

Esoteric Alchemy

The Transmutation of Attitudes

It has been pointed out to Ramon Lulio, one of the great alchemists ahead of his time, that the tragedy of the concept of alchemy was the transmutation of metals. Basil Valentine, a monk of St. Bennett, expressed the same idea in his book: *Woe to the Goldsmiths!* The history of alchemy is divided into two distinct branches that have descended from antiquity, possibly originating in Egypt. The word "Ghem" (Kem), used in both chemistry and alchemy, is an ancient Egyptian name. And "Al" means divine or sacred, and we find it used in the Bible in terms such as "Alevin." Of course, the Deity of Islam is Allah. This divine prefix would indicate that alchemy is a spiritual art, a divine secret science.

The great texts on alchemy come primarily from the deepest Hermeticism at the beginning of the Christian era, and there were probably schools of alchemy in Alexandria at that time. They are also the earliest records of alchemy in China and India. It seems that from very early times we have inherited a dual concept of physical chemistry: the chemistry that pertains to areas of knowledge now considered scientific, and spiritual chemistry, which was undoubtedly a sacred art.

In practice, the difference between these two systems is summarized quite well by Paracelsus when he pointed out that alchemical transmutation was impossible unless the alchemist himself was undergoing the transformation. Today, chemistry is largely dominated by the concept of profit, the idea of wealth. All kinds of chemical experiments are being carried out for various reasons, some very good, some very dangerous, but always with a certain concept of material gain for the good or evil that is done. Chemistry is largely a material art, dominated by scientific investigation, and in no way implies any necessary spiritual connotation. The chemist does not have to be a person of great faith; he does not have to believe in metaphysical or mystical procedures. He is simply working with physical evidence and physical texts.

The alchemist, on the other hand, has a completely different point of view. Most alchemists were pious people, convinced that their The progress of science was seen as a spiritual contribution to the well-being of society, and thus they were concerned with the development of their own inner lives. Jacob Boehme uses a number of alchemical terms in his mystical writings, and these have been confusing for modern students of his work. In reality, the use given to them by Boehme in most cases is probably the original intended use, namely, that alchemy is a great system of human regeneration, which has

nothing to do with the advancement of material possessions or worldly status.

In Europe, alchemists were persecuted and in many cases hanged and tortured to death because greedy rulers and leaders wanted the secret of making gold. When alchemists began to reveal this aspect of their beliefs, they immediately became targets of persecution, and the pursuit of gold as a science led to the downfall of many alchemists. Furthermore, the uncontrolled production of gold or any other precious substance could lead to the collapse of the world.

The question then remains: Can gold actually be manufactured? Not whether it should be or not, but can it be? I believe the answer has to be yes. It can be. It is also obvious from recent experimentation that progress could be made. But this is not the true purpose of alchemy. And where chemists unite to raise their own economic standard of living, scientists are driven into a desperate prostitution of knowledge.

Ancient alchemists used symbols at a very early date. In many cases, the symbols were accepted as literal images, but this has led to further confusion. We know, for example, that in ancient alchemy, the great replica in which all experiments were conducted was a symbol of the solar system, seen as a world in which all the chemical and alchemical processes of existence were taking place. The ancients believed that the world we live in is a great theater of mysteries, the secrets of which have never been solved. In reality, the world is strange and complete in itself, containing everything necessary for its infinite perpetuation. This situation remains quite peaceful and natural until human ambition and greed take over. Modern man's ambition is the average share of fame, distinction, or wealth. Therefore, knowledge is immediately used for the direct or indirect creation of gold. He cannot make gold in the an exact replica, but he will sell secrets or scientific formulas that will bring him rich financial rewards.

We might ask ourselves: what harm does this do? One reason is extremely dangerous because the moment we begin experimenting with the basic laws of existence, we are very prone to forgetting their inherent integrity. Natural laws must be obeyed, and they are not interested in obedience to natural laws, but rather in changing them to suit our own purposes. We want to use natural law to exploit the universe we live in, and as a result, we are constantly in trouble and facing the same dilemma that burdened the alchemist.

Many years ago, there lived an amateur alchemist here in Los Angeles. He was a charming old German man who, to earn a mundane living, worked in a cheese factory, but he was also experimenting elsewhere, devoting most of his life to these experiments, trying to unravel some strange and mysterious formulas that had come to him in the past. Before he passed away, he donated most of his alchemy books to our library. He was certain there was an answer, but that he hadn't lived long enough to find it.

