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THE HISTORY OF MAGIC

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Kurt Seligmann

THE HISTORY OF MAGIC



250 ILLUSTRATIONS

Pantheon Books

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TO ARLETTE

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Ioannès ab Indagine, *Chiromantia*, Strassburg, 1531

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217. Position of the planets on the right hand
Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia Libri III*, Antwerp, 1533

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Ronphyle, *La chiromantie*, Paris, 1665

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John Indagine, *The Book of Palmestry*, London, 1676

220 Lines of the thumb
John Indagine, *The Book of Palmestry*, London, 1676

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B Coclès, *Physiognomonia*, Strassburg, 1551

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B. Coclès, *Physiognomonia*, Strassburg, 1551

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Introductory Note

THE aim of this book is to present to the general reader a condensed account of the magical ideas and operations in the civilized Western world Because of the character of this book a vast material had to be sifted and reduced to what I considered most typical. Such a condensation, however, may convey more to the lay reader than a lengthy dissertation on an inexhaustible theme.

Magic has been treated mainly in two different ways. The specialized works of scholars are confined to specific types, aspects and eras; generally, they are written for the scientific reader. On the other hand, there are innumerable publications of questionable value expounding ideas rarely based on fact, but twisting the truth into a narrow system of a special brand: that of the sectarian of the occult. Only a few authors on magic have written for the general reader, a fact which will perhaps justify this publication

Without pretence to original scholarship, my investigation has been guided by such scholarly works as those of J G Frazer, A. von Harnack, G L. Kittredge, Fr J Boll, L Thorndike, and others In addition, my personal library of old books on magic and witchcraft facilitated this investigation and permitted me to select a wealth of illustrations which the reader will welcome, no doubt. As an artist, I was concerned with the aesthetic value of magic and its influence upon man's creative imagination The vestiges of ancient peoples tend to indicate that religio-magical beliefs have given a great impulse to artistic activities, a stimulus which outlasted paganism and produced belated flowers in the era of Christianity.

I wish to express my gratitude to the following persons who have helped me in assembling and coordinating material for this book: Miss Henrietta Weigel, Ralph Hyams, Martin James, Miss Edith Porada, Marc Pagano.



Fig 1 Shell Plaques of a King of Ur
(Courtesy of The University Museum, Philadelphia)

MESOPOTAMIA

The Forgetful Gods

From time immemorial, man has felt confronted with evil supernatural beings, and his weapon against them has been the use of magical rites. Spirits lurked everywhere Larvae and lemures lived beneath the earth; vampires escaped from the dead to attack the living, Namtar (pestilence) and Idpa (fever) plagued the cities Night was ruled by the demons of evil, of the desert, of the abyss, of the sea, of the mountains, of the swamp, of the south wind. There were the succubi and the incubi, carriers of obscene nightmares; the snare-setting Maskim, the evil Utuq, dweller of the desert; the bull demon Telal; and Alal the destroyer.

People's minds were dominated by malign demons who demanded sacrifices and prayers But the sages of ancient civilizations knew also that good spirits existed, ever ready to come to the rescue of the afflicted. In the higher magical religions the priests conceived a supreme deity, a wise controller of the world's harmony.

Amid such fears and wonders lived the river peoples of the Tigris and Euphrates· the legendary Sumerians who had settled in the lower Euphrates valley five thousand years before Christ, the dark-skinned Akkadians who had established themselves in the region of Babylon three thousand years before our era, the Elamites, ancestors of the Persians whom we can trace back to the fourth millennium, the star-wise Babylonians, founders of a world empire; the Assyrians, first vassals of Babylon, subsequently conquerors of western Asia and Egypt, and again the Medes, whose glory had seemed everlasting until the Persians achieved hegemony over all Asiatic lands.

In the broad plains, on terraces of temples and towers, the priests scanned the night sky, pondering over the riddle of the universe—the cause of all being, of life and death They offered their prayers to the spirit of Hea, the Earth, and to the spirit of Ana, the Sky By conjuration, by the burning of incense, by shouts and by whispers, by gesture and by song, the priests sought to attract the attention of the fickle gods who had forever to be reminded of the misfortunes of mortals "Remember," the incantations were always reiterating:

"Remember him who makes sacrifices—may forgiveness and peace flow for him like molten brass May this man's days be vivified by the sun!—Spirit of the Earth, remember! Spirit of the Sky, remember!" [1]

Not only were the demons to be feared, but also within man himself lived dangerous powers If magic was a protector, it was likewise a destroyer, a formidable weapon in the hands of criminals who used it to attain evil ends. The sorcerer believed himself to be beyond laws and religious commandments, casting spells and reciting incantations to kill at random

"The imprecation acts upon man like an evil demon The screaming voice is upon him. The maleficent voice is upon him The malicious imprecation is the cause of his disease The maleficent imprecation strangles this man as if he were a lamb The god in his body made the wound, the goddess gives him anxiety. The screaming voice, like that of the hyena, has overcome him and masters him." [2]

Some sorcerers were believed to possess the evil eye, which enabled them to kill by merely glancing at their victims; of others it was said that they created images of their enemies which they burned or punctured with pins, depending upon the amount of harm they desired to inflict.

"He who forges the image, he who enchants—
The spiteful face, the evil eye,
The mischievous mouth, the mischievous tongue,
The mischievous lips, the mischievous words,
Spirit of the Sky, remember!
Spirit of the Earth, remember!" [3]

There were incantations against the innumerable operations of black magic, against the ever-present demons which pass like snakes furtively into the house, preventing women from conceiving, stealing children, sometimes descending upon the land like pillaging Asiatic warriors.

"They fall on one land after the other,
They raise the slave above his rank,
They cast the freewoman out of the house where she gave birth,
They cast the young birds out of their nests into emptiness,
They drive the oxen before them, they drive away the lamb,
The evil, the cunning demons" [4]

But voices of peace are also heard amid the fear and the tumult, and hymns of worship alternate with conjurations. A broken tablet still reads in cuneiform characters "The garlands . exalted shepherd . . on the thrones and altars . . . the marble scepter . . . exalted shepherd, King, shepherd of the peoples . . ."

These peaceful songs cease when Namtar, the pernicious demon, unfolds his black wings Then the afflicted are reminded of Mulge, Lord of the Abyss, and the planets, his kin In deadly terror they call upon the gods and the spirits whom they had forgotten in their prosperity, for men are forgetful just as the gods whom they shaped in their image.

Spirit of Mulge, Lord of the countries, remember [5]
Spirit of Nin-gelal, Lady of the countries, remember.
Spirit of Nindar, mighty warrior of Mulge, remember
Spirit of Paku, sublime intelligence of Mulge, remember.
Spirit of En-Zuna, son of Mulge, remember
Spirit of Tishku, Lady of the hosts, remember
Spirit of Udu, King of Justice, remember . .*

Such is the nature of the cuneiform inscriptions that have come to us from the royal library at Nineveh, which, in the seventh century B.C., King Ashurbanipal had compiled from the ancient Akkadian texts. These had long since become unintelligible, but precisely for this reason even greater powers were ascribed to them It was taken for granted that, since these mysterious formulas had been recited for ages, they were still efficacious. Similar beliefs that the magic word must not be altered existed among other nations of antiquity, beliefs which, indeed, with slight modifications, survive in our day Veneration for the original word of the Scriptures is stressed in our time by Catholics and Jews who recite their prayers in Latin or Hebrew, in spite of the fact that these languages are dead, just as Akkadian was during the Ashurbanipal period.

The ancient Akkadian texts clearly show these peoples' conception of the supernatural For them, Good and Evil are caused by good or evil spirits sent forth by good and evil gods Their world is dualistic, the stage of undecided combat between the forces of light and dark No moral distinction is made in this perennial struggle, in the belief that it is only through fatality that these forces are either good or bad Good may well engender evil, as illustrated by Mulge, who, although not belonging essentially to the evil principle, yet begot Namtar, the most cruel of all demons Good and evil are not even necessarily encamped in separate abodes beneficent powers dwell in the dark abyss of Mulge, and spiteful forces live side by side with charitable ones In these beliefs, man would have been the prey of chaos had he not employed magical arts to protect himself against evil influences

Through magic, he established his society, it coordinated his daily life The arts flourished, merchants attended to their business, troops maneuvered in the plain, from the temples rose the smoke of sacrifices, hunters roamed the northern mountains, and in the king's palace the wise assembled to discuss affairs of state These nations have left behind vestiges of their high culture; a refined taste, a sharp sense of beauty were predominant Artisans made marvelous things from metal, stone, wood, shells, and other materials; their works harmoniously united elegance with simplicity, ostentation with intimacy, humor with cruelty.

The ancient Elamites had created their gods in animal forms. But among the Sumero-Akkadians, human gods emerge from the beast The animal is subdued and is made to conform to human ways On the harp of the king of Ur is engraved the mythical hero Gilgamesh, embracing two rampant man-headed bulls. Lion and dog are depicted on their way to the sacrifice, a bear is holding

* Mulge is the master of hell, Nin gelal is the earth Nindar is Saturn, Paku is Mercury, En Zuna is the moon, Tishku is Venus, Udu is the sun

a harp "that fills with joy the temple courts," while a donkey is playing upon it, a jest that was also dear to the Middle Ages On the bear's paw, a fox makes himself at home, drumming on a board and shaking his rattle under the muzzle of the carved bull's head which adorns the sounding box. A creature—half man, half scorpion—is about to dance. Standing on his hindlegs, a chamois shakes the rattles. These scenes represent the wild spirit of the dance (fig. 1).

Joyous feasts alternate with solemn sacrifices, and everything is accomplished by magical operations that free the soul from fear and stimulate man's imagination It was for magical purposes that images were carved, poems written, music played, and public monuments erected

Divinatory Arts

DEMONS were powerful, capable of killing man and beast, but they could not altogether destroy life, nor could they permanently disrupt the order of nature. An eclipse of the sun might cause panic; but ultimately the sun emerged victorious from this struggle against evil, for did it not rise and set day after day, with the seasons following one another, bringing sowing and harvesting? Man stimulated the rhythm of nature by incantation, dance and gesture; and the stars moved in accordance with immutable laws as if to bear witness to the harmony of the world.

With the progress of civilization, the early dualism was modified In Chaldea, wise men discovered a higher order and a better law. By contemplation of the night sky, the Chaldean priests conceived a supreme god from whom sprang the other deities This god was a creative power chained to the eternal law which he embodied, and submitting to his own decrees. Based upon a philosophical system, a purer religion was born from Akkad's demoniacal world

About two thousand years before our era, a reform took place. a caste of priests was founded in whom all occult knowledge was concentrated They were masters in the arts of prescience, predicting the future from the livers and intestines of slaughtered animals, from fire and smoke, and from the brilliancy of precious stones, they foretold events from the murmuring of springs and from the shape of plants. Trees spoke to them as did serpents, "wisest of all animals " Monstrous births of animals and of men were believed to be portents, and dreams found skillful interpreters

Atmospheric signs, rain, clouds, wind, and lightning were interpreted as forebodings, the cracking of furniture and wooden panels foretold future events Such cracking was called Assaput, the Prophetic Voice; it did not always bode ill, sometimes presaging the "rejoicing of the heart." Flies and other insects, as well as dogs, were the carriers of occult messages.

"If a red dog enters the temple, the gods will desert it
If a dog is found lying upon the king's throne, the palace will be burned down
If a white dog enters the temple, it will stand for a long time
If a gray dog enters the temple, it will be deprived of its possessions.
If a yellow dog enters the king's palace, the palace will be destroyed." [6]

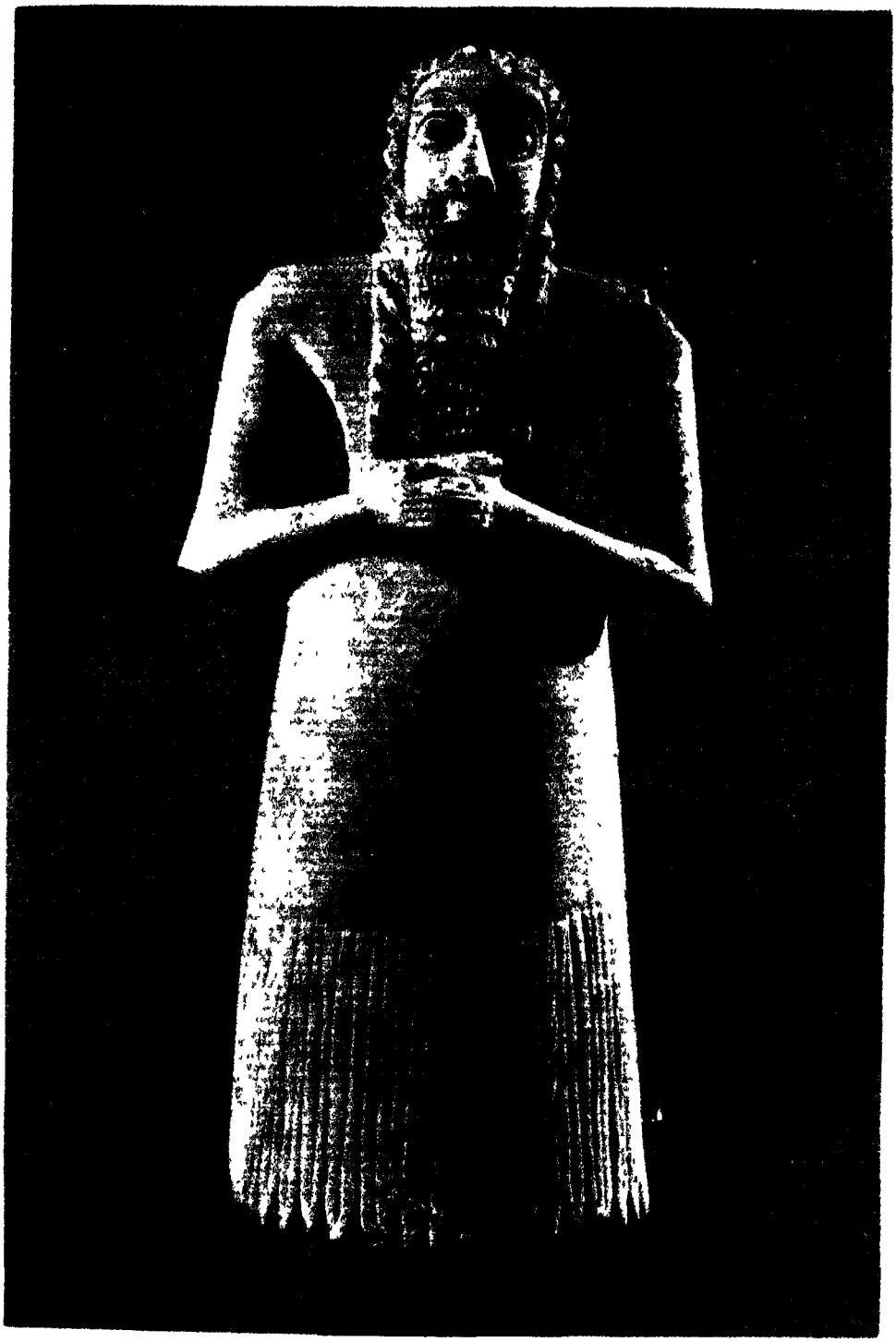

Fig 2. Statue of an Akkadian
(Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The Chaldeans sought also to prognosticate the future through arrow divination. In the writings of Ezekiel, we read:

"The king of Babylon stands at the parting of the ways, at the fork of the two roads, practicing divination, he shakes the arrows. . ."

According to St. Jerome, the king used the arrows for a strategic purpose. In order to know which city he should attack first, he marked his arrows with the names of his enemies. He put them into the quiver and, after shaking them, took out one of the arrows, the name it bore directed the army to its first attack.

The practices of divination may seem puerile or at least so primitive in character as to appear irreconcilable with the elaborate Chaldean cosmogony. However, such reasoning is superficial if we contemplate the world concept of the Chaldeans which was essentially magical, akin to that of the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. We find similar "superstitions" among all these peoples, where divination is the logical application of their theory of magic To the magus, there exists no accidental happening, everything obeys the One Law, which is not resented as a coercion but rather welcomed as a liberation from the tyranny of chance. The world and its gods submit to this law, which binds together all things and all events *Certa stant omnia lege* everything is established solidly by that law which the wise man discerns in happenings in appearance accidental to the profane The curve observed in the flight of birds, the barking of a dog, the shape of a cloud are occult manifestations of that omnipotent coordinator, the source of unity and harmony

The Mystery of Stars and Numbers

In the search for a supreme standard, a prototype of order and harmony, the priests looked to the heavens where, inaccessible, the stars move along A minute and incessant observation of the heavenly bodies led them to that wisdom which we call astrology. In their everlasting round, the planet-gods were performing a pantomime, expressive of the Law which ruled the universe. The stargazers understood the meaning of this harmonious play They could foretell the configurations of the grandiose rondo and they knew also in what way the heavenly movement would affect happenings on earth. In the world hierarchy, the superior rules over the inferior, and the star gods were the heavenly rulers of all that lay below.

Among them, the seven planets were the most powerful, "the interpreter gods" Jupiter-Marduk was the creator, the awakener of the dead, the victor over chaos His bright star was a torch, "a ruler of the sky." When appearing in the moon aura, he bestowed male offspring. His influence was always favorable. The forebodings of the moon, Sin, were ambiguous because of its irregular phases. Growth was hindered by its contraction, stimulated by its expansion The sun, Samas, carrier of life and light, was likewise ambiguous, bring-

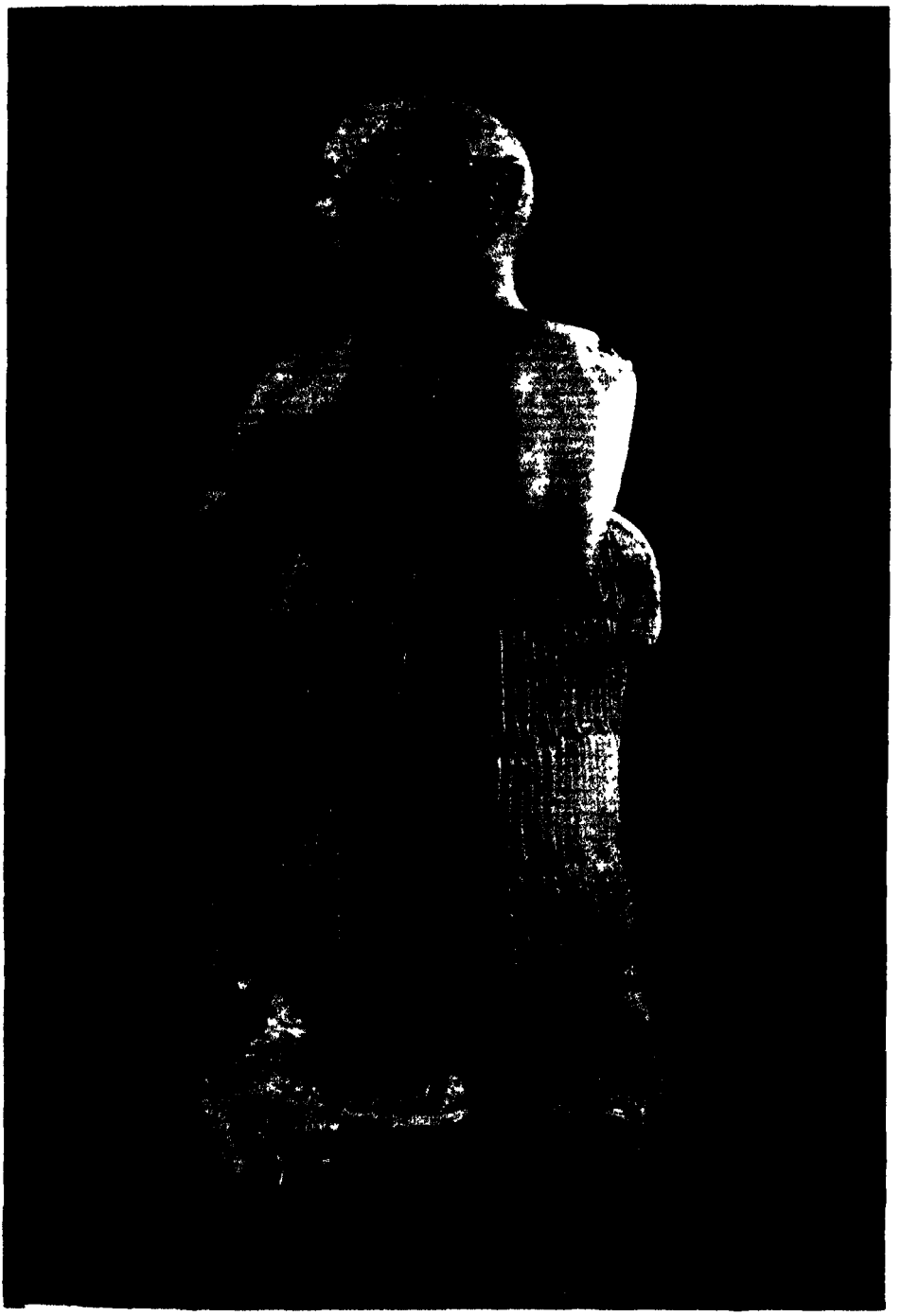

Fig 3 Statuette of a Sumerian
(Courtesy of The University Museum, Philadelphia)

ing sometimes scorching and drought. Uncertain was Mercury, Nebo, the scribe and god of wisdom, who wrote down the deeds of men: knowledge can bring forth good and evil. Saturn, Adar, the god of hunting, was propitious to public affairs as well as to family life But he too seems generally to exert evil influence, they called him the Great Misfortune Evil was Mars, Nergal, the god of the dead and of pestilence, causing war, and foretelling death to the king. He destroyed the wheat and the date harvest; he stunted the growth of cattle and fish roe He was called the fiend, the Persian, the Fox, etc. Venus, Ishtar, the goddess of motherhood and love, was beneficent From her emanated great healing power; by her vegetation is brought forth; however, she was dangerous to widows and to sucklings

Besides the planets, the signs of the zodiac also are offsprings of Chaldean astrology, and six of its original figures still exist to this day They are the Bull, the Twins, the Lion, the Balance, the Scorpion and the Fishes Although little is known of their symbolism, it may be surmised that these figures originally were closely connected with earthly affairs. Thus, for instance, the price of wheat was fixed according to the position of the heavenly Balance, rather than according to the quantity produced by the harvest When the sign of the Fishes shone weakly, it meant that fish roe was affected adversely, when Nergal, the evil planet, approached the sign of the Scorpion, it meant that the king was about to die from a scorpion's sting.

In the astrologer's language, symbols and allegories were adopted which were enigmas to the profane. The sun sheds tears; Jupiter is surrounded by courtiers; the moon travels in a carriage and accepts various crowns from the stars she approaches, crowns of the evil wind, of anger, of happiness, of iron, of bronze, of copper and of gold. Venus seizes foreign goods and wears crowns of different colors according to her conjunction with Mars, Saturn, Mercury or Jupiter.[7]

These enigmatic images were expressed in the old tongue of Akkad or Sumer, the "language of the gods," in which only the initiate conversed The cosmic secrets were hidden from the people, because of the fear that knowledge of the future might either discourage them or cause them to abandon their daily work from joy Those who had knowledge of the stars were more influential than king's ministers, and foreign rulers consulted them frequently. Diodorus of Sicily (first century of the Christian Era) gives witness of their prestige. "Having observed the stars during an enormous number of years," he says, "they know more precisely than anyone else the movements and the influences of the stars, and they predict with accuracy many things to come."

From ancient times, the known world had been divided according to the four quarters of the sky The south was Akkad (Babylonia), the north, Saburtu (Assyria), the east, Elam (Persia); the west, Syria and Palestine. The movements of the stars and other events in the sky were interpreted according to this astrological geography. Thus it was considered a natural thing when thunder resounded in the south, Akkad, whereas thunder from other directions was considered as an omen On the twenty-ninth of the month, the moon was favorable to Akkad, but unfavorable to Amurru, etc. Of still greater intricacy was

the Chaldean concept of star substitution. Its meaning has been a mystery until a recent discovery cast light upon it. In certain cases of star interpretation, a planet or a fixed star might be replaced by a constellation or zodiacal figure. Thus Saturn might be replaced by the Balance, by Cassiopeia, by Orion or by the Raven This enigmatic relationship was based upon similarities of color and strength of light among the stars. Heavenly bodies of the same luminosity and color were believed to be related to one another, a theory which permitted many variations and subtleties in star interpretation.[8]

As far back as memory reached, metals were related to the underworld. They lay hidden in the hollow of the earth and no heavenly stars shone upon them; yet, in the wish to relate all earthly things to heaven, the astrologer saw an affinity between metals and planets, an idea which still haunted the mediaeval alchemists. To the Chaldeans gold was the metal of the sun, silver that of the moon, lead that of Saturn. Tin had its correspondence in Jupiter, iron in Mars, and copper in Venus.

Like a mysterious, incised seal representing the preestablished mathematical harmony of the universe, certain sacred numbers are to be found in the skies, numbers which seem to confirm the basic idea of astrology. They appear to assist each other and to lend themselves to many speculations. Thus the number seven occurs in the main stars of the Great Bear and in the Lesser Bear, in the Pleiades and in Orion. Seven are the days of the moon quarters, seven are the planets of antiquity. Twelve and thirty seem to be mystically connected. Twelve are the zodiacal signs, thirty is the number of a moon period, and thirty are the years of Saturn's circuit. The product of twelve and thirty is the approximate number of the days of the year. Many such relations can be found. They offer to the indefatigable astrologer a wide field for his inquiries and quests. Together with astrology, mystic numbers came into being and like astrology, numerology has survived through the ages with astounding vitality.[9]

Knowing what keen observers the Chaldeans were, it is difficult to believe that all their wisdom was of an arbitrary nature. No doubt, many features of their knowledge were based on a true notion of meteorology, physics, chemistry and medicine. Let us not forget, however, that astrology, which has been the stimulus to many scientific discoveries, was also theology. In its vast domain, there is nourishment for both spirit and soul, and there can be no doubt that astrology owes its longevity to its psychic rather than to its intellectual value Yet it is good to remember also that the great astronomer Kepler made his discovery at the end of his vain search for that law which unifies the universe His desire for unification was similar to that which had animated the Chaldean astrologers, whose early wisdom still exerted a powerful influence at the dawn of modern science Astrology and numerology are such great discoveries that no epoch has escaped their influence. At the end of the eighteenth century, the romanticist Novalis still believed in the mystical essence of numbers. "It is very likely," he says, "that in nature a marvelous mysticity of numbers is at work, and in history also Is not everything of significance, symmetry and strange connection? Can God not reveal Himself as well in mathematics as in other sciences?" [10]

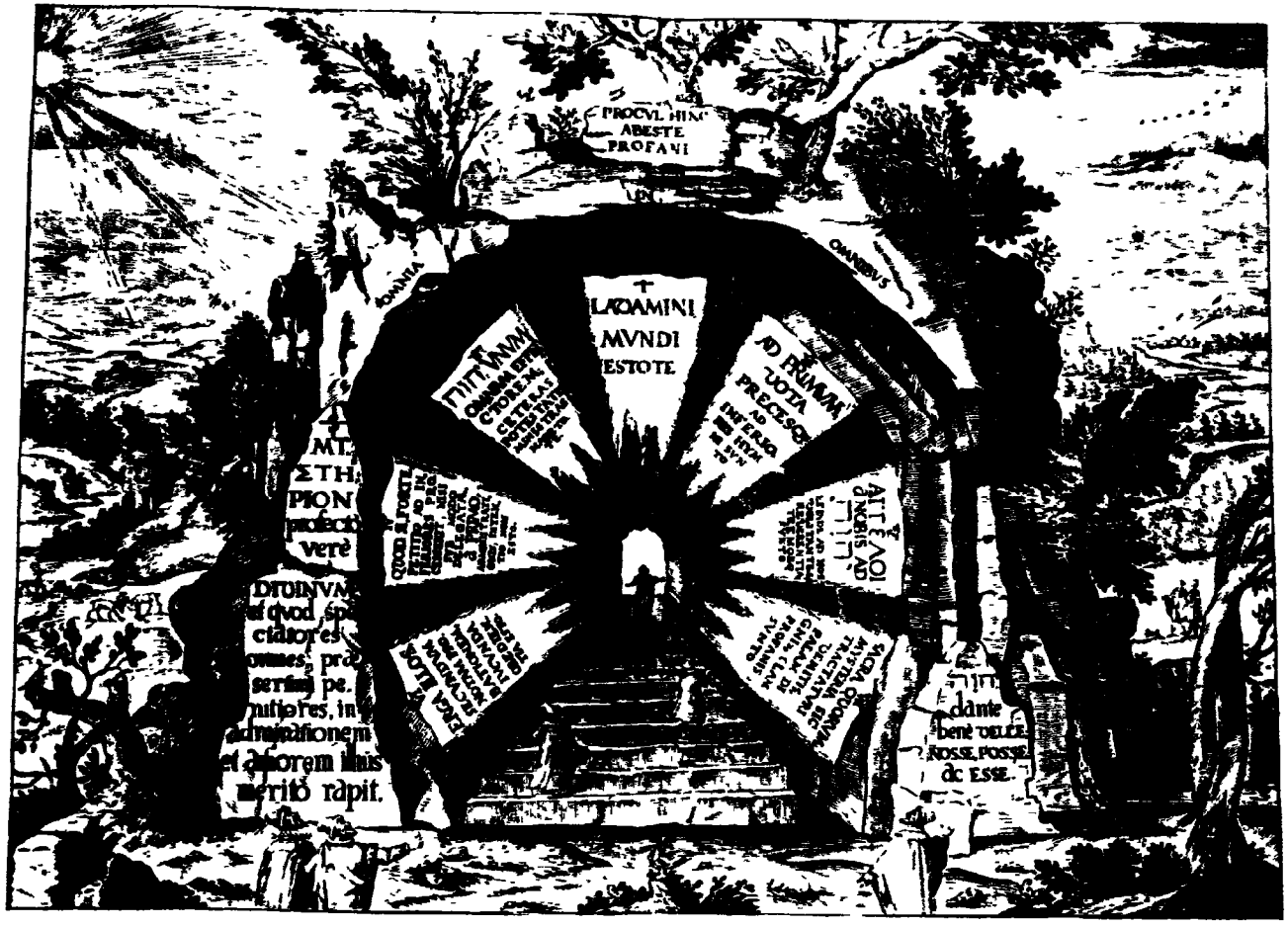

Fig. 4 The Gateway to Eternal Wisdom

The Tower of Babel

> In relating the things of the earth to the celestial, and those of heaven to the inferior, the Chaldeans have shown in the mutual affections between these parts of the universe (which are separated in space but not in essence) the harmony that unites them in a sort of musical accord
>
> PHILO JUDAEUS

In the search for a plastic expression of their cosmogony, the Chaldean rulers devised the temple tower, the ziggurat Built in steps, it expressed the degrees of hierarchy on which heaven and earth were established The ziggurat was actually a miniature world, its structure represented the "Mountain of Earth" In Babylon they erected the El-Temen-An-Ki, the house of the foundation stone of heaven and earth This magical monument, known in the Bible as the Tower of Babel, had seven stages, each one dedicated to a planet Its angles symbolized the four corners of the world, pointing to Akkad, Saburtu, Elam, and the western lands Four, according to old Sumerian traditions, was the number of the heavens, and the square or rectangle was accepted by Babylon as the basis of their system The seven steps of the tower were painted in different colors which corresponded to the planets The "Great Misfortune," Saturn, was black Saturn, the "Nightly Sun," was at the base, opposed to the highest degree, the gilded top of the tower where the sun resided. The second story up was white, the color of shining Jupiter, the third, brick-red, the color of Mercury Then followed blue for Venus, yellow for Mars, gray or silver for the moon These colors boded good or evil, like their planets This explains why a yellow dog entering the palace foretells destruction, for yellow was the color of Mars-Nergal, the war god In the same way a white dog brings luck, because he is the color of the beneficent planet, Marduk-Jupiter.

The height of El-Temen-An-Ki corresponded to its length The square, though divided into seven, was again respected, and the old tradition of a fourfold world was reconciled with the seven heavens of later times.

For the first time in history numbers expressed the world order Such speculations became frequent among later philosophers. A legend depicts Pythagoras traveling to Babylon where he is taught the mystery of numbers, their magical significance and power. The seven steps often appear in magical philosophy. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Heinrich Khunrath, in his *Amphitheater of Eternal Wisdom*, depicts wise men ascending the seven steps before they reach the hidden lights of wisdom. As the Chaldean priests may have warned the impious against entering the temple tower, Khunrath had these words engraved over the entrance of his marvelous cave. "Stay away, keep out from here, ye profane." (Fig. 4.)

An earlier woodcut shows a learned man wrapped in a doctor's mantle, setting his foot on the first of the seven steps Through ascending these he will attain the knowledge of God, whose name is at the eighth degree, the threshold of God's heavenly dwelling. According to this image, which illustrates Lully's



Fig 5 The Steps Leading to the Celestial City

book *On the Ascent*, the seven steps are stones, fire, plants, animals, man, the starry heavens and the angels Starting with the humble study of stones, the man of wisdom will attain higher and higher degrees of knowledge, until he will be able to apprehend the sublime, and the eternal (fig 5)

The Babylonian commonwealth was administered according to the law which the priests had discovered in the universe Nothing could disturb the world order but the impiety of man Once angered, the gods would leave the temples

and choose a dwelling in a foreign country Then chaos would reign, and Chaldea would become a prey to evil.

The temple towers are the symbols, the very embodiment of ancient wisdom. In the conviction that their knowledge was valid for all time, the kings had the towers constructed so that they might be invulnerable to decay. Thus the ziggurat were never raised above some three hundred feet The royal seal was imprinted on each brick and the kings compared the raising of these structures to the superhuman, boasting that they were "like heaven" This may be the reason for the erroneous belief that the Tower of Babel was of an enormous height.

Among the temple towers restored by Nabopalassar, who reigned 625–604 B C, was that of Babylon An inscription recording this pious deed reads as follows

> "As for the temple tower of Babylon, El-Temen-An-Ki, which before my time had become weakened and had fallen in, Marduk the lord commanded me to lay its foundation in the heart of the earth and to raise its turrets to heaven I caused numerous workmen to be assembled in my land to carry them I set to work, I made bricks, I manufactured burnt bricks Like the downpour of heaven which cannot be measured, like the massive flood, I caused the Arabtu to carry bitumen and pitch With the help of Hea, with the insight of Marduk, with the wisdom of Nebo and Nisaba . . I came to a decision By means of exorcism, in the wisdom of Hea and Marduk, I cleared away the place and on the original site I laid its platform foundation" [11]

The image of the king is then placed in the foundation together with silver, gold, jewels, "goodly oil" and herbs The royal family carries precious tools and baskets in a solemn procession In this inaugural ceremony, mortar is mixed with wine, and the king continues

> "I built the temple in front of Esharra with rejoicing, and like a mountain I raised its tower aloft, to Marduk my lord, as in days of old, I dedicated it for a sight to be gazed at O Marduk, my lord, look with favor upon my goodly deeds At thy exalted command, which cannot be altered, let the performance of my hands endure forever Like the bricks of El-Temen-An-Ki, which are to remain firm forever, do thou establish the foundation of my throne for all time O El-Temen-An-Ki, grant blessing to the king who has restored thee When Marduk with joy takes up his abode in thee, O temple, recall to Marduk, my lord, my gracious deeds." [12]

The tower, however, decayed rapidly King Nebuchadnezzar, Nabopalassar's son and successor (ruled 605–562 B C), refers to its restoration in this inscription· "The temples of Babylon I have restored As for El-Temen-An-Ki, with burned bricks and bright ugnu-stone I raised on high its turrets"

However, bricks, bitumen and magical incantation could not prevent its decay The famous tower perished together with the splendor of Babylon. Its sand-covered ruins seem to confirm the legend of Genesis which tells of the

confusion of languages, brought about by Elohim in order to stop this "sinful" construction. In the symbolic language of the Orient, its builders say: "Come, let us build ourselves a city with a tower, whose top shall reach to the heavens, so that we may not be scattered over all the earth."

Was it not indeed to conquer the heavens and their secrets that the ziggurat was erected? These magical attempts were destined to fail because the workmen were scattered and disunited, says the book of Genesis, contrary to the true aim of magic, which is to achieve unity.



Fig 6 Zoroastrian Priest

PERSIA

Zoroaster

In the primitive dualistic world the powers of light and darkness are worshipped alike The equal strength of both good and evil may have arisen in the mind of man when he observed nature and meditated upon his own life. Man is inhabited by contradictory forces, in his thought and action, good and evil are so intimately mingled that he cannot always distinguish between them Moreover, good intentions sometimes generate evil, or criminal desires become the servant of the good Both principles seem to be everlasting, and in nature nothing carries out the idea that light should overcome darkness In the east, good rain falls, fertilizing the land, while in the west evil rain falls, causing destructive inundation The south wind carries pestilence and fever whereas the north wind cleanses the air and chases away disease No wonder that primitive man discovers good and evil spirits everywhere He calls upon them, flatters them, lies to them, and uses every means which he deems fit to bring about good influences and to avert the evil ones Out of fear he pays more respect to evil spirits. When the hunter's arrow failed his prey, such failure is rarely attributed to lack of skill but rather to a nefarious intervention of evil. Little power is given to man in such a primitive world.

With growing civilization, man became increasingly aware of his capacities and his responsibility The Chaldean star religion taught that luck and disaster are no haphazard events depending on the caprices of spirits, rather they derive from the heavenly bodies which send good and bad according to mathematical laws Man, it should seem, was incapable of fighting the will of the planet divinities Yet the more this system evolved, the more did the wise men read ethical values into man's fate the will of the stars was not completely independent from man's demeanor His deeds were mysteriously linked with the happenings above, and they were of importance in the interplay between heaven and earth In the seventh century B.C., the king of Assyria, Ashurbanipal, sent his prayer to the star Sirius

> "Speak, and the gods may assist thee,
> Judge, give thine oracle,
> Accept the raising of my hand, harken to my imprecation
> Take away the enchantment, blot out my sin" [1]

A spell had been cast upon the ruler who asked himself whether he deserved this misfortune because he had committed a sin The favor of the star is invoked to remove not only the spell, but its cause as well, the evil deed And Sirius is addressed as the messenger of higher gods who assist him in his beneficent course, and whose will he announces

It was probably in Ashurbanipal's time that Zoroaster the Median prophet preached the doctrine that evil, though powerful and everpresent, can be avoided and lastly defeated Zoroaster purified the ancient belief in the hosts of good and evil spirits, rulers of a split universe He traced these legions back to their principles Ormazd (Ahura-Mazda), king of light, Ahriman (Anra-Mainyu), prince of darkness The good demons of older traditions were dethroned by Zoroaster, however, ineradicable from popular beliefs, they were granted a place in the hierarchy of evil spirits

Led by Ahriman, these spirits no longer oppose Good in unruly swarms The kingdom of Evil has become organized like that of Good The two armies are marshaled in warlike array As in the game of chess, whose white and black figures oppose each other in equal strength, the armies of light and of darkness face one another Victory, however, is not followed by peace, because the struggle continues to the end of time In heaven as on earth resounds the battle cry Here Ormazd—There Ahriman!

Six archdemons are Ahriman's principal underlings, corresponding to the six archangels surrounding the king of light These archangels are Divine Wisdom, Righteousness, Dominion, Devotion, Totality, and Salvation The archdemons are the spirits of Anarchy, Apostasy, Presumption, Destruction, Decay, and Fury The lastmentioned archdemon's name is Aeshma Daeva, known to the Hebrews as Ashmadai and to Christian demonologists as Asmodeus Still unsolved is the riddle of why this demon has attracted more interest in the Occident than other Zoroastrian devils According to Pierre de Lancre (died 1630), Asmodeus is the "chief of the fourth hierarchy of evil demons," who are called "the avengers of wickedness, crimes and misdeeds" The learned Bra-

bantian doctor John Wier (1515–1588) gives in his *Pseudo-Monarchy of Demons* a curious description of Asmodeus "He is a great and powerful king He appears with three heads, a bull's head, a human head and a ram's head. He has goose feet and a snake's tail He exhales fire and rides upon a dragon of hell. He carries a spear and a banner" Truly the goose-footed fiend will give goose flesh to whoever calls upon him Asmodeus is, however, not to be feared Say to him. "In truth thou art Asmodeus," and he will give you a marvelous ring; he will teach you geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and mechanics. When



Fig 7 Asmodeus

questioned, he will answer truthfully He can render man invisible and reveal hidden treasures (fig 7)

Many other demons in the Zoroastrian religion, daevas of lower rank, tempt one away from the true worship of Mazda Paromaiti, Arrogance—Mitox, The Falsely Spoken Word—Zaurvan, Decrepitude—Akatasa, Meddlesomeness—Vereno, Lust [2]

Still lower in this fiendish hierarchy rank the Drujs, the Yatus, the Nasus, enchantresses, malevolent beings, deceivers, and monsters. Just as great is the circle of heavenly legions, the good Yazatas.

So far it is only by its minute organization that Zoroaster's dogma is distinguishable from that of primitive dualism But the reformer's originality resides in something beyond his elaborate angelology and demonology He conceived periods of time in which the fate of the material world and of the good and bad principle would be decided The outcome was to be good, defeat awaited Ahriman Zoroaster distinguishes between two types of time boundless time or eternity, and sovereign time, a long period which Ormazd "carved out" from the immeasurable bulk of eternity. Sovereign time will last twelve thousand

years; it is divided into four cycles of three thousand. Each millennium is presided over by a sign of the zodiac, an indication that sovereign time is thought to be an enormous celestial year whose smallest fraction is the circle of twelve daily and nightly hours Three, four, and twelve are the mystical numbers of this cycle. They are the base upon which evolves the number seven, the six archdemons together with Ahriman their ruler, and the six archangels and Ormazd.

The first three thousand years are those of spiritual creation, during which all creatures remain in their transcendental form The second triad is that of material creation, of celestial beings, of spirits, sky, water, earth, plants, animals, and mankind. The third period is that of the irruption of the Evil One, that dominated man's history before the coming of revelation The last period, that which started with the advent of Zoroaster, will end with the day of judgment.

Dualistic Zoroastrianism tended towards monotheism Evil was originally thought to have sprung from a doubting thought of the good god In later versions of the sacred scriptures, those accepted by the Zarvanite sect, there exists a single power, whence sprang Ormazd and Ahriman, the ill-matched brothers. This single power is Zrvan Akaran, Boundless Time, which rests in its glory, so incomprehensible to man that we can but honor it in awed silence

In this manner began creation. Akaran produced light by emanation; from light sprang Ormazd, the first-born, who created the pure world Then he ordered the hierarchy of angels and the myriad concepts of things he intended to bring into being Another emanation of Boundless Time was Ahriman, second-born of the Eternal, who was jealous and hungry for power He envied Ormazd and was banished to the realm of darkness, where he is to reign in night while the struggle between good and evil is being fought The war began thus After a thousand years, Ormazd created light patterned after the supermundane, the celestial light He fashioned the source of life, a power he called Bull, and Ahriman destroyed the bull-being From its scattered seed, Ormazd then fashioned the first man and the first woman With milk and fruit Ahriman seduced the woman, and man fell into sin. And as evil counterparts of the "good animals," Ahriman created harmful beasts, reptiles and snakes, the Khraftstras And the war goes on, overwhelming grows the strength of evil Yet, at the moment when Ahriman seems to triumph, redemption is at hand.

Redemption awaits the day of judgment, the advent of the Saviour, when a flood of molten metal shall sear the wicked while the righteous shall pass unharmed. As good and evil are parted finally from one another, Ormazd will establish his Good Kingdom The dead shall rise, and hell shall be purified and claimed for the enlargement of a regenerated world, deathless and everlasting.

Zoroastrian thought has exerted a greater influence upon the Western world than many wish to believe Though this religion is nearly extinct today, many of its ideas continue to live in Christian doctrine A V. William Jackson says that "anyone who has even a superficial knowledge of the Iranian religion cannot but be struck by the parallel that may be drawn between it on the one hand and Judaism and Christianity on the other." He points out how intimately



Fig. 8. Supposed Portrait of Zoroaster
(Courtesy of The Yale University Art Gallery)

related in both types of religion are the doctrines of angels and demons, how almost identical are the manifestations of the doctrine of a new kingdom, the coming of a saviour, the belief in resurrection, a general judgment and a future life, features of both dogmas, the Zoroastrian and the Christian The question of who was the originator of these ideas has not yet been satisfactorily answered We are inclined to believe, however, that most of these ideas germinated in an older tradition and were shaped by Zoroaster, whose teachings began to spread shortly before the Hebrews returned from their Babylonian exile.

It must have been in Babylon that the Hebrew sages became acquainted with Zoroastrianism and incorporated some of its features into the older creed There is also no doubt that the Gnostics accepted many Zoroastrian ideas, especially Hellenistic Gnosticism which attempted to reconcile Greek thought with that of the Orient. Infinite light, by which deity is expressed, the doctrine of the all-powerful and eternal word by which Ormazd creates the world, the emanation of divine light bringing forth the Good, and numerous other features of Zoroastrianism lived on in more or less altered form among Gnostics and Neo-Platonists—Mithraicism and Manicheism were offspring of Zoroastrian religion. Even the Mohammedans, whose persecution caused the decay of the Zoroastrian creed, accepted some of its features

Today, about two hundred thousand Parsees in India and Persia still perform the magical rites prescribed in the holy books attributed to the Iranian prophet.

Practically extinct, the old doctrine sprang up anew in the Middle Ages. Toward the end of the twelfth century, the dualistic creed of the Albigenses spread in France like wildfire Though suppressed in a pitiless crusade, it lived on surreptitiously Today the people in Carcassonne and Albi sometimes tell you in dark words of the struggle still being waged between good and evil. Again and again, the dualism of old brought forth the fruit of a vanished civilization, comparable to the ancient grain found in the tombs of the Pharaohs. planted in the earth they arise from the sleep of ages, and yield their long-delayed harvest.

Magic About Hair and Nails

not to pare our nails, whilst we are present
at the festival of the gods

HESIOD

NOT all the sacred books of Zoroastrianism have been preserved, and only a small part of the surviving sections can be ascribed to the Magus himself, namely the seventeen psalms or *Gathas*. The laws of worship and sacrifice are of early date Other books of the Magian cult are the hymns, the daily prayers, and the liturgies The books called *Vendidad*, compilations of anti-demoniac lore, were written after the middle of the fifth century B.C They contain rituals which are of a more purely magical type than others, and which therefore

attract our special attention. The dogmatic theology of Zoroastrianism is essentially religious, but the ritual of dealing with demons is magical Two instances will illustrate the magical aspect of cleansing rites, the ritual applying to hair and nails, described in this chapter, and that applying to the fly demon, treated in the succeeding.

In the seventeenth chapter of the *Vendidad*, there is a prescription devoted to parings of nails and clippings of hair, which as soon as they are separated from the body, belong to the Evil One as abodes of uncleanliness. Hair and nails taken from the dead are mentioned in the fable of how Zoroaster converted the royal family to the new doctrine, and how he escaped a plot against his life According to the story, courtiers hid bones in his room, together with hair and nails robbed from the dead. Accused of wizardry, Zoroaster was condemned to be hung At this moment the king's horse fell sick; its legs had entered its body "Free me," said the prophet, "and I will restore one leg." Freedom was granted, and the leg came forth. "Lord," said Zoroaster, "if thou wilt embrace my creed, I will restore the second leg." After the king's conversion, the two remaining legs were also restored, but only after the rest of the royal family and the court had become Zoroastrians.

Hair and nails, which were used by wizards for conjuring up the deceased, live "a life apart" from that of the body They lack sensibility and are seemingly dead. Yet they grow, and grow much more rapidly than the rest of the body. This individual tempo of growth together with a complete lack of sensibility may have led them to be regarded as individuals, growing upon people like parasitic plants In such a belief their independence would be sufficient cause for disquiet.

"1 Zarathustra (Zoroaster) asked Ahura Mazda (Ormazd)· O Ahura Mazda, most beneficent Spirit Maker of the material World, thou holy one. Which is the most deadly deed whereby a man increases the most baleful strength of the Daevas, as he would do by offering them sacrifice?

2 Ahura Mazda answered: It is when a man here below, combing his hair or shaving it off or paring his nails, drops them into a hole or into a crack.

3 Then for want of the lawful rites being observed, Daêvas are produced on the earth which we call lice, and which eat up the corn in the cornfield and the clothes in the wardrobe

4 Therefore, O Zarathustra, whenever here below thou shalt comb thy hair or shave it off, or pare thy nails, thou shalt take them away ten paces from the faithful, twenty paces from the fire, thirty paces from the water, fifty paces from the consecrated bundles of baresma (holy twigs)

5 Then thou shalt dig a hole, ten fingers deep if the earth is hard, twelve fingers deep if it is soft, thou shalt take thy hair down there and thou shalt say aloud these fiend-smiting words: Out of his pity Mazda made plants grow

6 Thereupon thou shalt draw three furrows with a knife of metal around the hole, or six, or nine, and thou shalt chant the Ahuna Vairya three times, or six, or nine

7. For the nails, thou shalt dig a hole, out of the house, as deep as the top joint of the little finger; thou shalt take the nails down there and thou shalt say aloud these fiend-smiting words: The words are heard from the pious in holiness and good thought." [3]

Zoroaster's concern with hair and nails has given full scope to the ironical humor of many who regard this as superstition unworthy of the wise. It is true that similar rites exist among primitive tribes whose level of civilization is far below that of the ancient Iranians Cut hair and nails are hidden away by many primitive people, or, deposited in sacred places, they are burned to prevent their falling into the hands of sorcerers who would use them for evil spells against their former owners

According to Frazer, the belief is widespread among these tribes that men may be bewitched through the clippings of their hair and the parings of their nails Among primitives, the custom existed and still exists of releasing war prisoners after their hair is shorn. The hair is kept as "hostage," a warrant for the future behavior of the defeated Thus they can be punished easily from any distance Whatever punishment the victors inflict upon the hair, its owners too will suffer

Our skepticism about Zoroastrian superstitions will subside when we learn how many similar beliefs still exist in Europe and America Chilean gauchos stuff their hair into walls, as do the Turks Armenians hide it in churches, hollow trees, and columns French peasants of the Vosges Mountains bury their hair secretly, together with extracted teeth, and mark the spot so that they may find them on the day of resurrection. In the village of Drumconrath, in Ireland, some trustworthy people, having learned from Scripture that their hairs were all numbered by the Almighty, expect to have to account for them on the day of judgment The good people of Liège in Belgium remove their hair carefully from their combs, lest it should come into the possession of some witch [1]

Zoroaster's belief that hair and nails produce insects or other animals did not spring from his own imagination The belief was older than Iran, and it was still alive in the sixteenth century of the Christian Era Women's hair buried in dung was thought to produce snakes In his book on witchcraft, published in 1603, the famous French judge, Henri Boguet, recalls St Thomas' opinion that rotten sticks can turn into snakes Though Paracelsus had declared *Nihil est sine spermate*--nothing exists without semen, the old belief lived on into the epoch of Leibniz and Newton Today, spontaneous generation of insects is held possible by people in Brittany. Hair carried away by wind, they think, will produce flies

Snakes, bugs, frogs, lice, flies, etc., were considered imperfect animals which are reproduced by corruption and not by semen. This implies that these animals were in relation with the infernal powers. According to Zoroaster, they were created by Ahriman, since nothing imperfect could derive from Ormazd Imperfection was, in Christianity, ascribed to the devil Popular tradition warns that he can never appear in perfect human form: either he limps or has a horse's hoof, betraying his true nature Satan was, like Ahriman, the master

of imperfect animals. Did he not give a silver louse to his devotees as a token of his friendship?

Great mystery surrounds the belief that hair and nails are specially susceptible to corruption, for reality has proven the contrary: in the grave they continue to "live" for some time independently of the decaying corpse.

Christianity, like Zoroastrianism, correlated hair and hell. Pious Jews think similarly about nails, a belief which causes them to pare them as short as possible. They profess that nails are abodes of evil, and that they are the only part of the body incapable of serving God Analogous beliefs do exist in Madagascar, where natives think that the devil dwells under unpared finger nails.

"Witches," says Paracelsus, "give their hair to Satan as a deposit on the contract they make with him But the Evil One does not waste this hair, for he cuts it up small and mixes it with the exhalation from which he forms hail; thus it has come to pass that we ordinarily find little hairs in hail " The conviction that hair is a refuge *par excellence* for devilish spells was shared by the persecutors of witches Before going to the torture chamber, suspected witches had all their hair shorn, a practice which made many a witch confess before the torture was applied The French jurisconsult Jean Bodin (1530–1596) records such an instance In 1485, forty witches in northern Italy simultaneously confessed their crimes, after having undergone this procedure In defense of the custom, he reminds us that Apollonius of Tyana was treated in the same way when the emperor Domitian had him arrested for wizardry.

The shocking recent happenings in liberated France, where women who had dealings with the Germans, saw their locks fall under the scissors of patriots, may likewise be traced to primitive magic It is a cleansing rite performed upon a taboo person Their hair was infected with the virus of the taboo which France had placed upon the invader

Casting out the Fly Demon

"The Lord of rats and eke of mice
Of flies and bed bugs frogs and lice
GOETHE *Faust*

FLIES, we know now, are imperfect animals, generated from corruption which they spread everywhere, carrying disease and contaminating foods. Anyone who has traveled in the East knows to what degree they constitute a true calamity Zoroastrian demonology has made of the fly a female demon, the Nasu, embodying impurity, putrefaction and decay, feeding in preference upon the dead.

The Nasu may be smitten "by corpse-eating dogs and birds"—beneficent creatures of Ormazd, whose glance can cast out demons. Expelled by their gaze, the demon, disguised in the shape of an abominable fly, leaves the

corpse. This forms the basis of the Sag-did ceremony, which must be performed before anyone may touch the dead An infringement of the taboo makes necessary a complicated cleansing rite, called the Barashnum, which the polluted must perform during nine days.

"The worshipper of Mazda shall dig three holes in the ground and he shall thereupon wash his body with gomez (ox urine), not with water. They shall then lift and bring my dog, they shall bring him in front of the man."

This is done three times, and the third time the defiled one is to be washed not with gomez, but with water.

"He shall first wash his hands If his hands be not washed, he makes his whole body unclean When he has washed his hands three times, thou shalt sprinkle with water the forepart of his skull"

This cleansing water will cause the Nasu to jump from one part of the head to another, chasing her from the head to the chest One after another, each part of the body is to be sprinkled with holy water in an oft-repeated and elaborate ceremony which ultimately drives the demon to the earth· from the right shoulder to the left shoulder, from the right armpit to the left, upon the chest, upon the back and so on until she is driven into the sole of the foot, "where what is seen of her is like the wing of a fly." From the sole, Druj-Nasu is finally driven to her last stronghold, the toe.

"He shall press his heels upon the ground and shall raise his right toe, thou shalt sprinkle his right toe with water, then the Druj-Nasu rushes upon the left toe Thou shalt sprinkle the left toe with water; then the Druj-Nasu flies away to the region of the north, in the shape of a raging fly, with knees and tail sticking out, all stained and like the foulest Khraftstras (devilish beasts)"

"And thou shalt say aloud these fiend-smiting and most healing words: The will of the Lord is the law of Holiness Whom hast thou placed to protect me, O Mazda while the hate of the fiend is grasping me . . . Who is he who will smite the fiend in order to maintain thy ordinances? Perish, O fiendish Druj! Perish, O brood of the fiend! Perish away, O Druj! Perish away to the regions of the north, never more to give unto death the living world of the holy spirit!"

The resemblance of this Zoroastrian cleansing rite to the Catholic rite of exorcism upon individuals possessed by demons is striking In AD 1582, Jerome Mengo published his *Whip for the Demons*, which deals with this difficult matter. This curious work was tardily (1709) placed upon the papal index. Up to that date, the priest-exorcist may have used rites such as are recommended in Mengo's treatise which includes frequent advice about washing the possessed with holy water, not unlike the ritual Zoroaster prescribes for his ceremonial As in the Barashnum, the demon is driven away systematically from every part of the body As anatomy was better known in Mengo's time than during that of the Iranian prophet, the enumeration of anatomical parts is

far more complete, which adds to the intricacy of the ceremony. At the end of the exorcism, the patient is bathed in a mixture of holy water and other liquids so "as to cleanse him of some malignancy against which no remedy has been foreseen, some spell which may lie hidden in the hair of the enchanted."

Other peoples of the East also resorted to supernatural powers for protection against the fly plague The Canaanites worshipped Beelzebub, whose temple was never polluted by these unclean insects. Beelzebub signifies "Lord of Flies." The Hebrews called him Prince of Demons (Matt 12 24, Luke 11:15), and the Pharisees accused Jesus of driving out other fiends with his help (fig 9).

Beelzebub was well known to the theologians and demonologists of the West. Pierre Le Loyer (1550–1634), first councilor to the king of France and an expert in such matters, tells us of a possessed woman in the city of Laon. Beelzebub, having been duly exorcised, escaped from her mouth in the form of a fly. "This is well testified to," he says, "by notaries and many goodly people, so that no one can doubt this happening "

In Christianity, Beelzebub is considered by many the sovereign of the empire of darkness His prestige brought forth other fly demons, imps that were suckled by English witches, and the big fly that stung Cunibert, king of Lombardy This incident occurred while the king was discussing with his favorite how best to rid the court of two noblemen who had defied him The royal court gave chase, but succeeded only in cutting off the fly's legs Meanwhile, the two noblemen were approached by an exhausted, one-legged man who warned them of the king's wrath, and they were able to escape

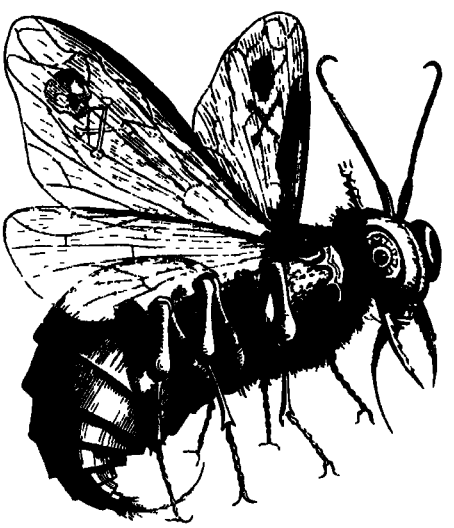

Fig 9 Beelzebub



Fig 10 Belphegor

THE HEBREWS

Jehovah's Warriors

In the fertile Tigris and Euphrates valleys, ruled by Babylonian and Assyrian masters, lived a people who disdained the hordes of good and evil demons They opposed the ostentatious, vain, and terror-inspiring idols, worshipping instead a single deity, a spiritual godhead that did not reside in images but was at once both invisible and omnipotent, reigning above the material world. In the eighth century before Christ, the most prominent Jews were deported to Assyria, and the Assyrians forced strange gods upon Jerusalem. In 605 B.C., Babylon rose again to establish a new Chaldean world empire, and King Nebuchadnezzar banished more Jews to the Euphrates Valley. Then as the people in Palestine continued to rebel, still more Jews were deported to Chaldea After the murder of a Babylonian governor in Jerusalem, the remaining Hebrews escaped the king's wrath by fleeing to Egypt.

These kings of Mesopotamia thought perhaps that the vanquished would merge with the populations of their own kingdoms. But this stubborn minority, preserving its individuality, held its own against foreign ways.

Perhaps a feeling of guilt among the captives caused a temporary tightening of morals For they thought that surely this banishment to a heathen land was sent by Jehovah to punish His people for their uncleanliness in the past. The greatest uncleanliness of all consisted in the cult of idols and the practice of magic. Had not the Hebrew prophets repeatedly warned their people that the Holy Land would no longer suffer these abominations, that it would spew forth its sacrilegious dwellers?

The false gods proved powerless before fate; none had prevented the devastation of Palestine The dispersed Jews could now reflect with shame and disgust upon these faithless gods

They had learned from the Egyptians to worship Beelsephon. A mare or dog, tradition says, was in his likeness—set up according to the rules of astrology.

Impure, Ammonitic Beelphegor dwelt in pits and rocky clefts, and at the time of the Exodus the Jews, seduced by the women of Sittim, were dissolutely sacrificing to Beelphegor's idols Moral purity was not his strong point, and Hosea thus protests against his disruptive influence:

"Therefore your daughters play the harlot
And your sons' wives commit adultery
I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot
Nor your sons' wives when they commit adultery,
For they themselves go with harlots
And sacrifice with temple prostitutes
And people without insight must go to ruin "

The Jews had also worshipped Dagon, the fish woman, goddess of the Philistines [1] Her gigantic bronze image was in the form of a beautiful woman, whose body, like the Syrian goddess Derceto and Dirce of Ascalon, ended in a huge fish tail (fig 11)

Then there was the Babylonian goddess, Succoth Benoth She was represented, the legend says, as a hen with her chicks. Asima, god of the Emathites, had the figure of a he-goat, Anamelech, that of a horse, and the Samaritan Nergal, that of a cock.

