



EDITORIAL

My work is at present undergoing another crisis, primarily as a result of the fact that the workload has outgrown my capacity to keep up with it. The central problem is that I have 30 titles in the Magnum Opus and Hermetic Research series combined, with forty back issues of the Journal to be bound up as 10 yearbooks in paperback format, making some 40 books in all. As many of my subscribers will be aware all of these books are prepared in small batches (of 50 to 100 copies), printed by myself on a high quality photocopier, and then hand bound either in paperback or hardcover format.

Some years ago when I only had a few titles, this method of production worked well enough, but now the backlist and volume of incoming orders has grown so greatly, no sooner have I completed one batch of books than I have to begin printing another which is out of print. It is not surprising that many people have noticed that of the past few volumes I have issued, Kabbalistic Diagrams, Atalanta Fugiens, Five Books of Dee, Poliphilus, my contribution primarily was in the editing, layout and production. I have

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CONTENTS

ISSUE NUMBER 42

- 1 Editorial
- 3 News and Information
- 4 **Gnostic Cosmogony**
Martin Levin ©
- 14 **The Twelve Figures of Orthellius**
Thomas Willard ©
- 25 **Theodorus of Asine and the Kabbalah**
Stephen Ronan ©
- 37 **Al-Kemi : Hermetic, Occult, Political, and Private Aspects of R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz.** - A review of André VandenBroeck's book by Joscelyn Godwin ©
- 42 **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.

just not had the time over the past three years to undertake any significant research or creative writing.

Establishing my work as a Registered Charitable Trust has not significantly altered this situation, though this rescued from an even deeper crisis that assailed me when I relocated my work in Wales. In some ways the Trust has brought other pressures and restraints into my work. While I ran the publishing work as a business venture I could sell my books as limited editions at prices which yielded enough profit to keep my business afloat, however, a Charitable Trust set up to disseminate knowledge of the Hermetic Tradition cannot limit this dissemination to 250 people. Thus there is a considerable pressure upon me to produce the Magnum Opus series in a cheap paperbound edition (and also many of these are reaching the end of their run).

The cost of having these books printed and bound by a commercial company would be around £2-3000 per book for a small run of 3000 copies, which with 40 titles requires a capital investment of £80-100,000 - funds which are just not available to me. So I have had to do this by using my time and labour binding up the paperbacks in small batches. Every book purchased from the Trust is entirely from beginning to end produced by me alone. Such an ongoing task precluded me from creative writing or exploring in depth the hermetic material. I had to some extent been accepting this situation and putting up with the difficulties, however, my experience with the Enochian Chessmen project has forced me to reappraise my work situation. The chessmen required expensive colour photocopying and encapsulation. The unit costs of colour work are very high unless the volume is extremely large (and we are talking of 20,000 copies and up) as is also the case with encapsulation. As it would obviously be impossible to sell such a quantity, I was forced to find ways of doing the work myself to cut the unit costs. Each set of

chessmen required 3-4 hours of my time as proved to be the case also with the boards. As I began to produce these it became obvious that I could in no way afford to invest this amount of time in the production. With most of September, October and November taken up with the Chessmen project, I decided reluctantly to limit the edition to 100 (or even 50 copies). The boards I have already cut to 25 copies only, all of which have been sold. In reality I have produced at relatively low price a potentially valuable limited edition item for a very few people, who in future stand to make a considerable amount of money when its rarity is appreciated. It has never been my intention to produce such collectors items, my wish has always been to disseminate knowledge and encourage interest in the hermetic tradition. I have always tried to keep the price of my book down to an affordable level (compare these with the price of the *Hermeticism and the Renaissance* book reviewed later in this Journal, produced and subsidised by a conglomerate of US Universities).

In the past few weeks I have set myself the goal of transforming the structure within which I have been working, and trying to fashion a better vehicle for my work to unfold. I don't believe my task is to be a publisher-bookbinder, or producer of expensive limited edition works, but I feel my contribution lies rather in researching, writing and disseminating knowledge of the Hermetic tradition.

At present I am not quite sure just how this restructuring can be achieved, although there are certain possibilities under consideration, however, I am sure that my work will emerge out of this period of difficulty strengthened in some way.

Adam McLean

News and Information

A Piece of "Rosicrucian" Music Restored

I recently took a couple of days off from producing the Hermetic Journal and worked on transcribing a piece of music that I found in the Simon Studion "Naometria" manuscript dated 1604. Simon Studion has been considered by many as a proto-Rosicrucian and the ideas contained in his vast unpublished manuscript the "Naometria" may have influenced those who a decade later worked in the Rosicrucian current. There is an article on "The Naometria of Simon Studion" in The Hermetic Journal No. 19 Spring 1983. The piece of music is a six part motet, which allegorises a fateful interweaving of the destinies of Henry of Navarre and France (the lily), King James of England and Scotland (represented by a Rose on the manuscript), and Frederick of Wurttemberg (a Star), as Lily, Nymph and Lion. When I first came across this piece some years ago I paid it little attention thinking it would probably be rather trite and of poor musical quality, however I did try on a few occasions to inspire some colleagues to attempt to transcribe it and see just how it sounded. But some days ago my curiosity got the better of me and I decided I must go ahead do this myself, and it didn't prove too difficult to make out the lines of music and enter these into a MIDI synthesiser. The music sounded very fine to my ear so I have recorded this on a cassette tape, in two versions, one with strings in the three upper voices and horns in the tenor and base, and another with synthesized voice sounds. Each version is about ten minutes in length. This tape is now available at £3.00 (\$7.00 inc post) for anyone interested in hearing this allegorical music connected with the Rosicrucian period.

Correspondence Course in Practical Alchemy

Those who read French or have any connection with French alchemical schools will be aware of "Les Philosophes de la Nature" an organisation which gives instruction in practical alchemy near Paris, run by Jean Dubuis. Much of the teaching is done by a series of correspondence lessons which have till now only been available in French. However, Bill Van Doren in the States has had this correspondence course translated and is making it available in English. I have no idea as to the cost, but those interested should write direct to:

The Philosophers of Nature, P.O. Box 11218, Boulder, Co 80301, USA.

The Westcott Enochian Chessmen

As I have indicated in the editorial opposite, I have completely discontinued production of the boards. Also there are only a few copies left from the first batch of chessmen (these should be sold by early in December), and I doubt whether I have the patience to undertake another batch of fifty. The work will be available for the foreseeable future only in the paperback edition with black and white illustrations of the men for £8.95 (\$18).

My term	Plotinus Neoplatonism [3rd C]	Kashmir Shaivism [11th C]	Suhrawardi Sufism [12th C]	Lurianic Kabbalah [16th C]	Steiner Anthroposophy [20th C]	Aurobindo [20th C]
Absolute Reality	The One	Paramashiva	"Light of Lights"	En Sof (Infinite)	—	The Supreme
Manifest Absolute	The One	Pure Tattwas (Shiva-Shakti)	Victorial Light	En Sof	—	Supermind (Truth-Consciousness)
Atzilutic ("Divine")	Nous (Divine Mind)	Pure Tattwas	Jabarut (Pure Lights)	Atzilut (Manifest God)	Spiritual hierarchies	Overmental
Archangelic	Noetic soul	Pure-Impure	Malakut (Angels and Souls)	Beriah (Archangelic)	Spiritual hierarchies	Spiritual Mental
Angelic	Rational soul	Impure (Subtle)	Malakut	Yetzirah (Angelic)	Devachan ("spiritual")	(Pure) Mental
Psychic	Irrational soul	Impure	Mithal (Interworld)	Assiah	Astral ("soul")	"Vital"
Etheric	"Nature"	Impure	Mithal	Assiah	Etheric ("life")	Subtle Physical
Physical	sense-world	impure ("earth")	matter	Assiah	Physical	Physical

"Divine" in this case refers not to the Supreme Divine or Absolute, but to the greatest "Gods".

TABLE 1. A Correlation of different Emanationist Cosmologies.

Gnostic Cosmogony

Martin Levin ©

The Gnostic Tradition

This article was in part inspired by Adam McLean's article on Kabbalistic cosmology and modern physics (*Hermetic Journal* No 39). What I have tried to do is to extend the implications of that article by describing realities which existed even before any hint of physical reality had come about. It is suggested that the En Sof (or Ein-Sof) of the McLean article is not the Absolute at all, but a kind of limitless Etheric reality (using the term 'Etheric' in the Anthroposophical sense), which I have called the 'Etheric sea'. This Etheric sea was in turn the result of higher spiritual processes.

Emanation and Dramaturgy

Gnostic cosmogony has a two-fold understanding of the origin of the Cosmos. On the one hand there is seen to be a process of emanation from the Source. What this means is that 'Creation' is considered as a process of successive outpouring, in that the Absolute Reality gives rise to the Divine reality, the Divine reality gives rise to the Archangelic reality (or whatever term one prefers), and so on down to matter.

On the other hand there is the concept of a Cosmic Crisis and Redemption. This sees the emanation process interrupted by a

catastrophic crisis, the Fall. The Fall here, however, is not something which occurs within the creation (as in, for example, Christianity), but rather prior to it. This Crisis then sets the milieu in which further emanation, and the creation of the physical world, occurs. Thus the Cosmos is seen as moving in a specific direction: towards the rectification of the original Fault.

But first, emanation.

There is a popular tendency nowadays to confuse all the higher (supra-physical) levels of reality. Thus we find otherwise excellent writers such as Fritjof Capra (*The Tao of Physics*) confusing the quantum physical with the Absolute, or Carl Jung (*The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*) confusing the psychic realms with biological instincts. In contrast with this, I adopt a more hierarchical picture, like that of the Suhrawardian and Shaikhi Sufis [1], the Lurianic and post-Lurianic Kabbalists, and the Kashmir Shaivites. These esoteric teachings are unanimous in seeing reality as a process of emanation, in which there exist worlds beyond worlds.

Thus one could say there is the psychic world (or 'astral plane'), the angelic world, the archangelic world, and the world of gods; hierarchy upon hierarchy, world upon world, a kind of epiphany or manifestation of the Divine; all looking downwards to matter, and also looking upwards to the godhead. Reality is thus seen to have a specific 'structure', which has been independently described by different esoteric cosmologies. The similarities between these emanationist cosmologies are such that it is possible to correlate them, and so formulate a kind of 'map' of the structure of reality. Table 1 has attempted to do this, and shows levels of reality according to some different esoteric cosmologies, with my synthesis at the left.

But all this only gives a static (or unchanging) picture of the reality structure as it is at present. Moreover, it is somewhat simplistic, as it assumes that the further 'up' the scale of being one goes, the more Light; the further 'down', the more Darkness or negativity. Thus a man, who possesses reason and spiritual comprehension, is further up the scale of being than an animal, which is only guided by instinct. The error of this position which was advocated by the Neoplatonists was succinctly pointed out by the critic who said: "If that is so, a man should be morally superior to a horse!" But, as anyone who considers the loyalty and sincerity of the animal in relation to the selfishness and greed of the human knows, this is clearly not the case.

So we actually have two parameters: Spirit-Matter, and Good-Evil. The gradation of Spirit-Matter is shown in Table 1; the gradation of Good-Evil is rather more difficult, for it involves a dynamic, rather than a static, view of reality.

Now, 'Creation', or the origination of the Cosmos, can be thought of approximately in terms of six stages. These are:

The original duality of Being and Non-being.

The 'Luciferic' Fall and origin of negativity.

The Descent of the Divine.

The emanation of the Gods and Creation of the higher worlds.

The creation of etheric worlds.

The creation of the physical universe.

The first four of these stages, which represent the pre-ethero-physical realities, will be briefly reviewed sequentially. The last two stages, especially the last, are equivalent to the realities Adam McLean described in his article, and will be considered together.

