

# AN ALCHEMIST'S PRIMER

Fundamentals of Esoteric  
Transformation



Manly P. Hall

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**By Manly P. Hall**



AN ALCHEMIST'S PRIMER: FUNDAMENTALS OF ESOTERIC TRANSFORMATION

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## CHAPTER ONE

# THE SACRED SCIENCE OF TRANSFORMATION

Alchemy has fascinated the human mind for at least three or four thousand years, and while it is still a very complicated situation, advancements in various sciences have had a bearing upon our interpretation of the alchemical theory.

Alchemy is based primarily upon one concept, namely, that an element can be transformed into another element. In other words, it is possible to take various substances, by art change them and by so doing accomplish any one of a number of symbolic or literal ends, one of which was the transmutation of base metals. Another was the transmutation of artificial precious stones so that they became identical with the genuine stones. A third end was the creation of a universal medicine by which all diseases could be treated, this medicine itself having as its primary objective the transmutation of the elements within the body of man.

During early times, both in China and in India, alchemical experiments are recorded. These experiments used very largely cinnabar which took the place of the mercury of Western alchemical experimentation. The Egyptians are said to have created alchemical formulas and to have carried on various experiments by burying substances in the desert sand, using the sand as a furnace or heating agent; by so doing they were able to cause the substance in a crystal egg to germinate. All these speculations are duly recorded in various books on the subject, and for a long time they were unquestioned. It was assumed that the science was literal, factual, and quite possible. There are a number of historical accounts of the transmutation of metals in public assembly with many witnesses.

This type of thinking continued to grow and interest the public mind to well into the seventeenth century, a most critical period in Europe for it was during the seventeenth century that there was an almost complete reformation of knowledge. During this period the medievalism gradually faded out, humanism arose against scholasticism, and the modern methods of thinking became dominant. In a very short time the old ways were lost forever, but there arose a tremendous revival of alchemy, and between around 1575 and 1675 the greater part of alchemical literature that we know today was published. Not only were the books strange, complex, and mysterious, but they were often illustrated with incredible and fantastic diagrams, figures, and symbols, seemingly derived from ancient theology, perhaps Greek or Roman, or perhaps even more remote as in East Indian and Chinese. Certainly the dragon appears, the many-headed deities of India are there, and a very interesting and remarkable school of graphic representation came to illustrate the recondite and mysterious writings of the various alchemical masters.

The alchemical revival mingled with the streams of Rosicrucianism which first appeared in Europe about 1610. A number of the alchemists were identified with the Rosicrucian Society and many works by the early Rosicrucian apologists referred directly to alchemy. The mystics of the period, like Boehme, combined astrology, alchemy, Rosicrucianism and many other types of symbolism.

The alchemists of the seventeenth century were generally persecuted or ignored or made to feel that they were of little value. A few native princes of the small European principalities hired alchemists in the hope of making gold, but about the only productive report that we have is that they helped to discover the Dresden porcelain which did make gold for a number of people. Behind this entire subject there seems to lie some form of important meaning, a meaning that has eluded us and is

now just beginning to be recognized. It seems inevitable that the alchemical processes were representative of psychological and physiological processes in man and nature, There is no doubt in the world that many of the alchemists were simply social chemists whose primary purpose was to reform human society and transmute the base objectives of the average person into pure and proper objectives suitable to protect society. These alchemists were united in secret orders, worked largely behind the scenes, and had very little public recognition. They were influenced by chemists from Arabia, Turkey, and North Africa. We know that it was in these areas that Paracelsus studied and returned to Europe with his famous contributions to medicine, one of the most important being his development of the use of mercury in various drug compounds. Finally his contributions elevated him to the position that Garrison gives him in his history of medicine, namely, that he was the foremost figure in pharmacology in Europe.

Paracelsus, Boyle, van Halmark (who discovered illuminating gas) were alchemists. Alchemists made many useful discoveries outside of the specialized field with which they were concerned. A large number of the early alchemists were religious people, monks, priests, bishops, and connected in one way or another with holy orders. Many of them undoubtedly worked on the speculation that alchemy was a spiritual science. Among those who took the religious turn of mind we realize that perhaps the most important was the use of alchemical symbols as in the case of Nicholas Vernow to ornament the fronts of churches in which it was assumed that the whole secret was placed upon the *reredos* or altar or upon the building facade. I visited the Church of the Innocents in Paris where the famous figures of Flornow were supposed to have been drawn, but unfortunately the church is gone, There are a few columns with partial figures in the gardens of one of the museums, I think the Cine in Paris but others, the great gates of Notre Dame were originally, it is said, not only covered with alchemical symbols but were cast in bronze by the devil himself, so the spirit of evil got mixed up in it somewhere. On the other hand, nearly every major cathedral in Europe has at least one legend in which infernal powers helped to complete the building, so it is not a unique situation.

One thing perhaps that would help us in this study is the realization that there was in early days, prior to the rise of the Ottoman Empire, direct communication between Europe and Asia Along the caravan routes in China, along the silk roads, and through the oasis of the desert of Gobi, merchants traveled with their wares all the way across Asia and Asia Minor to sell their goods in the forum of Rome and in the great market places of Etruscia and other cities. There is no question that Europe at an early date was aware of Asiatic culture, nor that Egypt was aware of Asiatic culture, and that these various foreign powers had an influence on the rise of alchemy in Europe It is quite possible we are dealing largely in alchemy with what the Asiatic mind refers to as Yoga. There was a distinct discipline, a sacred science of human regeneration, and this sacred science, being in conflict with the church and being contrary to the accepted policies of European thinkers, was held in secret and was represented symbolically by chemistry It is obvious that the tremendous control or influence of alchemy on European thinking from probably 500 B.C. to 1700 A.D. must certainly have something behind it other than chimera. It could not have been a complete delusion, and even the greatest adversaries of the subject were uncertain into which direction the final solution would lead. Actually, therefore, if we assume that the original purpose of alchemy was the perfection of man, the restoration of the human being to his divine estate, we can realize why some alchemists used early *Old Testament* structure for their guide, One alchemist pointed out that the canticles of Solomon contained a complete exposition of the alchemical process. Another was equally certain that the best key to the transmutation of metals was *The Lord's Prayer*. Now this type of reference should have caused a glimmer of realization in the public mind because it was obvious that these Biblical references,

dealing directly with man himself, could hardly be assumed to deal only with chemical substances. Gradually, up to and into the seventeenth century, the emphasis was more and more upon the solution of the human problem, and alchemy became a forerunner of political reformation and the establishment of democracy in the Western world. Alchemy became a new concept of healing based more and more upon natural methods. It was also a secret art of internal transmutation by processes of meditation, prayer, various disciplines upon the mind and emotions, and by the gradual transformation of mental attitudes so that the mind no longer interfered with the ultimate objective of evolution, namely, the production of the consciously enlightened person.

Alchemy might approach the subject by means of a series of archetypal diagrams or figures. Where do the symbols of alchemy originate? Like all symbols, they have to originate within man himself, and like all other symbols they arise from various interpretations of environmental circumstances. Symbols are adapted from nature, but each adaptation shows a certain originality bestowed by the human mind itself. We have in alchemy a series of basic dream symbols, archetypal symbols, or symbols based upon the collective subconscious of the race. These symbols in their various forms have appeared in slightly modified form all over the world, producing the complicated and enduring artistry of world symbolism. World symbolism has affected every religion of mankind, most philosophies, practically all art and, to a great degree, it has overshadowed all political institutions. By means of symbolism the human mind is persuaded to focus its attention upon various mysteries in order that it may solve them, the assumption being that the symbol has a meaning, that if this meaning can be found it unlocks the door, that the symbol can be unlocked only by the interpreter himself, and that the meaning may not necessarily be the same meaning for any two persons. In opening the symbol door and in determining its meaning for him personally, the individual makes a major revelation of his own inner life. He tells more about himself this way than he can possibly tell by strict analysis under some psychological directive. The symbol is forever calling out of man some part of his own subjective potential thinking power.



Leaf 1 | *To the king and queen shall a son be born, without equal in all the world, the Philosopher's Stone "... the Prime Material of all metals."*

Most of the symbols were originally derived from mathematics, anatomy, physiology, or from the various forms in nature. Scientists and students, examining nature, found every natural thing to be a vast symbol; also that the physical world which projects its appearance upon us is a collective symbol made up of countless small symbols fitted together like the elements in a cell or a miniature unit of life in one of its forms. Now the fact that the whole world is a symbol, forever coaxing us to interpret it, should naturally result in a tremendous revelation of man's internal potential instead of merely a concept of industrial exploitation. Every forest has suggested a new source of wood, every river a new source of electrical energy, every ocean a new place for sewage. Everything that we interpret out of nature at the present time is what we would term utilitarian but, for the most part, it is not practical at all. The symbol has drawn out of us the level of interpretation upon which we are functioning and the only solution to this unfortunate situation is that the individual's level of interpretation has to be raised in some way. The alchemists attempted to do this by spiritualizing their symbols and reminding the beholder or the student or the disciple of the dignity of the sacred art, and that the purpose of these symbols is not universal prosperity but universal integrity. The integrity factor was probably just as necessary then as it is today. European countries were no less corrupt than the modern nations of the world. Most of them were ruled by petty despots who exploited their subjects in every possible way, so the idea of a new way of life suitable to the enhancement of man's natural dignity was most attractive.

One of the immediate by-products of this same system, arising from the same pressures in England and on the continent, and illustrated by the same engravers, was the cycle of the Utopias, the Utopian or perfect or highly advanced social order. All of the Utopias that were presented during the early seventeenth century were essentially socialistic. They were Utopias of equality, of equal opportunity, equal responsibility. Some of them went so far as to become involved with Andreae and his *Christianopolis*, with ideas of pensions for the widow and the fatherless, various institutions to protect those who were sick or injured, all to be maintained by the community through dues and the contributions of the citizens. It was a beginning of a new way of life. In the midst of this, one of the key figures in the whole problem, Lord Bacon, laid the foundations that we now call the basis of modern industrialism. He began to perceive the inevitable rise of a productive society and that man's advancement, so far as his living conditions were concerned, depended upon the advancement of his own skills and the training of his mind into the search for everything that could be known by man; what could be useful to man was to be isolated and developed. These things all took place within the period of twenty-five years and that some very pressureful projects lay behind the surface is difficult to doubt.

Assuming that alchemy was in some way concerned with the life of the individual, transmutation as it was termed by the alchemists would be more or less equivalent with our idea of human progress, spiritual integrity, self improvement, the unfoldment of man's internal qualities. Secret societies existed throughout the ancient, medieval and early modern worlds for the very purpose of perpetuating the disciplines of the ancient mysteries concerning these matters, and these disciplines descended to the seventeenth century alchemists. They were a group of persons who were trying to transform the self into the living vessel in which the various experiments were to take place. While there are many hints of this, to state it too broadly would have been to create religious conflicts, von Welling points out that the alchemists had several parallel lines of interest, that the transmutation of ignorance into wisdom is a kind of psychological chemistry, that there are laws governing it, and that these laws must be obeyed. The transmutation or transformation of a corrupt state into an ideal



government is a scientific process dealing with the chemistry of human relationships; not only an exact science, but an achievable end.

Transmutation of the religious situation is more or less relevant to us, We have many faiths that remain isolated; therefore, they are the elements of a compound, but a compound which has never been brought together, organized, and the elements transmuted so that out of the many comes the one which is the soul of them all. The alchemists were concerned with the creation or the revelation of a universal religious dispensation which was not to be created by killing off all believers except their own, but by putting together all the elements of believing into one great new alchemical fusion so that no longer the separate parts were even discernible, only the essence or final substance remained. According to the von Welling school of thought, that which is true in moral, spiritual, mystical, and religious matters must also be true physically. If you can take the base substances of man's society and restore the rites and mysteries of the golden age, there can be a physical transmutation of matter, for "as above, so below." The law of analogy declares that what can be accomplished in the soul can be also accomplished in the body. The process of digestion was used as illustration, example, and proof of alchemy.



Leaf 4 | *The panel across the body reads, “The Book of life and true Treasury of the World.”*

Having come to this type of conclusion, the alchemical philosophers gradually gained new estate when it became obvious that they were custodians of an exact spiritual science. This spiritual science has again been variously interpreted. Viewed by some as a control of magnetic fields or the electrical background of nature, there are others who feel that it has to do with psychic revelations, There are many different points of view on the matter, but in all of them a metaphysical or mystical factor is present. If the alchemist was actually a mystic (many of them are known to have been mystics) and his system was that of an internal reformation, the basic material upon which he worked was usually symbolized as a tree with the, seven planets on its branches. This arboretum of the chemistry was the symbol of Nature and Nature's product.

The alchemist was described in his own writing as a secretary of Nature. He was not someone breaking away from the rules of life; he was simply following Nature's way, because he recognized that everywhere in nature transformation is taking place mysteriously. In one alchemical design Nature is shown walking along in a forest at night, leaving footprints behind her, and a wise old man with a lamp is following in the footsteps, implying that Nature holds a key which solves the mystery. In a book on trees in our library there is a plate of a tree accompanied by the words, "Man plants the seed; Pluvius, the god of waters and rains, nourishes; and God bringeth the harvest." This was another statement of the concept underlying alchemy. Alchemy was forever a following in the way of Nature, a following in the way of virtue or integrity, man performing certain actions, these actions in turn resulting in a kind of harvest according to natural law. The alchemist did not talk of miracles; to him the miracle was nothing but the fulfillment of the universal purpose relating to a thing, It was a perfect manifestation of law, and a perfect example of man's obedience to law.

The seven different planets with their symbols formed a kind of basic laboratory structure. These seven planets, as we know in astrology, represent the tempers, the humors, the natures, and the various attributes of the seven aspects or powers of the human soul. The soul manifesting from within the individual was described by Pythagoras and Plato as an *oczoic*, or eight-faced symmetrical solid of which the seven ordinary manifestations constituted the seven planets, and the eighth aspect was reproduction or the ability to reproduce itself. Man's imagination is represented by the moon, his inquisitiveness and mental alertness by mercury. Venus represents his emotional quotient, the sun his individuality or the self behind it all. Mars represents the passions and the ambitions; Jupiter the judgment and also escape from the temptations of authority and power. Saturn represents discrimination, philosophical thoughtfulness, meditation and realization. These aspects of the human mind are also represented by certain metals, for there was a metal assigned to each of the planets. Silver was assigned to the moon, gold to the sun, lead to Saturn; each of them had its metal correspondence, In addition, each element was assigned its vowel, its sound, its color, its number, and its form. These seven symbols became a kind of alchemy of alchemy and are observable throughout the whole history of the subject,

The human being manifests these attributes in varying degrees and intensities. In some people the imagination, signified by the Moon, is strong; in others it is not. In some people the imagination is more or less optimistic; in others it is pessimistic. Some are hopeful, some are fearful, and all are torn by the excesses of whatever emotional or imaginative factor is dominant, Mercury is the symbol of inquisitiveness, the search for knowledge, the communication of ideas. It is language, it is graphic in all forms; it is the presentation of what we believe so that others may comprehend it. However, this is subject to all kinds of abuses and misuses. The individual may be like the Chinese artist who paints the picture because he cannot help painting the picture, or he may paint a picture as so many

Westerners do, because he thinks he can sell the picture. These are different levels of motivation. The individualistic power of the sun may cause an individual to be strong and personally secure, or it may change him into an autocrat and a despot whose security leads him to believe that he is empowered to enslave others.

These seven symbolic metals, elements, and substances within the human psyche presented the alchemist with his primary problem: how to reconcile all of these different attributes and aspects; how to get imagination to work cooperatively with ambition so that one does not lead the other further and further into tragedy; how to call upon the resources of these different factors and, presuming they could be melded together into one substance, what kind of faculty would they be? Would they represent one common knowing? Would they bring the mind to its highest possible potential level so that instead of the mind being a tumbling ground for conflict, it would be a coordinated instrument to penetrate into the mysteries of the unknown? How to dispose of opinion so as to lift the individual from his own notion into a closer communion with value and reality?

The alchemists finally came to a decision that makes us almost suspect that they had strong Asiatic influence. They concluded that the body of these elements cannot be reconciled, nor can they be confined. Tin, gold, silver, mercury, and iron can be combined but will never result in anything except another alloy of one nature or another without any essential improvement or elevation of consciousness. The same situation applies to the combination of the various elements of man's personality. The first step, therefore, in the uniting of these principles is that the individual himself must reduce each of these symbolic planetary elements to its own primary nature. As a spirit it can be combined; as a body it cannot. Therefore, each of these elements must be freed of all its dross parts. Imagination had to be reduced to its own seed. It had to be freed and left as a power without an area of abuse or misinterpretation with which it had surrounded itself. The power of the faculty itself had to be released entirely from its addictions, involvements, and corruptions, and to be so trained that it could not again be over-influenced by bad neighbors. To get the imagination in this condition obviously would require some form of meditative discipline. Something would have to be done to clear the imagination without destroying it. Imagination must be reconciled with all of the other elements to make this new and mysterious elixir. The only way that has ever been found to accomplish this type of thing is by transcending or suspending the faculty itself, which is a problem involved in Eastern metaphysics and meditation disciplines.

As of imagination, so of all the others, the individual's emotions, represented by Venus, cannot be melded into a compound while these emotions themselves are excessive. The principle behind emotion has to be redirected. The alchemists believed that in principle all faculties will cooperate. In essence all aspects of thought are from one life power. The various faculties that we possess have been differentiated from one energy. Therefore, they can be restored to one energy, or brought back to unity or union or, as the Indians call it, Yoga. Once these have been brought back to their fundamental unity, they can be redirected into a different pattern of process. They can be changed; the whole outlook can be changed and the whole reason for things can be changed. These faculties can be allowed to move out again into manifestation without conflict and in perfect harmony with the divine plan of things. Having struggled along for centuries thinking with divided faculties, man must come in the end to recognize that in the union of these faculties as one agent, he is then able to think with the mind of God.

To create a technique for such a procedure, it was necessary to use all kinds of symbols derived from many sources. Most of these symbols go back to the Greeks, the Pythagoreans, Platonic, and Neo-Platonic mysteries and, of course, one of the most basic of these is the natural division of man

himself into spirit, soul, and body. In the old alchemical symbolism, spirit is represented by the Sun, body by the Moon, and the soul or mind by Mercury. Gold is the element of the Sun, silver the element of the Moon, and quicksilver the element of Mercury. The alchemists assumed that Mercury was the common solvent, that Mercury could accept into itself other substances, It was therefore a reconciler and on this basis Mercury arises as the mind, the peculiar power to learn, the learning becoming the reconciler of all things. In the mind man can heal all the wounds of society. In his inner life he can think through and realize the need for certain major changes in his way of life. We can see this even in modern society with more and more individuals thinking seriously about finding ways to solve difficulties.



