

# THE PHILOSOPHERS STONE

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## BOOK ONE

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### CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The word Alchemy is an Arabic term consisting of the article *al* and the noun *khemî*. We may take it that the noun refers to Egypt, whose Coptic name is Khem. The word, then, would yield the phrase "the Egyptian matter", or "that which appertains to Egypt". The hypothesis is that the Mohammedan grammarians held that the alchemical art was derived from that wisdom of the Egyptians which was the proud boast of Moses, Plato, and Pythagoras, and the source, therefore, of their illuminations. If, however, we assume the word to be of Greek origin, as do some authorities, then it implies nothing more than the chemical art, the method of mingling and making infusions. Originally all that chemistry meant was the art of extracting juices from plants and herbs.

Modern scholarship still leaves unsolved the question as to whether alchemical treatises should be classified as mystical, magical, or simply primitively chemical. The most reasonable view is, in my opinion, not to place them exclusively in any one category, but to assume that all these objects at one time formed in varying proportions the preoccupation of different alchemists. Or, better still, that different alchemists became attracted to different interpretations or levels of the art. There is no doubt that by some writers alchemy was interpreted in a categorical and literal sense - that is, as a chemical means whereby the baser metals could be transformed and made precious. There is a vast body of testimony to this end, evidence which cannot be made to yield any interpretation other than a physical and chemical one. On the other hand, there are certain alchemical philosophers to whom it would be impossible to impute any other interest than a mystical or religious one.

Alchemy is also called Hermeticism. Hermes, from the mythological standpoint, is the Egyptian god both of Wisdom and Magic - which concepts include therapeutics and physical science as then it was known. All these subjects may, therefore, claim just inclusion within the scope of the significance of the terms Alchemy and Hermetic subjects.

It cannot be doubted in any way that such writers as Robert Fludd, Henry Khunrath, and Jacob Boehme aspired to and wrote of spiritual perfection, a state or mystical condition which was represented to them by the Stone of the Philosophers. With this idea I shall deal at some length in succeeding pages. It is equally certain that the first consideration of Paracelsus, for example, was the cure of disease and the prolongation of life. At the same time his greatest achievements appear to most modern thinkers to have been his discoveries of opium, zinc, and hydrogen. We tend, therefore, to think of him as a chemist no less than we do Van Helmont, whose conception of gas ranks him as one of those rare geniuses who have increased human knowledge by a fundamentally important idea.

But another viewpoint is possible here. For alongside of the genuine researchers, the alchemists who employed a psychological or spiritual technique, or who were genuine chemists or healers, we have the scrambling throng of the uninitiated. These had utterly failed to penetrate the secret of the true doctrine on any of its several levels, and commenced working on anomalous materials which could never bring them to the desired end. These were the false alchemists derisively named the Puffers. It is not, then, from alchemy proper or legitimate alchemists, as is so often assumed, that modern chemistry derives, but actually from the erratic work of the Puffers. These spent themselves in experiments on alien substances and animal excreta condemned by the true adepts. In consequence, they never achieved the desired result - the Philosopher's Stone. But on the other hand, they were led by chance into unexpected and, for us, most useful discoveries. As an instance we may cite Künckel who isolated phosphorus, which he most certainly was not anticipating. Or Blaise de Vignère who discovered benzoic acid without being aware of it. We may also cite the salts isolated by and named after Glauber.

Historically, the literature is immense. Represented in India and the Near East, in the Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and the Arabic civilizations as well as in Hebrew writings, the entire literature runs to thousands of titles. In recent years, moreover, we have had the publication of an important Chinese text. Most treatises from the *Aesch Metzareph* of the Qabalists to Valentine's *The Chariot of Antimony*, are deliberately couched in hieratic riddles. Persecution by church, and the profanation of the secrets of power, whether real or imagined, were equally dreaded by the adepts of the art. Worse still, from the modern viewpoint, these motives and these literary techniques induced their authors to insert intentionally misleading statements, the more deeply to bewilder unworthy pretenders to their mysteries. Others, ignorant of the first principles of the art, the unscrupulous charlatans whom we have seen were

called Puffers, and many another quack, taking advantage of the general credulity and superstition prevailing at these times, issued utterly meaningless and nonsensical works pretending to reveal the working of the alchemical art.