The Pre-Ethero-Physical Processes of Creation

The Original Duality of Being and Non-Being. First of all of course, there was only the Absolute and nothing but the Absolute. But the existence of the Absolute, which is pure Being, brings about the existence of its opposite, or 'shadow', which is Non-being (exactly how this occurs is too difficult and obscure to go into here). The Lurianic Kabbalists adopt one position (the concept of *Tzimtzum*), Meher Baba another [2], the Classical Gnostics still another, and so on. So we have the Absolute, which is infinite Consciousness, Bliss, etc. Following Sri Aurobindo, we can refer to the 'shadow', as the *Inconscient* (or 'Inconscious'). It was this Inconscient that provided the theatre for all subsequent creation.

There were most probably many other stages between this first stage and the next - the Lurianic Kabbalists seem to indicate such things. But because these processes are vaguely described, and not relevant to an understanding of the present world, we can pass over them here.

The 'Luciferic' Fall. Before the present Gods (Cosmic Creative Powers) or World of Atzilut (Table 1), there was a previous Divine World. This world however was characterised by too much negativity (to use the Lurianic term, too much severity or *Din* - 'Judgement'): which meant that the Powers in it Fell (a distorted account of this Fall is still to be had in the Christian myth of Lucifer). From their Fall, the World of Darkness - the Ahrimanic World (from the Zoroastrian and Manichaean term *Ahriman*, the anti-God or Darkness) - was generated. Thus the Darkness and Chaos precedes the Light. This indeed is what we find for example in Chinese Taoism (first there was Chaos, then the Supreme Pivot - T'ai Chi) and in Judaism ("evening came, and morning came, the first day" [Gen 1:5]).

The Divine Descent. But if there was only Darkness, there could be positive creation. In order to rectify this situation, and restore

creation, a two-pronged Counter-Attack was undertaken from the Source.

First the Divine Itself, in the form variously referred to as the *Anthropos* or 'Primordial Human' (Manichaeism [3]) or the Supreme Mother (Sir Aurobindo, as described mythologically in his *Savitri*), consented to Incarnate, in order to Transform and Transmute the Fallen nature (as well as the Inconscience in general) from within. As a result of this Supreme Act of Self-Sacrifice, Negativity-Chaos ("Matter" conceived of as the "feminine principle"). In addition, it was from this Descent that the Soul, the indwelling Divine Individuality or Higher Self, came about [4].

The Emanation of the Gods. Secondly (or simultaneously) there was a Second Emanation of Gods; the Present World of Atzilut. From this Present Atzilut descended the creative Light and the emanated beings which fashioned the Cosmos (the sub-sequent Archangelic, Angelic and Psychic Worlds).

This can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

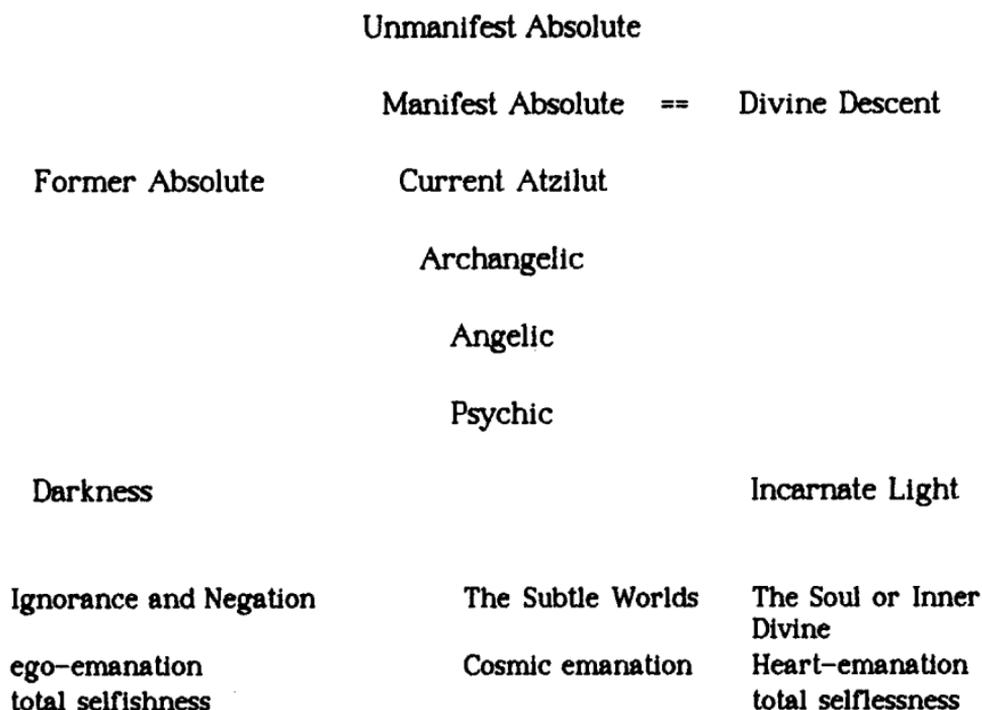


Figure 1. The Three processes of Creation

There was however a problem. This was that the Cosmos (from the Archangelic level down) was still predominantly Dark; indeed, was of the very nature of Darkness. Therefore, as the Light descended it

became progressively more diluted by the Darkness, and so progressively less Potent, the further Down it went. This is why Plotinus, and the Lurianic and Post-Lurianic Kabbalists, speak of the Higher Worlds as being realms of pure Light and Truth, but the Lower ones as being progressively more negative.

In the Lowest World, which the Kabbalists call the World of Assiah (or 'Making') (see Table 1), the Darkness predominated totally over the Light; and often the Light was captured by the Darkness, the result being a Mixture which was neither pure Light nor pure Darkness.

Only in the very centre of Assiah, in the densest possible regions - the regions of Gross (Physical) and Subtle (Etheric) Matter - where the Supreme Mother had Incarnated, was there a preponderance of Light (fig 2).

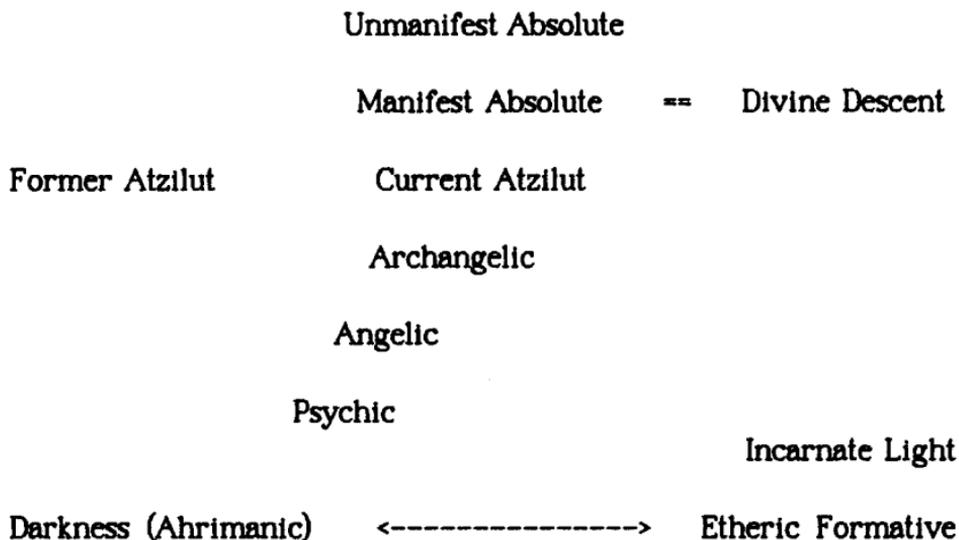


Figure 2. The tension of Light and Dark

The Importance of Physical Reality

Thus, the Ethero-physical (gross and subtle physical) is the key, for it is the region in which spiritual evolution takes place; in which the Soul can progress to greater and greater perfection (which is the real reason for reincarnation or rebirth); and in which the Divine Presence (of Mother-Mater, or Shekinah) is found. And it is only in the Physical that the final victory over Darkness will be won.

This is why it is the region in which the pure (Atzilutic) Gods are active. According to the Austrian spiritual philosopher Rudolph Steiner, the Spiritual Hierarchies manifest primarily at the Etheric level. Steiner, for example, speaks of the 'Cosmic Christ' active in the Etheric, and the importance this has for the future spiritual evolution of humanity [5].

The Etheric and Physical reality is therefore more important than the various intermediate realities (psychic, angelic, archangelic) between the physical/etheric and the Divine. Within those other realities there are also other forms of beings - gods, daimons, asuras, elementals, angels, and innumerable others - which follow their own evolution, although many are also concerned with the physical world and with man, some for good motives, others for bad. These intermediate realities cannot be described in terms of physical laws and sciences applicable to them, such as Magic, Numerology, etc.

Precisely because of its importance, the Ahrimanic Forces are extremely active in this physical world, because they wish to destroy it. And the Mixed forces are also active here, because they derive satisfaction from toying with humans and other incarnate beings, or because they wish to enforce their own manifestation here, in independence of, even if not actively opposed to, the Divine. And Divine Souls (or 'Higher Selves') are also active here, because this is where the Work is to be done (fig 3).

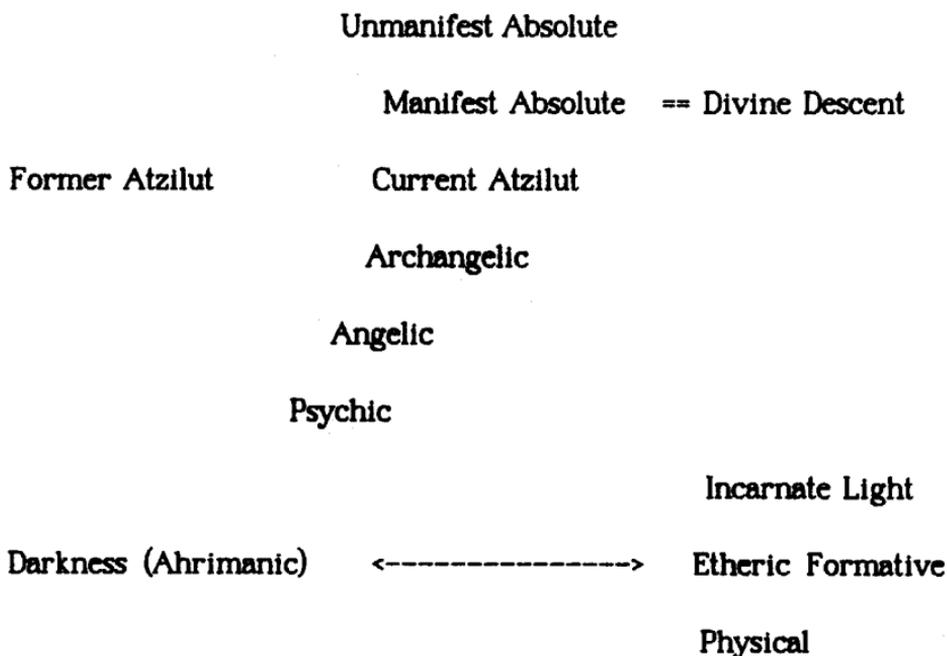


Figure 3. The Relation between the higher worlds and the physical

The Origin of the Physical Universe

In order to understand the origin of the physical universe, we must understand first the Etheric reality, which is the intermediate reality between the psychic (astral, mental, etc.) and the physical. The Etheric reality is a formative reality, determined by Projective rather than Euclidean geometry [6].

The Etheric reality is truly fascinating. It is not physical, yet also not psychic. It is the locus of various paranormal and parapsychical phenomena such as UFOs [7], Reich's Orgone, subtle Earth energies, and also Rupert Sheldrake's Morphogenetic fields [8]. Morphogenetic fields appear to be synonymous with Harold Saxon Burr's 'Life-fields', and the curious energies the physical (electrostatic) manifestation of which is detected through Kirlian photography.

Similarly, various quantum physical phenomena, which are paradoxical according to the laws of Newtonian science, such as the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, the collapse of the wave function, and so on, pertains to the process of manifestation from the Etheric to the Physical. The postulated, but never experimentally detected, Magnetic Monopole (the counterpart of the electron), actually exists at the Etheric level; it is, in other words, the Etheric counterpart of the physical electron, and vice-versa [9].

