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THE SPIRIT MERCURIUS

AI

Ἐρμῆς κοσμοκράτωρ, ἐνκάρδιε, κύκλε σελήνης,
στρογγύλε καὶ τετράγωνε, λόγων ἀρχηγέτα γλώσσης
πειθοδικαιόσυνε, χλαμυδηφόρε, πτηνοπέδιλε,
παμφώνου γλώσσης μεδέων, θνητοῖσι προφῆτα—

(Hermes, ruler of the world, dweller in the heart, circle of the moon,
Round and square, inventor of the words of the tongue,
Obedient to justice, wearer of the chlamys, shod in winged sandals,
Guardian of the many-sounding tongue, prophet to mortals.)

—A Magic Papyrus (Preisendanz, II, p. 139)

we may a general survey of the Mercurius concept in alchemy and by no means be taken only as examples and makes no claim to completeness. [For "Mercurius on Hermes", see the editorial note on p. 191.—Editors.]

Upon a time there was a poor woodcutter. He had an only son who wished to send to a high school. However, since he gave him only a little money to take with him, it was used before the time for the examinations. So the son went home and told his father with the work in the forest. Once, during the night, he heard a voice calling from the ground, "Let me out, I am the tree. The spirit cried in an awful voice: "I have punished me, and I will be rewarded! I am the great and mighty spirit Mercurius, and now you shall have your reward. quickly thinking up a trick, he said, "First, I must be released me, him I must strangle." This made the boy un- and, quickly sealing it back into the bottle. Then he made haste to seal it and the spirit was caught again. But to prove this, the spirit crept back into the bottle. Then you are the same spirit that was shut up in that little bottle. To the boy would die spirit promised to reward him richly if the boy would tell him what he wished to do.

In my contribution¹ to the symposium on Hermetes I will try to show that this many-hued and wily god did not buy any means with the decline of the classical era, but on the contrary has living in strange guises throughout the centuries, even into our times, and has kept the mind of man busy with his deities and healing gifts. Children are still told Grimm's tale of "The Spirit in the Bottle", which is ever-living like shadows, and moreover contains the quintessence and depth of the Hermetic mystery as it has come down to us.

THE SPIRIT IN THE BOTTLE

Part I

him out. So he let him out and received as a reward a small piece of rag. Quoth the spirit: "If you spread one end of this over a wound it will heal, and if you rub steel or iron with the other end it will turn into silver." Thereupon the boy rubbed his damaged axe with the rag, and the axe turned to silver and he was able to sell it for four hundred thaler. Thus father and son were freed from all worries. The young man could return to his studies, and later, thanks to his rag, he became a famous doctor.²

²⁴⁰ Now, what insight can we gain from this fairytale? As you know, we can treat fairytales as fantasy products, like dreams, conceiving them to be spontaneous statements of the unconscious about itself.

²⁴¹ As at the beginning of many dreams something is said about the scene of the dream action, so the fairytale mentions the forest as the place of the magic happening. The forest, dark and impenetrable to the eye, like deep water and the sea, is the container of the unknown and the mysterious. It is an appropriate synonym for the unconscious. Among the many trees—the living elements that make up the forest—one tree is especially conspicuous for its great size. Trees, like fishes in the water, represent the living contents of the unconscious. Among these contents one of special significance is characterized as an "oak." Trees have individuality. A tree, therefore, is often a symbol of personality.³ Ludwig II of Bavaria is said to have honoured certain particularly impressive trees in his park by having them saluted. The mighty old oak is proverbially the king of the forest. Hence it represents a central figure among the contents of the unconscious, possessing personality in the most marked degree. It is the prototype of the *self*, a symbol of the source and goal of the individuation process. The oak stands for the still unconscious core of the personality, the plant symbolism indicating a state of deep unconsciousness. From this it may be concluded that the hero of the fairytale is profoundly unconscious of himself. He is one of the "sleepers," the "blind" or "blindfolded," whom we

² [Author's paraphrase. Cf. "The Spirit in the Bottle," *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (trans. Hunt, rev. Stern), pp. 458-62.—EDITORS.]

³ Concerning personification of trees, see Frazer, *The Magic Art*, II, ch. 9. Trees are also the dwelling places of spirits of the dead or are identical with the life of the newborn child (*ibid.*, I, p. 184).

was used in the same sense by the Gnostics. Cf. Hippolytus, *Enchiridion*, 25 where the many-named and thousand-eyed "Word of God" is "the tool of All".

¹ material on the tree symbol, see *infra*, "The Philosophical Tree,"

The secret is hidden not in the top but in the roots of the personality it has, a personality it also possesses the marks of—voice, speech, and conscious and since it is, or has, a personality it also possesses the secret a great secret.⁵

In the illustrations of certain alchemical treatises,⁴ the unawakened who are still unconsciousions of them have not yet integrated their future, more extensive wholeness," or, in the language of the mystics, "enlightened." For our hero, who are not yet "enlightened".

definition of Mercurius. As the life principle of the tree, it is a sort of spiritual quintessence abstracted from it, and could also be described as the *principium individuationis*. The tree would then be the outward and visible sign of the realization of the self. The alchemists appear to have held a similar view. Thus the "Aurelia occulta" says: "The philosophers have sought most eagerly for the centre of the tree which stands in the midst of the earthly paradise."⁷ According to the same source, Christ himself is this tree.⁸ The tree comparison occurs as early as Eulogius of Alexandria (c. A.D. 600), who says: "Behold in the Father the root, in the Son the branch, and in the Spirit the fruit: for the substance [*οὐσία*] in the three is one."⁹ Mercurius, too, is *trinus et unus*.

²⁴⁴ So if we translate it into psychological language, the fairytale tells us that the mercurial essence, the *principium individuationis*, would have developed freely under natural conditions, but was robbed of its freedom by deliberate intervention from outside, and was artfully confined and banished like an evil spirit. (Only evil spirits have to be confined, and the wickedness of this spirit was shown by its murderous intent.) Supposing the fairytale is right and the spirit was really as wicked as it relates, we would have to conclude that the Master who imprisoned the *principium individuationis* had a good end in view. But who is this well-intentioned Master who has the power to banish the principle of man's individuation? Such power is given only to a ruler of souls in the spiritual realm. The idea that the principle of individuation is the source of all evil is found in Schopenhauer and still more in Buddhism. In Christianity, too, human nature is tainted with original sin and is redeemed from this stain by Christ's self-sacrifice. Man in his "natural" condition is neither good nor pure, and if he should develop in the natural way the result would be a product not essentially different from an animal. Sheer instinctuality and naïve unconsciousness untroubled by a sense of guilt would prevail if the Master had not interrupted the free development of the natural being by introducing a distinction between good and evil and outlawing the evil. Since without guilt there is no moral consciousness and

⁷ *Theatrum chemicum*, IV (1659), p. 500.

⁸ Ibid., p. 478: "(Christ), who is the tree of life both spiritual and bodily."

⁹ Krueger, *Das Dogma von der Dreieinigkeit und Gottmenschheit*, p. 207.

d. 6, p. 92.

The First is of Concord and of Love, / Between your Works and the Sphere
of Nature—Norton's "Ordinary of Alchimy," *Theatrum chemicum Britannicum*,
Title Page, 20 : 3; "and set a seal upon him."

The doctrine of the *status iustitiae originantis* and *status naturae integrare*.
Title page, p. 87.

It is not, because it is the gift of God" (*Distinctio XXXVII*, in *Theat. chemic.*,
which comes the whole world, and the world is formed from my mercy, and
which the "Dicitur Belinit" Mercurius even says: "Out of me is made the bread from

the earth" (*status mundi*, which according to an old alchemical concep-
tum sustinens the cosmos. Caesarius of Hesiterbach (thirteenth
century) mentions a vision in which the soul apperebat as a
mans for spirit. The alchemical retort is therefore equivalent to
the *status mundi* like solidified water or air, both of which are syno-
dium cosmico in which the earth was created.¹² Transparens glass
also to be as round as possible, since it was meant to represent
what the sign of Hermes);¹² it had to be made of glass, and had
medium of alchemy, it was "hermetically" sealed (i.e., sealed
bottle the spirit from the surrounding medium. As the uses Her-
mes and artificialem of the procedure, whose obvious aim is to
human product and thus signifies the intellectual purposeful
mystic except rigb under the oak. The bottle is an artificial
medium to roam about at will, but is only hidden there in a safe
place in the fairy tale is not simply banished to the earth and
one cannot be identical with evil. Correspondingly, the evil
of God, or as the actual form in which he manifesstis himself, na-
mether the body nor nature in general is evil *per se*: as the work
of the inner doctrinal distinctions.¹¹ For, according to doctrine,
has held the body in contempt, without bothering much about
issues with the historical fact that Christian thought in general
there is, to the earth, in other words the body. This statement
in our fairytale the natural evil is banished to the "roots,"
means his microcosmic opus to the work of creation, and therefore he
to do work analogous to the work of creation, and so far as he strives
in this small way, competes with the Creator in so far as he strives
magnificent beliefs, God himself is this Master—and the alchemist,
sorcery and in this sense was for the good. According to our
knowledge necessary for the development of any kind of con-
sciousness at all, we must

spherical glass vessel.¹⁴ Likewise the "spiritual" or "ethereal" (*aethereus*) philosophers' stone is a precious *vitrum* (sometimes described as *malleable*) which was often equated with the gold glass (*aurum vitreum*) of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21: 21).

²⁴⁶ It is worth noting that the German fairytale calls the spirit confined in the bottle by the name of the pagan god, Mercurius, who was considered identical with the German national god, Wotan. The mention of Mercurius stamps the fairytale as an alchemical folk legend, closely related on the one hand to the allegorical tales used in teaching alchemy, and on the other to the well-known group of folktales that cluster round the motif of the "spellbound spirit." Our fairytale thus interprets the evil spirit as a pagan god, forced under the influence of Christianity to descend into the dark underworld and be morally disqualified. Hermes becomes the demon of the mysteries celebrated by all *tenebriones* (obscurantists), and Wotan the demon of forest and storm; Mercurius becomes the soul of the metals, the metallic man (*homunculus*), the dragon (*serpens mercurialis*), the roaring fiery lion, the night raven (*nycticorax*), and the black eagle—the last four being synonyms for the devil. In fact the spirit in the bottle behaves just as the devil does in many other fairytales: he bestows wealth by changing base metal into gold; and like the devil, he also gets tricked.

¹⁴ *Dialogus miraculorum*, trans. by Scott and Bland, I, pp. 42, 236.

in the shadow of the Bush, pp. 31f.

Mercrinus. To this context belongs also the hamadryad as an interpretation of the *Socrate*, so-called "Aenigma Bononiense". Cf. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, pp. 68f.

Mercrinus, in the form of *Litha* or *Melusina*, appears in the tree in the Ripley

undoubtedly identical with the tree. These psychic phenomena
name of the tree now and then heard its voice. Here the voice is
Under cross-examination he alleged that all those who bore the
desperately to break out of the barracks and hasten to the tree.
where a native soldier heard an *off* tree calling to him, and tried
beings. Amarty Talboe reports one such case from Nigeria,
would say—and possess a voice that gives commands to human
are animatized by souls—have the character of personality, we
there is a notable analogy with primitive animism: certain trees
mena observed among primitive peoples. In all such cases
have a significant connection with certain psychological phe-
However, it must not be forgotten that these mythical motifs
identical with the voice of the serpent which issued from it.
stems as a prototype for this and similar tales: it, too, is not
an else such a mark is put up afterwards. The tree of paradise,
but instance, is preferably buried near some kind of landmark,
was presented a suitable place for concealing a secret. A measure,
out of the spirit in the bottle; we may rather conjecture that the
reason to think that the oak, which represents the self, has grown
has been put there by artificial means. The fairytale gives us no
mention. He is not identical with the tree, nor with its roots, but
roots of the self, as the secret hidden in the primitive individual-
ual terms, this means that the evil spirit is imprisoned in the
tree—namely, under the oak, the king of the forest. In psychology
where he lies confined is not just any place but a very essential
should like to point out a not unimportant fact. The place

2. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SPIRIT AND TREE

suggest that originally the tree and the daemon were one and the same, and that their separation is a secondary phenomenon corresponding to a higher level of culture and consciousness. The original phenomenon was nothing less than a nature deity, a *tremendum* pure and simple, which is morally neutral. But the secondary phenomenon implies an act of discrimination which splits man off from nature and thus testifies to the existence of a more highly differentiated consciousness. To this is added, as a tertiary phenomenon testifying to a still higher level, the moral qualification which declares the voice to be an *evil spirit under a ban*. It goes without saying that this third level is marked by a belief in a "higher" and "good" God who, though he has not finally disposed of his adversary, has nevertheless rendered him harmless for some time to come by imprisonment (Rev. 20 : 1-3).

