

MUTUS LIBER

(ALTUS)

*Wherein all operations
of Hermetic Philosophy
are described and represented*

———— * ————

**PRECEDED BY AN
EXPLICATIVE HYPOTYPOSE
OF MAGAPHON**

Translator's Note

The following is a preliminary translation of Magaphon's French commentary to the *Mutus Liber*. We are counting on the assistance of skilled proof readers to produce a final improved version where errors of spelling as well as such passages where the idiom remains unclear have been corrected. We then hope that this will present a valuable addition to the presently available selection of material on alchemy in the English language. Magaphon was the pseudonym of Pierre Dujols, one of the greatest French erudites around the beginning of the XXth century. He belonged to the circle around Fulcanelli. (Robert Amberlain identifies Fulcanelli as Jules Champagne in his book on Spiritual Alchemy).

The *Mutus Liber* was first published at La Rochelle in 1677. The author's name was given as Altus, a pseudonym. The *Mutus Liber* also occurs in Manget's "*Bibliotheca Chemica Curiosa*" of 1707.

More information may be found in "*A Prelude to Chemistry*" by John Read, London 1936, page 155 et seq. Recognize that the *MUTUS LIBER* has no words and is simply a collection of plates. (These should be reviewed first)

Kjell Hellesoe
Stavanger Norway
1985

HYPOTYPOSE

This title, good as it may seem, has not the least pretension. It is all technical, the only suitable and genuine on the subject, because it traces, in its conciseness the plan of our study. A hypotypose (from ὑπό , under, and τύπος, print, emblem) is an explanation placed under abstract figures. Well, the Mutus Liber is then a collection of enigmatic images.

Around the Mutus Liber an absurd legend has formed itself. One school - which has nothing hermetic except the name - has given this work a reputation of impenetrable obscurity, and as such, worships it as a sacrament, without understanding it. This is an error; even as translating Mutus Liber by the Mute Book, without words, is a philosophical misnomer. All the signs adopted by human industry to manifest thought are words. The Latins - this word suitably intended - call drawing, painting, sculpture and architecture, by means of which the Hierogrammates ¹ reserved for the elect the mysteries of science, mutae artes, which means the symbolic arts.

What is then a symbol? Σύμβολον is a convention; and Συμβολον, a sign of recognition. Hence a symbol is that which we today call a "code", a tacit system of writing adopted for diplomatic and even commercial

¹Sacred scribes, a lower rank of Egyptian priesthood.

correspondence, for telegraphic and semaphoric communications etc...

For an illiterate person, all books are mutus. A volume in Hebrew, Sanskrit, Chinese is a mutus liber, a mute book, for the majority, even though they be instructed in their proper language. One has then, to get used to this very simple idea, that the Mutus Liber is a book like all the others and can be plainly read, once one has the grille.

Moreover, the alchemical works, in verse, prose, Latin, French or any other language are themselves nothing but cryptogrammes. Although written with the ordinary letters of the common alphabet and vocabulary they remain no less indecipherable for those who ignore the key. To tell the truth, among the two stenographic procedures, the one of the Mutus Liber is still the more transparent, for the objective image is certainly more speaking than literary tropes and rhetorical figures, especially in a matter as experimental as chemistry.

While attaching these few pages of commentary to the allegorical plates of the Mutus Liber, we are proposing, without leaving the philosophers mantle, to facilitate the lecture, by a sincere interpretation, to the true inquisitors of science, honest, patient and laborious like the diligent bees, and not to the curious, idle and frivolous, who pass their lives uselessly fluttering from book to book without ever pausing at one to extract the malefic substance.

But what! Grammar, geography, history, mathematics, physics, chemistry and the rest do not become accessible but after long and cumbersome efforts, and who would enter into the "King's Palace" without observing the conventions and submit to the laws of etiquette! A hasty and superficial lecture would not replace an austere and serious study. Even the

profane sciences are not to be penetrated and assimilated, but after sustained and prolonged work.

One can object that the University counts some illustrious grammarians, geographers, historians, mathematicians, physicians and chemists, but that one never notices the least alchemist there. And if the Bachelor of Alchemy is unknown, it is because alchemy is a chimera. This argument ad hominem is not without an answer: a thing hidden is not at all to be taken for nonexistent, and alchemy is an occult science; or better: it is occult science in its entirety, the universal arcanum, the soul of the absolute, the magical resort of religion, and that is why it has been called the Sacerdotal or Sacred Art.

There is in all faiths impressed upon the vulgar by means of an appropriate mythology: Bible, Vedas, Avesta, Kings, etc., a positive substratum, which is the foundation of the sanctuaries of all the cults that are propagated on our globe. This mystery, recognized in the catechism as the appanage of the Pontiffs - who are not the public Dignitaries - is alchemy on all its planes: physical and metaphysical. The exclusive possession of the sacrarium, makes up the force of the Churches; they then also watch over the {Masonic Secret} with a worried and jealous care, aided by a suspicious police and censorship.

We are not advancing anything hazardous, and while these allegations may seem unfounded, because impossible, note that since the invention of printing, the hermetic books have always been published freely with license from the civil and religious authorities. And nothing would really be opposed to the spreading of these libels written in known languages, but for the contents; over such a sign which the greatest school chemists - from

Lavoiser to Berthelot - have broken their heads without result. And is not this the place to recall the disdainful address of Artephius and the haughty warnings of the Adepts who ambiguously declare, write only for those who know and allure the others! Thus one makes the "Christ" speak in the Gospels, and the disciples model themselves after the "Master". It is nonetheless a real and exact science, conforming to reason and moreover rationalistic. At all times there have been "goldmakers"; the "gentleman glassblowers" who enjoyed such a high consideration, were hermetists. And even in our own days, transmutation still works miracles. After the sensational debates a little while ago ², it was told - and among what stupor - that the Monetary Administration should have seized, without any other form of process - and not without reason! - the production of a contemporary alchemist: - "You are not supposed to know how to make gold" he was told with a threatening air, and was sent back with free but empty hands. Is it then prohibited to be a sage, or is alchemy perhaps a state secret? This should not lead to the naive conclusion that the ministers who succeed each other are acquainted with the Kabbala. The Kings rule but do not govern, according to a famous aphorism. And for the moment it seems as if there still is, behind the screen, some grey eminence who pulls the strings! The famous "Galetas of the Temple" is perhaps not as abolished as one supposes him to be, and he would there have a surprising book to write with watermarks on banknotes and with seals on coins.

But in that case, one says, why has gold become so rare as to nearly paralyze social life? The bars have not evaporated, but have been displaced,

²This introduction was written before the first World War. (Editor's note)



and one must keep in mind that they will return to their point of departure by an inverse economic movement. Only, too much slowness in this return can have incalculable consequences.

The politics of nations is regulated by a secret metallic pact, that cannot be violated without entailing the most serious international complications. Paper money is therefore to be issued with much effort, but no longer are gold coins to be minted. And yet, it is not the gold that is lacking: it is openly displayed, and with what splendour, on innumerable shoulders, around wrists, on fingers and even legs whose elegance and beauty sometimes leave something to be desired. Nothing would therefore be easier for the state than to exchange its paper against the precious matter and to put the "coins" into circulation. This is paradoxical, yet true. There is then behind this momentary eclipse in the value of gold a profound reason based on wisdom. {Gold is whatever is gold worth} says an adage. If coining was allowed to the nations who have exhausted their normal reserves, then over abundance would lead to price-cutting. The paper standard would no longer offer any guarantee and would be broken; this would be the death of business and world ruin. This is why even the "natural" production of gold is limited, even as concessions for new mines are refused and until its extraction at poor yield, river beaches and others.

