



Mensionization Complementation

The Mathematics of Hermetic Alchemy

Section 12

The Hermetic Alchemists

Albert Pike

*This text has been transcribed from "Morals and Dogma" by Albert Pike. **Morals and Dogma** was sanctioned in the late nineteenth century by the Supreme Council of the Thirty-Third Degree, for the Southern Jurisdiction of Masons of the United States.*

The *Hermetic philosophers* also drew their doctrines from the *Kabbalah*; and more particularly from the *Treatise Beth Alohimor Domus Dei*, known as *the Pneumatica Kabalistica*, of *Rabbi Abraham Cohen Irira*, and the *Treatise De Revoluionibus Aniniarum* of *Rabbi Jitz-chak Lorja*. This philosophy was concealed by the *Alchemists* under their *Symbols*, and in the jargon of a rude Chemistry, a jargon *incomprehensible* and *absurd* except to the *Initiates*; but the key to which is within your reach; and the philosophy, it may be, worth studying. The labors of the humati intellect are always *interesting* and *instructive*. To be always rich, always young, and never to die: such has been in all times the dream of the *Alchemists*. To change into gold, lead, mercury, and all the other metals; to possess the universal medicine and *elixir of life*; such is the problem to be resolved, in order to accomplish this desire and realize this dream. Like all the Mysteries of Magism, the Secrets of "*the Great Work*" have a *threefold* signification: they are religious, philosophical, and natural. The philosophical *gold*, in religion, is the Absolute and Supreme Reason: in philosophy, it is the *Truth*; in visible nature, the *Sun*; in the subterranean and mineral world, the most perfect and pure gold.

It is for this that the pursuit of the *Great Work* is called the Search for the *-Absolute*; and the work itself, the work of the *Sun*. All the *masters* of the *Science* admit that it is impossible to attain the material results, unless there are found in the two higher degrees all the analogies of the universal

Alchemists-1

medicine and of the philosophical stone. Then, they say, the work is *simple*, *easy*, and *inexpensive*; otherwise, it consumes fruitlessly the fortune and lives of the seekers. The universal *medicine* for the *Soul* is the Supreme Reason and Absolute Justice; for the *mind*, mathematical and practical truth; for the body, the Quintessence, a combination of light and gold. The *prima materia* of the Great Work, in the Superior World, is *enthusiasm* and *activity*; in the intermediate world, *intelligence* and *industry*; in the lower world, *labor*: and, in Science, it is the *Sulphur*. *Mercury*, and *Salt*, which by turns volatilized and fixed, compose the *AZOTH* of the Sages. The *Sulphur* corresponds with the elementary form of the *Fire*; *Mercury* with the *Air* and *Water*; and *Salt* with the *Earth*.

The *Great Work* is, above all things, the *creation* of *man* by himself; that is to say, the full and entire conquest which the effects of his faculties and his future. It is, above all, the perfect emancipation of his will, which assures him the universal empire of *Azoth*, and the domain of magnetism, that is, complete power over the universal Magical agent. This Magical agent, which the Ancient Hermetic philosophers disguised under the name of "*Prima Materia*", determines the forms of the modifiable Substance; and the Alchemists said that by means of it they could attain the transmutation of metals and the universal medicine.

There are *two Hermetic operations*, one *spiritual*, the other *material*, dependent the one on the other. The whole *Hermetic Science* is contained in the dogma of Hermes, engraven originally; it is said, on a tablet of emerald. Its sentences that relate to operating the Great Work are as follows: "Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, gently, with much industry. "It ascends from earth to Heaven, and again descends to earth, and receives the force of things above and below. "Thou shalt by this means possess the glory of the whole world, and therefore all obscurity shall flee away from thee." This is the potent force of all force, for it will overcome everything subtle, and penetrate everything solid. "So the world was created." All the Masters in *Alchemy* who have written of the *Great Work*, have employed symbolic and figurative expressions; being constrained to do so, as well to repel the profane from a work that would be dangerous for them, as to be well understood by *Adepts*, in revealing to them the whole world of analogies governed by the single and sovereign dogma of *Hermes*. So, in their language, *gold* and *silver* are the *King* and *Queen*, or the *Sun* and *Moon* ; *Sulphur*, the flying Eagle; *Mercury*, the Man-woman,

winged, bearded, mounted on a cube, and crowned with flames; *Matter* or *Salt*, the winged Dragon; the Metals in ebullition, Lions of different colors ; and, finally, the entire work has for its symbols the *Pelican* and the *Phoenix*.

The *Hermetic Art* is, therefore, at the same time a religion, a philosophy, and a natural science. As a religion, it is that of the Ancient Magi and the Initiates of all ages; as a philosophy, we may find its principles in the school of Alexandria and the theories of *Pythagoras*; as a science, we must inquire for its processes of *Paracelsus*, *Nicholas Flamel*, and *Raymond Lulle*. The Science is a real one only for those who admit and understand the philosophy and the religion; and its process will succeed only for the *Adept* who has attained the sovereignty of will, and so become the King of the elementary world: for the grand agent of the operation of the Sun, is that force described in the Symbol of *Hermes*, of the table of *emerald*; it is the universal magical power ; the spiritual, fiery, motive power ; it is the *Od*, according to the Hebrews, and the *Astral light*, according to others.