Leaf 5 | *The first operation: the Solar-Bird battles with the Earth-Serpent, who, tearing out its own entrails, gives them to the bird.*

Now Mercury as the solvent, symbolizing the soul, the mind, or the individuality implies another aspect of alchemy, namely that the soul or psychic field is actually the mysterious vessel within which the alchemical experiment must be performed, for in the soul the spiritual resources and the bodily resources find common ground, and the reconciliation of spirit and matter must always be soul. In the soul medium between the two there must gradually arise a compatibility; this compatibility really results in the increase of the majesty and dignity of the psychic life which gradually becomes more and more beautifully represented until in the end the soul, achieving its full development and bearing witness as being the child of the Sun and Moon, or spirit and body, rises to its supreme, unfolded, and enlightened dignity in the symbol of the Messiah. To the alchemists Christ was the end of the great chemical experiment, Christ was the symbol of the completely balanced and reorganized soul power in which all of the seven elements making up the objective world were reconciled, transformed, and transmuted by a mystery of transubstantiation.

Therefore, the soul power is the thing that the individual is striving for. He is seeking to achieve soul mastery over matter, over body. He feels that this is the reason for his original creation, namely that he might truly be the gardener in the garden of the Lord, that he might be the faithful and good shepherd, that he might do all things wisely and well. To achieve this he must perfect the inner structure of his own nature from which comes the impulse to do well. As man's soul becomes more luminous his native attitudes are transformed and changed.

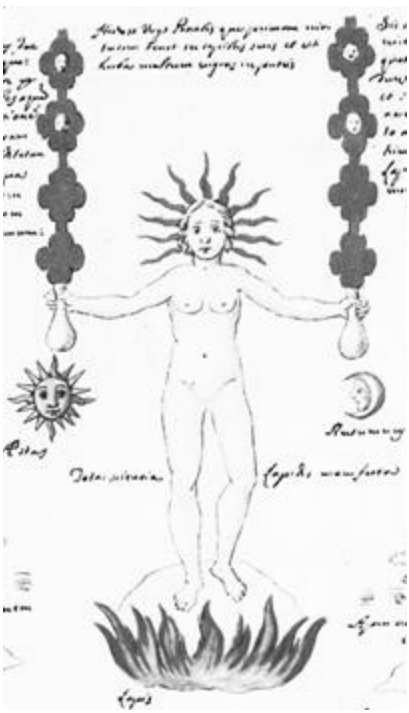
In the alchemical story we have constant references to the mysterious old alchemist sitting in his gloomy laboratory, with his bellows and a charcoal fire, or perhaps huddled over a little clay furnace in which he is attempting to preserve his sacred experiment. He is here and he has waited for years, like Michael Sendivogius, and the final secret of it all eludes him, He goes so far and he can go no further. He knows in his own soul that there is that one final step to reality. He has read all the books, but he has read them with the wrong eyes of course in some cases he has been imposed upon, for as in other vocations there were also false alchemists. He has failed in studying the great masters to let the true meaning, and in the midst of his dejection and sometimes discouragement and tragic frustration, a stranger comes into his laboratory, a person he has never met before. This stranger was known to the alchemists of Europe as Helias Artista, Helius the Artist. He was the perfect alchemist, the master of all alchemists. And he was the one who rewarded the faithful seeker who had been honorable and sincere in all matters by whispering to him the next step, that which he had not yet learned or accomplished, all this under the obligation of extreme discretion. Then Helias Artista vanished and was never seen again in that particular laboratory, but records in old literature tell us that Helias Artista is mentioned by Paracelsus, he is mentioned by several other of the alchemists as being the wandering saint, or the wandering sage of alchemy, the perfect master of the mysteries. This Helias Artista seems to have a certain bearing upon what we call perhaps today the teacher image in man.

The teacher image in man appears in art and literature everywhere. It is Gurnemanz in the story of Parsifal. It is the aged, learned seer, the scholar; in art he appears in the vestments and appearance of the great scholar or philosopher. We may think of him as a kind of Plato; in the Orient they would think of him as a great Buddhist Arhat, or perhaps one of the great disciples of Confucius. He is the venerable symbol of the final communication of the secret of immortality, the one who must bring the final crowning of the effort. There is almost no doubt that he represents the divine power, the God power, in man, blessing the labor and releasing itself into manifestation when the disciple is ready. This gives us one of the great Hermetic axioms, "When the disciple is ready, the master is there, for the readiness is within ourselves and the mastery is within ourselves." When we have reached a point

where we deserve the next step, it is always conveyed to us, usually by an archetypal symbol, sometimes by a new point of view. We have read the sacred text a thousand times, we have examined the learned work a hundred times, but suddenly, as we go through one of these works for the hundredth and first time, the meaning dawns upon us, and the dawning of the meaning is what Boehme called the Aurora, or the sunrise, The dawning of the meaning is the reward to the individual of having brought the experiment to the next degree below that which the dawning represents. When he has reached the point where the dawning must be next, it comes; and this is the crown of the adept in alchemy. He then possesses the secret and by extension can use this secret in whatever manner he sees fit; but before he has achieved it he has seen what fitness is, and would be incapable by his own integrity of misusing or corrupting or compromising the wisdom which he has received.

Thus we might assume for general practices and purposes that there have always been and always will be a certain number of these alchemical adepts in society. We do not know who they are. Some of them may have little laboratories here and there, or a furnace in the backyard, but we do not know them. Wherever they are or whatever they are doing, if they are the true alchemists they are primarily concerned with the regeneration of the base metals of their own natures. They are hard at work accomplishing for themselves what no psycho analyst could possibly accomplish for them. They have realized in following the very ancient tradition that the only way man can get out of his dilemma is to outgrow it. He cannot be saved by political policies. He cannot have a just government until he governs himself justly, These realizations flowing in upon the beginner or the novice in these matters is reminiscent of the lines from Omar Khayam's *Rubiyat*: "And from my base metal shall be filed the key." It is from our own base substances that the alchemical elixir must be found. As gold is a tiny vein in the rock, so in alchemy true individuality is a tiny vein in the base substance of man's exaggerated egoism, his tremendous destructive ambition, and his remorseless determination to succeed at all cost; yet somewhere in that base substance is the true principle that has been misused but which can be restored.





Leaf 6 | *The secrets of the great Stone: fire lives on air, air on water, water on earth, and thus the Stone lives peacefully on all the pure elements. The text declares that by putting fire beneath the symbolic figure it is possible to extract therefrom the sun and the moon.*

The seed of the metals equates with the Buddhist seed of Chinese Buddhism, for these seeds represent internal integrity by means of which and from which grow the great jewel trees that shade the worlds of paradise. Every individual has the seed of eternity in himself; every being, every creature has all the elements of the great alchemical experiment within his own nature. He contains within himself the seed of his own immortality, the substance of his own divinity, and all of the faculties and powers necessary to sow this seed in good soil, water it, fertilize it, take care of it, bring it to flowering and to fruit, and finally to gather the harvest. This is man's internal potential, but he has ignored it. The alchemists of Europe did what the mystics of Asia did, they set aside a kind of life which they held to be devoted to the primary purpose of salvation, not only salvation for themselves but ultimately and actually salvation for all that lived. Not only must the individual gain the power to transmute his own nature but he must become an active agent in the transmutation of human society. The final end is social justice, and the immediate end is adjustment with society so that the individual can live and work and fulfill his purpose without being completely tormented by environmental processes.

We all realize that there is a great deal of trouble in the world and most people also realize, if they think for a moment, that as individuals they are not going to solve that trouble. They are going to be fortunate indeed if they are able to maintain their own integrity through this trouble. So that instead of taking on continuously the negative pressures of the outside, we may be like the alchemist who retires to the little laboratory of his own inner life and there labors to accomplish that which is most necessary, realizing that as he labors in secret, so in due time he will be rewarded openly. He retires perhaps into the most intimate laboratory that he has—his home—and here he starts working with the alchemical factors of human relationship. He has to deal with all kinds of problems, but before he can solve any of them he must find their common denominator and that is the idea of reducing them to their seed or to their principle, as in the alchemical thinking. He must find the common ground upon which all things can be built, and to find the common ground he must go deeper and deeper within himself. The common ground cannot be found by winning an argument, nor the ultimate enlightenment of his family achieved by constant pressure and endless strife. In a sense his family represents the alchemical laboratory. It is the most intimate to himself next to his own body, and in his own thinking and in his own life he has to work with this. After he has gone a certain distance he will begin to realize that the increase of his own consciousness will show him how to solve problems which, at the moment, are not solvable. He is now in a state of confusion because he is also confused internally; but the confusion around him can only be overcome by the organization of that which is within him. He can never defeat the confusion by screaming against it, but he can integrate against it until it seems to fade away and no longer has much meaning. So everything on the outside is governed from the inside of the individual, and alchemy must therefore be the science of developing and strengthening the inside so that it can accomplish its perfect work.

There are many interesting books of alchemical symbols. Some of them, like the *Liber Mutus*, are books written without words, the silent books consisting of nothing but pictures representing the various degrees of the experiments, based on the assumption that the picture would reveal that which was intended. A book like this is almost identically the equivalent of an Eastern mandala, or meditation figure. By the mandala figure the novice is introduced into the mystical inner structure of nature so that he may begin to obey its laws and will find fulfillment in obedience—rather than in disobedience. While man does not understand his world he will fight against it and regard it as outrageous; but when he understands the world, internally, he will then labor with it for the common

good. The *Liber Mutus* contains a number of diagrams that are very similar to the Eastern mandalas and the work of Henri Khunrath is another example of very strange and curious diagrams of the greatest practical significance. Actually, the mandala of the crucifixion of Christ in space is an almost absolute reproduction of one of the Eastern figures. The symbolization of it is through a mental, internal experience, the alchemist having come to the realization of the nature of the work and having gradually taken hold of the symbolic elements, the alphabet of the art, so that he begins to understand what each symbol stands for. By then quietly meditating upon the design, he organizes its resources and brings it together in a pattern. He is able to rescue from within himself faculties to interpret that pattern. He begins to warm up or stimulate the inner potential of himself to understand reality, to take hold of things and penetrate their appearances to the final experience of their meaning. All of this is perhaps the very soul and substance of alchemy.



Leaf 7 | *The seated figure holding aloft a hammer is described as breaking hard stone, while the words beside the man with the retort read: “Breaking of stone our replenishment.”*

As for the physical side of it, presuming that the individual has accomplished all of the things that we have suggested, the alchemist would probably again take reference to the Bible where he would say that the final proof of the physical experiment is found in the words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." The alchemist, therefore, is assured (and many of them were monks and religious people) that if he achieved the inner mystery, the fulfillment of the outer part would be inevitable. But practically every charlatan in alchemy has determined primarily to achieve the physical purpose first. His primary interest has been to make gold, or perhaps one of the other aspects of it, such as a medicine against illness. He has wanted the physical effect first, but because the physical effect was not intended to be first, when he starts to study and explore the various texts, he comes upon a dilemma, his own internal resources cannot discover the correct instructions. The words may be there, but the meaning eludes him because the meaning is not part of his own present spiritual integrity. He hopes that he can follow literally some formula, but is nearly always disappointed, He cannot perform the physical experiment correctly until the inner power of his consciousness has shown him the perfect arrangement of all involved elements,

Theoretically, the adept in alchemy (and, incidentally, the term "adept" used in alchemy is almost identical with that used in Oriental philosophy; sometimes *arhat* or *mahatma*), having the internal ability by the power of energy alone to transform things after he has achieved his true enlightenment, would not have to make gold in a bottle because by will and yoga he could project it whenever he wanted to, However, this is only when he has attained the highest degree of individual integration and a degree of spiritual insight which will probably result in the fact that gold is of no importance to him, By the time he can make it he does not care because in getting there he has fulfilled the great experiment, he has transformed his own base metals into true gold and has become the living, radiant principle called the philosopher's stone. He is the ruby diamond, the integrated being as indicated by his magnetic field which shows all the prismatic lights and shadows of the diamond. Another school of alchemy has to do with the magnetic field itself, the assumption that the retort is the aura, that within the retort of the magnetic field of the individual all of the alchemical processes of regeneration occur, even as in the larger aura, the retort of the solar system, all the transformations of solar process take place. The aura is a kind of a vessel of glass, similar to the one in which it is said Merlin the magician went to sleep in the legends of King Arthur. It is the glass which contains the homunculus, or the synthetically created human being.

The magnetic field is itself composed of the seven planetary rays, each one of them now no longer associated with the planet but associated with a rate of vibration, with a color energy, with a certain purpose in the body, and each one working through a vortex in the physical body taking care of some of the important processes of human function. If this magnetic field of the body is damaged in one way or another, then as shown through the Kilner screens and other research including considerable clairvoyant investigation, the magnetic field is a strange battleground of conflicts and shows the inconsistencies and the in temperance of the individual. The magnetic field is actually damaged by alcohol and narcotics and also is hurt by the tremendous intensity of man's attitudes. The chronic worrier, the chronic complainer, the individual who never thinks anything is good enough for him all set up patterns in the magnetic field, and gradually this field, which should be a beautiful chemical vessel in which the great experiment of mutation takes place, becomes a mass of psychochemical confusion.

This, then, becomes in a sense the retort, and the alchemist has as one of his projects to clear up this magnetic field, to clear the Augean stables as Hercules was supposed to do. The labors of

Hercules are the labors of the arhat or the adept. Actually, as we bring our lives into integration, coordination, and into honorable relationships, the magnetic field begins to clear and then we will note that this has a direct effect upon health. It is believed in the Orient and also in Europe that some of the alchemical adepts and yoga mystics lived for hundreds of years without any apparent aging. This was because the magnetic field was cleared from all corruption. The magnetic field energies were available without interference and without pollution to maintain the structure of the physical body and its etheric double.

As long as the magnetic field is well-charged and its energies are used properly, it will very largely protect the body from almost any ailment except an actual accident. But if the magnetic field is corrupted in itself by the seven planetary faculties, by greed or by imagination to the point of illusion, by ambition beyond reasonable ends, by egotism too strong represented by the sun, all of these damage the magnetic field, for each one of these changes the basic color of the magnetic aura. The basic color of Jupiter will be a lovely shade of blue but, when ambition comes, it becomes dirty and murky, and this dirty, murky color is like smog. It is corruption, the pouring of destructive elements into the magnetic field through the attitudes of its owner. When it is necessary for this energy to flow into the body, it flows in corrupted and out of this corruption may come obstruction of function or depletion of function which in turn produces sickness.

Maintenance of the magnetic field in perfect poise is tremendously important and when these magnetic elements are brought into harmony, when the seven rays are in perfect harmony, then we have the magnetic field of the illumined or enlightened person, of which of course the star of Bethlehem is a symbol. The auras around the bodies of saints and all the splendors reflected through the light of a great cathedral window, these things represent the magnetic field when it has been brought into order and proper control by the person who owns it. Alchemy is the transformation and transmutation of the psycho chemical elements within the individual. If he achieves this first, there is no reason to question those alchemists who declared that the physical experiment of transformation could be achieved. By this physical process of transformation they may also have meant the possibility of renewing the body periodically by means of specially prepared remedies; these remedies being largely, if not entirely, the periodic release of magnetic force by which the body could be continually strengthened and improved. The individual could renew himself for great lengths of time as long as there was no conflict in his own nature nor division in his own resources until all the faculties combine, we cannot have the perfect union. Until all nations combine, we cannot have a perfect government. Until all levels of society unite in common purpose, we cannot have a secure state or society in man, until his faculties are in constructive agreement and unite to cooperate for the ends or purposes necessary for the human being—until then there cannot be a healthy person or a successful human society, nor can the individual escape from the longings, yearnings, and loneliness which are symbols of isolation.

The entire secret of alchemy is therefore on several levels, but I think the great alchemists—Basilius Valentinus, Raymond Lully, Paracelsus, Michael Sendivogius, George Ripley, all of the great alchemists from all times did definitely imply, and sometimes obviously stated, that their art was sacred, that it had come to them from the land of Khem, *al-chem-y*, divine chemistry, Khem being the ancient name for Egypt. Further, that this science was intended to be used only by the God-loving and the God-fearing, that it was a mystery of which the death and resurrection of Christ became symbolical, and the seven elements, by means of which the transmutation of the metals and substances were to be achieved, were also parallel with and symbolically expressed through the seven sacraments.

These are all ways toward salvation and each is a symbolical, prayerful, meditational step combined in a perfect scientific pattern so carefully scientifically laid out that we cannot but believe that there was a definite, organized science of salvation, and that it is perhaps high time in our modern world that we rediscover this and realize that while we have sciences for all kinds of lesser purposes, the science of the perfection of man is the most important science of all. It has always been the most difficult to attain, but those who have attained it have attained to the end which the whole world is seeking, that is, universal peace, universal truth, and life everlasting. These are the great goals, and all other things are merely secondary. In order to achieve these goals the individual must gradually, in one way or another, accept the challenge of self-discipline and the challenge of dedication to the best possible use of the faculties and powers which he possesses.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE TRANSFORMATION OF ATTITUDES

It was once pointed out by Raymond Lully, one of the great early alchemists, that the tragedy of the concept of alchemy was the transmutation of metals. The history of alchemy divides into two distinct branches that have descended from antiquity, possibly originating in Egypt. The word "Chem" in both chemistry and alchemy is an ancient name for Egypt. "Al" is divine or sacred and we find it used in the Bible in such terms as "Alevin." Of course the Deity of Islam is Allah. The divine prefix would indicate that alchemy is a spiritual art, a divine secret science.