With these latter I am obviously not concerned in this place. Nor, for the moment, am I interested in the purely chemical aspect of the subject, however valid such an interpretation may be. My principal concern at the moment, when Analytical Psychology and psychological methods daily prove more absorbing, is to divine whether or not there is anything concealed within these obscurities which related to man, revealing methods of perfecting or integrating his consciousness. I believe that they do, and therefore I propose an examination of a text or two to see in what way our present views may not be enlarged.

A cursory glance at certain sections of the alchemical literature reveals the fact that the art relates to what anciently was known as Theurgy - the divine work. Its object was to afford by technical methods of meditation, reflection, magical practices and forms of interior prayer, a more rapid mode of spiritual development and an acceleration of intellectual evolution.

The alchemical and magical theories roughly amount to this: In the course of long aeons of time, Nature has gradually evolved a complex mechanism of reaction which we call Man. Marvellous as this organism is in many ways, yet it manifests several defects. A stream cannot rise higher than its source. And without entering into the complicated and at first sight rather bewildering realm of alchemical cosmological theories, it is held that Nature has fallen from a certain divine state - from grace as it were. It may be said that man's consciousness has relegated to a sub-ordinate place the once proud and divine universal spirit. An efficient and useful servant, it has usurped the place of its lord and master.

Because of this condition of things, it is held that by herself and unassisted Nature cannot regain her former glorified condition of equilibrium. The alchemists referred to all things within the natural realm - especially the unawakened and unenlightened man, torn perpetually by internal conflict. For man to attain something other than an intolerable state of conflict with the misery and suffering and uncertainty resulting therefrom, some other and higher means than are found in the natural state are required to transcend his constant companions of fear, inferiority, and insecurity. The alchemists assert that everything within the circle of limited and fallen Nature can only beget its kind. Hence man's own natural efforts in an intellectual direction cannot elevate him beyond his natural state and can only beget a similar kind of unregenerate, unilluminated condition. Thus the continual failure of philosophy, politics and sectarian religion.

But there is the aphorism "Art perfects what Nature began". And, as another Alchemist has affirmed, "Our gold is produced by art, adding nothing, detracting nothing, but only eliminating superfluities." In other words, the alchemical assertion is that in man is latent an element of Wisdom which, so long as the natural state of conflict and ignorance exists, remains dormant and in obscurity. "Within the material extreme of life, when it is purified, the Seed of the Spirit is at last found." The entire object of art is the uncovering of the inner faculty of insight and wisdom, the "essence of mind which is intrinsically pure", and the removal of the veils intervening between the mind and diverting it from its hidden divine root.

Existence and the ordinary turmoil of life, the struggle and the confusion which sooner or later binds consciousness by manifold links to an unevolved infantile and emotional attitude towards life, create anxiety and deep-seated fears. We entertain fear for the morrow and in the face of the unexpected. Fear and anxiety give rise in early life to automatisms and compulsive behaviour, to what might be called a shrinkage of the sphere of consciousness. It sets up an involuntary habitual contraction of the ego instead of a full-hearted easy acceptance of whatever may come in life, be it joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure. Continued sufficiently long, this attitude develops into mental rigidity, into a closed and crystallized conscious outlook, complacent and narrow, in which all further growth is impossible. Apart, from this, many people become fixed and hidebound for quite other reasons - becoming over-attached to traditional and unoriginal modes of thinking and feeling. The result is that all spontaneity of intellect and feeling is thoroughly eliminated from the realm of possibility. It is a sacrifice which entails the death of all that is creative within. The individual becomes enclosed within an iron cage of his own construction - forged through fear of life. From this, there seems no escape. No doubt consciousness becomes developed to a very high degree, to the point where it becomes clear, inventive, and trenchant. It becomes so, however, at the expense of life itself. Such a development is at the expense of flexibility and elasticity. Its cost is the loss of all that the underlying and dynamic unconscious aspect of the psyche implies - warmth, depth of feeling, inspiration, and ease of life and living. Too great a price to be paid.