Therein is the secret fire, living and philosophical, of which all the *Hermetic philosophers* speak with the most mysterious reserve: the *Universal Seed*, the *secret* whereof they kept, and which they represented only under the figure of the *Caduceus* of *Hermes*. This is the grand Hermetic Arcanum. What the Adepts call dead matter are bodies as found in nature; living matters are substances assimilated and magnetized by the science and will of the operator.

So that the *Great Work* is more than a *chemical operation*; it is a real creation of the human word initiated into the power of the Word of God. The creation of gold in the Great Work is effected by transmutation and multiplication. Raymond Lulle says, that to make gold, one must have gold and mercury; and to make silver, silver and mercury. And he adds: "I mean by mercury, that mineral spirit so fine and pure that it gilds even the seed of gold, and silvers that of silver." He meant by this, either electricity, or *Od*, the astral light. The *Salt* and *Sulphur* serve in the work only to prepare the *mercury*, and it is to the *mercury* especially that we must assimilate, and, as it were, incorporate with it, the magnetic agent. Paracelsus, Lulle, and Flamel alone seem to have perfectly known this mystery. The *Great Work* of *Hermes* is, therefore, an operation essentially magical, and the highest of all, for it supposes the Absolute in Science and in Will. There is light in gold, gold in light, and light in all things.

The *disciples* of *Hermes*, before promising their adepts the elixir of long life or the powder of projection, advised them to seek for the Philosophical Stone. The Ancients adored the Sun, under the form of a black Stone, called Elagabalus, or Heliogabalus. The faithful are promised, in the Apocalypse, a white Stone. This Stone, say the Masters in *Alchemy*, is the true Salt of the philosophers, which enters as one-third into the composition of *Azoth*. But Azoth is, as we know, the name of the grand Hermetic Agent, and the true philosophical Agent: wherefore they represent their Salt under the form of a cubical Stone.

The Philosophical Stone is the foundation of the Absolute philosophy, the Supreme and unalterable Reason. Before thinking of the Metallic work, we must be firmly fixed on the Absolute principles of Wisdom; we must be in possession of this Reason, which is the touchstone of Truth. A man who is the slave of prejudices will never become the King of Nature and the Master of transmutations.

The Philosophical Stone, therefore, is necessary above all things. *How shall it be found?* *Hermes* tells us, in his "Table of Emerald," we must separate the subtle from the fixed, with great care and extreme attention. So we ought to separate our certainties from our beliefs, and make perfectly distinct the respective domains of science and faith; and to comprehend that we do not know the things we believe, nor believe anything that we come to know; and that thus the essence of the things of Faith are the unknown and indefinite, while it is precisely the contrary with the things of Science. Whence we shall conclude, that Science rests on reason and experience, and Faith has for its bases sentiment and reason. The Sun and Moon of the Alchemists concur in perfecting and giving stability to the Philosophical Stone. They correspond to the two columns of the Temple, *Jachin* and *Boaz*. The Sun is the hieroglyphical sign of Truth, because it is the source of Light; and the rough Stone is the symbol of Stability. Hence the Mediaeval Alchemists indicated the Philosophical Stone as the first means of making the philosophical gold, that is to say, of transforming all the vital powers figured by the six metals into Sun, that is, into Truth and Light; which is the first and indispensable operation of the Great Work, which leads to the secondary adaptation, and enables the creators of the spiritual and living gold, the possessors of the true philosophical *Salt*, *Mercury*, and *Sulphur*, to discover, by the analogies of Nature, the natural and palpable gold.

To find the Philosophical Stone, is to have discovered the Absolute, as all the Masters say. But the Absolute is that which admits of no errors, is the Fixed from the Volatile, is the Law of the imagination, is the very necessity of *Being*, is the immutable Law of Reason and Truth. The Absolute is that which *IS*. To find the Absolute in the Infinite, in the Indefinite, and in the Finite, this is the *Magnum Opus*, the Great Work of the Sages, which *Hermes* called the Work of the *Sun*. To find the immovable bases of true religious Faith, of Philosophical Truth, and of Metallic transmutation, this is the secret of *Hermes* in its entirety, the *Philosophical Stone*.

