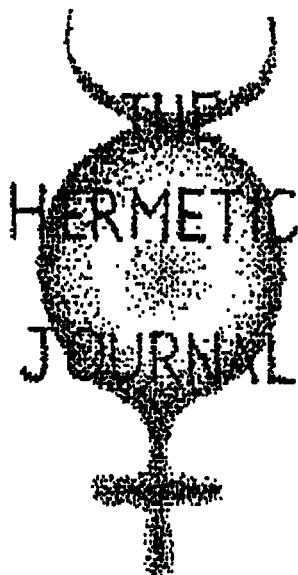


Edited by Adam McLean

Published by
The Hermetic Research Trust
6 Canonbury Place
London N1 2NQ

Tel: 01 226 0774



Editorial

The present issue number 40 marks the completion of a decade of publishing the Hermetic Journal. I well remember the excitement of working on the first issue in the summer of 1978. At that time I had just given up a full time job and intended to use a period of unemployment for intensive study and research into the hermetic tradition. I had also earlier in 1978 resigned from running the Theosophical Society Library in Edinburgh, which had taken up an enormous amount of my time, though I had the compensatory opportunities of being able to use to the full one of the best collections of late 19th/early 20th century esoteric books in Britain.

Thus as I had thrown off certain responsibilities that had been weighing me down, perhaps it was not altogether surprising that I began to

CONTENTS

ISSUE NUMBER 40

- 1 Editorial
- 3 News and Information
- 4 **Report on the Alchemical Workshop**
John Fitzpatrick ©
- 7 **Lilith and the Primal Water**
Graham Knight ©
- 12 **The Alchemical Tarot Deck: Part One**
Rafal T. Prinke ©
- 26 **The 49 Powers in Kabbalah**
Paul Krzok ©
- 35 **The Alchemical Drama of Goethe's Faust**
Adam McLean ©
- 43 **Reviews and Book Notices**

The ideas, opinions and views expressed in the articles in the Hermetic Journal are those of the contributors only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Hermetic Research Trust.

seek a new outlet for my creative energies. However, I wished to work on my own, to develop a project out of my own resources rather than work within a group or society as I had earlier. I had little patience for the committee infighting and the paralysis of creative energy that I found brought about by working within a society.

I had been intrigued by Mike Magee's *Azoth*, as well as Gareth Knight's *New Dimensions* and later *Quadrige*, and the more magically oriented *Sothis* and *New Equinox*. The Seventies saw a wealth of such small circulation magazines though many were to die out during the early Eighties, but none directly addressed the subjects I wished to read about and see deeply researched. So the Hermetic Journal was born.

I decided to ask various well known authors to contribute to the initial issues, hoping that their names would attract some subscribers. Stephen Skinner, Cottie Burland, Gareth Knight and others assisted in this way. Christopher McIntosh helped greatly by allowing me to circulate people on the mailing list of his Orpheus Books, and this got the magazine off the ground. Within a month or so I had almost 100 subscribers. Many of this initial group still take the Journal and some have become good friends and long term supporters of my work. Many people helped to spread news of the birth of the Hermetic Journal. In particular Hans Nitzel put me in touch with a network of contacts in the USA.

During the first year or so I was to a great extent feeling my way, trying not to take too many risks in publishing difficult articles that might frighten away potential subscribers, and I also broadened the subject area somewhat to include articles on more 'pagan' and 'earth energies' themes. However, as I grew more confident in the continued support of my subscrib-

er base, my own personal direction began to shape the Journal material.

The Journal, like all other small circulation magazines, was entirely unprofitable and I had to take on a part-time evening job in a local cinema. This undemanding job contributed greatly to supporting the early period of the Hermetic Journal. I had been very impressed with Askin Publishers limited edition books, such as the *True and Faithful Relation...* and wondered if such a project might be feasible for me. Stephen Skinner gave me advice and encouragement, so I decided to risk publishing a work on magical symbolism, the de Bry *Magical Calendar* engraving which I had seen in one of Manly Palmer Hall's books, and so the Magnum Opus series began. After I had produced 10 or so in this series it began to become financially self-supporting and eventually I was able to survive on the income generated from the sales and devote myself full-time to the work.

Now ten years later my work continues under the umbrella of the Hermetic Research Trust and the Journal should be able to continue for many years to come. For it seems to me and to the many supporters of the Hermetic Journal over the years that the impulse that gave rise to its founding still must be sustained. Ten years ago, I thought it timely to provide a forum for the researching and promotion of the hermetic philosophy. The need for this forum still remains. Even 40 issues and 30 books have only touched the surface. The well of the Hermetic tradition goes very deep. There is so much more fascinating material to be uncovered and brought to light in the next decade of the Hermetic Journal.

Adam McLean

On the move again !

As reported in the last issue (Feb 88), the move to 6 Canonbury Place went reasonably smoothly, although my work schedule was inevitably disrupted for a few months. However, just as I was settling in, we discovered that considerably more renovation was necessary to No 6 than had been earlier thought, and after consultations with the building contractors, it was decided that it would be best if I were to move out temporarily while the work got underway. The Marquess of Northampton managed to find me a suitable flat nearby (only a few hundred yards from Canonbury Place) and I moved there early in April. It is expected that the work on No 6 will take the best part of a year, so I expect to be in the temporary accommodation till early in 1989. This move, of course, has again disrupted my work, but I am beginning to pull things together and reorganise my workplace, as the fact that I am able to produce this present issue testifies. I have kept the 6 Canonbury Place address for all correspondence, and the Post Office will forward the mail (there is no delay as both addresses lie within the same delivery office). The telephone number also remains unchanged. I don't wish to confuse people by giving a new temporary address. Anyone wishing to call and visit, please telephone and I will give you the new address.

The Hermetic Research Trust has now been able to lease a large volume photocopier. The old Canon 155 which has produced all the books and Journals over the past three years had greatly exceeded its design specifications and produced well over 1,000,000 A5 pages. However, it required constant attention and had to be coaxed, with considerable frustration on my part, through the long hours needed to print the Journal or batches of books. The new copier is considerably faster and I hope to be able to expand book production in due course.

New price increase !

At a recent Trustees meeting it was decided to increase the price of the Journal. The present £4.80 for four issues was introduced with issue 25 in Autumn 1984, so an increase was long overdue. Consequently, the price of four issues has been increased to £6.00 with immediate effect, with single copies £2.00 each.

For USA customers the dollar price is now \$12.00 for four issues or \$4 for single copy.

I will try to increase the number of pages from 40 to either 44 or 48 per issue on a regular basis.

Report on the Alchemical Workshop held in London on the 1st to 4th of April 1988

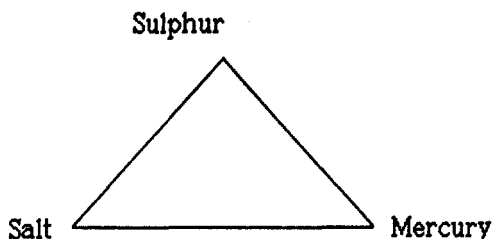
John Fitzpatrick ©

After many years of hard work by different people all over the British Isles to get an Alchemical class started, during which something always seemed to go wrong and the proposed class never materialised, at last I was the lucky one and succeeded in getting Mr Jack Glass to come and impart to us some of his knowledge on this age old science.

Fifteen people from all walks of life, some complete novices and others more advanced in the Art, but each one full of enthusiasm, gathered in a small hall in North London to learn.

Jack Glass was formerly a student of Frater Albertus and was one of the many people who helped build up the Paracelsus Research Society in Utah, U.S.A. Jack now works in his own way and has a large modern laboratory attached to his property. He proved to be a very able teacher and had what all teachers need most of all, patience.

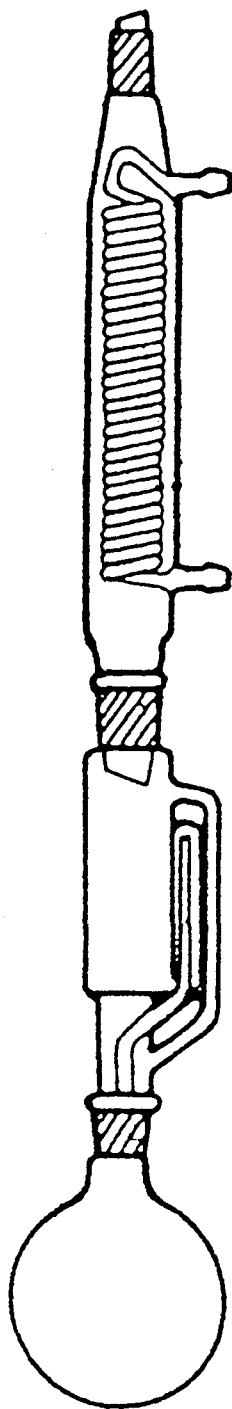
The work was begun on the morning of Friday the 1st of April. Jack went through the theory of Alchemy and what we hoped to achieve, opening each morning with an Alchemical Invocation. We were told how the law of the triangle operated throughout Alchemy, that is,



Our first experiment was to make a tincture without any elaborate equipment. Using Melissa with 190° proof alcohol gave a deep tincture after a few hours. He showed how to assemble the Soxhlet Extractor, and that one should make sure it was well greased before trying to assemble it. Should it become stuck together, hot water will solve the problem. Another good hint was to place a small flat object under the thimble so that the tubes of the extractor would not become blocked.

The goal of the class was to make an herbal stone. Jack showed the class one he had made in his own lab from Eucalyptus from Australia. Jack had brought with him a packet of Spanish Eucalyptus, which was placed in the thimble and using 190° proof alcohol, the extractor was set to do its work. It was left overnight to run and in the morning the extraction was finished. This liquid was covered and placed in a refrigerator. The feces, or remnant of the Eucalyptus, was burned to a black ash, then placed in the calcining dish and subjected to heat for a few minutes, then removed and ground with a pestle and mortar, and again subjected to more heat. This Eucalyptus proved a hard subject with which to work. Firstly, we had problems with the heat. To get it to a white colour you need between 550° and 660°C. As we did not have a furnace this proved impossible to achieve, but we left it on the fire for two days. It seemed to get darker, in the end we leached it to get the salts. If it had turned white it would have absorbed better when making the Stone.

