



BETTER LIVING THROUGH ALCHEMY

VOLUME I: ORIGINS OF ALCHEMY

By Lynn Osburn© 1994-2008



Author's Preface

“Better Living Through Alchemy” began as an outline and notes for a lecture I conducted at the *Meeting of the Minds* conference hosted by Chapman University in Southern California in 1994. The presentation was given in a lecture hall in the science building on a Friday afternoon. I had enriched the project with a slide show presentation of classic Alchemy artwork dating back to the 1500s. As students left one class heading to another they came past the open door to my lecture and upon peeking in were fascinated by the highly evocative symbolism in the artwork. This of course was the goal of those ancient masters of Alchemy known as Adepts and Sages. The room filled with students; many thought this was a new course added to the curriculum. After the presentation several came up to me and wanted to sign up for the course.

Since that time my outline and notes grew into a book length project. Then it evolved and the chapters began fusing into independent volumes. Segments from *ORIGINS OF ALCHEMY* have been published in journals on the World Wide Web, including *Alchemy Journal* and *Hermetic Foundation Journal* since 2001. Here for the first time I've made the complete Volume I available in electronic format.

Lynn Osburn March 23, 2008

Introduction

When I was growing up in America back in the 1950s and 1960s DuPont the chemical corporate giant used the trademarked slogan “Better Things for Better Living...Through Chemistry” to advertise their economic paradigm. “Better Living Through Chemistry,” (the variant used by a host of corporations to avoid DuPont's trademark) brought us poisoned groundwater, poisoned air, our bodies poisoned with traces of synthetic molecules and heavy metals, our bodies poisoned with artificially altered food products.

The list of woes and complaints generated from “better living through chemistry” continues to grow. Yet there is nothing inherently pathological in the science of chemistry. Miracle drugs chemically engineered have vanquished diseases and alleviated painful symptoms. The drug companies promise even more in their advertisements. TV commercials claim one pill will give you energy; another will make you feel young. One breath mint company's commercials insinuate their sugar pill will enhance the user's problem solving skills while enabling the user to step out of conformity to solve the problem—that's a lot of magic from a breath mint.

What the drug companies promise is quite alluring and generates billions of dollars in annual retail sales. If advertisements for chemical concoctions claimed that ingredients were compounded with magic spells to make them work miracles the government attorneys would accuse them of fraud. However it is legitimate to proclaim that through the genius of science and the technology of chemistry ingredients have been compounded that can

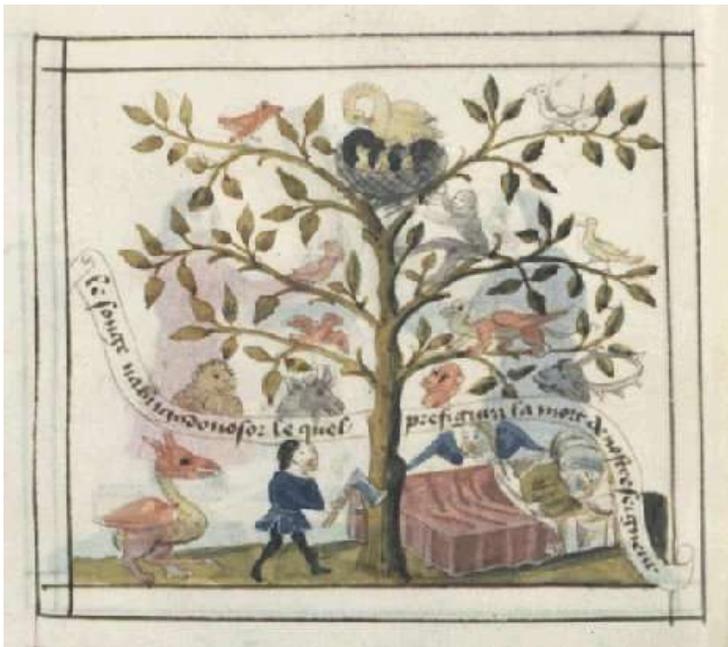
work miracles. This scientific proclamation to have produced a miracle-working pill finds acceptance because science has replaced magic as the reality interface between people and Nature.

Magic has a certain spiritual vitality while science usually operates mechanistically seemingly lacking in spiritual vitality. Science hasn't lost its soul; for a very long time now its body has been enslaved by national and corporate economic interests. Before that time the spirit that imbued the scientific methods with creative genius was the dynamic soul, Alchemy. For thousands of years alchemy technicians compounded pills called Stones that cured disease, alleviated pain, unleashed energy and rejuvenated the body. The people experiencing these Philosopher's Stones believed they were magic; the alchemists always said the Stone was art and science coupled to the inspiration of the divine.

Alchemy is a philosophical discipline utilizing proto-scientific principles that are applied through scientific methods. Alchemy blossomed about 2000 years ago out of the culture chaos where East met West at the beginning of the current epoch: an epoch nearing its end, an epoch where civilization thus far has gone global on a tidal wave of technical knowledge.

The alchemist sages and adepts not only established the essential methods used in modern medicine and the sciences of chemistry, biochemistry, pharmacology, psychopharmacology and psychology; they also created the paradigm at the heart of the global counterculture and psychedelic movement—the desire to know thyself and live in balance and harmony with Nature.

Alchemy is the spiritual discipline of the Initiate culture. The Initiates throughout history have run afoul of the authoritarian hierarchy of rulers established by economies of governments and dogmas of religions.



The marriage of the decaying Roman empire to a fanatic religion of the masses, Paulist Christianity, created the Holy Roman empire and through several ecumenical councils brought fourth the Dark Ages and outlawed the pursuit of knowledge by declaring the Tree of Knowledge bore the fruit forbidden by god. The resulting creative stagnation and spiritual repression banned all avenues of communion with the mysterious and seriously inhibited Western cultural growth. The alchemists took that psycho-social babble of religio-statesmanship and spun a golden thread through it that tapped the creative energies despite prohibitions by the church-state. Alchemists devoted their lives to the pursuit of self development under the guise of making gold. Early on they cooked the ancient instinctual patterns and primordial drives of our ancestors distilling and

congealing from them the archetypal psychic structures that drive us today.

The goal of the alchemical “magnum opus” (great work) was no less than individual self-perfection through physical transmutation and spiritual transcendence. To that end the alchemists experimented with countless substances unlocking the mysteries of chemical composition and probing the nature of energy/matter.

They worked in laboratories making profound medicines called *tinctures*, *elixirs*, *cylssi*, and *stones* from a multitude of plants and minerals. The production of alchemical medicines they called the Spagyric Art¹. From

the spagyric art came the sciences of pharmacology and psychopharmacology. Spagyric preparations were for healing the body, clearing the mind, and some were capable of extending life many years beyond the average lifespan.

The “great work” of alchemy on “metals and minerals” was undertaken in the laboratory. The starting material was reduced to its “prima materia” (first matter) and broken down by and into the “four elements,” then ultimately reassembled into a red and a white powder. Both were extremely potent and deadly. The alchemists rarely ever revealed the detailed processes for making the red and white “Philosopher’s Stones.” They believed it was essential for each “operator” to do the work individually, so they obscured their recipes, simply describing the procedures as generally taking two paths, the Humid and the Dry. The “humid path” operations took longer to complete but were not as difficult as the “dry path” operations which required more subjective finesse and artful technical discernment.



Alchemy lore asserts an operator tested the efficacy of the powders by “projecting” a minuscule portion onto any metal; lead, tin, copper or brass, were favorites. The powders acted like catalysts transmuting the metal into silver or gold depending on which powder was used. If the transmutation was successful the adept consumed an extremely dilute modified admixture of the two powders. A profound transmutation began, causing a metamorphosis of being. The operator became immortal and capable of transcending space/time—a universal navigator. Legends abound in the old literature about transmuted alchemist sages appearing in times of great need and miraculously helping humanity, then vanishing. Tradition has it that one of the last things an adept did before transcending space/time was to leave a written record—a memoir and guiding light for those still in the labyrinth.

Ancient Alchemy East and West

The Western philosophical discipline called *alchemy* crystallized around the second century CE.² The earliest alchemical operators were centered in Alexandria, Egypt. “If there was an enormous public library at Alexandria, there were also many private libraries of the inner schools dealing with the sacred science of unseen things. It was precisely from these private circles that all the mystic writings proceeded, and we can see from the nature of the Gnostic and other works of this kind which have reached us, that their authors and compilers had access to large libraries of mystic lore. ... And not only was there a library, but also a kind of university, called the Museum, dedicated to the arts and sciences and embracing among other things an observatory, an amphitheatre of anatomy, a vast botanical garden, an immense menagerie, and many other collections of things useful for physical research.

“It was an institution conceived on a most liberal plan, an assembly of savants lodged in a palace, richly endowed with the liberality of princes, exempt from public charges. Without distinction of race or creed, with no imposed regulations, no set plan of study or lecture lists, the members of this distinguished assembly were left free to prosecute their researches and studies untrammelled and unhampered.

“... So far there had been no philosophy in the proper sense of the word; that did not enter into the curriculum of the Museum. Hitherto Alexandria had had no philosophy of her own, but now she is destined to be the crucible in which philosophic thought of every kind will be fused together, and not only philosophy, but more important still, religio-philosophy and theosophy of every kind will be poured into the melting pot, and many strange systems and some things admirably good and true will be moulded out of the matter cast into this seething crucible. ...