Another acquaintance, also involved in alchemical speculation, followed every

rule in every book he could find, and of course, he soon discovered that each book had a different set of rules. This was confusing and frustrating for him. He bought a lot of apparatus and instruments, followed hunches and advice, and was always on the verge of a great discovery that never happened. What he lacked was a deep and abiding love of God, faith, or humanity. He was simply an intellectual, convinced that science could work. What science understood in terms of its own nature didn't seem to apply to him.

In the alchemy of China and India, symbolism ranged from chemistry to all kinds of vibrational patterns. In China, alchemy was intertwined with music and the amplification of harmonics in musical life. The ancient Greeks of Pythagoras's time combined all their knowledge of cosmogony and the actual reform of humankind into a grand mathematical formula that was never to be taken literally, but would become almost like a mantra, a sacred declaration that, if obeyed, could produce tremendous results.

Hermetic philosophy also became involved in alchemy. The Hermeticists of Alexandria followed a mysterious being known to them as Hermes Trismegistus, or Hermes the thrice-great. Who was he? When did he live? No one seems to know. Whether he was a product of symbolism or perhaps a great, skilled alchemist of ancient times, we do not know, but in Hermeticism we begin to perceive the beginning of the transmutation of man as the essential goal of the great alchemical process.

In Europe, in addition to its other problems, alchemists had to be careful in promoting some of these beliefs due to strong opposition from the clergy. The clergy felt that alchemy was, in some way, a religion and therefore were quite certain that it had to be classified as heresy. As a result of the transmission of Arabic knowledge to Europe, alchemical secrets passed into the hands of individuals such as Paracelsus, Khunrath, and Valentinus, who largely obtained their knowledge of alchemical processes from Constantinople and Baghdad. This, of course, meant that this knowledge had to be kept secret to avoid the persecutions and martyrdoms that were common in Europe at the time.

In many parts of the world, alchemy was recognized for what it truly was: a series of symbols intended to convey a grand operation concerning the transmutation of humankind itself. Without this transmutation, none of the great good things we dream of can come to pass. The elixir of life, or the philosopher's stone, was the power through which all good things could be attained, through which all errors and forms of ignorance could be overcome, and through which the individual could gain complete control not only over their own life but also over the laws that govern it.

Therefore, we arrive at the particular question that seems to be very much at the heart of medieval alchemy: Is there any proof of transmutation? Is there any real evidence of things being completely altered? Has there ever been a

scientist who could completely alter anything? He could modify it, improve it to a degree, and he could destroy it. But the process of the actual transformation of a thing is something entirely different; this has been a subject of concern in alchemical investigations throughout the ages. The evidence for transmutation is remarkably simple: the answer lies within the human body itself.

The process of digesting food requires the transformation of its elements. It requires an almost instantaneous adaptation of certain principles to special uses for which they were not originally intended. It is possible, therefore, for the food consumed to somehow ingest a life principle that is not food itself, and which the body uses to nourish that life principle within the human being. Bread, butter, vegetables, fruits, milk, and other foods sustain something alive that is none of them, something that throughout life will continue to make the heart beat, circulate the blood, and nourish the functions of the human being until the very end. Beyond what happens to what is obtained from it—the arts, sciences, poetry, music, philosophy, religion, and economics—all originate from someone who feeds on food, the surrounding environment, water, planetary rays, and the light of the sun and moon. The symbolism of the wedding of the sun and the moon in alchemy is very important, not because it will not be a wedding in the sky of the two luminaries, but because of the union of the principles by which they interpose themselves inside the human body.

Therefore, there is astonishing evidence of life flowing behind all forms and made available through nourishment to every creature. From the crops in the fields, a world is nourished, and those who absorb these crops become skilled in many forms of activity.

In the Christian doctrine of the Eucharist, divine blood is paralleled by alchemy in the elixir of life. How does this divine blood work? It's unclear to many, but in some mysterious way, universal life is compatible with human life. These are the people who can never be aware of the source of their own nourishment, and in a mechanistic age like ours, it's no longer common to worry about the source of food.

Beyond this, a new concept of nutrition has emerged, one that involves vitamins, proteins, carbohydrates—an entire nutritional system based on the development of highly specialized foods derived from the various food products we consume. These nutrients are related to the maintenance of different structures within the human body. In this sense, there is an acceptance of this alchemy without any real understanding of it.

Here's the idea that nutrition doesn't do the job, but how and why it does it, and how one general type of nutrition can sustain an infinite diversity of creatures is another situation that is difficult to understand.