Another important work was with Antimony. Basil Valentine wrote a whole book on the subject of this metal.



For our experiment we used Antimony Fume, which was placed in the extractor and using 190° alcohol we hoped to get a tincture. After about 3 hours the liquid turned red. This was left to run for 24 hours, and we obtained a dark red tincture which was placed in the fridge. This tincture still contained all the poison of Antimony, which we later removed from the tincture. The poison in Antimony is in the Salt. This tincture is known as the Unfixed Antimony. Next we were to make the Fixed Antimony. In order to achieve this we used Spirit of Vinegar, which gave a yellow liquid. Then we removed the vinegar to get the dark red powder. This was as far as we were able to take this experiment as time was running short. It is from this red powder that we get the Fixed Antimony.

Another experiment undertaken was the preparation of the oil of egg. For this we used one dozen eggs, which were hard boiled, then the shells removed and placed in a separate bowl. From these shells you can extract the oil of Calcium.

The yolks were removed and dried in the oven, and made into a fine powder. After this had been left to cool, Ether was poured over this powder and left to extract. This mixture was filtered and the Ether evaporated off, by placing the vessel in a basin of warm water. After the Ether has been driven off, we added alcohol and put the liquor in the fridge and left overnight. In the morning we found a white substance in the jar which was the impurities of the oil. This was filtered to obtain the pure Oil of Egg.

Jack told us how to make the Alkahest which is a more potent menstruum than alcohol. On the Monday we tried to put back together the Salt, Sulphur and Mercury to make the Vegetable Stone. This proved impossible to achieve, as we could not get the feces to a white colour. Nevertheless, we did try, and at least learnt the processes and technique involved in making this work. We learned more in these four days than would have taken many years of study with Frater Albertus. May I say that Albertus never gave complete information on the Stone. Alchemy is no longer secret and therefore we were given complete details on many alchemical processes, such as the Butter of Antimony, etc. Also we were able to exchange information on how and where to get the different items needed for alchemical work.

I must thank Adam McLean for advertising this class in the Hermetic Journal free of charge; F. Indigo for the Ether and Antimony Tri-oxide; John Whitecross for the extractor, Antimony fume and other items of equipment; Rosetta Della Ferarri for the hot plate, extractor and other items; Diana Fernando for the meal at her home, but especially to Mr Jack Glass of Ohio who gave us so much alchemical information.

I hope to hold another small class in the Fall. This will be limited to seven people.

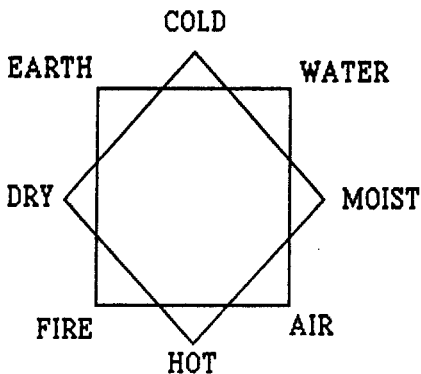
LILITH AND THE PRIMAL WATER

Graham Knight ©

The Elements

As is well known, the conception of matter and of the four Elements that ultimately passed into the West was first developed by Plato and his disciple Aristotle. It became the accepted underpinning of neo-platonic and alchemic theory as they were formulated in Alexandria during the 2nd and 3rd centuries of our era. From here, they passed into Syria and Byzantium, and ultimately into Arabia, and thence Europe.

Aristotle posited four qualities, whose combinations would produce the quaternity of Elements.



It is clear from this that the Elements are not fixed absolutes, but under certain conditions can transform from one into another by a change in the balance of their underlying qualities. This theory of course is basic to the evolution of Alchemy in the 3rd century, but in the following article I want to emphasize the primary role accorded to water – thus Plato says:

“In the first place what we now have named water, by condensation as we suppose, we see turning to stones and earth, and by rarefying and expanding this same element becomes wind and air; and air when inflamed becomes fire, and conversely fire contracted and quenched returns again to the form of air; also air contracting and condensing becomes cloud and mist, and from there yet further compressed comes flowing water, and from water, earth and stones once more.”

Doubtless this Greek interpretation of water as the primeval root substance derives ultimately from the myths of earlier middle eastern cultures, which see the dark ocean as the chaos out of which divinity moulds creation.

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out to readers of the Journal how often in later alchemical texts and illustrations, water or a fountain feature as the root or heart of the Work – indeed, how it is the vinegar that reduces the Proxima Materia to the first Nigredo, and how this latter is portrayed as a chaotic state of matter.

Lilith

Popular myth describes Lilith as being the first wife of Adam. When she refused to adopt a (sexually) submissive role to the male, she was cast out of Eden and went to dwell in the desert, where she copulated with demons to produce a multitude of negative souls. Later she became a generic term for the night demons who kill young babies, and who causes abortions. Inducing and capturing nocturnal emissions of seed, she is the origin of the medieval succubus/incubus, creating demonic off-spring from the stolen seed. She is thus the polar opposite of the dutiful wife and fertile mother, the dark twin or shadow to the orthodox Jewish conception of womanhood.

But though fiercely and absolutely negative, yet Lilith is intimately connected with the higher reaches of the Kabbalistic Tree. Kabbalah as it flows from the Zoharic tradition has a strongly sexual mysticism

at its heart. Just as the union of Jehovah and Elohim empowers all of the unfolding creation, Adam and Eve in turn are seen as emerging from beneath the Throne as one androgynous being, and so also Lilith and Samael emerge united from the self-same source.

As the mythology of the Kabbalistic Matrona developed, she took on not only the role of the Great Mother embodied in the Sephirah of Binah, but also the position occupied by Elohim as the wife of Jahweh. Matrona was thought to be intimately concerned and connected with the fate of Israel, following the tribes into their exile at the destruction of the Temple. When this mythico-historical event was projected outward into cosmic terms, it became the exile of spirit within matter, or the creation of Malkuth, the material Kingdom. Matrona was forced to leave her husband and descend into the Kingdom, where she was the Bride to Kebab – a figure who is the shadow or negative reading of Yahweh [1].

Within the sexual mysticism of Kabbalah, it was impossible to imagine the male without the female, since from their union is the balance maintained that allows for creation [2], whereas in their separation, Judgment arises unrestrained [3]. Thus, in the absence of his true wife, Yahweh takes her hand-maiden Lilith as his companion, as the union of male and female must at all cost be maintained; in the long and complex Fall which is the lightning flash upon the Otz Chiim, each takes the other's shadow as their sexual partner.

The Woman with the Spear



In Reusner's *Pandora* [4], there is a curious image which shows the Melusine piercing the left side of Christ, whilst between them stands the passive figure of Eve. That these figures are connected in some way with the Alchemical Praxis is indicated by the trinity of vessels shown to the right of the figure. Lilith here is a composite and complex symbol, half woman and half fish [5]. This creature is powerfully seductive – being the siren or mermaid inhabiting the ocean, and luring men towards danger and death. In *Pandora*, she has become Longinus, drawing out the blood of Christ, here obviously identified with Mercurius as the Prima Materia.

The various myths of Lilith, also strongly link her with the primordial Ocean; she is the 'living creature', created on the 5th Day, that dwells in and populates the ocean. Alternatively, she is created within Adam (as the androgyne) and given a soul from the Great Abyss. When he was ensouled, they were divided and she fled to the Cities of the Sea. Her compulsive intercourse populates the ocean, as elsewhere it is said to fill the desert – both being images of the formless and featureless infinite. Her twin and husband, Samael, is a version of Keadab and thus also of Yahweh (meaning Yahweh reversed or negative) – hence his titles: 'Angel Satan', 'the other God' [6].

Lilith as Oracle

In the Melusine of *Pandora* we seem to see the androgynous nature of Lilith/Samael – both woman and serpent. Samael was said to be the dragon upon whose back Lilith rode, and is linked with all those manuscripts and paintings that show the serpent of Genesis as having a serpent's tail but a woman's body and face [7]. The serpent is traditionally an impartor of Knowledge [8], maintaining this role even when viewed negatively, as in the biblical account. Thus the Melusine pierces Christ in order to reveal the life-giving moisture of his blood, the spear and wound neatly reversing the sexual polarity of entry. Note that in this illustration both Melusine and Eve have the long serpentine hair so often associated with the dangerous assertive power of female seduction. Christ's blood is here made to parallel the heat which will revive the hermetic vessels concealed within the furnace. It is in this sense that Lilith is said to carry the gift of prophecy – she is the Anima as Dark Lover.

NOTES

[1] Keadab = כבד = 26 = יהוה = Yahweh. Thus by Gematria the

two Names are considered identical.

[2] "When this Mother is conjoined with the King, all the worlds receive blessing, and the universe is found to be in joy." Lesser Holy Assembly: 740-763.

[3] Lesser Holy Assembly: 368-370.

[4] Reusner: 'Pandora: Das ist, die edelst Gab Götte'. (Basel, 1588).

[5] The fish being a traditional symbol of lasciviousness and sexual desire - also, interestingly, a Greek derived shorthand for the Name of Jesus; again emphasising the closeness of opposites.

[6] Samael's four wives - Lilith, Naamah, Mahalath, and Igrath rule over the four Equinoxes (Tequfot) and the four continents, thus claiming dominion over and upon the material world, just as Lucifer is named 'Prince of this world'.

[7] For example, the Ripley Scrowle (1588), illustrated in Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy*, figure 257. Or in fine art, Van der Goes' *Der Sündenfall*, illustrated on the cover of Graves and Patai's *Hebrew Myths*.

[8] Hence those Gnostic sects termed variously Naassene or Ophite, and alleged to have venerated snakes during their rites. See especially the 9th century Syrian cult bowl, illustrated facing p 192 in Jung and Von Franz' *The Grail Legend*.