In Accaron Beelzebub's image was that of a fly, and the Israelite King Achaz sent for him in vain, to cure his sickness.

A gruesome deity was the Ammonitic Moloch, gobbler of children He alone of all the idols had no temple in Jerusalem. Even during the time of greatest decadence, he did not venture into the holy city The near-by valley of the sons of Hinnom sheltered his iron image; leading his followers astray in wantonness, he rejoiced at their doom. Moloch is identical with the Hebraic Melech, king The purpose of his cult was originally to gain health and long life for the king, who was expected to use his magic powers for the benefit of the people, in particular to obtain good harvests [2] But Moloch's price was too high, and the people burned their own children to please him Gorged with the lives of his victims, Moloch dominated over Hinnom. Cymbals, trumpets and drums filled the air with barbaric din, drowning out the shrieks of his victims (fig 12).

In spite of all these waverings and regressions to the old idol worship, the Jews were an exception among the nations of antiquity Ever and again, enlightened prophets arose to remind them of their ancient compact with the Eternal And during times of misfortune and persecution, the Jewish people remembered the one Lord, recognizing in their misery the stern and righteous hand of the "jealous God" In this conception of misfortune the Jews differed

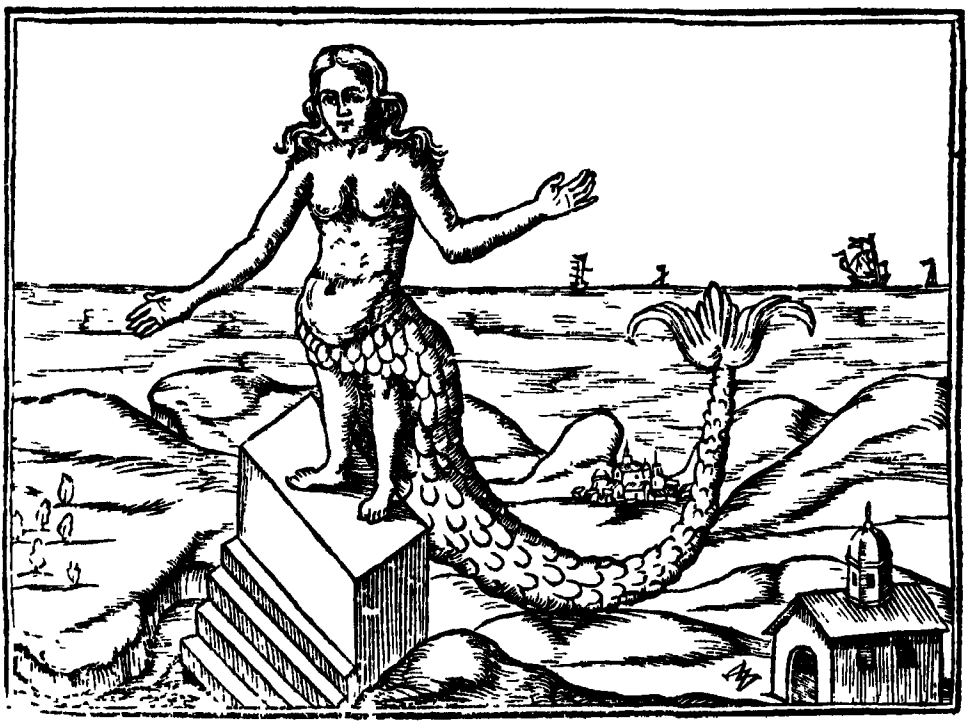

Fig 11 The Divinity Dagon

from their neighbors, who believed that ill fortune stemmed from evil powers with whom they must compromise when all their counter magic has failed.

Today we know that Israel had no monopoly of the idea of One God; nor can the chosen people claim to have been the first to conceive monotheism, which, we know also, became the Egyptian state religion under the young monarch Amenhotep IV He declared the old deities deposed (1375 B C), and over priestly opposition, enforced the religion of the one God, Aton, a name which may have lived on in the Hebrew Adonai, Lord Aton would suffer no images, and the disc of the sun was his only symbol Amenhotep, who with the new cult changed his name to Ikhnaton, also abolished the cult of the dead with all its magical rites Yet Aton's cult was short-lived The kingly reformer died in 1358 B C , and soon afterwards Aton was overthrown, having never gained popularity among a people so fond of the sculptured image

Neighboring peoples, whether friends or enemies, learn from one another

and an exchange of ideas takes place between them, so that for good or for evil they are linked. In spite of their stubborn resistance, the exiled Jews were not able to withstand foreign influences. If the apocryphal book of Tobit can be relied on, the Jews at Nineveh were not confined to separate communities. Many attained dignity and wealth Tobit was buyer for King Shalmaneser V (ruled 727–722 B.C.), journeying to Media on official business, and apparently



Fig 12 Moloch

to other lands of western Asia Under the succeeding king, Essarhaddon, the conqueror of Egypt, Tobit's nephew became secretary of the treasury, in charge of all the accounts of the kingdom

Many forgot their homeland, only a few, perhaps, remaining steadfast in their faith Thus Tobit could complain "All my brothers and relatives ate the food of the heathen, but I kept myself from eating it, because I remembered God with all my heart"

Even those who had remained in Palestine were hardly better able to withstand Assyro-Babylonian influences From the incensed writings of Ezekiel (sixth century B.C.), we learn of Israel's countless relapses into the various beliefs of its victors With few exceptions, the people were fascinated by the foreign religions and magic practices which were carried into the very temple at Jerusalem. "Lo, there were all sorts of loathsome forms of reptiles and beasts, together with all the idols of Israel" And at the north gate of the

Temple, "Lo, there sat women weeping for Tammuz." Still greater sacrilege was to be seen. "Between the vestibule and the altar about twenty-five men, with their backs to the tabernacle of the Lord and their faces to the east, were worshipping the sun of the East."

The abhorred gods of the Mesopotamians, the cult of the Persians, had invaded the Holy of the Holies, and at its gates the shrill pipe and plaintive flute were being played in honor of the ancient god Tammuz, whom the Sumerians had worshipped in the past as Dumu-Zi, the True Son. They gave Tammuz to the Hebrews Tammuz was the youthful lover of Ishtar, the great mother goddess, the embodiment of productive power, the female principle. Like Astarte, Cybele, Aphrodite, and Isis, she was the receptacle of life and growth. As Tammuz, the man-god, dies and descends into the underworld, he is bewailed by all femininity Ishtar follows her dead lover and wrests him from the infernal powers. Tammuz comes back to life for the sake of all life, and when the couple returns to the light of the day, nature rejoices, and vegetative activity, which had stopped during Ishtar's hell-journey, starts anew.

From time immemorial, Ishtar had been honored by the women and maidens of western Asia. A magical custom which aimed at stimulating the goddess' productive power accompanied the ancient cult in the form of prostitution. The usage probably dated back to the time when marriage was unknown or forbidden as an infringement upon old communal rights.[1] And the goddess Ishtar was thought to be unchaste and unwed, an abomination to the true believer in Israel.

The Jewish people passed through many crises and many relapses into various old and abolished cults, such as that of Tammuz; and they borrowed new elements which attached themselves to the monotheistic religion.

The notions of Daniel and of Ezekiel have quite a Persian character, and there is a thoroughly Persian flavor[4] to Tobit's story of his daughter-in-law Sarah, a Median Jewess. She was possessed by the evil demon Ashmadai, who had killed seven of Sarah's betrothed Ashmadai must be cast out To this end, incense was mixed with the heart and liver of fish and put on a burner. "And when the demon smelled the smoke, he fled to the farthest part of upper Egypt, and the Angel Raphael bound him there"

After the rise of Zoroastrian Magianism, Israel witnessed the collapse of her oppressors, when during the mid-sixth century Mesopotamian might was shattered and the Persians rode into Babylon Forty thousand Jews returned to the now deserted and gutted Jerusalem Through their political defeat, the Jews had lost faith in the stability of earthly things God's Kingdom was not on earth Palestine, they recognized, was the crossroad upon which marched the armies of powerful empires; and only the coming of the Messiah could free them from their political misery Like the Zoroastrians, they were preoccupied with the life to come after death—unknown to the old religion of Moses They longed for the establishment of the heavenly kingdom which would mark the end of their hopeless struggle

Magic in Holy Writ

THE Scriptures speak of magic as something whose existence no one doubts. Here, magic is a reality. The widespread condemnation of the occult does not arise from the suspicion that its magical operations are exploited for deception, but because magic is morally and socially harmful, indulging in what is forbidden and doing violence to the divine teaching.

Holy Writ recognizes God as a governor having jurisdiction over mankind. Piety and good deeds, it is true, influence Him favorably, but men's destinies are ultimately in His hands, and when He strikes the good man, it is not from injustice, for His ways are inscrutable, beyond mortal comprehension.

The Mosaic religion, like the Christian, opposed magic as an illicit tampering with God's power. But being itself an outgrowth of magic, its ritual contains many elements whose magical origin can hardly be denied. The Biblical miracle is not entirely unlike the magical prodigies recorded in Holy Writ, the distinction being that the one is performed by the will and with the help of Jehovah, whereas the other is brought forth with the assistance of the Evil One.

Jannes and Mambres, conjurors of the Pharaonic court, are wizards capable of imitating many of Moses' miracles—changing staffs into serpents and conjuring up swarms of frogs The Devil, who is the "ape of God," taught them to counterfeit the divine miracles of the prophet. The Devil's power, however, is limited· the conjurors were able to bring forth frogs, but it lay beyond their wisdom to make them disappear again. In this way, the Bible distinguishes between the miracle and the prodigy of black magic. The onlooker in Pharaoh's court must have regarded Moses simply as the more able magician.

An unmistakably magical operation is that performed by the patriarch Jacob. When they divided the herds, Jacob and his father-in-law Laban agreed that Laban was to have the unspotted animals, while all spotted goats should be Jacob's. "Then Jacob procured some fresh boughs of poplar, almond and plane and peeled these rods in alternate stripes of white and dark, and he put them in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink" The animals copulated duly and "the flocks conceived before the rods and brought forth cattle ring-streaked, speckled and spotted"

Jacob was using his striped sticks according to the magical principle that like produces like. striped boughs produce stripes upon the animals' hides. He did not gain his wealth through divine intervention; it was not a miracle which produced the spots upon the patriarch's cattle, but rather Jacob's knowledge of magic

We learn from the Biblical narrative that Joseph practiced divination by

hydromancy, that is, he wanted to discover hidden things by gazing into water. When his brothers were leaving the land of Egypt with their sacks of grain, Joseph caused a silver goblet to be hidden in Benjamin's sack. This vessel was not for drinking purposes only. "In fact," the Bible says, "he used it for divination." The practice of hydromancy must have been general in Joseph's time. He speaks about it as of something well known, not only to the Egyptians but also to the Hebrews. "Did you not know that a man like me would be sure to use divination?"

Moses, seeking to free his people from the plague of serpents, set up the bronze image of a snake in the wilderness. This statue had the character of a talisman; such images were used at all times as a protection against various evils. According to conceptions of magic, like not only produces like, but also propitiates it. Gregory of Tours (A D 538–594) tells how the Parisians, excavating for a bridge, found strange medals whose significance was unknown to them. One of these magical coins depicted a rat, another a snake and a third a flame. These talismans, Gregory says, became lost or destroyed, and since that time Paris has known rats, snakes, and conflagrations, three plagues which formerly had spared the city. The magus Jacques Gaffarel (1601–1681), the learned librarian of Richelieu, reports that during the capture of Constantinople by Mohammed II, the jaw of a bronze snake chanced to be broken This image had a talismanic virtue, and from that time on the city's snakes began to multiply in an uncanny way.

Gaffarel also mentions the snake of Moses, but pronounces it not to have been a magical image since it was made of copper, the sight of which, according to him, aggravates snake bites. He argues that Moses must have fashioned the statue in this metal to convince his people that it was no talisman but that its effects were divinely rather than magically wrought This argument seems somewhat weak.

In the Book of Numbers, we find a custom which must be classified as magical since it does not merely *pray* for a divine verdict, but *insists* on obtaining one· the jealous husband suspecting his wife of unfaithfulness brings her before the priest After performing some ceremonies, the priest summoning the woman bids her to "take her stand before the Lord, loosening the hair of her head" Then the priest pours the consecrated water into an earthenware jug, and after further ceremonies orders her to drink thereof "When he has made her drink the water, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, then the water that brings the curse upon entering her shall cause her pain, her womb shall become easily fertile but she shall have miscarriages, so that the woman shall become an execration among her people But if the woman is not defiled, she shall be immune and shall bear children."

Another custom of the Jews, one prescribed by their cult, arose from the belief that evil could be discharged into an animal. In the New Testament, Jesus cures a demoniac "night and day shrieking among the tombs and cutting himself with stones." The Messiah casts out these sons of darkness who thereupon rush into a herd of swine.

A very old ceremony was connected with this belief. Before the Hebrews could give themselves over to the Feast of the Tabernacles and its joys, a purification rite had to be performed on the preceding Day of Atonement. The high priest cast lots over two he-goats, one falling to Yaweh, the other to Azazel They offered up the Lord's goat in the usual manner, but the scapegoat, that was Azazel's, they sent into the wilderness with the sins of Israel. The suffix *el* (lord) suggests that in an earlier age Azazel had been a deity, perhaps a local god of primitive Semitic tribes. On being discarded as a god, Azazel was banished to the wilderness as an unclean being, an object of scorn, upon which the people might purge their misdeeds (*fig.* 13).



Fig 13 Azazel

Of all magic usages, divination of future and hidden things gained the strongest foothold in Israel We learn from the Scriptures that the Syrian Laban, Rachel's father, possessed the Teraphim, the household gods. He thought their oracle to be of unfailing truth. When Rachel eloped from her father's house with Jacob, she took with her the idols whose reliability she had learned to trust when still a child In her simple belief, she feared the Teraphim would tell Laban the direction of their flight And when Laban—unaided by the oracles—overtook the pair, Rachel resolved to keep the Teraphim, concealing them beneath her skirts The idols were the only things of her home that Rachel would not forego in the outside world (fig 14).

This survival of the pastoral faith passed into the popular magic of Israel. We do not know how one questioned the Teraphim nor how they answered, but like the Lares in Rome the Teraphim were to be found in many houses of Israel In vain the Prophet Zechariah argued that "the Teraphim have given vain answers"

The interrogation of God was a good and legal thing when it took place in the Temple Prior to a weighty transaction of state, His will had to be discovered through the Ephod oracle The high priest wore shoulder pieces inserted with onyx stones, and a woven sash embroidered with gold Over this outer garment called the Ephod he donned the square breastplate with the Urim and Thummin, twelve jewels through which Jehovah spoke giving strategic counsel in time of war, pointing out transgressors and predicting things to come But often God would withhold His advice, when angered, He not infrequently denied help to His blaspheming people Then the kings in despair might turn to soothsayers, who deserved the death penalty, according to the law "A man or woman in whom there is a pythonic or divining spirit, dying let them die"

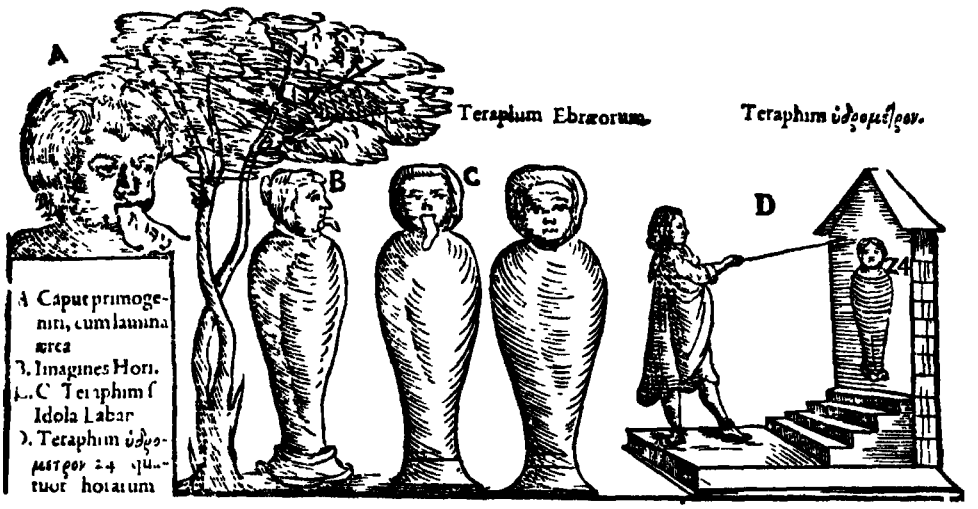

Fig 14 Teraphim

King Saul turned to necromancy when the Ephod remained mute He was seeking foreknowledge of the battle in which he was to be fatally wounded With a few trusted men, he stole out by night to visit the witch of Endor "Divine now for me by the familiar spirit," he said, "and bring up for me whom I shall indicate to you " "Whom shall I bring up for you?" said the woman "Bring Samuel up for me," said he Then the spirit of Samuel rose from the ground "an old man, wrapped in a mantle" He confronted the terrified king with his approaching death (fig 15)

Was this the real Samuel, sent by God to frighten the anxious king, or was it a phantom from hell? This much-debated question is left unanswered in the Scriptures

Saul had always fought sorcery and witchcraft in his kingdom Yet he was more superstitious than other Hebrew rulers Too often had he consulted the Ephod oracle, and the Lord grew weary of his questioning Neither could his virtuous successor David rid himself of these magical beliefs Once when there



Fig. 15. The Apparition of Samuel to Saul

was a blight in the kingdom, David interrogated the Ephod, which placed the blame on Saul. Saul, having been gathered to his fathers, lay beyond the reach of the hungry and irate people, but many of his sons were still alive. David ordered seven of them to be sought out. "And they were hanged before the Lord," at the beginning of the barley harvest in the spring. When the autumn rains came at last, falling upon their dead bodies as upon the scorched earth, their bones were gathered and buried with honor in their ancestors' sepulcher. King Saul's descendents had been used as a rain charm The magic power that dwelt in their princely bodies, in their bones, had proven efficacious, as David had anticipated. In the Middle Ages, witches used bones to the same end, conjuring up rain and storm They perpetuated the old belief that the bones of the dead, when handled properly, induce rain.[5]

We are told that Manasse, thirteenth King of Judah, encouraged the most sacrilegious kind of divination. "Manasse shed much innocent blood till he filled Jerusalem up to the mouth." This king of the chosen people saw prophecies of good or evil in the quivering entrails of the slaughtered.

Even the great and legendary Solomon did not always behave according to the Lord's behest. In his old age he turned away from the God of his Fathers and worshipped the wanton Elilim He had peopled his harem with foreign women who worshipped their native gods, and in the holy city he had built temples for every creed His theological and demonological wisdom has become legendary; his magic lamp and celebrated seal enabled him to command the spirits of hell. A thousand legends concerning Solomon (Suleiman) are scattered through the East. His throne was of ivory, flanked by two sculptured lions overtopped by eagles; when he approached, the lions would roar and the eagles would spread their wings above his venerable head However, this and other marvelous accounts cannot conceal the fact that after Solomon's reign Jerusalem fell into a magico-religious chaos. The Scriptures, so eloquent concerning Solomon's wealth and magnificence, his wisdom, his horses and chariots, leave unanswered the question as to whether Solomon ever returned to the faith of the one Jehovah.

EGYPT

The Sphinx

The Sphinx "I am the child of yesterday, the Twin Lion Gods have made me come into being"

Book of the Dead

In the undulating desert near Giseh rise three mighty pyramids, the tombs of three kings—Khufu, Khafre, and Menkure. At the foot of the pyramids crouches the Sphinx with talons outstretched over the city of the dead, guarding the magical secrets gathered therein

"In front of the pyramids," says Pliny, "is the Sphinx, a still more wondrous object of art, but upon which rests a spell of silence, as it is looked upon as a deity."

The Sphinx imposes silence. The thirteenth-century Arab writer, Abd-al-Latif, tells us that "the true reason why all mention of this monument had been avoided was the terror it inspired." During that epoch, its face and figure were still beautiful, and its mouth, Abd-al-Latif relates, bore "the imprint of grace and beauty, as if it were smiling" The huge head refulgent with red varnish was still untarnished at that time. The Arabs named it *Abu'l-hawl*, Father of Terror.

Fourteen centuries before Christ, so we read on the flat stone leaning against its breast, this giant already lay buried in the shifting sand By that time the Sphinx was already ageless, its origin blurred in legend.

Fourteen hundred years before our era, a prince, the later Ṭhutmose IV, took his siesta in the shadow of the half-submerged Sphinx. He had been throwing spears and hunting in the neighborhood, when the hour came in which he granted rest to his followers. Alone in the noontime solitude, he offered flower seeds to Horus, "for a great enchantment rests upon this place from the beginning of time." Whereupon the Sun-god (whose image the Sphinx was then believed to be) appeared in a dream to the prince and spoke to him as a father to a son; after promising that he would succeed to the throne and enjoy a long and happy reign, the god urged the prince to have the Sphinx cleared of the sand: "Promise me that thou wilt do what I wish with all my heart; then I shall know whether thou art my son and my helper." When later, contrary to his expectations, the prince was raised to kingship, he remembered his dream and obeying the god's will, ordered the Sphinx to be dug out of the sands.[1]

However, the sands of the desert continued their ceaseless labor, and a few

hundred years later the monster was again buried beneath the dunes, as man and desert fought to possess the hewn rock

In his book on *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch (A D 45–126) says that the Sphinx symbolizes the secret of occult wisdom Elsewhere, he describes it as a magnificent creature having wings of ever-changing hue When turned toward the sun, they glitter like gold, when toward the clouds, they shine with the reflection of rainbow colors But even Plutarch, that assiduous investigator, failed to penetrate the mystery

For countless ages, the Sphinx remained the guardian of Egyptian magic. Plutarch assures us that, in their desire to converse with its priests, many Greek thinkers—Solon, Thales, Pythagoras, Eudoxus, even Lycurgus himself—undertook the arduous journey to Egypt

Each priestly word, each priestly gesture, had a marvelous effect Mysterious magical power resided in persons and the greater the Mana or magic tension, the more astounding the marvels they could induce

The Pharaoh was so charged with this power that by merely raising his hand he could make the earth tremble For this reason perhaps, the king, when not depicted in the midst of a well-defined action, was usually portrayed in a pose of immobility, so that no danger might result from an involuntary movement of his For the Mana resided not only in the person but in the image too

In the Nile land, images had from ancient times been treated as living, active beings Since the beginning, Egypt was the land of magical statues whose occult powers could affect the physical world Thus the awesome figures of the guardian Sphinxes before the temples did more than frighten away the profane They could reward and punish, as could the king himself whose image they represented originally

The Sphinxes opened their stone mouths and revealed the will of the gods The Fathers of the Christian Church distinctly vouch for the phenomenon that statues could speak The king and the assembled people were often present at this oracle, and scribes wrote down the words on their papyri

In the Siwa Oasis stood the image of Ammon, to which Alexander the Great once made a pilgrimage Ammon promised something dazzling to the Macedonian mastery over the earth Images accomplished still greater wonders Often they would descend from their pedestals to walk among men Thus during the reign of Queen Hatshepsut, the god Ammon strode through the temple halls at Karnak, stopping before a youth—later to be Thutmose III (ruled 1501–1477 B C) The young man knelt before the god, but Ammon raised him up and bade him take the place that was the king's Through this divine *coup d'état* Thutmose became sovereign Human reason is silenced when Ammon intervenes in a dynastic matter

Whenever the sculptor's chisel molds the amorphous mass into an image, whenever he portrays an organism, magical power flows into the statue—a power which may be imprisoned within it by incantation and magical gesture, and which gives life to the image so long as it remains whole When it is broken its soul escapes Demons hostile to men are for this reason cut through

on the hieroglyphic reliefs, so that the sign may have no evil influence.

But what power can disturb the magic virtue of the Sphinx or drive away the spirit that inhabits it? Thousands of chisels carved the rock When nature failed, masonry was introduced. This colossus, half hewn, half molded, has defied millenniums. Never in the history of mankind has a statue so lastingly caught the imagination of peoples. The thoughts of countless generations dwell in it; numberless conjurations and rites have built up in it a mighty protective spirit, a soul that still inhabits this time-scarred giant

Mortuary Magic

> As Osiris died and rose again from the dead so all men hoped to arise like him, from death to the life eternal
>
> J G FRAZER, *The Golden Bough*

WHEN Ikhnaton overthrew the Egyptian gods and demons, making the cult of the One God Aton a state religion, he also suppressed mortuary magic The reformer king did not believe in a life beyond the grave Yet it was upon the afterlife that Egyptian magic centered In the course of the ages, this magic had become an elaborate science whose aim was to win for the dead a pleasant life in the hereafter

The massive pyramids and tombs built for the deceased Pharaohs and their ministers, for priests and other dignitaries, suggest the power that the dead wielded over all minds Looking at these monuments, we can sense the impossible task that Ikhnaton faced when he sought to banish mortuary magic from the Egyptian religion

In the west, the Egyptians believed, lies the World of the Dead, where the Sun-god disappears every evening, they spoke of the departed as "Westerners." The belief in a World of the Dead often mingled with the notion of an underworld It is through this subterranean world that the ship of the Sun sails during the night the dead await it impatiently and rejoice when its divine radiance appears Then the dead souls, filled with delight, seize a rope from the ship and tow it through the depths

It was also believed that, disguised as birds, the dead soar into the sky where in his heavenly barge Ra, the Sun-god, awaits them and transforms them into stars to travel with him through the vault of the heavens

Or again, a lentil field lies high in the northeast, where the grain grows taller than it does on the banks of the Nile, and where the dead live on in peace and abundance. However, this blessed land is water-locked, and none but the just and righteous may persuade the obdurate ferryman to row them across

The cult of the dead reached a peak when it incorporated the Osiris myth Osiris, divine brother and husband of Isis, was born to save mankind. At his



Fig 16 Ikhnaton
(Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

nativity, a voice was heard proclaiming that the Lord had come into the world. But the diabolical, vengeful Seth shut him up in a chest which he conveyed to the sea by the Tanaitic mouth of the Nile Isis wandered in search of the body, and at last, near the city of Byblos in Syria, she found the coffin in a tamarisk tree which had grown up around it She carried it back to Egypt, but now Seth dismembered the body and scattered its parts far and wide A second time the grieving Isis set out upon her arduous search for her husband's scattered limbs. She interred the fragments wherever she found them or, as others believed, buried an image in all these spots, pretending that it was his body, to the end that Osiris might be honored in many places. According to this version, she fastened the limbs together with the help of the gods Nephtis, Thot, and Horus, her son She fanned the body with her wings, and through her magic art Osiris rose again to reign henceforth as king over the dead

There he was assisted by the forty-two helpers, hideous representatives of the sins, with Osiris exercising power over the souls of the departed. Before this tribunal, in the "Hall of Both Truths," appear the dead, to have their hearts weighed in the scales of righteousness According to the verdict, they receive everlasting life or are punished for their sins Those whom Osiris brings to reckoning are condemned to hunger and thirst, to lie in the dark and solitary grave from which they may never return to sunlight Or they are tossed to abominable executioners in the shape of crocodiles and hippopotami eager to tear them asunder The good and the righteous, however, now receive their reward In the course of ages, these diverse traditions concerning the blessed and their afterlife have tended to mingle According to belief, the dead will live on in the fields of Yaru or soar to Ra the Sun-god, or they will descend to Osiris in the underworld, or again to Abydos, city of the dead, whose sovereigns were once the living rulers of Egypt

Whereas the soul known as Ba passes into the afterlife, the Ka remains with the mummy (*fig* 17) The Ka is a mysterious life force, a tenuous counterpart of the soul which continues to live a magical reflection of life in the grave, among the tomb possessions of the deceased or among the pictures of such objects Images, statuettes, imitation utensils, miniature houses take the place of real things Magical operations give them their efficacy, and the small-scale replicas of reality attracted the Ka, since the Ka is unable to detect the difference between them and reality Or rather, through the magical operations of mortuary priests, the replicas become reality The priest could thus assure the Ka of the deceased a serene life in the silent depths of the grave from which it might at times emerge to be gladdened by the sun But what advantage did these promises gain if the Osiris tribunal condemned the Ba soul?

Here too priestly magic offered a solution The Egyptian gods could be deceived, menaced and forced into obedience So implicitly did the Egyptians trust the power of magic, the virtue of the spoken word, the irresistibility of magic gestures and other ritual, that they hoped to bend even the good gods to their will. The priests would bring dreadful retribution to the deities who failed to deal leniently with the dead They threatened to shoot lightning into the arm of Shu, god of the air, who would then no longer be able to support

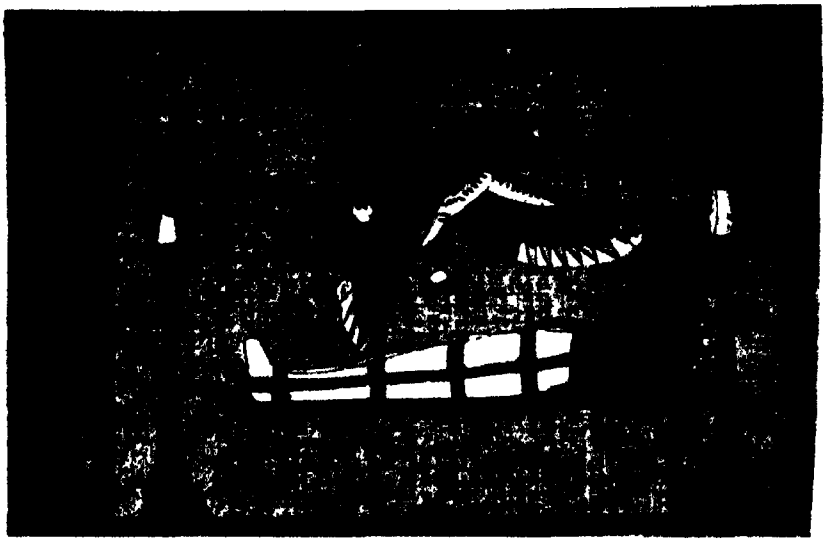

Fig 17 The Ka and the Mummy

the sky-goddess, and her star-sown body would collapse, disrupting the order of all things.

The priests filled papyrus scrolls with magical formulas enabling the deceased to withstand his judges in the world beyond The *Book of the Dead* told precisely what the soul would encounter during its journey into the shadowy kingdom, and how the deceased might plead his cause This scroll revealed the secret names of the demons and inquisitor-gods Knowledge of the spirit's true name gave to the deceased power over that spirit.

The answers to the examiners' questions were transcribed word for word, and knowing them was sufficient to obtain a favorable verdict "I have always shunned evil; I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, a ship to the stranded; to the orphan I was a father, to the widow a husband, to the roofless I gave a home "

These answers, uttered with the correct intonation and in the prescribed phraseology, would pass for truth But what if the deceased should find himself unable to pronounce the words? What if the spirits of the air robbed him of breath, or other evil spirits stole his mouth, his head, his heart, or even his name, without which he lost all identity? For this emergency, too, the *Book of the Dead* contains formulas and incantations A guidebook placed in the sarcophagus or inscribed on it conducts the wayfarer into the next life.

Despite these arts, one fear remained In the tribunal hall, before the terrifying judges, might not the conscience of the traveler rebel within him and cause his heart to rise against the deceitful words issuing from his mouth? Here too priestly magic provided assistance On the mummy's breast, a scarab was fastened, a sacred beetle with a charm to pacify the restive heart. ' O my heart, rise not as a witness against me." '

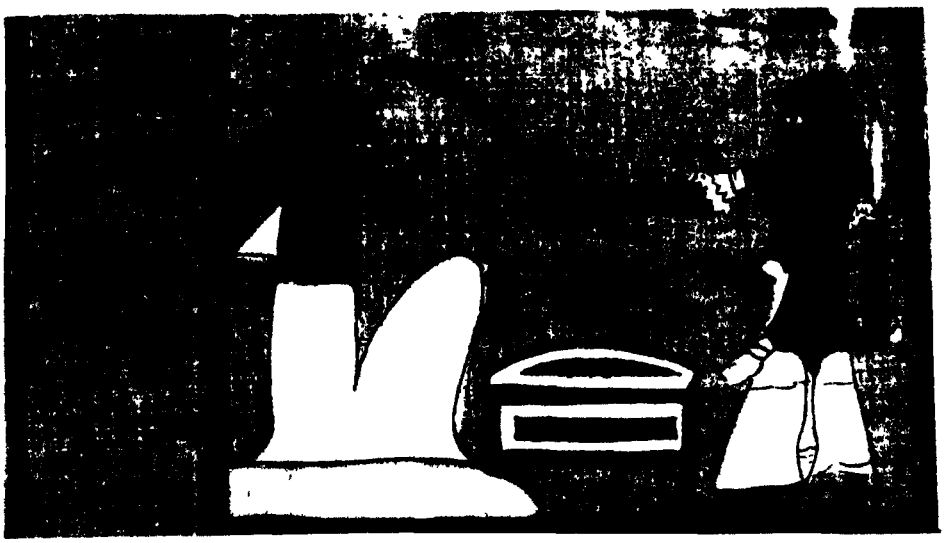

Fig 18 Magical Operation of the Priest on the Effigy of the Deceased

Journey to the Underworld

THE mouth of the dead had to be "opened" before he could journey to Osiris, so that he might plead and answer in accordance with the priests' instructions The "opening of the mouth" was of the greatest importance It was performed upon the statue that had been made of the deceased and that had been set in the tomb.

The statue was placed on a mound, symbolizing the funeral mountain. There, leaning against the arch beyond which the mummy lay, it received the fluid, the Ka of the deceased, that entered the image through the nape, causing the statue to come to life Its mouth was opened by the priests according to a ceremony described in the *Book of the Dead.*

A vignette in one of the papyri which have come to us shows a man seated upon a pedestal which has the shape of the emblem of Right and Truth, the Maat The dead man, we learn from the scroll, is a scribe named Ani, now called Ani-Osiris, for like all the blessed deceased he was supposed to have become one with the great Osiris This fusion with the godhead was in Ani's time considered the reward of those who had escaped punishment Standing before the statue of Ani-Osiris, a priest clad in a panther skin holds in his right hand a wand with which he is about to touch the statue's lips (fig. 18). Below the image is this text

"Osiris, the scribe Ani, triumphant sayeth May the god Ptah open my

mouth, and may the god of my city loosen the swathings, even the swathings which are over my mouth Moreover, may Thoth, being filled and furnished with charms, come and loosen the bandages, even the bandages of Seth which fetter my mouth. and may the God Tem hurl them at those who would fetter me with them and drive them back May my mouth be opened, may my mouth be unclosed by Shu with his iron knife wherewith he opened the mouths of the gods I am the goddess Sekhet and I sit upon my place in the great wind of heaven I am the great goddess Sah who dwelleth among the souls of Heliopolis Now as concerning every charm and all the words which may be spoken against me, may the gods resist them, and may each and every one of the company of the gods withstand them ."

Ptah, the patron-god of artists and artisans, and Thoth, whose magical words became flesh when they brought the world into being, are invoked as the protectors of statues and incantations They will put to flight Seth the destroyer, the enemy of Osiris Shu, the god of the air, is called upon, since he is the breath necessary for speaking He stands erect, supporting the heavenly vault, whose curve is like the hollow of the mouth In early times the gods too had their mouths opened, and Shu performed this magical act Ani identifies himself with several deities, for instance with Sekhet and Sah This stratagem endows him with supernatural power, as we shall discover in the next chapter.

Once having his mouth opened, Ani will begin his perilous journey He will meet evil spirits, but powerful words will drive them away In his guidebook, the *Book of the Dead*, Ani will find the answers to all the questions with which the underworld will burden him

When he reaches the river where the old ferryman is waiting, Ani will speak thus to him

"O thou guardian of the mysterious boat, I hasten, I hasten, I hasten. I come to see my father Osiris"

Then speaks the boat's hull "Tell me my name."

"Darkness is thy name"

Then the voice of the mast commands "Tell me my name"

"He who leadeth the great goddess on her way is thy name"

The sail says "Tell me my name"

"Nuit, goddess of heaven, is thy name," replies Ani, and his answers, if uttered in the right tone, are accepted The boat seems to stand for the universe Its hull is Keb, the god of the dark earth, in which are the caves of the underworld The mast is Shu, the Air-god, who stands upright, holding in his outstretched arms as if they were the sail's yard, the arched body of Nuit, goddess of heaven, symbolizing the sail (fig 19)

After having left the boat, the scribe is called upon again· "Who then art thou?" Several voices ask "What is thy name?"

"I am he who lives under the flowers, the dweller in his olive tree, is my name"

"Pass thou," the gods say, and Ani reaches the city "to the north of the olive tree"

New questions assail him which, like the answers, are clad in the code of occult

wisdom whose beholder alone will pass freely the twenty-one pylons, the fifteen doors, and the seven halls that lead to the judgment chamber.

"What, then, didst thou see there?" meaning in the city through which Ani has passed.

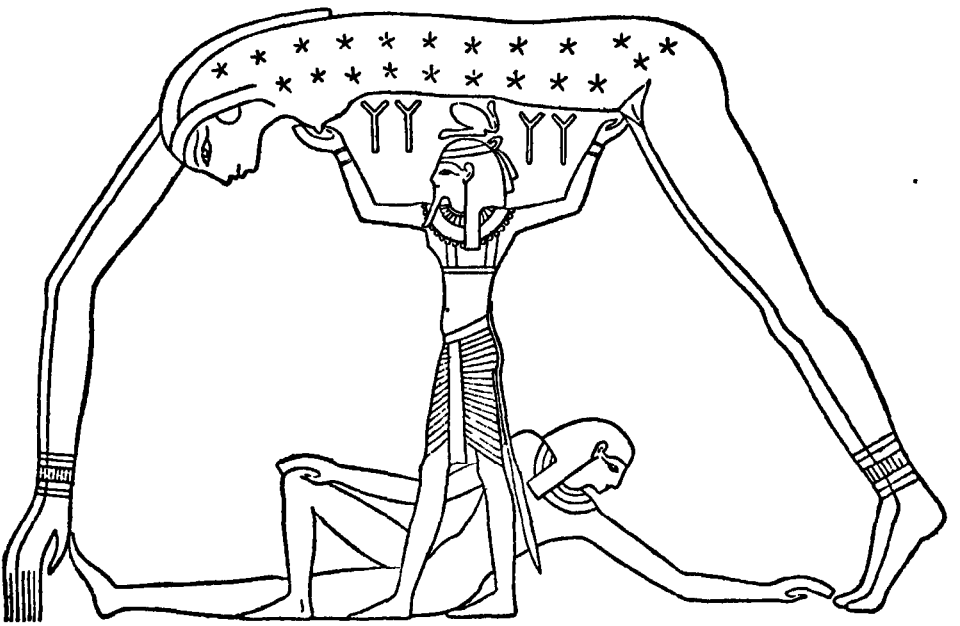

Fig 19 The Egyptian Gods of the Earth, the Air, and the Heavenly Vault

"The leg and the thigh," is the enigmatic answer

"What didst thou pay to them?"

"Let me see rejoicings in those lands of the Fenkhu"

"And what did they give unto thee?"

"A flame of fire and a tablet of crystal"

"What then didst thou do therewith?"

"I buried them by the furrow of Manaat, as gifts for the night"

"What then didst thou find by the furrow of Manaat?"

"A scepter of flint, the name of which is Giver of Words"

"What then didst thou do to the flame and the tablet of crystal after thou hadst buried them?"

"I uttered words over them in the furrow, I extinguished the fire, I broke the tablet, and I made a pool of water."

"Come then," they say, "and enter through the door of the hall of double Maati (the judgment hall), for thou knowest us."

But the wanderer is not yet free, since the bolts of the door, the lintels, the threshold, and the sockets ask to be told their names. Ani, however, has learned the answer from the *Book of the Dead*, and thus at last the door opens to allow him entrance to the judgment hall, where Osiris will try him.

The Word

WHATEVER a man calls his own is magically a part of him. His cut hair and nail parings remain bound up with his being, objects with which he has shared contact are imbued with his personality, and his name is just as much a part of him as a limb is of his body. Objects with which he has had no contact may likewise carry influence, likeness has the most powerful ties with the man it represents. An individual's magic tension flows into his portrait or image. The reluctance of primitive people to be photographed is well known. They are afraid to leave fragments of themselves in strangers' hands.

J. G. Frazer analyzes the principles of thought upon which these magical beliefs are based. They are of two kinds. "First, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause, and second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after physical contact has been severed." Using the first of these principles, called by Frazer the *law of similarity*, the magician seeks to produce the desired effect by imitating this effect. Using the second, the *law of contagion*, the magician does to a thing which has belonged to a person whatever he wishes to do to the person himself.

By mistreating a portrait, the magus will cause its subject, no matter how far away, to suffer. If the magician adds a lock of the victim's hair or his walking stick to the image, he will be combining the two principles, similarity and contagion, thus building up greater magical power. Calling the enchanted one by his name strengthens further the effect of the operation. The name is the only part of a person with which the magician can work when his victim is remote and no other belongings of his are available.

This is why a name is a precarious possession, to be guarded jealously. Innumerable people have believed and still believe in the magical power of a name. This belief was especially powerful among the Egyptians. At birth everyone was given two names, the true name and the good name, or the greater and the lesser. Only the lesser name was made public, the greater belonged to the Ka, and embodied all the individual's magical power. The evil spirits

and the gods would vent their anger upon the lesser name, leaving the man himself unharmed.

In the light of this belief, the priests of Egypt sought to discover the names of the gods, and thereby the ability to wield a supernatural power At the sound of the true name, the powers of the god stood ready to perform the invoker's bidding "This name being uttered on a river bank, the stream will dry up And if pronounced in the fields, sparks will spring forth. If the magician who knows the secret name of a god is attacked by a crocodile, the virtue of this name will cause the earth to fall into the water; south will become north, and the earth will be overturned."

In the magic incantations of the Egyptians, not only the name but every spoken word had its supernatural effect. Nothing could come into being before its name had been uttered. Not before the mind had projected its idea upon the outside world could a thing have true existence

"The word," the hieroglyphics tell us, "creates all things everything that we love and hate, the totality of being Nothing *is* before it has been uttered in a clear voice " To accomplish its full effect, the word must be spoken correctly. Magic conjuration prescribed the intonation, the secret rhythm which Thoth, god of magic and inventor of language, had taught to the wise men Success depended on the exact delivery of the formula -Rhythms and melodies were studied in the Egyptian college of magic or "House of Life," where the various other arts of magical conjuration also had their home For in time primitive beliefs become framed in an elaborate technique More and more, knowledge was needed for an effective conjuration

Thoroughgoing preparations had to be made before one was ready to begin. For nine days, the magician had to undergo cleansing rites, then he anointed his body and washed his mouth with natron Fresh clothing was obligatory—new and white All the garments were thoroughly fumigated before the magician donned them On his tongue, in green ink, the magician drew a feather, the sign of truth And finally, in the color appropriate to the god of the hour, he traced a circle on the earth Only then could he proceed with his incantation

To make an enemy harmless, the magician would smear his own feet with clay, placing between them the severed head of an ass and rubbing his mouth and hands with its blood He turned to the sun, and having put one arm forward, the other back, he addressed Seth-Typhon, the Evil One, in magical rhythmic speech "Thou terrible, invisible, all-powerful one, god of gods, assailer and destroyer . "

In many ceremonies, the magus would utter strange, incomprehensible sounds, words foreign to the Egyptian tongue With these *names*, either of Semitic origin or fancifully compounded, the gods were summoned Since the word was charged with magical power, it had to remain unaltered The words of the magical language were handed down through centuries, although there were few who still knew to what gods the bizarre expressions referred An incantation from the time of Ramses II (1292–1225 B C) contains the following jumble of ancient verbiage.

"O Ualpaga O Kemmara O Kamolo O Karkhenmu
O Asmagaaa The Uana The Uthun (enemies) of the sun
This is to order those who are in your midst, the enemies

He died by violence who murdered his brother
To the crocodile he has vowed his soul
No man laments him
But he brings his soul before the tribunal of double justice
Before Mamuremukahabu (Osiris)
And those absolute rulers who are with him,
Who thus answers his enemy

O lion, black face, bloody eyes (venom),
Into his mouth who destroyed his own name
His Father's These have not yet lost their power to bite" [6]

This is doubtless addressed to the formidable judges of the underworld lest they be deceived by the magical formulas offered by the murderer It is a powerful counter magic, designed to fathom the wiles of the criminal's soul in order to make certain that he receives his punishment to the crocodile he has vowed his soul! Only one thing could resist the virtue of a word still more powerful words, more powerful magic

Often the evil spirits would appear unbidden Particularly fearful were the dead condemned to wander until their souls were annihilated They were recognizable by their mummy noses, flattened by the swathings Eluding the watchful mothers, they would steal up to the cradles of sleeping children One had to be wary when undressing at night, the ghosts spied upon the living, waiting for the unguarded moment when a careless one might be dragged away Against this danger was used the formula "The beauties of N (speaker of the formula) are the beauties of Osiris His upper lip is that of Isis His under lip is that of Nepthis His teeth are little swords His arms are those of the gods. His fingers are like divine serpents His back is like that of Keb" [7]

Despite the elaborate ritual for the passage of the dead to the afterlife, it was ever to be feared that the departed would return to the home they had left Complicated formulas had to be recited "O ewe, ewe's son, lamb, ewe's son who suckest milk of the mother ewe, do not let the deceased be bitten by any serpent male or female, nor by any scorpion, nor by any reptile Do not let the venom become master of his limbs, nor let any of the dead, whether male or female, enter into it May it not be haunted by the shade of any spirit May the mouth of the serpent em-kkahu-ef have no power over him He is the ewe

"You who enter, do not enter into any of the deceased limbs. O you who hear him, do not hear him with you O you coilers around, do not coil yourselves around him

"I have uttered these words over the sacred herbs placed in all the corners of the house, whereafter I sprinkled the whole house with the sacred water at evening and at sunrise He who hears this (the deceased) will remain stretched out in his place" [8]

All-powerful words also helped to resist earthly perils. On the edge of the pale desert one awaited nightfall uneasily. True, one's house was well guarded by dogs to ward off any nocturnal visitor, but it was more certain if, before turning them loose, one strengthened them with the magical words:

"Up, savage dog. I shall prescribe to thee what thou art to do this day. Thou wert tied up. Art thou not set loose? By Horus thou art commanded to do this: Let thy face be as the open sky. Let thy jaws be merciless. May thy strength immolate like that of the god Har-shefi Kill like the goddess Anata. Let thy mane rise in iron rods. For this, be Horus and be Seth. . . . I invest thee with the power of fascination, take away hearing. For thou art the courageous, threatening watcher."

In many conjurations, the magician identifies himself with a god or with several gods A man attacked by crocodiles cries out "Be not against me. I am Ammon I am Amhur, the guardian. I am the great Lord of the Blade. I am Seth," etc.

The potentates of the land believed themselves to be close relatives, sons of the gods In battle, the Pharaohs would turn to Ammon-Ra, the Sun-god, to remind him of this bond. The king did not pray for victory, but demanded it as something that was his right And the "Father of Battles" might respond: " . Ramses-Meriamun, I am with you! It is I, thy father! My hand is with thee and I am better for thee than hundreds of thousands " [1]

The highest powers of all, the supernatural rulers of the world are obedient to mortal words The world order is perpetually in danger A foolhardy priest might overturn the earth and the sky to satisfy his own or his client's wishes "How is it possible," we must exclaim with Porphyry the Neo-Platonist, "that the gods should be subject to extortion, like men?"

Quite different was the magic of the Mesopotamians True the Chaldeans were aware of the existence of the name of the highest god Although it remained unknown to them and therefore unutterable, it was invoked by them in times of great peril This name was a distinct person, a divine hypostasis endowed with a personal existence, and hence having a power of its own over the other gods, over nature and over the spirits Not even the priests could learn it through initiation No constraint could be exercised over it.

As children recognize their parents to be their masters yet seek to obtain from them the gratification of their innumerable wishes, so did the Egyptians behave toward their gods The world revolved around their own problems and wishes, and the gods, like parents, had to succumb to their pressure Like children, the Egyptians lied to their god-elders without the feeling of remorse or without diminished confidence in the omnipotence of these supernal beings. And they knew that the gods could withhold neither their favor nor attention.

Isis

> Isis is the great female generative power, the essence of things
>
> PLATO, *according to Plutarch*

ONE element of the old cosmogony was destined to outlive Egyptian magic: the cult of Isis. The great goddess evokes gentleness, maternal constancy, devotion to husband, and the fertility and grace of woman She fosters everything born, everything that grows Her tears swell the waters of the Nile which, overflowing, fertilize the earth Her soul dwells in the star Sirius. And for thousands of years the appearance of Sirius in the dawning sky during the summer solstice was a signal to the Egyptians for the return of the Nile flood Restored by the grieving Isis, Osiris, the husband, rose again. The ever-recurrent procreative act took place Osiris, the sacred Nile, fertilized the green-growing land of Egypt.

Isis had many names, and she united the qualities of many local divinities. The faithful sought her protection, and the alien recognized in her the traits of the mother goddesses of his homeland Minerva, Aphrodite, Ceres, Hecate . . .

Isis towered above them all. Her motherliness contrasted with the wanton, cruel behavior of Astarte, Anaitis, Cybele, the formidable goddesses of the Orient, and the holocaust of maidens and mutilated youths whom they subjected These goddesses loved human sacrifice, war, barrenness, but it was *life* that Isis loved and protected

Her cult spread throughout Europe and western Asia, and verged finally toward nascent Christianity Many attributes of the Holy Virgin were borrowed from Isis. The Immaculate, Mater Domina—an appellation that survives in the form "Madonna." "Indeed," says J G Frazer in describing the cult of Isis, "her stately ritual with its shaven and tonsured priests, its matins and its vespers, its tinkling music, its baptism and aspersions of holy water, its solemn processions, the jeweled images of the Mother of God, presented many points of similarity to the pomp and ceremony of catholicism "

There was significance in everything pertaining to the goddess's figure and dress On the base of her statue in the city of Sais these enigmatic words were carved: "I am everything that was, that is, that shall be Nor has any mortal ever been able to discover what lies under my veil "

Apuleius (second century of the Christian Era) vividly portrays the goddess, and from his description the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680) had a woodcut made,[1] in which Isis is crowned with a coil of hair, symbol of the moon's influence upon herbs and grasses (fig 20). Wheat adorns her head, as a reminder that she was the discoverer of grain and taught us how to cultivate it Her hair is drawn through a sphere which represents the world This sphere

ISIDIS
Magnæ Deorum Matris
APVLEIANA DESCRIPTIO.

Nomina varia Isidis.

Isis
Minerua
Venus
Iuno
Proserpina
Ceres
Diana
Rhea seu Tellus
Pessinuncia
Rhramnusia
Bellona
Hecate
Luna
Polymorphus dæmon.



Explicationes symbolorum Isidis.

A Diuinitatem, mundum, orbes cœlestes
BB Iter Lunæ flexuosum, & vim fœcundatiuam notat
CC Tutulus, vim Lunæ in herbas, & plantas.
D Cereris symbolum, Isis enim spicas inuenit.
E Byssina vestis multicolor, multiformem Lunæ faciem.
F Inuentio frumenti.
G Dominium in omnia vegetabilia.
H Radios lunares
I Genius Nili malorum auerruncus
K Incrementa & decrementa Lunæ.
L Humectat, vis Lunę
M Lunæ vis victrix, & vis diuinandi.
N Dominium in humores & mare.
O Terræ symbolũ, & Medicinæ inuentrix.
P Fœcunditas, quæ sequitur terram irrigatam.
Q Astrorum Domina.
R Omnium nutrix.
S, M } Terræ marisque Domina.

Ἀκρὸ Θεῶν Μήτηρ ταύτη πολύμορφος ΙΣΙΣ.

Fig 20. Isis

rests on a garland of flowers, denoting her rule over the plant world. The rich headdress is completed by two snakes, signifying doubly the moon's generative power and its sinuous path Isis' flowing hair means that she is the nurturer of the whole world In her left hand, she holds the pail, symbol of the Nile flood, in her right, the sistrum, a jingling instrument sacred to her. This, according to Kircher, reveals her as the genius of the Nile and guardian against evil Her robe glows with all the colors of the moon, and being the queen of the firmament, she wears a star-sown mantle, the hem of which is decorated with flowers, symbolic of the soil and recalling that Isis is the discoverer of healing juices On her womb she wears a half-moon, whose magic rays fertilize the earth Her right foot is on land, her left in the water she presides over both elements She is the Stella Maris, star of the sea, guardian of all that journey upon the ocean And the ship, a feminine symbol, is consecrated to Isis.

All these attributes the believer regarded with curiosity, they excited his imagination The figure of Isis preoccupied both the simple-minded and the philosophic He who sought higher knowledge soon turned away from the interpretation of Stoic philosophers it meant little to him that the myth symbolized the overflowing Nile, an eclipse of the moon or other astronomical events From the world of matter, he withdrew to the sphere of ideas, seeking a transcendent key to the legend of the world mother

Plutarch, whose ideology is deeply tinged with Platonic and Oriental esoterism, speaks in mysterious terms of the holy trinity of Osiris, Isis, and the son Horus They corporealize, he says, Intelligence, Matter and Cosmos, and they are called the *most perfect triangle*. The proportions of this triangle express a divine secret the base, equal to *four*, is Isis, the female conceiving element; the vertical, equal to *three*, is Osiris, the male creative principle; the hypotenuse, *five*, is Horus the offspring

Any triangle traced in these proportions is a sacred diagram endowed with magic power, and similarly are the three numbers, carrying supernatural forces The Egyptians and the philosophers of the Pythagorean school were devoted to the wisdom of numbers, as we shall see in the following chapter Wherever in later times numbers and geometrical figures appear in magic circles and on talismans, we may trace them back to ancient numerology

"Numbers," Plutarch says, "allude to something which the founder of this sect had observed in the Egyptian temples, they refer to some ceremonies performed in them, or to some symbols exhibited there "

The secret, however, Plutarch cannot or does not want to reveal, though he affirms repeatedly that all this has a profound meaning Everything in the Egyptian religion, he says, is to be understood allegorically

Isis lived on in the Christian West, not only in the cult of the Madonna but also in the occult doctrine of the magicians Following Plutarch's ideas, they discovered in the god-mother of antiquity an occult allegory, that of the *World Soul*, which nurtures the entire creation at God's behest Cast out of the Christian heaven, she continues in the world of the stars and upon earth to sow the essence of life "She is the feminine part of nature, or that property which ren-

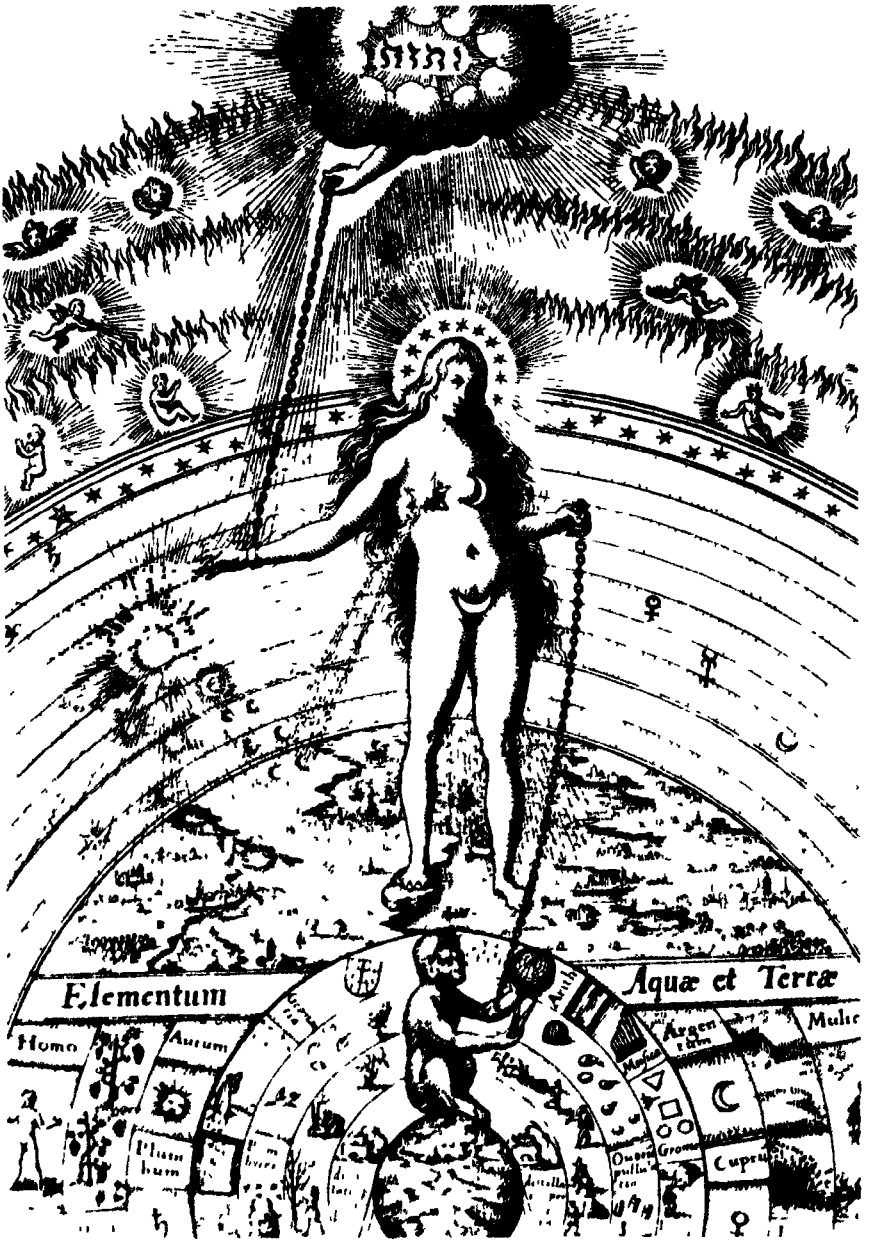

Fig 21. The Soul of the World

ders her a suitable subject for the production of all other beings." A seventeenth-century engraving (fig 21) shows the World Soul still with some of the symbols of the ancient Isis: flowing hair, the half-moon on her womb, one foot in the water, the other on land She is chained to God, according to Plutarch's saying: "Isis always partakes of the Supreme " And man (the ape of God!) is chained to her, as he owes his very life to the seed that flows from her breast

Centuries passed and still her image persisted At the end of the eighteenth century, she was remembered by men who seemed closed to every magical sentiment, the leaders of the French Revolution At the solemn ceremony performed in honor of the Supreme Being, Robespierre, in a vague remembrance of the mysterious inscription of Sais, put the torch to a veil that covered the gigantic statue of a woman, Isis, whose generative power was interpreted now as Reason, the nurturer of progress

GREECE

Magic in Philosophical Garb

> let us not boast, lest some evil eye should put to flight the word which I am going to speak
>
> PLATO, *Phaedo*

MORE than other nations of antiquity, the Greeks relied on inductive reasoning which framed poetically the somber images of mythology and pervaded their philosophy Natural phenomena were approached from the higher realms of the mind, which was thought to partake of the divine. This explains why the Greeks were poor experimenters; despite their masterly logic, they evolved only vague and unscientific explanations for happenings in nature Mind subjugated matter

This negligence and even abhorrence of experimentation resulted from indulgence in what was "superior," the unreserved acceptance of the authority of reason which could exist without material proof The West inherited this unscientific procedure from Hellenic philosophy Throughout the Middle Ages, during the Renaissance, and even in more recent times, the natural sciences were hampered by this tradition

Plato says that there are four species of beings—those of the air, the birds; those of water, the fishes, those of earth, the pedestrians, and those of the heavens, the stars, whose element is fire During the Renaissance, Agrippa von Nettesheim, reluctant to accept the idea that the stars were related to the earthly fauna, modified Plato's statement Agrippa, basing his opinion on Aristotle, Dioscorides and Pliny the Elder, said that fire shelters salamanders and crickets A simple experiment would have proven that salamanders and crickets die in fire, like any other animal, but Agrippa shared with the past an aversion to experimentation From Pliny we learn that similar beliefs concerning the marvelous virtues of salamanders existed in Egypt and Babylon Without doubt Aristotle had gathered his wisdom from Oriental neighbors, and did not find it necessary to submit the salamander to a scientific test. Thus did a superstitious belief perpetuate itself for about two thousand years. That the fiery nature of the salamander was accepted generally in Agrippa's time is illustrated by the fact that his contemporary, King Francis I, adopted as his royal emblem the batrachian surrounded by flames.



Fig 22 A Salamander Alive in the Flames

The reasoning of the philosophers produced the most startling (and poetic) absurdities. Plato says that the head, the abode of ideas, is spherical in the image of the stars Unlike the rest of the body, the head is linked to heaven. A small isthmus, the neck, between the intelligible and the corporeal, was made in order to separate neatly these two things.