This stone is one and manifold; it is decomposed by Analysis, and re-compounded by Synthesis. In Analysis, it is a powder, the powder of projection of the Alchemists; before Analysis, and in Synthesis, it is a stone. The Philosophical Stone, say the Masters, must not be exposed to the atmosphere, nor to the gaze of the Profane; but it must be kept concealed and carefully preserved in the most secret place of the laboratory, and the possessor must always carry on his person the key of the place where it is kept. He who possesses the *Grand Arcanum* is a genuine King, and more than a king, for he is inaccessible to all fear and all empty hopes. In all maladies of soul and body, a single particle from the precious stone, a single grain of the divine powder, is more than sufficient to cure him. "Let him hear, who hath ears to hear!" the Master said. The *Salt*, *Sulphur*, and *Mercury* are but the accessorial elements and passive instruments of the *Great Work*. All depends, as we have said, on the internal Magnet of Paracelsus. The entire work consists in projection: and the projection is perfectly accomplished by the effective and realizable understanding of a single Word.

There is but a single important operation in the work; this consists in Sublimation, which is nothing else, according to Geber than the elevation of dry matter, by means of fire, with adhesion to its proper vessel. He who desires to attain to the understanding of the Grand Word and the possession of the Great Secret, ought carefully to read the *Hermetic philosophers*, and will undoubtedly attain initiation, as others have done; but he must take, for the key of their allegories, the single dogma of *Hermes*, contained in his table of Emerald, and follow, to class his acquisitions of knowledge and direct the operation, the order indicated in the Kabalistic alphabet of the Tarot.

The *Hermetic science*, like all the real sciences, is *mathematically demonstrable*. Its results, even *material*, are as rigorous as that of a *correct equation*. The Hermetic Gold is not only a true dogma, a light without Shadow, a Truth without alloy of falsehood; it is also a material gold, real, pure, the most precious that can be found in the mines of the earth. But the living gold, the living *sulphur*, or the true *fire* of the philosophers, is to be sought for in the house of *Mercury*. This fire is fed by the air : to express its attractive and expansive power, no better comparison can be used than that of the lightning, which is at first only a dry and earthly exhalation, united to the moist vapor, but which, by self-exhalation, takes a *fiery* nature, acts on the humidity inherent in it, which it attracts to itself and transmutes in its nature ; after which it precipitates itself rapidly toward the earth, whither it is attracted by a fixed nature like unto its own. These words, in form enigmatic, but clear at bottom, distinctly express what the philosophers mean by their *Mercury* fecundated by *Sulphur*, and which becomes the Master and regenerator of the *Salt*. It is the *AZOTH*, the universal magnetic force, the grand magical agent, the Astral light, the light of life, fecundated by the mental force, the intellectual energy, which they compare to *sulphur*, on account of its affinities with the Divine *fire*. As to the *Salt*, it is *Absolute Matter*. Whatever is matter contains salt; and all salt [nitre] may be converted into pure gold by the combined action of *Sulphur* and *Mercury*, which sometimes act so rapidly, that the transmutation may be effected in an instant, in an hour, without fatigue to the operator, and almost without expense. At other times, and according to the more refractory temper of the atmospheric media, the operation requires several days, several months, and sometimes even several years.

Two primary laws exist in nature, two essential laws, which produce, by counterbalancing each other, the universal equilibrium of things. These are fixedness and movement, analogous, in philosophy, to Truth and Fiction, and, in Absolute Conception, to Necessity and Liberty, which are the very essence of Deity. The Hermetic philosophers gave the name fixed to everything ponderable, to everything that tends by its nature to central repose and immobility; they term volatile everything that more naturally and more readily obeys the law of movement; and they form their stone by analysis, that is to say, by the *volatilization of the Fixed*, and then by synthesis, that is, by fixing the volatile, which they effect by applying to the fixed, which they call their salt, the *sulphurated Mercury*, or the light of life, directed and made omnipotent by a Sovereign Will. Thus they master entire Nature, and their stone is found wherever there is salt, which is the reason for saying that no substance is foreign to the Great Work, and that even the most despicable and

apparently vile matters may be changed into gold, which is true in this sense, that they all contain the original salt principle, represented in our emblems by the cubical stone.

To know how to extract from all matter the pure salt concealed in it, is to have the Secret of the Stone. Wherefore this is a Saline stone, which the *Od* or universal astral light decomposes or re-compounds: it is single and manifold; for it may be dissolved like ordinary salt, and incorporated with other substances. Obtained by analysis, we might term it the Universal Sublimate: found by way of synthesis, it is the true panacea of the ancients, for it cures all maladies of soul and body, and has been styled, par-excellence, the medicine of all nature. When one, by absolute initiation, comes to control the forces of the universal agent, he always has this stone at his disposal, for its extraction is then a simple and easy operation, very distinct from the metallic projection or realization. This stone, when in a state of sublimation, must not be exposed to contact with the atmospheric air, which might partially dissolve it and deprive it of its virtue; nor could its emanations be inhaled without danger. The Sage prefers to preserve it in its natural envelopes, assured as he is of extracting it by a single effort of his will, and a single application of the Universal Agent to the envelopes, which the *Kabbalists* call cortices, the shells, bark, or integuments. *Hieroglyphically* to express this law of prudence, they gave their *Mercury*, personified in Egypt as *Hermanubis*, a *dog's head* ; and to their *Sulphur*, represented by the Baphomet of the Temple, that goat's head which brought into such disrepute the occult Mediaeval associations.