THE ALCHEMICAL TAROT DECK

Part One

Rafal T. Prinke ©

I. THE TAROT AND ALCHEMY

“Each human being must interpret formal symbols as he interprets life; that is, in the light of personal experience. Meaning is not inherent in material forms; it is bestowed upon them. It follows that each interpreter arrives at somewhat different conclusions, applying a censorship of interests at each step of his interpretation. Thus an Orientalist could be impressed by the vestiges of Eastern symbolism in the Tarot designs. An Egyptologist could be equally certain that the figures originated in the sanctuaries along the Nile. The student of the cabala finds cabalism in everything, and the alchemist would not hesitate to defend the cards as genuine remains of ancient alchemy.”

Manly P. Hall: *The Tarot*

The recorded history of the occult or esoteric interpretation of the Tarot cards can be traced only as far back in time as 1781 when the book *Monde Primitif* by Count de Gebelin was published. Its author claimed, and backed it by no tangible evidence, that the cards of the Tarot deck were of ancient Egyptian origin and contained some secret teachings. The 19th century magicians, especially Eliphas Levi, took up that suggestion and developed a whole set of correspondences between the Tarot and various branches of the occult sciences, such as the Kabbalah and Astrology. The development on these lines has been continued until now and has produced a surprisingly wide variety of theories about the deck's origin, interpretation, correspondences, and artistic designs (which are also interpretations, of course). Some of these were very naive, while others were quite sophisticated, discovering and revealing much about the structure and meaning of the cards. However, I consider it a misunderstanding of magical

thinking to accept any of such theories or designs as "the only ones". Those who represent this kind of approach to the Tarot are simply biased by the scientific way of thinking, which is enforced on us from the beginning of our lives and therefore is almost innate. So when one enters the field of esotericism, one has to abandon that way of thinking. In the case of the Tarot it means, for example, not to take seriously any of the hypotheses on the origin of the cards put forward by various authors, but to consider them to be symbolic expressions of some truths about the Tarot which are difficult to state in any other way.

In order to illustrate this point of view we may consider the problem of the origin of the Tarot in some detail. Probably the largest number of authorities ascribe the ancient Egyptian origin to the deck. It is said that they were painted on the walls inside one of the Pyramids or some other initiation chamber and that their meanings were explained to neophytes upon initiation. This story, approached from a scientific point of view (i.e. as a statement of historical truth) is totally false or even stupid, as there is no single piece of evidence to support it. On the other hand, if the story is approached from a magical standpoint, it makes sense in so far as it reveals "something" about the Tarot. And what that "something" is can only be felt (as magical thinking is really feeling) after comparing several such theories on equal grounds (i.e. without trying to find out which one is "true").

Some of the other hypotheses point to such regions as India or China as the places of the Tarot's origin. An especially revealing story is the one told by Paul Foster Case, who stated that the cards had been invented by initiates from all parts of the world who held a secret meeting in the city of Fez in Morocco. They decided to entrust the "secret doctrine" to a series of pictures used for gambling, so that it would not perish. The form was probably suggested, as Case states, by the adept from China. This story gives us an important clue which points to the universality of the "secret doctrine", whatever its outward guise is. It also helps us to understand that the Tarot decks exhibiting Egyptian, Hindu, Mayan, Amerindian, Chinese, Basque, Medieval or modern designs are all "true" in the magical sense.

But on the other hand the same Paul Foster Case, as well as Arthur Edward Waite and many other authorities on the subject, keep trying to make their readers believe that there exists a secret initiated deck of the Tarot cards, which cannot be revealed to the general public for "obvious reasons", and to which their own versions of the

FIGVRA O



FIGVRA I

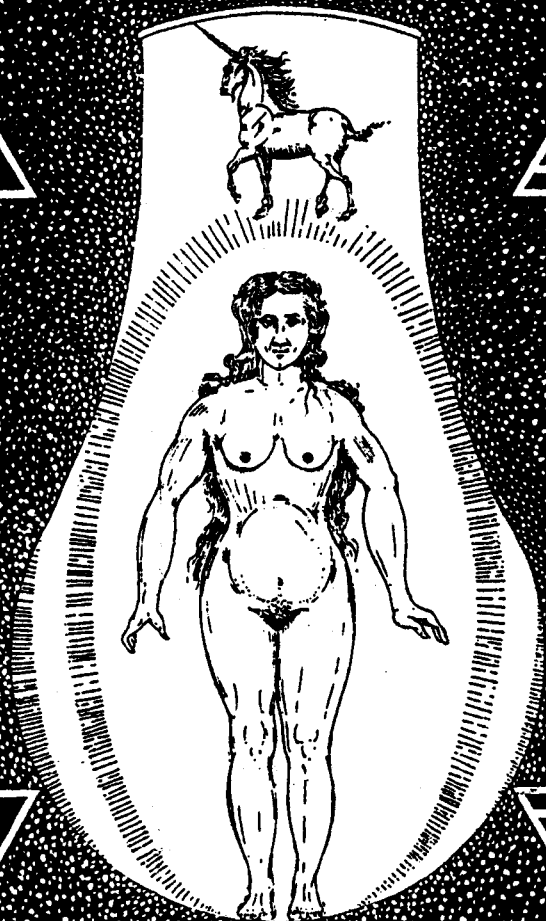


Tarot approximate very closely. This is partly true but is also capable of being misunderstood due to the scientific way of thinking "natural" to the majority of readers. They surely tend to understand "the true esoteric Tarot" as an actual set of cards with pictures and symbols which is in the possession of some "secret chiefs" and their initiated disciples. In my opinion (and all the available evidence seems to confirm it) there is nothing like that in existence on the material plane, though it does exist on the spiritual plane. The Arcana of the Tarot represent archetypal principles which cannot be expressed otherwise than by pictures or visual symbols which are only approximate representations of those principles. Similarly such principles as "love", "freedom", etc., can have only approximate verbal representations, as they also belong to the spiritual world. The only way to understand (or rather "feel") these principles is to experience them, and it is experience that underlies all the esoteric fields and occult sciences or arts. Without experiencing it, all esotericism may be rightly called "mere superstition".

The symbolic story of the Tarot's origin told by Case carries another important message: that any serious system of thought (even not necessarily esoteric thought) may be "seen" in the Tarot series of archetypal images. Therefore any attempt at a new interpretation of the deck is justified and, after some time of open-minded meditation on the Tarot symbols, can be accomplished. My approach to the Major Arcana (which is certainly the most interesting and fascinating part of the full deck) is that they represent an archetypal cycle of attainment, similar to the cycle of the Zodiac or that of the Tree of Life in the Kabbalah, though stressing the visual symbolism in preference to the organic/psychological or cosmological. It is, therefore, of little importance to occultists who invented the Tarot deck and when (it may as well have been produced for the mad king of France, Charles VI, as one of the "uninitiated" theories has it) but what counts is that the inventor drew his inspiration, either consciously or not, from the vast reservoir of the collective unconscious preserving the spiritual heritage of mankind. And in this sense the Tarot "really" dates back to the days of ancient Egypt, Atlantis and Lemuria.

Now turning to the scientific way of thinking, it seems to be quite certain that nothing like the Tarot existed prior to the 14th century. For the historian of esoteric thought that period is associated with the appearance and early development of Hermetic Alchemy in Europe. Therefore it can be argued that the Tarot cards (and especially the Major Arcana) are just another series of symbolic visual explanations of the Great Art and its processes. The scientific way of proving this

FIGVRA II



FIGVRA III



hypothesis would consist in collecting historical evidence and presenting it with as many references as possible. The magical or esoteric approach, however, does not need a historical proof of a connection between the Tarot images and Alchemy. If the Tarot represents an archetypal "process of attainment" and Alchemy is a system of self-realisation and attaining mastery over natural processes, then these two have to be parallel and it should be possible to explain one with the other. What is needed in order to find such a correlation is getting to "feel" both of these systems, which can be accomplished by meditating on symbols pertaining to each of them. A certain amount of logical thinking is also necessary, of course, just as science requires some intuition, though it is not formally recognised as a scientific tool.

It has been stated by many authorities that the Tarot contains "the doctrine of Alchemy", and several attempts at an interpretation on these lines have been made. These attempts include *The Golden Cycle Tarot deck* by Ron Ballard, Antoinette Sandbach, and John Sandbach, the Church of Light system of correspondences by C. C. Zain (Elbert Benjamine), *Comment on deviant alchimistebase sur les clefs du Tarot* by the French writer on Alchemy Francois Jollivet-Castelot, the system of correspondences given in *Le Tarot des imagiers du moyen age* by Oswald Wirth, and a number of others. I have not been able to get acquainted with most of them (especially the French ones), but those which I know do not seem satisfactory to me. They are either oversimplified, or do not catch the "spirit" of Alchemy, or refer to a kind of "mental alchemy" which does not reflect the Hermetic Tradition. Therefore I believe that my own attempt at presenting the Tarot deck in alchemical terms forms an independent approach and will be of interest to students of esotericism.

II. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE MAJOR ARCANA

The part of the Tarot deck which is known as the Major Arcana is certainly the most interesting one. Some authorities state that it had once been a separate deck and only afterwards was joined with the Court and Minor Arcana. Although there is no definite proof of it in the historical sense, it appears quite possible since this series lacks the fourfold division found in the remaining cards. However, because the modern occult tradition (if it can be called "tradition") has treated both of these series jointly, the safest opinion is probably the one stating that the Major Arcana are a condensed form of the Minor Arcana (understood here as including the Court Arcana).

It is often stated that the beautiful illustrations from Solomon

FIGVRA IV



FIGVRA V



Trismosin's *Splendor Solis* have some relation to the Tarot Major Arcana. I thought such relation was rather far-fetched, especially as the Tarot appears to represent a uniform cycle of transformation, while only some of the *Splendor Solis* illustrations show the stages of the Magnum Opus. However, after much meditation on the cards and their relation to Alchemy, I arrived at a similar scheme. It is not identical with *Splendor Solis* but also only in part shows the stages of the Great Work, the remaining part representing general fundamentals of the Alchemical philosophy.

