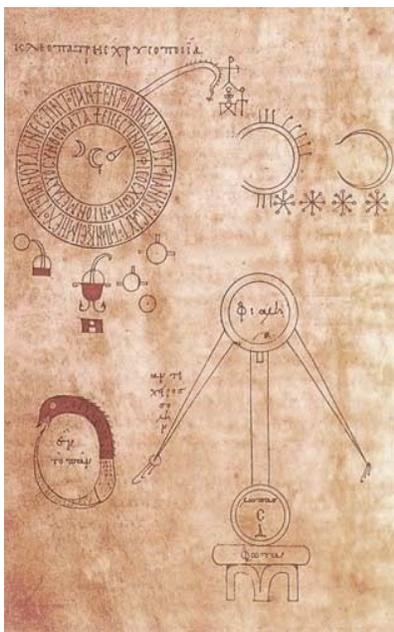


The Secrets of Hermetic Alchemy

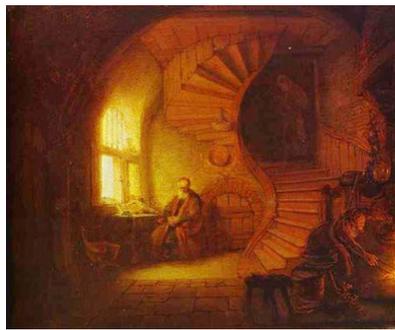
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Are you interested in Alchemy? Ask yourself why! If you want to make gold to get rich, you have come to the wrong place. If you want to understand how you want to go the spiritual path to the perfection of you being, and the discovery of your divine being, then read on. But more important: practice it! What is alchemy? It has been such a controversial subject that even after so many centuries, few people have any insight in it. How alchemical symbolism started is a bit fuzzy, but it probably came from the Islamic empire that once stretched throughout Northern Africa and part of Spain. Laboratory alchemy was practiced in the Islamic culture. At a certain point European Philosophers started to use terms derived from chemistry to express their spiritual practices and their world view. In Europe the Catholic Church did not allow alternative practices. With a symbolic terminology, it would be more difficult for the Church to persecute those who deviated from the established Catholic dogmas. As time went by, alchemy was expressed widely, from chemistry, metallurgy, pottery, glass making, architecture etc. Basically it was a search to understand nature, the cosmos, man. Religious and scientific principles were not separated as it is now, because in past ages people realized that everything is connected. Some people say that laboratory alchemy was only early chemistry. They are right to a certain extent. By trial and effort alchemists found new chemical substances. But true laboratory alchemy starts where matter gets manipulated beyond mere chemical reactions. Transmutation into gold, for example, is possible, but not by mere chemistry. Those who have accomplished it, and verified by those present, were very few. An alchemist who was able to produce gold from other metals, was considered an advanced spiritual being who had achieved spiritual transformation first. Without spiritual insight into the hidden energies of nature, laboratory alchemy is a waste

of time, unless one just keeps trying.

Philosophical alchemists are only interested in the spiritual side of the Great Work. The term "Philosophers" had a different meaning for the alchemists than what we presently understand by philosophy. Dom Pernety (18th century) in his *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique*, explains the term Philosopher as follows: "Amateur of wisdom, who is taught the secret operations of Nature, and who imitates its procedures to arrive at more perfect things than those of Nature itself. The name of Philosopher is given to those who are really instructed in the procedures of the great work, what is also called Science and hermetic Philosophy, because Hermes Trismegistus is considered the first one who became famous in it. Only they think that they truly deserve this name because they claim that they now nature in depth, and by this knowledge they become like the Creator, to which they direct their plights and praises with a lot of attention, love and respect. They say that this love is the first step that leads to wisdom. and they constantly recommend it to their disciples, whom they call children of Science." Read it again, slowly, because this the basis of what a Hermetic Alchemist is.



Hermetic or Philosophic Alchemy is not the well-known concept of transformation of common lead into common gold. It is about the transformation of oneself. That is only possible if one understands the true nature of oneself, and the firm understanding that one is in essence a divine being. Man as he is born is the product of Nature. However man can improve himself to become more than Nature. He is able to manifest his true divine potential, by transmuting his common, every day nature into the full divine nature that he really is. There are many ways to do this. Over the course of history people in different cultures have stumbled on different practices to accomplish this. When I first studied the alchemical scriptures, I thought that there was only one alchemical process, disguised in the symbolic alchemical language. The more I read them the more I became confused because of the many, many symbols and allegories. It was only later on I realized that the (hermetic) alchemical process described in the manuscripts is basically a very simple blueprint. No matter what spiritual practice you decide to use, it will always go through the basic steps or phases from the beginning to the end. I also realized that I practicing hermetic alchemy without knowing it. My meditation experiences were the same as what is described in the alchemical books, be it in symbolic language. When one starts out reading the alchemical manuscripts it all very confusing, because some of the books describe

laboratory alchemy, and sometimes alchemical writers would intentionally confuse the matter. The hermetic alchemical books are so heavy laden with symbols, because each alchemist used besides the commonly used symbols, additional terms and allegories. When you try to interpret the symbols it is very easy to get lost. But when you start from the very simple blueprint, then you can easily understand what they are talking about. It came to me only after many years of studying other spiritual practices, especially the Eastern meditation techniques. The bases of these techniques, which is always spiritual transformation is always the same. Once you understand this simple blueprint it is much easier to read the alchemical manuscripts.



The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz by Johann Valentin Andreae and the Most Holy Trinosophia. by Comte de Saint-Germain are examples that the alchemical process is very much a personal experience.

Alchemists made use not only of chemical symbols, but also for a great deal of Roman and Greek mythology. They combined many concepts into a language that would express what they experienced. Experience came first, then they wanted to express it in a way that could be understood by others. merely words are inadequate for describing spiritual experiences, especially to somebody who is not familiar with it. Thus alchemists relied created images, and used myths and allegories. When you want to study alchemy, you have to learn to think and feel what those images mean, and what those myths and allegories mean in the sense of personal experience. If you keep yourself to an intellectual interpretation you will never penetrate the secrets of alchemy. A few manuscripts described the alchemical process in a form of personal experience although still in symbolic form.



If you are really interested in working on yourself, in transforming yourself from a common person into realizing your divine self, then read on. I will give you the blueprint and the explanation of the alchemical symbols and allegories. The Great Work, of course, you will have to do it yourself, on a daily basis, with love, patience and endurance. I will keep it as simple as possible. Do not skimp on this simplicity. Take your time to fully understand what is being said and incorporate it into your life. It is in simplicity that your power lies.

My explanation of the Great Work in this article is by means of alchemical images. Contemplate both the pictures and the explanations, and above all, apply them in your life. Reading and understanding is essential, but practice is the only way that will transform you. With each image you will get additional information. It is like a puzzle. The more puzzle pieces you have the clearer the image of the puzzle becomes.

The images come here without a reference of the original manuscript. For the purpose of this article this reference (manuscript title, name of the author, date of first publishing, etc) is not necessary.

This article is basically a visual guide to the spiritual alchemical process and some of its symbols. It is important to understand the alchemical process is very simple and there is very little to know about it. But over the many centuries aspiring alchemists have come up with a multitude of symbols that are very confusing for the novice. Always be aware that many symbols and terms were used for one and the same subject or operation. It is only necessary to understand that one simple blueprint of the alchemical process, explained in the next chapter, and you will see that a multitude of terms can be drastically reduced to a few. Alchemists were people like you and me, who were in the process of discovering what life is all about and what can be done to spiritually improve oneself. Only a handful completed the entire spiritual transformation. All the rest tried to explain their experiences, knowledge and insights in a way that was clear to them but maybe

confusing to others. But the following images and simple explanation will help you along.

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The Essential Key of the Great Work



What is Hermetic Alchemy or the Alchemy of the Philosophers? It is the transmutation, or transformation of the common man into the divine man. The common man is the person we know from our every day lives. He grew up in our society as an ordinary person, unaware of who he really is. The transmutation consists of becoming aware of the different aspects of his being: the physical body and its energies, emotions, thoughts and his divine center, and of purifying body, emotions and thoughts. This purification process will allow his divine center to shine through all these layers and become fully manifest in physical reality. It is the realization of our divine essence. Common man is like being asleep, the realized man is like being fully awake. It is all about clarity of awareness. The alchemists called it the Great Work.