Now, it is with this rigidity of consciousness, with this inflexible crystallized condition of mind, that Alchemy, like modern Psychotherapy, proposes to deal, and, moreover, to eradicate. Psychotherapy

according to one popular writer, is a means of obtaining self-knowledge through breaking down the shell of fantasy in which the ordinary person is confined. Analysis is sometimes defined as a process the object of which is to enhance consciousness. It proceeds by making conscious those unconscious elements in the instinctual and morally compulsive life which experience demonstrates to be in conflict with or untrue to reality. The crystallization of the field of consciousness, with its consequent narrowing of the possibilities of experience, produces a species of living death. The alchemists proposed to kill death. Their object, by the psychological method of interpretation, was to disintegrate this inflexible rigidity of mind. This process they call the dissolution or putrefaction. Consciousness is broken down into its component parts. From this apparently amorphous and homogenous resultant, it was their intention to reassemble the fundamental elements of consciousness on an entirely new and healthy basis. It was proposed to establish another foundation altogether, one capable of functioning in a completely regal and spiritual way. So that the divine root which, according to their theory, had become occultated and subordinated by the presumption of man's ego, is able to manifest through a mentality which is free from the defects which characterize the average intelligence. Consciousness is to be vivified utterly and is not separated from the Unconscious by a sharp and unnatural cleavage or partition from the other levels of the psyche. Thus the contents of the one part, by a reversal of values and functions, have full access of entry into the other, and vice versa.

Like modern psychological methods the alchemical formulae have as their goal the creation of a whole man, of integrity. What the psychotherapist proposes is freedom from the nervous and defensive automatisms that render men slaves of impulse and emotion, the automatism of the drunkard, for example, the drug addict, the kleptomaniac, the chronic waverer, the choleric, the coward. I make but little mention of the normal habits and automatisms of the so-called average man, though the neurotic expressions are but slight exaggerations of them. One of the reasons why psychotherapy is so difficult for the layman to grasp is that few people are aware of the preponderance of such automatic reactions in all ordinary human conduct.

Not only does Alchemy envisage an individual whose several constituents of consciousness are united, but with the characteristic thoroughness of all occult or magical methods it proceeds a stage further. It aspires towards the development of an integrated and free man who is illumined. It is here that Alchemy parts company with orthodox Psychology. Its technique envisages a religious or spiritual goal. In much the same terms as Eastern philosophy, Alchemy propounds the question, "What is it, by knowing which, we have all knowledge?" This is the theme, allowing for variations of a minor character, pervading the entire nature of Brahmanism and Buddhism, as well as the whole of archaic philosophy and religion. The *Tractatus Aureus* avers that "All the wisdoms of the world, O Son, are comprehended in this my hidden Wisdom." It is this which gives Alchemy that peculiar attraction which always in the West it has enjoyed, regardless of whether or not its terms have been completely understood in the clear light of logical thought.

In order the better to comprehend the basic postulates of this aspect of Alchemy which are concealed in a seemingly barbarous and unintelligible terminology, I propose to provide a brief comparison of its terms with those of other systems. Here we will employ a form of the Tree of Life as understood by the Jewish Qabalists as the fundamental basis of comparison. Its capacity to refer all symbolologies to a single source of reference, thus rendering them more or less intelligible by a process of classification, is the indubitable virtue of this scheme. Where it is possible I shall refer to Analytical Psychology for a more modern and readily understandable explanation. *Book One* will be commented upon precisely in that light. *The Six Keys of Eudoxus*, the second text, will be interpreted in terms of certain aspects of Magic and Animal Magnetism or Mesmerism. These two attempts at interpretation will render the third text by Vaughan more or less clear.

Since a comparatively complete exposition of the Qabalah may be found in other of my writing, it would be needlessly repetitive to go over the same ground. This diagram shows the Ten Sephirohs of the Tree of Life arranged in such a way that the seven planets of the astrological scheme may be referred to them. In addition, there is another unnumbered sphere named *Dads*, Knowledge. The Philosophy supposes this to be an entirely new principle latent within consciousness, developing or externalizing itself as and when man acquires complete and full self-consciousness. With this principle I shall not deal for the moment, though its mention was important, since it refers to an end result. It is a final goal of the system, the purified and integrated consciousness developed after the various experimental stages of the Alchemical work have been completed. The other principles, or Sephirohs as they are called, I have numbered for convenience' sake. These I can now describe in terms of the usual alchemical, psychological, and other occult clichés and ideas.