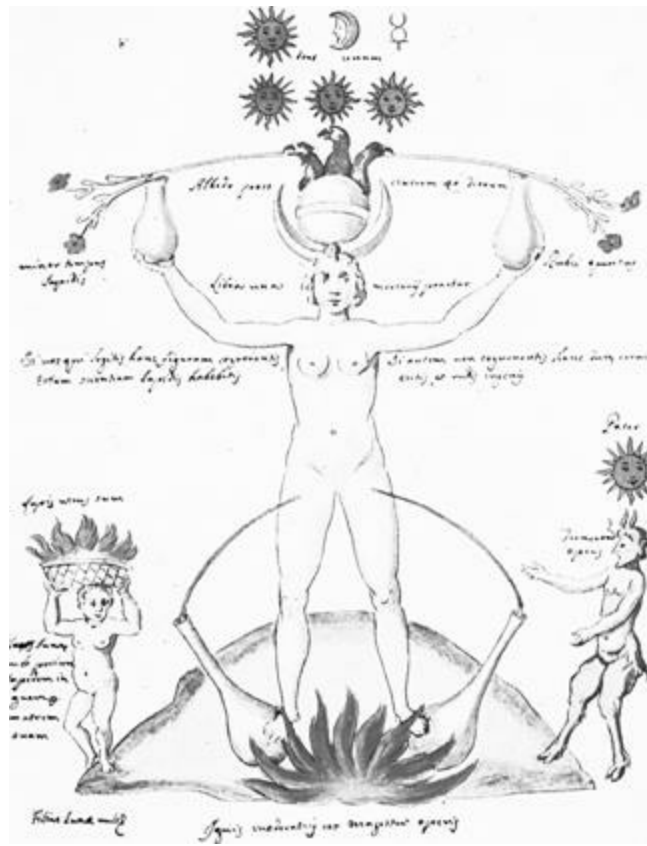
The great texts of alchemy have come principally from the hermetic background at the beginning of the Christian era and probably there were alchemical schools in Alexandria at that time. There are also early records of alchemy in China and in India. It seems that from very far back there has descended a double concept of chemistry: physical chemistry having to do with those areas of knowledge which are now considered scientific, and spiritual chemistry which was definitely a sacred art.

In practice, the difference in these two systems was summarized rather well by Paracelsus when he pointed out that the alchemical transmutation was impossible unless the alchemist himself was in the process of transformation. Today chemistry is largely dominated by the profit concept, the idea of wealth. All kinds of chemical experiments are being made for various reasons, some of them very good, some of them very dangerous, but always with a certain concept of return in material wealth for the good or the evil that is done. Chemistry is largely a material art, dominated by scientific inquiry and not in any way involving any necessary spiritual overtones. The chemist does not have to be a person of great faith, does not have to believe in metaphysical or mystical procedures. He is simply working with physical tests and physical texts.

The alchemist, on the other hand, has an entirely different perspective. Most of the alchemists were pious people, convinced that their advancement of science was a spiritual contribution to the well being of society and concerned with the development of their own inner lives. Jakob Boehme used a number of alchemical terms in his mystical writings and these have been confusing to modern students of his work. Actually the use given by Boehme in most cases probably is the original intended usage, namely, that alchemy is a great system of human regeneration, having nothing whatsoever to do with the advancement of worldly goods or worldly position.

In Europe, the alchemists were persecuted and in many cases put to the rack and tortured to death, because the rulers or avaricious leaders wanted the secret of gold making. The moment the alchemist began to publicize this part of his belief, he immediately opened himself to persecution, so that the gold making as a science brought many of the alchemists to destruction. Also, the manufacture of gold or any other precious substance without control by the state could result in the bankruptcy of the world. In a good number of cases, when an alchemist died all the surrounding chemists made a bid for his widow so that they could marry her and so gain the secrets. Most of this, however, had a rather sad ending because nobody seems to know exactly what the formulas really were.





Leaf 8 | Under the sun, moon, and Mercury are the words “Three” and “One.” To the left is written: “If you who read shall have known this figure, you will possess the whole science of the the Stone.” Beside the child is the sentence: “The son of the moon would throw the Stone into the fire — his mother.” Above the flaming basket is written: “I am the true Stone.”

The question then remains: can gold actually be manufactured? Not whether it should be or not, but can it be? I think the answer has to be in the affirmative. It can be. It also is obvious from recent experimentation that the subject could be advanced. But this is not the real purpose of alchemy and where the chemists get together to raise their own level of economic living, the scientists run into a very desperate prostitution.

The ancient alchemists were using symbols at a very early date. In many cases the symbols were accepted as literal pictures, but this has led to further confusion. We know, for instance, that in ancient alchemy the great retort in which all the experiments were being made was a symbol for the solar system itself, viewed as a globe within which all the chemistries and alchemies of existence were taking place. The ancients believed that this world in which we live is a great theatre of mysteries, the secrets of which have never been solved. Actually, the world is strangely complete within itself, containing everything necessary for the infinite perpetuation of itself. This condition remains rather peaceful and natural until human ambition and avarice take over. The ambition of the average modern person is involving fame, distinction, or wealth. Therefore, he immediately is using knowledge for the formation directly or indirectly of gold. He may not make the gold in the retort but he will sell secrets or scientific formulas which will bring him rich financial rewards.

We might ask: what harm is this? One of the reasons it is extremely dangerous is because the moment we begin to experiment with the basic laws of existence we are very apt to forget their own integrities. Natural laws have to be obeyed and we are not interested in obeying natural laws but in changing them to fit our conveniences. We want to use natural law to exploit the universe in which we live and as a result we are constantly in trouble and in the same dilemma that burdened the alchemist.

Many years ago there was an amateur alchemist here in Los Angeles. He was a delightful old German gentleman and for a prosaic living he worked in a cheese factory, but he was experimenting on the side throughout most of his life, trying to work out some strange and mysterious formulas that had descended to him from the past. Before passing on some years ago, he donated most of his alchemical books to our library. He was certain there was an answer but that he had not been able to live long enough to find it.

Another acquaintance engaged in alchemical speculation followed every rule in the book he could find, and of course soon found that every book had a different set of rules. This was confusing and frustrating to him. He bought a lot of apparatus and instruments, followed hunches and hints, and was always on the verge of a great discovery that never happened. What he did not have was a deep, abiding love of God, faith, or mankind. He was simply an intellectual, convinced that a science could be made to work. What the science meant in terms of his own character never seemed to occur to him.

In the alchemy of China and India the symbolism moves from chemistry to all kinds of vibratory patterns. In China, alchemy was tied in with music and the musical scale, the harmonics of life. The ancient Greeks of the Pythagorean period combined all their knowledge of cosmogony and the actual reformation of man into a great mathematical formula which was never to be taken literally but was to become almost like a mantra, a sacred statement which, if obeyed, could produce tremendous results.

Hermetic philosophy also became involved in alchemy. The hermeticists of Alexandria followed a mysterious being known to them as Hermes Trismegistus, or Hermes the *Thrice Great*. Who he was, when he lived, no one seems to know. Whether he was a production of symbolism or perhaps a great alchemical adept of some ancient time, we do not know, but in hermeticism we begin to sense the beginning of the transmutation of man as the essential purpose of the great alchemical procedure.

In Europe, in addition to their other problems, it was necessary for the alchemists to be careful in

the promulgation of some of these beliefs because of the bitter opposition of the clergy. The clergy sensed the fact that in some way alchemy was a religion and they were therefore quite sure it had to be included among the heresies. As a result, however, of the motion of Arabic knowledge into Europe, the alchemical secrets passed into the keeping of persons like Paracelsus, Khunrath, and Valentine, and these persons gained their knowledge of the alchemical processes largely from Constantinople and Baghdad. This, of course, meant still more that the knowledge had to be held in secrecy against the persecutions and martyrdoms that were popular in Europe at that time.

In many parts of the world, alchemy was recognized for what it actually was: a series of symbols intended to convey a major operation concerning the transmutation of man himself. Without this transmutation, none of the great good things we dream of can come about. The elixir of life or philosopher's stone was that power by means of which all good things could come to pass, wherein all errors and forms of ignorance could be overcome and the individual could gain complete control of not only his own life but the laws governing it.

Therefore, we come to the particular question that seems to be very much in the medieval alchemical tradition—that is—is there any proof of transmutation? Is there any actual evidence of things being completely altered? Has there ever been a scientist that could completely alter anything? He could modify it, improve it to a degree, and could destroy it always. But the process of actual transformation of a thing from what it is to something totally different, this has been a question of concern in alchemical researches for ages. The evidence for transmutation is extraordinarily simple: the answer lies in the human body itself.

Our principal interest now is to try to understand something of the alchemical theory, What is alchemy in the terms of modern man? Certainly we recognize it as a principle of transformation. And perhaps one of the easiest ways to approach this is by direct reference to the human body. The process of nutrition as it takes place in man, including digestion and assimilation, is a problem in transformation. The supreme alchemy with which we are confronted in daily living is this problem of food digestion. Here miracles happen that we have no explanation for. Here energies are reduced to their basic principles and redistributed through the body in a manner so extraordinary that it is wonderful there could be even one undevout dietitian or nutritionist. We recognize, therefore, that Nature is forever transforming things, and man himself is no exception to the general rule. The human being is in a constant process of mental, emotional, or physical transformation. But transformation can be regarded on several levels. A number of the early alchemists declared the Holy Bible to be the great text of alchemy and that the life of Christ was the complete and perfect account of transformation. Several of the early priestly alchemists were very outspoken in their rejection of physical chemistry as the true meaning of their art. Roger Bacon, on one occasion, said, "Woe, woe to the goldmakers," that this entire alchemical science had to do with something far more important than the transformation of metals to enrich the various pocketbooks of Europe. But up to now there has been very little clue as to what the original meaning might be, why it was not simply a matter of the transformation of metals.



Leaf 9 | “... without the light of the Moon the Sun does not heat the earth and that into the Moon the Sun emits its fruits.” Whoever believes in and possesses the true herb of the philosophers shall be [spiritually] rich. “Understand thoroughly what the man has in either hand to be enlightened.”

The process of digestion of food requires the transformation of elements. It requires an almost instantaneous adaptation of certain principles to special usages for which they were not originally intended. It is possible, therefore, for food which is taken in to, in some way, maintain a life principle which is not a food and not in the body otherwise, but is used to nourish the life or principle in the human being. The bread, butter, vegetables, fruit, milk and other foods keep alive something that is not any of them, which throughout life will continue to cause the heart to beat, to circulate the blood, to nourish the functions of the human being until the end of life. Out of what goes into him comes out of him arts, sciences, poetry, music, philosophy, religion, and economics, they all come out of someone who is nourished by the food, the atmosphere around him, water, the rays of the planets, and the light of the sun and moon. The symbolism of the wedding of the sun and moon in alchemy is very important, not because there will be a wedding in the sky of the two luminaries, but because of the union of the principles for which they stand inside of the human body.

Thus, there is the amazing evidence of the one life flowing behind all forms and made available through nutrition to every creature. From the harvests in the fields a world is nourished, and those who absorb these harvests become proficient in many forms of activity.

In the Christian doctrine of the Eucharist, the divine blood parallels in alchemy the elixir of life. How this divine blood operates is not clear to many people, but in some mysterious way universal life supports the life of people, people who may never be aware of the source of their own nutrition and in a mechanistic era such as ours do not care about the source of their nutrition.

Out of this has come a new concept of nutrition, a concept involving vitamins, proteins, carbohydrates, an entire system of nutrition based upon the development of highly specialized nutrients from the various food materials we eat. All these nutrients have something to do with the maintenance of the various structures of the human body. In this sense, there is an acceptance of alchemy without any understanding of it. Here there is the realization that nutrition does do the work, but how and why it does it and how one general type of nutrition can maintain an infinite diversity of creatures is another situation that is difficult to understand.

The nutrition must be conditioned to the creature which is receiving the nourishment, So we have within our own bodies an extraordinary laboratory, a laboratory the mysteries of which we have not begun to touch. Someone can prescribe various materials for our common nutrition and for special emergencies that arise, but prescribing them is not creating them, and prescribing them is not understanding them. We have simply come to know that certain materials have certain effects and we depend upon them to maintain the procedures which we hope will strengthen and lengthen our life expectancies.

Immortal life is one of the beliefs of alchemy and there are a number of very quaint and unusual concepts about this matter. Some of these concepts are difficult to understand even now, but we know that they definitely believed that there were in the world a few individuals who had solved the mystery of alchemy. The master of all the alchemists was Elias Artista, the most celebrated of all the hermetic adepts and philosophers. No one really knew him, although we do have two or three early books in the library in which alchemists described a meeting with him. The symbol of the perfect alchemist, Elias Artista had a number of disciples who came very close to him in achieving the ends which he sought. His powers were such that he would appear in laboratories where worthy persons had worked very hard for years and give them a hint or a little advice to advance their researches, only to disappear and to never be seen by them again. He appeared in many nations in many different guises and spoke many languages. He is supposedly an eternal person, living on and on because there

was nothing in him that could cause him to die; death has to be the result of causes. Life expectancies are increasing constantly, but life expectancies to reach a phenomenal extension of time are now either a phenomena in themselves, the result of very serious scientific conditioning, or constitutional ability to adapt nutrition over a longer period of time than is possible for most people.

The alchemists pointed out that the beginning of the alchemical experiment was to remove all friction from life. By friction is meant wear and tear. Now what is wear and tear? To most people it means doing the things they have to do and have no particular interest in doing. Wear and tear is also the result of the lack of control of the mental, emotional and physical activities of the individual. All of these activities use energy. A large part of the energy we use we waste. We are not conserving it, not taking care of this mysterious vitality that comes to us. We are allowing it to be expended in all kinds of use less ways. Of course we have to make physical adjustment for employment, but it is not the work necessarily that is the greatest cause of problems; it is the attitude toward the work. It is the lack of enthusiasm, the lack of recognition of significance of the things that we do that depress us. Emotional relationships out of hand can become a terrible enemy to vitality. Worry, fear, anxiety—all of these use up part of this alchemical nutrition that is constantly being made within ourselves. If we waste it we can no longer have it. If we use it unwisely it is dissipated. And to maintain artificial attitudes will gradually undermine the necessary functions of the body.

The alchemist first of all declared that the master of all arts was God. Deity was in a sense the extra-personal perfect alchemist because in Deity all things continue according to the Divine Will. How this Will operates, man does not know, but he does recognize, if he is mystically inclined, that there is a tremendous background of eternal wisdom behind the happenings in nature. Deity becomes the perfect force behind generation and regeneration. Deity brings forth the seed, the plant, the flower and the fruit. And then that seed becomes the next generation of the same.

Alchemical symbolism is strange and obscure but well worth trying to understand. We must begin with what the alchemist begins with: base metals. We must begin with things as they are here. We cannot build our alchemical formulas from elements or substances not available to us. The beginning is to recognize that the first operation is a transmutation of physical factors, elements, and properties; in other words, purification. If it is mercury, it must be purified. If it is sulphur, it must be purified. If it is salt, it must be purified. And if it is man, he must be purified. Everything begins with the purification or removal of the dross which limits the value and survival of elements, principles, and substances.



Leaf 16 | "... the spirits are freed by the death in the bodies. You will ride with that death with a scythe." Over the scythe is written: "Subject to the Sun, the Moon, and Azoth, complete the Work." This figure is called 'Latom' for it looks black in the vessel and is the beginning of corruption.

The alchemist starts with the concept of a pure material with which to work. He is given various clues and keys on how to achieve this pure material. He might assemble it under certain aspects of planets or wait until the moon shines upon the water before he uses it in his test tubes. He may do all kinds of things. First he must purify by gathering his materials from pure sources as much as he can. Most of the great experiments of Paracelsus and many others were possible because of the pure high atmosphere of the Alps where materials were uncontaminated and grew to the fullness of themselves. In their day there was no smog or congestion. These pure materials, having been found, became the basic elements in which they worked.

The same problem applies to the individual. The alchemist must first purify his own body and his own nature. Until the body is cleansed, its various processes cannot be refined. While all the integration and organization of his abilities and capacities, the improvement of his nature through learning, meditation and contemplation all lead up to, contribute to, and make possible a final internal illumination, the final secret has to come from inside. Therefore, everything has to be refined until the soul of itself is available, and in man it is his own soul; until this is available, he labors in vain.

Those efforts that have to contribute to this progress must be considered as disciplines or as first steps toward achievement. They represent first of all man's recognition of his responsibility to the life principle which exists in him and in which he exists. This principle is divine, sacred, and the most valuable and mysterious thing in the whole world. Unless the individual is true to this basic principle in his own life and way of living and thinking, he cannot hope to advance in the cause of spiritual alchemy. For achievement he must do everything possible to make his own life reasonable and normal.

This does not mean that he has to depart from society or go into some refuge near the top of the Alps, but there must be an establishment of basic harmony within himself. Harmony is the proof of the compatibility of the elements. Harmony is the ability of different chemical elements to work together, only possible when they are purified—in their gross form they will never be compatible. Salt and sulphur in the form of the physical elements available for purchase can never be compatible. It is necessary to cleanse them both, refine them, and remove from them those elements which are the cause of conflict. It is not the essence of the sulphur or salt that is the problem; it is the crystallization around them which comes into conflict with other similar crystallizations. The alchemist must put his own house in order; he is actually searching for something that is in its substance and essence completely sacred. Therefore, any other consideration is going to damage his probabilities of getting it.

The alchemical procedure most commonly known is related to one of two distinct ends: one the creation of the philosopher's stone; the other the brewing of the philosophical medicine—the elixir of life. The stone in itself represents the body of wisdom purified; the universal medicine represents the soul. The medicine of immortality must be derived from things that have a birth and death of themselves. In other words, the nutrition that is given off may cause the primitive element to be lost, but its power goes on. It does not die; it simply reincarnates on a higher level. When we take into ourselves basic elements they are reborn in us and therefore pass through a process of evolution as they are used by the human being to maintain the economy of life.

The alchemist must first find a quiet place to work; he must have his little laboratory. To the ancient alchemists the laboratory was a furnace, a fireplace with some bottles and a few old books to guide his way. The meaning of the laboratory for us is actually a body free from interference and confusion that we can retire into when we so will. In other words, the laboratory is our own internal,



that part of ourselves which is always capable of being reduced to a harmonious situation. The personal life must be basically harmonious. Many people feel that this is not possible, that there is no answer to all these grievances and griefs that beset us and affect us. But the alchemist says you are after the most valuable thing in the world and if you are hoping to get it you must earn it by making adjustments that will never be required of anyone except for this purpose.

To create a quiet place within the self for the contemplation of the symbols of regeneration is very vital. This does not mean, however, that the person has to become a constant celled monk or mysterious acolyte. He does not have to retire from life; he simply has to retire from confusion. He has to reject the idea of confusion within himself. The acceptance of confusion is a form of ignorance. It is not real, but we all are subject to it. Confusion also means waste of energy, waste of time, depletion and inability in that state to contact a deeper and higher part of ourselves.

The alchemists used as the symbol of their achievement the lamb with the cut throat and the blood pouring from it, because of the idea of man being saved by the blood of the lamb. The blood of the lamb in this case is actually the eucharistic vitality which arises from the absolute sacrifice of all forms of negation and the purification of the life that flows through us through the wonderful possibilities of the Infinite. The body can be considered alchemically the power of the moon. The body being subject to all kinds of digestive and assimilative processes, the lunar energies work for the maintenance constantly of the peace of the flesh, and the individual has to cooperate consciously with this process if he wishes to proceed further.