Nutrition must be tailored to the individual receiving it. Thus, within our own bodies, we possess an extraordinary laboratory, a laboratory of mysteries we have yet to begin to explore. Someone may prescribe various materials for our everyday sustenance and for special emergencies, but prescribing them is not creating them, nor is it understanding them. We have simply come to know that certain materials have certain effects, and we rely on them to maintain the processes we hope will strengthen us and extend our lifespan.

Immortal life is one of the core beliefs of alchemy, and there are a number of very colorful and unusual concepts surrounding this topic. Some of these concepts are difficult to grasp even now, but we know that they undoubtedly believed there were individuals in the world who had solved the mystery of alchemy. The master of all alchemists was Elias Artista, the most celebrated of all the Hermetic adepts and philosophers. In reality, no one knew him personally, even though we have two or three early books in which alchemists describe meeting him. The epitome of the perfect alchemist, Elias Artista had several disciples who came very close to him in achieving the goals he sought. His powers were such that he would appear in laboratories where worthy individuals had worked tirelessly for years and offer them a hint or a small piece of advice to further their research, only to vanish without a trace.

He appeared in many nations in many different forms and spoke many languages. He is supposedly an eternal person; he continues to live because there was nothing in him that could cause him to die. Death must be the result of external causes. Life expectancy is constantly increasing, but life expectancy reaching a phenomenal length of time is now a phenomenon in itself, the result of very serious scientific conditioning, or the constitutional capacity to adapt to nutrition for a longer period of time than is possible for most people.

The alchemists stated that the beginning of the alchemical experiment was to eliminate all friction from life. By friction, they meant wear and tear. Now, What is burnout? For most people, it means doing things they have to do without any particular interest in them. Burnout is also the result of a lack of control over one's mental, emotional, and physical activities. All of these activities use energy. A large portion of the energy we use is lost.

We are unaware of its preservation; we do not take care of this mysterious vitality that comes to us. We are allowing it to be spent in all sorts of useless ways. Of course, we have to make the physical adjustment for employment, but it is not necessarily the work itself that is the main cause of the problems; rather, it is the attitude toward work. It is the lack of enthusiasm, the
A lack of recognition of the importance of the things we do is what depresses us. Superficial emotional relationships can become a terrible enemy of vitality. Worry, fear, anxiety—all of these are part of this alchemical nourishment that is constantly being created within ourselves. If we lose it, we can no longer have it. If we use it recklessly, it dissipates. And to maintain artificial attitudes,

this will gradually minimize the body's necessary functions.

The alchemist, in the first place, declared that the master of the arts was God. Deity was, in a sense, the perfect alchemist in his personal Deity, because all things proceed according to Divine Will. How this will works, man does not know, but he recognizes, if he inclines mystically, that there is a vast wellspring of eternal wisdom behind what happens in nature. Deity becomes the perfect force behind generation and regeneration. Deity brings forth the seed, the plant, the flower, and the fruit. And then, the seed becomes the next generation of itself.

Alchemical symbolism is strange and obscure, but well worth trying to understand. We have to start with what the alchemist starts with: base metals. We must begin with things as they are. We cannot construct our alchemical formulas from elements or substances that are not available to us. The principle is to recognize that the first operation is a transmutation of physical factors, elements, and properties—in other words, purification.

If it is mercury, it must be purified. If it is sulfur, it must be purified. If it is salt, it must be purified. And if it is man, he
It must be purified. Everything begins with purification, or the removal of the dross that limits the value and survival of elements, principles, and substances.

The alchemist begins with the concept of a pure material to work with. He is given various clues and hints on how to obtain this pure material. He might assemble it under certain planetary aspects or wait until the moon shines on the water before using it in his test tubes.

He can do all sorts of things. First, he must purify himself by gathering materials from the purest sources possible. Most of Paracelsus's great experiments, and many others, were made possible by the pure atmosphere of the Alps, where uncontaminated materials grew to their full potential. In his day, there was no pollution or congestion. These pure materials, once found, became the basic elements on which they worked.

The same problem applies to the individual. The alchemist must first purify their own body and nature. Until the body is cleansed, its various processes cannot be refined. While all the integration and organization of their skills and abilities, the improvement of their nature through learning, meditation, and contemplation, all lead to, contribute to, and make possible a final inner illumination, the ultimate secret must come from within. Therefore, everything must be refined until the soul itself is available, and since the individual is their soul, until it is available, they strive in vain.

