of Lampspring is a famous book about the alchemical process and contains 15 plates, each with an emblem and an accompanying motto or saying. One of the emblems is a picture of an ouroboros (see Figure 4). In his insightful analysis of this book, Adam McLean shows how the plates can be viewed as a presentation of the spiritual journey of the alchemist in a series of three sequences of five emblems each. In the first sequence, the plates depict different opposites of our inner life. At the beginning of the second sequence, McLean states that:

"Emblem 6 is a clear statement of the Ouroborus, the serpent dragon that seizes its own tail and unites these polarities in forming its circle in the Soul."6

Embedded in this alchemical treatise is the concept of the unification of opposites and, once again, this idea or process is symbolised by the ouroboros.

Swiss psychologist Carl Jung saw the ouroboros as an archetype and the basic mandala of alchemy. His description of the significance of this symbol was a complex one:

"The alchemists, who in their own way knew more about the nature of the individuation process than we moderns do, expressed this paradox through the symbol of the Ouroboros, the snake that eats its own tail. The Ouroboros has been said to have a meaning of infinity or wholeness. In the age-old image of the Ouroboros lies the thought of devouring oneself and turning oneself into a circulatory process, for it was clear to the more astute alchemists that the prima materia of the art was man himself. The Ouroboros is a dramatic symbol for the integration and assimilation of the opposite, i.e. of the shadow. This 'feed-back' process is at the same time a symbol of immortality, since it is said of the Ouroboros that he slavs himself and brings himself to life, fertilises himself and gives birth to himself. He symbolises the One, who proceeds from the clash of opposites, and he therefore constitutes the secret of the prima materia which [...] unquestionably stems from man's unconscious."7

Dennis Hauck, a practicing contemporary alchemist, summed up and unified many of the different interpretations of the ouroboros by associating this symbol with *conjunction*, the fourth step of the alchemical process described in the *Emerald Tablet*. The seventh figure from his website is an image of the ouroboros that is relevant to this concept of union – a serpent that presents the process of the above and the below flowing into and out of one another.

This idea is echoed in other mediæval writings that link the ouroboros to other key alchemical processes:

"More allegorical descriptions abound in mediæval literature and representations amongst which are those comprising both 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' aspects of alchemy. One such symbol, the origins of which can be traced back to Ancient Egypt is that of the serpent Ouroboros biting its tail, symbolising immortality or the eternal cycles of world changes. This may have also meant to reflect the interrelatedness and reversibility of certain chemical transformations as in 'distillation' and 'condensation.'"8

We've identified and revealed the common or accepted meanings of the ouroboros from different traditions. All of these are significant issues for human kind and they are expressed in many other cultural symbols, myths and archetypes around the globe. So, is there a unique message that the ouroboros brings down through the ages to us today? I think that there is.

This message is contained in a part of the ouroboros symbol that is unique to it - the space in which the tail is dissolved in its mouth and simultaneously the space immediately behind its head which extends or grows to allow the tail to be continuously destroyed as energy for the creation of the body. Continuous destruction leading to continuous renewal is one way to think of this special space. To do so, however, one has to see the ouroboros in motion rather than as a static image. Think of the symbol as a photographic snapshot of a process, something that could not be depicted directly in a two dimensional etching, drawing or carving. Now imagine the figure animated. At once it is apparent that, for this motion to be sustained



"The ouroboros is not biting its tail off in an act of self destruction, but rather is consuming it in order to create the energy for resurrection – a continuous cycle of life and death."

continuously, the body must be replaced as the tail is devoured, in order to continue the cycle of destruction and creation. To make this moving image more viable and vibrant think of the Greek words describing the image - tail devourer. The ouroboros is not biting its tail off in an act of self destruction, but rather is consuming it in order to create the energy for resurrection - a continuous cycle of life and death.

This, I submit for your consideration, is the secret of the ouroboros revered especially by alchemists who saw it in this way as the supreme image of the cycle of destruction and creation in which they desired to participate. This idea was expressed in an ancient alchemical text:

"Nature rejoices in nature; nature charms nature; nature triumphs over nature; and nature masters nature; and this is not from one nature opposing another, but through the one and same nature, through the alchemical process, with great care and great effort."9

Dennis Hauck identified a way to look at this paradox that lies at the center of alchemy and the ouroboros:

"It is not generally known, but Godel proved that ultimately, logical thinking can never know truth. Without going into a lot of detail, he developed an introspective form of mathematics that used self-referencing propositions to expose fundamental problems in the foundations of mathematics. His Incompleteness Theorem demonstrated that no matter what 'axiomatic system' or logical approach you take - no matter how complicated - you will never be able to explain the complexity of the universe. In other words, provability is a weaker notion that truth. I can show that right now, in fact. Just reflect on the following sentence: 'This statement is false.' At first you think it is a false statement, but you realise if the statement is really false, then it must be a true statement; yet if it is a true statement, it cannot be a false statement. Try it! You get caught in what Godel called a Strange Loop. So, there is something fundamentally flawed in our idea of yes/no, true/untrue, and that means there is something fundamentally wrong with binary logic itself, which is the heart of computers."

Hauck goes on to say that alchemists understood the concept of a 'Strange Loop' and used it to grasp an important element of the mystery behind the ouroboros. For them, it could be understood as Socrates' expression, "Know thyself," because all is one.10

Looking back on the images of the ouroboros we have seen and the different interpretations of its meaning we have explored, is there an interpretation of its message that includes most of versions that have come down to us? Perhaps there are none and we will go on wondering just what it is telling us. Yet I would like to highlight a concept for us to consider: the continuous cycle of change. The ouroboros is in motion, consuming part of itself to feed the purpose of its life and that of all life - creation. Not a creation limited to the expression of one idea or thing for one time, but a willing, conscious participation in the eternal process of recreating what exists in new ways and in new forms, by seeing the One expressed in the All. From an alchemical perspective, the moment of creation could be seen as the moment when two seemingly contradictory things form simultaneously. One is yet unformed by a living water of life that has many names given to it by alchemists, and the other a solid and dead thing that when brought fully to life is the Stone. The act of creation does not make a distinction between things and life - One is All and All is One.

This concept is not an answer to the mystery of the ouroboros or the reason for its thousands of years long, worldwide existence as a symbol of our view of the Universe in which we live. It is a clue. And if we are to understand this mystery, we must begin with this clue, bring it fully into our consciousness and remain fully aware that we are the creator of our lives, that the fullness of our being lies in our hands and that we are all alchemists. \triangle

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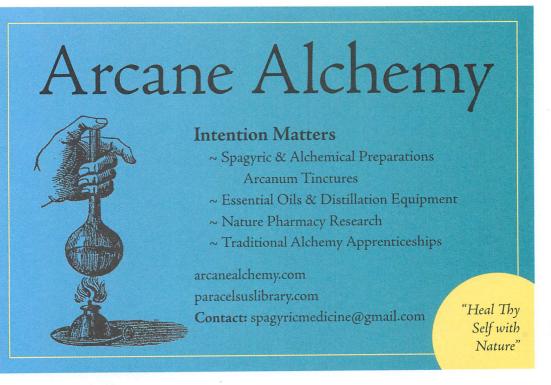
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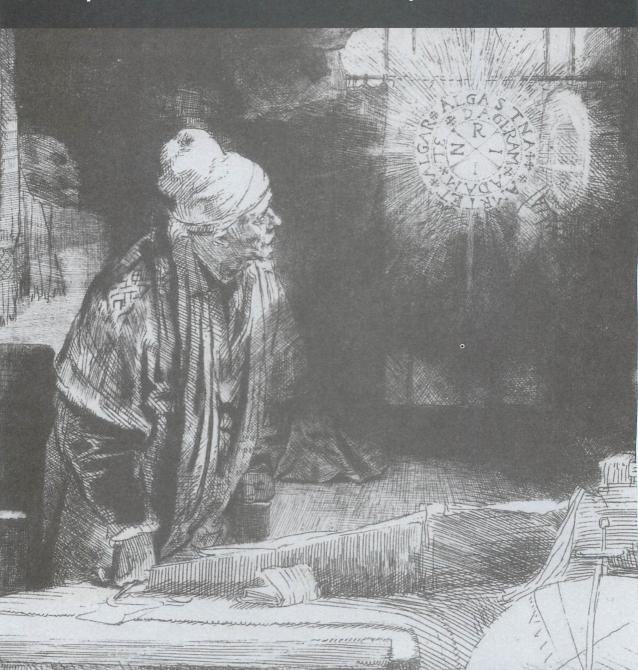
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The Mystic Way and the Emerald Formula: the use of Gnosis in Mysticism and Alchemy DR. JAMES RODGERS



"O all ye seekers after this Art, ye can reach no useful result without a patient, laborious and solicitous soul, persevering courage and continuous regimen."

Turba Philosophorum¹

he field of Western esotericism encompasses a large range of disciplines including history, religion and philosophy, among others. Given this multidisciplinary nature, a set of methodological guidelines have been proposed in an attempt to establish its boundaries. Antoine Faivre has made important contributions to help delineate the field by positing six components of esotericism. He considers four of these to be intrinsic or fundamental elements: correspondences, living nature, imagination and mediation, as well as transmutation. The last two components he considers relative: praxis of concordance and transmission.

Despite this important work, many scholars maintain that a much broader perspective is needed to help delineate what is esoteric. Some view the esoteric from an empirico-historical perspective or as a theoretical construct. Others see it as an "element of discourse in the European history of religion."3 It has also been argued that the concept of gnosis is critical in any discussion of the boundaries of esotericism.4 Although Faivre has noted the significance of gnosis, his typology does not include it as a defining component of esotericism. Arthur Versluis points out that this omission has kept disciplines like mysticism out of the fold of Western esotericism. He points out that gnosis is the central characteristic of Western esotericism and to disregard gnosis as a component is to miss its defining character - what makes esotericism esoteric.5

He recommends as components two fundamental yet interrelated types of gnoses; cosmological-defined as direct spiritual insight into the nature of the cosmos and of oneself, and metaphysical-defined as direct spiritual insight into complete transcendence. Cosmological gnosis maintains a subtle dualism of subject and object, whereas metaphysical gnosis is a nondualistic insight.⁶

These forms of gnosis, along with the components in Faivres' typology, illustrate that the esoteric worldview is distinctly different from the secular, materialistic, Newtonian/Cartesian paradigm that dominates our modern worldview. In our current reductionistic view the world is apprehended from a distance. Emotion and subjectivity are viewed with suspicion. Objectivity, logic and reason predominate. The world of the esotericist, however, is one of purpose and intelligence. In this paradigm the world is ensouled, for consciousness pervades all reality, seen and unseen. This current of thought values intuition and imagination as much as logical reasoning. As Wouter Hanegraff has noted, this way of seeing "emphasises experiential rather than rational or dogmatic modes of knowing and favours mythic/symbolic over discursive forms of expression."7 This mode of thought represents a different type of consciousness,8 a different way of seeing and knowing the world.

Two disciplines in particular, alchemy and mysticism, exemplify the esotericists' vision and epistemology. Both are not only forms of

thought, they are also ways of life. The alchemist and the mystic are both seeking, through this way of life, an ontological change - a transmutation of the self. The road to this transmutation is through a similar psychospiritual pathway that utilises both cosmological and metaphysical gnosis.