²⁴⁸ Since at the present level of consciousness we cannot suppose that tree daemons exist, we are forced to assert that the primitive suffers from hallucinations, that he hears his own unconscious which has projected itself into the tree. If this theory is correct—and I do not know how we could formulate it otherwise today—then the second level of consciousness has effected a differentiation between the object "tree" and the unconscious content projected into it, thereby achieving an act of enlightenment. The third level rises still higher and attributes "evil" to the psychic content which has been separated from the object. Finally a fourth level, the level reached by our consciousness today, carries the enlightenment a stage further by denying the objective existence of the "spirit" and declaring that the primitive has heard nothing at all, but merely had an auditory hallucination. Consequently the whole phenomenon vanishes into thin air—with the great advantage that the evil spirit becomes obviously non-existent and sinks into ridiculous insignificance. A fifth level, however, which is bound to take a quintessential view of the matter, wonders about this conjuring trick that turns what began as a miracle into a senseless self-deception—only to come full circle. Like the boy who told his father a made-up story about sixty stags in the forest, it asks: "But what, then, was all the rustling in the woods?" The fifth level is of the opinion that something did happen after all: even though the psychic content was not the tree, nor a spirit in the tree, nor indeed any spirit at

The fifth level assumes that the unconscious exists and has a unity just like any other existent. However dubious it may be, this means that the "spirit" is also a reality, and the "evil" spirit is even worse, the distinction between "good" and "evil" spirit having proved to be a subjective experience, then even more so than the other suitable objects would have, once again, to be considered as its lodging places.

3. THE PROBLEM OF FREEING MERCURIUS

250 We will not pursue the paradoxical reality of the unconscious any further now, but will return to the fairytale of the spirit in the bottle. As we have seen, the spirit Mercurius bears some resemblance to the "cheated devil." The analogy, however, is only a superficial one, since, unlike the gifts of the devil, the gold of Mercurius does not turn to horse droppings but remains good metal, and the magic rag does not turn to ashes in morning but retains its healing power. Nor is Mercurius tricked out of a soul that he wanted to steal. He is only tricked into his own better nature, one might say, in that the boy succeeds in bottling him up again in order to cure his bad mood and make him tractable. Mercurius becomes polite, gives the young fellow a useful ransom and is accordingly set free. We now hear about the student's good fortune and how he became a wonder-working doctor, but—strangely enough—nothing about the doings of the liberated spirit, though these might be of some interest in view of the web of meanings in which Mercurius, with his many-sided associations, entangles us. What happens when this pagan god, Hermes-Mercurius-Wotan, is let loose again? Being a god of magicians, a *spiritus vegetativus*, and a storm daemon, he will hardly have returned to captivity, and the fairytale gives us no reason to suppose that the episode of imprisonment has finally changed his nature to the pink of perfection. The bird of Hermes has escaped from the glass cage, and in consequence something has happened which the experienced alchemist wished at all costs to avoid. That is why he always sealed the stopper of his bottle with magic signs and set it for a very long time over the lowest fire, so that "he who is within may not fly out." For if he escapes, the whole laborious opus comes to nothing and has to be started all over again. Our lad was a Sunday's child and possibly one of the poor in spirit, on whom was bestowed a bit of the Kingdom of Heaven in the shape of the self-

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the spirit Mercurius
was needed to be performed only once.¹ But if he had lost the
image he would certainly never have been able to produce it
again. He may even have planned to tame the wild Mercur-
ian use. He may have planned to put him aside for some
other place, like a treasure—perhaps putting him aside for some
unneeded time, by himself. It looks as though some Master had
needed in capturing the mercurial spirit and then hid him in
some place, like a treasure—perhaps putting him aside for some
unneeded time, At any rate, it might follow if this
Master had his bird surprised when he returned to the oak tree and
thought not to have left the fate of the bottle to chance.

The spirit Mercurius
was also totally unconscious of what might follow if this
Master claimed of an unknown Master by setting Mercurius
apart from the fact that he may have intringed upon the
spirit out for him—must be described as alchemically incor-
rect. Apart from the fact that he may have intringed upon the
spirit, he was also totally unconscious of what might follow if this
Master was the first half of the seventeen-year-old golden age
at that time a storm bird did indeed escape from a spir-
it. At that time a storm bird did indeed escape from a spir-
it. The alchemists were all for not letting Mercurius es-
cape. They wanted to keep him in the bottle in order to trans-
mute him: for they believed, like Petaios, that Lead (another
name substance) was „so bedevilled and shameless that all who
investigate it fall into madness through ignorance.“²
The same was said of the elusive Mercurius who evades every
trickster who drove the alchemists to despair.³

¹ See Norton's "Ordinary of Alchymy," *Theatr. chem. Brit.*, ch. 4, p. 48.

² See Berthelot, *Alchymistes grecs*, II, vi, 43.

³ See the meteraining "Dialogus Mercurii alchymiste et naturee," in *Theatr.*

Part II

1. INTRODUCTORY

²⁵² The interested reader will want, as I do, to find out more about this spirit—especially what our forefathers believed and said about him. I will therefore try with the aid of text citations to draw a picture of this versatile and shimmering god as he appeared to the masters of the royal art. For this purpose we must consult the abstruse literature of alchemy, which has not yet been properly understood. Naturally, in later times, the history of alchemy was mainly of interest to the chemist. The fact that it recorded the discovery of many chemical substances and drugs could not, however, reconcile him to the pitiful meagreness, so it seemed to him, of its scientific content. He was not in the position of the older authors, such as Schmieder, who could look on the possibility of goldmaking with hopeful esteem and sympathy; instead he was irritated by the futility of the recipes and the fraudulence of alchemical speculation in general. To him alchemy was bound to seem a gigantic aberration that lasted for more than two thousand years. Had he only asked himself whether the chemistry of alchemy was authentic or not, that is, whether the alchemists were really chemists or merely spoke a chemical jargon, then the texts themselves would have suggested a line of observation other than the purely chemical. The scientific equipment of the chemist does not, however, fit him to pursue this other line, since it leads straight into the history of religion. Thus it was a philologist, Reitzenstein, whom we have to thank for preliminary researches of the greatest value in this field. It was he who recognized the mythological and Gnostic ideas embedded in alchemy, thereby opening up the whole subject from an angle which promises to be most fruitful. For alchemy, as the earliest Greek and Chinese texts show, originally formed part of Gnostic philosophical speculations which also included a detailed knowledge of the techniques of the goldsmith and ironsmith, the faker of precious stones, the druggist and

Schemen, Unter den Naturvölkern Central-Brasiliens, pp. 352f., 512.

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the primitive chemist, is for the psychologist a veritable gold-mine of the unconscious. On account of the primitive character of its projections, alchemy, so barren a people who have never heard of alchemy. One can still be found today among both sick and healthy persons that can be therefore identified with fantasy and delusion. This material stems from the absurd fantasies of alchemy can be recognized by the alchemist's mentality. What to the chemist seems like a fact that can be underlined or even thought of somewhere else works miracles, is self-evident. This substance possesses secret powers, or that there is a prima materia which works wonders, although they readily admit that they have no idea what it is. On this level, the alchemists' assumption that a certain Stethen says that the Boroors think of themselves as contents into objective situations, for example, Karl Stegmüller, not a fact that can be underlined or even thought of elsewhere, but a fact that can be underlined or even thought of elsewhere, that is, by projections of primitive mentality. On the primitive level, the whole of life and more especially in psychotherapy, is without doubt this phenomenon, a daily occurrence in practical psychology and more especially in psychotherapy, is without doubt the unknown nature of the object and to accept the result almost irresistibly bait for the unconscious to project itself prolonged preoccupation with an unknown object acts as good stead. Practical experience shows us again and again that the mind is trained in the way back into that primitive state of participation mystique in which subject and object the begin with, of course, it is almost impossible for our society to feel their way back into that primitive state of participation mystique in which subject and object are merged into the same period.

In East and West alike, alchemy contains as its core a doctrinal doctrine and by its very nature has the character of a peculiar doctrine of redemption. This fact necessarily escaped the chemist, although it is expressed clearly enough in the Greek and Latin texts as well as in the Chinese of the same period.

254 Since in what follows I shall often refer to the original texts, it might be as well to say a few words about this literature, some of which is not easily accessible. I shall leave out of account the few Chinese texts that have been translated, and shall only mention that *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, published by Richard Wilhelm and myself, is representative of its class. Nor can I consider the Indian "Quicksilver System."² The Western literature I have used falls into four groups:

1. *Texts by ancient authors.* This group comprises mainly Greek texts, which have been edited by Berthelot, and those transmitted by the Arabs, likewise edited by him. They date from the period between the first and eighth centuries.

2. *Texts by the early Latinists.* The most important of these are translations from the Arabic (or Hebrew?). Recent research shows that most of these texts derive from the Harranite school, which flourished until about 1050, and was also, probably, the source of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. To this group belong certain texts whose Arabic origin is doubtful but which at least show Arabic influence—for instance, the "Summa perfectionis" of Geber and the Aristotle and Avicenna treatises. This period extends from the ninth to the thirteenth century.

3. *Texts by the later Latinists.* These comprise the principal group and range from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

4. *Texts in modern European languages.* Sixteenth to seventeenth century. After that, alchemy fell into decline, which is why I have only occasionally used eighteenth-century texts.

² Cf. Deussen, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, Part 3, pp. 336ff. This undoubtedly alchemical philosophy belongs to the fairly late (medieval) *Upanishads*, more particularly to the *Maheshvarapurana*, hence to a doctrine principally concerned with Shiva. "Pāra-da" (bestowing the Other Shore) signifies quicksilver.

Merkurius was first understood pretty well everywhere as Mercurius, *Philosophia reformata*, p. 176. *Mercurius aureus*, "Mus. herm.", p. 39. *Mercurius mundi*, p. 244. *Mercurius, Phil. ref.*, p. 31. *Mercurius aureus*, "Mus. herm.", p. 376. *Mercurius, philosoforum*, in *Arts außerferre*, II, p. 376. *Mercurius mundi*, p. 250; *Khunrath, Von hydraulischen Chaos*, p. 214. *Mercurius, Tractatus aureus*, "ibid.", p. 34; "Gloria luminae", p. 581. *Hogelande*, "De alchymiae difficultibus", *Theat. chem.*, I (1659), p. 161. *Hogelande*, "water, and aquaops, silver", p. 161. *Hogelande*, "De alchymiae difficultibus", *Theat. chem.*, I (1659), p. 98. *Hogelande*, "Hence also lac unguinis, nitri, terra alba solita, magnesia, etc. *Hogelande*, "De alchymiae difficultibus", *Theat. chem.*, I (1659), p. 84. *Hogelande*, "Water, and aquaops, silver", p. 84. *Hogelande*, "De alchymiae difficultibus", *Theat. chem.*, I (1659), p. 161. *Hogelande*, "Water, and aquaops, silver", p. 161.

MERCURIUS AS QUICKSILVER AND/OR WATER

nature), or to rule the water.¹² The "divine water" (*ὕδωρ θεῖν*) so often mentioned in the Greek texts is quicksilver.¹³ Mercurius as the arcane substance and golden tincture is indicated by the designation *aqua aurea*¹⁴ and by the description of the water as *Mercurii caduceus*.¹⁵

¹² *Aurora consurgens* II, in *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 189. This text remarks that the water is fire (p. 212).

¹³ Berthelot, *Alch. grecs*, IV, vii, 2.

¹⁴ Basilus Valentinus, "Practica," *Mus. herm.*, p. 404.

¹⁵ Philaletha, "Metallorum metamorphosis," *ibid.*, p. 771, and "Introitus apertus," *ibid.*, p. 654.

"...the Pute is the heart of Mercurius, which is the true fire, in which is the
metamorph," *ibid.*, p. 766.

"...no fire in all the work save Mercurius" ("Fons chymicæ veritatis,"

"...sapientum," *ibid.*, p. 91.

"...auræus," *ibid.*, p. 39.

"...herm," *ibid.*, p. 200.

"...Mys., Phil., ref." *ibid.*, p. 245.

"...congerie Paracelsicæ," *ibid.*, p. 502; *Mys., Phil., ref.*

"...in Art. aurif." *ibid.*, p. 212; *Dorn.*, "Concidentia opposit-

"...indeed be so if God is held to be a coincidentia opposit-

"...rather as an internal component of the deity, which

"...or its fire, as absolutely outside of God or opposed to

"...it seems, however, that the alchemists did not under-

"...since the ignis mercurialis was also connected with the fires

"...ungratefully, its essence was nevertheless felt to be abyss-

"...as originally bestowed by God upon his creatures, is not

"...of Hermes as the god of revelation. Although the lumen

"...Scriptures. Once more we catch a glimpse of the ancient

"...mystical knowledge second only to the holy revelation

"...as it relates Mercurius to the lumen naturæ, the

"...heavenly spirit within it."⁹ This passage is particularly

"...and scintillating fire of the light of nature, which car-

"...other (northern lights).⁸ He is, in fact, as another text says, "the

"...lumen" of Mercurius is at the North Pole and that he is like

"...in "invisible fire, working in secret."⁷ One text says that

"...Mercurius is really the only fire in the whole procedure.⁶

"...fire,⁴ This fire is "highly vaporous" (*vaporous*).⁵ In-

"...Mercurius, "philosophic" nature. The aqua mercurialis is even a

"...noster naturæ ignis certissimus,³ which again in-

"...treatises define Mercurius simply as fire.¹ He is ignis

3. MERCURIUS AS FIRE

torum. The concept of an all-encompassing God must necessarily include his opposite. The *coincidentia*, of course, must not be too radical or too extreme, otherwise God would cancel himself out.¹⁰ The principle of the coincidence of opposites must therefore be completed by that of absolute opposition in order to attain full paradoxicality and hence psychological validity.