These efforts, which must contribute to this progress, should be considered as disciplines or as the first step toward achievement. They represent, above all, humanity's recognition of its responsibility to the life principle that exists within it and in which it exists. This principle is divine, sacred, and the most

precious and mysterious thing in the entire world. Unless the individual is faithful to this basic principle in their own life and way of living and thinking, they cannot aspire to advance in the cause of spiritual alchemy. To achieve this, one must do everything possible to make their own life reasonable and normal.

This doesn't mean you have to withdraw from society or retreat to some refuge near the summit of the Alps, but you must establish a basic harmony within yourself. Harmony is the proof of the compatibility of the elements. Harmony is the ability of different chemical elements to work together; it's only possible when they are purified from their raw form, which will never be compatible. Salt and sulfur, in the form of the physical elements available for acquisition, can never be compatible. It's necessary to cleanse both, refine them, and remove the elements that cause conflict. It's not the essence of sulfur or salt that's the problem, but rather the crystallization around them that conflicts with other similar crystallizations. The alchemist must put their own house in order, which is really the search for something that is fundamentally sacred in its essence. Therefore, any other consideration will harm their chances of achieving it. The best-known alchemical procedure relates to one of two distinct extremes: one being the creation of the philosopher's stone, the other the preparation of the drink of philosophical medicine - the elixir of life.

The stone itself represents the body of purified wisdom; the universal medicine represents the soul. The medicine of immortality must be derived from things that have their own birth and death. In other words, the nourishment that is released may cause the primal element to be lost, but its power continues. It does not die; it simply reincarnates at a higher level. When we have basic elements within ourselves, they are reborn within us and thus undergo a process of evolution, as they are used by our being to maintain the flow of human life.

The alchemist must first find a quiet place to work; they must have their own small laboratory. For the ancient alchemists, the laboratory was a furnace, a hearth with a few bottles and some old books to guide their path. The meaning of the laboratory for us is actually a body free from interference and confusion, a place we can retreat to when it is too late. In other words, the laboratory is our own inner self, that part of us that is always capable of being transformed into a harmonious state. Personal life should be fundamentally harmonious. Many people think this is impossible, that there is no answer to all these complaints and sorrows that beset and affect us. But the alchemist says that you are after the most valuable thing in the world, and if you are waiting to obtain it, you must earn it by making adjustments that are never required of anyone except for this purpose.

Creating a quiet space within ourselves for contemplating the symbols of regeneration is very important. This does not mean, however, that a person has to be a constant monk or a mysterious acolyte. They don't have to

withdraw from life, but simply withdraw from confusion. They have to reject the idea of confusion within themselves. Accepting confusion is a form of ignorance. It is not real, yet everyone is subject to it. Confusion also means wasted energy, wasted time, exhaustion, and the inability, in that state, to connect with a deeper, higher part of ourselves.

In the Eastern philosophies of Yoga and Vedanta, the mysteries of the chakras are equated with the seven seals of the Apocalypse, and the seven seals of the Apocalypse are equated with the seven sacred metals of alchemical transmutation.

In the practice of Yoga, it is very important to recognize, first and foremost, that the purpose is not to gain power to dominate another person or to escape life's responsibilities. It is a divinely ordained path by which the wanderer returns home to the spiritual homeland from which they came. It is part of a journey toward reality, toward oneself, toward the infinite, which we are all trying to understand.

In the alchemy of stillness, it's the same as in the recommended Yoga—to find a quiet place. In Tibet, there used to be an ancient monastery where they had an unusual form of training an acolyte in stillness. They had to sit under the temple bell, which would ring continuously until most people had gone completely mad. They were supposed to sit and attain peace. They were to reach a point where the ringing meant absolutely nothing, or where they could finally hear the voice of God in this clamor. There had to be total indifference to the disturbance. Indifference doesn't mean neglecting duties or enduring abuses of all kinds. The alchemist, too, had to learn to achieve an absolute stillness that wasn't negative. He wasn't seeking psychic revelation but simply finding peace, which is the basis of growth. After a certain amount of time in this assigned work, he was able to calm his nature and release certain basic competencies from it, because he also had within himself the seven seals of the Apocalypse in the forms of the vital organs, the various glands of internal secretion, the various systems of the body, the composition of the blood, and the orifices of the heart.

It is in this seventh cave of the heart that the great mysteries are revealed. The heart also becomes part of the alchemical apparatus through which the individual finally receives full support.