The alchemist usually makes a disheartening discovery, at least at the beginning. It is that, essentially speaking, the body, which is the earth of the alchemical experiment, did not really do him very much harm in the first place. It was not the flesh but the dweller in the flesh that was giving trouble nearly always. The flesh was the victim, the daily scourge. It was being constantly beaten like some faithful animal by the ambitious, self-centered driver. The next thing was to determine what this driving force was, and that meant getting into the fire principle, or the emotions.



Leaf 18 | *The tree surmounted by the Sun and Moon is accompanied by the words: “When the Stone is dead, that is changed to water, in this tree it will produce flowers.” Beneath Aristotle and the prostrate human figure is a quotation from the Emerald Tablet: “He who makes everything descend from heaven to earth, and then ascend from earth to heaven, has information about the Stone.”*

Emotion is life. The energy behind emotion is magnificent, it is divine; but the use to which we put it is miserable in most cases. When we get mad, angry, or jealous, our ambitions run wild. We do not like people or things. We cannot stand the daily problems of life and become beautifully and systematically neurotic. With all these disagreements within ourselves, our emotions are constantly battling us with negative thoughts. There is also the temptation: if I am going to put this much effort into it, what am I going to get for it? This is one of the major temptations. Those working truly for the good of the great alchemical mystery will be concerned only with the fact that it is the spiritual and moral necessity of their lives.

The negative emotional factor which beats the body and uses up a very large part of the energy the body is able to manufacture is a constant wasting of life. It is a wasting of the Divine Power. Behind this problem lie thousands of years of tradition. We have always supposed that when we were unpleasant we had a right to be. We have also believed that when we wanted to think ill of a person it was our privilege. If we wanted to be angry and go into warfare, that was also a right that was inalienable. Out of the emotional excess on the personal level are all the temper fits, poutings and psychoses we most dread. On the larger world field of the great alchemical retort this misuse of the emotional energy is war, crime, and all the difficulties that we most fear. We need to rid ourselves of our own conflicts, hurt feelings, offenses, those things we want to do which we know that we cannot, and the extravagance that demands we accomplish the incredible, or be miserable. We have to get our own attitudes and our emotions down where they are reasonable.

One of the best uses of emotion is through the arts and music, but in the ordinary commonplace of things it is the qualities of kindness, affection and compassion. Where these attitudes increase strongly there is a change in body chemistry and the emotions no longer persecute the body nor offer the body on the altar of private ambitions. They no longer destroy, cause the nursing of grievances nor the waste of time and energy in dwelling on past events. The thing of value from the past is experience, which is helping to make us better now. The emotions can be beautiful, and emotions that are beautiful are well worth cultivating, but they must be sincere, real, and within a natural pattern of normalcy. Even the best emotion gets into trouble if it becomes hysteria.

While the emotions sit around making trouble for the body, the mind arrogantly stands up and makes trouble for both. The mind sets the body in great habits, and these habits are mostly unreasonable. The mind is the final basis of career. It is that which we learn to do well so that we can get rich doing it; the mind is planning forever to make a millionaire out of the body. Another problem of the mind is that it argues and debates. If it is not up to its neck in politics, regardless of whether any of the candidates are worth voting for, the mind is the basis for telling other people how to live, even though the person does not know how himself. And the mind is that which comes to the conclusion that the more we accumulate, the happier we are, when every day this is proving to be an absolute falsehood.

The mind needs to be brought down to where it was intended to be: a sort of psychological bookkeeper. The mind is not the master of life, although we have allowed it to become such. The mind is simply a very useful secretary, able to keep the ledgers balanced. While we are giving all the minds courses in computerization, it is going to be a long time before we can use these computers to find out what is wrong with ourselves. We may sometime, it may be someday that we will have to fight it out with the computers because they may be more right than we are. In any event, the mind is a constant cause of agitation. Its ambitions and appetites know no bounds and very often it forms a difficult and unfortunate partnership with the emotions. When the emotions justify an unfortunate

attitude, there is definitely a bad situation. When the emotions tire the mind, that is one trouble; when the mind rationalizes the emotions, that can be another. The solution of these problems is the gradual recognition of the ascent of the being through these conditions.

The stories in the great system of the ancient mysteries: the rites of Eleusis and Dionysus, the rites of Horus and Isis, the rites of Buddha in India, China, and Japan, these were always arranged in three basic steps, and these three basic steps represent the three great levels of the personality, that part of ourselves of which we have some inkling but very little understanding. They will also become the basic bulwark degrees of Freemasonry, and many fraternal orders have this same trichotomy of rituals and symbols. The three together constitute what might be termed the visual or tangible temples.

In the body, these three powers are the grand masters of life, the ones upon which nearly everyone depends for survival, continuance, and the fulfillment of purposes. When something cannot be solved physically, we try to solve it emotionally. If that fails, we try to explain it or rationalize it mentally. If all of these fail, we are at a kind of wit's end. We simply drop back sometimes, feeling there is no answer, and turn to the more familiar things. Those of an idealistic nature look beyond and see above these three steps something else, perhaps God, realizing there is something they still have to transcend more than they assumed necessary. But for our personality and for the experiments of salt, sulphur and mercury, there is the threefold body and the auric or magnetic field in which it functions.

The magnetic field is very curious because it is also a mass of chemical factors, a constantly changing compound of interactive energies. The magnetic field is like a bottle that is being violently shaken after a whole group of materials have been put into it. Looking at these situations symbolically, the magnetic field is a bottle containing the three parts of our lower nature, each one of which has a magnetic overtone. When we begin to realize this we begin to see that we have interactions here as well as in the body. We have to explain, for instance, why a temper fit can cause a headache, or why indigestion can result in serious emotional complexes. The answer is that the troubles arise in the difficulties in the auric or magnetic field, due to intemperance of attitudes. If an individual is angry, the magnetic field blazes up and really practically burns out most of the other values, for the moment at least. If the individual is depressed, the magnetic field fades down to a shadow. If an individual is in the presence of contagion and is healthy, the magnetic field can protect him from infection. If, however, he is depleted and in the presence of contagion, he may catch the ailment.

The magnetic field is in constant motion, made up of emotion forms, thought forms, and bodily essences. If there is any deceit or falseness in the personality, it will show in the magnetic field, although the individual may try to talk himself out of the problem. A temper fit can only be justified if it does not result in trouble in the magnetic field. The magnetic field is not interested in excuses or explanations, but in the chemical interaction of values. When a value is perverted or misused, the magnetic field bears witness. The moment it bears witness its resources are depleted and the individual does not feel so well.

Little by little, abuse of the various emotions, thoughts, and bodily functions will result in the exhaustion of the magnetic field. When that exhaustion is complete, the individual simply leaves this world. He cannot function if the energy fields do not sustain him. Thus, it is very important to maintain harmony. One of the great principles of Pythagoras was that the world had to be maintained as a musical instrument, that it had to be in harmony always. And the individual in his personal life is also a musical instrument. He is the *vina* of Siva, the mysterious instrument that plays the majestic music of life. If he mistakes his destiny or misuses his power, he is in trouble.

Now most of the alchemists got about to the point where they were beginning to sense some of

these values. Having gone as far as the mind could take them, they found themselves at the entrance to a promised land which they could not enter into. They did not know how to handle that which lay beyond. They had listened carefully and, as Faust in his library, had read all the great books. They had studied all the mysteries, but there at last they stood with all their lore, fools no wiser than before. The great search ended in frustration, not in the great reward for which they had hoped. The only answer to this was to do what Lully, Valentine, and Khunrath and many others did, check over what had happened. What did happen? Why this sudden block that is impossible for most people to get through? The final realization was that this block was the absence of a faculty higher than the mind. The mind could go only a certain distance. Even the most beautifully trained mind could not fulfill the ultimate. There had to be something higher than the mind, without which the great experiment could not be performed.

When Elias Artista visited the alchemists he sometimes gave them a small amount of transmuting powder. He put it in his ring or he made a tiny vial which was worn around the neck, and one grain of this powder could transmute a thousand times its own weight into solid gold. There was a lot of talk about that and the grains were few, but it was known that in some cases they existed. It is believed that Roger Bacon offered to finance the Crusades for England as the result of the ability to transmute base metal into gold suitable to be minted. The legends and fables continue, but the main story seems to be that Elias Artista, or one like him, appeared at the proper moment to give some type of instruction, something more than the alchemist alone had achieved. Elias never appeared unless the disciple was in every way worthy. He would never help any alchemist out of his own mistakes, but he would help him to progress beyond a sincere effort to a greater degree of accomplishment.

In the alchemical tradition, there were seven stages of adepts and masters relating to the science. It was a long journey at best, but a journey where every step brought with it a greater sense of inner security and sincerity. With the beginning of the fourth step, under the leadership of a guide or by means of the mysterious tincture, the alchemist received his first evidence that he was ultimately going to succeed. He received the inner message that the labor was not in vain. It was from a hope in the first three to a kind of mysterious, mystical certainty in the fourth level that made it possible for him to go on.

On this fourth level of alchemy we find the life of Christ is an alchemical formula. We also find, according to the cabalists, that the *Song of Solomon* is also purely a chemical formula in disguise. But the Christian formula of the Christ mystery places Christ as the final achievement of the universal medicine. In the alchemical symbols, pictures of Christ and saints appear in the bottles to indicate that this was the intention of the story, although most people did not realize its import.

In the fourth step is the beginning of an integrated mystical experience. In other words, the fourth step was the awareness of the soul. It was what in Indian philosophy is the Buddhic state. It is the state of the individual suddenly becoming rational inside himself, achieving a sense of reality superior to thought, and also becoming for the first time capable of directing his own efforts by the very Divine Power within him which he was seeking to release into manifestation. In the ancient hermetic mysteries the soul was the symbol of the Elias Artista, the adept. It was the one power in man capable of becoming the internal instructor, capable of becoming the source of inner enlightenment that cannot fail.

In alchemy, the cultivation of this soul power is perhaps most clearly defined in the writings of Boehme, the German theologian mystical shoemaker who was one of the greatest mystics of the Protestant world. Boehme was the one who finally realized that within himself was the adept. The adept was not someone wandering around outside, but the adept self, more or less in the same spirit

of the leadership that we find in the psychology of Carl Jung where the inner teacher becomes the symbol of the master alchemist.

At this particular phase, light begins to shine from within and clarify. The eye begins to see through the blind spot in its center. The world becomes more and more translucent, the elements more and more understandable. Instead of seeing nothing but bodies, the intuitive mind gradually learns to concentrate on qualities. The intuitional mystical experience is one in which the individual sees things as they are and not as he has thought them to be. He sees not with mortal eyes but from an inner vision which projects a higher level of sight. To make it a little clearer, all things that exist have not only the visible forms of their existence, but invisible forms. Each rock and pebble, each twig and flower, is not only a physical thing but a metaphysical thing. With the mind, emotion, and body we see the physical thing. With the psychic power of the soul we see the psychic bodies of these things, the magnetic fields of them, and become aware of their degree of growth in the development of their potential. We also become able to watch clearly the result of combining them. We see the compatibilities and incompatibilities. We see the elements that work together and the works that cannot be reconciled.

As we work with the soul eye, we slowly become aware of the universal soul. For the first time we are capable of seeing the quality of life. This is well noted in some of the early visions of the Platonic writers and many other mystics who were able to behold the invisible shapes of things, and in seeing their shapes behold their natures. While the physical body cannot change greatly, the psychic centers within the body are in constant motion and agitation. It is then also possible for the alchemist to discover something that perhaps he had never fully realized before. He may have believed it, but believing and knowing are two different things. He now knows that no matter what he sees or examines, there is nothing in the entire universe that is not alive. Even the grain of sand is a living mystery. Everything is alive, and in the great aliveness of things the magnetic fields of all these different forms gather in the magnetic atmosphere of the universe. It is a very great and important subject for careful study.

With the beginning of this dimension of value, the alchemist begins to discover how to accomplish the mutations which are necessary to his art. He knows the principle of sublimation. He knows the cycles of recapitulation that have to be used because gradually he sees that alchemy is only a symbolic representation of the entire process of universal activity. Everything is part of the same great pattern, and this pattern unfolds as we become capable of understanding it. The pattern is never more nor less, but our relation to it is forever changing as a result of personal growth.

Finally the individual through an intuitive process forms a reunion with the divine part of himself. Having formed this union with the divine part of himself, he then goes on to the further steps of the great transmutations, finding himself gradually lifted up into the hierarchies of life but never, however, for personal gain, never for glory, never for wealth, and never to escape pain. The pains and sufferings we have are the impairments which by our own policy we know no better. They are processes of growth which Nature has presented to us for contemplation and which we must face, whether they are happy or not.

In time, we find the part of alchemy in the great universal plan of things. We find the planet itself is in a state of constant alchemical transformation. We know that the solar system is moving from one level of evolution to another and the whole cosmos is coming more and more into perfect harmony with its own rules. The different forms of life have a tendency as time goes on to be absorbed into higher forms of life. It is not that sometime our planet will disappear or go forever and we will cease because of it, but that evolution is a growing, and when we outgrow the experiences that we are

facing in the twentieth century, we will no longer be subject to the confusion and sorrow of these experiences.

We have to solve problems. The alchemist's problem was to solve the mystery of himself. He had to find ways to outgrow his own limitations and various systems have been advanced by that. Religion and philosophy have attempted the same thing and science will someday attempt it because science will have instruments by means of which many of the great mysteries of antiquity can be solved. Regardless of the motive behind it or the methods used, the solution is the gradual transformation called transmutation, multiplication, and finally projection of the great work.

This is a marvelous wonder world of forces and values which work together with the music of the spheres, as Pythagoras called it, a universe of infinite integrity, infinite beauty, and infinite wonder, a universe which exists within ourselves as a potential of all of these things, for there is nothing in the universe that is necessary to man that he does not possess. And it is perfectly possible to conceive the ultimate unity of man and the universe, not by his ceasing to be himself but by outgrowing what he has come to consider himself, another problem that we all have to face.

We all think of ourselves as we are. We look around us and we see our clothing, friends, associates, and limit ourselves to the kind of creature we seem. On the mental and emotional levels of vision we see the inside the way we think it is. We look inside and we see ourselves as a more or less complicated mass of conflicts and contradictions. We realize that we are nothing to brag about, if we want to be really honest about it. But we can always think of something to brag about. All these infirmities, weaknesses, limitations are taken for granted; the individual is what he is. He is going to be here a little while and then he is going to leave. Where he is going, most people are not very sure. But in any event we take this *selfness* as it is to be ourselves. This *selfness* is the thing we have given the name John Doe to, and whenever someone says "John Doe" we stand up. We recognize ourselves as a separate entity somewhere in the world of creatures, and it never occurs to the average person that there is any real reason that he should be anything but what he appears to be. There is no reason why he should give up all his pleasures for something he does not understand. There is no reason to assume that he can ever be anymore than he is.

It is from that standpoint we are locked in the lowest level of achievement. About the only other answer seems to be to try to make as it is as comfortable as possible. We do not want to suffer more than we have to. We do not want to do anything that is going to inconvenience us. We want to go along as well as we can until we leave. But this, of course, is a lack of aspiration, and there has to be some aspiration, or nothing works. Therefore, it becomes very necessary for the individual to sense that there is something more he can become, or he will stay the way he is. No amount of education can get him out of it because education can only help the mind, but the mind cannot get at the facts.

Out of growth, friendship, kindness, experience particularly, we need to release the soul power, the *overself* of Emerson. We have to release this inner superiority and give the best of ourselves immediate rulership over the rest of ourselves. Plato says that in the philosophic empire the wisest lead. Those not so wise are still wise enough to follow honorably. To the individual, the best part of himself must be the leader of the rest, for the moment he rests leadership upon any contaminated level of his own consciousness, he is in trouble. The alchemist was a kind of a being apart, a natural mystic, and there were many mystics who were not alchemists but were also on the same general level. There is a small part of society, unfortunately small, that has discovered within itself the need for growth, the need to become more, aware that there are certain nagging questions that need to be answered in order to live well now.

We need to increase in all these values in order to make life in this world suitable to us. We have

to try to find the answers to war and corruption. We realize that as we are now, even though we may never be in a war ourselves, we are in a war and conflict with our neighbors and our families and within the biological structure of our own bodies.

Something has to be done to arbitrate these things. The way of arbitration is a slow process of discipline by means of which we ascend the three personality factors of our lives and come into harmony with the fourth level. This in the ancient astronomy was the level of the sun, the fourth orbit. The wedding of the body and the psyche, or soul, was called by the alchemists the marriage of the sun and moon.

Alchemy is actually a dedicated effort to find out where we come from, why we are here, and where we are going. It is also a science by which all sciences built in selfishness can be rededicated to the common good of humanity. It is a way of applying all that we know to all the problems that we must solve. Step by step, we become more knowing, more useful, and more helpful, becoming better citizens here and, whether we realize it or not, better citizens of Eternity.

Alchemical symbolism is a lovely metaphysics, a gracious and beautiful approach to one of the great problems of daily existence. Every individual in his own personal life can be an alchemist, a worker with the divine chemistries of living. He can work with the chemistry of adjustments with society, he can work and discipline his own nature, he can develop integrities and kindness, and gradually transmute his life from a self-centered effort to succeed into a soul-centered effort serving the great cause of life.

As these changes take place the individual will find that he is being transmuted. He is being changed from a mortal creature to the divine being which was always there, always within him, but which was locked out. There is a life growing up within that has to grow to know, has to develop its own potentials in order to be able to learn, and which in one way or another through the problems of life will ultimately be impelled to dedicate itself to the service of that which it needs to know.





Leaf 19 | To the right of the seated man: “I am neither tree nor animal, nor stone nor vegetable, but the Philosopher’s Stone, trampled on by men, cast into the fire by my father, and in fire I rejoice.” Below the man is the Philosophic Egg containing the words: “It is the end in which the beginning resets.” The capital ‘T’ stands for ‘Tincture.’

## CHAPTER THREE

### PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ALCHEMY

It has become apparent that the alchemists were certainly mystics and that they had used the symbolism of chemistry to describe or explain mystical experiences which occurred within themselves. They were searching for the chemistry of human regeneration. They believed that there must be some medicine that would cure the sickness of the soul and, by so doing, would restore the health of the body. It is quite likely that the alchemists were influenced, to a measure at least, by traditions that had come from Asia, and there are elements in alchemical symbolism which suggest that the designers of such devices were aware of yoga and other Oriental philosophical disciplines.