In the meantime, the hour is near when science will totally reclaim all its rights, and when the occult will again become manifest as it was in former times. The sage **Girtaner** has announced it, while basing his opinion on ignored but certain Laws: "In the 20th century the Chrysopee shall be in the public domain." This considerable event is evidently

subordinate to a social status quite different from the one that rules today; but we are strongly going there, the world turns fast; and who can foretell the charter of tomorrow!

However, if alchemy is limited solely to the transmutation of metals, it would doubtlessly be an inappreciable science from the industrial point of view, but equally mediocre from the philosophical point of view. In reality it is not like that. Alchemy is the key to all knowledge, and its complete divulgence is called to overthrow from top to bottom, all human institutions that are based on falsehood, in order to reestablish them in truth.

These preliminary considerations seemed to us to be opportune, before charitably taking the reader by the hand, to lead him through the inextricable meanders of the labyrinth. As our intention is to be useful to the seeker, but since we cannot, in a few pages, write a technical treatise, we must before entering into the material, orient the disciple towards the work which best seems to correspond to the figures of the Mutus Liber. The major part of the manipulations indicated in this collection of symbols, find themselves well enough described by the most notorious philosophers, in "*An Open Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King*", by Eirenaeus Philalethes.

It is not that nothing more could be added thereto. Far from it, on the contrary. The practice of Philaletes, presented under an amiable and persuasive exterior, counts among the most subtle and perfidious fictions of hermetic literature. Yet it does contain the truth, but similar to poison, sometimes conceals its own antidote if one only knows how to isolate it from its pernicious alkaloids. As occasion arises we shall signal the traps, in so far as they present themselves to us along our way.

The Mutus Liber is composed of fifteen emblematic plates, some

truthful, others misrepresented, and disposed according to one of those beautiful disorders, that, following the precept of Boileau, is an effect of the art.

The first plate that serves as frontispiece is truly capital. On its comprehension depends the whole success of the Work.

One sees there, inside a border formed by two interlacing rosaries, a man asleep on a rock whereon grow some languishing kermes - oaks. A limpid water with metallic reflections flows out from it. Next to the sleeper, on a ladder - the Stairway of the Sages - two angels are blowing their trumpets to awaken him.

Above, a propitious and reposeful night sky: the stars are shining and the moon outlines its horn of plenty.

This initial page should bring with it a criticism not directed towards the learned author, but towards the profane artist, who in reproducing the figures has committed, without suspecting, a grave mistake. And it is already a great achievement merely to notice this, without it being necessary to insist more upon it. The hermetic expositions will warn the disciple, who does not judge it useless to inform himself about it.

The sleeping man is the subject of the Work. What is this subject? Some say that it is a body; others affirm that it is a water. They are both right because a water called {the silver beauty} springs from this body that the Sages call the Fountain of the Lovers of Science. It is the mysterious selago of the Druids, the matter which gives the salt (from sel for salt and agere to produce).

The secret of the Magistry is to also disengage its sulphur, and to utilize its mercury, for everything is in everything. Certain artists pretend

to turn elsewhere for this in effect, and we do not deny that the hydrargyre of cinnabar may be of some help in the work, if one properly knows how to prepare it for oneself; but one should only use it knowingly and at the right time. For us, he who succeeds to open the rock with the staff of Moses, and that is not a small secret, has found the first operatory key. On this steep rock then, will flower the two roses that hang from the branches of the sweetbriar, one white and the other red.

One will ask us, and not without reason, what magic word is capable of extracting from the arms of Morpheus our Epimenides³, who really seems to be deaf to the clamour of the trumpets. This word comes from God, carried by the angels, the messengers of fire, It is a divine breath that stirs in an invisible, but certain, manner, and this is no exaggeration. Without the concourse of the heavens, the work of man is useless. One neither grafts trees, nor does one sow the grain during all seasons. Everything has its time. The philosophical Work is called the Celestial Agriculture, and not without cause; one of the greatest authors has signed his writings with the name Agricola, and two other excellent adepts known under the names of Grand Paysan and Petit Paysan.

Thus, the disciple will have to meditate a long time on this first plate and compare it with the apologues in vulgar language. May he then be fortunate enough himself to hear the heavenly voice; but let him know ahead of time that he will lend his ear in vain, if he has not nourished himself on the Holy Scriptures.

The second plate is not in the order of operations. It represents the

³Religious teacher and wonderworker of Crete, who according to the legend slept for 57 years (ca. 500 B.C.)

philosophical egg, and yet, up to here there is nothing that could have acquainted us with the elements that must compose it.

In order to give us an idea of this, we must deliberately go over a certain number of symbols.

All eggs comprise a germ, Purkinje's vesicle, which is our salt; the yellow, which is our sulphur, and the albumen, which is our mercury. These are enclosed within a retort, which corresponds to the shell. The three products are here personified by Apollo, Diana and Neptune, the God of pontic waters. Tradition requires that this retort be enclosed within a second one, and this one again within a third one made of wood from an old oak. Flamel expressly says: "Note that oak tree", and Vico, the chaplain of the Lords of Grosparmy and Valois recommends it with no less interest. This insistence is significant, and we must recall that in the first plate, on the rock of the Sages grows the Kermes oak, which is the Hermes of the Adepts, because, in the Hebrew language, K and H are but one and the same letter, taken alternatively one for the other. But here one must be on guard, the mineral kermes leads to the trap set by Philaletes, Artephius, Basil Valentine and many others, and one should not lose view of the fact that the philosophers delight in certain verbal collusions. "Ερμῆς" is the artificial mercury that amalgamates the compost."

The size of the egg is of no importance. In Nature, the egg varies from that of a wren to that of an ostrich; but, says Wisdom, in medio virtus. Something must also be said about the philosophic glass. The authors speak only little about it, and then with reserve. But we know, by experience, that the best is that from Venice.

It must be of a thorough thickness, limpid, without bubbles. In former times one still used the great glass of Lorraine made by the gentlemen glassblowers; but a good practitioner must learn to make his retort by himself.

The lower figure of this second plate represents an athanor between a man and a woman on their knees as if they were praying, which has led certain feeble spirits to believe that prayer intervenes in the work as a ponderable element. Here it is a non operating factor. The main thing is to employ expedient materials; but the elan of the creature towards the creator can have a favorable influence on the directives, for the light comes from God. One must nevertheless liberate oneself from these not very effective suggestions. The artist's prayer is yet more his work, often hard, dangerous and incompatible with too white hands. Count then above all on the *improbis labor*.

The third plate is no longer in its place. It leads us into the empire of Neptune. One sees, frolicking in his waves, the dolphin dear to Apollo and on a boat some fishermen putting out their gear. In another ship a man lies stretched out in a nonchalant position. In the second, a landscape with on one side a ram, on the other a bull, which we shall find back further on and shall study at a more opportune moment. Below on the left a woman holds a basket which is the symbol of the grated lantern of the philosophers; on the right a man throws his (fish) line into the ocean which is found within the third circle (the one that encloses the two others). The third circle is animated by a flock of birds to the left; a siren below and Amphitrite up on top. In the margin the sun and the moon, and hovering over this naustic

scene, Jupiter carried by his eagle. This whole figure aims at showing that the operator must deploy all his faculties and put to work all the resources of the art in order to capture the mystical fish, about which d'Espagnet speaks.

The author should first have instructed us how to weave the thread necessary for this miraculous fishing. Let us amend his omission: The weir must be braided in a very fine maze from asbestos, which has the property of being incombustible and of staying unaltered. The device being well disposed in the deep waters, one must furnish oneself with a lantern whose luster will attract the prey into the nets. One may also, following other symbols, employ a line; but the arcanum is in the preparation of the pocket, and the word is circumstantial, for it concerns nothing less than to catch the golden fish.