For our purposes, those principles numbered 4 to 7 inclusive are more important, entering more frequently than the others into exegesis. The trinity of potencies comprising the first circle refer to that

divine root of man's being which is the deepest core of the Unconscious, the "It", the "essence of mind which is intrinsically pure". It is the realization in consciousness of this root, pure potentiality, and its assimilation into the everyday thinking of man, which is the final goal of all spiritual techniques. Various faculties of consciousness, memory, will, etc., are comprised in the second and third spheres.

The principle numbered 4 is the *Ruach*, the mind, the reasoning faculties. It is referred to the element Air. I am here reminded of the archaic and primitive correspondences - geist, pneuma, ruach, breath, spirit, etc. It is consciousness itself, operating as the ruler of the body. It is also named *Tipharas*, meaning beauty and harmony and equilibrium, its symbol being the interlaced triangles. The latter indicates the union and therefore the reconciliation of two opposing elements in a single symbol. Fire is the upright triangle, and Water - the downpointing triangle. This intrinsic tendency towards reconciliation is considered implicit within the nature of consciousness. That is to say, it indicates intellectual acumen and insight into the nature of the pairs of opposites. This faculty of understanding enables it to arrive at a third and reconciling factor of poise and rhythm. Another correspondence often employed is the Sun. Since the latter is the vital centre of the solar system radiating life and heat to all about it, and without which life could not be - so at the centre of man is this rational intellectual faculty without which man is no longer man.

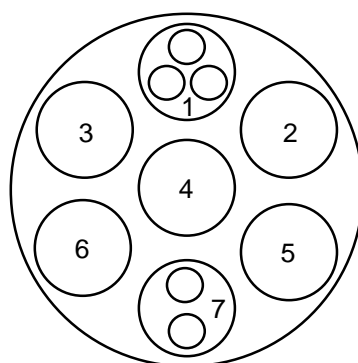


Fig.1 - The Tree of Life

Inasmuch as it is the development of this particular type of consciousness which is assumed to differentiate man from and above all other creatures, elevating him above every other department of nature, it is quite often referred to as Gold, the most perfect and precious of metals. In the Alchemical texts the intellect is also one of the Three Principles, the purified Mercury defined as "philosophic, fiery, vital, running, which may be mixed with all other metals and again separated from them. It is prepared in the innermost chamber of life and there it is coagulated". And again, when referred to as the Philosopher's Stone, we have this definition from *The Golden Treatise* of Hermes: "In the cavern of the metals, there is hidden the Stone that is venerable, splendid in colour, a mind sublime and an open sea." But this latter refers more accurately to the consciousness itself represented as a scintillating gem of untold price and brilliance, the redeeming, saving stone. It becomes this only after the several alchemical operations when it has been dissolved, coagulated, calcined, purified, refined, and sublimated into the newly arisen king's son, crowned with the Spirit, cloaked with the royal purple, and exalted into the treasure of the world.

The fifth principle on our chart is the emotional, feeling, and passionate urge, which gives motive and direction to life. In contrast to most Western thinking, occultism sharply separates emotion as a principle from mental activity - though it is admitted that in actual practice the activities of the two do overlap each other considerably. The nature of this principle is fiery, as witness various colloquialisms and figures of speech: "thy fire of thy love", "the white heat of passion", "consuming flames of passion", and "ardent desires". Alchemistically, this identifies emotion and feeling with the principle Sulphur, a fiery dynamic principle, on the correct employment and application of which the entire work depends. The regimen of the fire is the crucial and critical operation of Alchemy - even as in a lesser way it is in Psychotherapy. In certain psychological cases the awakening of a dormant or repressed side of the patient's nature, and the union of consciousness with the *anima* or fiery emotional nature, produces integrity and wholeness and a higher synthesis of being.