Quantum physics therefore can be considered as descriptive of the interface between the Etheric and Physical realities. The Etheric reality itself could be considered 'para-physical'; the physical reality is the 'Newtonian-Cartesian' reality.

But although quantum physics is pretty much mathematical, mathematics itself first existed at a higher level, before becoming the laws of physical reality. Plato, for example, speaks of the World of Ideas, and this would seem to correspond to an aspect of my 'Angelic World' (or the Angelic-Physical interface, to be more precise); Rudolph Steiner, in fact, locates the Platonic Ideas in 'Devachan' [10]. Above that level, there would only be 'relationships' (e.g. the Shakta Tantric diagrams of inter-locked triangles, representing the polarities of Shiva and Shakti, male and female) but not mathematics or geometry as we generally know it.

We can go back in time to the beginning of the physical universe, and discover how this emerged from the larger etheric reality. As I see it, the process went as follows :

Before any of the present physical and etheric structures were formed, there was nothing but a vast, infinite etheric ocean. This seems to correspond to the physicist's idea of an infinite sea of potential energy, outwardly a vacuum, in which there occurs that

vacuum fluctuation we know as the 'Big Bang' [11]. A very similar idea occurs in Lurianic Kabbalah, with the concept of the Tzimtzum or contraction of the Godhead (En Sof). According to this idea, the Light of the En Sof was so overwhelming that no separate beings could exist. In order to make space for creation, the En Sof withdrew or contracted (tzimtzum) its Light, and into the resulting 'Space' (tehiru) there emanated the successive worlds. [Note: the Lurianic Cosmogony is multifaceted and rich in suggestions. Thus on the one hand, the Tzimtzum can be used as an explanation for the origin of the 'shadow' or Inconscient; on the other as referring to the origin of the physical cosmos]. As Adam McLean has shown in his excellent article, the parallels between this cosmology and the latest concept in modern physics; e.g. the 'Inflationary Universe' (Allan Guth), Higgs fields, symmetry breaking, etc., are quite astonishing [12].

But one can go back even further than this. Before the Etheric sea had come about, there existed the formless chaotic pre-matter, which, following the Greek metaphysicians, I refer to as Hyle. It was into this Hyle that the first supreme Incarnation or Avataric descent of the Divine occurred (see above). Through that Supreme sacrifice, the very nature of Hyle itself changed, processes were set up, etheric worlds formed, and so on, all leading to the ultimate culmination in the formation of the physical universe.

So physical creation occurred as a follow-up to the Divine Descent. It was not part of the emanation sequence from Atzilut through the Archangelic, Angelic, and Psychic worlds, but rather came about directly as a result of the action of the Supreme within Etheric or spiritualised Matter. In this sense then, Jews, Christians, and Moslems are correct when they speak of creation occurring as a direct Fiat or Act of Will on the part of 'God'. Where this cosmology differs from them is in its concept of God: not as an old man with a beard sitting upon a throne, a cosmic autocrat, but rather as the Power of total Love which had consented to sacrifice itself for the sake of restoring Creation (or rather, for the future potential creation, for when this act occurred, creation itself had not yet come about). There are certain parallels here with the Christian idea of incarnation, irrespective of the obvious very strong differences between the Christian and the esoteric-gnostic positions.

References

- [1] see Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, Princeton University Press, 1977.
- [2] *The Everything and the Nothing*, pp 85-6, Meher House, Sydney 1963.

- [3] see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, ch. 9, Beacon Press, Boston, 1963.
- [4] I have already described this in greater detail elsewhere; see my article 'The Gnostic Cosmology of Max Theon', *Eco-Gnosis* no. 2, Feb 88 (copies available from the author - 14/287 Barkly St, St Kilda, Vic, 3182, Australia).
- [5] see Rudolph Steiner, *The Etherisation of the Blood*, Rudolph Steiner Press, London; and this and other related essays in *The Reappearance of the Christ in the Etheric*.
- [6] George Adams, *Physical and Etheric Spaces*, Rudolph Steiner Press, London, 1965, and George Adams and Olive Whicher, *The Plant Between Sun and Earth*, Shambhala edition 1982.
- [7] Trevor, James Constable, *The Cosmic Pulse of Life*, Neville Spearman, 1976.
- [8] Rupert Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life*, Granada, 1981.
- [9] William Tiller, 'Two Space-Time Mirror-like Universes : Some Consequences for Humanity', *Phoenix*, vol 2, No 1, 1978.
- [10] Rudolph Steiner, *Theosophy*, Anthroposophic Press, 1971, pp 101ff.
- [11] Edward P. Tryon, 'Is the Universe a Vacuum Fluctuation?'. *Nature*, vol 246, pp 396-7.
- [12] 'Kabbalistic Cosmology and its Parallels in the 'Big Bang' of Modern Physics', *The Hermetic Journal*, no. 39, Spring 1988.

The
Twelve
Figures
of Orthelius

Thomas Willard ©



In Volume VI of the *Theatrum Chemicum*, there is a set of twelve small woodcuts illustrating the whole work of alchemy. The designs are simple, even stark, and no great achievement as art; I cannot recall having seen any of them reproduced in modern books on alchemy. But they are important in two respects. They are said to illuminate the *Novum Lumen Chemicum* of Michael Sendivogius, one of the most influential works of seventeenth-century alchemy, and with the accompanying commentary they show how Sendivogius was read in Hermetic and early Rosicrucian circles.

The designs first appeared in a German edition:

Michael Sendivogius, the Pole. *The New Chemical Light, divided into twelve tracts and illustrated with old figures and notes lately discovered in Germany and most clearly recut and illuminated. The work and study of Andreas Orthelius, made public as a service to the genuine sons of Hermes.* Erfurt: Printed by Philip Wittel and sold at the bookstore of Johann Birckner, 1624.¹

Andreas Orthelius, who seems to have assembled this edition, also added commentaries on letters by several alchemists and on a passage by Maria Prophetessa. There followed several German verses on alchemy and an abstract of the anonymous *Gloria Mundi*. Orthelius wrote in German, despite the Latin headings of his "Studio" and "Epilogus". He wrote in a simple style, which led Lenglet Dufresnoy to praise him but prompted others to call him a simpleton.² The modern historian Partington thought the shorter commentaries "throw no light".³ However, Jung was fascinated by the "Epilogue of Orthelius" and its reflections on "the 'theology' of the *lapis*".⁴ The reflections show that Orthelius was religiously orthodox (whether Roman Catholic or, more probably, Lutheran) and had no use for heretics or sectarians, and that is all we know of him. (He is not to be confused with the great Dutch geographer Abraham Ortelius.)

Here is the title of his commentary, as it appeared in the *Theatrum Chemicum*.⁵

ORTHELIUS,
A COMMENTATOR ON THE
NEW CHEMICAL LIGHT
OF MICHAEL SENDIVOGIUS,
the Pole, illustrated with XII Figures
discovered in Germany.

*And in the year 1624 in the service of genuine
sons of Hermes made public. Now truly
translated from the German language
into Latin.*

In the preface, Orthelius writes that he discovered a difficult, fragmentary text in German, accompanied by figures. He set out to elucidate the text, "with testimonies from Sendivogius' *Chemical Light*" and has revealed "the author's true sense" with as little torture of words as any intellect could require. Having said this, he reproduces the old text with his corrections and parenthetical insertions. He adds a set of quotations out of Sendivogius and an essay "On the Composition of the Philosophers' Stone". Then come the twelve figures, each under a separate head or chapter. Characteristically, Orthelius quotes the pertinent "text" from his German original, followed by the figure and by an "explication" or "addition"; only once (for Fig. 3) does he say that the text needs no comment. In summarizing, I shall draw principally from the "texts".

The twelve figures may be divided into three equal groups, corresponding to the three stages of alchemy as cited in many accounts. The first four figures illustrate the first or lesser work of alchemy, in which the lower part of the philosophers' stone is produced. Fig. 1 shows a mountain side which, on closer inspection, could consist of clouds at the left side and water at the base: this is the matter which the alchemist must gather, the Adamic earth, which is carried in the air and born in water. The text suggests salt ammoniac (*sal armoniacus* which Rulandus glossed as "the Dissolved Stone").⁶ Fig. 2 shows this air gathered in a glass lute; the lute is connected to a retort, where the air is made to condense and form a mineral water or liquor called "our steel". Fig. 3 shows the condensed liquor being twice rectified back into the lute. Fig. 4. shows the remnant in the retort, the *caput mortum* or phlegm, being poured out and filtered to yield the desired salt; and the salt being churned in the rectified air or spirits to form earthly mercury.

The next four figures illustrate the second work, in which the higher part of the stone is prepared. In Fig. 5, the "water of air" is attracted into a vessel, a process that takes six months, according to the text. Orthelius adds an illustration of a kidney-shaped "marble sponge" that will draw in the moisture and deposit it in a double bag. This process is to be conducted during the winter months. In Fig 6, the newly gathered water is poured into a vessel and left out under clear skies and stars to soak up their influence; the vessel is covered (left) when rain falls. In Fig. 7, the adept unites the lower stone (left) and the higher medium in order to produce the "central salt or crystal" also known as the mother of metals, mercury duplex, water that wets not the hands, water congealed. Next, because common gold and silver are dead, the adept must go to the gold mines or to running rivers for gold that has not been tried in fire. His study and search are shown in Fig. 8.

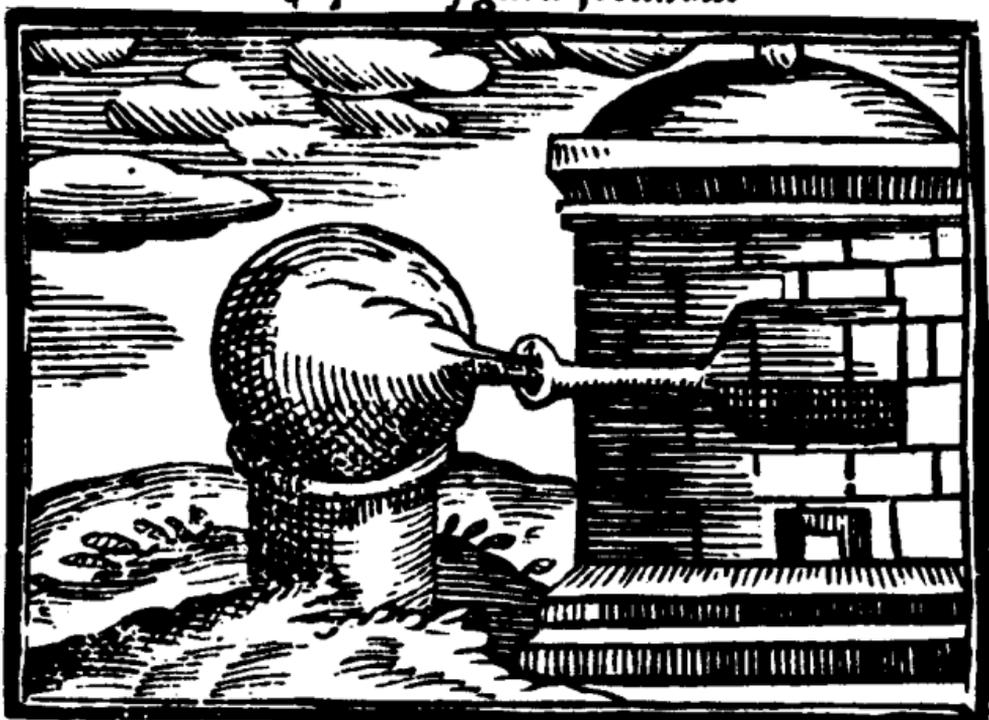
The last four figures show the third work of alchemy: the projection and multiplication.⁷ The adept takes ten parts of philosophical mercury to one part gold or silver, puts them in a vial, and seals it hermetically (Fig. 9). He then heats the vial for three months in a humid fire (Fig. 10). This produces philosophical gold, the true seed of gold. He sows the seed in its own earth, i.e., in the philosophical mercury. The process is analogous to growing plants from seed in the fields or gold from sands in the mines or rivers (Fig. 11). Finally, the work is brought to perfection in an athanor or philosophical furnace, where the sown seeds are heated for seven months (Fig. 12). "Then, by the grace of God, you will find what you have sought."