“Slowly but surely the wisdom of Egyptians, of the Babylonians and Chaldeans, and its reflection in some of the Jewish doctors, of Persia, too, and perhaps even to India, begins to react on the center of Grecian thought, and religion and all the great problems of the human soul begin to oust mere scholasticism...from the schools; Alexandria is no longer to be a mere literary city, but a city of philosophy in the old sense of the term; it is to be wisdom-loving...”³

The early Alexandrian alchemists adapted ancient Egyptian, Babylonian and Hindu metallurgical procedures to pursue their investigation of the *Spirit and Soul in the matter*. These procedures possessed magical and religious importance for the Egyptian and Babylonian priesthoods, especially the methods used to refine gold and other metals from rock ore and to make synthetic stones of religious significance. The Alexandrian alchemists proceeded with a proto-scientific philosophical spiritual approach with emphasis on experimentation. They were also adept at preparing herbal medicines and compounding powerful psychotropic extracts. Many taught alchemy openly at the Museum near the Serapis temple and library, the Serapeum.

However, the quintessential esoteric paradigm underlying alchemy, the pursuit of individual self evolution, seems to be the offspring of the marriage between Hindu tantric alchemy and the teachings of the enigmatic Taoist sages. Lao Tsu is the most well known among the Taoist sages; he lived in China about 2400 years ago. Along with this marriage from the East was the fusion of philosophies and praxis that has come down to us as the *Gnosis* or *Gnosticism*.



In fact writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus were found that dated from the 4th Century in the collection of Gnostic manuscripts that became known as the Nag Hammadi Library. “We come to a class of writings that one would hardly have expected to find in a Gnostic library. This consists of the texts which, in some cases, reveal to us a teaching intermediate between Gnosticism and Hermetism, whilst others belong properly to Hermetic literature. ...As for the properly Hermetic writings of this category, they are—significantly—grouped together, five of them in Codex VI—which was one of the most in use,

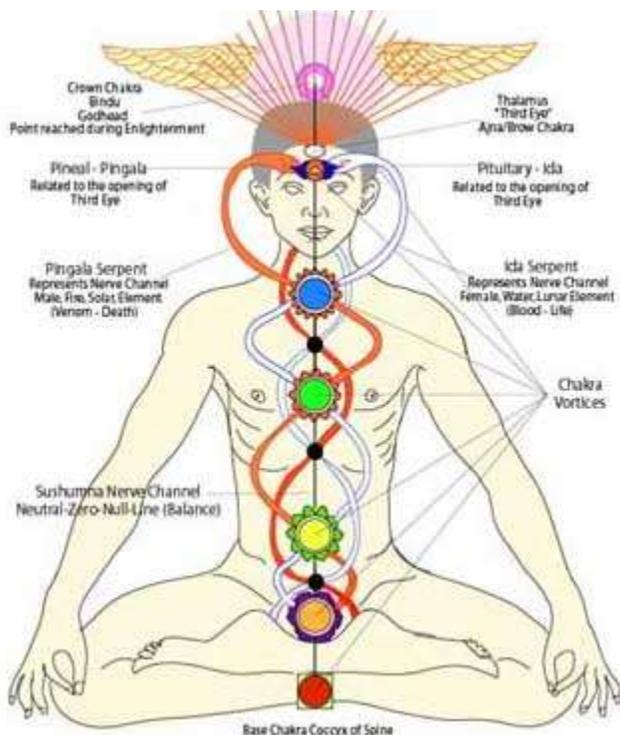
as we can see from the portions of feathers slipped in between the leaves to mark certain places in the book.

“What remains so remarkable is the presence of these Hermetic writings in a library of which all the rest is essentially Gnostic. Moreover, the gloss of the Gnostic compiler—‘This is the first discourse that I have copied for you. But there are many others that have come into my hands: I have not transcribed them, thinking that they have already reached you....’—greatly heightens the interest of its presence in this collection. What it shows is that there was in circulation in Upper Egypt, in the second half of the fourth century (the period of our codex), a far more important collection of Hermetic treatises, already translated from Greek into Sahidic Coptic, and destined, no doubt, for use by sectaries more or less related to those of Chenoboskion.

“The intentional juxtaposition of Hermetic writings and Gnostic treatises shows that some interchange was then going on between the two schools of doctrine. Here, living once again before our eyes, is that syncretic movement which associated the Gnostic prophets not only to the Hermes of Cyllene, but also to the more learned Hermes of the Greek mystical treatises. This is precisely the blend of ideas whose occurrence at the epoch had been suggested, but not satisfactorily proved, by the little treatise of Zosimos the alchemist *Upon the Letter Omega*; in which myths derived from the writings of Zoroaster, some of those of Nicotheus ‘the hidden’ and of the Jewish Gnosis, are treated upon the same footing as writings *On the Natures* and *On Immateriality*, which are imputed to the authority of the Trismegistus.”⁴

Hindu Origins of Alchemy

According to many historians alchemy was introduced into India by the Arabs. However “mercury” was mentioned in the fourth century “Bower Manuscript,” and the transmutation of metals and ores into gold was described in several Buddhist texts between the second and fifth centuries. The *Mahaprajnaparamitashastra* of Nagarjuna, was translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva over three centuries before the zenith of Arab alchemy which occurred during the life of Jabir ibin Hayyan, aka Geber around 760 CE. The discourse of Nagarjuna lists among the *siddhi* (miraculous powers) the transmutation of stone into gold and gold into stone.



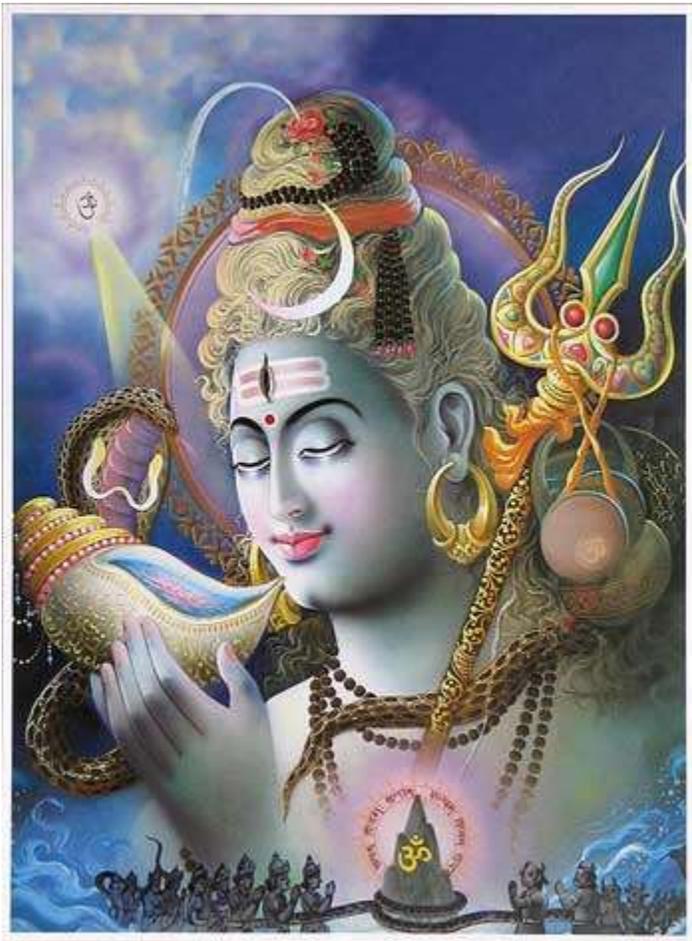
Another Hindu alchemical text, *Avatamska Sutra* (second-fourth century) reported: “There exists a Hataka juice or essence. One *liang* of this solution can transform one thousand liangs of bronze into pure gold.” Further details are given in *Mahaprajnaparamitopadesha* by Nagarjuna, translated into Chinese 402-405 CE: “By means of drugs and incantations one can change bronze into gold. By skillful use of drugs, silver may be transformed into gold and gold into silver. By spiritual strength man can change clay or stone into gold.”⁵

“The Hatha-yogis and the Tantrists attempt to transmute their bodies into incorruptible ones. The new body they call *divine body of gnosis*. The Hindu alchemist pursues the same goal: the transmutation of the body indefinitely prolonging its youth, strength and suppleness. The tantric Hatha-yogi works on the physical body and the mind while the alchemist works on substances. Both aim at “‘purifying’ these impure materials, at ‘perfecting’ them and finally, transmuting them into ‘gold.’ ...‘Gold is immortality:’ it is the perfect metal, and its symbolism rejoins

the symbolism of the pure spirit, free and immortal, which the yogi endeavors, by asceticism to ‘extract’ from the ‘unclean’ and ‘enslaved’ psycho-mental life. ...The alchemist hopes to achieve the same results as the yogi by ‘projecting’ his asceticism *on* to matter. Instead of submitting his body and his psycho-mental life to the rigours of yoga, in order to separate the Spirit (*purusha*) from all experience belonging to the sphere of the substance (*prakrti*), the alchemist subjects metals to the chemical operations which correspond to the ‘purifications’ and ascetic ‘tortures.’ For there is a complete solidarity between physical matter and the psycho-somatic body of the man: both are products of the primordial substance (*prakrti*). Between the ‘basest’ metal and the most refined psycho-mental experience there is no break of continuity.