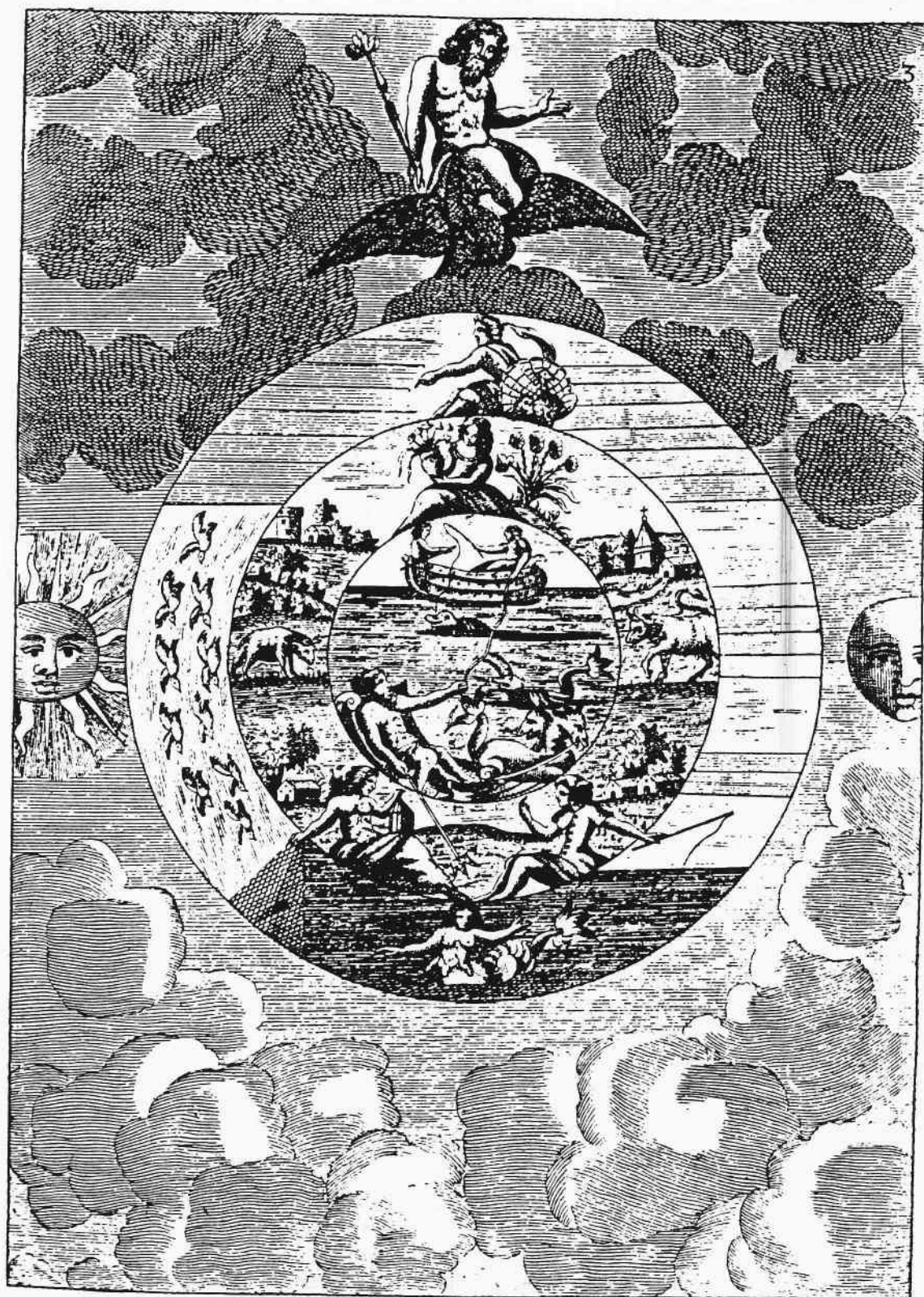
One will find the secret of this operation in a classical work under the title *Ariadne's Thread*, for we cannot review the procedure in a few lines within this restricted framework. Concerning the method of lighting the magic lantern indicated by the basket, it is only described in some very rare works, and in a confused manner. Hence we must say a few words about that.

Certain authors, and not the lesser ones, have pretended that the greatest operatory artifice consists in capturing a solar ray, and to imprison it in a flask closed with the seal of Hermes. This gross image has caused rejection of the operation as something ridiculous and impossible. And yet, it is literally true, to the degree that the image coincides with reality. It is moreover unbelievable that one should not have thought of it. This miracle is accomplished in a way by the photographer when he makes use of a



MUTUS LIBER,
*tota Philosophus herme
depingitur, ter optimo
consecratus, solisque
auctore cuius nomen
21. ii. 82. Neg:
93. 82. 72. Neg:
22. 82. xi. 33. Tued*

IN QUO TAMEN
*tica, figuris hieroglyphicis
maximo Deo misericordi
filus artis dedicatus.
est Altus.*

