

Alchemy Journal



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Alchemy: the Cosmological Yoga (by Maurice Aniane)

Part 1: What Is Alchemy?

Alchemy in most ancient civilizations is none other than the science of the sacrifice of terrestrial substances, the liturgy for transfiguring those crafts that deal with "inanimate" matter. We find it everywhere from archaic Mesopotamia to ancient China and in India throughout the ages. In these traditions, "mythological" in form, alchemy is not restricted to any particular place: if the Spirit is everywhere, obviously it is also in a stone; when the one and only light, that of Divine Intelligence, is manifest in the sun, in an eagle, and in honey, it is surprising that it is also manifest in gold, that every metal is gold which does not know itself, and even in its ignorance is a "state" of gold? If man has no other role than to

worship in the undivided sanctuary of his body and of nature, is it surprising that he should "transmute" lead into gold? Neither can sanctity be divided, and the "miracle" of transmutation reveals its omnipresence.

Alchemy in the metaphysical and mythological traditions had no more importance than the dance which expressed the sacred nature of rhythm, showed the worshipful circling of the dancers to be the same as that of the stars, and, in the sudden immobility of the body, "transmuted" time, the sleep of lead, into the pure gold of a moment of eternity. However, alchemy was destined to have a special significance in the realm of the "monotheistic" traditions, and particularly in Christianity. Apart from traces of folklore that still exists in some rural communities of Europe, alchemy, or, more generally, Hermeticism, seems to have been the only cosmological doctrine to survive in the Christian world. It has therefore been called upon to play a major role "beneath the surface" in a religion that stressed "contempt of the flesh" and shunned cosmology.

In fact, during the early Middle Ages and up to the beginning of Gothic Art, alchemy was not opposed to Christianity but completed it. Through it, the Eucharistic effusion radiated even into the heaviest states of matter. It was no longer only bread and wine that were transubstantiated, but stone, lead, the lime of bones and rocks. Vivified by Christianity, alchemy gave the latter a "technical" application in the "psychocosmic" realm, which Christianity had neglected because its aim was not to establish man in the world but to lead him out of it.

So alchemy could not have survived in the West without the tremendous initiatic effusion of

Christianity: just as the archaic house only exists because of the chimney by which it communicates with "heaven," so there is no possible cosmology except around the "central" state, through which one can find a way out of the cosmos. However, without alchemy Christianity could not have been "incarnated" in a total order: there would have been monks and saints; but there would not have been the sacred idea of a nature which could endow the arts and crafts, and heraldry, with their character of "lesser mysteries." In a time when we are weighed down by heaviness, it is perhaps urgent to remind Christianity that it not only accepted but, in the centuries of its noblest incarnation, animated a true "yoga" of heaviness and matter.

Despite the insistence of historians of science, alchemy was never, except in its degenerate aspects, a primitive chemistry. It was a "sacramental" science in which material phenomena were not autonomous, but represented only the "condensation" of psychic and spiritual realities. When the spontaneity and mystery of nature is penetrated, it becomes transparent. On the one hand it is transfigured under the lightning-flashes of divine energies, and on the other it incorporates and symbolizes those "angelic" states that fallen man can only glimpse for brief moments, when listening to music or when contemplating a human face. Symbols are not meant to be "stuck onto" things: they are the very structure, the presence, and the beauty of things such as they are in the process of perfection in God. For alchemy, which is the science of symbol, there was no question, as has sometimes been said, of a "material" unity of nature, but of a spiritual unity – one could almost say a spiritual Assumption of nature. For nature, ultimately, is none other than the place of a metaphysical principle: through man it becomes the body of the Word and, as it were, the bride of God.

This Assumption of matter is the key to the alchemical work, which simply helps substances "to plunge into the Father-nature," that is, to incorporate, according to their mode of being, the greatest possible spiritual light. "Creatures must plunge into this Father-nature and become Unity and the only Son, "for nature, which is God, seeks only the image of God." "Copper, because of its nature, can become silver, and silver, by its nature, can become gold: so neither one nor the other stops or pauses until this identity is realized." For gold is the most perfect of metals, the one whose luminous density best expresses the divine presence in the mineral realm: through spiritual continuity each metal is virtually gold and each stone becomes precious in God. This transfiguration of nature – memory of Eden and expectation of the second coming (*Parousia*) – can at present only take effect in the heart of man, the central and conscious being of the creation. Indeed, that being so, "the eye of the heart" can see gold in lead and crystal in the mountain, because it can see the world in God.