The main criteria I followed in designing this Alchemical Tarot deck were the following: (1) each card should be based on a well known and easily identified Alchemical concept, known from the tradition as handed down to us by the most celebrated of its exponents, and (2) there should be a recognisable similarity to both the traditional Tarot designs and some Alchemical symbolic illustrations. It was not possible in every case to hold to these criteria very closely, but the departure from them is never too far.

The general appearance of each card is uniform throughout the deck, showing an alchemical retort surrounded by black background with the signs of the four elements and thus representing "the Chaos of the Elements" outside the vessel of the Art (also Nature as contrasted with Art). Although not all of the cards symbolise phases of the Great Work, all of them have been drawn in the same way to give them a uniform appearance. Besides the main picture inside the retort there are also animal symbols (with two exceptions of floral ones) in the neck of the retort. No titles are given as, on the one hand, it seemed to me that to invent definite Alchemical titles would be tending to favour only one of the many meanings of each card, and on the other hand, the earliest Tarot cards also do not have any titles. In the following descriptions of the Major Arcana I will use the traditional titles for easier reference only, as these do not correspond to the Alchemical terminology in most cases.

0. **The Fool.** This Arcanum has several meanings. First of all it represents the neophyte alchemist beginning his journey towards the achievement of the Philosophers' Stone and the transmutation. His arms refer to the four elements, which will be the materials of the Great Work, and also to the four suits of the Minor Arcana (lance-rod-fire, sword-sword-air, cuirass-cup-water, banner-pentacle-earth). The neophyte is also the Materia Prima of the Work, which is carried out both in his Athanor and in himself. The symbols of the green dragon and the Ethiopian represent Materia Prima, too,

FIGVRA VI



FIGVRA VII



as does the snake biting its own tail coiled around the outside of the neck of the retort, though its significance is much wider (the cyclic nature of the universe - this Arcanum is both the beginning and the end of the Great Work). On still another level of interpretation, and in connection with the next two Arcana, this man in full armour represents the Philosophical Salt of the Salt-Mercury-Sulphur trinity, and Body (Corpus) of the Body-Spirit-Soul triad, i.e. the most basic building material of either a chemical body or man.

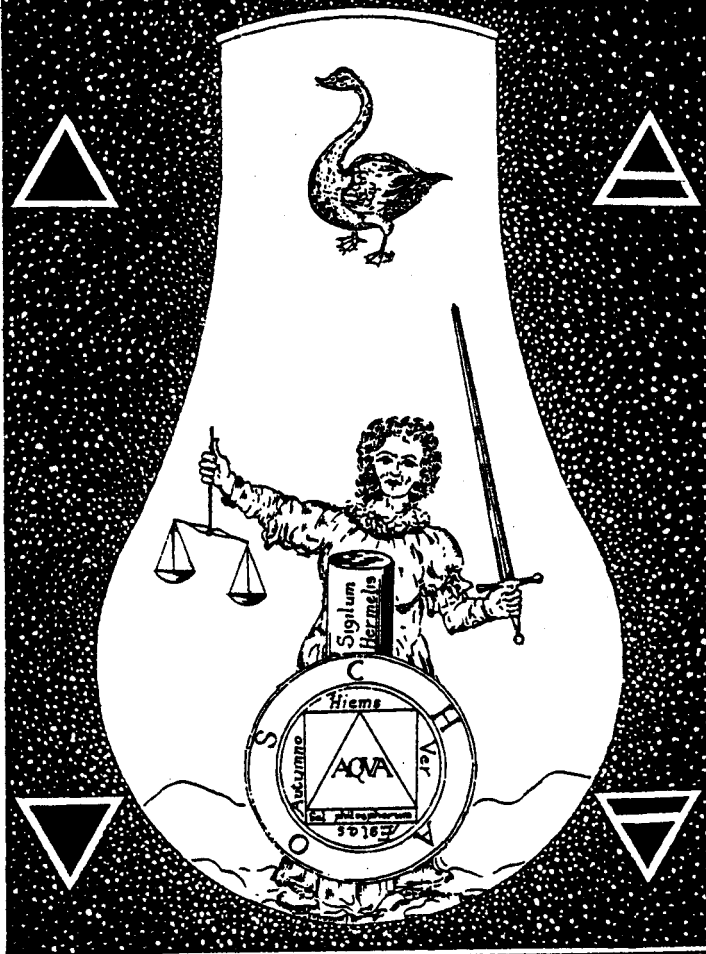
I. **The Magician.** The next card of the fundamental triad is Mercury of the Philosophers symbolised by the classical god of the same name. He represents the aerial principle in everything, or the "spiritus movens", and is connected with the ethereal heaven (Coelum Aethereum), just as the former Arcanum was connected with the elemental heaven (Coelum Elementarum), and the next one with the empyrean heaven (Coelum Empyreum). The mercurial principle is therefore responsible for the reception of astrological influences, here symbolised by the Sun and the Moon under the feet of Mercury. The dove in the neck of the retort is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, i.e. the Spirit of the World. In the terms of Jungian psychology this card represents Animus, or the male principle in every person.

II. **The High Priestess.** A naked, pregnant woman symbolises the archetypal womanhood or motherhood. She is the Philosophical Sulphur, or the fiery principle connected with the highest heaven. It is the "spark of God" in every man or the outward features in every chemical body (i.e. perceptible features given by God upon creation, such as colour), and therefore represents the Soul of every created thing, as well as Anima Mundi - the Soul of the World. In Kabbalistic terms it is the Shekinah, and in Jung's system - Anima, understood as the female principle, the symbol of which is the unicorn in the neck of the retort.

III. **The Empress.** The symbol of the queen represents one extreme of the basic duality. It is the passive, Lunar principle, and everything connected with it. She also symbolises vulgar Silver which will, in the course of the Great Work, become the White Stone. The lily above is the symbol of the feminine principle.

IV. **The Emperor.** The image of the king is the other extreme of the previous Arcanum. It represents the active, Solar principle and all its connotations, as well as vulgar Gold which is to become the Red Stone or Red Tincture. The rose in the neck of the retort is the symbol of

FIGVRA VIII



FIGVRA IX



the masculine, forming another contrast with the previous card.

V. **The Hierophant.** In this Arcanum the basic duality is shown again as being dependent on the Mercurial (spiritual) principle, from which they have to draw the spiritual force in order to become "live" or "our" Silver and Gold. It can also be seen from another angle as the three principles (Mercury, Salt, Sulphur) and the relations existing among them: Mercury is the most important of the three. The same idea of drawing "force" is conveyed by the pelican feeding its young with its blood shown above.

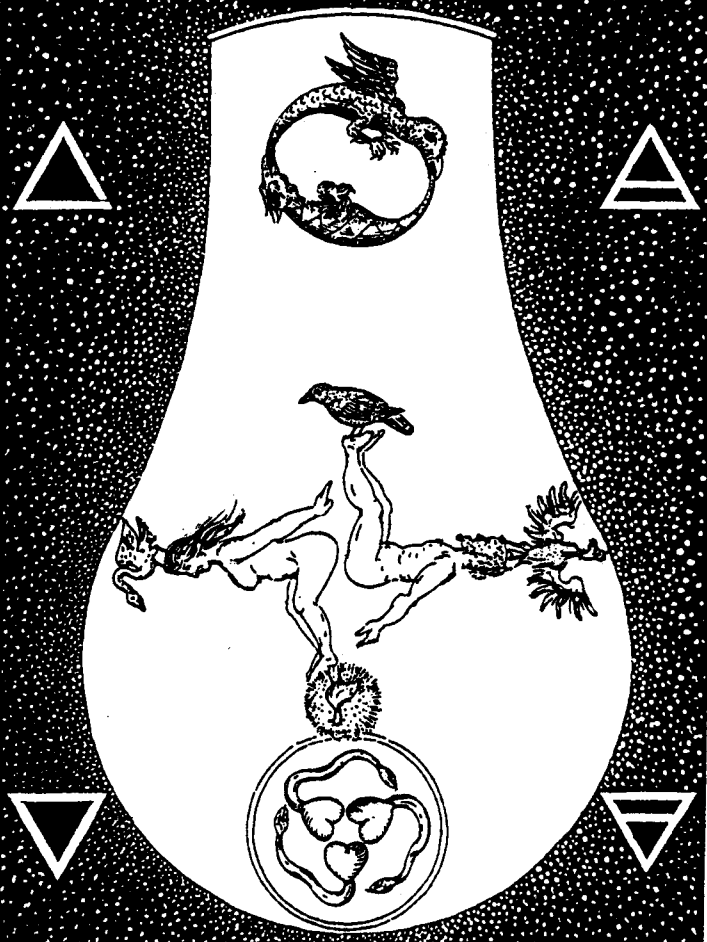
VI. **The Lovers.** Another traditional title of this card is 'The Two Paths' and this describes its alchemical meaning quite well. There are two ways to success in the Great Work: the wet way and the dry way. Each of them requires the union of opposites (Coniunctio Oppositorum), here symbolised by the royal couple, the same as in the Arcana III and IV. In the upper half of the retort they are being married by a bishop (Mercury from the previous card), which is the dry way requiring a catalyst, and in the lower part they are shown in the act of copulation (Copulatio in Aqua), which represents the wet way. The griffon above is a symbol of the same conjunction, being half eagle and half lion (symbolising the female and the male principles respectively).

VII. **The Chariot.** On one level of interpretation the warrior-king in the chariot symbolises the necessary requirements that the alchemist should possess in order to complete the Great Work: courage, perseverance, will to continue. He should also pay attention to the signs telling him he is on the right path (this is symbolised by the two peacocks - Cauda Pavonis of alchemy). On another level this Arcanum is connected with the "Triumphal Chariot of Antimony" and the wolf in the neck of the retort is the symbol of that metal.

VIII. **Justice.** Another card showing the requirements which should characterise the alchemist. The female figure with the scales and sword symbolises the knowledge of "weights and measures", i.e. the technical side of Alchemy. The hermetically sealed vessel on her body designates the theoretical knowledge of Alchemical Philosophy, as shown by the diagram on it. The swan above, though it is more frequently used in Alchemical allegories as designating the White Work, is also a symbol of spiritual purity, which is another requirement traditionally demanded of the Alchemist.

