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Edited by Adam McLean

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## EDITORIAL

The respectable scientific Journal *Nature* has in the past months indulged itself in a rather shabby way in appraising a controversial scientific article. Their paranoid attitude towards genuine scientific researchers reveals a certain insecurity in the scientific world about the established scientific paradigm or world view.

The article in question *Human basophil degranulation triggered by very dilute antiserum against IgE* was written by Dr Jacques Benveniste of INSERM, an institute researching allergy and immunopharmacology attached to the University of Paris, and his work has been repeated and corroborated by other researchers in laboratories in Israel, Italy and Canada, who also lent their name as co-authors of the paper. Their experiment was with human basophils (a type of white blood cell) which degranulate (an observable change in the cell structure which produces histamine) when exposed to a particular antigen. This is the basis of various human allergic reactions (hay fever, nettle rash, etc) to various substances in the environment.

Dr Benveniste and his colleagues noticed that this reaction was triggered by very low concentrations of the antigens and designed an experiment to explore this phenomenon further. After many years of research and cross checking with other laboratories, they found that the degranulation reaction occurred down to over 100 dilutions of 1 part in 10. According to the laws of chemistry, there should be less than one molecule of the antigen (which initiates the reaction) when the sample is diluted merely 14 times. Also they found that there were a series of rhythmic peaks and troughs in activity as they further diluted the sample, rather than merely a gradual falling away in activity. This experiment thus would seem to support the claims of the homœopathic school of medicine that rhythmic dilution of various substances gives rise to definite biological activities. Homœopaths regularly use dilutions of D30 (1 part in  $10^{30}$ ) to D120 (1 part in  $10^{120}$ ). It is not Benveniste's object to prove homœopathy and he does not mention this in his paper.

The results of this experiment seems to have so challenged the prevailing scientific model that a strange band of guardians of the tradition were despatched by *Nature* to investigate Dr Benveniste's claims. John Maddox a scientific journalist, brought together Walter Stewart an investigator of scientific fraud, and James Randi, an illusionist, professional magician, and debunker of clairvoyants and the paranormal. This strange crew spent a week in Dr Benveniste's laboratory investigating the experiment and produced a damning report in the next issue of *Nature* 'High dilution experiments a delusion', entirely dismissing the Benveniste results and implying either direct fraud or lack of scientific rigour in their methodology.

Now Dr Benveniste's response to their investigation team is very interesting and revealing. The investigators considerably disrupted work in the laboratory, and created an atmosphere

of tension and melodrama - at one point Randi taped the code for a particular series of blind tests to the ceiling of the laboratory so that it could not be interfered with by the scientists, as if he were investigating Uri Geller! - and Stewart even altered the experimental method at the last moment though he had no experience of this particular laboratory technique. Benveniste emerges as a serious scientist researching a phenomenon he has stumbled upon in the course of his work and yet is investigated as if he were a trickster. The paranoid reaction of the Nature reply to Dr Benveniste reveals a terrible insecurity at the heart of the present scientific world view. It is well worth reading the whole sequence of articles (in *Nature* Vol 333, 30th June, and 334, 28 July 1988).

It struck me that, just at the time when guardians of scientific orthodoxy were exhibiting their paranoid insecurities at some results which challenged their present world view, the Christian religious world was being equally convulsed by Martin Scorsese's film based on the novel *The Last Temptation* of Nikos Kazantzakis. Various fundamentalist Christians have apparently gone into paroxysms of fury at the portrayal of Jesus in this film.

Kazantzakis' novel, which I remember reading over ten years ago, impressed me with its treatment of the human side of Jesus, and was an attempt through fiction to show the inner struggles and emotional life of Jesus. The 'last temptation' is Jesus' reverie on the cross, that in place of this agonising end to his life, he could have chosen instead to bring his career as a spiritual teacher to an end and become an ordinary family man living a simple life with Mary Magdalene.

The novel includes a sympathetic treatment of Jesus' relationship with the Essenes, and is a worthy and deeply felt work expressing a particular view on the figure at the centre of Christianity. Now it has been made into a film, however, the extremist Christian groups have threatened to disrupt screenings

and have even been encouraged by some fundamentalist preachers to burn down cinemas. Their paranoid reactions reveal a deep insecurity at the foundation of these peoples' religion.

It seems to me that esotericists have much to learn from these two public exhibitions of insecurity in the scientific and religious spheres. For an interest in esotericism by itself will not make us immune from such feelings of insecurity, indeed we often read of one group denouncing another, or hear mischievous tales designed to discredit an individual or group. Such public denouncements and attacks on other groups are a petty politics of people who take themselves and their opinions too seriously, a pathetic imitation of the battles fought out in the arena of national and international politics.

Surely security in our spiritual life cannot come merely from our ideas being unchallenged by the views of other people or groups, but must arise from within. Only when we are inwardly immersed in our ideas, and have a living inner connection with the core of the hermetic tradition, can we have that security. If we work with the hermetic ideas, building them through inner exercises into the substance of our being, then we will gradually sense the philosophers' stone within us, the solid ground on which our spiritual life can stand secure. Only when we can sense the stable ground of the Philosophers' Stone in our being will we as esotericists feel no pressing need to denounce other groups or currents of ideas critical of our own.

*Adam McLean*

## News and Information

In the two month period between the last issue of the Journal and the present one, I have been able to print up some back issues in the new format. As I indicated some time ago, individual back issues will no longer be available, but instead these will be bound up as yearbooks in paperback format. At present four volumes are available at £9.95 each or \$18.00 to US customers inc post,

1982 (15/16/17/18),

1983 (19/20/21/22),

1984 (23/24/25/26)

1985 (27/28/29/30).

Further volumes, those for 1979, 1980 and 1981 will be available in the next few months.

Also three further Magnum Opus volumes are now to be issued in paperback

The Rosary of the Philosophers (available now £9.95)

Splendor Solis (available now £8.95)

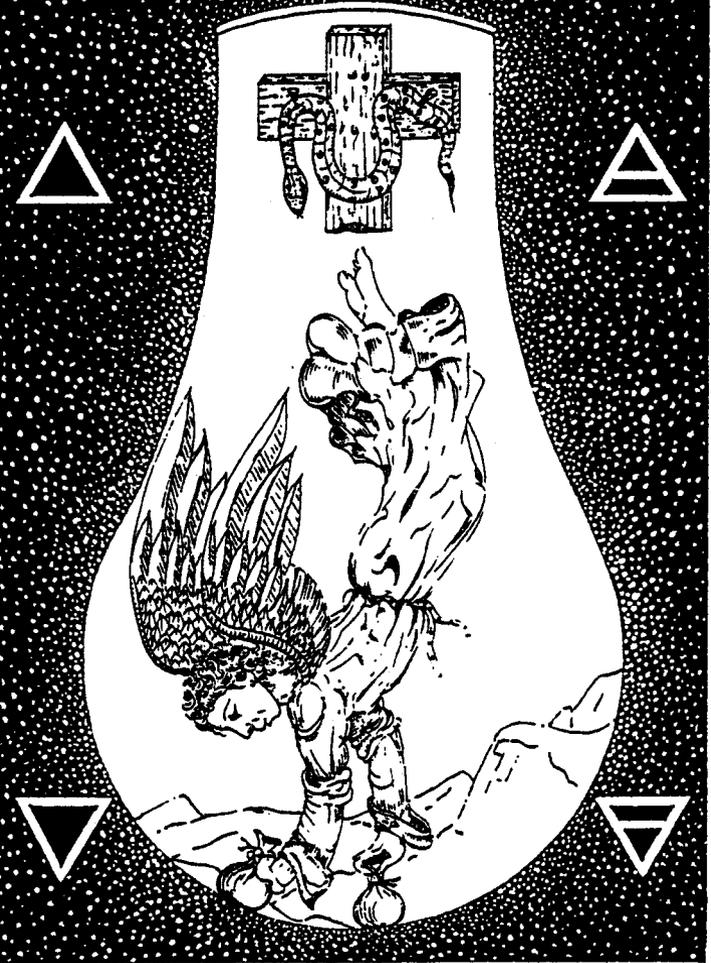
The Mosaical Philosophy - Cabala of Robert Fludd (available September £9.95)

## Westcott's Enochian Chess Set

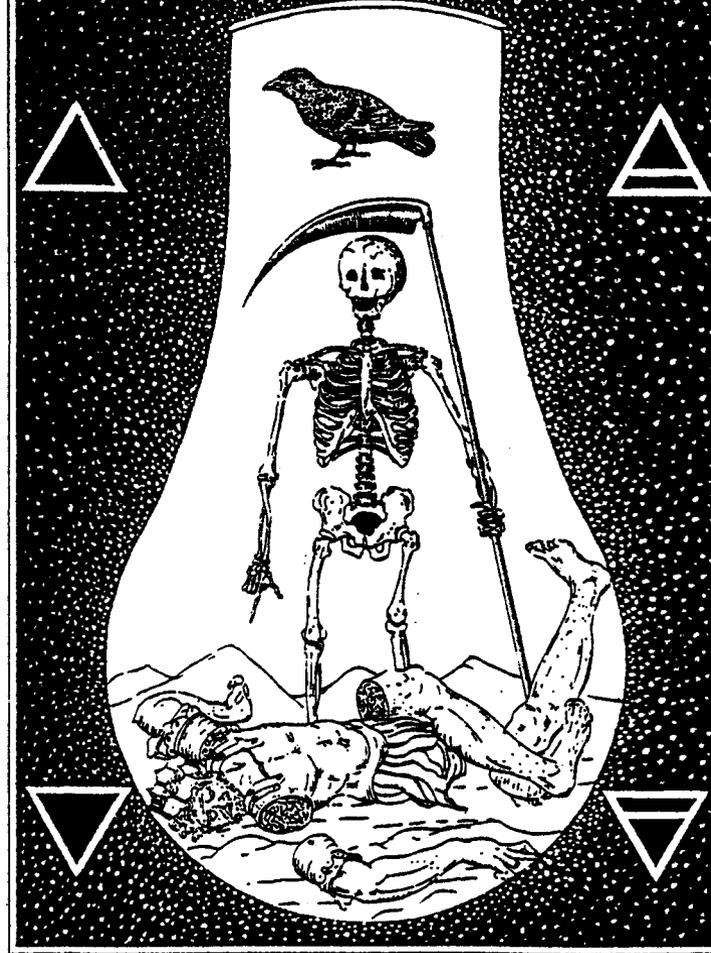
The Hermetic Research Trust will publish in September a full colour facsimile set of the original Westcott Enochian Chess Set used in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The 37 pieces will be encapsulated in a protective clear plastic film. A book describing the history of the pieces, together with much of the Order documents on 'Enochian' or 'Rosicrucian' Chess, and a number of essays on the symbolism, will accompany the pieces. The book plus facsimiles will initially only be available direct from the Hermetic Research Trust. Later in the year this may be distributed through the book trade. We have tried to keep the price to a reasonable level but the colour printing and encapsulation is extremely expensive, however, we can keep the price down to £30 (\$60 in USA).