Alchemical and mystical traditions have shared a close historical tie. Mircea Eliade has noted:

"To situate alchemy correctly in its original context, one must keep in mind the following fact: in every culture that we find alchemy, it is always intimately related to an esoteric or 'mystical' tradition: in China with Taoism, in India with Yoga and Tantrism, in Hellenistic Egypt with Gnosis, in Islamic countries with Hermetic and esoteric mystery schools, in the Western Middle Ages and Renaissance with Hermetism, Christian and sectarian mysticism and Cabala. In brief, all alchemists proclaim their art to be an esoteric technique, pursuing a goal similar or comparable to that of the major esoteric and 'mystical' traditions."9

Despite their common goal and historical link, however, several authors see the paths of the mystic and the alchemist as divergent. Faivre writes:

"The mystic - in the strictly classical sense - aspires to the more or less complete suppression of images and intermediaries because for him they become obstacles to the union with God. While the esotericist [alchemist] appears to take more interest in the intermediaries revealed to his inner eye through the power of his creative imagination than to extend himself essentially toward the union with the divine."10

Likewise, Rudolf Steiner states:

"The research of the mystic and the alchemist lie in opposite directions. The mystic goes straight to the individual spiritual heart of man. His goal (which can be regarded as mystical marriage) is the union of the conscious mind with its own spiritual essence. The alchemist, however,

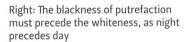
aims to traverse the spiritual territory of nature so that at the end of the journey, by virtue of the knowledge acquired during it, he can perceive the spiritual essence of man. His goal is chemical marriage, union with the spiritual territory of nature. Only after this union will he be able to perceive the essence of mankind."11

Although the mystic generally does not utilise images and intermediaries to the degree of the alchemist, both recognise that Nature is a sacred text written in symbolic language, needing to be interpreted with intuition and imagination. Both seek in their own way the spiritual in the material, the archetypal in the mundane.

Here I will compare the distinctive psychospiritual paths of the mystic (i.e. the mystic way) and the alchemist (through the seven operations of alchemy as derived from the Emerald Tablet) to illustrate that both forms of gnosis, cosmological and metaphysical, are used by the 'traditional' mystic and the 'spiritual' alchemist. In other words, the alchemist seeks not only the hidden treasures in Nature (cosmological gnosis) but also spiritual gold through union with the transcendent (metaphysical gnosis). In a like manner, the mystic seeks the transcendent in the world of flux and becoming; seeks the "unmoved mover moving in all that moves" as an analogy of the world of being (metaphysical gnosis through cosmological gnosis). Therefore I hope to demonstrate that the mystic and alchemist are more convergent than divergent in their approach to ontological change and thereby illustrate the importance of gnosis in the consideration of Western esotericism's boundaries.

Mysticism.

Mysticism, defined as conscious union with a living Absolute12 or direct intuitive experiential knowledge of the transcendent, is a distinct form of spirituality. Its current runs through all major religions: Abrahamic, Eastern, as well as other forms of spirituality. Valentin Tomberg believes, "Mysticism is the source and the root "The alchemist and the mystic are both seeking, through this way of life, an ontological change - a transmutation of the self."





of all religions. Without it religion and the entire spiritual life of humanity would be only a code of laws regulating human thought and action."13 Mysticism's varied expression lends itself to a number of different categories of classification. It is classified by different schools (Rhineland, Carmelite, Taoist, Neo-Platonic, etc.) as well as by its diverse experiences as in mysticism of "love and union," or of "knowledge and understanding."14 It has been separated into various paths such as the via positiva (kataphatic) versus the via negativa (apophatic), God versus Nature mysticism.

In her classic study, Mysticism: The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness, Evelyn Underhill has maintained that, despite the diverse forms and expressions of mysticism, there is a unity of experience. She states, "It is one of the many indirect testimonies to the objective reality of mysticism that the stages of the road, the psychology of spiritual ascent as described to us by the different schools of contemplation, always present practically the same sequence of stages."15 The mystic road is one. It is this shared byway that the mystic way traverses. Elsewhere she states, "Taken all together,[the mystic way constitutes phases in a single process of growth; involving the movement of consciousness from lower to higher levels of reality, the steady remaking of character in accordance with the independent spiritual world."16

Underhill, in describing this psychological process, is clear that not all mystics follow these stages in a rigorous way but that the 'traditional' mystic can be reliably shown to follow this route.

Five Stages of the Mystic Way

The traditional mystic route classically has three stages: purgation, illumination and union. These correspond to the alchemist's three classic stages of *nigredo*, *albedo* and *rubedo*. Through her extensive study of (predominantly) Western Christian mysticism, Underhill has expanded the three classic stages of the mystic way to five.

1. Awakening or Conversion

This initial stage is defined by the conscious awareness of a transcendental reality. This awakening to the Absolute, which can be abrupt or gradual, can take two fundamental forms: a transcendent (eternal) aspect or an imminent (temporal) one. These represent the two ways of knowing God as both Being and Becoming. It is in this preparatory stage that the mystic first develops the insight that the Absolute can be glimpsed through Nature. Underhill writes of this experience:

"There is first then the apprehension of a splendour without: an expansive, formless, ineffable vision, a snatching up of the self, as it were from knowledge of this world to some vague yet veritable knowledge of the next. The veil parts, and the Godhead is perceived as transcendent to, yet immanent in, the created universe." ¹⁷

In this awakening the mystic glimpses the need for cosmological gnosis in achieving metaphysical gnosis.

2. Purgation or Purification

The second of the preparatory stages, analogous to the operations of calcination, dissolution and separation in alchemy, is purgation. After awakening, the mystic now realises the extent of the work to be done. At this stage he must purge himself of all that stands in the way of his journey. It is a process of self simplification. Purification is of two types. 18 Negative purification involves the stripping away of the superfluous, unreal and harmful aspects which fix the self in the world of becoming. The goal is to "keep the

soul from inclining to lower things," as Plotinus has stated. First there is a purification of the senses, followed by a purification of the will and emotions. With the resultant clarity the mystic can see through pure sensation, unadulterated by distracting thoughts and feeling, to the pure essence of things. Secondly, positive purification involves a raising up to their purest state of all that remains to establish the permanent elements of character. It is this breaking down and building up, what the alchemist calls solve et coagula, which prepares the self for the next stage.

3. Illumination or Enlightenment

Analogous to the operation of conjunction in alchemy, illumination is the fruit of purified sense and emotion. It is a consciousness of divine presence. Because there remains a subject / object dichotomy at this stage, there is no clear union as occurs in the ultimate stage. Illumination is characterised by two important phases of contemplation. First, contemplation of the world of Becoming emphasises for the mystic the importance of cosmological gnosis. The notion that the mystic does not utilise Nature is misguided. As Underhill points out," to elude nature, to refuse her friendships and attempt to leap the river of life in the hope of finding God on the other side is the common error of a perverted mysticality."19 Elsewhere she adds, "the true mystic so often taunted with a 'denial of the world' does but deny the narrow and artificial world of the self and finds in exchange the secrets of that mighty universe which he shares with nature and God."20

The 'denial of the world' of which mystics are accused is not an ascetic narrowing of consciousness – a narrowing of the Many to see the One, but a self simplification which causes an expansion of vision and consciousness. This leads to an expansion of the One seen in the Many.

Secondly, contemplation of the world of







Left to right: The alchemical operations of calcination, sublimation and putrefaction

Being, in contrast, is an exercise where the mystic utilises intuitive love, what the alchemist will call *intelligence of the heart*, to better understand their place in the natural world. From this understanding there is a striving to know the unity that supports this multiplicity – a yearning for metaphysical gnosis.

This stage ends what is referred to as the 'first mystic life.' To the alchemist this is analogous to the creation of the Lesser Stone or 'Child of the Philosopher.'

4. Dark Night of the SouL or Self Surrender

After completing the first mystic life, the mystic now must undergo a second phase of purification. This involves a final and complete cleansing of the self. This stage corresponds to the operations of fermentation and distillation (encompassing the classic *nigredo* or blackening stage) for the alchemist. This dark night of the soul, as Saint John of the Cross beautifully described, is the hardest step along the mystic way. It results from a psychic fatigue which follows the joy

of illumination. The mystic death that results pushes the mystic to a state of self surrender. Only through this exercise can the mystic understand that a final purification is needed before there can be true union or metaphysical gnosis. The second mystic life is opened and illuminated by the dark night of the soul. It is from this that the mystic understands there can be no true light without darkness.

5. Union or Unitive Life

The culmination of this inward journey, this development of spiritual consciousness, is union with transcendence. This stage, analogous to the operation of coagulation to the alchemist, completes the ontological change – the final transmutation of the mystic's character. In this stage the numinous awareness is complete. The mystic is one with the Absolute. True metaphysical gnosis has occurred as the subject / object dichotomy is resolved. Here "man becomes fully human capable of living the real life of eternity in the midst of the world of time." ²¹



"Being integral with this one Nature, the alchemist believes that his character is just as important in the opus as his knowledge of physical reality."

Left: From death comes new life

Alchemy

Alchemy is the royal art of transformation – the science of perfecting Nature. Paracelsus notes "Nature does not produce anything that is perfect itself, man must bring everything to perfection. This work of bringing things to perfection is Alchemy."²²

The alchemist understands that this perfecting of Nature, whether it be the transmutation of base metals into gold, or the changing of the *prima materia* (first matter) into the *lapis philosophorum* (Philosopher's Stone), occurs on all three levels of reality; physical, psychological and spiritual.²³ The alchemist, therefore, works not only in the physical laboratory of retorts and alembics, but also in the inner laboratory of his being. They are called 'Philosophers of Fire' for they know that there is no transmutation without fire, whether that is the physical fire working on the *prima materia* in the lab or the 'Secret Fire' of their concentrated will, using their creative imagination to change their psychospiritual lead

into the Philosopher's Stone of spiritual gold.

Alchemy, as a Hermetic discipline, derives its principles from the *Tabula Smaragdina* (or *Emerald Tablet*) erroneously attributed to the mythical figure Hermes Trismegistus. This early Hermetic writing, thought to predate the writings of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, has been called "the cryptic epitome of the alchemical opus, a recipe for the second creation of the world, the *unus mundus*." ²⁴ The operative metaphysical principle of the alchemical opus is expressed in the *Emerald Tablet* as "that which is below corresponds to that which is above and that which is above corresponds to that which is below to accomplish the miracles of the one thing." This is the famous Hermetic axiom, "as above, so below."

This correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm relies on an intelligent, ordering principle which the alchemist understands as the world soul (anima mundi). The alchemist, therefore, views the world as one living Nature (unus mundus). This unity amid

the diversity of the world of flux and becoming, implies the possibility of transmutation. ²⁵ This understanding of unity underlying change (an important component of cosmological gnosis) rests upon the notion that all forms of matter are originally one. The original matter, *prima materia*, has a fourfold structure corresponding to the four archetypal forces represented as elemental earth, air, fire, and water.

Being integral with this one Nature, the alchemist believes that his character is just as important in the *opus* as his knowledge of physical reality. Just as sanctity is crucial to the mystic in their journey from self to union, the alchemist prayed and worked (*ora et labora*) with the expectation that a purified consciousness, just as real as any force or energy, obeying the doctrine of correspondence, could be injected into his work of transmutation.

Revealed in the *Emerald Tablet* is a pattern or formula which outlines the operations for transmutation. Because these operations occur on all three levels of reality – physical, psychological and spiritual – alchemy can be seen not only as

a precursor to modern chemistry, but also as a psychospiritual technology, an ancient depth psychology.

Throughout their history alchemists, who often depict their work in cryptic fashion, have varied the number of operations. Classically, the alchemical division was three - nigredo, albedo and rubedo - corresponding to the mystics' purgation, illumination and union. Here I will use the seven operations outlined by modern alchemist Dennis Hauck.26 These seven operations are calcination, dissolution, separation, conjunction, fermentation, distillation, and coagulation. They represent physical metaphors for transformation on a psychological and spiritual level. In other words, the alchemist envisions these physical interactions, in accordance with the theory of correspondences derived from the unifying principle of a world soul, as linking the material and the spiritual. As Eliade has pointed out, "the stages of the alchemical opus constitute an initiation, a series of specific experiences aiming at the radical transformation of the human condition."27

The Seven Operations of Alchemy

1. Calcination

Right from the start the alchemist's reliance upon the first of the four elements, fire, as a transformative agent is evident. On a physical level, calcination is the burning of a material to an ashen state as the initial step of purification. On a psychological level, the fire of transformation is concentrated consciousness directed at all the aspects of the self that create illusion. This is the purification of conscious thought or solar consciousness. Corresponding to the stage of negative purgation on the mystic way, this is the first step in breaking substances down to their base level (*prima materia*) before attempting to perfect their nature. "The alchemist summed up

the process of destruction and rebirth as...*Solvite Corpora et Coagulate Spiritus*" - the maxim, "dissolve the body and coagulate the spirit." The alchemist here is destroying or dissolving structures and pre-existing incarnations, called salt by the alchemist, to release the essence, spirit, and create a new body that is a more perfect expression of these essences.²⁹

2. Dissolution

The second stage, again corresponding to the mystic's negative purgation, continues the process of breaking down and purifying. To the spiritual alchemist this is the letting go and freeing up of emotions or the work on lunar consciousness. The alchemist associates this work with the element water and, on a physical level,

with the washing or dissolving of the calcinated material from the first operation. The spiritual alchemist, like the mystic, understands that purified thoughts and emotions, driven by a directed will, are necessary in order to progress to higher states of perfection.