It is easy to understand why Orthelius found no followers, at least among those who wanted the apocalypse now. His procedure takes a long time indeed: six months, from the autumnal to the vernal

Sequitur figura prima.



Sequitur figura secunda.



Sequitur figura tertia.



equinox, to attract the water of air; three months to heat the philosophical mercury; and seven months to heat the resulting seeds of metals; making the whole procedure last upwards of thirteen months. These specifics are not in Sendivogius, and tend to get ridiculed in the writings of those who, like Thomas Charnock, offer timetables.⁸ But the illustrations are interesting in that they suggest the importance of precipitated air; in this respect, they anticipate the famous *Mutus Liber* and the work of Armand Barbault in our century.⁹ The analogy to husbandry is especially suggestive.

To appreciate Orthelius' place in chemistry, we must consider the place of his work in the *Theatrum Chemicum*, the greatest alchemical collection of its time.¹⁰ The *Theatrum* began as the venture of Lazarus Zetzner, a publisher in Ursel, near Frankfurt, which was then the centre of the occult book trade. The first three volumes appeared in 1602; the fourth was published in Strasbourg in 1613, after Zetzner had moved his business. The most famous of all Zetzner's publications, the *Chymisches Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz*, appeared in 1616, the year of Zetzner's death. A fifth volume of the *Theatrum* was published by his heirs in 1622, and all five volumes were reprinted in 1659 and 1660. A sixth and final volume was issued in 1661, containing works "translated from the German and French languages by Johann Jacob Heilmann, M.D., of Zweibrücken in the Palatinate". Heilmann called himself "A Lover of Theosophy and Philosophy", and referred to his effort, in which he had only one assistant, as a Herculean labour—a reasonable remark given the volume's 772 numbered pages.

Heilmann's dedicatory letters help to confirm the hypothesis of Dame Frances Yates that Rosicrucianism was born out of the ashes of the ill fated Bohemian kingdom.¹¹ The first is addressed to his "benefactor", the most serene Prince Ferdinand, Count of the Rhine Palatinate, Duke of Bavaria, etc., and suggests that he is equally curious about remedies for gout and about *ars transmutataria*. The second is directed to "an anonymous disciple of Chortalasseus" (i.e., Johannes Grasseus); the disciple is identified only as "J.F.H.S., Son of Sendivogius, the most renowned Hermetic philosopher of our age". Heilmann begins by quoting Christ's message to his disciples, to let your light shine before men; he praises his friend's *Mysterium Occultæ Naturæ*, which appears later in the volume, followed by Grasseus' account of alchemy in a letter to the Elector of Cologne; and, in so saying, he makes one suspect that Grasseus was a transmitter of occult learning. This suspicion is born out by "two responses of the F.R.C. to certain of their clients", appended to the translation of Grasseus' *Arca Arcanæ*, and by the fact that Grasseus was a lawyer and statesman in Stalsund, on the Baltic Sea, in close proximity to the Rosicrucian

Sequitur figura quarta.



Figura quinta.



Sequitur figura sexta.



apologist Michael Maier, in Rostok, both writers flourishing circa 1620. The term "Son of Sendivogius" has the ring of a secret society or *schola Hermetica* such as Heilmann mentions, and it recalls the hypothesis, mounted most recently by Robert Schuler, that Sendivogius founded a society of some sort.¹² Gerard Dorn's repeated references to "Paracelsici" in Volume I of the *Theatrum* have similar hints of a secret society, this one preceding the Rosicrucian manifestos.

Orthelius does not mention Grasseus or Rosicrucians, but his work is placed between that of Grasseus and the anonymous disciple, and all three take leads from Sendivogius (also from the *Aurelia Occulta Philosophia* of Georgius Beatus, which immediately follows the works of Sendivogius in Volume IV of the *Theatrum*). His vocabulary is both Paracelsian and Rosicrucian: in a passage on "the scope of the ancient philosophy" he says that the universal medicine was given to "brothers in Christ", and in a passage on the "written and created Word" he writes about the "great mysteries" in nature (*mysteria magna*) and about the "Magical Theosophy" (*Theosophia Magia*).¹³ The first phrase recalls Paracelsus' term for the first matter, *mysterium magnum*; and the second, though derived from St. Paul and Dionysius the Areopagite, was introduced in Latin by Rosicrucian apologists like Theophilus Sweighardt and Robert Fludd. Anyone who called himself a "lover of Theosophy", as Heilmann did, was for all purposes saying that he shared the Rosicrucian ideals. Orthelius writes at the end of the early outpouring of Rosicrucian tracts in Germany and does not simply illustrate Sendivogius. He shows the two sides of the alchemical coin, as it was current in early Rosicrucian circles: there is a physical work of alchemy, but it requires the grace of God and should draw the adept into contemplation of the divine mystery.

Here are the chapter headings, somewhat condensed, and followed by Orthelius' "synopsis" of his work:

- I. The subject of the Earth and of the lower part of the Philosopher's Stone.
- II. The distillation of the red or Adamic earth in a liquor.
- III. The rectification of the twice distilled liquor.
- IV. The extraction of the fixed Salt from the *caput mortem* and its resolution in its rectified spirits.
- V. The attraction of the water of air.
- VI. The superior part of the material of the Philosophers' Stone, i.e., the influence of the sun, moon, and stars.
- VII. The union of the inferior and superior, that is, the generation of the Central Sun or crystals in mixed waters.

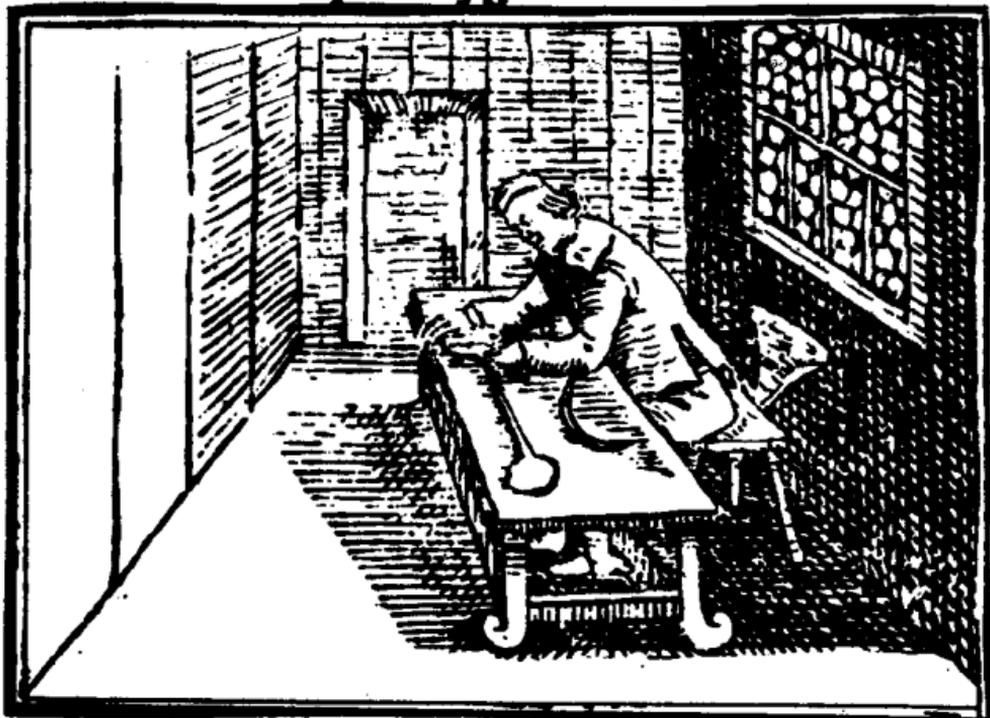
Sequitur figura septima.



Sequitur figura octava.



Sequitur figura nona.



- VIII. The subject of the form of the stone, i.e., of live mineral gold and its preparation.
- IX. The solution or perforation of the body or of live gold in Philosophical Mercury.
- X. The extraction of the golden seed and the form of the stone, which is the other part of its composition.
- XI. The semination of the golden seed in its earth or Philosophic Mercury, i.e., the conjunction of the matter and form of the Salt and the Central Sun for the supernatural generation of the Sun's son.
- XII. The maturation of the work to its perfection and completion.

	Parts	Matter (mercury duplex, ch. 7)	Earth (lower stone, chs. 1-4)
Philosophers' stone		Form (philosophers' sulphur or golden seed, chs. 8-10)	Heaven (higher stone chs. 5-6)
	Preparation	dry (chs. 11-12)	
		humid (chs. 7, 10-12)	

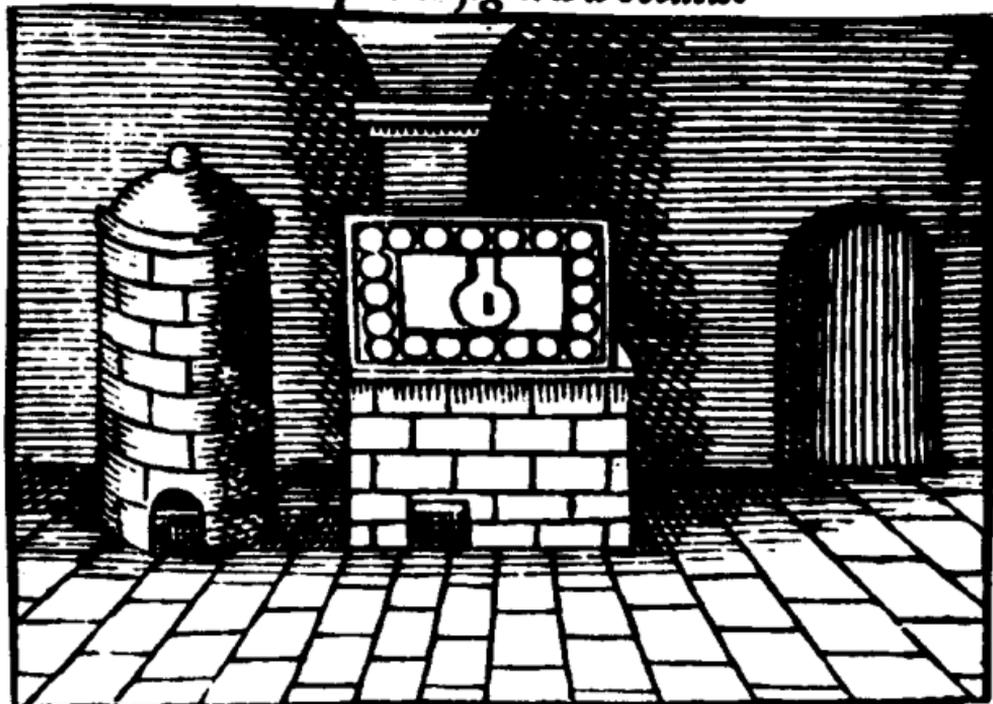
1 The full title is cited in John Ferguson, *Bibliotheca Chemica* (1906), 2:366. The commentary had a separate title page and may have been bound separately; the Wellcome Institute copy does not include the commentary.

2 For the two opinions, see Ferguson 1: 157.

3 J.R. Partington, *A History of Chemistry* (1969-70), 2: 428.

4 *Psychology and Alchemy* (2nd ed., 1958), 428. Following this remark, Jung translated a long passage from the epilogue, which he also cited in *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (2nd ed., 1974), 15. In *Alchemical Studies* (1967), Jung quoted a closing comment on the stone being everywhere because man contained all things (94).