IX. **The Hermit.** The third requirement card, representing wisdom and secrecy. Wisdom, symbolised by the old man and the owl above, is

FIGVRA X



FIGVRA XI



not the wisdom which can be learned from books, but that which is either received orally from a master (under the oath of secrecy) or achieved by illumination. This intuitive wisdom tells the Alchemist in which direction he should proceed (which is symbolised by the stick the old man holds) and advises him on the proper use of the time factor in his Work (symbolised by the hour-glass).

X. The Wheel of Fortune. This Arcanum symbolises the decision to begin the Great Work or "turn the wheel". Turning the wheel three or four times during the Work is often referred to in Alchemical texts (e.g. Ripley's *Twelve Gates*) implying the necessity to repeat the same processes on various levels. This card also recapitulates the basic tenets of Alchemical Philosophy which were expounded in the previous Arcana, namely the three principles (Salt, Mercury, Sulphur) symbolised here by the three snakes in the bottom circle, the two seeds (positive and negative) represented by the man and the woman, and the four elements of Nature (Fire, Air, Water, Earth) symbolised by the four birds. The two dragons biting each other's tails is the symbol of the cyclic nature of the Great Work, as well as of the fixed and the volatile, another important pair of opposites.

XI. Strength. After the decision to begin the Work had been made in the previous Arcanum, the initial substances are placed in the alchemical vessel. The green lion and the toad in the neck of the retort are symbols of Prima Materia (here in the meaning of the materials with which the Work is begun), while the woman sitting on the lion is the personification of the Art ("Alchymia"), who will reappear in some of the subsequent cards. The Sun and the Moon, from which two streams descend into the vessel, are to remind us once more about the necessity to perform "Coniunctio Oppositorum".

To be continued in the next issue...

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratefulness to Edward J. O'Donnely, who evoked this deck to visible appearance, and to Adam McLean, who effected coniunctio of the authors and multiplicatio of the cards. I am also indebted to Stuart R. Kaplan, the help of and correspondence with whom initiated me into the mysteries of the Tarot, and to the anonymous author of the great little book *S.S.O.T.B.M.E.*, whose ideas helped me to understand a few things. My thanks are also due to all those people who led me to the crossroads at midnight.

The 49 Powers in Kabbalah

Paul Krzok ©

Introduction

Over several years of researching Kabbalah and associated studies, I have noticed the high frequency of the occurrence of the number 49, especially referring to powers or cycles. As well as Kabbalah, it has occurred in Gnostic, Hindu, Tibetan and Western teachings. The latter is clearly seen in John Dee's *Heptarchia Mystica* [1] and other of his writings. Some of the areas covered include the Fifty Gates of Understanding and Malkuth, the 49 Pure and Impure Powers, the sevenfold cosmic cycles and the 49 powers in Eastern philosophy.

The 49 Powers

In his speculative article, "A Possible Origin for the Enochian Calls" [2], Geoffrey James mentions the 49 Enochian Calls and suggests the possibility that these might be equivalent to the 49 powers which are mentioned in several Gnostic texts. From the research this writer has done on the same material, it is very difficult to prove the case because of the scarcity of in-depth information on these 49 Gnostic powers. But more interesting is the quote from Dee (or Kelley) which Mr James gives: "49 voyces or callings; which are the Natural Keyes, to open ... Gates of Understanding, wherby you shall have knowledge to move every Gate, and to call out as many as you please ... and wisely open unto you the secrets of their Cities". Although Mr James does not comment on it, these gates are the 50 Gates of Understanding of the Kabbalah. God is the fiftieth Gate. Perhaps Kelley obtained these Calls from a Kabbalistic work on the Fifty Gates.

According to Johann Reuchlin, in his *De Arte Cabalistica* (1517), the 50 Gates of Understanding were an interpretation on the nature of the universe, and that Moses knew 49 of them, but not the final one because God had made him "a little less than the gods" [3]. Reuchlin also says that King Solomon "comprehended 48 of these gates of understanding which open onto knowledge of all creatures" [4]. This perhaps suggests that the 50 Gates of Understanding represent knowledge of Creation, which contains creatures, therefore excluding the realm of the Sephiroth which contains no creatures, not even angels. Later Reuchlin actually says: "These are the forty-nine means of understanding creation, the gates of understanding". It can also be suggested that the "32 Paths of Wisdom" represents the Sephiroth and their dynamics, and to know these might be called "Inner Enlightenment" as opposed to knowing the 50 gates of Understanding which could be termed "Outer Enlightenment". This "Inner Enlightenment" was traditionally secret, about which Reuchlin comments:

"To this end the Kabbalists have a tradition of paths of enlightenment and luminous experiences which they call 'the thirty-two paths of wisdom'. Abraham speaks of these in the Creation. He writes: 'In thirty-two miraculous paths did God, the Tetragrammaton, carve or engrave his name Zebaoth'. On which Rabbi Cohen writes that he says 'miraculously', and by means of this that these paths are secret, hidden and concealed, and backs up this interpretation by reference to Targum."

Papus, in his book *The Qabalah*, says there are two comparable systems of enumerated evolution. They are the Thirty-two Paths of Wisdom derived from Chokmah and the Fifty Gates of Understanding from Binah. He quotes Kircher:

"As the thirty-two paths of Wisdom issued from Chokmah, spread throughout the circle of created things, so from Binah, which we have seen to be the Holy Spirit, issue the fifty gates leading to these paths; their function is to lead to a practical use of the thirty-two paths of Wisdom and Power.

They are called Gates because, according to the Cabalists, no one can arrive at a perfect notion of the aforementioned paths, unless he first enters by them". [5]

These gates are listed and range from the lowest primary matter (Chaos), through elements, metals, flowers, animals, man, planets, angels, and finally God, the fiftieth gate. Again, this information from Kircher tells us that the Fifty gates are a preliminary to working with

the Thirty-Two Paths, and suggests, in relation to what Reuchlin has to say, that they are concerned with nature, rather than the lofty heights of the Sephiroth.

49 Powers of Impurity

Although now we might have an inkling of what the Fifty Gates of Understanding are, what about the enigmatic Fifty Gates of Malkuth? It is an extremely difficult question to answer as there is very little data to examine. In fact many esoteric students of Kabbalah have never even heard of them. One of the reasons why the Fifty Gates of Malkuth may not have been mentioned very frequently is that they were probably identified with evil or the "Other Side". This can be seen to some extent in an extract from Abraham Ben Mordecai Galante's *Kinath Setarim* (Lamentation of Mysteries)

"You already know that in the Foundation, that is, that Zion, there are two Paths! One towards the flow of good oil, and the other to the rest, to give abundance to the outer powers. Now Jeremiah is teaching us that the two paths were mourning in the time of the Destruction (of Jerusalem). Even the pure path was clad in sorrow and mourning, which is the Shell (Kelippah). They (both paths) do not enter into the Tabernacle as I have already explained. Since nothing enters nothing comes out. Therefore, 'all her gates are desolate' (Lam. 1:4). Her gates which are fifty gates of Malkuth from the realm of Jubilee (Binah), through which she brings out the souls and the existences, they are all desolate, because she has nothing to bring out, since whoever is granting peace in the house is inactive" [6].

These "outer powers" seem to be 49 or 50 powers which oppose the gates or powers of Understanding, the pure powers.

Rabbi Krakovsky, in his book, *The Light of Redemption*, refers to these impure powers:

"Each of the seven lower Sephiroth of the World of Emanation, which make up the three-pillared government of the heavenly supervision, includes all seven. For, whatever is in one, is in the others and they are wholly integrated. Thus, they make up a total of 49 powers, representing the restrictions of the light of their source, which is Intelligence.

In Intelligence they are 49 concealed powers, and together with the source, make up 50 'gates'.

Moses conceived the 49 gates of Intelligence, but of the essence

of Intelligence itself, the 50th gate, he did not perceive. The 49 gates (or Sephiroth) correspond to the 49 days of the counting of the Omer (from Passover to Pentecost), and on the 50th day the Torah was given.

Just as there are ten sacred Sephiroth so there are ten impure Sephiroth, and just as there are 49 aspects of purity as above mentioned, so are there 49 aspects of impurity paralleling them. When the Israelites were in Egypt they were tainted with the 49 impure aspects, and the Creator had to redeem them through the medium of the 49 pure aspects, for each and every one of these 49 powers was appointed for an individual act to combat the power of the impure aspects" [7].

In the Zohar, these 49 impure grades are mentioned in relation to a black-magician: "He (Balaam) heard the words of a god – the one who is called 'another god', and he knew the knowledge of the most high, that is the highest of the grades of uncleanness, those who direct the boat and the tempest. There are 49 of them, and the steersman is the highest of them all" [8]. It is likely that there will be a system of demonology based on these 49 impure grades, although it is difficult to be certain, as little information has been published from the original manuscripts which still exist on this subject.

More importantly, the practical use of the 49 pure grades would be much more useful. In the Zohar they are mentioned in a rather exoteric way : "When the Israelites proclaim the unity (of God) expressed in the mystery of the twenty-five letters of the Shema (the creed of the Unity) and in the twenty-four letters of the response, and each person in the congregation is doing this with devoutness, then all those letters unite as one and ascend as one unity. Then the forty-nine gates are opened which signify the mystery of the Jubilee" [9]. Traditionally, the recitation of the Shema had to be done each day and night to prevent evil demons from possessing a person.

The Shemittoth

The Shemittoth are important because ultimately they suggest the existence of 49 powers or periods of time. These periods of time or cosmic cycles, were first described in an anonymous book called *Sepher-ha-Temunah*, which appeared in Gerona at the beginning of the fourteenth century, not long after the Zohar was made public. Its name means either 'Book of Configuration', referring to the configuration of the Hebrew letters, or 'Book of the Image', meaning the image of God.