3. Separation

Corresponding to the mystic's phase of positive purgation, separation on a psychological level is the isolation of the purified essences of thought and emotion from the two previous preparatory operations. On a physical level, this operation involves the separation of the components of dissolution by filtration. During psychological filtration the alchemist must decide which essences are worthy of being retained as he focuses upon progressing to higher spiritual levels. This is the operation where the alchemist first infuses elements of spirit (elemental air) into his work. It is here that he begins to see that the purified absolute within can lead him to the perfection he seeks. "Through the process of Separation, the alchemist confronts his true self and realises that he is made up of two basic components: an indestructible soul or essence and a higher spiritual component."30

4. Conjunction

Corresponding to illumination of the mystic way, conjunction is the unifying of the purified essences of self remaining from the preceding preparatory operations into a completely new substance. This stage of the alchemical opus involves the 'mystical marriage' of opposites – Sun / Moon, masculine / feminine, reason / emotion – to form a new self. The alchemist, upon reaching this stage, has achieved cosmological gnosis. The marriage of reason and emotion creates a higher intuitive state known as intelligence of the heart. The product of this conjunction is called the Lesser Stone or 'Child of the Philosopher' because, as in illumination, this is not true union. At this stage there remains a

subject / object dichotomy. The alchemist combines the elements of fire, water and air of the previous operations with the earth of conjunction to produce the quintessence (fifth element), which is more than a substance – it is the life force itself ³¹

5. Fermentation.

At this stage of the Great Work, after conjoining the opposites within to create a new personality, a new way of viewing the world, the alchemist completes the work in the 'below' or the personal, material realm. This completed work corresponds to the end of the first mystic life and the attainment of cosmological gnosis. In order to progress to the 'above' or transpersonal, spiritual realm, the alchemist needs to work, not with the four earthly elements but with the three supernal elements of mercury, sulphur and salt. As another example of how the alchemist used Nature to obtain transcendent insight, Paracelsus notes:

"The mysteries of the Great [Macrocosm] and the Little [Microcosm] World are distinguished only by the form in which they manifest themselves; for they are only one thing, one being. Heaven and earth has been created out of nothingness, but they are composed of three things – Mercury, Sulfur and Salt ... of these same three things the planets and all the stars consist; and not only the stars but all bodies that grow and are born of them. And just as the Great World is thus built upon the three primordial substances, so man – the Little World – was composed of the same substances. Thus man, too, is nothing but Mercury, Sulfur and Salt." 32

These three supernal elements, the *tria prima*, express archetypal principles representing spirit (mercury), soul (sulphur) and body (salt). Sulphur symbolises the masculine fiery principle, whereas mercury, the life spirit in all things, symbolises the feminine watery principle. "On the higher levels of the work, these substances work together to create the coagulated Salt

which is the Philosophers Stone."³³ As Jacob Boehme writes: "Everything that grows, lives and moves in this world is in Sulfur [Soul], and Mercury is its life [Spirit]. Salt [Body] is the corporeal essence of Mercury's hunger."³⁴

In order to continue his journey towards metaphysical gnosis the alchemist needs to raise the work into the 'above' or transpersonal realm. This is accomplished by yet another purification - this time of the self. Analogous to the dark night of the soul for the mystic, the alchemist at this point must die to himself in order to live at a higher level of spiritual existence. Again, solve et coagula. This death is called putrefaction or mortification. Just as the mystic has to endure this cloud of unknowing, the alchemist understands that this painful stage is a necessary step in the formation of the Greater Stone. "This long night comes to an end with the inspiration of spiritual power from Above that reanimates, energises and enlightens the blackened soul."35 This marks the end of the traditional nigredo phase. The new life and energy that is subsequently created is signaled by what the alchemists called the cauda pavonis, the peacock's tail, which represents the rebirth of the soul. At this stage the alchemist looks to the 'above' with intuitive love in an act of self surrender. He activates his true imagination, the Secret Fire within, in order to escape the dark night. Imagination, that organ of the soul, is the instrument that allows the alchemist " the use of ... intermediaries, symbols and images to gnostic ends, to penetrate the hieroglyph of nature, to put the theory of correspondence into active practice and to discover, to see, to know the mediating entities between the divine world and Nature."36

6. Distillation

Distillation, corresponding to the classic alchemical *albedo* or whitening stage, as well as the mystics' dark night, continues the work in the 'above.' Distillation, also known as sublimation, represents a higher usage of elemental

water - symbolising a final purification of the self in preparation for union with the Absolute. This higher level purification, critical for the attainment of metaphysical gnosis, helps separate the soul from the body in order to keep it from the distracting elements of the material world. If fermentation is an experience of the transcendent realm, then distillation is learning to work with the transcendental powers resulting from the union of the essences of the 'below' (personal realm) and the 'above' (transpersonal realm). As a chemical process, distillation is the repeated heating and condensing of a substance to purify it, to release its inner essence or spirit. On a psychological level, this repeated 'heating' and 'condensing' of the self is needed to ensure that no impurities are left over in the old self in the rebirthing of the transpersonal self.

7. Coagulation

The final operation in the *Magnum Opus*, the classic alchemical *rubedo* or reddening stage, culminates with the perfecting of the *prima materia* into the Greater or Philosopher's Stone; the permanent stone of higher consciousness. The coagulation of sulphur and mercury produces the salted body of the Stone. Just as in the unitive stage of the mystic way, the alchemist has transcended the subject / object dichotomy. The body has become spirit, the spirit body. The result for the alchemist and mystic alike is an utter transmutation, a completely new perfected being with a new way of seeing the world.

As Eliade writes, "Indeed, the *opus alchemicum* not only changes, perfects or redeems Nature, but also brings to perfection human existence ... In the perspective of the history of religions one can say that through alchemy man recovers his original perfection." ³⁷ With his 'perfected' consciousness the alchemist at last has attained, through his understanding of the material world of Nature, metaphysical gnosis.

The esoteric worldview, which constitutes the alchemist's form of thought, facilitates his use of living Nature as a means to transmutation. His ability to 'know' the secrets of the cosmos (cosmological gnosis) as he labours to perfect Nature on a physical level becomes for him a way of life – a psychospiritual journey through the operations of alchemy to the perfected nature of spiritual gold (metaphysical gnosis). The alchemist follows the path expressed in the Neoplatonic / alchemical maxim, "from the One, towards the One, by means of the One."

Like the alchemist, the mystic's form of thought becomes a way of life; the mystic way. Through purification of his senses – not in an attempt to deny the world (Nature), but in an attempt to see it more clearly – the mystic is able to see the world of change and flux for what it is: a manifestation of the One in the Many. The mystic, like the alchemist, uses his purified view of Nature (cosmological gnosis) as the foundation for union with a living Absolute (metaphysical gnosis). Underhill notes that the mystic uses "nature as the stuff of ontological perception, the medium whereby the self reaches out to the Absolute." 38

The two pathways to ontological change compared here demonstrate how in many ways the 'traditional' mystic and the 'spiritual' alchemist are convergent in their use of cosmological and metaphysical gnosis. This convergence is an example of the central role that gnosis plays in the esoteric tradition, and strengthens the academic argument that gnosis should be included in the demarcation of this field.

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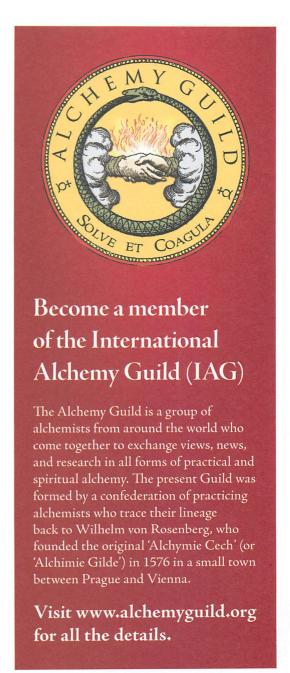
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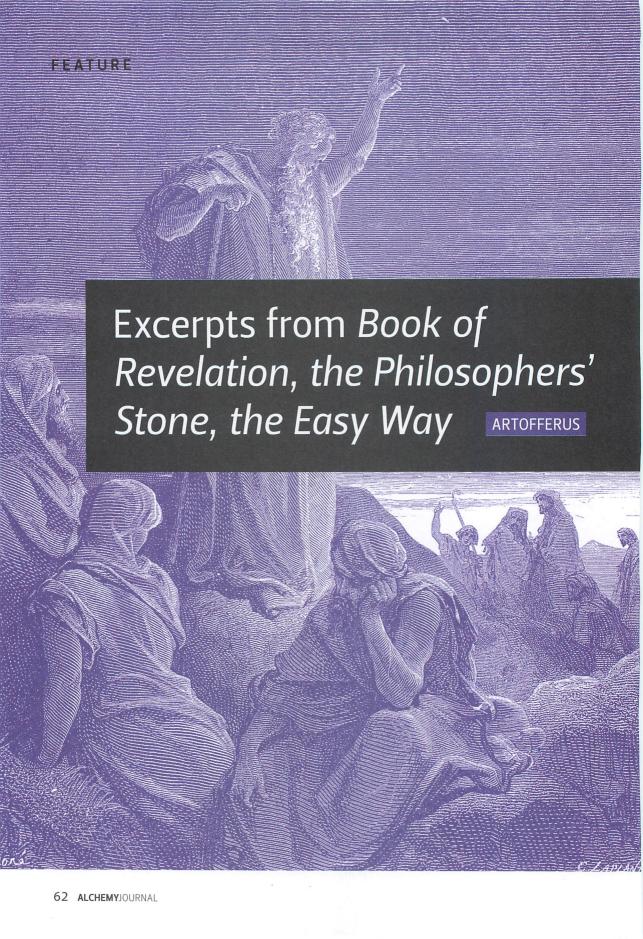
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ne year ago, I submitted seven extracts from my Book of Revelation, the Philoso-phers' Stone, the Easy Way, "carefully pulled like one's first front teeth, by the author, exclusively for the Alchemy Journal." However, when I saw the extracts in print in Vol. 9, No. 1 of the Alchemy Journal, it dawned on me that I could have given too much, too soon. In the book I gradually prepare the reader with tender love and care to digest and assimilate its highly controversial contents, bit by bit, bite by bite. But those excerpts could have been too large to swallow. Someone could have choked on them - even to death - meaning 'given up on Artofferus' who recklessly and selfishly dished them up, only to evoke such an irresistible curiosity that one just had to obtain a copy. If that was the case, I say, "I'm sorry!"

Also, let's face it, one claiming or even hinting at having made the Philosophers' Stone, and openly proclaiming this to the world - a world in which greed and lust for power reigns supreme must be out of his mind. But then I say that I feel sorry for anyone who assumes, judges and condemns as quickly as that, and if that's the case it would be better not to read my Book of Revelation; thus giving someone else a chance to read a copy, since the first print run is only 2,000.

This time though, I will be much more careful, because it involves the removal of two severely decayed wisdom teeth; the extraction somewhat risky because it is difficult to get a grip upon them, and they could break off anytime. One is in the mouth of 'religion,' the other in the mouth of 'science.' For centuries they have caused much pain. Would it be possible to clean out the cavities, fill them with ceramic cement, and maybe cover them with a crown? The tooth owner could then chew and taste truth much better, and 'devour' my Book of Revelation with vigour.