Alchemy, like all the ancient sciences, was therefore an immense effort to awaken man to the divine omnipresence. Its importance is to have emphasized this omnipresence in the darkest heaviness: there where the pseudo-mystical, "idealistic" perspective would be least likely to look for it; there, on the contrary, where, according to the analogical inversion of a "sacramental" vision, the divine omnipresence "contracts" and most strongly withdraws into itself. If the production of metallic gold has sometimes been achieved, then it was simply a *sign*. It was no more of a miracle than that of a saint whose look transforms a sinner. Just as the saint sees in the sinner the possibility of sanctity, so the alchemist-sage saw in the lead the possibility of metallic sanctity, that is, of gold. And this vision was "operative."

But the alchemist did not seek to make metallic gold. That was not the true meaning of his work. His purpose was to unite his soul so intimately with that of the metals that he could remind them that they

are in God, that is, that they are gold. The medieval alchemist actualized the Word of Christ to the letter: he proclaimed the good news to all creatures. "The stone is the Christ," all the Hermetic texts of the Middle Ages hopefully repeat. Through his vision of Christic Gold, the alchemist could transmute every "imperfect metal." But he did it only rarely, for as a saint, he knew that the time for cosmic transfiguration had not yet come.

The true role of the alchemist was twofold: on the one hand, he helped nature, suffocated by human decadence, to breathe the presence of God. Offering up to God the prayer of the universe, he anchored the universe in being and renewed its existence. The texts call him *king*; as secret king, he confirmed the order of time and of space, the fecundity of the earth producing grain and diamond, as did the kings of ancient societies, like the emperor of China up to the beginning of the twentieth century. In the second place, the alchemist, on the human plane, "awakening" substances and gold itself to their true nature, used them to prepare elixirs which gave "longevity" to the body and strength to the soul: "drinkable gold" was a gold *awakened* to its spiritual quality, and reflected in its order the "immortality medicine" as St. Ambrose said of the Eucharist. The true role of the alchemist was to celebrate analogically a mass whose species were not only bread and wine, but also all of nature in its entirety.

A Meditation on Paracelsus (by Mary Hurst)

The alchemist Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, known as Paracelsus, (1498 to 1541) was a great physician, chemist and philosopher. He discovered, for example, that substances that make us sick can also, in small quantities, make us well, or protect us from further infection. He worked hard all his life to teach the truth to a reluctant medical establishment, and died at 43, probably at the hand of someone who wanted him silenced.

In studying the story of his life and achievements, intriguing insights about his personality have been coming to me between the lines of what I read. What I am discovering is that, while there is nothing funny about Paracelsus, his work, or the story of his difficult life, I still catch myself smiling, and at times I almost want to laugh. Paracelsus was deadly serious about his work, yet he had a sense of humor. The man's in-your-face style as portrayed in his writing and teaching makes me applaud, as we do any time one of the "little guys" tells the rude truth to authority. Paracelsus was a great "ranter," but he was no puritan, like his contemporary Savonarola, the reformer of Florence. He was exuberant, full of "entheos" — the God Within — alive and lusting to get inside the clockwork of the world to discover what makes things tick. He was both self-aggrandizing and humble in the face of the great mysteries. He was completely devoted to spreading what he believed to be the truth, yet with his over-the-top pronouncements and denunciations I suspect that, at some level, he was putting us on. Of course, the medical



establishment of his day did not see it that way. In fact, our word “bombast” comes from his name and is a perfect description of his oratorical style.

Art historian James Elkins (What Painting Is: How to Think about Oil Painting Using the Language of Alchemy) notes that, “After one seminar Paracelsus had infuriated so many doctors and druggists that he had to flee for his life in the middle of the night.” Imagine him pouring sarcasm and verbal vitriol onto the professors and doctors at the University of Basle, as he accuses them of doing more harm than good with their antiquated and dangerous “cures.” He tells them that their beliefs are not based on actual experience, and challenges them to “get off the couch and get to work,” to stop reading ancient texts and go out and discover the world for themselves. Rude and fearless, he burnt the classical medical works of Galen, Avicenna and others to make the point that the ancient “cures” were worthless. Paracelsus had reason to fear the maddened doctors, but even more reason to fear retribution by the Catholic Church, on watch constantly for heresy.

Again, I find a certain tongue-in-cheek quality in his attempts to avoid accusations of blasphemy by writing a history of alchemy that grounds it in the Judeo-Christian faith. As always, the wildest assertions of Paracelsus were stated flatly as unequivocal truth. In “The Aurora of the Philosophers” he begins with the assertion that Thoth (the ancient Egyptian bringer of wisdom who became a god) was in fact Adam. In his version, the Pillars of Hermes were not pillars but two stone tablets that contained information on all the natural arts written in hieroglyphics.