For a limited period only, these will be available to Journal subscribers at the reduced price of £25 (\$50 for USA customers) inclusive of post.

FIGVRA XII



FIGVRA XIII



# THE ALCHEMICAL TAROT DECK

## Part Two

Rafal T. Prinke ©

**XII. The Hanged Man.** This card is a symbol of the stage in the Great Work known as "fixing the volatile". The winged, and therefore aerial, figure descends from above downwards and places small sacks of solid matter on the bottom of the retort. The same idea is conveyed by the crucified snake at the top, which is a traditional symbol of this process.

**XIII. Death.** The next important phase of the Work is that of Nigredo, in which the substance in the retort is broken down into its basic components. The process causing this to happen is called putrefaction and is usually symbolised by the death of the king, his body often being cut into pieces, or a skeleton, or a black raven (from which another name of this stage is derived - Caput Corvi). All of these symbols appear on this card.

**XIV. Temperance.** This Arcanum represents the longest phase of the Great Work, which consists in various cyclic processes, such as distillation, sublimation, circulation, and which requires much patience on the part of the Alchemist. The peacock above is the symbol of Cauda Pavonis, or appearance of iridescent colours in the retort, which should be accomplished at the end of this stage.

**XV. The Devil.** The next process is that of solution, which is symbolised by Neptune and the dolphin above. The gesture made by Neptune indicates that during this phase the union of the two opposites (male and female, Sun and Moon, etc.) is completed. On another level of interpretation, when we consider the central figure to be Pluto, the

FIGVRA XIV



FIGVRA XV



god of the underworld (and the Devil of the traditional Tarot appears to be a fusion of Neptune and Pluto), this Arcanum is also symbolic of the Alchemical formula of VITRIOL (i.e. "Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem") and therefore of rectification or cleansing of the substance which is worked upon. So, in the last analysis, the message of this card is that the union of opposites and rectification is achieved by solution in "our vitriol".

**XVI. The Tower.** The process which is symbolised by this Arcanum is the final fixation of the substance in the retort. This is accomplished by the proper application of heat, but is also the greatest danger which may destroy everything that has been made so far. The broken neck of the retort serves as a warning against applying too great heat. The salamander is also a symbol of fire or, more exactly, control of fire ("regimen ignis").

**XVII. The Star.** The final process of the Great Work proper is multiplication by which the efficiency of the tincture is greatly increased in order to make the Philosophers' Stone. The rabbit above is a symbol which sometimes appears in old Alchemical pictures and whose traditional meaning is not quite clear, but it seems to be an appropriate symbol for multiplication.

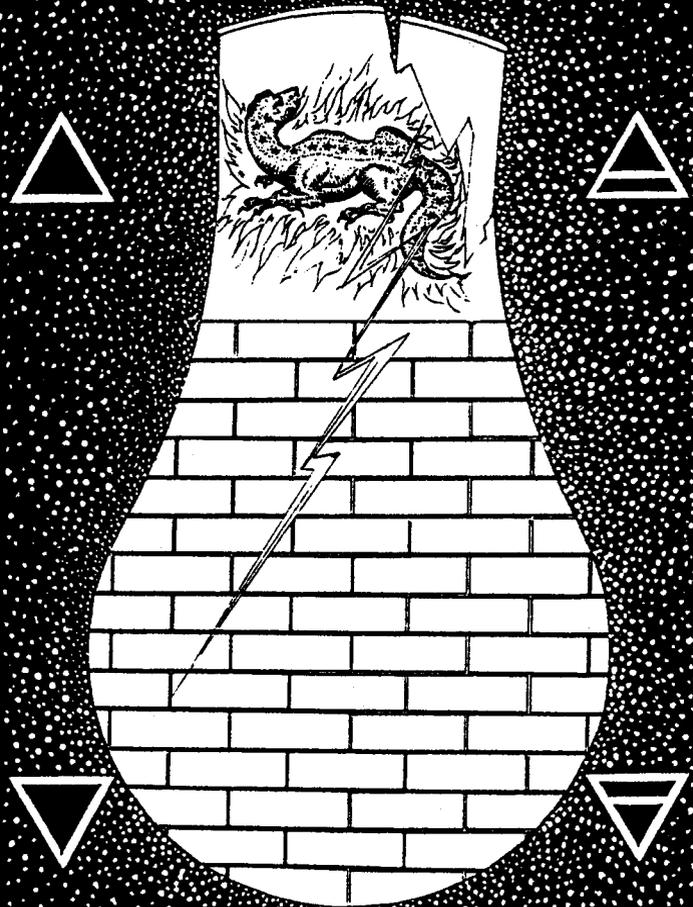
**XVIII. The Moon.** This Arcanum shows the first and less perfect variety of the Philosophers' Stone known as the White Stone, which serves to transmute base metals into silver and which is obtained in the stage known as Albedo. All the symbols on this card are traditional representations of it (naked queen with wings, the Moon, white eagle).

**XIX. The Sun.** The perfect Stone is the Red Stone or Red Tincture, which enables the Alchemist to change base metals into gold (which is not to be understood on the physical level only) and it is made in the phase of Rubedo. The symbols of the naked and winged king, the Sun, and red lion all refer to it.

**XX. The Last Judgment.** Armed with the Philosophers' Stone, the Alchemist can perform its projection on "vulgar" (or "dead") metals and change them into gold. This idea is conveyed by the seven kings rising from their graves, who are symbolic of the seven alchemical metals changed into "live gold". The phoenix in the neck of the retort is the symbol of this resurrection.

**XXI. The World.** The Alchemical Rebis symbolising the final, absolute and universal transmutation on all levels and the achievements of adepthood by the Alchemist. The doubled-headed eagle above conveys the same symbolism of the highest Magisterium.

FIGVRA XVI



FIGVRA XVII



### III. THE STRUCTURE OF THE TAROT IN THE LIGHT OF ALCHEMY

Using the above interpretations of the Major Arcana we can now look at them as an integrated and interconnected series, which describes quite adequately the philosophy and practice of Hermetic Alchemy. The whole series may be divided into two parts, the borders of which are marked by the Arcana 0, X, XXI, i.e. the first, the middle and the last ones. These are of a special character and represent the shortest description of the Great Work: the neophyte Alchemist, or Materia Prima of the Work, the processes or "turning the wheel" and the final transmutation. Now the cards of the first half of the series, i.e. between 0 and X, constitute a symbolic description of the stages preceding the actual practice and can be further subdivided into two groups: Theoretical (0 - VI) and Preparatory (VII - IX). Arcanum X forms the midpoint and may be said to belong either to both or neither of the two halves. The second half (XI - XXI) is a description of the Practical part of the Work and again can be subdivided into the processes leading to the preparation of the Philosophers' Stone (XI - XVII) and the descriptions of the final products and their application (XVIII - XXI).

Now we shall consider the first half of the series in detail:

0.	Neophyte/Salt/Corpus/Hermaphrodite	
I	Mercury/Spirit/Animus	3 principles
II	Sulphur/Soul/Anima	
III	Passive, female seed/Silver Theory (7)	2 seeds,
IV	Active, male seed/Gold	
V	Interrelation of the three and the two	
VI	The two ways/"Coniunctio Oppositorum"	
VII	To Will/to Dare	
VIII	To Know	Require
IX	To Keep Silent	ments (4)
X	To Go	

It may be noted that Arcana III and IV can also be considered as symbols of Jungian Anima and Animus principles. The first trinity, however, includes also the hermaphrodite or neutral factor, so these two groups may be compared to the three genders (masculine, feminine, neuter) and the two sexes (male and female), which are not mutually exclusive. Actually, this may be seen as indicating that the terms of Hermetic Philosophy are more precise than those of Jung.

FIGVRA XVIII



FIGVRA XIX



Arcanum X has been included here as the fifth requirement, "to Go", which was added by Aleister Crowley to the traditional four Hermetic axioms. It may also be compared to the Portal Grade of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, as it recapitulates the theory and opens the way to the practice.