Let us listen for a few moments to the *Alchemists* themselves, and endeavor to learn the hidden *meaning* of their mysterious words.

The *Ritual of the Degree of Scottish Elder Master, and Knight of Saint Andrew, being the fourth Degree of Ramsay*, it is said upon the title-page, or of the *Reformed* or *Rectified Rite of Dresden* has these passages:

"O how great and glorious is the *presence* of the Almighty *God* which gloriously *shines* from between the Cherubim! "How adorable and astonishing are the *rays* of that glorious *Light*, that sends forth its bright and brilliant beams from the Holy Ark of Alliance and Covenant! "Let us with

the deepest veneration and devotion *adore* the great Source of Life that Glorious Spirit Who is the Most Merciful and Beneficent *Ruler* of the *Universe* and of all the creatures it contains!

"The *secret knowledge* of the *Grand Scottish Master* relates to the *combination* and *transmutation* of different substances; where-of that you may obtain a *clear* idea and *proper* understanding, you are to know that all matter and all material substances are composed of combinations of *three* several substances, extracted from the *four elements*, which three substances in combination are, *Salt*, *Sulphur*, and *Spirit*. The first of these produces *Solidity*, the second *Softness*, and the third the *Spiritual*, vaporous particles. These three compound substances work potently together; and therein consists the true process for the transmutation of metals.

"To these three substances allude the *three* golden basins, in the first of which was engraved the letter M, in the second, the letter G, and in the third nothing. The first, M, is the initial letter of the Hebrew word *Malakh*, which signifies *Salt*; and the second, G, of the Hebrew word *Geparaith*, which signifies *Sulphur*; and as there is no word in Hebrew to express the vaporous and intangible *Spirit*, there is no letter in the third basin.

"With these three principal substances you may effect the transmutation of metals, which must be done by means of the *five points* or rules of the Scottish Mastership.

"The first Master's point shows us the *Brazen Sea*, wherein must always be *rain-water*; and out of this rain-water the Scottish Masters extract the first substance, which is *Salt*; which salt must afterward undergo a *seven-fold* manipulation and purification, before it will be properly prepared. This seven-fold purification is symbolized by the Seven Steps of Solomon's Temple, which symbol is furnished us by the *first point* or *rule* of the Scottish Masters.

"After preparing the first substance, you are to extract the second, *Sulphur*, out of the purest gold, to which must then be *added* the purified or celestial Salt. They are to be mixed as the *Art directs*, and then placed in a vessel in the form of a SHIP, in which it is to remain, as the Ark of Noah was afloat, one hundred and fifty days, being brought to the first *damp* warm degree of *fire*, that it may putrefy and produce the mineral fermentation. This is the *second* point or rule of the Scottish Masters."

If you reflect, my Brother, that it was impossible for anyone to imagine that either common *salt* or *nitre* could be extracted from rain-water, or sulphur from pure gold, you will no doubt suspect that some secret meaning was concealed in these words.

The *Kabbalah* considers the immaterial part of man as threefold, consisting of *NEPHESCH*, *RUACH*, and *NESCHAMAH*, *Psyche*, *Spiritus*, and *Mens*, or *Soul*, *Spirit*, and *Intellect*. There are Seven Holy Palaces, Seven Heavens and Seven Thrones; and Souls are purified by ascending through Seven Spheres. A *Ship*, in Hebrew, is *Ani*; and the same word means *I*, *Me*, or *Myself*.

The RITUAL continues:

"*Multiplying* the substance thus obtained, is the *third* operation, which is done by adding to them the animate, volatile *Spirit*; which is done by means of the water of the Celestial Salt, as well as by the *Salt*, which must daily be added to it very carefully, and strictly observing to put neither too much nor too little; inasmuch as, if you add too much, you will destroy that growing and multiplying substance; and if too little, it will be self-consumed and destroyed, and shrink away, not having sufficient substantiality for its preservation. This third point or rule of the Scottish Masters gives us the emblem of the building of the *Tower of Babel*, used by our Scottish Masters, because by irregularity and want of due proportion and harmony that work was stopped; and the workmen could proceed no further.

"Next comes the *fourth* operation, represented by the *Cubical Stone*, whose faces and *angles* are all *equal*. As soon as the work is brought to the necessary point of multiplication, it is to be submitted to the third Degree of Fire, wherein it will receive the due proportion of the strength and substance of the metallic particles of the Cubical Stone; and this is the *fourth* point or rule of the Scottish Masters.