Skipping ahead in history, Paracelsus writes that, after the Deluge, Noah discovered the tablets “under” Mount Ararat — perhaps an echo of the Ten Commandments of Moses, found on Mount Sinai. This “universal knowledge” descended through Abraham, Jacob and the other Patriarchs of Hebrew tradition, and became the intellectual property of Wise Men called Magi, such as those who visited Jesus at his birth. According to Paracelsus, this is the true alchemical tradition, and “the Art” as “discovered” by the Greeks was corrupted. This point of view may reflect his beliefs, but it also neatly supports the Church’s position that the ancient Greeks and Romans were the original “pagans” against which the early Christians rebelled. Paracelsus insisted that the Greeks (in particular the Sixth century Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras) were not true wise men because they “would not admit disciples belonging to other nations than their own.” Paracelsus’ words were supported by his actions: for example, he gave his lectures in “the common German tongue instead of Latin,” which scandalized doctors and professors at the University of Basel, where he taught in 1527. According to Paracelsus, the wisdom of the Greeks was “mere speculation, utterly distinct and separate from the other true arts and sciences.” He notes that this flawed science “flourishes with the Germans, and other nations, right down to the present day.” He tells us that European science has been wrong-headed all along, Q.E.D., from ancient Greece to “modern” Europe! I theorize that Paracelsus’ attitude toward the Greeks may also have come from an unconscious personal bias. According to James Elkins, Paracelsus (like the young Pharaoh Akhenaten, another important figure in alchemical history) had a pear-shaped body and misshapen face with protruding lips. In contrast, Pythagoras was known for his beauty and long hair. In his work and in his person, Pythagoras embodied the Greek ideal of beauty and order that excluded Paracelsus by implication. Like Paracelsus, Pythagoras was a self-promoter, however he was rewarded for his scientific and mathematical discoveries, while his less-favored descendant was frequently run out of town on the sixteenth century version of a rail.

An ugly genius, Paracelsus suffered ridicule for his appearance as well as his beliefs; one can imagine

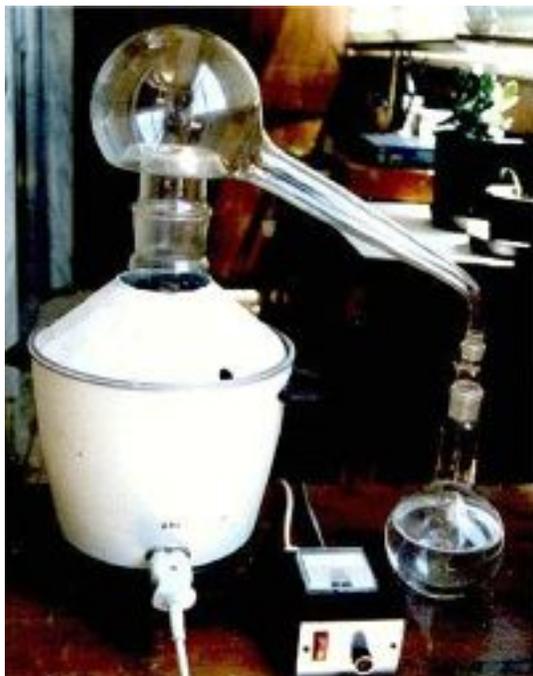
his “bombast” arising from a need to stand up for himself, his rudeness a preemptive strike against the derision he had good reason to expect. Even though his cures turned out to be effective, the medical establishment did not accept him. Yet he never doubted that he was right, and rejection only caused him to pour it on. He was a magnetic speaker, and drew crowds of disciples and detractors wherever he traveled. Despite being the archetype of a “royal pain in the ass,” I believe that Paracelsus’ enthusiasm and good humor sustained him as he was hounded from one European city to another for his beliefs. He would appreciate knowing that today he is honored and his work is regarded as indispensable to the furtherance of modern chemistry and medicine. In addition to the discovery of cures and remedies, Paracelsus’ life work was a search for what he called “the chief and supreme essence of things.” To him, the Philosopher’s Stone of the alchemists was the divine Quintessence achieved only through the highest degree of purgation and purification. This “perfect substance” was known to include in itself “the essence of all celestial and terrestrial creatures.” Its exact nature was “impenetrable” even to the wisest of the Magi. A seeker might find “wonderful and strange effects,” but such effects were not to be mistaken for the Thing itself. Was Paracelsus saying that the Quintessence, or Philosopher’s Stone is God? Or was he saying something else?