This is the entire secret of the Great Work. It is very simple. The uninitiated, who is unaware of the different aspects of the human being, might have difficulty to understand this transformational process, and thus the alchemists gave us explanations in symbolical language. Chemical terms were not the only way they tried to explain what is about. Some concepts are more easily transferred by means of images, and thus the student of alchemy has to study the drawings and paintings by not only deciphering their symbolic interpretations, but also by feeling them. One could say that the student makes a psychic connection with the archetypes of these images. The alchemists also made use of allegoric scenes derived from Greek mythology. Therefore one must know the mythological stories in order to understand their meaning for the inner transformational processes. The essence of the Great Work is plain and simple: the purification of your awareness. The alchemical images show that the Great Work is a personal and spiritual process, and not laboratory chemistry. It gives you a good idea about the psychological aspects of the Great Work. In this article I am going to explain you the spiritual practice of alchemy. As I mentioned earlier there are many spiritual practices around, and you can choose one that you feel comfortable with. But the basis of purification of yourself always remains the same. The basis of all spiritual practices is the elimination of unwanted emotions and thoughts. Without this any practice will fail. The more you practice, the clearer your mind becomes, the sharper your awareness, the more the light of your divine self will shine through. I started meditating when I was about 20 years old. I had read a book by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of transcendental yoga. In it he recommended a meditation technique in which you focus on visualizing an object like a match, in order to become aware of thoughts, how thoughts arise and disappear, and to be eventually without thoughts. I tried to visualize a match but discovered I just couldn't do it. It was frustrating. So I decided to drop this visualization and just eliminate my thoughts. That is of course easier said than done. I chose the forceful way, that is, every time a thought would come up, I immediately made a big effort to stop it. Many years later I learned from studying Buddhist meditation techniques that this is actually the most difficult way in thought-less meditation. Usually they advise to go at it in a much more gently way. But it worked for me. Let me also state that aside from that one book of the Maharishi I did not know anything about meditation techniques or Buddhist

teachings. I did it all by intuition. Much later I learned that what I was doing was actually called Dzogchen.

Thus I became aware of my inner world of thoughts. I discovered that thoughts are constantly running through the mind, every second of the day. They just ramble on, about anything possible. During meditation, when you direct attention inwards, you really become aware of all these thought-trains. They usually work by association, jumping from one subject to another. The trick is to stop their flow. I did it by stopping every upcoming thought in its tracks. Usually Buddhists will advise you to just observe the thoughts indifferently and let them pass by, not putting any energy in it, not jumping on the train by way of speaking. But I wanted to stop them right away. First I discovered that as soon as I eliminated one thought, another popped up right away. Often my attention would weaken, and I would not be aware that I was going along with a thought-train, that is actively thinking about a certain subject. Then I would become aware again, and stop this thought-train too. You can't imagine how many thoughts arise in a half hour of meditation! But with the days and weeks you get better at it. I found out that there are different layers of thoughts. At the surface are thoughts about anything that happened to you in the recent past, things that you said to someone, and things that want to say to someone. They are basically all just ramblings. When you are able to eliminate these, you see thoughts about more profound subjects, more serious things about your life. The more you eliminate thoughts the more basic they become. The whole process is about becoming aware of them and eliminating them, or observing them in an unattached way. All this demands one thing that is indispensable: absolute clear awareness. The more you think, that is, the random thoughts, the more unaware you are of your self. In meditation you have to make an effort to be aware, to be conscious, of your thoughts, and to keep this awareness going. That is not easy because we all have the tendency to slip back in our every day dreamy state of consciousness. The biggest obstacle in any kind of meditation is this slipping back in dreamy consciousness, and even falling asleep. It helps to use deep breathing to maintain the clarity of your mind and to prevent the sliding off in unawareness. All those random thoughts we don't really need, and they are an obstacle for our true divine essence. The purpose of meditation is not so much to be without thoughts, but to become clear aware of our Self. It is something that is not easily put in words. When you direct your attention inwards, you will discover that you have an inner world, where emotions and thoughts reside. But these are just energies of your present personality. You will also become aware of your real self. That is vague at the beginning but it becomes clearer the more you can purify your awareness.

So I was eliminating my thoughts. After about two years of daily meditation, I was able to have about only ten thoughts in half an hour. I was using a rope with ten knots to keep track of them. It is really invigorating when your energy is not used up by a constant thinking process. I was also trying to have at least thoughts as possible during the day during periods when I was by myself. I generated so much energy that I sometimes had to stop with it because it was difficult to handle.

Then one day, after half or an hour of meditation, I was in a state without any thoughts. It is not easy to put in words, but here we go. I was absolutely in the here and now, wherever that is, because there was no awareness of the body. I was completely in my self. Being my self. Pure being me. It was a state that felt very good, very pleasant, but not in an emotional way. There was no darkness, as when you close your eyes and you start to meditate. There is also no shining light as some people might expect, but it is like a light state of being, if that makes any sense to you. Some people say that when you are aware that you have no thoughts, that this also a thought, claiming that we cannot be completely without thoughts. I disagree. The state I was in was absolutely "above" thoughts. There was no awareness that I was not thinking anymore. Even that was gone. It is just pure being my self. There is not much you can say about it in words.

It was many years later that I found out that this is half-way the ultimate goal of what is called enlightenment. Let me clarify here that enlightenment is just becoming aware of your true divine self that is always there but is obscured by our thoughts, emotions, our physical body. It is not some out-there, wow, amazing experience. What you truly are, your divine self, is just plain and simple pure awareness of your being. Nothing extraordinary. Attaining your pure state of being, in pure awareness, is not enough. One has to be able to maintain it. First, longer and longer during the meditation session, and then ultimately one must keep this pure awareness when one comes out of the meditation and back into everyday life. And longer and longer too in every day life. Until the pure awareness of your divine self will be constant. That is true enlightenment.

I was only able to maintain the pure awareness for a couple of minutes. At that point in my life, I had no idea what this state of being really was about. So, after a while I abandoned my meditation practice. Many years later I started reading Buddhist literature and found out more about it. Now I also see the parallel with alchemical symbolism. There are many spiritual practices but they all have the same basic outline. In general terms: the first stage is Nigredo or blackness, when one becomes initially aware of one's tumultuous emotions and random thoughts. Albedo Whiteness, which is the state of pure awareness of oneself, and Rubedo of redness, when this pure awareness has become permanent. In alchemical terms I had reached the stage of Albedo. Unfortunately, at that point in my life, I didn't quite understand what I have reached. I was able to reach the same state of being several times, I eventually stopped with meditation for a while, and since then I haven't been able to reach it again. Life has taken me on other paths and other responsibilities. It really takes discipline in order to get results, and living in a society does not make that easy. I can easily see why monasteries and caves are ideal places for meditation practices, but solitude is not necessarily a requirement either.

If you keep this all in mind, the following alchemical images and symbols becomes so much more understandable. The purpose of showing you alchemical images here is twofold. First, a basic interpretation of the symbols and allegories is necessary to gain an understanding of the alchemical process. Second, look and meditate on the image itself and try to get a feel of what it is communicating.

Images allow you to come into contact with the energy of what it represents. When humans form an image, be it in the mind, or on paper, or engage in a practice, a morphogenetic field is formed that carries information about that particular subject or practice. The more people who are engaged in that practice, or have used those images to form their concepts or understanding, the more that energy field gets charged and laden with information. Because everything in the universe is alive, from rocks, minerals, to plants, animals humans and other beings, these particular morphogenetic fields are also alive and continue to exist. by focusing on images one connects with these energy fields, and their information will flow into your mind. It can be very subtle or very clear depending on your sensitivity, but this way you can gain understanding in a very direct way. it is like intuition and inspiration. It flows into you, you suddenly know and understand, without words, although your mind might translate it into thoughts. Thus, really pay attention to the images and let them speak to you too.

Some advice if you want to practice spiritual alchemy. It is a life style. It is a transformation of your entire being. It is not only about that half hour of meditation. You have to change your attitude, your action, your emotions, your diet, the company your in, your environment, because all this will affect the efficacy of your meditation. It is not the place here to explain all the different things you have to change in your life, you can find that well described in the Buddhist teachings, but also study other teachings like Gnosticism, mystical Christian teachings, theosophy, Rosicrucianism etc. You can also the many articles I have put up in the section of The House of the Sun of our web site. Choose a meditation practice that suits you. Buddhism explains several kinds of meditation techniques. The basis all all Buddhist techniques is Dzogchen. Without the understanding of Dzogchen no meditation technique will bear fruit. Dzogchen explains how to reduce unwanted thoughts or eliminate them all together. There are now several books of Dzogchen on the market. The best one, in my opinion is The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen by Chogyal Namkhai Norbu. It is not necessary to eliminate all thoughts, but to arrive at that state of clear awareness where there are no random thoughts, where if you want to think, you can initiate thoughts when you really want to. In other words, you control the thoughts, instead of the thoughts controlling you.

Just when I had finished this article, I found a nice link between alchemy and the eastern practices of meditation in lama Anagarika Govinda's book Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism: "The Buddha alludes to the same state (the state of Enlightenment (or sambodhi), when saying in Udana VIII: 'Verily there is a realm, where there is neither the solid nor the fluid, neither heat nor motion, neither this world nor any other world, neither sun nor moon... There is o, monks, an Unbornn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed. If there were not this Unborn, this Unoriginated, this Uncreated, this Unformed, escape from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed, would not be possible..'

"He who has realized this, has truly found the Philosopher's Stone/ the precious jewel (mani), the prima materia of the human mind, nay, of the very faculty of consciousness in whatever form of life it might appear. This was the real aim of all great alchemists, who knew that 'mercury' stood for the creative forces of higher

consciousness, which had to be freed from the gross elements of matter in order to attain the state of perfect purity and radiance, the state of enlightenment."