“All this is more easily understood if one studies the ideology, symbolism and techniques of alchemy in their yogi-tantric context, and if one takes account of a certain Indian spiritual prehistory embracing the belief in men-gods, magicians and immortals. Tantric yoga and alchemy have integrated, and given a new significance to these myths and yearnings as, in China, Taoism and alchemy have done with a number of immemorial traditions.”⁶

The great Hindu alchemist and sage Nagarjuna taught that the alchemical process of *fixing mercury*, indeed the whole of alchemy, was revealed by the great god Shiva personally, and secretly transmitted from one generation of adepts to the next. Nagarjuna described the alchemical adept: “intelligent, devoted to his work, without sin and master of his passions...Those who are truthful, free from temptation, love the Gods and are self-controlled and used to live upon proper diet and regimen—such are to be engaged in performing chemical operations.”⁷



Shiva is called the god of mercury in the *Rudrayamala Tantra*. Shiva says his generating principle is mercury and extolled its efficacy when it has been *fixed* (dead) six times. Mercury was also called Harabija, “semen of Shiva” in the lexicon of *Maheshvara*. The *Survarna Tantra* asserts that by eating fixed mercury (*nasta-pista*) a human can become immortal. The *Rudrayamala* describes the fixed mercury as having no brilliance nor fluidity; it’s lighter than quicksilver and coloured. The *Rasaratnasamuccaya III* declares a human body can be transmuted into a divine one through the action of an elixir obtained from ‘mercury.’ In that text Nagarjuna said he had developed remedies for “wrinkles and white hair and other signs of old age...Mineral preparations act with equal efficiency on metals as on the human body”⁸

“This favourite metaphor of Indian alchemists illustrates one of their fundamental conceptions. Like the human body, metals can be ‘purified’ and ‘made divine’ by mercuric preparations which communicate the healing virtues of Shiva, for Shiva, to the whole tantric world, is the God of deliverance. The *Rasarnava* recommends that mercury should be applied first on metals and then on the human body. If

we are to believe the *Rasahrdaya Tantra*, alchemy may even cure leprosy and restore to old men their pristine youth.⁹

“From times of the greatest antiquity an important section of the Indian spiritual elite applied itself to ‘experimentation’—the direct, experimental knowledge of all that constitutes the basis and processes of the human body and the psycho-mental life....

“The Indian alchemist drew up the elements of a pre-chemistry the moment he abandoned the strictly traditional plane of reference and applied himself to the objective study of phenomena and experimentation with the aim of completing his knowledge of the properties of matter. Hindu scholars were capable of exact observation and scientific thought... Metallurgical processes were described with greater accuracy by Hindu writers three centuries before Agrippa and Paracelsus. In the pharmacopoea, the Hindus achieved impressive results....

“Operational contact with the ‘substances’ was not without spiritual consequences—as was the case in the West from the time when scientific chemistry came into its own. To work actively on ores and metals was to touch *prakrti*, to modify its forms, to intervene in its processes. Now, in the ideological universe in which the alchemist works, and which is that of tantrism, *prakrti* is not only the cosmological principle of classical Sankhya and yoga; *prakrti* is the primordial mode of the Goddess, of the Shakti.”¹⁰



Taoist Origins of Alchemy

“Taoism goes back to the days of the guilds of smiths, custodians of the most wondrous of the magic arts and the secrets of the primal forces. It was in Taoist and neo-Taoist circles that alchemical techniques were propagated.... Their ideas of longevity and immortality belong to the sphere of mythologies and folklore which is virtually universal. The notions of the ‘herb of immortality,’ of animal or vegetable substances charged with ‘vitality’ and containing the elixir of eternal youth as well as the myths concerning inaccessible regions inhabited by immortals, are part of a primitive ideology going far beyond the confines of China....

“Chinese alchemy was built up, in so far as it is an autonomous discipline, by utilizing: traditional cosmological principles; myths connected with the elixir of immortality and the immortal saints; techniques pursuing the prolongation of life, beatitude and spiritual spontaneity.... There is a very obvious and close connection between the ‘preparation of gold,’ the ‘drug of immortality’ and the ‘evocation of the Immortals’”¹¹

Han dynasty historian, Ssu-ma Ch’ien lived in the first century 145-86 BCE. In *Records of the Historian* he recounts how Taoist master sage, Lao Tsu, “having lived in Chou for a long time, realized it was in decline and left. As he reached the pass, the pass-keeper, Yin-hsi, said, ‘You are about to retire. Please try your best to write a book for me.’ Thereupon Lao Tsu wrote a book in two parts, expounding the ideas of the Way and its virtue in over 5000 words and then [he] departed. None knew how he ended. Probably Lao Tsu lived to be more than one hundred and sixty years—some say more than 200 years—because he practiced the Way and nourished his old age.”¹²

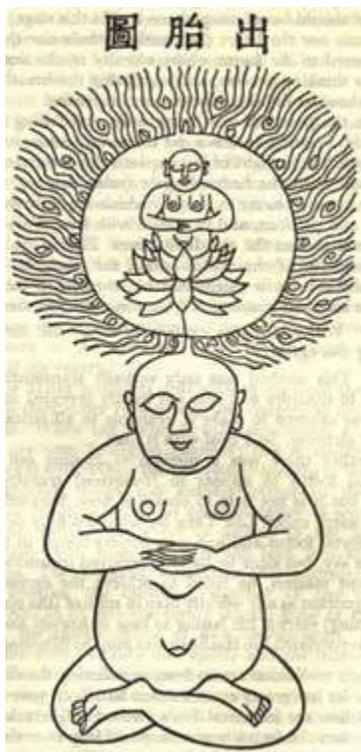
Pass-keeper Yin-hsi became Master Yin-hsi, inspired by the teachings Lao Tsu had written for him in the *Way of Things, the Tao te Ching*. From it master Yin-hsi developed a method to keep one in harmony with Tao. He called it *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

The Secret of the Golden Flower advances the Taoist “premise that the cosmos and man, in the last analysis, obey the same law; that man is a microcosm and is not separated from the macrocosm by any fixed barriers. The very same laws rule for the one as for the other, and from the one a way leads into the other. The psyche and the cosmos are to each other like the inner world and the outer world. Therefore man participates by nature in all cosmic events, and is inwardly as well as outwardly interwoven with them. ...The fundamental idea is that Tao, though itself motionless, is the means of all movement. [And life is] the multicolored play of nature which cannot evade the laws of the Tao.”¹³

The Taoists believed, and the *secret doctrine* proposed, that human consciousness is of two natures. Body-consciousness is stimulated to react by phenomena and is bound to the laws of physics. It is the emotional consciousness awakened by the five senses through unreflecting reactions to impressions received from the external world. Spirit-consciousness prevails when body-consciousness is quiet.

Psychic energy and vital energy flow out from the individual into the phenomenal world. Vital energy is exhausted at death. Body-consciousness is linked to organic processes and decays returning to the earth. Spirit-consciousness is linked to intellect and imagination and powered with psychic energy. At death it rises from the earth then failing to maintain its energy output, dissipates, or its energy is drawn into the common reservoir of life energy. The master of the Pass reasoned that reversing the direction of energy flow from outward to inward would prolong life. He called the process of reversing the flow of psychic and vital energies, “Circulation of the Light.”

Circulation of the Light:



“The work on the circulation of the light depends entirely on the backward-flowing movement, so that the thoughts are gathered together. ...When the light circulates, the energies of the whole body appear before its throne. ...You have only to make the light circulate: that is the deepest and most wonderful secret. The light is easy to move, but difficult to fix. If it is made to circulate long enough, then it crystallizes itself; that is the natural spirit-body. In carrying out this fundamental principle you need to seek for no other methods, but must only concentrate your thoughts on it. When the light is made to move in a circle, all the energies of heaven and earth, of the light and the dark, are crystallized.

“...When one begins to apply this magic it is as if, in the middle of being, there were non-being. When in the course of time the work is completed, and beyond the body there is a body, it is as if, in the middle of non-being, there is being. ...There develops the seed pearl. It is as if man and woman embraced and a conception took place. Then one must be quite still and wait. The circulation of the light is the epoch of fire.

“...In the midst of primal transformation, the radiance of the light is the determining thing. The radiation and dissipation of spiritual consciousness is chiefly brought about by this energy when it is directed outward. Therefore the Way of the Golden Flower depends wholly on the backward-flowing method. The decision must be carried out with a collected heart, and not seeking success; success will then come of itself.

“...As soon as the heart stirs, there develops breath-energy. Breath-energy is originally transformed activity of the heart. ...Since heart and breath are mutually dependent, the circulation of the light must be united with the rhythm of breathing. ...Although the breath that flows in and out through the nose is not the true breath, the flowing in and out of the true breath takes place in connection with it.”¹⁴

By the ninth century *The Secret of the Golden Flower* had generated the “Religion of the Golden Elixir of Life.” Practitioners of this esoteric and secret religion were met with tolerance and favor during the T’ang dynasty. But over time, as it became more popular, adepts were accused of political intrigues. Adherents were persecuted by hostile governments. In 1891 fifteen thousand members of the Religion of the Golden Elixir of Life were murdered by Manchu hirelings.