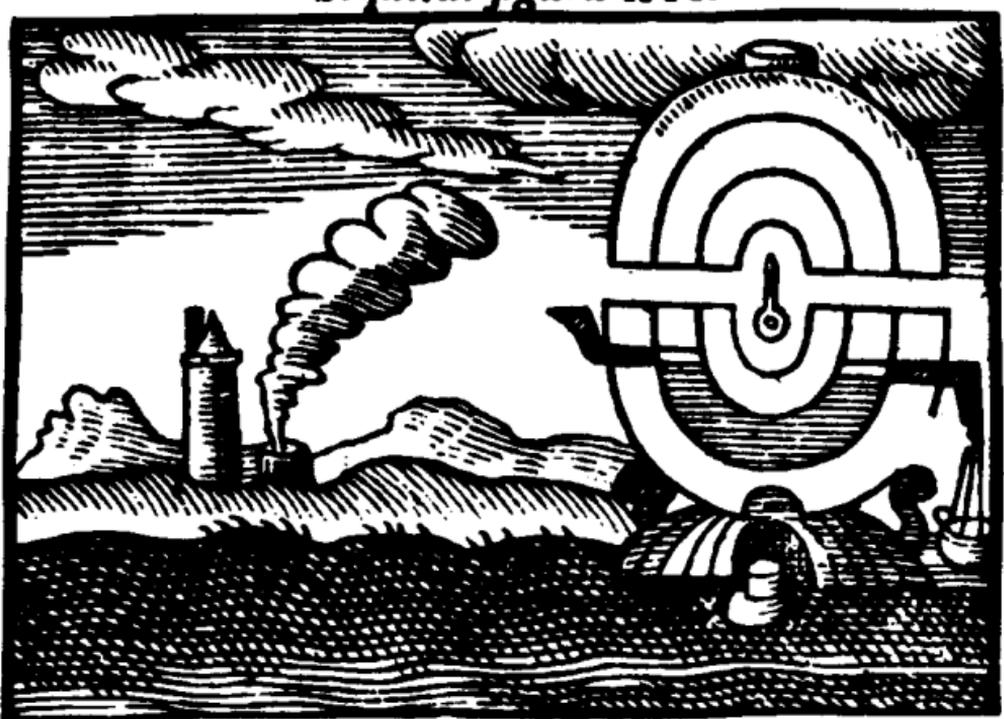
Sequitur figura decima.



Sequitur figura XI.



Sequitur figura XII.



5 The Latin translation is reprinted in Jean Jacques Manget's *Bibliotheca Chemica Curiosa* (1702) 2: 516-30.

6 *A Lexicon of Alchemy* trans. A.E. Waite (1893), 281. For further background see Henry Guerlac, "The Poet's Nitre", *Isis* 45 (1954), 243-55, and Allen G. Debus, "The Paracelsian Aerial Nitre", *Isis* 54 (1965), 43-61.

7

8 In *The Breviary of Naturall Philosophy*, Charnock maintains that the *opus* takes "three moneths at least" (in Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* [1652] at the second page numbered 292); at this point, Thomas Vaughan scribbled in the margin, "Away Animal thou liest."

9 Armand Barbault, *Gold of a Thousand Mornings* (Eng. tr., 1975).

10 The fullest account of Zetzner's business is probably that of John Warwick Montgomery in *Cross and Crucible* (1973), 2: 259-62.

11 *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972).

12 "Some Spiritual Alchemies", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41 (1980), 293-318. Schuler's central document (from British Library MS. Sloane 3667) has been published with commentary in Ron Heisler's "Introduction to the Hermetic Adepti", *Hermetic Journal* 35 (Spring 1987), 34-41.

13 *Theatrum Chemicum* (1659-61) 6: 430-32.

Theodorus of Asine and the Kabbalah

Stephen Ronan ©

I Introduction

Whilst I was preparing Proclus' *Commentary on the Timæus* for the Chthonios edition, I came across a section of the commentary which had not been translated by Thomas Taylor for the original publication in 1820. This section concerns Proclus' report of the teachings of one Theodorus of Asine on the creation of the Soul and contains striking examples of the Neoplatonic use of the techniques of *gematria*

Before we go on to look at Theodorus' system, it might be as well to go through a brief *who's who* of a few of the important Neoplatonists whose doctrines we'll be dealing with.

Numenius of Apamea (fl. second half of 2nd C. AD)

Precursor of Plotinus, as well of the religious and occult concerns of the later Neoplatonists.

Plotinus (204/5 -270)

Formulator of the basic metaphysical structure of Neoplatonism.

Porphyry of Tyre (c. 232 - 305)

Student of Plotinus and rival of Iamblichus.

Iamblichus of Chalcis (c.242 - 326)

The dominant figure in later Neoplatonism.

Theodorus of Asine (dates uncertain)

Student and rival of Iamblichus.

Proclus Diadochus (412 - 485)

The great expounder of Neoplatonic doctrine in full-flower.

An understanding of Theodorus' metaphysics presents a number of problems. We possess none of his works, and are mainly dependant on Proclus' reports of his teachings. Our chief testimony is, in fact, the present passage from the *Timaeus* commentary, and Proclus' account is a very compressed report of what must have been an elaborate and complex system. Fortunately, since we are only interested here in Theodorus' linguistic symbolism, the details of his ontology will not be tackled on this occasion. On the other hand it does seem worthwhile, in order to forestall major misunderstandings, to sketch out very briefly the structure of the Neoplatonic spiritual world as taken for granted by Neoplatonists after Plotinus.

The One

In Platonic tradition the supreme principle is called 'The One' or 'The Good'. The first of these terms refers to its position as the head and source of all existence and the second denotes it as the supreme object of desire after which all things strive.

Consciousness

At the second level of reality comes Consciousness (*nous*). In deference to normal practice I have translated that term as 'Intellect', but this is a word which really can be very misleading. When we use 'intellect' nowadays, and particularly in a spiritual context, we often use it in a slightly disparaging way to refer to purely ratiocative thinking, or to a sort of mental juggling more or less divorced from the issues of real life; a process which is irrelevant to, or which may actually inhibit, dealing with the depths of spiritual or emotional realities. But the Neoplatonists saw things very differently. For them, 'Intellect' (*nous*) was, in its highest manifestation, the realm of pure awareness which only became rational thinking at a lower level. At the level of *nous* proper, contemplator and contemplated are at one, and all that can be known is known in its most essential way. 'Intellect' (*nous*) and its cognates like 'intelligible' (*noëtos*) often denote what we would call the spiritual realm as opposed to the physical.

Soul

The third level of reality is that of Soul (*psyche*). Here is another term that we are liable to misunderstand. For the ancients, Soul was the force which animated (from Latin *anima* 'soul') all living things. Its absence or presence made the difference between something being dead or alive, and it was thus the intersection point of spirit and matter. To have denied the existence of the soul would have been

meaningless to an ancient thinker, for it would have been tantamount to saying that nothing was alive.

II Proclus' report of Theodorus' teachings on the creation of the Soul.

The following translation is based on the Greek text by Diehl and the French translation by Festugière (for these and other works quoted, see the bibliography at the end). This is a compressed and difficult piece and I should like to express my thanks to Laura Knobloch and Gillian Knight for their help.

[Diehl Vol II p 274, 10-277,26]

But Theodorus the philosopher from Asine, who was filled to the brim with the doctrines of Numenius, has treated the subject of the generation of the soul in a fairly revolutionary fashion, basing his ideas on the sounds, shapes and numerical values (of the letters) [1]. So in order to include a summary in our commentary of what he thought on this subject, let us recapitulate by setting out point-by-point what he said.

1. That which comes first is justly celebrated by him as Ineffable (*arrhétos*), Unutterable (*anaklalétos*), Source of All and Cause of the Good.

2. After this First Principle - which also transcends everything - comes the triad which, for Theodorus, determines the Intelligible Plane. He calls it the One (*hen*) and it is composed (a) of the breath (*asthmatos*) which in a particular way belongs to the word 'ineffable' (*arrhétos*), breath of which the rough aspirate (i.e. the 'h' of '*hen*' is an imitation [2]. (b) Of the vault of the *epsilon* (*e*) itself, taken on its own without the following consonant [3], (c) and straight afterwards (*edé*) from (i.e. composed from) the letter *nu* (*n*).

3. After this triad comes another which delimits the Intellectual Depth, and another which determines the Demiurgic Depth. The one is the Fact-of-Being prior to Being (*to einaí pro tou ontos*), the Fact-of-Intellection prior to Intellect, the Fact-of-Living prior to Life. After this comes the Demiurgic Triad, which has in the first place Being, in second Intellect and in third the Source of Souls.

4. After this triad comes another; the Soul-Itself (*hé autopsyché*), the Soul-in-General (*hé katholou*), and the Soul-of-All, on the division of which we have already spoken earlier [4]. Each one of these has emanated in its entirety from the Demiurgic Triad, with the qualification that the first derives more from Being, the second more

from Intellect and the third more from the Source of Soul. It is this last, the Soul-of-All, which according to Theodorus Plato proposes to describe: or rather the Soul which is Soul purely and simply, which derives from the Source of Souls ; and the Soul-in-General conjointly with the Soul-of-All; and the Source itself. For all is in all, although it is found here in one way and there in another [5]. In the Soul prior to the triad all is found in a unitary fashion; in the Soul which is Soul purely and simply, all is contained according to the whole prior to the parts; in the Soul-in-General, all is contained according to the whole resulting from the parts ; in the third Soul (i.e. the Soul-of-All) all is contained according to the whole included in the parts, as if Plato were dealing with all these Souls, and that it were necessary to apply all the relationships to all the Souls, (yet) without admitting to the differences between them.

In the first place, Theodorus considers that it is necessary to say why the Soul is composed of three intermediary elements. On this point he says the Soul, in its totality, is a geometrical relationship which is composed from both the First God in conformity to Being and from the second in conformity to Intellect: these are in effect the two substances, the indivisible substance and the divided substance. From the geometrical relationship emerges both the arithmetical relationship, which reproduces the image of the second. For the one, being unextended, is monadic; the other is extended, but in a harmonic fashion.

The Letters of the Word *Psyché* (Soul)

In the next place, starting with the tetrad of the elements, he says that the Soul can be shown to be a tetrad, and that the number in its entirety can be a geometrical number (because *psyché* has 4 letters in Greek). On the other hand, so that one does not conceive of this number as without life, one will find that in the letters at the ends of the word 'Soul' (*psyché*), there is the fact of life (*zén*), if in place of the third heptad one takes the first [8]. Or, instead, if one puts the fundamental numbers of the first letter (*psi* Ψ =700) next to this letter, one will see that the Soul is an Intellectual life. Take *zeta*, *omicron* and *psi* (7,70,700) : in the middle is the circle (*omicron* 0) which is Intellectual, because Intellect is the cause of Soul. The smallest fundamental number (*zeta* Z =7) shows us that the soul is a sort of geometrical intellect on account of the line which joins the parallel lines as a straight diagonal (*zeta* in capitals is Z), an Intellect which, resting on high, carries itself towards the line opposite and which manifests a form of life which is at once non-oblique yet in an oblique manner (*peplagiasmenos*). The largest fundamental number (*psi* Ψ =700) is the

element of the sphere. For it is certain that in any case where lines are curved they will make a sphere [7].