Alchemists, of course, like most other mystics, divide into several classes, both of skill and of integrity. There is no doubt that there was considerable charlatanry in the field. Many pretenders simply filched from their victims in exchange for formulas that would never work. Some of the alchemists now honored record that they were deceived and duped for fifty years before the true secret was given to them. Another problem was the lack of a common language. This had to be corrected by the introduction of a philosophical alphabet of symbols. Also, there are a number of alchemical tracts in cipher and later, when the seventeenth century began to develop elaborate cryptography in similitude of the Baconian situation, many ciphers were inserted in books without the knowledge of the original authors. This type of thing scattered the ideas but left them comparatively incomplete and imperfect. In addition a great many later books were back-dated to add to their authority and many artificial alchemists were invented who never existed except for the pamphlets published under their names. Many of the very great scholars of the past of the caliber of Pythagoras, Aristotle, and Plato were listed among the alchemists although no direct labors in chemistry had been attributed to them.

The greater of the alchemists in the period to which we refer were themselves quite convinced and inserted into their books remarks and recommendations that indicate clearly that the making of artificial gold was not their objective, but all other higher purposes were eclipsed by the glamour of potential wealth. Flamel, the famous French alchemist, was apparently successful in the actual physical transmutation of base metals, but he used all of that which he had manufactured by such means to build churches, cloisters, and retreats for the religious. Others also apparently had success at times and almost always the sincere alchemist devoted his entire manufacturing to charity and works of Godly piety.

Basil Valentine, probably the most quoted of the alchemists, declared definitely that the manufacturing of gold, the transmutation of physical metals, or the development of a chemical elixir of life was not the legitimate end of alchemy, and in one place in his book on the twelve keys he says, "Woe unto the goldmakers." Yet he was their patron saint. The only answer is that some of these searchers were aware of the essential purpose and that actually the elaborate formulas of alchemical transmutations merely clothed and concealed references to the mystery rituals of classical antiquity. Some of these rituals of alchemy were nothing but the Eleusinian mysteries transferred to the level of chemistry. Just as the Dionysian artificers took the great laws of the universe and incorporated them into the science of architecture, so the alchemists incorporated their understanding of the universal purpose in the language of chemistry.

If the making of gold was not their primary purpose, then as several of them, including von

Welling, point out, that which is true on one level of life is also true on other levels of life. If metals can be refined and purified, bodies can be refined and purified. If physical gold can be manufactured, the same applies to spiritual gold. As metals can be refined and sublimated, so also can human nature be refined and sublimated. All of these were one set of laws operating upon several levels of activity. When Alexander opened the tomb of Hermes he found in it the celebrated Emerald Tablet on which was inscribed the law of analogy: "That which is above is like unto that which is below. That which is inferior is like unto that which is superior." Thus a law was established that dominated human thinking for thousands of years, namely, that there are parallels and analogies by means of which we can discover hidden things through the understanding of revealed things, that through the study of the solar system we can understand man, and by understanding man, we can discover the cosmos. These analogies seem to have been worked into the alchemical presentation.

If the original purpose of alchemy was the sublimation of human character, then we can understand why it was also necessary to keep this information more or less secret. At a time when theology was bitterly opposed to practically all mystical and philosophical speculation and it was hoped and assumed by the church that the pagan mysteries were gone forever, it would have been dangerous and even fatal to have it realized or recognized that these old teachings had survived under another name, that they were still functioning as originally, but that their outward form had been altered to protect them from the tyranny of their time. Therefore, underneath the outward semblance of alchemy was a universal religious point of view, a philosophy which could be interpreted in various ways, none of which was exactly orthodox. To have this recognized or realized would have been to subject hundreds of sincere and dedicated persons to the dangers of the inquisition. It was, therefore, prudent to remain silent and to clothe wherever possible the original teachings in a garb that would appear innocent and, if possible, in close conformity with prevailing social mores of one kind or another.

Some of the alchemists have admitted frankly that their principal textbook was the Bible. At first this does not seem especially reasonable, but with careful thought it could well be sustained. The favorite book of the *Old Testament* for alchemists was the clavicule of Solomon, or the *Song of Solomon the King*. In this the alchemists found the complete formula for regeneration of metals. They also found the life of Christ as substantially contained in the *Four Gospels* to be a perfect representation of the procedures by which chemistry advanced various elements toward ultimate perfection through death and resurrection. With this type of nomenclature the alchemists could be a little more open in their terminology, but still it was necessary to be extremely discreet.

It would be interesting indeed if it gradually came to light that the revival of alchemy today is essentially a revival of the ancient mystery system, and that step by step we are getting closer to the original intent of the subject. We know that in Egypt, which was apparently the motherland of alchemy, that the Egyptian Mysteries were very highly scientific structures concerned with all of the advancements of arts and sciences. The mystery ritual, especially of the Osirian cycle, had to do with the death and resurrection of a deity. In alchemy, the principal theme is the death and resurrection of the spirit of metals. Now this spirit of metals was recognized in several ways. Alchemy pointed that out in saying: "When we refer to gold, we do not mean common gold; when we refer to mercury, we do not mean common mercury; nor is our sulphur the common sulphur, lead, zinc, iron, copper, brass, as we use these terms, are not the common substances that appear in trade and in the marketplace." They were particular kinds of metals, and these particular kinds of metals built up around a composite thought, namely, that the bodies of metals cannot be truly fused or brought together. The metal in its objective material form cannot be united with the objective material form of another metal. They can be brought together in a physical compound. The gold can be modified with silver, or the lead can be

given additional strength by the adding of some other material, zinc. But these combinations are not the fusions that the alchemists were concerned with. Before it is possible to bind together the spirits of metals, their bodies must be overcome, their forms must be gradually sublimated, for it is only in the spirit that any two substances can become one. As long as they are not in the spirit they may be brought close to each other but they can never become one substance.

The Oriental philosophies which may have contributed to alchemy recognized the human body as the alchemical retort, the furnace, or any of the equipment used in alchemy. In many cases the old vessels which appear in the diagrams are roughly in the shape of the human body, but not much detail is added for fear that the secret would be more easily noticed. Within this miniature laboratory which we call man all the processes of the universe appear in miniature. There is no element in the universe that is not present in man. There is no process in the universe which does not in some way affect the function of the human personality. Therefore, because man is a miniature of all things, it is perfectly possible through the careful study of man to discover the nature of every major level of existence around us. It is also possible through the study of man to discover the science by means of which the human being can be brought up to a state of relative perfection.



Leaf 20 | At the top is written: "Rains are made by six stars." The two sentences about the figure read: "Remember Mercury, for ashes thou art and unto ashes thou shalt return. I thirst and am dead." Above the seven globes at the left is the admonition: "If he thirst, give him a drink and he shall live."

In the last twenty-five years the mental phase of alchemy has been gaining general favor. We are still confronted with one of the most complicated mysteries that man has ever faced, the mystery of his own thinking. The mind is some kind of a retort or bottle, and within this something is bubbling most of the time, but what it is, why it bubbles and what it achieves, and how it can be controlled and directed, these are questions that have never yet been satisfactorily answered.

Nature assists in gradually evolving living things to the revelation of their own potentials. Nature is forever improving life; by various devices it is raising the levels of the consciousness of created things. As this is Nature's slow but inevitable purpose, the alchemist says that it is the part of the chemist to be a secretary of Nature, that in its turn art perfects nature. Art in this sense refers to enlightened purpose. It is the individual learning through a measure of internal expansion how to cooperate with the processes of his own growth and to anticipate and advance these purposes more rapidly than in the slow and clumsy way in which Nature is forced to operate. If, therefore, there is a way that man can cooperate with the Divine Plan, this is the science of growth by which growth is advanced, just as a gardener in a garden by cooperating with the development of the plants and trees is able to help them to perfection, preserve them against danger, and cause them to become more healthy and beautiful. Such was largely the policy of Luther Burbank whose primary interest was to help the plants to be themselves, release their own internal values, and protect this growth from the interference and corruption of circumstances. The alchemists had this basic motivation, namely that they were there to find out what Nature wanted and by so doing to become masters of life's most essential science.

Today we think of science rather differently. We think of science as perfecting all kinds of branches of learning. We think of science as advancing technologically in a number of divided and sometimes conflicting spheres of activity, but to the alchemist, science, wisdom, and all the higher attributes of man's nature existed primarily for one purpose: to help the individual to discover the laws governing his own existence. His science was to discover the law, his philosophy to apply it to himself, and his religion to live according to the law. These rather simple principles were more or less interdenominational, and interdenominational thinking was not popular in the seventeenth century. Actually, however, the whole problem was on the level we now term psychological. The psychological level itself is merely, of course, a veil, a term for a degree of insight according to a new point of view or, perhaps more correctly, rediscovering the old point of view and adapting it to modern considerations. In any event, contemporary psychology is discovering that man is far more than the comparatively simple creature he was long suspected of being. Man is not simply a being full of pressures, neuroses, antagonisms, concerns, appetites, and opinions, but a mysterious being. Whether this being is identical with the body and *co-eternal* with it has not yet been fully decided by all authorities, but it is generally agreed that, whatever be the source of it, there is a part of man that is transphysical, a part of him aside from flesh, bone, muscle, lymph, and the like, a part actually superior to the known functions of his body. This superior part seems to inhabit the body and, as Jung defines, it is the person in the body.

A lot of thought has been given to the body and we have developed a whole defensive mechanism to take care of it. Practically all of our social benevolences are directed toward the body, to feed it, to house it, to support its needs economically, to take care of its health, to provide it with old age securities, to see that it is able to make its way in life by educating that part of it which is referred to as the brain or the mind. This problem was well stated by Socrates in one of his discussions. Alcibiades, one of his favorite friends and disciples, was an extravagant young man, rather lacking in

the essentials of philosophic integrity. One day Alcibiades was wearing a very elaborate gilded and bejeweled dagger in his sash. Socrates looked at it for a moment and remarked to Alcibiades, "It is a pity to have a dull blade in such a beautiful sheath." It seems this was said in the hope that Alcibiades would get the hint.

No matter what we do with the body, it is a pity if the person in the body is neglected. We cater to all the appetites except the aspirations, and these we neglect. We are content to see that the body is comfortable even if the soul within it is in a state of desperate misery. We like to assume, of course, that the misery of the soul is because of its bodily condition, and that therefore if we can clear up the chilblains the rest will cure itself, but it does not work. Some of the world's handsomest and most healthy people have been in the deepest trouble, and some that were very unprepossessing in appearance have become the universal benefactors of mankind. Aesop, the slave, was a hunchback, but his wisdom will never cease to enthrall us with his fables and legends. Homer and Socrates were pigeon-chested, and Steinmetz was a hunchback; yet these things did not prevent the inner life from coming through, whereas in many cases outer amiability and a passable personality become substitutes for character, to the detriment of all concerned.

In alchemy it is assumed that within the person there is a psychic integration, a soul if you wish to call it such, superior to the body but largely imprisoned within it, carrying in its own nature the better part of the human being. The soul is the link between spirit and body, between God and man, between heaven and earth, between divinity and nature. In man, this soul is his most vital and valuable possession. It is that part of himself upon which the well-being of all the rest depends. Yet in many instances the very existence of it is denied. The individual does not like to be burdened by the small, still voice of conscience when he has something else on his mind, nor to listen to his own integrities, especially if they conflict with his ambitions or his worldly goods. The soul, or the psychic part of man, has been recognized as a mysterious factor by means of which the superior and inferior natures are united, the tie that binds together the corporeal and the incorporeal.

The nature of the soul is discussed at some length in the writings of the Platonists and the Neoplatonists, who considered it as the archetypal symbol of beauty. According to the Pythagoreans it is a perfectly symmetrical, eight-sided, geometric solid, an octahedron. The soul is equally beautiful on all levels of existence. On the mental level it is wisdom; on the emotional, harmony; and on the physical, perfect proportion. In terms of morality it is virtue and on the level of human relations it is integrity. The aspects of the soul are revealed through the planets, constellations, and elements of the solar system. All the kingdoms of nature release aspects of the soul's power and are embodiments of psychic beauty. The seven races of mankind, the seven kingdoms of nature, the liberal arts and sciences, the notes of the musical scale are all revelations of soul power. On the religious level the seven spiritual virtues and the seven deadly sins are related to the use and abuse of psychic power. The metals of alchemy, the chakras of yoga, and the seals of *Revelation* bear witness to the psychic energy. The eighth power of the soul is its procreative energy by which the vehicles of its purposes are perpetuated and, through an evolutionary process, gradually release the harmony of the soul into mortal manifestation. It is said that the soul nourishes itself from its own nature and that the human being sustains his own soul power by intuitively recognizing the celestial beauties manifested through creation and the divine sublimity which abides forever in a state of perfect harmony. In alchemy the soul is symbolized as the universal medicine, the philosophical gold, and the ruby diamond.

There has been a great deal of comment as to why the ancients put the earth in the center when that was not really where it belonged. It was assumed they knew no better. This has been worn rather thin, however, because Pythagoras nearly six hundred years before the Christian era pronounced that all

the planets in their chariots circled around the blazing altar of the sun. They were definitely aware of this as were the Hindus much earlier, but used the geocentric system when calculating the influence of planets on material nature and man. The reason for this is obvious: in the psychic integration of man, the geocentric system is a perfect diagram of the relationships between the various elements and levels of soul power. These relationships were represented by the planets which, in turn, were the Greek or Latin deities and these, in turn, were the names given by the alchemists to the metals that were necessary for the transmutation processes. Thus we stand in the midst of a compound diagram which sets forth very clearly not only the purpose for which man was intended, but also the way in which this purpose could be most likely attained in ordinary daily experience.

Among the symbols of the chemists three stood out. They were the three substances: salt, sulphur, and mercury. These three substances were associated in alchemy, sulphur with the sun, the moon with silver or salt, and the planet Mercury with its own element, mercury or quick-silver. Why should the sun, moon, and mercury be so very important in this procedure? Because in alchemy they became the symbols of the Holy Trinity. The Divine Power was God, sulphur; the material power was the earth, salt; and between these was the soul. Between spirit and body stood the soul, mercury, which in turn developed a specialized symbolism in the hermetic arts where it was associated with Hermes Trismegistus, the mysterious adept of the hermetic art. In Egypt, in the Latin or Roman period, it was Sulphermes Trismegistus, and of course Hermes was the Greek form of the word mercury, or the deity Mercury. The hermetic arts, there-fore, are the arts of Mercury, and mercury was to these ancient chemists the symbol of the solvent. Mercury was necessary to combine metals. Mercury was necessary in their philosophy to hold together or to become a kind of mordant which accepted into itself both sulphur and salt and brought them together in an indissoluble compound.

In the Bible we find the statement: "Ye are the salt of the earth." At one time the Romans actually paid their soldiers with salt. The word "salary" in Latin means salt, and that is the origin of our word "salary." Also, the references to salt, "If the salt has lost its savor, wherewithall shall it be salted," "the salt of salvation," and the division of society above and below the salt—all of these are carry overs to very ancient thinking. However, in all substance we discover that salt is absolutely necessary to salvation, and that the word "salvation" itself, like "salary," means preservation by salt, the *sal* being salt at the beginning of the word. The symbolism of salt can be lifted up from the common shaker salt (with or without iodine) which we use today, to a more intriguing thought, namely, that there is within the human being the mystery of the salt. In a Moslem world no one who receives salt at a meal can then be injured by the host. Preservation is through the exchange of salt, which is the most solemn of all bonds. Salt, therefore, becomes a symbol of the common virtues of life. Man is saved by his integrity, his honesty, his kindness, his various activities. He must earn his bread with the sweat of his brow. He must derive from nature the substance for his own material survival, and the whole problem of material survival becomes involved in the mystery of salt.

Sulphur is an entirely different type of agent, less referred to in the non-mystical writings, but we know that it was essential to the development of a great many products of antiquity. Sulphur became the symbol of physical fire captured in a substance. The element of sulphur, the metal of sulphur, or the fumes of sulphur, sulphuric acid, all represented fire captured in a physical substance. This fire also represented the spirit in man—a spiritual principle captured in a material substance. It is not like salt which rises from the earth but like the fire of heaven which descends from the sky. The whole spiritual mystery of man was contained in the concept of sulphur. Sulphur was fire, the symbol of captured fire suspended. It could come out anytime as when it is struck with a sulphur match. It is fire held in suspension, fire captured as though frozen into a material thing. The ancients used it to



represent the spirit life in all living things, it corresponded to God, the Father, whereas salt was God, the Holy Spirit, for it was this Holy Spirit that at the Pentecost miracles provided them with the salt of salvation. They were then to realize and understand that they were the salt of the earth, which meant necessary to the survival of life. Even in the desert places, in the jungles, in the wilderness, the salt lick where animals go to get the absolutely necessary salt is usually an area of truce. Animals otherwise incompatible meet side by side to partake of the necessary salt of life.

Perhaps the most interesting symbolism is connected with mercury. Mercury was the god of communication; somewhat involved in gossip which is one of the probabilities of his intimate association with newscasting. In any case he was referred to as the messenger of the gods. In chemistry, mercury was a very powerful and essential spirit. In the form of Hermes, which was his Greek and original name, he had a great deal more importance than in his Latin form. The Latins were not philosophers and were not much concerned with the deeper mysteries of life. They were tolerant in religion so long as men paid their taxes. However, in the transition of the deities from their Greek to Latin forms, a considerable amount of valid symbolism was lost. Cronus who became Saturn is a far more important philosophic symbol as Cronus than he is as Saturn. Zeus who became Jupiter lost much of his stature in the transformation and Hermes, who became Mercury, was deprived of most of his esoteric significance. Hermes was a term or a name for the *enlightener*, the spirit of truth, reality, factuality and actuality, the reconciler of opposites. He was the symbol of all things brought to a common understanding, a common ground not by the individual descending to the level of those less than himself, but enclosing all levels within a higher self in which each had its proper place. Hermes did not make the doctrine so simple that the foolish could understand, but developed a means of expressing truth so simple that the wise and the simple could understand equally. It was a part of Mercury to overcome or clarify all mysteries, to establish the true path or the true course of procedure. Therefore, as Nebo he was the illuminator of the Babylonians, as Thoth he was the wise scribe of the gods of Egypt, and as Hermes he was the mysterious patron of the science of transformation or of the regeneration of all forms of life.