Alchemists used the lamb with its throat cut and blood flowing from it as a symbol of their achievement, based on the idea that humanity is saved by the blood of the lamb. The blood of the lamb in this case is actually the vitality born from the Eucharist, the absolute sacrifice of all forms of negation and the purification of life that flows through us through the wondrous possibilities of the Infinite. The body can be considered alchemically as the power of the moon. The body is subject to all kinds of digestive and

assimilative processes; lunar energies work to maintain the peace of the flesh, and the individual must consciously cooperate with this process if they wish to progress.

The alchemist usually makes a discouraging discovery, at least at first. Essentially speaking, the body, the ground of the alchemical experiment, doesn't actually cause much harm in the first place. It wasn't the flesh itself, but the person within it who was almost always the problem. The flesh was the victim, the daily scourge. It was being constantly beaten like a faithful animal by the ambitious driver. The next step was to determine the driving force, and that meant delving into the principle of fire, or the emotions.

Emotion is life. The energy behind emotion is magnificent, it is divine, but the use we make of it is miserable in most cases. When we get angry or jealous, our ambitions run rampant. We dislike people or things. We can't grasp the everyday problems of life and become, instead of beautiful, systematically neurotic. With all these conflicts within ourselves, our emotions are constantly battling us with negative thoughts. There is also the temptation: if I'm going to put so much effort into it, what will I get out of it? This is one of the main temptations. Those who truly work for the great alchemical mystery are concerned only with the fact that it is the spiritual and moral necessity of their lives.

The negative emotional factor that throbs within the body and consumes a large part of the energy the body is capable of producing, constantly wearing down life. It is a waste of divine energy. Behind this problem lie thousands of years of tradition. We have always believed that when we were unpleasant, it was because we had the right to be so. We have also believed that when we wanted to think ill of someone, it was a privilege. If we wanted to be angry and go to war, that was also an inalienable right. From emotional excess on a personal level come all temper tantrums, psychosis, and fear. On a larger, global scale, this misuse of emotional energy is war, crime, and all difficulties and fears. We have to free ourselves from our own conflicts, hurt feelings, offenses, those things we want to do but know we can't, and the extravagance that demands we achieve the incredible or be miserable. We have to bring our own attitudes and emotions to a reasonable level.

One of the best uses of emotion is through the arts and music, but in the ordinary, everyday realm, it manifests as kindness, affection, and compassion. When these qualities are strongly expressed, there is a shift in the body's chemistry, and emotions no longer haunt the body, offering it up on the altar of private ambitions. They no longer cause destruction, dwell on grievances, or waste time and energy rehashing past events. The value of the past lies in its experience, which helps make us better. Emotions can be beautiful, and beautiful emotions are well worth cultivating, but they must be sincere, genuine, and within a natural range of normalcy. Even the best emotion gets into trouble if it turns into hysteria.

While emotions sit and create problems for the body, the mind arrogantly rises up and makes a problem for both. The mind instills in the body great habits, and these habits are mostly unreasonable. The mind is the ultimate foundation of career. It's what we learn to do well in order to become rich; the mind is the perpetual plan to make a millionaire outside the body. Another problem with the mind is that it sustains debates. If it's not up to its neck in politics, regardless of whether any of the candidates are worthy of a vote, the mind is the basis for telling people how to live, even though the person doesn't know themselves. And the mind is the one that concludes that the more we accumulate, the happier we are, which is proving to be an absolute falsehood every day.

The mind must be brought to where it was meant to be: a kind of psychological bookkeeper. The mind is not the master of life, although it has allowed itself to become so. The mind is merely a very useful secretary, capable of keeping the ledgers balanced. Although we are giving all courses in thought to computerization, it will be a long time before we can use these devices to find out what is wrong with ourselves. It is possible that at some point we may have to fight with computers, as they may be more powerful than we are. In any case, the mind is a constant cause of agitation. Its ambitions and appetites know no bounds, and very often it forms a difficult and unfortunate alliance with the emotions. When emotions justify a deplorable attitude, it is definitely not a bad situation. When emotions weary the mind, that is a nuisance; when the mind rationalizes the emotions, that may be another. The solution to these problems is the gradual recognition of the ascent of the self through these conditions.

The stories in the grand system of the ancient mysteries—the Eleusinian and Dionysian rites, the Horus and Isis rites, the Buddhist rites in India, China, and Japan—were always arranged in three basic steps. These three basic steps represent the three great levels of personality, parts of ourselves of which we have some idea but very little understanding. They also became the basic bulwark degrees of Freemasonry, and many fraternal orders have this same trichotomy of rituals and symbols. The three together constitute what we might call the visual or tangible temples.

