

Alchemy Journal

WINTER 2016



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Alchemy Journal

ISSUE 1

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The *Alchemy Journal* was first published in Autumn 2000 as an online magazine for members of the International Alchemy Guild. By 2007, we had published 27 issues. The following year, we started publishing it as an 80-page printed journal, and the final print issue was published in 2010. The *Journal* earned a reputation as a serious tool for scholars and researchers, as well as an insightful and entertaining magazine for members.

Now that we have assembled a talented team of writers and editors to continue this endeavor, I think it appropriate to remind us of our original goals, as I stated them in my editorial in the very first issue:

“This journal, like all proper alchemical endeavors, will seek to balance both the feminine (intuitive) and masculine (logical) ways of experiencing reality. For that reason, you will find in these pages an eclectic blend of material, both scholarly and personal, thoughtful and emotional, practical and spiritual. Keep in mind this publication is a living thing that grows and transforms with each issue, just as we hope you the reader will grow and transform along with us.”

In the Great Work –
Dennis Hauck
President, The Alchemy Guild

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Egyptian Alchemy

Secrecy is an implicit aspect of alchemical practice. Used to keep charlatans, usurpers and “puffers” from gaining access to the wisdom of its philosophy, alchemists resorted to the use of misleading images in their artwork and paradox in written recipes.



What is Alchemy?

Alchemy, according to the philosophers, is the science of God, the law of the universe. Alchemists say that God is the Grand Alchemist and His body, the universe, is the laboratory. The task of the alchemist is to center himself within the consciousness of the divine creative principle so that he can understand the universe and all its diversities as one great process.



+∞

“The All is Mind; The Universe is Mental.” FROM THE KYBALION.

“I speak not fiction, but what is certain and most true. What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below for performing the miracle of one thing. And as all things were produced from One by the Mediation of One, so all things are produced from this One thing by adaptation.” FROM THE EMERALD TABLET.

“The Kingdom of Spirit is embodied in my flesh.” FROM THE PATTERN

ON THE TRESTLEBOARD

The 800 Pound Stigma

By John H Reid III

AS ALCHEMIST, at least one if not all three of these quotes should be familiar to us, especially the ideas and concepts they seek to reveal to the mind that reads them in a contemplative, not cursory manner. They speak to us a subtle truth about what alchemy is all about. They convey a truth in a very simple language that if one seeks to integrate into their life, will cause one to have to confront and be dashed upon the rocks of long held beliefs and tradition.

All three quotes point to non-duality, and at its essence, this is what alchemy is all about: the reconciliation of opposites.

A peculiar infection has been inoculated into the minds of many Westerners either through the teachings of Judeo-Christianity or scientific dogma. From either/or there exist a schism between what is termed the mundane and the spiritual, or the profane and the holy.

On the contrary, that gap does not exist for many aboriginal or what used to be termed primitive people around the world. For them the demarcation between

what we term physical reality and the world of spirit is not made of a concrete barricade, but rather an osmotic diaphanous membrane that can easily be crossed back and forth. Both are viewed as being equally substantial and valid. And why not? Does not what we term the physical world disappear when we sleep as the dream world does when we awake? Are not the items, people and places in a dream just as real to us in the dream as the items, people, and places we visit in waking life? In fact, for many cultures the world of reality is often stated to be the dream, and the world of spirit the ultimate reality. Hermeticism agrees with this. It is not without reason that the Sephira of Yesod is named “Foundation”.

For many of us in the West the thought that our daily grind is actually a spiritual undertaking seems to be the province of lunacy. Yet it is in the valley of the Kingdom (Malkuth) where we prove and live our spiritual tenets. This living and proving is not one of escapism or overcoming something but rather affirming the truth

the Pattern on the Trestleboard so eloquently states.

Given ones particular mental perception it might be easy to imagine something like a doctor or artist as being, at its roots, a spiritual occupation...even if modern day living has obfuscated its true meaning. When I tell most people that even being a garbage man is a spiritual undertaking, I get what is euphemistically called incredulous looks. How can a garbage man or a sewer maintenance person be a spiritual undertaking? But if I use another word instead of spirituality you will understand immediately the point I am making. If I say there is a Zen to being a garbage man I am sure the lights have gone on in many minds reading this. Zen is not that which you do, but rather the spirit in which one does a thing. In this regard, it agrees with the Alchemical designation of energy = spirit.

Often, spirituality is confused with morality; the two are not synonymous. I define spirituality as the degree of freedom to which the life force flows unrestricted through any person or thing, thereby revealing itself in the adroitness of the accomplishment of a particular task. Morality is and should come about from having a deep understanding of self, and the boundaries of your actions. That is what you stand for, and will or will not do.

Let's try a little experiment and see if you can follow along with the products produced by the phrase I am about to write. Examine your own mind to see if you can see the energy (thought) and then the energetic assumptions (judgments) produced from the thought.

Hitler was just as spiritual as Mother Theresa.

Each of these persons has associated with them a certain vibration of energy that represents certain actions or uses of energy. The judgments about those uses of energy are a distinct and separate thing from the energy itself. You might raise an incredulous eyebrow to this, as you state you *know* Mother Theresa was good and Hitler evil. But do you know this, or do you believe it because you were told so? If the Nazi's had won and the world had fallen under their domain school children today would be singing Hitler's name and praises. If perchance you had been born in the East rather than the West (or vice versa) by which name would you call God? In the Americas between 250 to 900 CE human sacrifice was a morally accepted part of the Mayan civilization at that time. Now many people will claim "well what could be done? That was the dispensation people were living under at the time". But do you really believe there were not those who spoke out against that

practice, just as there were people in the 18th and 19th century who spoke out against the accepted national institution of slavery in the U.S.?

Again, morality is and should come about from having a deep understanding of self, and the boundaries of your actions. That is what you stand for and will or will not do. It should also be noted that even though the Mayans practice of human sacrifice is morally repugnant to most today, their spirituality allowed them to understand time cycles, planetary movements and to create a calendar that had a rather palpable effect on modern humanity in 2012.

How often do you just blindly accept the moral edicts you are taught without even questioning them? It reminds me of the old spiritual song that goes "give me that old time religion, give me that old time religion. It was good for the prophet Daniel, It was good for the Hebrew children, it was good for my Pa, It was good for Ma, and it's good enough for me". Of course, the sentiment expressed by the song is Give me tradition (the accepted norm), it has been good so far, so I will accept it now without question. This, in turn, leads to children singing Hitler's praises, state sanctioned sacrifice, and institutionalized slavery, all of which is fine if that is how you want to vibrate. I am simply asking do you follow tradition for traditions sake, or do you live as you live because of something deeper?

Ultimately alchemy is about the removal of all resistance to life¹, this does not mean acquiescence, but rather acceptance of what is, because all comes from One and exist in the One. Besides, if we cannot be truthful with ourselves about our current state of affairs, and the reasons for them, how can we ever hope to express something different?

So now let's have some fun and visit the 800 pound stigma! What, you didn't think that stuff above was it did you? That's child play compared to this beast.

First let's recap. Everything is energy, energy = life, life = god. Because energy/life = god, energy can neither be created nor destroyed; it can only be transformed. Essentially, the form can be destroyed, but the energy behind it continues to exist.

In a lecture given by accepted practical and spiritual alchemical authority Dr, Werner C. Nawrocki the statement was made "where there is money, that means there is energy, and where there is energy we will see there there is god²"

Now there is someone who thinks about money as an aspect of god. Before you let the cascade of energetic assumptions force you into a knee jerk opinion/reaction, remember in the gnostic Gospel of Thomas we

read “Lift the stone and there you will find me. Split the wood and I am there”. Whenever I cite that verse I usually get an inflamed reaction from someone to the effect of “don’t you dare quote Gnostic Scripture to me!” I do not think it is because they necessarily disagree with the idea of All is One, and the One can be found anywhere and everywhere. I think the reaction comes from them coming face to face with something they would rather not see, and that simply is the power they have given over to the demonization of a thing. After all, from whence did money acquire its profane, evil characteristics? Was it the same evil profane thing when its accepted form was obsidian³ or sea shells⁴?

This article came about because of a post made by Mark Stavish on Facebook March 9, 2016 @ 9am about Paracelsus and charging for alchemical products. The post which created quite a little storm is found below:

“I am occasionally asked to perform some sort of mojo for people to help them with their often profound problems. However, I tend to refuse. The reasoning is simple. While many of my fellow esotericists will moralize about ‘selling the gifts of God’ and New Age types about ‘interfering with another’s karma’ it is really much simpler than that: people get what they deserve, or ‘the gods help those who help

themselves’. Let the lessons of Paracelsus be a guide to those asking for help from the invisible via a human agent. Let it also be a warning to those who seek to be human agents - get your fee in advance.