The Great Work is a Spiritual Process



Some alchemical manuscript describe laboratory chemistry. Others were written using chemical symbols to describe a spiritual process. very few alchemists really attained the end of the Great Work. That means that a lot of the alchemical writers were just rehashing other texts. others were writing down their spiritual experience, sometimes clear and direct, sometimes in an allegoric way. Some of them used symbols but explained in clear language that it is a spiritual process. These works were meant as a guide. Alchemists had contact with each other. It was said that alchemists would gather in the back of the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, and exchange their experiences, knowledge and wisdom. Everyone experience is a bit different from the other, thus alchemical symbols are a general way of describing these experiences. When engaged in a practice one can use these manuscripts and symbols to adjust one's own experience to gain better results.

Chaos



Some hermetic alchemists said that at the very being of their Great Work is Chaos. As the hermetici relied heavily on Greek mythology one needs to understand the term Chaos in this way. Chaos was described as an original state of existence from which the first gods appeared. In other words, the dark void of space. It is made from a mixture of what the Ancient Greeks considered the four elements: earth, air, water and fire.

After encountering chaos, the Great Work starts in which the gods appear as the traditional seven planets and their metal equivalent. The process in the Great Work is also described in terms of the four elements. At the very start we have Earth, which turns into water by putrefaction, then distillation turns water into air, and later on, by coagulation air turn into fire.

The state of Chaos and the birth of the Gods might be viewed as cosmological events, but one must always remember that originally they stood for human experiences. When ordinary man starts the process of introspection, like meditation, the very first thing he experiences is chaos. You can easily find that out for yourself. When you start to become aware of your self, that is of what is inside of you, you will find a bunch of emotions and feelings that are running around, bodily tensions that pops up and bother you, and especially a constant flow of random thoughts that doesn't care if you want to have them or not. When you close your eyes and go sit in meditation, it is a complete mess in there. That is the chaos the alchemists spoke about. Then the cleansing process of the Great Work starts.

The Three Phases of the Great Work

1. Blackness of Nigredo



What is the first thing you encounter when you close your eyes? Blackness. When you enter your inner world, you enter into darkness. This is the first experience, and the first stage of the Great Work. Here the operation of putrefaction takes place. Here the fixed gets dissolved by the volatile. By becoming aware of the volatile mind, the bodily consciousness diminishes. In alchemical symbols Nigredo is always indicated by something black: the raven, the raven's head, the dark jacket, darkness, the night, the Solar or Moon eclipse, the tomb, hell, and death. When the Matter has entered the stage of blackness, it is called lead or Saturn, or the head of Moorish one.

2. Whiteness or Albedo



This is the perfect putrefaction, when all blackness has disappeared and the color white appears. Then it is said that life has conquered death, that the king has been revived, that earth and water has become air, that the child has been born,

that Heaven (the Volatile, the Female) and Earth (the Fixed, the Male) have married. It is the realm of the Moon.

When one has purified his awareness of Self, during meditation, by eliminating thoughts, or otherwise, then at a certain point, light appears. This can be but is not necessary a visual light inside oneself. The light that appears is also metaphoric for an absolute clear, pure awareness of Self. It is something that cannot be described. I have experienced it myself, although for very brief periods. One does not indeed experience the darkness anymore that is there when one closes the eyes.

The alchemists say that in Whiteness, the Matter has attained a degree of Fixedness that fire cannot destroy. In that state one is in a very fixed position, that is, very stable, very much in the here and now, in total clarity of Self.

The Philosophers say that when one has attained this stage, one needs to destroy the books because they become superfluous. From this point on one needs to continue this purification of awareness to the next stage of redness.

3.Redness or Rubedo



The third and last phase is characterized by the color red. When the White stone or the White Elixir has been made, it needs to be purified further, sublimated, until the Matter becomes totally Fixed and is completely stable. Then we have the Red Sulfur, the red stone, the Red Elixir, the Stone of the Wise.

When the divine light has emerged during meditation, one needs to make it last. This demands a continued effort of holding one's attention to this pure awareness, not only for the length of the meditation session, but also during every day life. At a certain point the pure awareness of one's divine self will be permanent.

The Seven Metals



Usually the great Work is divided in three stages according to the three principles colors: black for Nigredo, white for Albedo, and red for Rubedo. But there is another system that divides the Great Work alongside this threefold system, and that is the one of the seven metals or planets which must be interpreted according Greek mythology.

Nothing is so confusing as the seven metals in alchemy. In some manuscripts the name of metals is used alongside other symbols. Sometimes the metals are described a bit more in detail. often it is difficult to figure out if it is about laboratory work or purely symbolic.

In Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique Dom Pernety (an 18th century French writer, Benedictine, librarian, and founder of a secret society) defines the use of the seven metals in hermetic alchemy as follows: "When the Wise talk about metals, they do not understand these objects that are in use in everyday life; one must understand them in the sense of that they talk about the transmutation of imperfect metals in gold or silver. Their metals are only different states of their mercury in the operation of the work. These states are seven in number, like there are seven Planets and seven common metals; this is the reason why they give the system of their work to the seven Planets, which rule at every state, and every dominion manifest itself by a different color. The first state is that of mercury, which comes before the black color. The second is that of Saturn that lasts all through putrefaction until the matter start to become gray, that is when the Wise call their matter lead of the Philosophers. The third is that of Jupiter, son of Saturn, who was subject to his voracious father, who mutilated him in order to prevent the ability to procreate: his mutilates parts were thrown in the ocean and they gave birth to Venus, by which one understands that the black color does not appear anymore in the work. And because Jupiter was the father of the gods, with Junon, represented by the air enclosed in the vase, and the humidity which mixes itself with it.

"The entire dominion of Jupiter is used to wash the milk, what happens by the successive ascending and descending of mercury on the earth. That water

represents the sea, Of which the flow and reflux is marked by these ascensions and continual descensions. But the Philosophers have another sea, that one will see explained in his item.

"The Poets gave to this milk the name of Latone, mother of the Moon and Sun; because the moon period is a continuation of the ablution of the milk, that by there becomes white, and of a whiteness bursting as the one of the Moon. Venus dominates next, and this is in the time that the matter takes a citrine color, that goes over to red, or of iron rust color, and thus comes the period of Mars, friend of Venus, that lasts until the color orange, represented by the dawn, before sun comes up. Phoebus, brother of Diane, appears at last under the crimson color. The Poets said that Diane his sister played the role of midwife to his mother Latone when she gave birth to the sun, because real gold, or real sun of the Philosophers, would never appear until the white color, or Diane, had not appeared beforehand. By all this one can easily see how many Mythological hermetici are mistaken in their arbitrary explanations of the Fables, as this is only a allegory applied to the Great Work".

This might be a bit difficult to read and understand if you are a novice to alchemy. After all, you are supposed to be knowledgeable about the different Greek mythological tales. The hermetici in past ages were familiar with Greek mythology because it was their prime source for understanding the human condition and their world view. They understood that the myths were symbolic and allegoric.

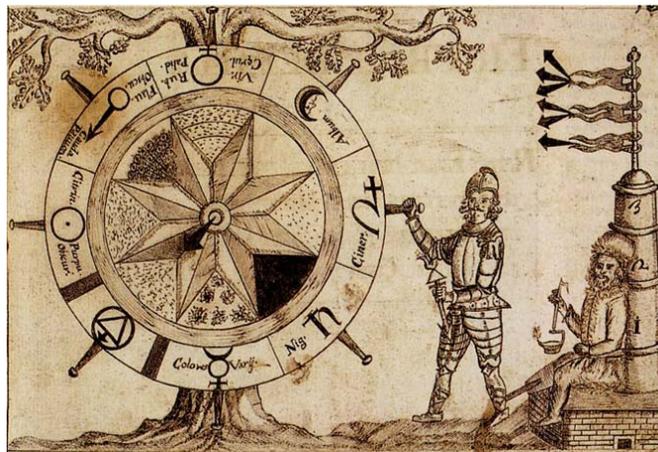
In a nutshell:

1. Mercury, planet Mercury: the substance, the Matter to be worked on. originally you have to find out what it is. For the Hermetic Alchemists it is of course you yourself, what includes your body, your mind (=emotions and thoughts) and your divine essence.
2. Lead, planet Saturn: the beginning of the state of Blackness. The Matter is putrefying and dissolving.
3. Tin, planet Jupiter: the color gray that appears at the end of the process of Blackness, when the Matter has been purified to almost a perfect white. Jupiter is the son of Saturn, therefore he is the next stage.
4. Copper, planet Venus: the citrine color. Venus is the next stage because she was born when the testicles of Jupiter, cut off by his father Saturn, fell into the sea.
5. Silver, the Moon: the white color, corresponding to the state of Whiteness or Albedo. The Matter has been completely purified. In Greek mythology the Moon is symbolized by the huntress goddess Diane. Diane is the daughter of Jupiter and Latone.
6. Iron, planet Mars: Mars is the friend and lover of Venus. Orange or rust-red color, like the light of dawn. It is the state during which the Matter starts to become red.
7. Gold, the Sun: this is the last state; the red color or Rubedo. Here the Matter is called Red Sulfur, among other terms. The sun god Apollo.