Plato's world is a magical one, for it is unified and all things are interrelated. The universe is an animal endowed with soul and mind It has no eyes, as nothing is to be seen beyond it; it has no ears, for there is no place outside of it in which anything could be heard It has no breath as the atmosphere is within it Hands are useless to the world animal, as it has no enemy against whom it would use them. It has no feet, for they are not necessary to revolving movement, etc Thus the world animal is shaped in the most perfect form· the sphere

The soul is older than the body and therefore superior to it, says Plato. It is composed of three elements the indivisible, which partakes of the divine, and the divisible, which partakes of the earthly Both are related through a third element partaking of each and placed between the two The three were made one by compression[1] The compound was cut into strips which were crossed or interwoven, and bent into a spherical shape Such was the World Soul in which God has placed the corporeal universe. The human soul is made of the same elements as the World Soul

The star-gods are the children of the creator, they form man who will return after death to his star

The World Soul pervades everything, in man, it circulates in a proper motion, which can be perfected by him who observes the motion of the heavenly gods, the planets

Plato believed in the influence of the stars He is cited frequently by the astrologers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Moreover, he gave an impetus to alchemy when placing the World Soul in all bodies The alchemists were striving to extract the soul of substances, using this essence, they wanted to produce marvelous effects with minerals

Just as the Persian Zoroaster believed that the good god Ormazd shaped the world with ideas, similarly Plato attributed a divine character to ideas Since they dominate the body, the magicians of the West concluded that they could induce marvels in the corporeal world through the omnipotence of sovereign ideas

Since in Plato's world heaven and earth, the elements, the soul and the spirit, the divine and the terrestrial are interrelated and partake of one another, it is no wonder that magicians wanted to make use of such mysterious consanguinity. Similarly, they used Pythagorean numbers in their magic circles, as numbers were also, according to Pythagoras, older than bodies and hence more powerful The world is formed according to a mathematical scheme, and is harmonized according to proportion. Beauty and order were to these philosophers impossible to achieve without numbers. In the size, weight and intervals of the stars lurk mystic numbers; and around these, the creator built the cosmos

The Pythagoreans called arithmetic the study of numbers and their relation to natural phenomena, so that scientific study was fused with philosophic speculations and fantasy When the Pythagoreans became inebriated with their own imagination, arithmetic was lost in the marvelous, and numbers became living beings, divine hypostases in their own right At times the number four answered to Hermes and Dionysus, seven, one of the oldest number divinities, was Pallas Athene, ten represented Atlas who upholds the vault of the sky. According to the poet Hesiod (eighth century B C), chaos or the primeval mass whence all things were formed found its embodiment in the monad, the number one Five was the number of justice, uniting the "feminine" number two with the "masculine" three Six was Aphrodite, goddess of love, as this number was composed of two times three, the multiplied first numbers of each sex

Plutarch, as we have noted, has a different interpretation for the numbers three, four, and five, and we may suppose that more than once in the course of time the meaning of numbers has changed

The Pythagoreans were not only theorists of magic but they practiced it publicly Empedocles (fifth century B C) performed wonders among the people He believed firmly that he could resuscitate the dead, induce rain and drought, etc.

The magical beliefs of old which had endowed peoples' lives were clothed by the philosophers in the beautiful garments of reason Most philosophers, however, indulged also in popular magic or superstitions, like the members of all classes Thales (640–548 B C) believed in demoniacal apparitions, and Plato in ghosts—deceased people who were compelled to return to the living because *they were unable to disassociate themselves from their bodily passions* Democritus (fifth century B C), who could laugh so heartily at human folly, recommended that a man stung by a scorpion should sit upon an ass and whisper in the animal's ear "A scorpion has stung me " He thought that the pain would thus be transferred to the ass

All the philosophers of old believed in the reality of magic Heraclitus, Thales, Pindar, Xenophon, Socrates were unable to elude the enchanted circle

The later Greek philosophers, like Porphyry (A D 233–303), were entirely devoted to magical practices They have bequeathed their elaborate demonology to the early Christians, whom they had fought so bitterly For Porphyry there existed innumerable beastly demons who haunted men and houses in their hankering after blood and filth At meal times the demons swarm around us like flies, and only a complicated ritual can keep them away These ceremonies were initiated not to please the gods but solely to repel devils

Greek magic has been influenced from time immemorial by Oriental beliefs No nation welcomed foreign ideologies more warmly than the Hellenes. Priests, philosophers and historians roamed the lands. The quest for knowledge led the wonder-worker Apollonius of Tyana to the shores of India Plato tells of cultural ties with Egypt and Crete. Greeks accompanied the Persians Darius and Xerxes on their expeditions. They admired the wisdom of the Persians In the *Alcibiades*, Plato causes Socrates to say that their educators are superior to those in Athens, and he speaks admiringly of the brilliant tutelage given to the



Fig 23 Pythagoras

young Persian princes and of the virtues of their teachers, the wisest of whom is a magian, a disciple of Zoroaster Mythical figures and gods of the Orient have been hellenized The Delphic cult originated in Crete, Adonis sprang from



Fig 21 Ideal Portrait of Aristotle

the Hebrew Adonai, Aphrodite is the embellished and pacified Astarte, Isis became Athene, and Dionysus hardly veils his alien origin

Like the wise men of the Orient, the Hellenic philosophers were believed by the people to be magicians It was commonly accepted that Socrates possessed a familiar spirit that kept him informed of the future According to Socrates' friend Xenophon (ca 427–355 B C), many of the philosopher's confidants would consult the spirit about their own problems Plutarch says that the familiar replied with sneezes directed either to the right or left, according to whether the answers were affirmative or negative Apuleius says that Socrates' demon was visible to all, an opinion which Maximus of Tyre disputed vigorously The latter asserted that it merely symbolized Socrates' psychic power This controversy

as to the appearance and character of his demon continued to the eighteenth century

In *An Essay on the Demon or Divination of Socrates* (London, 1782), the author, Nares, arrives at the disappointing conclusion that Socrates employed the word "demon" merely to describe his divinatory gift Nares decides reasonably that despite their wisdom the Greek philosophers were after all only children of their time, and like lesser men subject to the beliefs and prejudices of their fathers

Dreams, Ghosts and Heroes

In the Greek mind side by side with the Apollonian dwelt the Dionysiac, along with the harmonious, rational world of plastic form and intellectual clarity there dwelt among the Greek people the dark, the eerie and the undisciplined The Dionysiac conjured up the dead and induced a belief in witches, ghosts and other apparitions

The nightmares of the Greeks shared the repulsive qualities that later characterized the mediaeval ghosts and devils, not unlike those which exist in our own time, bringing to our dream hybrids, witches and grotesque animals

Apuleius (second century of the Christian Era) describes a harrowing nightmare in his *Metamorphoses* After a hearty dinner, Aristomenes and his friend retired to a shabby hostel in Thessalonia Sleep had scarcely come to Aristomenes when the door opened and two witches entered the room Aristomenes' bed collapsed, pinning him beneath it From this uncomfortable position, he saw the two hags stab his friend and afterwards neatly pour his blood into a leather flask One of them plunged her arm into the wound and drew out the victim's heart, after which she closed the orifice with a sponge, while murmuring these magic words "Beware, O sea-born sponge how thou dost pass through a river " Whereupon the two creatures turned their attentions to the fearful Aristomenes and defiled him Then they vanished On the following morning, however, the dream proved to have been real, for when the friend stooped to drink at the river, the wound opened, the magic sponge fell into the water, and with it the corpse of the bewitched traveler

Just as this dream became reality, so among the imaginative Greeks the real merged with the illusory In their dreams they saw the mythical monsters whose images they had observed during the day, and afterwards they believed that the visit of the magic creature was no hallucination but had actually happened

But even when the dream was recognized as one, it still furnished enough substance for conjecture In their dreams, they saw the forerunners of the future, experienced divine revelations, and had premonitions of impending

danger. Most of these nightly visitors filled them with terror. Pan the goat-footed, the goat-horned, son of the nymph Dryope, was the reputed sender of nightmares.[1] To the early Christians, the devil appeared as a Panic figure and inherited the attributes of the Grecian shepherd-god.

Seafarers, before sailing, would sleep in the temple of Poseidon, praying to the Sea-god for a prophetic dream wherein they might glimpse the outcome of their voyage.

The temples of Asklepios too were famous, where the God of healing would reveal remedies to his believers during sleep God-sent dreams were not only for the individual, magistrates and generals were often sent to the temples to dream of official business and to learn the will of the gods. When Alexander the Great lay mortally stricken, several of his generals visited the temples of Asklepios to ask whether the King should be left in his palace or be carried to the sanctuary.[2] Asklepios replied that it was best to leave the dying hero where he was.

A remarkable feature of this Asklepian dreaming is that it formed the basis for medical science among the Greeks After each successful cure, the case history together with the god's prescription was recorded in writing or carved upon the temple walls. As the centuries passed, a reliable archive was created of significant therapeutic dreams The great physician Hippocrates is said to have been indebted for his knowledge largely to the temple records of Cos, his native city.[3]

We are reminded at this point of a dream which saved the city of Athens from a plague: the nightly apparition which came to a dreaming woman in the form of a deceased Scythian who counseled that wine be poured into the streets and alleys of the stricken town Following the Scythian's advice, the foul air was "cleansed" by wine, and the pestilence disappeared.[4]

The importance of dreams is reflected in the stress placed upon their correct interpretation. Considerable rewards awaited whoever possessed that gift A work that soon became famous is the dream book of Artemidorus Daldianus, Apuleius' contemporary.

Many dreams, says Artemidorus, represent a simple and direct image of the event which they foretell Others show symbols whose meaning must be ascertained. The interpreter should know every detail of the dream which he wishes to explore; if the beginning is confused, he should start his interpretation at the end and reascend to the source Moreover, he should know the dreamer's state of mind, his social standing, and his state of health It is important to know whether the dreamer is a master or a slave, a rich man or a pauper, an old man or a youth. They may have similar dreams which should, however, be interpreted in various ways

If an old man dreams about being wounded in the chest he must expect bad news If a young girl has a similar dream, she may expect a devoted lover If a poor man dreams that he is changed into a woman this is a good sign, for someone will take care of his needs, yet, to the rich this same dream announces the end of his authority. he will retire from public life into a petty

domestic existence. A slave will be pleased to dream of being assisted and comforted, whereas the master's similar dream announces misery and insult. A sick person will die when a dream shows him an innkeeper, for the latter, like Death, receives whomsoever; but to the healthy, the innkeeper means travels into many countries.

Certain dreams, says Artemidorus, are a good omen to people specialized in a craft or profession. The nightly vision of ants invading one's ears is favorable to educators and professors who will be listened to by the public, symbolized by ants. For other people this same dream signifies death: like ants they will dwell in the earth.

He who eats books in a dream will die soon. To lawyers, teachers and statesmen, however, eating books allegorizes the increase of knowledge

To have donkey ears is a good dream only for philosophers who will interpret it in this flattering fashion: they will be indifferent to gossip and vain rumors, "because the donkey seldom moves its ears." To other people the donkey dream announces servitude, they will have to toil like domestic animals

To be dressed up ridiculously is a disagreeable presage for everyone who dislikes to be ridiculed; for comedians and dancers, such a dream predicts great success on the stage

Dreams of horror, which Artemidorus enumerates carefully, may well signify good luck. To hold one's head in one's hand is only favorable for him who has neither wife nor children. However, to be burned at the stake is a good omen for all; the sick, when dreaming of such execution, will readily recover, and young people will know the passions of love.

Whipping is also a good omen To be fustigated by a wealthy and capable person predicts favorable and profitable things Similarly favorable is the dream of crucifixion. Whoever sees himself crucified will enjoy a fairly serene married life To seafarers it indicates a good voyage, "because the cross, like the ship, is made of wood and nails, and because the misery of the crucified is not unlike seasickness." To a politician, crucifixion announces an office· he will be "raised" at the very place where the cross was elevated in the dream. For slaves, the same dream signifies that they will soon be free men

The cult of the dead among the Greeks at this time was also widespread Often the deceased would return from their graves, having neglected to complete some act during their lifetime, or because an important part of the mortuary rites had been omitted Usually they spread terror throughout the house, and we rarely find in these apparitions the tenderness and poetry of that which came to Eukrates' dwelling Eukrates had lost his beloved wife, and together with the body, her dress and ornaments had been burned on the pyre On the seventh day, as the widower was reading Plato's *Phaedo* to escape his grief for a while, she entered and sat by him, complaining that one of her golden sandals had not been burned It had, in fact, fallen behind the chest and escaped the flames As she spoke, the Melitian dog barked, and she vanished The sandal, being found later, was burned, and the dead woman never returned again.[1]

Graveyards always aroused in the Greeks an uncanny feeling Some remnant of life might still inhabit the body thus who could be sure that the deceased might not leave the grave, or at least send forth a specter In the



Fig 25 Ideal Portrait of Apollonius of Tyana

funereal avenues and the necropoleis, there also appeared superhuman phantoms of the night, such as the infernal Hecate, whose repulsive figure was accompanied by souls and howling dogs swarming over the graves "

A similar specter showed itself to Dion, a pupil of Plato and ruler of Syracuse (409–354 B.C) Having finally rid himself of the villainous Herakleides, Dion

was resting in the vestibule of his house and absorbed in his thoughts, when something stirred behind him He turned and beheld a powerful woman whose face and black garments recalled a goddess of vengeance She was sweeping the hall with a besom As he cried out for help, the apparition faded. A few days later, Dion's son committed suicide, and the ruler himself was assassinated shortly afterwards.

On his journey to India, Apollonius of Tyana had crossed the snowcapped Caucasus and wandered now by moonlight with his companion Damis through the plain They reached the Indus River, where they met Empusa, a hobgoblin that was continually changing form, and sometimes vanishing into limbo "And Apollonius, realizing what it was, abused the hobgoblin and instructed the members of his party to do the same, explaining that this was the remedy for such a visitation The phantasm fled, shrieking even as ghosts do." [7]

Later, after his return from India, Apollonius journeyed through Greece, stopping at Athens, Ephesus, and Corinth According to Apollonius' biographer Philostratus, the philosopher, while in Corinth, met a Lamia, a vampire. One of Apollonius' followers was Menippus, a poor, young student whose sole possession was the philosopher's cloak Apollonius had been attracted by the youth's beauty and good judgment It was rumored by his friends that Menippus was loved by a foreign lady, a Phoenician, who was beautiful and extremely rich She wanted to marry Menippus despite their contrasting social rank, Menippus was happy to make her his wife, for he loved her devotedly. He invited Apollonius to be the guest of honor at the wedding breakfast and the master, sensing danger for his disciple, declared that for the special occasion he would break his habit of abstaining from rich meals and wine. When he arrived at the lady's house, he asked to be introduced to the bride. He looked at her searchingly and, turning to Menippus, he asked to whom the silver and gold vessels and decorations of the banqueting hall belonged. "To the lady," replied the youth, "for this is all I possess," and he touched the mantle that he wore "All this adornment," Apollonius said, "is not reality but semblance, and thy fine and dainty bride is not a mortal but a vampire, a Lamia. These beings are devoted to the delights of Aphrodite, but still more to devouring human flesh " The lady pretended to be disgusted with such nonsense.

Obviously amused, she said that philosophers were always spoiling the pleasures of honest people, frightening them with evil omens, and she commanded her unwelcome guest to leave. But Apollonius took one of the silver goblets from the table and weighed it in his hand it was light as a feather, and soon it vanished. In a similar way the other plate disappeared, the cooks and servants fell to dust when Apollonius uttered a magical imprecation; the house tumbled into ruins The lady, imploring the philosopher to torment her no longer, was forced to confess that she had intended to fatten Menippus before devouring him, "for it was her habit to feed upon young and beautiful bodies, because their blood is pure and strong." (Fig. 26.)

The fear of specters and other apparitions did not prevent the conjuring up of the dead at special places that were chosen for these rites, such as Manteia, Psychomanteia and Psychopompeia The conjurors of the deceased were called

psychagogues. Little is known of their ritual, but we may take it for granted that they demanded fasting and concentration Blood and burned offerings were surely necessary for the operation in the silence of night

The psychagogues must have had considerable influence Among them there was one who did not fear to announce the bad tidings to the tyrant Periander (625–585 B C), when his wife spoke from the underworld She was cold and naked, for at her funeral her clothes had been interred with her and not burned according to custom Whereupon the wise Periander ordered a public feast for all Corinthian women Arrayed in their best garments they gathered in a public square, expecting a brilliant show or some other treat However, they were ordered to undress, and their fine raiments were gathered and burned in a pit for the benefit of the deceased Periander's wife announced through the mouth of the psychagogue that she was warm now and comfortable in the kingdom of Hades

Although some of the philosophers, notably Plato, protested vigorously against necromancy, its practice remained an integral part of the Hellenic religion.

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Together with the cult of the dead and the conjuring up of the deceased, magical rites were used to propitiate defunct heroes These demigods were feared, yet they were considered benevolent patrons during danger The heroes were as a rule connected with a city or a district, in earlier times they may have been the family ancestors or the house-god, worshipped with the fire of the hearth Their tombs were small buildings surrounded by colonnades, venerable trees and orderly gardens Others were invisible, hidden beneath some public building, and the location of their shrines was kept secret because it was feared that the heroes' bones might be stolen Like the relics of Christian saints, these bones were endowed with beneficent power that brought luck to the city or to the province where they were buried This belief may be illustrated by the weird myth of Oedipus, the murderer of his father and spouse of his mother who, in expiation for his monstrous deeds, wanders distractedly through Hellenic lands Though abhorred by all, and despite his atrocious crime, the hero is offered an asylum by rival cities, because it is known generally that wherever Oedipus is buried, he will bring luck to that land and its inhabitants

Hero magic was accomplished at night, and solemnity accompanied it Its ritual was different from that used for the worship of the gods A groove was opened at the west side of the tomb, and magical formulas were recited The sacrificial offering consisted of wine, milk, and pomades; blood was poured into a crack of the tomb, as it was believed to revive the dead An active force emanated from the shrine, guiding the destinies of the living, influencing the welfare of the city, and exerting its mysterious power within the landmarks of the country In Aeschylus' *Choephores*, entombed Agamemnon, though never visible, is a co active power, and without him the play could not be concluded



Fig 26 Apollonius of Tyana and the Lamia

In the *Persians*, the hero-king Darius rises from his tomb and takes part in the action In this play, Aeschylus creates the imposing image of the magical rites, the evocation of the dead.

It is but a short step from the sublime to the ridiculous: The Greeks created heroes from bizarre, allegorical beings, who became the clowns of the cult. In Munychia they offered these honors to the mythical Akratopotes, who drank undiluted wine No doubt he was a drunkard, for the Greeks used to add water to their wine. Keraon and Matton, the wine mixer and the baker, were Spartan heroes, and in Boeotia, *Bread* and *Cake* were worshipped as heroes This self-irony is typically Greek. In the Near East, the cults were clad in pathos We search the Old Testament in vain for a conscious humorous note The rites of the Phrygians, the Babylonians and the Assyrians are awesome, those practiced by the Persians and the Hebrews are severe and sober."

Omens, Oracles and Astrology

THE Christian church condemned magical operations even when they aimed at good. A magician who by magic words healed a neighbor's cow might suffer a fate similar to that of a witch who had placed the curse of sickness The Greek religion was less rigid, no ecclesiastical authority ruled While having strong links to the old usage, it welcomed fresh revelation All that mattered was that the magic should have a beneficent purpose, and serve the commonweal. This applied both to practitioners of magic who were members of the priesthood and to free-lance magicians

Plato, in his *Laws*, ordains: "He who seems to be such a man who injures others by magic knots or enchantments, be he a prophet or a diviner, let him die." But in the *Timaeus* he declares divination from the liver of slaughtered animals to be a good and legitimate deed, a remedy "which God combined with the liver and placed in the house of lower nature (the body) in order that (in the liver) the power of thought which proceeds from the mind, might be reflected as in a mirror which receives the likeness of objects and gives back images of them"

Death punished similar acts when practiced criminally. Apollonius of Tyana was brought to trial in Rome, when "it was declared that he had sacrificed a boy to divine the secrets of futurity which are to be learned from youthful entrails." This could hardly have been exceptional, for a law provided specifically against it.

Spontaneous prophecy was interpreted as a divine gift bestowed upon the worthy Plato, in his *Apology*, causes Socrates, under sentence of death, to say: "And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power."

And Plato, in the *Symposium*, terms the divinatory arts, as a whole, "communion between gods and men."

Mythical Orpheus was thought to have fathered all prophecy and founded all initiations and mysteries "His melodies brought back the dead " The Orphic religion was already flourishing in Greece six hundred years before Christ. Orpheus' head was preserved in the Isle of Lesbos, with its magical power still alive· it foretold the future. Melampus understood the language of birds that the snakes had taught him Epimenides lived three hundred years, and had slept thirty of them Melisangus, the divine soothsayer, practiced his art in Athens Bakis was possessed by nymphs, and the daughters of springs and sources spoke through his lips Last of this elect company was Apollonius of Tyana, who lived in the first century of the Christian Era His power was hailed as that of a god, and many communities in Asia Minor raised temples and shrines to this rival of Jesus the Nazarene [10]

Clairvoyance was most intimately bound up with daily religion The oracles were consulted as to the future, and old seers witnessed sacrifices and other religious ceremonies From the intestines of the animal, from the way its entrails burned, from the sacrificial flame, one sought first to know whether the sacrifice was acceptable and pleased the gods, then, avid for more knowledge, one searched these phenomena to find the wisdom of the immortals.

The word oracle means "answer " Priests might speak with the god through the Pythia, a female medium Narcotic smoke or natural fumes rising from the earth brought the medium into a state of trance In Argos, to achieve the same end, the Pythia drank the blood of lambs Once the godly spirit had entered the body of the Pythia, the priest posed his questions, receiving the replies of the Olympians through her mouth Most of these answers, produced in a strangely altered intonation, were ambiguous Lucian (second century of the Christian Era) scoffed at the ambiguity "Only a second Apollo could have elucidated the statements of the first " Thus, the Pythia is said to have warned Nero "Beware of the sixty-third year " Nero interpreted the caution as applying to his own age But it referred to the sixty-third year of Galba, who overthrew him

The most celebrated oracle was at Delphi, on a slope of Mount Parnassus. Surrounding boulders gave back a wondrous echo, vapors emanated from a natural grotto, and in a crypt stood the image of Apollo, framed by laurel. When the oracle was to be rendered, the Pythia, sitting on a golden tripod, moved closer to the steaming crevasse Soon she was overcome by a divine delirium—her neck swelled, her body writhed in convulsions, her head jerked violently The crisis was shocking enough to fill all who beheld her with religious awe (fig 27)

These mantic phenomena increase beyond measure when we recall that any religious ecstasy was believed to be divinely inspired People among the crowd at the Orphic and Dionysiac festivals would, in a state of hysteria, utter prophetic words, in daily life, the flight of birds, the whispering of the trees, the sneeze of a neighbor were premonitions sent by the gods



Fig 27 The Pythia

Centuries of anticipating such portents must have sharpened the senses of the Greeks. Constant intentness added not only to their occult knowledge, but also to their powers of observation in the broadest sense.

Oracles and omens played an influential role in political life. No war was declared before consulting the gods And more than once the oracle, which also confided strategic advice, started a war. One might say that at times the soothsaying Pythia of Delphi served as Greek minister of war and foreign affairs.

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Generals were ever anxious lest an evil omen should bring panic to their armies. In the fourth century B C. when Timotheus was about to sail with the entire Attic fleet, the sneeze of a soldier caused a standstill. The army hesitated to board ship until Timotheus—laughing, though scarcely in a jovial mood —asked: "What kind of omen is this, if it caused only one man to sneeze?" Whereupon the warriors laughed too, and the embarkation proceeded.[11]

Agathocles (361–289 B C) carried with him "lucky owls," birds sacred to Pallas Athene, on a foolhardy expedition to Libya. And as his army somewhat dejectedly took up its position for battle, he released the birds. The owls perched on the shields and helmets of the soldiers, restoring courage to them.[12]

Doves are set free to this day during the religious processions in southern Italy. This custom stems directly from the bird omens of antiquity.

Unusual occurrences in the temples were also interpreted as portents. The disappearance of sacred weapons, sweating images, the opening of the temple doors, etc , boded ill Perhaps the priests, wishing to guide public opinion, may have contrived these miracles A singular book ascribed to Hero of Alexandria (second century of the Christian Era) explains how such "wonders" could be brought about by mechanical means Incense, driven by the pressure of warm air, fell from the hands of bronze statues and burned upon the altar. A water syphon might produce mysterious trumpet tones as the temple shutters opened When the fire was lit before the sanctuary door, heat accumulated in the hollow altar, and the expanding air caused water to flow into a bucket. This made the bucket descend, and its motion acted upon the pivots, opening the door. This mechanical device was of course invisible to the spectators (fig. 28).

It would, however, be a mistake to believe that all magical operations of the ancients were calculated to deceive. Not even the most ardent champions of the new Christian religion doubted the supernatural powers of the Hellenistic gods or demons, although they condemned them as work of the devil. Among the Greeks, as with all peoples, religion merged with magic Observing these practices, we must first ask ourselves what were the ethical implications in each case; and where the outcome was not evil, or could in some way be defended, one may justify them Doubtless, the magicians and priests were, as a whole, earnest men, believers in what they professed. Many, rendering oracles, may have acted by suggestion upon the medium, Pythia. However, they might have done this unintentionally, as modern students of occult phenomena have shown. Today, even the skeptical do not doubt the reality of premonition or

clairvoyance. During an era when large numbers of people concentrated their thoughts upon such phenomena, they must have taken place more readily than today.

Being assured of the reality, one wished to avail oneself of the power. Yet it was difficult to know *what* benefit there might be in making use of this power, since the Greeks thought that fate could not be avoided. Some of them may

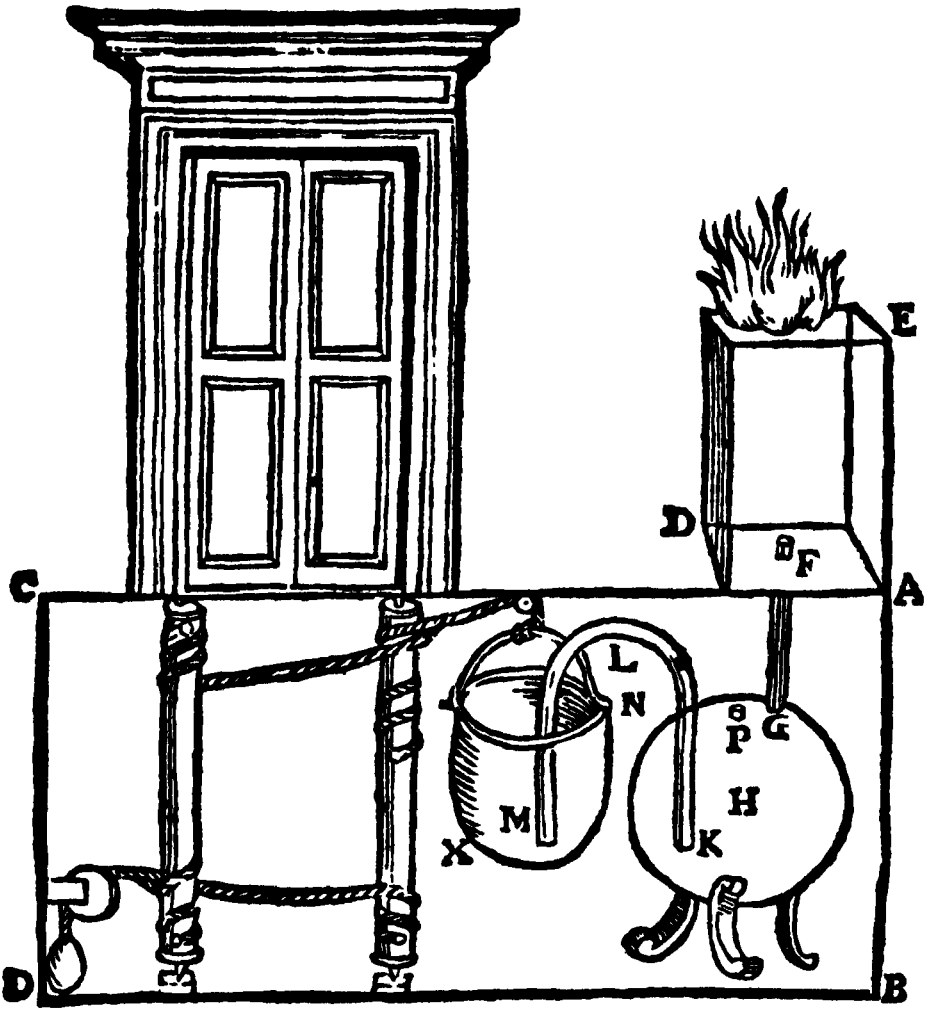

Fig 28 Fire Automaton

have later arrived at the opinion expressed by Iamblichus, the Greco-Syrian: "Better not to know the future and to await with patience the calamities of fate" Still, much interrogation of the future continued into Christian times. Iamblichus, despite his belief, was credited with the invention of alectryomancy—divining by means of a fowl. After certain magical rites, one traced the letters

of the alphabet on the sand, sprinkling a handful of wheat or barley across the characters One listed the signs in the order made by the bird's picking, and then sought hidden meanings in the words thus produced.

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Ptolemy, the great astronomer and interpreter of the stars, a contemporary of Iamblichus, defended vigorously the use of foreknowledge. A thoughtful chapter in one of his four books, *On the Influence of the Stars,* is devoted to this. In general, he says, it is good to know both the human and the divine, and to rejoice. Prescience, it is true, will bring neither fame nor riches; yet the art of prognostication shares these traits with all other arts When something unforeseen occurs, we are either overwhelmed by terror or our composure is destroyed by the sudden knowledge, but forewarned, we may await the future with dignity

Not all events of human life are caused divinely nor are they all inevitable; neither do they all stem from a single relentless fate, as there are also natural events Man is subject not only to disasters inherent in his own personality, but also to those born of general causes—plagues, floods or fires, which destroy multitudes Such occurrences must be explained by the absence of any opposing heavenly influence which might prevent them Whoever exercises prognostication must take care to foretell only those events belonging within the realm of natural causes.

These subtleties of Ptolemy are a late product of Greek thought. Originally, the Greeks may well have thought otherwise about astrology, for the course of the stars suggested rather the mathematical precision and relentlessness of fate

Although astrology was no creation of the Greeks, not having been introduced to them until late by Alexander who had brought it from Babylon and Egypt, it soon gained tremendous popularity. Not only was the hour of birth considered important because of its astrological influence, but horoscopes also were made the bases for all important decisions

Chaldean astrologers settled in Athens and won wealth and favor. Berosus, a Babylonian, founded a college for astrology on the Isle of Cos, so great was his success that in their gymnasium the Athenians erected his statue, holding a golden lyre, the symbol of divine prophecy.

The Mysteries of Eleusis

DEMETER the Earth-goddess journeyed through all lands in search of her daughter Kore, and found her in the city of Eleusis at the end of her long quest There Demeter founded a secret worship, teaching her mysteries to the city elders The initiates were to be both good citizens and wise men So runs the story as to the origins and purpose of the cult These rites contained a hidden meaning guarded from the masses, a deep secret of magical nature Similar secret institutions existed in other Greek cities, but Eleusis was the most famed and the most venerated, even down to the first centuries of the Christian Era For ages the arcane Eleusinian temple lived through the changing fortunes of the Greek people, and cruel wars had left it unprofaned The imparting of the secret was at the same time a promise What this privilege was appears in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter "Happy he of the mortals who has seen this, in the dark kingdom of shadows, the fate of the initiate and of the uninitiate is not the same." Such was its great pledge an afterlife happier than for other men

It is not astonishing then that, so many later wishing to receive this initiation, a special building had to be erected, since the temple could no longer house all the candidates A rite which promises privileges in the afterlife is a magical one Similar promises were made by the priests of Egypt The Egyptians sought mainly to cover up man's bad actions by secret formulas, conjurations and talismans so as to deceive the gods and bias their judgment But in the Greek mind a light was kindled true good deeds rather than counterfeit ones were the best guaranty for a happier hereafter

The sacred rites began with a cleansing, a lustration in the sea near-by. "To the sea, ye Mystics!" cried the leader of the festivities, and the hopeful group plunged into the water How the rite itself proceeded remains unknown to us Even those converts to Christianity who had formerly received the Eleusinian rites kept the pledge of secrecy But various allusions suggest that a sacrament was administered A potion was drunk, symbolic objects being taken from a basket and set in a chest The novice's lips were "locked" with a golden key, and the experience began What Aristotle said of mysteries in general must hold true for those of Eleusis: "The initiates had not to learn, but to experience" A sacred pantomime would seem to have acted out the history of the gods the rape of Kore, the wanderings of Demeter, the marriage of Pluto and Kore, Demeter's return to Olympus In this silent drama each gesture was a revelation The enactment of age-old traditions in the flesh, this was certainly no ordinary performance The showing of sacred objects should be understood in like manner.

Then followed the initiation itself, of which Plutarch gives a veiled account. Modern occultists who have read between Plutarch's lines give us colorful descriptions, interesting to be sure, but on the fanciful side. The little that we may take for granted is that the candidates were made to roam through winding subterranean passages. It was a peregrination through the dark, a journey to an invisible end, which put to the test all one's presence of mind. And then, at the moment of decision, the initiates were subjected to terrors. They experienced shudders and trembling, they sweated with fear and were paralyzed with terror, until light was gradually admitted, and the day restored. With sacred chants and dancing choruses a magnificent place was opened before them. There noble things were seen and heard The initiated was crowned with garlands, and by the side of pure and holy men he enjoyed the festival of rebirth. Regenerated and freed, he could now leave the temple; and certain it is that pensive natures would carry away from Eleusis a new, a consoling faith.

Many students of the occult have stated that the Eleusinian rite contained the one great magic secret, the kernel of all wisdom, yet the democratic nature of the gathering, the presence of large numbers, rules out the possibility of any doctrine calling for great intelligence and philosophical skill The mystery must have been a mattter of faith rather than of knowledge

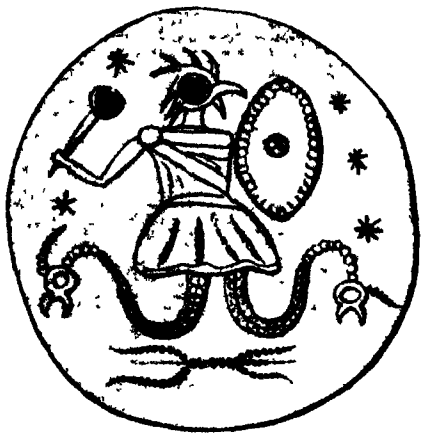


Fig 29 Gnostic Gem Abraxas

GNOSTICISM

The Way to Blessedness

> The unity of religion and that of political au thority are two correlative ideas
>
> LOUIS MENARD

EXPANSION into world empires, the conquests of Asiatic and Egyptian rulers, brought nations into ever closer contact An understanding of the foreigner's mind became an important factor in the administration of conquered territory, for wherever possible victorious kings preferred to govern by peaceful means This toleration of the ways of subject peoples was however opposed by another interest· that of fusing all the provinces into a unit over which the monarch would reign as an inviolable, divinely ordained ruler Such a king, who would ascribe his power to the will of the gods, had first to elicit unchallenged respect for these gods, and his subjects would have to recognize them as the highest divinities

The policy of ancient kings seems to have been torn between these two aims Government would swing from one extreme to another violence and persecution would alternate with kindness and tolerance Both had the same goal *supremacy of the state religion One would try to persuade the subjects* that their faith was hardly different from the king's religion, that their gods were actually identical though worshipped under other names Thus, for political reasons, the wise men of the court learned about the ways of foreign peoples The knowledge thus gained was superficial, gathered from the needs of the moment and not from a deeper quest

Wisdom and philosophy traveled along strategic and commercial routes. Alexander's conquests had opened Asia to an astonished West. When finally Rome mastered the subtle art of governing, the intercourse of the nations reached its peak. Universal religious toleration was Rome's traditional policy. The doctrine of Buddha spread to the Mediterranean and exerted its influence. Buddhistic teaching had been sanctioned by treaties under the Seleucidan and Ptolemaic rulers Buddhism revealed to the West that the acquisition of wealth was not necessarily a blessing, that salvation could also be gained in absolute chastity and poverty. The highest morality of the monks of India rested no longer in the strength to maintain oneself in the struggle for existence, but in the surrender of all strife and the renunciation of self.

Judaism also exerted a strong influence upon many provinces of the Roman Empire, and the Roman emperors lost no time in gaining a new patron, Jehovah, by instituting daily sacrifices to him at their own cost Augustus highly commended his grandson's conduct, when during his stay in Palestine he had visited the temple of Jerusalem Jewish influence in Rome continued even after the fall of Jerusalem and, in fact, grew stronger In Alexandria, the Jews were for some time leaders in science and philosophy Their ideas mingled with those of the Greeks. The Hellenizing Rabbi Aristobulos saw a connection between Greek philosophy and Jewish theology Alexandria became the most prolific intellectual center, where East and West joined hands Here the great spiritual currents met and merged Babylonian astrology, Zoroastrian magism, Egyptian secret knowledge, Hellenic philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity produced a movement unique in the history of mankind. the syncretism of many doctrines and religions.

Gnosticism arose from the widely held belief that revelation and wisdom of the divine were not the prerogatives of one particular nation, but were to be found among all civilized nations, and that every faith contained a germ of the great truth which culminated in Christ

The Greeks were well prepared for the acceptance of religious internationalism The ideas of evil, sin, hell, salvation, and immortal life had been familiar to them before Plato The philosophers opposed the primitive polytheism of their nation Through the legends of Hercules, Bellerophon and Prometheus, they had become familiar with the idea of Salvation They understood that Hercules performed his heroic deeds not for his own sake, but for that of mankind And Prometheus suffers for humanity, his myth resembles—not accidentally—the history of Golgotha The Greek mind conceived the idea that the redeemer of mankind was to suffer martyrdom Did not Plato say that the perfect one, the righteous, shall be tortured and whipped? "They will blind him, and when he has suffered the most excruciating torments they will hang him on a stake."

Many Babylonian ideas had long since influenced the West, particularly their astrology It became known also that the priests of Babylon knew the "One-God," Ilu, primary and unique, from whom spring all the other gods. Ilu formed the holy trinity Anu, the Time-god, Nuah, intelligence, and Bel, the coordinator. This first triad represents the genesis of the material world

which emanated from the divine being To each of these gods corresponds a feminine divinity Nana, Belit, and Davkina They are the passive forms of the triad Their significance is not quite clear. Belit, however, is distinguishable as the female principle of nature, the womb which generates gods and men The godly emanation continued and formed a second triad, the most magnificent external manifestation of god. They are Sin, the moon, son of Bel; Samas, the sun, son of Nuah; and Bin, the god of the atmosphere, wind, rain, and thunder Bin was Anu's son

As the Chaldeans never accepted a god without dividing him into the male and female principle, the gods of the second triad are accompanied by their spouses In the descending scale follow the gods of the five planets Adar, Saturn, Marduk, Jupiter, Nergal, Mars, Ishtar, Venus, and Nebo, Mercury. The planets, like the higher gods, have their spouses

The complicated hierarchy of powers or gods culminating in the One-God attracted deep interest among the syncretists They too conceived a single deity enthroned above a still more intricate hierarchy of heavenly cycles, the Aeons

As Gnosticism originated on Egyptian soil, we may be sure that many elements of the antique Egyptian magic were adopted by the founders of the new doctrine Magical incantations, powerful words had opened in times of old the underworld formulas had driven away evil powers which threatened the deceased on his journey to Osiris Similar words, letters, and phrases were now pronounced by the Gnostic on his ascent to Paradise For the attainment of eternal life, this word-magic was indispensable to him He believed that after his death he was to ascend to heaven through the Aeons and this ascent, he thought, was as difficult and dangerous as was the descent of the ancient Egyptians into the world beneath

Without knowing the magical words, the righteous could not hope to find their way to paradise So important was this knowledge that Christ returned to earth after his crucifixion and dwelt there many years, teaching men the mysterious path to heaven

Two outstanding features of the Gnostic world image are borrowed from Zoroastrianism or from its offspring, namely dualism and the doctrine of emanation Like Ahura Mazda, the Persian god of the Good, so did the highest Gnostic God manifest himself through a mystical light that penetrated the Aeons of the invisible world and was mingled, though imperceptibly, with the corrupt matter of the visible world

The idea of perennial strife between the good and the evil principles is inherent in all Gnostic sects Towards the end of the third century, waning Gnosticism was succeeded by Manicheism, which attempted to reconcile the religion of Zoroaster with that of Christ Adopting many Gnostic features, Manicheism stressed again the irreconcilability of good and evil "Before heaven and earth existed, and all that is in them, there existed two principles, one was the Good and the other the Bad"

Of the alleged teachings of Christ, collected in innumerable books by the leaders of Gnosticism, only one, discovered in a Coptic manuscript toward

the middle of the last century, entitled *Pistis Sophia*, Faith-Wisdom, has come down to us. The author claims to be Philip the Apostle, writing at the Saviour's behest.[1]

The soul, this book says, must traverse aeons, circles of celestial powers and virtues When Christ ascended to heaven again, he found at the thirteenth aeon the forlorn and weeping Pistis Sophia who, having glimpsed the highest light, had an irresistible desire to reach it and flew to its source Adamas, ruler of her circle, punished her for this rebellion by making a false light shine upon the waters, so that Pistis Sophia was led astray by it and plunged into the abyss

By the Saviour's intervention she was rescued and together with Christ she ascended the aeons, singing a confession at each step After the reinstatement of Pistis Sophia, the book turns to a precise interpretation of doctrine. Mary Magdalene, the chief speaker, questions the ultimate cause of sin, to which Jesus replies with a dissertation on man's soul This is followed by an estimate of the powers ruling the place of torment, which is also known as the dragon of "Outward Darkness"

The book speaks in veiled terms of twenty-four mysteries contained in twenty-four aeons - There are also Five Marks, Seven Vowels, Five Trees, and Seven Amens, which the voyager to paradise must know.

Scattered through the *Pistis Sophia* are allusions to seals, numbers and other symbols borrowed partly from the faith of the Hebrews and partly from Egyptian worship Repeating themselves in mysterious sequence, they are impenetrable

Finally, the *Pistis Sophia* contains the long portion of the prayers of Jesus Now on a mountain, now at sea, now in mid-air, the Saviour, attended by his disciples, makes invocations to the Father These invocations are preceded by magical formulas, Jesus also celebrates a communion of wine and water He then explains the influence of the zodiac upon man's soul, as well as the good and evil influences of the planets, the names of which are borrowed seemingly from the Magian religion of Zoroaster Some Egyptian deities are among those mentioned Bubastes and Typhon-Seth, and the Syrian goddess Barbelo, who is the heavenly mother of the Saviour

The following is from the last part of the *Pistis Sophia*, written independently of the others The words put into Jesus' mouth are pure magical initiation, not a fantasy as might at first sight appear, but a jumble of Hebrew, Egyptian, and Persian, copied and recopied until it became incomprehensible The masses uttered these words without knowing their origin In this they followed the ancient rule of not altering foreign and obscure texts, for fear of destroying their magical power This trust in the efficacy of the word is paralleled by a belief in the mystical power of numbers, of the "true names," and in other elements of the Egyptian or Babylonian magical apparatus [1]

"Then Jesus stood up with his disciples at the water of the Ocean and He invoked it with this prayer, saying 'Hear me my Father, the Father of every Fatherhood, the boundless light.

aeeiouo-iao-aoioia
psinother - thermops - nopsither - zagoure -
pagouri - nethmomaoth - nepsiomaoth - markhkhhatha -
thobarran - tharnakhakhan - zoroko - thora - jeou - sabaoth '

"But Jesus thus saying them, Thomas with Andreas with Jakobos with Simon the Kananite were being west, their faces being turned to the east.

"But Philippos with Bartholomaios, were being on the south, being turned onto the north But the remainder of the disciples, with the women disciples, they were standing behind Jesus But Jesus was standing at the altar and cried



Fig 30 Gnostic Gem Abraxas

out, 'Jesus, Jesus', turned himself about it unto the four corners of the world with his disciples, all being wrapped in linen garments, saying 'ι α ο, ι α ο ' This is its interpretation Iota—the universe came out of Alpha, they will turn them O—will become the completion of all completions But these he having said them, Jesus said.

" 'Japhta raphta mounaer, mounaer, ermanouer, ermanouer,' which is this· 'O Father of every Fatherhood whom I brought into thy presence, because they shall believe every word of thy truths ' "

It would abuse the patience of the reader to describe the intricate heavenly organization of the Gnostic doctrines The Gnostics, no doubt, wished by plunging into the meander of a most complicated system to reach the divine light Blessedness, they believed, could not be attained without strenuous effort The Jews had wandered thirty years through the desert before they reached the Promised Land, and it was the will of their God which had caused this long

journey of purification. How much more difficult must be the journey to heaven.

This heaven was the domain of numerous deities taken from many religions of that day. Three hundred and sixty higher rulers depended on five great rulers: Kronos, Ares, Hermes, Aphrodite, and Zeus Among all these celestial powers the Greek gods occupied the highest rank. Their clear Hellenic names mingle with barbarian Oriental ones The Hebrew Jehovah and the Greek Zeus had their assigned rank. To Ares, the god of war, was bound a power called Ipsantakhounkhainkhoukheoc Hermes, the mediator-god, is endowed apparently with a power of lesser importance. Its name is only of two syllables Khainkhookh. Still, Khainkhookh is among the three triple-powered gods who still are mighty enough Sophia, the daughter of Barbelos, is bound to Aphrodite, the most amiable of these forced alliances And Kronos is bound to a power without a name, a virtue drawn from the "Great Invisible."

The wide diffusion of Gnosticism shows clearly how much it appealed to the masses It is also true that the intelligentsia of the time had been attracted by the new faith, which strove toward the reconciliation of the ancient world with nascent Christianity

St Paul (died AD 67), fully aware of the dangerous spread of Gnosticism, warns the Church of Ephesus against being seduced by "these vain discourses and newly coined appellations" Other men of the Church were less cautious, as for example Synesius (370–413), who was chosen bishop of Ptolemais in North Africa He commented on the alchemical book ascribed to Democritus and dedicated his commentary to the high priest of Serapis in Alexandria. His alchemical writings and his Gnostic hymns were certainly not orthodox.

The Gnostic Sects

ACCORDING to Valentinus, the most prominent of the Gnostic leaders (died AD 161), matter is not separated originally and irretrievably from the spiritual, celestial world Thus Pistis Sophia's temporary fall from grace is accomplished within the world of heaven Two highest aeons exist, that of the Father and that of the Primal Man who, according to the myth, sank into matter and raised himself again to heaven This fallen aeon begot a soul, Christos, who is not the Christ Redemption came through Horos, the Limiter, whose name is derived from the Egyptian Horus, the son of Isis

The chief sacrament of the Valentinians was that of the bridal chamber, where the pious were to witness the celestial marriage of Sophia and the Redeemer, and the faithful to experience mystical union with his angel. A formula was used at this sacrament "I will confer my favor upon thee, for the father of all sees thine angel even before his face we must now become as one; receive now this grace from me and through me, deck thyself as a bride who

awaits her bridegroom, that thou ,mayest become as I am, and as thou art; let the seed of light descend into thy bridal chamber, receive the bridegroom and give place to him, and open thine arms to embrace him. Behold, grace has descended upon thee "

Mystical eroticism is also manifest in the doctrine of Simon Magus, the most ancient of the Gnostics His numerous followers thought that the Supreme God, the Father and most exalted power, had produced by emanation a female, generative principle She in her turn gave birth to the angels who then fashioned the visible world These inferior beings were jealous of their mother, and they drew her down to earth and forced her to endure degrading incarnations She had been Helen of Troy and lived in Simon's time in Tyre as a prostitute.



Fig 31 Gnostic Gem Serapis and Agathodaemon Combined in a Single Figure Adoring the Master of the Universe

Simon married her for the salvation of mankind, salvation comes not through good works but through the grace of Simon and hope in Helen.

Simon has become in the West the prototype of the evil wizard According to Acts 8 9-24, he was converted to Christianity by Philip, whose wonders and preaching had deeply impressed the magician The magic of Philip appeared to him more powerful than his own When he saw Peter and John baptizing people by laying their hands upon them, Simon asked that he be taught this rite so that he too might dispense the Holy Spirit And he offered them money for their instructions Humbly he accepted Peter's rebuke and begged him to pray for his forgiveness Simon's name has been branded, and "simony" has since this episode been the word to describe the acquisition of ecclesiastic charges.

According to the legend, Simon wanted to demonstrate that he, like Christ, could ascend to heaven He flew into the blue sky of Rome Many people were seduced by this prodigy, and Peter feared that his flock might be attracted to this false prophet He prayed to God, imploring Him to end this scandal Driven away by Peter's prayers, the demons supporting Simon abandoned him and the magus fell to the earth and broke his legs (fig 32)

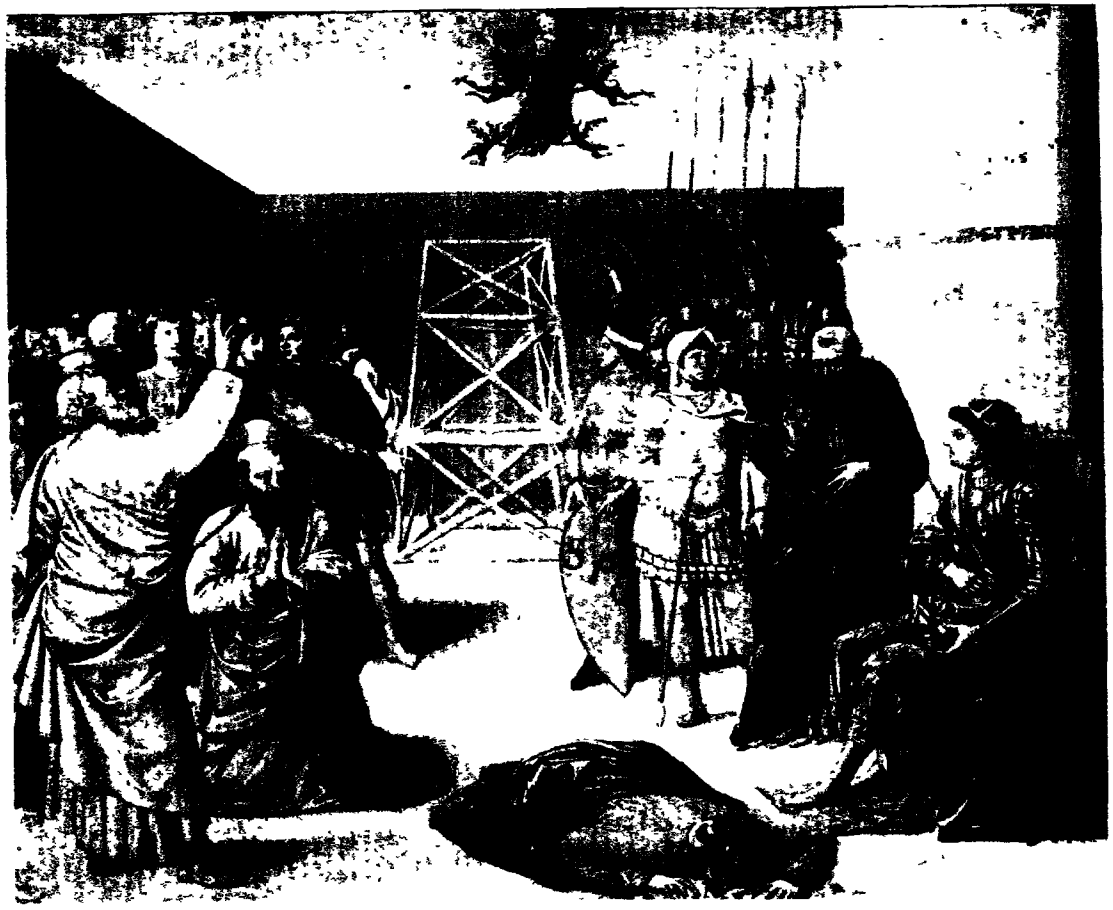


Fig 32 The Fall of Simon Magus
(Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The most celebrated Gnostic was Basilides who flourished ca. A.D. 125. Early Catholics have written much about him Hippolytus in his account of the Basilidian faith describes the "Father" as the supreme being—his essence is beyond words, and nothing can be predicated about him He created the Seed which contains the germs of all things, and wherein were also embedded three degrees of divine sonship, consubstantial with the Father The first sonship ascended to the Supreme, the second, being less, made only half of this way, the third sonship was immersed in matter and became the spiritual heritage of the chosen From the world seed, the great ruler, the higher Archon, was generated, who believed he was the highest being His son, however, wiser and better than himself, laid the foundation of the universe He and his father ruled the upper firmament to the moon area The sublunary world was ruled by the god of the Hebrews, who also had a son The higher Archon's son became the Christ

Among the innumerable and widespread Gnostic sects—far too many to be mentioned here—some beliefs were held in common They all agreed that creation was not the work of the highest god but that of the demiourgos He was below the highest god, the "Unknown Father" or "Boundless Power," as Simon called him The demiourgos was also called Iadalbaoth Having created the visible world from matter, it was imperfect in its very nature According to the sympathy or antipathy for the Hebrew faith, the various sects assigned to Iadalbaoth a higher or lower rank, but never considered him as the highest divinity who had created the spiritual world, heaven and the angels The large sect of the Ophites took a decided stand against the Hebrew god Their dogma ascribed to Iadalbaoth traits unworthy of a divine being He was proud, ignorant, and vengeful Dissatisfied with his creation, he wanted to destroy his work through a woman, Eve But Sophia sent the serpent that enticed man to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, upon which Iadalbaoth had placed a taboo, hoping thus to keep man in a state of ignorance Wisdom enabled man to wage war against Iadalbaoth, the inner meaning of the Old Testament lies in this ruthless struggle When the Father sends Christ to save mankind, Iadalbaoth instigates the Jews to kill Christ, but only Jesus, the human form of the redeemer, died and not Christ, who is divine and cannot die

The serpent, Ouroboros, was worshipped by several sects of the Ophites The coiled dragon-like creature biting its own tail forms a circle, the symbol of the endless cycle of metamorphoses Good and bad is united within the Ouroboros (fig. 33).



Fig 33 Gnostic Gem Abraxas

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Magic Under the Roman Emperors

The Jew can send you any dream you choose
JUVENAL

IN A D 77 Pliny the Elder dedicated his books on Natural History to the Emperor Titus Though recognizing the powerful influence of magic upon many nations in the past and present, Pliny declares that magicians are either tricksters or fools whose doctrines are born from the contempt they have for mankind Magic is vanity and nonsense, humanity is indebted to the Roman government for abolishing that monstrous magical rite, the human sacrifice Pliny asserts that the founder of magic was a Persian, Zoroaster, but by ignoring the fact that the Zoroastrians abhorred human sacrifices, he defeats one of his stronger arguments In general, his discussion of the whole matter reveals confusion and uncertainty Despite his scorn for that "invalid and empty" wisdom, his own book is full of magical elements and follows the tradition of praising the virtues of herbs, stones, animals, amulets, etc.

In rallying arguments against magic, Pliny cites the Emperor Nero, who had performed many occult experiments, but never successfully Furthermore, he notes with satisfaction that Emperor Tiberius suppressed magicians in Gaul.

Most of the Roman emperors, it is true, were openly opposed to magic, and Pliny, an admiral of the Roman fleet, may have found it politic to agree with the status quo His salvo on magic seems to lack objectivity, as do his repeated attacks on Greek philosophers, whom he accuses of vanity, credulity and falsehood

Nero, whom Pliny presents as a skeptic, was certainly hostile to magic as well as philosophy, whose study he forbade, saying it was frivolous and served as a pretext for those who wished to know the future He believed that magic was dangerous to the government, and it would indeed have been so, had citizens been allowed to read in the stars the destiny which awaited their rulers. The stars might predict conspiracies. Nero's wife, Poppaea, had a diviner attached to her household, and astrologers cluttered her private chambers. Nero, despite his official stand, consulted magicians in political matters The astrologer Babilus read from the sky the names of Nero's enemies, who thereupon were annihilated by the emperor

Tiberius, whom Pliny credits with the abolition of magic in Gaul, consulted

the star-wise Thrasyllus This astrologer predicted not only the impending elevation of Tiberius to the throne but his own imminent danger as well. Tiberius, in order to test Thrasyllus' veracity, had decided to kill the astrologer if he failed. Therefore, when he asked Thrasyllus to prophesy his own destiny, the astrologer, growing pale, declared himself to be in impending danger. "That is true," replied Tiberius, "and the exactness of the prophecy guarantees the one concerning my person" He reassured the trembling prophet and embraced him

Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi—what is suitable to Jove, is not permissible for the oxen Caesar may consult the soothsayers, but the people should abstain from doing so Tiberius prohibited public and secret divination from the entrails of slaughtered animals, and during his reign magicians and astrologers were banished from Italy Four thousand Romans were exiled to Sardinia for having practiced magical arts, and others were condemned to death on the charge that they had made horoscopes that would foretell the honors they would attain But privately the emperor resorted to this same method when he wanted to know his rivals' plans And so did Titus, Domitian, and Otho to whom Ptolemy had predicted the imperial crown

Vespasian reinforced the law of banishment, but he exempted his own astrologer from it.

His predecessor Vitellius had ordered all magicians to be gone from Italy by a set date. The answer of the astrologers was a poster announcing that the emperor would leave the earth before their departure from Italy—and the prediction proved to be true

As a rule, famous astrologers were well received at court So long as their oracles were agreeable to the emperor, they were honored Among them, however, were many bad courtiers whose predictions were contrary to the ruler's projects. Their originality rarely found favor Accused of being responsible for the adverse stars, they faced exile, jail or execution. Those who had miraculously escaped death were certain to gain wealth. "So long as an astrologer," says Juvenal, "has not endured chains and dungeons, he has no credit, and is an ordinary man But when he has escaped death, everyone wants his advice"

Aristocrats, like the emperor, had their household prophets When Livia was bearing Tiberius, she consulted her astrologer, who foretold the unborn infant's brilliant future A similar prophecy was made about the suckling Octavian, Livia's future husband

Octavian, better known as the Emperor Augustus, was the first in the lineage of Caesars His reign established the most brilliant epoch of Roman history Originally a skeptic, he was converted to astrology when Theogenes, almost against the future Caesar's will, set up his horoscope Theogenes had barely examined it when he knelt worshipfully before the future master of the empire Augustus later ordered the coining of medals representing the lucky stars under which he was born.

If such an enlightened man indulged in magic arts, we can understand how it happened that the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius, the most virtuous of all Roman rulers, sought help from a Chaldean magus. His wife Faustina had

fallen in love with a gladiator. After having fought her passion in vain, she revealed her misery to Marcus Aurelius and the couple decided to have a philter concocted that would free her from her untimely passion The remedy prescribed by the magician was simple; the gladiator should be killed and Faustina was to rub her body with his warm blood After having accomplished this loathsome rite, the empress could not but think with horror of her past love.

The fearless soldier and friend of the Muses, Septimius Severus, was ruthlessly ambitious Having lost his wife, he wanted to marry a woman who would help his ascent to the throne From Chaldean astrologers he knew that in Syria lived a maiden to whom the stars had promised a royal spouse Accordingly Septimius married her. In his impatience, he found that his political advancement was proceeding too slowly, and in him arose the fear that he had wed wrongly because of astrological miscalculation In order to secure advice on this affair, he went to Sicily to consult a famous stargazer When the Emperor Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, heard of this scandal, he was enraged Septimius narrowly escaped death, but he ascended to the throne after Commodus' assassination and ruled for many years It must be added that his own horoscope had not been interpreted correctly, as none of the astrologers had told him that he would die by strangulation.

The rulers of the empire suspected all magicians, foreign as well as native. Soothsayers and philter-brewing wizards might uncover dangerous secrets Jewish magi sold dreams in the streets of the capital, at night, the people fulfilled the illegal and criminal desires repressed by day in fear of the Caesar The clan of philosophers discussed "The Eternal," "The Everlasting," and found unworthy of words the ephemeral splendor of the emperor A few among them dared to criticize the government and offered their unsolicited advice upon political matters Before long, foreign gods with newly coined names will be worshipped in ceremonies of which the sacred books do not speak

Had not Maecenas given this golden advice to Augustus "Chastise the authors of foreign religions, not only from respect to the gods, but because, by introducing foreign divinities, they instigate many to follow foreign laws. From them are born conspiracies and secret societies, dangerous to the reign of a lone ruler Tolerate no person who despises the gods, anyone who devotes himself to the arts of magic "

As early as 139 B C , the Chaldean magi had been banished from Rome, but they always managed to return Augustus followed Maecenas' admonition, but punishment was lenient only two thousand Chaldean books were burned

Pliny looked upon magic as a parasite that had fattened itself upon science; the historian Tacitus defended it, saying that the charlatans who practiced magic ought not to serve as proof against true magic, Seneca, though uncertain, believed at any rate in astrology and divination, the satirist Juvenal ridicules the Chaldeans and the Roman ladies who believe in such nonsense. Only a short time before, Maecenas had called magic an instigator to revolt.