“The final insult came when Paracelsus was called to the sickbed of the wealthy churchman, Cornelius von Lichtenfels. The old Canon had been declared dying by his own doctors - the same professors of the Faculty at Basle. Von Lichtenfels offered one hundred guilders for a successful cure. Paracelsus prescribed three doses of a medicine, purgation and diet, and claimed that the old Canon’s condition had been misdiagnosed and not understood by his attending physicians. Von Lichtenfels was soon free of pain and shortly after was on his feet again, completely cured. He conveniently forgot both his suffering and his promise. He paid Paracelsus the usual six guilder fee claiming that it was sufficient for a single consultation and three doses of medicine.”

As I said, the post created quite a storm (tempest in a teapot) with the usual rounds of moralizing about charging to heal the sick. One fellow went as far as to insinuate that those that charge somehow rob their preparations of a spiritual energy and authority. Really? So if one does not charge for something that somehow makes them and what they do holy? Guess that one is

FOOTNOTES:

1. *Removal of resistance* <https://vimeo.com/87379158> @22:09

Removal of resistance <https://vimeo.com/87837715> @28:32

2. <https://vimeo.com/87379158> @ 5.53

3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_money#Emergence_of_money

4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shell_money

right up there with just going to church every Saturday or Sunday one ensures the salvation of their soul, and entry into heaven.

Why is it that things not charged for are said to be given in love and that which is charged for is somehow bereft of love? Do you really think the craftspeople who meticulously put together a Rolex watch, or hand stitched the leather of a luxury car with tolerances that make automated robots green with envy, are doing what they do out of anything other than love? It sure is not being born out of hate or something profane any more than Michelangelo's *Pieta* was. What if no one had ever inculcated into your mind the notion that there was some inherent taint to money...that there was no good, or evil to it? Would you still have an internal moral wrestling match over it, or would you be able to have a freedom of expression independent of labels, to live in the moment and act in a way that the present situations circumstance warranted, rather than a rigid binary reaction?

If you find yourself in a job that you hate, that you have just to pay the bills, whose fault is it that? You bought into that mode of operation. It certainly is not the company you work for unless they held a gun to your head (and even then you still have a choice). Why do you do what you do, and live like you live?

If you expect that teaching and products should be for free, my question is what sacrifice are you willing to make on your end? After all, you are expecting the spiritual teacher or maker of alchemical products to make such a sacrifice. Are you willing to meet them at least halfway for the benefit of all?

A little story about sacrifice to the benefit of all. I am sure many of you have had access to and enjoyed the electronic copies of the Alchemical Laboratory Bulletins published by the Paracelsus research Society. If you do not, you may read them on-line here: https://www.spagyria.com/alchemical_lab_bulletins/index.php or acquire a complete set in html format by going here: <https://www.spagyria.com/bulletinannounce.php>

As I said, I know many of you have enjoyed reading these bulletins. What you may not know is the story of how they were acquired and the events leading to their on-line distribution.

For the record I was the one who acquired and scanned those documents. I found out about the college (the research society had been changed to a college by then) just after Frater Albertus' death. When I contacted the college this news of course made me crestfallen as I felt I had missed my chance to learn from Frater. As I was about to hang up the phone, I asked the lady

on the other end, (Olive was her name) if there were any books or publications that were for sale. Olive informed me that she had just one complete set of the Alchemical Laboratory Bulletins, Parachemy Magazines, *Essentia* Magazines and a few copies of *Amo*. She informed me that if I wanted them I would have to act quickly because the doors of the college would be closing soon. She gave me a price which came to approximately \$400. The cost was not important, what was important was the decision that I was faced with. At that time I was making about \$5 an hour working at Ritz camera or about \$400 every two weeks before taxes. I obviously had to pay rent (utilities were included in the rent), and have enough to get back and forth to work, as I knew what those costs were, those funds were set aside. Something was burning inside of me and my zeal for getting those items from the college would not be stilled. I had my cable turned off for the month this gave me about \$60, and that left \$340 outstanding to get the items. At that time, I was a habitual smoker of marijuana and I decided that too would go that month another \$100 down but still leaving \$240 outstanding. The only thing left was my grocery money. I looked in my cupboards and they were as empty as was the fridge. The only thing I had was salt, pepper, a large sack of flour and coffee. With a deep sigh I committed myself to getting the printed material from the college. For a month I had no TV, no smoke, ate hardtack (I could not afford yeast to leaven the bread), and drank black coffee, but at the end of the time I had those printed items. Fast forward to September 2001 and for almost a year I had been scanning the Alchemical Laboratory Bulletins into electronic format. Interestingly, I got done with my task just 5 days after September 11th, five being the number of the Hierophant in the Tarot system of the BOTA. How could I have known back when I made the sacrifice that I did, that it would affect hundreds if not thousands of lives, and have its emergence at such a critical time into the world? The point that I am making is that sacrifice is always a two way street, and if you expect a teacher or maker of product to cut you some slack you too need to be willing to winnow something from your life. Why is it ok for the teacher or maker of alchemical products to suffer and struggle to make ends meet, when you have a full plate of food each night, access to premium cable channels, etc?

To be fair, some people are genuinely having a hard time in life, and I can say with pride and humility I have never turned a person away because of money; accommodations are always made for those true of heart.

I am not trying to say that charging or not charging

for something makes one good or bad, it does neither. But your intent behind what you do is the determining factor. If you do not charge money simply with the idea that somehow this is going to make you spiritual, then what are you really doing except seeking to barter entrance into something.

Irrespective of funds being donated so that one can run an Alchemical Lab or School or charging outright for the service really makes no difference. At some point, someone had to work, to give of the most precious thing they have in this life (time) in order to get those funds that were used as a donation or outright payment for service. Either way it comes from a space of spirituality.

Since that is the case let us recognize the Zen in all of our actions for no matter what path we choose there are trade offs. The person who holds down a 9 to 5 job will have less time to devote to the cultivation of their skills in the laboratory and understanding of Hermetic Philosophy as opposed to the one who does it full time. The person who does not charge can give away what they make freely but then again they have only so much to give. Ingredients, laboratory cost, energy, etc. all take money.

Money is more than a medium of exchange, it is a system of a four part cycle of appreciation created by the One:

- My Giving freely of the gifts, talents that I have naturally or acquired. This giving should be done wholeheartedly. By freely, I mean without reserve or embarrassment. One is never the best or the worst at