According to its theory, the first three Sephiroth are said to be hidden potencies that do not act in the visible universe. They are more like the roots of the seven lower Sephiroth. Binah gives birth to the latter, which correspond to the seven primordial rays of creation, each of which rules over one active cosmic cycle of six thousand years. In the seventh millennium of each cycle there is a shemittah, a term borrowed from Deuteronomy 15, which means 'Sabbatical year', or 'year of release'. The Sabbatical year, which is a divine year, lasts for a thousand earthly years, during which the power of the Sephirah ceases to function and the universe returns to chaos and is absorbed by Binah, but the Sephiroth are not affected at this stage. Although the term shemittah particularly relates to the thousand years of inactivity, it is also used to refer to the whole 7,000 year cycle, which is said to be a cosmic week of God (see Psalm 90:4).

Since each Sephira rules over one Shemittah, the cosmic cycles exhibit different qualities. These qualities reflect the inner dynamics of God, which flow into creation by a divine process to give the world a living rhythm, not only of time but also of being. The present Shemittah, according to the Sepher-ha-Temunah, is ruled by Geburah, and that is why the world is full of turmoil and war. The previous Shemittah was ruled by Chesed, hence the tradition of a past 'golden-age'.

When the seven cycles are completed, at the end of 49,000 years, the 'Great Jubilee Year' or Yobhel (lit. 'ram's horn') occurs and lasts for a thousand years, during which time the whole of creation returns to Binah, this time including the seven Sephiroth, giving a complete cycle of 50,000 years. Then, according to some kabbalists, the whole process begins again.

The chronology of these cycles is not to be taken literally, because in the seventh millennium of each cycle there begins a gradual and progressive slowing in the movement of the stars, so that time becomes longer in a geometric progression. Therefore, 50,000 years becomes a much longer period.

The importance and ramifications of the Shemittah are difficult to know without examining the Sepher-ha-Temunah and analysing its contents. But two important features can be seen from even a superficial examination of its theory. Firstly, it gives an added dimension to the dynamics of the Kabbalah, by showing that the structure of the kabbalistic universe is not static, but is a living

organism which exhibits changing energies. Secondly, it demonstrates the existence of the sevenfold principle and the square of this principle with its 49,000 years. Incidentally, during a seven-thousand year period, although a single Sefhira is dominant, the Sepher-ha-Temunah also says that the other six Sephiroth exert a subtle influence. So, with all seven Sephiroth being active, to some extent in each cycle, possibly producing sub-cycles, the complete set of seven Shemittoth might result in 49 periods or powers, as in other aspects of Kabbalah which might have been mentioned.

Biblical Authority for the Shemittoth and the 49 Powers

The Shemittoth and the 49 powers are probably based on an esoteric interpretation of the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee. Of course, some kabbalists might say that the reverse is true. According to the Bible, during the seventh year all land had to be fallow and debts were to be remitted (Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1-11). The end of the seven sabbatical cycle instituted the Jubilee, the fiftieth year (Lev. 27:16-25); Num. 36:4). The Hebrew word for Jubilee is 'Yobhel', meaning 'ram's horn', which was probably blown to inaugurate the Jubilee Year.

The Jubilee is believed by some scholars to be in commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt of the Jews. According to the latter, Moses led the tribes of Israel through the Gulf of Suez (the Passover) into the Sinai Peninsula, where traditionally, after 49 days, they encamped before the Holy Mount Sinai and received the Ten Commandments (Pentecost or Shabu'ot). This deliverance from Egypt is associated by Kabbalists with the deliverance of Man from the 'Sitra Ahra' ('Other Side') which is inhabited by the Kliphoth or evil forces.

One hidden reference to the 49 powers is Ezekiel 45:23 which describes part of the Passover ritual: "And on the seven days of the festival he shall provide as a burnt offering to the Lord seven young bulls and seven rams without blemish, on each of the seven days..." This of course, comes to 49 bulls and 49 rams. Could it be that the 49 bulls represent the 49 impure degrees and the 49 rams represent the 49 pure degrees? If the rest of the chapter is read, it seems to indicate that the bulls are associated with evil, as they are referred to as a 'sin offering', whereas the rams have no such association. Here, one is reminded of the idolatry of the 'golden calf' in Exodus, and also of the fact that the Canaanite god, Baal, was associated with the bull.

Another very important hidden reference to the shemittoth, which seems to have gone unnoticed, is the account in the Old Testament where seven priests of Israel with seven trumpets lead their army around the walls of Jericho: "On the seventh day they rose early at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times : it was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, 'Shout; for the Lord has given you the city' " (Joshua 6:15). It seems quite clear that this occurrence parallels the dynamics of the Shemittoth. The seven circuits or cycles by the seven priests with seven trumpets act out the seven cycles of the Shemittoth. The fall of the walls of Jericho symbolise the destruction of the universe and its absorption into Binah, although in this case it is a lower manifestation of Binah in the form of Mother Earth who receives the debris. A very important fact about this biblical account is that the Passover was celebrated immediately before the assault on Jericho.

The Eastern Connection

To digress slightly, it is interesting to note that there are 49 powers or states of being in the Eastern Writings. These are important, as there are many similarities between these ideas and those of the Kabbalah. Much of the Eastern philosophy is based on the sevenfold system, as is also part of the Kabbalah, as has been shown in this and earlier articles [10].

In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* the following passage is given: "...Buddha Gautama, the Reformer of the Lower Hinduism and the Codifier of the Secret Lore, never repudiated, there are seven worlds or seven degrees of Maya (illusion) within the Sangsara (the phenomenal universe), constituted as seven globes of a planetary chain. On each globe there are seven rounds of evolution, making the forty-nine stations of active existence" [11]. This is similar in concept to the Shemittoth, although here it specifically states it is for the purpose of evolution. Later in the same book, another passage discusses the after-death process or Bardo:

"Similarly, the forty-nine days of the Bardo may also be symbolical of the Forty and Nine Powers of the Mystery of the Seven Vowels. In Hindu mythology, whence much of the Bardo symbolism originated, these vowels were the Mystery of the Seven Fires and the forty-nine subdivisional fires or aspects. They are also represented by the

Svastika signs upon the crowns of the seven heads of the Serpent of Eternity of Northern Buddhist Mysteries, originating in ancient India. In Hermetic writings they are the seven zones of after death, or Bardo experiences, each symbolising the eruption in the Intermediate State (the after-death state) of a particular sevenfold element of the complex principle of consciousness, thus giving the consciousness-principle forty-nine aspects or fires, or fields of manifestation."

These 49 aspects of consciousness are somewhat mirrored by the comments of the kabbalistic writer Perle Epstein who refers to the 50 Gates (remembering that only 49 can be known): "Physical and emotional bliss might be indications of higher states of consciousness, but for mystics seeking more than visions, they represent only the first of the 'Fifty Gates of Understanding' located in the human body. A symbolic indication of the long way to go, the first 'gatekeeper' was called Az (Thus)" [12].

In *The World as Power* by Sir John Woodroffe, the text discusses 49 vital forces: "It has been observed that the Yoga-Shastra (sacred books) speaks of forty-nine Vahus (vital forces)" [13]. A little further on it says: "There are thus forty-nine forms of vibration in which Vital Force exhibits itself and the Letters (of the sanskrit alphabet) are Life-Forces revealed to us by gross sound". The fact that the sanskrit letters are seen as life-forces is significant, as Hebrew letters are similarly viewed as such.

Conclusion

Knowing that the Kabbalah talks of seven heavens, palaces, earths and hells, as well as seven Sephiroth of Construction and seven principles in man, it is not altogether surprising to hear that there is a continuation of this system based on the square of seven.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of information, the exact nature of this teaching is not known, therefore some speculation has been introduced into this article. Nevertheless, much firm evidence has been produced to give a firm basis for further research.

Ideally, more theoretical knowledge of this system would be needed before developing a practical method for ascending or opening the gates. However, some form of meditation could be easily developed by focussing on the seven Sephiroth inside each of the single lower Sephiroth. Similarly, to gain illumination, Abulafia used a kabbalistic

system of letter permutation, known as 'Tseruf', which explored the Fifty Gates of Understanding [14]. At least some of these Gates were said to be located in the body, which is not surprising when it is remembered that the Sephiroth were also visualised as being in the body. Unfortunately, Abulafia's book on Tseruf has not been published in English, but then again a reasonable command of Hebrew would be necessary to manipulate the Hebrew letters. Obviously, other methods of exploring these Gates must exist, for if not, the Gates then become merely an imaginary idea and not a universal truth.

References

- [1] Dee, John, *Heptarchia Mystica of John Dee*, Edinburgh, Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks, 1983.
- [2] James, G., 'A Possible Origin for the Enochian Calls', *The Hermetic Journal*, No. 6.
- [3] Reuchlin, Johann, *The Art of the Kabbalah*, New York, Abaris Books, 1983.
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Papus, *The Qabalah*, Wellingborough, the Aquarian Press, 1983.
- [6] Galante, Abraham Ben Mordecai, *Kinath Setarim*, The Secret Garden: An Anthology in the Kabbalah, (Edited, David Meltzer), New York, The Seabury Press, 1976.
- [7] Krakovsky, Rabbi I., *The Light of Redemption*, Jerusalem, Research Centre of Kabbalah, 1970.
- [8] Sperling, H., Simon, M., and Levertoff, P., trans. *Zohar*, London, Soncino Press, 1973, Vol. 5, p. 275.
- [9] Ibid., Vol. 3, p. 401.
- [10] Krzok, P., *The Cosmological Structure of the Zohar*, *The Hermetic Journal*, No. 20; also *The Sevenfold Kabbalah*, *The Hermetic Journal*, No. 37.
- [11] Evans-Wentz, W., Y., (Editor), *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, London, Oxford University Press, 1981.
- [12] Epstein, Perle, *Kabbalah*, New York, Doubleday & Co., 1978.
- [13] Woodroffe, Sir John, *The World as Power*, Madras, Ganesh & Company, 1974.
- [14] Epstein, Perle, *Kabbalah*, New York, Doubleday & Co., 1978.