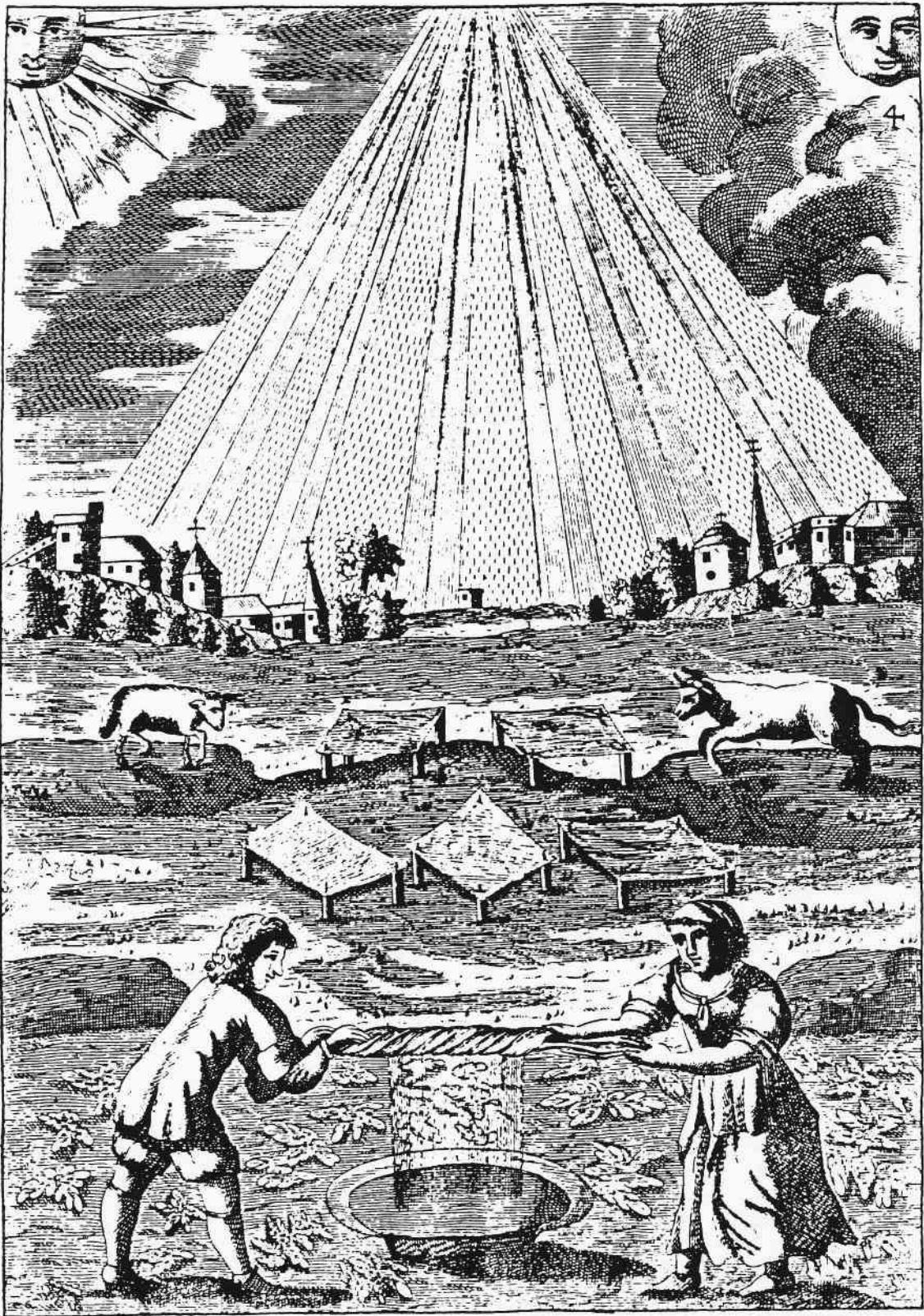


sensitive plate which one prepares in different ways. In the *Typus Mundi*, edited in the 17th century by the Fr. of the Society of Jesus, one sees an apparatus, described also by Tiphaigne de Laroche, by means of which one can steal the Heavenly fire and fix it. One can no longer say that the procedure is scientific, and we candidly declare that we are here revealing, if not a great mystery, at least its application to practical philosophy.

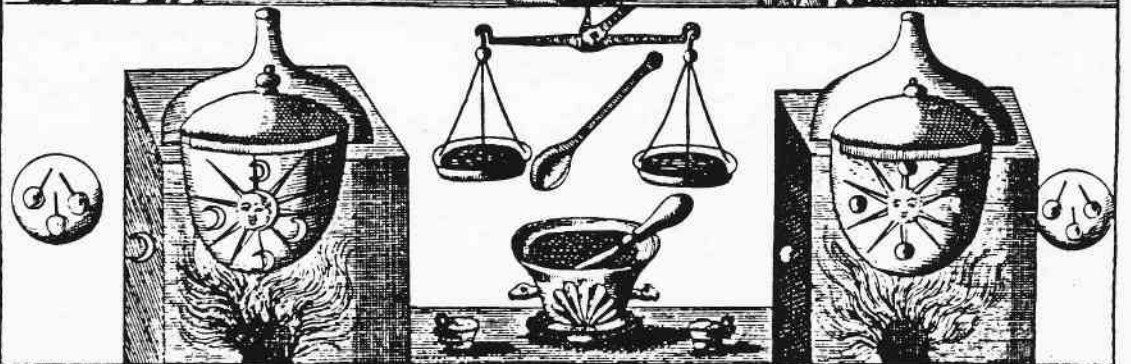
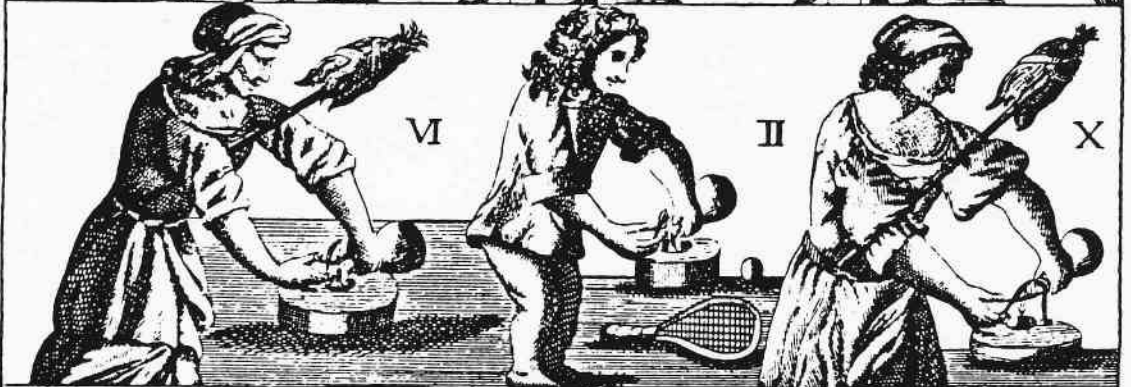
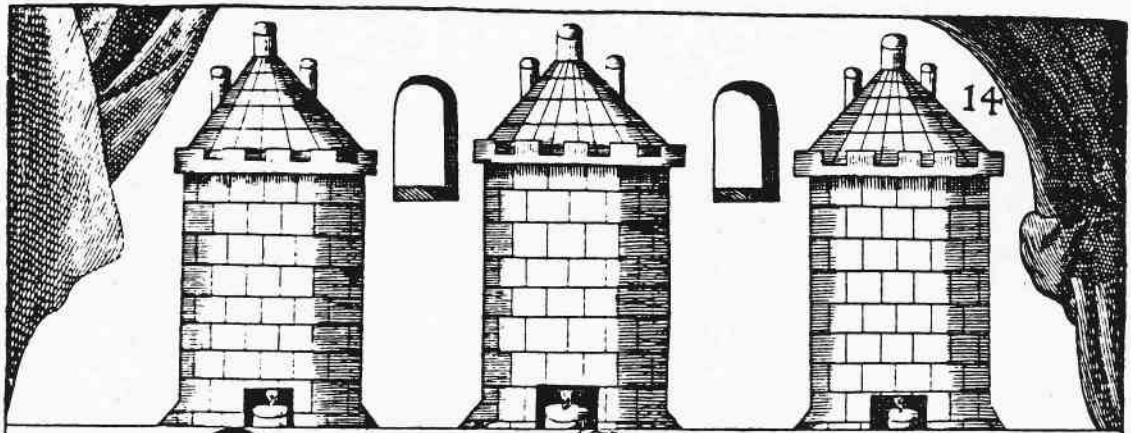
The eagles that are flying to the left, inside the great circle are designating the sublimations of the mercury. One needs from three to seven for the Moon, and from seven to ten from the Sun. They are indicated by the flying of the birds and are indispensable, for they prepare the nuptial robe of Apollo and Diana, without which their mystical union would be impossible. That is why Jupiter, the god who governs the eagle, presides over these operations.