These conflicting opinions, uttered in the first century of the Christian Era, bear witness to the fact that magic was then still exerting a strong influence

upon every mind it caused laughter and fear, scorn and admiration. Everybody was concerned with *private* magic, no one found it timely to criticize the *official* cult, in spite of the fact that the codified religion of the state was nothing more than legalized magic Did it really matter whether the priest or the magician interpreted omens? Before Tiberius abolished the law, no state action could be decided upon without interrogation of the entrails, the haruspicy. Of a similar magical character were the other divinatory arts, taught in the priest-controlled schools—prediction of the future through interpretation of the flight or the cries of birds, of the lightning, of the trees There was little in Roman religion which could not already be found among the earlier Etruscans and the Greeks It was an antiquated religion of nature, full of the relics of "savagery" In defending it, the Caesars pursued only one aim, the consolidation of their authority

The early Christian emperors began their persecutions where the pagans had ended theirs Under Constantius, people who adhered to the old cult (which had now become illegal) were declared to be magicians and made to suffer martyrdom for their beliefs In the East Roman Empire, under Valens, the terrorized citizens burned their books, fearing they might be indicted for witchcraft Valens' investigators resorted to a method which was then not new and which has since that time too been employed In the houses of suspects, they "discovered" magical writings which they themselves had placed there—an easy way of ridding the emperor of annoying subjects and of filling the treasury with the gold of the executed.

Neo-Platonism

In Rome, private magic had become a trade, in exchange for money, the Chaldeans meted out good and evil Their knowledge was degenerating steadily But magic still exerted a powerful influence, and Gnostics and Neo-Platonists who accepted magical ideas and ceremonies gathered believers everywhere The latter, alarmed by expanding Christianity, appointed themselves the new champions of pagan magic An integral part of their cult was *theurgy*, the calling-down of good demons

Originally, demons had been mortals of extraordinary merit whom the gods claimed after death Under the influence of Greek philosophers, especially of Pythagoras and Plato, this concept changed, and now the demons were thought to be divinities The gods and heroes of ancient polytheism became the servants of the one God, who was infinite and universal, incomprehensible to man. Thus a compromise was reached between primitive polytheism and the monotheism of the philosophers

The demons, though partaking of the divine, appeared in human form. They

protected man against evil influences and carried his prayers to the highest heavens. Neo-Platonism also recognized evil demons, fond of bloodshed and strife Their evocation was considered a crime.

An important feature of Neo-Platonic ethics was the belief that God had manifested himself not only to one, but to many nations "His spirit had breathed wherever one discovers traces of divine revelation." Specially venerable at that time were older religions as being the receptacles of God's earliest manifestations to mankind. Neo-Platonic syncretism, however, differed from that of most of the Gnostics in that Christianity was not accepted Hellenic philosophy was to be saved by grafting upon it religious beliefs and other wisdom of the Orient.

In Alexandria, which had become the laboratory of the expanding communication between East and West, a Jewish philosopher, Philo (born 20 B C.), had translated the Old Testament into Greek, attempting to show a relationship between the old Jewish creed and Greek philosophy Philo had declared that Greek philosophy was superior to the Jewish religion; but he asserted that most of the great ideas in philosophy had originated among the Hebrews and had been borrowed from them by the Occident. Philo's philosophy culminated in the belief that true wisdom and morality are superior to intellectual apprehension, and that knowledge alone does not confer blessedness

Together with Philo, early Christians like Athenagoras and Justin paved the way for Neo-Platonism. In their ambition to exhibit Christianity as hyper-Platonic, they strove to connect the new faith with Platonism and Stoicism. They referred to philosophy in order to prove that the Christian revelation was true

The mysticism of Plotinus contains less magical and religious elements than that of later Neo-Platonists. He and his disciples still exhibit confidence in the presuppositions of philosophy Their successors, however, did not share this view; and to the achievements of the human intellect they opposed the higher wisdom of divine revelation

The soul, partaking of the Divine, strives to return to its source, God, from Whom has emanated *Nous*, who is at once created in His image and the archetype of all existing things. This return, however, according to Plotinus, cannot be hastened by magical rites, but only by the practice of virtue, ascetic observance, chastity, and by the contemplation of God From Porphyry, Plotinus' disciple, we know that the master attained this ecstatic union with God four times Porphyry popularized his master's teachings, placing the emphasis on religio-magical *rites*, thus accelerating the transition of Neo-Platonism from mystical philosophy to religious practices In the hands of Iamblichus, Porphyry's pupil, this process was completed. philosophical theory was transmuted into a theological doctrine.

Plotinus, who lived from about A.D 204 to 262, was opposed to magic. He charges the Gnostics with believing that the spoken word can influence the higher and incorporeal powers. He also attacks their conviction that diseases are demons who can be banished by exorcism Although Plotinus recognizes the efficacy of incantations and talismans, he calls them the works of magicians

and sorcerers, and in his *Aeneid* (IV, 4, 44), he concludes that *the life of reason is free from magic*. He concedes an occult meaning to the stars and to their motion, which though "not causing everything, signify the future concerning each." Like Plato he considered the stars as divine and eternal animals endowed with souls and with an intelligence superior to that of man. They dwell closer to the world soul, and therefore their nature is beyond that of earthly beings; but by no means do they shift from good to evil upon entering the different signs of the zodiac

Thus he denies emphatically the Chaldean star wisdom. His world image, however, is essentially a magical one. For him, harmony and sympathy draw together all the existing parts of the universe. Between beings having no apparent relationship there exist secret sympathies, a concept which the later Neo-Platonists shall make use of in producing marvels Plotinus' conception of astrology was the same as that of many Christian scholars of the Middle Ages: the stars exert their influence, which, however, the human will—being free—can overcome. His followers saw a connection between demons and magic; they drew a distinction between theurgical arts and the evil practice of sorcery on the one hand and science on the other. Theurgy uses "arcane signatures" and "the power of inexplicable symbols, consecrated from eternity" These are more sublime than reason, and their origin is known only to the god whom they invoke In other words, the old belief in seals and strange words is upheld once more and, though they are transformed to suit the needs of a changing world, they are truly the implements of magic.

In the book *Of the Mysteries of the Egyptians*, ascribed alternately to Iamblichus or to Porphyry, we read that natural objects are related to demons ethereally, aerially, or aquatically. This leaves a wide field open to magical operations, covering objects already familiar to us for such purposes Stones, herbs, aromatics and animals are used to attract spiritual powers, while the efficacy of prayer rests in its power to purify the conjurer of passion and profanity

It is little wonder then that the Neo-Platonic magicians of the Renaissance operate similarly, preparing themselves with devout prayers and Christian symbols prior to conjuring up the demon who shall reveal hidden treasures to them

A sixteenth-century magician recommends that these operations be suspended until the half-moon rises in the sky; that the conjurer observe chastity for nine days, that he attend to his confession and communion, and so forth.

The Neo-Platonists, fearing injury from evil, used counter charms, employing tactics which might thwart the demons. Porphyry (A D 232–304) reports on an imperfect conjuration conducted by his master, Plotinus, in the temple of Isis in Rome The sober views that Plotinus held about magic did not prevent him, in this case at any rate, from indulging in theurgy The god who appeared in this instance vanished soon because a friend of Plotinus, who had held two birds as counter charms, strangled them when the apparition became visible The god, shocked by this action, remained mute and disappeared quickly.[2]

The influence which theurgy exerted upon the Occident was powerful, and

stronger still was the imprint which Neo-Platonism left upon Church dogma. However, it is not within the scope of this book to describe its evolution in the Christian Church. It may suffice to remember that St. Augustine and Plotinus, both being products of the same philosophic-tradition, had arrived independently at similar conclusions The dogmas were formulated through philosophic methods; the theologians and the Neo-Platonists at times drew so closely together that they appear completely in accord.

★

During Plato's time, any magic that served the commonwealth could be fused with religion Under the Roman emperors of pagan times, the official cult was legalized magic, private practices were feared because they escaped government control Neo-Platonism had introduced rites heretofore unknown to Rome, which could be considered in the nature of reforms as well as taken for some new, forbidden magic When Apuleius was accused of witchcraft, he declared that his operations were nothing more than those sanctioned by state religion. And not long afterwards, Neo-Platonism became factually identified with the theology of paganism No one could be certain whom the Christian emperors might condemn through their laws against magic; this ambiguity proved practical for the rulers. Apparently, they revived the ancient decrees which Rome had formulated against wizardry. Their belated application, however, in a profoundly changed society, produced other results those same laws which had originally been created to protect the state religion now caused its destruction

In Rome, when the persecution of Christians was at its height, Tertullian (*ca* 160–240) exclaimed. "All those of ours who fell into your hands you have destroyed, and still more perish daily through your abominable tortures Should we call for revenge, what a war of reprisal we could wage against you, we who have not been weakened by debauchery and the enslavement of the mind." [1] This reprisal was then not far away, and the old Roman laws were to constitute its most powerful weapon The ancient Twelve Tables, the oldest Roman legislation, had never lost their validity They ordered death for the crime of witchcraft The Cornelian Law confirmed the sentence· "Soothsayers, enchanters, and those who make use of sorcery for *evil purposes*, those who conjure up demons, who disrupt the elements, who employ waxen images destructively, shall be punished by death "

When they found it expedient, Christian emperors now stigmatized as soothsayers the prophetesses of the sacred temples, as conjurers of coiled demons the philosophers who conversed with the intermediary gods This double-edged sword of justice was· not always of equal sharpness on both sides The emperors either enforced or disregarded these laws, according to circumstances Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, upheld tolerance in Italy and in Africa, whereas in Asia Minor he persecuted the heathens under various pretexts. In 357, he forbade absolutely every kind of divination. "There shall be

no more divination, nor curious inquiry, nevermore Whosoever dares disobey shall lose his head by the avenging sword of the executioner He who refuses to comply with this decree shall be smitten " People who had practiced the old religion were now accused of attempting to take the emperor's life by evil spells

Julian the Apostate

FROM such procedures we may gather that the early Christian emperors considered themselves, before all, the rulers of the empire, the foundations of which they consolidated by every political means that suited their purpose On the other hand, the Church to whom the majority of the lower classes now flocked, saw itself compelled to compromise with popular superstitions Many of the spiritual leaders indulged in these superstitions, and numerous clerics exhibited a corruption which contrasted strangely with the virtue of the last pagan philosophers No longer burdened with the problem of how to attract the masses, the latter retired into the highest realms of philosophy

It is necessary to bear these facts in mind in order to understand the popularity which the Emperor Julian enjoyed when he abandoned the Christian faith and reinstalled pagan worship Julian was the only survivor of his family, which had been massacred by his cousins, the sons of Constantine He had been spared, probably because of his apparent inoffensiveness He had known a joyless youth on the eastern border of the empire No princely education was given him, and the bishop of Nicomedia was ordered by Constantius to direct Julian's inclinations toward the clerical profession

Julian must have concealed his resentment skillfully, as Constantius had no suspicion that he might become dangerous According to the legend, Julian secretly instructed himself in Neo-Platonism Eusebius the philosopher had instilled in him reliance on reason, "since nothing is closer to error than the beliefs of a feeble mind " Chrysantius, on the contrary, was exalted in the praise of theurgy and spurred his pupil's interest in supernatural manifestations The venerable Maximus finally initiated the future emperor in the philosophy of Neo-Platonism, and as supreme proof of his wisdom he evoked a few beneficent demons The initiation which took place in an abandoned temple near Ephesus was the beginning of Julian's career It was as incredible to him as it was to many others that his cousin Constantius called upon him Still more marvelous was his nomination as Caesar, that is commander-in-chief of the armies in Gaul When he entered the first Gallic village, arrayed gaily by the friendly inhabitants, a laurel wreath accidentally fell upon his head When riding through Vienne, an old woman blocked his way to greet him as the emperor and the favorite of the gods These were good omens, which became confirmed when Julian fought victoriously against the invading Germans

The events of Julian's life are well-known: his victory over the German tribes, his coup d'état in Paris, which made him Roman emperor, his startling career as ruler of the empires of East and West, his recantation of the Christian faith In Eleusis, he descended into a pit, where ox blood was poured on him in accordance with the rites of the Mithraic religion Then he offered a sacrifice in the temple of Fortune, and was present at the haruspicy, the inspection of entrails for knowledge of the future As Pontifex Maximus he decreed that the temples be reopened, and sacrifices and divination were declared to be an integral part of the state religion.

In 362, he traveled to Persia, the only country which for centuries had resisted Rome He reached Antioch by the end of July, at the time of the festival of the mourning for Adonais This coincidence was considered an evil omen. In Mesopotamia he worshipped the goddess of the moon and, after mysterious nocturnal ceremonies, he ordered her temple doors to be walled up "until his return " The Persian war was an unlucky undertaking Wounded fatally, Julian addressed his confidants, affirming he knew that the soul was above the body. Fearing that his waning spirit might make a mistake fatal to the empire, he did not designate his successor. "Why," he said, expiring, "bewail a soul ready to join the Genii of the stars?"

In his writings, Julian reveals himself to be a true Neo-Platonist and an admirer of Iamblichus, whom he praises in his *Hymn to the Sovereign Sun* This work contains many astrological ideas The planets are the visible gods, and the sun, the highest among them, is the link between the visible and the intelligible world Behind its shining disk is the great Invisible He is the First Cause, the Supreme Principle, acting upon the world by means of emanation whose highest embodiment is the sun [4] "The doctrines of Aristotle," Julian says, "are incomplete until they become harmonized with those of Plato, and even that is not enough, they must agree with the *revelations* granted by the gods " He wanted to use Neo-Platonism for the revival of Greek philosophy. As an advocate of this school, he considered man's soul to be imprisoned in the body for the expiation of sin Matter is evil, and one ought to flee from it One should blush to possess a body whose grossness is offensive to man's soul. Knowledge of God is attained through ecstasy, a bacchic frenzy which the initiated alone may witness The world is a trinity, composed of matter, of the planets which are not marred by imperfection, and of the supreme Good that evades the grasp of the intelligence

Julian's main interest was the glorification of his favorite deity, the sun His worship of the radiant provider of all life we can trace to Eastern sources that sprang from Zoroastrianism, the religion of Light Julian worshipped the Sun-god under the name of Mithra, the mediator, as King Helios, the king of all things, who "fills the heavens with as many gods as are comprehended by his intelligence " [5] All the gods of the other religions shall play their parts on the intelligible scene, as manifestations of the power and the beneficence of Helios. He ends his discourse on King Sun with these exalted words:

"May the gods grant me the privilege of celebrating many times the sacred feast, and may the Sun-god, king of the universe—He who proceeds through all eternity from the generative substance of the Good, who in the midst of the intellectual gods fills them with infinite harmony and beauty, with fruitful substance, perfect intelligence, and continually and without end with every good—bless me I beseech thee, Sun, king of all things, because of my devotion, to be benevolent to me, and give me a happy life, a steady mind, a divine intelligence—and, finally, at the desired moment, a most tranquil liberation from life, and allow me to ascend and remain near Him, possibly through eternity and, if this be beyond my merit, at least for many harmonious years" [6]

Julian was not the only promoter of sun worship Such beliefs must have been popular in Rome and caused perhaps the spreading of the Mithraic cult in Europe Sun worship was connected with the faith of Mithras. A relationship of Mithraicism with Christianity was also alleged by the priests of the Oriental creed A witness to this is St Augustine "I remember," he says, "that the priests of the fellow in the cap (that is, Mithra, who wore a Phrygian bonnet) used to say at one time, 'Our capped one is himself a Christian'" [7] The first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great, adopted for the most common type of coinage the figure of the sun with the legend, "To the Invincible Sun, my guardian," [8] retaining it long after his conversion

Julian's religion rested upon the ancient beliefs of the Orient and recalls the earliest monotheistic religion, that of Ikhnaton who had arrived, thirteen hundred years before Christ, at similar conclusions, praying to a supreme deity whose emblem was the disk of the sun

The Ruin of Pagan Magic

" . announce that the Great Pan is dead"
According to PLUTARCH

IT was during the fourth century that Christianity overcame the pagan cult and its magical rites Julian died in 363, and his successor Jovian in 364, the year in which the brothers Valens and Valentinian ascended to the thrones of East and West Rome Under Valens, pagan resistance was still powerful, centering upon the old Iamblichus whose sobriety was combined strangely with enthusiasm and the love of the marvelous His doctrine and that of Plotinus were the pillars supporting the pagan sanctuary Paganism was smoldering beneath the ashes of burned temples, sacred trees and images In the cities, many found it wise to accept under pressure the religion of Christ But these converts, though adding to the number of Christians, were dangerous, as is demonstrated



Fig 34 Ideal Figure of Iamblichus

by Libanius, the Greek rhetorician (314–391). He says "If they tell you that there are many newly converted, be sure that their sudden conversion is only simulation They remain what they were They show, when in the company of true Christians, their new religious feelings. They seem to swell the number of worshippers of Christ with whom they pray No doubt they do pray—with words different however from those befitting the place They are like the tyrant in the tragedy being no tyrants at all yet wearing his mask"

In the country, such a mask was not always necessary since there official vigilance was relaxed Pagan signifies villager (Latin *pagus*—village), and in Valentinian's laws, the old creed is called *religio paganorum*, the religion of the country people It was in the country that the philosophers met secretly to deliberate on how to face the oppression One of these meetings, under the guidance of Iamblichus, has often been described Twenty-four philosophers met in an abandoned mansion to exert their divinatory arts By alectryomancy, divination by a fowl, they wanted to explore the future, anxious to know whether Valens was to be succeeded by a more worthy monarch They scattered grain on their alphabetical circle and the cock picked from the Greek letters, in the sequence ΘΕΟΔ, Theod The philosophers concluded that Theodorus, an official of high rank at court, was to be chosen emperor

When Valens had been informed of this meeting, he reinforced the persecution of all philosophers, seers and magicians Not only were philosophers sentenced to death but others also, whose mantles were fringed in the style of the philosophers' garments

This persecution was not considered unusual in these barbaric times However, the remainder of the story as it has been reported can only find its prototype in the realms of legend Valens commanded the death of all people whose names began with Theod, the Theodores, Theodules, Theodotes, Theodositer, Theodorites, etc The slaughter was initiated by the execution of the courtier, Theodorus By the hysterical way in which the emperor sought to eradicate superstitious beliefs, he exposed his own subservience to superstition

The venerable Iamblichus, it is said, poisoned himself in order to escape an ignominious death. Secret police roamed the countryside searching for victims At court, Heliodorus, an astrologer, gave Valens lessons in eloquence, in this way disguising his true function, which was to cast horoscopes, to predict the future from the stars But he did not reveal that Iamblichus' ill-starred alectryomantic oracle was to come true Valens, fighting the Goths at Adrianople, was killed (378), and Theodosius (346–395), called the Great, ascended to the throne It was Theodosius who dealt the death blow to paganism, for his Draconian decrees prohibited the most inoffensive old customs the burning of incense and the lighting of a fire at home in honor of the house-god, the pouring of wine with a similar intention, and the adorning of trees Many of these rites were hardly connected with the pagan cult There was, for instance, the sacrifice called the *propter viam* because of departure It consisted in the burning of remainders of food This "sacrifice," or rather hygienic measure, was dictated more by the necessity of getting rid of waste than by piety.

Such rites, or rather traditions, were punished by confiscation of the house and prosecution for high treason. The new laws were reinforced sternly by magistrates and judges The third of a field in which a pagan fire had been kindled was confiscated, even though its owner had not participated in the rite. "Prejudice disguised itself in religious fervor, and many accused their neighbors of paganism in order to despoil them."

Festus, *former governor of* Syria and *proconsul of* Asia, who had always been an enemy of paganism, was so horrified by these abuses that in his old age he embraced the religion of the persecuted

In vain did Libanius exhort the emperor to be tolerant In his *Speech in Defense of the Temples*, Libanius, who had been counselor under Julian, exposes with humanity misdeeds committed through fanaticism It was useless, however, for the fate of paganism was already decided Under Theodosius II it struggled feebly for existence and lingered on into the fifth and sixth centuries The demons of Neo-Platonism grew ever less powerful. A single word, 'Christ,' could drive them now into the abyss With prayers and holy water the air which they had polluted was purified They seemed to be driven away forever, yet they were to return to avenge the persecution of their worshippers. As devils, they reappeared in the occidental world, where they dwelled in the imagination both of the learned and of the simple The persecutions of which they were the cause rank among the major misfortunes that have visited the West.

ALCHEMY

Origins of Alchemy

This operation, as the ancients say, is in truth convenient for women

BASIL VALENTINE

THERE is evidence that the art which was later called alchemy came to the West at the beginning of the second century of the Christian Era. The most important testimony substantiating this is that of Pliny the Elder (A D 23-79) who writes extensively on metallurgy but does not mention ideas which could be included among those related to alchemy The various beliefs concerning metals and their treatment mentioned by Pliny indicate that alchemy was in his time ready to emerge [1]

Despite the alchemists' claim concerning the age of their art, it is in point of fact the youngest magical wisdom The notion that it flourished during the time of the Pharaohs has been abandoned along with the etymology *chem* or *qem*, meaning black, an Egyptian word employed occasionally to describe Egypt, whose black soil contrasted so sharply with the red earth of the desert [2]

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

Zosimus declared that the knowledge of metals, precious stones, and of scents dated back to the epoch mentioned furtively in the Genesis "The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair" The mysterious sons of God were believed to be fallen angels who had mated with the women of antediluvian times

In gratitude, the angels taught these women various arts, obviously with the intention that their companions make jewels, colorful garments, and perfumes with which to adorn their beauty Thus, the wise men of ancient times decided that the fallen angels must have been evil, perverters of morals and manners

Tertullian (ca A D 160–240) confirms these early beliefs, saying that the sons of God bequeathed their wisdom to the mortals with the evil intention of seducing them to "mundane pleasures"

According to Zosimus, these happenings marked the beginning of alchemy. He was repeating what late Jewish and early Christian writers had already

declared. Zosimus elaborates upon the subject and gives also the name of a very early master of the alchemical art, the mysterious Chemes, though this legendary ancestor of the gold-makers has left no evidence that he ever existed However, it was accepted that Chemes had written a book which he called *Chema*, and that the fallen angels had given lessons to the daughters of men with the aid of this book From Chemes and *Chema* was derived *Chemia*, a name which was given consequently to the art itself

This accounts for the legend thus far The Greek word *Chemia* was the designation for alchemy until the Arabs added to it the article *'al'* of their native tongue

In an early alchemical manuscript, a priestess who calls herself Isis and who addresses her writings to her son Horus declares that she owed her knowledge to the first of the angels and prophets Amnael Isis does not hesitate to tell us that she acquired her wisdom as a reward for the intercourse with Amnael. Her book is of great interest to the student of alchemical tradition, and still more revealing are the writings of a woman known by the pseudonym of Mary the Jewess Mary, a Greek, is apparently the earliest alchemist of the West None of her writings have survived in complete form, but she is cited by her colleagues, like Zosimus, as if she might be identified with Moses' sister Miriam The alchemist Olympiodorus (fourth century of the Christian Era) quotes the famous passage on the strength of which she has always been called a Jewess Speaking of the "holiness" of her book, she says:

> "Do not touch it (if you are not of the Abrahamitic race), unless indeed you are of our race." [1]

The passage is confused, as the sentence in parenthesis seems to be a gloss that had worked itself into the text. The question of Mary's faith is of minor importance She is a most capable chemist, and the invention of a series of new technical devices is ascribed to her the vessel enclosed in a box of hot ashes, producing a low and steady heat, the dung bed which retains its warmth for an indefinite time, the double boiler, still called in French *bain-marie* [4]

Speaking of women alchemists, we must not forget the early scholar who called herself Cleopatra, and Theosebia, Zosimus' sister There will be additional material in following chapters on Cleopatra's book, *Chrysopeia (Gold-Making)*. The participation by so many women in the study of the newly invented art is like a confirmation of the fable that wills the fair sex to be connected with the origins of alchemy Most of the alchemical manuscripts which were written in the third and fourth centuries of the Christian Era have come to us in copies of later dates Cleopatra's *Gold-Making*, for instance, is preserved in a manuscript of the tenth or eleventh century (fig. 35). But there are also early Greco-Egyptian texts, like the famous Leyden and Stockholm Papyri. They date back to about A D 300 Most or all of them were found in a tomb at Thebes in Egypt, but the name of the alchemical master who wanted his library to be buried with him is unknown To this early literature must be added the theoretical and apologetic writings of Zosimus, Stephanus, Olympiodorus, Synesius, and others, whose authenticity cannot be questioned Zosimus and

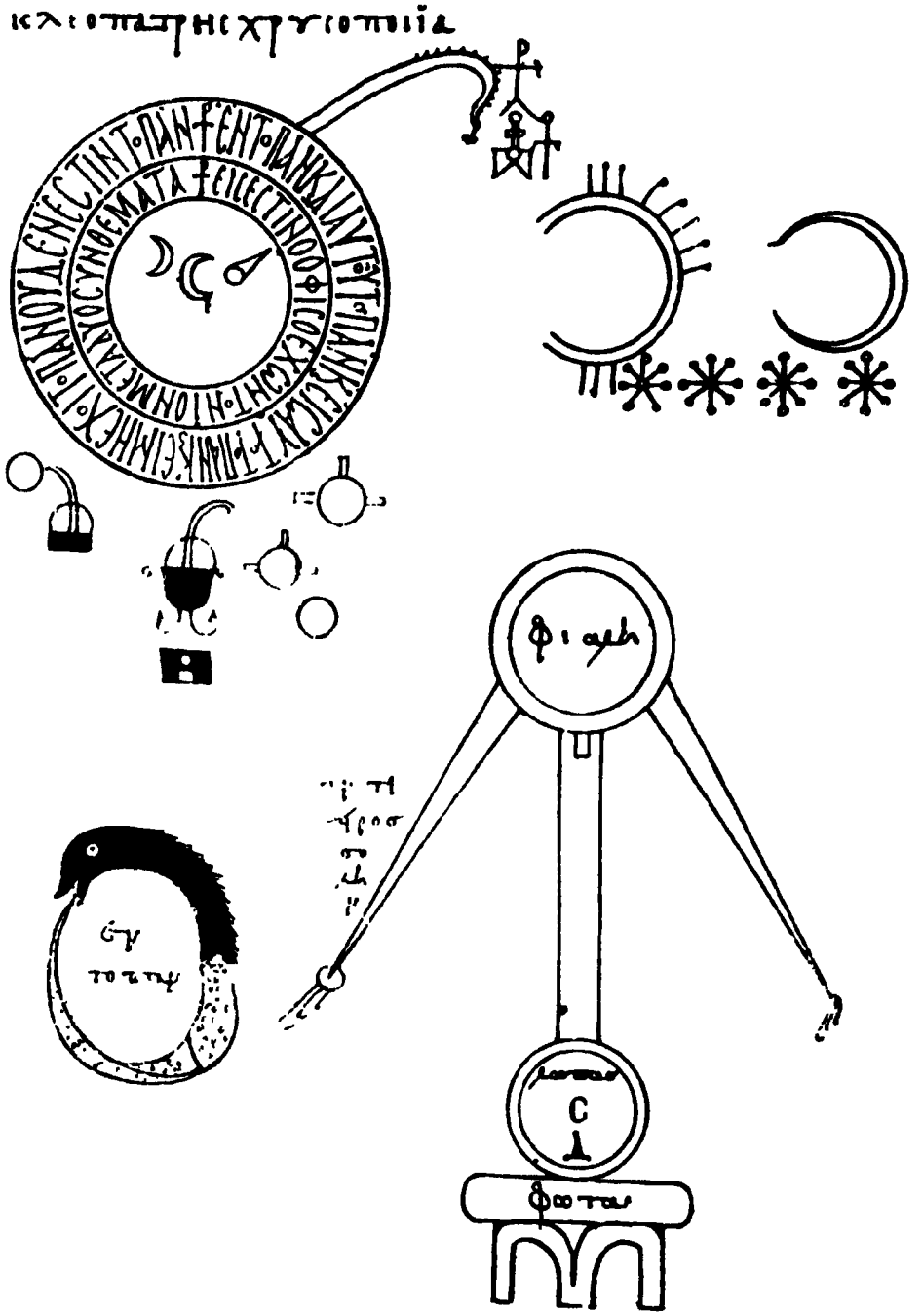


Fig 35 Chrysopeia of Cleopatra

Olympiodorus wrote in the fourth century, Synesius in the fifth, and Stephanus continued the lineage in the seventh century.

This literature provides a clear picture of the early alchemical art By these authentic writings it is possible to unwind the silky thread which fable has spun into a marvelous cocoon, and to unravel its mystery

Together with magic and other illicit arts, alchemy was revealed to mankind by the cursed angels, betrayers of God's secrets They had been punished for this indiscretion, a curse lay upon the forbidden knowledge which enabled man to rival his creator. Investigation of the hidden works of nature was sacrilegious St Augustine shares this conception when he censures "the vain and curious desire of investigation, known as knowledge and science"

The rivalry between knowledge and faith had likewise been perceived by Roman writers In his book *On the Nature of Things*, Lucretius (*ca* 98–53 B C) exclaims triumphantly "Thus is religion trod down, by a just reverse; victory makes us akin to the gods" And he adds, hypocritically "Do not think that I wish to teach you the principles of impiety, or to lead you to the path of crime."[5]

Throughout the first centuries of our era, the tree of knowledge of the Genesis remained the symbol of such sinful investigation. With the eating of the forbidden fruit, man had become like God, knowing good and evil No doubt the alchemists accepted such views, yet they proceeded with their investigations just the same Isis' boast of how she has acquired knowledge sounds like a challenge to the passage of Genesis Gnostic teachings created this entirely new attitude, for many Gnostic sects were indifferent to the problem of good and evil upon earth The Ophites, in like manner worshipped the serpent of the Bible as a beneficent being, since it had rightly directed man to knowledge, the weapon used by him against his creator Iadalbaoth The tree of knowledge and the serpent were thus to become the most cherished emblems of alchemy (fig 36).

It is not surprising that the first alchemists were treated as badly as the heathen Their persecution was initiated when the art was still centered in Alexandria The study of medicine and alchemy was carried on in buildings adjacent to the Serapeum, the Serapis Temple. When Theophilus, archbishop of Alexandria, ordered the destruction of this temple, he met with resistance, but a direct command by Emperor Theodosius forced the scholars to retreat Together with the other temples of the empire, the Serapeum perished in flames The library, once already destroyed under Caesar, was saved and the studies continued in the museum, until the woman-philosopher, Hypatia, was murdered (415)

Her death marked the end of pagan learning in Egypt. The persecuted philosophers sought refuge in Athens, where Proclus, the Neo-Platonist, was then teaching With them, alchemy traveled to Greece In 529, Justinian ordered the official suppression of ancient learning, science and philosophy Pagan culture disappeared, but alchemy survived, though the Theodosian law had ordered that alchemical books be burned publicly, with the bishop present

New writers continued the filiation of the cursed Fusing some orthodox elements into their doctrine, they made it acceptable to the emperors. Stephanus of Alexandria dedicated his *Nine Lessons in Chemia* to Heraclius, emperor of the East (575–641) Well-versed in the philosophy of Pythagoras and



Fig 36 Alchemical Tree

Plato, yet a Christian mystic, Stephanus marks the transition between ancient alchemy and that of a new Europe Not far away were the times when Byzantine monks would set to work copying such old writings as might fall into their hands Among these assiduous compilers who worked for several centuries at the reconstitution of fanatically destroyed wisdom, Nicephorus (758–829) was concerned mainly with Greek authors In the eleventh century, Psellus restored Platonic philosophy Together with the reappearance of old literature, the number of alchemical commentators increased, including the "Christian Philosopher," pseudonym of a highly trained monk who fused, in his work, Christian culture with pagan studies, alchemy with theology

Inspired by Stephanus' writings, alchemical poets appear upon the literary stage, praising in exalted verse the marvels revealed by the hermetic art

Zosimus and Olympiodorus are cited again, together with Synesius, the ingenious and wise bishop of Ptolemais Mythical alchemists like Trismegistus, Petesis and Agathodaemon reappear in the texts, also pseudo-Hermetics such as Zoroaster and Democritus Those who in fear of persecution had hidden behind pseudonyms—Cleopatra, Mary, and Isis—are now the objects of veneration Iamblichus, the unfortunate champion of Neo-Platonism, was credited with two alchemical treatises These Byzantine manuscripts of hermetic texts made their way to Italy, some were ultimately acquired by King Francis I and brought to France.

However, this trickle of old wisdom would not have saved Europe from falling into the depths of ignorance, had not the conquering Arabs introduced to Spain the learning of antiquity

Hermes Trismegistus

As early as 2900 B C, the Egyptians had mined gold, *nub*, in Nubia. The precious metal obtained from quartz was ground by handmills, and as technical skills progressed, gold was refined and standardized The refining process had been discovered after laborious research, and its secret was closely guarded by the priests " They reserved them for the inheritor of the throne or for those of the highest virtue and wisdom

Zosimus says "The good of the whole kingdom is upheld by these arts of exploiting metals and sand, but no one but the priests may exercise power over them "

In Egypt, chemical operations were accompanied, as everything important was, by magical incantations If we combine the three facts, namely, that the Egyptians worked with gold ore and other metals, that they kept these operations secret, and that their chemistry was endowed with magic, we draw close to alchemy

Were the Egyptians adept at the arcane art? There is no evidence nor any likelihood that they were

Everything relating to alchemy, however, leads us back constantly to Egypt Zosimus dedicated his book on alchemy to Imhotep, the wise poet and counselor, who lived not much later than 3000 B C In Imhotep's beautiful verses, we recognize that at an early date the Egyptians already knew the mundane pleasures which the sons of god had taught to the daughters of men

"Follow thy desire while thou livest,
Lay myrrh upon thy head,
Clothe thee in fine linen
Imbued with luxurious perfumes,
The genuine things of the gods " [7]

Stephanus, who wrote in the seventh century of our era, says that sulphur and lead are synonymous with Osiris This god, Isis, and the evil Typhon are mentioned often in alchemical writings, and most of them name Hermes Trismegistus as the master of alchemical philosophy (fig 37) Hermes is the Greek god who conducts the souls to the dark kingdom of Hades, the underworld "He opens the doors of birth and of death " He controls exchange, commerce and learning. he is the gods' messenger, the mediator, the reconciler.

'Trismegistus' means "three times the greatest," an epithet that reveals in what high esteem he was held He is not a Greek god but a divinity of the Greek colonists in Egypt These Greco-Egyptians admired the ancient religious doctrines of the Nile land, which apparently had not changed since the remote times of the Pharaohs, but which in reality had decayed, so that when the Greeks began to study them, their symbols were not even understood by the Egyptian priests

The Hellenic settlers did not make up the largest portion of the population in Alexandria, but they were certainly the most intelligent In the amalgamation of Egyptian religion and Greek philosophy, resulting in constant exchange between these two peoples, Hellenic ideas were predominant, so that we can rightly speak of an Hellenized Egypt The Greeks accepted readily whatever they could understand among the remnants of the old Egyptian religion, and the result of this process was an Egyptian philosophy in which were mingled both elements, together with religious fragments of the Jews and the other peoples of the East ` The Greeks recognized in the Egyptian gods their own deities, thus they identified their Hermes with Thoth, the divine inventor of magic, of writing, and of the spoken word

Thoth is the scribe in the judgment hall of the underworld, writing down Osiris' verdict which is pronounced after the deeds of the deceased have been weighed

Thoth-Hermes became humanized, developing into a mythical king who had reigned for 3226 years and who had written 36,525 books on the Principles of Nature Iamblichus brought this fantastic number down to 20,000, and Clement of Alexandria (fl AD 200) reduced it to a sober forty-two, which he had seen carried in a solemn procession

These books were nothing else but the anonymous writings on Egyptian philosophy, the offspring of Greco-Egyptian intercourse. According to Iamblichus, the authors of such works signed them with the name, Thoth, probably to give them the venerability of age Thoth-Hermes, assumed to have been their author, was credited with founding the doctrine which consequently was called hermetic

No one doubted the authenticity of the mythical adept whose existence had been confirmed by Plato, by Diodorus of Sicily, by Tertullian, Galen, Iamblichus, and many others

From the colossal amount of writing ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus not very much has survived, beyond fourteen short texts written in Greek and a series of fragments preserved by Christian authors These express mystical and philosophical ideas inherent in this early epoch which, viewed as a whole,



Fig 37 Ideal Figure of Hermes Trismegistus

recall Gnosticism. The best known among them is called *Poimandres, the Good Shepherd,* some passages of which bear a striking resemblance to the gospel of St John, while others are reminiscent of Plato's *Timaeus* Jewish thought, such as is expressed by Philo, can also be discerned in them.

In addition to these writings, a few magical treatises are ascribed to Trismegistus Their main theme is astrology, alchemy is treated somewhat vaguely



Fig 38 Alchemical Allegory "The Wind Hath Carried it in his Belly

The hermetic books were considered by the alchemists as Hermes' bequest to them of the secrets which were veiled in allegories to prevent the precious wisdom from falling into the hands of the profane Only the wise were able to find their way in this mystical labyrinth

Hermes' passage, cited frequently, the Credo of the adepts, was the inscription found on an emerald tablet "in the hands of Hermes' mummy, in an obscure pit, where his interred body lay," situated, according to tradition, in the great pyramid of Gizeh The document is called the *Emerald Tablet* and is too intimately connected with alchemy not to be reproduced in its entirety.

" 'Tis true, without falsehood, and most real that which is above is like that

which is below, to perpetrate the miracles of One thing. And as all things have been derived from one, by the thought of one, so all things are born from this thing, by adoption The Sun is its Father, the Moon is its Mother Wind has carried it in its belly (fig 38), the Earth is its nurse Here is the father of every perfection in the world. His strength and power are absolute when changed into earth; thou wilt separate the earth from fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with care. It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends again to earth to receive the power of the superior and the inferior things By this means, thou wilt have the glory of the world And because of this, all obscurity will flee from thee. Within this is the power, most powerful of all powers For it will overcome all subtle things, and penetrate every solid thing Thus the world was created From this will be, and will emerge, admirable adaptations of which the means are here And for this reason, I am called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the philosophy of the world What I have said of the Sun's operations is accomplished "

In these allegories, the alchemists recognized the various stages in the process of gold-making, and the ambiguity of the sentences lent itself to infinite interpretations We know that there was no Hermes Trismegistus; no emerald slab was found in the master's tomb It is an interesting coincidence, however, that the old fable met the truth halfway, for the earliest recorded copy of the *Emerald Tablet* can be found in the Leyden Papyrus, mentioned already, which was discovered in the tomb of an anonymous magician in Egyptian Thebes in 1828.

In the *Emerald Tablet*, one sentence emerges as a possible clue to many alchemical theories "Because of this, all obscurity will flee from thee " The alchemists knew that gold appearing in their retorts would radiate a beautiful light The heavy, congealed material was to become animated It would not be ordinary but living gold that would grow as "gold grows in the earth ' The goldsmith's metal, they thought, was dead, like the limbs severed from a tree, and with a tree they compared the subterranean ramifications of the ore Living gold "engenders gold, as corn engenders corn " Once the Hermetics had grasped the truth, they radiated like living gold and "obscurity flew from them." Thus the transmutation of base metals into gold was accompanied by another transmutation, that of man, and the seven steps, or stages, of the alchemical process were the symbols decking the path to blessedness

In this struggle, the alchemist sought a union of soul and mind with the divine Scientific achievement was without value when not accompanied by an ennoblement of the soul And the mastery was the proof that the adept was now among the chosen The symbol of this final stage was the figure of Christ, appearing within the retort

The alchemists thought that in this world the most perfect substance was imperishable gold Nature, which tends toward perfection always, wants only to produce gold Lead, copper, iron and other metals are miscarriages of nature. God has imbued man's soul with a longing for perfection. Like nature, man should strive for the divine within him

The best that existed below, the adept believed, could only be linked to

what was lowest above. The most perfect thing on earth was gold; and above, the only body whose rays reached into the heaven of the angels was the sun. Among the divine things, the sun was the lowest. Thus gold was linked with the sun, which is halfway between the Supreme and the earth, the mediator between man and God

Hermetica

> One loses science when losing the purity of the heart
>
> NICHOLAS VALOIS

TRUE alchemy was infinitely superior to a craft or a science, for transmutation could not be produced by ability alone, neither was knowledge by itself adequate to attain mastery Moral virtues were required, and only when he had attained the sublime state of perfection could man utilize the wonders of nature

St John was thought to have been an alchemist, for according to the Byzantine legend he had transformed the pebbles at the seashore into gold and precious stones

Mediaeval and Renaissance alchemists did not stress the scientific part of their wisdom, as they turned away from magic more and more, the inquiring spirit of their ancestors released its hold upon them Many declared that the contemplation of nature was far more important than the study of learned books They recommended that one recapture the simplicity of heart, affirming that a child could make gold, and that the primary ingredient for alchemical work—the *prima materia*—could be found everywhere But the ignorant trod upon it daily, and the cornerstone of alchemy is rejected by the unworthy

"It is manifest to all men," says Paracelsus concerning *prima materia*, "the poor have more of it than the rich The good part of it people discard, and the bad part they retain It is visible and invisible, children play with it in the lane . ."

Such images are borrowed from the Gospel, and even the apparent nonsense of the *materia* being at once both visible and invisible can be shaped to reason with passages of the Evangelist "And they had closed their eyes so as never to see . . for blessed are their eyes, for they do see " (Matth. 13 11-15)

The Gospel and the writings of Hermes are akin to each other Both were written in the second century, and independent of each other, their authors have discovered similar ideas and modes of expression, this resemblance impressed the early leaders of the Church Together with the Sibyls—who also are apocryphal—they invoked Hermes Trismegistus as a witness of the truth In the third century, Lactantius exclaimed "Hermes has found, I do not know how, almost the whole verity "



Fig 39 The Alchemist in his Laboratory

The mediaeval and Renaissance Hermetics stressed still more this parentage. Apparently pious Christians, their books exalt the Almighty, "who still creates wonders in our days." Verses in the Gospel are quoted so frequently that one begins to suspect that Writ is nothing more than an alchemical book. Even the obscure imagery of the seven stages of gold-making could be justified by Matthew's text "I will open my mouth in figures I will utter things that have been concealed since creation" (13 35)

But this figurative speaking of the Hermetic lacks the vigor of Biblical images The writer's imagination was hampered by established symbols, allegories and metaphors which were not to be altered, for everything had been articulated and accomplished from the beginning New discoveries were not to be made, the perfect art could not be perfected However, it was different with alchemical graphics, as we shall see in the following pages

In all the ramifications of society, alchemy had taken root, yet it did not participate in its life The alchemists lived in seclusion, as if protesting tacitly against their environment The soul of the alchemist could find no peace in the teachings of the established dogma For the truly pious, *faith* was blessedness, but the alchemist wanted to *understand* God through knowing the marvelous force that God had given to matter With his intellect he wished to grasp the Supreme, and through study and contemplation to ascend gradually to the divine light

Wisdom builds its own house, they used to say, and such a proud device contrasts oddly with the simplicity of the heart which they desired to achieve Yet both things have been professed by the adepts Their way to blessedness was a sinuous one, and their ideas an alloy of contradictions

An engraving in Khunrath's *Amphitheater of Eternal Wisdom* (1609) illustrates this fusion of ideas (*fig* 39) Khunrath, the alchemist and Rosicrucian, is kneeling before a tabernacle, reminiscent of the tent of the Hebrews in the desert In it, an inscription says "Do not speak of God without enlightenment" Upon the table are two open books, the Bible opened at the psalm "Then they were in great terror, for God was with the righteous generation" "Generation" alludes probably to the production of the philosopher's stone The other book contains hermetic formulas Smoke escaping from an incense burner near by is inscribed "The prayer may rise like smoke, a sacrifice agreeable to God" At the right, in a sumptuous hall, a huge fireplace contains the laboratory The mantelpiece is sustained by two columns experience and reason And above, on one of the heavy beams which support the wooden ceiling, we read "Nobody is great without divine inspiration"

Prayer and work are confined to opposite walls, for the alchemist's laboratory, the *laboratorium*, is consecrated to both—the word composed of *labor* and *oratorium*, meaning both labor and a place devoted to prayer Between these activities are those of relaxation -musical instruments are piled upon the center table, inkwell, pen and paper inviting one to indulge in leisurely writing In order that music should not lead to pleasures too worldly, on the tablecloth is inscribed "Sacred music causes flight to sadness and to the evil spirits because the spirit of Jehovah sings happily in a heart filled with holy joy"

Amidst these manifold activities the secluded Khunrath could not have known boredom. He had stored his princely dwelling generously with provisions that fed his mind and his soul. Alertness must have been one of his outstanding characteristics, for over the portal of the hall he had written: "Be vigilant even when asleep"



Fig 40 Hermetic Philosophers and a Practising Alchemist

The division in the Hermetic's activities is similarly made clear by an etching of the *Musaeum Hermeticum*, a compilation of alchemical treatises, published in 1625 (fig 40) In a library, an abbot, a monk, and a philosopher are discussing hermetic problems Their garments and expressions reveal that they do not intend to do any alchemical work, it is obvious that they are merely theorizing The adjoining laboratory is filled with alchemical apparatus. This room shows no sign of scientific conjecture or mystical speculation, but is apparently the place for experimentation, and the vigorous old man—a new Vulcan—his heavy hammer swung over his shoulder, is concerned solely with the air pipes he has driven into the flame The alchemist's oven in the center is the link between work and study, practice and theory

Absorbed in thought, the three philosophizing adepts were unaware of what is happening in the retort on the oven One of them points to the glass bowl in which a snake has appeared

This miniature reptile, which in 1625 still haunted the alchemist's retort, can trace its ancestry back to the earliest times of our era, when Paul was warning his Corinthian flock of the dangerous Gnostic teachings, of "scurrilous talk,



Fig 41 The Hermetic Dragon

secret practices, and sham apostles " Some sects of Gnosticism, it may be recalled, worshipped the serpent of paradise who had planted in man's heart the yearning for knowledge This snake, the Ouroboros, became an alchemical emblem It is found in Cleopatra's book on gold-making, the *Chrysopeia* (fig 35) The serpent's body, divided between light and dark, signified to the adept that in the material world good and bad, perfection and imperfection, are bound together in matter For matter is One, or as the alchemists used to say. "One is All " In Cleopatra's book, this axiom is encircled by the Ouroboros In the three concentric circles in the upper left, a mysterious text elaborates this idea. "One is All, by him is all, and for him is all, and in him is all. The Serpent is one, he has the two symbols (good and bad) ."

The evil serpent of paradise was transformed by the Gnostics into the beneficent Ouroboros The Ouroboros was changed into the alchemist's dragon, and its body being light and dark found a chemical interpretation A beautiful etching in Lambsprinck's book on the *Philosophical Stone* shows such a dragon, that "lives in the forest " (Fig 41)



Fig 42 Alchemical Allegory The Killing of the Dragon

"Most venomous is he, yet lacking nothing,
When he sees the rays of the Sun and its bright fire,
He scatters abroad his poison,
And flies upward so fiercely
That no living creature can stand before him .

His venom becomes the great medicine
He quickly consumes his venom
For he devours his poisonous tail.
And this is performed on his own body,
From which flows forth glorious balm,
With all its miraculous virtues
Here do all the sages rejoice loudly" [9]

For him who has not yet grasped the meaning of this imagery, Lambsprinck has added a short and prosaic explanation "The mercury is precipitated, dissolved in its own water, and then once more coagulated" But before the miracle can be performed with this marvelous metal, containing its own "medicine," the dragon must be killed (fig 42).



Fig 43 Alchemical Allegory of Putrefaction

"The sages say
That a wild beast is in the forest,
Whose skin is of blackest dye
If any man cut off his head,
His *blackness* will disappear
And give place to a *snowy* white "[10]

This allegory alluding to the change of color of the chemically treated mercury is explained by Lambsprinck with one word putrefaction In the alchemist's work, the first stage is decay The dragon, mercury, must be killed. "Sacrifice him," it is written in a manuscript of the tenth century, "peel off his skin, separate the flesh from the bone, and thou wilt find that which thou seekest" The perfect philosopher's gold cannot be produced without preceding decay

And this was not only valid for transmuting matter, since the alchemical

mystic thought that man, as we have already seen, had to endure the same ordeal. He cannot attain the state of blessedness without first destroying his bodily passions When he has vanquished the black Hydra in his heart, then he will be cleansed, and the blackness will turn white:

> "When the beast's black hue has vanished in a black smoke,
> The sages rejoice . . ." [11]

Such speculations carry us into Catholic mysticism. Man's body is impure; Adam's flesh is putrefied But the Saviour's flesh is hidden in every man. From the putrefied flesh of Adam, a seed blossoms into eternal life. Without sin there is no salvation; without death there is no resurrection Man has to descend to the darkness of the grave before rising to eternal clarity. Or, as we read in Paul (I Cor 15.36): "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die "

Basil Valentine, the pious monk of the fifteenth century, interprets as follows the first stage in the alchemical process. In his book *Azoth*, a woodcut shows a decayed cadaver lying in the alchemist's globe. Below, cold and warm perform their task, "gently with great care." Above are the sun, the moon, and the planets with their signs Among them is black Saturn, under whose auspices the first step toward gold is made Hopeful, the corpse raises his head to heaven; Black Raven "separates the flesh from the bones," while soul and mind, small white bird-monsters, have left the body together with the last breath (fig 43)

Eugenius Philalethes, a hermetic writer of the seventeenth century, describes his search of the marvelous treasure hidden in the decaying dragon. "This treasure is real," he says, "but by the magical art of God it is enchanted "

Thus Philalethes restores the magical power to God, from whom the fallen angels had wrested it to please the daughters of men The circuit of alchemy is moving to its close In his book *Light of All Lights*, Philalethes describes his subterranean wandering in search of the philosopher's stone. Guided by a woman, the alchemists' muse, or Nature, he reaches a hall where below the altar is the green dragon, the mercury of the magi, encircling with his coils a treasure of gold and pearls "This is no dream or fantasy, but truth . . . Above the treasure was a child, and the device: *Nil nisi parvulis*, only for the humble ones."

Philalethes comments on the image in the way we already know The adept must be free from falsehood, and his heart like that of a child.

The device *Nil nisi parvulis*, together with Philalethes' allegory, was to serve as the bookplate of a retired American army officer E. A. Hitchcock (fig. 44). In 1865, he published his *Remarks on Alchemy and the Alchemists*, which attracted considerable attention. Hitchcock, marshalling an impressive series of quotations from old alchemical books, undertakes to demonstrate that the only object of alchemy was MAN! "The genuine alchemists," he says, "were not in pursuit of worldly wealth and honors. Their real object was the perfection or at least the improvement of man. According to this theory, such perfection lies

in a certain unity, a living sense of the unity of the human with the divine nature, the attainment of which I can compare to nothing so well as to the experience known in religion as the New Birth. The desired perfection or unity is a state of the soul, a condition of Being, and not merely a condition of Knowing."

It is unnecessary to point out the importance of Hitchcock's discovery. He denies the likelihood that any real chemical operations were performed by the adepts and affirms that all chemical processes were symbols for the ennoblement not of the metals but of man himself

While we do not share such ideas, believing that both mystical contemplation and alchemical operations can be coexistent, yet the impulse which Hitchcock has given to psychological and psychoanalytical inquiry into hermetic art, has produced a rich harvest We may even call the lonely Vermont Hermetic a forerunner of modern psychology. Silberer, in his *Problems of Mysticism* (Vienna, 1914), refers frequently to him Hitchcock's early suggestions of the psychic values of alchemy have been justified and elaborated in several psychoanalytical essays, of which the most voluminous work is C. G Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy*, published in 1944.



Fig 44 Ex Libris of E A Hitchcock

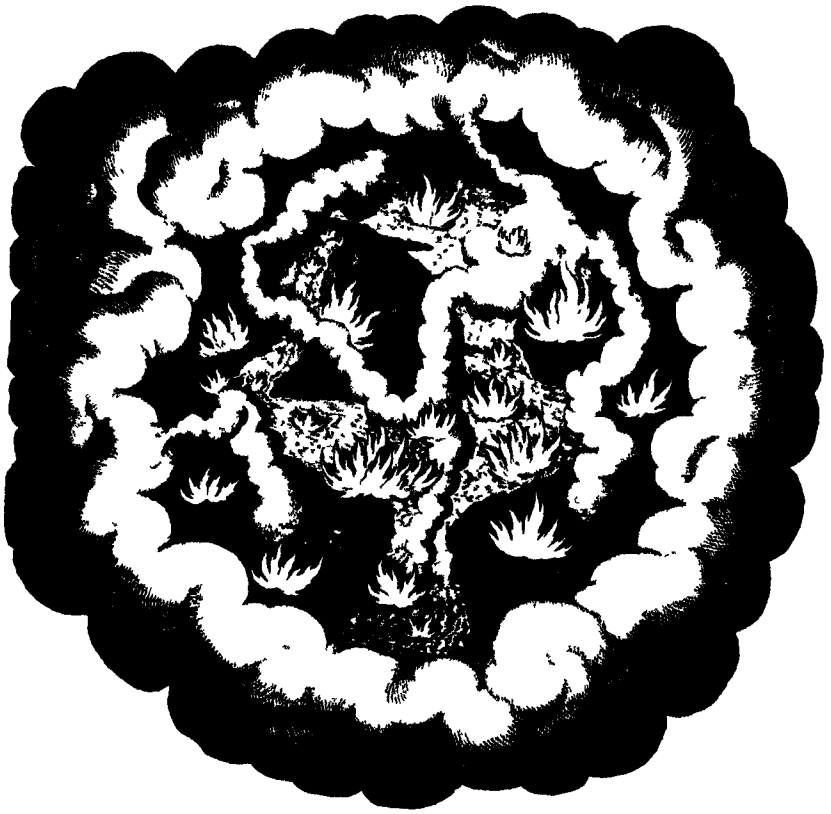


Fig 45 The Chaos of the Elements

The Principles of Alchemy and the Philosophers' Stone

WHAT was the fundamental theory upon which the adepts based their *practice*? They have claimed that two principles—the theory of the composition of metals, and that of their generation—have served as the basis for their system

To them, metals were composed of diverse substances, and all of them contained sulphur and mercury varying proportions produced gold, silver, copper, etc Gold was supposed to be composed of a large proportion of mercury and little sulphur, in copper, both ingredients existed approximately in equal quantities Tin was an imperfect mixture of a small quantity of impure mercury and a large proportion of sulphur, and so forth

The Arab, Geber, had professed this in the eighth century, and affirmed that according to the ancients one could by efficacious operations vary the contents of metals and transmute one into another.

The theory of generation is formulated quite clearly in the mediaeval alchemical treatises. The theorists compared the process that was taking place in their vessels to the generation of animals and vegetables. Thus, for the producing of metals, it was necessary to discover their seed.

For the adept there existed no such phenomenon as an inorganic substance; every substance was endowed with life. Life was influenced secretly by the stars, silent artisans working toward the perfection of metals At first imperfect, they changed gradually into perfect substances, and ultimately when transformed into gold, the process ended A few Hermetics who had comprehended the meaning of the serpent biting its tail supposed that there could be no cessation in nature's work and that the perfect metals were to undergo new transformations only to return again to base metals Thus they were to perpetuate the circuit of molecular change.

However, these were only theories, and transmutation had to be accomplished in order to prove them From the twelfth century on, the alchemists declared that for their transmutations an agent was necessary This agent they called by many names—the philosophers' stone, the philosophic powder, the great elixir, the quintessence, etc. When touching the liquid metals, the philosophers' stone was thought to change them into gold The descriptions of this marvelous substance vary among the writers Paracelsus calls it solid and dark red, Berigard of Pisa says it is the color of poppies, Raymond Lully observed its color to be like that of carbuncles; Helvetius had held it in his hands, and claimed it was bright yellow! These contradictions are reconciled by the Arab, Khalid, or rather by the author who wrote under that name "This stone unites within itself all the colors It is white, red, yellow, sky-blue, and green " Thus all the philosophers were brought into accord [12]

Besides its power to transmute metals, the philosophers' stone had other marvelous virtues: It could cure all diseases and prolong life beyond its natural limits

These virtues of the philosophers' stone have their counterpart in the Far East China also had its adepts, indeed before alchemy was known to the West.

Deviating from the plan of this book not to include the complex problems of magic in India and in the Far East, Chinese alchemy is mentioned here as a possible promoter of Occidental alchemy

The Chinese, believing that gold was immortal, thought that when it was absorbed by the human body it could render man immortal The problem was to discover the "wonder preparation of medicine," for gold powder could not be digested They wanted to find means other than that of breaking the metal up into small particles It was to be dissolved into a marvelous powder, a gold dust which "spread mistily like wind driven by rain" through the five organs Such a powder could be obtained only through an alchemical operation The universal medicine, *huantan*, freed its owner from all worldly miseries New teeth would grow, dark hair would cover the old man's baldness, and his sick wife would regain her girlhood

"Like produces like," is the old axiom of sympathetic magic the most perfect

and imperishable metal will produce immortality and perfection. The Chinese alchemist used magical formulas in his work, and he trusted in the beneficent influence of the stars for the various and laborious procedures.

Contrary to Western beliefs, the Chinese supposed that artificial gold, not true gold, was endowed with great magical power. From cinnabar, a mercury ore, and other metals, the masters of the East strove to develop alloys which *resembled* gold. It was sufficient to eat regularly from vessels made of such alloys to have immortality granted But the great Wei Po-Yang (ca. A D. 100–150) did not have recourse to such artificiality. He succeeded in manufacturing the true gold medicine, and he and his pupil Yu have become immortal, together with the wise man's dog which had eaten the remainders in the plate.

The Chinese aimed "only" at rejuvenation and eternal life, and the philosophers' gold was unknown to them Their art can be traced back to about 100 or 150 B C., an epoch when alchemy was unknown to the West.

Here transmutation was the main topic, and the problem of how much gold would the transformed metal yield Johann Kunkel (1630–1703), an adept when alchemy was declining, and more chemist than alchemist, is modest in his evaluation He thinks that the base metal when tinged with the stone would yield twice as much gold The Englishman, Germspreiser, believes that lead will change so as to yield fifty times more gold. Roger Bacon says a hundred thousand times more, and Isaac, the Dutchman, a million times more. Lully calculates an astronomical amount of multiplied gold, and he exclaims: "I could transmute the seas, were there enough mercury."

Wonderful creative powers such as these resided in the philosophers' stone, but what was its essence? Could it be a composition akin to the sacred stones which the Egyptians manufactured in antiquity? It is unlikely The Egyptians used to fashion magical stones which were objects of worship. They were endowed with supernatural power, like the Kaaba of the Mohammedans. Plutarch reports that Kyphi, the sacred stone of the Egyptians, was made of many substances, of gold, of silver, of chesteb and of mafek blue and green stone. Other writers name the various minerals that were fused to produce the substance sacred in the city of Edfu they are gold, silver, chesteb, chenem, mafek, hertes, and nesenem What all these minerals were it is difficult to know, and the meaning of such alloys is still more mysterious The Kyphi was sacred, therefore magical

The philosophers' stone contained marvelous virtues which may be called magical This is what the learned Agrippa has to say about it.

"An operation cannot proceed from a mere body All famous Poets and Philosophers affirm therefore that the world and all celestial bodies must have a soul, and also intelligence, hence, Marcus Manilius, in his *Astronomy to Augustus*, sings of

> 'The great corporeal world, which doth appear
> In divers forms, of Air, Earth, Sea and Fire,
> A divine soul doth rule, a Deity
> Doth govern wisely '

". . . And Virgil, richest in Philosophy, sings thus:

'And first the Heaven, Earth, and liquid plain,
The Moon's bright globe and stars Titanian
A spirit fed within, spread through the whole
And with the huge heap mix'd infused a soul,
Hence man and beasts, and birds derive their strain
And monsters floating in the marbled main,
These seeds have fiery vigor, and a birth
Of Heavenly race, but clog'd with heavy earth'

"What do these verses seem to mean other than that the world should have not only a spirit-soul but also should partake of the divine mind; and that the original virtue, vigor of all inferior things, depend upon the soul of the world? All Platonists, Pythagoreans, Orpheus, Trismegistus, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Avicenna, Algazel, and all Peripatetics confess and confirm this. . . ."

There are four essences in the universe upon which not only Agrippa but all the learned through the centuries have agreed These are Fire, Water, Earth, and Air. However, there is a fifth essence, or quintessence, which permeates everything above in the stars and below upon earth It is the world soul-spirit which animates all bodies. It is "clog'd with heavy earth," and never free or visible. Yet it is omnipresent, and he who can free this fifth element from the matter that it inhabits shall hold in his hand the creative power with which God has endowed the world of matter. The ancient goddesses of growth and vegetation, like Isis, were nothing more to the alchemist than the emblems of the quintessence, the generative power that resides in the philosophers' stone

Vas Insigne Electionis

Rejoicing not in the many but in the probity of the few . .
WILLIAM OF CONCHES

ACCORDING to Hitchcock, the seven stages of the alchemical process have been described by the adepts with, at least, comparative simplicity There is, however, one exception complete secrecy is maintained concerning the *vessel* in which the process must take place Hitchcock conjectures, as we have learned, that this vessel was the key to the hidden treasure, that it was nothing more than the alchemist himself.