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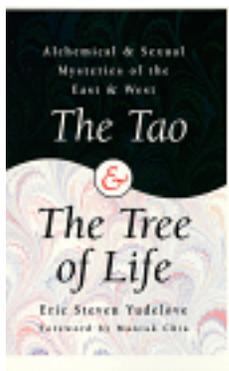
Researcher Kirsten Houseknecht is working on a study of alternative spirituality and would like people who have left traditional religious faiths for some other variety of religious orientation (paganism, Buddhism, meditation, Wicca, etc.) to take a short email interview. You can email her at Kirsten@fabricdragon.com.

Laboratory Notes



A 6-liter alchemical oven can be made with a 1,000 watt deep-frying cooker. It can be used for the distillations of essential oils, wine, and vinegar. Before buying the electric frying cooker, acquire a good quality 6-litre Pyrex glass balloon, with plane bottom, to make sure it fits in the appliance. You will need to install, between the oven and the outlet, a 1kW electronic voltage regulator. The regulator will allow you to regulate the voltage of the electric current between 0 and 220 volts AC (110V in USA) in a way that you will obtain the suitable temperature in the oven. You will also need a variety of specially-made glassware. You will also need to cut an asbestos pad to form the bottom and upper hood of the furnace. The final product is shown in the photo. (For detailed instructions, see the Alchemy Petrinus website at <http://planeta.clix.pt/petrinus/ovalemb6-e.htm>.)

New Releases



The Tao & The Tree of Life: Alchemical & Sexual Mysteries of the East & West

by Eric Yudelove (reviewed by Onelove@onemain.com)

Click on book cover to order this book at a 20% discount.

Eric Yudelove has a writing style that makes the esoteric subjects of this book very easy to understand. I have a personal bias with authors who get caught up in complexity. I feel the underlying principle of spiritual philosophy and practice is

simplicity. Not only does Eric outline Taoist internal alchemy, but he also shows the direct parallel of the Taoist system with the Middle Eastern Kabbalah system. Upon the ultimate source of all things, both the Taoists and Kabbalists are in complete agreement. All existence came out of nothingness. The Taoists call this ultimate source Wu Chi (No Chi.) The Kabbalist call it Ayin (Nothing) or Ein Soph (No End, No Limit.) Wu Chi and Ein Soph can be experienced but can not be described. The route is meditation. Experiencing this nothingness is a profound mystical experience.

In the Taoist system, the Micro Cosmic Orbit Meditation and Healing Love sexual practices are the foundation of the higher meditations. The next stage is the Fusion of Five Elements meditation. The

Taoist view the human body as a microcosm (or miniature) of the universe (macrocosm) in the sense that they are both constructed from the five elements. Earth, Fire, Wood, Water, Metal correspond with your internal organs Spleen, Heart, Liver, Kidneys, and Lungs. There are also corresponding positive and negative emotions associated with each internal organ. It is through the meditation that you learn to purify and balance the emotions or elements and combine them with your sexual energy to form a spirit body inside your body at the navel center. The next higher meditation is Kan and Li or Fire and Water Meditation. This is where you place fire underneath water at your navel or cauldron to create a alchemical steam that rises to the brain. Also opening up the various energy centers corresponds with the 32 meridians of the Taoist system and 32 paths of the Kaballah. You are essentially building the Tree of Life within your body. Also the Taoist Thrusting Route corresponds with the Middle Pillar of the Kaballah. He mentions the path is a rather slow process because to reach enlightenment without first conquering the ego is what causes so many spiritual leaders and gurus to lead themselves and their students into trouble.

In the Sepher Yetzirah, one of the classical texts of the Kabbalah, it is stated that "In the 32 mystical paths of wisdom did Yah create the universe with numbers, letters, and sounds. The aim of Taoist Yoga is to create the Immortal Child mirrored by the Kabbalist creation of a Body of Light. The ultimate goal is to merge this Immortal Child or Body of Light with Wu Chi or Ein Soph - Nothingness. It is further explained how in the advanced meditations, that you begin to draw in the energy of the various planets Macro Cosmic Orbit or Larger Heavenly Cycle and align yourself with the North Star to accelerate the growth of the spirit body. Also it is mentioned connecting with the North Star corresponds with the Teli in the Kaballah. Teli means dragon or celestial dragon. Many of the ancient Hebrew sources say it refers to the constellation Draco. In ancient times the North Star was Thuban, a star in the tail of Draco. This is due to the shift over time. The North Star is also corresponds with the purple light of transformation. Alignment with the North Star takes place through the brain, also called the Crystal Palace or Heavenly Heart. In Western Alchemy, it corresponds with the Philosopher's Stone.