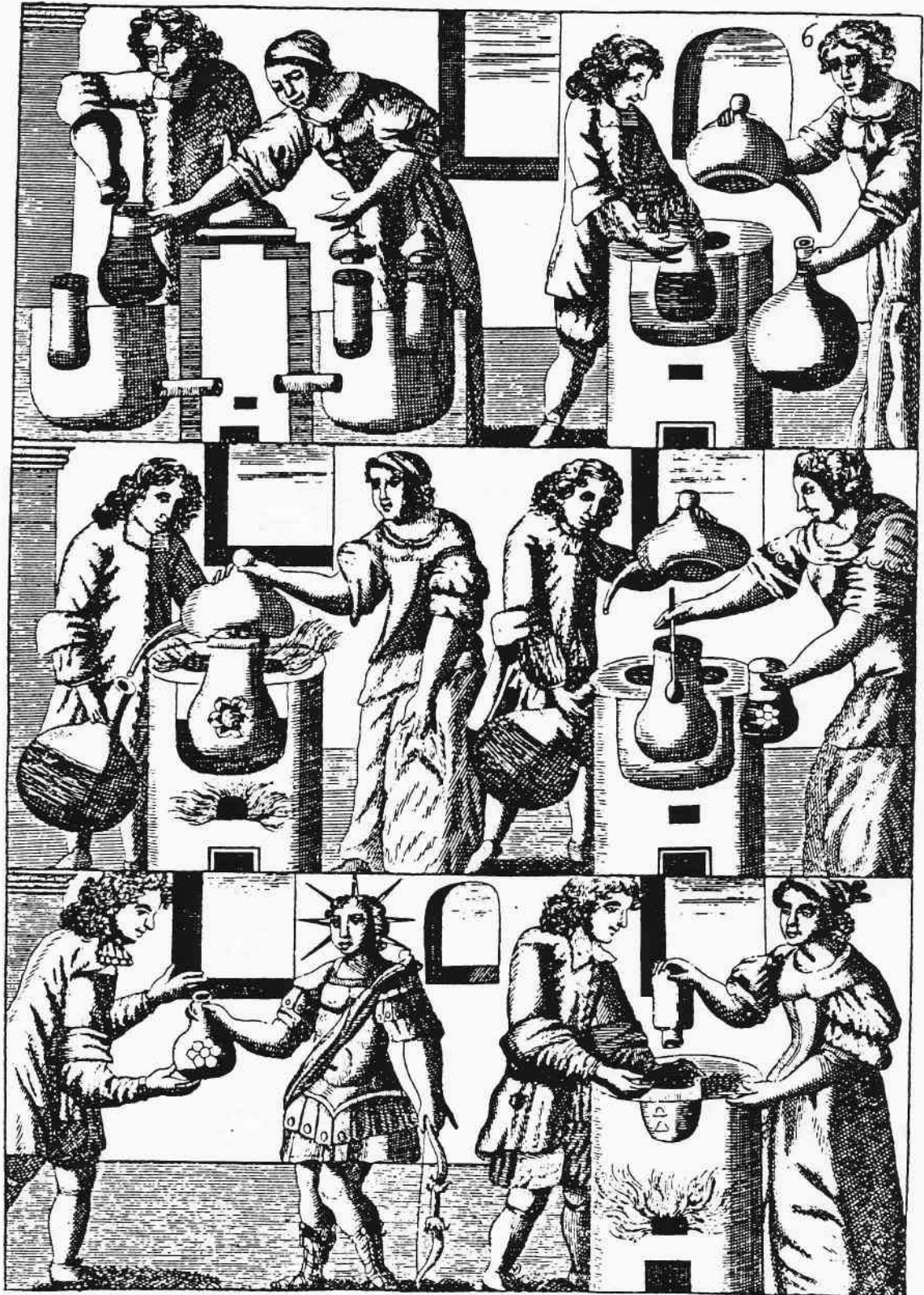
The fourth plate shows how the collection of the *flos coeli* works. Some sheets are stretched out on poles in order to receive the heavenly dew. Below a man and a woman are wringing them to press out the divine liquor, that falls into a large vessel put there to that purpose. To the left one sees the Ram; on the right the Bull.

The *flos coeli* have put the spirit of the bad puffers to torture. Some have seen in it a kind of magical influx, for them magic is a supernatural power, acquired by concourse with spirits, good or bad. Others, more realistic and closer to the truth, have recognized in the morning dew. The *flos coeli* is in fact called the water of the two equinoxes, from which one has deduced that it is obtained in the spring and in the fall, and is a mixture of these two fluids. Again others, believing themselves still better informed, would collect this mysterious product from a kind of algae or lichenoid









whose vulgar name is nostoc. In the Seven Hints on the Philosophical Work, Eteilla, who was perhaps more worth than his reputation, seems to have obtained some satisfactory results with an analogous moss; but one must read his tract with some good glasses.

The Rosicrucians called themselves the "Brothers of the ripe Dew" according to the testimony of Thomas Corneille, a good hermetist as was his brother, the great tragic writer. Nevertheless, Philaetes scoffs disdainfully at the collectors of dew and rain water, in which, notwithstanding, the abbot of Vallemont recognized some virtue. It is up to the disciple to form his own opinion according to his own judgement. But it is beyond doubt that an agent kept secret, called "Celestial Manna" plays an important part in the work.

We must declare, sincerely, that the Ram and the Bull in the plate, which one always takes for the signs of the zodiac under which one must collect the flos coeli, have no connection with the astrological symbols. The Ram is Hermes' Criophore, which is the same as Jupiter Ammon; and the Bull, whose horns delineate the crescent, attribute of Diana and Isis, who are identical with the cow Io, lover of Jupiter, and the philosophers moon. These two animals personify the two natures of the Stone. Their union forms the Azyne of the Egyptians, the Asimah of the Bible, hybrid monster designating the orichalc, the Latten or bronze oryx, the bull of Phalaris or of bronze, the golden or chrysoeale calf⁴, which differs, most certainly, from the pinchbeck⁵ of Mannheim and is in some ways akin to German

⁴It is not irrelevant to recall here that Helvetius has written a treatise on alchemy under the title Vitulus Aureus (the Golden Calf).

⁵Pinchbeck = copper + zink + tin

silver⁶. Briefly put, it is the electrum of the poets; but one should properly understand this word, which encloses the magical arcanum. Philaetes teaches that the gold of the hermetists is certainly not similar to vulgar gold. Furthermore, we add that, according to mythology, the Stone devoured by Saturn was called *betulus*, which is, really, the same word as *vitulus*, calf in Latin, and as *vitellus*, the yolk of an egg. The dough of unleavened bread was its hieroglyph. The priests from the bank of the Nile never touched the sacrificial breads with any steel or iron cutting tool: that would have amounted to a case of sacrilege. From this derives the ancient custom, still in use, of breaking the bread. Likewise in the Catholic rite, the officiating priest divides the host by means of the silver-gilt paten. This whole logomachy⁷ conceals the vermillion of the Sages, or the philosophic amalgam of mercury, gold and the silver of art, rendered indissoluble by the *flos coeli*.

One will learn, not without surprise, that bullfighting is a dramatic figuration of the Great Work. All games have a hermetic origin. The red cockade worn by the animal and to which it is attached a prize bestowed upon the victor, is the image of the Rose of the Philosophers. The grand concern is to be a good Matador. Also, according to Spanish tradition, to accede to government, one must conquer the bull - the mystic bull, evidently. This victory confers chivalry, true nobility, the one of Science, and consequently the sceptre. This is why, under Louis XIII, the leaders of the "Kabbale d'Etat" were nicknamed Matadors. This species is not extinct,

⁶German silver = copper, zinc & nickel

⁷battle of words

though obliterated and not apparent.

The fifth plate initiates the disciple to the laboratory operations. One there witnesses a sequence of varied manipulations. One will see that it deals with the coction of the fluid collected in the proceeding plate. A man and a woman appear to be pouring it into a pot put over the fire. In the figure below the man adds a viscous product and holds, in his other hand, a substance which is not difficult to discover, if one bears in mind that the egg of Hermogenes is analogous to the others. In the same picture, on the side, a naked person, decorated by a half-moon and embraced by an infant, receives a flask, where one notices four small triangles. They represent the proportions of elements put into the work, namely one part of sulphur to three of mercury. A lunar body intervenes in this operation, which has been indicated by an escutcheon carrying a silver moon on a field of gules.

The moon of the philosophers is not always silver, though this metal is convenient to the work at a certain point. In order to lead astray the profane, the Adepts gave this name to mercury and its salt, the preparation of which presents the most grave difficulties. In order that the mercury be suitable to the work, it is indispensable to animate it. This animation is performed by means of the sulphur prepared to this end. In Philaletes one will find the practical directions, which however must not always be followed word for word. He is exact, yet he fails to purge the mercury from its heterogeneous elements by separating the pure from the impure, the subtle from the gross. One sees, in this plate, the woman who gets ready to skim the compost. It is a presentation overburdened with work, but in the main exact. In the Work it is in fact the feminine element which performs the selection by means of its constitutive virtues; but the artist must lend a

hand and assist nature with prudence.