²⁵⁷ The mercurial fire is found in the "centre of the earth," or dragon's belly, in fluid form. Benedictus Figulus writes: "Visit the centre of the earth, there you will find the global fire."¹¹ Another treatise says that this fire is the "secret, infernal fire, the wonder of the world, the system of the higher powers in the lower."¹² Mercurius, the revelatory light of nature, is also hell-fire, which in some miraculous way is none other than a re-arrangement of the heavenly, spiritual powers in the lower chthonic world of matter, thought already in St. Paul's time to be ruled by the devil. Hell-fire, the true energetic principle of evil, appears here as the manifest counterpart of the spiritual and the good, and as essentially identical with it in substance. After that, it can surely cause no offence when another treatise says that the mercurial fire is the "fire in which God himself burns in divine love."¹³ We are not deceiving ourselves if we feel in scattered remarks of this kind the breath of true mysticism.

²⁵⁸ Since Mercurius is himself of fiery nature, fire does not harm him: he remains unchanged within it, rejoicing like the salamander.¹⁴ It is unnecessary to point out that quicksilver does not behave like this but vaporizes under heat, as the alchemists themselves knew from very early times.

¹⁰ This is a purely psychological explanation having to do with human conceptions and statements and not with the unfathomable Being.

¹¹ Figulus, *Rosarium novum olympicum*, Pars I, p. 71. This is the "domus ignis idem Enoch." Cf. "Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon," supra, par. 186.

¹² "Ignis infernalis secretus . . . mundi miraculum, virtutum superiorum in inferioribus systema" ("Introit. apert.", p. 654).

¹³ "Ignis in quo Deus ipse ardet amore divino" ("Gloria mundi," p. 255).

¹⁴ "For it is he who overcomes the fire, and is himself not overcome by the fire, but rests in it as a friend, rejoicing in it" (Geber, "Summa perfectionis" *De alchemia*, cap. LXIII, p. 139).

As has already been indicated, the psychic nature of the artist did not escape the alchemists; indeed, they actually defined it as "spirit" and "soul." But since these concepts—quite substance did not escape the alchemists; indeed, they actually defined it as "spirit" and "soul." But since these concepts—especially in earlier times—were always ambiguous, we must approach them with caution if we want to gain a moderately clear idea of what the terms *spiritus* and *anima* meant in alchemical usage.

The necessary self-criticism in investigating an unknown quantity, such as always takes place when the inquiring mind lacks substantial evidence, is obviously a projection of the unconscious. That the philosophical Mercury, so dear to the alchemist as the very special meaning, but shall content ourselves with stating therefore we would rather not tie this concept prematurely to anything and we begin to perceive that the end is nowhere in sight. searching psychological problems. The concept swells dangerously and few hints we have given, threatens to ramify into a set of far-important unconscious content which, as may be gathered from figures or ciphers *fugitives* (fugitive slave or stag), is a highly conscious projection. The "philosophic" Mercury is a elusive fascinatting, irritatting, and elusive thing which attracts an unpredictable behind or within the quicksilver—that indefinable, special quicksilver, "our" Mercury, the essence, moisture, or spoke of Mercury. It was certainly quicksilver, but a very conduction that one simple and unmistakable term in no way sufficed to designate what the alchemists had in mind when they I have listed. The fact that this need arose points to the three would obviously have been no need for any of the appellations I have listed. The fact that this need arose points to the

4. MERCURIUS AS SPIRIT AND SOUL

A. MERCURIUS AS AN AERIAL SPIRIT

261 Hermes, originally a wind god, and his counterpart the Egyptian Thoth, who "makes the souls to breathe,"¹ are the forerunners of the alchemical Mercurius in his aerial aspect. The texts often use the terms *pneuma* and *spiritus* in the original concrete sense of "air in motion." So when Mercurius is described in the *Rosarium philosophorum* (fifteenth century) as *aereus* and *volans*,² (winged), and in *Hoghelande* (sixteenth century) as *totus aereus et spiritualis*,³ what is meant is nothing more than a gaseous state of aggregation. Something similar is meant by the poetic expression *serenitas aerea* in the *Ripley Scrowle*,⁴ and by the same author's statement that Mercurius is changed into wind.⁵ He is the *lapis elevatus cum vento* (the stone uplifted by the wind).⁶ The expressions *spirituale corpus*⁷ and *spiritus visibilis, tamen impalpabilis*⁸ (visible yet impalpable spirit) might also mean little more than "air" if one recalls the aforementioned vapour-like nature of Mercurius, and the same is probably true even of the *spiritus prae cunctis valde purus*⁹ (pre-eminently pure spirit). The designation *incombustibilis*¹⁰ is more doubtful, since this was often synonymous with *incorruptibilis* and then meant "eternal," as we shall see later. Penotus (sixteenth century), a pupil of Paracelsus, stresses the corporeal aspect when he says that Mercurius is "nothing other than the spirit of the world become body within the earth."¹¹ This expression shows better than anything else the contamination—inconceivable to the modern mind—of two separate realms, spirit and matter; for to people in the Middle Ages

1 This characteristic of Mercurius is stressed in *Aurora consurgens* II, in *Aurif.*, I, pp. 146 and 190: "He makes the nostrils [of the foetus] in the fifth month."

2 *Rosarium*, pp. 252, 271.

3 *Theatrum chemicum*, I (1659), p. 169.

4 16th cent. British Museum, MS. Add. 10302.

5 *Ripley, Opera*, p. 35.

6 "Tractatus aureus," *Mus. herm.*, p. 39.

7 *Rosarium*, p. 282.

8 Basilius Valentinus, "Practica," *Mus. herm.*, p. 404.

9 "Introit. apert.," *ibid.*, p. 654.

10 *Rosarium*, p. 252.

11 *Theatr. chem.*, I (1659), p. 600.

- 122 P. 183.
123 P. 19.
124 P. 308.
125 "Tractatus aureus," Mus. herm., p. 39.
126 Mytius, Phil., ref., p. 308: "(Mercurius est) spiritus et anima corporis." The same in Venetia, Theat. chem., II (1659), p. 282, and in "Tractatus Micretis," Theat. Alchymiae, Phil., p. 92.
127 Agredinus de Vadi, ibid., II (1659), p. 106.
128 Philaletha, "Metall. metamorph.," Mus. herm., p. 766.
129 Abraham Elieazar, Uraltes Chymisches Werk, pp. 29ff. "Phytton is the life of all things," p. 34.

However, *anima* often appears to be connected with *spiritus*, or is equated with it.¹⁶ For the spirit shares the living quality of the soul, and for this reason *Mercunitus* is often called the *spiritus vegetatus* (*spirit of life*) or *spiritus seminalis*.¹⁷ A peculiar appellation is found in that seventh-century Gregory which purports to be the secret book of Abraham le Juif, mentioning by Nicolas Flamel (fourteenth century). The epiphany spirits to be the secret book of Abraham le Juif, accompanied by the serpent sign: ▲. Very much more material than the definition of *Mercunitus* as a "life-giving power like a serpent", Procreator, and *Pylion*, the Delphic serpent), and is accompanied by the serpent sign: ▲.

"Soul" represents a higher concept than "spirit" in the sense of air or gas. As the "subtle body" or "breath-soul", it means something non-material and finer than mere air. Its essential characteristic is to animate and be animated; it therefore represents the life principle. *Mercurius* is often designated as *animula*, as a feminine being, he is also called *femina* or *virgo*, (hence, as a soul but, as in aqua nostra, *Mercurius noster*, *corpus nóstrum*, our as nostra anima). The nostra here does not mean "our own" but, as in aqua nostra, *Mercurius noster*, *corpus nóstrum*, refers to the arcane substance.

B. MERCURIUS AS SOUL

the spirits mundi was also the spirit which rules nature, and not just a pernicious gas. We find ourselves in the same dilemma when another author, Mylius, in his *Philosophia reformatiæ*,¹² describes Mercurius as an „intermediate substance“ (*media intermedia naturæ*), which is evidently synonymous with his concept of the *anima media naturæ*¹³ (soul as intermediate nature), for to him *Mercurius* was the „spirit and soul of the bodyes.“¹⁴

glue, holding the world together and standing in the middle between body and spirit." ²⁰ This concept corresponds to Mylius' definition of Mercurius as the *anima media natura*. From here it is but a step to the identification of Mercurius with the *anima mundi*,²¹ which is how Avicenna had defined him very much earlier (twelfth to thirteenth century). "He is the spirit of the Lord which fills the whole world and in the beginning swam upon the waters. They call him also the spirit of Truth, which is hidden from the world." ²² Another text says that Mercurius is the "supracelestial spirit which is conjoined with the light, and rightly could be called the *anima mundi*." ²³ It is clear from a number of texts that the alchemists related their concept of the *anima mundi* on the one hand to the world soul in Plato's *Timaeus* and on the other to the Holy Spirit, who was present at the Creation and played the role of procreator ($\phi\beta\tau\omega\rho$), impregnating the waters with the seed of life just as, later, he played a similar role in the *obumbratio* (overshadowing) of Mary.²⁴ Elsewhere we read that a "life-force dwells in *Mercurius non vulgaris*, who flies like solid white snow. This is a spirit of the macrocosmic as of the microcosmic world, upon whom, after the *anima rationalis*, the motion and fluidity of human nature itself depends." ²⁵ The snow represents the purified Mercurius in the state of *albedo* (= spirituality); here again matter and spirit are identical. Worth noting is the duality of soul caused by the presence of Mercurius: on the one hand the immortal *anima rationalis* given by God to man, which distinguishes him from animals; on the other hand the mercurial life-soul, which to all appearances is connected with the *inflatio* or *inspiratio* of the Holy Spirit. This fundamental duality forms the psychological basis of the two sources of illumination.

²⁰ Happelius, "Aphorismi Basiliani," *Theatr. chem.*, IV (1659), p. 327.

²¹ *Verus Hermes* (1620).

²² "Aquarium sap.," *Mus. herm.*, p. 85.

²³ Steeb, *Coelum Sephiroticum*, p. 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁵ Happelius, loc. cit.

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³⁰ *Theatr. chem.*, II

³¹ *Ibid.*, V (1660), p.

³² Berthelot, *Alch.*

³³ *Ibid.*, III, xxviii,

³⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, vii, 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I, xiii, 3. [C]

[*The Visions of Zosimus*, pars. 97ff.]

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Mercurius as the arcane substance had a more or less secret connection with the goddess of love. In the "Book of Krates," which was transmitted by the Arabs and is possibly of Alexandrian origin, Aphrodite appears with a vessel from the mouth of which pours a ceaseless stream of quicksilver,³⁶ and in the *Chymical Wedding* of Christian Rosencreutz the central mystery is his visit to the secret chamber of the sleeping Venus.

- 266 The fact that Mercurius is interpreted as spirit and soul, in spite of the spirit-body dilemma which this involves, indicates that the alchemists themselves conceived of their arcane substance as something that we today would call a psychic phenomenon. Indeed, whatever else spirit and soul may be, from the phenomenological point of view they are psychic structures. The alchemists never tired of drawing attention to the psychic nature of Mercurius. So far we have concerned ourselves with, statistically, the commonest synonyms such as water and fire, spirit and soul, and it is now possible for us to conclude that these exemplify a psychological state of affairs best characterized by (or, indeed, actually demanding) an antinomian nomenclature. Water and fire are classic opposites and can be valid definitions of one and the same thing only if this thing unites in itself the contrary qualities of water and fire. The psychologem "Mercurius" must therefore possess an essentially antinomian dual nature.

³⁶ Berthelot, *Moyen âge*, III, p 63.