Within the body of these three powers are the great masters of life, the one upon which almost everyone depends for survival, continuity, and the fulfillment of purpose. When something cannot be resolved physically, we try to resolve it emotionally. If that doesn't work, we try to explain or rationalize it mentally. If all of this fails, we are in a kind of ingenuity-ending state. We simply retreat sometimes, feeling there is no answer, and we return to the most familiar things. Those of an idealistic nature look beyond and see beyond these three steps to something more, perhaps God, realizing that there is something we still have to overcome more than they assume is necessary. However, for our personality and for the salt, sulfur, and mercury experiments, it is not the

triple body and the auric or magnetic field in which it operates.

The magnetic field is quite curious, as it is also a mass of chemical factors, a constantly changing compound of interacting energies. The magnetic field is like a bottle being violently shaken after a whole group of materials have been placed inside. Symbolically speaking, the magnetic field is a bottle containing the three parts of our lower nature, each of which has a magnetic quality. When we realize this, we begin to see that we have interactions here, just as in the body. We have to explain, for example, why a temperamental imbalance can cause a headache, indigestion, or why it can result in serious emotional complexes. The answer is that problems arise from difficulties in the auric or magnetic field, due to intemperate attitudes. If a person is angry, the magnetic field intensifies and practically burns out most of the other values, at least for the moment. If the person is depressed, the magnetic field fades to a shadow. If a person is contagious and healthy, the magnetic field can protect them from infection. However, if they are exhausted and contagious, they may contract the illness.

The magnetic field is in constant motion, composed of emotional forms, thought forms, and bodily essences. If there is any deception or falsehood in the personality, it will manifest in the magnetic field, even if the person tries to talk themselves out of it. A temper tantrum can only be justified if it doesn't cause problems in the magnetic field. The magnetic field isn't interested in excuses or explanations, but in the chemical interaction of values. When a value is perverted or mistreated, the magnetic field bears witness. It witnesses its resources being depleted, and the person doesn't feel well. Gradually, the abuse of various emotions, thoughts, and bodily functions will result in the depletion of the magnetic field. When that depletion is complete, the individual simply leaves this world. They cannot function if the energy fields don't sustain them. Therefore, it is very important to maintain harmony. One of Pythagoras's great principles was that the world had to be maintained like a musical instrument, that it had to be in harmony at all times. And the individual in their personal life is also a musical instrument. He is Shiva's vina, the mysterious instrument that plays the majestic music of life. If he misunderstands his destiny or misuses his power, he is in trouble.

Now, most alchemists had reached the point where they were beginning to sense some of these values. Having gone as far as the mind could take them, they found themselves at the entrance to the promised land, which they could not enter. They did not know how to handle what lay beyond. They had listened attentively and, like Faust in his library, had read all the great books. They had studied all the mysteries, but in the end, all their wisdom proved no better than before. The great quest ended in frustration, not in the great reward they had hoped for. The only answer to this was to do what Lully, Valentine, Khunrath, and many others had done: examine the answers to what had happened. What had occurred? Why this sudden blockage that was impossible for most people to overcome? The final realization was that this

blockage was the absence of a faculty higher than the mind. The mind can only go so far. Even the most highly trained mind could not reach the ultimate limit. There had to be something higher than the mind, without which the great experiment could not be carried out.

When Elias Artista visited alchemists, he would sometimes give them a small amount of transmutation powder. He would put it in his ring or make a small vial to wear around his neck, and a single grain of this powder could transmute its own weight a thousand times over into solid gold. There was much talk of it, and the grains were few, but it is known that in some cases they existed. It is believed that Roger Bacon offered to finance the Crusades for England as a result of the ability to transmute lead into gold suitable for coinage. The legends and fables continue, but the main story seems to be that Elias Artista, or someone like him, appeared at the right time to give some kind of instruction, something more than any other alchemist had managed. Elias never appeared unless the disciple was in every way worthy. He would never help any alchemist correct their own mistakes, but he would help them progress beyond sincere effort to a higher degree of achievement.

In the alchemical tradition, there were seven stages of adepts and masters associated with the science. It was a long journey, at its best, but one in which each step brought a greater sense of inner security and sincerity. With the beginning of the fourth stage, under the guidance of a mentor or through the mysterious tincture, the alchemist received his first proof that he was finally going to succeed. He received the inner message that his work had not been in vain. It was from a hope in the first three stages to a kind of mysterious, mystical certainty in the fourth that made it possible for him to continue.