The other figures represent digestions and distillations. We will not be telling the sensible reader anything new, by saying that a man crammed up with chemical formulas and apt to resolve all school problems on a piece of paper, is not entitled to call himself a chemist. It is therefore necessary that theory is accompanied by practice, the one being the consequence of the other. Only laboratory practice gives mastership, for what is practice if not controlled by theory. The rigor of the former corrects the vagaries of the latter. Thus the disciple must exert himself to realize all his concepts.

The sixth plate is the continuation of the fifth. One will notice that here the operations are always effectuated by a man and a woman, symbolizing the two natures. The exterior action of the two natures indicates the interior work of the mutually reacting bodies. In the first figure, the female agent plays a passive role, and the male agent an active role. The latter is the sulphur, the former: the moon.

One will doubtlessly want to know which is the mysterious sulphur concerning which the philosophers always speak without designating it by any other name. It is the sulphur of the metals. The secret of the art consists in extracting it from male bodies in order to unite it to female bodies, which requires their previous decomposition. Present day science seems to consider this fact an absolute impossibility. But some of the great chemists of the XVIIIth century have demonstrated, in communications addressed to the academic societies, that the operation is realizable and that they had accomplished it. We have in our hands a magnificent sulphur of silver obtained by analogous means and which closely approaches the tincture of the Sages. But, in order to arrive at this result, a certain practice and

profound knowledge of the mineral kingdom is required.

Do not trust the authors who speak of grindings, decantations, separations obtained by what they call a slight of hand. The manual action only contributes to the results in the manner of a kitchen maid preparing her pot-au-feu. When the ingredients have been put into the pot, the water cooks the compost brought to the required temperature by the exterior fire. The coction completed, there remains but to extract the products and employ them according to formula. But all untimely intervention is detrimental and darkness to the work.

Very particularly we must point out the figure which represents the hermetic rose obtained by the foregoing sublimations. On this there would be a lot to say. All alchemical tracts are but (Novels of the Rose)⁸, both literally and figuratively. The artists foremost concern consists in separating the true from the false. This dominates and constitutes hermetic literature.

What is the Rose? It is the flower of the philosophic tree which forebodes the fruit. Now the tree of the philosophers is the vegetable mercury' the Rose is hence the efflorescence of the metallic sap put into motion by the exterior fire, which excites the internal fire of the bodies. But the Sages speak of two different fires vested with this function. The disciple must therefore consider that there exists, outside of natural fire, another agent of this name, and this secret fire is the ferment of metals, which in the work plays a role analogous to the leaven in the bakers dough. But may the addition of this new element not trouble the minds of the sons of science. For even as leaven is made out of sugar and acidified water, so the ferment

⁸This refers to Jean de Meung's "Roman de la Rose".

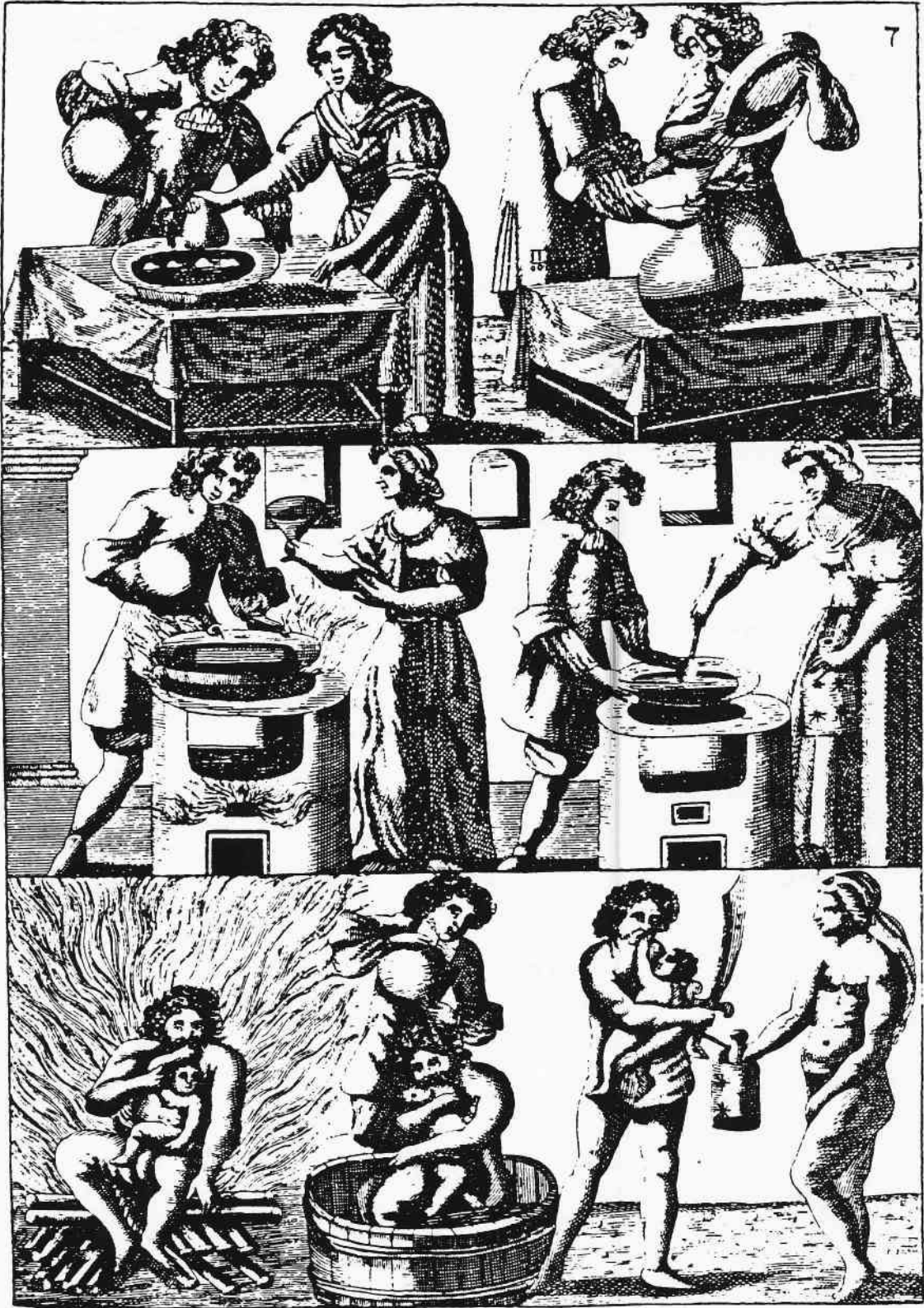
of metals is a product of sulphur and mercury, brought to a suitable state by means of art. The proportions are analogous to those used in breadmaking.

Our plate shows a second smaller rose, and a third one smaller still. Would there be several roses? Yes and no. In principle there are two roses, according as one works for gold or for silver; and, basically there is but one. Nevertheless, the *Mutus Liber* presents three well defined ones. This is correct; but they are daughters of each other, i.e., of three different virtues. During the regimen of coction, Philaletes instructs one to first obtain the white rose, which he calls the moon; then the yellow or saffron; and finally the red or perfect rose. We are not using this author's exact terminology; but we are speaking with enough clarity to make ourselves well understood.

The obtaining of the roses is subordinate to putrefaction. The putrefaction gives rise to a succession of colours. The first is the black; it is the key to the others. Without the black there is no putrefaction; and without putrefaction no transformation. If such an accident should occur, it is because the materials brought into contact do not possess the desired qualities, or have been poorly prepared. See Philaletes for the rest and accept the subtle only.