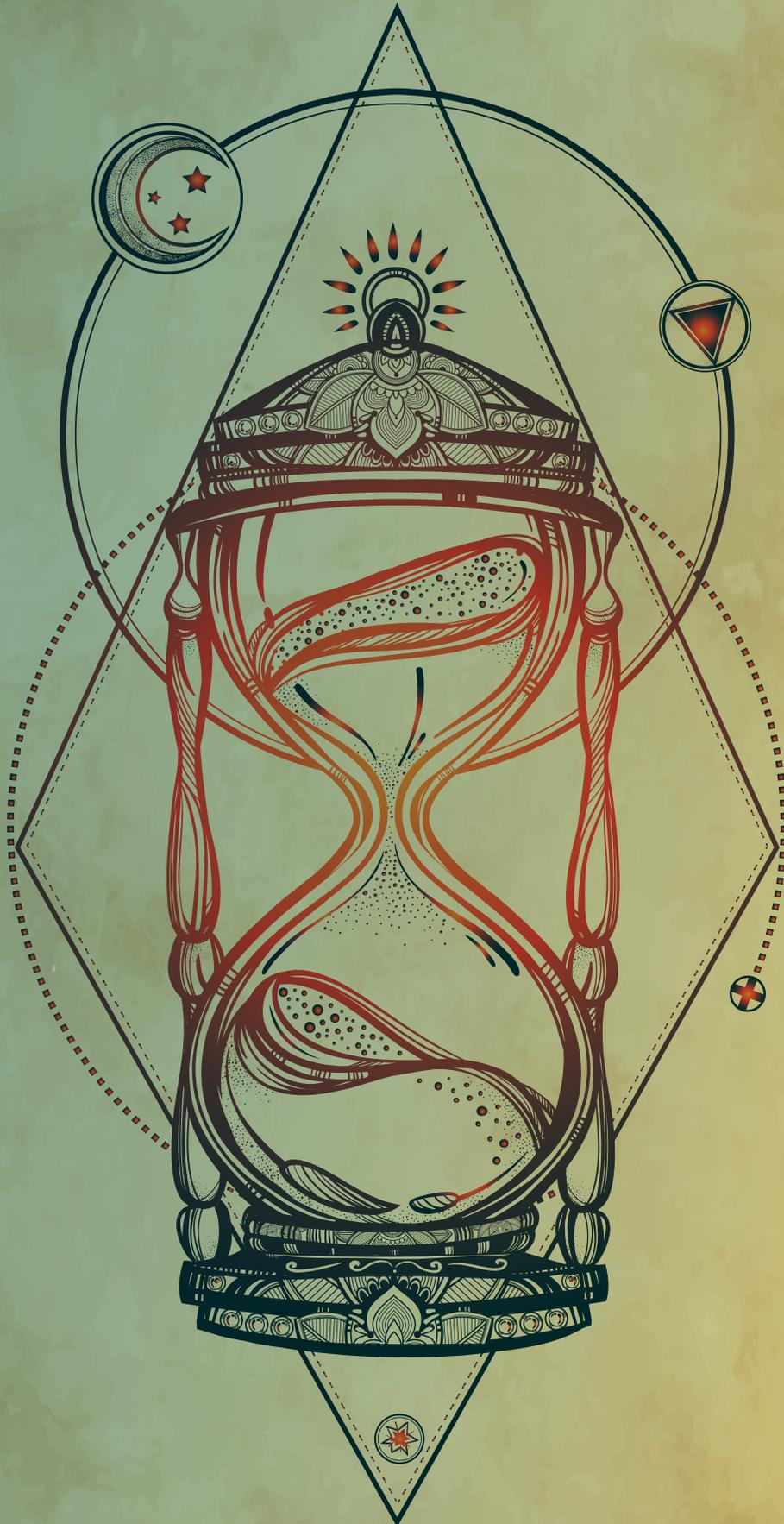
a thing. Let your light shine with that which you know and have experienced.

- Persons who utilize my service or gifts are showing appreciation for them. See it as such and you will naturally seek to improve that which you do.

- Value Others: My fellow beings also have gifts and talents which they share with me. I need to value this and see it for what it is: an expression of their spiritual energy irrespective of it being the baker, Doctor, or garbage man.

- I need to show appreciation for what others have brought into my life. Persons have rewarded me with appreciation, now I need to go out into the community and show my appreciation for what others are doing. This is the cycle of wealth and is a central part of the law of reflection.

Ultimately, as alchemist we should remember that god, divinity is the cause of everything, no matter if we label it good or bad. The reason for the seeming paradox, why we have become like the Elohim to know good and evil, is so that we may along with all things evolve. Therefore we should strive to see the world as it is, not with our thoughts of how a thing should be, or the filter of our education, but just see it as it truly is. We should also remember that whatever we see is only a partial truth. A wall appears solid because we can only see 24 vibrations per second, if we could see more vibrations per second we could see through the wall. 🌀



By following the nocturnal course of the sun and traveling backwards in time and space, one reaches the deepest layer of being, the source of every new creation. - ERIK HORNUNG

Egyptian Alchemy: Secrets Beneath the Black Sand

Thom F. Cavalli, Ph.D.

SECRECY IS AN IMPLICIT aspect of alchemical practice. Used to keep charlatans, usurpers and “puffers” from gaining access to the wisdom of its philosophy, alchemists resorted to the use of misleading images in their artwork and paradox in written recipes. But even without the use of such devices, alchemy is by nature shrouded in secrecy. We find evidence of its mysterious nature in what little we know of its origins. In this paper, I describe some of the psychological secrets of alchemy’s past by focusing on a central theme in its long history. This theme emerges from one interpretation of the word alchemy that derives from the Arabic *al-khem*, meaning black. I further elucidate this word “black” and its associations with secrecy and darkness as each term appears in early Egyptian cosmology, mythology and in their funerary rituals. It is especially important to any sincere practitioner of the Art to be familiar with the etymology and evolution of recipes and practices that derive from a *psychological* understanding of alchemy’s origins. There is no purer wisdom that can be gained than the *gnosis* that emerges from nature and no better alchemical practice than relying on the mental apparatus as an efficient instrument for having such a transcendent experience.

More than most images and descriptions of the *lapis*, the concept of “black” offers a concrete sense of permanence that symbolizes the beginning and ultimate end of the alchemical opus, the *mysterium coniunctionis*, otherwise known as the Philosopher’s Stone. The theme of black appears throughout the alchemical work: the *prima material* described as “blackest than black,” the *nigre-*

do meaning “blackening,” the *Sol Niger*. There is also the psychological experience of blackness expressed artfully in Durer’s *Melancholia* and described in St. John of the Cross’ *Dark Night of the Soul*. Historically, black brings us back to ancient Egypt, the Black Land. Jack Lindsay relates *Kem and Kimiya* to the allusions having to do with the “black fertile soil of the Nile valley.”¹ In a desert land the Nile was sacred for its power to bring forth life and take it away. Its rhythm of ebb and flow, rising and falling, variable as it was, always left rich, black, muddy silt behind as its waters retreated after the annual flood; as constant as a shadow, this black mud awakens in us the reality that Egypt is more than a dream.

Mythologically, the Nile existed not only as a river that fertilized the land, but that also flowed through the *duat*, the underworld – that place where the sun god descends each night. Life, in this time, was not restricted to earthly boundaries – from womb to tomb. The afterlife depended on Ra making his way through the treacherous blood red waters of the Nile that flow beneath the earth. The cosmological cycle of life revolved around the sun making its way through the celestial body of Nut and by Ra’s victorious preservation of sun/light/life after surviving his ordeal in the realm of death.

The Nile’s mud and the underworld are the mythological equivalents to our modern day concept of the unconscious. I am drawing particularly from the work of C. G. Jung’s concept of the unconscious, especially his concept of the Collective Unconscious, to reveal what black means psychologically. The importance of this

approach goes further than simply revealing truths that lie beneath mythological images; for we should abide by Thomas Norton's first rule, which in his words reads, "The student's mind should be in perfect harmony with his work. The desire of knowing this Art should hold a dominant place in his mind; else all his labours will come to nothing."² In other words, we should not deceive ourselves into thinking that there are two separate alchemies, one physical and another psychological. Alchemy cannot exist without an integral approach that employs both body and mind in its endeavors. Mud and mind in this case point, to a psychoid region that cannot fully be explained but only sensed and imagined.

When we recall the story of how Osiris came into being, a prototypic image is revealed that reflects this integral approach that is familiar to the knowing adept. The story has it that Thoth, god of wisdom and magic, cleverly sidestepped Ra's curse. The sun god, like Chronos of the Greek myths, did not want his power challenged by his progeny. Instead of devouring his children, Ra utters a curse against the celestial sky goddess Nut, commanding that she never bear children on any day or night. Nut appeals to Thoth for help. He devises a plan that will appease Nut's wish to have children and at the same time, not disobey Ra's command. Thoth invites Khonsu, the moon god who is a well-known gambler, to a game of draughts. As the game proceeds, the stakes are high and Khonsu is wagering his light... and losing. From his winnings, Thoth creates five days that hitherto did not exist. It is on these days then that Nut gives birth to Osiris, Harmachis, Seth, Isis and Nephthys, respectively.

One function of myth, as the well known mythologist Joseph Campbell points out, is to explain in personal terms how life came into existence. In this story, we learn how the phases of the moon came into being. We also see a relationship forming between the god of light, Ra, and a clever, dark god, Thoth. Alchemically, the moon or Luna represents the feminine aspect with its reflected light and psychologically, it's changing moods. We see this feminine aspect as part of Mercur-

rius' mutable, shape-shifting nature that is, in metallic terms, the liquid component of quicksilver. Out of the loss of all moonlight, the image of the *Sol Niger* emerges, an image that has great alchemical significance.

It is perhaps in this early myth that the association of Thoth as a moon god finds its origin. The myth is elaborated in Thoth's relationship with his feminine consort Ma'at and the role Thoth plays in the underworld. In this dark region, Thoth is the divine scribe who records the Judgment of the Dead. If the soul of the deceased is heavier than Ma'at's feather, then it is doomed to extinction by being fed to the hideous god Ammit, Eater of the Dead. Otherwise, the spirit of the deceased continues to develop into a fully realized and integrated soul. Ultimately, the soul then gains entry to the Field of Reeds or the Field of Offerings, a place that idealizes the beauty and pride Egyptians had in their earthly home. Such qualities formed the nexus of ancient Egyptian society. We see this legacy left behind in their art. It is more difficult to discern the magnificent psychology of these people, especially the connection they drew between personal identity and eternal salvation. The balance of one's soul being measured against the Goddess of Order brings to mind the great tipping point between the integrity of one's personality and the everlasting promise of reward in the next world.