As the Hermetic Philosophers were well versed in ancient mythology and derived a lot of their symbolism from it, it might be interesting to note that the use of the seven planets as a progression in the Great Work has a stunning parallel in

Gnostic teachings. The Gnostics explained that man here on Earth lives basically in a spiritual darkness. Through initiation he ascends through seven layers/worlds created by the Archonts to eventually arrive at the eighth sphere where the initiate will shine in all its divine glory. The seven spheres were associated with the seven traditional planets, and they were each a hindrance to the progress of the spiritual person. It is remarkable that the alchemists also talked about passing through seven stages of the Great Work, each associated with one of the seven planets.

Twelve Operations



Some alchemical manuscripts mention twelve operations, although they are not always given in the same order or name. Actually there is only one operation, and that is the purification of the alchemist himself. The different operations are only aspects and different ways of describing this one process.

The twelve operations are sometimes compared with the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The Zodiac is used as a symbol for progression of the Great Work. There is also a connection to the Twelve Labors of Hercules. Hercules is sometimes portrayed in alchemical iconography. The hermetic Philosophers were well versed in Greek mythology, and thus one needs to read up on the stories of these Twelve labors because they are all symbolic for inner, spiritual work that a candidate for the spiritual path needs to undergo.

Here is an example of twelve operations in the Philosophical, that is, the hermetic sense, just to give you an idea about the terminology the alchemists used. The description is taken from the 18th century Dom Pernety's Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique. I am also giving my interpretation of their symbols applied to the spiritual process the hermetic Philosopher or Alchemist goes through.

Calcination: reduction of the bodies to their first principles without destruction of their seed virtues.

When discovering the inner self, like in meditation, this is by very nature a reduction of bodily awareness, and becoming more aware of the more subtle energies that are the foundation of our lives.

Coagulation: the inseparable union of the fixed and the volatile into one mass

that is so fixed that it can withstand the most violent fire, and that it can communicate its fixedness to the metals that it transforms.

Although dissolving and coagulation is a cyclic process, coagulation is often taken in terms of the final fixation of the volatile. In other words, the mind has been refined to such an extent, that the awareness of our divine essence has become permanent, it has become so 'fixed' that nothing can throw us off anymore.

Fixation: fixating the volatile is an ongoing process that starts from the moment of Blackness throughout Whiteness, and with Redness fixation has attained its maximum degree.

Fixation is very similar to coagulation, but it is usually taken in the sense of continuous dissolving and fixation from the very beginning to the end. It is becoming ever more aware of our inner mind and divine essence and making it part of our every day life.

Dissolution: the reduction of a body to its primal matter, or elemental principles. Turning our awareness away from every life and the physical body towards the inner energies.

Digestion: almost all the operations can be reduced to to the term digestion, because this is what happens during the entire time in the vase. Digestion is basically a term used to make a tincture.

Digestion is transformation from one substance to another in order to obtain something more useful. Thus the energies encountered in our inner world

Distillation: when the volatile ascends it has in itself the fixed that will fix the volatile afterwards. It is a continuous circulation.

'Fixing' is like holding the awareness. When one becomes aware of the more subtle energies in one mind, by 'distilling' the lower everyday consciousness to more subtle consciousness, one needs to hold this higher awareness.

Sublimation: Purification of the matter by means of dissolution and reduction to its principles. It is a purification and making more subtle of all terrestrial and heterogeneous parts, and giving them a perfection from which they were deprived, or rather to release the chains that kept them in prison and prevented them from growing.

Our everyday consciousness is really very immature and limited to conditioned reflexes, instincts, programs. Therefore it needs to be sublimated, being dissolved to its underlying energies, and purifying them, so they can become perfect, which, in essence they already are, but they were obscured by a lot of impurities.

Separation: the effect of the dissolution of the body by its solvent. This separation happens when the matter becomes black; then the separation of the elements begin. That blackness changes into vapor; this is the earth that becomes water. That water condenses and falls back onto the earth, and makes it white; that whiteness is the air. After whiteness redness comes, that is air that becomes fire. This separation is not different from the dissolution of the body and the coagulation the spirit.

With meditation, awareness separates itself from the bodily consciousness. The first thing you experience when you close your eyes is blackness. When discovering the inner world at the beginning, their energies are like water

compared to earth(=body). When refining your inner world, your experience will become more and more subtle, and the Hermetic Philosophers compared this transition in terms of the elements, from earth to water to air to fire.

Incineration: action where more and more mercury is added to the matter which is becoming sulfur, be it to multiply it, be it to make the perfect elixir. A term not often used, but applied to the end process, when divine awareness has become totally fixed into the body.

The following three terms relate to a process after the Great Work has been done. It is veiled in very symbolic language, but often it seems that they are talking about physical substances. As very few alchemists have ever completed the Great Work, only they know truly what they are talking about. In general it seems that these adepts are able to use the divine energy and multiply it for the purpose of imbuing other people or substances, for healing and for actual physical transmutation of metals. I am giving you the description from the Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique but as I am not an adept I cannot give you an interpretation.

Fermentation: Which the Philosophers call properly fermentation, is the elixir operation. It does not suffice to complete the big work, to push the work to the red color. The practice of the stone, d' Espagnet tells us, finishes itself by two operations; the first one consists in creating sulfur, the other is about making the elixir, and this last one is done by fermentation. The projection will be in vain if the stone is not fermented. The work at the red color phase is a sulfur or a very subtle earth, very warm and dry; she hides in her interior very abundant natural fire, that has the virtue to open and to penetrate the metal bodies, and to render them similar to herself; by which it has gotten the name of father and of masculine seed. But from this sulfur it is necessary to create a second one, that next will be able to be multiplied into infinity. This sulfur multiplies itself from the same matter of which it has been created, by adding a small part of the first one, and fermenting this all with the red or white yeast, according to the intention of the Artist.

Multiplication: operation of the Great Work during which the powder of projection is being multiplied, be it in quality, or quantity into infinity according to the liking of the Artist. It consists in redoing the already done operation but with more exalted and perfected substances, and not with the previous rough materials. The entire secret, according to a Philosopher, is a physical reduction into mercury and a reduction in its primal matter. To this effect, the philosophers take the matter cooked and prepared by Nature and reduce it into its first matter, or philosophical mercury, from which it was taken.

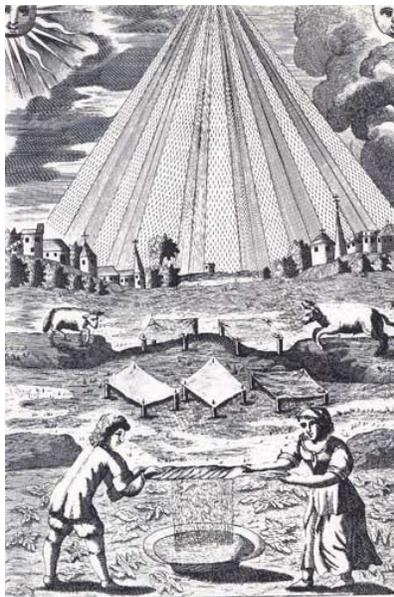
Projection: The Hermetic Philosophers call their projection powder, a powder which is the result of their Art, that they project in very small quantity onto the imperfect metals in fusion, by means of which they get transmuted in gold or silver, according to the degree of its perfection. One needs to know that in the projection the entire metal on which one projects the powder, will not transmute completely in silver or gold, if the powder was not well purified before it was thrown in the mix.

The Dragon



The dragon, a mythological beast, appears frequently in alchemical manuscripts. generally, the dragon is a symbol for philosophical mercury, or the Matter that needs to be transformed in the Great Work. In other words, it is another symbol for your self, or you inner world. because the dragon is an animal, it can also be taken for the lower, animalistic nature of man, furthermore because the dragon is sometimes taken to represent the Earth, that is the body. The dragon needs to be killed, and then signifies the stage of putrefaction. that is, coming into contact with your lower nature and transforming it. The image of the dragon was widely used by alchemist, probably because it represented a wild, untamed animal, and thus comparable with the untamed emotions of a normal person.

Gathering the Dew



In some of the alchemical images we see people gathering the early morning dew. It is said that the morning dew is the matter of the Great Work, the

substance to be worked on. Some people took this literal, and thought they had to gather the dew with clean sheets and then wring them out in a container. Then this dew water was used for distillation. It has been an old belief that the morning dew has certain rejuvenating energies, and therefore young girls would go out into the meadows and put the dew on their bodies in order to stay young and beautiful.

In hermetic alchemy, this is of course allegoric. When one goes into the inner self, as with meditation, one encounters the finer energies. As the finer energies precipitate into your awareness, this is like the dew that gathers on the grass.

The Peacock's Tail



The peacock's tail has become a well known symbol in alchemy, although it is a later addition to the alchemical symbols. Dom Pernety explains it as: "These are the colors of the rainbow which manifest themselves on the matter during the operations of the stone." he doesn't seem to place that much importance to it, but he does place the peacock's tail after the raven (Blackness, first stage), and before the swan Whiteness, second stage). the phoenix represent the third stage of Redness.