An adept of the sixteenth century, Denis Zachaire, describes in his *Memoirs* the vain search of the Parisian alchemists for the true recipient "The one worked with glass retorts, the other with earthenware vessels, another with bronze vases or pots, cans, jars, jugs of copper, lead, silver, or gold " None of them succeeded

Hitchcock's idea of a process of purification which leads to a mystical union with the divine seems to recall the Gnostic sacrament of the bridal chamber, the supreme spiritual achievement as professed by the Valentinians: the pious



Fig 46 The Hermetic Androgyne

will witness the divine marriage of Sophia with Soter, the redeemer, and he will experience, in the image of the heavenly marriage, the union with his angel The generative, active male element and the vegetative, passive female element must be united in order to become the perfect Unity We have said that the sun was considered by the adept to be male, its warm radiance was active,

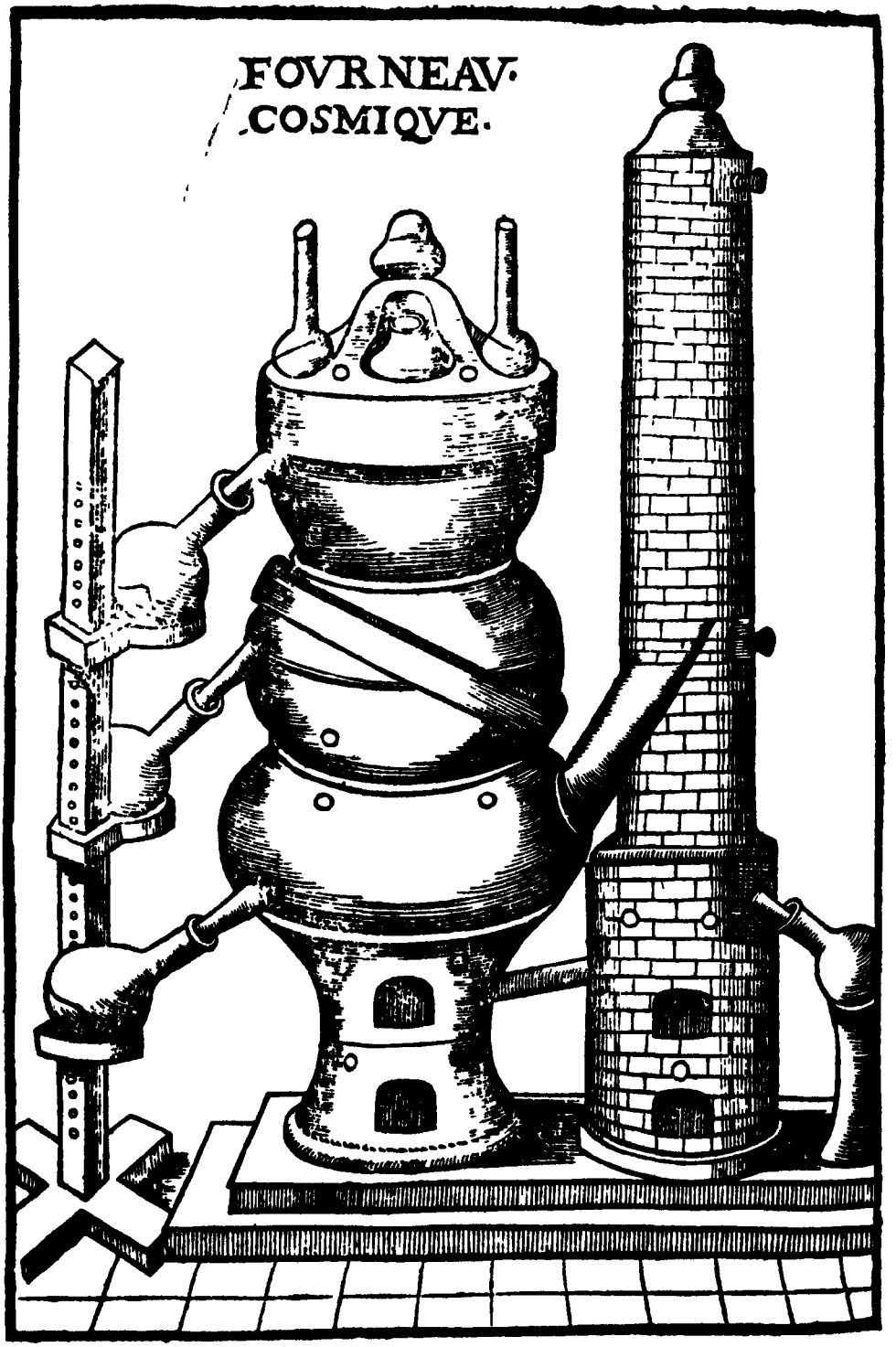


Fig 47 Cosmic Oven

and heat and dryness were thought to be male attributes. On the other hand, the moon was female as it does not send forth rays other than those it has received from the sun. The moon is the receptacle, and its expansion was pregnancy.

Often the alchemists represented in their allegories the union of sun and moon, prototypes of both sexes.

In Michael Majer's *Chemical Secrets of Nature* (1687), a curious etching shows Sun and Moon embracing in front of a cave which symbolizes the hollow of the retort The etching is explained thus "He is conceived in water and born in air; when he has become red in color, he walks over the water." The offspring of the Sun and the Moon is the philosophers' red stone, floating upon the liquid in the crucible

Another emblem of the philosophers' stone is that of the androgyne, a being half male, half female, half Sun, half Moon (*fig* 46), holding in its hands the philosophic egg, which symbolizes, like the Serpent, the universe

The alchemical furnace expresses similarly this union It was not without reason that this apparatus was called the Cosmic Oven Did it not perform that generative process which the adept had observed in the cosmos? In Cleopatra's drawing, the oldest of its kind, the separation of the two elements is already obvious Below the furnace, the producer of heat symbolizes the male, the upper retort the female part From the bowl, resting upon the fire, the seed is projected into the upper recipient There it is cooled off, condensed and liquefied

The "nuptial diagram" is still more distinct in later graphics where the oven and the convex vessels are depicted as a couple (fig 47) Three miniature retorts, the offsprings, are suckling their "mother"

Hermetic Enigmas

> they were pleased to speak by figures, types and analogies that they might not be understood but by the discreet, religious and enlightened
>
> SYNESIUS

SOME alchemists accused themselves of having been too explicit in their writings, of revealing more than was permissible, thus profaning their sacred art The indiscreet might be expelled from the circle of the chosen and condemned to eternal misery. But in reading these books, such indiscretions are in no way apparent When the assiduous reader has grasped a meaning, he will search immediately for a still deeper one which he suspects is hidden in the

newly discovered truth He can thus devote a lifetime to these mysteries without ever reaching the bottom of the enchanted well.

With his imagination constantly directed toward the marvelous, the hermetic philosopher was undoubtedly pleased with his studies. It is not difficult to understand why alchemy is called an art—it relied upon imagination as well as upon manual dexterity. To produce the philosophers' gold was the goal. Only a few succeeded, but those who failed did not consider their efforts futile. From daily meditation and experimentation was born a silent bliss. There was pleasure in handing various substances and tools, in the feeding and surveying of the oven, as well as in learned discussions with neighborly colleagues who followed all this activity. More than one adept may have preferred the passage leading toward perfection to its actual attainment.

When gold appeared in the alchemist's crucible, his quietude must have been disturbed Fearing the indiscretion of others, his joy over achieving the ultimate was mingled with anguish. Kings were ever eager to know these prodigies, which could miraculously refill their empty treasuries, finance their wars and otherwise assist them in shady activities Such princely plans, however, horrified the chosen The masters of the art were courted by the monarchs until they declared that their wisdom could not be revealed, then they were imprisoned, tortured and executed. They endured pain and death, but they remained undefeated Incurable egocentrics, they preferred martyrdom to admitting that their studies had been futile and their gold an illusion.

These threats to their lives and the danger of profanation justified their enigmatic style, which is illustrated by a few examples

In Abraham Lambsprinck's book, *On the Philosophers' Stone*, there is an etching of two fishes, "without flesh and bone, swimming in our sea" Lambsprinck recommends that these fishes be cooked in their own water, then they will become transformed into a sea, "the vastness of which no man can describe" (fig 48) The fishes, says Lambsprinck, are the soul and the spirit, the sea is the body When cooked, *i e*, purified, they will attain an indescribable state of felicity. Lambsprinck adds that the fishes are not two but one. The meaning of this may readily be explained.

The following figure in Lambsprinck's book shows a unicorn and a deer, hidden in the forest. The unicorn is the spirit, the deer the soul, and the forest the body.

"The sages say truly
That two animals are in this forest;
One glorious, beautiful, and swift,
A great and strong deer;
The other a unicorn
They are concealed in the forest.
But happy will be the man
Who shall capture them" [13] (Fig 49)

Lambsprinck's next figure and text reveal what must be done when the two, soul and spirit, are caught

"The sages faithfully teach us
That two strong lions, to wit, male and female,
Lurk in a dark and rugged valley.
These the master must catch,
Though they are swift and fierce,
And of terrible and savage aspect
He who, by wisdom and cunning,
Can snare and bind them
And lead them into the same forest,
Of him it may be said with justice and truth
That he has merited the need and praise before all others,
And that his wisdom transcends that of the worldly wise." [14]

The two lions are again symbols of the soul and the spirit. When they are caught, says Lambspringk, "they must be united in their body." (Fig 50.)

In the state of man's perfection, his soul and spirit must become one Figure 51 shows the relation of soul and body.

"A nest is found in the forest
In which Hermes has his brood,
One fledgling always strives to fly upward,
The other rejoices to sit quietly in the nest,
Yet neither can get away from the nest,
As a husband in a house with his wife,
Bound together in closest bonds of wedlock
So we rejoice at all times also,
That we hold the female eagle fast in this way,
And we render thanks to God the Father " [15]

The spirit strives toward God, but it is held down by the body. In the same way, mercury must be sublimated repeatedly, fly up, and "return to the nest," until at length fixation is attained The alchemist, like the snail, proceeds slowly on his journey Spirit and body will become one in the nest, i e , the heart

Figure 52 shows the ennoblement of man "From a Rhetor he has become a Consul "

"Yet I was of ignoble birth,
Till I was set in a high place
To reach the lofty summit
Was given me by God and Nature " [16]

The master has been able to separate soul and spirit from the body, with which they had been mingled imperceptibly He knows himself! Soul and spirit, the young king and a winged old man, have climbed the mountain· the body (fig. 53). But the conflict between father and son is not at its end The son is longing for the father, who cannot live alone. A new union must take place. The spirit will unite them and dwell with them constantly "When the son enters his father's palace, the latter is overcome with joy." Now the mysterious unification takes place (fig 54)

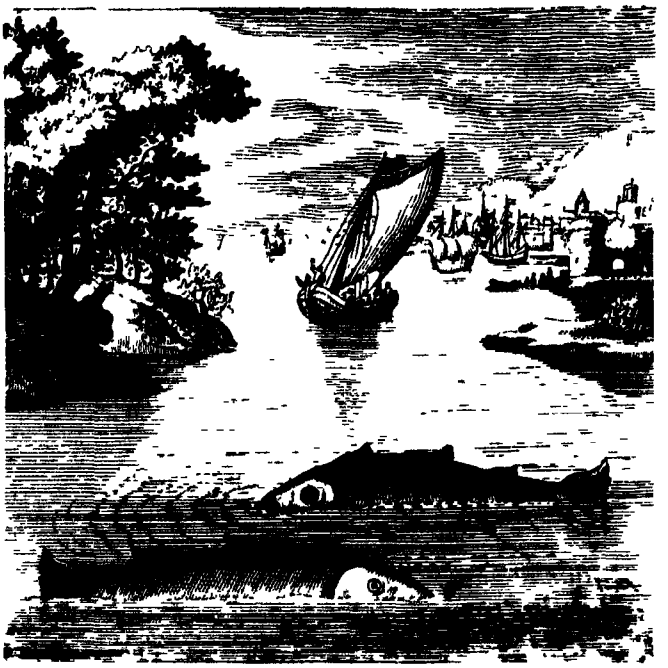


Fig 48 Alchemical Allegory
Soul and Spirit in the Body



Fig 49 Alchemical Allegory
Body, Soul and Spirit



Fig 50 Alchemical Allegory.
Body, Soul and Spirit



Fig 51 Alchemical Allegory
The Soul Rising Towards God



Fig 52 Alchemical Allegory
The Achievement of the Work

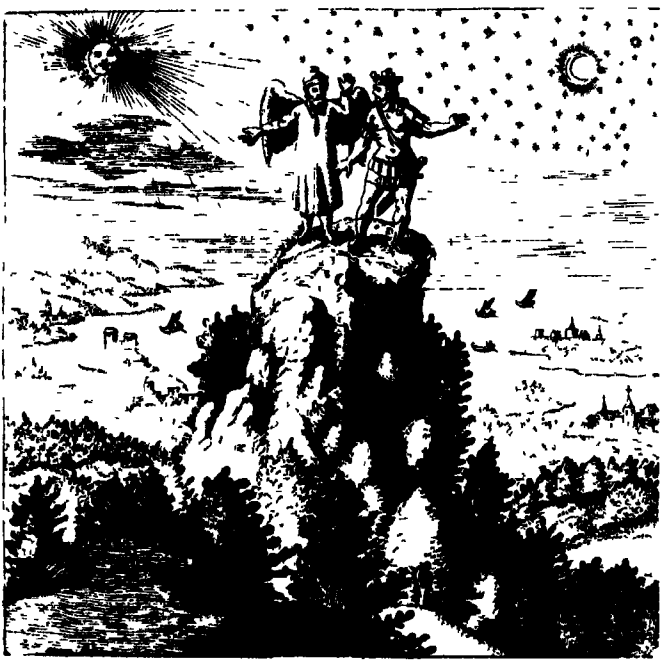


Fig 53 Alchemical Allegory:
Soul and Spirit Separated from the Body



Fig 54 Alchemical Allegory
The Father (Body) Devouring the Son (Spirit)



Fig 55 Alchemical Allegory
Body and Soul Reunited by the Spirit

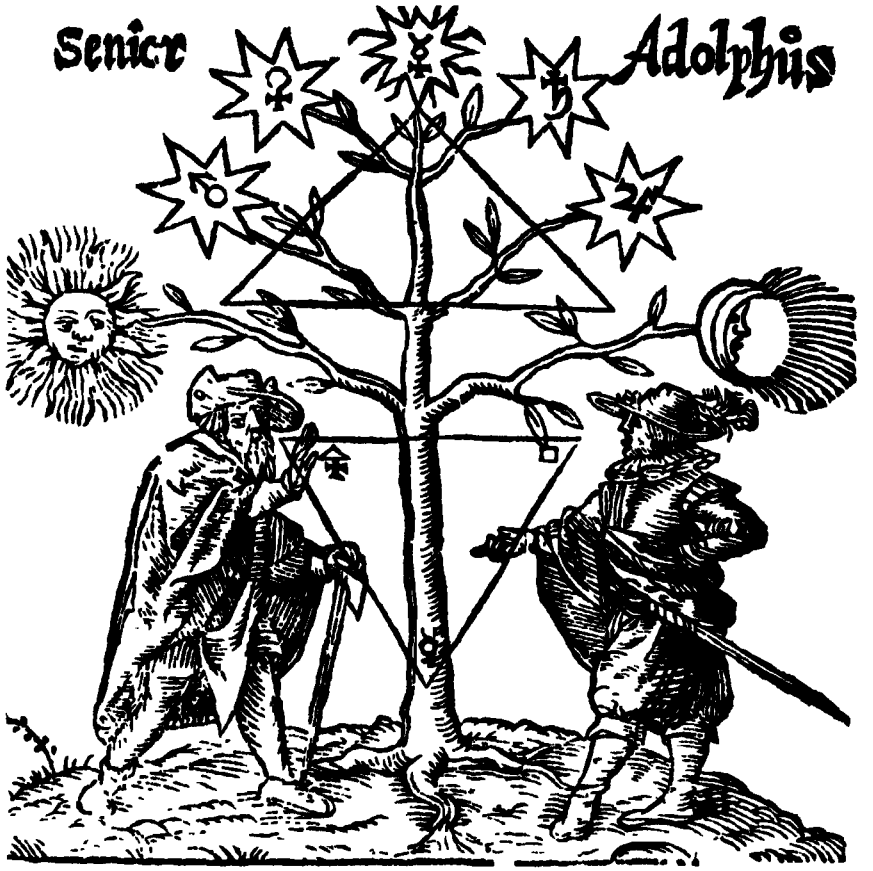


Fig 56 Hermetic Conversation

"My son, I was dead without thee,
And lived in great danger of my life
I revive at thy return,
And it fills my breast with joy
But when the son entered the father's house,
The father took him to his heart,
And swallowed him out of excessive joy "[1]

The son has risen to heaven, as Hermes Trismegistus has expressed it, and descended again to earth, after having received the power of the superior

Lambsprinck's last figure shows the father and the son united through the spirit, "to remain so forever " (Fig 55)

The Biblical happenings of the advent and the ascension of Christ have happened here in reverse, the son has returned to earth, to dwell upon it eternally Hermes Trismegistus says that the below is like the above But this was to be

interpreted not as an earthly replica independent of heavenly things but as a reflection. Like in a mirror, everything is seen in reverse, as illustrated by Basil Valentine (fig 56)

The sage and the scholar are having a discussion under the tree of knowledge, whose branches are the sun, the moon, and the planets The triangle above is the soul, the spirit, and the body of the universe The triangle below is reversed Its three minerals are identified with man's threefold essence.

Valentine depicts the planet Mercury as the top of the tree and unlike the other planets, Mercury has eight branches Already in Cleopatra's book we find the emblem of the eight-branch star (fig. 35, upper right) Eight recalls the Gnostic Ogdoas, a group of the highest celestial powers, peculiar to the systems of Basilides and Valentinus. According to Plutarch, the number expressed the universe, he reports that the Pythagorean cosmos was built on the double four Timothy recalls the old proverb· Eight is all, because there are eight spheres encircling the earth Eratosthenes (276–196 B C) declares that eight is the "double polarity of each of the four elements, producing a stability, chemical, for instance, or mental " [18]

The hermetic world image may be exemplified by a scheme invented by Thomas Norton (died A D 1477), which is suspected of being not only a plan of the universe but also that of the perfect alchemical oven Its hearth is Satan, the lower rectangle chaos, the abyss, darkness, etc , i e , the uncreated world, according to the Bible The hearth is the residence of fire The kingdom of Satan is surmounted by a triangle, representing the created world which is divided into four smaller triangles earth, water, air, and heaven In the center is man, halfway in heaven since his soul and spirit partake of the divine The apex of the triangle reaches into God's heaven, called the world's archetype Its center is God, the infinite good The finite good is the lower threefold heaven, angelic, elementary, and ethereal, which encircles the fourfold triangle The latter's angles are sulphur, salt, and mercury soul, body, and mind Thus was the world created (fig 57) Its hierarchic construction is comparable to the world architecture of the ancients, the Egyptians, Persians, and Babylonians.

Norton's treatise begins thus. "A most wonderful Magistery and Archemagistery is the Tincture (The Stone) of sacred Alchemy, the marvelous science of the secret philosophy, the singular gift bestowed upon men through the grace of the Almighty, which men have never discovered by the labor of their hands but only through revelation—and the teachings of others It was never bought nor sold but has always been granted through the grace of God alone to worthy men, and perfected by long labor and the passing of time "

Neither drawing nor text reveals anything beyond generalities No suggestion is given on how to proceed in the making of the philosophers' stone, and allegories take the place of weights, lapses of time, temperatures, and similar technical data. Such *minor items* the adept had to discover alone If he was not successful, he could always bestow upon his son the little he had uncovered. And so it happened frequently that the results of alchemical efforts were transmitted through several generations.

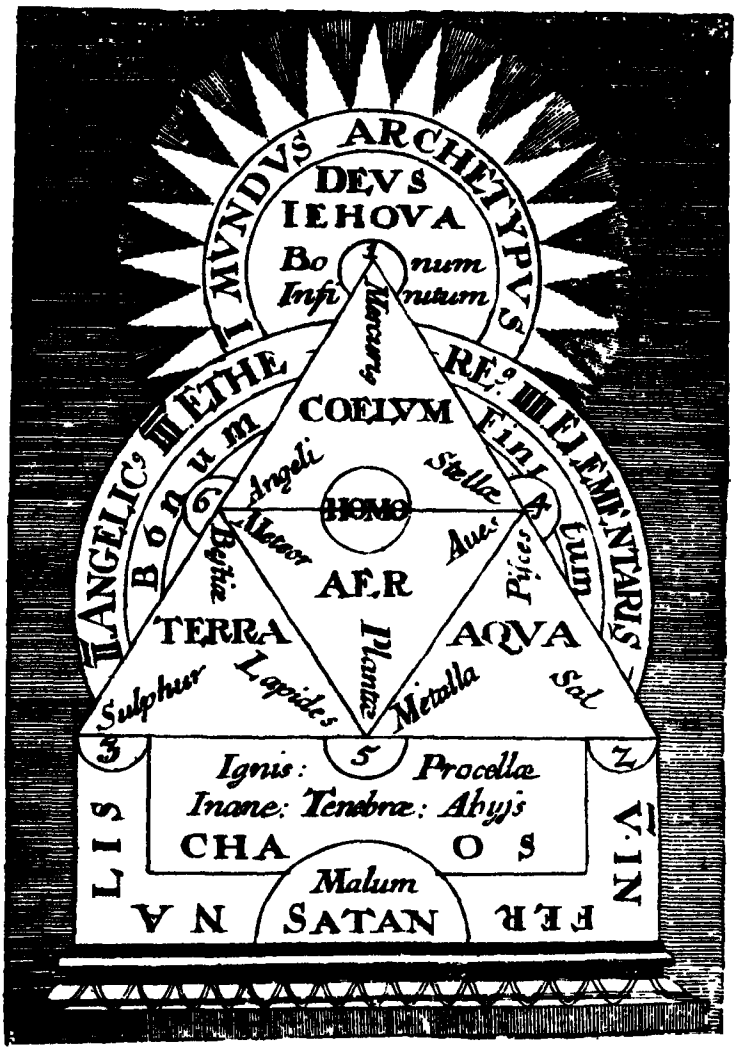


Fig 57 Hermetic Scheme of the Universe

When the alchemists' treatises are more explicit than usual, they justifiably arouse suspicion

In Cremer's *Testament*, a short treatise of the fourteenth century, a series of very strange procedures are explained "Take the water of an unpolluted youth, after his first sleep for three or four nights, until you have three pints . . . Add two glasses of very strong vinegar, two ounces of quicklime, half an ounce of living water, of which the preparation has been described Put the mixture into an earthen pot, and place over it an alembic, or distilling vessel, etc." A very simple drawing illustrates the process Is this the great secret that one

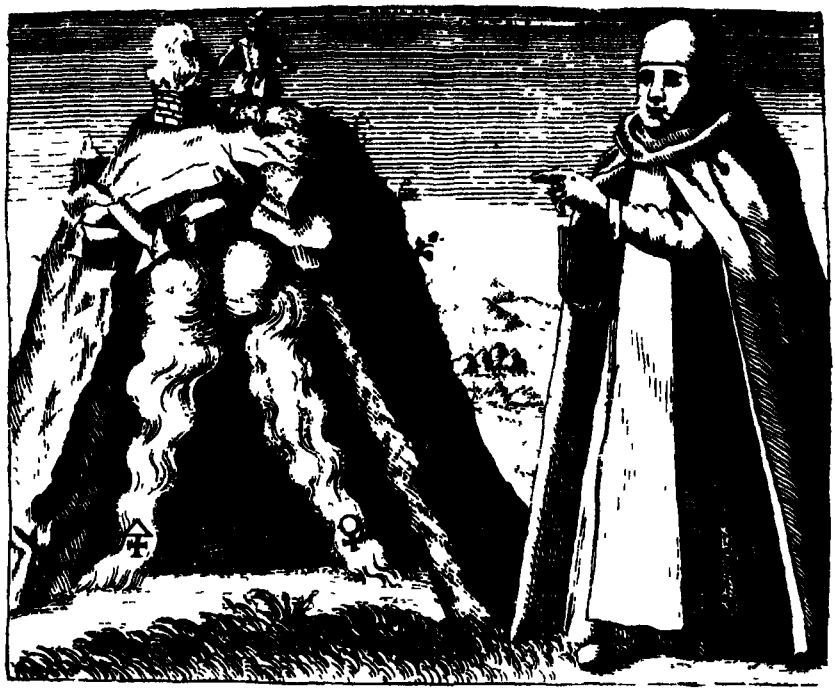


Fig 58 Allegory of the Great Arcanum

should evaporate the prepared sulphur and mercury in the vessel's womb and allow the steam to escape through a chimney? There is doubt about what has to be done with this evaporated mixture, as the little alchemist on the hilltop is operating in a mysterious manner Cremer, the abbot of Westminster, stands near-by. With his wide cloak, he resembles the alchemical hill, and self-assured, he points at his invention Did he know the secret? He could *not* have, because there has never been an abbot Cremer at Westminster, and the Benedictine is wholly invented by an anonymous adept (fig 58) [19]

Basil Valentine, prior of St Peter's in Erfurt, is credited with several alchemical treatises on the philosophers' stone The subtitle of his book *Azoth* is certainly not lacking in clarity *"The means by which the hidden philosophers' stone can be made"* But the title is disappointing to him who expects technical information Valentine writes in alchemical metaphors The hermetic dragon speaks in the usual manner

"I am old, sick and weak My pseudonym is the dragon Therefore I am imprisoned in the pit in order to be rewarded with the royal crown, and to make my family rich, being the fugacious servant yet able to accomplish such things, we will possess the treasures of the kingdom "

A woodcut (fig 59) accompanies this enigmatic text the center of the alchemical disk is man—his face is compressed within a triangle representing sulphur, mercury, and salt Salt is the base of the process it is identified with heavy Saturn whose black ray points at the cube, symbol of the body Body

may also mean the philosophers' stone. As in Babylonian color magic, the yellowness of sulphur is identified with Mars whose sign is pointing at a hand holding a candle or torch the soul Mercury is connected with another hand, holding a bag or matrix the spirit Thus, body, soul, and spirit are the angles of the big triangle, the universe The triangle framing man's face is a microcosm, shaped in the world's image

Soul is male, active, fiery, and is usually identified with the sun Spirit, the female principle, is the moon Again, the male fiery essence is symbolized by



Fig 59 Hermetic Circle

the salamander, "which lives in fire", and the female fugitiveness by an eagle To the left, seated upon the earth, is the ambivalent figure of King Sun and Jupiter; to the right, a goddess rides a dolphin, she embodies both Venus and Diana, traveling across the water

The mystical meaning of the large triangle is that the sun is the father, and the moon the mother—the male and the female principles In nature, they are always separated Through the alchemical art, the two principles should be united, and from this marriage will be born the philosophers' stone, female and male simultaneously, a hermaphrodite The emblem of man's perfection is also the hermaphrodite, since soul and spirit, as we have learned already, must be merged into one Below, in Valentine's image, two feet are shown, one in the water, the other on land, participating in the male and female elements: the process is to be applied to man, whose ultimate perfection is perhaps identified with the hermaphroditic philosophers' stone

Upon the disk, between the planets' rays, are the seven allegories of the

process, starting from the left below with putrefaction, and ending at the lower right with resurrection.

Seven words suggest how the work must be done, each word being related to one stage of the procedure.

"VISITA—INTERIORA—TERRAE—RECTIFICANDO—INVENIES—OCCULTUM—LAPIDEM" (Investigate the interior of the earth Rectifying, thou wilt find the hidden stone).

How can such perfection be attained? To this, the adept answered paradoxically. "Make the fixed volatile—unite the fugitive female with the fixed male." The answer is but another riddle The emblem of the fixed volatile is at the top center of Valentine's figure. two wings tied together



Fig 60 Alchemical Allegory The Fixed Volatile

The volatile is the evaporating mercury The fixed is the mercury remaining at the bottom of the vessel When condensed on the vessel's vault, the volatile will drip and whenever "the water comes back, it brings a blessing with it" This rising and sinking of the volatile, Valentine compares with ebb and flow The process, sublimation, aims at separating the male and female elements contained in mercury, the fixed and the volatile They must be joined in marriage, but first they have to cleanse themselves, as do the bride and the bridegroom before they enter the nuptial chamber In Valentine's engraving, the dual essence of mercury, speaking in alchemical terms, is represented as the crowned genius holding in each hand a caduceus (fig 60) The opposing male and female are depicted allegorically as two fencers--upon the sword of one rests a young eagle, symbol of the volatile, on the other's sword perches a crowned



Fig 61 The Mercury of the Philosophers

snake, the fixed mercury The combative parties are characterized by sun and moon The alchemist must end this merciless struggle of kin—the adversity residing in one and the same metal was symbolized by the swan which, according to Aristotle, fights its own kind.

The reconciliation of the irreconcilable is the fixed volatile whose emblem, the joined wings, is set in the foreground

The allegory is interpreted without difficulty; but the chemical recipe it supposedly personifies is illegible

Neither will Nazari's alchemical dragon utter comprehensible words (fig. 61). Gifted with a human head, he should be able to speak the language of man, but all that this does is merely to complicate further the riddle of hermetic philosophy We can hardly recognize in this monster the descendant of the old Gnostic Ouroboros Though the art was immutable and the symbols retained through centuries, many curlicues embellished or disfigured their established forms How modest Cleopatra's serpent is in comparison with Nazari's baroque creature Fantasy, with which the Italians seem more gifted than other people, has produced an alchemical emblem which is fluidly and fastidiously drawn Mercury's winged sandals remind us that the monster symbolizes the corresponding metal Additional tails and signs attempt to create a new alchemical synthesis The tails are strangely knotted and knotty is the problem of how to unravel the dragon's obtuse speech

"Raising myself from death, I kill death—which kills me I raise up again the bodies that I have created Living in death, I destroy myself—whereof you rejoice You cannot rejoice without me and my life.

"If I carry the poison in my head, in my tail which I bite with rage lies the remedy Whoever thinks to amuse himself at my expense, I shall kill with my gimlet eye

"Whoever bites me must bite himself first, otherwise, if I bite him, death shall bite him first, in the head, for first he must bite me—biting being the medicine of biting."

One would like to be a new Alexander, to cut this Gordian knot with the sword—and such bold means has been recommended by Michael Maier (1568–1622)

"Learn about the egg and cut it with a flaming sword In our world, there is a bird more sublime than all others To search for his egg be thy only concern Vile albumin surrounds its soft yolk, heat the egg according to custom, then with thy sword search for it cautiously, after Vulcan, Mars will accelerate the work, and when thenceforth has come the chick, it will overcome fire and sword " (Fig. 62.)

Fire and ore—Vulcan and Mars—are needed for the transmutation

Majer's recommendation seems so far quite clear, but what he counsels furthermore is truly astounding In order to make perfect the "noble medicine," a woman must be suckled by a toad (fig 63) "Apply a toad to the woman's breast, that it may take milk from her; and the woman will die, when the toad is full of milk." This is certainly an odd chemical formula which contrasts with the sober signs and numbers of modern chemistry.

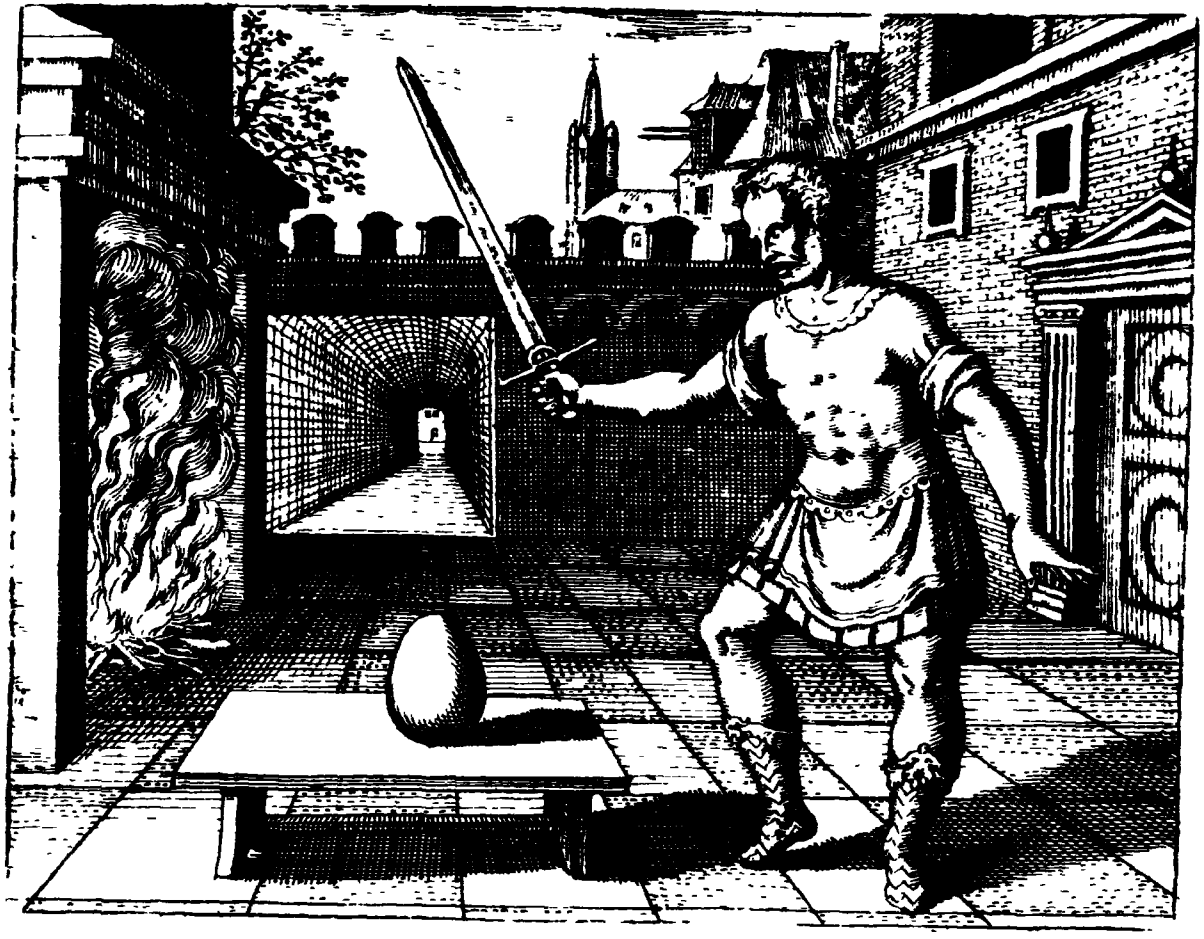


Fig 62 Alchemical Allegory The Philosopher's Egg

But Majer's imagination has not yet reached fullness. His twenty-third emblem depicts in breathless simultaneity happenings of mythology applying to the alchemist's work (fig 64) The adept (or is it the God Vulcan?) splits sleeping Jupiter's head In his right hand, the maltreated god holds the sign of his power. the flame of lightning He is leaning against his bird, the eagle From the wounded head arises naked Pallas Athene A shower of gold falls upon her Like the sun, the head of Apollo's statue in the background rises above the horizon The god Apollo, himself, embraces Venus in an improvised tent. They are observed by Eros. The explanation of the representation is given as follows

"It rained gold when Pallas was born in Rhodes, and the Sun mated with Venus This is a marvel, and its truthfulness is affirmed by Greece The happening was celebrated in Rhodes where they say that the clouds yielded a golden rain And the Sun was joined to Cypria, the goddess of Love. At the time when Pallas emerged from Jupiter's brain, from the vessel fell gold as if it were rain water"

The myths of Greece and the legends of the Bible are melted together in the alchemist's retorts Jason, who took the golden fleece from the venomous dragon, was an alchemist, and Bezalel, the Hebrew artisan whom Moses had blessed, was also a gold-maker, Job must have known the great arcanum, as his wealth increased in such an astonishing way after God blessed him Alexander and Solomon possessed the philosopher's stone, as did likewise Pythagoras, Democritus and Galen Wherever the word gold occurred in accounts of history, the alchemists were on the lookout for marvelous interpretations. Wherever they recognized the report as mythology, it was interpreted as an hermetic allegory As in the age of Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism, fable and philosophy of East and West were syncretized into an astounding world image The heaven of theology and that of Greek philosophy, the monsters of the Orient, and the mythical figures of Hellas were joined under the sign of Hermes

Mylius' hermetic world plan (fig 65) depicts such syncretism Above is the Heavenly Trinity, the Lamb, the Dove, and the Hebrew Jehovah Surrounded by angels, they send forth rays of divine light Below is the world of matter The starry heaven encircles the hermetic work, which is "half above and half below" Its center is the philosophic stone, a triangle inscribed by the double sign of mercury and gold The symbol is flanked by the three signs of the alchemistic procedure a triangle, air—signifying the volatile mercury, a reversed triangle, water, *i.e.*, the fixed mercury In the third sign, the two qualities of mercury are superimposed, forming a six-branched star which symbolizes the "fixed volatile" Seven concentric circles surround the signs The innermost contains the recommendation to use four degrees of fire for the work Then follow the trinities of mercury, sulphur, and salt Mylius is discerning about the philosophers' mercury, which is not corporeal, but spiritual, the corporeal mercury meaning the sublimated metal, and the vulgar mercury, etc One circle signifies time, which Mylius divides into the solar year, the year of the stars, and that of the winds They refer to the influences of sun, stars and atmosphere



Fig 63 Alchemical Allegory *Ablactatio*



Fig. 64. Alchemical Allegory. The Golden Rain

upon the hermetic work The outmost circle, finally, shows that these influences must be directed Favorable constellations have to be awaited here are the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the five signs of the planets (sun and moon having special places) The sphere of the fixed stars encircles five hermetic emblems the raven, the swan, the hermetic dragon, the pelican which feeds its children with its own blood, and the phoenix which resuscitates in the flame.

The world below is dualistic, divided into light and darkness, day and night. Man and woman are chained to the world above They are the two principles of procreation, with which God has endowed the world of matter Here below, everything is divided into two, male and female, in God alone both principles are united, as He is the cause of everything Various meanings are superimposed on these two figures the male is the sun, gold, the fiery dry essence, he is the soul, the generative principle With him is the lion of the zodiac, presiding over the month when the heat is strongest, he is Jupiter and Apollo, and fire and air are his elements, because they are dry and warm The fiery phoenix is his emblem, and the lion is the symbol of gold Lion and man hold the sun, which is the philosophers' gold as well as the heavenly star, and the emblem of generation

Woman is the moon, silver, the moist and cool essence, she is the spirit, bearing fruit, conceiving, giving birth and nourishing In her hand she holds the grape whose many fruits are her true symbol She is connected with evaporation, rain, and earthly moist exhalation, for her elements are earth and water From her breast flows the Milky Way, the seed which penetrates everything in this world of bodies, and which the wise men also called the world spirit or world soul In her left hand she holds the moon in its two extreme phases Her fugitiveness is symbolized by the eagle The silvery moon she shares with the Hellenic Actaeon of the myth He had surprised Diana when she was bathing, and was changed by the goddess into a deer But Diana being cleansed was a symbol of alchemical volatilization, the sixth degree of the process which is marked by the appearance of silver in the alchemist's retort Actaeon's horns are both six-branched, and his metamorphosis into a deer is but an allegory of the transformation occurring in the vessel Silver, moon, Diana, and night are connected ideas Other alchemical allegories of the sixth stage represent the Holy Virgin, immaculate like Diana, standing upon the half-moon

Mylius' cosmic symbols stress the twofold quality of the material world In the center of his plan, however, he shows the mystical union of the two essences Lambsprinck's lions are united here they have two bodies, but only one head This head sputters the water of life The sage is standing upon the lions' bodies, resting upon both male and female, soul and spirit He is clad in dark and light, day and night, man and woman He is like God The Hermetic's eyes are opened now, he knows good and evil From the tree of knowledge he has taken the fruit, and the tree of paradise has multiplied and produced the orchard which covers the hermetic hill Bathed in the light of the sun and the moon, receiving as well the divine light, this hill is a suitable dwelling for the hermetic master Fire and water emerge from its sacred soil, whose trees reach to the heavenly vault

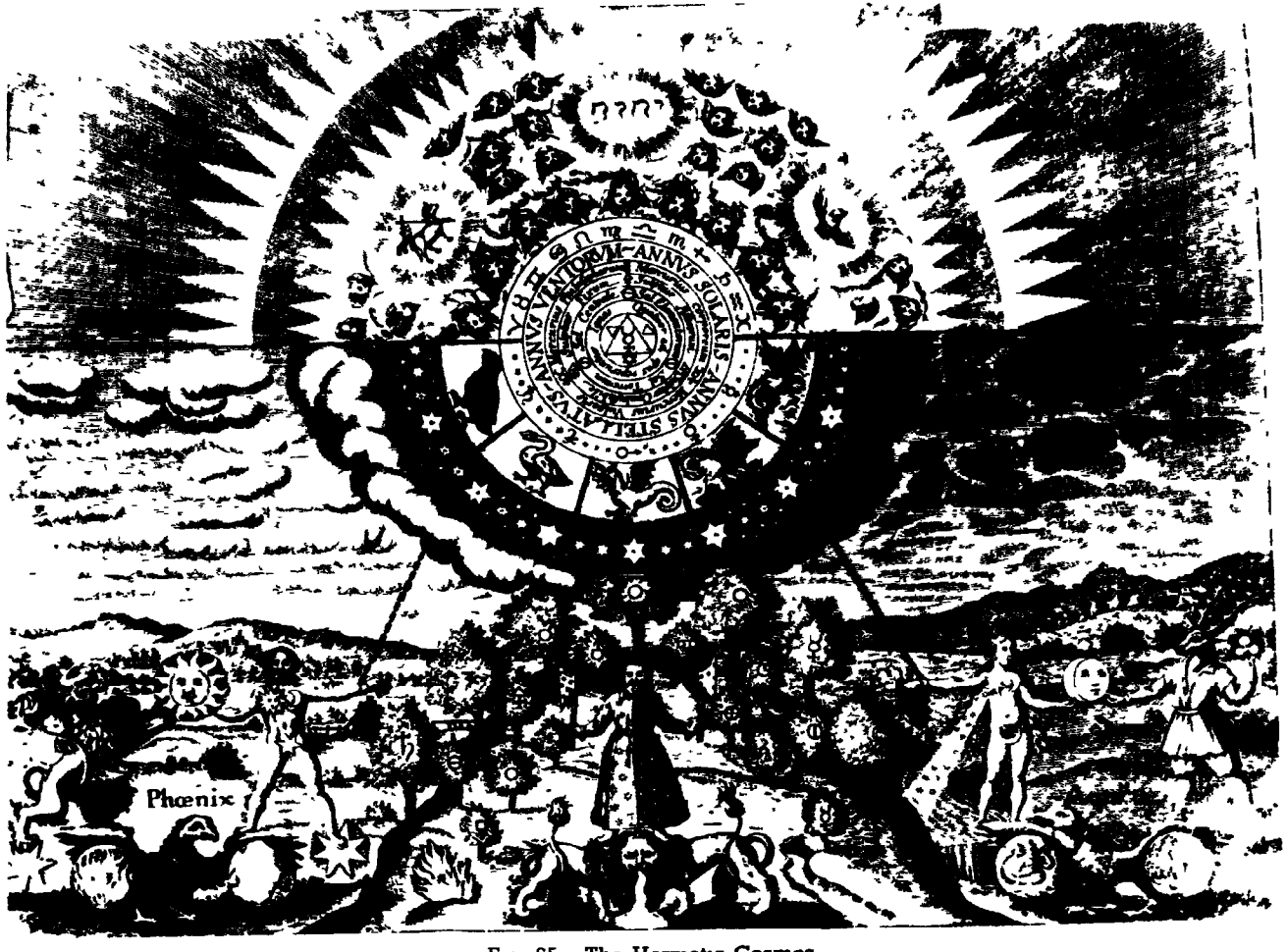


Fig 65 The Hermetic Cosmos

Mylius' stunning image is accompanied by this text

"What heaven shows, is found on earth Fire and flowing water are contrary to each other Happy thou, if thou canst unite them Let it suffice thee to know this" [20]

The Alkahest

THE *prima materia*, the alchemists declared, can be found everywhere. It was considered the essence of all substances, "the underlying something that always remains identical and one" [21] It was the world soul, the world spirit, the quintessence from which had sprung the elements

The alchemists wanted to capture this ever-present and yet unseizable power and to confine it in the philosophers' stone They dissolved various substances in order to seize the *prima materia* which was not only fugaceous but also very fragile. Greatest care was necessary for this operation, a care which the simple chemists disregarded when they dissolved bodies with acids "The chemists destroy," said the Hermetics, "but we build up, they kill, and we resurrect, they burn with fire, and we burn with water"

This burning water was an all-dissolvent liquid, the alkahest, mentioned for the first time by Paracelsus In his book on the *Members of Man* he says "There is also the spirit alkahest, which acts very efficiently upon the liver it sustains, fortifies, and preserves from the diseases within its reach Those who want to use such medicine must know how the alkahest is prepared" And in his book *On the Nature of Things*, Paracelsus speaks of an elixir which matures metals and makes them perfect However, whether this elixir is the alkahest, he does not say

These casual references would not have been sufficient for bringing fame to the alkahest, had not the famous Belgian doctor, Jean Baptiste Van Helmont (1577–1644), enriched the subject with new marvels It is he who proclaimed the dissolving characteristic of the alkahest, which he calls a new wonder medicine, Fire Water, Hell Water He says "It is a salt, most blessed and most perfect of all salts, the secret of its preparation is beyond human comprehension and God alone can reveal it to the chosen"

Van Helmont was one of the chosen, for he affirms by oath that he possessed the alkahest "As warm water dissolves ice," it dissolved all bodies

During the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth, many adepts searched for the alkahest, and one could fill a library with the writings concerning the universal dissolvent The alchemist Glauber, who discovered sodium sulphate, still known as Glauber salt, believed that his discovery was this wonder elixir The adepts generally imagined that the word alkahest was an anagram veiling the secret, and for this reason Glauber used alkali, he alkalized nitre



Fig 66 The Alchemist at Work

The research continued without abatement until the middle of the eighteenth century, when the alchemist Kunkel declared "If the alkahest dissolves all bodies, it will dissolve the vessel which contains it, if it dissolves flint, it will render liquid the glass retort, for glass is made with flint The great dissolvent of nature has been discussed often Some say its name means *alkali est*, 'it is alkali', others say it is derived from the German *All-Geist*, 'universal spirit,' or from *all ist*, 'it is all ' But I believe that such a dissolvent does not exist, and I call it by its true name, *Alles Lugen ist*, 'all that is a lie.' "

Kunkel gave the death blow to the alkahest, for after his declaration the dissolvent is no longer mentioned in alchemical writings Adepts who wanted still to lay their hands on the *prima materia* had to resort to other means.

Early Attacks on Alchemy

An art which good men hate and most men blame

AGRIPPA

IN the second part of the *Romance of the Rose*, Jean de Meung (ca. 1240–1305) shows Lady Nature complaining about the foolishness and the sophistication of those alchemists who make use only of mechanical practices in their operations He is fully convinced that gold can be produced, but he reprimands the adepts for their negligence in spiritual matters Science without morality for him was lacking in wisdom, and nature too is ashamed of this

"I am suffering great grief
For the stench of thy sulphur
With hot fire that burns man
Thou wilt fix the quicksilver

Poor man, thou deceivest thyself!
For by these means thou wilt do nothing

And the artist is ashamed and affectionate
Kneeling before Lady Nature
He begs humbly for forgiveness
And gives her thanks"

He had been misled by "oblique words and parabolic sentences" instead of following nature

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?–1400), who translated into English Jean de Meung's *Roman de la Rose*, is more skeptical In the Chanon's Yoeman's Prologue, we read

"They take upon them to turne upside downe
All the earth betwixt Southwarke and Canturburie towne,
And to pave it all of silver and gold

But ever they lacke of their conclusion,
And to much folke they doo illusion,
For their stuff slides awaie so fast,
That it makes them beggars at the last
And by this craft they never doo win,
But make their pursse emptie, and their wits thin" --

During the Renaissance a few writers protested against alchemy, declaring that the great art was a chimera The most violent attacks came from the protestant North Here the power of the orthodox Church had been secularized, its

wealth confiscated, and monasteries and nunneries closed This was a difficult period for individuals who wanted to live in loneliness and meditation

The rising bourgeoisie stressed the virtue of common sense What the Church had censured formerly as sin, the bourgeois now called folly Catholic and Protestant citizens appointed themselves as the inquisitors of human folly,



Fig 67 Sebastian Brant

and they discovered it everywhere Satirical writers rampaged through human activities, and neither did the magicians nor, more especially, the alchemists escape their invective Through the invention of printing, a wider circulation of alchemical writings was possible, and many who had blindly admired the hermetic art discovered now, when able to read the masters' works, that they were foolish and pretentious

Erasmus of Rotterdam (1467–1536), whose witty and cultivated pen excelled that of his contemporaries, describes in a dialogue between two priests, John and Balbine, to what extent "fair words make fools and how large offers blind the wise" John, the alchemist, succeeds in having his experiments financed by

Balbine, a wise man who speaks little John finds numerous ways of extorting money from his silent friend, and the more Balbine invests in this adventurous enterprise, the more he is bound to John to whom he clings like the gambler does to his dice After the modest and reasonable demands for retorts, coals and tools, John asks for larger amounts His experiment being unsuccessful, he advises his pious friend that a prayer to the Virgin would hasten the work, that those matters would proceed much better if he sent Our Lady a few French crowns in reward, for the art being holy, the matter cannot prosperously proceed without the favor of the saints John dissipates on his short voyage every penny among bawds and knaves. After his return, he prepares another swindle. Lamenting his misfortune, he tells Balbine 'It has been known at court that they make alchemical experiments without having a license. They will be cast into a dungeon, condemned to fabricate gold for their sovereign The learned Balbine prepares his defense, beating his brains in devising how the accusation might be answered and the danger averted

John proposes that the courtiers be silenced with bribes for they are greedy for money In this way Balbine loses thirty ducats more Finally, his alchemical friend is involved in an ugly scandal, he has been found with a neighbor's wife This affair offers many opportunities for tapping Balbine's purse And he who would rather have lost thirty-two teeth than one ducat is now compelled to spend half of his wealth sending the alchemist abroad secretly, and bribing him not to gossip about their unsuccessful partnership

Erasmus' description of the wise fool, the easy prey of every cheat, is a happy stroke Balbine who speaks little and thinks much incorporates a type of folly which escaped the observation of the satirist's less subtle contemporaries Indeed, learnedness and discretion do not exclude vice and folly

Sebastian Brant (1457–1521) dedicates in his *Ship of Fools* a few malicious verses to the alchemical impostors whose most common trick was to hide gold in the stick with which they stirred the molten metal, little wonder, then, that the amazed witness was able to find gold in the caldron! (Fig 68)

"And so as here not to forget
The ugly lie of alchemy,
Which conjures up silver and gold
First hidden in the stirring stick,
It's only trick and jugglery
They show a lump to you as proof,
And soon, behold, out comes a toad!
This blindness drives him from his home,
Him who was sitting soft and warm,
He stuffed his wealth in the retort
Till it is ashes all and dust—
And at the end his mind was lost
Many a man has perished thus,
And hardly one acquired wealth
For Aristoteles declares
The form of things will never change"

Brant's mention of Aristotle is significant, for mediaeval scholasticism (which had been supplanted in Brant's time by Platonism), was based upon Aristotelian theories. Most arguments against alchemy revealed the dryness of a scholasticism which had outlived its usefulness and especially in its ultimate form, lent itself to senseless speculations and syllogisms based on false premises. Brant refers to Aristotle's declaration in his *Meteorology* that artificers cannot alter species, but can only make other metals *seem* like silver or gold

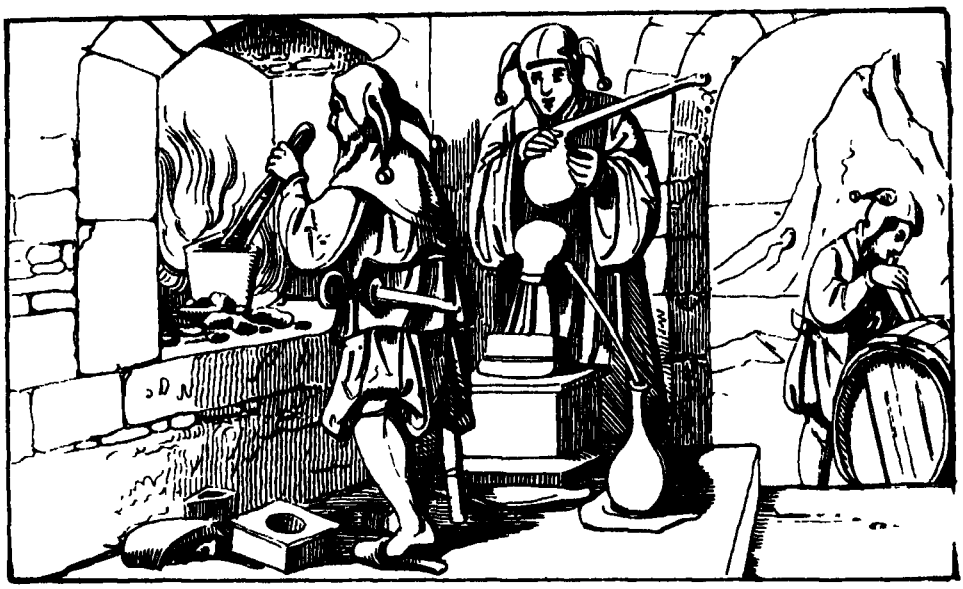


Fig 68 The Folly of the Alchemists

At the end of the seventeenth century, these syllogisms were still cultivated "If alchemy," declares a superfine scholar, "were a reality, King Solomon would have known of it For does not Writ affirm that in him was united all wisdom of heaven and earth? But Solomon sent his ships to Ophir, in search of gold And he also made his subjects pay their taxes Had Solomon known the philosophers' stone, he would have acted differently Thus—there is no alchemy!" -[1]

To this, an apologist of alchemy, John Becher, replied with arguments likewise born from idle fancy

"It is true, Solomon possessed every wisdom But did he know plainly every detail of human activity? Was he a specialist in all arts and crafts? Did he paint, carve, make shoes, weave rugs? It is certain also that he ignored many things to come, for instance the printing press and gunpowder. Solomon may well have possessed the philosophers' stone It is not known for what reasons he sent away his ships And uncertain also is whether this legendary expedition ever happened in an epoch when the mariner's needle had not yet been in-

vented. The German Emperor Leopold I is known to have made gold. Did he on that account recall all his ships and reduce his subjects' taxes?" [24]

Becher's book was published in 1664. Earlier, in 1572, a scholar from Heidelberg, Thomas Erastus, published his *Explanations*. They were directed mainly against Paracelsus. Thomas Erastus is the prototype of learned sterility and quarrelsomeness. He makes a considerable effort to disapprove the reality of transmutations, with the use of the same futile syllogisms. Incredulous in alchemical matters, Erastus defended the belief in witchcraft. In his *Dialogues* he attacked venomously the doctor, John Wier, who had dared to write that witches were, in the main, mentally disturbed women.

Pierre Le Loyer, the learned magistrate of Angers, refused to believe in transmutation. In 1605, he wrote: "As to transmutation, I wonder how it can be reasonably defended. Metals can be adulterated, but not changed. . . . Blowing (the bellows), they exhaust their purses, they multiply all into nothing. Yes, I do not believe, and may the philosophers excuse me if they wish, that the alchemists can change any metal into gold."

This testimony of a skeptic, Le Loyer published in his heavy in-quarto work *Discourse and Histories about Specters, Visions, and Apparitions of Spirits, Angels, Demons, and Souls that appeared visibly to Men*. The full-sounding title makes clear that Le Loyer was not equally skeptical in other matters.

Similarly, many scholars who believed firmly in witchcraft denounced the vanity of alchemy. They were convinced that the devil could appear in the form of a goat, that witches could transform themselves into cats, wolves, snails, etc. Proclaiming that the metamorphoses of spirits and humans were a matter of fact, they railed against the credulous who accepted the possibility of metals being transmuted from one into another. In such a way, Pierre de Lancre, the famous witch-burner, ridiculed those who believe in transmutation. "Considering the multitude of hermetic ideas," he says, "there would not be a sick man in the whole kingdom, nor a poor, nor an ignorant one. The adepts were more fortunate when *ideas* were able to cause transformation."

Agrippa, the magus and Neo-Platonist (1486-1534), author of *Three Books on Occult Philosophy*, surprised the learned of his time when he published a work on the *Vanity of Sciences and Art*. Having believed in all marvels, he found himself lost now in confusion, and reached the radical decision that all human enterprise was folly. He who had been alchemy's champion now proclaimed its madness, exposing the tragicomic character of the adepts. His prejudice blinded him, and he failed to see that these men who had devoted themselves so ardently to the quest of the unknown might deserve interest and compassion rather than ridicule.

"There is no greater madness," says Agrippa, "than to believe in the fixed volatile or that the fixed volatile can be made—so that the smells of coal, sulphur, dung, poison and piss are to them a greater pleasure than the taste of honey—till their farms, goods and patrimonies are wasted, and converted into ashes and smoke, when they expect the rewards of their labors, births of gold, youth, and immortality, after all their time and expenses; at length old, ragged, famished, and with the use of quicksilver, paralytic, only rich in misery, and



Fig 69 Laboratory of the Alchemist
(Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

so miserable that they will sell their souls for three farthings; so that the metamorphosis which they could have produced in the metals, they cause to happen in themselves—for instead of being alchemists, they are *cacochymists;* instead of being doctors, beggars; instead of unguentaries, victualers, a laughing



Fig 70 Pamphlet against the Alchemists

stock to the people, and they who in their youth hated to live meanly, at length grown old in chemical impostures, are compelled to live in the lowest degree of poverty, and in such calamity that they receive nothing but contempt and laughter, instead of commendation and pity, at length compelled thereto by penury, they fall to ill courses, as counterfeiting of money

"And therefore this art was not only expelled from the Roman Commonwealth, but also prohibited by the decrees of the sacred canons of the Church."

Agrippa's sarcasms are less pleasing than Pieter Brueghel's drawing, en-

graved so masterfully by Hieronymus Cock of Antwerp (fig 69) Brueghel the Elder (1525–1569), the painter of human folly, found the alchemist a suitable model for his cherished theme. The drawing depicts the appalling disorder of the adept's house, which reflects the state of the alchemist's mind. His wife with her empty purse is the image of mute despair; two assistants perform their operations according to the master's directions; one wears a fool's cap that suits his moron's face; the other, emaciated and ragged, works with apparent displeasure and distrust In search of food, the children climb into the cupboard, but all they find is an empty caldron. Through a wide opening in the wall, we look into a square, where in front of a poorhouse a nun greets some famished newcomers. They are the members of the unfortunate adept's family: after an ultimate attempt—and failure—he disappeared, and one of the helpers brought his wife and children to this public shelter The happening occurs immediately after the scene in the foreground, as one of the children is still capped with the caldron he had found in the larder.

Brueghel's figures seem to represent allegories of sterile learning, folly and misery. They contrast strikingly with the proud hermetic allegories

The caricature of Doctor Rauchmantel ("smoke-mantle"), engraved by Wilhelm Koning and published in 1716, depicts the alchemist similarly (fig 70) The small amount of liquid which he has been able to distill is not very promising, and his plump hands seem hardly suited to such subtle operations Rauchmantel's attitude reveals painful effort, which manages to squeeze out two drops, the symbol of the alchemist's sterility. It is difficult to recognize in this short-legged and unintelligent gold cook a descendant of Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus When Rauchmantel's image was engraved, the heroic times of alchemy were past and the art was the object of raillery and witticism We shall see in another chapter whether the epoch of reason, the eighteenth century, was really as reasonable as many have judged it to be.

Famous Transmutations

He produces an inexhaustible treasure
Who from rods made gold
And from stones made gems
Hymn to St John the Baptist

Louis Figuier, an authority on mediaeval alchemy, wrote in 1856 "The present stage of chemistry does not allow us to consider impossible the transmutation of metals, from notions recently acquired and from the current character of chemistry, we may assume that the transformation of one metal into another could be attained." He adds, however, that this has not yet been realized.