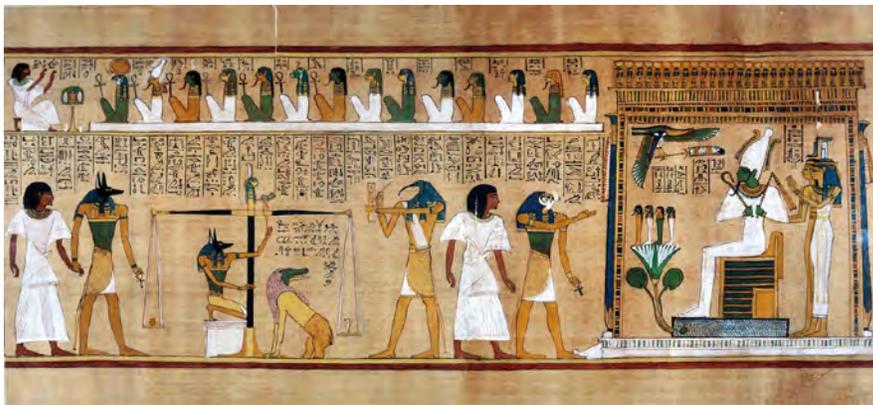
"Egypt saw the uniqueness of identity as the ground of divine nature. Identity is the divinity of the soul. The purpose of life is to achieve and to groom your own identity, polishing yourself into the finest image of yourself of which you are capable, your "Golden Horus name," then to carry that polished image into eternity, to shine there in the next life as illuminated as the stars themselves."

-RAMONA LOUISE WHEELER

Thoth, in his relationship with Ra, was a dark god. By dark, I mean that Thoth's nature, behavior and wisdom reflect the shadowy aspects of life. His is never the straight road, but one that travels underground, through forests and hidden valleys. His ibis head signifies his spiritual nature, but he is also often shown with the head of a baboon. Along with his association to Ma'at, a feminine deity representing the supreme Order in life, Thoth's use of wit, trickery and even chaos reveal the two sides of his nature. Spirit/instinct, order/chaos, masculine/feminine are opposites that describe his psychic duality. He flits from one extreme to the other with the deftness of an acrobat and the wisdom of a sage. Thoth's nature is mercurial, as much infused by spirit as by the dark soul. As we will learn later, Thoth is asso-

OPPOSITE PAGE: *Melan-cholia*, By Albrecht Durer circa 1514

BELOW: Judgment of the Dead





MELENCOLIA I

6	3	2	3
5	10	11	8
9	6	7	12
4	15	14	1

ciated with Hermes Trismegistus, god of three realms, mineral, animal and human, and eventually reaches his most complex image in Mercurius.

The dark story of alchemy's origins continues with the death and resurrection of Osiris. In this myth we also see the origin of many of alchemy's images, recipes, rituals and practices. Of the five born of Nut, Osiris weds Isis and Seth marries Nephthys. Whether by error, deceit or desire, Osiris sleeps with Nephthys and they bear a male child named Anubis. This sets the stage for revenge and a protracted battle that will later involve Seth and Osiris' second son, Horus. But first, Seth has to deal with his burning desire for vengeance toward Osiris. Henceforth, Seth comes to represent "death and his confederates are the demons of decay and dissolution."³ Seth secretly obtained Osiris' physical measurements and prepares a party in which the prize of a beautiful tomb will be given to the person who best fits inside. When Osiris lays down in the tomb, Seth's conspirators quickly seal him in by binding the tomb with tight lead bands. The tomb is thrown into the Green (Mediterranean) Sea and set adrift until it reaches the shores of Syria.⁴ Without too much difficulty we can discern a number of alchemical themes and operations in this opening of the story: generation, measurement, the *vas hermeticum*, *mortificatio* and *solutio*, and lead to gold!

It would be absurd to any modern man or woman to win a tomb at a party. But, for the ancient Egyptian who lived in a land where wood was scarce and preparation for death was an integral part of life, an expensive tomb was a real prize. There were three grades of tombs, those made of elm, cedar, and stone; each elaborated with increasingly intricate spells and artwork depending on the price paid and the individual's place in society. The tomb concealed the mummified remains of the deceased. It was the place where the mummy was venerated by the living; it was also the 'laboratory' or vessel of union between the soul of this world and the spirit of the next. The preparation of the mummy also has deep associations with our theme of black, and the secret operations taking place in the tomb. These dark processes are made clear by the names of the substances used in the embalming process.

Mumia is an oil, a black bitumen oozing out of the surface of the land, a tar-like substance made from the residue left in the still. Salt, in the form of natron, was also an important desiccating substance used in mummification. Forty of the seventy days needed to mummify a body were spent applying natron to the corpse as a means of removing all moisture and humidity. Although natron is associated with the white *albedo*, psychological-

ly its darkness appears as the priests drained whatever life water (light) remained in the deceased body. What was not desiccated by the salt was removed surgically by the high priests. Specifically, the liver, lungs, stomach and intestines were washed in Nile water and sealed individually in Canopic jars. The brain was removed and discarded; the heart was left in situ.⁵

After Isis manages to recover her husband's body, she resuscitates the corpse of Osiris through her own magic, copulates with it and bears the child Horus.⁶ Seth discovers them and, still bent on revenge, cuts Osiris' body into fourteen parts and scatters them throughout the land of Egypt. With Thoth's help, Isis recovers the body parts and re-joins them in preparation for Osiris' passage into the underworld. Thoth serves as psychopomp and takes the soul of Osiris into the dark realm of the dead. Anubis, who prepares Osiris' body, becomes the god of embalmers. We then have Osiris' two sons by different mothers, Isis and Nephthys, who play a critical role in preserving their father's body and soul. A son's obligation to keep his father's memory alive is a theme that is commonly found not only throughout Egyptian religion but also figures quite prominently in alchemical imagery.

It is interesting to note that Anubis is typically envisaged as a jackal but was more probably modeled after the desert dog. These dogs were nuisances, roaming through graveyards looking for a good meal. They devoured the remains of the dead. This didn't bode well for the deceased soul since the dead were not to be disturbed for fear that bad things would happen. While magic was practiced by the temple priests, superstition pervaded the minds of common people. Living in a hostile, desert environment, everyday life was filled with danger. The dead were especially feared because they were among the few who possessed *heka* (magical power). It is not surprising then that we find a gradual transformation of jackals and desert dogs into the god Anubis. Fear is oftentimes projected and transformed into the making of a god. Cult worship was one way of staying on the good side of a god.

In this part of the story we find the theme of dismemberment. In Trismosin's *Splendor Solis*⁶ we see this same theme explicitly depicted in Plate 10. Dismemberment, however, began long before artists and artisans represented it in their work. Prior to mummifying their dead, Egyptians buried the deceased in shallow graves. The extremely hot sands dehydrated the body, leaving only skeletal remains. Fearing that the dead might rise from their graves and disturb the living, these superstitious people took to breaking the bones of the dead bodies before



TOP TO BOTTOM: Green Osiris, Black Osiris



laying them to rest. In this way, they believed, the dead would not be able to move about at night. This same kind of magical thinking is seen in certain hieroglyphs. The snake, for example, consisting of several curved lines, was sometimes depicted with a break cutting straight through the hieroglyph. This juncture was imposed for the same reason: to prevent the snake from slithering off the papyri and doing harm to people. Such a device, and other forms of dismemberment, was intended to provide similar magical protection. It also served alchemical and psychological purposes. This can be illustrated in a familiar alchemical recipe.

One of alchemy's seminal recipes is "Dissolve and Coagulate," or otherwise stated, "Separate and Unite." Dismemberment reflects the first operation in these recipes, dissolve and separate. On a concrete, physical level, dismemberment was carried out chemically through dissolution and physically by slicing, crushing, mashing, pulverizing, etc. The alchemist, attempting to reduce Nature to its purest constituents, worked to literally pull substances apart, something that is not unlike the atom-smashers we see today. Reduced to its simplest form, the pieces were then prepared and reassembled by the alchemist into a new, more refined form. The *separatio* also served to rid substances of their impurities and enhance the innate power locked within their microcosmic form.⁸

From a contemporary psychological point of view, dismemberment involves an instinctive need each of us has to separate from nature in order to individuate and establish independence. The first separation comes with severing the umbilical cord from the mother, but this is an external action that requires nothing of the fetus. Still, it is the first

of many *separatios* that are needed for one to become an independent person. Separation precipitates individuation. This is reflected on a collective level as well. Countries break away from others in order to establish their own

sovereignty. In the myth, Osiris's body is not only dismembered but the juices of his decayed corpse become root agents of fertilization. In each of the fourteen places where Seth had thrown pieces of Osiris' body, there arose the fourteen nomes or settlements that eventually coalesced the great nation that we call Egypt today.