The image of the peacock's tail with its iridescence of a multitude of colors, might have found its origin in the spiritual experience of alchemists. I primarily speak of meditation experiences in this article, but some of the alchemists probably also experienced the energies of the astral world, which is often characterized by its brilliant colors, and some clairvoyants have said that the clothing of some astral beings are iridescent.

Rebis



The Rebis may seem an awkward figure. Dom Pernety defines Rebis as: "The Matter of the Wise in the first operation of the Work. The mineral spirit rough like water, as the good Trévisan tells us, mixes itself with its bodies in the first brew in the process of dissolving. That is why it is called Rebis, because it is made of two things, male and female, solvent and solvable bodies, which basically is but one thing and one matter."

Your normal consciousness is the matter, and is the male aspect, fixed in this physical reality. When directing your attention inwards, in meditation, your consciousness feels more subtle, like water, in the beginning, and it compared to the female. Nevertheless it is still the same you, just two different aspects of your consciousness. When you meditate the everyday physical consciousness dissolves and becomes more fluid when attention shift towards the inner consciousness. The Rebis is a clear androgyn figure, not always named as such. However the male-female aspects are always clearly visible.

Phoenix



The phoenix is a mythical sacred fire or sun bird which originated in the ancient mythologies mentioned in Phoenician and Egyptian Mythology, and later the

Greek Mythology. It has a 500 to 1,000 year life-cycle, near the end of which it builds itself a nest of myrrh twigs that then ignites; both nest and bird burn fiercely and are reduced to ashes, from which a new, young phoenix or phoenix egg arises, reborn anew to live again.

in alchemy the phoenix is the symbol for the red sulfur, which is the end of the Great Work at the stage of Rubedo or Redness. The Great Work has been accomplished and man has been reborn.

The End of the Great Work



The end of the Great Work is the completed transformation of the alchemist. When the purity of mind has been attained, and maintained in every day life, the divine essence will shine through the entire being of the alchemist. This is often symbolized by the crowning of the alchemist. This adept is not only master of himself, but also over Nature.

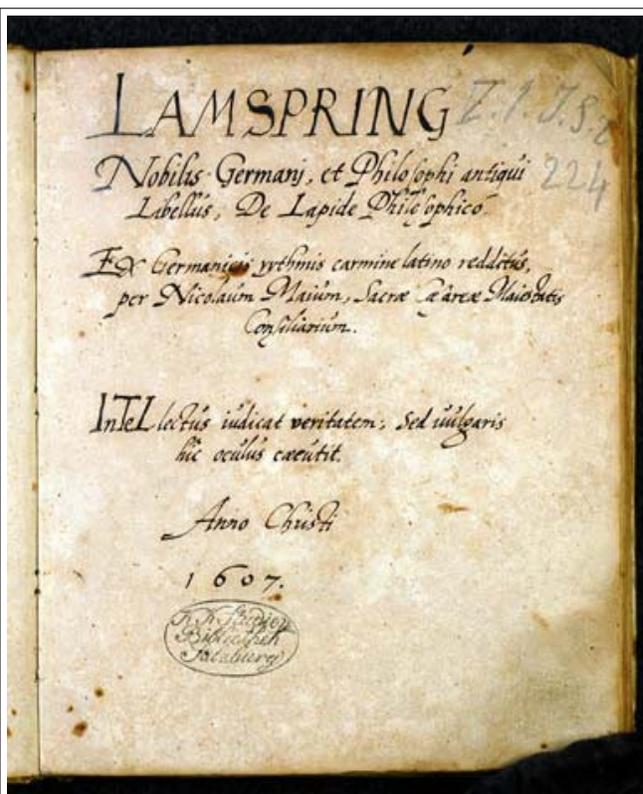
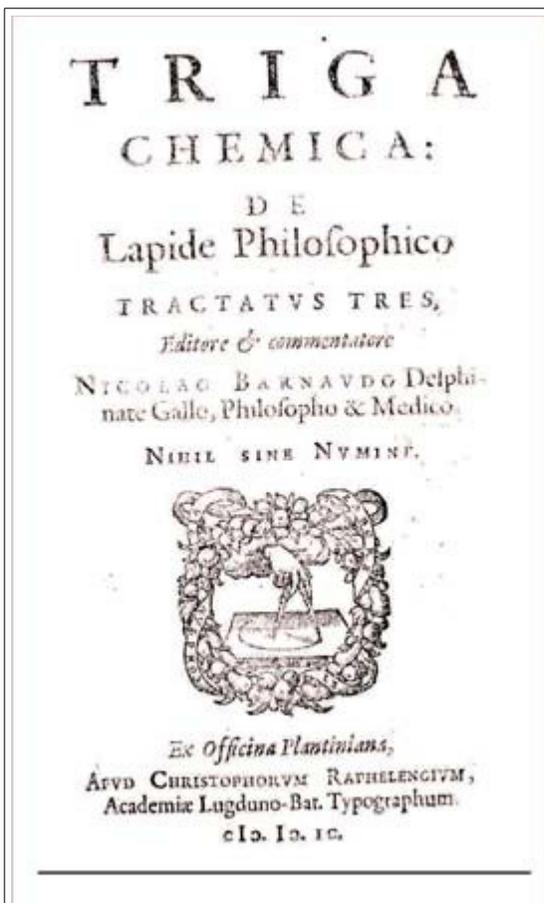
The Book of Lambspring

The Book of Lambspring is one of my favorite alchemist manuscripts, because of it being simple and direct without too much arcane chemical language, although still symbolic.

The Book of Lambspring is one of the few real-life cases of a centuries-old book on alchemy. Originally published in Latin by Frenchman Nicholas Barnaud under the title *De Lapide Philosophico Triga Chemicum* in Prague, 1599, it does not appear to be an original work, but rather an edited collection of manuscripts that had been passed around for at least twenty years previous. Later, Lucas Jennis published the work in full in Frankfurt, 1625. Though the Christian Church burned

most of the copies over the centuries, there are still a few copies of the original remaining intact. One of them (Ms 16752) is in the National Museum of Nuremberg, and another is in the University of Leiden.

In the left column is the Barnaud version; in the right column are the equivalent images taken from a Latin/German version of 1607; plus my interpretation of the text. This interpretation is only a guide in how to read and understand the text.



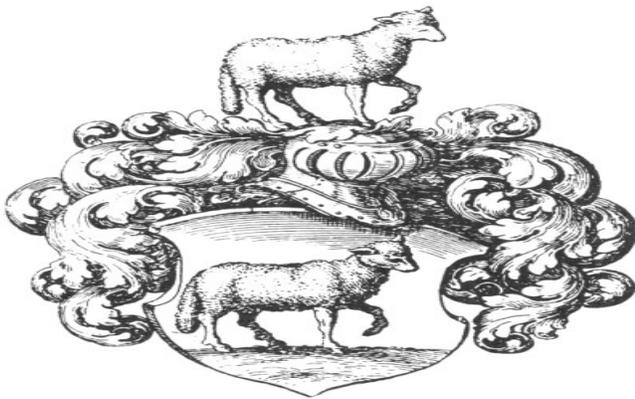
The Book of Lambspring, A Noble Ancient Philosopher, Concerning the Philosophical Stone; Rendered into Latin Verse by Nicholas Barnaud Delphinus, Doctor of Medicine, a zealous Student of this Art.

The term philosopher in past centuries meant a person who studied Nature, science, mythology, and above all man. Art was a term used for the alchemical art, or the Great Work.



PREFACE

I am called Lambspring, born of a Noble Family, and this Crest I bear with Glory and Justice.



Philosophy I have read, and thoroughly understood,
The utmost depth of my teachers' knowledge have I sounded.
This God graciously granted to me,
Giving me a heart to understand wisdom.



Thus I became the Author of this Book,
And I have clearly set forth the whole
matter,
That Rich and Poor might understand.
There is nothing like it upon earth;
Nor (God be praised) have I therein
forgotten my humble self.
I am acquainted with the only true
foundation:
Therefore preserve this Book with care,
And take heed that you study it again
and again.
Thus shall you receive and learn the
truth,
And use this great gift of God for good
ends.
O God the Father, which art of all the
beginning and end,
We beseech thee for the sake of our
Lord Jesus Christ
To enlighten our minds and thoughts,
That we may praise Thee without
ceasing,
And accomplish this Book according to
Thy will!
Direct Thou everything to a good end,
And preserve us through Thy great
mercy. -
With the help of God I will shew you
this Art,
And will not hide or veil the truth from
you.
After that you understand me aright,
You will soon be free from the bonds of
error.
For there is only one substance,
In which all the rest is hidden;
Therefore, keep a good heart.
Coction, time, and patience are what
you need;
If you would enjoy the precious reward,
You must cheerfully give both time and
labour.
For you must subject to gentle coction
the seeds and the metals,
Day by day, during several weeks;

"Study it again and again": a mere
intellectual interpretation is not
sufficient, one must gain understanding
by contemplating the text and images.