The sixth principle implies form. Properly, it is the vehicular side of consciousness. Its nature is substantive. One characteristic of occult philosophy is the theorem that every state of consciousness has its own particular type of matter. We have the idea in all magical philosophy of a so-called mental body or sheath, of a mind clothed with a fluidic body of thought, grounded in a substance of extreme tenuity and subtlety. Referred to the planet Mercury (not to the alchemical principle also of that name) which

implies intelligence and consciousness of a kind, its elemental attribution is Water. This latter brings out the correspondence of a fluidic plastic substance forming the etheric or astral body of the mind. The appropriate alchemical principle is Salt, the last of the triad, conceived of as an inert, heavy mineral body. Just as the alchemical Mercury refers to Consciousness, and Sulphur to emotion and feeling, so this principle of Salt refers more particularly to the sheath or vehicle in which these faculties are grounded.

After the above was written the writer glanced through Geraldine Coster's *Yoga and Western Psychology*, where the following passage occurs: "The European can readily enough grasp the idea that the physical universe is a manifestation of spirit and mater in innumerable and indissoluble combinations, because he is aware of that mysterious something called 'life' which permeates all things, but it is to him a staggering improbability that the interior processes of emotion, thought, and will possess at their own level suitable forms, forms which are substantial to the perception of those levels of experience .... All experiences consist of spirit-matter of varying degrees of density and the response of consciousness to this stimulus. Thus feelings and thoughts exist in space, have a shape, a rate of movement, and a period of duration."

Not only is this peculiar to all Hindu philosophy and psychology, but it underlies Hermeticism as well. To recapitulate, we have a mental body which comprises or is the seat of all the mental faculties - intelligence, emotion, will, memory, etc., together with a certain degree of plastic, fluidic, and vital substance. The whole, when it is purified and integrated, and not otherwise, forms what the Alchemists name the Philosopher's Stone.

A dual concept is contained in the seventh principle. The first half is in itself a synthetic idea. Primarily it is a concept including the three Alchemical Principles of Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury, considered as an undivided whole. It is a unit, however, only prior to the purification of art, one object of which is to differentiate them from their homogenous base. Then, when their ideas have been assimilated to consciousness, they may sink back again into the unconscious. This principle, in its natural state, is of little value to the operator, yet without its knowledge he cannot proceed. Purified and rectified, however, it is the Stone itself, though it is then called by some other name. But within it, as said before, are the three dormant principles, for which reason it is often called Mercury alone, the other principles being considered latent and implicit. Its other names are the Quintessence, Azoth, our Water, or the Astral Ether. It quintessentializes the four elements of Earth, Air, Water, and Fire. It is axiomatic that any single principle or unit is multiple when observed from a higher level - that is, with additional insight. A multiplicity is a unity when approached or seen from below. For example, a table is merely a simple wooden piece of furniture to the average person. To a more thinking type, its substance is seen to be comprised of innumerable molecules and atoms in varying proportions, vibrating at enormous speed so as to give the sensory impression of solidity and hardness. Another individual of greater insight will perceive that what his fellow saw as a table or as a congeries of atoms, is in reality spiritual energy polarizing itself into positive and negative charges forming electrons, neutrons, and protons, which circulate and move at a tremendous vibratory rate. On its own plane, therefore, the Quintessence is a unity synthesizing the four elements of a lower plane. Looked at from above it is no longer simple and homogenous but a compound of Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury - of abstract philosophical principles.

The Eastern equivalent of the Quintessence is *Prana* or the life-force sustaining and permeating the body. Since the Qabalistic and magical attribution is Air, we have the idea of the atmosphere or oxygen concealing or being the vehicle of a dynamizing vital principle. Here is the rationale of certain types of Yoga breathing exercises. The breath is the vehicle of *prana*, life, vitality, animal magnetism, which as nervous energy transmits the commands of the Mind to the body in much the same way as the atmosphere reflects or transmits the heat of the Sun. So that by various kinds of breath regulation, the practitioner of these special modes of breathing anticipates the increase of his vitality. As a corollary to this, such an increase is said to improve and extend the horizon of his mind so that it comes to embrace and recognize the spiritual principle pervading all life and living things.

Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury are concepts synthesized by the term Quintessence, the First Matter. This is that which first of all must be sought out and discovered. Since the water of the Wise, the Residual or Magical Earth, is not physical in the ordinary sense of the word, it has been most curiously defined and concealed. Basil Valentine, defining the nature of this First Matter, declares it to be comparable to no manifested particular whatever, and that all description fails in respect of it without the light of true experience. Sendivogius proffers that "our Water is heavenly, not wetting the hands, not of the vulgar, but almost rain water". It is heavenly, so to say, only because, like rain, it descends from the heavens above. Vaughan defines it as "a world without form, a divine animated mass of complexion like silver, neither mere power nor perfect action, but a weak virgin substance, a certain prolific Venus, the very love and seed of Nature, the mixture and moisture of heaven and earth".

Albertus Magnus states that Mercury is “a watery element, cold and moist, a permanent body, an unctuous vapour, and the spirit of the body”. “O how wonderful is that Thing which has in itself all things which we seek, to which we add nothing different or extract, only in the preparation removing superfluities” in yet another panegyric to the virtues of this First Matter of the Wise.

The above will show how ambiguous these definitions are without some fairly illuminating system which may give a clarified vision of their import. It remains to be added that one’s first clairvoyant view of astral matter seems to be of a white or silvery cloud, smoke, or vapour, in a state of great activity and movement. The pictures that project themselves upon it slowly unwind themselves before the mental or inner vision like a cinematograph film.

As a general concept we may more or less identify this Water of the Wise with the magician’s Astral Light and this again with the Collective Unconscious of modern psychology. It is defined by Jung in his commentary to *The Secret of the Golden Flower* as a psychic substrate common to all men alike. “It transcends all differences of culture and consciousness and does not consist merely of contents capable of becoming conscious but of latent dispositions towards identical reactions.” And elsewhere he writes that “the Collective Unconscious, moreover, seems ... something like an unceasing stream or perhaps an ocean of images, figures which drift into consciousness in our dreams or in abnormal states of mind”.

We may now glance at the remaining dual concept of the seventh principle, also considered under several aspects. First of all, since the other principles have elemental correspondences, so *Malkus*, as this principle is named, is referred to the element Earth, implying solidity, firmness, and an unchanging receptacle or base in which manifest the other principles. On the other hand it is often depicted as being the sphere of the operation of the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water, whilst the other spheres are given planetary attributions.

Moreover, it may be considered as the instinctive life, the body consciousness, or the brain-mind. It corresponds with the mythological Persephone, the animal or unredeemed soul which is in exile from the promised land, lost, wandering in the wild darkness, ever in search of some abiding city. The physical body itself would seem not to be shown on this chart system, except by reference to an assumed and hypothetical subterranean world of shells. This theory implies that the physical body as such is an illusion. Not, let me hasten to add, in the false sense that it has no real existence, as some people seemed disposed to misinterpret the word. But rather, that it is not what it appears to be. The more or less permanent human form is a subtle etheric invisible body, an ideal shape or design. About and through it physical atoms, in a state of great activity and vibration, congregate and play, being attracted and repelled continuously to form by such a circulation an illusory appearance.

After a perusal of Jung’s comments in *The Secret of the Golden Flower* it is difficult to gather whether, although corroborating the idea of psychic changes induced by the technique described in that book, he rejects the validity of the breath- or subtle-body hypothesis.\* If this is the case, then deliberately he ignores a vast body of material which is as evidential and as strictly scientific as any body of material evidence could be. It is important to mention this inasmuch as it touched upon what the Alchemists called their First Matter.

First of all, there are the researches and investigations in the last century of Baron von Reichenbach. He worked with a number of sensitives both under hypnosis and in normal consciousness. The result of his investigations was such as to prove beyond doubt that about each living human being - or for that matter, around every object in living nature - was a glow of living light, a dynamic emanation. This he called the “odic glow”. Nowadays the term for it is the aura, which is considered to be the vital emanation from this interior design- or thought-body. The hypnotic pioneer James Braid took Reichenbach to task, attempting to demonstrate that all of the observations which emanated from the Baron’s sensitives were due entirely and exclusively to suggestion. Braid’s attitude is really characteristic of the whole of the extreme and one-sided scientific approach of the last century. Fortunately it is now outworn, and we are coming to adopt that point of view which accepts facts rather than attempts to force facts into a predetermined theory. The fact that Braid duplicated all Reichenbach’s results by deliberately rejecting or suggesting them to his hypnotized subjects is by no means a valid mode of criticism. One might as well argue that since Messrs. Maskelyne and Devant with their intricate apparatus and conjuring knowledge can duplicate certain of the psychic phenomena of the psychical research societies, therefore the phenomena there observed and recorded are disproved