Here is a critical transition from Osiris, who initially reigned over the land as a fertility god and who oversaw the currents of the sacred Nile; having suffered death and dismemberment, he is reanimated by Isis and becomes King of the Underworld. This double image of Osiris, as lord of life-sustaining vegetation and king of the dead, explains why he is variously depicted as having either green or black skin and in the Pyramid texts referred to as the "the Great Black Thing" and the "Great Green Thing." Osiris is nature, passive, naive and unconscious. He does not awaken to full consciousness until his son, Horus, vanquishes his murderer, Seth, and revives him in the underworld; Osiris was not, until this time, even aware of Seth's evil motives.

Psychologically, this shift in Osiris' image from the 'above to the below' represents a movement toward awakening as he brings fructifying energy to the land and Horus the order needed for civilized society. This movement secured Osiris' place in the psyche,

for, as best we can identify with him, we too live in the world above and die to the world below. We see him as our collective ego who acquires wisdom from Ra, symbolizing the Self and teaches Osiris the ways of the underworld. Symbolically, nature is brought to life through the triumph of light over darkness just as one attains conscious awareness by undergoing the 'dark night of the soul.'

This shift is evidenced in the changing themes of successive Books of the Dead. The main themes in the earliest Pyramid Texts had to do with spells and instructions that would assist the pharaoh in his ascension to

LEFT: Anubis embalming Osiris

RIGHT: Trismosin's *Splendor Solis*, Plate 10 circa 1532-1535

the Field of Reeds or the Field of Offerings. But the later Books of the Dead emphasize the journey each of us eventually takes through the underworld. Osiris was the first initiate after Ra to undertake this perilous journey. Eventually, the possibility for attaining immortal life was made possible for all. This wasn't just a myth: commoners paid six months' wages to purchase a Book of the Dead that provided instructions that would hopefully bring eternal life.

Alchemically, the voyage taken by Osiris represents the adept's experience of the *nigredo*. During this initial stage of the work, there are simultaneous psycho-physical operations occurring in which both material matter and psychic matter are broken down. In modern psychological terms, the adept's ego is dissolved and what appears is the Shadow. For the Egyptian, the Shadow (*shuit*) was one of nine souls that evidenced the proof of one's corporeal existence. In time, the shadow evolves into a psychological construct where "recognizing and integrating one's shadow is required to attain wholeness." Alchemically, we find this work expressed in the 15th century recipe, "The Sun and its Shadow bring the work to perfection."¹⁰ The *Turba* echoes a similar instruction: "But he who hath tinged the poison of the sages with the sun and its shadow, hath attained to the greatest secret."¹¹ The Egyptians projected this black endeavor onto the walls of their sanctuaries and filled thousands of pages of papyri with descriptions of the *duat*, the underworld experience for both the purpose of achieving eternal life and also as a means of learning how one might communicate in this life with the gods of the collective unconscious.

"It is good to know this for a person on earth, a remedy, a million times proven."

-FROM THE AMDUAT

The "divine words" used to describe this alchemical journey were considered alive and magical. These images, employing letters and pictures, were later termed hieroglyphs by the Greeks. They were magical in the sense that writing and copying them brought to life what they represented. We read in the *Amduat*, "Whoever knows these pictures is the image of the great god himself."¹² Thoth, god of symbols and language, was credited with having invented hieroglyphs and was believed to have written parts of the Book of the Dead. This language remained secret for thousands of years; only temple priests understood their meaning. 1400 years went by without anyone knowing what these strange figures meant. Fortunately, in 1799 one of Napoleon's soldiers

happened to find a stone in a place called Rosetta. It was written in three languages, Greek and two forms of ancient hieroglyphs. Through the labors of a language scholar, Jean-Francois Champollion, the Rosetta Stone provided the key needed to translate this mysterious language, a language that was, oddly enough, never spoken. It was odd because of the magical significance early Egyptians placed on the creative power of utterance. So important was the God of Utterance that he stood directly behind Ra on the Sun boat that journeyed through the netherworld. In order to see, hear and speak in this dark realm, the mummy was given a final rite called "Opening the Mouth" which reanimated the senses. Other stories account for Ra's creation of the world by his uttering a name, a power not unlike that which was found much later in the Book of Genesis.

Among the many Books of the Dead, the *Amduat*, written in 1400 BCE, described in exacting detail Ra's travel through the underworld. The Egyptians believed that this world, the *duat*, was the mirror opposite to the flat earth on which they lived. *The Amduat or What is in the Netherworld* was meant as an instruction book for how one should navigate the treacherous waters in this dark and dangerous region beneath the earth. The journey is taken by boat that has on board specific gods to help Ra avoid, kill and defeat the many dangers. Ra's divine crew included Wepwawet, the "Opener of Ways, Sia "Mind," the "Lady of the Barque", (Hathor), the "Horus of Fragrance," the "Bull of Ma'at," "The Vigilant One," Hu "Utterance," and the "Guide of the Barque," another form of Horus who serves as helmsman. After Seth is defeated by Horus, he was put on board as the "roarer" to frighten away Ra's enemies. The ram headed Ra stands gallantly at the center of the Sun boat under a protective canopy formed by the uraeus snake. The ultimate danger faced by Ra is Apopis, a god antithetical to light. His blackness represents every impulse that seeks to extinguish consciousness permanently. Mastering Apopis means that we gain control over our lower base instincts.¹³

Ra, the supreme god of light, makes this passage each night and evidence of his victory over darkness is the rising sun. Eventually, Osiris is initiated by Ra and given the wisdom needed to make this perilous night passage. Although physically dead, Osiris' spirit undertakes this same journey so that it can reunite with the light of the Self and with the help of Horus, become a fully awakened soul. Now when Osiris rises up from the depths, safely delivering the sun to earth, there is a rebirth of consciousness. With Osiris' ba-soul reuniting with his body, the collective is well served by having conscious-

ness restored to the earth; the dimensions of below and above form a renewing *coniunctio*. This transmission of light from a supreme god (Ra) to nature (Osiris) to human beings is reflected in the evolving themes of the funerary literature of one period to the next. “In the Intermediate Period between the Old and Middle Kingdoms,” writes Egyptologist Erik Hornung, “the Pyramid Texts were transformed into the Coffin Texts, which were no longer a royal privilege but available to all who could afford a painted coffin.”¹⁴

Before Egypt was called by its present name, it was referred to as the Land of Beauty. Indeed, even the Egypt we see today reflects its early magnificence and the love the people had for their country. Despite popular notions about slavery and abhorrent conditions that were said to have existed during the building of many pyramids, the truth is that the thousands employed to work on these projects were not slaves and medical care was freely available. It was considered an honor for workers to be buried as close to the king’s pyramid as possible.¹⁵ Above all the ancient Egyptians were a practical people who worked collectively and held deep respect for ancestral power. Egypt’s secret beauty isn’t completely revealed in artifacts and what remains of the great pyramids. These reflect a psychology that is difficult for the modern Western mind to comprehend. For while we struggle to fend off death, regarding it as an enemy, the early Egyptians saw “going to one’s horizon” as an opportunity for eternal life. In their view, the afterlife wasn’t very different than that lived on earth. The Field of Reeds is beautifully depicted in stela as a place of abundance. With the exception of having to work one day a year, the immortal, resurrected body would spend endless time luxuriating in the bounty of his beloved country.¹⁶

Spiritual governance over work and commerce would later be credited to the Greek version of Thoth, Hermes. He was Lord of the Marketplace. Recently, on a visit to New York City, I sat in a parked bus peering up at the top of Grand Central Station to see Mercury, the Roman image of Hermes, presiding over this hub of transportation and commerce. Hermes did not replace Thoth and in time the two appear to have merged in the form of Hermes Trismegistus. The debate as to whether Hermes Trismegistus was a true god or a divine man remains undecided. What is clear are the many powers attributed to him and his special kinship to alchemy.