Excerpts (beginning on page 500; followed by excerpts from pages 501, 404-405. 407-415, 502, and lastly, page 16):

500: I presume that some readers would at first. for whatever reason, despise what I have written. It is impossible for me to know how the general public will receive this book - I believe that it will make an enormous impact. While 'devouring' ARTOFFERUS some readers might at first get a bitter taste in their mouth, but I hope that most may experience the sweetness of honey, like Ezekiel after he had swallowed the scroll given to him by an out-stretched hand.21

²¹ Ezekiel 2:8: "But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house: open your mouth, and eat what I give you." 9And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and, lo, a written scroll was in it: 10 and he spread it before me; and it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

Ezekiel 3:1: And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." 2So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3And he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it: and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

501: In the Bible's appendix THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, p. 16, we learn that EZEKIEL is the title of a book named after the principal character - a prophet of Israel in exile, who lived among the Jews taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar (c. 586 B.C.).

404: Ezekiel 18: The word of the LORD came to me again: 2"What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? 3As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. 4Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die."

Then follows a list of what in the eyes of the Lord is lawful and right. Then: "[if a man] "walks in my statutes, and is careful to observe my ordinances, he shall surely live, says the Lord GOD." Thereafter follow examples of bad sins; then: "He [who] has done all these abominable things; he shall not live; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself." [v. 13, last sentence] ...

Ezekiel 18:21: "But [now comes the most interesting bit] if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²²None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live. ²³Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?"

Verse 24 in a nutshell: When a righteous man turns to sin none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, and he shall die.

Verses 25-32 in the husk of a mustard seed: *turn, and live*.

405: What the Lord GOD uneasily pointed out via Ezekiel's mouth, or vice versa, is that (alchemical) change in polarity nullifies all sin. Secondly, that the Lord GOD needs sinners to HELP his beloved son acquire walking sticks, meaning legs; thirdly, that SIN - as is beauty and godliness - is in the eyes of the beholder; and lastly, that in the last TURN all is forgiven and forgotten ... And if anyone needs more conviction of 'Ezekiel' teaching alchemy here, then please read the beginning of his book, especially regarding his visions of God, and especially that of the four living creatures who came out of the midst of a great cloud with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually ... [Ezek 1:4-5]. These creatures had the form of men, but each had four faces, each had four wings, straight legs with feet like the sole of a calf's foot, and they sparkled like burnished bronze [vv. 6-7].

Ezekiel 1:8: Under their wings on their four

sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: 9Their wings touched one another; they went, every one straight forward, without turning as they went. 10 As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man [in front], the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle [at the back]. Verse 11 points out that each creature had two [upper] wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two [lower ones] covered their bodies. 12 And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. ¹³In the midst of [or Heb: And the likeness of] the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14 And the living creatures darted to and fro, like a flash of lightning.

407: Before the reader loses the plot of the lot, or vice versa:

The 4 living creatures had 4 faces, indicating the 4 elements: Lion = Fire, Ox = Earth, Eagle = Air, Man = Water.

That each creature had four wings emphasises that these four elements are not to be *corporally* sought after.¹⁶

¹⁶ 'Aureus,' or The Golden Tractate, Section I: "Understand ye then, O Sons of Wisdom, that the knowledge of the four elements of the ancient philosophers was not corporally or imprudently sought after ..."

Each creature (each one comprising the four elements) had a set of 4 wings, 2 left (Yin) wings and 2 right (Yang) wings, bringing the total number of wings in the elemental composition to 16 (8 Yin and 8 Yang).

Under their wings each four-faced creature had (two) human hands, i.e., one left (Yin) hand and one right (Yang) hand, bringing the number of hands in their total elemental make-up to 8. 'Human hands' hints at the involvement of manual activity.

One (upper) wing tip of one creature touched the (upper) wing tip of another, thus forming around the four four-faced creatures a 3-dimensional O, something like a cocoon, their fourfaced heads as one big dot in its centre. The two lower wings probably covered the front of the body to hide their nakedness, and the tips of those wings touched each other lowest down, thus forming another such O with 'the holy point' in its centre. And of course, together these Os form a 3-dimensional 8, sort of.

408: Ezekiel 1:13-14, alchemy-wise: In the midst of the fireplace, in the likeness of a furnace, there was something in the crucible that looked like burning coals. The matter looked alive; the 'elements' moved like torches, darting to and fro, glowing bright, like mythical salamanders enjoying their 'play of flames.' On the surface of the red-hot matter lights flashed, resembling lightning.

409: Additional comments by ... Artofferus: The composition in the crucible was complete; nothing more had to be added. The matter was fireproof within that range of heat, but still in the process of evening opposites, coinciding with digestion and maturation. — The flashes of light come from tin or lead solder particles, which upon penetration of Spirit glow brighter with excitement, then seem to ignite, as if lighting the heavy vapour above the matter like lightning.

Ezekiel then explains the mechanism of that same alchemical process by comparing elemental action with wheels. Each living creature's construction consisted of a wheel within a wheel, with the appearance like that of chrysolite. His 'story' of the wheels17 tells me that Ezekiel was an alchemist.

¹⁷ Ezekiel 1:15: Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them [Heb of their faces]. ¹⁶As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of a chrysolite;

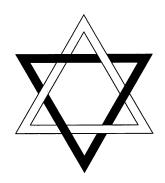


Tympanum of the Porch (12th century) of the Church of St. Trophime, Arles, France

and the four had the same likeness, their construction being as it were a wheel within a wheel. ¹⁷When they went, they went in any of their four directions [Gr Old Latin: Heb And the likeness of without turning as they went. ¹⁸The four wheels had rims and they had spokes [Heb on their four sides]; and their rims were full of eyes round about. 19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. 20Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

410: The rims of the wheels were full of eyes round about [Ezek 1:18] is a fitting description of Our precious Matter frozen in action, which can be observed even with the naked eye, but only when the glass has solidified.

Alchemist Ezekiel would have examined many samples of the molten mass in his red-hot crucible ... The samples could have been pieces of thin slabs of glass, poured onto a smooth flat stone or a sheet of metal. While being poured When this matter, known as the Philosophers' Stone, the Stone of the Wise, the bread of life, water of life, etc., etc., is ingested regularly, 'give us this day our daily bread,' the individual subtly turns into a member of God's race.



the hot, viscous glass rapidly solidifies in the air, producing straight rods, their thickness varying from that of a pencil to that of hair. Thick rods cool slower, and thus thicken at one end before reaching the tray, before solidification is complete. These rods could resemble straight legs with a foot; more often my rods looked like pearls. Such solidified glass is free of possible contamination from dipstick matter or from the pouring-tray.

411: Many samples Ezekiel would have taken with a dipstick or his stirring-rod, made of metal, even wood, thus learning the effect Subject matter has on 'rod-matter' at the same time.

The eyes in the rims of the wheels are spherical hollows, which in solidified form contain nothing. They vary in size from microscopically tiny to quite large, say about 3 mm in diameter. In clear, transparent glass these eyes show most magnificently, but they are also present in biscuit-type glass. In very hot molten glass the hollows contain Our Matter in the form of gas, also called vapour.

The Matter's temperature determines the degree of its activity; the higher the heat the smaller the eyes, the lower the heat the larger the eyes, for they are nothing but boiling-bubbles. Rapid cooling causes these bubbles to 'freeze' before they, with gas inside them, can retreat back into glass thus leaving a ring, which gives the impression of a wheel, its rim being the multitude of tiny, hollow spheres. They reflect

golden light in all directions, and make the yellow glass sparkle like polished bronze, dazzling bright in sunlight, with the appearance like that of chrysolite. When poured thinly onto a tray, the glass clearly shows wheels within wheels. Thick parts, taking longer to solidify, reveal larger 'boiling-bubble caves', but still show the 'whirl of wheels.'

412: In the Dry Way the glass produces similar gas bubbles, but this gas is more like heavy vapour. If the heat is much higher than m. of lead, the bubbles travel to the surface where they burst and release the vapour. However, the viscosity of hot glass also depends on its purity, and helper-salts mixed with it. These salts are the needful 'sinners,' which help to mature Our Subject from coloured biscuit to pure yellow glass, with or without bubbles. This maturation is slow in a large crucible when not surrounded by an even heat, and also because its maturation first occurs in the most favourable areas, where the necessary helpers are at hand and the heat more suitable. In such a situation, pure yellow glass - Revelation's 'new Jerusalem' - forms amongst impure biscuit, which then looks as if having all colours of the rainbow.

Even during constant external heat, the internal heat within the crucible's contents fluctuates in localised areas, since the change of solid matter into this *heavy vapour* involves absorbing heat by the glass in order to convert it. Similarly, to convert this 'heavenly vapour' into

'cave crystals' involves minute cooling.

Imagine Ezekiel seeing a sample of this, and how he must have struggled, trying to describe it. Moreover, when a large 'G' bubble remains stationary in low heat, the gas produces clusters of tiny needle-like crystals on the inner wall of the bubble, growing all around, as it were in a cave. These cave crystals keep growing in length and thickness. The spherical caves get larger, not only by expansion of the gas in the bubbles, but also as a result of cave gas feeding on cave matter. In such manner a cave can produce a mighty crystal, which glitters 'like sapphire,' yet also showing rainbow colours of surrounding biscuit glass.

413: Ezekiel describes this result in 1:22-28. I will expound only a little on what is most relevant to the Great Work. The diligent reader could test his understanding on the rest of the text. But note for instance, that crystal in verse 22 carries footnote g, Gk: Heb awesome crystal. And when that crystal took form out of G-gas, Ezekiel likened this to the formation of a firmament - the gas gaining firmness, first resembling a throne, then a human form.

Ezekiel 1:25: And there came a voice from above the firmament over their heads; when they [the elements] stood still, they let down their wings. [The volatile became fixed].

Verse 26: And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire [Heb lapis lazuli]; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form. 27 And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him [it!]. 28Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.

Such was the appearance of the likeness of the

glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking. [Last part of verse 28].

Ezekiel realised that what he saw was the embodiment of the Son of God, Holy Stone, which in the Christian tradition, since 'A.D.' and a little before that, became personified as Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world and mankind, who supposedly would turn Satan's Paradise into God's Kingdom on Earth.

414: Ezekiel's paradisiacal matter, the circumvallated 'Holy Park,' where Holy CAVE-crystals 'park' the alchemist's gold of the wise, the Holy Ark holding all frequencies of life and all matter, the ALL in ONE 'X-Mass,' that, dear reader, is the Holy Place, the destination of our pilgrimage. It is there, in that exclusive palace, where God SAVES all what is essential to reconstruct itself in solid form 'in the likeness' of glass, but which inwardly equals God's Son's flesh. When this matter, known as the Philosophers' Stone, the Stone of the Wise, the bread of life, water of life, etc., etc., is ingested regularly, 'give us this day our daily bread,' the individual subtly turns into a member of God's race.

Ezekiel 27:12 hints at what ingredients had been used; silver, iron, tin, and lead, was exchanged for Ezekiel's wares. The Stone had also made him wealthy.

Ezekiel 4:1 reads: "And you, O son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and portray upon it a city, even Jerusalem; 2 and put siegeworks against it [etc.]. 3And take an iron plate, and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it [watch it carefully while feeding it with iron]. This is a sign for the house of Israel." - A brick may have served as a pouring tray, or hinted at ingredients to fix 'Jerusalem glass.'

415: Iron is of course not only THE master of siege, but is also the great protector, the Shield of (king) David, also known as the Star of David, and

Magen David, the hexagram – a symbol of Judaism, which appears as a *sign* on the Israeli flag.

Also note that another meaning of *siege*, absolutely obsolete, is a *seat*, and a *seat of rule*, for instance, as in **Siege Perilous**, a seat at King Arthur's Round Table for the knight destined to find the Holy Grail and fatal for any other occupant.

Ezekiel, starting at 4:4, then talks about changes in polarity Our Matter must undergo in terms of 'left side' and 'right side,' and that this turning is to be continued till the days of siege have passed, i.e. till the matter has evened, put in cords, so that you [personified matter] cannot turn from one side to the other ... [v. 8]. He thus teaches the very essence of Hermetic Science, how to elaborate the Stone: turning the matter till all is evened and fixed.

502: When the author of EZEKIEL had learned how to make the Stone he got overjoyed and wanted to share it with his people, 'Israel,' so he wrote his manuscript under the pseudonym Ezekiel – with great caution, because the nature of man had not changed since Adam and Eve. He cleverly invented the scroll story, ate the scroll before anyone else could see it, and its presumed

text became the major part of his Book, written to teach alchemy, protected by, "Thus says the LORD God."