At this fourth level of alchemy, we find that the life of Christ is an alchemical formula. We also find, according to the Kabbalists, that the Song of Solomon is also purely a chemical formula in disguise. But the Christian formula of the mystery of Christ presents Christ as the ultimate achievement of universal medicine. In alchemical symbols, images of Christ and the saints appear on the bottles to indicate that this was the intention of the story, although most people do not realize its significance.

The fourth step is the beginning of an integrated mystical experience. In other words, the fourth step was the awareness of the soul. It was what in Indian philosophy is the Buddhic state. It is the state of a person suddenly becoming rational within themselves, achieving a sense of higher reality through thought, and also becoming, for the first time, capable of directing their own efforts toward the Divine Power deep within, which they were trying to release into manifestation. In the ancient Hermetic mysteries, the soul was the symbol of Elijah the Artist, the adept. It was the only power in man capable of becoming the inner instructor, capable of becoming the source of inner illumination that cannot fail.

In alchemy, the cultivation of this soul power is perhaps most clearly defined in the writings of Boehme, the German theologian and mystic shoemaker who was one of the greatest mystics of the Protestant world. Boehme was the one who finally realized that he himself was the adept. The adept was not someone merely outwardly engaged in the art, but a skilled being, much in the same spirit as the leaders found in Carl Jung's psychology, where the inner master becomes the symbol of the alchemical master.

In this particular phase, the light begins to shine from within and clarify. The eye begins to see through the blind spot in the center. The world becomes more and more translucent, its elements more and more comprehensible. Instead of seeing nothing but the body, the intuitive mind gradually learns to focus on the qualities. The intuitive mystical experience is one in which the person sees things as they are and not as they have been thought to be. They do not see with mortal eyes, but with an inner vision that projects a higher level of sight. To make this a little clearer, everything that exists has not only the visible forms of its existence, but also invisible forms. Every rock and stone, every twig and flower, is not only a physical thing, but a metaphysical thing. With the mind, emotions, and body, we see the physical thing. With the psychic energy of the soul, we see the psychic bodies of these things, their magnetic fields, and become aware of their level of growth in the development of their potential. We also become able to clearly see the result of combining them. We see the compatibilities and incompatibilities. We see the elements that work together and the works that cannot be reconciled.

As we work with the soul-eye, we gradually become aware of the universal soul. For the first time, we are able to see the quality of life. This is clearly observed in some of the early visions of Platonic writers and many other mystics who were able to contemplate the invisible forms of things, and in seeing their forms, they contemplate their nature. While the physical body cannot change much, the psychic centers within the body are in constant motion and agitation. It is then also possible for the alchemist to discover something that perhaps had never been fully realized before. He may have believed, but believing and knowing are two different things. Now he knows that no matter what he sees or examines, there is nothing in the entire universe that is not alive. Even the grain of sand is a living mystery. Everything is alive, and in the great vitality of things, the magnetic fields of all these different forms converge in the magnetic atmosphere of the universe. This is a very large and important subject for careful study.

With the beginning of this dimension of value, the alchemist begins to discover how to carry out the transformations necessary for his art. He understands the principle of sublimation. He understands the cycles of recapitulation that must be used because he sees that alchemy is merely a symbolic representation of the entire process of universal activity. Everything is part of the same grand pattern, and this pattern unfolds as we become

capable of understanding it. The pattern is neither more nor less, but our relationship to it is always changing as a result of personal growth.

Finally, through an intuitive process, the individual forms a union with the divine part of themselves. Having formed this union with the divine part of themselves, they then move on to the further stages of great transformations, gradually finding themselves within the hierarchies of life, but never, however, for personal gain, never for glory, nor for wealth, and not to escape pain. The pains and sufferings we experience are impediments that, by our very nature, we know are not better. They are processes of growth that...

Nature has presented us with this for contemplation, and we must face it, whether we are happy or not.

Over time, we encounter the alchemical aspect of the grand universal plan of things. We find that the planet itself is in a state of constant alchemical transformation. We know that the solar system is moving from one level of evolution to another, and the entire cosmos is becoming more and more in harmony with its own rules. Different life forms have a tendency over time to be absorbed by higher life forms. It's not that at some point our planet will disappear or vanish forever and leave us behind, but rather that evolution is accelerating, and when we overcome the experiences we face in the 21st century...20who will no longer be subject to the confusion and pain of these experiences.