A science was formulated and the pattern was supplied by chemistry. It became the skeleton or framework around which a special philosophical technique was developed, the purpose of this technique being, first of all, the purification of man, then the unfoldment and purification of the reason, and finally the assimilation of the individual into the universal. These three steps related to the three parts of the Trinity, representing the three kingdoms of heaven, earth, and hell which were found in the ancient writings, hell being essentially the world in which we live now. Plato points out clearly that men do not go to purgatory when they die, but come to it when they are born. This is the world of punishment, the world of karma; but it is also the great laboratory in which the alchemical experiment of universal brotherhood is in the process, for the laws governing human relationships are as exact as those to be found in electronics, chemistry, or architecture.

To symbolize these laws was set up what is called the *L'Escalier des Sages*, the ladder of the sages, a ladder connecting heaven and earth. This ladder was marked with the orbits of the planets in ancient times, ascending from the surface of the physical earth to the interior surface of the sphere of the fixed stars. This was also the mysterious burden of the *Book of Revelation* with its seven seals, its seven trumpets, its seven vials, and the seven churches which are in Asia. The septenary of the planets was adapted into alchemy where the great book of chemistry was said to be sealed with seven seals. This is the book that was before the throne of God and the lamb in the *Book of Revelation*. Tracing the old mysteries back to their Egyptian and Greek beginnings, we realize that they were veiled, not only with one veil but with many veils. Sir Edwin Arnold points out in his poem, *The*

*Veil upon veil we lift to find  
Veil upon veil behind.*

The many veils are actually not veils thrown over the structure, but veils within ourselves by means of which our power to interpret is highly individualized and not found to be exactly the same in any two persons. In any event, the veils of the mysteries, the key to the regeneration process, was the major purpose of alchemical exploration and research.

The danger of the quest for physical gold was pointed out by the alchemists, and they go into this a little more psychologically also. Why do we want to grow? Why does the average individual want to be better than he is? Why are we concerned with becoming spiritual and what are our motivations? Here we are warned to carefully study the physical aspects of our purpose. Do we really want to be spiritual primarily in order that we may be free from the limitations of ordinary living? Do we want to be better so that we can transcend our lessons rather than learn them? Are we hoping to be freed from the law of cause and effect by a meditative discipline? Are we really thinking of advancing ourselves? Do we think of spirituality as bringing with it prosperity and all the blessings of material advantage? If so, then we are in violation of the intent of Raymond Lully and the other great alchemists because we are working toward physical objectives, which is not the true goal. When we leave here we must leave all physical possessions behind as well as our opinions, attitudes, careers, and other distinctions we have gained. These are only part of our estate and the part that is most vulnerable to time. The material goal was considered the false end, and the alchemical transmutation was not to be performed for any essentially physical purpose, which was considered by the alchemists as a profanation of the art. Unfortunately in our contemporary society this is an attitude very few people can completely escape and one in which theology has become ensnared, because it does not know how to inspire an individual to live a virtuous life unless it promises him heaven if he does and threatens him with perdition if he does not. This leaves the individual still advancing his own cause; trying to escape eternal damnation or trying to meet the requirements of eternal salvation without understanding either one.

The sphere of mercury also symbolizes the soul or psychic sphere itself and in the alchemical tradition the goal to be attained is a peculiar psychic integrity achieved by complete detachment from self-purpose. Practically everything we think about involves self in some form, its purposes or projects. Most people if they could eliminate thoughts of self would probably lapse into some form of unconsciousness because they really have little else on their minds beyond some aspect of self. The problem of eliminating self-interest becomes the key to final integrity. We experience repeatedly that people who are really quite advanced in their thinking axe by no means above taking advantage of someone else and are also unable to control a bad disposition. When they feel they are injured they fight back, compounding the felony. They do not really have the inner discretion, discrimination, and strength to live the harmless life; the impersonal life of virtue.

The way in which the ancients tried to direct their disciples was through the process of wisdom, and as the material world is the sphere of activity, the mental life of the individual is the sphere of wisdom. Here he gradually comes to know why certain principles are true. He also becomes aware that these principles are immutable, therefore that it is inevitable that he will have to obey them, and

there is no longer the power of choice for the wise person to put off his virtues until tomorrow because today he has some vices he would like to exercise. Wisdom largely removes self-interest because it places all things on the level of universal interest. Wisdom brings justice and justice establishes the reign of Divine Purpose over mundane affairs. Through the alchemy of transformation, the Mercury principle is gradually transformed into its spiritual equivalent symbolized by Hermes, for Hermes was actually the hidden god of wisdom, the mysterious power that spoke for the Eternal. It was in this divine wisdom that the word was made flesh and the invisible power of truth was made apparent to man, but he has to learn to see it. It is wisdom that opens his eyes so that he can see the reality of the truths which are suspended as “effulgent blossoms from Heaven,” as Plotinus says.

The spirit itself is the eternal flame that never burns out. Like sulphur, it is fire captured in the most remote parts of space. Fire held so in suspension that whenever a light is lit anywhere in the world the flame rises, but where is the flame before the lamp is lit? The flame does not arise from nothing but is always there. Spirit is the flame that is there but is unknown until the flint and the steel or the match brings it into manifestation. Spirit becomes the ultimate source of all, the unmoved mover of all things. It becomes the symbol of the final state of spiritual enlightenment. It is also the true symbol or the true mystery of the philosopher’s stone, for the philosopher’s stone or the fire diamond is the fire of earth burned out in the fire of heaven. To discover this, to compound the diamond of the wise requires, therefore, perfect control of the physical aspects of life, the perfect unfoldment of the psychological levels of life, and finally ultimate perfect identification with the Divine Principle of all things. We can think about God and in this we fulfill the lower aspects. We can think with God, and thus assume the next higher level of our spiritual association.

The alchemist now uses all kinds of fantastic dream symbols to represent the infinite diversity of the compounds of human nature, for each individual is a formula in himself, a patterned relationship between the elements which compose his nature. Each individual is the sum of what he has achieved, and stands on the threshold of further achievement. Each individual brings with him into the present life the unfinished business of the past and must establish the unfinished business of the future. Every part of life is perfectly within a pattern of regulation and law.



Leaf 24 | *“I, the bird [the adept], speak into thine ears from the Sun, the Moon, and the Azoth. The work is perfected with little labor.”* The text to the right reads: *“This is my beloved Son whom I saw and loved. If he be resurrected, He will remain at home, and in that house the spirit will be the soul and the body; for Mercury may be called the son of the Sun and the Moon.”*

Mercury, being the symbol of wisdom and of the soul, has another factor also involved in it, what St. Paul calls "*charitas*" and which we have translated as "love." The soul is the love principle. The soul achieves all its purposes through reconciliations. It is that which places an instinct of understanding and togetherness above all the separations of life. It is an emotional approach to reality. It is sympathy, it is compassion, it is understanding and forgiveness. Practically all of the virtues, qualities and dispositional factors given in the Sermon on the Mount will be found as part of the soul's chemical mechanism. Love is a chemical. Relationships of human beings are chemical combinations, but all these chemical combinations are merely names for psychical associations. They are parts of the inner life coming forth into manifestation through conditioned physical organisms. This inner life is divided into numerous forms, similitudes, and likenesses represented by symbolical forms.

If, then, we want to be private alchemists in our own little worlds, the first thing we have to do is to purify metals so that it is possible for them to be brought into unity. If for the word "metals" we psychologically give the term "opinions," we might not be very far from it. Opinions will separate us forever. The only solution to opinionism is to penetrate its surface to points of reconciliation. Opinions are the peculiar *intensities* of individuals, but all opinions are reconciled in fact. When the truth of the matter is known, opinions lose their power to disturb. Much of the tyranny and activism of today, as well as the confusion of society, is the result of groups or individuals pressing their own interpretations of things, believing that they are right and others are wrong, believing they have causes to defend and, at the same time feeling justified in variously offending other causes. All these are what Heraclitus calls "the falling sickness of the reason." They are attitudes and opinions. Now the first step of this transmutation process is to gradually reduce opinionism. The individual should not have any opinion unless he is qualified. There has long been talk that there should be a license on opinions, and that the individual who is to have opinions should pass an examination, prove that he is qualified, and then become an official, recognized, honored opinionist. But before he could get the certificate he would realize he must stop having opinions at all, that he must have facts. Imagination, prejudice, And all these little imps that come out of bottles in a mysterious way interfere with the simple judgment by means of which very often the child is correct and the mature person is wrong. The first part of purifying the metals is to use Mercury, the mind, as a means of bringing things together, creating cooperation rather than competition in all fields including learning. The moment we see better than the division we achieve unity. One of the highest attributes of the mind is to discover the identity of the truth in all things. Having done this we might say that having saved ourselves from the conflict of attitudes and ideas and having discovered a truth that is larger than all of them, we can then live in comparative peace with our neighbor. We can understand him better, realizing for perhaps the first time that it is the measure by which we understand that, in turn, we shall be understood.

The next step is for the individual to take care of the objective life of his environment, his business problems, his home, his family, his social responsibilities. He gains the providence to administer his estate and things of this nature, which are all part of his material life. If he can put these in order he will relieve his psychic integration of the terrific stress of misunderstood and misdirected activities. He will find that it is not necessary for him to spend most of his leisure time worrying himself to exhaustion. He will realize that he does not have to become disgruntled or irritated or antagonistic. These emotions help to lock the psyche further away, sicken it, and set up vibrations in it which must later come forward as another type of karma. By quietly, lovingly, and wisely administering his mortal affairs he begins to release the soul from the burdens of the non-tranquilities of the flesh. As

soon as the false life fades, there is a chance for the true life to shine, and in the life which has been brought to peace and harmony, the power of the soul begins to manifest and the matter of transformation or transmutation is advanced. Gradually the soul, radiating out from itself through a personality which is no longer in a battlefield condition, begins to move from the inside. It begins to bring with it greater personal experience of insight. The soul, released from bondage to the obstructions of the body, is capable of bestowing upon the mind, and later, through the mind upon the brain, the so-called mystical experience which is the experience of the victory of the inner over the outer. This is the labor of the great alchemical rotations. This is represented by patterns of creatures, of winged beings, of birds and of animals, and of various degrees of fomentation within bottles. The bottle is the psychic self, the aura, the magnetic field, within which these transformations take place.

The final form of the transformation is, of course, the perfect stone. When the perfect stone is found, the true diamond is seen in the alchemical tradition as part of the emanational or magnetic field. The great chemistry takes place in the aura, in that part of the body which is super physical. The alchemy becomes a pattern of color, of mysterious forms that rise and fall like thought forms in the mind. It is a constant motion of light, each light being a chemical element, and each chemical element being a divine or human attribute. These working together gradually break up their inharmonious patterns. The heavy colors fall away; the rotations are continued through disciplines such as meditation which is a rotation of psychic metals, until finally the magnetic field becomes as it is shown in the highest diagrams of alchemy, a beautiful, luminous area in which the phoenix, or sometimes the symbol of the risen Christ, is placed. In the alchemical test tubes there are many diagrams showing Christ rising from the test tube, as the symbol of the final revelation of the true mystery of Christ. This, of course, is what Paul calls "the Christ in you, which is the hope of glory." And it is also Paul who says, "If this Christ be lifted up, it shall raise all men unto it." This is a perfect alchemical parallel for it represents the power of salvation raised from the level of physical salt to the level of spiritual salvation or the salt of the earth.

The alchemists, then, have these steps which their symbolism implies. Today most psychologists and psychiatrists are actually burdened to death with the psychotics they have to work with, because in that field it is practically impossible for anyone to work twelve months a year many hours a day with the mentally infirm without becoming ill themselves. This is a desperate situation for which there has been no broad pattern of therapy. The successful broad pattern of therapy must call forth a realization of the laws governing human behavior. No individual can be better than his own conduct. If he wishes to improve he must improve his relationships with life. Selfishness, self-centeredness, egoism, unreasonable ambition, these can never be gratified. There is no way to guarantee that the person will achieve peace by getting what he desires. The moment he gets what he thinks he desires, the desire fails and he turns his attention to something else. He is forever searching to have more than he has, when his only true and proper quest is to become more than he is. Until this is recognized all of the higher forms of knowledge must fail, because knowledge cannot pass in a pure state through a corrupt vessel, and man must begin by making himself worthy by cleansing the inside of his own cup,

The mystical alchemists were just simply people who were trying to get started in the right direction. They wanted to find ways in which to discipline or unfold their own natures and they were able, as Boehme was, to take the attitude that they could not kill out their faults with a club nor, like St. George, slay the dragon with a sacred lance. The point of insight is much simpler than this and the strange thing is that truth is no respecter of human knowledge. Truth is not limited to the intellectual nor to the individual who may have spent his life searching for it. Truth is actually an experience of normalcy. The child can come closer to it than the aged, and both the child and the aged are closer to

it than those in the prime of life because in the prime of life our physical attachments are very intense. The child can apply the principles that lead to emancipation more easily very often than the highly educated and skilled adult because it begins with childlikeness. We are reminded that the kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of children, and the child heart, the child mind, is allowed to express its natural feelings. In a small child until it is spoiled by worldly associations, these natural feelings are most always essentially good-natured. When just by being good-natured one can get one foot on the ladder, it is a simple matter to do the self-disciplines that are gentle and subtle and lead to a kindlier way of life. One can simply refuse gently and quietly to hold attitudes that are unkind, critical, competitive, violent, or intolerant, prejudiced. Many people do this most easily by making these adjustments religious virtues, feeling in this way that they keep faith with God. Keeping faith with God in simple and little things is the beginning of the victory of the soul over self. It is the beginning of the process of transformation, also especially the beginning of the path of transmutation of the metals. We say a person of courage is a man of metal, and we say also that the metals represent all the different degrees and phases of human insight. One of the metals in one man may cause him to play the piano, in another to be an expert at golf, in a third to be a great surgeon, and in another a musician or an artist. These are the metals which must be fused together by consciousness to become the perfect integrated structure of the soul, for all skills, abilities, aspirations, visions, and inventions arise in the soul. The soul, when it takes over the metals, takes over all of the different departments of life over which the metals symbolically preside. From within, then, we control all the aspects of our own potentials and are able to gradually unfold soul power. When we have unfolded the soul power of things, we then have "the powder of projection."

The powder of projection was said to be a mysterious substance, by means of which one unit, one gram of this powder could transmute hundreds of pounds of base metal into pure gold. It is rather obvious what this mysterious thing is, one gram of which can work such a miracle. One interpretation, of course, is that it is intuition or common sense, the use of which will transmute almost all mistakes into virtues, if one is careful and thoughtful; but the powder of projection is also insight. It is the power for the individual to achieve the transmutation of all externals, transforming them from the base substances. Through experiences which have been obstacles we find the ways of our own growth. This powder of projection transforms a universe of mistakes we think we see into a universe of divine order, which is there whether we see it or not. This powder of projection, then, allows us to face life in terms of the Universal Plan rather than in the terms of our own personal ambitions. Behind world problems such as we see today is the eternal working of an eternally benevolent purpose and those who cannot see this are sorely troubled; but when insight arises within, one grain of insight can transform the whole world pattern into what it really is, the constant unfoldment of eternal principles through time and space.

Thus alchemy becomes a kind of mystical philosophy with many levels and stages. There are many details that only very careful study and meditation will reveal. There is no doubt that it is the large pattern which has been partly discovered in modern psychology and psychiatry but which can never be perfectly known in this world until the professor, the teacher, or the system itself is tied directly to the human soul and the Divine Power from which this soul is suspended. We can never have a perfect psychology unless it is founded in religion, and we can never have a perfect psychological religion unless it is supported by psychology and defended by conduct.



Leaf 25 | *The Queen calls herself “The mother of the Sun, the sister of the Moon, and the servant and spouse of Mercury.” Above her is stated that in the beginning of the book it was written of her that from her maternal breasts she nourishes the Sun. On the right she is made to exclaim: “I cannot be crowned unless these sons of mine become ashes.*



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE YOGA OF ALCHEMY

The origin of the alchemical tradition is obscure, but we know that it existed among most ancient cultures. It probably reached Europe from Oriental sources, especially from the Hindu system of *raja yoga*. The Oriental concept of personal transformation is certainly the basis of the Western idea of transmutation. The end of *raja yoga* was the release of the divine principle in man from the impediments of mind, emotion, and the sensory perceptions. The yogic doctrines were perpetuated in the teachings of the Buddhists and Jains, and numerous mystically oriented groups. Their Western equivalents are the Pythagorean disciplines, Rosicrucian mysticism, and the secret doctrine of alchemy. The Neoplatonists maintained that the inner life of the unenlightened individual was obscured by the deficiencies of human nature. Contemplation, meditation, and retrospective techniques combined with personal purity could enable the soul to rise triumphantly from the tomb of flesh and be united forever with the blessed gods. It is in this sense that we wish to examine Western alchemy as a secret science of redemption concealed behind an elaborate pageantry of chemical formulas. As the ends to be attained are the same in East and West, each can be used to interpret the other.

The disciplining of the inner life is a universally accepted prerequisite for enlightenment, and the fact that systems arising in all parts of the world show a basic unity in their structures, some feel, may be due to the inner experience of the individual himself. As we search for enlightenment, our intuitive faculties more or less reveal the direction that we must take. The instruction seems to come from within ourselves—not necessarily as a formal statement but as an instinct to do those things which are most likely to improve the health and comfort of the inner life. Also, there is a belief with some pretty strong circumstantial support of a migration of doctrines. We have come to assume that East and West were separate until comparatively recent times, that Western people have little or no knowledge of the Orient, and that Oriental people had practically no insight into the Western concept of living. This is a combination of ignorance and arrogance. The truth of the matter is, there has only been one world for a very long time and there has never been a time when there has not been a broad circulation of ideas.

We know that as early as the fourth or fifth century B.C., Buddhist and Hindu priests visited Athens. They came along the same path that later other monks from Asia journeyed. They walked across the Gobi Desert. They traveled through all the mysterious jungles of Hindustan. They came through Kashmir and through Pakistan, and finally arrived at the Near East where they mingled their personal pilgrimage with the caravan routes. These scholars also brought back to Asia a great deal of interesting information, and by the beginning of the Christian era it is reasonably certain that the more informed Orientals were well aware of the directions of Western philosophical and religious thinking. We have several accurate accounts of pilgrims who made the journey back and forth at a comparatively early date, far before the famous journey of Sir Marco Polo.