- "Cohslillum coniugii," *Arts chemica* (1566), p. 59.
- "Tractatus aureus," *Mus. herm.*, p. 25.
- "On the Nature of the Psyche," pp. 198f.
- "Cf. the snake vision of Ignatius Loyola and the polyophtalmia motif discussed in *Summarium Physiopsichum*," *Ibid.*, pp. 172f.
- "Aquarium sap." *Mus. herm.*, p. 111. Cf. infra, par. 384, n. 5.]
- "Dorn, in *Theatr. chem.*, I (1659), p. 420.
- "Julius, *Phil. ref.*, p. 18; "Exercitationes in Turbam," *Art. aurif.*, I, pp. 159, 161.
- "Valentinus, "Practica," *Ibid.*, p. 425.
- "Breviis manuductio," *Mus. herm.*, IV (1659), p. 506.
- "Aurelia occulta," *Theatr. chem.*, IV (1659), p. 788.
- p. 695: Julius, *Phil. ref.*, p. 176.
- "Aquarium sap." *Mus. herm.*, p. 84; *Trevisanus*, in *Theatr. chem.*, I (1659).
- "Aegidius de Vadi, *Ibid.*, II (1659), p. 105.
- "Theatr. chem.", I (1659), p. 470.

of his elements are passive, earth and water, and two active, air consists of "the dry and earthy, the moist and viscous." 18 Two There is the "common and the phiosophic" Mercurius;¹⁹ he behind, and he sleeps with some open and some closed; "11 he is covered with eyes on both sides of his body, before and lies an ever-waking dragon, who is called Pantophthalmos, for "winded and wingless." 10 A parable says: "On this mountain thought of as dissimilar, sometimes opposed; as the dragon he is analogy is thus made plain. The two substances of Mercurius are where the sacrament of the Last Supper is instituted. The Christ which the text²⁰ cites the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew, of which the text²¹ cites the twofold substance, in explanation stances," 8 He is the "giant of twofold substance," in explanation dragons," 5 the "twin," 6 made of "two natures," 7 or "two sub-equality the company of the good and the wicked." 4 He is "two It is said of him that he "turns round the earth and enjoys shifty).²² He is duplex²³ and his main characteristic is duplicity. curius," 1 and another calls him *versipellis* (changing his skin, changeable, and deceitful. Dorn speaks of "that inconstant Mercurius, following the tradition of Hermes, is many-sided,

5. THE DUAL NATURE OF MERCURIUS

and fire.¹⁴ He is both good and evil.¹⁵ The "Aurelia occulta" gives a graphic description of him:¹⁶

I am the poison-dripping dragon, who is everywhere and can be cheaply had. That upon which I rest, and that which rests upon me, will be found within me by those who pursue their investigations in accordance with the rules of the Art. My water and fire destroy and put together; from my body you may extract the green lion and the red. But if you do not have exact knowledge of me, you will destroy your five senses with my fire. From my snout there comes a spreading poison that has brought death to many. Therefore you should skillfully separate the coarse from the fine, if you do not wish to suffer utter poverty. I bestow on you the powers of the male and the female, and also those of heaven and of earth. The mysteries of my art must be handled with courage and greatness of mind if you would conquer me by the power¹⁷ of fire, for already very many have come to grief, their riches and labour lost. I am the egg of nature, known only to the wise, who in piety and modesty bring forth from me the microcosm, which was prepared for mankind by Almighty God, but given only to the few, while the many long for it in vain, that they may do good to the poor with my treasure and not fasten their souls to the perishable gold. By the philosophers I am named Mercurius; my spouse is the [philosophic] gold; I am the old dragon, found everywhere on the globe of the earth, father and mother, young and old, very strong and very weak, death and resurrection, visible and invisible, hard and soft; I descend into the earth and ascend to the heavens, I am the highest and the lowest, the lightest and the heaviest; often the order of nature is reversed in me, as regards colour, number, weight, and measure; I contain the light of nature; I am dark and light; I come forth from heaven and earth; I am known and yet do not exist at all;¹⁸ by virtue of the sun's rays all colours shine in me, and all metals. I am the carbuncle of the sun, the most noble purified earth, through which you may change copper, iron, tin, and lead into gold.

268 Because of his united double nature Mercurius is described as hermaphroditic. Sometimes his body is said to be masculine and his soul feminine, sometimes the reverse. The *Rosarium*

¹⁴ *Rosarium*, in *Art. aurif.*, II, p. 208.

¹⁵ Khunrath, *Hyl. Chaos*, p. 218.

¹⁶ *Theatr. chem.*, IV (1659), pp. 501ff.

¹⁷ I read *vi* instead of *vim*.

¹⁸ This paradox recalls the Indian *asat* (non-existing). Cf. Chhāndogya Upanishad, VI, ii, 1 (Sacred Books of the East, II, p. 93).

- 29 *Art, autr.*, II, pp. 389, 349.

30 "Mitoit, apart," *Mus. herm.*, p. 658.

31 "Gloria mundi," *Ibid.*, p. 250.

32 *Aurora consurgens* I, *Parable VII.*

33 *Thebanum, Lux eton alchemiae*, p. 47.

34 *Hyl. Chaos*, p. 62.

35 *Hyl. Chaos*, p. 19.

36 *Phil. ref.*, p. 5.

37 *Happollis in Theatr. chem.*, IV (1659), p. 327.

38 *La Verita et profinitate de la quinque esse[n]ce*, p. 15. The "metal of the philios-others" will become like "heaven," says the "Tractatus Miceris," *Theatr. chem.*, IV (1660), p. 100.

39 *Manget, Bibliotheca chemica*, I, p. 478b.

40 *Khunrath, Hyl. Chaos*, p. 195.

41 *IV Ezra*, 13 : 25-53. Cf. *Charters, Aposyphra and Pseudoeigraphy*, II, pp. 618f.

42 In *Aureum velutis* (1598), *Tract. 3*; *Splendor Solis* (1920 facsimile), p. 23, Pl. VIII.

is the dead masculine body, but as „our“ Mercurius he is feminine, spiritual, alive and life-giving.²⁰ He is also called husband and wife,²¹ bridegroom and bride, or lover and beloved.²² His wife, spirituel, alive and life-giving.²⁰ He is also called his bride and his wife,²¹ bridegroom and bride, or lover and beloved.²² His countary natures are often called *Mercurius sensu strictiori* and *Mercurius sensu latius*, the former being feminine, earth, and Eve, and the latter masculine, water, and Adam.²³ In Dorn he is the „true hermaproditic Adam“,²⁴ and in Kuhnert he is „the „true hermaproditic Adam“,²⁴ and in Kuhnert he is „the „true hermaproditic master“ (i.e., the *prima materia*).²⁵ Melytius calls him the „hermaproditic master“ (i.e., the *prima materia*).²⁶ As Adam he is also the macrocosm, or even „the heart of the microcosm“,²⁷ or he has the microcosm „in himself, where are also the four elements and the *quintal essentia* which they call Heaven“.²⁸ The term *cœlum* for Mercurius does not, as one occurs earlier in Johannes de Rupeccissa (*fourteenth century*).²⁹ The term *homo* is used as a synonym for „microcosm“, as when Mercurius is named the „*Philosophic ambisexual Man*.“³⁰ In the very old „*Dicitu Belimi*“ (*Belinus or Balinus is a corruption of Apolloinus of Tyana*), he is the „man rising from the river“,³¹ probably a reference to the vision of Ezra.³² In *Trismosim's Splendor solis* (*sixteenth century*) there is an illustration of this.³³ The idea itself may go back to the Babylonian teacher of wisdom, Orannes. The designation of Mercurius as the „high priest“³⁴ is probably a reference to the „Apollonius of Tyana“ of this.

man”³⁴ does not fit in badly with such a pedigree. The terms Adam and microcosm occur frequently in the texts,³⁵ but the Abraham le Juif forgery unblushingly calls Mercurius Adam Kadmon.³⁶ As I have discussed this unmistakable continuation of the Gnostic doctrine of the Anthropos elsewhere,³⁷ there is no need for me to go more closely now into this aspect of Mercurius.³⁸ Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize once again that the Anthropos idea coincides with the psychological concept of the self. The atman and purusha doctrine as well as alchemy give clear proofs of this.

- ²⁶⁹ Another aspect of the dual nature of Mercurius is his characterization as *senex*³⁹ and *puer*.⁴⁰ The figure of Hermes as an old man, attested by archaeology, brings him into direct relation with Saturn—a relationship which plays a considerable role in alchemy (see infra, pars. 274ff.). Mercurius truly consists of the most extreme opposites; on the one hand he is undoubtedly akin to the godhead, on the other he is found in sewers. Rosinus (Zosimos) even calls him the *terminus ani*.⁴¹ In the Bundahish,⁴² the anus of Garotman is “like hell on earth.”

³⁴ Ruland, *Lexicon alchemiae*, p. 47.

³⁵ John Dee in *Theatr. chem.*, II (1659), p. 195; *Rosarium*, in *Art. aurif.*, II, p. 509.

³⁶ Eleazar, *Uraltes Chymisches Werck*, p. 51. Adam Kadmon is the Primordial Man; cf. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, ch. V.

³⁷ “Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon,” supra, pars. 165ff., and *Psychology and Alchemy*, index, s.v.

³⁸ Gayomart also is a kind of vegetation numen like Mercurius, and like him fertilizes his mother, the earth. At the place where his life came to an end the earth turned to gold, and where his limbs disintegrated various metals appeared. Cf. Christensen, *Les Types du premier homme et du premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens*, pp. 26, 29.

³⁹ *Senex draco* in Valentinus, “Practica,” *Mus. herm.*, p. 425. In *Verus Hermes* (1620), pp. 15, 16, Mercurius is also designated with the Gnostic name “Father-Mother.”

⁴⁰ “De arte chimica,” *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 581. *Regius puerus* in “Introit. apert.” *Mus. herm.*, pp. 678, 655.

⁴¹ *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 310. Here it is the stone identical with Mercurius that is so called. The context disallows the reading “anni.” The passage which follows soon after, “nascitur in duobus montibus,” refers to the “Tractatus Aristotelis” (*Theatr. chem.*, V, 1660, pp. 787ff.), where the act of defecation is described. (Cf. supra, “Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon,” par. 182, n. 61.) Corresponding illustrations for *Aurora consurgens* may be found in the Codex Rhenoviensis.

⁴² Ch. XXVIII. Cf. Reitzenstein and Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland*, p. 119.

In spite of his obvious duality the unity of Mercurius is also emphasized, especially in his form as the lapis. "In all the world he is One,"¹ The unity of Mercurius is at the same time unitary, with clear reference to the Holy Trinity, although his unitary does not derive from Christianity dogma but is of pagan origin (Concerning the Art).² Martinal calls Hermes omnia ter natus (All and Three One).³ In Monakris (Arcadia), a three-headed Hermes was worshipped, and in Gaul there was a three-headed Mercurius.⁴ This Gallic god was also a psychopomp.

The triadic character is an attribute of the gods of the underworld, as for instance the three-bodied Typhon, three-bodied world, three sons of Zeus the Kings, the rex antiquitatis.⁵ They are called the "forefathers", and are wind-gods,⁶ obviously by the same logic the Hopi Indians believe that snakes are at the same time flashes of lightning auguring rain. Kshurath calls Mercurius *triuus*⁷ and *terruarius*.⁸ Mylius represents him as a three-

6. THE UNITY AND TRINITY OF MERCURIUS

headed snake.¹¹ The "Aquarium sapientum" says that he is a "triune, universal essence which is named Jehova."¹² He is divine and at the same time human."¹³

²⁷¹ From all this one must conclude that Mercurius corresponds not only to Christ, but to the triune divinity in general. The "Aurelia occulta" calls him "Azoth," and explains the term as follows: "For he is the A and O that is everywhere present. The philosophers have adorned [him] with the name Azoth, which is compounded of the A and Z of the Latins, the alpha and omega of the Greeks, and the aleph and tau of the Hebrews:

$$A \left\{ \begin{matrix} Z \\ \omega \\ \aleph \end{matrix} \right\} Azoth."^{14}$$

The parallel with the Trinity could not be more clearly indicated. The anonymous commentator of the "Tractatus aureus" puts the parallel with Christ as Logos just as unmistakably. All things proceed from the "philosophic heaven adorned with an infinite multitude of stars,"¹⁵ from the creative Word incarnate, the Johannine Logos, without which "was not any thing made that was made." The commentator says: "Thus the Word of renewal is invisibly inherent in all things, but it is not evident in elementary solid bodies unless they have been brought back to the fifth, or heavenly and astral essence. Hence this Word of renewal is the seed of promise, or the philosophic heaven resplendent with the infinite lights of the stars."¹⁶ Mercurius is the Logos become world. The description given here may point to his basic identity with the collective unconscious, for as I tried to show in my essay "On the Nature of the Psyche,"¹⁷ the image of the starry heaven seems to be a visualization of the peculiar nature of the unconscious. Since Mercurius is often called *filius*, his sonship is beyond question.¹⁸ He is therefore like a

¹¹ *Phil. ref.*, p. 96.

¹² This peculiar designation refers to the demiurge, the saturnine Ialdabanth, who was connected with the "God of the Jews."

¹³ *Mus. herm.*, p. 112.

¹⁴ *Theatr. chem.*, IV (1659), p. 507.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 614.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 615.

¹⁷ Pp. 198f.

¹⁸ Cf. *Rosarium*, in *Art. aurif.*, II, p. 248: "filius . . . coloris coelici" (cited from

Art. aurif., II, p. 339.

(Hilka, Der Percevalroman, p. 372.)

"Ce domit icil giotriens pere
Qui de sa fille fit sa mere."

Chrétien de Troyes:

² *Pandarinum*, XXX, 16, 2). Art. autif., I, p. 151. The same is said of God in the *Contes del Gratal* of

Two, they assert, were raised up by God, the one (is) Christ, the other the devil".

³³ Cf. the report on the Bogomils in Euthymios Zigabenos, "Panoplia dogmatica", trans. Marcellino Ficino, fol. N. V.

¹ Hall's "Secretum"; Kuhnraeth, *Hyl. Chaos*, passim; *hinc macrocosmum*, p. 59.