Similar views are expressed by M Berthelot in 1884 In his work, *The Origins of Alchemy*, he devotes a chapter to the comparison of old alchemical and

modern theories, and he concludes that both, though unlike, are not completely alien to one another "Alchemy," he says, "was a philosophy explaining rationally the metamorphosis of matter" Berthelot mentions also the atomic conceptions of those "who consider so-called simple bodies as being formed by association of a certain number of analogous elements, and the efforts to reduce all equivalents of simple bodies to a series of numerical values" He mentions his colleagues—Chancourtois, Mendeleef, Newlands and Meyer—who have tried to group together all numbers that express the atomic weight of elements, and he refers to the problems in arithmetic resulting from such attempts

Transmutation, which Berthelot and Figuier believed possible, was proven a reality by Mme Curie, whose work was published at the end of the nineteenth century

Today, we know that not only can we transmute one substance into another, changing mercury into gold, for instance, but that through chemical operations we are able to produce new metals

The seventeen-hundred-year-old dream of the adepts has thus become true, and we can only wish that the men who know the secret possess that "purity of heart" without which, according to the alchemists, there can be no science.

Did the alchemist have valid scientific knowledge about the process? That is difficult to believe, for alchemy's principles were not scientific Hermetics had to be eradicated before the tree of chemistry could be planted Unlike other ancient knowledge—for instance, surgery, which amidst constant elimination of its errors survived—it had to be discarded altogether The principles of surgery were correct scientifically, those of alchemy did not belong to science but to a philosophic wisdom which directed it from its inception toward mysticism Alchemy's chief values were of a psychic nature, the Hermetic was the brother of the mystic

It is curious to remember, however, that the experiments of the adepts resulted in an impressive series of chemical discoveries, whereas under the unsterilized scalpel of mediaeval surgeons most of their patients died If alchemy failed to discover what it had been seeking, it certainly stumbled upon things it had not anticipated finding

It may be worthwhile to mention some of these discoveries

Albertus Magnus (1193–1280) is credited with the preparation of caustic potash He was the first to describe the chemical composition of cinnabar, ceruse and minium.

Raymond Lully (1235–1315) prepared bicarbonate of potassium

Basil Valentine (fifteenth century) discovered sulphuric ether and hydrochloric acid

Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493–1541) was the first to describe zinc, theretofore unknown He also introduced to medicine the use of chemical compounds

Jean Baptiste Van Helmont (1577–1644) recognized the existence of gas

Johann Rudolf Glauber (1604–1668) discovered sodium sulphate, *i e.*, Glauber salt, which he believed to be the philosophers' stone.

Brandt (died 1692), a burgher of Hamburg, is said to have discovered phosphorus

Giambattista della Porta (1541–1615) prepared tin oxide

Johann Friedrich Boetticher (1682–1719) was the first European who made porcelain.

Blaise Vigenère (1523–1596) discovered benzoic acid

These few examples suffice to illustrate that the alchemists' researches, though lacking scientific direction, produced a benefit to humanity at large, not merely for the chosen

Some reports on transmutations will now be considered, selected from amongst many of those recorded by serious contemporaneous scientists whose honesty cannot be doubted, and by rulers who could not easily be deceived These reports are truly astounding, eluding apparently every possibility of deception.

John Frederick Schweitzer, called Helvetius, one of the most violent adversaries of alchemy, reports that in the forenoon of December 27, 1666, a stranger came to his house, a man of honest, grave countenance and authoritative mien, clothed in simple garb, like that of a Mennonite. Having asked Helvetius whether he believed in the philosophers' stone (to which the famous doctor answered negatively), the stranger opened a little ivory box, "in which there were three pieces of a substance resembling glass or pale sulphur " Its owner declared, this was *the* stone and that with such a small quantity he was able to produce twenty tons of gold Helvetius held a piece in his hand and, having thanked the visitor for his kindness, begged the alchemist to give him a small amount of it He refused brusquely, adding in a milder tone that he could not part with any of it for all the wealth Helvetius possessed, "for a reason which was not lawful for him to divulge "

Asked to give proof of his assertion by performing a transmutation the stranger replied that he would return in three weeks and show Helvetius something that would amaze him He arrived punctually on the promised day, but refused to operate, saying that he was not permitted to reveal the secret He condescended, however, to give Helvetius a small piece of the stone, "no larger than a grain of rapeseed " And as the doctor showed doubt as to whether such an infinitesimal quantity could produce any effect, the alchemist broke the grain in half, threw away half and returning the other, said "Even now it is sufficient for you "

The honest scholar admitted now that at the stranger's first visit, he had managed to extract a few particles from the stone, but that they had changed the lead not into gold but into glass "You should have protected your spoil with yellow wax," the amused alchemist answered, "then it would have been able to penetrate the lead and to transmute it into gold " He promised to return again the next morning at nine o'clock and to perform the miracle—but he did not come that day nor the following day Thereupon Helvetius' wife persuaded him to attempt the transmutation himself

Helvetius proceeded according to the stranger's directions He melted three drachmas of lead, enveloped the stone in wax and dropped it into the liquefied metal. It turned into gold!

"We immediately brought it to the goldsmith, who declared at once that it

was the finest gold he had ever seen, and offered to pay fifty florins an ounce for it."

Helvetius, in concluding his report, tells us that the gold was still in his possession as proof of the veracity of transmutation "May the Holy Angels of God watch over him (the anonymous alchemist) as a source of blessing to Christendom! This is an earnest prayer on his behalf and ours "

The news spread like wildfire Spinoza, whom we cannot include among the credulous, wanted to inquire into the matter. He visited the goldsmith who



Fig 71 Medal Commemorating a Transmutation at Prague in 1658

had tested the gold The report was more than favorable during the fusion, the silver which was added was also transmuted into gold Brechtel, the goldsmith, was the Duke of Orange's minter He surely knew his craft It is hardly credible that he could be the victim of a subterfuge or that he wanted to deceive Spinoza Many trustworthy people were present when Brechtel made the assay Spinoza then visited Helvetius, who showed him the gold and the crucible which had served for the operation Some gold still clung to the inside of the crucible, and like the others, Spinoza was convinced of the reality of this famous transmutation

In 1621, Professor Martini, lecturing at the University of Helmstedt in Germany, explained to his students why transmutation was impossible One of the students replied to the incensed scholar with subtle arguments, and the verbal duel continued for some time Finally, the student demanded a crucible, a stove and lead and, forthwith, under the scrutiny of Martini and the students, he performed the transmutation the lead turned into gold! He handed the vessel to the astonished professor, saying *"Domine, solve mi hunc syllogismum "* (Sir, confound *this* syllogism!) But Martini had nothing to say In his *Treatise on Logic* published after this event, he expresses his complete credulity in alchemical matters

In 1648, an adept, Labujardière, felt that he was going to die. He wrote to his friend Richthausen in Vienna to come and get the philosophers' stone which he kept in a special casket. Richthausen hastened to Prague; he arrived too late, but the casket was found Count Schlick, a nobleman of Bohemia, in whose service Labujardière had been, demanded that the famous box be given to him. Richthausen, however, returned a replica of the box, and brought the original to the emperor's court Ferdinand III, himself an alchemist, knowing well the adepts' subterfuges, employed all precautions against deception Count Rutz, director of mines, was present at the experiment which the emperor conducted in person. Richthausen was not permitted to assist at the operation With one grain of Labujardière's powder, Ferdinand transmuted two and one half pounds of mercury into pure gold A medal was coined to commemorate the transmutation; it represented Apollo, the Sun-god, holding Mercury's caduceus. The coin bore this inscription: *Divine Metamorphosis Caused in Prague, January 16, 1648, Witnessed by His Holy Imperial Majesty Ferdinand III* (fig 71). Still doubtful, the emperor made a second transmutation, and again it was successful. Richthausen was ennobled with the title of Baron of Chaos; he traveled through Germany, transmuting here and there until his wonder powder was exhausted.

Wolfgang Dienheim, professor at Freiburg University, a great skeptic in alchemical matters, was forced by evidence to admit the possibility of transmutation The alchemist who succeeded in changing his mind was the famous Scotchman, Alexander Sethon Sethon had learned the secret from a shipwrecked Dutchman, James Haussen, whom he had sheltered In 1602, Sethon started his ill-starred journey through Europe After having furnished ample proof of his capacities in transmutation, he was imprisoned by Christian II, Elector of Saxony The unfortunate adept was pierced with pointed irons, scorched with molten lead, burned by fire; but he exhausted his torturers and did not reveal his secret He finally escaped with the aid of Sendivogius, a Polish nobleman who was also an adept Sethon died soon after his liberation.

During his journey through Switzerland, Sethon had met Wolfgang Dienheim By boat, they traveled together from Zurich to Basel "You have attacked the alchemical art constantly during our trip," Sethon said when they reached Basel "I have promised you an answer, it will be a demonstration I expect somebody else whom I wish to convince too" He was referring to Zwinger, professor of medicine at the University of Basel, author of a *History of German Medicine*. The three went to a mineworker, the two professors carrying some lead plates which Zwinger had brought with him; a crucible was borrowed from a goldsmith, and ordinary sulphur was purchased on the way Sethon had not chosen the goldsmith or the apothecary, nor did he touch anything In the goldminer's house, the hearth was lit and the lead and the sulphur heated in the crucible After a quarter of an hour had passed, Sethon said "Drop this little paper into the molten lead, but well in the middle as nothing should fall into the fire" This was done. The paper, according to Dienheim, contained a yellow

powder, but so little that he could scarcely see it For another fifteen minutes, the mass was stirred with iron sticks Then the fire was extinguished, and the lead had changed into pure gold "Now," Sethon said to the two overwhelmed scholars, "where are your pedantries? Do you see the verity of the fact and this truth, which is stronger than your sophisms?"

The gold was cut Zwinger received a piece as a souvenir which was retained by his family through several generations until an alchemist, unable to perform the transmutation, sold it in order to pay his debts

Dienheim adds in his report "Ye disbelievers will probably laugh at this true story But I am alive and ever ready to testify to what I have seen And Zwinger is also alive He will not remain mute, but be a witness to what I affirm"

When Alexander Sethon died from the injuries inflicted upon him by his torturers, he bequeathed the remainder of his philosophers' stone to his liberator, Sendivogius By accomplishing numerous transmutations, Sendivogius soon became as famous as his deceased master Emperor Rudolf II sent for him, and in Prague Sendivogius was received graciously and highly honored Courtesy demanded that the adept acknowledge this recognition, he deemed it best to present some philosophers' stone to the emperor With a small amount of the yellow powder, Rudolf accomplished a successful transmutation A marble plate was affixed to a wall in the chamber where it had taken place The plate read "May anyone else accomplish what the Pole Sendivogius has done" The court's alchemical poet, Mordecai of Delle, praised the event in bombastic verses, and Sendivogius received the title of Counselor of his Majesty, together with a medal bearing the emperor's effigy He left Prague and, after a series of unfortunate adventures, reached Poland In 1604, Frederick, Duke of Wurttemberg, sent for him In Frederick's castle at Stuttgart, the Polish adept performed several astonishing transmutations which disturbed greatly the court's alchemist, the Count of Mullenfels

To rid himself of such a formidable competitor, Mullenfels persuaded Sendivogius that the duke was planning his imprisonment, Sendivogius, recalling his master's fate, was convinced without too much difficulty He escaped at night and Mullenfels' horsemen captured him They robbed him of his valuables, not forgetting the philosophers' stone Sendivogius' wife complained at court, the emperor sent a dispatch to Stuttgart, demanding that Mullenfels be surrendered to him Seeing the extent to which this affair had gone, the duke ordered that Mullenfels be hung

Mullenfels was executed in a garment covered with gold spangles, and the gibbet was gilded

The philosophers' stone could not be found, however, and Sendivogius, unable to replace his loss, ended in misery

A famous transmutation, though not confirmed by witnesses, will be related here for two reasons the report of its author seems to bear the stamp of truth, and the reality of the transmutation appears plausible since the adept's wealth increased suddenly The hero of this story is the famous Nicholas Flamel (1330–1418), whose name has long been venerated by Hermetics and by the French

people. In many ways, Flamel is an exception among the adepts. "Whilst in all ages and nations, the majority of the alchemists have derived little beyond deception, ruination and despair from their devotion to alchemy, Nicholas Flamel enjoyed permanent good fortune and serenity Far from expending his resources in the practice of the *magnum opus*, his moderate fortune swelled to a vast treasure within an amazingly brief period He used his wealth to endow charitable and pious foundations that survived him and sanctified his memory" [25]

Flamel was a scribe Among the books he copied there were, no doubt, many alchemical treatises, but none of them attracted his interest so much as the one he acquired for two florins and "which was gilded, very old, and large It was not made of paper or parchment, like other books, but of admirable rinds of young trees" With the aid of this book, and the advice of a Jewish doctor whom he had met during a pilgrimage to Spain, Flamel discovered, as he says, the secret of transmutation His wife assisted him in his experiment, and was present when gold appeared in the vessel Flamel describes the memorable event as follows

"This was upon a Monday, the 17th of January, about noon, in my house, with Perenella (his wife) present only, in the year of the restoration of mankind, 1382

"Afterwards, following always word for word in my book, I projected the Red Stone upon a similar quantity of mercury in the presence, likewise, of only Perenella, in the same house about five o'clock in the evening—which I transmuted truly into almost as much pure gold, better assuredly than common gold, being more pliable

"I may speak with truth I have made it three times with the help of Perenella, who understood it as well as I, because she assisted me in my operations, and without doubt if she would have attempted it alone, she too would have attained at the end perfection thereof

"I had indeed accomplished enough when I succeeded once, but I found great pleasure in seeing and contemplating the admirable works of nature within the vessels

"I was afraid for a long time that Perenella could not hide her excessive joy, which I measured by my own, and feared lest she should let some word escape amongst her kindred of the great treasures which we possessed

"For excessive joy robs one of understanding as well as of great heaviness, but the goodness of the most Great God had not only filled me with this bless ing he gave me a wife chaste and sage– for she was moreover capable not only of reason but also of doing all that was reasonable, and was more discreet than women usually are

"Above all, she was exceedingly devout and, therefore, being without hope of bearing children and now well-advanced in years, she began, as I had, to think about God and to give herself to the works of mercy" [26]

Nicholas and Perenella founded and endowed with revenues, fourteen hospitals, three chapels and seven churches in Paris "We have also accomplished in Boulogne about as much as we have in Paris, not to speak of the charitable

acts which we both performed, specially with regard to widows and orphans. If I were to divulge their names under the guise of charity, my reward would be only in this world and it would not be pleasing to the persons involved."

Flamel's words have a convincing tone of being forthright and humble, and it is difficult to regard them as the testimony of an impostor. In an archway which he had built in the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents, a mural symbolizes the Great Secret (fig. 72). The painting was an object of pilgrimage for the Hermetists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Flamel's alleged success gave a decisive impetus to alchemy and added to the popularity of the art.

★

One is inclined to believe in the reality of transmutation when reading these reports. What can be said against them? It is possible though unlikely that the rulers honored the adepts' talent of deception and not their true ability for transmutation. Were not many magicians in later times rewarded royally at court for their art of legerdemain? This custom still existed at the beginning of this century. The question is whether Ferdinand, Rudolf, Frederick, and other royal alchemists believed in the art. In that case, it seems unlikely that they honored those who wanted to deceive them. What interest could they have had in championing alchemy? To make other European potentates believe that they were rich enough to wage war for any length of time?

And what about the sober statements of scholars, like Martini, Zwinger, Dienheim, Helvetius, and others? Could they be as easily deceived, even when they themselves were operating? As a solution to the riddle, it has been proposed that by some subterfuge contrived by a crony, an auriferous substance had been, in time, introduced into the crucible. Such an argument drives the devil out with Beelzebub. Who would believe that these scholars were the victims of such grossness!

Furthermore, one would like to know what was the proposed auriferous substance which made possible changing large quantities of base metal into gold. Where did the base metal go? Such a powder would be as marvelous as the stone itself. Did all these seemingly honest scientists wish to deceive their friends, and if not, why would they interpolate their scientific tracts with practical jokes?

Perhaps they had other reasons for promoting the belief in alchemy, which formerly they had fought so violently. Their motives would surely have been weighty, as none of these grave men would have risked compromising their honest careers for a bagatelle.

In whatever way we approach the problem, it remains a mystery, and no reasoning has yet robbed these happenings of their marvelous aura.

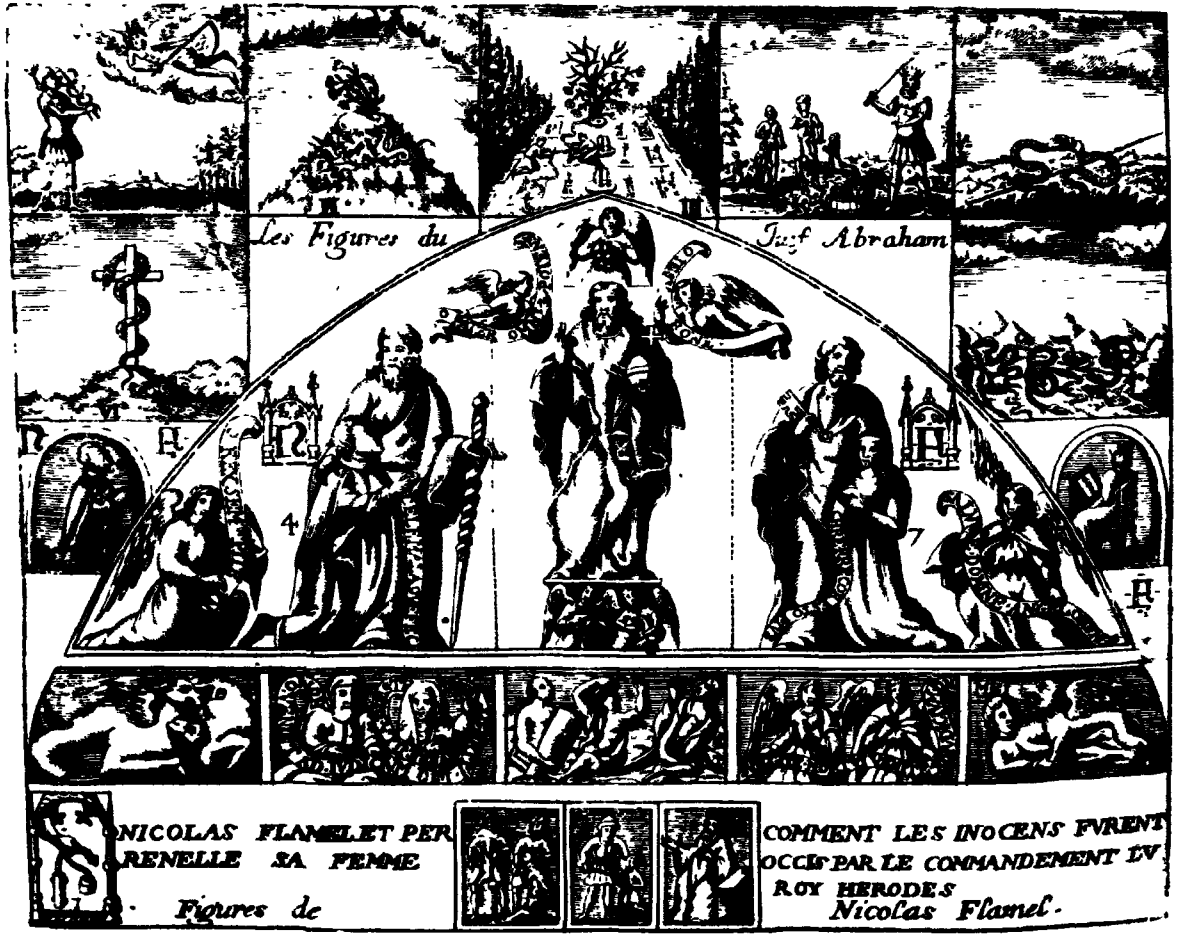


Fig 72 The Fresco of Nicolas Flamel in the Charnel-House of the Innocents

The Inheritance of the Accursed

"With all thine likeness to God, thou'lt yet be a sorry example!"

GOETHE, *Faust*

MANY scholars of the past have studied alchemy together with other sciences: geometry, mathematics, etc. But there were also adepts whose sole preoccupation was the philosophers' stone. Was it necessary to probe other fields of learning when from the stone all moral and intellectual qualities emanated? They did not study Hermetics as a part of knowledge, for them, this art embraced all things, including the guidance of the soul and the nourishment of the mind. These "specialists" were mystics without being orthodox Catholics, scientists without following the learning of their time, artisans unable to teach others what they knew They were sectarians, problem-children of society

Psychoanalysts have pointed out the neurotic character of alchemical allegories and practices. the fondness of the adepts for putrefaction, their experimentations with offensive substances, their Peeping-Tom curiosity in erotic matters, their glorification of the hermaphrodite, and so forth If this is true, the alchemist could be compared to the artist, according to Freud's analysis of the latter. In both cases the abnormal produces what is valuable, the good. Speaking in alchemical terms, we could say that putrefaction was followed immediately by sublimation.

The moral and intellectual postulates of the doctrine were not merely theoretical to the adept. He wanted to live purely, to be charitable and pious, for the stone, he knew, was revealed only to the *worthy* But the alchemist's conception of the good was not identical with that of the society in which he lived The spiritual and secular rulers were ever hesitant about deciding whether to welcome the Hermetic as a pure sage or to destroy him for being a sacrilegious impostor

The question as to whether gold could be made was considered a minor one From the middle of the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the reality of the art was accepted generally; the incontestable fact of transmutation is often mentioned in the laws As late as 1668, the Chancellory of Breslau rewarded the alchemist Kirchof with a diploma authorizing his practice of alchemy [47]

Most of the mediaeval Popes were not concerned openly with alchemy, and few shared the remarkable skepticism of John XXII, whose edict against the art (1317) begins like this:

"The unfortunate alchemists promise what they have not Though they call themselves sages, they stumble into the pitfalls which they have dug for others Ludicrously, they pretend that they are masters of alchemy And they offer proof of their ignorance when citing older authors, though they have not discovered what those were unable to find, they still believe that it is possible to discover it in the future." [48]

Only a few years before this edict, Arnold of Villanova had accomplished two successful transmutations at the Holy See.

Well-known is the witty reply which Pope Leo X is supposed to have given to the alchemist Aurelius Augurelli when the latter dedicated a poem on alchemy to him. Augurelli had expected a princely reward in return, but Leo, who had never been fond of gold, gave him a most beautiful—but empty—purse he who can make gold needs only a receptacle for storing it!

The mediaeval kings had been less indifferent to the matter In 1380, Charles V of France proscribed all alchemical research An unfortunate adept who disregarded this law was arrested, and had a narrow escape from the gibbet After the king's death, the law became obsolete

Henry IV of England, made the following decree in 1404.

"From now on, nobody shall, under penalty of felony, multiply gold and silver, or make use of fraud in order to succeed in his designs " Although this law makes a distinction between true and fraudulent transmutation, neither jugglers nor Hermetics paid much attention to it

In 1418, the Venetian Republic prohibited the practice of alchemy The law had no more effect than that of the English king

With the rise of capitalism, the attitude of monarchs toward alchemy changed Wherever they scented gold, *i e*, power, the kings and princes became very gracious Disappointed, they resorted to penalties whose cruelty exceeded by far the severity of the mediaeval laws against Hermetism

The desire for gold and scientific interest caused a few potentates themselves to study the problem of transmutation Among them, Rudolf II (1552–1612) and Ferdinand III (1608–1657) protected and financed the alchemists

Many theologians felt that Hermetic philosophy did not conform to the Church's dogma, though they rarely objected to alchemical practice itself They were not deceived by the alchemists' frequent citations of Bible verses The apparent modesty of the Hermetics veiled an offensive pride Their teachings pointed out a path to felicity unlike the one recommended by the Church

In a former chapter, it has been shown that the art, like all inquiry into natural phenomena, had been considered a vain and cursed knowledge It was connected with two great crimes the intercourse of women with fallen angels, and Adam eating the forbidden fruit, *i e*, original sin. Furthermore, we have seen that Hermetism was related closely to Gnosticism: the serpent is a symbol borrowed from the Gnostics.

The fundamental difference between Gnosticism and Catholicism is their opposing concept of *guilt* Humbly, the orthodox Church accepted original sin and professed that the only possible salvation lay in conciliating the offended Father. This had taken place when the Son offered himself as a voluntary sacrifice· His blood had washed away Adam's sin.

But there were others, many Gnostic sects, who did not admit their own culpability, justifying Adam's deed as being caused by God's injustice. As previously pointed out, they declared that the creator of the material world was but the imperfect maker of an imperfect universe He was the God of the Old

Testament, the jealous one who had incensed the Jewish people to destroy Christ. Through the Father's intrigue, the Son was killed. Thus the Gnostics reversed the accusation and projected their feeling of guilt upon the accuser: the offended Father.

The early alchemists must have shared these conceptions, and their emblems



Fig 73 The Massacre of the Innocents

—the tree and the serpent—may have also symbolized to them the happenings in the garden of Eden Whether the later adepts were aware of this significance and whether they knew the true origin of their doctrine, is not clear. At any rate, alchemy had retained this heretic flavor, that the achievement of the

supreme is attained through knowledge *(sophia)*, soul and spirit must become ONE, *i.e.*, faith and science are to be identical. For the adept, intellect, like the soul, is of the divine; and often the Hermetics do not distinguish between them.

In the alchemists' rich imagery, the crucified Saviour does not appear,



Fig 74 The Crucified Serpent

though the flowing blood is the symbol of the fourth stage of the transmuting process. Instead of Christ, the alchemists depict the killing of the holy innocents by King Herod, the iniquitous *father* of the people (fig. 73) Flamel represents the sixth stage of the process by a crucified serpent, as if to allude to Gnostic salvation, which is achieved through wisdom (fig. 74). In Lambsprinck's



Fig 75 Hermetic Allegory Nature Teaches Nature



Fig 76 The Alchemist Pursuing Nature

hermetic figures, father and son are shown in open conflict, and their reconciliation is caused both by the spirit and by the intellect. But before the two can be reconciled, they have to be separated. The spirit says:

> "Come hither, I will conduct thee everywhere,
> To the summit of the loftiest mountain,
> That thou mayest behold the greatness of the earth and of the sea,
> And thence derive true pleasure " [29]

The Gnostic trinity, Father, Mother and Son, appears in Cleopatra's early design (fig 35) The mystical circles in the upper left art inscribed with the old signs of gold, silver, quicksilver, which are to be identified with the heavenly family.

Hermes Trismegistus alludes similarly to the female element in the trinity when he says: The Sun is his Father, the Moon is his Mother The alchemists have always maintained this trinity in the macrocosmic triangle whose angles are the Sun, the Moon, and the Stone.

Noticeable also is the importance given to women by the Hermetic In Majer's etching, the virgin is, like her ancestor Eve, the instigator (fig. 75) And a woman is the alchemist's symbol of nature. He follows her tracks, which lead to perfection (fig 76). It may be recalled that Magdalene and Sophia are most important and active figures in the *Pistis Sophia*, and that the earthly incarnation of the Heavenly Mother is a main feature in the dogma of Simon Magus.

Flamel's transmutation took place when his wife was present, and in the *Liber Mutus*, an alchemical tract, it is recommended that before starting the operation the alchemist and his wife should kneel and pray before the oven. The union of soul and spirit, of the male and female essence, has its counterpart in heaven· the Sun is the Father and the Moon, the Mother. Sophia is wed to her divine lover.

The importance that is given to women is connected with the Ophites' gratitude to Sophia who had pointed out the way to knowledge. The leaders of the orthodox Church fought from the very beginning of Christianity against such glorification of women In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul says bluntly "Women are to keep quiet in church, for they are not allowed to speak They must accept a subordinate place, just as the Law says If they want to find out anything, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in church." (14.34, 35) Moreover, Paul affirms that man "is the image of God and reflects His glory; while woman is the reflection of man's glory " (Cor. I, 11.7)

THE MIDDLE AGES

Magical Miscellany in Pre-Arabic Times

LEAVING the art of Hermes and its remarkable adepts, we shall return to the early Middle Ages

For about seven hundred years, magic seems to have been repressed and even annihilated. The Church is built upon solid rock, its representatives know that nothing can endanger it From this feeling of safety is born a relative tolerance, replacing the cruelty of old, a fact which is demonstrated by the dealings of the authorities with the popular superstitions and customs of the past.

Among the early laws against magic, a few are amazingly lenient. That of the Salic Franks, the *Lex Salica*, stipulates that "a witch, having eaten human flesh and being convicted of this crime, shall pay eight thousand denarii, i e , two hundred gold-pennies "[1] The amount is high, but the crime is horrible in an epoch when necrophagous habits in a man could not be explained as a psychic disorder but only as a most dreadful and punishable perversion.

This Salic law was sanctioned by Clovis I (466–511) It inflicts a fine of seventy-two pennies and half a gold coin for enchantment by magic knots. Strangely enough, most of the fines for evil operations of magic are lower than those specified for defamation, the unjust accusation that a person is a witch. The Ripuarian law ordained that any wrong inflicted by a sorcerer—harming limb or property—must be compensated by money In doubtful cases, the accused might clear himself by oath. The code of Charlemagne provided imprisonment for enchanters and wizards and a season to be devoted to repentance. The law of Withraed, king of Kent (in 690), ordains· "If a theow make an offering to devils, let him make a bot of six shillings, or his hide!" [2]

It is remarkable that the punishment meted out to the higher classes was more severe than that to the lower classes The earliest English collection of ecclesiastical disciplinary measures, the *Liber Poenitentialis* of St. Leonard (seventh century), provides imprisonment for what the Church must have judged to be a dreadful crime—the sacrifice to demons "One year of penance, if he is a clown of low estate, if he be of a higher degree, ten years." [3]

When the life of the king was at stake, or that of any member of the royal family, things were different A magical attempt to kill the ruler was punished cruelly Sometimes, witchcraft was the pretext used for ridding the court of some displeasing figure The rigor displayed during such trials, however, cannot be interpreted as a measure provided for by established jurisdiction

The formulation of a law implies the existence of a crime. That the annihilation of magic was not complete has already been surmised above with respect to alchemy. Hermeticism was cultivated mainly in the East, and early scholars in France, Spain and England hardly mention it But from the writings of the West, we learn that many pagan customs survived among the lower classes' enchantment, magical knots, the use of disguise as mythical animals, nightly assemblies of sorcerers, talismans, herbs, stones and poisons, incantations, spells, demon-worship, and many other practices of witchcraft which were common in these seemingly pacific centuries Everybody believed in the power of magic, the scholars as well as the worldly rulers and the clergy.

The writers do not define clearly the difference between magic and witchcraft Most of them censure such operations and only a few find them worthy of investigation In astrological matters, however, they were less certain Based upon their knowledge of philosophy, they assigned a higher rank to the stargazers and mathematicians than to the common sorcerers Thus Boethius (480?–524), the famous author of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, believed that the stars were superior, influencing men and things upon earth

Less versed in philosophy and more concerned with withchraft pure and simple was Isidor of Seville (*ca* 560–636), who believed that there are signs of things to come, prodigies and monstrous births In his historical survey, he calls Zoroaster and Democritus the inventors of magic Magic is identical with witchcraft, arts which cause disturbances in the air, incantations that cause death. The future may be known through divinatory arts, etc In his censure of magic, he derives his arguments from the Church fathers

The English historian and monk, Bede (675–735), also believed in prodigies and divination.

Gregory the Great, Pope from 590–604, dwells mainly upon ecclesiastical matters His preferred theme is the possession of man by devils He reveals an amazing credulity in superstitious tales and dwells also upon the miracles performed by the saints.

In addition to such humble writings, there existed also some confused compilations of classical fragments These books were ascribed incorrectly to various famous authors of antiquity, crumbs of ancient wisdom which had become the nourishment for those arid times [1]



Fig 77 The Astrologer Albumasar

The Arabs

EUROPEAN learning changed utterly when the Arabs entered Spain. Endowed with an insatiable curiosity concerning foreign learning, guided by a truly Oriental imagination, and filled with the energy of a people who had extended their boundaries from the Indus to the Pyrenees, the Arabs in their writings show a dynamism which contrasts sharply with the passive wisdom of the West

In the seventh century, Mohammed carried his message into the Arabic world Before his coming, the Arabs had lived and died with magic—they spoke to the good genii, the Djinns, they used charms, wax figures, and incantations Talismans were to them powerful protectors, and the wise men foretold the future in their sacred songs After Mohammed had established the new faith, they continued all their magical practices, adding to their incantations some verses of the Koran, employing thus the power of religion together with that of traditional magic

Mohammed himself had frequent dealings with demons. He was the victim of a powerful magic spell, the enchantment by knots, an operation of witchcraft already censured by Plato. Lucaides, a Jew, had knotted a cord, uttering mysterious words while doing so. By these means, he hoped to rob Mohammed of his virility. Then he stuck needles into a wax figure that represented the prophet. Fortunately, Allah appeared to Mohammed in a dream and revealed the cause of his ailments. The wax figure and the cord were found in a sacred

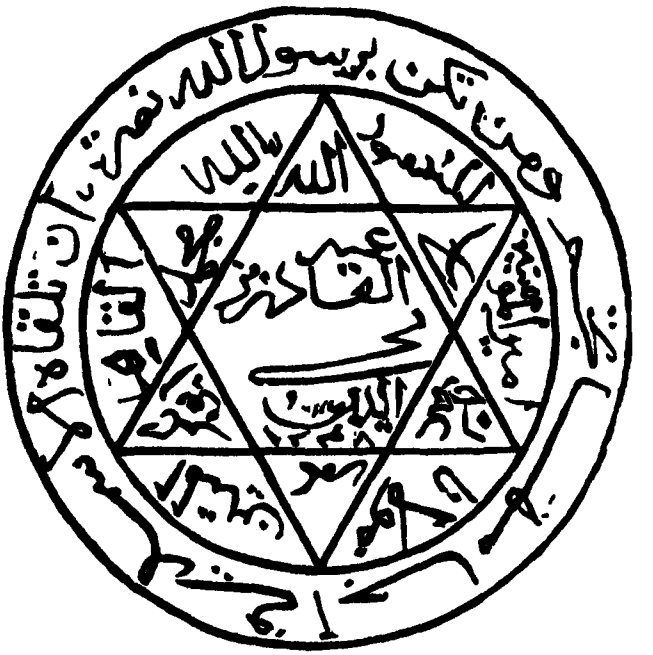


Fig 78 Arabic Talisman with Inscriptions such as "Allah is with us, the Almighty, by this Magic Sign, in the Name of Allah, you, the believers of Islam, shall not be harmed by Magic"

well, and when the prophet recited some verses from the Koran, the punctures in the wax disappeared, and the knots became untied.

Mohammed composed the Koran in verse, the rhythmic prose called *sadj*. This he had done for a weighty reason, for the Arabic seers had always offered their oracles in the *sadj*, and the people would not have accepted Mohammed's laws had they not been written in the language of the gods.

Like all great men, Mohammed had moments of doubt. Did he truly fulfill a divine mission or had he been seduced by an evil spirit? One night he heard a voice which commanded "Announce!" Its owner claimed to be the angel Gabriel Utterly disturbed, the champion of Islam confided this to his wife. She found a way by which he could ascertain the truth Undressing, she told him to do likewise The angel disappeared modestly, proving that he belonged to the good spirits.[1]

In the centuries which followed the establishment of Mohammedanism, its leaders, the sultans, exhibited great interest in the knowledge of the conquered nations, and many foreign books were translated into the Arabic.

Alkindi (died 850 or 873) translated Aristotle. He wrote on philosophy, politics, mathematics, medicine, music, astronomy, and astrology.

Albumasar (died 886) treated various problems, and his occult writings have influenced strongly the later mediaeval magi.

Costa ben Luca (ninth century) translated Hero of Alexandria's book *Mechanics*. He wrote also on physical ligatures, i e , talismans and enchantments. His quotations from Greek and Roman writers reveal that he was well-versed in classical literature His book *The Difference of Soul and Spirit* was translated into Latin by John of Spain (twelfth century). Mediaeval scholars, Arnold of Villanova for instance, are indebted to him.

The encyclopedist, philosopher and astronomer, Thebit ben Corat, exerted a still greater influence. He is frequently quoted by celebrities of the thirteenth century, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Cecco d'Ascoli, and Peter of Abano, and we are indebted to him for a treatise on images. Thebit was one of the most prolific translators: by him, the writings of Archimedes, Apollonius, Aristotle, Euclid, Hippocrates, and Galen were made available in the Arabic tongue

Rasis (died 924) is credited with having contributed a fabulous number of works, two hundred and thirty-two! He wrote on medicine, physiognomy, drugs, cosmetics, hygiene, surgery, diseases and so forth.

Among numerous others, may be mentioned also Khalid ibn Jazid (635–704), Geber (ninth century), and the legendary Morienus who wrote treatises upon the hermetic art. Thus through Arabic writings, alchemy was introduced to western Europe.

Avicenna (980–1037), "prince of the physicians," explored matter and soul with the intent to prove that there are no miracles, but that all happenings derive from natural causes He wrote on the wonderful virtues of nature, on diseases, poisons, the influence of the mind upon the body, on the power of the stars and talismans.

The Arabic encyclopedia, *Kitab-Fihrist* (988), devotes several pages to the enumeration of Hermetics, mentioning among others the Egyptian Chemes, the Median Osthanes—presumably the teacher of Democritus—Hermes Trismegistus, Mary the Jewess, Cleopatra, and Stephanus of Alexandria.[1]

Vanquished in France in 732, the Arabs retreated to Spain and settled there until the fifteenth century. Through them, Spain became the European center of learning Under Alfonso the Sage, in the thirteenth century, foreign learning attained so high a level that it could be compared with that of the Renaissance.



Fig 79 Arabian Astrologers

Magicians of the Middle Ages

DANTE saw Albertus Magnus in Paradise:

> "He who at my right is closest to me
> My brother and master, Albert of Cologne. . ."

But in his verses Dante imprisoned other contemporaries in hell— Michael Scot (ca. 1170–1232) and Guido Bonatti (died about 1300)

Scot expiates his crimes of magic, a magic doubly criminal since according to Dante it was a fraud Little is known of the Scotchman's life He died early in the thirteenth century, and now he wanders in the eighth circle of the Inferno, looking back over his shoulder, because here those who attempted to predict the future are not allowed to look forward

According to his own statement, Scot was astrologer to Emperor Frederick II, the extraordinary ruler who invited to his court seers and magi of the East and of the West At Frederick's request, Scot wrote his extensive works dealing with the occult—the book *Introductions, Particularis,* and also one on physiognomy, the study of man's face, where the planets have marked the events of each individual's life Scot also translated Avicenna

Among his contemporaries, Scot was considered a great scholar Bacon believed—erroneously—that Scot had introduced Aristotle to the West Leonardo da Pisa dedicated his book on numbers to him Thomas of Cantimpré, Bartholomew of England and Vincent of Beauvais called him an authority, but Albertus, the saintly man, was more cautious, for he censured his writings severely, saying that Scot had failed to understand Aristotle Yet Albertus used Scot's translation of Aristotle's *History of Animals!*

What crimes did Scot commit that caused his eternal banishment to hell? Although he labeled as experiments many magical operations and condemned magic and especially necromancy, the conjuring up of the dead, he spoke too much and in too detailed a way of all these evil practices The full description and publication of forbidden arts had been condemned throughout the centuries in the fear that people might become inspired by them Whatever magic arts existed in his time were descrlbd by Scot Conjurors mix blood with their ritual water, because demons are attracted by blood They sacrifice human flesh and bite off their own flesh or that of corpses They cut off doves' heads, and seek their bleeding hearts with which to draw magic circles, they make use of Biblical verses in their diabolical incantations

In his book on astronomy, Scot speaks of spirits of the air and of the planets, of images, prayers and conjurations for each hour of the day and night, things which we will encounter frequently in the black books of the Renaissance and of more recent times His treatise on physiognomy contains the traditional ele-

ments of the subjects· the stars influence the generation of man and imprint their seals upon the face of man Therefore we can read in man's features what the heavenly bodies have decided concerning him. Scot interprets dreams and believes like everyone in his time that stones, herbs, etc., are endowed with marvelous virtues.

He accepts alchemy and divination In short, he is a great expert of magic, concerned solely, besides his medical practice, with the occult arts. No theological treatise counterbalances this prodigious amount of suspect learning.



Fig 80 Ideal Portrait of Guido Bonatti

Guido Bonatti, a citizen of Forli, whom Dante also consigned to hell, was a promoter of astrology, of the talismanic arts, and of all wisdom that derives from the stars

A violent and self-assured man whose magic power fascinated his fellow citizens, Bonatti worked zealously—and magically—for the welfare of his town. He derived his learning from the Arabs mainly, from the Greek astronomer Ptolemy and from Hermes Trismegistus His publications enjoyed great popularity.

He recommended his book on astrology to the spiritual and secular leaders of the states, but not all of his ecclesiastical readers may have been pleased by his assertions. the foundation of churches should be laid at the propitious hour, calculated by a capable astrologer, to him who does not believe in astrology, God must undoubtedly appear unjust—but the pious astrologers recognized that they are not afflicted by Him, since misfortune comes from the stars, Christ was an astrologer, when his disciples dissuaded Him from returning to Iudea, He answered "Are there not twelve hours in the day," alluding to the fact that He would not be molested, having chosen the right hour.

Bonatti tampered dangerously with theological problems. The miracle of St. Francis' divine love he declared to be caused by a favorable conjunction of the planets. Similar assertions proved unlucky for the astrologer Cecco d'Ascoli,

who died at the stake in Florence, because he had deduced from Christ's horoscope that He was predestined to die at a given time upon the cross. But Forli and Bologna were not Florence, and Bonatti felt sufficiently secure there in railing at the ignorance and the "idiocy" of the Franciscans. "Fortune rules everything," he said, "although some fools in tunics (the friars) may say the contrary." John of Vicenza, of the Order of the Preaching Friars, he called a silly fool and a hypocrite—and what is worse, Bonatti defended his town against the Pope's armies.

Forli had been girdled with new walls. The event was celebrated by both the Ghibellines and the Guelfs, who embraced each other and forgot their old feud Bonatti, however, did not trust this bond, and in order to protect the city from any evil that might result from human inconstancy, he fabricated a brass horseman according to the rules of astrology.

Before the construction of the new walls was begun, Bonatti had convinced the inhabitants of Forli that the right hour for this enterprise should be awaited. The fortunate constellation, he said, should be used simultaneously for an eternal reconciliation of Ghibellines and Guelfs One member of each party was elected for the ceremony. both held a foundation stone in their hands while the masons stood by with mortar. When the decisive moment had arrived, Bonatti gave the signal and the Ghibelline did as he had been told But the Guelf, fearing that he was being tricked into some operation contrary to the interests of his party, withheld his stone Now the angered Bonatti cursed him together with all the Guelfs, saying that this sign would not appear again in the sky for five hundred years The chronicler adds with satisfaction that God had afterwards destroyed the Guelfs of Forli, just as Guido had predicted [9]

At times, the astrologer was also inclined to help an individual, like the apothecary with whom he used to play chess, and who had lost his wealth. Guido made a wax image for his friend, a ship endowed with astro-magic power "Store it away," he said, "and do not speak to anyone about it." The apothecary regained his wealth but was troubled by the thought that his lucky ship might be the evil work of magic He confessed the story and the priest told him to destroy this product of superstition He did so—and, as Bonatti had warned him, the apothecary once more lost his possessions. This time when he asked Bonatti to make him another ship, he was called a fool. The propitious hour, the astrologer said, would not return for fifty years.[10]

It is quite astonishing how this headstrong magician managed to escape the vengeful arm of the Inquisition. He was killed by bandits, as he was returning from Paris to Bologna.

A man who could not avoid open conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities was Peter of Abano, famous translator of Abraham Aben Ezra's book *Nativities*. Peter was the author of a work on physiognomy, on geomancy, on prophecy, on the elements of magic He lived from 1250 to 1318.

This peaceful and most learned scholar traveled widely. From Padua, where he was lecturing, he went to Paris, from there to Sardinia, thence to Constantinople where he discovered a volume of the *Problems* of Aristotle, which he

translated for the first time into Latin. In Paris, where he spent several years at the university, he wrote his book on physiognomy He was acquainted with Marco Polo from whom he obtained information on Asia He also carried on a lucrative medical practice

Such wisdom and wealth soon brought him into trouble He became the victim of a colleague's envy A medical doctor denounced him to the inquisitors of Padua His books were burned, and he barely escaped the stake. After his death, his corpse was burned upon the pyre



Fig 81 Ideal Portrait of Peter of Abano

The public, however, did not share the inquisitors' views Frederick, Duke of Urbino, had his statue erected at the portal of the palace; Trithemius and Agrippa, in the sixteenth century, published Abano's treatises together with their own works A hundred years later, Gabriel Naudé, referred to previously as the defender of Zoroaster, attempted to clear the name of the unfortunate scholar of the stain of heresy.

Peter believed in geomancy, the divinatory art that uncovers the future through the design formed by earth tossed haphazardly upon a table. Geomancy can also be manipulated by a simpler method, i e , marking, at random, a paper with four rows of dots By cancelling two of them simultaneously, the remaining dots will be two or one From the four lines will result four of the following figures· 2222, 2221, 2211, etc ; sixteen variations are possible, eight of them being favorable omens, eight unfavorable These numbers are connected with the planets, the signs of the zodiac, etc They predict the future.

The process as proposed by Abano is still used today. Like many divinatory operations, it has degenerated into a game, and who would believe that such a harmless operation could have endangered the life of its promoter in early days!

From the innumerable books ascribed to Raymond Lully, only a few can be identified as the writing of the Catalan martyr His chief work—the *Universal Art*—contains magic merely incidentally. It is a treatise on a perfected scholastic method of argumentation supposed to serve as a tool for the conversion of the Mohammedans The Doctor Illuminatus, as he was called, believed like all his learned colleagues in the power of the stars which he sought to employ for medical treatment. He also held numbers in high esteem, believing like the Pythagoreans that they were endowed with marvelous virtues

His life story is that of a fervent Christian whose temperament forbade him to live peacefully within the walls of a monastery A forerunner of the Jesuit missionaries, he wished to travel to the heathens, to learn their customs and wisdom, which he hoped to make use of in propaganda for their conversion

All this does not seem typical of a magician His most ardent desire was to die like a martyr He was stoned at Tunis by a mob of angry Arabs whom he had tried to convert A few Christian merchants carried the badly wounded Lully to their ship and set sail for Majorca, the martyr's homeland Just as the island was sighted, he died, on June 29, 1315

Oddly enough, Lully, well-versed in the art of arguing in abstractions, soon won reputation as an experimenter Just as later the archway in Paris dedicated to Nicholas Flamel was the object of alchemists' pilgrimages, so now Lully's tomb became an object of worship Later alchemists were wont to count the columns of the tomb and to examine its sculpture, hoping to find a key through which they could attain the famous perfection

Many wrote treatises on the philosophers' stone, signing their work with Lully's name They bequeathed to their master more than he had given them, for in but few authentic writings Lully seems to be rather opposed to alchemy. He had, however, attained perfection, if not in the crucible, at any rate in his person, as he changed from a frivolous and vain courtier to a learned and active defender of his convictions

Starting as a country practitioner and lacking literary culture, Arnold of Villanova achieved astounding fame. Two kings and three Popes were his patients, admirers, and defenders. Arnold was indeed in need of protection from the clerical judges who though ready to accept his medical innovations did not appreciate his originality concerning matters of faith It is not clear why he wanted at any cost to be more than a great scholar, why he insisted on being also a counselor in spiritual matters His preaching impressed James II of Portugal and Frederick II, James' brother, king of Sicily Even the popes were forced to listen to his sermons if they wanted to be treated by Arnold

Arnold of Villanova had the great ambition to cure not only individuals, but even states and the Church. He criticized severely the condition of the clergy, and predicted the advent of the antichrist and a precipitous end for this corrupt world, for he had read in the stars that a catastrophe would occur in the middle of the fourteenth century

Arnold was also a great traveler We find him in Montpellier, Valencia, Barcelona, Naples, in Gascony, in Piedmont, at Bologna, Rome, and even on the

African continent. He was often called abroad on official business, carrying messages for kings and Popes He interpreted dreams for James and Frederick, impressing them both with his weird predictions James had been disturbed by a nightly apparition of his deceased mother. He wrote about it to Frederick who advised his brother to read Villanova's books.

The magus exhorted the king to reform his country's administration. He advised that he endow hospitals and give alms to the poor, that he should proscribe the divinatory arts and witchcraft; justice should be exercised equally to both the rich and the poor; taxes were to be diminished. He summed up his arguments by pointing out that the king in order to preserve his interests had to yield to the will of the people.

In his works, Arnold emphasizes the reality of alchemy. He performed a successful transmutation at the Holy See, in the presence of Pope Boniface VIII. John André, a witness, reports:

"In our days, we had at the See master Arnold of Villanova, an authority in theological and medical matters. He is a great alchemist, and he submitted the gold sticks he produced to everyone for examination "

Villanova spoke Greek, Latin, and Arabic, and was well-versed in mathematics, philosophy, and medicine. He translated Costa ben Luca's treatise upon physical ligatures, a compendium of talismans, charms, herbs and stones In his *Disapprobation of Sorcerers,* he enumerates the remedies of counter magic. They are none other than those used by wizards and at times reveal Gnostic influences Here is an example:

". . . Take the purest gold and melt it as the sun enters Aries. Later, form a round seal from it and say while so doing: 'Arise Jesus, light of the world, thou art in truth the lamb that takes away the sins of the world ' . . Then repeat the psalm, *'Domine dominus noster.'* Put the seal away, and when the moon is in Cancer or Leo, and the sun in Aries, engrave on one side the figure of a ram, and on the circumference, *'arahel juda v et vii,'* and elsewhere on the circumference engrave the sacred words, 'The Word was made flesh' . . , and in the center, 'Alpha and Omega and St. Peter.' "

We will meet similar prescriptions in later black books of magic. Their mingling of magic and religious elements had a soothing effect upon those who feared heavenly punishment for their unorthodox operations Such countermagical ceremonies and prescriptions were shocking to the authorities, though Arnold accompanies all this with passionate arguments against witchcraft. Magic must be excluded from medicine, he says; enchanters, conjurors, invokers of spirits and diviners, should be rejected as being ignominious, producing marvels of a character unlike those of natural science

However, even during his lifetime—in 1305—the inquisitors forbade the reading of his books And his conflict with the Catalan Dominicans was not his only one with the authorities. James sent him as an ambassador to Philip the Fair of France. When Arnold arrived in Paris, he was arrested. An influential friend bailed him out the following day. During the trial before the Parisian Theological Faculty and the bishop he learned about the grudge the theologians bore against him because of his prophecies concerning the world's end

and also for his treatise upon the Holy Name, in which he seems to revive the old word-magic of Gnosticism. The verdict was that his books should be burned publicly. Arnold protested to Philip and Boniface; and, in 1301, he was allowed to leave France. Shrewdly he tried to enlist the pope in his behalf by submitting to him a modified copy of his work. But the Parisians had anticipated such a move and sent to his Holiness the original version which they had condemned.

Arnold was imprisoned by the Pope; and after a while, he had to abjure his errors before a secret consistory. The Pope gave him this friendly advice: "Occupy thyself with medicine, leave theology alone, and we will honor thee." [11] Boniface needed him as a doctor and, perhaps for this reason, showed an extraordinary leniency toward Arnold, who had declared that he received his ideas for reforming the Church from Christ. Such communication with the divine, without the mediation of the Church, would have been sufficient to bring the illuminated culprit to the stake. He might have ended tragically had the Pope not at that moment become ill. Arnold treated him successfully, was rewarded with the castle of Anagni, and his next book was well received.

Clement V was favorably disposed toward Arnold In Avignon, the seer was permitted to expound his theories before a "sacred college." His uncompromising ideas eventually brought about his estrangement with James II of Portugal, whom he had cured in 1303 In his arguments, the reformer probably denounced temporal governments, in order not to antagonize the sacred college. He returned to Frederick, and in 1310 he died en route to Clement, to whom he was carrying a message from Frederick.

Such was the life of this extraordinary man who is rightly ranked with magicians, for he operated magically, as is confirmed by his own writings: "The human operator can accomplish great things by availing himself of the stars' influence."

Like the ancient Egyptians, he chose the hours for gathering healing plants. He used cabalistic signs and every kind of talisman in treating his patients. He did not reject ceremonial magic, including conjurations and unorthodox prayers. Based upon the Greek Galen (A.D. 131–210), he brewed unsavory concoctions for his patients. His treatment of kidney stones is most dreadful, and Pope Boniface's trust in him must have been great to accept it.

In one important point, however, Arnold was unlike his scholastic colleagues· despite his criticism of popular remedies, he admitted that many of them were effective. Unlike Bacon and Albertus, he defended popular experiments, and to some extent his tolerance can be compared to that of Paracelsus (1493–1541) who learned from barbers, surgeons, witches and vagabonds whom he met during his wanderings through Europe.

Papal pressure increases with the spreading of heretical beliefs which the Church was unable to eradicate From the East, possibly imported by the crusaders, the dualistic heresy filtered through for many years, and from the eleventh century on, sectarians paraded their theories openly in Italy, especially in Lombardy, where two movements met: on the one hand that which

had originated in the seaports of southern France, on the other that from the East reaching the valley of the Po

In 1080, Pope Gregory VII still recommends moderation to worldly leaders in prosecuting heretics and witches. But numerous sects grew with a disquieting speed the Paulicians, Bogomiles, Katharı, Paterini, Vaudois, Albigenses, Tartarins, Beghards, the Pauvres of Lyons

In 1209, Pope Innocent III ordered a crusade against the Albigenses and the Katharı Crusaders ransacked Béziers and Carcassonne, and though protected by the Count of Toulouse, the Albigenses were defeated at Muret and at Toulouse. This terrible war, in which the king of France participated, came to an end in 1229

The Albigenses suffered a military defeat which was accompanied by cruel persecutions, but the faith continued to exist, and only a few years after the peace treaty, a papal bull refers to the Luciferians who worship the principle of evil The struggle between the orthodox Church and the Dualists continued throughout the thirteenth century In 1233, Gregory IX established the Inquisition, a special tribunal of Dominicans who were to combat all heresies The Inquisition condemned culprits to the stake on grounds of heresy However, the Dualists were not mere Heretics but actually members of a faith independent of Christianity In 1274, the earliest "example" of an inquisitorial condemnation of a witch occurred She was burned in Toulouse, the center of the Katharan movement

Then, in the years 1318, 1320, 1331, and 1337, additional papal edicts against witchcraft and heresy were published [12] The example set by the Church was later followed by the secular authorities, but mass persecution was most drastic during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the burning of witches became an economic factor

Albertus Magnus

1193–1280

THE thirteenth century was far from being a dark epoch of the Middle Ages Christendom was united, and under the Church, European civilization constituted a homogeneous society with common institutions and aspirations "The supreme Pontiff," Dante says, "shall lead the human race to life eternal by means of revelation, and the emperor guide it to temporal felicity by means of philosophical instruction." [13]

Philosophy, though controlled by the dogma of the Church, flourished again. The early days, when philosophers were persecuted as magicians, were forgotten, and now their venerable images were carved on the portals of the cathedral. The century was enlightened by scholars of a truly universal wis-



Fig. 82. Ideal Portrait of Albertus Magnus

dom, men such as William of Auvergne, Vincent of Beauvais, Thomas of Cantimpré, Bartholomew of England, Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, Lully, Aquinas, and the great Albertus (to mention only a few of the outstanding scholars). Their treatises differ from those of the past because of their greater thoroughness and the larger number of subjects treated.

These men were not magicians, in the true sense of the word, but they showed an interest in magic; they found it worthy of investigation, and a few among them made magical experiments. The sacred fear of the occult arts, which had previously been considered the works of the devil—the shrewd one who is ever ready to set his traps for the learned as well as for others—existed no longer The cunning of the devil could be defeated by wise or holy men, his power exploited for the good of mankind Here he was called upon to build a castle, there, a bridge, and the chroniclers rejoice when telling how his services were finally ill rewarded and how mortals escaped his voracious fangs by some humorous trickery

The epoch was, however, profoundly religious All the above-mentioned scholars were members of the clergy. William was bishop of Paris, Thomas lecturer of the Dominicans who played an important role in this renaissance of wisdom Bartholomew lectured for the Franciscans; Grosseteste was bishop of Lincoln; the Dominican Vincent of Beauvais was chaplain to King Louis IX; St Thomas Aquinas, the great teacher, and author of *Summa Theologica*, became a Dominican when he was sixteen years old Bacon joined the Franciscan order; Albertus, who was canonized in 1932, was Bishop of Ratisbon, and Raymond Lully died as a martyr for his faith

These men were the faithful servants of the Church under whose mantle the wisdom of the past and the present met How wide this mantle was, we can judge from the painting by Andrea da Firenze (fourteenth century) representing St. Thomas Aquinas enthroned in glory, holding upon his knees the open Bible (fig 83) At his side are the champions of the faith Job, David, St. Paul, the four Evangelists, Moses, Isaiah and King Solomon Below, fourteen female figures seated in choir stalls personify the theological sciences and the liberal arts At their feet sit celebrated students of art and science Emperor Justinian, Pope Clement IV, Peter Lombard, Dionysius the Areopagite, Boethius, John the Damascene, and St Augustine representing the theological branches of wisdom Then follow Pythagoras, Euclid and Zoroaster (astronomy), the Biblical Tubal Cain (music), Aristotle, Cicero, and the Latin grammarian Priscianus.

The men of the faith dwell peaceably together with the wise men of antiquity, admitting even the presumable inventor of magic, Zoroaster A more profound understanding of the past, a wider conception of wisdom produced this world, which although not as universal as that of the early syncretistic religions, is well ordered, with all its elements fully understood

In Albertus' writings, we often read such phrases as 'I have tested this,' or 'I have not experienced this,' or 'I have proved that this is not true.' Such an attitude is new; it shows that the authorities of the past were not accepted blindly. Albertus' relative objectivity is seen when he criticizes his beloved Aristotle, the pillar of scholasticism Often, he enumerates facts, adding that



Fig 83 Philosophical Allegory of the Catholic Religion
(Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

they have not been proved adequately by certain experience, 'though found in the writings of the ancients ' These ancients were philosophers, and the goal of philosophy is to attain truth by observation and reason, and not by experimentation.[14]

Although Albertus recommends the making of conjectures and their testing, he is still a man of philosophy His reasoning is good but his experiments are superficial and his conclusions often wrong. Albertus' importance in scientific matters lies more in his attitude than in his achievements His description of the marvelous virtues that dwell in crystals may serve as an example: If you hold a crystal toward the sun, you can light a fire This is true, but Albertus forgets to tell us the most important thing, that the crystal must be of a convex shape. He seems to believe that it is the crystalline substance that produces the marvel, not the refraction of light. But at times, he plucks also the right fruit from the tree of knowledge "The ostrich eats and digests iron," the ancients say, to which Albertus answers that it eats stones but not iron, for he himself has observed the fact Such apparently humble observation is more important than one might think Despite Albertus' thoughtful remark, the ostrich three hundred years after his time was still depicted with a horseshoe in its beak.

Albertus united within himself a curiosity which was laudable, together with the disciplined methods of a scholar These methods, as we have said, test particular statements by the general law concerning living beings, as they are established by Aristotle

A work published in honor of Albertus' canonization does not mention the master's views on magic. Some writers have contested that he even manifested interest in alchemy and astrology. But in Albertus' treatises are found many allusions to the magical arts An early scholar, the Abbot Trithemius (1462–1516), says that this "most saintly of saints" was not ignorant of natural magic, holding that this is not evil "For not the knowledge but the practice of what is bad is evil " The question arises how can one master an art without practicing it? Trithemius' sentence seems to be the key to an understanding of the mediaeval scholar's interest in magic· they wanted to study the evil in order to be able to recognize and to judge it But so strong a curiosity indicates also that the forbidden wisdom attracted them powerfully Whether Albertus' magical experiments were good or evil depended upon his intention, and we may take it for granted that his operations were motivated by only one purpose: knowledge.

He never doubts that magical wonders can be effected. True, there exists for him jugglery and illusion· people believe they are seeing things which do not exist True, also, that evil demons lead man astray with magic, which is considerably worse than the deception of the eyes Yet, there also exists in Albertus' opinion *natural magic*, which is of the good, and a great deal of this good can be found in the writings of the Arabs as well as in hermetic literature. Furthermore, there are wonderful virtues in herbs and stones of which the patristic writings do not speak. Betony confers the power of divination, verbena can be used as a love charm; the herb meropis opens the seas;

and many other marvels can be induced with plants, as is written in Costa ben Luca and Hermes. There are also magical stones which cure diseases. In his work on minerals—according to the edition of 1518—Albertus speaks extensively of the hidden virtues of stones. Some of the marvels he has experienced himself. *"Lapides preciosi praeter alius habent mirabiles virtutes"* (precious stones have more miraculous virtues than others). He enumerates carefully these marvels:

The *amethyst* is found in India; it acts against inebriation, as Aaron says; it creates alertness and appeases quarrels. It fosters the acquisition of knowledge and produces intelligence.