After this, the fundamental numbers of the following Upsilon letters *delta* Δ, *mu* Μ, *upsilon* Υ (υ) (4,40,400), which again Y(υ) Υ are three and at the same time tetradic and for this reason make up 12, and produce the 12 spheres of the universe. The largest of these fundamental numbers (*upsilon* Υ = 400) shows us that the essence of the Soul aspires to and tends to two things - hence certain people name this letter 'lover of wisdom' (*philosophos*) - but that the Soul-Itself plunges towards the depths of the two things [8]. In any case, we too have found this title for *upsilon* amongst some of the men of great wisdom, and the *upsilon* (Υ =400) is common between two spheres, the *psi* (Ψ =700) and the ch chi *chi* (χ =600), the latter which, because of the breath, is X hotter and more vitalizing (*chi* is an aspirate), the former ones possessing these two qualities to a lesser degree. The result is that, once again, the Soul is an intermediary between two Intellects; the one anterior, the other posterior, and the fact that the letter *upsilon* is in the middle indicates the affinity and the relationship of the Soul with these two. Nevertheless, Plato more often attributed the letter *chi* to the Soul - although the letter *psi* is also a sphere - to manifest the equilibrium of the movement of the Soul, since all the straight lines are equal in the *chi*, and to render perceptible in this way the self-moved quality of the Soul. If, on the other hand, the Demiurge creates the Soul with its essence alone, then it is clear that he too is analogous to the *chi*: for the *chi* is the most primary Intellect. So, by this explanation of the letter *upsilon*, Theodorus states that the Soul proceeds and creates itself as a sort of intermediary existence between the two Intellects. This, then, is how one should understand these things.

As for the last letter, the *éta* (the *é* in *psyche*), one must é éta see it as the procession of the Soul towards the cube H (because *éta* = 8) [10]. If on the other hands the Soul is dyadic on account of the otherness (*heterotés*) of life, and if it is triadic on account of the tripartite character of its essence, then it contains by that very fact the ratio of 3 : 2. When it enters them itself and, because of this entry, multiplies the dyad by the triad, it engenders the hexad. When it unites the dyad with the indivisible and with the tripartite, it produces by this means the harmony consisting of the ratio 2 : 1. When it returns towards itself as a triad, it engenders the ennead [11]. When it carries itself doubly towards itself in the form of a dyad, it produces in every case the octad [12], and, with the help of these two, it produces the ratio of 9 : 8.

Moreover, generation according to the line signifies that which is in the Soul which is indivisible and absolutely identical - for every part

of a line is a line - as well as the fact that all the (same) relationships are to be found everywhere. The splitting in two shows that the form of the soul is dyadic.

Moreover, the indivisible totality of the Soul is the image of the First Intellect; that of the two totalities (or wholes) which is undivided, the one which Plato called the Circle of the Same, is the image of the Second Intellect; the totality divided into six is the image of the Third Intellect which is enumerated in last place.

Again, we have seen the appearance of the octad as derived from the dyad of the Soul. Concerning the heptad, that which is in the units (7) represents the first form of life, that which is in the tens (70) represents the Intellectual part as cause of the circle, that which is in the hundreds (700), and in the third and last place, represents the proper characteristic of the Soul.

Yet again, the immutable cohesion of the Soul with the agent which created it has caused the sphere of the fixed (stars) to come into existence, the exit and indetermination have brought forth the planetary sphere, and the return after the procession has brought into existence the stably unstable life (*tên aplanôs planômenên zôên*). [13]

And since the shape of the Soul is like a letter *chi* (X), and its form is dyadic - for the division is into two - and that the dyad multiplied by the hexad, which is the first fundamental number of the *chi* (=600), produces the dodecad. One can extract from thence the twelve Primary Souls of the governing rank.

These are then, more or less, the philosophical considerations of Theodorus on this subject, which he explains by basing himself on the letters and their pronunciation - to place before your eyes what is only a small selection from a long exposition.

Notes to the Translation

[1] '...sounds (*grammata*), shapes (*charakterés*) and numerical values (*arithmoi*)...' These are the most natural translations, in this context, of these three Greek terms. However, Festugière (III p318) and Gersh (p289), want to translate *grammata* as 'positions of letters in words' and 'linguistic components in general' respectively. The basis for these slightly strained interpretations is the fact that further on (Diehl II p 277,25), Proclus contrasts *grammata* with *ekphônêseis* 'pronunciation', and in this instance *grammata* must be bearing its other main meaning of 'letters'. But there happens to be a much simpler explanation: for in the first instance, Proclus is using Theodorus' own terminology, whereas in the second he is making his own brief characterisation of Theodorus' system.

[2] The breath, the aspirate 'h' of *hen*, is hidden in *arrhetos* because although this word begins without the aspirate, aspiration is found in the letter 'r' (*rho*).

[3] '...the vault of the *epsilon*..' Theodorus is here envisaging the semicircle of the ϵ (ϵ in Greek) as the Platonic 'sub-celestial arch' (see Proclus' *Platonic Theology* Bk.4. ch.23 ; Praechter *apud* Gersh p291 n9).

[4] Proclus has omitted Theodorus' earlier treatment of this point.

[5] This is a famous principle which, in its different manifestations, had such a large part to play in Neoplatonic metaphysics and Theurgy, and whose origins seem to go all the way back to Anaxagoras (Aristotle *Physics* 187b). For two classic Proclean formulations, see the *Elements of Theology* prop.103, and *On the Sacred Art* passim.

[6] Festugière (III p319 n5) explains : "If, instead of *psi* (700) one takes *zeta* (7) then one has, with the final letter *eta*, *zé(i)* 'live'."

[7] O (*omicron*) has a circular shape in Greek as well as English. z (*zeta*) is 'Z' in Greek capitals. ψ (*psi*) is drawn thus : . When he talks of curved lines making a sphere, Theodorus seems to have in mind the idea that any curved line, if continued indefinitely, will tend to describe a sphere.

[8] The text is probably corrupt at this point. See Diehl's and Festugière's notes *ad. loc.*

[9] Theodorus is thinking of Plato's *Timaeus* 36b *f* where the two diagonals of the letter χ are curved around to form two circles: . Theodorus has this passage from the *Timaeus* in mind throughout his explanation.

[10] 8 is the first cubed number : $2 \times 2 \times 2$.

[11] $3 \times 3 = 9$.

[12] $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$.

[13] The word for 'planet' (*planétés*) also means 'wanderer' in Greek. The planets were the 'wandering' in contradistinction to the 'fixed' stars.

III Theodorus' gematria and its critics

Now we have an overview of Theodorus' system, let's look in more detail at his techniques of *gematria*. He makes use of quite a range of methods. There is phonetic symbolism dealing with the sounds of words, e.g. an aspirate letter is 'more vitalizing' than a non-aspirate (p 29). He uses figurative symbolism drawn from the shape of letters, e.g. the 'vault of the ϵ ' (p 27), and the positions of letters in words, e.g. *upsilon* situated between *psi* and *chi* in the word *psyché* (p 28). Another major technique concerns numerical quantities. He may make use of the fact that a word has a certain number of letters e.g. 'Soul' is a tetrad because *psyché* has four letters in Greek (p 28), but more importantly, he makes use of a system of number bases (*pythmenes*) or 'fundamental numbers' where the units stand for the unitary level, the tens for the 'Intellectual' Realm, and the hundreds for that of Soul. Letters can be substituted for one another on this pattern, e.g. taking *zeta* (7) for *psi* (700) (p 28).

Proclus' account of Theodorus' system ends with a summary of Iamblichus' criticisms of his methods [1]. Iamblichus holds that you can't derive any certain conclusions from the number of letters in a word. 'Soul' has the same number as 'Body' or 'Non-being' in Greek, but these different entities are surely not on the same level. Again, letters have changed their shapes over time - *zeta* used to be drawn I instead of Z. Thirdly, altering the numerical values by means of number bases or by any other method, means that anything can be made equal to anything else. Thus these techniques have no sound basis.

As Gersh says, it is strange to find Iamblichus being quite so harsh about Theodorus' methods. After all, Iamblichus himself belonged to a tradition which had great respect for the divine origin of the relationship between words, sound and what they represented. In fact, in another mood we find Iamblichus paying homage to Pythagoras for having used gematrical methods of divination in preference to animal sacrifice (see below p). Gersh suggests (p 303-4) - and I'm sure it's at least part of the answer - that Iamblichus feels Theodorus (and probably his mentors in these matters, Numenius and Amelius) have gone too far in *deriving* metaphysical principles from linguistic symbolism, where the reverse relationship, using linguistic symbolism to *illustrate* metaphysical principles, might have been acceptable.

Theodorus' system of *gematria* is clearly highly developed and seems to pre-suppose a long period of development. In fact, the only comparable and contemporary use of *gematria* in such a sophisticated way - before the medieval Kabbalah - is to be found in the Gnostic systems of Marcus [2] and that of the tractate *Marsanes* in the Nag Hammadi collection (X,1). Marcus seems to have been roughly contemporary with Numenius, who is credited as the originator of Theodorus' techniques. This brings us to the origins of *gematria*, to which we must now turn our attention.

IV Theodorus and the Kabbalah

A first glance might give the impression that the Neoplatonists must have derived their linguistic techniques from Jewish sources.

After all the word *gematria*, as well as the techniques, are known to us chiefly from Jewish sources. The Jewish scriptures could be seen as having given the impetus to such a development, since numerical groupings such as seven, twelve and forty have a particularly large and significant part to play. The most famous piece of *gematria*, the 'number of the beast', occurs in the New Testament in the book of *Revelation* (xiii,18), a work dependent in part on Jewish apocalyptic sources. We might also note that many of the Neoplatonists were of Semitic extraction: Numenius and Iamblichus were Syrians, Porphyry a

Phoenician from Tyre and, later on, Proclus' pupil Marinus was a Jew from Samaria and Damascius came from Damascus. Adding considerable weight to all this is the fact that Numenius, Theodorus' source, held Jewish traditions in the highest respect. It was he who made the famous remark that Plato was 'Moses talking Greek' [3] and who quoted and commented upon the Jewish scriptures [4]. We should add to this that recent research has been emphasizing the Jewish component in the origins of Gnosticism, so the existence of Gnostic parallels to Theodorus' linguistic symbolism might be taken to indicate a Jewish background.

A closer examination of the evidence will, however, point us in quite a different direction. Let's first take a look at the word *gematria*. Although the form is Hebrew, the word turns out to be derived from the Greek *geomatria* 'geometry' [5]. To function at all in its strictest sense, *gematria* needs an alphabet where the letters also have numerical values. Now, although Greek and Babylonian had this characteristic as far back as the 8th Cent. BC [6], it is not attested for Hebrew before the 2nd Cent. BC [7], and then on Maccabean coins during the period of Greek influence. Scholem points out that numerical *gematria* first appear in Rabbinic literature in statements of the *tannaim* of the 2nd Cent. AD. He goes on to say regarding the use of *gematria* in this early period that

"Gematria has little significance in *Halakhah*. Where it does occur, it is as a hint or mnemonic... Even in the aggadah, at least among the early *amoraim* gematria is not used as a source of ideas and homilies but merely to express them in the most concise manner" [8].

A look at early Jewish mystical literature confirms the impression that *gematria* plays a minimal role. The *Sepher Yesirah*, which may possibly be as early as the late 2nd Cent. AD, deals with the letters of creation and it is here, if anywhere, that one would expect to find developed gematrical techniques were they in vogue. Yet there is only the occasional use of phonetic symbolism (ii,1; iv,1) and letter transposition (ii,4; iii,6-7) [9]. *Gematria* in the sense of exegesis from numerical values is absent, as is symbolism based on the shape of the letters. The latter does not, as far as I'm aware, appear in Jewish mysticism until the time of the *Sepher Bahir* [10]. The *Yesirah*, at any rate, has features reflecting a Greek-speaking milieu [11].

Let us now turn our attention to the Greek evidence. Iamblichus, whom we have earlier met as a critic of Theodorus' system, displays quite a different attitude in his *Life of Pythagoras*. Here [12] he applauds Pythagoras for divining by means of numbers (i.e. by the numerical equivalent of names) "conceiving this to be a method purer, more divine and more kindred to the celestial numbers of the Gods (than animal sacrifice)". The details of Pythagorean gematrical divination are given by Hippolytus (2nd-3rd Cent. AD) in his *Refutation*

of all Heresies [13]. The method is of interest, since it involves using 'fundamental numbers' like the system of Theodorus [14]: firstly, each letter is reduced to its base number (i.e. 700 to 7) and then all the base numbers are added together, and if the result is in two or more figures, then these are again added to produce a single digit. Artemidorus (2nd Cent. AD) in his *Interpretation of Dreams* [15] uses *gematria* (ii,70; iv,24) including the most basic method of considering words of the same numerical value to have the same meaning [16]. The famous Pythagorean writer Nicomachus of Gerasa (first half 2nd Cent. AD) used *gematria* in philosophical exegesis: *kosmos* ('world', 'universe') shows its hexadic qualities by the fact that it adds up to 600 [17]. The roots of these traditions go back a long way. As far back as the 4th Cent. BC, Plato was making use of phonetic and figurative symbolism in his analysis of language (Cratylus 426c ff). Plato's Pythagorean links are of course well known and were particularly stressed in antiquity.