One peculiarity of Mercurius which undoubtedly relates him to the Godhead and to the primitive creative god is his ability to beget himself. In the "Allegoriæ super librum Turbae" he says: "The mother bore me and is herself begotten of me."²² As the world was dragon, he impregnates, begets, bears, devours, and slays himself, and "himself lifts himself on high," as the Rosarium says,²³ so paraphrasing the mystery of God's sacrificial death. Here, as in many similar instances, it would be rash to assume that the alchemists were as conscious of their reasoning processes as perhaps we are. But man, and through him the un-

brother to Christ and a second son of God, though in point of time he must be accounted the elder and the first-born. This idea goes back to the conceptions of the Euchites reported in Michael Pselius,¹⁹ who believed that God's first son was Satan-²⁰ and that Christ was the second.²¹ However, Mercurius is also the counterpart of Christ in so far as he is the "son"; he conceived to be a chthonic triad. According to this view he would be equal to one half of the Christian Godhead. He is indeed the dark chthonic half, but he is not simply evil as such, for he is called "good and evil", or a "system of the higher powers in the lower". He calls to mind that double figure which seems to stand behind both Christ and the devil—that emigmatic Lucifer whose attributes are shared by both. In Rev. 22 : 16 Christ says of himself: "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright

THE SPIRIT MERCURIUS

conscious, expresses a great deal that is not necessarily conscious in all its implications. Nevertheless I should like to avoid giving the impression that the alchemists were absolutely unconscious of their thought-processes. How little this was so is proved by the above quotations. But although Mercurius, in many texts, is stated to be *trinus et unus*, this does not prevent him from sharing very strongly the *quaternity* of the lapis, with which he is essentially identical. He thus exemplifies that strange dilemma which is posed by the problem of three and four—the well-known axiom of Maria Prophetissa. There is a classical *Hermes tetracephalus* as well as the *Hermes tricephalus*.²⁴ The ground-plan of the Sabaean temple of Mercurius was a triangle inside a square.²⁵ In the scholia to the "Tractatus aureus" the sign for Mercurius is a square inside a triangle surrounded by a circle (symbol of totality).²⁶

²⁴ Schweitzer, *Herakles*, p. 84.

²⁵ Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, II, p. 367.

²⁶ *Bibl. chem.*, I, p. 409.

One of the curios lies in the archons and curius and the either to con first case quite in the earth (the second, the "spirit. Both s personified as service as a p treatise "Cl with descriptive Goeje.³ Ther in the "Libe account acco the hieroglyph spirit Mercur the *Corpus H* same role in "occulta," whe stars.⁶ As the Maier, *Circulus* Theatr. chem., I "Nouveaux doc Theatr. chem., V Berthelot, *Alch.* Theatr. chem., I semplex whi fluid star appears,

- 1 Mayer, *Circulus physicus quadratus*, pp. 15ff.

2 Théâtre, *chem*, IV (1659), pp. 198ff.

3 "Nouveaux documents pour l'étude de la religion des Harramines," p. 341.

4 Théâtre, *chem*, V (1660), pp. 101ff.

5 Berthelot, *Alech, grecs, introdiction*, p. 236.

6 Theâtre, *chem*, IV (1659), p. 510.

7 Supra, par. 106.] He corresponds to the stella sempiflex which appears at the end of the work, " . . . cook, until the seven-tailed star appears, running through the sphere" (ibid., p. 508). Cf. the early

7. THE RELATION OF MERCURIUS TO ASTROLOGY AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE ARCHONS

moon.⁷ But contrariwise he is also the begetter of his parents;⁸ or, as the treatise of Wei Po-yang (*c. A.D. 142*) remarks, the gold (sun) gets its qualities from Mercurius.⁹ (Owing to the contamination, the astrological myth is always thought of in chemical terms as well.) Because of his half-feminine nature, Mercurius is often identified with the moon¹⁰ and Venus.¹¹ As his own divine consort he easily turns into the goddess of love, just as in his role of Hermes he is ithyphallic. But he is also called the "most chaste virgin."¹² The relation of quicksilver to the moon (silver) is obvious enough. Mercurius as the shining and shimmering planet, appearing like Venus close to the sun in the morning or evening sky, is like her a Lucifer, a light-bringer ($\phi\omega\sigma\phi\delta\mu\sigma$). He heralds, as the morning star does, only much more directly, the coming of the light.

²⁷⁴ But the most important of all for an interpretation of Mercurius is his relation to Saturn. Mercurius *senex* is identical with Saturn, and to the earlier alchemists especially, it is not quicksilver, but the lead associated with Saturn, which usually repre-

Christian idea of Christ as the leader of the "round dance" of the stars. ("Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," pp. 273ff.)

⁷ "Tabula smaragdina," *Rosarium*, in *Art. aurif.*, II, p. 253, and *Mylius, Phil. ref.*, p. 101.

⁸ "Allegoriae super librum Turbae," *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 155; "origo Solis"; Ventura, *Theatr. chem.*, II (1659), p. 296: "The sun rises together with the moon in the belly of Mercurius."

⁹ Wei Po-yang, "An Ancient Chinese Treatise," p. 241.

¹⁰ "Epistola ad Hermannum," *Theatr. chem.*, V (1660), p. 800; "Gloria mundi," *Mus. herm.*, pp. 224, 244. As the arcane substance magnesia he is called the "full moon" (*Rosarium*, in *Art. aurif.*, II, p. 231) and *succus lunariae* (p. 211). He has fallen down from the moon (Berthelot, *Alch. grecs*, III, vi, 9). The sign for Mercurius is ☽ in the "Book of Krates" (Berthelot, *Moyen dge*, III, p. 48). In the Greek Magic Papyri, Hermes is invoked as "circle of the moon" (Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, I, p. 195).

¹¹ Vision of Krates in Berthelot, *Moyen dge*, III, p. 63. As Adam with Venus in the bath, Valentinus, "Practica," *Mus. herm.*, p. 425 (cf. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, pp. 303, 383). As *Sal Veneris*, green and red lion (= Venus), Khunrath, *Hyl. Chanc.*, pp. 91, 104. The substance of Mercurius consists of Venus (*Mylius, Phil. ref.*, p. 17). Since his mother Venus is the *matrix corrupta*, Mercurius as her son is the *puer leprosus* ("Rosinus ad Sarratantam," *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 318). In the Magic Papyri, the day of Aphrodite is associated with Hermes (Preisendanz, *Pap. Graec. Mag.*, II, p. 120). In Al-'Irāqī the attributes of Venus are identical with those of Mercurius: sister, bride, air, green, green lion, phoenix (Holmyard, p. 420).

¹² "Aurelia occulta," *Theatr. chem.*, IV (1659), p. 480.

Platonis quatuorrum, "Theatr. chem.", V (1660), pp. 127, 136.

Elenchos, V, 16, 2.

Opera, p. 317.

Ars transmut. metalli, fol. 9r.

Phil. ref., p. 305. "Saturn's Chyld" in Ripley's "Medulla" (Theatr. Chem., p. 195).

Mayer, symb. aur. mens., p. 211. Like Saturn, Mercurius Chrys., p. 195.

Phil. ref., p. 391.

Philo, IV (1659), pp. 458f.

The same in Mylius, Phil. ref., p. 302.

Busta, p. 204.

II, P. 379. The same in Dorn, "Theatr. chem.", I (1659), pp. 560f.

Like the planetary spirit of Mercurius, the spirit of Saturn is suited to this work.²⁴ One of the manifestations of Mercurius the Lion was associated with Saturn.²⁵ Khunrath calls him green and now red. Khunrath calls this transformation in the alchemical process of transformation is the Lion, which suited to this work.²⁶

Like the planetary spirit of Mercurius (Saturn) is a "Power of the colour of water,"²⁷ which destroys everything, since "water is destructive".²⁸ This statement of Sir George Ripley, Canon of Bridgeton, is a most remarkable parallel to the Gnostic teaching that Kronos (Saturn) is a father and a "bright water" in the plant Saturnia, "the most perfect water and flower in the planet Saturn, and a 'bright water'" is extracted from Saturn's child.²⁹ Quickly comes "from the heart of the father and origin of Mercurius, therefore the latter is bound with their complement [i.e., the four elements], and this is in Saturn."³⁰ The same is said of Mercurius. Saturn is "an old man on a mountain, and in him the natures of water."³¹ Like Mercurius, Saturn is hermaphroditic,³² or Saturn is simply Mercurius. Saturn "draws the philosophical lead."³³ In Khunrath Mercurius is the "salt of water" which is just what Mercurius is. Raymund Lully says the rigid limbs of my brothers.³⁴ This refers to the "Dicitur Bellini" Saturn says: "My spirit is the water that is identical with the "water of the moon and of Saturn." In the prima materia. In the Arabic text of the *Turba*³⁵ quick-

"the lion of the Catholic tribe,"²⁶ paraphrasing the "lion of the tribe of Judah"—an allegory of Christ.²⁷ He calls Saturn "the lion green and red."²⁸ In Gnosticism Saturn is the highest archon, the lion-headed Ialdabaoth,²⁹ meaning "child of chaos." But in alchemy the child of chaos is Mercurius.³⁰

²⁷ The relation to and identity with Saturn is important because Saturn is not only a *maleficus* but actually the dwelling-place of the devil himself. Even as the highest archon and demigod his Gnostic reputation was not the best. According to one Cabalistic source, Beelzebub was associated with him.³¹ Mylius says that if Mercurius were to be purified, then Lucifer would fall from heaven.³² A contemporary marginal note in a seventeenth-century treatise in my possession explains the term sulphur, the masculine principle of Mercurius,³³ as *diabolus*. If Mercurius is not exactly the Evil One himself, he at least contains him—that is, he is morally neutral, good and evil, or as Khunrath says: "Good with the good, evil with the evil."³⁴ His nature is more exactly defined, however, if one conceives him as a *process* that begins with evil and ends with good. A rather deplorable but picturesque poem in *Verus Hermes* (1620) summarizes the process as follows:

A weakling babe, a greybeard old,
Surname the Dragon: me they hold
In darkest dungeon languishing
That I may be reborn a king.

A fiery sword makes me to smart,
Death gnaws my flesh and bones apart.

²⁶ *Hyl. Chaos*, p. 93.

²⁷ Cf. Christ as lion in the *Ancoratus* of Epiphanius and as lion cub in St. Gregory, *In Septem Psalm. Penit.*, Ps. 5:10 (Migne, P.L., vol. 79, col. 609).

²⁸ *Hyl. Chaos*, p. 195.

²⁹ Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, pp. 10, 321, 352.

³⁰ For Saturn's day as the last day of creation, see infra, par. 301.

³¹ Codex Parisiensis 2419, fol. 277r. Cited in Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, p. 75.

³² *Phil. ref.*, p. 18.

³³ Sulphur is the "fire hidden in Mercurius" (Trevisanus in *Theatr. chem.*, L. 1659, p. 700). He is identical with Mercurius: "Sulphur is mercurial and Mercurius is sulphureal" ("Brevis manuductio," *Mus. herm.*, p. 788).

³⁴ *Hyl. Chaos*, p. 186. Therefore, he says, we should pray to God for the spirit of discretion, that it may teach us the distinction between good and evil.

It is conceivable that the curious name for the alchemists in Rupescissa's *La Vertr et propriete de la quinte essence*, "les poures hommes evangelisans," goes back to the Cathar *perfectedi* and *fauperes Christi*. Rupescissa (Jean de Roquetaillade) lived about the middle of the 14th cent. He was a critic of the Church and the clergy (Pergusson, *Bibliothecca chemica*, II, p. 305). The Cathar trials lasted into the middle of the 14th cent.

Consciously and partly under a deliberate disguise,³⁵ founder of Christianity, were continuumed in alchemy, partly opened the concept of the Paraclete very much in the spirit of the Euichites, Paulicians, Bogomils, and Cathars, and which developed therefore very probable that those heresies which began with the thus was identified with Sapientia and the Holy Ghost. It is therefore very probable that those heresies which began with the a religious experience or revelation. As a result of this, Mercure stands, then the process is accompanied by all the emotions of But it consciousness participates with some measure of under-reience, goes on even without the participation of consciousness, individually process, which, being a natural psychic occur-easily be seen from what has gone before, is the projection of the him is a projection of the collective unconscious. This, as can of the artifice; for not only Mercurus but also what happens to In this poem Mercurus is describing his own transformation, which at the same time signifies the mystic transformation whom the whole world would like to see!

Hero of peace, come forth from me,
That I may greet the light of day.
O soul, O spirit with me stay,

O that the Three would make the One!
In deepest dust I lie alone,
Such be the wages of all sin.

To a black crow am I akin,
And leave a poison, black and stinking.