The *beryl* helps to overcome laziness. It soothes the pain in the liver and stops hiccoughs and belching, and is also good for teary eyes When a rounded beryl is exposed to the sun, it will kindle a fire. It is said also to preserve peace at home.

The *emerald* is of a chaste nature. In order to ascertain whether a girl is chaste, a mixture which contains emerald fragments is prescribed as a potion; if she is chaste, she will retain the potion, if not, she will vomit. It is also said that the emerald increases its owner's wealth and that, in court, it encourages persuasive words When worn in a necklace, it cures epilepsy.

The *agate* is found in Libya and Britain. It strengthens the teeth, drives away phantoms and melancholy and is good for stomach-aches. Snakes flee from it.

The magi make much use of the stone *diacodos*, which is said to excite phantasms but loses its virtues when brought into contact with a corpse. In the works of such magi as Hermes, Ptolemy and Thebit ben Corat, there is more about this stone which is not mentioned here.

All this Albertus professes with assurance, apparently unaware that it is pure magic, not unlike that used by Chaldeans, Egyptians and Persians. In the same treatise he asserts also that engraved gems are endowed with mysterious powers, especially those which Nature has formed without man's aid Such ideas lead to the making of talismans, magical images, medals, and signs which protect their owners

The existence of all these marvelous virtues is derived from the stars, for, according to Aristotle, the heavenly bodies govern things upon earth. Believing this, Albertus has already betrayed himself as an astrologer. Repeatedly he asserts that the stars influence objects and men, recognizing their power over the earth, which is manifested by the marvels he likes to enumerate. There is still more to be said about their influence· they are the base of all the divinatory arts, for he who can read the stars' imprints upon bodies will be able to calculate his fate Whether it is the grooves in man's hand or forehead, whether the veins of a leaf, the form of stag-horns, the shape of a stone, they are "physiognomies" molded by the planets.

The question as to whether Albertus was an alchemist must likewise be answered affirmatively. Like his pupil St. Thomas Aquinas, he believed that alchemy was a difficult but true art In his chemical experiments, he is less hampered by philosophy, perhaps because the early Greeks were not acquainted with alchemy He describes his operations with accuracy and expresses

original ideas. Among the numerous volumes he bequeathed to posterity, his alchemical treatise is perhaps the best. In the book on minerals, he finds much to criticize in alchemical theories, and sometimes he seems opposed to the art of Hermes, but in his treatise *On Alchemy*, which probably is authentic, he champions alchemical operations and the idea that gold can be produced artificially This is what he recommends in his book to his fellow-alchemists:

"The alchemist," he says, "must be silent and discreet. To no one should he reveal the results of his operations.

"He shall live in loneliness, remote from men His house should have two or three rooms consecrated entirely to the work.

"He shall choose the right hour for his operations"—meaning that the favorable heavenly constellations should be awaited.

"He must be patient and possess perseverance

"He will operate according to the rules the trituration, the sublimation, the fixation, the calcination, the solution, the distillation and the coagulation.

"He will use only glass vessels or glazed pottery.

"He must be rich enough to afford the expense which such works demand.

"And finally, he will avoid all contact with princes and rulers" [15]

Albertus knew that the hermetic wisdom was a source of constant danger to the alchemist neighbors might report a successful operation to the prince and once the latter knew about the philosopher's gold, the worker of such miracles was doomed, such as later happened to Alexander Sethon and others. The alchemist must be rich enough to support his work during his lifetime, for there was no certainty that he might ever succeed, and poverty might then compel him to abandon his studies or resort to deceit and falsification

Albertus does not tell us, whether he made gold or not According to popular traditions, he had owned the famous stone and could accomplish other marvels which the people readily called magical. When William II, count of Holland, dined with him in Cologne, Albertus had the table set in the garden of the convent in spite of the fact that it was mid-winter. When the guests arrived, they found a snow-decked table But as soon as they sat down, the snow disappeared and the garden was filled with fragrant flowers Birds flew about as if it were summer, and the trees were in bloom The legend has credited a less saintly man of later times with similar magic—Dr Faustus, but the latter produced his winter flowers not with natural magic, as Albertus did, but with black magic and with the help of the devil.

Authors, contemporaries of Albertus, affirm also that he built an automaton the android. Shaped like a man, with each part of its body welded under the influence of a particular star, the android was Albertus' servant. He was endowed with the gift of speech so much so that his gibberish disturbed the studious Aquinas, who destroyed the machine Did such an automaton really exist, and if so what was its nature? Eliphas Lévi, the nineteenth-century occultist, has remarked subtly that it was only a symbol of Albertus' scholasticism: human in form, but an artificial being controlled by a mechanism and not by life.

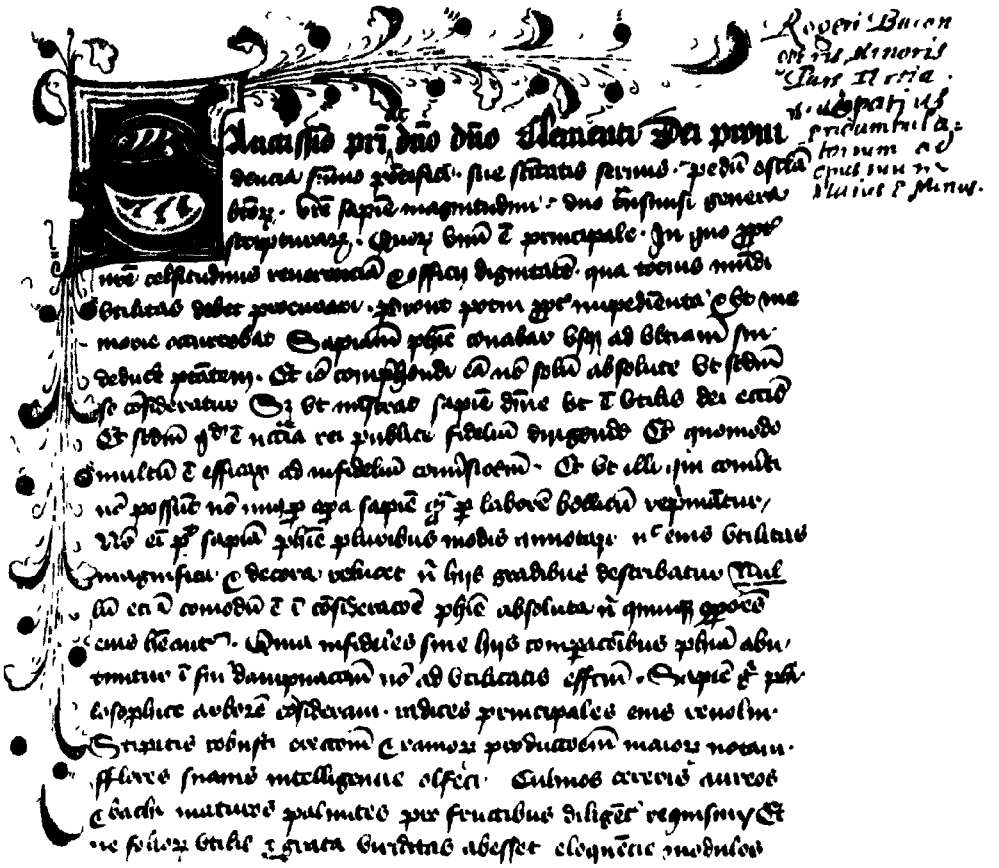


Fig 84 Page of Manuscript by Roger Bacon

Roger Bacon

1214–1294

> Without experience, nothing can be sufficiently known
>
> ROGER BACON

LIKE Albertus and other contemporaries, Roger Bacon, the Franciscan Friar, based his knowledge upon Aristotelian philosophy. Not only did he gather wisdom by philosophical methods, i.e., through observation and reasoning, but also, like Albertus, he emphasized the importance of *experimentation*. It must

be borne in mind, however, that what we call experience today has little relation to that of the Middle Ages Bacon says, for instance. "We have established by *experience* that the stars cause generation and decay upon earth, as *anyone can see.*" This is not so evident to us, and we may also ask ourselves in what way Bacon could experience the mysterious forces of the planets which influence, supposedly, man's life and death The friar concludes impetuously: "Having established by *experience* what philosophers have made evident before, it follows *immediately* that all knowledge here below depends on the power of mathematics"

Another instance of Bacon's scientific attitude is his *hazel experiment.* In his work on *Experimental Science,* he recommends that a sapling of one year's growth should be severed from the root of a hazel tree It should be slit longitudinally and the divided parts, separated by the space of a palm or four fingers, should be held by two persons at the two ends After a short time, the parts will approach each other gradually, and at length they will be united and the bough will be intact again! The "scientific" explanation of this phenomenon, "wonderful beyond all that I have seen and heard," is given by Pliny, whose views Bacon accepts certain things are mutually attracted although they are locally separated This explanation is based upon belief in sympathetic magic, namely, that like attracts like Had anyone told Bacon that this was magic, he would have been astonished, for he ends his report thus. "This is a wonderful thing Magicians perform the experiment, repeating all sorts of incantations I have disregarded these incantations and have discovered the wonderful action of nature, which is similar to that of the magnet of iron." Thus, in Bacon's opinion, magicians are charlatans, reciting magical formulas though they know that the phenomenon is a natural one—"as anyone can see!"

We frequently find similar "observations" in Bacon's manuscripts He condemns magic, being a magician himself

Bacon's writings have a vivacity which we do not often find in the heyday of scholasticism, and his impatience, mingled with an enigmatic clairvoyance, compels him at times to make truly astounding predictions

"First, I will tell you," he says in his letters, "about the admirable works of art and nature. Afterwards, I shall describe their causes and their form *There is no magic connected with this,* for magic is inferior to such things and unworthy of them Namely machines of navigation can be made, huge ships for rivers and the seas. They move without oars; a single man can maneuver them better than if they were manned fully

"Then there are also cars, moving without horses and at a colossal speed; and we believe that such were the battle wagons of old furnished with sickles

"Flying machines can be made also A man sitting in the center controls something which makes the machine's artificial wings flap like those of birds

"A device, small in size, for lowering heavy weights can be made, most useful in emergencies For by a machine, three fingers high and wide, and less in bulk, a man could free himself and his friends from all dangers of prison, and could rise and descend.

"Another instrument can be made with which a single man can pull a thousand men violently and against their will; and it attracts other things similarly.

"A machine can be constructed for submarine journeys, for seas and rivers. It dives to the bottom without danger to man Alexander the Great has made use of such a device, as we know from Ethicus the Astronomer. Such things have been made long ago and they are still made in our days, except perhaps the flying machine . . .

"And infinite other such things can be produced, bridges that span rivers without pillars, or other supports and devices, ingenious and unheard of."

No wonder that Bacon has been credited with numerous inventions and discoveries gunpowder, eye glasses, the telescope, etc

That magic existed, he no more doubted than his contemporaries He admitted also that there were difficulties in discerning between science and the black arts. He accepted natural magic, which is not evil, and if we divest his arguments of their subtleties and crudities, we find that the scholar's conceptions were not unlike those of the philosophers: magic aiming at the good is permissible and is called natural magic; the black arts promoting what is evil are to be rejected

Alchemy, he says, is related to physics. It treats of colors and other substances, of burning bitumen, of salt and sulphur, of gold and other metals, and though nothing concerning the alchemical art is written by Aristotle, the latter is necessary for the study of natural philosophy and speculative medicine Through alchemy, gold can be made, and thus the hermetic art can provide for the expenses of the state It prolongs man's life But there are few who work alchemically, and still fewer are those who can produce works that will prolong life The art is suited only to the wisest, who know the meaning of the eagle, the deer, the serpent, the phoenix, creatures who renew their lives through the virtues of herbs and stones

Potable gold must be dissolved, according to Bacon, in a mysterious liquid, a water which only specially gifted scientists know how to prepare. Such gold is better than that found in nature or alchemical gold It will produce a most wonderful action when dissolved correctly Many things should be added to this solution "That which swims in the seas . and also the thing which grows in the air, a flower of sea dew" To this there should be added the dianthos, a mixture of leaves and fragments of wood, with a small portion of flowers; and furthermore, that which is cast out by the sea ambergris And finally, a most important ingredient is the snake, mentioned by Aristotle The Tyrians used to eat it, properly prepared with spices A bone that grows in a stag's heart will give the final touch, because the stag is an animal of longevity Here again Bacon uses medicine according to the magic principle that like produces like the animal of longevity will give man long life! The friar considers his concoction an excellent remedy for curing one of old age and for all the corruptions of the body He believed that one could prolong one's life with it for several hundred years. He knew a man "who had a letter from the Pope, testifying to the truth of his patriarchal age."

Bacon believes such incredible things to be proven adequately by this vague report. What he says about speculative alchemy is hardly encouraging to one who wants to explore its confused realms. He declares that very few know about this art and therefore they do not deign to communicate their knowledge or even to remain among those whom they call fools, for such people quibble about the law and cultivate sophisms The alchemists reproach others for separating philosophy from theology He adds that alchemical operations are difficult and expensive so that many acquainted with the art cannot operate it for lack of money Also, the books are written in terms so obscure that one can hardly understand them

Bacon's exclusiveness is truly exasperating He praises science, describing its insurmountable difficulties, and despises magic and every unscientific method. It would seem that he would have all knowledge controlled by a few supermen, perhaps only by one, himself

Having declared that all human knowledge depends upon mathematics, he asserts that its noblest branch is astrology, which should be used in medicine, in alchemy, and in predicting the future It is specially useful in political matters the recent wars could have been averted had the wise observed the stars more carefully

At man's birth the heavenly bodies determine his physical complexion and his change; with every hour the bodies are subject to the influence of another constellation and the works of man shift in character, according to the everlasting celestial movements But they only dispose man towards his fate, and do not decide it, for his will is free

He says "In accordance with the fact that certain signs are fiery, hot, and dry, some things partake also of this fiery nature They are therefore called Martial after the planet, and are of the nature of Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius The same principle is true concerning other characteristics of things, signs and planets However, to name and mark things individually with regard to planets and signs, is a matter quite difficult to accomplish, and impossible except through the *Books of the Hebrews*"

Like Rabbi Moses Maimonides (1136–1204), Bacon believes that Holy Writ is the basic source of astrology, a fact which makes the study of the stars and their influence a legitimate occupation Bacon's opinion in this matter was not shared by all, for in spite of the growing influence of astrology on mediaeval learning, the official attitude of the Church was rather adverse to it. At any rate, Bacon implies a belief that philosophy, which he identifies with astrology and mathematics, should ultimately lead to and confirm theology. He goes even further, asserting that without astrology or philosophy Church doctrine was not complete. In his *Opus Majus*, he says. "If the truth of philosophy is impaired, damage is inflicted upon theology whose function it is to use the power of philosophy, not absolutely but in controlling the Church, directing the commonwealth of believers and aiding the conversion of predestined unbelievers . ." And of the theologians who opposed such ideas, he says "But they err not only in this, that they ignorantly condemn knowledge of the future secured through mathematics, but because for the sake of a

part, which they abhor as the result of their ignorance, they condemn the whole." This again is one of Bacon's boasts, and quite a dangerous one.

Bacon believed in the power of the spoken word, which he explains thus: "We must consider that it has great force, all miracles at the beginning of the world were made by the word And the peculiar work of the rational soul is the word, in which the soul rejoices Words have a great virtue when they are pronounced with concentration and deep desire, with the right intention and confidence For when these four things are joined together, the substance of the rational soul is moved more quickly to act according to its virtue and essence, upon itself and upon exterior things"

As he declared that experiments are the only sure test of certainty in science, we may conjecture that he explored suggestion or hypnosis. But this is only surmise, for we have seen before how seriously we may judge his experiments.

Such things, he continues, can also be worked differently, without the help of a favorable constellation and without the enumerated virtues, but with magical formulas and foolish thought It is then the unscientific work of old wives which cannot produce results unless aided by the devil.

Repeatedly he uncovers the pride of the learned and his contempt for things which are not well expressed and coordinated He accepts contradictions only in matters of theology He mentions, for instance, a mystery which is contrary to reason Christ is the angular stone, yet he is also the center in which the twelve apostles converge In religious matters, he was absolutely orthodox, and his life and study were devoted to the Church Whatever he discovered served the purpose of increasing the prestige of the Church and facilitating the realization of its plans and activities In his book, *On Experimental Science*, he says about scientific inventions that the Church should consider their employment against unbelievers and rebels, in order to spare Christian blood, "and specially it should do so because of future perils in the times of antichrist, which with the grace of God it would be easy to meet, if prelates and princes promoted study and investigated the secrets of nature."

Seen as a whole, Bacon's teachings are not of the Faustian character which enthusiastic investigators claimed them to be He was not the enlightened forerunner of a scientific time, whose voice was unheard in the scholastic desert In his determination to unify all learning, wisdom and faith, he produced a unique work, the *Opus Majus*, which includes material already known to many in his time but which he has arranged and coordinated according to his own original views [16]

The most interesting aspect of his books is that they have a more individualistic flavor than other contemporary works From Bacon's passionate outbursts we glimpse his great sensibility against which, without doubt, he fought when he praised the dull methods of learning His outstanding statements, which we believe were unique in his time, were marked by the prophetic air, so contrary to science (despite his assertion that all his discoveries are purely scientific). In these predictions, he articulates the deep desires of mankind which led finally to the great inventions.

THE DEVIL

The Principle of Evil

"You have the devil underrated
I cannot yet persuaded be,
A fellow who is all behated
Must something be!"

GOETHE

How can one measure the good without knowing the bad? How can one long for light without knowing the anguish of darkness? In what an unpleasant land of plenty would one live were there no bad Evil causes suffering and from pain springs the desire for something better; deficiencies cause us to want improvement, evolution, and to set up ideals

It can safely be said, as has been often said, that God would cease to exist if there were no devil, or as a French theologian expresses it. "God and the devil are the whole religion."

Religions of antiquity conceive of evil as partaking of the divine Among the early Mesopotamians, both principles are intermingled. In the Egyptian theogony the destructive Seth is the brother of beneficent Osiris, in Persia the dark Ahriman was believed to have sprung from a doubting thought of Ormazd, the Light-god.

Monotheism arose from age-old dualism, but the monotheistic world-equilibrium is more precarious than that of old The Apocrypha of the Old Testament are hesitant about the power of Evil In the story of Tobit (150 B C), Asmodeus is God's opponent, in the book of Esdras, however, two abysmal beings—Enoch and Leviathan—do not produce evil. In the book of Enoch (110 B C.) demons have a character similar to that of the Gentiles A product of Alexandrian Judaism, the Book of Wisdom reiterates that through Satan, death came into the world and "those who hold to the devil's side will find death." [1]

The problem of evil has been taboo for centuries The official dogma was to be the only valid explanation of the perennial strife of Good and Evil, and every unconventional interpretation was punishable. Even this rigor seemed to the European dualists proof of the partiality and vengeance of the Supreme. When the Albigenses witnessed the cruelties of their persecutors, when the Templars were confronted with their iniquitous judges, they may have really believed that the world was topsy-turvy, that the Evil One was good and the Good evil But such a reversal would not lead to any solution of the problem.



Fig 85 The Torments of Hell

Good and Evil would still exist in their antagonism, ever destroying and renewing themselves like the alchemical serpent: He devours his tail, but the tail is as immortal as the head.

Satan is an individualist. He upsets the commandments of heaven which enforce a definite moral conduct. He inspires us with a longing for the unknown; he gives us dreams and hopes. He endows us with bitterness and discontent, but in the end he leads us to the Better, and thus he mainly serves the Good. He is that "force which strives for the evil yet causes the good."

The messenger of knowledge cannot be ignorant. He is an idealist, a Don Quixote Blinded by fanatic conviction, he does not perceive that the giants are windmills and the warriors swine, and his vast pride precludes recognition of his errors. Milton has depicted him as a noble rebel who would rather suffer eternally than accept humiliation. Yes, Satan's essence is his one-sidedness, for he is the antithesis.

Can we mold him and his opponent into a synthesis? The Zoroastrians did not achieve this, but they made us believe it possible. Ormazd and Ahriman will be reconciled at the end of time. Side by side, they shall enter the new kingdom as brothers. The Gnostics made it clear that the universe exists only through this everlasting antagonism and, the universe being one, good and evil are united in the divine In his *History of the Devil* Paul Carus comes to a similar conclusion. "God being All in All, regarded as the ultimate authority for conduct, is neither evil itself nor goodness, but nevertheless he is the good, and he is in the evil. God is in growth and decay, he reveals himself in life and in death. He lives also in the visitations that follow evil actions. . "

In most beautiful verses Victor Hugo reveals his dualistic bias When Satan was cast out, he says, a feather detached itself from his wings and lay upon the rim of the Abyss, gleaming and growing mysteriously From this miraculous feather God created a beautiful angel, a woman whom he called *Liberty* Both God and Satan may claim its fatherhood, but actually she is the reconciler of Good and Evil.

Such voices, in the defense of Satan, have been raised in liberal times Abbé Constant, alias Eliphas Lévi, attempted to be just to Satan His verdict, however, is confused. He distinguishes between Satan and Lucifer whom he judges from his hobbyhorse. the astral light In his play, the *Nuptials of Satan*, published in 1890, Jules Bois depicts Satan as a "beautiful athletic youth, whose crackling hair reflects the heavenly stars like a glistening sea " Psyche is betrothed to him and "amidst delicious thunderbolts" the Ineffable Voice announces reconciliation:

"My pure essence, according to the law, is to be *Love* I love you both. Be united in suffering. Ultimate reward is promised to you

"You are the dear chosen of my wrath. The most glorified you are because the most foolish "

These verses reflect their time and environment, the satiated French bourgeoisie, and Satan is not far from the stage of the Folies Bergères

In fact it happened! Monsieur Benglia appeared as Satan in *Sabbat et la Herse Infernal* at the Folies Bergères The Reverend Father Montague Summers

who did not expect to be reminded of the devil in so gay a place as the Folies Bergères says in his *History of Witchcraft and Demonology* that this play does not "call for more than passing mention."

In Summers' chapter on the 'Witch in Dramatic Literature,' we learn of the prodigious amount of "devil-plays" performed upon the stage since the Renaissance.

The devil can be an actor He can be whatever he chooses. He is everywhere, the contemporary demonologist, Denis de Rougemont, says. According to him, the Evil One wants to pretend that he does not exist. "I am nobody," he says. But he is legion By definition, he is an imperialist; he is a gangster on the lookout for a kidnapping, he makes us doubt the reality of the divine law, he is a liar, a tempter, a sophist and, though being nobody, he can impersonate as many beings as there are in this world.

This is true indeed, for the devil is ever-changing in man's mind, unlike God whose established image, that of a good and wise old man, has remained constant throughout the centuries The devil likes to be modern

He is everywhere But he is not unique in this characteristic, for we can say the same thing about God Both are manifest only to him who believes in them. Satan comes to the believer who is haunted by remorse. The diabolic apparition will either compel him to return to what he recognizes to be the Good or to yield to Satan, in whose existence he also believes However, such capitulation is rarely irretrievable, for the Good welcomes the repentant.

Hercules struggled with the mythical hero, Antaeus, who regained his force when he was thrown to earth—the earth who was his mother. According to many old beliefs a divinity was hurled to earth in order to be resuscitated thereafter Concerning the serpent the alchemists maintain that the great miracle is that the poisonous tail contains the healing medicine Believing in the good, we can say that an evil deed recognized and corrected is more important to man than the anxiously heeded good, saved from that painful fall to earth. Over-anxiety about one's actions will impede one's life, which in its very nature is subject to error

This leads to two stories which demonstrate that the devil's claws are not as crooked as many connoisseurs say they are and that he often relinquishes his prey with the sportsmanship of a good loser.

Theophilus, the Faust of the Middle Ages, being in need of "silver and gold," conjured up Satan The Evil One appeared readily, for who could resist so attractive a conjuration:

Bagabi laca bachabe
Lamac cahi achababe
Karrelyos
Lamac lamec Bachalyas
Cabahagy sabalyos
Baryolas
Lagoz atha cabyolas
Samahac et famyolas
Harrahya.

Theophilus, somewhat hesitatingly, gives a sealed parchment to Satan in which he promises to renounce God, His Mother, and everything which is spoken or chanted in church The document is signed and sealed: no power upon earth or in heaven can save Theophilus. He is rich and miserable. One day, he prostrates himself before the image of Mary She descends from her pedestal, setting the Child upon the floor Mary begs the child for Theophilus' forgiveness, but Christ remains mute. Finally He says: "Why, mother, dost thou beg so much, for this stinking carrion?" Mary insists, and the infant yields She calls Satan and orders that he restore the parchment. He hesitates; but threatened, he descends into hell and returns with the contract. "I do this for the last time," he says The Virgin places the letter upon the sleeping Theophilus, takes her child and returns to the pedestal

A knight having wasted his whole estate sees himself abandoned by his friends. He rides into the dark forest where the devil is already waiting. This is his proposition he will give him chests filled with glittering gold in exchange for his fair wife. They agree Laden with treasures, the knight returns to the castle "O, lady dear," he says, "wilt thou ride with me through the green and pleasant forest?" In the forest stands a small chapel, where men worship Mary, our worthy mother and lady The wife wants to stop here to pray She falls asleep in the chapel, and Mary, clad like the noblewoman, steps forth Knight and Virgin mount their horses and at the crossroad meet the devil, who is confused "Thou hast cheated me, promising to bring thy lady fair, and bringing the lady of heaven" But Mary is firm "The woman shall stay with me, she shall live in my Son's kingdom, now and forever, Amen"

It was in the thirteenth century that the devil throve In that epoch, he was hardly the Nobody who wants people to believe that he does not exist On the contrary, he gave daily proof of his bodily reality It is sufficient to read Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogue on Miracles*, St Gregory's famous *Dialogues*, the writings of Thomas Cantimpré and others, to understand that Satan appeared as a tangible individual possessing the senses of man Moreover, his scent was not agreeable When disappearing, he left behind an odor of sulphur tainted with hellish putrefaction In this way too he was the antithesis of Good, just as holy men and women were wont to emit that famous odor of sanctity which has become proverbial Satan's physiognomy was then most unpleasant One could scarcely recognize in him the ancient promoter of science and the future handsome rebel. The tympanum of the church at Souillac represents Theophilus dealing with Satan such as the eleventh century conceived him Emaciated and clad only in the coat-of-mail apron of the mediaeval warrior, his features are those of a released mercenary who has exchanged his armor for food His face, however, is depicted in several variations and is reminiscent of a nightmare There is something unreal about his figure; his legs and arms are grooved, showing no joints or muscles. The devil of Souillac is unnatural, as if to show that evil is against nature.

The Last Judgment at the cathedral of Bourges (thirteenth century) acquaints



Fig 86 St Anthony Tormented by Demons, by Sassetta
(Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery)

us with a different type of demon. The hordes of hell have become fearsome and real. They are made up of mis-shapen human beings, men and women wearing heads upon their bellies, wings on their thighs, and showing other abnormalities, whether appalling or ludicrous it is difficult to decide. Some of their faces are marked by the fantastic features of mediaeval monsters, others are human.

But let us allow their contemporaries to describe them. Caesarius of Heisterbach informs us that the devil can appear in the shape of horses, cats, dogs, oxen, toads, monkeys, bears; at times, however, he favors the features of a "decently" clad man, a handsome soldier, a husky peasant, or a goodlooking girl. Then again he assumes the form of a dragon, a Negro, or a fish. He is the ape of God, copying all forms with which the creator has endowed man. Being an imitator, however, he is never capable of completely assimilating the original; there is always something missing In assuming human features, a devil explains concerning his colleagues, "*dorsa tamen non habemus*," "we have no bottoms " Such a banal thing as the buttocks devils are incapable of copying, and it is not clear whether this is more offensive to the demons or to man whose head or facial expression they copy perfectly Instead of the missing part, they wear a second head on their back side.

What is unpleasant about devils is their power of seducing men and women, in assuming the shape of the incubus or succubus. So concrete have they become that they visit the credulous in their beds—but let us omit some of Caesarius' details Briefly, the devil can procreate, and the ugly Huns are none other than the descendants of the incubi A similar origin is ascribed to the great seer of Britain, Merlin

Already in the twelfth century, we find the Evil One at the Court of Justice pleading his cause He accuses mankind and Christ Such "legal" treatment of theological problems became popular during the Middle Ages. It attained its most perfect form in the book of Jacobus de Theramo, written in 1382. The infernal powers chose the demon *Belial* as official representative of the hellish interests, for Belial according to tradition is most expert in legal questions. He appears before God and demands that the deeds of Christ be investigated God chooses *King Solomon* as judge, and the accused Christ demands that *Moses* be his defender. In the *Book Belial* (Augsburg, 1473), a woodcut shows the representative of hell discussing the matter with his uncanny companions. The jaws of hell are wide open and kept in this position by a heavy stick (fig 87).

The devils are sitting in the flaming gap, listening avidly to Belial's dissertations His gesture is reminiscent of some contemporary preaching scholars; he moves his hands according to Lully's mnemotechnical method. Another woodcut depicts the demon handing his credentials to the imperturbable Solomon in the presence of Moses The Hebrew king is well suited for the role of judge, for he did have—as the legend reports—many dealings with the demons. In Belial's complaint, we read that "*quidam dictus Jesus*, a certain individual called Jesus, has unlawfully tampered with the infernal rights, and usurped the government of things that are not his, namely hell, sea, the earth and all beings



Fig 87 The Devil Belial Before the Gate of Hell

that inhabit it" Belial does all he can to influence the kingly judge favorably towards him He dances before him agitatedly, while Solomon watches with obvious satisfaction. The verdict, however, favors Jesus, and Belial has recourse to an appeal of his case.

Another judge, *Joseph*, the Egyptian king's vicar, is to decide about the infernal appeal. Belial and Moses are pleading vehemently for their clients and finally arrive at a compromise. a committee shall be formed whose decision shall be final. Under the presidency of Joseph, Emperor Octavianus, Aristotle, Jeremiah and Isaiah ponder the problem. Christ is found not guilty. Satan, however, obtains the confirmation of his authority over all the iniquitous damned on the Judgment Day.



Fig 88 The Minister, the Fool, and the Devil

Infernal Helpers

BEING inhabitants of the inner earth, devils have more experience with earthly affairs than good angels, whose concern is more spiritual than material. The devil is a clever craftsman, a laborer who is usually cheated on pay day.

In the dealings of the devil with virtuous men, evil often results in good Bishop Olaf Magnussen, who signed his treatise on *The People of the North* with his Latinized name, Olaus Magnus, asserts that in Scandinavia devils work in the stables at night; they clean them and feed the animals, who find the stable-devils as sympathetic as the stable-men Devils work also in the mines, whose dark labyrinths are probably familiar, reminding them of their own hellish habitation As a rule, the noise they make is greater in volume than the work they produce, but they are harmless so long as the miners do not molest them. In the Swiss village of Davos, a silver miner mocked them, which resulted in evil consequences, for his head was turned around and it remained in this extremely uncomfortable position the rest of his life.

According to Olaus Magnus, devils are excellent navigators Possessing power over the elements, they can induce favorable winds. A crude woodcut in the Basel edition of his work depicts a devil at the rudder, holding in his left hand the propitious cloud from which emerges the desired wind. In the same picture, men travel in the air, their heavy wagon pulled by a demon Such demoniacal services cause us to be suspicious. we ask ourselves anxiously whether the devil's reward in these cases was perhaps not man's soul

First-hand witnesses, however, quiet this fear The famous monastery at Citeaux was infested by joyous and benevolent devils Fond of practical jokes, one of them appeared to a novice as the tail of a calf, which disappeared after having flicked across his face Later he reappeared in the form of a distended eye In 1221, an infernal visitor made himself useful to a serf The monastery was famous for its wine, and the vineyard had to be guarded day and night The serf on watch grew sleepy, so he called the devil to whom he promised a basket full of grapes if he would take his place, and the good devil, overcome by the boy's ingenuity, sat up all night for this modest reward

In 1130, a devil visited Hildesheim, in Saxony He would still be there had not the wickedness of men aroused his truly devilish wrath The devil gained admittance into the episcopal palace and soon gained the confidence of its inmates by making himself useful with his good advice and by his excellent cooking In those days no true bishop was indifferent to juicy steaks; and the devil lived peacefully between kitchen and council hall, until a rebellious kitchen drudge insulted and beat him Having complained about this unworthy treatment to no avail, the devil returned to the kitchen, killed half a dozen kitchen drudges, and disappeared

Being a patron of travelers, the devil appeared to a scholar who was journeying from Guadalupe to Granada The scholar was met by a black rider who bade him mount his black mare They traveled all night with the speed of the wind and at dawn reached Granada, having completed overnight a journey that usually took days. The fiendish horseman departed without harming his fellow traveler and without leaving behind the usual stench upon which most demonologists agree.

That the devil is not insensible to human candor, we learn from the *Acts of the Saints* by Bollandus. A young girl named Agnes was obliged one day to pass a house of ill repute. When she appeared before the open door, Satan and a group of his companions flew down disguised as ravens, blocking the entrance and driving Agnes away. The unchaste inhabitants of the house as well as Agnes were greatly astonished, and the latter understood immediately that this was a sign from—heaven Later she purchased the house and founded there a nunnery, of which she was the first inhabitant

Though intending evil, the devil produces good when treated justly by saintly or good men He has built many bridges when human wit was exhausted, and regularly, he received as a reward a cat or a dog or a goat, instead of the expected human being—the first farer across the devil's bridge A popular print of the last century depicts the imposing figure of St. Cado handing a cat to the disconcerted devil Below is the bridge, a monument of masonry betraying the true touch of a cunning engineer (fig 89) Similar bridges exist all over Europe. In many instances men have nearly forgotten to whom they are indebted for this or that particular bridge They are indeed very forgetful of the helpfulness of others and attribute the talents of outsiders to themselves Often they behave as wickedly to the devil as malicious artists do to their colleagues Not only do they steal their ideas and call them their own, but they treat the bereft ones with contempt

Thus, men would have forgotten completely that the bridge of St Cloud in Paris was built by the devil, had not Grillot de Givry reminded them of the undeniable fact "Who would believe," he says, "that this bridge which leads to the famous park and to the gay Parisian Fair and upon which electric trolley-cars cross, the honest Pont de St Cloud, is the work of Satan?" But the people of St Cloud gave the devil no better a reward than that which he has received from others. he had to be content with a meager black cat which would have died soon at any rate

A similar reward was given to the devil who built that famous bridge in the Schollenen gorge in Switzerland, which boldly spans the Reuss River For modern engineering, the gorge would hold no serious problem, but in those days, the site offered great obstacles One side of the gap is formed by nearly vertical rock formations, and the road had to be carved out from the granite and made secure by masonry The legend states that a shepherd promised to the devil the first living creature that would cross the bridge if he could span the vital spot which linked the south and north of Europe When the work was completed, the shepherd drove a chamois over the bridge which the devil had to accept as his reward.



Fig 89 St Cado and the Devil

As might be expected, the Evil One is also expert at building walls and fortifications. On one occasion he nearly captured a French nobleman, the High Constable of Lesdiguières, whose castle he had girdled. It was agreed that the castellan's soul would be the devil's reward if the former were unable to escape before dawn. The devil thought that he could finish the wall in time to trap the nobleman in his castle, but the latter fled on his horse at the very moment when the wall ends were being joined together So narrow was his escape that the horse's tail got caught in the joint, but the rider freed himself in cutting it off with his sword and then galloped a hundred miles before he dared to stop. And thus the devil got nothing, not even a cat! Bits of horse-tail are still to be seen in the castle's wall.

England and Scotland in the days of old were separated by a huge wall fragments of which are said still to exist. So solid was its cement and so perfect its joints that since time immemorial, it was called the Devil's Wall.

Many more examples could be cited to prove that the devil is not as formidable and black as he has often been depicted and that he has been approached from time to time by good and energetic people who returned from their ordeal with not even a hair of their heads harmed.

Unholy Images

"The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil, and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape "

SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*

IT has been noted above that devils can borrow any shape they choose. Such an opinion has been expressed by many demonologists; others, tarring all things with the same brush, have tended to standardize the devil, saying that he and all his fellow devils are horned and hoofed and possess tails There are authorities, however, who assign to certain infernal inhabitants a corporeal personality which is not a disguise of the Nobody but their characteristic form.

John Wier held this belief. He was a great traveler, and when entering a new country, his first question was concerning its devils In this way he collected an impressive number of infernal beings among whom we will mention a few, depicted by Louis Breton, the master-engraver, "according to formal documents":

Bael is the greatest king below; his lands are in the East. He has three heads, that of a toad, that of a man and that of a cat. His voice is hoarse. He is a law expert and his hobby is fencing. He brings wisdom to man, but can also render him invisible. Sixty-six legions of devils obey his command (fig. 90).

Forras, or Forcas, is a renowned president in hell. He looks like a strong

man. His wisdom is great; and more than others, he knows the marvelous virtues of herbs and stones. He too can render man invisible. But he can even do better than that, for he teaches rhetoric, logic and mathematics. With his help, the magician will detect treasures and find lost objects. Forras renders man vivacious and ingenious (fig. 91).

Buer, also a president as well as an expert in ethics and logic, is concerned mainly with healing juices found in plants. He bestows familiar spirits and this power makes him very desirable to man. He commands fifty devil-legions Wier says that Buer is as visible as a five-branch star, a form which Louis Breton interprets in his original way (fig. 92).

Marchocias is a great marquis in hell. He appears with a griffin's wings and a snake's tail "His mouth vomits out something," Wier says, "I do not know what" When Marchocias adopts a human shape, he resembles a courageous soldier. When you ask him questions, he will answer truthfully. Before Satan's fall Marchocias belonged to the Dominations. Now he commands thirty legions. He hopes to be reinstalled upon the seventh heavenly throne after twelve hundred years, but this, Wier says, is a vain hope (fig. 93)

Astaroth, a mighty lord, looks like an ugly angel. He sits upon a dragon of hell and holds a viper in his fangs. Astaroth knows the past, the present, and the future—everything that is concealed. He speaks freely of the creation of all spirits, of their fall, in what way they have sinned and how they were precipitated into hell He claims not to have fallen voluntarily, which betrays that he has not yet overcome his grief. He is the patron of the liberal arts (fig. 94).

Though not included in Wier's pseudo-monarchy, we mention finally the heavy Behemoth whom Louis Breton has depicted so drastically. Wier mentions him in another section of his voluminous work, recalling that the Creator spoke to Satan· "Here is Behemoth whom I have made together with you He devours grass like the oxen, and his strength resides in his loins. His virtue is upon the navel of his belly." (Fig. 95.)

Besides this uncanny fellow who seems to symbolize brutal force and whom Wier has wisely omitted in his infernal government, the rulers below are endowed with great wisdom and manifold knowledge, according to the tradition of antiquity with which Wier must have been acquainted His demons are repulsive scholars, sophisticated city devils.

The peasantry, however, clung to their old images. In the country the Evil One does not teach philosophy. There he offers more practical advice and instead of the treasures of wisdom, he gives money. To the peasant he appeared and still appears in the beastly shape of old, with horns, hoofs and tail. Thus he is depicted in the black books of the last century wearing occasionally a fringed jacket, as if to pay tribute to progressing civilization. His three horns he has donned like a fool's cap, and his goat's feet are those of his ancestor, Pan He carries money, and for this reason many people have found him sympathetic. But devil's money does not bring lasting wealth, for after a while it changes into horse dung or ashes Wizards are therefore always eager to get rid of such ephemeral currency. It was literally 'hot money' which burst into flames when thrown upon the earth (fig. 96). Sometimes he borrows the shape



Fig 90 The Demon Bael



Fig 91 The Demon Forcas



Fig 92 The Demon Buer



Fig 93 The Demon Marchocias



Fig 94 The Demon Astaroth



Fig 95. Behemoth

of an ox, as we learn from the conjuring book, *The Black Hen*, wearing an old-fashioned embroidered frock-coat and frills. But all this does not render him any more amiable. In velvet and lace he is still the old fiend, a redoubtable monster (fig. 127)

The discrepancy between the country and city devil was observed by Francis Barrett, professor of chemistry, natural and occult philosophy at London, who published in 1801 his famous book, *The Magus* In this, he undertakes to restore to the rulers of hell their true shape, in an epoch highly conscious



Fig 96 The Devil Bringing Riches

of the changes which history has wrought Thus Barrett despoiled the devils of all the embellishments with which they had been adorned by various eras For this reformatory enterprise Barrett went to the trouble of drawing the correct outlines of certain demons who had attracted his interest He depicts Asmodeus as a short-nosed and sharp-toothed fellow and Theutus as a singularly good-natured Anglo-Saxon who hides his small chin behind a voluminous beard The lascivious Incubus, however, has a keen and rather disconcerting grin which might have deeply impressed Barrett's female students to whom he used to lecture on the Cabala and ceremonial magic



Fig 97 The Demons Theutus, Asmodeus, and Incubus



Fig 98 Collin de Plancy Conversing with the Devil

In Barrett's book there are more of these hellish portraits—inspired perhaps by some fountainheads or architectural ornaments in the good city of London (fig. 97).

Collin de Plancy, to whom the devil appeared in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, confirms the views of the country people. The tempter has in truth the traditional attributes, horns and a tail, but no hoofs (fig. 98). He is eight feet tall but well proportioned. Unfortunately, he encountered St. Dunstan who pinched his nose with red-hot tongs and did not release his hold until the nose was longer than a foot! St Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, lived in the tenth century, but the memory of such an extraordinary deed has not yet

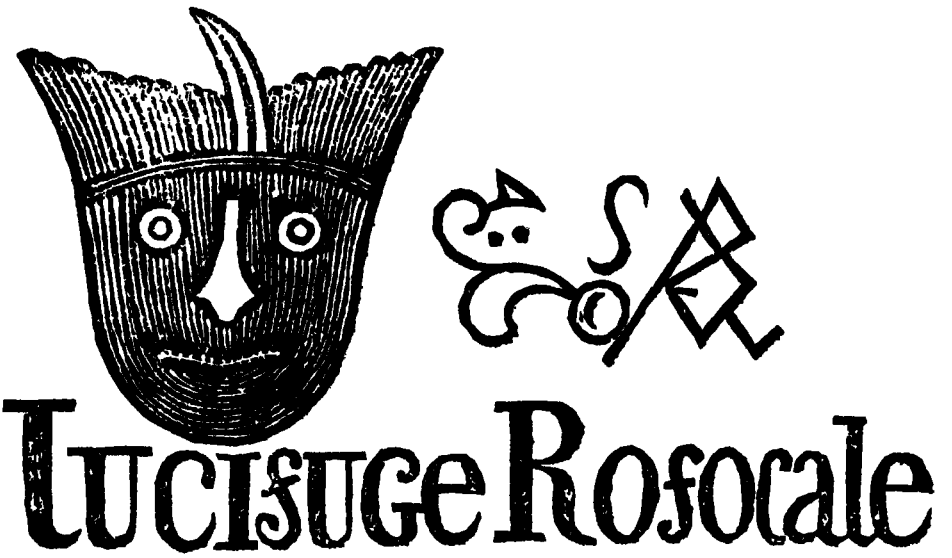


Fig 99 Lucifuge Rofocale

vanished among the English country people The devil, Collin de Plancy explains, claims to have received most of his deformities from man. They are not in his nature, God has decided that whatever men attribute to him, he must retain. "Thus at the beginning of my exile, I had no tail," says the devil, "until popular belief gave it to me " The horns were set upon his forehead by ladies and nurses "who wished to terrify their little charges." Thus, he was laden with gifts which he did not request His ears are swollen, Plancy says, because every box on the ear, which the exorcisers inflict upon the possessed, must be accepted by the devil who sums up his state by saying. "I am disfigured so as not to recognize myself. They give me every name and every shape."

The belief that he is a nobody is erroneous For from the irrefutable firsthand account concerning him, we learn that Satan has a well defined primary form, in which he appeared to Plancy, saying that at various times he transforms himself into various shapes, merely for a pastime He is corporeal, mate-

rial, and sensible, as Psellus claimed in the eleventh century. And since he is, he can walk, write, sleep, speak and strangle; on devil's contracts, he places his seal, real wax upon which his hand has impressed his sign or crest, as sub-



Fig 100 The Devil and the Coquette

stantial as that of the mayor He inscribes bizarre signatures on the title pages of the black books, to show his approval of their devilish contents (fig 99) Yes, the devil is a concrete being, a somebody Only those who dislike plastic expression, who proscribe the veneration of images, would have the Evil One vanish into limbo Such iconoclasts do not look at themselves in a mirror without fearing that Satan may appear in it. But those concerned with artistic creation are in some way connected with the Inferno.

To Victor Hugo, Satan appeared as an intellectual athlete, the projection of the poet's desire to have his power of thought combined with physical prowess. When an old man, Hugo was still haunted by the symbols of youth.

Adelbert von Chamisso conceived of the devil as an orderly, sad-looking citizen, wearing a top hat and a tidily buttoned jacket. Yet he endowed this banal type with the power to produce marvels. Chamisso wanted the mediocre bourgeois to be an artist, because he was torn between the desire to live independently and to have his income assured. From such a dilemma he could never free himself, and he ended his days as a professor at the University of Berlin.

Collin de Plancy's life story clarifies his views on the devil A child of the Revolution, he had early been taught to believe in reason alone He repressed his longing for religion and wrote many books on the devil, subconsciously seeking God at heaven's back door He cites authorities who have stressed the devil's inoffensiveness, Jean Bodin had maintained that demons could do good and angels evil St. Augustine that "the devil is a chained dog; he can bark, but he cannot bite." St Bernard that "if the devil had the power to do evil, he has at any rate not the will to do it."

Plancy feared the beyond He was converted to Catholicism soon after the publication of his book, *The Devil Painted by Himself*

WITCHCRAFT

Possessions

In his *Dialogues*, Gregory the Great mentions the modest story of a servant who swallowed a devil. She had eaten a few lettuce leaves from the convent garden when she suddenly felt that a devil inhabited her. An exorcist was called who admonished the demon to be gone, but the unwelcome guest excused himself, saying that he had been sitting quietly upon the lettuce when the girl came and swallowed him He was duly expelled This singular event was the forerunner of frightful epidemics of later centuries, when entire nunneries were possessed by demons In the quietude of the convents, where life was regulated by unalterable rules, devils were always on the alert, precipitating passions long repressed, awakening desires, and sowing impatience among the inmates

In the late twenties of the seventeenth century they found an easy prey in the monastery of Loudun. One of the nuns was a young woman whose curious ambitions had frequently alarmed the others But Joan of the Angels, as she was called, was the daughter of Baron Louis Bécier,—and the nunnery was poor. As she knew that the Superior of the convent was about to leave, and her ambition was to occupy her place, Joan refrained from being extravagant, giving unexpected proof of devotion and humility Her strategy was successful, but once she had assumed authority, she found it no longer necessary to veil her old habits

At that point, a priest made his appearance in Loudun, one Urbain Grandier He was handsome and brilliantly gifted and soon became the parish priest of the town, being noticed of course within a short time by the ladies He had ways of consoling widows and of comforting maidens that were not quite in accord with his profession.

The consequence of his vainglorious conduct was that several redoubtable enemies rose against him in Loudun. He had seduced the daughter of Trincant, the King's Solicitor. Then Grandier met Madeleine de Brou, daughter of the King's Councilor, for whom he composed a witty treatise against the celibacy of priests These scandals agitated Loudun At the nunnery, Joan of the Angels was strongly moved by all this gossip, she dreamed of Grandier, whom she had never met He appeared to her as a radiant angel, but the words he addressed to her were not those of a divine being When Moussant, the old Prior of the convent, died, Joan of the Angels offered the position to Urbain Grandier, who, however, refused it. Joan's psychic disturbance grew worse, and her hys-

terical screams disrupted the nightly quiet of the convent Ashamed of her weakness, she resorted to discipline, asking the nuns to whip her The result was inauspicious. after a few days several nuns suffered hallucinations similar to those of Joan

Incapable of appeasing the storm she had caused, Joan sought help from Canon Mignon, a relative of Trincant They decided that Mignon should carefully investigate the details; Grandier's adversaries remembered the execution of a priest in Marseilles, Gaufridi, who was burned alive for having bewitched a girl, they hoped that a similar justice could be meted out to Grandier.

Exorcists were sent to the nunnery, and the odd ceremonials, the extravagant rituals for summoning devils, which were carried on daily, gave the final blow to Joan's disturbed mind Her convulsions terrorized the nuns, convinced now that devils infested her and everybody else One after another, they fell into fits, and amidst their gibberish and shrieks the word "Grandier" was frequently heard

Accused by his enemies of having bewitched the nuns, Grandier suddenly became aware of the abyss into which they wanted to drive him He appealed to the bailiff of Loudun, pleading to have the nuns isolated, but the bailiff's orders were not obeyed by the exorcists

Grandier made another appeal to the archbishop of Bordeaux. The prelate sent his doctor who declared, after having examined the afflicted, that they were not possessed The archbishop forbade further exorcisms and ordered the nuns to confinement in their cells Thus peace was re-established and the convulsions ceased After a while, however, the hysteria began again, and Doctor Sourdis had to report that "the nuns were persecuted constantly by impure temptations" Day and night they rushed about, calling loudly for Urbain Grandier

This was the situation when in Loudun appeared the Councilor of the State, Laubardemont, whose character is depicted by his proverbial saying "Give me two lines written by a man—and I will hang him." He was a relative of Joan of the Angels and the brother-in-law of two other nuns, the Ladies Dampierre Having witnessed the misery that had befallen the convent, he made a report to Cardinal Richelieu who ordered Grandier's arrest. In 1618, Grandier had written a libelous discourse against the cardinal Now an occasion offered itself for revenge

The exorcists returned to the convent, and to the churches also, for now the affair was handled publicly. Father Gault succeeded in dislodging a few demons, and he was cautious enough to have them sign a promise

> "I promise that when leaving this creature, I will make a slit below her heart as long as a pin, that this slit will pierce her shirt, bodice and cloth which will be bloody And tomorrow, on the twentieth of May at five in the afternoon of Saturday, I promise that the demons Gresil and Amand will make their opening in the same way, but a little smaller—and I approve the promises made by Leviatam, Behemot, Beherie with their companions to sign, when leaving, the register of the church St Croix! Given the nineteenth of May, 1629. "Signed: Asmodeus."

This strange document (fig 101) is preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. It is written by Joan of the Angels

The expulsion of the devils proceeded very slowly. Father Gault was succeeded by Father Lactance and Father Surin The demons signed several other documents. One is dated June 30, 1634 That same year, Grandier was burned alive. Before his execution he was tortured by Father Lactance, and the Capuchin Tranquille His legs were broken and he had to be carried on a stretcher to the stake At that moment he summoned Father Lactance to appear before the heavenly judge within thirty days Father Lactance died at the appointed time. Others who were involved in this affair—for instance, Tranquille—died similarly under strange circumstances The scandal of Loudun continued until Richelieu cut the exorcists' salaries. The most tenaciously possessed was Joan of the Angels, whom the demon of lust, Isacaaron, tortured with fits, showing, according to the alienists Lègue and Tourette, the typical symptoms of a particular type of hysteria In 1637, peace was restored From this time on, Joan was rewarded with heavenly consolations and died a holy death in 1665

The convincing proof of Grandier's guilt was not only the accusations made by the demons through the mouth of Joan and the other nuns, but a pact with Lucifer, "found" in Grandier's house (fig 102) It is signed by the priest, and countersigned by the dignitaries of hell Lucifer, Beelzebub, Satan, Elimi (?), Leviathan, and Astaroth Though the verdict stipulated that all such papers were to be burned together with Grandier, a last-moment decision has saved them. One agreement signed by "an enemy of the Virgin" is half burned as if it had been rescued from the pyre.

An affair at the Louviers convent, where the nuns were tormented by various appearances of Satan, ended no less tragically There were, however, human apparitions mingled with those of the supernatural, for one nun attacked courageously one of the "spirits" and was rather astonished when she held a man of flesh and bone in her arms. He escaped through the chimney, and as the nun held him tight, crying for help, he dragged her halfway up the chimney She fell down, covered with that pomade with which sorcerers used to anoint their bodies

Here, as in Loudun, the mask which Satan used to wear most successfully was that of a beautiful angel. In such a disguise he succeeded in inducing the nuns to commit grave theological errors His conversations were full of heresies, so cleverly professed and clothed in such charming words that none could resist them When objecting timidly that such things had not been taught them by their superiors, Satan answered that he was a messenger of heaven, an angel of divine truth, and that there were many errors in the established dogma.

Father Bosroger was charged with the recording of the facts His book, published in 1652, gives an astounding account of the devil's conversation with the exalted nuns His style is baroque; a mystical glow emanates from these diabolic conversations, and the transport of sensuality is restrained by rule and reason And yet, what an abundance of folly did Father Bosroger's cultivated pen convey to paper!

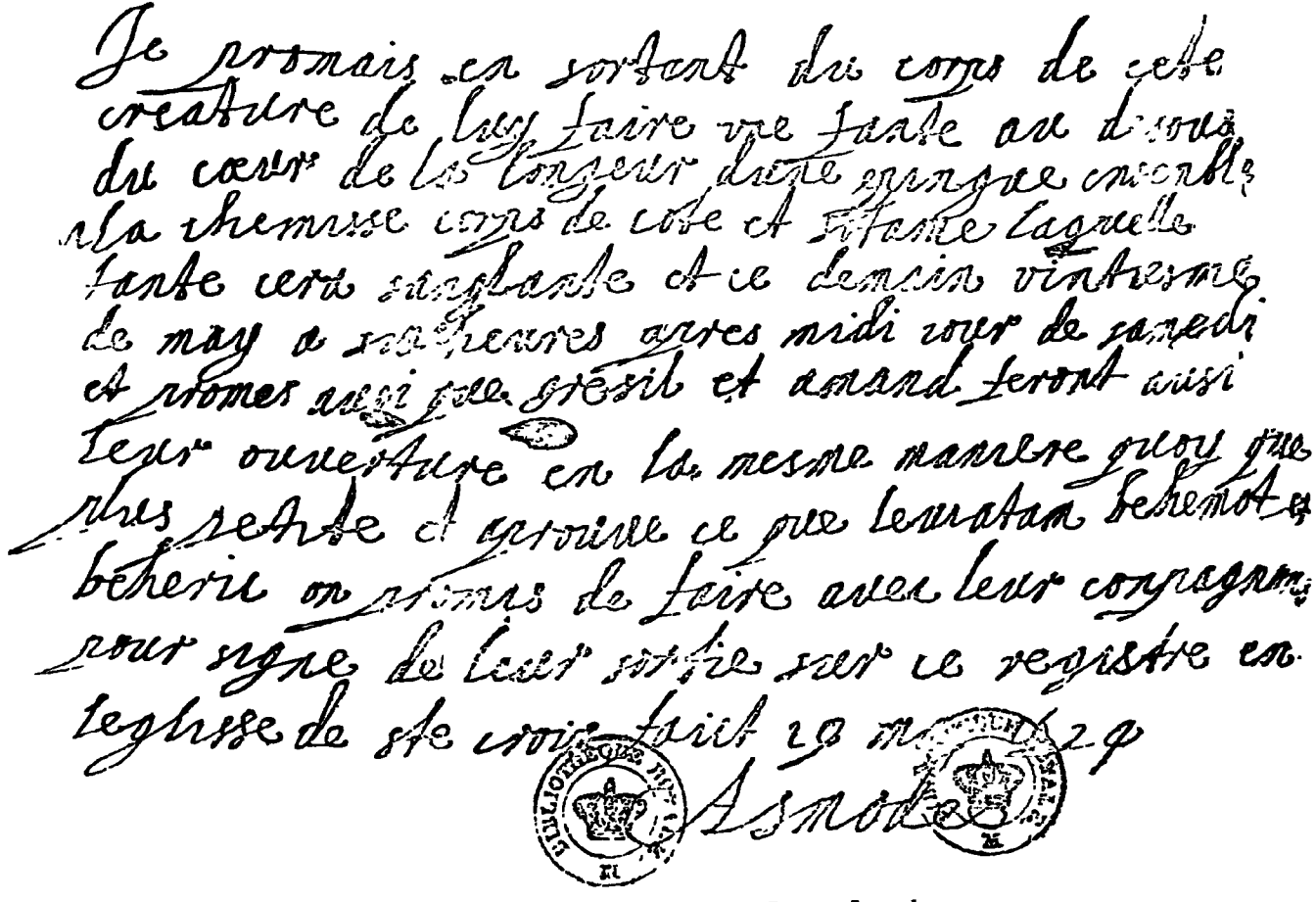


Fig 101 Document Signed by the Demon Asmodeus

Fig 102 Contract Drawn up Between the Devil and Urbain Grandier

The disturbances were fomented by Madeleine Bavent, a nun in attendance, Mathurin Picard, director of the nunnery, and Thomas Boullé, vicar at Louviers. Madeleine confessed to having been led by the two clerics to the witches' sabbath. She became married to Dagon, a devil, and committed horrible deeds with him upon the altar. There, she said, babies were strangled and eaten, and two men who attended the orgy from curiosity were crucified and disemboweled! One is tempted to believe her account, although her hysterical disposition invites one to be cautious.

During the trial the nuns of Louviers continued to show all the symptoms of possession—contortions, talking in strange languages, insults addressed to the exorcists, wounds made by the demons upon the women's bodies. Their shrieks mingled with the cries of the tortured Boullé and the vociferations of the exorcists. Almost everybody was molested by the inquisitors; cross-examinations, threats, apprehensions were the daily fare The whole city was dragged into the general hysteria, and finally the parliament of Rouen rendered the verdict. Mathurin Picard, dead a short time before, was exhumed and his body burned publicly. Madeleine was imprisoned in the ecclesiastical dungeon. Boullé was burned alive.

It would be tedious to enumerate many cases of similar possessions. One, however, we do add because its heroines were children.

Antoinette Bourignon, the only survivor of her family, wishing to make pious use of the estate she had inherited, founded a school for homeless children. In 1658, with the permission of the bishop of Lisle in Flanders, the school was transformed into a cloister. The girls were kept, as she says, under strict discipline No mention is made as to whether they were asked how they felt about being placed in a cloister After three years, thirty-two of the pensioners were discovered to be witches The treatment of the girls was, in accordance with the views of the time, rather rigorous Madame Bourignon, responsible for this convent of minors, reports that every Friday they had to humiliate themselves by admitting their faults in the public hall. These pious exercises were followed by corrections, by whipping, or by confinement in a place called the prison. One girl of fifteen unlocked the prison door and returned to the class, which was considered by Madame Bourignon an act of witchcraft The girl declared that she had been delivered from her imprisonment by a black man. Three pastors were called, and upon examining the culprit, discovered that she had a devil. Another girl who was to have been whipped declared that the "crime" she had committed was accomplished with the help of somebody and that she would confess everything if she were not beaten.

"Taking her aside in my chamber, she told me that it was the devil He was a handsome youth, a little taller than herself." Such children-devils must have pleased the other girls, for shortly afterwards, thirty-two novices told about their little man-devils who were kind to them, caressing them day and night, escorting them to witches' festivals, etc. It seems quite clear that the girls, having experienced but little affection in Madame Bourignon's establishment, compensated their sad existence with day dreams of an adventurous life. They preferred to be exorcised to being penned in and fustigated.

Madame Bourignon reports also that she lodged adults, such as a girl of twenty-two whose confessions were those of a disturbed adult Having been subjected for eight months to exorcism and penance, she admitted to having attended regularly the nocturnal assemblies of the Sabbath, "where every devil brought from day to day his love, whether male or female . . ."

The exorcisms continued with admonitions, prayers, interrogations, punishments, until the devil appeared to Madame Bourignon in the form of a little wrinkled woman with a wry mouth It is not reported whether this wealthy spinster endured now the same treatment she had found convenient for her pupils, and whether she was exorcised, admonished, and punished

The three pastors lost patience and the affair was brought to court The judges were extremely lenient with these "criminals" Only one, an adult, was imprisoned—she had begged to be put to death The little tract ends gracefully, that it "was never known what since has become of her."

The Sabbath

> No mention shall be made of witches who do not exist
>
> KING KOLOMAN OF HUNGARY

UPON lonely roads on clear nights one could see men and women walking in silence towards a well-known gathering place Young and old marched on, attracted irresistibly by some magic force, a bleating voice summoning them from the forest or from the plain Upon the crossing of some desolate tracks, the master awaited them The women carried sticks and brooms, upon which they had fixed candles When reaching the assembly, they straddled their besoms and entered the company's circle, hopping and shrieking Cries coming from the midst of the crouching witches answered them The sabbath was rarely disturbed by undesirable spectators When the shouts and the music reached the pious, they closed the shutters and crossed themselves The boldest witch persecutors turned a deaf ear, for they knew that Satan was present at the sabbath and weapons were of little avail against the master of darkness

The gathering took place preferably near a rotten tree, a road sign or a gibbet. Under the pretext of magic rites, a carnival of lust unfolded its grotesque pomp.