The second half of the Arcana can now be considered:

XI	Placing the initial substances in the retort	
XII	Fixing of the volatile	Processes
XIII	Putrefaction/Nigredo	(7)
XIV	Distillation/Sublimation/Circulation	
XV	Solution/Rectification	
XVI	Fixation	
XVII	Multiplication	
XVIII	The White Stone/Albedo	Products
XIX	The Red Stone/Rubedo	(2)
XX	Projection	Application
XXI	Transmutation/Androgyne	(2)

As can be seen, the seven theoretical Arcana of the first half have their reflection in the seven Arcana describing the processes or stages of the Great Work in the second half (their number is in agreement with the tradition). The sequence of the processes as revealed by the Tarot Arcana differs slightly from that given in other alchemical texts (those best known at least). This may be interpreted either as purposeful confusion or as the true sequence, and I tend to accept the latter view as the Tarot deck was probably not constructed by an alchemist but by someone who experienced illumination and contacted the archetypal level of existence, as I have already explained, and therefore had no purpose in introducing the confusing element into the deck. So the processes of the Great Work would appear as follows. First the substances to be worked upon are chosen and placed in the retort. At least one of these substances is volatile and it has to be fixed in the next stage. Only then the phase of Nigredo takes place, in which the substances are putrefied ("killed") and disintegrate. What remains is then subjected to long lasting processes of distillation or sublimation. After this process is completed, the substance is solved, which brings its rectification, and then fixed. Finally it has to undergo multiplication, i.e. put through the same processes again and again until its power is sufficiently increased. In this way the Philosophers' Stone is finally produced (whether it is the White or the Red variety depends probably on the initial substances).

As the Tarot is an archetypal cycle, it has to be accepted that with the Arcanum XXI or final transmutation we come back to Arcanum 0,

FIGVRA XX



FIGVRA XXI



which is also suggested by the Ouroboros coiled around the outside of the neck of the retort in Arcanum 0, as well as by the androgynous meaning of these two Arcana. This reminds one of a Zen story which says, more or less, that for a person who does not practice Zen a tree is a tree and a mountain is a mountain, for one who is a practitioner of Zen a tree is not a tree and a mountain is not a mountain, and for one who has attained mastery of Zen a tree is again a tree and a mountain is a mountain. Somewhat similar statements can be found in European alchemical texts, which say that the matter of the Stone can be found everywhere but ignorant seekers cannot perceive it.

#### IV. THE MINOR AND COURT ARCANA

Although the Minor and Court Arcana are far less interesting than the Major Arcana of the Tarot, a few words have to be said concerning a possibility of their interpretation in the light of Alchemy. The main feature of this part of the deck is its fourfold division into suits, which may be seen as representing either the four elements of Hermetic Philosophy with all their correspondences, or the four "turnings of the wheel", i.e. carrying out the same processes of the Great Work on four levels. Although both of these views are not mutually exclusive (symbols are in fact expected to have many meanings), the former possibility seems to me more appropriate, as I think that the Minor Arcana symbolise Nature as opposed to Art (Major Arcana). In this scheme the Court Arcana would represent the "spiritual" part of Nature, which is not perceived by ordinary human beings. The meanings of the suits would then be as follows:

SUIT	ELEMENT	KINGDOM OF NATURE	LEVEL OF EXPRESSION
Rods	Fire	Human	Spiritual
Swords	Air	Animal	Mental
Cups	Water	Vegetable	Emotional
Pentacles	Earth	Mineral	Physical

Every one of the ten numbered cards of each suit represents one of the basic principles operating in nature according to the Hermetic Philosophy, as it finds its expression within the realm of each element. These include also the sub-elements, e.g. Fire of Fire, Fire of Air, Fire of Water, etc., which were used by the Golden Dawn and Aleister Crowley, and, I believe, have some foundation in the tradition. The correspondences for each of the numbered cards are the following:

1. The Root or Essence
2. The Male Seed

3. The Female Seed
4. Salt
5. Sulphur
6. Mercury
7. Fire
8. Air
9. Water
10. Earth

This scheme has obvious links with the Sephiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life and can be viewed either as the unfolding of Nature in a series of emanations (as shown here, from the Root of each element to the fullest expression of it) or as the way which should be followed by the Art of Alchemy in order to reach its goal (imitating Nature). In that case number one would symbolise the Tincture or Philosophers' Stone and would be the end, not the beginning, of the series.

The Court Arcana are symbolic of the spiritual forces of the elements and realms corresponding to them, and thus for each suit or element the following roles would apply to the figures of the Court Arcana:

- King - Ruler of the Element
- Queen - Intelligence of the Element
- Knight - Demon of the Element
- Page - Elemental of the Element

In this attribution the Queen and Knight are positive and negative aspects of the elemental forces, while the King and Page are neutral. The difference between the latter pair is that the King symbolises a conscious force, while the Page stands for the unconscious force manifesting itself through the element in question.

## V. THE USES OF THE ALCHEMICAL TAROT

The final matter which has to be considered here is the application of the alchemically interpreted Tarot deck. Obviously it can be used in any of the ways other decks are used but its special significance lies in the field of alchemical research. First of all Alchemical theory and practice can be learned from it, as it features most of the most common symbols found in alchemical illustrations of old treatises, and meditating on these cards can be of great help (I may add that I have learned much about Alchemy while designing this deck). In the same way this deck may serve as an explanatory tool for teaching Alchemy to others. And finally it may be used for a kind of divination for the purpose of determining the proper course of action in practical

Alchemy. The best spread for this would be the one to which a person is accustomed, i.e. which has been used by one for other purposes with other decks of the Tarot cards, with the meanings of card positions slightly adapted for the aim in question.

## VI. COLOURING GUIDE

Colour is a very important feature in Alchemical symbolic imagery and therefore general guidelines for colouring the Tarot cards are added here, though without going into detail about the significance of the colours employed.

- O. The man - black, the armour and kneecaps - blue, the lance - red, the banner - black, the dragon below - green, the snake above - upper half red, lower half green.
- I. The man - natural colour, the sun - yellow, the moon - white, the dove above - white.
- II. The woman - natural colour, the halo around her - the darker rings red, the brighter ones yellow, the unicorn above - white.
- III. The dress - mostly blue, the lily above - white.
- IV. The dress - mostly red, the lion above - red.
- V. The bishop - bishopric purple, the king - red, the queen - white, the pelican above - white.
- VI. The copulating couple - the king red, the queen white; in the upper half: the bishop's clothes - bishopric purple, the king's clothes - red, the queen's dress - white, the griffon above - half red (head and wings), half white (trunk and legs).
- VII. The king - dressed in red, the peacocks - multicoloured, the chariot - yellow, the wolf above - grey.
- VIII. The woman's clothes - blue, the scales and sword - yellow; the diagram: the triangle - blue, the square - black, the outer ring - red, the space between the square and the outer ring - white; the swan above - white.
- IX. The man's clothing - brown, the hour glass - yellow, the stick - red, the owl above - brown.
- X. The man - red, the woman - white, the phoenix - red, the swan - blue, the eagle - white, the raven - black, the three snakes below - black, white and red, the two dragons above - the upper one red, the lower one green.
- XI. The lion - green, the woman's garments - blue, the heart in her hand - red, the sun - yellow, the moon - white, the toad above - black.
- XII. The figure's dress - blue, wings - yellow, the small sacks - green, the snake above: upper half red, lower half green, the cross - brown.

- XIII. The skeleton - white, the pieces of the king's body - red and yellow, the raven above - black.
- XIV. The woman's dress - blue, the wings - yellow, the lower retort - green, the upper one - red, the peacock above - multicoloured.
- XV. Neptune's body - blue, the man and woman - natural colours, the sun - yellow, the moon - white, the dolphin above - blue, the trident in Neptune's hand - red.
- XVI. The bricks - red, the salamander - yellow surrounded by red fire.
- XVII. The figure - dressed in blue, the retort and the liquid - red, the rabbit above - red.
- XVIII. The woman, the moon and the eagle - white.
- XIX. The man, the sun and the lion - red.
- XX. The kings are yellow, but their graves are of different colours, namely: white, green, blue, red, black, bishopric purple; the phoenix above - yellow surrounded by red fire.
- XXI. The female half - red, the male half - yellowish brown, the female wing - blue, the male wing - green, the crowns on the feet: female - blue, male - green; the crown in the female hand - yellow, in the male one - red, the crown on the head - red, the one round the neck - green, the one round the waist - black, the dragon below - pink with green wings, the dragon above - black.

## VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ICONOGRAPHY

The sources are too extensive to list them here and this seventh headline has been added only to complete the Alchemical Law of Seven. So.....

FINIS CORONAT OPUS.

### 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 conjunctio 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 Celestial Dew and Kabbalistic Prayer

G.S. Bennett ©

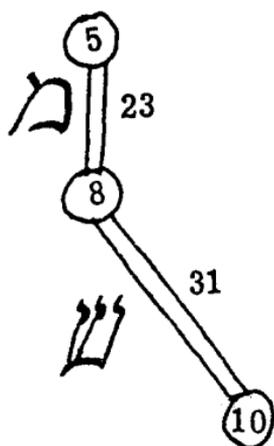
**"My Lord open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise" [1]**

**"With His consent, I will speak of hidden things amidst this people, to bring them joy through this prayer for dew... The depths of the earth which is His footstool, yearn for its drops, and all grassy meadows long for it. Dew - the remembrance of which increases (the praise of) His might... Dew - destined to revive (the dead who rest even) in the clefts of the rocks... Let dew sweeten like honey (the crops of) the mountains; let Your chosen ones savour Your goodness; deliver Your beloved ones from bondage, then we will raise our voices and sing sweet songs - with dew... For a blessing and not for a curse." [2]**