"Finally, we come to the *fifth* and last operation, indicated to us by the *Flaming Star*. After the work has become a duly-proportioned substance, it is to be subjected to the fourth and strongest Degree of fire, wherein it must remain three times twenty-seven hours; until it is thoroughly glowing, by which means it becomes a bright and shining tincture, wherewith the lighter metals may be changed, by the use of one part to a thousand of the metal. Wherefore this Flaming Star shows us the *fifth* and last point of the Scottish Masters.

"You should pass practically through the five points or rules of the Master, and by the use of one part to a thousand, transmute and ennoble metals. You may then in reality say that your age is a thousand years."

In the oration of the Degree, the following hints are given as to its true meaning: "The *three* divisions of the Temple, the *Outer Court*, *Sanctuary*, and *Holy of Holies*, signify the *three* Principles of our Holy order, which direct to the knowledge of morality, and teach those most practical virtues that ought to be practiced by mankind. Therefore the Seven Steps which lead up to the Outer Court of the Temple, are the emblem of the *Seven-fold Light* which we need to possess, before we can arrive at the height of knowledge, in which consist the ultimate limits of our order.

"In the Brazen Sea we are symbolically to purify ourselves from all pollutions, all faults and wrongful actions, as well those omitted through error of judgment and mistaken opinion, as those intentionally done; inasmuch as they equally prevent us from arriving at the knowledge of True Wisdom. We must thoroughly cleanse and purify our hearts to their inmost recesses, before we can of right contemplate that *Flaming Star*, which is the emblem of the Divine and Glorious *Shekinah*, or presence of God; before we may dare approach the Throne of Supreme Wisdom." In the Degree of The True Mason [*Le Vrai Macon*], styled in the title-page of its Ritual the 23d Degree of Masonry, or the 12th of the 5th class, the Tracing-board displays a luminous Triangle, with a great Yod in the centre.

"The Triangle," says the Ritual, "represents one God in three persons; and the great Yod is the initial letter of the last word. "The Dark Circle represents the Chaos, which in the beginning God created.

"The Cross within the Circle, the Light by means whereof He developed the Chaos."The Square, the *Four Elements* into which it was resolved."The Triangle, again, the three *Principles* [*Salt*, *Sulphur*, and *Mercury*], which the intermingling of the elements produced.

"*God creates*; *Nature produces*; Art *multiplies*. God created Chaos; Nature produced it; God, Nature, and Art, have perfected it.

"The Altar of Perfumes indicates the **Fire** that is to be applied to **Nature**. The two **towers** are the two furnaces, moist and dry, in which it is to be worked. The bowl is the mould of oak that is to inclose the philosophical egg.

"The two figures surmounted by a Cross are the two vases, **Nature** and **Art**, in which is to be consummated the double marriage of the white woman with the red Servitor, from which marriage will spring a most Potent King." Chaos means universal matter, formless, but susceptible of all forms. Form is the Light inclosed in the seeds of all species; and its home is in the Universal Spirit.

"To work on universal matter, use the internal and external fire: the **four elements** result, the **Principia Principiorum** and **Inmediata**; **Fire**, **Air**, **Water**, **Earth**. There are four qualities of these elements - the **warm** and **dry**, the **cold** and **moist**. Two appertain to each element: The **dry** and **cold**, to the **Earth**; the **cold** and **moist**, to **Water**; the **moist** and **warm**, to the **Air**; and the **warm** and **dry**, to **Fire**: whereby the **Fire** connects with the **Earth**; all the elements, as Hermes. said, moving in circles.

"From the mixture of the four Elements and of their four qualities, result the three Principles, - **Mercury**, **Sulphur**, and **Salt**. These are the philosophical, not the vulgar.

"The philosophical **Mercury** is a **Water** and **SPIRIT**, which dissolves and sublimates the Sun; the philosophical **Sulphur**, a **fire** and a **SOUL**, which mollifies and colors it; the philosophical **Salt**, an **Earth** and a **BODY**, which coagulates and fixes it; and the whole is done in the bosom of the **Air**.

"From these three Principles result the four Elements duplicated, or the **Grand Elements**, **Mercury**, **Sulphur**, **Salt**, and **Glass**; two of which are volatile, - the Water [Mercury], and the Air [Sulphur], which is oil; for all substances, liquid in their nature avoids fire, which takes from the one [water] and burns the other [oil] ; but the other two are dry and solid, to Wit, the **Salt**, wherein **Fire** is contained, and the pure **Earth**, which is the **Glass**; on both of which the **Fire** has no other action than to melt and refine them, unless one makes use of the liquid alkali; for, just as each element consists of two qualities, so these great duplicated Elements partake, each of two of the simple elements, or, more properly speaking, of all the four, according to the greater or less degree of each, - the Mercury partaking more of the Water, to which it is assigned; the Oil or Sulphur, more

of the Air; the Salt, of the Fire; and the Glass, of the Earth; which is found, pure and clear, in the centre of all the elementary composites, and is the last to disengage itself from the others.

"The four Elements and three Principles reside in all the Compounds, Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral; but more potently in some than in others.