16: Note **D**: Time and money prevented setting up the **Artofferus Foundation**. The remaining option was to make the book available through a business, **Artofferus Books**. Book sales will make the Foundation a reality.

If this clean-up of the two molars – sorry, wisdom teeth – was a little painful, not having used an 'anaesthetic' as done in the book, to the readers of the *Alchemy Journal* I say, "I'm not sorry!" \triangle

ARTOFFERUS says that in childhood, his 10 year older brother (also his godfather) George, awakened a keen interest in Nature. While walking through fields, parks, and botanical herb gardens in and around Antwerp, George told of their common names, and explained why they were so named. This involved 'dissection' and the engagement of all five senses. This led Artofferus to alchemy, and eventually, the Philosophers' Stone. His Book of Revelation, the Philosophers' Stone, the Easy Way (co-edited by Paul Hardacre) is available from www.artofferusbooks.com



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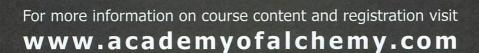
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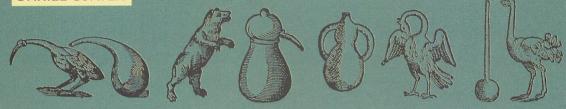
"I am really impressed with Almine and the integrity of her revelations. My respect for her is immense and I hope that others will find as much value in her teachings as I have."

Dr. Fred Bell, former NASA Scientist



Modern_ Renditions of Ancient Apparati

DANIEL COATEN



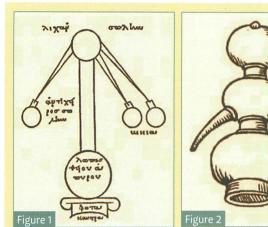
The development and use of modernised versions of three the most famous apparati associated with practical alchemy namely the tribikos, pelican and kerotakis - will be discussed here. All of these apparati are generally attributed to the great Alexandrian alchemist known as Mary the Prophetess. 123

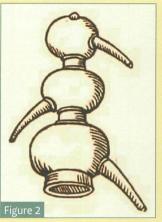
I first became interested in these pieces many years ago when I started my studies in practical or laboratory alchemy. After reading about these apparati in various texts, I quickly became eager to try out the equipment for myself. However, I was dismayed to find that they were not easily available readymade, if at all. I therefore decided to develop my own working versions, by combining research that I had done on the original pieces with current knowledge and techniques as applied to the manufacture of modern scientific glassware (such as the calculation of flow rates and vapour pressures of possible substances being worked with in these vessels, as well as the use of 3.3 borosilicate glass). This fusion of ancient and modern resulted in apparati that were robust, efficient, easy to maintain / clean, and which managed to stay true to the spirit of the original designs.

My first adaptation was the development of a specialised still based upon the simple alembic, such as those that have been used for centuries by alchemists worldwide in their laboratory work. This led to the formation of a unique alembic still head which was designed to be compact, yet efficient at condensing and collecting distilled vapours.

I then looked towards the original design of Mary's dibikos and tribikos stills which were said to have been comprised of a single still head with two or three delivery spouts or solens4 (see Figure 1). I noted that by the 17th century, similar designs were seen which featured multiple still heads stacked one upon another (see Figure 2), which were used to separate and collect different fractions.

From this single alembic a stackable, multiheaded version was then produced which not only reflected the dibikos / tribikos and 17th century designs, but also employed the use of interchangeable ground glass joints (see Figure 3). The result was a still which allowed the use of several alembics of descending size (with corresponding receivers) at once, in order to more effectively "(separate) the subtle from the gross," as stated in the Emerald Tablet.5









With the addition of an extra head (making four heads in total), it was decided that the unit be called a tetrabikos in honour of Mary the Prophetess and her generous contributions to the Great Art (see Figure 4). Not only was it now possible to simultaneously distil a liquid into three separate fractions (possibly with the intent that each of these fractions could symbolise the separation into the three essentials of philosophical sulphur, mercury, and salt), but also into four such fractions (which could symbolise the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire). In essence, each of the alembic arms could be rotated in its socket so that collection of fractions could be performed as orientated to any direction or, indeed, any significant astrological alignments that may be poignant to the particular operation at hand. In the case of the latter, it was also possible to then carefully rotate each arm without having to move the main body of the still, in order to track the movements of these celestial bodies as they slowly shifted through time and space.

At lower temperatures the system was used as a sealed unit. If warmer temperatures were required, a specially designed bellowed air condenser (and insert) was used to allow operations to be conducted without the need for a water source for cooling (see Figure 5), such as could Figure 1: The three-armed still of Mary the Jewess (reproduced from a 10th-11th century manuscript (299) in Saint Mark's, Venice, in Collections des Anciens Alchimistes Grec by Marcellin Berthelot, Paris)

Figure 2: Alembic with three delivery tubes (from Alchymia by Andreas Libavius. 1606)

Figure 3: The tetrabikos

Figure 4: The four alembics of the tetrabikos

Figure 5: Bellowed air condenser with insert









Figure 6: The pelican (from De Destillatione, Libri IX by Giovanbattista della Porta, 1609) Figure 7: The pelican adaptor with alembic

Figure 8: The pelican adaptor

be achieved via the use of a sand bath (balneum arena)6 or water bath / double boiler7 (balneum marie)8 - a technique which has also been attributed to Mary the Prophetess.9 10 11 However, to distil at higher temperatures a cold finger adaptor and/or a reflux condenser was used to help avoid excessive escape of vapour out of the system.

The distillate fractions obtained from using this still were then either used on their own for specific alchemical / therapeutic practice, or were combined with other alchemical substances to help balance them energetically (i.e. water of water was used in the extraction of capsicum to help balance the amount of fire present in the final product). Sometimes fractions were also re-combined with each other (such as in the alchemical distillation of water as discussed in Aurea Catena Homeri or The Golden Chain of Homer,12 or the 4x3 distillation of spagyric waters), in order to produce products that are greatly potentised energetically.

I have used this still in both the tribikos and tetrabikos configuration for a variation on the 4x3 distillation of water (see the Alchemical distillation of water schematic) using snow, rain and sea water, as well as for the alchemical separation of hydrosols.

For example, in the first part of the 4x3x4 distillation, I orientate the alembic arms to incorporate the corresponding four elements at each of the four compass points as associated in accordance to the Native American tradition (i.e. the top alembic collects the most volatile fire of water in the south, the alembic under that collects the air of water in the east, the next alembic collects the water of water in the west, and the final or bottom alembic collects the least volatile earth of water in the north).

My next adaptation focused upon the pelican retort. This apparatus was specifically designed for the continual evaporation and condensation of vapours within an enclosed vessel. The depiction of the mythical pelican as it pecked at its own chest in order to feed its young on its blood (see Figure 6) was seen as the philosophical act of sacrificing the essence of the material worked with13 14 (or, indeed, the practitioner's own essence). It was symbolic of continual alchemical death and rebirth resulting in an acceleration of evolution of the given material towards achieving its full potential in perfection. This continual circulation of a liquid over a solid is referred to as pelicanisation.15

This piece was developed as an adaptor, rather than an apparatus in its own right. This was done so that the material to be worked on could be easily introduced and removed from the set-up, and so that a variety of boiling vessel sizes could be employed. Developing the apparatus in this way also allows for the option of

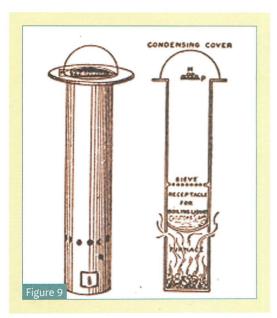


Figure 9: Long form of kerotakis, as restored by F. Sherwood Taylor (from the second edition of Alchemy by E.J. Holmyard, 1968)

using the apparatus in conjunction with other pieces of glassware (such as the tetrabikos, as described above) via ground glass joints adaptors (see Figure 7).

A specially designed internal condensing trap was incorporated, situated at the centre of the adaptor, which allows the rising vapour to cool slightly before being twisted into a vortex as it moved up the central column. When the vapour reaches the 'mushroom' head of the pelican, it expands and condenses on the inside of the vessel before draining down either one of the side arms leading to the trap, before returning back to its source. Each of these arms innovates at a slightly different angle / height from / on the central column in order to avoid the possibility of a gas trap forming at this point, which would severely impair the circulatory process. Each of these arms also features a small rounded area at the elbow, designed to increase the surface area of the drainage without having to overextend the length of the arms, allowing for a more compact design (see Figure 8).

I have used this adaptor in both the fermentation and coagulation stages of alchemical laboratory work. These operations are paramount to the practical alchemist to firstly help the starting material worked on to carefully 'open' and release its philosophical mercury, and then to encourage the products of the coagulation stage to ripen to final maturity (such as in the final stages of spagyric tincture and essence production).

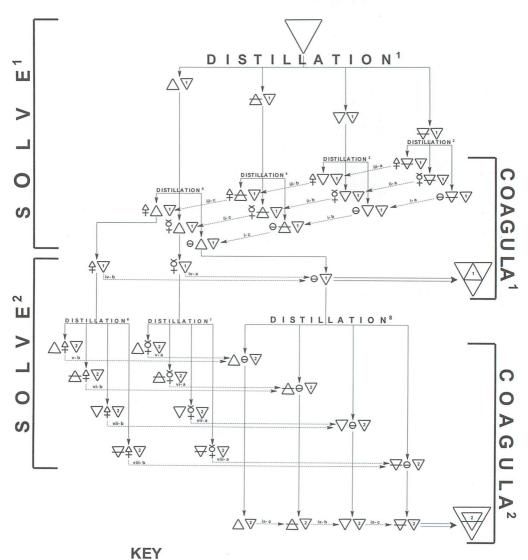
Like the tetrabikos, this adaptor was sealed when a minimal amount of heat was used. Alternatively, the bellows air condenser or cold finger and/or reflux condenser was added if higher temperatures were needed.

Traditionally the kerotakis (see Figure 9) was primarily associated with use in the mineral / metal work16 and, as such, was made of tough materials so as to withstand the higher temperatures commonly used. However, I personally prefer to work with glass equipment in the laboratory, which is why I decided to design a variation on the kerotakis using borosilicate glass. Also, as most of the focus of my alchemical work at this time has been within the plant kingdom, rather than with metals / minerals, I saw the potential of using this apparatus to help in the coagula part of making a Plant Stone and spagyric essences.

The process applied consisted of the following three phases: the copulation phase (reuniting of the fixed and volatile philosophical sulphur); the revivification phase (enlivening the philosophical salt with philosophical mercury); and the conjunction stage (the penultimate reunion of all three essentials to obtain the quintessence). I will discuss these phases further below.