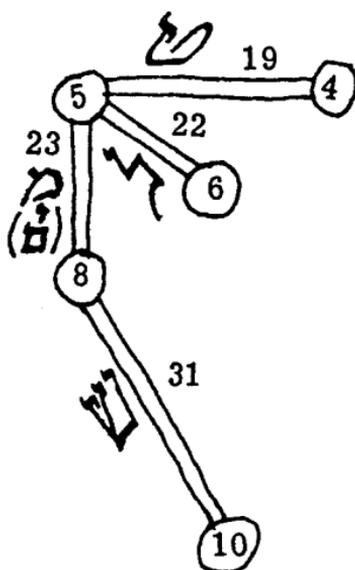
**It is believed that a fair proportion of the moisture that settles on the earth as dew arose from it in the first place. [3] In like manner the supernal "membrane is opened from below". [4] Blessing or curse is in part dependant on the "act below" which "stimulates a corresponding activity above". [5] "For just as the celestial holiness can be aroused both by act and by word on our part, so can they that come from the side of uncleanness." [6] Intention during prayer or ritual act must therefore be nothing short of an effort to "cleave" [7] to HaShem Himself.**

**"The dew is first raised from the earth, heated by the sun" (... "chiefly when the sun is below the horizon"... ) "and thence the lower bodies are first moistened... when so much is extracted as the air cannot sufficiently poise, it falls back on the earth: when the air is corrupted with hurtful vapour the dew is infected by it..." [8]**

Although one's purity of intention is ultimately directed to HaShem, **יהוה**, the Name, **יהוה**, considered 'locally' in objective Chokmah, in alphabetical Path consideration the Guilt of its subjective Fire, **ש**, must rise up the Left Side to heat the Waters, **מ**, to attain Merit. [9]



The subjective Fire, the Spirit of Elohim ( **ש** -300- **רוח אלהים** ) revives the dead [10] reversing the downward flow of subjective Water to find its own level of containment [11]. This quenches the objective Fire of Geburah, the resultant vapour being jetted along Channel 19 to moisten the dry fixed posture of the "coiling, twisting" [12] **ט**, that the Serpent may stretch out its tail to Chesed and extend the "masculine waters" [13] into the restrictive Fire. The pure vapour produced is "goaded", **ל**, down the 22nd channel, that which alphabetically corresponds to Work in the *Sepher Yetzirah*.



The Serpent, ך, is therefore that which "goads" the dynamics of the Tree into the equilibration of the Great Work, that results in the cleansing of Tiphareth, the Self, the Sun risen above the horizon, with "dew", טל. "For a blessing and not for a curse". [14]

Tiphareth thus cleansed becomes the perfect mirror for "the dew of the lights" [15] to descend from Kether. "and the appearance of this dew is white, like unto the colour of the crystal stone, whose appearance hath all colours in itself." [16]

"Thy dead shall live, my body shall rise,  
O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!  
For thy dew is a dew of light,  
And on the land of the shades thou wilt let it fall." [17]

## NOTES

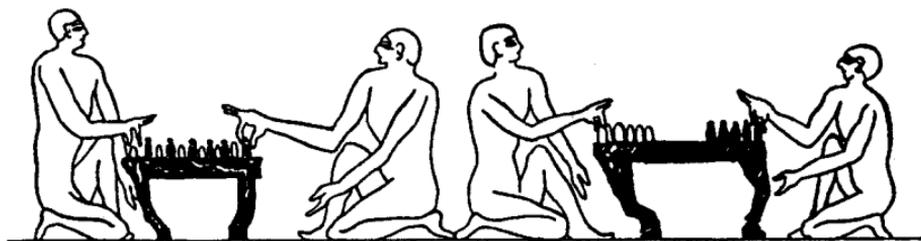
- [1] Psalms 51:15, included in source indicated in note [2].
- [2] Selections from "Prayer for Dew" from "Musaf Amidah for the Three Festivals", *Siddur Tehillat HaShem Nusach Ha-Ari Zal*. (prescribed order and text of the Hebrew prayers according to the Lurianic Kabbalah), Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, N.Y., 1982, pp. 265-266.
- [3] See Paul Baines, "Dew and Dew Ponds", *Hermetic Journal*, No 17, 1982, pp. 12 - 13.
- [4] *Zohar*, Chapter VI, "Book of Concealed Mystery", S.L. MacGregor Mathers (trans.), *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957 ed., p. 116.
- [5] *Zohar*, III, 92a, Maurice Simon and Harry Sperling (trans), Vol V, Soncino ed., 1978, p. 113.
- [6] *Zohar*, III, 112a, Simon and Sperling (trans), Vol V, p. 151.
- [7] Devekuth.
- [8] Rev. John Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, Fullerton, Glasgow, 1837, p. 217.
- [9] Guilt and Merit are assigned to the letters of ך and ך in Knut Stenring's 1923 trans. *Sepher Yetzirah*, Ktav reprint 1970, N.Y., p. 22. See also W.G. Gray *Concepts of Qabalah*, Weiser, Maine, 1984, p. 162 and G.S. Bennett, "A Kabbalistic Interpretation of Hebrew Memorial Inscription". *Hermetic Journal*, No 34, 1986, p. 30.
- [10] The Tarot Arcanum XX, assigned to Path 31 and ך depicts, in the Marseilles deck, Mother and Father in prayer outside the grave, whilst the offspring, the one figure, the Daughter/Son impacted combination, arises from the earth to the trumpet of the angel of Judgement.
- [11] This is represented Tarotically on Path 23 by the inversion of the Hanging Man. Alphabetically expressed the ך of ך'ך is opened

“to cut down” ( לַכַּרְתַּ = 650 = מִים ) resistance that the “feminine waters” may become equilibrated, מִים . “They may know” ( יָדְעוּ = 90 = מִים ) then more “wholly” ( כִּלְיָל = 90) of the “King” ( מֶלֶךְ = 90) “in the valley” ( בְּנַחֲלֵי = 90) and that there is no finality “and he may redeem himself” ( וַיִּגְאֹל = 90).

- [12] “ ך the ninth letter of the alphabet, called מַיִת (a coiling, twisting)”, Dr. Karl Feyerabend, *Langenscheidt's Pocket Hebrew Dictionary to the Old Testament*, Hodder and Stoughton, n.d., p. 115.
- [13] “ ‘Feminine waters’... denotes benevolent acts, self inspired, rising from man to G-d, while ‘masculine waters’ denotes the flow of Divine influence and grace from G-d to man.” *Likutei Amarim - Tanya*, Kehot, N.Y., 1981, p. 43, Note (16).
- [14] As Note [2].
- [15] *Zohar*, Mather's trans., cit., p. 116 in quotation of Isaiah 28:19.
- [16] *Zohar*, Mather's trans., p. 117.
- [17] Isaiah 28:19, Revised Standard Version. The closing line of the verse in the New International Version reads “... the earth will give birth to her dead.”

# The 'Rosicrucian' or 'Enochian' Chess Set of W. Wynn Westcott

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The 'Enochian' or rather 'Angelic' material in John Dee's diaries has attracted the interest of esotericists over the centuries, but its reformulation by Mathers and Westcott as part of the initiatic procedures within the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn has raised it in the twentieth century to high status as the most intricate, arcane and powerful of magical systems. At the heart of this 'Enochian' system were a series of tables of letters received by Dee and Kelley during their magical operations. Through special manipulations of these tables, Mathers and Westcott derived four 'Elemental' tables consisting of an 8 x 8 layout of squares, each with an Enochian letter

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§ Wall drawing from a tomb at Benihasan, c 2000 B.C.



and a complex elemental, Tarotic, Egyptian, geomantic, and astrological series of correspondences. These two creative and eclectic synthesizers of the magical traditions, conceived these tablets as the basis for a chess game which has become known as 'Rosicrucian' or 'Enochian' Chess, and this was set as an exercise for the higher grade adepts of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

Writing in his diary after visiting Mathers in Paris during February 1898, W.B. Yates noted

"Sometimes in the evening we would play a curious form of chess at which there should be four players. My partner would be Mrs Mathers and Mathers would declare that he had a spirit for his. He would cover his eyes with his hand or gaze at the empty chair at the opposite corner of the board before moving his partners piece."

Some notes on this Enochian chess were preserved in the order papers together with descriptions of the chessmen which incorporated Egyptian God forms. Regretfully, no coherent set of rules seems to have survived, though perhaps it is unwise to see this as a type of chess game with rules and a competitive strategy, for the 'game' appears to have been primarily used for divination and answering esoteric questions rather than competitive play. Chris Zalewski in New Zealand has however been working with this system and is shortly to publish a book on the game together with a set of rules for play she devised from interpreting the available order materials.

Over the past decades a number of versions of this 'Enochian Chess' have been published and sold to the public, some of these very poorly constructed. Most of these derived their designs from the written descriptions in the Order papers published by Israel Regardie or from other occultist's own private sets, but these lacked authenticity as no one had been able to examine an original set of chessmen contemporary with the early period of the Golden Dawn. However, a few years ago R.A. Gilbert discovered Westcott's original set of chessmen (dated on the box containing them as 1889) among a collection of his papers and this has provided us with an authentic set. This set would probably have been the archetype from which the adepts would have made copies for their own use. These are in the form of a thick card (without a base upon which to stand upright), coloured in accordance with the Golden Dawn Elemental colours with their complementary 'flashing' colours where appropriate. One side of the card bears an Egyptian God-form while the reverse has a conventional symbol for King, Queen, Bishop, Knight, Rook and pawns. Some of the cards are six inches high by three inches across, so they would have been rather clumsy to move around a conventionally sized chessboard. Though there should be four boards one for each of the elements, these were not included in this collection of Westcott's papers. Neither were there any instructions found with the chessmen.

This is an important find and with R.A. Gilbert's permission, the Hermetic Research Trust has decided to make these available as a set of full colour facsimiles exactly reproducing the originals. This will be issued together with a short compendium of material on this 'Rosicrucian' or 'Enochian' Chess.

Mathers and Westcott probably got the idea for their 'Rosicrucian Chess' from the 5th century A.D. Indian game of Chaturanga. This was in essence a war game between four forces, a yellow, a black, a red, and a green army, each under the control of a Rajah and each with four corps - Infantry, Cavalry, Elephants and Boatmen. Two players were loosely allied against their two opponents.