The Alchemical Drama of Goethe's Faust

Adam McLean ©

Goethe's *Faust* is rarely performed in the English theatre. The work is too arcane and often disturbs and confuses its audiences, also the stage effects, particularly the transformation scenes in Part II, are so difficult to stage convincingly, that it is no surprise that directors and theatrical managers steer clear of this classic work. However, the recent production of the two parts of Goethe's *Faust* at the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith tackled the work energetically and did not shy away from stressing its alchemical facets.

The alchemy in Goethe's *Faust* is central to its dramatic conception, and is not merely added for effect. For Goethe's working of the Faust story differs from other dramas based on the archetypal legend of a conjuror who sells his soul to the devil, sealing his pact with a drop of blood, ultimately to suffer the fires of Hell, in that Goethe reveals through his drama various transformational processes working in the human soul, personified in Faust. Goethe struggles to weave the personal inner journey of Faust towards some enlightenment, together with the collective social forces that are undergoing transformation through the historical process, so here Faust is also a representative of Northern European humanity striving for evolution from the limitations and strictures of the 16th century Reformation to the new aspirations of humanity that Goethe saw developing during the 18th century Enlightenment era.

The work is too complex and multi-faceted for me to do more here than point to some alchemical themes in the play. In my *Commentary to Goethe's Fairy Tale*, I showed something of how Goethe, who had

early in his life extensively studied alchemical literature, was able to fashion an elaborate alchemical allegory. The *Fairy Tale* (*Marchen*) is an allegory of inner transmutation of the soul, in which various polarities emerge and are brought together again. In the *Fairy Tale* the two lands separated by a river are brought together through the alchemical transmutation taking place in an underground temple. In his *Faust* Goethe again presents the separation of polarities that are brought together in a new transformation. Part One of *Faust* follows the structure of the Faust myth quite closely, though in the details of the action Goethe introduces broader themes that are developed further in the second part of the play.

Part One opens with Mephistopheles entering into a bargain with God for the soul of Faust. Faust has struggled long for enlightenment, has studied deep, and thirsts after knowledge and understanding. God indicates that Faust serves His plan uncomprehendingly and that he will eventually be led towards the light, but He grants Mephistopheles the freedom to lead Faust astray. Thus Goethe subtly alters the Faust story at its outset by paralleling it with the testing of Job.

In the first part of the play, Faust is tricked into the pact with Mephisto and casting off his scholars gown leaves his study and his mean scholar's cell behind, to immerse himself in the action of life. His lofty pursuit of knowledge and study of Philosophy, Law, Medicine, Theology and the Sciences had repressed his experience of human feelings, and when Mephistopheles allows free rein to his emotions then it is not altogether surprising that these emerge in an adolescent and unintegrated form. With Mephisto's guile and cunning, Faust pursues the young virgin Gretchen and ultimately corrupts her and destroys her life. As is presented in his *Fairy Tale*, for Goethe the initial problem of humanity lay in its inability to relate to the feminine component of its nature. For Goethe, the proper development of the human soul lay in its forming a proper relationship between its feminine and masculine facets. Thus Part One of *Faust* sets before us the central problem of Faust's soul, his difficulties in relating to the feminine side of his being.

Part Two of the work is a truly alchemical drama whose five acts weave together a complex net of themes. Goethe wrote *Faust* over a period of nearly sixty years, and the struggle he had with this material shows in the seeming incoherence of the second part of the drama. If one reads the play as an hermetic allegory, the inconsistencies of the drama dissolve away as one senses the structure that underpins the various disparate scenes.

Part Two begins with Faust recovering through the power of Nature from the emotional buffeting he has undergone in the disastrous episode with Gretchen. With his constant companion Mephistopheles, Faust attends the Emperor's court. The empire is in financial ruin through the extravagance of the court, but Mephisto and Faust offer a solution to these problems. Till now the currency of the empire has been Gold, but there is not enough to support the extravagant spending. Mephisto suggests an easy answer - since there is undoubtedly much gold as yet undiscovered beneath the land, which belongs to the Emperor, then surely a promissory note can be made for the value of such gold. He showers the Court with the new paper money. The foundation of the empire has been moved through Mephisto's cunning from the solidity of metallic gold to insubstantial promises on paper. Faust acting the role of magus is asked by the Emperor to conjure up the spirit of Helen of Troy. Goethe is here drawing upon the story about Johannes Trithemius conjuring spirits before Emperor Maximilian. (This scene was also included by Marlowe in his *Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (1593). Interestingly, Trithemius seems to have met, and had scant regard for, the historical personality Georgius Sabellicus, a conjuror adventurer who acquired the name and reputation of Faust in the early 16th century.)

Again Faust seeks to make some contact with the feminine, this time in the idealised form of the beautiful heroine of Greek legend. To achieve this he must enter the realm of the Mothers, deep within the earth and outside of space and time. The spirits of Paris and Helen are summoned, and the court witnesses their encounter as a kind of tableaux. Faust, besmitten with the beauty of Helen becomes jealous of Paris embracing her, and forgetting himself leaps into the magic circle with the spirits and tries to seize Paris. Faust falls unconscious.

The second act takes place in Faust's old laboratory, where his pupil, Wagner, following up his master's studies, has just completed the alchemical work and produced an homunculus, a little man living in the flask. Wagner has produced this homunculus outside of the normal natural means of conception. This little man in the flask lies outside of the domain of Nature, a soul and spirit without a proper material body. Homunculus takes Mephisto and the still unconscious Faust to the classical world of Ancient Greece, where he seeks to become a full human being outside of his retort. Homunculus is a being of fire, his flask glows with a strange light, and through a discussion with two ancient Philosophers he decides he must seek union with the water element in order to attain to a full birth, and become a real

being outside the enclosed world of his flask. He meets Proteus, the shape-shifting God of metamorphosis who constantly transforms himself from one form to another, and they approach the ocean. With the encouragement of Proteus, Homunculus enters the waves in his flask and seeks to unite with Galatea, the sea-nymph, or Goddess of the Ocean. The light of his retort illumines the waves and beneath the feet of Galatea his flask breaks and his fiery essence enters the water. The four elements are brought into a new harmony through this kind of mystic sexual union. This voluntary submission of Homunculus to the Ocean, here pictured as the feminine element, is contrasted later in the play with Faust's own attempt in Act four to contain and bind up the Ocean's elemental forces, a kind of act of rape committed against the natural order that directly leads to his downfall.

Through the figure of Homunculus, central to the play, Goethe illustrates that the path of humanity seeking a rebirth of enlightenment in their being, lies within themselves – the recognition and acceptance of the feminine component of the soul. It is Faust's avoidance of his feminine side that leads him into all his difficulties, for he chooses always to be guided by Mephistopheles. If we think of Mephisto as a part of Faust's soul, an alter-ego, it is significant that this trickster figure has a very masculine, even chauvinistic, perspective. Faust always projects the feminine outside himself.

The next part of the action has Faust pursuing Helen into the underworld on the back of the centaur Chiron, and with the help of Manto the Prophetess.

Mephisto, assuming a disguise as Phorkys, deceives and persuades Helen to go to live with Faust at his castle in the North. Helen here represents classical beauty but also the unrepressed sensuality of the Greek world – a world which Mephisto finds uncomfortable as it lacks a decent sense of sin, and without such dualism he has nothing to work his deceptions upon. Faust lives with Helen and they bear a boy-child, Euphorion. Euphorion is impetuous, he seeks like Faust to rise above the earthly world, to soar into the heights and take heaven by storm. Faust now lives in harmonious happy union with Helen, there is no sense now of his former tortured struggles within himself. This has been projected upon Euphorion. After trying to force himself upon a woman, Euphorion dies like Icarus, trying to fly high in the sky. The union of Faust and Helen is broken, and Helen returns to Persephone's underworld realm with the soul of their child.

The next act takes us back to the Emperor who is now at war. Faust, with the ever helpful Mephistopheles, assists the Emperor and

enables him to triumph over his enemy, in return for the rights of the coastline of his realm. Faust's great plan now is to extend the land out to sea, by damming up the ocean.

The last act finds Faust having accomplished most of his grand design of pushing back the primal energies of the Ocean, and establishing his own land, attempting to redesign the natural environment. He is frustrated by an old couple, Baucis and Philemon, who hold a cottage and chapel on strategic high ground which Faust wants to mould to his design. Goethe weaves into his play, the classical myth of Baucis and Philemon. (These were an old couple in Phrygia who provided shelter for Zeus and Hermes while they were wandering incognito through that land. Everyone else had refused the travellers hospitality, so they sent a great flood upon the land. Only Baucis and Philemon were saved and rewarded by having their cottage changed into a temple where they held priestly office). In the last act of Goethe's play, Faust wishes them to move from their sacred spot and Mephisto sends his henchmen to evict them, however, the old couple die in the struggle and the house is burned to the ground. Through this tragedy Faust loses his sight.

In his final hours he tries to press on with his great scheme to drain the marshes and establish a great paradise on Earth won from the ocean bed, where he believes humanity through struggling against the forces of nature will become free. Ironically, Mephistopheles leads the blind Faust to believe his workmen are completing his life's work, when they are actually digging his grave. Faust dies believing that his plan was nearing fruition.

Goethe brings the play to a close with a scene which is difficult to grasp. Mephistopheles comes forward at the burial to seek the soul of Faust to which he has every claim. However, Angels come down from on high, and while some of them distract Mephisto by flirting with him, others raise the soul of Faust heavenwards. The spirit of Faust is led by the Angels through a chorus of anchorites and blessed souls into the presence of Mary, Mater Gloriosa. The spirit of Gretchen now appears and intercedes for him and the Divine Mother says his spirit can pass on to the highest sphere. The final words of the play echo the importance of the feminine to this process of redemption.

All that shall pass away is but reflection.
All insufficiency here finds perfection.
All that's mysterious here finds the day.
Woman in all of us show us our way.

The closing scene in Goethe's *Faust* had always been, to me, unsatisfactory, leaving many energies of the drama unresolved. Seeing the production did not entirely remove my doubts, though it seemed to work well enough dramatically, providing a resolution or release after the climax of Faust being raised to Heaven. Later, after meditating on the experience, I came to see more clearly what Goethe intended.