Combining the powers of Thoth and Hermes, “The papyri present the new syncretistic Hermes [Hermes Trismegistus] as a cosmic power, creator of heaven and earth and almighty world-ruler. Presiding over fate and justice, he is also lord of the night, and of death and its mysteri-

ous aftermath – hence his frequent association with the moon (Selene) and Hecate. He knows ‘all that is hidden under the heavenly vault, and beneath the earth’, and is accordingly much revered as a sender of oracles.”¹⁷

With all these powers one would think that the zenith of this archetype had reached its most developed expression. And yet, we find a still more complex image emerging in Mercurius, the god who oversees the labors of the alchemists.

Mercurius is a complex and perhaps more psychological figure than Thoth and Hermes. Jung enumerated his qualities in *Alchemical Studies*. Mercurius, writes Jung:

- a. consists of all conceivable opposites
- b. is both material and spiritual
- c. is the process by which the lower and material is transformed into the higher and spiritual
- d. is the devil, a redeeming psychopomp, an evasive trickster, and God’s reflection in physical matter
- e. is also the reflection of a mystical experience of the artifex that coincides with the alchemical opus represents on one hand, the self, and on the other, the individuation process and, because of the limitless number of his names, also the collective unconscious¹⁸.

The question of whether these gods represent a progression or evolution of this archetype remains unclear. Some have proposed that there were two Egyptian Hermes, one grandfather and the other, grandson.¹⁹ Plato queried whether Thoth was a god or a divine man. Others attribute the changes in these archetypal images to syncretism or a natural need for renewal of archetypes (see Henderson quote below). As I survey the many stories of these gods’ relationship to humankind, their powers and dark nature, I find not one god but strong evidence that each is an emanation or avatar of the Trickster archetype. At its core each of these gods shows himself as a kindly, wise, whimsical teacher and friend to humankind, one who indirectly connects the darkest aspects of the individual and the collective with its greatest resource, variously called the Light, Sol, Self. Thus: Osiris brought fertility to the lands both from above and below; Hermes Trismegistus authored the collected books known as the *Hermetica*; Hermes, of course, gave us the healing wand, the caduceus, and Mercurius the power to transmute gross thoughts and raw metals into precious ones. If not saviors them-

selves, each disturbed earthly condition enough so that only a savior could transform the status quo into something divine. And with this transformation of chaos into cosmos we see the creation of the god-man.²⁰

From this archetypal perspective a whole new vista opens up: we discover trickster gods in all cultures. Some aspects of Thoth appearing in the visage of Maui, the Hawaiian trickster god who created the island named in his honor; a bit of Hermes is seen in Wadkunkaga, the Winnebago trickster who shape-shifts, steals and sexually acts out, actions all taken to teach and bring healing to the tribe. As Jung said of the trickster, he is “a collective shadow figure, an epitome of all the inferior traits of character in individuals. And since the individual shadow is never absent in a component of personality, the collective figure can construct itself out of it continually.”²¹ In all these images of the trickster we find a dark beauty that, I believe, finds its origins in the Black Land of ancient Egypt.

The Ancient Egyptians believed that these gods and other beings of the Netherworld also die regularly and therefore have to be renewed in their image”. It is a well-known psychological fact that the living entities of the collective unconscious, the archetypes, have a tendency to fade in their vigor and die away. They need a regular renewal by an ego-consciousness that enters the realm of the transpersonal unconscious. Then all the dangerous and helpful forces become realities again, receiving new clothes from the individual that undertook the dangerous journey of entering the unconscious realm.

-JOSEPH HENDERSON

The secret of Egypt’s beauty lies in the imagination that gave rise to some of the world’s most sophisticated physical structures. For 3800 years, the Pyramid at Giza stood as the world’s tallest structure until the construction of the Eiffel Tower in 1889. The *Amduat* is “the first scientific publication” and “first illustrated book in history.”²² The early Egyptians invented black ink, a 365-day calendar, the ox-drawn plow, sails and paper. But the real secret of Egypt’s beauty lies in its vision of life, its cosmology, art and mythology. Time, in this earthly dimension, was viewed as little more than a weigh station on a person’s journey toward wholeness.

What evidence we have from the remnants of ancient pyramids, tombs, mummies, artifacts as well as papyri that describe the magical, mythological and psychological cosmology of early Egyptian life is unparalleled in the history of humankind. The ancient Egyptians were equally

adept at building the internal structures of the mind as they were proficient in constructing pyramids, the means of which still boggle the imagination. Not only did they understand the nature of materials, mathematics and engineering, but they possessed a profound knowledge of group dynamics that provided sustained transgenerational cooperation of thousands of workers dedicated to a single goal. They both allied and challenged natural law. Of all their accomplishments perhaps the most overlooked was their ability to awaken sleeping consciousness from its dark imprisonment. We find ample evidence to support this claim in thousands of spells and countless gods all created for the purpose of subduing the inferior habits of the mind while elevating human consciousness in life and beyond the grave. Perhaps the single, simplest piece of evidence is found in one translation for a title of the Book of the Dead, *Per Em Hru*, which means, “emerging while awake.” In other words, the work of attaining supreme consciousness was not restricted to either this life or the next. The preparation for death begins at birth and at death one continues the work in becoming Osiris, resurrected and awakened.

So thus Eternity is in God, the cosmos is in Eternity. Time is in the cosmos. Becoming is in time. And while Eternity stands still in Gods presence, the cosmos is in motion in Eternity. Time passes in the cosmos and ‘becoming’ comes to be in Time.

-HERMES TRISMEGITUS,
EMERALD TABLETS OF THOTH

We can see from the various myths and folk tales I have described, many themes and images that would occupy the attention of alchemists throughout the world for thousands of years. At the heart of their conception of life was a seminal image of blackness, a void large and strong enough to contain the many transmutations of all things evolving from gross to subtle. The Black is most prominent in the human experience as death and the emphasis on death is apparent in the extensive funerary preparations that are evidenced in magical spells, mythological themes, specific gods of death and ritualistic practices. “Going to one’s horizon” offered the deceased an opportunity to gain eternal life. This journey began in the darkness of unconscious life and with increasing awareness of life’s temporality there arose an impulse to transform one’s grossly unconscious personality into something possessing eternal beauty. The best insurance one could have in getting through the hardships of life in this hostile environment and the struggles that still had to be faced after death was the

integrity achieved in perfecting one's identity.

We have much to learn from these people. Alchemy was only one shining gem in their crown, but it remains one that still captures our imagination.

Whoever knows these mysterious images

Is a well-provided Akb-spirit.

Always this person can enter and leave

The netherworld.

Always speaking to the living ones.

Proven to be true, a million times. (A)

Notes:

1. Jack Lindsay, *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (London: Fredrick Muller, Ltd., 1970), p. 74.

2. *op.cit.* Thom F. Cavalli, *Alchemical Psychology, Old Recipes for Living in a New World* (New York: Putnam, 2002). Thomas Norton, *Ordinal of Alchemy*, Chapter VI. p. 335

3. R.T. Rundel Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1959), p. 123.

4. *Ibid.* p. 104. In the Pyramid Texts Osiris was killed at a place known either as Nedit 'where he was cast down' or Gazelles' Mountain, perhaps the modern Komir, in southern Egypt. A second possible etymology of the word alchemy may come from *chymia* meaning to cast as in casting a mould. But, this phrase "where he was cast down" throws light on another possible origin of the word and its relationship to Osiris.

5. The heart, considered the seat of intelligence, will be needed in the afterlife where it will be weighed against a feather to determine the soul's fate.

6. According to Jung, Horus' "real name is Horpi-chrud, which is composed of *chrud* (child), and *Hor* (from *hri*, 'up, above the top'). The name thus signifies the "up-and-coming child," the rising sun, as opposed to Osiris, who personifies the setting, the sun "in the Western Land." *Symbols of Transformation* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1956). p. 240.

7. Trismosin's *Splendor Solis*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.), pages 32-33.

8. This is later expressed by the Gnostic's idea of releasing the spirit trapped in matter. What the alchemists intuited but were unable technologically to accomplish in the laboratory, was, centuries later, derived by Einstein. His famous formula led to the technology used for releasing the tremendous energy concealed within the atom.

9. R.T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*. P. 117.

10. C.G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1963). p. 97.

11. *ibid.* p.97. See footnote 38.

12. Theodor Abt and Erik Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife, The Egyptian Ambuat – A Quest for Immortality* (Zurich: Living Human Heritage Publication, 2003), p. 20.