From the third century BCE. to the third century CE. Taoist adepts inspired by the *Secret of the Golden Flower* sought to produce a substance that would turn base metals into gold and give men immortality. This *philosopher’s stone* created by artful diligence in the kitchen was to be crushed “into a marvelous powder, a gold dust which ‘spread mistily like wind driven by rain’ through the five organs. The universal medicine freed its owner from all worldly miseries. New teeth would grow, dark hair would cover the old man’s baldness, and his sick wife would regain perfect health.”¹⁵

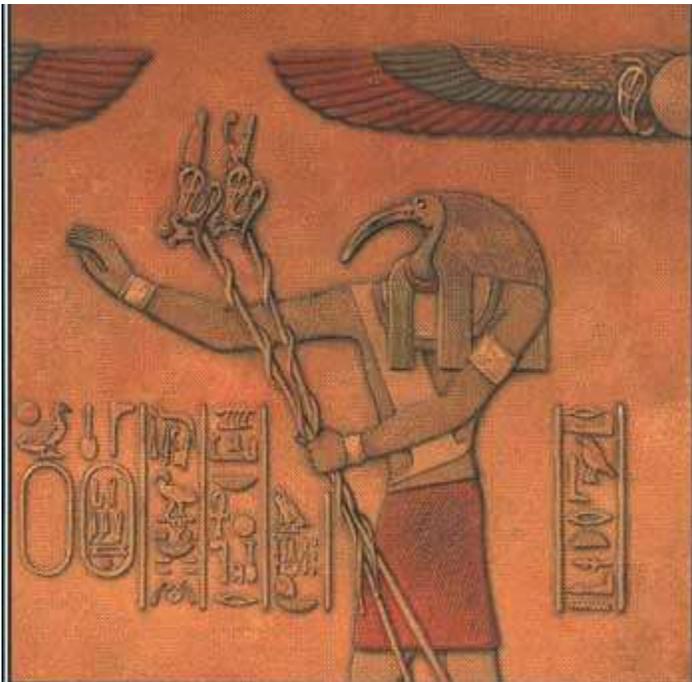
Hermetic Origins of Alchemy

During approximately the same time period in Egypt, Greek colonists living in Alexandria partook in a cultural synthesis that mingled elements of Egyptian religion and Greek philosophy together with religious fragments from the Levant and the East.¹⁶ The god Hermes ascended from this crucible. From then on he was a fusion of the Homeric Greek god Hermes and the ancient Egyptian god Thoth, the divine inventor of magic, language and writing. Hermes “‘opens the doors of birth and of death.’ He controls exchange, commerce and learning: he is the gods’ messenger, the mediator, the reconciler.”¹⁷

By 200 BCE Hermes had become humanized, developing into a mythical king. His 36,000 books on the *Principles of Nature* written over his 3200 year reign were reduced in number to a mere forty-two, which the Christian patriarch Clement of Alexandria claimed to have seen carried in a solemn procession. The books were anonymous writings on Egyptian

philosophy, the offspring of Greco-Egyptian philosophical intercourse. Those Sages writing under the pseudonym, Hermes, preserved for us the composite wisdom called Hermetic philosophy.

Hermetic philosophy with its tradition of anonymous adepts was adopted by the early Alexandrian alchemists. Many texts claim Hermes Trismegistus was the first master of alchemy. However alchemy incorporated many elements of a more pragmatic nature, taking Hermetic philosophy from the merely cerebral, and applying it to the phenomenal.



Very few of the manuscripts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus escaped destruction by the emerging Roman-Catholic Empire. However when the Moslems invaded Egypt and settled there after 640, they found manuscripts and inscribed tablets in the pyramids. Arabic writings on the subject recount tales of discovering a tablet of mystical instructions in the tomb of Hermes. E. J. Holmyard uncovered the oldest known version of it inserted in *THE ELEMENTARY BOOK OF FOUNDATION*, by Geber (Jabir ibn Hayyam), the greatest and most prolific Arab alchemist; it is dated to the eighth century.¹⁸ There Geber recounts how the great magician sage, Apollonius of Tyana, discovered in a tomb an engraved emerald tablet in the mummified hand of Hermes Trismegistus. Apollonius flourished in the first half of the first century CE. His biographer Philostratus (170-230 CE.) detailed Apollonius' travels in India and his claim to be the reincarnation of Pythagoras. The tablet contained the *Creed of the Adepts*—the legendary *Emerald Tablet* of Hermes Trismegistus.



The eighth century *Emerald Tablet* represents the quintessence of Taoist philosophy and its *Secret of the Golden Flower* congealed into Western consciousness. It leaves nothing out in its brevity, revealing the whole of the art and creation of the world in the sublime simplicity so loved by the Taoist masters.

'Tis true without falsehood, and most real: that which is above is like that which is below, to perpetrate the miracles of One thing. And as all things have been derived from One, by the thought of One, so all things are born from One by adoption.

The Sun is its father; the Moon is its mother. The Earth is its nurse; The belly of the Wind carries it. Here is the essence of every Perfection in the world. Its strength and power prevail when turned into earth; thou wilt separate the earth from fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with great care.

It ascends from earth to heaven, descends again to earth and receives the power of the higher and the lower. By this means, thou wilt have the glory of the world. And because of this, all obscurity will flee from thee. Within this is the power, most powerful of all powers. For it will overcome all subtle things, and penetrate every solid thing. Thus the world was created. Wonderful adaptations will emerge from this; it is the Way.

*And for this reason, I am called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the philosophy of the world. What I have said of the Sun's operations is complete.*¹⁹

The first paragraph reveals the relationship between the macrocosm and microcosm. Man and the universe are like each other, complete each other miraculously becoming One. All things are One individually and One whole when taken together.

The second paragraph reveals One is a trivalent emanation born in the embrace of opposites: sun and moon, light and dark, positive and negative, on and off, one and zero, existence and nonexistence, etc. The union of opposites creates a body (Earth) or manifestation of that union. The manifestation is the One thing derived from the two. The One thing continues as long as the body of that union can be nurtured. One is the continuing embrace of opposites. In other words the trivalent potentiality in all things is one of opposition, attraction,

balance—or expansion, contraction, stasis—the three conditions of the universe postulated by modern physics. To unleash the power of One separate the subtle from the gross: separate the opposites, carefully.

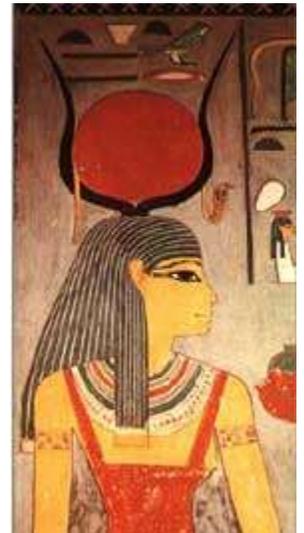
Paragraph three describes the process and the results of separating the opposites, heaven and earth, and separating One from them. The One is *it* that ascends to heaven and descends to earth thereby gaining the power of the macrocosm and the microcosm. Paragraph two said *the belly of the Wind carries it. It ascends and descends on the air one breathes. All one has to do is separate it from the air breathed in and circulate it as described by the Taoist alchemists and all obscurity will flee from thee.*

“It was in the fourth century, amidst the merciless fight which Christianity was waging against paganism, that alchemy flowered. Zosimos of Panopolis, a writer of that epoch, appointed himself the defender of the alchemical art. His allegories and comments are cited by medieval experts as the most profound and venerable documents of the arcana.

“Zosimos declared the knowledge of metals, precious stones, and of scents dates back to the epoch mentioned in Genesis: ‘The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair.’ The mysterious sons of God were believed to be fallen angels who had mated with women of antediluvian times. [Grateful], the angels taught these women various arts, [desiring] their companions make jewels, colorful garments, and perfumes with which to adorn their beauty.”²⁰

A woman adept of the early period calling herself, Isis, had revealed in her treatise that Annael, the first of the angels and prophets, gave her alchemical wisdom because he wanted to have sex with her. Many alchemists participating in the early original formative years of this new epoch were women. Zosimos directs several of his tractates to his sister alchemist Theosebia who was openly initiating apprentices though Zosimos advised against it.

Zosimos further revealed that Chemes, a very early master of alchemy, had written a book called *Chema*, which the fallen angels had used to instruct their lovers, the daughters of men. The Greek word “chemia” described the alchemical art until the Arabs added to it the article “al” from their language creating the word *alchemy*.²¹ *Al kimiya* meant to the Arabs not only the elixir or Philosopher’s Stone itself but also the medium of transmutation.