My soul and spirit fast are sinking,

THE SPIRIT MERCURUS

8. MERCURIUS AND HERMES

278 We have already met with a number of alchemical statements which show plainly that the character of the classical Hermes was faithfully reproduced later in the figure of Mercurius. This is in part an unconscious repetition, in part a spontaneous reexperience, and finally also a conscious reference to the pagan god. There can be no doubt that Michael Maier was consciously alluding to Hermes as pointer of the way ($\delta\delta\gamma\gamma\beta\delta$) when he said that he found on his mystic peregrination a statue of Mercurius pointing the way to paradise,¹ and that he was referring to Hermes the mystagogue when he made the Erythraean Sibyl say of Mercurius: "He will make you a witness of the mysteries of God and the secrets of nature."² Again, as the *divinus ternarius*, Mercurius is the revealer of divine secrets,³ or in the form of gold is conceived to be the soul of the arcane substance (magnesia),⁴ or the fructifier of the philosophical tree.⁵ In the "Epigramma Mercurio philosophico dicatum"⁶ he is called the messenger of the gods, the hermeneut (interpreter), and the Egyptian "Theutius" (Thoth). Maier even goes so far as to relate him to Hermes Kylleios when he calls him "this faithless and all too elusive Arcadian youth,"⁷ for in Arcadia was the sanctuary of Kylleios, the ithyphallic Hermes. In the scholia to the "Tractatus aureus" Mercurius is named outright the "Kylleian hero."⁸ Maier's words might also be a reference to Eros. And in fact, in Rosencreutz's *Chymical Wedding*, Mer-

¹ *Symb. aur. mens.*, p. 592. [Cf. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, pars. 276ff.]

² *Ibid.*, p. 600.

³ Dorn, in *Theatr. chem.*, I (1659), p. 547.

⁴ Khunrath, *Hyl. Chaos*, p. 233.

⁵ Ripley, in *Theatr. chem.*, II (1659), p. 113.

⁶ *Mus. herm.*, p. 738.

⁷ *Symb. aur. mens.*, p. 386.

⁸ *Theatr. chem.*, IV (1659), p. 673.

- 17 Bellelite, trans., *Gnostics texts*.
- 16 Alchemische Lehrschriften und Märchen bei den Arabern, pp. 77f.
- 15 For this motif see *Symbols of Transformation*, pp. 209f.
- 14 E.g., Codex Rhenovitensis, Zurich, and Codex Vossianus, Leyden.
- 13 P. 67.
- 12 Theat. chem., II (1659), facsimile p. 109.
- 11 „Initioti, apert,” *Mus. herm.*, p. 653.
- 10 Ripley, *Opferu.* pp. 42ff.
- 9 Also in the form of the boy showing the way and the „age-old son of the mother.”

the bowl of the moon. One is reminded of the winged ichyphal-lucus with wings. In one of them he stands up to his waist in two reliefs representing an entirely non-Indian scene *ichyphala* of Padmanabhapura in Travancore (c. fifteenth century) I found there were Buddhist monasteries in Feisia. In the royal temple at work in southern Mesopotamia, and in the second century B.C. in the first centuries of our era, Indian religious influences were ziers, which may date back to the time of the Moguls. Already mambas from a Turkish book of folklore¹⁷ about the forty vi-India are not unlikely. Reitzenstein¹⁸ reports the story of Pad-concept. Connections between Greek and Arabic alchemy and which is found in unalloyed form in the Tantric Shiva-Shakti Again, Mercurius represents the „continuous cohabitation“¹⁹ likewise belongs to this sphere of the „underworldly“ Hermes.²⁰ Pictures in old manuscripts of excretory acts, including vomiting, unctio in old prints, often preserved merely as pornography, ioned the numerous somewhat obscene pictures of the con- pair of embraicing lovers. In this connection may also be men- chariot drawn by a cock and a hen, and behind him is a naked chinnicus of Sennivogius,²¹ where he appears on a triumphal lasciviousness is borne out by an illustration in the *Triplus* with nymphs, which reminds one of the pastoral god, Pan. His a demon. In the Table of Symbols in Penotus²² he is associated with him in the hand with an arrow. The arrow is the „dart of passion“ (*telum passiois*), which is also an attribute of Mercurius; He is an „archer“, and indeed one who „shoots without a bow-sting“, and is „nowhere to be found on earth“, so is obviously adept for his curiosity in visiting the Lady Venus by wounding him in the hand with an arrow. The arrow is the „dart of passion“ does appear in the form of Cupid,⁹ and punishes the

THE SPIRIT MERCURIUS

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lic old man who pursues the "blue" or "doglike"¹⁸ woman in Hippolytus. Kylleios does in fact appear in Hippolytus¹⁹ as identical on the one hand with the Logos and on the other with the wicked Korybas, the phallus, and the demiurgic principle in general.²⁰ Another aspect of this dark Mercurius is the mother-son incest, which may be traceable to Mandaean influences: there Nabu (Mercurius) and Istar (Astarte) form a syzygy. Astarte is the mother and love goddess throughout the whole Near East, where she is also tainted with the incest motif. Nabu is the "Messiah of the Lie," who because of his malice is punished and kept in prison by the sun.²¹ The texts remind us again and again that Mercurius is "found in the dung-heaps," but they add ironically that "many have grubbed in the dung-heaps, but extracted nothing thereby."²²

²⁷⁹ This dark Mercurius must once again be understood as representing the initial *nigredo* state, the lowest being a symbol of the highest and vice versa:

Anfang und Ende
Reichen sich die Hände.²³

He is the uroboros, the One and All, the union of opposites accomplished during the alchemical process, of which Penotus says:²⁴

Mercurius is begotten by nature as the son of nature and the fruit of the liquid element. But even as the Son of Man is begotten by the philosopher and created as the fruit of the Virgin, so must he [Mercurius] be raised from the earth and cleansed of all earthiness, then he ascends entire into the air, and is changed into spirit. Thus

¹⁸ κυνοειδῆ or κυνοειδῆ. Hippolytus, *Elenchos*, V, 20, 6 and 7 (ed. Wendland) has the latter reading. The alchemical equivalents of this strange mythologem support both possibilities: Dog as Logos, psychopomp, and *filius canis coelici coloris* (puppy of celestial hue), all referring to Mercurius. [Cf. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, pars. 174ff.]

¹⁹ *Elenchos*, V, 7, 29.

²⁰ The duality of the Mercurius concept has a parallel in the syncretist views of the Naassenes, who sought to grasp and express the psychological experience of the paradoxical First Cause. But I must be content with this hint.

²¹ Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, pp. 43, 55, 142.

²² *Rosarium*, in *Art. aurif.*, II, p. 243.

²³ "Beginnings and ends/Touch hands."

²⁴ *Theatr. chem.*, I (1659), p. 601.

27 Ibid., p. 489.

26 "Tractatus aureus cum scholiis," ibid., IV, p. 507.

25 "Tractatus aureus cum scholiis," ibid., IV, p. 608.

which—after heaven knows what happenings!—must yet be
tural doctrine. At that moment two worlds came into contact,
metical philosophy should take the place of Aristotle in ecclesiastic-
the humanist Patriarch proposed to Pope Gregory XIV that Her-
icinal retrospect, it was a moment of the utmost significance when
elation who gave his name to a whole philosophy. Seen in histor-
Hermes is a god of thieves and cheats, but also a god of rev-
earth." 27

which Christ referred when he said: "Ye are the salt of the
centre of the circle in man is the earth, and calls it the 'salt' to
same time Many in myself." 28 This same treatise says that the
centre. 29 He can therefore say of himself: "I am One and at the
the *circulus simplicis* of which he is at the same time the
the circular nature of the uroboros, hence he is symbolized by
with the Basilidian concept of the third sonship. Mercurius has
Redemeers, while on the other hand he displays a certain affinity
manifests a nature contrary to that of Christ and the Gnostic
to earth again. He carries out the reverse movement and thereby
with the powers of Above and Below united in himself, returns
the *filius macrocosmi* starts from below, ascends on high, and,
comes from above to followed by the Christian Redemeer, who
contrast to the route followed by the Christian Redemeer, who
So it is not a question of a one-way ascent to heaven, but, in
Below. His power is complete when he has returned to earth."
descends again to earth, and receives the power of Above and
on the other hand, says: "He ascends from the earth to heaven and
ascend of Mercurius is in entire accord with the Christian trans-
"Tabula" in one essential point. In the version of Penotus, the
it must be emphasized that he departs from the spirit of the
nature.

Since Penotus is here referring to the "Tabula smaragdina,"
is fulfilled the word of the philosopher: He ascends from his
heaven and receives the power of Above and Below, and puts off his
earthy and impure nature and clothes himself in the heavenly

united in the future. At that time it was obviously impossible. A psychological differentiation of religious as well as scientific views is still needed before a union can begin to be brought about.²⁸

²⁸ [This paragraph originally ended the monograph.—EDITORS.]

Mercurius, it is generally affirmed,¹ the prima materia, is the arcamum,² the prima materia,² the „father of all metals”,³ the primeval chaos,⁴ the earth of paradise, the „material upon which nature worked a little, but nevertheless left imperfect.”⁴ He is also the ultima materia, the philosophical gold, the carbuncle, the phælosophic man, the second Adam, the analogue of Christ, the king, the light of the heights, the deus terrestris, indeed the divinity itself or its perfect counterpart. Since I have already discussed the synonyms and meanings of the stone elsewhere there is no need for me to go into further details now.

Besides being the prima materia of the lowly beginning as well as the lapis as the highest goal, Mercurius is also the process which lies between, and the means by which it is effected. He is the „beginning, middle, and end of the work.”⁶ Therefore he is called the Mediator,⁷ Servator, and Salvator. He is a mediator like Hermes. As the medicina catholica and alexipharmacum he is the „preserver [servator] of the world.” He is the „healer [saluator] of all imperfect bodies”⁸ and the „image of Christ’s incarnation,”⁹ the unigenitus „consubstantial with the parent-

g. MERCURIUS AS THE ARCANE SUBSTANCE

tal hermaphrodite.”¹⁰ Altogether, in the macrocosm of nature he occupies the position which Christ holds in the *mundus rationalis* of divine revelation. But as the saying “My light surpasses all other lights”¹¹ shows, the claim of Mercurius goes even further, which is why the alchemists endowed him with the attributes of the Trinity¹² in order to make clear his complete correspondence to God. In Dante, Satan is three-headed and therefore three-in-one. He is the counterpart of God in the sense that he is God’s antithesis. The alchemists did not hold this view of Mercurius; on the contrary, they saw him as a divine emanation harmonious with God’s own being. The stress they laid on his capacity for self-generation, self-transformation, self-reproduction, and self-destruction contradicts the idea that he is a created being. It is therefore only logical when Paracelsus and Dorn state that the *prima materia* is an “*increatum*” and a principle coeternal with God. This denial of *creatio ex nihilo* is supported by the fact that in the beginning God found the Tehom already in existence, that same maternal world of Tiamat whose son we encounter in Mercurius.¹³

¹⁰ Khunrath, *Hyl. Chaos*, p. 59.

¹¹ “Septem Tract. hermet.” *Ars chemica*, p. 22. *Rosarium*, p. 381: “I illumine the air with my light and warm the earth with my heat, I bring forth and nourish the things of nature, plants and stones, and with my power I take away the darkness of night, and cause day to endure in the world, and I lighten all lights with my light, even those in which there is no splendour nor greatness. For all these are of my work, when I put upon me my garments; and those who seek me, let them make peace between me and my bride.” This is cited from the “Dicta Belini” (printed in Manget’s *Bibl. chem.*, I, p. 478). There are variations in the text. I have quoted the passage in full because of its psychological interest.

¹² “For in the Stone are body, soul, and spirit, and yet it is one stone” (“Exercit. in Turb.” *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 170).

¹³ Cf. *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 26.

*Hence the designation of Mercurius as *mare nostrum*.*

Certainly goldmaking, as also chemical research in general, was of great concern to alchemy. But a still greater, more impersonated concern appears to have been—one cannot very well say the "investigation"—but rather the experience of the uncanny. That this side of alchemy—the *metrunka*—was far so long misunderstood is due solely to the fact that nothing was known of psychology, let alone of the superpersonal, collective unconscious. So long as one knows nothing of psychic actuality, it will be projected, if it appears at all. Thus the first knowledge of psychic law and order was found in the stars, and was later experienced bramched off into sciences: astrology became astronomy and ended by projections into unknown matter. These two realms of science branched off into sciences: astrology became astronomy and ended by projections into unknown matter.

- (6) As such, he represents on the one hand the self and on the other the individualization process and, because of the limitations of his names, also the collective unconscious.¹
- (5) He is also the reflection of a mystical experience of the triflex that coincides with the *opus alchymicum*.
- (4) He is the devil, a redeeming psychopath, an evasive trickster, and God's reflection in physical nature.
- (3) He is the process by which the lower and material is transformed into the higher and spiritual, and vice versa.
- (2) He is both material and spiritual.

(1) Mercurius consists of all conceivable opposites. He is thus quite obviously a duality, but is named a unity in spite of the fact that his innumerable inner contradictions can dramatically fly apart into an equal number of disparate and apparently independent figures.

The multiple aspects of Mercurius may be summarized as follows:

10. SUMMARY

omy, and alchemy chemistry. On the other hand, the peculiar connection between character and the astronomical determination of time has only very recently begun to turn into something approaching an empirical science. The really important psychic facts can neither be measured, weighed, nor seen in a test tube or under a microscope. They are therefore supposedly indeterminable, in other words they must be left to people who have an inner sense for them, just as colours must be shown to the seeing and not to the blind.