"The *Fire* gives them *Movement*; the *Air*, *Sensation*; the *Water*, *Nutriments*; and the *Earth*, *Subsistence*."The four duplicated Elements engender THE STONE, if one is careful enough to supply them with the proper quantity of fire, and to combine them according to their natural weight. Ten parts of Air make one of Water; ten of Water, one of Earth; and ten of Earth, one of Fire; the whole by the Active Symbol of the one, and the Passive Symbol of the other, whereby the conversion of the Elements is effected."

The Allusion of the Ritual, here, is obviously to the four Worlds of the Kabbalah. The ten Sephiroth of the world Briah proceed from Malakoth, the last of the ten Emanations of the world Aziluth; the ten Sephiroth of the world Yezirah, from Malakoth of Briah; and the ten of the world Asiah, from Malakoth of Yezirah. The Password of the Degree is given as *Metralon*, which is a corruption of *Metatron*, the Cherub, who and Sandalphon are in the *Kabbalah* the Chief of the Angels. The Active and Passive symbols are the Male and Female.

The Ritual continues:

"It is thereby evident that, in the Great Work, we must employ ten parts of philosophical Mercury to one of Sun or Moon."This is attained by *Solution* and *Coagulation*. These words mean that we must dissolve the body and coagulate the spirit; which operations are effected by the moist and dry bath.

"Of colors, *black* is the Earth; *white*, the Water; *blue*, the Air; and *red*, the Fire; wherein also are involved very great secrets and mysteries.

"The apparatus employed in 'The Great Work' consists of the Moist bath, the Dry bath, the Vases of *Nature* and *Art*, the bowl of oak, *lutum sapientice*, the Seal of Hermes, the tube, the physical lamp, and the iron rod. The work is perfected in seventeen philosophical months, according to the mixture of ingredients. The benefits reaped from it are of two kinds - one affecting the soul, and

the other the body. The former consist in knowing God, Nature, and ourself; and those to the body are wealth and health."The Initiate traverses Heaven and Earth. Heaven is the World manifest to the Intelligence, subdivided into Paradise and Hell; Earth is the World manifest to the Senses, also subdivided into the Celestial and that of the Elements.

"There are Sciences specially connected with each of these. *The one is ordinary, and common;* the other, *mystic and secret.* The World cognizable by the Intellect has the *Hermetic Theology* and the *Kabbalah*; the *Celestial Astrology*; and that of the *Elements*, Chemistry, which by its decompositions and separations, effected by fire, reveals all the most hidden secrets of *Nature*, in the *three* kinds of *Compound Substances*. This, last science is styled '*Hermetic*,' or 'The operating of the *Great Work*.'"

The *Ritual* of the Degree of *Kabbalistic* and *Hermetic Rose* has these passages:

"The true Philosophy, known and practiced by Solomon, is the basis on, which Masonry is founded. "Our Ancient Masons have concealed from us the most important point of this Divine Art, under hieroglyphical characters, which are but enigmas and parables, to all the Senseless, the Wicked, and the Ambitious. "He will be supremely fortunate, who shall, by arduous labor, discover this sacred place of *deposit*, wherein all naked the sublime Truth is hidden; for he may be assured that he has found the True Light, the True Felicity, the True Heavenly Good. Then may it truly be said that he is one of the True Elect; for it *is the only real and most Sublime Science of all those to which a mortal can aspire* his days will be prolonged, and his soul freed of all vices and corruption; into which" (it is added, to mislead, as if from fear too much would be disclosed), "*the human race is often by indigence.*

"As the symbolism of the Hall and the language of the ritual mutually explain each other, it should be noted here, that in this Degree the columns of the hall, 12 in number, are white variegated with black and red. The hangings are black, and over that crimson. Over the throne is a great Eagle, in gold, on a black ground. In the centre of the Canopy the Blazing Star in gold, with the letter Yod in its centre. On the right and left of the throne are the Sun in gold and the Moon in silver. The throne is ascended to by *three* Steps. The hall and ante-room are each lighted by ten lights, and a single one at the entrance. The colors, black, white, and crimson appear in the clothing; and the Key and Balance are among the symbols.

The duty of the Second Grand Prior, says the Ritual, is "to see if the Chapter is hermetically sealed; whether the materials are ready, and the elements; whether the Black gives place to the White, and the White to the Red." "Be laborious," it says, "like the Star, and procure the light of the Sages, and hide yourself from the Stupid Profane and the Ambitious, and be like the Owl, which sees only by night, and hides itself from treacherous curiosity." "The Sun, on entering each of his houses, should be received there by the four elements, which you must be careful to invite to accompany you, that they may aid you in your undertaking; for without them the House would be melancholy: wherefore you will give him to feast upon the four elements." "When he shall have visited his twelve houses, and seen you attentive there to receive him, you will become one of his chiefest favorites, and he will allow you to share all his gifts. Matter will then no longer have power over you; you will, so to say, be no longer a dweller on the earth; but after certain periods you will give back to it a body which is its own, to take in its stead one altogether Spiritual. Matter is then deemed to be dead to the world.