It is likely that Mathers and Westcott used as their source a well known book *A History of Chess*, by Professor Duncan Forbes of the Department of Oriental Languages at King's College, London. This would have been readily available to them as it was published in London in 1860. In his book Forbes translated a full account of the rules of the game from a Sanskrit poem.

The pawns in Chaturanga represent the infantry, a ship the boatmen or naval forces, a horse the cavalry, an elephant the elephant corps, while the Rajah was shown as a human figure.

The RAJAH could move only one square at a time in any direction, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. The ELEPHANT moved orthogonally (on the vertical columns or horizontal rows), any number of unoccupied squares, but it could not jump over a piece. The HORSE moved one square orthogonally and one diagonally, just like the knight's move in modern chess. The SHIP moved two squares diagonally and could jump over any intervening piece. The PAWNS moved one square orthogonally forwards, unless they were making a capture when they moved one square diagonally forwards.

Ships and pawns were minor pieces who could capture each other but not the major pieces. The moves of the pieces were controlled by a throwing a long die marked 2, 3, 4, 5 :-

if a 2, the Ship was to move; if a 3, the Horse; if a 4, the Elephant; if a 5, Rajah or Pawns, were to move.

If a piece moved onto a square occupied by an enemy piece, the latter was removed from the board, however, minor pieces could not move onto squares occupied by major pieces.

The board was arranged as opposite with the Black Army at the North, the Red at the South, the Green at the East, and the Yellow army at the West. Each army is drawn up in the same formation with a boat on the marked corner square, next is a horse, then an elephant, and the king stands on a marked square known as the Throne. The pawns stand in front of these pieces and move forward towards their ally's side of the board.





## EPIGRAMMA XLII

**N**ature be your guide; follow her with your art willingly, closely,  
You err, if she is not your companion on your way.  
Reason be your Staff, Exercise may strengthen your sight,  
On account of which things that are far away can be discerned,  
Literature be your lamp, shining in the darkness,  
In order to guard you against an accumulation of things & words.

# The Lineage of the Serpent or Ring of Fire

K. Samten ©

The 'coding' and 'transmission of Hermetic Information does not take place in a void. A 'matrix' is generated which acts as a necessary carrier for the information. This 'vehicle' or 'medium' ensures the continuity of the teachings. Our focus in this exploration is what John Lilly terms a 'meta-programme', taking concrete form as a lineage of transmitters. We then have to ask who, or what are the transmitters? How long does the meta-programme operate, and what are the specific qualities of activity of its operators?

We commence with a classical Hermetic emblem - the 42nd Emblem of *Atalanta Fugiens*. The same picture appears on the title-page of the 1625 edition of *Musaeum Hermeticum*. In this variation, a second figure, also with staff spectacles and lamp, is seen crossing the bridge in the distance, and the figure of Nature carries a blazing xix pointed star, or Hexagram in her left hand.

It is obvious that the figure of the old man is 'The Hermit' or 'The Sage' - Arcanum 9 of the Sacred Tarot. Fred Gettings says of this emblem:

"It is an image of an old man searching in the dark, feeling his way with a stick and lighting up his path with a lantern."

We can see from the content of Emblem 42, that this is a negative interpretation. This archetypal 'Wise Man' is always associated with the astrological sign of Aquarius.

The three figures of the title-page of the Hermetic Museum suggest a process of continuity, a transmission of light. Embedded in this emblem is the principle of the transmission of Wisdom, or Light, and this observation will be extensively expanded from the visual references before us.

Michael Maier gives a direct clue in the following quotation from



his *Themis Aurea* :

There were certain rites and Ceremonies done at Athens in honour of Prometheus, Vulcan and Minerva after this manner: many were appointed to run into the city with lighted torches, and he whose light was out, gave place to the others, so that the victory was obtained by him who could come first at the goal with his flaming torch. The meaning was to express the propagation of secrets, for the putting out of a torch is the death of a Predecessor, so that another living with his lighted torch succeeds him, by which means the rare mysteries of Chemistry come safe to after generations."

As evidence of the deep materialism and spiritual poverty our civilisation has fallen into - we can see this esoteric transmission of the Light of Wisdom is what has now degenerated into the shameful Olympic Games.

In his *Arcana Arcanissima*, Michael Maier amplifies this Hermetic view of the transmission of the 'rare mysteries of Chemistry':

"Perhaps the Lampadephoria are illustrative of our 'work'. These games were used in this manner. Runners carried a lamp or torch from one point to another in a chain of competitors, each of whom formed a successive link. The first, after running a certain distance, handed the lamp or torch to the second, and so on until the point proposed was reached. Heroditus uses the game as a comparison to illustrate the living image of successive generations of men. The action of carrying on an unextinguished light from the Cerameicus to the Acropolis is a lively symbol of the benefit conferred by the Titan (Prometheus) upon man, when he bore fire from the habitations of the gods, and bestowed it upon man. But the gratitude to the giver of Fire passed to Hephaestos, who taught men to apply it to melting and moulding of metal. Other writers hold that the game had an inner significance, "alluding to the inward fire by which Prometheus put life into man". One symbol on a coin referring to these games shows a serpent surrounding in a circle. Reference is also made to the common altar of Vulcan and Pallas, to the fire of Vesta, to the chief place which Vulcan held amid the Egyptian gods, and to the Germanic races."

Amongst the Egyptian Gods, Vulcan was known as *Pythas* or *Ptha*. Pavel says :

"On the authority of Photius, Phthas appears as the highest power which creates several 'great gods'. These, by virtue of their 'greatness' can also be called Hephaestuses. They are also said to be the children of Hephaistos, or else they form between them a unity called Hephaistos."

Maier seems to think that the 'Fire of the Gods' passed from

Prometheus directly to Hephaestos-Vulcan, while to the ancient Egyptians, their Vulcan - Ptha - was the 'highest power'. But basic to this transmission of the 'Fire of the Gods', is that Prometheus, Vulcan-Hephaestos, and Pallas-Minerva shared a 'common altar' and the 'rites and ceremonies'.

We shall accept that the highest symbolic content of Emblem 42 is Promethean in essence. Prometheus rules the highest grade of the Memory Theatre of Camillo: "The seventh grade is assigned to all the arts - both noble and vile - and above each gate is Prometheus with a lighted torch".

Frances Yates continues :

"The image of Prometheus, who stole the sacred fire and taught men knowledge of the gods and of all the arts and sciences thus becomes the topmost image - at the head of the gates on the highest grade of the Theatre. The Prometheus grade includes not only all the arts and sciences - but also religion - and law."

With this Promethean citadel before us, we must work our way back to the process through which the Fire of Wisdom is transmitted through time and space. This process of a Transmission Lineage is most likely universal, but it has been beautifully woven into historical reality by Tibetan Buddhism in particular. The Tibetan Transmission is given in great detail in *The Blue Annals* translated by George Roerich. The French mystic Rene Daumal expresses the compassionate motive of this Lineage in simple and clear terms in his prophetic book *Mount Analogue* :

"To reach the summit one must proceed from encampment to encampment. But before setting out for the next refuge, one must prepare for those coming up after to occupy the place one is leaving. Only after having prepared for them can one go on up. That is why, before setting out for a new refuge, we had to go back down in order to pass our knowledge to other seekers."

This 'knowledge' is the 'Fire of the Gods', the arts and science, religion and law, brought from 'habitation of the Gods' by Prometheus, to mankind.

Now we amplify the details of Emblem 42, as this image appears in the 9th Arcanum of the Tarot:- The Hermit, Sage, Wise Man or Seer, who is following in the footsteps of Mother Nature, and carrying the Promethean 'Lamp' or 'Torch'.

Aquarius, the stellar ruler of this image has as its keynote - 'Wisdom' or 'Prudence'. But Aquarius is more commonly shown as 'The Water Bearer', a Youth pouring water out of a jar. The Larousse Mythology says:

"In primitive times Ganymede seems to have been conceived as the deity responsible for sprinkling the earth with heaven's rain. He is compared with the Vedic SOMA... and Ancient astrono-

mers identified him with Aquarius, the water-carrier."

Ganymede as the 'cup-bearer' of the gods, dispensed the nectar or soma, from a golden bowl. But the Sage of the Egyptian Arcanum 9, and the Wise Man of Emblem 42 of *Atalanta* both carry LAMPS OF LIGHT, and not water, as is commonly shown.

To complicate matters, Aquarius is an AIR sign, ruled by the revolutionary URANUS. As Aquarius is the cosmic frequency for the next 2,000 years, with its keynote of 'Wisdom', the variation between the Youth carrying water in a jar, and the Sage carrying light in a lamp, is of some significance to the future of humanity, in this day and age. What is the symbolic interweaving of the Light Bearers and the Water Bearers. Maier seems to give attention only to the transmission lineage of the torch of fire.

But this convergence of the two Elements of Fire and Water in the 9th Arcanum of the Tarot, introduces a wide spectrum of symbolic research. Initiation by Fire and Initiation by Water are the two great themes of this exploration. H.P. Blavatsky gave this cryptic clue on the nature of the Promethean Mysteries:

"Prometheus is a symbol and a personification of the whole of mankind in relation to an event which occurred during its childhood - so as to say - the 'Baptism by Fire' - which is a mystery within the great Promethean Mystery, one that may be at present mentioned only in its broad general features."

Thus we can see why the 9th Arcanum symbolises the initiatory transmission and protection of the 'rare mysteries'. Using the Law of Correspondences, the great Hermetic strategy of analogy, we find that Aquarius, the Sage, Arcanum 9, corresponds to the 9th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which means 'ROOF'. Fred Gettings adds :

"The Hebrew Teth of the Italian pack certainly confirms this idea of protection, for it represents a roof, or a place of shelter, and may be linked with wisdom and forethought."