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\* This was written in December 1936. The issue since that time appears to have been considerably clearer. At this moment (March 1938) I have before me Jung’s new book of Terry Lectures *Psychology and Religion*, where the following statement is made: “I have often felt tempted to advise my patients to conceive of the psyche as of a subtle body ...”

and invalid. Reichenbach approached his investigations with more or less an open mind. So far from suggesting ideas to his subjects and sensitives, the fact remains that quite by accident they stumbled across the various phenomena of "odism" which he spent the rest of his life in investigating.

Reichenbach's results have within the past couple of decades obtained definite verification from a totally unexpected source. This time, from an individual whose orthodox standing and integrity can hardly be questioned, and who cannot be suspected of psychic or spiritualistic sympathies. I refer to Dr. Kilner of St. Thomas's Hospital. He wrote a few years ago a book entitled *The Human Atmosphere*, describing his experimental work on auras. It seems that he had invented some screens which he stained with dicyanin, through which he examined the atmosphere surrounding innumerable patients of his hospital. At first sight it could be argued that what he perceived had no necessary connection with objective reality, being simply an optical resultant of the employment of chemical substances and stains. On the other hand, it had an empirical value. By this means he was able to diagnose disease, to view the shape and size of the aura, and to describe the state and condition of the auras of different people in varying states of health and sickness.

Quite apart from this, however, there is a third source of evidence. I refer to the research done by Richet, Schrenck Notzing, Geley, Crawford, and a host of others in connection with the séance-room phenomena, quite apart from spiritualistic theories, and this I believe convincing and evidential. It was found that objects could be moved experimentally at a distance, under rigorous test conditions, without physical contact. Materialized shapes of various kinds would manifest in the research chamber, apparently exuded unconsciously from the body of the medium. The substance of these shapes received a specially coined word, ectoplasm. There is no doubt in my mind, from a critical examination of available material, that this ectoplasm corresponds to an objectified form of the plastic substance comprising the interior subtle or astral body, and which the Alchemists named their First Matter. W.J. Crawford, after a host of experimental work with a medium, showed that her weight and the volume of her thighs diminished when ectoplasm was projected in the form of a materialization. In many instances he was able not only to view such shapes, but to feel them and observe empirically their structure. His description of this substance is that it is cold, heavy, damp, or, according to varying circumstances, as hard and rigid as metal.

Geley also described this substance. He notes that it is variable in appearance, being sometimes vaporous, sometimes a plastic paste, sometimes a bundle of fine threads, or a membrane with swellings or fringes, etc. It may be white, grey, or black in colour, quite often it is seen to be luminous, as if phosphorescent. Its visibility may wax or wane, and to the touch it may feel soft, elastic, fibrous, or hard. It has the power of self-locomotion, and moves generally as with a slow reptilian movement, though that is not to say that it is incapable of moving with extreme rapidity. It may be said to have an inherent tendency to organization, but it is of no mechanical kind. Its propensity is to take any form or shape which may be dictated or imagined unconsciously by the medium.

This is a brief description, condensed from innumerable experiments, of the substance which exudes from the body of the medium when in a trance state, and which builds itself up into bodies, heads, amorphous shapes, rods, and levers. It is this substance also which moves objects from a distance and achieves the phenomena of telekinesis, and may also become sufficiently solid to intercept an infra-red beam of light.