"Therefore it must be re-vivified, and made to be born again from its ashes, which you will effect by virtue of the vegetation of the Tree of Life, represented to us by the branch of acacia. Whoever shall learn to comprehend and execute this great work, will know great things, say the Sages of the work; but whenever you depart from the centre of the Square and the Compass you will no longer be able to work with success. "Another Jewel is necessary for you, and in certain undertakings cannot be dispensed with. It is what is termed the *Kabbalistic pantacle*. This carries with it the power of commanding the spirits of the elements. It is necessary for you to know how to use it, and that you will learn by perseverance if you are a lover of the science of our predecessors the Sages. "A great Black Eagle, the King of Birds. He alone it is that can fire the Sun, material in its nature, that has no form, and yet by its form develops color. The black is a complete harbinger; of the work: it changes color and assumes a natural form, out whereof will emerge a brilliant Sun.

The birth of the Sun is always announced by its Star, represented by the *Blazing Star*, which you will know by its fiery color; And it is followed in its course by the silvery lustre of the Moon. "A rough Ashlar is the shapeless stone which is to be prepared in order to commence the philosophical work; and to be developed, in order to change its form from triangular to cubic, after

the separation from it of its *Salt*, *Sulphur*, and *Mercury*, by the aid of the Square, Level, Plumb, and Balance, and all the other Masonic implements *which we use symbolically*.

"Here we put them to philosophical use, to constitute a well-proportioned edifice, through which you are to make pass the crude material, analogous to a candidate commencing his initiation into our Mysteries. When we build we must observe all the rules and proportions; for otherwise the Spirit of Life cannot lodge therein. So you will build the great tower, in which is to burn the fire of the Sages, or, in other words, the fire of Heaven; as also the Sea of the Sages, in which the Sun and Moon are to bathe. That is the basin of Purification, in which will be the water of Celestial Grace, water that doth not soil the hands, but purifies all leprous bodies. "Let us labor to instruct our Brother, to the end that by his toils he may succeed in discovering the principle of life contained in the profundity of matter, and known by the name of *Alkahest*. "The most potent of the names of Deity is *ADONAI*. Its power is to put the Universe in movement; and the Knight's who shall be fortunate enough to possess it, with weight and measure, shall have at their disposition all the potencies that inhabit it, the Elements, and the cognizance of all the virtues and sciences that man is capable of knowing. By its power they would succeed in discovering the primary metal of the Sun, which holds within itself the Principle of the germ, and wherewith we can put in alliance and six other metals, each of which contains the principles and primitive seed of the grand philosophical work.

"The six other metals are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, and Luna; vulgarity known as Lead, Tin, Iron, Copper, quicksilver, and Silver. Gold is not included; because it is not in its nature a metal. It is all Spirit and incorruptible; wherefore it is the emblem of the Sun, which presides over the Light. "The *vivifying Spirit*, called *Alkahest*, has in itself the generative virtue of producing the triangular Cubical Stone, and contains in itself all the virtues to render men happy in this world and in that to come. To arrive at the composition of that *Alkahest*, we begin by laboring at the science of the union of the four elements which are to be educed from the three Kingdoms of nature, Mineral, Vegetable, and Animal; the rule, measure, weight, and equipoise whereof have each their key. We then employ in one work the animals, vegetables, and minerals, each his season, which make the space of the Houses of the Sun, where they have all the virtues required.

"Something from each of the three Kingdoms of Nature is signed to each Celestial House, to the end that everything may be done in accordance with sound philosophical rules; and that

everything may be thoroughly purified in its proper time and place order to be presented at the wedding-table of the Spouse and the six virgins who hold the mystic shovel, without a common fire, but with an elementary fire, that comes primarily by *attraction*, and by digestion in the philosophical bed lighted by the four elements.

"At the banquet of the Spouses, the viands, being thoroughly, purified, are served in Salt, Sulphur, Spirit, and Oil; a sufficient quantity thereof is taken every month, and therewith is compounded, by means of the Balance of Solomon, the *Alkahest*, to serve the Spouses, when they are laid on the nuptial bed, there to gender their embryo, producing for the human race immense treasures, that will last as long as the world endures. "Few are capable of engaging in this great work. Only the true Free-Masons may of right aspire to it; and even of them, very few are worthy to attain it, because most of them are ignorant of the Clavicles and their contents, and of the Pantacle of Solomon, which teaches how to labor at the great work. "The weight raised by Solomon with his balance was 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; which contains 25 times unity, 2 multiplied by 2; 3 multiplied by 3; 4 multiplied by 4; 5 multiplied by 5, and once 9; these numbers thus involving the squares of 5 and 2, the cube of 2, the square of the square of 2, and the square of 3." Thus far the Ritual in the numbers mentioned by it, is an allusion to the 47th problem of Euclid, a symbol of Blue Masonry, entirely out of place there, and its meaning unknown. The base of the right-angled triangle being 3, and the perpendicular 4, the hypotenuse is 5, by the rule that the sum of the squares of the two former equals the square of the latter, - 3×3 being 9; and 4×4 , 16; and $9 + 16$ being 25, the square of 5. The triangle contains in its sides the numbers 1, 2, and 3. The Perpendicular is. the Male; the Base, the Female; the Hypotenuse, the product of the two.