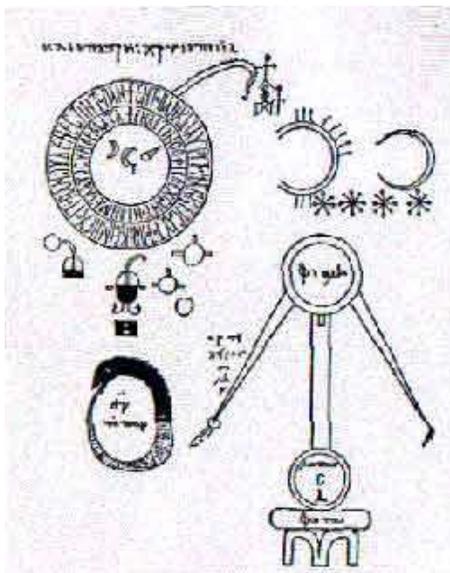
One of the earliest alchemist in the West was a mysterious Greek woman who wrote under the pseudonym, Maria Prophetissa (also called Mary the Jewess). Zosimos and other alchemists have identified her with Miriam, the sister of Moses. Maria was a skilled adept credited with inventing several devices that demonstrate laboratory techniques routinely employed by modern science. She designed an apparatus that enclosed a vessel in a box of hot ashes to produce low and steady heat to initiate reactions of materials placed in the vessel. She devised the routine of placing the reaction vessel into a dung heap to incubate alchemical principles, thus taking advantage of the prolonged warmth produced by the bacteria composting the dung. She invented the double boiler to produce still higher but steady heat necessary for other phases in the production of the Philosopher’s Stone.²²

Unfortunately the alchemical writings of Maria Prophetissa are incomplete, surviving only in fragments copied by later writers. In one treatise ascribed to her, “*Practica Mariae Prophetissae in artem alchemicam*,” possibly of Arabic origin, she discusses *matrimonium alchymicum* (alchemical wedding) with the philosopher Aros. From it comes the oft repeated alchemical dictum “Marry gum with gum in true marriage.” The renown twentieth century psychiatrist and pioneering investigator into the psychology of alchemy, C. G. Jung, wrote concerning the nature of that alchemical gum, “Originally it was ‘gum arabic,’ and it is used here as a secret name for the transforming substance, on account of its adhesive quality. Thus Kunrath declares that the ‘red’ gum is the ‘resin of the wise’—a synonym for the transforming substance.”²³ Had Jung been an initiate of alchemy he would have known that gum arabic was itself a pseudonym for the true transforming substance—the red resin of the wise—a gum gathered from the resinous flower clusters of female *Cannabis sativa* plants. That highly fragrant reddish resin has been produced in India since time immemorial and carried to the west by Arab traders.



Another early adept using the pseudonym, Cleopatra, wrote a book called *Chrysopeia* (Goldmaking). In it she describes the *Ouroboros*, accompanied with an illustration of a snake devouring its tail. The upper half with the head is dark. The lower half is light. Above it in three concentric circles is written, “One is All, by him is all, and for him is all, and in him is all. The Serpent is one; he has the two symbols (good and bad)...”²⁴ The Ouroboros was a Gnostic creation that transformed the evil serpent of Christendom into a symbol for the union of opposites in the Way of One. The Ouroboros is the Western equivalent of the Taoist *Yin-Yang*: a circle dynamically divided in two halves, one light, the other dark, each chasing the other and each containing a point of the other within it. The *Yin-Yang* is the Eastern symbol for the union of opposites in the Way. The serpent and the Tree of Knowledge became the most cherished

symbols of alchemy.



The Ouroboros or serpent devouring its tail is perhaps the best symbol possible that demonstrates the nature of Nature—the Green Economy. All biotic life on Earth exists as one collective biomass by maintaining a balance where the living biomass consumes the dead biomass in an ongoing cycle perpetuated by green plants.



Early Christian zealots believed the serpent that tempted Adam to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge had caused the downfall of Man. They also believed the fallen angels had sinfully given women knowledge meant for god alone. So they cursed this forbidden knowledge that enabled men to rival god. The dogmatist Saint Augustine wrote of the Christian disdain for knowledge admonishing against “the vain and curious desire of investigation, known as knowledge and science.”²⁵

Most alchemy manuscripts of the third and fourth century have come to

us in copies from a much later date. The *Chyrsopeia* of Cleopatra is preserved in a manuscript dating from the tenth or eleventh century.



Persecution of the alchemists was initiated while the art was still centered in Alexandria. The study of medicine and alchemy was conducted in buildings adjacent to the Serapis Temple, the Serapeum. Theophilus, archbishop of Alexandria, ordered the Serapeum destroyed, but the scholars resisted. Then Emperor Theodosius, destroyer of paganism, forced the philosophers to retreat. The temple was destroyed but the library was saved. Learning continued in the Museum until the woman adept and teacher, Hypatia, was murdered there on the steps in 415. After that, philosophers sought refuge in Athens where the Initiate Mystery cults were still protected from Christian fanaticism.

In 529, Emperor Justinian instituted the official suppression of ancient learning, science and philosophy. Pantheistic culture disappeared but

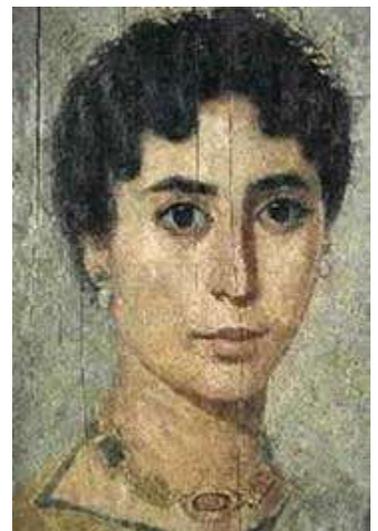
alchemy survived even though Theodosian law had decreed that all alchemy books be burned in public with the bishop presiding. The conceptual knowledge alchemy contained was essential to the further development of civilization in the West. And alchemy was flexible enough in its traditions and concepts to re-postulate the formulae of the Way in the language of the church.

The seventh century alchemist and Christian mystic, Stephanus of Alexandria, fused some elements of church orthodoxy into alchemical doctrine and dedicated his *Nine Lessons in Chemia* to Heraclius, emperor of the East. The alchemical writings of Stephanus made the quest for knowledge and methods of science palatable to the church-state. By elevating the value of knowledge in the eyes of the church, Stephanus opened the way for one of the few bright spots during the Dark Ages—the perseverance of the Byzantine monk archivists whose love of knowledge set them to work copying whatever old writings providence handed them. They devoted their lives to rescuing some of the wisdom fanatically destroyed by their Christian brothers.

Alchemical poets appeared on the scene, inspired by the writings of Stephanus and the ancient wisdom restored by the monks from the eighth through the eleventh centuries. Those early alchemists that avoided persecution by using pseudonyms—Cleopatra, Isis and Mary—were then venerated as was Hypatia though she was romanticized by later European authors outside the realm of alchemy.

Valued as it was, this trickle of wisdom could not pull European thought out of the pit of ignorance the catholic hierarchy and its flat-earth/flat-universe antinomianism had ordained for humanity. The darkness was not dispelled until after the Moslems invaded Spain and from there some of the learning of antiquity so assiduously preserved by the Byzantine monks of Eastern Christendom re-entered the West.

The Islamic scholars found a ready audience willing to accept their advances



in alchemy and science. The new wave of European students of *chemia* enthusiastically absorbed the new Arabian *alchemy* and made it their own. The resulting expansion of knowledge began the slow erosion of the church-state worldview that dominated and inhibited Western thought.

The ultimate failure of the church-state to control thinking people was facilitated by the art of papermaking introduced by the Moslems, and finalized not long after the invention of the movable type printing press. Nowadays while people pray to god for help and look to science for salvation, the mysterious *spirit* of the Way, and the underlying *soul* of the matter, live on in the *body* of alchemy.

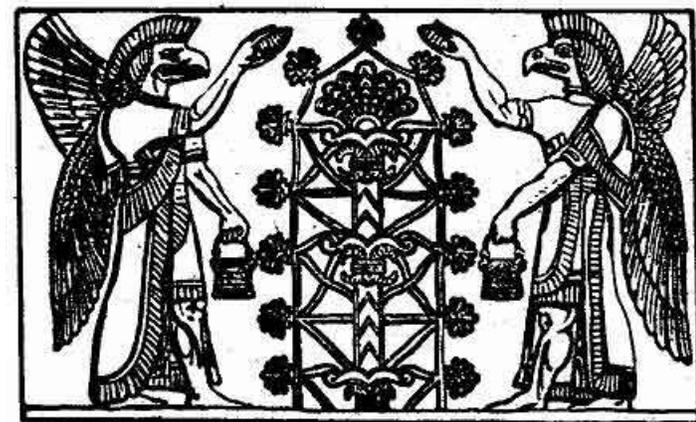
Esoteric Origins of Alchemy

Early alchemists Zosimus and Isis said alchemical knowledge came from fallen angels sexually attracted to human women. The early Christian church fathers believed them and claimed the angels had sinned against the orders of god. Who were these angels?

The Book of Enoch (Enoch 1), the Book of the Secrets of Enoch (Enoch 2) and the Book of Jubilees contain more details about the fallen angels referred to in *Genesis*. Enoch 2 was probably written by a Hellenistic Jew in the first century CE. Enoch 1 and the Book of Jubilees are Jewish works of the intertestamental period written down in the second century BCE. The information contained in them is much older than the date of these manuscripts.