I have detailed these facts as proof, quite apart from other directly experiential data of the alchemical theory, that there is such an astral or design body within the physical frame. The ancient view was that it is the medium or intermediate state between mind and body, thus establishing a continuum. And that, moreover, it is the direct vehicle of the mental and emotional faculties in the fullest sense of these terms. Finally, it is this interior psychic form which is the subject of the alchemical experiment. And it is this which, because of its appearance to clairvoyant or spiritual vision, is called The Philosopher's Stone when remoulded and perfected. In the words of Khunrath: "Our King and Lord of Hosts goes forth from the chamber of his glassy sepulchre into this mundane sphere in his glorified body, regenerate and in perfection perfected, as a shining carbuncle, most temperate in splendour, and whose parts, most subtle and most pure, are inseparably blent together in the harmonious rest of union into one."



## CHAPTER TWO

*The Golden Treatise<sup>1</sup> of Hermes Trismegistus,  
concerning the Physical secret of the Philosopher's Stone.*

*In Seven Sections*

### SECTION FIRST

1. Even thus saith Hermes: Through long years, I have not ceased to experiment, neither have I spared any labour of mind; and this science and art I have obtained by the inspiration of the living God alone, who judged fit to open them to me His servant. To those enabled by reason to judge of truth He has given power to arbitrate, but to none occasion of delinquency.

2. For myself, I had never discovered this matter to any one, had it not been from fear of the day of judgment, and the perdition of my soul, if I concealed it. It is a debt which I am desirous to discharge to the faithful, as the Author of our faith did deign to bestow it upon me.

3. Understand ye then, O sons of Wisdom, that the knowledge of the four elements of the ancient philosophers was not corporally or imprudently sought after, which are through patience to be discovered according to their causes and their occult operation. For their operation is occult, since nothing is done except it be compounded, and because it is not perfected unless the colours be thoroughly passed and accomplished.

4. Know then, that the division that was made upon the Water, by the ancient philosophers, separates it into four substances, one to two, and three to one, the one third part of which is colour, that is to say -a coagulating moisture; but the two third waters are the Weights of the Wise.

5. Take of the humidity an ounce and a half, and of the Meridian Redness, that is the soul of gold, a fourth part, that is to say, half an ounce of the citrine Seyre, in like manner, half an ounce; of the Auripigment, half - which are eight - that is three ounces; and know ye that the vine of the wise is drawn forth in three, and the wine thereof is perfected in thirty.

6. Understand the operation, therefore, decoction lessens the matter, but the tincture augments it; because Luna after fifteen days is diminished; and in the third, she is augmented. This is the beginning and the end.

7. Behold, I have declared that which had been concealed, since the work is both with you and about you; taking what is within and fixed, thou canst have it either in earth or sea.

8. Keep therefore, thy Argent vive, which is prepared in the innermost chamber in which it is coagulated; for that is Mercury which is spoken of concerning the residual earth.

9. He therefore, who now hears my words, let him search into them; I have discovered all things that were before hidden concerning this knowledge, and disclosed the greatest of all secrets.

10. Know ye, therefore, Enquirers into the rumour, and Children of Wisdom, that the vulture standing upon the mountain crieth out with a loud voice, I am the White of the Black, and the Red of the White and the Citrine of the Red; and I speak the very truth.

11. And know that the chief principle of the art is the Crow, which in the blackness of the night and clearness of the day, flies without wings. From the bitterness existing in the throat, the tincture is taken, the red goes forth from his body, and from his back is taken a pure water.

12. Understand, therefore, and accept this gift of God. In the caverns of the metals there is hidden the Stone that is venerable, splendid in colour, a mind sublime, and an open sea. Behold I have declared it unto thee; give thanks to God, who hath taught you this knowledge; for He loves the grateful.

13. Put the matter into a moist fire, therefore, and cause it to boil, in order that its heat may be augmented, which destroys the siccidity of the incombustible nature, until the radix may appear; then extract the redness and the light part, till the third part remains.

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1 The Golden Treatise, says Arthur Edward Waite in his work *The Secret Tradition in Alchemy*, first appeared at Leipzig in 1600 under the editorship of Dr. Guecias, and again in 1610. An English version was included by William Salmon in his *Medicina Practica*. Waite asserts that there is not only no Greek original but as a Latin text it is a late production. He also says Mrs. Atwood's version which is our text differs from Salmon's

(Note: - The numbering of the verses does not exist in the former texts. This is simply my own inclusion, adopted for convenience' sake. - I.R.)







































































































































