286 The store of projections found in alchemy is, if possible, even less known, and there is a further drawback which makes closer investigation extremely difficult. For, unlike the astrological constituents of character which, if negative, are at most unpleasant for the individual, though amusing to his neighbour, the alchemical projections represent collective contents that stand in painful contrast—or rather, in compensatory relation—to our highest rational convictions and values. They give the strange answers of the natural psyche to the ultimate questions which reason has left untouched. Contrary to all progress and belief in a future that will deliver us from the sorrowful present, they point back to something primeval, to the apparently hopelessly static, eternal sway of matter that makes our fondly believed-in world look like a phantasmagoria of shifting scenes. They show us, as the redemptive goal of our active, desirous life, a symbol of the inorganic—the stone—something that does not live but merely exists or “becomes,” the passive subject of a limitless and unfathomable play of opposites. “Soul,” that bodiless abstraction of the rational intellect, and “spirit,” that two-dimensional metaphor of dry-as-dust philosophical dialectic, appear in alchemical projection in almost physical, plastic form, like tangible breath-bodies, and refuse to function as component parts of our rational consciousness. The hope for a psychology without the soul is brought to nothing, and the illusion that the unconscious has only just been discovered vanishes: in a somewhat peculiar form, admittedly, it has been known for close on two thousand years. Let us, however, not delude ourselves: no more than we can separate the constituents of character from the astronomical determinants of time are we able to separate that unruly and evasive Mercurius from the autonomy of matter. Something of the projection-carrier always clings to the projec-

personal alman. He becomes the one animating principle of all from his prison. Mercurius assumes the character of the super-dian view. Leads to the illusion of individual existence. Freed to the ego and the principle of individualization, which in the personal alman of the tree. Isolated in the bottle, he corresponds and living numen. In the language of the Upansishads, he is the bottle, is yet found in the roots of the tree, as its quintessence mystery of life, the mercatorial spirit, though imprisoned in the and soul, in spite of the artificial separation, are united in the Mercurius from the *hydriargyrum*, as it draws off the spirit intervention which separates body from soul and divides the spirit initiation, or consciousness itself, effects that world-shattering in- with it, Mercurius is called *argentum vivum*. Conscious discrimination, "living" substance it has animated and appears to be one the "living" experience, when directly experienced, confronts us in

²⁸⁷ Since the psyche, with the chaos of Tiamat, is in truth a primordial experience, with the chaos of creation. The struggle with the alchemists say, God's work of creation. The repeats, as the humanæ. If a man puts his hand to the opossum, he repeats, as the superhumanæ that they seem to us like a *crime læse majestatis* we call the unconscious: it is refractory like matter, mystery today we call it. The same is true of that objective spirit which today to its laws, and only to the extent that he did so could he control without closely observing its behavior and paying heed matter which is matter. Nowhere and never has man controlled bolt for which is matter. The most appropriate symbol we encounter the phenomenonology of an "objective" spirit, a true matrix of psychic experience, the most appropriate project, minable meditation" demanded by the work. In these interactions we encounter the phenomenonology of an "objective" spirit, with the Master who spoke of the "wearinesses of the inter-

created things, the *hiranyagarbha* (golden germ),² the supra-personal self, represented by the *filius macrocosmi*, the one stone of the wise. "Rosinus ad Sarratantam" cites a saying of "Malus Philosophus"³ which attempts to formulate the psychological relation of the lapis to consciousness: "This stone is below thee, as to obedience; above thee, as to dominion; therefore from thee, as to knowledge; about thee, as to equals."⁴ Applied to the self, this would mean: "The self is subordinate to you, yet on the other hand rules you. It is dependent on your own efforts and your knowledge, but transcends you and embraces all those who are of like mind." This refers to the collective nature of the self, since the self epitomizes the wholeness of the personality. By definition, wholeness includes the collective unconscious, which as experience seems to show is everywhere identical.

²⁸⁸ The encounter of the poor student with the spirit in the bottle portrays the spiritual adventure of a blind and unawakened human being. The same motif underlies the tale of the swine-herd who climbed the world-tree,⁵ and also forms the *leitmotiv* of alchemy. For what it signifies is the individuation process as it prepares itself in the unconscious and gradually enters consciousness. The commonest alchemical symbol for this is the tree, the *arbor philosophica*, which derives from the paradisal tree of knowledge. Here, as in our fairytale, a daemonic serpent, an evil spirit, prods and persuades to knowledge. In view of the Biblical precedent, it is not surprising that the spirit Mercurius has, to say the least, a great many connections with the dark side. One of his aspects is the female serpent-daemon, Lilith or Melusina, who lives in the philosophical tree. At the same time, he not only partakes of the Holy Spirit but, according to alchemy, is actually identical with it. We have no choice but to accept this shocking paradox after all we have learnt about the ambivalence of the spirit archetype. Our ambiguous Mercurius simply con-

² Cf. Maitrayana-Brāhmaṇa Upanishad, V, 8 (Sacred Books of the East, vol. 15, p. 311). He occurs as the *spiritus vegetativus* and collective soul in the Vedanta-Sutras (*ibid.*, vol. 34, p. 173, and vol. 48, p. 578).

³ The treatise of Rosinus (*Zosimos*) is probably of Arabic origin. "Malus" might be a corruption of "Magus." The *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadim (A.D. 987) lists, along with writings of Rimas (*Zosimos*), two works by Magus one of which is entitled "The Book of the Wise Magus (?) on the Art" (Ruska, *Turba*, p. 272).

⁴ *Art. aurif.*, I, p. 310.

⁵ Cf. "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales," pp. 231ff.

ch. 5, "Christ, a Symbol of the Self,"—Editors.]
[Cf. *Psychology and Alchemy*, ch. 5, "The Lapis-Christ Parallel," and *Aion*,

and unprovable faith). Although I have stressed that the Lapis is not be distinguished from a God-image (except by inconveniences), it is an essential element of the psychological self, and the self can-truly has something of that *deus absconditus* (hidden god) which it is to represent any kind of totality. Mercurius as *deus terrae* is an important aspect of the self—the fact, namely, that it is essentially a *complexis oppositorum*, and indeed can be nothing else. Hermetic symbols. The paradoxical nature of Mercurius reflects reality, they cannot express themselves otherwise than in dark matter from the Christian model. But since they possess living spirit. It represents all those things which have been eliminated apart, bound to nature and at odds with the Christ-an angel of light. The Lapis formulates an aspect of the self points to the devil, who is known at times to disguise himself as Christ." On the contrary, as we have seen, in many ways it Christianity and can on no account be expressed by the symbol sends a part of the psyche which was certainly not moulded by ours, dark, paradoxical, and thoroughly pagan. It therefore represents the symbolic figure of Christ. In comparison with the substance, points, psychologically speaking, to the self, as also does the symbolism, like that of Mercurius who constitutes its world. Its symbolism, like that of Mercurius, who constitutes its Lapis is at most a counterpart or analogy of Christ in the physical they really meant Christ. If this had been their meaning, why this militates strongly against the assumption that by their Lapis should they have remained Christ the *Lapis philosophorum*? The Lapis is a triad, even to the Trinity. It looks as if it were not only to the Holy Spirit, but, in the form of the Lapis, also to all the more striking because his positive aspect relates him to Mercurius in a predominantly unfavorable light, which It must be admitted that the fairytale and alchemy both precisely these relationships which led the alchemists to put parallel stress on the dark and dubious quality of Mercurius, and this militates strongly against the assumption that by their Lapis they really meant Christ. If this had been their meaning, why this militates strongly against the assumption that by their Lapis should they have remained Christ the *Lapis philosophorum*? The

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lungs the rule. In any case, the paradox is no worse than the show Mercurius in a predominantly unfavorable light, which is all the more striking because his positive aspect relates him to Mercurius, "accidentally," located on the very same tree as the forbidden snake,

a symbol embracing the opposites, it should not be thought of as a—so to speak—more complete symbol of the self. That would be decidedly incorrect, for actually it is an image whose form and content are largely determined by the unconscious. For this reason it is never found in the texts in finished and well-defined form; we have to combine all the scattered references to the various arcane substances, to Mercurius, to the transformation process and the end product. Although the lapis in one aspect or another is almost always the subject discussed, there is no real consensus of opinion in regard to its actual form. Almost every author has his own special allegories, synonyms, and metaphors. This makes it clear that the stone, though indeed an object of general experiment, was to an even greater extent an outcropping of the unconscious, which only sporadically crossed the borderline of subjectivity and gave rise to the vague general concept of the *lapis philosophorum*.

²⁹⁰ Opposed to this figure veiled in the twilight of more or less secret doctrines there stands, sharply outlined by dogma, the Son of Man and Salvator Mundi, Christ the Sol Novus, before whom the lesser stars pale. He is the affirmation of the daylight of consciousness in trinitarian form. So clear and definite is the Christ figure that whatever differs from him must appear not only inferior but perverse and vile. This is not the result of Christ's own teaching, but rather of what is taught about him, and especially of the crystal purity which dogma has bestowed upon his figure. As a result, a tension of opposites such as had never occurred before in the whole history of Christianity beginning with the Creation arose between Christ and the Antichrist, as Satan or the fallen angel. At the time of Job, Satan is still found among the sons of God. "Now there was a day," it says in Job 1 : 6, "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." This picture of a celestial family reunion gives no hint of the New Testament "Get thee hence, Satan" (Matthew 4 : 10), nor yet of the dragon chained in the underworld for a thousand years (Rev. 20 : 2). It looks as if the superabundance of light on one side had produced an all the blacker darkness on the other. One can also see that the uncommonly great diffusion of black substance makes a sinless being almost impossible. A loving belief in such a being naturally involves cleansing one's own house of black filth. But the

The two are not identical. The Christian development represents a very considerable advance compared with the ancient Israelite religion of law. The Christians of the synoptic gospels signifies little more than a coming into terms with issues inside Judaism, which may fairly be compared with the much earlier Buddhist reformation inside Hindu polytheism. Psychologically, both reformations resulted in a tremendous strengthening of consciousness. This is particularly evident in the therapeutic method employed by Shakayamuni. But the sayings of Jesus manifest the same tendency, even if we dis- card as apocryphal the clearest formulation of this kind, the Lord's Prayer in Codex Bezae to Luke 6 : 4: "Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed. If thou knowest it not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the Law." At all events, the para-

The balance of the primordial world is upset. What I have said is not intended as a criticism, for I am deeply convinced not only of the relentless logic but of the expediency of this development. The emphatic differentiation of opponents is synonymous with sharper discrimination, and that is the sine qua non for any broadening or heightening of consciousness. The progressive differentiation of consciousness is the most important task of human biology and accordingly meets with the highest rewards—merely increased chances of survival and the development of power technology. From the phylogenetic point of view, the effects of consciousness are as far-reaching as those of lung-breathing and warm-bloodedness. But clarification of lung-effects necessarily entails an obscuration of those dimmer elements of the psyche which are less capable of becoming conscious, so that sooner or later a split occurs in the psychic system. Since it is not recognized as such it is projected, and appears in the form of a metaphysical split between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. The possibility of this projection is guaranteed by the presence of numerous archaic vestiges of the original damages of light and darkness in any age. It seems likely, therefore, that the tension of oppositions in Christianity is derived to a still greater degree from the dualism of ancient Persia, though

which must be dumped somewhere, and no matter where the dump lies it will plague even the best of all possible worlds with

ble of the unjust steward (Luke 16) has not found its way into the Apocrypha, where it would have fitted so well.

²⁹³ The rift in the metaphysical world has slowly risen into consciousness as a split in the human psyche, and the struggle between light and darkness moves to the battleground within. This shift of scene is not entirely self-evident, for which reason St. Ignatius Loyola considered it necessary to open our eyes to the conflict and impress it on our feelings by means of the most drastic spiritual exercises.⁷ These efforts, for obvious reasons, had only a very limited range of application. And so, strangely enough, it was the medical men who, at the turn of the nineteenth century, were forced to intervene and get the obstructed process of conscious realization going again. Approaching the problem from a scientific angle, and innocent of any religious aim, Freud uncovered the abysmal darkness of human nature which a would-be enlightened optimism had striven to conceal. Since then psychotherapy, in one form or another, has persistently explored the extensive area of darkness which I have called the shadow. This attempt of modern science opened the eyes of only a few. However, the historic events of our time have painted a picture of man's psychic reality in indelible colours of blood and fire, and given him an object lesson which he will never be able to forget if—and this is the great question—he has today acquired enough consciousness to keep up with the furious pace of the devil within him. The only other hope is that he may learn to curb a creativity which is wasting itself in the exploitation of material power. Unfortunately, all attempts in that direction look like bloodless Utopias.

²⁹⁴ The figure of Christ the Logos has raised the *anima rationalis* in man to a level of importance which remains unobjectionable so long as it knows itself to be below and subject to the *kúrios*, the Lord of Spirits. Reason, however, has set itself free and proclaimed itself the ruler. It has sat enthroned in Notre Dame as Déesse Raison and heralded events that were to come. Our consciousness is no longer confined within a sacred temenos of other-worldly, eschatological images. It was helped to break free by a force that did not stream down from above—like the *lumen de lumine*—but came up with tremendous pressure from below and increased in strength as consciousness detached itself from the

⁷ *The Spiritual Exercises* (trans. Rickaby), pp. 75ff.