To fix the volatile, in the Hermetic language, means to materialize the spirit; to volatilize the fixed is to spiritualize matter. To separate the subtle from the gross, in the first operation, which is wholly internal, is to free our soul from all prejudice and all vice. This is effected by the use of the philosophical SALT, that is to say, of WISDOM; of MERCURY, that is to say, of personal aptitude and labor; and of SULPHUR, which represents the vital energy, and the ardor of the will. Thus we succeed in changing into spiritual gold such things even as are of least value, and even the foul things of the earth.

It is in this sense we are to understand the parables of the Hermetic philosophers and the prophets of Alchemy; but in their works, as in the Great Work, we must skillfully separate the subtle from the gross, the mystic from the positive, allegory from theory. If you would read them with pleasure and understandingly, you must first understand them allegorically in their entirety and then descend from allegories to realities by way of the correspondences or analogies indicated in the single dogma:

"What is above is like what is below; and what is below is like what is above." The treatise "*Minerva Mundi*," attributed to *Hermes Trismegistus*, contains, under the most poetical and profound allegories, the dogma of the self-creation 'of beings, or of the law of creation that results from the accord of two forces, these which the Alchemists called the Fixed and the Volatile, and which are, in the Absolute, Necessity and Liberty. When the Masters in Alchemy say that it need's but little time and expense to accomplish the works of Science when they affirm, above all, that but a single vessel is necessary, when they speak of the Great and Single furnace, which all can use, which is within the reach of all the world, and which men possess without knowing it, they allude to the philosophical and moral Alchemy. In fact, a strong and determined will can, in a little while, attain complete independence; and we all possess that chemical instrument, the great and single athanor or furnace, which serves to separate the subtle from the gross, and the fixed from the volatile. This instrument, complete as the world, and accurate as the mathematics themselves, is designated by the Sages under the emblem of the Pentagram or Star with five points, the absolute sign of human intelligence. The end and perfection of the Great Work is expressed, in alchemy, by a triangle surmounted by a cross: and the letter Tau, the last of the Sacred alphabet, has the same meaning.

Paracelsus, the great Reformer in medicine, discovered magnetism long before Mesmer, and pushed to its last consequences this luminous discovery, or rather this initiation into the magic of the ancients, who understood the grand magical agent better than we do, and did not regard the Astral Light, Azoth, the universal magnetism of the Sages, as an animal and particular fluid, emanating only from certain special beings.

The four Elements, the four symbolic animals, and the re-duplicated Principles correspond with each other, and are thus arranged by the Hermetic Masons. The Air and Earth represent the *Male* Principle; and the Fire and Water belong to the *Female* Principle. To these four forms correspond

the four following philosophical ideas. Spirit: Matter: Movement: Repose. Alchemy reduces these four things to three: The Absolute: the Fixed: the Volatile.

Reason: Necessity; Liberty: are the synonyms of these three words. As all the great Mysteries of God and the Universe are thus hidden in the *Ternary*, it everywhere appears in Masonry and in the *Hermetic Philosophy* under its mask of *Alchemy*. It even appears where Masons do not suspect it; to teach the doctrine of the equilibrium of Contraries, and the resultant Harmony. The double triangle of Solomon is explained by Saint John in a remarkable manner: There are, he says, three witnesses in Heaven, - the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and three witnesses on earth, - the breath, water, and blood. He thus agrees with the Masters of the Hermetic Philosophy, who give to their Sulphur the name of Ether, to their Mercury the name of philosophical water, to their Salt that of blood of the dragon, or menstruum of the earth. The blood, or Salt, corresponds by opposition with the Father; the Azothic, or Mercurial water, with the Word, or Logos; and the breath, with the Holy Spirit. But the things of High Symbolism can be well understood only by the true children of Science.

Alchemy has its Symbolic Triad of Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury, - man consisting, according to the Hermetic philosophers, of Body, Soul, and Spirit. The Dove, the Raven, and the Phoenix are striking Symbols of Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, and the Beauty resulting from the equilibrium of the two. If you would understand the true secrets of Alchemy, you must study the works of the Masters with patience and assiduity. Every word is often an enigma; and to him who reads in haste, the whole will seem absurd. Even when they seem to teach that the Great Work is the purification of the Soul, and so to deal only with morals, they most conceal their meaning, and deceive all but the Initiates.

End.

Conclusion Next Section