Enoch was the great grandfather of Noah. *Genesis* 5: 22-24 says, “And Enoch walked with God after he begat Me-thu-se-lah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of E-noch were three hundred sixty and five years: And E-noch walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him.” The Books of Enoch describe how he was taken to the heavens after a tour of the earth: “The Lord spoke, ‘Have no fear, Enoch, good man

and scribe of goodness. Come hear my voice. Go speak to the Watcher of Heaven, who have sent you to intercede for them. Tell them: You should intercede for men, and not men for you. Why did you leave lofty, holy Heaven to sleep with women, to defile yourselves with the daughters of men and take them as your wives...?’” After God’s rhetorical admonition against his lustful yet loving angels he said to Enoch, “As for the Watcher who sent you to intercede for them, tell them: ‘You were in Heaven but the mysteries were not revealed to you. You knew worthless ones, and in the hardness of your hearts you revealed these to women, and through these secrets women and men work much evil [on] earth.’ Say to them, ‘You have no peace.’”²⁶

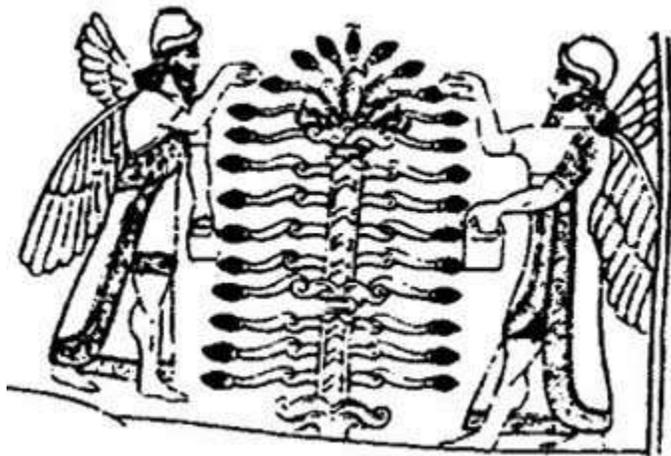


After his audience with God, angels including the archangel Uriel took Enoch on journeys through hell and heaven. From there the angel Raguel took him to the *Seven Mountains in the Northwest and the Tree of Life*. “Fragrant trees encircled the throne. Among them was a tree like no other. Its fragrance was beyond all fragrance, and its leaves and blooms and wood never withered...” Michael, the leader of the angels tells Enoch, “As for this fragrant tree, no



mortal is permitted to touch it till the great judgment....”²⁷ Enoch was instructed by the Lord to write down what had been revealed to him and to teach the people this wisdom. He did so in 366 books. Scholars believe the meaning of the name Enoch stems from a variant of the Hebrew root connoting “to train, to educate.”²⁸

Scholars have been able to verify the general historical accuracy of the Old Testament by comparing the biblical episodes to much older parallel chronicles written in cuneiform characters on clay tablets from the ancient Mesopotamian kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia. The oldest of all are from Sumer. *Shumer* is “land of the Watchers” in Akkadian, the root semitic language used by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

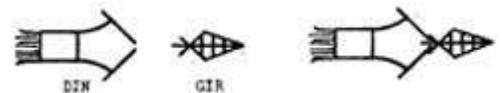


The Sumerian King List records all the rulers of earth back over 400,000 years. This huge stretch of time coupled with reigns into the thousands of years has caused most historians to reject its accuracy. However all the early rulers were gods—immortals. The King List does record the reign of Enmeduranki whose name meant “ruler whose *me* connect Heaven and Earth.” A tablet described by W.G. Lambert tells a story similar to Enoch’s: “Enmeduranki [was] a prince in Sippar, beloved of Anu, Enlil and Ea. Shamash in the Bright Temple appointed him. Shamash and Adad [took him] to the assembly [of the gods]... They showed him how to observe oil on water, a secret of Anu, Enlil and Ea. They gave him the Divine Tablet, the *kibdu* secret of Heaven and Earth... They taught him how to make calculations with numbers.”²⁹ Anu, Enlil, Ea, Shamash

and Adad were Sumerian gods called Anunnaki meaning “those who from Heaven to Earth came.”

A tablet referred to as CBS 14061 describes an incident paralleling the Enochian marriage of an angel to a human woman. The tablet tells of a young god named Martu who fell in love with the daughter of the high priest of Nin-ab. Martu complained to his goddess mother, “In my city I have friends, they have taken wives. I have companions, they have taken wives. In my city, unlike my friends, I have not taken a wife; I have no wife, I have no children.” Martu’s mother asked him if the woman he desired “appreciated his gaze.” Then the goddess gave her consent to the marriage. Enlil the leader of the gods on Earth became increasingly upset over the pollution of Anunnaki blood by these marriages and over the young Anunnaki gods becoming more interested in freedom and idyllic life on earth than taking orders from Enlil. He said “I will destroy the Earthling whom I have created off the face of the Earth.”³⁰

The peoples of ancient civilization, Sumerians, Egyptians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Hebrews etc., in their sacred writings all describe gods that physically dwelt on Earth. This was aside from their writings on philosophy and mysticism. According to the Sumerians these gods came from the planet Nibiru, “planet of the crossing;” the Assyrians and Babylonians called it Marduk, after their chief god. The Sumerians never called the Anunnaki, “gods.” They were called *din.gir*, a two syllable word. *Din* meant “righteous, pure, bright;” *gir* was a term used to describe a sharp-edged object. As an epithet for the Anunnaki *dingir* meant “righteous ones of the bright pointed objects.”³¹ The Sumerian pictograph for the word looks like a two-staged rocket with a pointed capsule at the top.



Sumerian texts break up history into two epochs divided by the great Deluge—the Biblical Flood. After the waters receded “the great Anunnaki who decree the fate’ decided that the gods ‘were too lofty for mankind.’

The term used—*elu* in Akkadian—means exactly that: ‘Lofty Ones;’ from it comes the Babylonian, Assyrian, Hebrew, and Ugaritic *El*—the term to which the Greeks gave the connotation ‘god.’”³²



Returning to *Genesis* chapter six, after the sons of God took human wives, verse four continues: “There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare *children* to them, the same *became* the mighty men which *were* of old, men of renown.” However the King James version erroneously translated the Hebrew term *nefilim* as “giants,” and *shem* as “renown.” If the original words are used the verse reads: “The Nefilim were upon the Earth, in those days and thereafter too, when the sons of the gods cohabitated with the daughters of the Adam, and they bore children unto them. They were the mighty ones of Eternity—The People of the *shem*.” Nefilim stems from the Semitic root NFL, “to be cast down.”³³ The first line of *Genesis* 6:4 means *Those who were cast down were upon the Earth*. They were the fallen angels!

They were also *the People of the shem*. “The Mesopotamian texts that refer to the inner enclosures of temples, or the heavenly journeys of the gods, or

even to instances where mortals ascended to the heavens, employ the Sumerian term *mu* or its Semitic derivatives *shu-mu* (“that which is a *mu*”), *sham*, or *shem*. Because the term also connoted ‘that by which one is remembered,’ the word has come to be taken as meaning ‘name....’ Like most Sumerian syllabic words, *mu* had a primary meaning; in the case of *mu*, it was ‘that which rises straight.’ Its thirty-odd nuances encompassed the meanings heights, fire, command, a counted period...”³⁴

After Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II had rebuilt Marduk’s sacred precinct within fortified walls made of fired brick and gleaming black marble, he recorded: “I raised the head of the boat ID.GE.UL the chariot of Marduk’s princeliness; The boat ZAG.MU.KU, whose approach is observed, the supreme traveler between Heaven and Earth, in the midst of the pavilion I enclosed, screening off its sides.” ID.GE.UL means *high to heaven, bright at night*. ZAG.MU.KU means *bright mu which is for afar*.³⁵



The Mesopotamians believed the gods were immortal. The Sumerians said one year on planet Nibiru, a *sar*, was equivalent in time to 3600 earth years. They also said Anunnaki lifespans were 120 sars which is 120 x 3600 or 432,000 years. According to the King List 120 sars had passed from the time the Anunnaki arrived on Earth to the time of the Flood. However when the Lofty Ones came to Earth their lifespans began to sync with

Earth's faster orbit and they faced rapid aging compared to that on Nibiru. They discovered that by eating food from their home planet they could keep the aging process synced to the pace of Nibiru.



The Sumerian god of wisdom Enki (Ea) was the leader of the first sons of Anu that came down to Earth. He played the pivotal role in saving humanity from the global Deluge. He defied the Anunnaki ruling council and told Ziusudra (the Sumerian Noah) how to build a ship on which to save humanity from the killing flood. Ea would have been over 120 sars old at that time, yet his relationship with humanity continued to be actively reported for thousands of years thereafter.

Within his sacred precinct “Mound of Creation” in Eridu, Enki unraveled the secrets of life and death. His emblem was two serpents entwined on a staff—the basis for the winged caduceus symbol used by modern Western medicine. Enki was the god who created the first humans: “In those days, in those years, The Wise One of Eridu, Ea, created him as a model of men.” His name was Adapa, Adam in the Old Testament: “Elohim created the Adam in His image—in the image of Elohim created He him.”³⁶



Through Enki's creative efforts “wide understanding he perfected for him.... Wisdom [he had given him].... To him he had given Knowledge; Eternal Life he had not given him.”³⁷ Anu wondered “why did Ea, to a worthless human the plan of Heaven disclose—rendering him distinguished, making a *shem* for him?”³⁸ Enki “made him take the road to Heaven, and to Heaven he went up. When he had ascended to Heaven he approached the Gate of Anu.” Enki had told Adapa that if Anu offered him food, he was not to eat the Bread of Life nor drink the Water of Life because they were poison.