The seventh plate is very important, but difficult to comprehend. Here we again find the four small triangles with the already explained correspondences; but we are arriving at a delicate operation, for it is here that Saturn devours his child.

The fable of Saturn and Jupiter is well known. But what is this Saturn and what is this Jupiter? The chemical nomenclature, to be found with the authorities, will inform you to what metals these two names correspond. But







we remark, in all honesty, that the Saturn and Jupiter of the Sages are not the same as those of the vulgar chemists. One has to be on ones guard, and not try to produce it from the solder of plumber or tinman. We are not working with gross products, and while they have all been derived from the family of metals, they are not proper to the Work before having been submitted to a preparation that renders them "philosophic".

If one adopts the humid way, one proceeds according to art if one brings our two elements into contact in such a way that one absorbs the other, which gives a new product that will contain the two, without it being henceforth possible to separate them, at least not in a chemical manner. The dry way evidently supposes a combination obtained by a procedure adapted to the nature of the bodies. But one should not mix the two ways: Liquids will unite to liquids and solids to solids.

In this operation the fire plays a certain role. One of the figures represents Saturn devouring his son in the midst of a fire. Here one pay the greatest possible attention to the words of the philosophers. One of them will assure you that elementary fire is the destructor of the bodies, and that their fusion volatilizes the soul; another one will declare that the Sages burn with water, and at the same time prohibiting the use of corrosive liquors such as acids. The disciple thus finds himself enclosed within a vicious circle, from which it is extremely difficult for him to escape advantageously. One has to take the mean between the two doctrines in order to make them agree. It is a water which encloses the fire of Heaven; it is the dew, or the flos coeli, which we have seen being pressed out in a previous plate. One knows that the dew contains an acid principle which literally burns. The objects submitted to its action do not delay to turn to dust. We must observe,

however, that the philosophic dew in reality differs from the common dew. Nevertheless, it is formed from the true tears of Dawn united to a terrestrial substance, which is the substance of the Work.

When Saturn has accomplished his horrible feast, one must, says Philaletes, cause all the waters of deluge to pass over him, not so that he drowns, but in order to correct the effects of a laborious digestion and eliminate the toxins resulting from fermentation. This is what one calls "to whiten the negro". The operation is rude, but efficacious, if one preserves, for it has to be repeated several times. This washing with the noble water derobes the body of its impurities, corrects its humors, and disposes it towards the subsequent operations. It is then distilled hermetically in order to loose nothing; one precipitates its salt which presents itself in small and very hygroscopic crystals, and which must immediately be removed from the influence of the air. This is why it has to be shut up, as shown in another figure, in a flask it has to be shut up, as shown in another figure, in a flask with a ground stopper, and which one has to have ready at hand. The eighth plate shows us the realized philosophic mercury, whereas the second plate only showed its constituting principles. He is produced from the Sun and the Moon that are at his feet. The eagles are flying around him, because inside the matrass he has to undergo the necessary sublimations; which has been indicated at the bottom of the plate by the athanor where the egg has been placed for incubation. The mercury of the philosophers, animated and sublimated according to the rules, must circulate a long time in the vase before producing the happy effects that one expects from him. But there are several mercuries in the work, and Philaletes points out a second one, very emphatically, under the name of virgins milk. This one differs in some



respects from the first, though they are both of the same essence. Philaletes, Ripley and others so far as to say that it pertains to common mercury. Basil Valentine, on the other hand, banishes it with malediction. Some have believed that the virgins milk could be obtained by combining the two. We are acquainted with one artist who has accomplished this tour de force merely for the pleasure of overcoming the difficulty, without pretending that it has any other advantages. We are thus in a position to acknowledge the operation as possible, which does not imply that we adhere to its use in the actual practice. Only with the utmost reserve should one accept all the bizarre names, imposed by the philosophers upon certain ingredients. These different epithets serve the sole purpose of disguising the course of operations. In this manner the same product carries a different name all according to whether it has or has not been exalted. And it is above all true that alcohol, though extracted from wine, differs from it in name as well as in appearance, in virtue as well as in effect, even as wine differs from the grape from which it has been drawn...

The ninth plate brings us back to the flos coeli. Why this return, and what is the point of repeating it when we were already provided with it? It is not that the author of the Mutus Liber would send us back to the fields to fetch some more; but surely he was obliged to repeat this symbol, the moment that this celestial agent had to enter into a new combination. In one of the figures of this plate, we see Mercury in the process of buying a flask of this divine water from a country woman. He therefore has need for it for some use. Philaletes prescribes, effectively, to wash the mercury several times, in such a way as to make it loose some of its oily nature. He very carefully describes this operation which is accomplished by means of the





celestial water brought to a certain temperature, nevertheless moderate, for it takes only a little too much heat for the fiery part to retake its path to the stars. Philaetes is a great master, his word has authority and he presents the work with such ingenuity, that no suspicion of fraud could possibly arise. But we must here expose a ruse: In his work this author has purposely confounded the dry way with the wet way. It would thus be an error to apply to one method that which belongs to the other. But, having made this remark, we recognize that the astral spirit plays a permanent part in the operations. And since we are using an expression of Cyliani, let us pause at the improbable interpretations to which this very recent term has given rise. Recent writers have seen in this astral spirit a magnetic emanation of the operator. According to them, one must, during a certain period, submit to a physical and moral training, in order to successfully practice this kind of fakirism or yoga. The strength of the product must be proportional to the power of the fluid in such a way that the powder of projection obtained multiplies 100, 1000 or 10,000 times, etc., according to the potential of the artist. Thus these phantasists pretend to impregnate the matter with astral spirit as one charges a battery with electricity. This is what the poorly understood and randomly applied analogy leads to. We shall not name these singular theoreticians whose sincerity is respectable; but we had to signal the fact, in order to put studious and too confident disciple on his guard against the hazardous reading of authors without mandate and without consecration, who have never produced anything but books, but who from that time pass for Masters.

The tenth plate represents the conjunction. The first figure shows, on the scales of a balance, on one side the salt indicated by the star, on the



other the sulphur designated by a flower, which with its heart forms seven petals. These are the proportions of the product. A man pours a liquid enclosed within a flask onto this flower. This is the Mercury. In his other hand he holds another receiver filled with astral spirit to be used according to the circumstances. The woman places all these products into a long necked matrass; but here we must recall what we have said concerning the role of the woman in the Work: the two agents personified in this way are the matters themselves, and the diverse accessories that accompany them declare their state of exaltation.

In the second line, the artist seals the matrass with the seal of Hermes. He puts its neck into the flame of a lamp, in order to return the glass to a pasty and ductible state. Afterwards he has to draw it out very carefully in order to make it thinner at the desired point, while assuring himself that not even the slightest capillarity is produced through which the spirit of the compost might escape. Having come thus far, after having cut the glass, he turns the part adhering to the matrass back on itself, and shapes it into a thick cushion (pad). Today this operation is very easily performed with gas, by means of the blow-lamp. Some very competent practitioners employ an automatic procedure of even greater perfection. But whatever method is used, one thereafter places the egg in the athanor and the coction begins.

We shall say nothing about the athanor. The Mutus Liber presents its form and inner arrangement. Philaletes describes it very carefully. We shall add but one important remark to the sayings of this author: the construction of the furnace is partly allegoric, and there is much to learned on the point of view of the governing of the fire and of the regimen of the Work. Concerning the latter, the Secret Work on the

philosophy of Hermes, attributed to d'Espagnet and favorably quoted, will be useful to follow, for one there finds the Zodiac of the Philosophers.