We have to solve problems. The alchemist's problem was to solve the mystery of himself. He had to find a way to overcome his own limitations, and various systems have been proposed for this purpose. Religion and philosophy have attempted the same, and science will one day attempt it, because science will have the tools by which many of the great mysteries of antiquity can be solved. Regardless of the motive or the methods used, the solution is gradual transformation, called transmutation, multiplication, and, finally, the unfolding of the Great Work.

This is a strange and wondrous world of forces and values, working together with the music of the spheres, as Pythagoras called it, a universe of infinite wholeness, infinite beauty, and the infinite wonder of a universe that exists within ourselves as a potential of all these things, because there is nothing in the universe necessary for humankind that we do not possess. And it is perfectly possible to conceive of the ultimate unity of humankind and the universe; this does not mean we cease to be ourselves, but rather that we transcend what we have come to consider ourselves to be—another problem we all have to face.

We all think of ourselves as we are. We look around and see our clothes, friends, associates, and we limit ourselves to the kind of creature we appear to be. On the mental and emotional levels of perception, we see the inside as we think it is. We look inward and see ourselves as a more or less complicated

mass of conflicts and contradictions. We realize that we are nothing to boast about, if we want to be truly honest. But we can always think of something to boast about. All these frailties, weaknesses, and limitations are taken for granted; the individual is what he is. He's going to be here for a while, and then he's going to be gone. Where he goes, most people aren't very safe. But in any case, we take this sameness as it is to be ourselves. This sameness is what we've given the name John Doe, and every time someone says "John Doe," it sustains us. We recognize ourselves as a separate entity in the world of creatures somewhere, and it doesn't occur to the average person that there's no real reason why we should be anything other than what we appear to be. There's no reason why we should give up all our pleasures for something we don't understand. There's no reason to suppose that we can ever be more than ourselves.

It is from this perspective that we are trapped at the lowest level of achievement. The only response seems to be to try to make things as comfortable as possible. We don't want to suffer more than necessary. We don't want to do anything that will make us uncomfortable. We want to agree, as best we can, until we leave. But this, of course, is a lack of ambition, and there has to be some ambition, or nothing works. Therefore, it becomes very necessary for the individual to perceive that there is something more they can become, or they will remain just as they are. No amount of education can get them out of this because education can only help the mind, but the mind cannot reach the facts.

Beyond growth, friendship, kindness, and above all, experience, we must unleash the power of the soul, Emerson's higher self. We must unleash this inner superiority and give our best selves immediate dominion over the rest of us. Plato says that in the philosophical realm, leadership is wise. Those who are not yet wise are still wise enough to follow with honor. For the individual, the best part of themselves must be the leader of others, for the moment that leadership becomes contaminated at any level of their own consciousness, they are in trouble. The alchemist was a breed apart, a natural mystic, and there were many mystics who were not alchemists, but they were also on the same general level. There is a small part of society, sadly small, that has discovered within itself the need to grow, the need to be more aware that there are certain insistent questions that need to be answered in order to live well now.

We must increase all these values in order to make life in this world suitable for us. We must try to find the answers to war and corruption. We realize that, as we are now, even though we can never be at war with ourselves, we are at war and in conflict with our neighbors and our families, and within the biological structure of our own bodies. Something must be done to arbitrate these things. The form of arbitration is a slow process of discipline through which we ascend to the third level through personal factors in our lives and enter into harmony with the fourth level. In ancient astronomy, this was the level of the

sun, the fourth orbit. This is why the marriage of the body and the psyche, or soul, was called by the alchemists the union of the sun and the moon.

Alchemy is, in essence, a dedicated effort to understand where we come from, why we are here, and where we are going. It is also a science through which all sciences built on selfishness can reaffirm us for the common good of humanity. It is a way to apply all that we know to all the problems we have to solve. Step by step, we become wiser, more useful, and more helpful, better citizens here and, if we realize it, better citizens of eternity.

Alchemical symbolism is a captivating metaphysics, an elegant and beautiful approach to one of life's great problems. Every individual, in their own personal life, can be an alchemist, a worker with the chemistry of divine life. One can work with the chemistry of adjustments within society, cultivate and discipline one's own nature, develop integrity and kindness, and gradually transmute one's life from a self-centered pursuit of success to a soul-centered endeavor in service to life's greater cause.

As these changes take place, the individual will find that he is being transmuted. He will change from a mortal creature into the divine being that was always there, always within him, but which was blocked. It is not a life that grows within him, but rather one that has to grow, has to develop its own potential in order to be able to learn, and that one way or another, through life's challenges, will ultimately be driven to dedicate himself to the service of what needs to be known.

The end