This has even greater significance when we realise that the ancient Egyptian equivalent for the astrological sign of Aquarius was 'CANOPUS' (a Canopy?). C.C. Zain elaborates:

"The word brings to mind a place of shelter and refers to a 'tent' which the initiate learns to build. This 'tent' is sometimes termed 'the Illuminated Heart' and sometimes the 'Sacred Heart'.

The beauty of Hermetic thought - the aesthetics of analogical thinking, can be demonstrated at this point. We have Prometheus stealing the 'Fire of the Gods' - a Mystery celebrated in the Lampadephoria, the famous run with the lighted torches. But where, symbolically speaking, would this 'Fire' be situated ?

Physiologically speaking, the heart is the centre of the body. The Sun is the heart of our Solar System. The Sun rules the astrological sign of Leo, which is opposite to Aquarius in the zodiac. The lighted

lamp carried by the Sage and the Torches of the Lampadephoria, are both indicating that this 'Fire' is actually at the centre of our being. It is the 'Illuminated Heart'.

Prometheus is 'the One who thinks ahead' or 'the Forerunner'. There is a possible resonance here with the Bhuddist MAITREYA, the Future Buddha and the Buddha of Love. Prometheus pays a severe price for breaking through to the habitation of the gods and stealing the sacred fire. He endures a torment that involves the participation of many other gods. Oceanus and the Oceanides, the ancient water gods, sympathise with Prometheus. The associations of Fire and Water as transmission agent appears in the play *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus. Water and Fire epiphanies have to be perceived as running parallel to each other, and in the symbol of the Illuminated Heart we have both Fire and Water fused as a stream of Blood.

Central to this enquiry is the fact that Fire, in the form of a lamp, flame or light, is transmitted from generation to generation "to express the propagation of secrets". What is the essential nature of this Fire?

Aquarius, the Sage, is ruled by Uranus, the planetary instigator of revolutionary acts that could be generally termed Promethean. In the sacred Tarot, Uranus is equated with the 10th Arcanum - 'The Wheel'. "The planet Uranus", says C.C. Zain, is the "general signifier of sudden changes of fortune, of inventions, discoveries, and of unconventional relations and actions". This well describes the actions of Prometheus. Uranus corresponds to the 10th letter of the Hebrew alphabet - the letter YOD, of which C.C. Zain says:

"Yod signifies the number 10, which is the perfect number, the number of the Sephiroth, on the Tree of Life, who in their turn symbolise the forces of the Spirit in operation. It (the Yod) has the conventional form of the free flame, the tips of which are sometimes called 'jots'. Every letter (of the Hebrew alphabet) is really made up of Yods, or modified Yods, together with the enlarged or diminished 'jots' and connecting lines. In very careful writing this symbolic flame detail can be detected, and sometimes even in poor script or printing it is still evident. That the flames also point to the starry heavens is shown in the tradition that the twenty-two letters really imitate certain small asterisms of the zodiac which they picture in miniature."

Corine Helene says of the Yod:

"Among the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet which mystically understood, outline first the general path of evolution for the many but also the straight and narrow initiatory path for the few, the letter Yod is one of the most important and powerful. It forms an essential part of each and every one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It is therefore a symbol of the omnipresence of Deity."

I do not think that Helene is being precise enough when she says that Yod is "a symbol of the omnipresence of Deity". C.C. Zain continues with:

"Thus the alphabet as a whole symbolised Light, but only a few of the letters reveal this in their present form, while the symbolic meaning still in our day lies under the veil of the Mysteries."

Interestingly enough, an image on the Promethean grade of the Memory Theatre is: "BOY WITH ALPHABET, GRAMMAR".

We have now established that Yod is a 'symbolic flame' or 'Light'. Is the YOD therefore the 'Illuminated Heart' at the centre of all being? Does Prometheus actually steal the Yod from the 'habitation of the gods'? Or is it the habitation of the YODS? By his revolutionary act, does Prometheus break through the fabric of being, to the core, or Inner Well of Fire?

At this profound level, we have to turn in great humility to the Kabala for further guidance. For it has been said that Greek Mythology is a Hellenic form of the Kabala.

The origin of Fire has its correspondence in the Zohar, as quoted by G. Scholem in his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* :

"In the beginning, when the will of the King began to take effect, he engraved signs into the divine aura. A dark flame sprang forth from the innermost recess of the mystery of the Infinite, En-Soph, like a fog which forms out of the formless, enclosed in the ring of this aura, neither white nor black, neither red nor green, and of no colour whatever. But when this flame began to assume size and extension it produced radiant colours. For in the innermost centre of the flame a well sprang forth from which flames poured upon everything below, hidden in the mysterious secrets of En-Soph. The well broke through, and yet did not entirely break through, the ethereal aura that surrounded it. It was entirely unrecognisable until under the impact of its break-through a hidden supernal point shone forth. Beyond this point nothing may be known or understood, and therefore it is called RESHITH, that is, 'Beginning', the first word of creation."

Surely this brings us to the very edge of the 'Veil of the Mysteries', in general, and the 'great Promethean Mystery' in particular? This 'hidden supernal point' is by way of the *Kabbala Denudata*, as used by C.G. Jung, identified with the YOD:

"When the Wisdom of the Blessed One saw that even in this splendour the worlds could not be manifested, since the Light was still too weak there, he again signalled to this letter YOD that it should once more descend and break through the sphere of splendor and give forth its light, which was a little denser..."

YOD is attached to the 'summit of the crown' and descends upon Sapientia (Hokhmah): 'It scatters light and an eminent influence on that Wisdom'."

In the Kabala, the Sefhira HOKHMAH (Sapientia) is WISDOM and identified with URANUS, and the Letter Yod, the Number 10 - ruling Aquarius on the astrological, or stellar level.

What is of vital importance here, is that the conflict between Water and Fire symbolism in the 9th Arcanum of the Tarot is reconciled with the statement from the Zohar that "...from the innermost centre of the flame a well sprang forth..." Our Promethean flaming torch can also be a gushing well of light. This is extended by G. Scholem:

"In the passage from the Zohar which has been quoted from above, the image of the point is already combined with the more dynamic one of the fountains which springs from the heart of the mystical Nothing. In many places, the primordial point is directly identified with this fountain from which all bliss and all blessings flow. This is the mystical Eden - Eden meaning literally bliss of joy - and from here the stream of divine life takes its course and flows through all the Sefiroth and through all hidden reality, until at last it falls into the 'great sea' of Shekinah, in which God unfolds his totality."

Quoting from the *Kabbalah Denudata*, Jung continues: "YOD is the 'vas' or 'vasculum' into which the 'fount of the sea' pours, and from which the 'fount gushing forth wisdom' issues."

Again, from the *Kabala Denudata* we come across the idea of the 'point' that 'flows':

"Yod, because it is simple, is sometimes singular and primary, and like the number '1', which, among numbers and as a point, is the first of all bodies. But the point by moving along its length produces a line, namely, VAU."

It must be remembered that Uranus, the YOD, number 10, is the octave expression of number 1, Mercury, the Aleph. The "moving point" of the flaming YOD, is an idea contained in the relay race of the lighted torches of the Lampadephoria. It expresses perfectly the integrity and continuity of a lineage of transmission from a celestial dimension downwards. This 'flowing point' is suggested in the two opening Theorems of the *Monas Hieroglyphica* of Dr John Dee (Antwerp 1564):

**Theorem 1.** The first and most simple manifestation and representation of things, non-existent as well as latent in the folds of nature, happened by means of straight line and circle,

**Theorem 2.** Yet the circle cannot be artificially produced without the straight line, or the straight line without the point. Hence, things first began to be by way of a point, and a monad. And things related to the periphery (however big they may be)

can in no way exist without the aid of the central point."

As John Dee explains this 'Hieroglyphic Monad' cabalistically there is reason to see this 'Monad' as the supernal point of YOD, Hokmah. There are various versions of this idea that have come down to us since ancient times. Dorn in his *Physica Genesis* says "Out of this little point, the wisdom of God made with the creative Word the 'huge machine of the world'."

Dorn repeats this in different words in the *Theatricum Chemicum* :

"O wonderous wisdom, which by a word alone was able to bring into being every part of the vast and weighty mass of this huge machine that hath been made since creation."

Here the 'point' is also a 'Word', which is a well known aspect of Eastern mysticism where the 'seed-syllable' or 'sound-point' is called the BINDU.

These quotations about the nature of the YOD, open up more metaphysical questions, the answers to which must remain hidden behind the Veil of the Mysteries. But in relation to the 'point', Lama Angarika Govinda, in his *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, gives us an insight into the Buddhist teachings on this subject:

"Its centre is a sphere which represents the seed or germ of the universe in its undifferentiated form as 'bindu' (dot, zero, drop, smallest unit). Its potential force is indicated in pictorial representations by a spiral issuing from the centre of the sphere."

The word 'bindu' is Sanskrit for 'drop, dot, point'. The Tibetan equivalent is 'thig le'. Keith Dowman calls this 'bindu', 'spot' as well as 'seed-essence'. He continues: "a single BINDU is a point of emptiness analogous to the cosmic egg." There are deeper levels of interpretation which we will not go into at this point.

Scholem also refers to this point:

"By the Zohar, as by the majority of the other Kabbalistic writers, this primal point is identified with the wisdom of God, HOKHMAH. God's wisdom represents the ideal thought of Creation, conceived as the ideal point which itself springs from the impulse of the abysmal will. The author extends the comparison by likening it to the mystical seed which is sown into Creation, the point of comparison apparently being not only the subtlety of both but also the fact that in either the possibility of further being are potentially, though as yet invisibly, existent."