Again, I decided to construct this apparatus in several pieces, using ground glass joints for ease of use and attachment to various sized boiling flasks. I also added a flat flange joint to the main body which enabled the use of a filter tube fitted with a glass sintered disc and two vapour holes. This was capped off with a slightly convex shaped lid which helped with protecting the salt

OF WATER: 4 x 3 (x 4)



= Philosophical Fire

= Philosophical Air

= Philosophical Water

= Philosophical Earth

→ = Philosophical M ercury
→ = Philosophical Sulphur

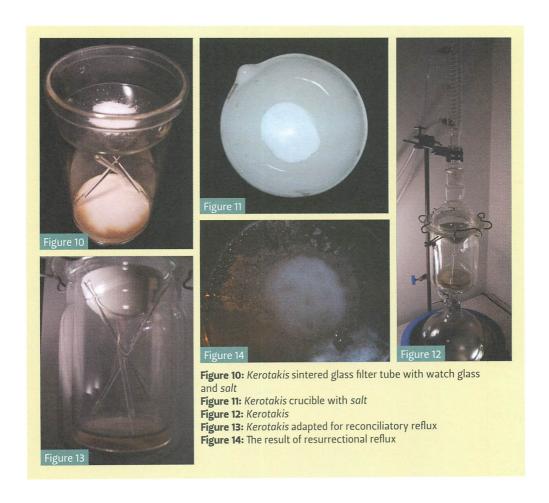
⊖ = Philosophical Salt

DISTILLATION 1-8 = Fractional distillation

= Recombination - follow in sequence i.e i - ix (a - b/c)

= Waters of 4x3alchemical distillation

waters of 4x3x4 alchemical distillation

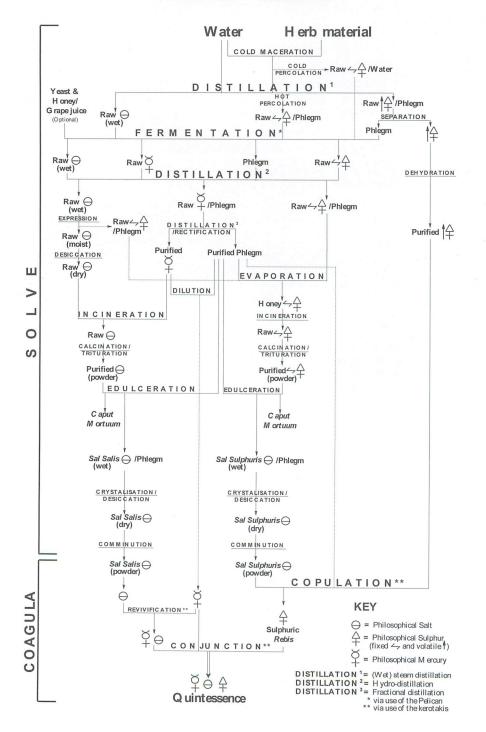


from getting flooded by condensing vapour (see Figure 10). Into this was placed a ceramic crucible (or shallow watch glass) supported on 3 inter-crossed glass rods. This crucible / watch glass was used to hold the salt which was to accept the vapours of the mercury (see Figure 11). When the lid of the main body was sealed (using a metal spring clip), a reflux condenser (in this case a Graham coil) was then attached, which helped to stop the precious vapours from escaping (see Figure 12).

A variation on this set-up was then used in the case of conjoining the dual aspects of sulphur (copulation phase, discussed below). Here another watch glass containing the volatile sulphur was placed inside the filter tube which sat directly upon the sintered disc (see Figure 13). The glass supports and crucible were then balanced on the top of this.

In the case of the copulation phase, the sal sulphuris was placed in the crucible. Purified phlegm (obtained from the fermentation and distillation stages) was gently heated in the lower chamber (boiler), and the steam produced helped to vaporise and transport the mist of the volatile sulphur up inside the main body of the kerotakis. Here the two aspects were reunited as the fixed sulphur delicately assimilates the volatile sulphur (i.e. "combining within itself the powers of both the above and the below,"17 as it says in the Emerald Tablet), forming a type of sulphuric rebis* in a process I have called reconciliatory

PLANT STONE



reflux. This substance is then removed and saved for the final stage, and the equipment is cleaned in preparation for the following phase.

Next, in the revivification phase, the *sal salis* was placed in the receiving crucible and a mixture of *mercury* and purified *phlegm* was gently heated in the boiler. The *mercury* then travelled through the apparatus to meet with and reawaken the *salt* – a process that I have named resurrectional reflux (see Figure 14).

Then finally, in the conjunction stage, the *kerotakis* was opened and the *sulphuric rebis* was carefully mixed with the now revived *sal salis*. The *kerotakis* was then re-closed and the process continued in order to allow the three essentials to combine and coagulate fully under a warmed mist of *mercury*. This process I call resuscitative reflux.

By following the above process the artist can be seen to be adhering to the following wise words which the ancients would say: "the Salt is first enlivened and then ensouled." 18

So far I have found the use of this apparatus to be extremely powerful in the process of forming a Plant Stone (see the Plant Stone schematic). Here the fixed (i.e *sal sulphuris* and *sal salis*) is allowed to bathe in the vapours of the volatile, and gently absorb their warmed essences in their own time (rather than being forced to conjoin via the crude imbibing of cold droplets).

I feel that these conditions are a lot more conducive to the formation of delicate substances, as they help to provide an ideal environment for the intimate processes to take place. Essentially they allow the principles to interact by themselves with minimal direct contact with the artist (almost in womb-like conditions – warm, moist and protected). In other words, the alchemist could be seen as merely being a facilitator in the process (at least in the physical sense), even though he or she may be deeply entwined with these substances on an energetic / spiritual level, through the powerful focus of their intent.

I have also found that the processes conducted within the *kerotakis* may also be further enhanced through the use of a vacuum. Allowing the processes to be performed with the minimal use of heat provides an even more gentle and subtle environment for the conclave of the three essentials to take place. Other experiments that I have performed with this apparatus include the production of deliquesced *salt waters* (such as a type of *angel water* produced from the *salt of tartar* – potassium carbonate).¹⁹

After first being charged with the Secret Fire from the moisture of the air, the *salt* is slowly re-crystallised and then used to pass on this *fire* to other *waters* (such as hydrosols) via the use of the *kerotakis*. These *waters* were then separated from the *salt* during vacuum distillation and the *salt* was saved for reuse.

*The term *rebis* traditionally refers to the conjoining of philosophical *sulphur* (masculine aspect) with philosophical *mercury* (female aspect), thus creating a powerful alchemical hermaphroditic archetype. This relationship is critical as it is what makes the transformative processes possible; processes essential to the effective practice of this Art.²⁰ Therefore, this term was chosen to be applied here, as it too symbolised the merging of the male and female aspects (i.e. the fixed and the volatile) to create a symbiosis between the subtle, opposing energies of philosophical *sulphur*. \triangle

¹ Holmyard, E.J. *Alchemy* (second edition). Penguin Books: Middlesex, 1968: 48.

² Hauck, D.W. The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation. Penguin Putnam Inc.: New York. NY, 1999: 253.

³ Alchemy Home Study Program. *Module 1: Alchemistic Philosophy* (Revision 5). Flamel College, 2006: 16.

⁴ Holmyard, E.J. *Alchemy* (second edition). Penguin Books: Middlesex, 1968: 48-49.

⁵ Hauck, D.W. The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation. Penguin Putnam Inc.: New

York, NY, 1999: 45.

6 Bartlett, R.A. Real Alchemy: A Primer of Practical Alchemy. Quinquangle Press, 2006: 52.

7 Hauck, D.W. The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation. Penguin Putnam Inc.: New York, NY, 1999: 195-196.

8 Bartlett, R.A. Real Alchemy: A Primer of Practical Alchemy. Quinquangle Press, 2006: 52.

9 Ibid.

10 Alchemy Home Study Program. Module 1: Alchemistic Philosophy (Revision 5). Flamel College, 2006: 16. 11 Ibid: 37.

12 Nintzel, H. (complier). Aurea Catena Homeri or The Golden Chain of Homer. Restoration of Alchemical Manuscripts Society, 1978: 36-38.

13 Hauck, D.W. The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation. Penguin Putnam Inc.: New York. NY, 1999: 252-253.

14 Hauck, D.W. Sorcerer's Stone. Citadel Press: New York, NY, 2004: 198.

15 Ibid: 253.

16 Holmyard, E.J. Alchemy (second edition). Penguin Books: Middlesex, 1968: 49.

17 Hauck, D.W. The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation. Penguin Putnam Inc.: New York. NY, 1999: 45.

18 Junius, M.M. The Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy: An Herbalist's Guide to Preparing Medical Essences, Tinctures, and Elixirs. Healing Arts Press, 1993: 153.

19 Bartlett, R.A. Real Alchemy: A Primer of Practical

Alchemy, Quinquangle Press, 2006: 90. 20 Hauck, Dennis William. The Complete Idiot's Guide to Alchemy. Alpha Books, 2008: 99.

DANIEL COATEN is a practicing alchemist and member of the International Alchemy Guild. He is also a qualified and experienced Western medical herbalist and lecturer who has a passion for herbal pharmacy / extraction research and botanical alchemy. In 2007 he founded Elixir Herbal Alchemical Laboratories (designing and supplying modern versions of traditional alchemical laboratory equipment in borosilicate glass), and in 2008 he also founded Alkemistinn (formulating and producing natural and organic skin care products made following alchemical principles) both of which are now based in Iceland. He is an author of Making your own essential oils and skin-care products, published by Low Impact Living Initiative (in the UK), and has also produced and taught workshops in the UK on the small scale production of essential oil, herbal distillates and a variety of natural skin care products. His published articles are in In Essence (journal for the International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists) and the International Journal of Clinical Aromatherapy. Daniel's ethos is 'self sufficiency' and he enjoys nothing more than being able to connect with and follow the process of botanical alchemy from seed to final product, witnessing the metamorphic magic that is plant medicine making! For further information, visit his websites: www.elixirherbal.com and www.alkemistinn.is

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Muse

Paracelsus' Burial Place in San Sebastian Church at Salzburg, Austria

The last paragraph reads:

Here is buried Philippus Theophrastus the distinguished doctor of medicine, who through wonderful art healed Malignant Wounds, Leprosy, Gout, Dropsy, and other incurable disease of the body, and who gave his possessions for distribution among the poor. In the year 1541 on the 24th day of September he exchanged death for life.

Translation from another grave in the same church:

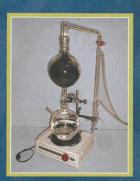
Age is the price of virtue;
Therefore this pious old man lived
Long above eighty years.
The woman, who loses her husband.
The brotherhouse, where he ruled,
Deplore his bier.
No herb helped against his passing.
The physician must, like everyone,
die.

He put the brotherhouse as inheritor,
Only his soul he willed to God,
But dear reader, take heed,
Often, after this life's end,
The physician himself is a patient,
Therefore make prayer your
medicine.

- 1777 A

From page 407 of *Alchemical Laboratory Bulletins*, 1st Quarter, 1968, No. 34. Translated by Frater Albertus Spagyricus. First published by Paracelsus Research Society.





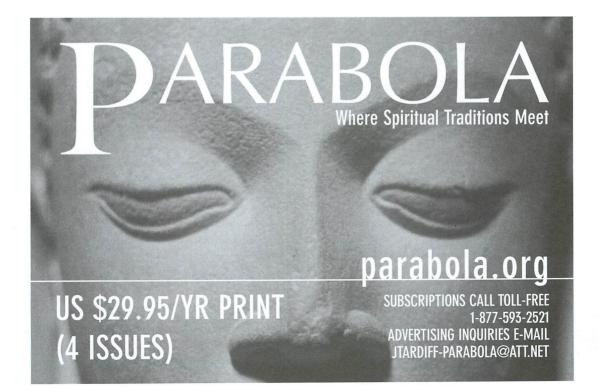
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Reviews

17th century multimedia, precursor to punk Andrew Kettle

Rachel Platt and Emily van Evera (sopranos), Rufus Müller (tenor), Richard Wistreich (bass and director), and Joscelyn Godwin (music editor and producer)

Atalanta Fugiens Claudio Records, £13.99 (UK) CD, 72 minutes

entle reader, I report that a most agreeable evening was enjoyed last month, August 1617, in the Hermetic academy of Rudolph II's court.

Michael Maier, Count of the Imperial Consistory, Doctor of Medicine, Knight Exemptus, formerly Imperial Physician, etc. aroused the more spiritual senses of intellect, sight and hearing with the presentation of his recently published work, Atalanta Fugiens, hoc est Emblemata nova de secretis Naturae Chymica, printed at the expense of the generous Oppenheim publisher, Johann Theodor de Bry.

Just as Timotheus the Milesian inspired Alexander the Great to war with the Phryian mode, Maier has celebrated the pinnacle of the present alchemical age with a most intriguing work built of 50 emblems, epigrams and canons for entertainment and, importantly, for reflection upon the Great Work.

As any educated person could be expected to sing a line of music, as parties of three we put our senses to the task of a play similar to the rounds sung by children and a parole conversation game: each with an Atalanta Fugiens book in hand, the emblem was considered, the poem recited, the fugue sung by our merry group at which time the conversation erupted as to the significance of the fugue, emblem and epigram. President Jean d'Espagnet praised the work of being ample lucidity to reveal the most hidden secrets in the Great Work! Maier not only invites the participants to contemplate the entire alchemical process but the infinite dynamics on Nature.

Or so the original impact and enjoyment of Atalanta Fugiens can be imagined ...