[From L. *mephitis*, a noxious exhalation from the earth.—TRANSLATOR.]

darkness and climbed into the light. In accordance with the principle of compensation which runs through the whole of nature, every psychic development, whether individual or collective, possesses an optimum which, when exceeded, produces an antinorma, that is, turns into its opposite. Compensation even denies emanating from the critical turning-point, though it continues persisting in its course they are completely suppressed. The stirrings in the darkness necessarily seem like a devilish being the approach to the critical turning-point, however even during the development everything that contradicts it or condemns as unbearable development. Reason cannot help to lay all of the ideal of spiritual development. Reason can only do what it does not agree with it is inevitably immoral and has therefore to be repressed. It is not difficult to imagine the multitude of energies which must flow off into the unconscious under such conditions of domination.

Hesitantly, as in a dream, the introspective brooding of the centuries gradually put together the figure of Mercurius and created a symbol which, according to all the psychological rules, stands in a compensatory relation to Christ. It is not meant to take his place, nor is it identical with him, for then indeed it could replace him. It owes its existence to the law of compensation, and its object is to throw a bridge across the abyss separating the two psychological worlds by presenting a subtle compensation to the Christ image. The fact that in Faust the two compensatory figures are almost merged together is not, as one might have expected from the author's classical predilections, the wily messenger of the gods, but, as the name "Mephistopheles",⁸ shows, a scoundrel, the ingrained Christian mentality, the dark antagonist of Goethe's consciousness. To the Christian mentality, the dark antagonist is also a devil. As I have shown, Mercurius escapes this prudence by only a hair's breadth. But he escapes it, thanks to the fact that he scours to carry on opposition at all costs. The magic of his name enables him, in spite of his ambiguity and duplicity, to keep outside the split, for as an ancient pagan god he possesses a natural undividedness which is impervious to logical and moral contradictions. This gives him invulnerability and incorruptibility.

bility, the very qualities we so urgently need to heal the split in ourselves.

296 If one makes a synopsis of all the descriptions and alchemical pictures of Mercurius, they form a striking parallel to the symbols of the self derived from other sources. One can hardly escape the conclusion that Mercurius as the lapis is a symbolic expression for the psychological complex which I have defined as the self. Similarly, the Christ figure must be viewed as a self symbol, and for the same reasons. But this leads to an apparently insoluble contradiction, for it is not at first clear how the unconscious can shape two such different images from one and the same content, which moreover possesses the character of totality. Certainly the centuries have done their spiritual work upon these two figures, and one is inclined to assume that both have been in large measure anthropomorphized during the process of assimilation. For those who hold that both figures are inventions of the intellect, the contradiction is quickly resolved. It then merely reflects the subjective psychic situation: the two figures would stand for man and his shadow.

297 This very simple and obvious solution is, unfortunately, founded on premises that do not stand up to criticism. The figures of Christ and the devil are both based on archetypal patterns, and were never invented but rather *experienced*. Their existence preceded all cognition of them,⁹ and the intellect had no hand in the matter, except to assimilate them and if possible give them a place in its philosophy. Only the most superficial intellectualism can overlook this fundamental fact. We are actually confronted with two different images of the self, which in all likelihood presented a duality even in their original form. This duality was not invented, but is an autonomous phenomenon.

298 Since we naturally think from the standpoint of consciousness, we inevitably come to the conclusion that the split between consciousness and the unconscious is the sole cause of this duality. But experience has demonstrated the existence of a preconscious psychic functioning and of corresponding autonomous factors, the archetypes. Once we can accept the fact that the voices and delusions of the insane and the phobias and obsessions of the neurotic are beyond rational control, and that the ego cannot voluntarily fabricate dreams but simply dreams what

⁹ Evidence for this is the widespread motif of the two hostile brothers.

God, XI, vii.

"For the knowledge of Ostanus concerning the stone that has a spirit,
11 "For the knowledge of the creature, in comparison with the knowledge of the
creature, is built a twillight; and so it dawns and breaks into morning when the
Creator, is drawn to the love and praise of the Creator. Nor is it ever darkened,
save when the Creator is abandoned by the love of the creature."—*The City of*

Mercurius is by no means the Christian devil—the latter
the evening and the morning star—Lucifer, the light-bringer.
darkness arises a new light, the *stella matutina*, which is at once
fall. But just as evening gives birth to morning, so from the
human and natural consciousness gradually darkens, as at night-
ness, then Augustine's thought would suggest that the merely
natural *Creatura*.¹¹ If we equate *cognitio* with conscious-
first corresponding to the *scientia* creature and a *cognitio matutina*, the
knowledge, a *cognitio vesperina* and two forms of
the night, nor of darkness," and distinguishes two forms of
the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of
sense that St. Augustine quotes I Thessalonians 5:5, "We are all
other than the figure of light veiled in matter.¹⁰ It is in this
surpassing all lights," the *lux moderna*, for the laps is none
nios and an Eros, yet it is from him that there issues the "light
swollen with blood). He is at the same time a Hermes Chtho-
venitur in vena / *Sanguine plena*" (He is found in the vein
a god of illusion and delusion of whom it is rightly said: "In-
he is the *benedicta viriditas* and the *multi flores* of early spring;
Cupid and Kyllenios, he tempts us out into the world of sense;
soullessness and Mercurius as the archetype of the unconscous. As
From this standpoint Christ appears as the archetype of con-
the modern intellect but does not alter the logic of our hypoth-
conditions from these figures. This is expecting a good deal of
figures from our psychic conditions, must derive our psychic
our rationalistic causal sequence, and instead of deriving these
ages that can be directly experienced, we are obliged to reverse
So if Christ and the dark nature-deity are autonomous im-
its stars.

it has to, then we can also understand that the gods came first
and theology later. Indeed, we must go a step further and as-
sume that in the beginning there were two figures, one bright
and one shadowy, and only afterwards did the light of conscious-
ness detach itself from the night and the uncertain shimer of

could rather be said to be a "diabolization" of Lucifer or of Mercurius. Mercurius is an adumbration of the primordial light-bringer, who is never himself the light, but a *φωσφόρος* who brings the light of nature, the light of the moon and the stars which fades before the new morning light. Of this light St. Augustine says that it will never turn to darkness unless the Creator is abandoned by the love of his creatures. But this, too, belongs to the rhythm of day and night. As Hölderlin says in "Patmos";

and shamefully

A power wrests away the heart from us;
For the Heavenly each demand sacrifice,
But if it should be withheld,
Never has that led to good.

³⁰¹ When all visible lights are extinguished one finds, according to the words of the wise Yajñavalkya, the light of the self. "What then is the light of man? Self is his light. It is by the light of the self that a man rests, goes forth, does his work and returns." ¹² Thus, with Augustine, the first day of creation begins with self-knowledge, *cognitio sui ipsius*,¹³ by which is meant a knowledge not of the ego but of the self, that objective phenomenon of which the ego is the subject.¹⁴ Then, following the order of the days of creation in Genesis, comes knowledge of the firmament, of the earth, the sea, the plants, the stars, the animals of the water and air, and finally, on the sixth day, knowledge of the land animals and of *ipsius hominis*, of man himself. The *cognitio matutina* is self-knowledge, but the *cognitio vespertina* is knowledge of man.¹⁵ As Augustine describes it, the *cognitio*

¹² Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, IV, 3, 6 (cf. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 133).

¹³ "And when it [the creature's knowledge] comes to the knowledge of itself, that is one day" (*Et hoc cum facit in cognitione sui ipsius, dies unus est*).—*The City of God*, XI, vii. This may be the source for the strange designation of the lapis as "filius unius diei." [Cf. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, pp. 335, 504.]

¹⁴ "Since no knowledge is better than that by which man knows himself, let us examine our thoughts, words, and deeds. For what does it avail us if we are to investigate carefully and understand rightly the nature of all things, yet do not understand ourselves?"—*Liber de Spiritu et Anima*, LI (Migne, P.L., vol. 49, cols. 816–17). This book is a very much later treatise falsely attributed to Augustine.

¹⁵ "Wherefore the knowledge of the creature, which is in itself evening knowledge, was in God morning knowledge; for the creature is more plainly seen in

matutina gradually sand things" and expect this to have knowledge. But have lost its m lapse cannot be that self-knowledge revealed after wrapped in the arising with the *scientia hominum*. "Who is it that myself." That arises the seven fies the rest of before the day on light of the *cog*. From the symbcance that Aug of the week. Then on the day of V

God than it is seen (Migne, P.L., vol. 49)

¹⁶ The *Liber de Spiritu et Anima* knowledge, as being who seek God through them is God. Let us selves. . . . At first things. Secondly, we to God" (chs. LI-LII, *alium*; also "deep in self. The *Liber de Spiritu et Anima* edition. Augustine has (col. 154): "Go not off. And if you find that member that when reasoning soul."

¹⁷ "Evening descended say, that light of j XXIX, II, 16 (transl.)

¹⁸ *The City of God*, Book XIX, Chapter 16 (transl.)

¹⁹ *Confessions* (transl.)

19 *Confessions* (trans. Sheed), p. 289.

18 *The City of God*, XI, viii, Cf. also *Dialogue*, LXXV, Quæst. XXVI.

30 : 5 (A.V.): "Weeping may tarry for the night but joy cometh in the morning."

XXIX, II, 16 (trans. Hobgbin and Corrigan, I, p. 308). These words refer to Ps. say, that height of justice which is the presence of God." — *Narrationes in Ps.*

17 "Evening descends when the sun sets. Now the sun has set for man, that is to increase soul."

member that when you transcend yourself, you must transcend yourself as a And if you find that you are by nature changeable, transcend yourself. But re-

col. 154): "Go not outside, return into yourself; truth dwells in the inner man.

dition. Augustine himself says (*De vera religione* LXXXII, Migne, PL, vol. 34, self. The Liber de spiritu et anima is in the mainstream of Augustinian tra-

dition; also "deep heart") is the mandala divided into four, the imago Dei, or altum; "deep heart" (chs. LI-LII; Migne, PL, vol. 40, col. 817). The "high heart" (cor to God". Secondly, we ascend to the high heart. . . In the third ascent we ascend things. Secondly, we ascend to our high heart. Let us therefore return to ourselves, that we may ascend to our- selves. . . At first we ascend to ourselves from these outward and inferior them is God. Let us through outward things, forsaking that which is in them, and in who seek God through essential condition for union with God. "There are some knowledge, as being an essential condition for union with God. "The self importance to self.

16 *The Liber de spiritu et anima* attributes very great importance to self. (Migne, PL, vol. 40, col. 741).

God than it is seen in itself." — *Dialogue*, Quæstionum LXXV, Quæst. XXVI

on the day of Venus (Fridays), and changes into Lucifer on Sat-
urday. The growing darkness reaches its greatest intensity
of the week. The growing darkness reaches its greatest intensity
cance that Augustine had in mind the pagan names of the days
from the symbolic standpoints it may not be without significance.¹⁹
height of the *cognitio materialia*. And this day has no evening.¹⁹
fore the day on which man returns to God and receives anew the
hees the rest of those who rest in God." Is The Sabbath is here-
arises the seventh day, the day of rest: "But the rest of God signi-
"Who is it that knows and understands everything?" Why, it is
scientia hominis, the knowledge of man, who asks himself:
"That marks the coming of darkness,²⁰ out of which
myself." That means the knowledge of everythings? Why, it is
revealed after a night during which consciousness slumbered,
that self-knowledge is the *scientia Creatoris*,¹⁶ a morning light
lapse cannot be ascribed to so gifted a man. His real meaning is
have lost its meaning by contradicting itself. Such an obvious
knowledge. But if this were true, Augustine's parable would
pect this to have happened already with the onset of self-
matutina gradually grows old as it loses itself in the "ten thou-

urn's day. Saturday heralds the light which appears in full strength on Sun-day. As I have shown, Mercurius is closely related not only to Venus but more especially to Saturn. As Mercurius he is *juvenis*, as Saturn *senex*.

³⁰² It seems to me that Augustine apprehended a great truth, namely that every spiritual truth gradually turns into something material, becoming no more than a tool in the hand of man. In consequence, man can hardly avoid seeing himself as a knower, yes, even as a creator, with boundless possibilities at his command. The alchemist was basically this sort of person, but much less so than modern man. An alchemist could still pray: "Purge the horrible darknesses of our mind," but modern man is already so darkened that nothing beyond the light of his own intellect illuminates his world. "Occasus Christi, passio Christi."²⁰ That surely is why such strange things are happening to our much lauded civilization, more like a *Götterdämmerung* than any normal twilight.

³⁰³ Mercurius, that two-faced god, comes as the *lumen naturae*, the Servator and Salvator, only to those whose reason strives towards the highest light ever received by man, and who do not trust exclusively to the *cognitio vespertina*. For those who are unmindful of this light, the *lumen naturae* turns into a perilous *ignis fatuus*, and the psychopomp into a diabolical seducer. Lucifer, who could have brought light, becomes the father of lies whose voice in our time, supported by press and radio, revels in orgies of propaganda and leads untold millions to ruin.

²⁰ *Enarrationes in Ps. CIII*, Sermo III, 21 (Migne, P.L., vol. 37, col. 1374).

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