The similarities between the 'seed essence' of the tantric BINDU (thig le), and 'the mystical seed' or the 'primal point' of the Kabala are of extraordinary significance in the context of the Promethean myth. The levels of enquiry that open up here in the Kabala, are too profound to be dealt with by a student such as myself. We complete this section with a prayer to YOD from *The Magical Calendar of Tycho Brahe* :

"The One Lettered Name of God - YOD  
 One, the beginning and end of all things;  
 without beginning or end -  
 One soul of the World - One world -  
 One Philosophers Stone - One Heart -  
 One Supreme Intelligence  
 Unity, the Love of Harmony and Friendship,  
 The Source and Origin of the Numbers,  
 has nothing preceding or following.  
 One King, the Source of the Light of the Stars,  
 Also One Phoenix in the World."

As we know, YOD corresponds to Uranus and the 10th Arcanum of the Sacred Tarot - 'The Wheel of Fortune'. The key word for this arcanum is CHANGE. A better word is IMPERMANENCE. The English letters 'I', 'J', and 'Y' correspond to the Hebrew YOD. By a wild association, Helmut Wilhelm, in his lectures on the *I Ching* elaborates on the Chinese ideogram/letter 'I'. It is very tempting to find a profound similarity, or at least a solidarity of structure in this quote from Wilhelm:

"The character I, which in translation we have simplified as 'change', belongs to the original stock of the Chinese language... It is often found on oracle bones and early bronze inscriptions. To throw light on the semantics of this word is not easy, for the most divergent explanations exist. Etymologically, form-parallelism seems to have led to the blending of two different complexes in this word. The first meaning seems to have been 'lizard'."

Alluding to the inward fire by which Prometheus put life into man, Michael Maier mentions a symbol referring to the Lampadephoria showing a serpent surrounding in a circle. This is obviously the OUROBOROS, the serpent biting its own tail. With Uranus and Yod, we have many associations between the 'reptile' and 'change' or 'impermanence'. Wilhelm links the Chinese ideogram 'I' to the chameleon as well. Hermetically this is condensed into the symbol of the Ouroboros. The letter YOD, as a point, or bindu of flame, permeates all of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which says that change or impermanence exists within each of the archetypal matrices of the Kabala, or of the sacred Tarot, or of existence itself.

This is revealed in certain Tarot decks where 'The Wheel of Fortune' is labelled 'ROTA'. It is obvious that ROTA is an anagram of TARO. 'Rota' is the Latin for 'wheel'. Thus we can easily replace 'rotate', with the word 'revolve' and then 'revolution'.

Using a triune tantric paradigm of being, we can speculate that the GROUND, the PATH and the GOAL are three aspects of existence. If we treat the full series of the 22 Letters as a spectrum of containers,

or embodiments of the Mystery of Being, of Life itself - we could say that impermanence, revolution, or change is the ground of being. That is, change and impermanence are the only constant factors on this level of phenomena. If we place the 22 Letters standing upright in a circle, then we have the Path, which is circular and rotates, without beginning or end, like the Ouroboros, the Aleph eating the Tau, the Alpha devouring the Omega. In his book *The Cipher of Genesis*, Carlo Suares says:

"The twenty-two graphs which are used as letters in the Hebrew alphabet are twenty-two proper names originally used to designate different states or structures of the one cosmic energy, which is essence and semblance of all that is."

The 22 letters with their flames of YOD's, are the path and point to the starry heavens above (The Hermetic Law : 'As above, so below'. This entire unitary meta-programme is the GOAL. In his *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice*, Professor H.V. Guenter links the Tantra to the Kabala with this mention of the mystic Tibetan 'spell-letters', "the 'yi-ge 'khor-loshogs chen sa' level where the universe is present as a rotating procession of spell-letters." Each letter evokes a vision which links up with other letters in an endless progression.

It is not only Fire that Prometheus steals from the Gods. It is the Fire of Impermanence. Fire and Light are two degrees of the same cosmic energy - we could say that Light is the Ground of Being.

There are many associations of Mercury/Hermes with change. ROTA/Rotation as the Wheel of Fortune is also connected to the Wheel of Ezekiel, which is another code for YOD/Uranus/10. Zain writes: "In humanity, as composed of two 5's, 10 indicates the whole man to consist of both man and woman, and that their union commences a new and higher phase of existence."

Writing about the 'I' Wilhelm again confirms a link between the Chinese ideogram and YOD: "Another explanation finds in the character 'I' a combination of Sun and Moon, that is of the two fundamental forces, yin and yang."

Perhaps the brilliant inspiration and inventiveness of natives of Uranus could be attributed to this union of opposites, and to the existential awareness of impermanence and change which allows greater 'flow' in personal evolution. This meta-programmatic ideology is confirmed by a study of *Atalanta Fugiens*. The core image is 'The Burning Salamander' - a suitable symbol for the reptilian energies of change and impermanence.

This is a section from a book in process entitled *The Burning Salamander*, an exploration of the Hermetic Master, Michael Maier. This work will be available from Lapis Publications, P.O. Box 15438, Cape Town, South Africa.

# Pontanus and the Sophic Fire

Graham Knight ©

The Text - *The Sophic Fire* by John Pontanus - 1624

"I, John Pontanus, have travelled through many countries, that I might know the certainty of the philosopher's stone: and I found many deceivers, but no true philosophers, which put me upon incessant studying, and making many doubts, till at length I found out the truth. But when I had attained the knowledge of the matter in general, yet I erred at least two hundred times, before I could attain to know the singular thing itself, with the work and practice thereof.

"First, I began with the putrefaction of the matter, which I continued for nine months together, and obtained nothing. I then for some certain time tried a Balneum Marie, but in vain [1]. After that, I used a fire of calcination for three months space, and still found myself out of the way. I essayed all sorts of distillations and sublimations, as the philosophers, Geber, Archelaus, and all the rest of them have prescribed, and yet found nothing: In sum, I attempted to perfect the whole work of alchemy by all imaginable and likely means - as by horse-dung, baths, ashes and other heats of divers kinds, all which are found in philosopher's books, yet without success. I yet continually for three years together studied the books of the philosophers, and that chiefly in Hermes, whose concise words comprehend the sum of the whole matter, viz. the secret of the philosophers' stone, by an obscure way of speaking, of what is superior, and what is inferior, to wit, of heaven and earth. Therefore our operation which brings the matter into being, in the first, second and third work, is not any of those things mentioned above and found in the books of the

philosophers. Shall I demand then, what it is that perfects the work, since the wise men have thus concealed it? Truly, being moved with a generous spirit I will declare it, with the complement of the whole work.

"The Lapis Philosophorum, therefore is but one, though it has many names, which before you conceive them, will be very difficult. For it is watery, airy, fiery, earthy: it is salt, sulphur, mercury and phlegm; it is sulphurous, yet it is argent vive; it has many superfluities, which are turned into the true essence by the help of our fire. He that separates anything from the subject or matter, thinking it to be necessary, wholly errs in his philosophy. That which is superfluous, unclean, filthy, feculent, and in a word, the whole substance of the subject is transmuted or changed in a perfect, fixed, and spiritual body, by the help of our fire, which the wise men never revealed, and therefore it is, that few attain to this art, as thinking that to be superfluous and impure, which is not.

"It behoves us now to enquire after the properties of 'our fire' and how it agrees with our matter, according to that which I have said, viz. that a transmutation may be made, though the fire is not such as to burn the matter, separating nothing from it, nor dividing the pure parts from the impure, as the philosophers teach, but our fire transmutes and changes the whole subject into purity. Nor does it sublime after the manner of Geber's sublimation, nor the sublimations or distillations of Arnoldous, or others: but it is perfected in a short time.

"It is a matter mineral, equal, continuous, vapours or fumes not, unless too much provoked; partakes of sulphur, and is taken otherwise than from matter. It destroys all things, dissolves, congeals, coagulates and calcines, adapted to penetrate, and is a compendium, without any great cost. And that is the fire, with a gentle heat, soft or remiss, by which the whole work is perfected, with all the proper sublimations. They who read Geber, with all the rest of the philosophers, though they should survive a hundred thousand years, yet they would not be able to comprehend it, for that this fire is found by a profound cogitation only, which being once apprehended, may then be gathered out of books - and not before.

"The error, therefore, in this work, proceeds chiefly from a not knowing or understanding of the true fire, which is one of the moving principles that transmutes the whole matter into the true philosophers' stone; and therefore diligently find it out. Had I found that first, I had never been two hundred times mistaken in the pursuit of the matter I so long sought after. For which cause sake, I wonder not that so many, and so great men, have not attained unto the work. They have erred, they do err, and they will err; because the philosophers, Artephius only excepted, have concealed the principle or proper agent.

And unless I had read Artepheus, and sensibly understood his speech, I had never arrived to the complement of the work.