Although it is not immediately obvious on the surface, these Pythagorean connections actually show up in Theodorus' text. There we found that the letter *upsilon* was called *philosophos* (p 29); this term, literally translated as 'lover of wisdom', also means *philosopher*. Tradition attests that Pythagoras was the first to call himself by that name. At this point we should note that antiquity preferred to call Numenius - Theodorus' master in things gematrical - a Pythagorean rather than a Platonist.

Moving on to consider the Gnostic material we briefly referred to earlier (p 32), we find that in Irenæus' report of Marcus and his followers, Pythagorean numerology is constantly interwoven with the linguistic material [18]. Also in the tractate *Marsanes* there is a special section - now unfortunately in a very fragmentary condition - devoted to similar numerological considerations [19].

At this stage in our investigation we can, I feel, take a Pythagorean origin for *gematria* as firmly established. But the Pythagorean tradition was not the only source for the luxuriant growth of linguistic symbolism displayed by the kind of texts we have been looking at. In his introduction and commentary to the tractate *Marsanes* Pearson remarks that the major source for the different grammatical classifications used in that text seems to be the *Ars Grammatica* of Dionysius Thrax (2nd Cent. BC) and his later commentators [20]. Of particular interest to our present enquiry is that both the tractate *Marsanes* and a commentary on the *Ars Grammatica* mention the idea that aspirates are better than inaspirates because they have more 'spirit' (or 'breath' *pneuma*) [21]. The same idea turns up in our piece from Theodorus (p 27), thus underlying the links which exist between these texts.

I think we should be clear at this point that although the basic techniques of *gematria* - meaning the numerological analysis of words

- might conceivably go back as far as the early Pythagorean school, the elaborate linguistic symbolism to be found in Theodorus or Marcus and *Marsanes* clearly has a much later origin, for it presupposes a relatively sophisticated stage of grammatical enquiry. But how much later? Numenius and Marcus (like Nicomachus and Artemidorus) flourished in the 2nd Cent. AD. Since we do not hear of anyone earlier engaging in this distinctive blend of Pythagorean tradition and grammatical theory, then this period seems to be the one indicated, at least for this linguistic symbolism in its fully developed form. Just how long this development from simple *gematria* took is very difficult to say, but anyway it must be after Dionysius Thrax (i.e. post 2nd Cent. BC).

If the 2nd Cent. AD is the time then Syria must be the place. Numenius (and Nicomachus) came from there, as did the tractate *Marsanes* (Pearson p232-3); it is possible that Marcus too came from the same area (Pearson p237).

One last question to be touched on here concerns the context for the development of this linguistic symbolism. It becomes clear from an examination of the texts that the impetus for development was ritual and magical. The magical background and parallels to Theodorus' theories are emphasized by Gersh (p292-6), and a similar background for *Marsanes* is obvious from even the most superficial acquaintance. Likewise Irenaeus preferred to label Marcus a magician (i.13,1&2). There is no space here to go into details about the magical/ritual use of language, worthy though that topic is of an extended treatment. We need only make the observation that clearly fundamental to this usage, is the widespread and well-known magical axiom that words and sounds are more than mere signifiers of the things they stand for : control of the name means control over the thing named, and in this process linguistic elements become entities which in themselves both control and are controlled. In illustration of this we can do no better than finish with a quotation from *Marsanes* :

"... they (viz. the consonants) submit to the Hidden Gods by means of beat and pitch and silence and impulse..." [22]

Notes to Sections III and IV

- [1] Diehl II 277,28 - 278,25.
- [2] Summarized in a hostile manner by Irenaeus Adversus Haecreses Bk I, ch. 7-14.
- [3] Fragment 8, ed. des Places.
- [4] Ibid. fr. 1b.
- [5] Scholem p337.
- [6] Heath vol. I. p33; Scholem ibid.

- [7] Scholem ibid.
- [8] Scholem p338.
- [9] The Yesirah is quoted by its standard chapter (perek) and section (mishna) headings.
- [10] The Bahir reached its final form between 1130 and 1170, according to Scholem Origins of the Kabbalah, New Jersey (Princeton) 1987, p123.
- [11] This is a topic which deserves a much fuller treatment than I can give it here. For the moment, note that the Yesirah makes use of the Greek form of the tetragrammaton: IAQ, IOA, etc. (1,9). In particular, the alphabetical classifications of the Yesirah are dependant on Greek models - compare with the mystical and ritual application of grammatical material in the tractate Marsanes: Pearson Marsanes, passim.
- [12] p54 De Vita Pythagorica (ed. Nauck); trans. Guthrie The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library, Michigan (Phanes) 1987, p81. See Gersh. p301.
- [13] Book iv, ch.13-14.
- [14] See Gersh p301.
- [15] The Oneirocritica was edited by R.A. Pack (Teubner) 1963. There is an English translation by R. White, New Jersey (Noyes) 1975.
- [16] See the notes ad loc. to White's translation for other examples of Greek gematria.
- [17] J. Dillon The Middle Platonists London (Duckworth) 1977, p359.
- [18] See above, note 2.
- [19] Marsanes p32*-33* (p309-311 ed. Pearson, and introduction p239).
- [20] Pearson p237-8.
- [21] Marsanes p27*, 4-6; Melampus' scholia on Dionysius Thrax p44 (Pearson p297).
- [22] Marsanes p 30*, 13-18.

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Al-Kemi:

Hermetic, Occult, Political, and Private Aspects
of R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz.

A review of André VandenBroeck's book by Joscelyn Godwin ©

André VandenBroeck *Al-Kemi: Hermetic, Occult, Political, and Private Aspects of R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz.* Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1987. 287 pages. Hardcover, \$22.95.

This is one of the most important contributions to the Western esoteric tradition that have appeared in recent years. It opens so many doors, and even one might say some Pandora's boxes, that one scarcely knows where to start in describing it. The author himself had the same difficulty. A strange "chance" led him in 1959 to the house in the South of France where Schwaller de Lubicz was living quietly with his wife Isha (famous as the author of Egyptian novels, *Her-Bak*, etc.) and his step-daughter Lucy Lamy. For the next year, André VandenBroeck and his wife saw the master almost daily, leaving only a few months before he died. As the years passed, VandenBroeck gradually began to realize the multiple dimensions of the experience he had passed through, and determined to record them. This is therefore not the usual occult pot-boiler, but the fruit of deep reflection and questioning over a quarter of a century. As such it deserves more than casual attention.

As VandenBroeck presents his youthful self at the beginning of the memoir, he was untutored in Hermetic Studies of any sort. Schwaller de Lubicz put him to work studying his enormous book on the Temple of Luxor and its Pharaonic geometry, *Le Temple de l'Homme*, in which the young man quickly detected some careless errors in a passage on music. VandenBroeck was thereupon entrusted with the general correction of the book for a possible future edition - corrections which I hope will appear in the English version, if that is ever published. He

was also put to studying the alchemical literature, great emphasis being placed on the reading and re-reading of Basil Valentine. In between times, the pupil received in rather an offhand way some confidences of an extraordinary nature concerning Schwaller de Lubicz's own past. It was long afterwards that the significance of these confidences dawned on him, and he came to realize that he had been singled out as perhaps the sole living recipient of secrets concerning the "Hermetic Aor" [Schwaller was known as Aor, "light", to his friends].

Although he presents himself as naïve, VandenBroeck was by no means unqualified: he was a professional painter, his mind was trained in mathematics and symbolic logic, he understood music theory, he was multilingual, and he seems to have had either an phonographic memory or great skill in reconstructing conversations. He had studied in the Ouspenskian and other schools of personal development, and he and his wife appear to have had little trouble in suddenly reorienting their life to the de Lubicz household. Most of all, as it has turned out, VandenBroeck is a superb writer, with a novelist's sense of drama and a scholar's sense of responsibility. Schwaller de Lubicz is not likely to be as well served for a long time.

But "well served" is a barbed term, and this is a barbed book. Having himself been chased from his native Luxembourg by Hitler's invasion, what was VandenBroeck to make of it when he discovered that his Hermetic preceptor still shared the cruel and unthinking anti-Jewish prejudices typical of his French bourgeois background? Isha herself would reveal in her autobiography published in the short interval between Aor's death and her own, that Schwaller had in 1919 published a pompous "Letter to the Jews" in which he essentially told them to "go home", i.e. get out of France. Still more: Schwaller told VandenBroeck that for the Veilleurs ("Watchmen"), the political group he headed just after the First World War, he had designed a uniform of dark shirt, riding breeches and boots: "which later became that of the SA" [Hitler's bodyguard], as he added with incredible sang-froid. Was this to be understood merely as a curious coincidence? VandenBroeck did not dare to press the point. Only years later, when he discovered that the roster of the Veilleurs had included the young Rudolf Hess, he had to admit that Aor could not be dissociated from subsequent events. Antisemitism in 1920 was one thing; but what was really shocking was Aor's want of the normal human sentiments in regard to its results under the Nazi régime. Unrepentant antisemitism in 1960, after the Holocaust, was inexcusable.

Since another reviewer of the book has dismissed this part of VandenBroeck's story as "malign insinuations", it seems important to adduce supporting evidence from my own researches into the beginnings of the Veilleurs. They were grafted onto a group devoted to spiritual renewal through the arts, which included Schwaller's mentor,

the poet Oscar V. de Lubicz Milan (who bestowed on René Schwaller his own aristocratic name—a curious incident). It was precisely when Schwaller entered the group in 1919 that the name of "Veilleurs" was adopted, and the group's orientation became political. The very first number of its new magazine *Le Veilleur*, in October 1920, carried a reprint of an anonymous article on the Jewish Question which says that the Jews, like the clergy, are parasites; that the examination system favour them over more creative minds; but that they should not be exterminated, because "good politics is not brutal"; they should be treated with circumspection and the hope that they will assimilate and thus disappear into the group. Such an article would certainly make any Jewish reader feel very uncomfortable, for "good politics" alone is a very thin hedge against brutality.

Schwaller did not write the article, but he must be held responsible for choosing to insert it in the first number of his journal. Likewise, it would be quite wrong to call him a Nazi; yet Rudolf Hess, the most intelligent and the most "hermetic" of the Nazi high command, was formed in his school.

What does it mean when a spiritual master has such sinister associations? One can answer that he is no spiritual master, or perhaps more accurately that his mastery is not spiritual. Yet Aor had metaphysical insight of a very high order, and some truly esoteric things to teach about human consciousness and perception; one only has to read his books to recognise this. Is it perhaps a shortcoming of the Hermetic path, taken on its own, that it allows formidable intellectual and even magical development without the necessity for moral purification? (The case of Aleister Crowley springs readily to mind.) Then again, does the hierarchical world-view which is part of Hermetism devalue the quality of compassion? (Now one thinks of Julius Evola, the Nietzsche of Hermetism.) As we shall see below, Schwaller had esoteric reasons for regarding most people's lives as virtually worthless.