13. *The Seven Passageways of the Pathway of the Serpentine Embraced* was a set of images produced by the Egyptians to provide the meditative means to subdue habits and the death instinct. See p. 54

14. Erik Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife, The Egyptian Ambuat – A Quest for Immortality*. p. 11.

15. For similar reason magicians would bury objects near sacred sites in order to absorb *heka* (magical power). These are early examples of sympathetic magic.

16. And even that one day of obligation was taken care of by having enough *ushabi* on hand to work at a moment's notice. These *ushabi* seem very similar to homunculi that were first described in the visions of Zosimos in the third century A.D.

17. Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes, A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986). P. 25.

18. C.G. Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, v. 13 (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1967). p. 237

19. Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, p.29.

20. *ibid.* According to Garth Fowden, "This self-identification with a god, common in the magical papyri, is an authentically Egyptian trait." P.26

21. *op.cit.* Paul Radin, *The Trickster, A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Books 1956).p. 209.

22. Erik Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife*. p. 12.

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“Therefore learn Alchimiam, otherwise known as Spagyria, which teaches you to separate the false from the true.” - PARACELSUS

What is Alchemy?

By Steve Kalec

WHAT IS ALCHEMY? What is the spirit and the secret of this Hermetic doctrine and tradition? What hidden knowledge is there to be found in the Alchemists secret language that is expressed in such obscure symbols and allegories? Is there really such a thing as the Philosopher’s Stone, and what is it? Can it really be found and made by the true seeker? Is it something tangible or something philosophical? Can it really transmute lead to gold, heal the sick, give longevity and even render one immortal? Is there really such a thing as the Elixir of Life? What kind of work and experiments do the alchemists do in their laboratories and why? Can we do the same work in our own homes and what does it do for us? What can one achieve with it? These are the questions that we as students of the Hermetic and Noble Art of Alchemy ask ourselves in our studies, our practice and in our quest. This very profound philosophy known as the Hermetic philosophy pierces the very mysteries of creation and being, and it is the foundation of all religions, philosophies and psychologies.

Alchemy, according to the philosophers, is the science of God, the law of the universe. Alchemists say that God is the Grand Alchemist and His body, the universe, is the laboratory. The task of the alchemist is to center himself within the consciousness of the divine creative principle so that he can understand the universe and all its diversities as one great process. The alchemists defined this as the raising of vibrations. This is accomplished through purification of the entity, whether it be on the physical plane which we call the tangible plane or whether it be on the spiritual intangible plane. Alchemy is the transmutation of

something inferior to something superior. It is the art of the manipulation of the energies of life. It is an art and it is the secret of the purification and the elevation of the body, soul and spirit of any substance in the three kingdoms of nature, being the mineral, vegetable and animal. Alchemy is the process of bringing natural substances to their inherent perfection.

There is a very big difference between alchemy and chemistry. To a chemist, all is matter and he only sees chemicals and their combinations to form other chemicals. A chemist does not view the bodies it works with as being alive. To an alchemist, all is life as he sees the universal being in all things. The alchemist sees being in the world and the world in being. Alchemy is a biodynamic system which uses the forces of life in its operations. He purifies and combines life energies of the Soul and Spirit in matter to form purer more noble and higher energies of life. The alchemical operation is a threefold work accomplished on bodies; the effects are purification, regeneration and evolution. The real difference between alchemy and chemistry is that to an alchemist, soul and spirit are always accounted for when they deal with matter. The element of consciousness is always well included and established in their experiments. This is something that the new quantum physics is only lately beginning to realize in what is called the *uncertainty principle* and the *virtual particle theory*.

On studying matter, scientists have discovered that what they know about a substance changes because of the very fact that they are looking at it. In other words, they have found that if they look at the position of a matter particle, then they have changed its momentum

by altering its absorbed energy, and because of this, the very substance as a particle has changed and is different. They are beginning to realize in a scientific manner that consciousness effects matter. That is, as our consciousness of something changes, then that something has changed. Alchemists have always known this as *Reality vs. Actuality*. There is a philosophical dictum that states, "Change your conception of the world, and you will have changed the world".

In nature, there is a truth which can only be realized with senses other than those of the flesh. Philosophers have always known the magic contained in this truth. They have seen this truth in the miracle of a tiny seed breaking through the earth having conquered death. They have seen it in the unfolding of a flower. It is seen when observing the rushing waves in harmonious symphony with the dancing palm trees on a sunny day at the beach. It is seen everywhere and it is found in oneself. The blessed alchemical marriage of the Sun and the Moon is a conjunction of physical fact with metaphysical reality, a union of the outer objective consciousness with the inner subjective awareness. Alchemy is veritably an art, and the alchemist must become sensitive to an inner receptiveness. Through such receptiveness, one's awareness allows that the alchemist be cleansed by the work just as his matter is purified during his experiment. A true and authentic Alchemical transmutation occurs at the convergence of the two worlds, the spiritual and the material.

What are the alchemists in search of? They seek to extract the Quintessence in all things.

"Alchemy is about isolating and collecting the Vital Life force itself, isolating it so that it can be condensed, purified and manipulated to conform with the alchemists will. Alchemy is in short, the Art of Evolution. Alchemy is the art of elevating a substance to their highest level of perfection that they can attain originally mandated by God while still on this earth in the material form."

-JOHN H REID III
IN HIS BOOK MINOR OPUS

The goal of Alchemy is the Great Opus or the Great Work which is the purification of the lesser or gross and its elevation to the greater or more refined, whether in plants, metals, or in consciousness. The ultimate goal of the alchemist is to find the Prima Materia or the First Matter of nature as the dark, passive, unformed and raw virgin and universal stuff of creation. Through the alchemical process, the alchemist transforms this Prima

Materia into the Philosopher's Stone. This accomplishment is most commonly known as the transformation of Lead into Gold, the heaviest, darkest, densest most earthbound, least valuable metal becoming Gold: Incarnated Light; the most glittering, luminous, valuable metal; symbol of the sun and of spiritual attainment and consciousness, spiritual illumination as cosmic consciousness which is the ultimate goal of the human evolution.

There are many facets to the practice of alchemy. They range from the spiritual, psychological, metaphysical, and the practical laboratory alchemy. The work and the modus operandi are universal in whatever path we chose. The key to practicing alchemy is work, for it is in the work that the alchemical process reveals itself. It is in the work that the alchemist becomes one with his matter as he realizes himself being in the crucible with his matter. It is in the work that an intimate relationship will develop with the experiment through which the vigil alchemist will realize the alchemical forces awakening in him or her through the law of correspondence. A resonance is produced by the harmonious and sympathetic attunement established between the alchemist and his experiment. The steps of the separation of the subtle from what is the gross, and the steps in the purification through water in the solve stage, and through fire in the calcination stage will spill over into one's being and there begin the inner process. The very work is knowledge of nature and a means to spiritual development.

According to the Philosophers of Nature the three adages related to alchemical and spagyric work are:

- The alchemist accelerates the process of Nature by never stepping out of its rules.
- The alchemist removes the obstacles which prevent Nature from acting spontaneously.
- The alchemist strives to help Nature in the work of universal reintegration.

It is suggested that one should start practice with practical laboratory alchemy in the vegetable kingdom as plant alchemy. It is a pleasant path because the work involves one with the beautiful world of precious essences of herbs, flowers and plants to make wonderful alchemical tinctures, elixirs, oil essences, precious salts and plant stones. These not only have powerful curative properties, but through the process in the alchemical work, the practitioner attunes with the higher forces of nature, and leads him to inner initiation of at least the whitening or Lunar stage.

Plant alchemy and the Spagyric art is a science with a profound philosophy in its background. The word Spagyria has its roots in two Greek words: spao, to

draw out, to divide; and ageiro, to gather, to bind, to join. These two concepts form the foundation of every genuine alchemical work, hence the often-quoted phrase “Solve et coagula, et habebis magisterium!” Dissolve and bind, and you will have the magistry. Paracelsus has said, “Therefore learn Alchimiam, otherwise known as Spagyria, which teaches you to separate the false from the true.” The work in plant alchemy wonderfully introduces the adept to the Hermetic Philosophy and the alchemical process, while at the same time allowing him to gently get accustomed to the animating energies of nature on both the physical and spiritual levels.