After Adapa answered Anu's questions Anu said, “What can we do for him? Fetch him the bread of (eternal) life and let him eat!”

“They fetched him the bread of (eternal) life, but he would not eat. They fetched him the water of (eternal) life, but he would not drink...Anu watched him and laughed at him.

‘Come, Adapa, why didn't you eat? Why didn't you drink? Didn't you want to be immortal? Alas for downtrodden people!’

“(But) Ea my lord told me: “You mustn't eat! You mustn't drink.”

“Take him and send him back to his earth.”³⁹

And so humanity missed out on immortality until the sons of the gods fell in love with the daughters of men, married them and had children by them. Then not wanting their lovers to die they taught them the secrets of immortality that Ea had discovered. Those secrets were the secrets of alchemy. Ea's youngest son was Ningizzida, Lord of the Tree of Truth, in Mesopotamia. He was revered as Thoth in Egypt and Hermes in the West.

By the beginning of the current era philosophers had removed the physical existence of the gods to the abstract, implying their powers were aspects of spiritual phenomena coincident to the forces of Nature. The early alchemists of that time period still claimed like the ancient priests before them, that the knowledge they possessed was a gift from the gods, and their pursuit of immortality was in emulation of the gods' pursuit of immortality.

Shamanic Origins of Alchemy

The first maxim of alchemy is "That which is above is like that which is below." If the religious and mythical origins of alchemy represent a portion of the *above*, then the anthropological record represents a portion of the *below*. Historian Mircea Eliade wrote extensively about the cultural origins of alchemy. He showed that alchemy was possibly the first offshoot of shamanism and was connected with the origins of agriculture and especially metallurgy. The divine smith was the ancestor of the alchemist.

The shaman/smith highly regarded stones from heaven—meteorites. This celestial metal was sacred. "It was inevitable that meteorites should inspire awe. They came from some remote region high up in the heavens and possessed a sacred

quality enjoyed only by things celestial.... They fall to earth charged with celestial sanctity; in a way, they represent heaven. This would suggest why so many meteorites were worshipped or identified with a deity....

"Rock crystals, supposedly broken away from the heavenly throne, do in fact play a special role in the shamanic initiation ceremonies of the Australian aborigines, among the Negritos of Malacca, in North America and elsewhere. These 'stones of light,' as they are called by the maritime Dyaks of Sarawak, reflect everything that happens on earth.

"They disclose to the shaman what has taken place in the sick man's soul and the destination to which his soul takes flight. ...The shaman is he who 'sees,' because he is endowed with a supernatural vision. He sees just as far into space as into time. Likewise he can perceive what is invisible to the layman—spirits, gods, the soul...."⁴⁰

"A mine or an untapped vein is not easily discovered; it is for the gods and divine creatures to reveal where they lie and to teach human beings how to exploit their contents. These beliefs were held in European countries until quite recently. The Greek traveler

Nucius Nicander, who had visited Liege in the sixteenth century, brings back the legend of the discovery of the coal mines of northern France and Belgium. An angel had appeared in the guise of a venerable old man and had



shown the mouth of a gallery to a smith who had until then fed his furnace with wood.... In other traditions it is also a demi-god or a civilizing hero, a divine messenger, who is the originator of mining and metallurgy.⁴¹

“...The sinking of a mine or the construction of a furnace are ritual operations, often of an astonishing primitivism. Mining rites persisted in Europe up to the end of the Middle Ages: every sinking of a new mine was accompanied by religious ceremonies. ...One notes the desire to appease the spirits guarding or inhabiting the mine....



“Let us note in passing the animal behaviour of the ore: it is alive, it moves at will, hides, shows sympathy or antipathy to human beings—a conduct not dissimilar from that shown by game towards its hunter.⁴²

“There is above all the feeling that one is meddling with the natural order of things ruled by some higher law and intervening in a secret and sacred process. Consequently, every precaution is taken that is considered indispensable to the ‘rites de passage.’ There is the obscure feeling that some mystery is at stake involving human existence, for the discovery of metals has indeed left its mark on man....

“Still charged with this dread holiness the ores are conveyed to the furnace. It is then that the most difficult and hazardous operations begin. The artisan takes the place of the Earth-Mother and it is his task to accelerate and perfect the growth of the ore. The furnaces are, as it were, a new matrix, an artificial uterus where the ore completes its gestation.”⁴³

In 1925 R. Eisler announced a hypothesis concerning the existence of Babylonian alchemy. This was after the publication of Assyrian chemical texts by R. Campbell Thompson. The tablets were from king Assurbanipal’s great library at Nineveh. Eisler believed these texts were the oldest historical documentation of the idea of the maturation and perfecting of metals, and they constituted proof of the Mesopotamian origins of alchemy. His argument was based on the interpretation of the meaning of term *ku-bu* in the main text. He believed *ku-bu* meant embryos, divine

embryos. Others translated the term as “a sort of demon,” and an “abortion.” The text says:

“When thou settest out the [ground] plan of a furnace for ‘minerals’ [ku-bu], thou shalt seek out a favourable day in a fortunate month, and thou shalt set out the [ground] plan of the furnace. While they are making the furnace, thou shalt watch [them] and thou shalt work thyself [?] [in the house of the furnace]: thou shalt bring in embryos [born before time...],....

“Thou shalt kindle a fire underneath the furnace and thou shalt put the ‘mineral’ into the furnace. The men whom thou shalt bring to be over the furnace shall cleanse themselves and [then] thou shalt set them to be over the furnace.”⁴⁴

In the Babylonian Epic of Creation, (*Enuma elish*, IV, 136, line 3) “*ku-bu* designates the monstrous body of Tiamat likened to a foetus, whose demiurge is preparing to shape the world.”⁴⁵ The “demiurge” that shapes the world in the Epic of Creation is the god Marduk, the eldest son of Enki.

“To sum up: in the symbols and rites accompanying metallurgical operations there comes into being the idea of an active collaboration of man and nature, perhaps even the belief that man, by his own work, is capable of superseding the processes of nature.

“The act, *par excellence*, of the cosmogony, starting from a living primal material, was sometimes thought of as a cosmic embryology: the body of Tiamat was, in the hands of Marduk, a foetus. And as all creation and all construction reproduced the cosmogonic model, man, in constructing or creating, imitated the work of the demiurge.

“It was an intervention in the process of growth, an attempt to expedite maturation or to induce the expulsion of the embryo.

“It was from such ritual experiences, taken in conjunction with metallurgical and agricultural techniques, that gradually there clearly emerged the idea that man can intervene in the cosmic rhythm, that he can anticipate a natural outcome, precipitate a birth. ...That was the point of departure for the great discovery that man can take upon himself the work of Time, an idea which we have seen clearly expressed in later Western, texts. Here too lies the basis and justification of the alchemical operation, the *opus alchymicum* which haunted the philosophic imagination for more than two thousand years: the idea of the transmutation of man and the Cosmos by means of the Philosopher’s Stone. On the mineral level of existence, the Stone was realizing this miracle: it eliminated the interval of time which separated the present condition of an ‘imperfect’ (crude) metal from its final condition (when it would become gold). The Stone achieved transmutation almost instantaneously: it superseded Time.”⁴⁶

Alchemy and Time

The ancient Persians created a religion of Time. Exoteric portions of it survived in the fragments of the spiritual discipline of the prophet Zoroaster. The ancient Persian religion of Time has been called Zurvanism after the name of the primal deity, Zurvan, whose name means Time.

“Zurvanism was evidently popular in pre-Islamic Iran, but none of its texts have survived. Zurvanite theology has, therefore, to be reconstructed from such outside sources as orthodox Zoroasterian literature and Christian and Arabic writers. The resulting account must consequently be tentative. The ancient myth apparently related that Zurvan, the great God, existed alone. He offered sacrifice for a thousand years because he wanted a son, but after so long doubted the efficacy of his sacrifice. At the moment of doubt he conceived twins within his hermaphrodite self. Ahriman was the personification of his doubt Ohrmazd the embodiment of his wisdom. ...[Zurvan] granted rulership over the world to Ahriman. To Ohrmazd he granted the high priesthood, sovereignty over the spiritual world, and the final victory.

“The point behind the Zurvanite myth appears to be a dissatisfaction with the Zoroasterian belief in two independent and opposed forces in life. Zurvanism was concerned to find the Undifferentiated One from which the two, the manifold, arose (a spiritual search which was perhaps stimulated by Greek or Indian thought)...

“The keynote of Zoroasterian teaching is the overriding conviction that Ohrmazd is wholly, absolutely and exclusively good, whereas Zurvan contains within himself the potential for evil. Zurvanites, therefore, considered that good and evil were not polar opposites, and so questioned the very basis of the Zoroasterian myths of creation and renovation.”⁴⁷

Elements of the Zurvanite spiritual practice are quite similar to the methods and ideals found in certain Hindu spiritual disciplines which are well documented. These practices were absorbed into the Alexandrian crucible of syncretic fashion being forged in the first centuries of the current epoch that began roughly about

“...We see that Zurvan Akarana is also a dual god: a naked lion-man enveloped by a snake of seven folds. The lion is symbolic of solar light, which is eternal; the serpent, of the rhymic, circling around the lunar tides of time, which never cease. Thus the figure is precisely what its name tells: Zurvan Akarana, ‘Boundless Time,’ in which eternity and time are one yet two.”⁴⁸

The adept Initiate transcending the seventh degree of the Mythraic Mysteries entered the realm of Zurvan Akarana, boundless time or Eternity. The adept had become one of the immortals manifesting the unfolding evolution of personal self divinity. The adept had become one of the gods.