The emphasis on directing one's
attention to God, or Jesus Christ can be
found in several alchemical
manuscripts. It is an important part of
the Great Work, because after all it
about discovering our divine essence.
That is the object of the direction of our
awareness.

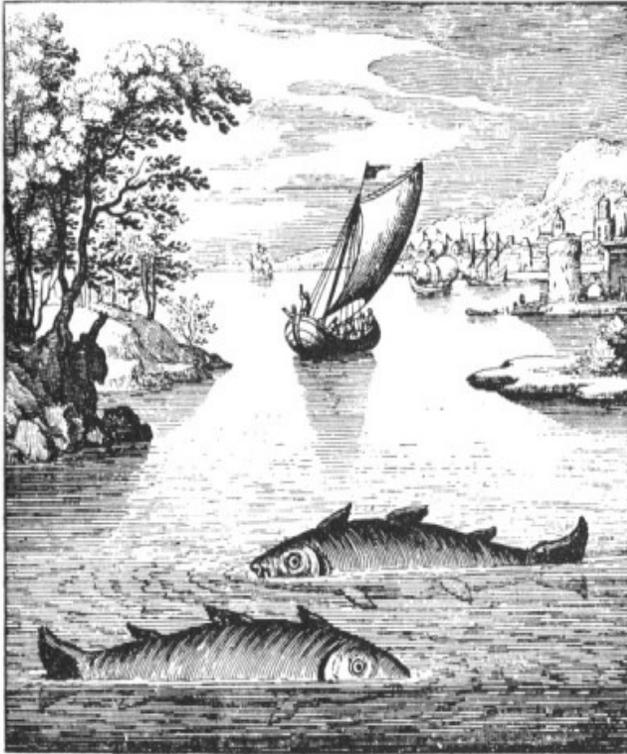
"For there is only one substance": in
spite of the multitude of symbols, like
mercury, salt and sulfur, the alchemists
keep on repeating that there is only
substance to work on, and that is the
alchemist himself.

The alchemical process is very simple:
it is the purification of oneself, nothing
else. Of course, 'normal' people don't
understand this.

Thus in this one vile thing
You will discover and bring to perfection
the whole work of Philosophy,
Which to most men appears impossible,
Though it is a convenient and easy
task.
If we were to shew it to the outer world
We should be derided by men, women,
and children.
Therefore be modest and secret,
And you will be left in peace and
security.
Remember your duty towards your
neighbour and your God,
Who gives this Art, and would have it
concealed.
Now we will conclude the Preface,
That we may begin to describe the very
Art,
And truly and plainly set it forth in
figures,
Rendering thanks to the Creator of
every creature.
Hereunto follows the First Figure,

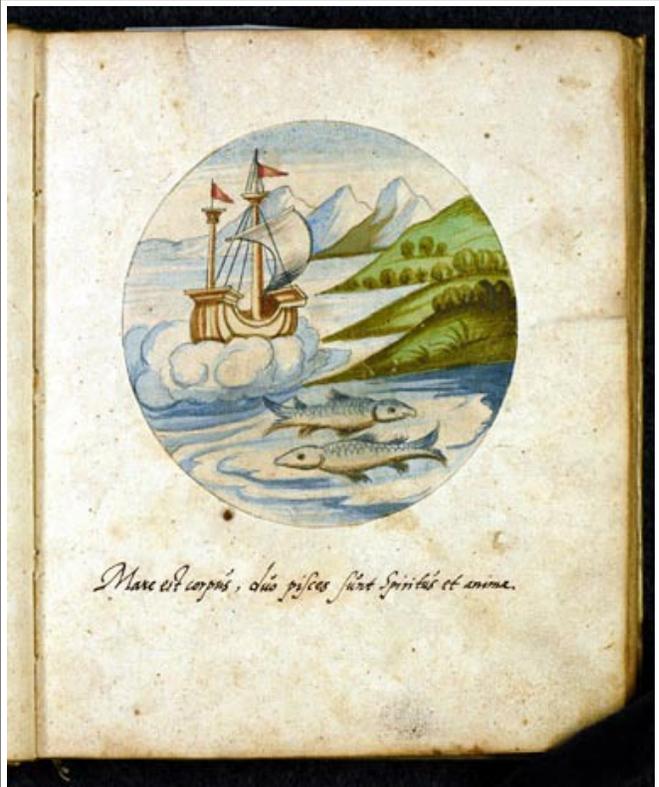
Figure 1

Be warned and understand truly that
two fishes are swimming in our sea.



The Sea is the Body, the two Fishes are Soul and Spirit.

The Sages will tell you
 That two fishes are in our sea
 Without any flesh or bones.
 Let them be cooked in their own water;
 Then they also will become a vast sea,
 The vastness of which no man can
 describe.
 Moreover, the Sages say
 That the two fishes are only one, not
 two;
 They are two, and nevertheless they
 are one,
 Body, Spirit, and Soul.
 Now, I tell you most truly,
 Cook these three together,
 That there may be a very large sea.
 Cook the sulphur well with the sulphur,
 And hold your tongue about it:
 Conceal your knowledge to your own
 advantage,
 And you shall be free from poverty.



Mare est corpus, duo pisces sunt spiritus et anima.

The body is compared with a sea/water, because when one directs one's attention inwards, like in meditation, the inner awareness is like a vast sea with no boundaries. It is the soul and spirit that needs to be purified.

Although we make a distinction between body, soul and spirit, there is only one you, although one can look at oneself in these three apparent different aspects.

Only let your discovery remain a close secret.

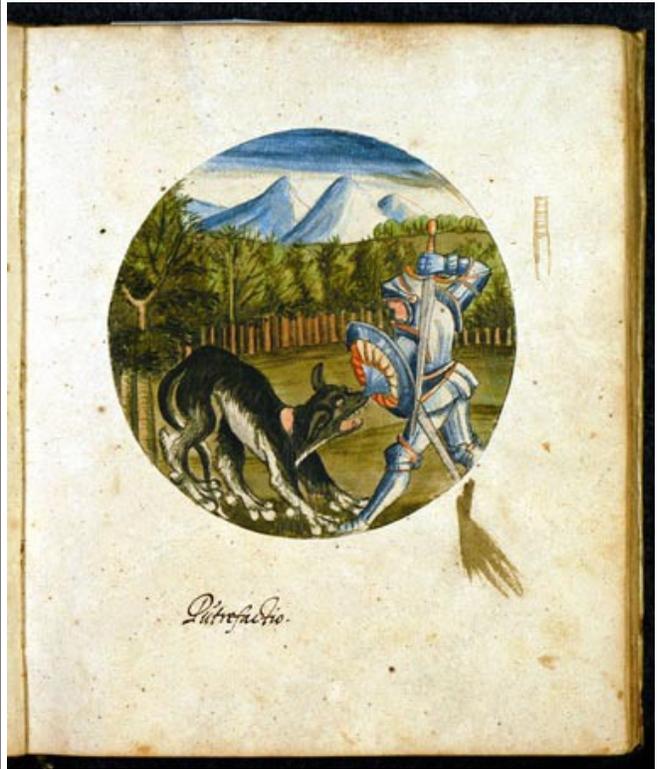
Figure II

Here you straightway behold a black beast in the forest.



Putrefaction.

The Sage says
That a wild beast is in the forest,
Whose skin is of the blackest dye.
If any man cut off his head,
His blackness will disappear,
And give place to a snowy white.
Understand well the meaning of this head:
The blackness is called the head of the Raven;
As soon as it disappears,
A white colour is straightway manifested;
It is given this name, despoiled of its head.
When the Beast's black hue has



Putrefaction is the stage of blackness, the blackness one encounters when the eyes are closed.

The dragon is a symbol for the untamed energies in oneself, especially the thoughts.

When one has cleaned up all the chaos in one's mind, and purified one's awareness, then eventually a clarity arises that can be compared with a

vanished in a black smoke,
 The Sages rejoice
 From the bottom of their hearts;
 But they keep it a close secret,
 That no foolish man may know it.
 Yet unto their Sons, in kindness of
 heart,
 They partly reveal it in their writings;
 And therefore let those who receive the
 gift
 Enjoy it also in silence,
 Since God would have it concealed.

shining light, or whiteness as the
 alchemists called it. An actual spiritual
 light can also be perceived. This is the
 stage of Albedo.

Figure III

Hear without terror that in the forest
 are hidden a deer and an unicorn.



In the Body there is Soul and Spirit.

The Sages say truly
 That two animals are in this forest:
 One glorious, beautiful, and swift,
 A great and strong deer;
 The other an unicorn.
 They are concealed in the forest,
 But happy shall that man be called
 Who shall snare and capture them.



A deer is a symbol for thought because
 it is swift and runs around like
 thoughts.

The unicorn is a symbol of one
 pointedness of mind. The fixation on
 clear pure awareness of self.