“Ora et Labora”, is the motto of the alchemists. Ora meaning to pray, from which comes the word, oratory. Labora, meaning to work, from which comes the word laboratory. Why the laboratory and what do the alchemists do in their laboratories? There is a beautiful and wonderful relationship that can be developed between the alchemist and his experiment through the laws of correspondences between the living animated symbols of the experiment and the inner awareness of the alchemist. In alchemy, the true alchemist knows that he is always in the crucible with his experiment. What is happening to the substances in the experiment is transpiring also within himself through correspondence. A true alchemist always sees himself or the universe in his boiling flask or his retort. He recognizes himself in his flask as the veils fade between the flask and the Self. Since he is raising vibrations by the purifying, cleansing and the exalting of his substances in his crucible or in his retort, through his attunement, a harmonious sympathetic resonance is had, and the alchemical process is spilled over into his being as an inner initiation. Outside lab work is objective work which will stimulate and set in motion inner subjective work through the alchemical law of correspondence through which the formation of the Philosopher’s Stone in his heart will begin to be felt. The outside objective work stimulates an inner response and an awareness, or an inner initiation.

Through this outer and inner translations and transfers of energies, not only does the outside work affect the inner being but also that which is realized as within, can and will exteriorize and manifest outside. Thus not only does an inner awakening occur, but also a relative and proportional outside manifestation is had on the objective level and a true outside transmutation can be the alchemist’s success. This is what is called the Magistry, the Great Opus or Work.

In the alchemical work using plants and herbs, one is led to inner attunement with the inner energies of the soul and spirit. He is led to an inner awareness

and contact with the inner guardian and master or the higher self. Through the interplays of these concentrated energies, and through the sympathetic resonances set up by the alchemical laws of correspondences between what is above and what is below, what is inner and what is outer: the alchemist also succeeds in the making of marvelous, potent and beneficial alchemical tinctures and elixirs that cure sickness, brings harmony and peace, and attunes one with the All. Alchemist and teacher Jean Dubuis says: “The whole alchemical process occurs simultaneously with the inner and the outer. The physical purification of the body with the preparation from the alchemical laboratory refine the energies and make them more receptive to the finer vibrations of the Cosmic. The spirit increases it’s awakening and consciousness expands. This increased consciousness enables us to further penetrate into the elixirs of the laboratory which reach then higher vibrations and raise our self to a higher level. And thus the process continues and accelerates into an inner and outer spiral, into an evolution of consciousness.”

The Alchemist understands that there is only one mind, the universal cosmic mind of the All. There is only ‘one’ energy permeating the universe as the one universal life source. This emanating energy divides itself and descends in the order of creation into various different levels of vibrations, intelligences, powers and levels of consciousness through its eternal act in becoming. There is always within itself an established and unbreakable unity through the universal law of “As Above So Below.” There is only one being, the infinite and eternal that which is, the universal life force that has an absolute affinity to become, unfold and manifest itself from that which is the invisible to that which is the visible and manifest in the world. This subtle yet most powerful energy is in everything. There is nothing in which this energy cannot be found in and nothing can be found apart from it. In a book called ‘Kybalion,’ there is written a law that states, “All is in THE ALL, and THE ALL is in All.”

It is this substance that the alchemist seeks and works with in his crucibles, alembics and retorts. It is this energy that is the alchemist’s Philosophic Mercury that he seeks to extract and purify from her terrestrial prison and set it free as it rises up to heaven where it acquires the powers of the above. It is with this magical stuff that he helps nature in her evolution as it descends again to earth and fills it with a new life as it saturates it with the divine energies and light to raise the vibration of matter, to exalt the salt of the earth and spiritualize it. In this process lies the second most important secret of alchemy. “Volatilize the fixed and fix the volatile.”

What is Alchemy?

Render the terrestrial or material into the spiritual by exalting matter by raising its vibrations, and render the spiritual into the material or terrestrial by bringing the spirit down into objective realization.

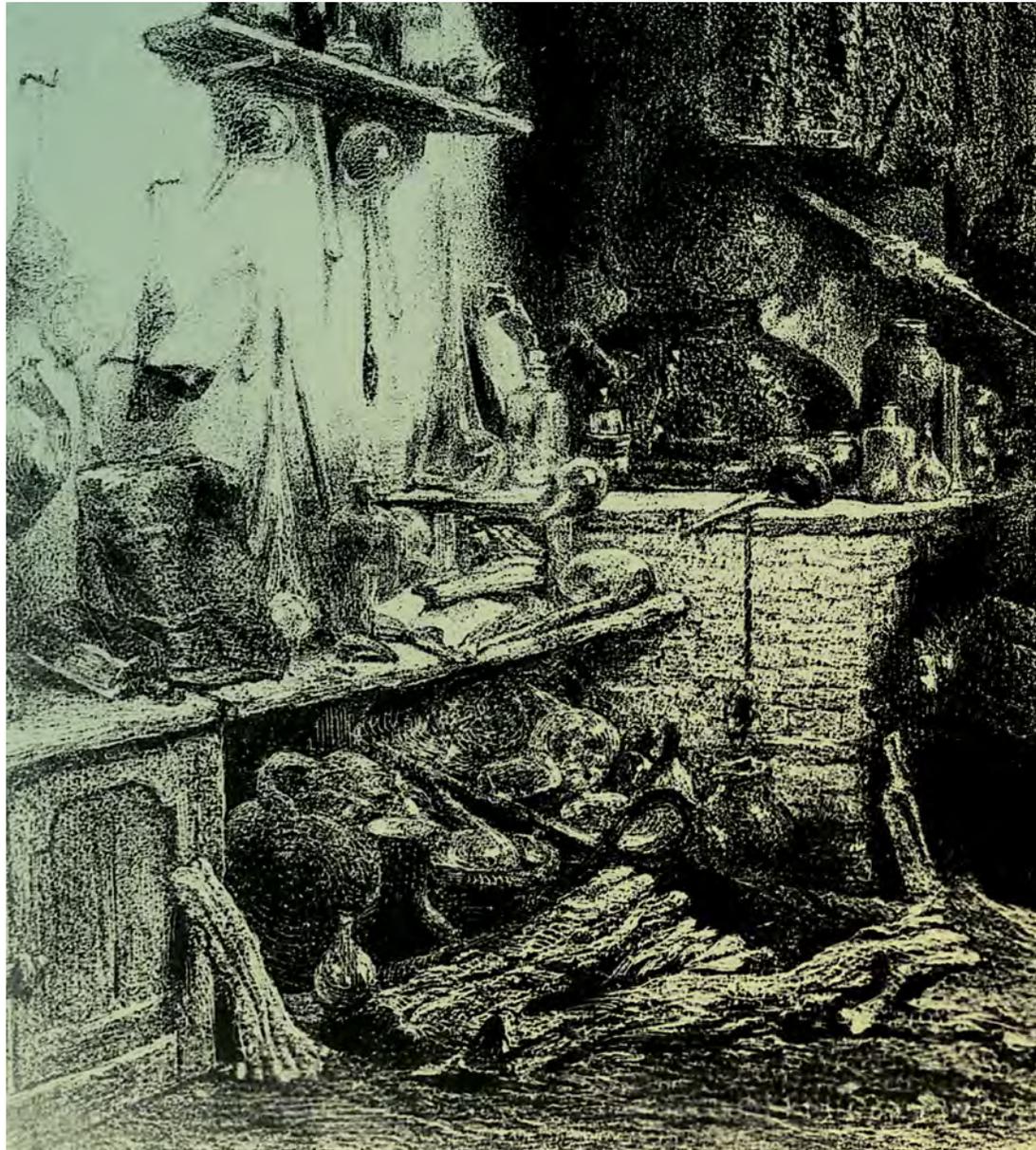
The “Motus Operandi,” the method of the operation of this volatilizing and fixing is through the regiment of the alchemist’s Secret Fire. This is the first most important secret of the alchemists. The masters say, “Above all, seek ye the secret fire, for without it you can do nothing in our art.” In alchemy, it can be shown, how a plant is turned inside out. An alchemist exalts and spiritualizes the matter, the salts of a plant, its body, and he will fix it, capture its spiritual aspect, its soul quality and make an alchemical elixir or a plant stone. These will have powerful and magical qualities belonging to the essential

values and attributes of the plant, which qualities having been multiplied, concentrated and transmuted into a higher order through the alchemical process.

To the study of alchemy there are many aspects. Whether we are a laboratory practical alchemist, or a transcendental and metaphysical alchemist, whether we study its profound philosophy or study it in psychology, all these aspects very much complement each other. Alchemy truly has most beautiful secrets to reveal. The pursuit of its mysteries can be very fulfilling and satisfying. The veil to the entrance of its temple will be lifted to all earnest seekers who truly are sincere in their quest.

Ora, Lege, et Labora. ☉

Study taken from Spagyric Courses of The Philosopher’s of Nature





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