If *Al-Kemi* has some profound reflections on the nature of hierarchy and the perilous interplay of esotericism with politics, it also has some astonishing revelations to make about Schwaller's alchemical involvements, of which never a word has been breathed up to now. Brought up as the precocious son of a chemist, Aor was himself working on Alchemy by the age of twenty, in 1907. Coming to Paris, he made contact with a group of operative alchemists which called itself "The Brothers of Heliopolis" and included Canseliet, Champagne, Sauvage, Boucher, and Dujols. One of the group, ten years older than Aor, went under the name and cultivated the legend of "Fulcanelli". This person told Aor that all the ideas for the group had come from himself and his experiments, but he exacted an oath, which Aor observed to the end, never to reveal his identity. Then Fulcanelli showed Aor an alchemical manuscript he had stolen from Chacornac's

bookshop (where he was employed), but could not fully understand; apparently it date from the period of "Cyliani" around 1830. On the basis of this manuscript Aor and Fulcanelli performed in 1914 a successful experiment, Aor supplying the understanding and Fulcanelli the manipulations, of which Aor acknowledged him a master. Exactly what the experiment was, is not stated.

Meanwhile, Aor had been working on the symbolism of the Gothic cathedrals, which he read as Hermetic through and through. He had told nothing of this to his other friends, but he lent his manuscript to Fulcanelli. It was eventually returned with the advice not to publish it: it revealed too much. Aor put it aside, being busy by now preparing to move to Switzerland and set up a Hermetic community near Saint-Moritz. Imagine his surprise when in 1926 out came *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, by a mysterious "Fulcanelli"—and there was his own work, tricked out with fantastic erudition (probably thanks to Pierre Dujols), and adorned with Jean-Julien Champagne's illustrations! Yet Aor maintained his relationship with his plagiarizer, and even gave him a monthly allowance right up to Fulcanelli's death in 1932.

It was in 1931 that the two of them met again in the new laboratory of Aor's house in Grasse to perform a second and crucial experiment. Now it was for Aor to hold Fulcanelli to an oath of secrecy, for this gifted but unscrupulous alchemist wanted to tell the world about it. "In fact, [Aor] told him that he could make himself responsible for a cataclysm such as might destroy the planet. While the experiment in itself was perfectly useless, it did point to a non-Newtonian constitution of matter that might well be exploited with unpredictable results. This was 'temple knowledge' for Aor, and definitely not meant for the multitude." Fulcanelli fell ill immediately after the experiment, and died miserably, not before handing to Aor the sole copy of the purloined manuscript. It has not yet resurfaced.

VandenBroeck does not speculate on the identity of this unfortunate man, not being greatly interested in the matter. From the evidence in Aor's anecdotes, there is not doubt whatsoever that it was Jean-Julien Champagne who hid behind the pseudonym. So in a sense those critics are right who have simply identified Fulcanelli with Champagne; and they are wrong who have swallowed the legend of the mysterious alchemist who has realized the Philosopher's Stone and is consequently immortal, popping up here and there as depicted in Pauwels and Bergier's *The Dawn of Magic*. Yet neither school, up to now, has had the missing clue that Aor entrusted in so casual a way to VandenBroeck, and which dissolves the problem of how the absinthe-ridden Champagne could have produced the remarkable *Mystère des Cathédrales* and thereby founded the most active school of operative alchemy in this century. (I refer to the fact that there are currently at least 30 "puffers" working in laboratories around Paris

alone, most of them in the Fulcanelli-Canseliet tradition.) In that sense, it is Schwaller de Lubicz who was really Fulcanelli.

Did VandenBroeck have any experience of Aor the operative alchemist? A careful reading suggests that he did, on the propitious midsummer night of Saint John; but that he, too, was bound to secrecy on this matter. In any case, that is his own business; the secrets he was given to reveal are of a different nature, and now they are out.

As far as Hermetic doctrine is concerned, the pervasive theme of *Al-Kemi* is that of the alchemic Salt. The many pages which VandenBroeck devotes to Aor's elucidation of Salt culminate in an arresting synthesis of his idea of hierarchy with his alchemical and his Egyptological work. Aor's teaching, in short, is that the most authentic human experiences are "inscribed" in the mineral salts of the bones, especially the femur, there to remain until decomposition or cremation allows the same atoms to become the focus for a new incarnation of that personality. The vast majority of people have no such experiences, so are bound to the slow pace of racial evolution; their "uninscribed" salts return at death to the general humus, changing it ever so little as their collective experiences pile up. The burial practices of Egypt seem to have been designed to prevent the salts of the élite from entering the public domain, as it were—perhaps with motives akin to Aor's reservation of his own alchemical knowledge. The alchemist, as Aor explained it to VandenBroeck, seeks in his operative work those moments of experience which will mark his mineral salts forever and constitute a nucleus for the future evolution of his consciousness.

We are on more familiar mystical ground when VandenBroeck suggests that the essence of such moments is their timelessness and the oneness of their material and spiritual aspects. He himself records an initiatory experience brought about purely by listening to Aor's discourse. There is no doubt that Aor had the power to bring on his disciple's development in this way. Neither do I doubt that Aor knew of sublime states of metaphysical certitude—just as Evola could write a "Phenomenology of the Individual Absolute". From the point of view of the Absolute, there is no good or evil, no pogrom or holocaust: all are illusory. Yet the human being still faces the choice between illusory good and illusory evil, and that choice will affect his illusory fellows, and his own illusory karmic destiny.

I have allowed myself in this review to go into speculative realms that VandenBroeck has the good sense to avoid, given that the purpose of his book is to record an experience. What I have recorded is some of the ideas that its reading has prompted, and those I hope are sufficient incitement to others to read it for themselves.

— Joscelyn Godwin

Note: this is an expanded version of a review that appeared in *ARIES*, No. 8.

Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe, Edited by Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus. 438 pp, 26 illustrations, Hardbound, £42.50 (UK). Folger Books, Associated University Presses, USA, UK and Canada, 1988.

This very interesting book collects together a series of essays derived from papers presented to a conference on 'Hermeticism and the Renaissance' held at the Folger Shakespeare Institute in the USA in 1982. The essays are of course of a high academic standard with masses of in-depth research well documented by footnotes. (Regrettably no general index is provided.) The influence and inspiration of Frances Yates is apparent and there are few essays that do not refer to her work. The essays are grouped around three main themes. The first section is concerned with the origins and transmission of the Hermetic texts, showing the influence of Greco-Roman, Egyptian and Jewish thought on the emergent Hermeticism. The second section examines the many diverse manifestations of Hermetic mysticism - in Lullian memory systems, alchemy, chemical medicine, Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry - and its influence on the development of the scientific tradition. The final section follows the appearance of Hermetic ideas in the literature, art and architecture of the period.

The best way for me to summarise the book would be to list the titles of the 20 individual contributions :- Hermetic and Related Texts in Classical Antiquity - Magic in Hellenistic Hermeticism - Hermeticism and Judaism - Hermes Trismegistus, Proclus and the Question of a Philosophy of Magic in the Renaissance - The Cessation of Miracles - Scholastic and Humanist Views of Hermeticism and Witchcraft - Good Witches, Wise Men, Astrologers and Scientists - Bruno's "French Connection": a Historiographical Debate - Newton's *Commentary* on the *Emerald Tablet* of Hermes Trismegistus: Its Scientific and Theological Significance - Mysticism and Millenarianism: "Immortal Dr Cheyne" - Alchemy in an Age of Reason: The Chemical Philosophers in early 18th Century France - Magic, Science and Institutionalization in the 17th and 18th Centuries - On the Function of Analogy in the Occult - Literary Hermeticism: Some test cases - *Aurora*; or, The Rising Sun of Allegory: Hermetic Imagery in the Work of Jakob Boehme - Rosicrucian Linguistics: Twilight of a Renaissance Tradition - Renaissance Hieroglyphic Studies and Gentile Bellini's *Saint Mark Preaching in Alexandria* - Freemasonic Imagery in a Venetian Fresco Cycle of 1716 - The Utopian Exit of the Hermetic Temple: or, A

Curious Transition in the Tradition of the Cosmic Sanctuary - The Children of Hermes and The Science of Man.

This book is priced at £42.40 in the UK, which is well outside the budget of many people, however, its price does indicate the real costs of publishing low volume specialist books.

***The Golden Game: Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century*, Stanislas Klossowski de Rola. 320 pp, 533 black and white illustrations, large format hardbound, Thames and Hudson, 1988, £30.00.**

This lavishly illustrated book surveys the alchemical emblem tradition in the seventeenth century. All the important works are here - Khunrath, Michelspacher, Maier, Mylius, Musaeum Hermeticum, Lambsprinck, and a number of less well known series of emblematic engravings. The illustrations are chosen and linked together by Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, who was the author of the well known *Alchemy: The Secret Art*, in the Art of the Imagination series which was published also by Thames and Hudson in 1973. Klossowski de Rola's earlier book did much to introduce many the emblem sequences to a wider public, but his present volume is a more substantial work. His obvious delight in and love of the material shines through, together with his desire to treat it sensitively, and not reduce the complexity of the interwoven layers of the symbolism to a simplistic explanation. His copious comments are suggestive, hinting at ways of approaching the symbolism, never forcing or projecting ideas onto the symbols, but rather trying to tease out their significance. In this way the book does not provide any kind of philosophical or psychological overview, or interpretation of the material, but is all the more valuable for letting the plates speak for themselves. The works chosen are approximately in chronological order and this gives us a glimpse at the evolution of the alchemical emblems through the 17th century, from Khunrath to Gichtel's Boehme.

Klossowski de Rola must be commended for choosing to illustrate the emblem sequences in their entirety, rather than picking and choosing particular plates out of context to fit some self imposed scheme. Some of the series he includes have, to the best of my knowledge, never before been published in their entirety (the Goosens van Vreeswijk, series on the Red Lion, The Green Lion, the Golden Lion and the Golden Sun are especially interesting). The author also does invaluable service to students of this material by including the text of the often elaborate title page of each book, together with an English translation and some notes on the author, the publisher, the engraver and where relevant, the patron or personage to whom the work was dedicated.

The plates, in general, are well reproduced, the large format avoiding the problem in many publications of reducing large copperplate originals to small size, with the consequent compression and obscuring of the important detail.

***Robert Fludd and the end of the Renaissance* William H Huffman, HB, 252 pg, 23 illustrations, index and copious notes and references. Routledge, London and New York, 1988, £30.**

The last few months have seen a number of important works published in the Hermetic field, not the least of which is this new book on Robert Fludd. The J.B. Craven *Doctor Robert Fludd* (pub. in 1902) was for a long time the only account of Fludd, until Joscelyn Godwin's *Robert Fludd: Hermetic Philosopher and Surveyor of Both Worlds* (1979) which really dealt with the well known illustrations from Fludd's works. William Huffman's book is 250 page biography replete with masses of notes and appendices. Apparently this is a revised version of the author's doctoral thesis, so of course it has been meticulously researched and documented. One of the main themes of this book shows that Fludd was living at critical point of change in the Western world, just as the Renaissance world view was giving way to the new philosophical and technical developments that underlie our modern age. The book deals in turn with Fludd's work as a physician, his friends, associates and patrons, the favour he found with King James, and describes in some detail the immense volume of writings which Fludd had published and the response of his contemporaries to his ideas. Huffman then places in historical perspective the core of Fludd's philosophy which he recognises as a late Renaissance Christian Neoplatonism, and deals with Fludd's synthesis of his ideas in his late work *The Mosaical Philosophy*. Huffman then outlines in a careful rather conservative manner the relationship between Fludd and Rosicrucianism. This book is a fine study of Fludd's life and ideas though those who have read their way through most of the material published in this field will find nothing new here, as Huffman has not turned up any new cache of historical information, but rather worked to describe and interpret the known body of published material on Fludd. Further, he tends to place Fludd as an establishment figure and sees him as marking the end of a Hermetic stream of philosophy, rather than as a creative and inspiring revolutionary figure who demonstrated in the vast scope of his writings the relevance of Hermetic ideas to all domains of human life. Perhaps what divides me and I suspect most readers of the Journal from the academic world view is that we believe in the continuing relevance of the Hermetic philosophy, rather than seeing this as a curiosity of history. William Huffman has provided us with a useful if limited and unexciting book.