The last figure of this plate demonstrates that the conjunction is taking place: the Sun and the Moon are united. The work has given the required colors. Here they have been synthesized into a circle, at first black, then white and finally yellow and red. The obtained product multiplies ten times, as announced by the numbers.

The eleventh plate proclaims that the operator has entered the regimen of the Sun, i.e., he has obtained the gold of the philosophers, which is not vulgar gold. Although Jupiter plays a nominal role in the operative process, it is not a question of bisulphur of tin, but of real "mosaic" or secret gold. Meanwhile we shall confess in all truth, that it is not a product of Nature, but of art. Contemporary chemists - unduly taken for competent - have believed to find it in common vitriol, which they hope to render philosophic. They have poorly understood Basil Valentine. The stroma of the dissolution of this salt, considered by them to be "nascent gold", is nothing but a fleeting mirage, and on analysis leaves nothing but deception.

One author, famous with other titles and who in certain circles has enjoyed a certain prestige - we must name Strindberg to warn against his strayings - got stranded on a puerile and ridiculous technique. His Book of Gold is an aberration that calls for a charitable silence. Philaetes and others advise, to those who ignore artificial gold, to seek it in vulgar gold, albeit signalling this work to be long and arduous. One must, in this case, submit it to difficult and dangerous manipulations, for one may transform the metal into gold fulminate, and the memoirs of the XVIIIth century report several mortal accidents following upon this preparation. But if the disciple has been

instructed in a good school, he will avoid this sophistic snare and operate hermetically; he will thus avert this redoubtable danger. The masters know how to reach their goal by following other paths, which they take good care not to indicate, but which are not undiscoverable if one reasons with ones reason rather than with the erroneous books of the Sages. "One needs gold in order to make gold", says the classical axiom; this is correct, only there are two different kinds of gold needed to bring the Work to a good end. This plate shows how one here recommences all the preceding operations. One must elevate the mercury to a higher degree of sublimation by means of the eagles, redistill it in order to give it a greater animation.

The twelfth plate instructs us how one may carry this mercury to a superior gradation. To this end one must recommence the imbibitions of the flos coeli, until the mercury, which is eager for them, is impregnated by them to saturation.

The thirteenth plate is a repetition of the tenth, for in the work, all operations follow each other and resemble each other; but this new conjunction, which operates with substances sublimated to the extreme, is nothing but the beginning of the multiplication. The work is the same as in plate ten and, in the coction, one will see the colours reappear. Its duration decreases in proportion as the multiplicative power becomes augmented, in such a way that in the end it takes but one day to obtain the result that in the beginning required months. The numbers on this plate give the transmuting powers obtained by the subsequent coctions.

The fourteenth plate is mainly dedicated to the instrumentation. One there sees the matrass hermetically sealed with its pad, such as we have described it; the mortar and the pestle for the grindings; the spoon for

skimming; the balances to determine the right weights; the furnace of the first operations before employing the athanor.

We recall that one must understand the grindings, the decantation, the skimming and all the rest in a philosophic manner, although a trituration, a decantation and skimming are positively necessary to render the substances fit for the work; but, after that, these operations take place by themselves and, so to speak, automatically by the reaction of the bodies on each other. The disciple will have to meditate profoundly on the woman with the distaff, and follow her with sagacity in his manipulations; they are not indifferent and all-telling to the true son of science. We cannot here transgress the will of the author, who witnesses of his well settled design to let the symbol alone express all his thought. If these lines come under the eyes of an adept, he will approve of our reserve, which nevertheless is close to indiscretion. But for the rest *qui potest capere capiat*.

The fifteenth and last plate represents the apotheosis of Saturn, victorious over his son Jupiter who had dethroned him, and lies inert upon the ground. It is the solarization of the vilest of metals, his resurrection and glorification in the light. The two branches of sweet-briar of the frontispiece are charged with red berries and white berries filled with active seeds where each one has the power to maul all the impure metals into gold or silver. The so-called mystics - who deny the possibility of the metallic work and have found nothing in the allegories of the philosophers but a treatise on asceticism where they would be very embarrassed to explain each symbol - these pseudo-mystics see in this plate an image of the resurrection of man and of his return to the celestial fatherland, and they become blissfully enraptured by this discovery, which they are not far from considering



ingenious.

But if we become pure spirit again, it follows that our body has enclosed its essence under its (outer) gross form and, given these conditions, one cannot deny the same property exists in the metals. The spirit or the fire is everywhere and in everything: it lies in the flint so cold in appearance, in the metals that one transforms into inflammable fulminates that explode upon the least shock. But, transmutation is a phenomenon that causes the species to pass from an inferior to a superior plane by means of a spiritual agent, a true seed called *powder of projection*. This marvelous product is obtained by the real death and putrefaction of a metallic substance, which, transfigured, has the property of, in its turn, modifying the nature of other matter or creatures. Under its action these likewise undergo a prompt death and resurrection, that elevates them to their highest degree of dignity. The Hermetists compare this transformation to the one of wheat. The grain becomes corrupted in the earth, assimilates the gross elements of the soil to itself and, through the work of a long digestion, moults them into pure wheat in the ratio of a hundred to one. This digestion is more or less activated by the environment. In certain climates the harvest takes place three months after sowing, and in the tropics the vegetation obtains almost instantaneously. It is thus altogether rational that a ferment endowed with great power and projected onto matter submitted to a high temperature may cause it to evolve at a speed that borders on the miraculous.

Evolution is the law of life: the mineral becomes a plant and the plant an animal, by way of intussusception; but this transit is subordinated to the mediation of an exterior agent, plant or beast. If then the metals are admitted to pass in this way from one kingdom to another with the assistance of a

suitable element, it is still more logical that a certain perfect and quintessential gold, taken back to its radical and spermatic state has the virtue to exalt and to convert like natures into itself. Is it not thus that the human embryo, during gestation, assumes and transforms the substance of beings of a less noble origin? Nutrition is a continual metamorphosis. Just as, in the three kingdoms, everything converges towards man, among the minerals all ends in gold. But one cannot deduce from this, that nature, in the long run, makes gold from lead. For this effect she needs to be assisted by art, i.e. by the magical ferment that operates its transmutation.

Gold is called the sun, for, in Greek, $\alpha\upsilon\rho$ is light; it is the heaven of the metals, the spiritualisation of the species. The metals thus become gold as, in certain regards, our body becomes spirit by the work of posthumous fermentation. Putrefaction, disgusting and hideous, is nevertheless the amazing fairy that works all the miracles in the world. It is a gross error to believe that, in the case of man, the soul abandons the body with the last breath. It is itself entirely flesh, for matter is a modality of spirit in different states subordinated to a greater and more subtle spark, which is the God of each organism. And if science denies the reality of the spirit because it has never found any trace of it, it is dishonouring its own name. A corpse, rigid and cold, is by no means dead in an absolute sense. An intense life, but fortunately unconscious and without perceptible reflexes, continues in the tomb, and it is from this horrible and more or less long combat - which is the purgatory of the religions - that the matter, distilled, sublimated, transmuted and vaporized by the action of the sun, surges up to the amorphous plane, which has its grades from air to elementary light and from this one to the fire principle where all finishes by dissolution and from

where all emanates anew.

We believe that we have accomplished our task with all the required honesty, and caused some new light to shine in an obscure domain. It is now up to the disciple to complete the work. As for those who pretend to acquire wisdom without merit and only for a vile and contemptible farthing, we say to them as Saint Jerome in the legend of the rich and idle Cratus: "Philosophy does not fit you".

And you, son of science, bear in mind the eloquent sign by which the terminal figures of the fourteenth plate address you, and the gloss that closes the Mutus Liber: "If you have understood, work in silence and for still some time keep your mouth shut on the Mystery".

MAGAPHON

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