Also there seems to be a combination of circumstances that centered around the crusades. For the European mind the crusades opened the door of the Near East and the Far East, for that matter to Western Europe, for the first time. Up to the days of the crusades, maps of the world had practically no markings for Asia at all. Civilization was Mediterranean, and the rest of the world was in barbarism or savagery. Western peoples were not much interested in the beliefs of any group except

themselves, regarding their own culture as divinely established and spiritually ordained. They had what they considered to be an adequate philosophy of life, in fact, the only true one—so the thoughts and opinions and attitudes of others were not too important to them through the early centuries of European growth.

Occasionally minds, searching for greater insight, did break away, and there are evidences that Greek and Latin physicians visited Baghdad and other centers of Near Eastern culture. Along the course of merchandising came an exchange of ideas. The Roman court wanted the silks of China. Nearly all luxury loving Europeans had a deep desire for the beauties and artistries of the East and made arrangements to get them. The merchants from the East told stories of their world and explained their beliefs, and other merchants from the West traveling Eastward also carried various tidings to the countries of Asia. So there was an early exchange that perhaps came to its period of greatest volition at the time of the crusades.

It will be remembered that one of the charges against the crusaders was that they worshiped a three-headed deity. This three-headed deity, as represented in some of the earlier texts, was startlingly similar to the great Trimurti in the caves of Elephanta in the harbor of Bombay, India. There seems to be no doubt that the Shiva of Elephanta was carried to Europe without adequate explanation or the explanations were held in secret, and it thus appeared as a fantastic idol with the returning crusaders. For their opinions on these subjects and other heretical thoughts which seemed to imply Oriental thinking, the crusaders were virtually exterminated. But the exchange still went back and forth, although on a limited level, and there seems to be no reason to question that some Europeans were aware of Eastern thinking at a comparatively early date.

The European situation was rather well-locked within itself until the time of the Protestant Reformation. This was the first breakthrough in which the rights of the individual to think and believe according to his own dictates were protected. In fact, it was about that time these rights were even recognized to exist. A powerful theocracy had controlled the thinking of Europe, but after the Reformation the infallibility of religious beliefs was strongly undermined and, following the Reformation also, there arose not merely one Protestant group, but a galaxy of Protestant sects, beliefs, and various larger and smaller sects.

This brings us perhaps to the beginning of the seventeenth century which is without question one of the most important in the history of civilization. It was in the seventeenth century that what we call today the modern world was born. It was preceded by the years of exploration and colonization, but these in turn had added a new dimension to man's thinking, the realization that there were other lands besides his own and other peoples outside of the circle of his immediate understanding and insight. What was perhaps more embarrassing was the realization that these people were highly cultured and highly civilized and had arts and sciences and crafts comparatively unknown in Europe.

The seventeenth century gave us of course a new look at philosophy. This new look was spearheaded by such minds as Descartes and Bacon, and from the concepts of these men humanism gained vast encouragement. This was also the time when Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood. It was the time in which the solar system became more or less identified along the lines we know today. It was a period of greater educational liberalism. In this century, also, we have the beginning of the great Utopian cycles. There had been earlier works on the subject, but these had little effect. The new world of the Western Hemisphere and the new perspective on European culture resulted in the rise of idealistic Utopian visions of wide variety and of varying degrees of specialization. The Utopians simply stated in substance the conviction that man had a purpose, that it was possible to live better, that it was possible to correct faults and evils of society, and that

righteous and dedicated individuals could create a universal reformation. Some of these were persecuted for their beliefs and many of these early Utopians were forced into secrecy; others broke through and migrated to the Western Hemisphere where Utopian movements were established before the end of the seventeenth century.

There were also other factors that were beginning to introduce themselves along mystical lines. Nearly every religion has passed through several stages of development and in the beginning orthodoxy dominated. Gradually the human mind rebelled against the boundaries placed by orthodoxy upon the function of the human mind. This rebellion resulted in a new interpretation of theological concepts, an escape from literalism into theological and mystical speculation. In this period we find early in the seventeenth century the rise of the Rosicrucian mystics followed by several different sects of mystical thinkers and culminating in the writings of Jacob Boehme, in whose works practically every system of European mysticism was involved in one way or another.

This was also the great day of alchemy. There had been earlier works, but most of those that were considered very early were actually back-dated, and the works themselves were more recent than the title pages might indicate. By the seventeenth century we find the emergence of a distinct alchemical tradition, presented in two ways: through books and through pictures. Nearly all chemists were involved in the art of diagramming, and also in the creating of appropriate emblems, under which to conceal their actual purposes. These emblems probably belonged again to two general classes; those that represented facts or ideas which could be communicated but which for safety might be at least slightly veiled, and the other group consisting of ideas that could not be ordinarily communicated and could only be passed from one person to another upon a level of symbolism. It was hoped that the beholder would experience within himself the true meaning of the symbols with which he was confronted in his research.

The alchemists no doubt began in Arabia, Persia, and other Aryan and Far Eastern countries. China, too, began by thinking seriously of the transmutation of physical metals. They were interested perhaps not entirely in metallic transmutation, but in the development of the mysterious illusive universal medicine for the sicknesses of mankind. Many of the alchemists were physicians, and most of them had discovered that the existing pharmacopoeia was inadequate. They were confronted every day with ailments with which they could not successfully cope. The sick were not recovering as one might hope, and neither the remedies nor the prayers were producing the desired results. It was circumstances of this nature that sent Paracelsus to the Near East in search of new remedies and new formulas for correcting the ordinary ills of the flesh; probably especially vital at a time when the average life expectancy was less than forty years. The alchemists, however, gradually divided into two schools, one that might be termed materialistic, and the other idealistic. In this respect alchemy was not so very different from modern knowledge as we have it today. In present society practically all forms of information are subject to two general interpretations, one which might be considered factual, and the other as hopeful, something good to be gained, something more than the surface appearance of the so-called facts. Man has never been satisfied with facts. He wanted to know the truths behind them, and the realities behind these truths. The alchemists at an early time, therefore—in the seventeenth century, at least—certainly developed an elaborate religious, philosophical, chemical heraldry. They developed all kinds of strange symbols which were later to be considered important on a psychological level, symbols that might arise in the subconscious of the individual, and passing through him might bring from his own depths information valuable to his surface consciousness. These symbols were never completely organized, as far as we know, in Western thinking. They were diffuse in many ways, but through them came a number of obvious imageries that do have a consistent

pattern, many of which show definite Oriental influence.

Now the alchemist had, of course, two concerns. One was to advance his knowledge, and the other was to protect himself and his family from persecution. Persecution was not always based upon disbelief. It was not always assumed that alchemy was the work of evil spirits or anything of that kind. Persecution might only mean that an avaricious prince would put an alchemist in prison for years in order to force him to reveal the secrets of his magical art. To protect themselves against such dangers the alchemists were extremely reticent and kept their better findings mostly to themselves, or presented them so fantastically that the average materialist simply did not believe there was any truth in the subject. They were so successful that up to around fifty years ago the average person had no particular interest in alchemy, but considered it the mad mother of chemistry and assumed that all alchemists were either deluded or fraudulent. We now realize that this was not true, but we also realize how protective such sophistry could be in a time when human life was not valued with much respect.

The objectives of the alchemists were partly religious and partly secular. Many of the alchemists of note were monks, coming from cloisters or religious houses of one kind or another. They were by nature a scholarly group and mingled their mystical speculations with those alchemists of a more physical focus, including physicians, professors, educators, and chemists. These mingling together produced a fantastic literature almost unbelievable. These alchemist mystics, or as they have been called with some propriety "alchemical philosophers," turned to the engraver for assistance. Engravings of the most interesting and elaborate kind are found in the writings of such great names of the period as Robert Flood, Count Michael Maier, and the various disciples of Basil Valentine and Raymund Lully. These diagrams must have been in some way controlled. True, most of the publishing houses of Europe kept engravers as part of their establishment, but you could not expect the average engraver to pick up a text, read it, and then make the proper engraving to carry the full meaning of the idea. These engravings were often decorated with extremely abstruse symbols. They often made use of chemical forms and diagrams which would not normally be within the scope of the average artist. We may therefore assume with some reality that the designs were submitted to the engravers, and that while the artists put the finishing touches on these pictures, they were working from various master plans, various symbolic materials provided for their use. Thus alchemy began to descend through two distinct series of procedures—the written word and the picture or emblem. The spoken word was not much used, being rather too dangerous.

As we examine the content of these various writings, we come upon a series of intimations that perhaps have never been fully appreciated except by one or two writers of the nineteenth century who began to suspect the truth. One of the most common things we find in the writings of the earlier seventeenth century alchemists is a brief statement to the effect that the transmutation of physical metals was not the object of alchemy and, as one writer points out in an all chemical treatise, "Woe, woe, woe unto the goldmakers." Now if the physical transmutation of metals was not the goal, what was it? If it was not the end of alchemy to produce a medicine for the healing of material ills, of what medicine did they write? And if it is also true that their experiments were not intended to take flaws out of diamonds and other precious stones, what flaws did they take out, and from what? The answer remained comparatively obscure all through the seventeenth century, but again and again the intimations indicate that alchemy was basically a spiritual art associated with the concept of a universal reformation of mankind.

When the first edition of the *Fama Fraternitatis* of the Rosicrucians was issued, a short treatise by Sir Johann Bocalini was appended to the end of this work. Bocalini was an Italian architect who was

also much of a humanist and a social dissenter. He wrote brilliantly and was assassinated for his efforts. But Bocalini's article is entitled *The Universal Reformation of Mankind*. This universal reformation was also the keynote of the Utopians. It became the most powerful force in the concept of the later humanists. A universal reformation of mankind! How was it to be effected? Some felt that the best way was to find a deserted spot and start a new civilization. Others believed, however, that this reformation could be achieved by the individual in his own social pattern and, furthermore, that the rise of a new mystical meaning to life would gradually change the political face of society.

If this alchemy was a science of universal reformation, what would such a reformation mean? From the Utopians themselves, some other paralleling mystical groups, and from some of the more devout religious sects that arose out of this concept (such as the Quakers, the Amish, the Moravians, and the Mennonites) it became clear that this reformation was to be a new relationship-not only between human beings, but between human beings and God. The purpose was to establish a world according to the Divine Will, and not contrary to it. In a mysterious way Deity became in a sense the foundation for the enlightened commonwealth.

The ideas of an enlightened commonwealth were old by the time the seventeenth century broke in Europe, and probably one of the great sources of this entire philosophy was China where the writings of Confucius had been included among the most important documents of the democratic concept of life. There was every possibility that a little of the Confucian method reached Rome along with the silks, satins, and baubles of the East, Perhaps only a stray hint reached a few, but this stray hint found fertile ground and created speculation that later broke forth in the realization that it was possible for human beings to build a spiritual life while still in the flesh. It was not necessary to wait until some where beyond the grave and then hope that one might be included among the blessed, but something to be done now, something to be accomplished here. The vision of this and the reason for it seems to have gradually matured-not through contact with outside forces but by the individual becoming increasingly aware of the dreams, ideals, and convictions of his own inner life. While these were completely blocked, he lived in a world of acceptances, but when he began to think and had the freedom to think, he began to live in a world of doubts. He began to doubt the inevitability of the conditions under which he was living, the divine right of kings, that all knowledge was contained in ancient works. There were things to be achieved, new work to be done, and new visions were needed to stimulate man in his search for reality.

The alchemists were probably the first to integrate the concept of human improvement into a science. They had already taken the science of chemistry and from it extended alchemical speculations which they regarded as equally scientific. To them, in fact, alchemy was far more scientific than chemistry. We might doubt that today because of our tremendous addiction to all forms of chemical and electronic research. But to these older thinkers, value was not to be measured in terms of merely physical achievement. Growth was not the perpetuation of the status quo. Growth was to become better, and unless the arts and sciences helped people to become better human beings, their essential value was lost. The alchemists, therefore, created a science for bettering the life of the individual. They wanted him to live closer, not only to his own heart's desire but perhaps above it, and finally come to live close to the Divine desire. This infers the science of salvation. Unless there was a scientific procedure of some kind, unless the way of growth could be ordered, brought into a useful and workable pattern, then the whole structure was left in the keeping of a few mystics or psychics with their own private revelations.

In Asia it was already assumed long ago that not only was the science of salvation real, but it was the greatest of all the sciences, the most important, and the most practical. The individual in the

contemporary Western world does not think of science as primarily intended to unfold his own inner life, but in terms of increasing the comfort of his environmental existence. The individual is not so much concerned in being good as he is in being rich. He wants all the luxuries and pleasures available and would like to remain the same and enjoy them. It has never occurred to him that his ability to attain peace of mind, security, health, and all these desired things is built by personal discrimination, self discipline, and a sincere effort to redeem the inconsistencies of his various emotions and thoughts.

In the Oriental philosophies of Yoga and Vedanta the mysteries of the chakras equate with the *Seven Seals of Revelation*, and the *Seven Seals of Revelation* equate with the seven sacred metals of the alchemical transmutation. In the practice of Yoga it is very important first of all to recognize that the purpose is not to gain power in order to dominate someone else nor to become free of the responsibilities of living. It is a way ordained by Deity by means of which the wanderer returns home to the spiritual homeland from which he came. It is a part of a journey toward reality, toward the self, toward the Infinite, which we are all seeking to understand.

In alchemy, the quietude is the same as that recommended for Yoga, to find a quiet place. In Tibet, there used to be an old monastery where they had an unusual way of training an acolyte in quietude. They had him sit under the temple bell and rang it all the time until most people would have gone completely crazy. He was supposed to sit there and attain peace. He must reach a point where the clanging would mean absolutely nothing or in which finally he was able to hear in this clanging the voice of God. There had to be a complete indifference to interruption. Indifference did not mean to neglect duties but to endure abuses of all kinds. The alchemist also had to learn to achieve an absolute quietude that was not negative. He was not looking for a psychic revelation but simply finding the peace which is the foundation of growth. After a certain amount of time in this allotted labor, he was able to quiet his nature and release from it certain basic powers already available to him because he also had within himself the seven seals of revelation in the forms of the vital organs, the various ductless glands, the various systems of the body, the composition of the blood, and the orifices of the heart. It is in this *septimate* cave of the heart that the great mysteries are revealed. The heart becomes also part of the alchemical paraphernalia by means of which the individual receives finally the full support.

We like to think that the physician can cure us, that our health depends upon the physician. This may to a measure be true physically, and it may now be partly true mentally, but in the larger picture of things-in the great plan of human unfoldment, health, happiness, and well-being arise within the individual as the result of a definitely enlightened course of procedure. He is not merely the victim of environment, that is, in the sense of society; he is the victim of an unregenerated environment within himself. Alchemy in seeking to create the enlightened person obviously was approaching a highly mystical point of view.

Perhaps one of the most tangible evidences of an East/West connection was in the concept of the adept. In Europe it was believed that certain great masters of the mysteries of transmutation had achieved an almost divine estate. These Europeans based their interpretations and their views on these subjects upon biblical factors, especially certain of the patriarchal descriptions of *The Old Testament*. One of the greatest of the European adepts was Elias the Artist. No one knew who he was, actually. No one knew where he came from. No one knew where he would go. He was a wanderer upon the surface of the earth, with only one purpose in mind; namely, to enlighten the qualified

disciples in the mysteries of regeneration. He might come to some alchemist's laboratory in the dead of night. He could pass through doors without opening them. He was invisible unless he wished to be seen. But if he found a consecrated and dedicated disciple with the right internal motives and with at least a glimmering of the true understanding, he would instruct him, show him how to advance his labors, bless him, and depart.

The story of the Western adept is completely parallel to that of the Eastern adepts. Adepts in the East were called "arhats" and the term is now so interchangeable that a number of Oriental scholars translating derivatives of the word "arhat" in various languages simply call them adepts. The word means that one was sufficient, but in the mystical way of thinking it implies a great deal more. All through Eastern philosophy—Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and even Shintoism—the legends of the saintly ones who came to bless the labors of the sincere, the mysterious sages who were interceptors between God and man possessing miraculous powers were commonly disseminated. Some of these adepts or arhats were believed to have been the original disciples of Buddha who were to remain on earth until the coming of the Lord Maitreya. Regardless of what they are called—whether they be arhats of Buddhism or the mahatmas of Hinduism—their function was identical in meaning, substance, and essence with the European adept.

It is quite possible to assume that both of these systems were founded upon what might be termed an adept tradition, and as we explore this again another dichotomy arises: who is the adept? The definition from one system of thought is that the adept is a person representing a graduate from the school of human life—one who has gone as far as human skills and abilities can go, and who has unfolded his inner resources as far as possible without ceasing to be a human being. The other concept is that the adept is the adept self in each of us, the superior part of our own intuitive life. The arhat or adept is the instructor within each of us, the aged sage shining actually even through the eyes of the newborn babe, for in each of us is a source of enlightenment. This source is invisible but it is revealed to us through occasional experiences or circumstances. These may include visions or dreams. They may include an apperceptive realization of instruction we receive from other people. But actually the meaning arises within ourselves. The meaning is inevitable because we are all so endowed. If the individual misunderstands, if he perverts the beliefs that he holds to be true or falls victim to the delusions of his own nature, then the adept or arhat or teacher fades away, and grotesque imagery takes the place. But this grotesque imagery again is an interpretation at a psychic level of his own nature. Some Asiatics are quite convinced that the arhat is within us along with the other parts of the kingdom of heaven. The more mystically inclined are more inclined to view the full chemistry or machinery of existence as an internal experience of the human consciousness. So here we have again a very strong parallel between Eastern and Western thinking, a parallel that might well be more than accidental or coincidental.

Christian mysticism, even within the structure of the early church, was recognized. It was realized that certain devotional attitudes produced extensions of consciousness. It was this circumstance really that justified the entire concept of the canonization of saints. The saint is the individual who has had an inner experience of truth or of God, and has therefore become endowed with certain powers or internal capacities which can be used for the general service of mankind. The Christian mystic found his way usually to his experience through the transformation of character. He must practice the virtues of his faith. The nominal believer might expect nothing even if he visited such great healing shrines as Lourdes. Unless the inner life was quickened, the power of outer phenomena to be changed by the inner consciousness remained untouched. But we find in the history of the saints, from the Golden Legend on to the present time, that they were mostly people apart who had recognized certain values

and placed themselves under programs of extreme austerity.

Some of these programs appear very excessive to us today. We do not like to think that religion requires such dedication or renunciation, and for the average believer it probably does not, but for those who wish to transform religion into a mystical experience, changes must take place within consciousness. The individual must gradually refine and reorganize his life. He must relieve his personality of its burden of worldliness. If he does not do so, the inner life cannot become dominant in him. So the disciplines of religion everywhere have to do with the vows of humility, obligations of poverty, and constant remembrance of charity. The individual must feel as though of himself he is nothing, or very little. He must lose all arrogance, all material ambition, all effort to justify his own mistakes, and all effort to escape the responsibility of the burdens which he has brought upon himself. He must renounce the patterns of conduct which tie him tightly to a materialistic way of life.