Many years have passed; retrospectively the beloved Atalanta Fugiens was one of the first multimedia performances and remains triumphant in the arena, having been challenged by few rivals. The 1998 Angel Magick by John Harle or Mozart's 1791 Masonic The Magic Flute spring to mind - however, they are opera.

Atalanta Fugiens is an obligatory inclusion at any alchemical musical recital, as witnessed at the 2006 International Conference on the History of Alchemy and Chymistry, Philadelphia. The conference commenced with a performance of the early music ensemble, Arcanum, whose programme included Henry Purcell, Jacques Hotteterre, Georg Friedrich, Handel's incidental music, a unique performance of part of the 1694 Théâtre italien play Les Souffleurs, ou La pierre philosophale d'Arlequin, and three canons from Michael Maier's Atalanta Fugiens.

Until recently, few modern recordings of Atalanta Fugiens have been available. A 78 rpm recording was made in 1935 of a performance by Saint Andrew's Choir, London, of fugues 2, 27, 18, and 45. In 1989 Phanes Press published a translation anew from Latin into English by Joscelyn Godwin as the Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourcework #22. This edition importantly included the transcribed modern notation sheet music. The purchase price of the book included the cost of a 90 minute, audiophile quality, cassette tape of the first ever complete recording of

the fugues, directed by Richard Wistreich and produced by Joscelyn Godwin. It was one of my first purchases in the field of alchemy and I hurriedly posted a perforated reply card bound in the rear of the book. The recording has accompanied me throughout my near two decades of alchemical studies.

Today, the Circle Bookshop (the occult bookshop in Brisbane where I originally purchased my first copy of Atalanta Fugiens) has long since closed, and my cassette tape is now deteriorated - in fact, a cassette player is no longer a com-

ponent of the stereo unit. So it is with great pleasure and excitement that a CD of the private recording session at the small church of Saint Margaret's, Putney, of January 1986 and by the same performers has been released by UK-based Claudio Records Ltd. It has been a great tragedy that it has taken close to twenty years for this adored recording to

be released in the modern digital format including .mp3 on itunes and Amazon, so it with a fond heart that I rejoice! In this incarnation Adam McLean appears as the hand colourist of the forty-fifth emblem engraving gracing the CD cover, with the record label's website connecting many links to his monumental work.

The recording's 72 minute duration of the angelic voices of Rachel Platt and Emily van Evera (sopranos), Rufus Müller (tenor) and Richard Wistreich (bass and director) recall years of lulling my children to sleep both in domestic bedrooms and long distance car travel, riding tour bicycles on dreamy landscape adventures with the fugues cassette playing. However, it has been in the laboratory pursuits of the double red lion that Atalanta and Hippomenes are transformed to at the conclusion of the fugues that the recording is most beneficial. For it is not

only in recreational pursuits that this recording can be enjoyed, but also during the deeper meditative voyages most certainly assisted by the expansive length of the soundtrack.

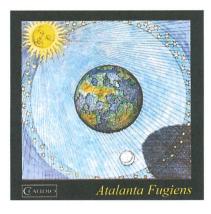
This certainly is a unique achievement for Atalanta Fugiens: not having been dismembered and presented as part of a collection of delightful but dissected compositions as works frequently are in live programs or compilation albums. In its entirety, from start to finish as the work was intended, the composition, whilst superficially appearing monotonous in effect, awakens the

> deep contemplation of the subject without doubt supported by the professional voices of an early music group of the highest calibre.

> As it is a recording label release it is without the accompanying emblem book, presumably the publisher considers that this printed material can be easily sourced elsewhere,

for the emblems are what make Atalanta Fugiens best known. Whilst the work is commonly known to be supplemented by music, probably few have sung it, for few educated people in present day could be expected to sing a line of music. Certainly this musical release will balance the injustice of the listening senses of Atalanta Fugiens. Prospectively this recording may contribute to the musical composition becoming better known, inspire early music groups to include the compositions in their repertoire, arouse collectives of artesans to consider the Great Work as a basis for new work, or at least to redress the modern historical blindness that multimedia is a new invention.

In this recording the many errors initially made by Maier and misprints by the original publisher have been treated lightly by Joscelyn Godwin (music editor and producer) in order to



retain the inspiration of the work, and acknowledgements are given for the generous gift from Mr. J.J. Ozaniec and a grant from the Colgate University Research Council that made the recording possible.

Until the emblem book, resembling the Book of God in which all the secrets of Nature are written, and the Claudio Records recording are united, the visible and 'not immediately comprehendible' symbolism of the complete work remain hidden. Much symbolism is contained within the notation represented by diminutions, inversions, retrograde movements, mirror-canons, collages of styles, and melodic inventions.

It is the three parts (Atalanta fugiens, Hippomenes sequens and Pommum morans) frequently changing their levels in respect to each other that is one of the most intriguing aspects of the work. A naïve listen may approach the composition presuming that three vocalists would sing the separate characters, at the very least presuming a female voice for Atalanta and a male voice for Hippomenes. However, as Maier has shifted each character through a range from soprano to bass for symbolic reasons, it would take three extraordinary singers to perform the fugues whilst remaining in character, if it was at all possible. With this consideration, the listener should be reminded that the Claudio Records recording has pursued an approach that the singers remain in their vocal range and vocalise whichever character that is written for that voice. This method results in a sexual confusion of the characters, in that a male voice at times vocalises Atalanta, and vice versa for Hippomenes. It is a small issue with the work, but worthy of mention for this topic alone is privital for analysis of Atalanta Fugiens symbolism.

Some fugues initially appear rough and irregular, leading some to consider the work amateur; yet in the light of the alchemical process these rough and irregular fugues portray Maier's uncompromising design to symbolise the Great Work – its tensions and processes – at the expense

of musical rules. Even harmony is unavoidably compromised when disharmony is denoted in the Work, in this respect Maier preceeds punk by several centuries.

In a modern context, Atalanta Fugiens would be considered the third episode in the tale; the two preceding instalments of the saga being Hippomenes obtaining the golden apples and Atalanta slaying all previous suitors. It is a deceptive play with the title that camouflages Atalanta Fugiens as the story of Pommum morans in the legend. Christian symbolism, in the use of the Gregorian Mass of the Christe eleison utilised in the voice of Pommum morans, within the fugues' cantus firmus structure reinforces its central character role, whilst benefiting from the pleasure of a ritual thrice repetition.

The contrast in *Atalanta Fugiens* – between the mind's creation of the narrative detail required for the construction of a myth, and the difficulty of appreciating the naked, simple truth of Nature and the alchemical process – is genius. In truth the narrative detail must be shed to appreciate Maier's guidance, condensed and purified. To this end, the meditational space created by uniting the Claudio Records recording with the emblem book empowers the listener to penetrate the work.

Maier implores his cohorts to allow reason to search out the emblems' secret signs, least of which conversation amongst peers was envisaged as part of the experience. To this end, I encourage the reader to consider the addition of both the in-depth 'Introduction' by Hildemarie Streich in the 1989 Phanes Press edition, and Stanislas Klossowski de Rola's comments on the emblems in his 1988 The Golden Game: Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century, as essential companions to the appreciation of Claudio Records' release of Atalanta Fugiens.

Above all, the work's true value is to tell the truth of Unity through Love: all three parts unify to become one. The alchemical trinity: winged mercury and fiery sulphur with the physical salt

of the divine spark of Love actualised; Atalanta fugiens and Hippomenes sequens with Pommum morans binding them; the voices of Rachel Platt and Emily Van Evera (sopranos), Rufus Müller (tenor) and Richard Wistreich (bass and director) uniting to evoke the Stone. Just as the epigram, emblems and fugues overlap and entwine. so too the singing voice unites the soul and spirit with the material world body.

Atalanta Fugiens should be considered as a product of a society in celebration at the pinnacle of its scientific pursuit, commemorating its achievements and rejoicing whilst protecting a shared secret symbolism with contemporaries. It is not necessarily a work conceived for the listener to approach looking only for insight and learning into alchemical wisdom, but rather a commemoration of the alchemical community! The Magnalia Nature of 1680 stated that few educated men would not have either seen the transmutation of metals or at least heard of witnesses ... may Claudio Records' release of Atalanta Fugiens be a catalyst for further celebration of a modern appreciation of new chemical secrets of Nature.

So, gentle reader, I report that a most agreeable evening was enjoyed (sadly alone) last

month, August 2009, in my domestic laboratory-study immersed in a rapturous, digital recording of Michael Maier's Atalanta Fleeing that is, New Chemical Emblems of the Secrets of Nature. accompanied by the gentle bubbling of a Clevenger apparatus whilst reading the epigrams in my battered Phanes Press copy, perusing the printed emblems and Stanislas Klossowski de Rola's comments in his The Golden Game: Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century, and emailing colleagues in the Art.

The distant past of the Alchemical Golden Age seemed long ago. For a moment I could imagine, seated amongst friends in the Art, celebrating the heights of Nature's insights exposed to my senses, whilst listening to Claudio Records' Atalanta Fugiens. A

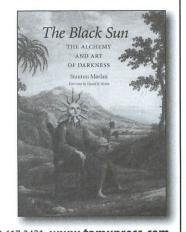
ANDREW KETTLE is a mature age undergraduate applied science student at the Queensland University of Technology, Australia; pursuing a major in biochemistry and biotechnology. Andrew completed his first cycle of alchemical studies (Prima to Tertia) at the Paracelsus College, Australia, between 2001 and 2005, yet it wasn't until the birth of two children, Hannah and George, that he and his partner, Helen, achieved their Great Work in parenthood!

THE BLACK SUN

The Alchemy and Art of Darkness STANTON MARLAN FOREWORD BY DAVID H. ROSEN

"If you want to learn fascinating, enlightening and unsuspected ideas about alchemy, this is a must read. The text is a well written, richly illustrated scholarly story of the Black Sun, Sol Niger. It sheds the light of blackness, and the luminosity of darkness. The book reports the author's fascinating and disturbing analyses and histories and their paintings as well as famous artists of blackness. This story of the Black Sun will bring you new ideas about death and blackness as well as the personal reflections of the author's life-long quest for new understanding."—Harry A. Wilmer, author of How Dreams Help

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Spiritual alchemy and the tarot Samuel Scarborough

Paul Foster Case
Hermetic Alchemy: Science and Practice (The
Golden Dawn Alchemy Series 2)
Rosicrucian Order of the Golden Dawn, \$19.95
(USA) paperback, 308pp, ISBN 978-0982352-11-3

aul Foster Case is one of the most well known and influential esoteric writers of the 20th century for his material on the tarot. He founded the Builders of the Adytum (BOTA) after leaving the Alpha et Omega (the Golden Dawn off-shoot order) in America. Case understood the connection of the tarot with spiritual alchemy through his research into the tarot. In his Hermetic Alchemy: Science and Practice, Case lays out this understanding in connection with the tarot and alchemy, particularly the twelve stages of the Great Work. The material in this book is from some of Case's early teachings and has not been readily available to the public for over seventy-five years. The book is divided into chapters which were originally lessons sent to students, and these lessons make for some interesting reading.

Case draws upon various sources for his conclusions within the book, including classical qabalah and yoga philosophy. There is much use of the qabalistic technique of gematria, i.e. assigning of a numerical value to a word or letter in the Hebrew alphabet and pointing to any and all connecting correspondences to that word to show interrelationships between various words. One such example is given in Case's discussion of *sweet salt*:

"This sweet salt is called **manna** because one spelling of the Hebrew word for 'manna' is MNA. The number of this word is 91, or 7 x 13, which suggests the sevenfold manifestation of the One Thing, inasmuch as 13 is the number of the AChD, Achad, UNITY.

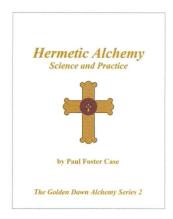
Words corresponding to 91 in Hebrew are

AMN, Amen, Faithful; IHVH ADNI, Jehovah Adonai, Jehovah Lord; and MAKL, mahakawl, food, fruit. These correspondences draw attention to the relation between food, on the one hand, and the completeness and perfection suggested by the word 'Amen' on the other. This relation is summed up in IHVH ADNI, Jehovah Adonai, 'that which was, and is, and will be, manifested as the LORD, or ruling power.'"