Faust was written over many years and one can see that Goethe was trying to rework the dualistic Reformation myth of Doctor Faustus selling his soul to the devil, into a new alchemical conception of the transformation of Faust through his harsh experiences of the polarities within his being. On an initial viewing or reading of the play, the closing scene does not present us with a Faust who has effected the inner transformation of his being that he should be allowed to escape the pact with Mephistopheles – instead Mephisto is deceived by the Angels by a trick worthy of himself. Gretchen appears as the penitent soul interceding with the Mother of God and offering to act as a guide to Faust's soul in the spiritual realm. But this is initially disconcerting, for our perception of the true alchemical path must surely be that we attempt to achieve this inner meeting with the feminine facet of our soul within our incarnation, and not postpone such inner development to a life after death in the spirit world.

Faust's ascension into the spirit comes quite unexpectedly in the drama. It resolves various polarities – the Father God at the beginning of the play puts Faust into his difficulties, whereas the Mother Goddess releases him from his bonds and allows him enter the spirit world. It is easy to view this resolution as rather stylised and imposed on the flow of the drama. Goethe, of course, was a deeper soul, and would not have stooped to tacking on a happy ending in Hollywood style.

It seems to me that if we focus on Faust as the main character in the allegory then we will not find the transmutation or interior development that satisfactorily resolves the allegorical drama. If we follow the interpretation I advanced of Goethe's *Fairy Tale*, where I showed how all the individual characters underwent some transformation, and further that in a sense all these individual characters could be seen as part of our own soul, then perhaps Goethe's *Faust* will begin to cohere.

We have to come to see Faust and Mephistopheles as two parts of the human soul. Mephisto is not the archetypal devil, but a part of Faust which has been repressed by his immersion in a Philosophy and Theology which stressed the Patriarchal God. The Mephisto aspect bargains with this Patriarchal figure at the outset of the play for an

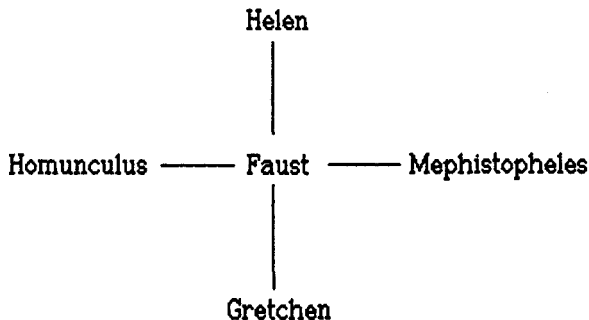
opportunity to reveal himself and influence Faust's life. Faust's early attempts at conjuring in the first scenes of Part One are failures because he attempts to dominate and impose his will on the elemental spirits from his book learning, but when Faust meets his repressed facet Mephisto then he abandons his earlier work. If Faust had remained true to his alchemical philosophic work (as was undertaken and continued by his pupil Wagner) then he would have fashioned the Homunculus, a being of soul and spirit but without embodiment. Homunculus must also be seen as an aspect of Faust a facet which is able to make a submissive relationship with the feminine. Gretchen again can be perceived as an aspect of Faust, which emerges after his meeting with the Mephistopheles facet. The Faust figure at this stage is still unable to recognise the feminine in himself so he uses the Gretchen figure selfishly and ultimately she is executed for his actions.

The killing of the Gretchen aspect at the close of Part One is a powerful event in the play. In the Second Part, Faust instead of looking deeper within his being for the feminine, turns to the idealised and mythical feminine figure of Helen.

Mephisto also undergoes some transformation, for under the prompting of Homunculus all three go off to classical times in pursuit of Helen. Interestingly, in all the scenes where Homunculus appears Faust is unconscious or absent from the scene. We must therefore see in the character of Faust, a failed alchemist, as one who has neglected to work upon himself in the interior retort to pursue the hermaphrodite in the soul. However, in Goethe's drama, the alchemical transformation continues in the wider context of the human soul of which Faust, Gretchen, Mephistopheles, Helen and Homunculus are but parts.

During the visit to the Classic Greek Walpurgis Night of the Witches, Mephisto shows his 'human' weaknesses in this unfamiliar territory where the Northern European Protestant sense of sin does not work so strongly. He discovers that he is powerless against those who do not have a sense of sin founded upon dualism. Mephisto is changed inwardly by his experiences and later in the closing scene, his flirting with the angels loses him the soul of Faust. The dynamic relationship of the Faust and Mephisto facets which has energised the play from the beginning, is then severed by Mephisto's dalliance with the angels. The Mephisto character at the beginning of the play would have been too cynical ever to fall for this trick, indeed through the action of the play, by the end of Part Two Mephisto seems to have absorbed something of the Faust character's weaknesses.

The main characters in the play are thus polarised facets of the one human soul, whose journey to enlightenment is demonstrated in the drama.



We can see Faust as the core of a complex being living within a net of polarities. Helen the ideal archetypal feminine, and Gretchen the earthly female from which he cuts himself off. Homunculus a potential inner hermaphroditic soul guide, whom he could have developed in his being had he stuck to his alchemical work, however, he turns to the Mephisto facet for guidance. At the end of the play he has been stripped of all these polarities and lies open and vulnerable in death.

If we see *Faust* in this way, then the difficulties posed by the final scene dissolve and the alchemical allegory reveals itself clearly. Goethe wanted us to read the entire drama and not to identify with the Faust character, but with the wider web of characters which are parts of the whole figure he wished to put before us. Goethe always tried purposely to mystify his audiences and readers, as he wanted to lead them beyond intellectual appraisal of his ideas. To grasp the allegorical riddles in *Faust* requires no mere intellectual analysis of the drama and characters but an encounter with the Mephisto, Gretchen, Helen, Homunculus as well as the Faust within ourselves.

Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: The Spiritual Dimension of Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde, by Joscelyn Godwin. 208pp, Hardback, £14.00. Thames and Hudson 1988.

Joscelyn Godwin is well known for his books on Robert Fludd, Kircher and the Mystery Religions, which were well received by the esoteric community. As well as being a writer sensitive to the hermetic tradition, in his professional work he is a Professor of Music, so his latest book on the spiritual dimension of music is especially valuable and full of insights. I sense that this is a courageous book for a scholar to write, for although academics usually feel quite free to express ideas that are radical or go against the prevailing academic consensus in fields outside their own particular academic discipline, here Joscelyn Godwin has dared to write, openly and without the usual academic equivocation, about the spiritual dimension of music. He records many of the ways in which the spiritual world works through and embodies itself in music, and it is so refreshing to feel through the text his personal commitment to this envisaging of the spirit. He does not hedge his words or hold back his enthusiasm for the hermetic spiritual current that he senses living in music, so this book is a delight as we don't have to read a coded message. Many people with an academic position who have a personal sense of the spiritual, nevertheless feel intimidated about expressing this too openly, so they write about their perceptions in a coded form which is familiar to student of esotericism. But here, Joscelyn Godwin has the courage to express his views on the spiritual currents that work behind individual human creativity and in the broader sweep of history.

Joscelyn Godwin begins his closely argued study with music's perceived effects on matter, on plants, on animals and on human behaviour. He then turns inward, to the absorbing accounts that have been given of the higher worlds that are the birthplace of Harmony, and of the realm of pure Intelligence which lies both within and beyond. To hear music, however, we need composers and performers and the argument then follows Harmony on its descent from Heaven to Earth. This descent takes place in the musician's inspiration, in the listener's experience, and in the world at large; for archetypal currents run beneath the surface of musical history, in the centuries that encompass the polyphony of Perotin or J.S. Bach and the psychic impact of Webern, Stockhausen and rock'n'roll. A self-contained final section embodies the fullest account ever given of ancient and modern theoretical systems of celestial harmony, from Pythagoras to Marius

Schneider, Rudolf Steiner and Gurdjieff. This includes the clearest and most deeply researched account of the different systems for ascribing the planets to musical tones which will be of especial interest to hermetic students.

The Egyptian Mysteries by Arthur Versluis. 168pp Paperback, £5.95. Arcana, Routledge 1988.

'The time will come when Egypt will appear to have in vain served the Divine with pious mind and constant worship, and all its holy religion will fall to nothingness. For that Divinity shall hasten back from Earth to Heaven... and Earth shall be bereft of the presence of the Gods. O Egypt, Egypt...'

- from **The Perfect Sermon**.

So we find Hermetic texts lamenting at the beginning of the present era. But what was lost? What was the destiny of the individual being, what is the nature of existence according to the ancient Egyptian tradition? What were the Mysteries of Isis and Osiris? These are just some of the questions answered here.

Drawing upon Vedantic, Buddhist and Platonic sources, as well as upon the extant Greek, Roman and Hermetic Texts, this book examines the ancient Egyptian Mystery tradition - in many respects the origin of Western tradition - not as an isolated phenomenon, but in the light of the great traditions still in existence. By setting the Mystery tradition in the context of the perennial philosophy, its relation to our present era begins to emerge. For to understand modernity, to understand our place in the cosmos, it is necessary to understand the mysteries.

Ars Notoria : The Notary Art of Solomon, showing the Cabalistic Key of Magical Operations, the Liberal Sciences, Divine Revelation, and the Art of Memory. 76pp. In USA Paperback \$10.95 (Cloth \$19.95, Leather \$29.95) from Catweasel, PO Box 20695, Seattle, Washington, 98102-1695, USA. In UK and Europe Paperback £8.95 inc. post from Chthonios Books, 6 Waldegrave Road, London SE19 2AJ.

This is the last book from the Lemegetton or Lesser Key of Solomon. Many of the manuscript versions of this are fragmentary and incomplete, indeed Kevin Wilby decided to leave this section out from the compilation of the Lemegetton he prepared for the Hermetic Research Series. This present edition was originally translated and published by Robert Turner in 1657, and the text has been entirely reset. The work itself is a collection of orations or prayers for the use of the practising magician, though apart from the occasional appearance of angelic or spirit names in places they seem indistinguishable from the prayers of conventional Christian worship.