This was true in the middle ages, and it is true today, and all during this time the so-called major religious bodies, while they will admit this, have made no grand effort to transform their moralism into a scientific procedure. They have not attempted to do more than to recommend those pieties and virtues which have descended as statutes of the faith. The alchemists, apparently, had a different attitude about it. They were sincerely convinced that this improvement of the person through certain disciplines indicated, at least in part, the nature of these disciplines. And this was the same everywhere. The Hindu, the Moslem, the Buddhist, the Shintoist, all are expected to make the same changes in themselves, regardless of the school they belong to. The Moslem has to bathe himself before he worships; so does the Shintoist. Everywhere cleanliness, not only of body but of spirit, is a requirement. Nearly all of these older religions also featured vigils. The American Indian practiced vigil. Vigil was the practice of going out alone into the wilderness, the forest, or the desert, and sitting down quietly, relaxing all human attitudes and emotions; then prayerfully asking to be shown the way of salvation. Our Indian shaman practiced this for ages, long before we came here. The search for truth was a search into loneliness of mind, the gradual relaxing away from the illusions and delusions of personal existence; also, a relaxing away from the concept of the omnipotence of the human mind itself. These vigilists did not go out to think, they went out to know; to know they were quiet, and in this quietude the voices of the old and the true came to them. They heard wonderful things. They experienced strange sights and lights within themselves, after which they then returned and served their peoples with greater integrity and ability.

Now if this was the way of the American Indian, the Hindu, the Oriental, the Moslem, the sanctified Christian, the dedicated orthodox Jew, the way in simple still followed by aboriginal tribes of Africa, and still the way of the Eskimo, we must realize that this is the one path that has always appeared as the solution to the ultimate state of human ignorance. Ignorance is not solved by learning, but by waiting quietly and peacefully for the coming of the presence of truth. Alchemy, taking this for granted, followed also in the Indian and Oriental systems. The alchemist established certain patterns, by means of which it was more simple for the follower to obey the rules and the instructions.

The Greeks had what they called the “probationary rites of catharsis.” To enter the temple, to join the priesthood, to become accepted into an esoteric school, the beginning was cleanliness. The body must be purified of all destructive elements, the habits must be modified, the mind and emotions must be cleaned-refreshed and washed in the waters of baptism—and the soul itself must be dedicated to truth. Without these aspects of the matter, the individual would remain locked in the narrow world of material purposes. He might aspire, he might hope, but he had to center his hopes probably upon conditions beyond the grave which he might earn while here. The alchemists believed with the ancients that enlightenment does not depend upon death, and that the individual can know the inner



world of this universe without waiting until he casts off the corporeal fabric.

We see gradually arising a group of patterns in the West which correspond to the mandalas of Eastern mysticism. A mandala is a meditation symbol- actually an eternal and inevitable design which has descended, verified, sustained, and supported by generations of mystics. The mandala is something which intrigues the mind, which impels the mind to search for resources within itself. To understand, the individual must bestow upon the symbol the meaning which he has in his own nature. If his nature is true, then the meaning will be correct; if it is not true, he is then subject to the infirmities of his own limitations.

In the Orient the mandala designs are means of visualizing conditions or states of consciousness which are themselves not visible to the profane sight of man. The great Buddhist mandalas of the Shingonshu are universe emblems. They reveal the structure of the Infinite itself, not scientifically but mystically. There is no way in which science with its present limitations can actually prove or disprove the mysterious symbolism of the mandala. It is something that can be only known intuitively by the individual who has earned the right to know and has become capable of knowing; he is following the ancient traditional disciplines which alone can point the way. The mandala primarily is a symbol not only of the universal diffusion but of the universal politics. The mandalas of Buddhism generally depict what was called "the great commonwealth," "the great commune." The universe is represented as a commune, a community. It is no longer regarded as divided into heaven and earth, for they are both parts of the same community. The invisible world is no longer referred to as a kingdom but as a community. It is a vast number of beings working together for a common purpose. It is one universal life flowing into manifestation through an infinite diversity of forms, but it is one life, moved by one life, dedicated to one purpose, and in his meditation the mystic becomes ever more aware that he is a citizen of this commune, of this vast commonwealth of purpose. This has a tendency to reduce the mistakes that he will make in daily life. It is modifying to his ambitions. It reveals to him the difference between what is important and what is not important. It makes it simple for him to give up certain material pleasures in order that he may grow inwardly and know a joy or peace that the world cannot bestow.

There is much to indicate that this mandala system came through into Europe. During the seventeenth century a very interesting alchemical work was published in Europe called *The Liber Mutus* or *The Book Without Words*. It was a series of pictures with no text, and this series of pictures opens with a diagram which very closely resembles the mandala. From there on it takes the whole problem through the world of chemistry, but the reader is to understand that this chemistry is a ternunology, something by means of which an alchemical meaning will become evident to those who are worthy of it. It is like the mysterious little *Book of Revelation* which cannot be nibbled at the edges, but must be swallowed whole-without awareness of its total meaning, each page tells nothing in itself. This book without words can be traced through a large variety of doctrines and beliefs, for many of the greatest secrets of ancient wisdom were communicated by books without words.

The disciplines of alchemy would seem to imply that there was a secret art known and, strangely enough, so widely that it was almost an open secret- something many had heard of, but something few had ever done anything about. It was as though they looked into depths they had never traveled, and as the depths appeared strange, distant, and dangerous, were not in a hurry to attempt to explore.

Some of the stories of alchemy are quite interesting, and they tell us more and more of the secret workings of these philosophers. They were called philosophers by fire, and of course fire is the symbol of purification. They were also philosophers by water, and water again is a symbol of purification. So man is purified by two agents: fire and water. The fire purifies his inner life; the

water cleanses his outer life. The cleansing of the outer life is implied by baptism, but the cleansing of the inner life by the mystery of the priesthood of Melchizedek is purification by fire. Fire and water became the great symbols of alchemy, and these in turn were symbolized by the sun and the moon. Now the sun and the moon represent in alchemy two elements that must be finally brought into equilibrium. As they say, fire must burn in the water without destroying it, and the water must be cast upon the fire without quenching it. The combination of the fire-water was of course also referred to in the Egyptian mysteries, and we find it in many of the early rites of the Christian church.

Here we have it seems also a symbol of the two great mandalas, or *shingons*. One of these mandalas is the cosmic figure; the other is the individual or mortal figure. They are like two halves of one totality, and the two paintings are always hung together, one symbolizing the exploration of the inner self, the quest by fire, the search for light, and the effort to become one with the eternal flame which is the life of all things; the other is a constant reminder of our material and mortal responsibilities. In Christian terminology, the cosmic mandala might be likened to the kingdom of heaven, whereas the terrestrial mandala would be the utopian commonwealth, based upon the symbolism of the way of heaven applied to all the deeds and conduct of men. This concept meant an equilibrium that had to be discovered, and to the alchemist the beginning of the journey was equilibrium. Socrates has stated it earlier: "In all things not too much." The equilibrium of alchemy was to bring into final and complete harmony the two paths of life: the visible and the invisible, the spiritual and the material. Conflict between them must end. There is no rivalry, as the Chinese point out, between heaven and earth, and in their art, heaven and earth are always compatible. Heaven is always superior and beautiful. The earth always lies beneath heaven, and is also beautiful. The beauties of the earth are reflections of the beauties of heaven. The beauties of man's outer life are reflections of the integrity of his inner life. These two must finally become completely reconciled so that there can be no conflict between them.

In the Chinese concept also somewhere in this pattern is inserted the figure of a human being—perhaps a hermit sitting in his little hut by the roadside, or a pilgrim walking along, leaning upon his staff. He is a comparatively insignificant symbol in terms of the magnitude of the other two. But this little pilgrim walking along is the arhat, he is the adept, he is the mahatma, he is the dweller between heaven and earth. He is what the Greeks called the "hero" of the order of Achilles and Odysseus. This little being that we see here who seems so inconspicuous is really the point of union between the two great powers, fire and water. Within himself, within the retort of his own consciousness, the great experiment must be perfected. It is in himself that the medicine of eternal life must be perfected. He stands between heaven and earth. He stands between the two great polarities of existence. He is the symbol of the power of the human being to absorb into himself and to reconcile within himself all of the diversities and conflicts of existence. Only when this is accomplished does he achieve peace, for to the human being peace is the fulfillment of heaven and earth in himself.

Thus man arises as the retort of the alchemical laboratory. Within himself these transformations must take place, and the fire that burns under the retort is the fire of aspiration and spirit. The transformations take place under the discipline of the fire and the law, and finally in the fulfillment of it all there arises within him, in his own life and substance, the mystery of the rose diamond, the stone that cuts all things, but which nothing can divide. This, incidentally, is the name of one of the Buddha sutras—the diamond cutter. This parallel is almost too close to be considered incidental or accidental.

Having come to the conclusion that there was such a path, the disciple was then taught one way or another to find the rose, and he learned as he went along that others had preceded him. He was

following in a path that had been well trodden in the course of ages, and along that path were all kinds of markers and guide lines much as the monuments, paintings, sculptures, and devices which Bacon describes in the great castle or temple of Solomon in his story of *The New Atlantis*. These mysterious imageries remind the true seeker that there have been others, and that they have all left for him guide marks, they have all left for him their mandalas. Some have written them in books, some have made them in paintings, some have composed them into music, some have preached them with the wisdom of the saviors, and others of these revelations have been embodied into the scriptures of humanity. But always those advancing have been given rules, guidelines, and if the advance is correct, the rules will be revealed through the symbols of these rules. If, however, the individual has falsely started, then he will always falsely interpret, and in order to get away from false starts there is the need for a tremendous humility, a tremendous simplicity, for the soul itself must teach man to take his first step. The first step must come from within and must be taken with faith, only with a little hope but never with audacity.

This arrangement of symbols is also a pattern found in Zen for we know that Zen is subtly divided into grades, that those practicing it can be distinguished from each other by the degrees of insight which they have attained. This insight is always toward purification, it is always not to learn more that is true primarily, but to believe less and less what is not true. It is a peculiar thing—one does not build truth; one removes error, and truth remains. The substance of truth cannot be added to for it stands eternal; but we can reduce within ourselves those factors which make the experience of truth difficult or impossible. Little by little we cut away the stone that is not necessary, and in the end we have the beautiful image of reality. So in alchemy, it was not the primary end that the individual should become more and more wise in his own conceit. It was not that he should master more and more of worldly knowledge, but that he should begin to understand that worldly knowledge is a mandala, that all knowledge that is material is merely a picture, a symbol which must be interpreted or misinterpreted according to the capacity of the interpreter.

Everything that happens to us every day has a true meaning and a false meaning, and we should prepare ourselves to distinguish between them. In the same way, the alchemist in his laboratory, following the instructions of the various masters whom he recognizes, might even begin by assuming that he must do exactly the literal things that are disclosed in the writing, or he must begin to consider the possibility of secret meaning, a meaning above that of the ordinary mortal experience of humanity. Actually, of course, it is almost a double procedure. The alchemist was a chemist. He did understand chemistry, but he understood chemistry back in those days as very few modern chemists understand it today. He recognized it to be nothing but a revelation of the working of the Divine Plan. He recognized that the supreme chemist was God, that the supreme master of the arts of transformation was truly Deity or one of the great teachers that Deity had appointed. Therefore, he used his chemistry as his first clue to the meaning of things.

Let us take another parallel which might get a little closer to our present concern. Most people today know a little about astronomy. In fact, in many of the alchemical diagrams astronomical elements are strongly featured. We know something of the great mandala which we call the cosmos, we recognize many of its operations and we are exploring it with a tenacity that perhaps is excessive in consideration of the results we hope to attain. At any rate, we are groping out there, not to understand primarily, but to discover, and the things that we discover we record, but their meaning we do not dare even to suggest. If we were mystics we might still be astronomers and thereby be better mystics, as the chemist is a better alchemist, but unless astronomy is ensouled by a vision of the eternal meaning of things, unless the universe becomes a symbol and evidence of Divine Power

eternally operating, we have very little spiritual consolation and very little incentive to moral and ethical improvement. We begin to look at all phenomena as simply factual, mechanical truth and the universe a vast machine. Under such conditions, all of the integrities have been sacrificed because we did not develop enough internal power to understand them. So the chemist has the same problem in alchemy. He has to learn how to understand chemistry, and when he began to understand it, began to recognize its full meaning and its implication to himself and to human society and to the whole world, he inevitably became an alchemist—because he suddenly realized that all these material things are but the shadows of true values. The tremendous truths that we are all seeking are concealed behind the very perishable forms of material creation.

Thus the alchemist grew from within himself, and we find that in many of the old alchemical diagrams the alchemist is seated very quietly, pensively, perhaps in an old chair and around him are all the accumulated instruments of his art. The retorts and vials and bottles, the furnaces, the distilling apparatus surround him and he is seated in the midst of them in an attitude of musing. Perhaps he was simply trying to be still enough to find out what his own equipment meant, that beyond the obvious is always the meaningful. This also is the great gift that Oriental philosophy has given the world: namely, this continuous effort to discover true meaning and that this true meaning, when it is discovered, is a revelation of the will of God.

The arts and sciences are sacred—music, literature, all these forms of man's knowledge are symbols of sacred truths. The fact that they are symbols does not mean that there is anything essentially wrong with them. If an individual wants to enjoy music, why shouldn't he? It has no negative effect upon him, if it is good music. But at the same time, the mystery of music does not end with this type of appreciation. This is the beginning. If he did not like it, he would not listen. But as he goes on and becomes a musicologist, something else happens. There is an unfolding of musical consciousness within himself, and by means of this musical consciousness he finds a much larger and more inspiring response to music in his own personal life. The same is true wherever we enter into mystical relationships with reality. These relationships become the basis of an enlargement of internal resource.

In the last few years we have begun to re-explore alchemy, and while there are still a few gold hunters among us, the majority of those interested in the subject today are not interested in becoming simply practical chemists with a secret knowledge. We are beginning to recognize that somewhere in the machinery of our own natures there has to be a means of transforming universal reality into practical, workable truths. Someway we must build upon a plan, and this plan is the mandala, and it is also the great scheme of alchemy. It is the rotations and revolutions of elements. It is the selection of the proper materials and their use.

In alchemy one of the interesting statements was that the most priceless material is that which we throw away, that we cast aside that which would be the most useful to us. This I think also has a parallel in the spiritual and religious teaching of the idea that the meek shall inherit the earth, or that which is seemingly very humble shall be exalted. The thing we have a tendency to throw away might be the folk values which we all possess. We are perhaps born wiser than we will ever be after that first day. We are born without error. We are born with the simple integrities that make life livable: friendship, love, respect, veneration. We are born into the possibility of companionship, of mutual labor, of cooperation, of patience, and insight. These are the common things that simple people are born with, and these are the things that the so called wise are most likely to throw away, for in the process of attaining sophistication we create an entirely new standard of relationships, a standard which has little foundation in the natural inclinations of human beings to be useful and helpful to each

other. Here perhaps is also the secret of folk art- its integrity. If we sacrifice integrity for skill or for wealth or for power, we have thrown away something we regard to be worthless and which is the most priceless thing in the whole world. To reclaim that which we have wasted, to restore that which we have thrown away, is itself a very definite discipline.

Through the long procedures which are called the rotations of alchemy, these disciplines are brought to our attention. We are invited not only to become better chemists, in a sense, but to interpret all arts and sciences as instruments of human regeneration and contributions to the universal reformation of mankind. If we take this attitude towards these things, we will become very much wiser than we are today.

Among some alchemical writings there are also references to the Bible, and some of these references are quite intriguing. One alchemist was convinced that the life of Christ could be chemically interpreted as the key to the production of gold. He believed that the procedures of chemistry were adequately followed psychologically in the life of Jesus. Whether he wanted to say that the life of Jesus was the foundation of alchemy or whether that it was merely the justification of alchemy or an example of it, the truth is that he believed he could trace step by step the alchemical technique in the various incidents in the life of Christ, including the miracles and the Sermon on the Mount. It might very well be true in the higher sense of a mandala, or it might very well be true that in the person of Jesus, Christianity has exemplified those processes of life by which the mortal condition of man may be regenerated. Other alchemists found great consolation in the canticles of Solomon, the story of Solomon the King. In this work Solomon was considered to be the alchemist, and the dark maiden of Jerusalem the dark material from which the transmutations were to be made. In Solomon, the wisest of all kings, the great transmutation was accomplished by the ultimate unselfishness of his own love. Actually, therefore, every type of book and of valid reading that we have tells the same story. All the non-valid reading which we have is a warning that we are on the wrong track, whether we recognize it or not.

There is much to indicate that a meditative discipline similar to that of Yoga was known to the alchemists, and that they closely followed the ancient Asiatic technique relating to the release of spiritual potential as set forth in the ancient Hindu doctrines. Such discipline when practiced by properly qualified individuals overcomes the common faults of mankind and gradually releases internal integrity. The disciple learned to relax away from the tyranny of his own ignorance, attained internal quietude, and was able to follow the biblical admonition, "Be still and know." In due course this unfolding consciousness led him from one degree of insight to another until finally he accomplished within himself the universal reformation of his own nature. Coming into a state of enlightenment, the alchemist attained adeptship, and the term adept in this case was equivalent to that of the Oriental sage who was referred to as a mahatma or great soul.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the alchemical philosophers were very wise people. They gave us a Western way of discipleship based upon a profound knowledge of divine and natural law. If present research trends reveal the true import of alchemy, we may hope that the path of unfoldment which they devised can be gradually applied directly to the solution of world problems. There are many base elements in modern society which must be transmuted if civilization is to endure. An ever increasing group of thoughtful persons are seeking self-improvement and ardently desire to be of assistance to those around them. As this has always been the true path which humanity must follow. Eastern mysticism and Western alchemy are dedicated to the same end. Secrets of human regeneration have descended to us from many cultures and older civilizations. It is our privilege to accept truth regardless of its source, overcome credal differences, and unite our energies toward the

accomplishment of the “great work.”



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Manly P. Hall founded the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., a non-profit organization in 1934, dedicated to the dissemination of useful knowledge in the fields of philosophy, comparative religion, and psychology. In his long career, spanning more than seventy years of dynamic public activity, Mr. Hall delivered over 8000 lectures in the United States and abroad, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote countless magazine articles.

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