The seven degrees of the initiatic processes became the seven stages of alchemy in Alexandrian Egypt. The classic depiction of Zurvan underwent a metamorphosis as well. Alexandrian alchemists were pragmatic experimentalists that considered results to be more of value than philosophical rhetoric. Zurvan was transformed into Aion in the Western Mystery schools. He stands upon a globe which represents the world or universe. With the alchemists Aion was transformed into Ion.

“In the Mithraic religion we meet with a strange god, Aion, also called Chronos or *deus leontocephalus* because he is conventionally represented as a lion-headed human figure. He stands in a rigid attitude, wrapped in the coils of a serpent whose head juts forward over the head of the lion. In each hand he holds a key, on his breast is a thunderbolt.

“In the Mythriac mysteries the snake is often shown as the antagonist of the lion, in accordance with the myth of the sun’s fight with the dragon.... To be ‘entwined’ or embraced is the same as to be ‘devoured,’ which...means entering into the mother’s womb. Time is thus defined by the rising and setting sun, by the death and renewal of libido, the dawning and extinction of consciousness.... Oromazdes (Ahura-Mazda) and Ahriman came into being through *Zrwan akarana*, ‘infinitely long duration.’ So time, this empty and purely formal concept, is expressed in the mysteries through transformation of the creative force, libido, just as time in physics is identical with the flow of energetic processes.”⁴⁹

Aion and Zurvan are basically one in the same and both bear a remarkable resemblance to Phanes, the hermaphroditic god of the Orphic mysteries. Phanes has a human head, is entwined with a serpent and has wings. Phanes means “Revealer.”⁵⁰ He is “the Shining One, the First-Created, the ‘Father of Eros....’ The significance of Phanes is akin to that of the Indian Kama, the god of love, who is likewise a cosmogonic principle.... Numerous mythological and philosophical attempts have been made to formulate and visualize the creative force which man knows only by subjective experience.... We would be better advised, therefore, when speaking of libido, to understand it as an energy-value which is able to communicate itself to any field of activity whatsoever, be it power, hunger, hatred, sexuality, or religion, without ever being itself a specific instinct.”⁵¹





Aion, Zurvan Akarana, Ion, represented the continued emanation, evolution and individualization of the creative force through Time earlier symbolized by Phanes in the Orphic mysteries. In the Mithraic mysteries they also represent the syncretism of the Thunderbolt Way of Vajrayana Buddhism, an extremely bold magico-mystical Tantric Buddhist discipline. The adept practitioner is able to manifest the thunderbolt power, *vajra*, within himself and use it to attain ultimate illumination. Aion, Ion, Zurvan was a personification of ultimate transcendence—of the Logos and Eros, Word and Sensation—into absolute Gnosis where duality is fused into the profound Paradox and Mystery.

The Christian Roman Emperor Constantine's victory in 312 at the Milvian Bridge marked the beginning of the end for Mithraism in the Roman empire. Except for the brief reign of Pagan Emperor Julian, the Mithraic philosopher, Christian prohibitions of religious freedom continued to tighten, which merely forced expression of the human religious spirit into greater sophistication—Alchemy in Alexandria.

“Historians of the sciences distinguish three periods on the formation of Greco-Egyptian alchemy: (1) the period of technical recipes for the operation of alloying,

coloring, and imitating gold (for example, the Leiden and Stockholm papyri, which date from the third century B.C.); (2) the philosophical period, probably inaugurated by Bolos of Mendes (second century B.C.), which is manifested in the *Physika kai Mystika*, an apocryphal treatise attributed to Democritus; (3) finally, the period of alchemical literature properly speaking, that of Zosimos (third-fourth centuries) and his commentators (fourth-fifth centuries). Although the problem of the historical origin of Alexandrian alchemy has not yet been solved, the sudden appearance of alchemical *texts* around the Christian era could be explained as the result of a meeting between the esoteric current represented by the Mysteries, neo-Pythagoreanism and neo-Orphism, astrology, the “wisdom of the East” in its various revelations, Gnosticism, etc. (this current was especially the concern of cultivated people, of the intelligentsia) and the “popular” traditions, which were the guardians of trade secrets and magical and technical systems of great antiquity. A similar phenomenon is found in China with Taoism and neo-Taoism and in India with Tantrism and Hatha Yoga. In the Mediterranean world these “popular” traditions had continued into the Hellenistic period a spiritual behavior that is archaic in structure. [And] the growing interest in the traditional techniques and sciences having to do with substances, precious stones, and plants is characteristic of this whole period of antiquity.



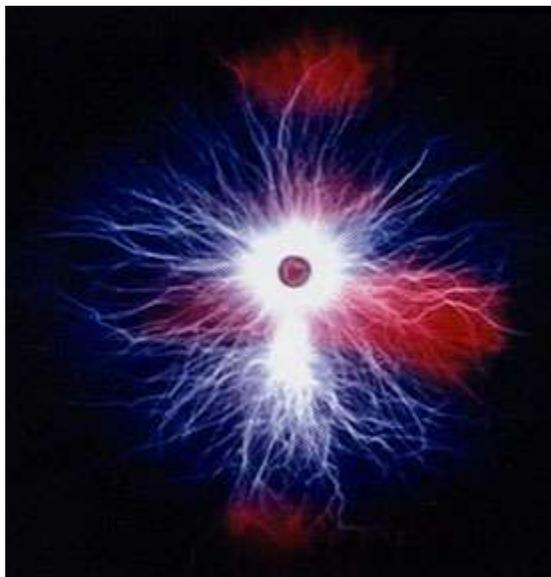
“...Attempting to connect a discipline that has haunted the Western world for two thousand years with efforts to counterfeit gold is to forget the extraordinary knowledge of metals and alloying that the ancients

possessed; it is also to underestimate their intellectual and spiritual capabilities. Transmutation, the chief end of Hellenistic alchemy, was not an absurdity in the contemporary condition of science, for the unity of matter had been a dogma of Greek philosophy for some time....

“For rather than the philosophical theory of the unity of matter, it is probably the old conception of the Earth Mother bearing minerals as embryos in her womb that crystallized belief in an artificial transmutation, that is, a transmutation performed in a laboratory. It is contact with the symbolisms, mythologies, and techniques of miners, smelters, and smiths that in all probability gave rise to the earliest alchemical operations. But it is above all the experimental discovery of *living* substance, as it was felt to be by the artisans, that must have played the decisive part. Indeed, it is the conception of a complex and dramatic *life of matter* that constitutes the originality of alchemy in contrast to classical Greek science. We have good reason to suppose that the experience of the dramatic life of matter was made possible by knowledge of Greco-Oriental Mysteries.”⁵²

In the original Greek text titled, “The Treatise of Zosimos the Divine, Concerning the Art,” two different words were used interchangeably that were translated as “sacrificer.” One means “the sacrificial priest who performs the ceremonies.” The other is “the prophet and revealer of the mysteries.”⁵³ The sacrificer tells Zosimos, “he who renews me is the sacrificer, by casting away the grossness of the body; and by compelling necessity, I am sanctified as a priest and now stand in perfection as a spirit.” Zosimos asks him who he is. He answers, “I am Ion, the priest of the inner sanctuaries, and I submit myself to an unendurable torment.”⁵⁴ The sacrificer is both priest and revealer meaning the liberation of creative energy represented by Phanes in the earlier Orphic mysteries also resides in Ion, the alchemical offspring of Aion.

With Alchemy the religious evolution of awakened humanity proceeded to unfold beyond the realization of a personal savior within, and of the world savior without. The new ideal was personal realization of divinity through artful manipulation of Nature inspired by Nature—a sort of self-induced metamorphosis both physical and psychical. The pursuit of alchemy demanded experimentation in order to manifest the spirit in the matter. Experimentation led to more questions of Nature leading to new hypothesis that developed into theories requiring greater synthesis and more experimentation. Alchemy plunged headlong into the challenge. Its body segmented into the sciences whose life blood was experimentation. Its spirit remained in the unrelenting pursuit of knowledge. And Ion, the divinity inherent within the alchemical operator, became the force driving chemical reactions delineated by modern Science orthodoxy—the positive and negative *ion*.



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¹In the word spagyria two Greek words are hidden: spao, to draw out, to divide; and egiero, to gather, to bind, to join. These two concepts form the foundation of every genuine alchemical work, hence the often-quoted phrase '*Solve et coagula, et habebis magisterium!*' (Dissolve and bind, and you will have the magistry) — PRACTICAL HANDBOOK OF PLANT ALCHEMY, by Manfred M. Junius; Inner Traditions International Ltd., New York; 1985; page 1.

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⁹*Ibid*; page 135.

¹⁰*Ibid*; pages 135-140.

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