The Masters shew you here clearly
That in all places
These two animals wander about in
forests
(But know that the forest is but one).
If we apply the parable to our Art,
We shall call the forest the Body.
That will be rightly and truly said.
The unicorn will be the Spirit at all
times.
The deer desires no other name
But that of the Soul; which name no
man shall take away from it.
He that knows how to tame and master
them by Art,
To couple them together,
And to lead them in and out of the
forest,
May justly be called a Master.
For we rightly judge
That he has attained the golden flesh,
And may triumph everywhere;
Nay, he may bear rule over great
Augustus.

The unicorn is the Spirit because the
Spirit is the center of our being, and on
this we hold our one pointed
awareness.

The deer, or thoughts, is part of the
soul.

Figure IV

Here you behold a great marvel --- two lions are joined into one.



The Spirit and Soul must be united in their Body.

The Sages do faithfully teach us
That two strong lions, to wit, male and female,

Lurk in a dark and rugged valley.
These the Master must catch,
Though they are swift and fierce,
And of terrible and savage aspect.

He who, by wisdom and cunning,
Can snare and bind them,
And lead them into the same forest,
Of him it may be said with justice and truth

That he has merited the meed of praise
before all others,
And that his wisdom transcends that of
the worldly wise.



Usually the lion is taken for the male, active principle in the Great Work, but here we have two lions as symbols for both Spirit and Soul. In this sense, we could take the lion as symbol for the emotions (from the soul) and feelings (from the Spirit). Emotions and feelings can indeed be very strong and savage, but they need to be tamed and guided.

Figure V

A wolf and a dog are in one house, and

are afterwards changed into one.

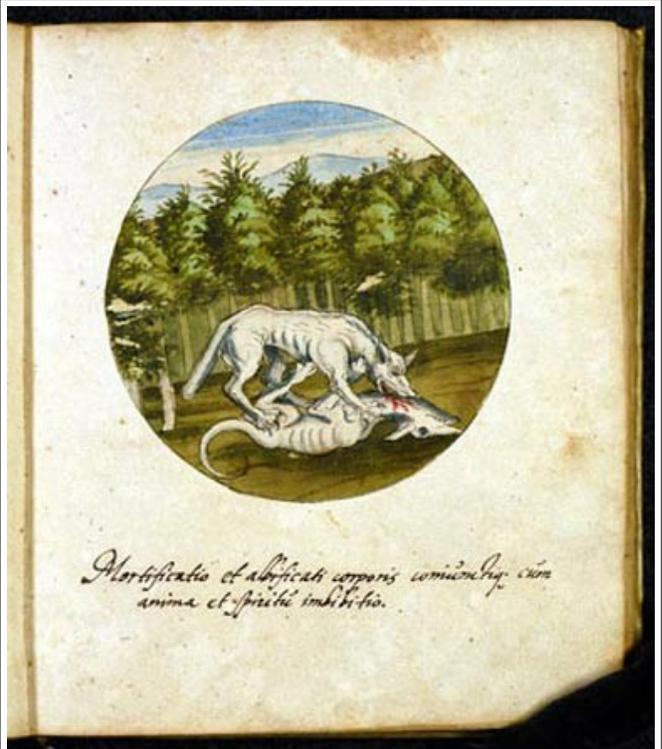


The Body is mortified and rendered white, then joined to Soul and Spirit by being saturated with them.

Alexander writes from Persia
That a wolf and a dog are in this field,
Which, as the Sages say,
Are descended from the same stock,
But the wolf comes from the east,
And the dog from the west.
They are full of jealousy,
Fury, rage, and madness;
One kills the other,
And from them comes a great poison.
But when they are restored to life,
They are clearly shewn to be
The Great and Precious Medicine,
The most glorious Remedy upon earth,
Which refreshes and restores the
Sages,
Who render thanks to God, and do
praise Him.

Figure VI

This surely is a great miracle and



Once one has become aware of the inner energies of Soul and Spirit and purified them, then the awareness of these inner energies has to be brought into the bodily awareness, into our every day consciousness.

The "wolf from the east" is the symbol for the Fixed, and the "dog from the west" is the symbol for the Volatile. The Fixed and the Volatile are two aspects of the continuous process of distillation and purification. By this one has to understand the alternate direction of attention to the inner, more subtle energies (volatile) and awareness, and the outer, physical, bodily awareness (fixed).

without any deception - that in a venomous dragon there should be the great medicine.



The Mercury is precipitated or sublimed, dissolved in its own proper water, and then once more coagulated.

A savage Dragon lives in the forest,
Most venomous he is, yet lacking
nothing:

When he sees the rays of the Sun and
its bright fire,
He scatters abroad his poison,
And flies upward so fiercely
That no living creature can stand before
him,
Nor is even the Basilisk equal to him.
He who hath skill to slay him, wisely
Hath escaped from all dangers.
Yet all venom, and colours, are
multiplied
In the hour of his death.
His venom becomes the great Medicine.

He quickly consumes his venom,
For he devours his poisonous tail.
All this is performed on his own body,



*Mercurius recte et chymice precipitatus vel sublimatus,
et in sua propria aqua resolutus, et rursus in se coagulatus.*

Meditation is like dissolving your ordinary awareness (earth) into a larger more subtle inner awareness (water), which we then try to bring back into our body, what is expressed by the term 'coagulation'.

The venomous dragon, usually depicted as Ouroboros, the dragon biting his own tail, is a symbol of the matter, or the Stone, or mercury, that is the inner energies of the mind, when they are circulating in the vase, that is, during the entire process of meditation, or any other spiritual practice. originally it is poison because the mind is originally full of impurities, but by continuous work or practice, they get refined and purified, and thus they become medicine, and will heal both body and soul.

From which flows forth glorious Balm,
With all its miraculous virtues.
Hereat all the Sages do loudly rejoice.

Figure VII

We hear two birds in the forest, yet we must understand them to be only one.



The Mercury having been often sublimed, is at length fixed, and becomes capable of resisting fire: the sublimation must be repeated until at length the fixation is attained.

A nest is found in the forest,
In which Hermes has his brood;
One fledgling always strives to fly upward,
The other rejoices to sit quietly in the nest;
Yet neither can get away from the other.
The one that is below holds the one that is above,
And will not let it get away from the nest,
As a husband in a house with his wife,
Bound together in closest bonds of



Even when the mind has been purified, one must continue the process, because one has to arrive at a state where this purified, clear awareness remains constant. This is the ultimate fixation as the alchemists expressed it, when the Matter, the Stone, Mercury is totally resistant to fire, that it, it cannot be altered anymore by any outside influence. One is completely stable in clear awareness.

The two birds that cannot get away from each other are both the physical awareness and the inner awareness that are now joined and form a unity.

wedlock.
 So also do we rejoice at all times,
 That we hold the female eagle fast in
 this way,
 And we render thanks to God the
 Father.

Figure VIII

Here are two birds, great and strong -
 the body and spirit; one devours the
 other.



Let the Body be placed in horse-dung,
 or a warm bath, the Spirit having been
 extracted from it. The Body has become
 white by the process, the Spirit red by
 our Art. All that exists tends towards
 perfection, and thus is the Philosopher's
 Stone prepared.

In India there is a most pleasant wood,
 In which two birds are bound together.
 One is of a snowy white; the other is
 red.
 They bite each other, and one is slain
 And devoured by the other.



Here is another example of continuing
 the process of purification which brings
 body and spirit together.

The white color is the state of
 Whiteness or Albedo, the first
 attainment of clear awareness. The red
 color the next state of Redness or
 Rubedo, when this clear awareness is
 'fixed, that is, the alchemist is able to
 maintain it.

The dove is a symbol of the State of
 Albedo, the phoenix of Rubedo.

Then both are changed into white doves,
And of the Dove is born a Phoenix,
Which has left behind blackness and
foul death,
And has regained a more glorious life.
This power was given it by God Himself,

That it might live eternally, and never die.
It gives us wealth, it preserves our life,
And with it we may work great miracles,
As also the true Philosophers do plainly inform us.

When the state of Rubedo has been attained, and clear awareness is being maintained, then one has manifested one's divine self, from which all wealth, health and miracles come from.

Figure IX

The lord of the forests has recovered his kingdom, and mounted from the lowest to the highest degree. If fortune smile, you may from a rhetor become a consul; if fortune frown, the consul may become a rhetor.



Thus you may know that the Tincture has truly attained the first degree.



From here on are instructions for adepts, that is, those who have successfully completed the Great Work,

Now hear of a wonderful deed,
For I will teach you great things,
How the King rises high above all his
race;
And hear also what the noble lord of
the forest says:
I have overcome and vanquished my
foes,
I have trodden the venomous Dragon
under foot,
I am a great and glorious King in the
earth.
There is none greater than I,
Child either of the Artist or of Nature,
Among all living creatures.
I do all that man can desire,
I give power and lasting health,
Also gold, silver, gems, and precious
stones,
And the panacea for great and small
diseases.
Yet at first I was of ignoble birth,
Till I was set in a high place.
To reach this lofty summit
Was given me by God and Nature.
Thence from the meanest I became the
highest,
And mounted to the most glorious
throne,
And to the state of royal sovereignty:
Therefore Hermes has called me the
Lord of the Forests.

and attained a fixed clear awareness of
Self at all times. Very few people will
ever arrive at this stage.