In the Congress of Heaven and Earth meditation, you combine Yin and Yang or union between the inner divine man and woman which gives rise to the spirit body becoming immortal, also referred to as the primordial Adam Kadmon. Activation of the Pineal, Pituitary, and Thymus gland also takes place. The spirit body now moves on and merges with the Wu Chi. This information has been secret for a very long time. The Taoist sages have been developing and perfecting this system of internal alchemy for perhaps three thousand years or longer. I feel that this information is the final chapter of Yogic practice that previously has been hinted at, or not spoken of at all. I also feel this information unlocks many of the mysteries throughout history and represents the highest aspiration of human existence. For the student of internal alchemy, this book is essential reading!

Website Reviews

Rubellus Petrinus has put together a wonderful alchemy website covering primarily the practical aspects of the art. Petrinus is a Portuguese alchemist who offers a multi-language website devoted to the operative and speculative aspects of alchemy, including vegetable spagyrics and salt volatilization. The furnace described in the Laboratory Notes section is from his website. Visit the Alchemy Petrinus website at <http://planeta.clix.pt/petrinus/>.

Alchemy Lectures and Workshops

EARTHSPIRIT CENTER. Los Angeles. November 11, 2000.

"Working with the Alchemical Tarot" is the title of a workshop to be held in Los Angeles on Saturday, November 11, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The tarot trump cards contain an ancient alchemical formula that provides the initiated user with an easy yet powerful system of transformation and manifestation. Discover the hidden pattern that connects the powers Above with the powers Below in this fascinating workshop with alchemist Dennis William Hauck. For registration information, contact the EarthSpirit Center at 323-254-5458. Email: info@earthspiritcenter.com.

L.V.X. Lodge (Ordo Templi Orientis). Los Angeles. Nov.14, 2000.

The L.V.X. Lodge of the Ordo Templi Orientis will present an evening with Dennis William Hauck on Tuesday, November 14. There will be a slide presentation and discussion on the esoteric principles of alchemy. One of the world's few practicing alchemists will guide you through the principles of alchemy in a unique and inspiring lecture. \$5 donation requested. For more information, call 310-645-5455.

EGYPT TOUR "In Search of the Emerald Tablet." March 15-27, 2001.

Join author Dennis William Hauck and rediscover the spiritual alchemy of the ancient Egyptians. The secret teachings will transform you, as you sail up the Nile River to an ancient source of peace and power. For a free brochure and detailed itinerary, email ETX Seminars at ETX@alchemylab.com with your address information. For online registration forms, visit the Soluna Tours website at www.SolunaTours.com/st-egyphhauck01.htm.

EDITORIAL

From the Editor ([Dennis William Hauck](#))

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Alchemy Journal*. This journal, like all proper alchemical endeavors, will seek to balance both the feminine and masculine ways of knowing (intuition and intellect) to arrive at truth. For that reason, you will find in these pages an eclectic blend of material, both scholarly and personal, logical and emotional, practical and spiritual. Just keep in mind that this publication seeks to stay *alive*, to become and remain a living thing in pursuit of a genuine experience of what alchemy is, where it came from, and how it works in the world today. If some of the things in this journal shock you, upset you, or set you afire with inspiration, then we have succeeded in our major goal: setting you on the path of alchemical perfection and transformation.

Submissions

Please submit your articles on any aspect of alchemy. We are looking for biographies, historical articles, practical laboratory work, philosophical pieces, experiences in personal transformation, spiritual insights, Hermeticism, Gnosticism, book reviews, film and video reviews, website reviews, artwork, etc. Please submit your material or queries to the *Alchemy Journal*, P.O. Box 22201, Sacramento, CA 95822-0201. You may also submit materials via email to the editor at DWHauck@alchemylab.com.

Acknowledgements

"Alchemy: The Cosmological Yoga" by Maurice Aniane is from an article of the same name that first appeared in *Material for Thought* magazine, San Francisco, California in Spring 1976.

Subscriptions

The *Alchemy Journal* is posted quarterly at the Alchemy Lab website on the journal archives page at www.AlchemyLab.com/journal.htm. To subscribe to the journal, send a blank email to AlchemyJournal-subscribe@yahogroups.com.

Alchemy Resources

- **Alchemergy** (Modern Alchemy) <http://www.Alchemergy.com>
- **Alchemy Guild** (Membership Organization) <http://www.AlchemyGuild.org>
- **Alchemy Lab** (Alchemy Articles, Files, and Gallery) <http://www.AlchemyLab.com>
- **Alchemy Website** (Original Alchemy Texts) <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/>
- **Crucible Catalog** (Books, Tapes, Labware, Tinctures, Herbs) <http://www.Crucible.org>
- **Flamel College** (Alchemy and Hermetic Courses) <http://www.FlamelCollege.org>

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