This material is interesting as it shows how Case is trying to link various ideas from a range of sources and traditions that make up the Western mystery tradition, such as qabalah, alchemy, and even in many cases Indian or Hindu material, to illustrate his points within the book. Clearly his strong suit is the qabalah and gematria, and it shows not only in the above example but in too many instances within *Hermetic Alchemy* to list adequately.

A great deal of the material that Case uses in *Hermetic Alchemy: Science and Practice* draws upon information that was propagated by the Theosophical Society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries regarding yoga and its correlation to much of the Western mystery tradition. That sort of thinking, linking yogic and Western esoteric practices, were very prevalent at the time this book was written, but Case also draws upon some classical alchemical texts to study quotes and to back up the claims that he is making throughout this course of study. Case quotes such alchemists and alchemical texts as Raymond Lully, Philalethes, Edward Kelley, *The Sophic Hydrolith*, and *The Golden Tractate*.

In the course of lessons laid out in this book, Case goes over much of the basic material in alchemy. There are chapters devoted to 'What Alchemy Really Is,' where Case explains his concept of alchemy as being primarily of a spiritual nature relating to the body of the alchemist; 'The First Matter,' where again Case explains what this is in relation to his concepts of alchemy; chapters on the four elements; and 'the Alchemical Process.' It is these chapters



relating to 'the Alchemical Process' that are the real meat of this book. In these chapters, which run for over 100 pages or roughly one third of the overall book, Case discusses what these twelve processes are and how, in his opinion, they work on the alchemist or even magician.

It is also in the chapters on 'the Alchemical Process' that Case falls back upon his most well known work, the tarot, and how the various tarot trumps or Major Arcana relate to the alchemical processes of calcination, congelation, fixation, separation, digestion, distillation, sublimation, putrefication, incineration, fermentation, dissolution, and multiplication. Each of these twelve alchemical processes is divided into three groups consisting of four processes in three lessons.

As an example, let us look at a portion of what Case has written pertaining in part to the alchemical process of putrefication and the tarot:

"The eighth stage of the Great Work is PUTREFICATION. It corresponds to the zodiacal sign Scorpio, and to the letter Nun, which has the following attributions:

The Imaginative Intelligence; the direction South-West; the function of Locomotion; the Tarot Key 13, DEATH."

Hermetic Alchemy: Science and Practice is definitely not a book like many that have been seen lately in the alchemy community. There are no diagrams for laboratory set-ups or practical alchemical projects, but there are plenty of examples of how to look at yourself as the alchemist, to improve yourself through the symbolism, and to study and work with the twelve stages of the alchemical process. In short, this book is about spiritual alchemy. It is an example of what many books on alchemy were like in the first third of the 20th century - a combination of differing sources such as Theosophy, Hermetic philosophy, practical alchemy, the tarot, and qabalah.

The material, for me, was a bit dense in places and seemed as though Case was stretching to reach some of his points - particularly between Indian yoga and Western alchemy - but the material is thought-provoking and makes you look at the material presented in a slightly new angle. There are a few quality illustrations and diagrams used throughout the book which are clear and that plainly reference the material in the body of the text that Case is trying to elucidate upon.

The book is very good on the whole, having some crossover appeal not only to alchemists, particularly those pursuing spiritual alchemy, but also to those following a more ceremonial magical path, such as BOTA or the Golden Dawn. Hermetic Alchemy should not only be on every alchemist's bookshelf, but should be read and consulted regularly as we improve upon ourselves while pursuing the Magnum Opus. A

SAMUEL SCARBOROUGH has been practicing ceremonial magick for the past 15 years, with an interest in all the Hermetic arts, including alchemy, for nearly 18 years. He has a special interest in both practical or laboratory alchemy and spiritual alchemy, and how these can be incorporated into ceremonial magick, especially within the Golden Dawn tradition. He is a senior member of the Ordo Stella Matutina, a modern Golden Dawn Order, and has written several articles for various occult publications.

Modern Magister

Rubaphilos Salfluĕre



"My teacher, being a woman, did not by any means lean on an intellectualised view of alchemy. In fact she talked about the work very sparingly, preferring instead to teach by example."

ubaphilos Salfluĕre's personal esoteric journey began in his mid-teens (the early 1980s). He began alchemical training in his early 20s. In his mid-20s Rubaphilos gained qualification as a psychotherapist (neo-Jungian), which catalysed his inner alchemical journey. Much of his views on theoretical Hermetism (in its broader aspects) come from his early involvement in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and later involvement in Freemasonry. Rubaphilos also has a background in the Builders of the Adytum, the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis and the Philosophers of Nature, and is a competent astrologer and an avid gabalist.

Rubaphilos teaches laboratory and inner alchemy within the bounds of a private research group that he founded in 1989. Mostly for the purpose of aiding tuition via the internet, he has produced volumes of original written materials on the subjects of laboratory alchemy, inner alchemy and esoteric psychology, as well as the theory and practice of teaching and studying Western esoterica (an art in itself). Most of these works have remained in private circulation.

In recent years, in order to aid his laboratory practice, Rubaphilos embarked on the study of a Bachelor's degree in oenology (wine science), which has included a study of physical, organic and analytical chemistry, microbiology, botany, viticulture, plant physiology, physics, engineering physics, wine making, and structural biology (amongst other things).

Rubaphilos' book, The Hermes Paradigm, Book One: First Principles, looks at the core concepts of theoretical Hermetism, using lab alchemy as the stepping off point for discussion, and is available from Salamander and Sons. His new website can be found at www.heredom.org

How would you explain or define alchemy? Is alchemy the same as spagyrics?

For me alchemy could be defined as the science of accelerating the evolution of a system by the artful manipulation of the spagyric mechanism that is the motive essence of that same system.

It is a popular habit today to insist that a spagyrist is someone who attempts to work alchemically, but fails - either through ignorance

of theoretical or practical Hermetism, or due to the belief that non-alchemical techniques will afford him success. But tradition already has two terms for such people: the archemist, who attempts to reach alchemical goals by strictly chemical means; and the puffer, who fails in alchemical work out of ignorance.

The term *spagyria* was invented by Paracelsus (Philippus Theophrastus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenhein), of which he said:

"Therefore, learn Alchimiam, otherwise called Spagyria, which teaches you to separate the false from the true. Such a Light of Nature is it that it is a mode of proof in all things, and walks in light."

(Paramirium, Lib. I., c.3.)

There is no rhetoric in that statement that hints at the idea that spagyrics is somehow inferior to alchemy. If Paracelsus' extensive writings are studied with care it will be seen that he uses the terms alchemy and spagyrics interchangeably.

Paracelsus was in the habit of inventing new terms with which to more accurately define ideas in alchemy, or to give names for Hermetic concepts where there previously were none. A close look at the etymology of the word spagyric supports Paracelsus' suggestion that it was designed to replace, or more carefully describe, what is meant by alchemy. Therefore, an alchemist is someone who applies the sovereign spagyric formula properly (to separate, purify and recombine). Anyone who applies this formula, according to Hermetic principles, is an alchemist.

What is the origin of your interest in, and practice of, alchemy and/or spagyrics?

Let us say that I never intended to get involved in laboratory alchemy at the outset. I was busy investigating occultism in general (in my early 20s), when a series of fortuitous circumstances had me introduced to the last properly trained and active lab alchemist in New Zealand. Then, when I started investigating the art and became a student to its practice, I quickly discovered not only that I was passionate about it, but that I had a natural inclination towards understanding it, and making serious headway in it.

One of the important factors in my 'clicking' on to the lab tradition (once I had stumbled over it), arose out of my previous interest in psychology. I became interested in psychology primarily for esoteric reasons. In the laboratory tradition I very quickly recognised a model which could be applied to internal alchemy (esoteric initiation), thereby providing a sound theoretical structure with which to explain the machinery of alchemical initiation

Which alchemist or spagyricist - canonical or contemporary - has most influenced you?

I think that I would have to say my own teacher, and through her, Frater Albertus Spagyricus. My nine year apprenticeship adhered very closely to the structure and teaching which Frater Albertus delivered in the classes of his seven year course. Since it is human nature to be strongly imprinted by the earliest events one is exposed to in any area of human endeavour, my having been exposed to Frater Albertus' teachings at the outset of my alchemical journey has continued to have a strong impact upon my approach to the laboratory art, and Hermetism generally.

My teacher, being a woman, did not by any means lean on an intellectualised view of alchemy. In fact she talked about the work very sparingly, preferring instead to teach by example. So my own training was very practical, very hands on. In that way much of the impact that studying alchemy had on my esoteric views was formed by having regularly seen the proverbial pudding, and the ample (and often startling) proof that it provided.

Which alchemical or spagyrical text or book canonical or contemporary - has most benefited your operative work?

Since my primary focus for the past 15 years has been upon the acetate path of the Great Work, I think that if I had to pick one work which had the most influence on me I would have to say Sir George Ripley's *The Bosome Book* (Printed for William Cooper, at the Pelican in Little Britain: London, 1683). While I regularly reference a small number of key texts in my laboratory work, every sentence of this text of Ripley's has proven to be absolutely accurate. So I personally consider *The Bosome Book* to be the literary heart and soul of the acetate path.

Describe your ideal laboratory.

I am afraid that my view of a perfect laboratory might not be too exciting. Access to unlimited and cost-free electricity would be my first preference. Enough glassware on hand to replace breakages quickly and to cover all the main processes I regularly work would be a big bonus. A gas chromatograph, a spectrograph and a good compact high temperature electric kiln would be indispensable. A good quality and reasonable sized ball mill would make life a lot easier. A room devoted solely to wine making that could accommodate two 1,000 litre tanks, a small bag press and a small cross-flow filter would be an enormous help. Finally ... bench space, bench space and more bench space.

Describe your current laboratory.

My own laboratory is small these days, due to the fact that I focus upon only about half a dozen specific processes now. I work from home in a small room that used to be my laundry, now converted to a lab. The pieces of equipment I use most include a well equipped fermentation system (I make a lot of wine), three different standard distillation set ups, two large circulatums, two types of retort for special purposes, and a Soxhlet extractor for a specific branch of research I am currently focused on. My preference is for Schott glassware (the Germans make the best Pyrex borosilicate in my opinion). I primarily use electricity for heating, but am about to invest in a gas system for the first time. A small

fridge for special storage, a laptop computer, small on-hand library, music, and a coffee perk are always absolute necessities.

What advice would you impart to an aspiring alchemist or spagyricist?

Firstly, find a good one-on-one teacher, (and that is a task in itself). The old adepts insisted that there were only two ways to succeed in the study of alchemy – either by learning from a properly trained and experienced teacher, or by direct inspiration from God. Based upon my personal experience, I totally concur with this view of the old adepts.

A good teacher should have three things going for him / her: (1) a good, experienced teacher behind him / her; (2) long term experience with the basics (like the herbal processes), as well as in advanced mineral alchemy; (3) adept experience in the inner (spiritual) work (any teacher without an effective knowledge and practice in the inner work is not much more than someone with an interest in fringe chemistry, in my opinion).

Secondly, put little stock in modern sources of information. Build your foundation in the works of the old masters.

Thirdly, get yourself involved with a group of like-minded, trusted students who are willing to share the workload and the fruits of their experiences, in private. Time is a huge factor when trying to solve the problems of alchemy, and progress is made more effectively if the burden is a shared one.

Fourthly, work systematically and keep reliable records. Alchemy is a science, not a process of chaotic tinkering.

Fifthly, learn basic physical and organic chemistry, and physics. No matter how much bad press is given by students of alchemy regarding a good education in chemistry and physics, the reality is that it is infinitely harder, today, to deal with the advanced works without a good background in those subjects. \triangle

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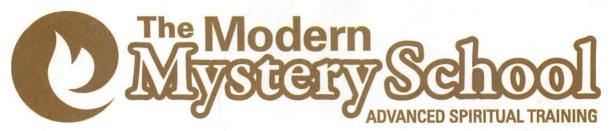
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*Brian Peskin earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) in 1979. He received an appointment as an Adjunct Professor at Texas Southern University in the Department of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (1998-1999). The former president of the University said of Brian's discoveries: "...His nutritional discoveries and practical applications through Life-Systems Engineering are unprecedented."



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