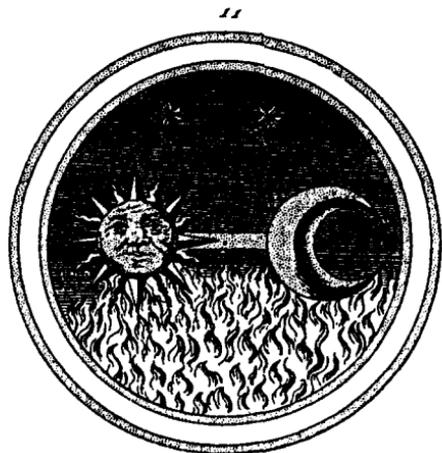
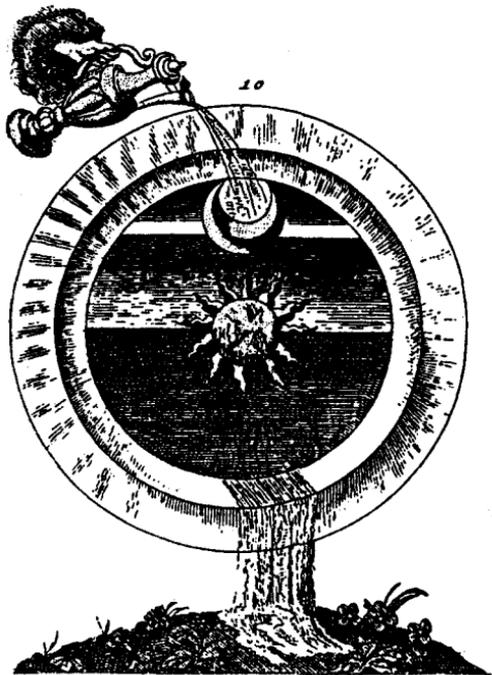
"Now the principle part is this: Let the matter be taken and diligently ground with a philosophical contrition, put upon the fire, with such a proportion of heat that it only excite or stir up the matter; and in short time that fire, without any laying on of hands, will complete the whole work, because it putrefies, corrupts, generates and perfects the whole work, and makes the three principle colours, viz. the black, white, and red to appear. And by the means of this our fire, the medicine will be multiplied by the addition of the crude matter, not only in quantity, but also in quality or virtue. Therefore seek out this fire with all thy industry, for having once found it, thou shalt accomplish thy desire, because it performs the whole work, and is the true key of all the philosophers, which they never yet revealed. Consider well of what I have spoken, otherwise it will be hid from thine eyes.

"Being moved with generosity, I have written these things, that I might speak plainly, this fire is not transmuted with the matter, because it is nothing of the matter, as I have before declared and these things I have though fit to speak, as a warning to the prudent sons of Art, that they spend not their money unprofitably, but may know what they ought to look after; for by this only they may attain to the perfection of the secret, and by no other means."

[Translated by Eirenaeus Orandus, in Flamel's Hieroglyphs, published in London, 1624; from the Latin version in the later *Theatrum Chemicum*.]

Pontanus' Sophic Fire represents, at the climax of serious alchemical endeavours, the most concise yet comprehensive attempt at describing and differentiating between the twin fires of the Praxis. As a visual elaboration of the same point, I would recommend the first eighteen plates from Barchusen's *Traite Symbolique de la Pierre Philosophale*, published as a tail piece to his work *Elementa Chimiæ* in 1718. Here too the distinction is drawn between a fire which penetrates the Materia, and one which simply maintains a warmth external to the Hermetic Vessel.

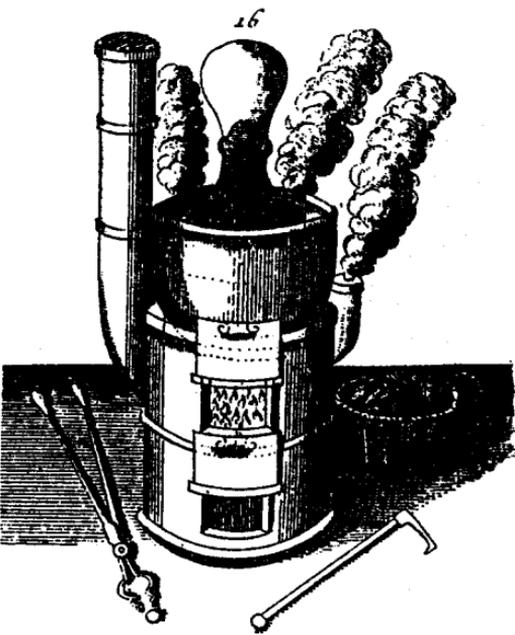
After some general introductory comments, Pontanus lists some of the fires he erroneously used as the Sophic Fire in his early experiments [1]. The Bain or Bañeum Marie was named after Maria Prophetessa, a 3rd century source with possibly an historical figure at its heart. The water bath was heated and the Vessel placed within it, to provide a moderate and evenly distributed heat. Likewise, dung was often packed around the Vessel, since its decay and fermentation produces a mild even heat. (Additionally, the Alchemists must have approved of the symbolism by which something so lowly and despised became the vehicle of transformation). What Pontanus terms 'a fire of calcination' is an external heat fierce enough to reduce the Materia within the Vessel to ashes. All authorities agree that such



avolent heat will destroy the soul of the metallic salts [2].

Having rejected these lesser fires, Pontanus relates how he searched throughout the written works of the Art for a clue, finding it in works attributed to 'Hermes' [3], and then he gives a profound key to the way in which his text should be read - 'our operation which brings the matter into being, in the first, second and third work, is not any of those things mentioned above...' (i.e. the lesser, external fires). The 'operation', it becomes clear, refers to the Fire, and actually creates the matter at each level, including the primary stage. This Fire is at once substance, action and quality.

Pontanus emphasises that the entire subject or matter is used in the Work - 'That which is superfluous, unclean, filthy, feculent, and in a word, the whole substance of the subject is transmuted or changed in a perfect, fixed, and spiritual body, by the help of our fire'. Note that in Plate 10 of Barchusen the water (or Fire) passes through the Proxima Materia [4], and that the vessel is not sealed and placed within a source of heat until plate 16. In other words, the Sophic Fire acts upon the Materia not by heat as commonly understood, but by a penetrating transformation that alters the Materia in its totality - it is the vinegar of the wise, that reduces to first principles without the destructive ferocity of calcination. 'Let the matter be taken and diligently ground with a philosophical contrition (the Fire), put upon the fire (external heat), with such



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a proportion of heat that it only excite or stir up the matter...' [5]

The sealed vessel contains the Materia and the Fire or vinegar, and with the addition of a continuous mild heat the stages of the Work occur without any further intervention. Not until the coherent world is achieved is the vessel broken (Barchusen, fig. 49) and the piercing liquid reintroduced. The vinegar acts upon, but is not part of, the Materia.

## Notes

[1] It is important from the very beginning to understand that these fires are not 'wrong', and that certain of them may be crucial at various stages of the Work. The point being made is that they do not constitute the 'Sophic Fire' - the transforming penetration of Matter. However, one should note that even here there is a double secret, for the author of *Hydropyrographum Hermeticum* states: "This supernatural Fire... they term it Balneum Mariae, a moist Horse-dung Menstruum, Urine, Blood, Aqua Vitae, and the like... And what is signified by Horse-dung... is meant the water of the Prima Materia, for it is warm and moist like Horse-dung, but it is no common Horse-dung, as many ignorant persons do suppose and understand".

[2] "If he be over-provoked, he will certainly break the vessel, and fly, and leave thee the ruins of thy glass..." Eirenaeus.

[3] See the note on Hermes in the section on authorities.

[4] I have discussed the concept of a Proxima (as opposed to Prima) Materia before in articles published by the Journal - the illustration from Reusner used in my article 'Lilith and the Primal Water' from issue No. 40, resumes allegorically the same point. As R.W. Councill puts it in *Apologia Alchymiae* "...this preparation of the solvent, and the preparation of the 'mineral' base which has to be dissolved, or as they put it 'calcined by our fire into a redness', are of the first work."

"The aerial soul is the secret fire of our philosophy, our oil, our mystic water" - Ripley, *Opera omnia chemica*.

"...the permanent water, out of which water our most precious stone is generated" - *Turba philosophorum*.

This water is termed variously poison, vinegar, wine, serpent. (See 'In Turbam philosophorum exercitationes', *Art. aurif*, which expands on this concept, or the lists given in Ruland's *Lexicon*.)

[5] Again, note the clarity with which the distinction is made between the fires, and the level of external heat emphasised.

[The first thing to be noticed about the authorities cited by Pontanus is that they are all 'practical' alchemists - their writings relate directly to a material, chemical praxis. When considering the meaning of 'The Sophic Fire' we can, at least tentatively, discard the sexual and spiritual levels of alchemical symbolism.]

HERMES of course was a name taken by pseudepigraphic writers throughout the history of alchemic texts, since the god-man Hermes Trismegistus was credited with having invented the Art at the very start of Egyptian culture. This myth was already well established in Alexandrian texts of the third century A.D. Perhaps Pontanus refers here especially to that compilation under the authorship of Hermes Trismegistus that contains the famous Emerald Tablet, entering Europe from Arabia in the 10th century and republished many times - for example, in the *Ars Chemica*, Strasburg 1566, along with other 'hermetic' texts.

ARCHELAUS of Miletus, pupil of Anaxagoras. Or else Archelaos, known also as Arisleus, an 8th century Byzantine author, preserved in Syriac texts and passed over into Europe from Arabia some time in the 10th or 11th century.

GEBER, or Djaber ben Hayyan Ec-Confy, an Arabic writer of the 8th or 9th century. It is likely that Pontanus is referring to works by the Pseudo-Geber, an anonymous writer of European origin writing in the 13th or 14th century, probably in Spain. The latter was both more advanced in chemistry, and more detailed in his descriptions of the chemical Work. Whichever author is intended, he is poorly regarded by Pontanus.

ARTEPHIUS, supposedly Al Toghrâi, a 12th century Arab, but more likely to have been active close to the publishing date of his extant works - the *Clavis Majoris Sapientiae*, published in Paris, 1609; *Liber Secretus*, published in Frankfurt, 1785. Important because he emphasises that the work occurs throughout in a sealed vessel. He is the authority from which Pontanus claims to have learnt most, "And unless I had read Artephius, and sensibly understood his speech, I had never arrived to the complement of the work".

ARNOLDOUS - Presumably meaning Arnold of Villanova, 14th century. Works attributed to Arnold, such as the *Novum Lumen*, quote liberally from the Pseudo-Geber.