However, it is not all that can be
attained.

At this state one is truly a King, master
of himself, inside and outside. The
purified mind vivified with the divine
spirit, is the source of health and
wealth.

Figure X

A salamander lives in the fire, which imparts to it a most glorious hue.



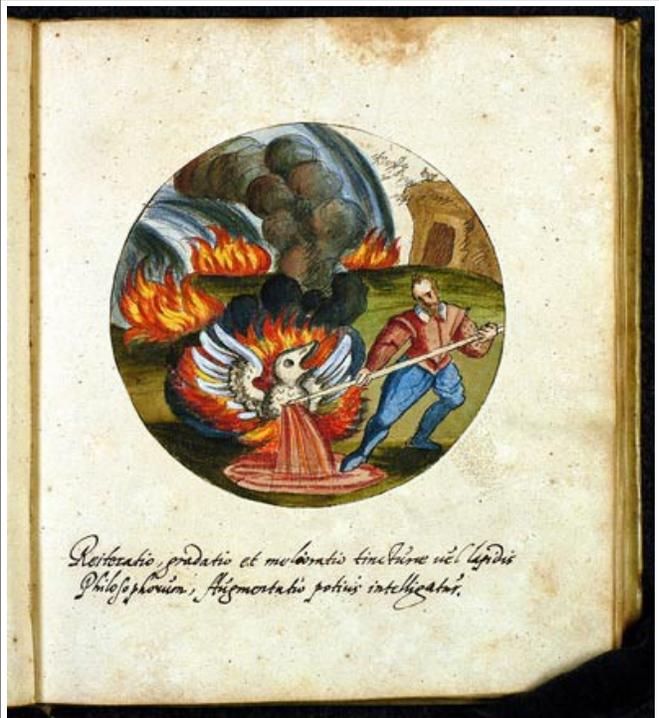
This is the reiteration, gradation, and amelioration of the Tincture, or Philosopher's Stone; and the whole is called its Augmentation.

In all fables we are told
That the Salamander is born in the fire;

In the fire it has that food and life
Which Nature herself has assigned to it.

It dwells in a great mountain
Which is encompassed by many flames,

And one of these is ever smaller than
another -
Herein the Salamander bathes.
The third is greater, the fourth brighter
than the rest -
In all these the Salamander washes,
and is purified.
Then he hies him to his cave,
But on the way is caught and pierced



*Restitatio, gradatio et melioratio tincturae vel lapidis
Philosophorum; Augmentatio potius intelligatur.*

Augmentation is also called Multiplication. The alchemist basically repeats the process but this time with the purified Matter, Mercury, Stone, in order to augment in quality or quantity.

The Fire is the Spirit itself, the divine essence in every man. The salamander here is the symbol of that divine essence in its fiery, active, living quality.

So, the salamander, the Spirit, is cleansed even more, this time with fire, which is active concentration. This brings about another transformation after which one is truly immortal, in the sense that death cannot become to the body, because the body itself has been transmuted.

So that it dies, and yields up its life with its blood.

But this, too, happens for its good:
For from its blood it wins immortal life,
And then death has no more power over it.

Its blood is the most precious Medicine upon earth,
The same has not its like in the world.
For this blood drives away all disease
In the bodies of metals,
Of men, and of beasts.
From it the Sages derive their science,
And through it they attain the Heavenly Gift,
Which is called the Philosopher's Stone,

Possessing the power of the whole world.

This gift the Sages impart to us with loving hearts,
That we may remember them for ever.

Figure XI



The father and the son have linked their hands with those of the guide: know that the three are body, soul, and spirit.



The father is the body, which of course

Here is an old father of Israel,
Who has an only Son,
A Son whom he loves with all his heart.
With sorrow he prescribes sorrow to
him.
He commits him to a guide,
Who is to conduct him whithersoever he
will.
The Guide addresses the Son in these
words:
Come hither! I will conduct thee
everywhere,
To the summit of the loftiest mountain,
That thou mayest understand all
wisdom,
That thou mayest behold the greatness
of the earth, and of the sea,
And then derive true pleasure.
I will bear thee through the air
To the gates of highest heaven.
The Son hearkened to the words of the
Guide,
And ascended upward with him;
There saw he the heavenly throne,
That was beyond measure glorious.
When he had beheld these things,
He remembered his Father with sighing,

Pitied the great sorrow of his Father,
And said: I will return to his breast.

like the soul, the son, that inhabits it.

The guide is the divine spirit, or divine
essence, in the person, that now can
take the soul to any place in the
universe.

The divine spirit can now shift its
awareness away from the body, and
roam the universe from the physical
level to the astral words, to the mental
realms, and to the spiritual.

But eventually one longs to be back into
the physical body again.

Figure XII



Another mountain of India lies in the vessel, which the spirit and the soul - that is, the son and the guide - have climbed.

Says the Son to the Guide:
I will go down to my Father,
For he cannot live without me.
He sighs and calls aloud for me.
And the Guide makes answer to the Son:
I will not let thee go alone;
From thy Father's bosom I brought thee forth,
I will also take thee back again,
That he may rejoice again and live.
This strength will we give unto him.
So both arose without delay,
And returned to the Father's house.
When the Father saw his Son coming,
He cried aloud, and said: -



The spirit and soul have left the body and are in the more subtle realms.

The body cannot live without the vivifying Soul and Spirit.

Figure XIII



Here the father devours the son; the soul and spirit flow forth from the body.

My Son, I was dead without thee,
And lived in great danger of my life.
I revive at thy return,
And it fills my breast with joy.
But when the Son entered the Father's
house,
The Father took him to his heart,
And swallowed him out of excessive joy,

And that with his own mouth.
The great exertion makes the Father
sweat.



The soul which has been purified greatly and vivified with the divine essence, enters the body again, but this enhanced energy has a great impact on the body.

Figure XIV

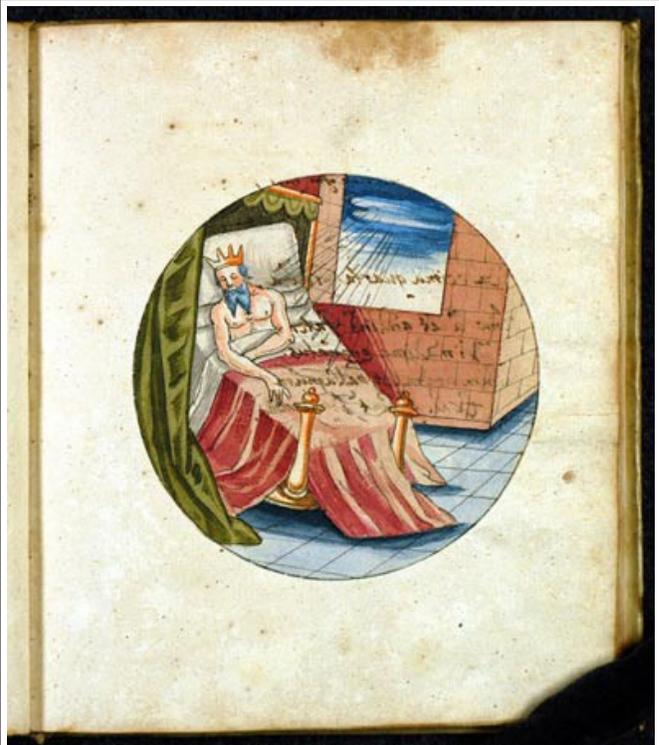


Here the father sweats profusely, while oil and the true tincture of the sages flow forth from him.

Here the Father sweats on account of the Son,
And earnestly beseeches God,
Who has created everything in His hands,
Who creates, and has created all things,

To bring forth his Son from his body,
And to restore him to his former life.
God hearkens to his prayers,
And bids the Father lie down and sleep.
Then God sends down rain from heaven

To the earth from the shining stars.
It was a fertilizing, silver rain,
Which bedewed and softened the
Father's Body.
Succour us, Lord, at the end,
That we may obtain Thy gracious Gift!



The body itself undergoes changes.

The rain from heaven refers to the Golden Rain from Greek mythology (Jupiter and Danae; and the birth of Minerva from Jupiter's head); although here it is called a silver rain.

It is the experience of the influx of divine energies that transform the physical body.

Figure XV



Here father and son are joined in one
so to remain for ever.

The sleeping Father is here changed
Entirely into limpid water,
And by virtue of this water alone
The good work is accomplished.
There is now a glorified and beautiful
Father,
And he brings forth a new Son.
The Son ever remains in the Father,
And the Father in the Son.
Thus in divers things
They produce untold, precious fruit.
They perish never more,
And laugh at death.
By the grace of God they abide for ever,

The Father and the Son, triumphing
gloriously
In the splendour of their new Kingdom.
Upon one throne they sit,
And the face of the Ancient Master
Is straightway seen between them:
He is arrayed in a crimson robe.



This is the unification of the body and
the spirit, which by a transfiguration
become one and the same, and
transcend the laws of Nature.

*To the invisible king of the world,
To the only true and immortal god
Be praise and glory
Now and evermore.
Amen.*