The sabbath became sinister when the old pagan rites were no longer considered the revival of a decayed past but evil activities born of heresy and witchcraft Together with the devil, the witch made her entry into the Middle Ages At the beginning of the eleventh century, the historian John of Malmsbury tells the story of a witch who was carried away on the devil's horse garnished with iron pikes He reports also that two old women on the highway

of Rome transformed men into horses and mules whom they sold for pack animals. John of Salisbury also reports a witches' sabbath where the devil appears in the form of a goat or a cat. In the thirteenth century, when devil lore had attained its definitive form, Vincent of Beauvais mentions "wandering dames," witches who fly to the gatherings; and William of Auvergne confirms these views, speaking of the canes and sticks upon which the sorceresses ride through mid-air.

Up to the eighteenth century the belief was common that witches could fly



Fig 103 Witch Astride a Diabolical Goat

with the speed of the wind Perhaps it was a demon who carried them in such a way, or a devil in the shape of a goat or a griffin, or the enchanted stick, broom, pitchfork, or magic wand Guazzo, the famous demonologist, depicts in his book *Compendium Maleficarum* (Milan, 1608) a witch riding a supernatural winged goat (fig 103); and Ulrich Molitor, the well known jurisconsult from Constance, illustrates his report on the Lamias (1498) with a crude yet striking woodcut two witches and a wizard ride together upon a fork, having the heads of an ass, a hawk and a calf (fig 104) It was generally accepted that witches could transform themselves into animals. Sometimes,

however, they wore animals' masks and hides, as had been customary in the Bacchanalia. In fact, many activities of the sabbath remind us of the ancient cults of Diana, of Janus, the two-headed god who rules over the crossroads, of Priapus and Bacchus The nightly gatherings in the open air, against which the defenders of the faith had fought so vigorously, were remnants of the *religio paganorum*, the religion of the country people. But the animals' hides and horns were now considered as the devil's attributes. Often the disguise was mistaken for the original and before long the fur-clad master or president of the sabbath was believed to be Satan in person.

What was the aim of these witches' gatherings and what ceremonies were performed on such occasions? The goodly people were certainly as frightened as they were curious to know about the sabbath, to which the sorceresses made mysterious allusions. From the witches' confessions, we can recreate many such details, it is, however, difficult to say whether any of them correspond to the actual happenings for, under torture, the witches confessed whatever the judges wanted them to Many among these wretched women, lacking imagination, were only too pleased to have their answers suggested to them since confession was the only way of ending torture. The reports varied, depending upon the particular country, but all demonologists and witches agreed that for the nightly flight through the air, a pomade was necessary—a narcotic oil with which the sorceresses themselves as well as their magic sticks had to be anointed Such witches' ointment was not an invention of the Middle Ages. In his *Metamorphoses*, the novelist Apuleius (second century of the Christian Era) already describes its use With specific salves witches could transform themselves into various animals. The hero of Apuleius' novel, probably the author himself, is peeping through a chink in the attic's door behind which the sorceress, Pamphila, "having unlocked a certain cabinet took out of it several little boxes Removing the lid from one and pouring some ointment therefrom, she rubbed herself for a considerable time with her hands, covering herself with the oil all over from the tips of her toes to the crown of her head. Then, after she had muttered a long while in a low voice, over a lamp, she shook her limbs with tremulous and jerky motions, then gently, until soft feathers emerged from her, strong wings grew, the nose was hardened and curved into a beak; the nails were compressed and crooked. Thus did Pamphila become an owl "

When the time for the sabbath came, the witches felt uneasy, they itched or felt pains They interpreted these physical symptoms as signs that the master was waiting and disliked having his summons ignored The witches on such an occasion disappeared to a solitary place, in the attic or cellar or any room having a fireplace, for it was through the chimney that they ascended into the air

They oiled themselves with the witches' pomade, murmuring all the while their incantations. Suddenly they flew up—or thought they did The poisonous pomade, it has been said, affected their spines A fit overcame them. In such a state of trance, they thought themselves to be at the sabbath. A modern demonologist has tried to explain their ability to fly by some occult phe-



Fig 104 Departure for the Sabbath

nomenon such as levitation. Based upon the legends of saints, he professes that in a certain state of exaltation human beings can rise into the air and transport themselves from one place to another. To such a fantastic assertion we oppose the older and better witnesses who have seen witches lying rigidly in their trances, insensible to pain When they awoke, they related their flying experience, and talked of the meals they had shared with their companions at the gatherings, and so forth.

The witches' meal was an important part of the rites of the sabbath, *and such*



Fig 105 The Sorcerers' Feast

rites did without doubt occur. Witches used to attend the sabbath in person, even though they had to go on foot. In Guazzo's book an illustration depicts the banquet on the plain Men and women sit beside devils at comfortable tables, and naked horned beings carry the plates and serve them Were these mythological children not present the gathering would resemble a normal dinner (fig 105) Wine, meat, butter, bread were consumed, and often the dinner was opulent, when some wealthy person had financed it, for both the rich and the poor used to mingle at the sabbath Sometimes a member of the nobility functioned as the Grand Master at the gatherings He masqueraded as the devil, hiding his identity carefully. In Scotland, John Fian, who headed

the Berwickshire witches, refused under torture to betray his Grand Master, the Earl of Bothwell. It is likely that the latter influenced his followers in the anti-clerical and revolutionary bias.

In Molitor's book, an illustration depicts the gathering of the three wives of wealthy burghers (fig. 106). Their dinner is very sober, as it takes place *in absentia diaboli*. No fantastic creatures attend them and without reading the text no one would suspect this to be a witches' gathering But Molitor reminds us of fantastic happenings when evil spirits infested an inn. They had the features of the innkeeper's neighbors yet they were evil demons who disappeared when St Germanus exorcised them

Considering the epoch in which Molitor published his work (1489), he appears to be rather skeptical. Most of the misdeeds attributed to the witches he believes to have been caused by demons His book, though endowed with the beliefs of his time restricts considerably the power of the devil and still more that of the witches In his epilogue he sums up· "Save the judgment of the Doctors whose opinions are better than mine and to whom I am ready to submit, the devil cannot, by himself or with the help of man, stir up the elements or harm man and beast. He cannot render man inept to generation, if he does not receive such power from the most merciful God" In other words, it is doubtful whether witches can be punished for activities sanctioned by God Among other arguments, Molitor professes that the witches' sabbath actually takes place only in the *imagination* of some wretched woman, that the gatherings are mere *illusions!*

This voice of an early skeptic found little echo among the learned. Molitor's book, it is true, was reprinted many times, but belief in the sabbath was ineradicable in the minds of the people. Artists depicted witches, for they were interested in fantastically grouped naked bodies Durer copied the striking engraving by Israel van Mechelen It showed four witches ready for departure (fig 107). Leonardo drew a witch who operated with the help of a magic mirror Hans Baldung chose the witch as a preferred theme (fig 108) One of his drawings on a dark background, dated 1514, describes the sabbath ceremony as a frenzied occasion—a witch rides through the air on a billy goat She carries a pole ending in a fork which holds a pot containing an evil brew Below, four women of different ages sit on the ground which is littered with magic implements· a human skull and bone, a horse's skull, several pitchforks, etc A cat is crouching against a middle-aged woman who holds the lid of an earthenware pot, from which escapes a hellish steam, mingled with toads and other "ingredients" stewed to conjure up hail storms An old woman raises a metal plate upon which rests a cooked monster, half bird, half toad. She lifts her emaciated arms in a magic incantation To the left, a younger woman raises her goblet. Behind her is a jug, and some sausages hanging over a witch's fork will be served at dinner, after the incantation has been performed. A gayly bleating goat surveys the improvised kitchen. The scene takes place near a rotten tree.

When the witches were inebriated, the fantastically shaped tree-trunk transformed itself into a huge devil moving his arms in the flickering light of the



Fig 106 The Meal at the Sabbath



Fig 107 The Four Witches, by Albrecht Durer

bonfire. At dawn he turned again into the old familiar tree, whose broken limbs emerged miserably from the morning mist. At the cock's crow, the witches disbanded silently, for the cock is the symbol of light and of pious vigilance Since time immemorial, the rooster was considered a defender against demons, the Hebrews believed that he had only to move his wings to drive away some uncanny visitor. But he was also used for magic operations.

In a less artistic but no less revealing image Guazzo gives us more details of the sabbath With disconcerting thoroughness the eminent Brother of the Milanesian Order of the Ambrosiani uncovers every deed of iniquity performed at the sabbath At the gathering, he says, parents bring their children to the demons (fig 109), whether alive or dead, according to the witch's intention to have her baby either rebaptized or cooked and eaten by the unholy congregation Newcomers, whether adults or children, have to endure the rites of baptism, Guazzo says And this is the way Satan proceeds with them: First, they have to deny the Christian faith and withdraw their allegiance from God According to St Hippolytus, they must say: "I deny the creator of heaven and earth I deny my baptism I deny the worship I formerly paid to God I cleave to thee, and in thee I believe "

The devil then marks them with his claw, preferably upon the eye-brow, "and this mark destroys the one of baptism " After such a horrible pact the devil rebaptizes his believers, sometimes with filthy water Then he gives them new names, as in the case of Rovere de Cuneo whom he renamed Barbicapra, 'Goatbeard' Fourth, he makes them deny again the sacraments of the Church, together with their godfathers and godmothers After this, he demands a piece of the initiates' cloth, "something of their very own," and often, their children Again, they must swear allegiance to him within a circle drawn upon the ground which according to Guazzo is the symbol of the earth, "God's Footstool," (apparently still thought to be a disk by the Ambrosian doctor). With this ceremony the devil wishes to persuade them that *he* is God (fig 110).

Furthermore, he inscribes their names in a black book, also called the Book of Death, and they must promise to strangle a child for him every month or two weeks.

Still this is not enough, for the devil seems to like thoroughness as much as did Brother Guazzo, who preferred being repetitious to being forgetful The devil's followers have to offer a gift to their demons to avoid being beaten by them. Such bribes must be black in color in order to be legitimate

Tenth "He places his marks upon some part or other of their bodies, as fugitive slaves are branded He does this not to all but only to those whom he thinks will prove inconstant, preferably to women. Neither does he always mark them upon the same place " Such practice, Guazzo explains, shall mock the rite of circumcision As to the question of why women are included in the old rite, the ingenious Ambrosian has a ready answer in the New Testament the sign of the holy cross substituted for the circumcision, and this sign is made over all babies of either sex.

The eleventh degree of the initiation sums up various insults and impieties



Fig 108 Witches at the Sabbath, by Hans Baldung

which the devil-worshippers must commit, to the detriment of the Church. They will abstain from using the sign of the cross, holy water, blessed salt and bread, and other consecrated things On certain days they shall fly, *if they can*, to the witches' sabbaths In the meantime no one shall be inactive: evil deeds will be credited by the devil, proselytes should be made, which is difficult as the witch must also promise to be silent about her pact and about the gathering. If they attempt to send misfortune to their neighbors and fail, the evil shall return to the evil-doer, and so on



Fig 109 Sorcerers Presenting a Child to the Devil

The devil's obligations are formulated vaguely He will always sustain them, fulfill their prayers, and give them happiness after death

One cannot but be astonished that for such little assurance the witches would fulfill these promises Was it not known through never-ending witch executions that the master of hell was absolutely unable to assist his flock? It was a very common belief that Satan feared the judges and that he rarely ventured into a prison, if it was not for the purpose of enticing the accused witch to commit suicide Even the most unintelligent people must have grasped that he never keeps faith nor thinks himself bound by any promise.

Similarly did the judges make false promises to the accused Alleging that

they would grant them freedom, they meant, tacitly, to free them from their earthly miseries, or when promising to build them a new house, they meant the pyre. Such false commitments believed to partake of the good were recommended by highly trained and well known jurisconsults. Jean Bodin who wrote an excellent book, *The Republic*, professes in his *Daemonomania* that "it is a virtuous thing, necessary and praiseworthy, to lie in order to save the lives of innocents, and it is condemnable to tell the truth which might destroy them."



Fig 110 Evocation of the Devil

The Devil's Share

"Giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible"

JOHN WESLEY, *1768*

So long as devils retained their debased Neo-Platonic character, they were not dangerous to the Church. But with the advent of the mediaeval Satan, everything was changed. He also was One In conceiving Satan, the one devil, theologians disposed the creed towards the old dualism. The devil grew ever



Fig 111 Panorama of the Witches' Sabbath

more powerful, he demanded his share, that which according to the heavenly decision had been alloted to him He established himself upon earth, and dwelled everywhere in nature The things of this world became suspect, if not fearful.

Satan had become a personality, which whether ugly or beautiful, formidable or beneficent, was of less importance than was his actual existence or his power With this power, many were willing to compromise.

When the Black Death annihilated whole populations, Satan's rule upon earth appeared unchallenged, and his power undermined the authority of the Church. Theology wanted to rule alone, but had found a redoubtable challenger in its own creation Many serfs perceived this, not without satisfaction True, the Church united the higher classes with the humble ones Master and servant together sang their pious chants in the chapel of the castle; together they bowed their heads when the host was raised But the peasants were driven to despair by the increasing disorder and growing oppression which dominated Europe [1] They had to toil for the monks and the noblemen, and their misery is inconceivable today In the Middle Ages, they learned that there was no hope in open revolts One uprising after another had been suppressed bloodily by the united secular and temporal authorities

Despairing, the serf took refuge in dreams He clamored for the old deities, who had been driven into shelter but who continued their mysterious life, many living as gnomes under the good earth These had grown very small and very ugly, but they were full of beneficent activities, and they were fond of the humble man whose skin was as brown and as wrinkled as their own Fairies lived in trees and springs - beautiful ladies of the supernatural, far more powerful and fairer than the haughty chatelaines, who exploded with laughter when the lord of the castle related the cruelties and vexations the village women had to endure from his own men [2]

The early revolts had shown that large masses were so profoundly dissatisfied with the Church that they were ready to sacrifice their lives in the struggle for transformation State and Church united in the defense of established society, and revolts were suppressed But the desire for a thorough change continued to haunt the humble In fairy tales, *transformation* is the main element of the marvelous a pumpkin transmutes itself into a carriage, shabby clothes become shining garments, coarse food an exquisite meal · An old witch fond of human flesh lives in a house made of candy Who else is she but the druidess of old, living in her forest temple where she performs the rites of human sacrifice, and where the devotees come to offer their food

In the fairy tale, the ancient faith survived The country people clung to these images despite assertion by the priest that they were delusions sent by the devil The old gods suited the humble people better than the new one, whose representatives were his severe masters and whose symbol was that of bloodshed and suffering

A witch confessed to De Lancre that her devil had one face in front, the other at the back of the head "Just as god *Janus* is represented," the learned judge adds, and he was perfectly right Another witch said that her devilish para-

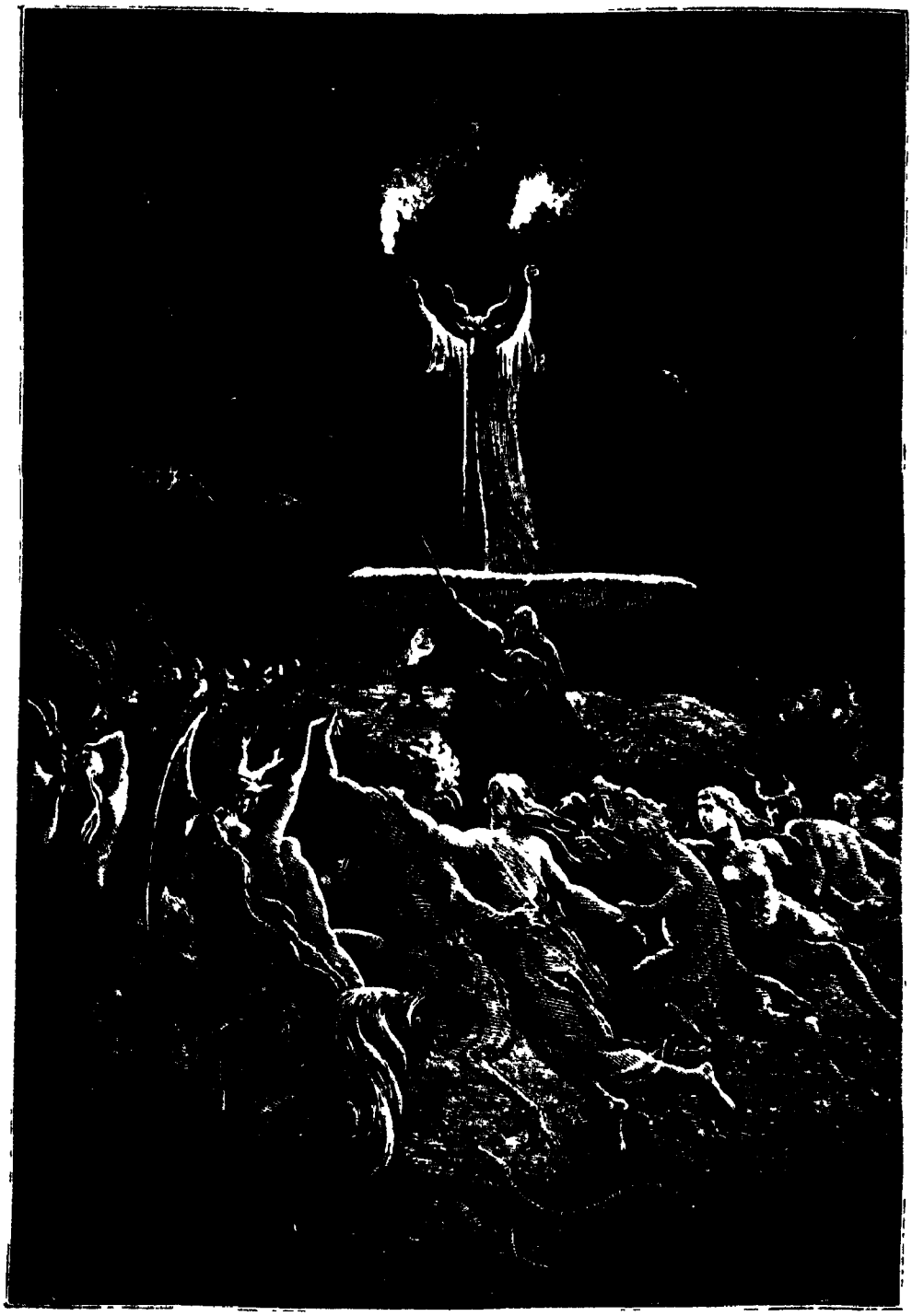


Fig 112 Satan Presiding at the Sabbath



Fig 113 Departure for the Sabbath

mour looked exactly like a billy goat with a human face. It was none other than old *Pan*

With the devil's establishment of his power, the ancient survivals, the amusements of serfs, the most innocent stories, were henceforth Satanic, and the women who knew about the old legends and magic traditions were transformed into witches, or evil fairies, as the old stories call them. The traditional gatherings, the Druids' Festival on the eve of May day, the Bacchanals, the Diana feasts, became the witches' sabbath, and the broom, symbol of the sacred hearth, though retaining its sexual significance, became an evil tool. The sexual rites of old, destined to stimulate the fertility of nature, were now the manifestations of a forbidden carnal lust ' Mating at random, a survival of communal customs, more ancient than the Old Testament, the judges now decided to be an infringement of the most sacred laws The peasants felt differently about these old traditions, they had been taught by their lords not to be jealous, their wives and daughters were at the nobleman's mercy if he desired them For the peasant the people of the nightly gatherings were equals with whom he was willing to share everything, he had the same feeling about this as the primitives of the South Sea Islands do, or did It was not a perversion, but a primitive and innocent custom At the sabbath he was free to do as he pleased He was feared also, and in his lifelong oppression, this gave him some dignity, some sense of freedom

Here he could give himself to excitement without the interference of the Church, that wanted to regulate even human emotions If this was Satanic, the peasant thought, I shall cling to Satan

The sabbath and the witch existed because there were nonconformist people in Europe who, oppressed though they were, clung to the defeated gods of the past, their brethren in oppression Today we tend to overlook the fact that the new religion was alien to Europe whereas the old peasant customs were rooted in the very soil where they had always lived

Most of the resentment which religion was earning had sprung from the feeling that it was something foreign and that it had come from a remote land, from the East The old aversion was still alive in our epoch, when a nation, Christianized for a thousand years, reinstalled her pagan customs, reminding the citizen of his bond with the soil upon which his ancestors had lived

Persecution produced resistance and also leaders for such resistance, and Satan who represented nature, freedom, hatred of the established order, became a political figure Witchcraft was considered a penal offense in legislation ordained by Catholics and Protestants alike, and by the leaders of the state Wherever the voice of freedom was heard or an original idea was expressed, the leaders regarded such as the activities of Satan

In the Middle Ages, when an ideal of order and unity still seemed attainable, witch persecutions were clad in a relatively mild form With the increasingly disturbed social order of later times, the desperation of rulers was demonstrated in their means of defending religion and the state, and the witch burnings degenerated into the most horrible orgies

The authority of the old Church was tottering, but the reformed faith brought

no respite to the sorceress. Calvinism denounced *all happiness as sin.*[1] In Calvinistic Scotland, the judges proceeded with ever growing eagerness, but these rigorous ideals fought a losing battle against the growing attraction which the banished nature exerted upon the minds. Although timidly at first and under haphazard leadership, investigation into the things of nature produced a new world, of which the sorceress with her healing herbs and simple remedies could be called a forerunner.

The Witch

In his book on the inconstancy of Evil Angels and Demons, Pierre de Lancre (died 1630) gives a detailed description of all the activities at the witches' sabbath. He had gathered his material from the accused sorceresses. In 1603, a complaint was filed at the Parliament of Bordeaux describing the disquieting *increase of witches in the districts of Bayonne and Labourd*. Pierre de Lancre was charged with the inquiry and he acquitted himself well of so delicate a task. During the years 1609–1610, the prisons were not spacious enough to hold the multitude of witches indicted by the King's Councilor De Lancre, a scholar and patron of the fine arts, reported on all these activities in his elegantly written work, for which Jean d'Espagnet, his friend and occasional collaborator, had made a beautiful Latin introductory poem.

The aim of the treatise was above all to prove that the witch-trials were held "more juridically and more ceremoniously than in other empires, kingdoms, republics and states." The form of the procedures was apparently of greater concern to De Lancre than the crimes which he judged. But this was only in appearance, for the King's Councilor was fascinated by the accounts of the evil women, who embellished their confessions in order to please the overcurious magistrate. Such obliging ways, however, did not save them from the stake but only delayed their condemnation, for De Lancre decided that the simple fact of having assisted at the sabbath sufficed for the verdict, punishment by death. He adorned his book with a large etching, depicting in an impressive panorama the entire ceremonial of the nightly gatherings (fig. 114). The center is occupied by the caldron in which the evil women brew their poison. In its nauseating vapors evolve witches, demons and obnoxious insects. To the right a banquet is being held: women of different social rank sit together with the devils with whom they share the horrible repast—a cooked baby. To the left children watch the toads that will serve for the poison of the caldron.

Such venom was used, De Lancre says, for various purposes. It was a greenish water, or an unguent strong enough to kill when brought into contact with the victim's clothes. In their earliest years children were taught to concoct such



Fig 114 The Witches' Sabbath according to De Lancre

mixtures, active also in powder form. A sorceress, Rivasseau, revealed its composition: "They make it with a flayed cat, a toad, a lizard, and a viper which they lay upon live coals until they are reduced to ashes." When stinging worms appeared, the poison was ready for use. Witches' unguent, according to the confession of a girl, Androgina, could be used for the oiling of door latches. She alleged that every inhabitant of the house was killed by this crime, perpetrated at Geneva in 1563, as reported by Jean Bodin But the most common use of the evil powder was made for the poisoning of crops, of fruit and wheat. "In Labourd," De Lancre says, "they sow it, saying in the Basque tongue: 'this is for wheat, this for apples.' To the grapes they say: 'you will come in as flowers and not as fruit.' "

In De Lancre's etching the spectators grouped behind the children are all people of wealth and social position, men and women accompanied by devils In the background, six nude witches perform a backward *sardana* to the music of a female orchestra. At the right, behind the feasting anthropophagites, another dance is performed by women and demons around a young tree, not far from the devil enthroned, a four-horned billy goat mounted by a will-o'-the-wisp. The master is flanked by the queen and the princess of the sabbath. A child is presented to him by a kneeling sorceress and a butterfly-winged devil.

These were the details which De Lancre learned from the Labourd witches. They reported this freely without being tortured, he assures us. No doubt they preferred the voluntary confession to the excruciating procedures prescribed by the sixteenth-century laws for the extortion of the truth These wenches surpassed each other in fantastic accounts, of which many are of a nature that forbids reproduction

A few of the councilor's remarks, however, will outline the atmosphere of phantasy and sadism in which the trials and executions took place De Lancre reports with astonishment that a witch called Detsail refused to be kissed by the hangman, "a handsome youth" who tried vainly to extort the "kiss of pardon" from the girl tied to the stake. "She did not wish to profane her lovely [illegible] which yet had so often kissed the devil's back."

Elsewhere, De Lancre tells us that a young witch of fifteen or sixteen was forgiven after full confession and a declaration that she was able to detect all witches and wizards by their devil's marks She was appointed to examine men and women, and this vicious girl brought numerous goodly people to the stake

With obvious pleasure, De Lancre reports also a Spanish mass execution, an auto-da-fé, which he describes in great detail The imposing pomp of the Spanish Inquisition impressed him greatly, and he did all he could to 'improve' the Labourd district.

It would be a mistake to suppose that De Lancre was an exception in his time The witch problem had induced a science that occupied large groups of scholars. They were not lawless and ignorant but on the contrary represented the flower of learning Jean Bodin, for instance, who finds no method too vile to be applicable in witch trials, was a great authority on law It is rather unexpected to find that he revealed throughout his life a tolerance which proved nearly

fatal to him during the Night of St Bartholomew. After the Parisian massacre of the Protestants he had to leave the capital because he was suspected of having defended them and of having recommended tolerance.

Henri Boguet (died 1619), an eminent and humane jurisconsult, judge of the province of Burgundy and President of the tribunal of St Claude, was implacable in witch questions In his *Discourse on Sorcerers*, he shows fanaticism and a disconcerting cruelty This book, which ran into at least eleven editions, was for a long time an authoritative work for French parliaments and bailiwicks, it is a collection of horrid, ridiculous, indecent details. Boguet pronounced or ratified about six hundred capital sentences against witches.

Nicholas Rémy (1530–1612), after having filled several important legal positions, was appointed secretary to Duke Charles III of Lorraine, and one year later became a member of the Supreme Court at Nancy He wrote several valuable works, such as a *History of Lorraine* Yet his most famous, or infamous, treatise is the *Demonolatry*, a voluminous collection of witch-trial examinations and their results, representing his knowledge of magic charms, incantations, spells, the sabbath, and hundreds of details concerning witches, gathered from the confessions of indicted persons This learned man is credited with the condemnation to death of some nine hundred sorceresses, an impressive number which, when divided by his fifteen years of public service, averages more than one witch a week

These examples may suffice to illustrate the problem of reconciling the apparent inconsistency of the learnedness and integrity of these scholars with their cruelty and prejudices

Two possible solutions present themselves That there were no witches, and that the judges were fools and ogres, or, that witches existed and these men performed their horrible duty Both explanations are fallacious

There were no witches, as the persecutors understood them They could not fly upon a broomstick, they could not conjure up hailstorms, and their snake and toad stews contained hardly any poison Yet, actually, witches did exist, and the sabbath likewise existed, attended by men as important as the Ea[illegible] of Bothwell

No more did the judges pronounce their verdicts against public opinion On the contrary, they were to a great extent in agreement with popular views Moreover, the belief in witches and the conviction that they must be destroyed were the rare ties which united all classes in the sixteenth century—the rebellious peasants as well as the conservative burghers, Catholics and Protestants, the clerical and the secular judges

A modern philosopher, Ian Ferguson, has attempted to show the good contained in the reckless witch persecutions He declares that without bloodshed and persecutions resulting from a spiritual effort, there is no human progress "Out of bloodshed comes bloodshed," he says, "but out of lethargy comes extinction" Having witnessed in our days persecutions far more terrible than any imagined in the past, we have become cautious about bloody experiments It will take a long time to prove again that oppression and the annihilation of minorities will produce any—even minor—good for the oppressors.



F.g 115 Three Witches Burned Alive

The Pursuit of an Ideal

ATTENDANCE at the sabbath by the members of the upper classes, encouragement of these mock-revolts by men of politics, was of evil consequence to the witch Divergent ideas found a common expression in her gatherings Most of the wealthy spectators were persons eager to witness something forbidden, and their curiosity indicated that established authority was losing ground among all classes

No wonder that rulers agreed upon the uprooting of witches, without regard for those of higher standing involved in this hoax Those who were not willing to keep things in their proper place and who mingled with these treacherous wenches must be eradicated as well To a certain degree, envy, hatred and greed may have contributed to the spreading of the persecution, but these motives are not an adequate explanation for the terrible storm that devastated Europe for centuries An abridged list of persons executed in the bishopric of Wurzburg may serve to illustrate this

The Sixth Burning, six persons:
The steward of the senate, named Gering
Old Mrs Canzler
The tailor's fat wife
The woman cook of Mr. Mengerdorf
A stranger
A strange woman

The Eighth Burning, seven persons
Baunach, a senator, the fattest citizen in Wurzburg
The steward of the dean of the Cathedral
A stranger
A knife grinder
The gauger's wife
Two strange women

The Eleventh Burning, four persons:
Schwerdt, a vicar-choral in the Cathedral
Rensacker's housekeeper
Stiecher's wife
Silberhans, a minstrel

The Thirteenth Burning, four persons
The old smith of the court
An old woman
A little girl, nine or ten years old
A younger girl, her little sister

The Fourteenth Burning, two persons
The mother of the two little girls before-mentioned
Liebler's daughter

The Twentieth Burning, six persons
Goebel's child, the most beautiful girl in Wurzburg
A student who knew many languages, an excellent musician
Two boys from the Minster, each twelve years old
Stepper's little daughter
The woman who kept the bridge gate

The Twenty-Fifth Burning, seven persons:
David Hans, a canon in the New Minster
Weydenbusch, a senator
The wife of the innkeeper at the Baumgarten
An old woman
The little daughter of Valkenberger was privately executed and burnt on her bier
The little son of the town council bailiff
Wagner, vicar in the Cathedral, was burnt alive

The Twenty-Eighth Burning, six persons:
The wife of Knertz, the butcher
The infant daughter of Dr. Schultz
A blind girl
Schwartz, canon at Hach
Ehling, a vicar
Bernhard Mark, vicar in the Cathedral

The Twenty-Ninth Burning, five persons:
Viertel, the baker
The innkeeper at Klingen
The bailiff of Mergelsheim
The wife of the baker at the Ox Tower
The fat noblewoman

From this excerpt we may gather that the victims met with death for one reason alone: they were believed to be wizards and witches Greed could not have condemned poor strangers, envy could not have destroyed the blind girl of the twenty-eighth burning Indeed, what horrible hatred would have brought innocent children to the stake, except such as was born from the fear of a social and moral catastrophe threatening the very traditions upon which the past had been built?

A schism took place within the classes One group clung to the spiritual ideal of old, seeing hope and salvation only in the pursuit of the most rigorous religious ideal fasting, chastity, purity, self-punishment, concentration upon that which comes from above, the renunciation of pleasure, the rejection of every material good which the fruitful earth offers its inhabitants, discipline, preparation for the hereafter. By such superhuman effort, a turning of the tide was attempted in order to avert pest, strife, catastrophes, in order to reconcile the irate Father by coordinating all activities for the sole glory of God "

The other group turned toward what could roughly be called materialism. The earth offered pleasures which were no sins, relaxations necessary for man's well-being From discoveries and inventions emerged new necessities Capital began to expand, industries were started on a modest scale. Diseases were not unanimously called the work of the devil Scientists, as condemnable as witches, initiated their investigation into the true nature of man The days were past when Popes forbade every surgical intervention accompanied by bloodshed In the revolutionary sixteenth century, the voices of common humanity asserting its right to pleasure grew ever louder, and well-being was no longer considered the privilege of the few ' The rigid hierarchy of feudalism had collapsed, cities acquired liberties; the lower classes started to think and to question the legitimacy of knights' privileges

Peasants posted a libel at the Emperor Maximilian's palace.

"When Adam toiled and Eve spun,
Say, where was then the nobleman?"



Fig 116 The Devil in Love

To which the Emperor answered honestly, and according to his firm belief:

"I am a man like every man,
My honor came from God alone"

In the midst of this turmoil stood the witch, something more than an evil woman capable of destroying her neighbors She incorporated in its awesome extreme that which Christian idealists were fighting with all their resources Yet, the incensed crusaders themselves could not avoid being driven by the swelling tide When Calvin burned the scientist Servet who had dared declare that the blood in man's veins was circulating, he had still acted according to his ideal.

But witch persecution soon became an *industry* It employed judges, jailers, torturers, exorcists, wood-choppers, scribes, and experts, and the abolition of the trials would have caused an economic crisis All those who found their livelihood within the orb of persecution were interested in its continuation. There was no escape the witches had to confess They were driven to such despair that they preferred a most dreadful death to the pleading of their cause One of the most sensible opponents of these trials, the Jesuit Friedrich von Spee (1591–1635), declared

"Often I have thought that the only reason why we are not all wizards is due to the fact that we have not all been tortured And there is truth in what an inquisitor dared to boast lately, that if he could reach the Pope, he would make him confess that he was a wizard"

Canon Loos claimed that the war waged in the name of idealism was controlled by material interests He called the witch trials a newly invented alchemy, by which human blood is transmuted into silver and gold

The defense of an ideal cannot be a profession, it must be a vocation Witch persecutors, however, were craftsmen, with a professional pride A hangman grew melancholic when a witch resisted him unduly That was akin to a personal offense In order to save face he let the accused die under the torture, and thus his honor was not impaired, for the blame for killing would then rest on the devil The cultivation of such professionals produced a harvest contrary to the noble aspirations which these trials primarily symbolized The business became so prosperous that the hangmen's wives arrayed themselves in silk robes, rode upon beautifully harnessed horses or in painted carriages—and of course nobody dared reprove them! During witch hunts, considerable amounts of wine and beer and food were consumed by the hangmen's assistants Innkeepers' bills which have come to us bear testimony to this For every burned witch the hangman received an honorarium He was not allowed to follow any other profession, therefore he had to make the best of his craft.

Soon the torturers had discovered an infallible method for perpetuating their business Under torture, the witch was constrained to name her accomplices. Thus one trial gave birth to a hundred It was a Satanic *perpetuum mobile*.

Merry-making was a sin Popular amusements not ordained by the Church led to hell. With the execution of witches, however, a new kind of macabre merry-making was introduced which could not be found in the old ecclesias-

tical calendar. The place of execution was no longer the gallows' field, or other uncanny places Any public square spacious enough to hold the curious was suitable for the purpose, and not far from the pyre were food stalls and other improvised shops where the out-of-town spectators could purchase souvenirs, rosaries, holy images, and pamphlets printed for the occasion

Sometimes several witches, sometimes a hundred, were burned in one day. Masses, driven by Satan into an obsessional anxiety, projected it upon the condemned who could hardly find one expression of compassion in the crowd. Such executions combined, as Schiller said, the horrible and the comic. They revived the sacrifices of antiquity in their debased form the circus The Spanish Inquisition clothed the condemned with a sulphur shirt and a cardboard tiara, on which were painted devils, flames and a human head resting upon burning fagots (fig 117) The procession moving towards the place of execution resembled those early heathen festivals when mock kings were sacrificed In Germanic countries, the custom still exists at the carnival to burn an effigy symbolizing winter Such remnants of the pagan past found a parallel in the auto-da-fe, the burning of humans by the Inquisition, as well as the burning of stuffed effigies of indicted persons who had died before judgments had been rendered against them Such puppets were carried on poles in these pageantries and burned on the pyre with the coffins of the deceased Judgment was passed in the market place Scaffolds were erected with special loges for the king, the queen, the nobility, the councilors and all the functionaries of the Inquisition The ceremony lasted all day The judgments were proclaimed from special platforms, and the condemned had to stand in a cylindric cage in the middle of the square, to hear the announcement of their condemnation (fig 118) A huge awning was stretched across the square as protection against the sun and the heat, as had been customary in the Circus of ancient Rome, and the sacred fury which animated the crowd was restrained by a pompous ceremonial performed amidst comfort

This sacred carnival was further embellished by the varied costumes the condemned had to wear the sanbenitoes, the samanas, the carrochas All this was contrived in order to impress the masses

The results were manifold Temporary satiation was succeeded by a desire for more, anxiety was not abated, the devil himself could not be brought to trial—only the devil's friend There were always more witches to be hunted The spectacle witnessed by young and old was of a nature to affect dangerously the psyche of the people So long as the procedure rested in ecclesiastical hands, its legitimacy could not be questioned by the believers But now lay judges showed more fanaticism and rigor than the clerics, who had inherited experience in psychological matters The conduct of the lay judges was open to criticism and among sober-minded spectators must have awakened a doubt about the rightness of all these procedures

The spreading of these persecutions was so serious that ignorant or inexpert lay judges in remote parts of the country were now faced with the difficult problem of knowing how to conduct these trials In England, the invention of the *witch pricking* helped them to solve temporarily their perplexity By this



Fig 117 Sorcerer Condemned to Death by the Inquisition

device, bleeding or not bleeding was used to establish the proof of innocence or guilt Tedious procedures were no longer necessary for the conviction of the witch The custom was not new Previously, however, it had been considered only as a means for the establishment of suspicion, not of guilt English judges, encouraged by King James' book, *Daemonologie* (1599), did not shrink from even the most primitive means in their search for the guilty.

C L'Estrange Ewen describes scenes of witch-pricking in the town of Newcastle-on-Tyne, which meant merry-making to its inhabitants, but not to the unhappy indicted women

"As soon as the witch finder arrived, the magistrates sent their crier through the town, ringing the bell, and shouting that anyone wishing to lodge a complaint against a woman for being a witch should bring the complaint to the person appointed Thirty women were brought into the Town Hall and stripped, and pins were then publicly thrust into their bodies. Most of them were found guilty "

The witch finder was paid twenty shillings for every convicted woman, and Ewen adds that the bluebeard was hanged finally after confessing that he had caused the death of 220 women

Lieutenant-Colonel Hobson, present during the above-mentioned procedure, tried to save one of the suspects During the examination of "a personable and good" woman Hobson observed that she was of good repute and did not need to be tried The examiner, offended in his professional pride, "said, she was (a witch), for the town said she was (!) . and presently, in the sight of all people, exposed her body, naked to the waist, with her clothes over her head . " As the pin pricks caused no bleeding, he decided she was guilty.

Fortunately for this woman, Hobson remarked that "through fright and shame all her blood had become clotted in one part of her body" which, he thought, had prevented the bleeding. He requested that she be brought in again, "and required the Scot to stick the pin into the same place, and then blood gushed out, and the Scot cleared her, saying she was not a child of the devil "

Hobson's energetic intervention, which intimidated the witch finder, saved this woman Now this experiment could have been attempted with regard to the others condemned, but no one had such a notion Even the brave Lieutenant-Colonel did not dare insist To show too great a compassion for these wenches might have caused his own end at the stake or gallows

Another instance reported by Ian Ferguson is in the same vein, showing to what perversion the pursuit of an ideal may lead

"There came then to Inverness one Mr Paterson, who traveled all over the kingdom trying witches, and was usually called the Pricker. Stripping them nude, he alleged that the spell spot was discovered and could be seen. . . He first polled all their heads and collected their hair in the stone dick, and then proceeded to pricking the women with pins. . . . This villain gained a great deal of money and had two servants, at last he was discovered to be a woman disguised in men's clothes Such cruelty and rigor was sustained by a vile varlet's fraud "

The procedures at the trials became as arbitrary, anarchical and chaotic as

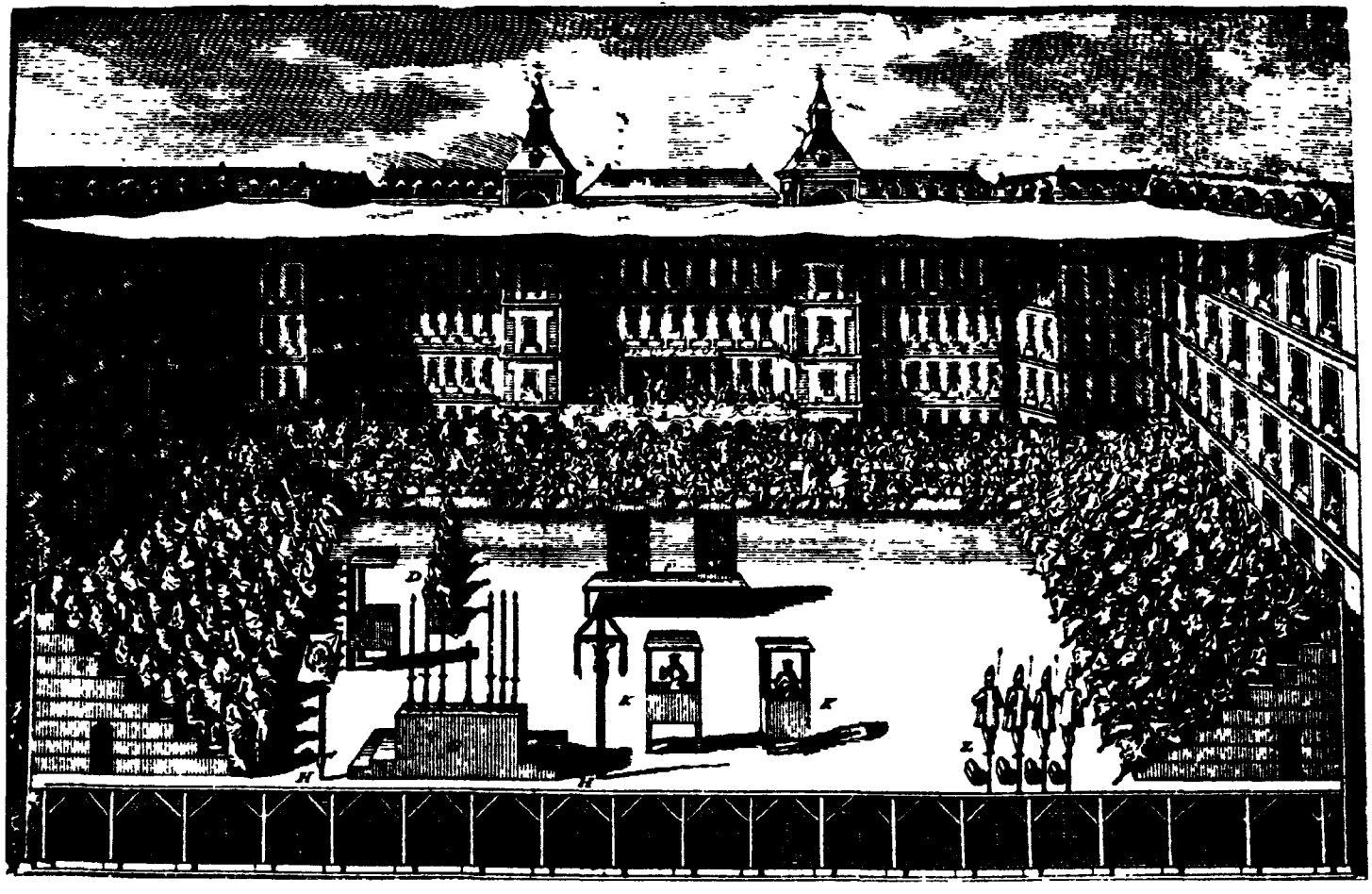


Fig 118 Auto-da-fe

the alleged activities at the sabbath In fact, many of the imagined horrors of the witches' gatherings were repeated by the persecutors themselves. The pinpricking resembled strangely the devil's marking of the witches The magic broth which the accused had to consume before the torture was a mockery of the sabbath meal. The stripping and shaving of the witch were not less licentious than the dancing before Satan

When at the behest of Pope Innocent VIII the Dominicans Sprenger and Kramer published their guide book for witch trials, the famous *Witch Hammer*, they understood that the evil activities of sorcerers were to be classified under heresy They continued the tradition initiated by the Inquisitor-General of Aragon, Nicolas Eymeric, who had in 1376 compiled his voluminous *Directory for Inquisitors*. The *Witch Hammer* pronounces that these matters should be judged *in foro ecclesiastico*, by clerical courts But Sprenger's book did not follow the injunction of Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) who had recommended wisely that heretics and witches be judged "without noise" Eymeric's work was a manuscript circulated only among a select group of law experts within the Church But the *Witch Hammer*, originally published in 1485, was reprinted in numerous editions It made much noise and fell naturally into many non-ecclesiastical hands In using the printing press as a modern means of distribution, Sprenger thought perhaps that a wide circulation of his carefully written work would open the eyes of many, still unaware of the imminent danger which sorcery had conjured up against the Christian commonwealth But he himself was not conscious that heresy and witchcraft had both changed their meaning since Eymeric's time and that no pressure was able to avert the danger of a general religious revolt Trying to strangle in one large embrace every opposition to the Church, he did very little or nothing for his cause Thirty years after his publication, half the population of Europe became "heretic," and there would not have been sufficient wood in Christian lands to burn all the Protestants.

That the Reformation and witchcraft could not be tossed into the same sack became evident very soon when the Protestants accepted the *Witch Hammer* as the standard work for their own witch persecutions Even a more farsighted theologian than Sprenger could not have foreseen this turn

The witch trials continued unabated in both Protestant and Catholic countries for a considerable time

In the Swedish village of Mohra, a witch epidemic broke out in 1669 The sorceresses took about three hundred children with them to the sabbath upon the imaginary Blokula Mountain On a crossroad, they called out "Antecessor, come and carry us to Blokula," whereupon "he" appeared, in a gray coat, and red and blue stockings "He had a red beard, a high-crowned hat, with linen of divers colors wrapped around it, and long garters upon his stockings." In short, it was a typically Swedish devil He set them upon a huge beast and carried them over churches and high walls Twenty-three witches who confessed freely were burned, and fifteen children suffered the same fate Thirty-six children between nine and sixteen were forced to run the gauntlet, twenty more had their hands beaten with rods on three successive Sundays, and the



Fig 119 An Execution of Witches in England

"aforesaid six and thirty were also deemed to be lashed this way once a week for a whole year."

The execution occurred on August 25, 1670 Pastor Antony Horneck who published the account adds:

"The day was bright and glorious, and the sun was shining, and some thousand people were present at the spectacle."

In Arendsee, Germany, three witches were executed in 1687. They were Susanna, Ilse, and their mother Catharine. This Protestant execution was accompanied by an unpleasant religious unction·

"On the way, prayers alternated with exhortations and the singing of hymns. Before Seehausen Gate a circle was made, and Susanna was led round until the public had finished singing the hymn, 'God, Our Father, dwell within us.' When she was decapitated, the people sang· 'To Thee we pray, O Holy Ghost.' Next came Ilse, who was killed in the same way, accompanied by the singing of the same hymn.

"While the singing continued, Catharine was placed upon the fagots and her neck fastened with an iron chain, which was drawn so tight that her face swelled and became suffused with a brown color. The fagots were lit and all present—clergy, school-children, and spectators—sang until her body was consumed in the fire."

In France, things were somewhat better In 1669, two brothers, Ernoul and Charles Barneville, lodged a complaint at the Rouen Parliament about the disquieting increase of witches in the districts of Coutance, Carentan and Haye du Puits Five hundred persons were suspected, among whom there were a hundred priests. The affair was ready to degenerate into a large-scale persecution. After six months of witch-hunting, twelve were condemned to immediate execution. The burning of thirty-four more was decided upon, and a few had already perished at the stake, when Louis XIV stopped the orgy, commuting the death sentences to lifelong exile. The good Parliament of Rouen dispatched its vigorous protest to the king, pleading that the old tradition should be maintained. The king's answer was a stern refusal, accompanied by an injunction that the prosecutions be suspended immediately, which was obeyed.

In England, the persecutions reached a new level in 1638 They differed from those of the continent and were on the whole less cruel. Women were not tortured with special instruments but were watched and submitted to the 'water ordeal': when they swam, they were found guilty, when they sank, it meant they were innocent. Excessive and incredible cruelty was, however, not infrequent. In 1608, the Earl of Mar made the following revealing report to the Privy Council:

"Albeit they persevered constant in their denial to the end, yet they were burned quick after sic and cruel manner that some of them died in despair, renounced and blasphemed, and others, half burned, broke out of the fire and were cast quick into it again until they were burned to death "

Many of the English witches were hung, but a large number perished at the stake; and a few were condemned to the pot, *i.e.*, they were boiled alive

The Scottish trials were worse. In 1678, two old women of Prestonpans were

executed, having accused seventeen others before their death. Nine of them, victims of this denunciation, were condemned.

In 1679, a group of witches was discovered at Borrowstowness They confessed to having attended the sabbath, to their intercourse with devils and to similar crimes. Annaple Thompson, Margaret Pringle, Margaret Hamilton, Bessie Vickar, and others were found guilty of "the abominable crime of witchcraft" They were burned to ashes, after having been "wirried at the stake till they were dead."

In 1696, a girl of eleven years saw the maidservant Katherine Campbell drink milk from the can, and threatened that she would report this to her mother. The maid answered angrily that "the devil might harl the soul through hell." The child was beset by fits, crying out against the maid Soon a large number of people became involved, of whom five were burned in 1697. One of the indicted, John Read, hanged himself in prison. The executed were: a seventeen-year-old beggar girl, her cousins aged fourteen and twelve, their grandmother, and Jean Fulton Twenty others were condemned to less drastic punishment.

Thus a drink of milk proved sinister in effect. The possessed girl whose name was Christiana Shaw grew up and became an expert in spinning yarn. With the help of a friend, she introduced the famous Renfrishware products. She married a minister and died in 1725, greatly lamented by her husband's flock.

In Italy, where Guazzo had revived the tradition so well, a full-scale trial in 1646 brought misery to many. It took a full year to convict all the culprits. Domenica Camelli, Lucia Caveden, Domenica Gratiadei, Caterina Baroni, Zinevra Chemola, Isabella and Polonia Gratiadei, and Valentina Andrei were condemned to death by the assizes of Nogaredo. The sentence was carried out by Leonard Oberdorfer, an Austrian hangman.

Of the trial of Penn, the Quaker who was acquitted in London in 1670, the recorder, Sir John Howell, said "Till now I never understood the reason of the policy and the prudence of the Spaniards in enduring the Inquisition, and certainly it will not be well with us, till something like the Spanish Inquisition is in England." Of the Magna Carta, this man of justice spoke publicly in gross terms.

The Inquisition was, however, an institution opposed diametrically to the interests of an expanding England, a trading country relying upon international relations, and a future colonial empire.

The distinction between heresy and witchcraft, religious rebellion and the creed of foreigners, science and magic, was never made by the prejudiced judges of Lisbon and Madrid Until their demise, they clung to mediaeval concepts Protestants, Calvinists, Zwinglians and Huguenots, alike were considered heretics, and everything uncatholic was combated. Witches, polygamists, Jews, blasphemers, English tradesmen, astrologers, were thrown into the prisons of the Holy Office. In the seventeenth century, the inquisitors condemned to the stake a horse, whom his owner, an Englishman, had taught some tricks Such retrogressive mentality signified the end of the Spanish empire In his *History of the Inquisition*, Philip van Limborch (1633–1712) says quite rightly· "This monstrous tribunal of human opinions is aimed at the sovereignty of the intel-

lectual world, *without intellect* It may be restored again, to keep Spain stationary in the Middle Ages" As he had foreseen, it was in fact restored and continued its policy until Napoleon abolished it

In New England, finally, the witch persecutions appeared late and in the mildest form possible The American settlers were too scattered and too preoccupied with the immediate necessities of life to spend much time on merry-making. The cruelties also lacked the refinements which were so highly developed on the old continent.

The total number of witches executed in New England is inconsiderable and the executions lacked that pomp displayed particularly in the southern countries of Europe The Salem witches were hanged, according to the former practice of the country, not burned as is generally believed

Shortly after the happenings in Salem in 1692, people spoke of them as a calamity. A truly astounding and unique fact in the history of witch-trials is the recantation and public repentance made by the judge and the jury in Massachusetts. Some passages of this extraordinary document read as follows:

"We confess that we ourselves were not capable to understand, nor able to withstand, the mysterious delusions of the powers of darkness . . On further consideration and better information, we justly fear we have been instrumental, with others, though ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring upon ourselves and these people of the Lord, the guilt of innocent blood . . We do, therefore, hereby signify to all in general (and to the surviving sufferers in special) our deep sense of, and sorrow for, our errors for which we are much distressed and disquieted in our minds . . We do heartily ask forgiveness of you all, whom we have unjustly offended, and do declare, according to our present minds, we would none of us do such things again, on such grounds, for the whole world, praying you to accept this, in way of satisfaction for our offence, and that you would bless the inheritance of the Lord, that may be entreated for the land

Foreman	Thomas Fisk	Thomas Pearly, sen
	William Fisk	John Peabody
	John Bachelor	Thomas Perkins
	Thos Fisk, jun	Samuel Sayer
	John Dane	Andrew Eliot
	Joseph Evelith	H. Herrick, sen"

We have enumerated all the undersigned, not with the intention to divulge once more the names of those responsible, but in order to honor these men. They have by their insight, honesty and modesty rendered a service to humanity

Their repentance and recantation came, as Kittredge has remarked, at a time when they proved to be singularly effective arguments in the hands of the opponents of the witch-dogma in England And for this reason, the declaration is not only a great document of American history but a promoter of the good for all.

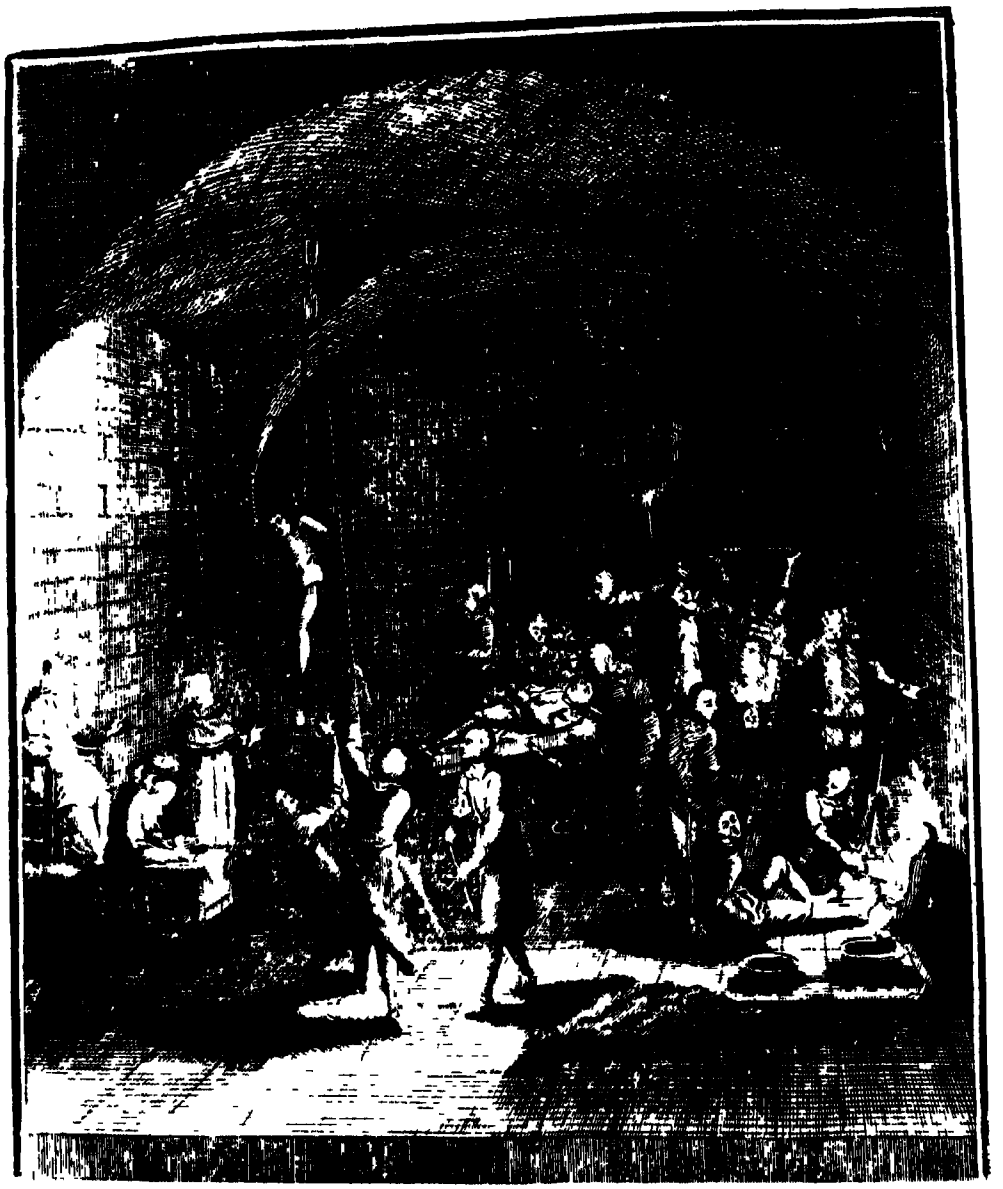


Fig 120 Torture Chamber of the Inquisition

The Witch Controversy in English Literature

> How much more natural that our understanding should be carried from its place by the volubility of our disordered mind than that one of us should be carried by a strange spirit upon a broom staff, flesh and blood as we are, up the shaft of a chimney
>
> MONTAIGNE

A good interpretation of the official belief in matters concerning witches at the end of the sixteenth century is given in the book *Daemonologie*, published in London, 1597. Its author is none other than His Majesty King James I of England In this short treatise, written in the form of a dialogue between Philomathes who asks the questions and the wise Epistemon who gives the answers, the kingly demonologist sums up the most important problems that witchcraft and magic brought to that epoch

The book attacks the facts directly, and the author unlike others does not get lost in the details, but adheres to the principles of the forbidden arts, their operations and their punishment

The *Daemonologie* has been severely criticized and has marred the memory of its author, whom Grillot de Givry calls a sinister figure Mrs Lunn E Linton wrote in 1861 that his name "stands accursed for vice and cruel cowardice and the utmost selfishness and fear" In 1904, Trevelyan blames the king for the enactment of the new "death law," and Robert Steele's criticisms are similar· "In the first Parliament of James, the more merciful act of Elizabeth was repealed" Under the new act, 70,000 persons, Steele says, were executed

George Lyman Kittredge, to whom we owe these notes, undertakes to rehabilitate the royal witch expert In his book, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, Mass , 1928), he proves that according to available records (which might be incomplete) only forty or even less executions took place during the reign of King James—an average of two a year According to Kittredge, James was skeptical, and a good influence upon the judges He protected the occultist Dr John Dee and tolerated scoundrels like Forman and Lamb, notorious wizards Kittredge asserts further that James did not make the Scottish law of witchcraft, which was enacted before the king was born; nor did he teach it to the Scottish nation, such beliefs were the heritage of the human race, and they survived for more than a hundred years after the death of James. The worst period of Scottish witch persecution did not come within his reign

James was involved in a famous trial that took place in 1590, in which his cousin, the Earl of Bothwell, was denounced by Agnes Sampson as a wizard. The

king was then seventeen years old. He was present during the questioning of the witches and also, it is said, during the torture.

In reading his work, it appears that James could not champion anything but the traditional, befitting to a king. Original ideas are not his strong point; he wrote his *Daemonologie* in refutation of new ideas, namely those of John Wier and Reginald Scot Wherever James is skeptical, it is upon religious grounds, and he does not miss an occasion to brand the superstitions of the Papists.

He does not believe in werewolves, but assumes that lycanthropy is a disease of people who *think* they are wolves He declares that the Papists' beliefs in the power of the cross to expel devils and in the power of God's name are both superstitious The rite of exorcism produces good effects, but the conception that created the rite is false Such subtleties are not convincing. His suggestion that only people of good repute should be accepted as witnesses, however, is an improvement over the French methods of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. Moreover, James rejects the bodily or spectral existence of the nightmare, which he claims is a natural sickness. Devils appeared more frequently in Papist times; now they had become rare. "Because before we erred grossly and that mist of error overshadowed the devil to walk more familiarly among them." And, finally, Satan, Beelzebub and Lucifer are one and the same. These are about all the reformatory suggestions that James made—and they are not his own invention. In the fifth chapter of the *Daemonologie* he gives a clue as to his leniency with Dr. Dee and other magicians. To Philomathes' question as to why princes and kings retain magicians frequently, Epistemon answers that evil customs cannot be interpreted as good laws.

James' first book of the *Daemonologie* is devoted to magic and to necromancy, that is, prophecy by the dead. The magicians command the devil, according to their pact signed with blood. After the magician's death, the devil assumes the command. The Evil One entices man to forbidden practices through three passions curiosity, hunger for revenge and greed Astronomy is permissible, even necessary. Astrology, concerned with seasons, weather forecasts and simple remedies, when exerted moderately is not unlawful. But all astrological calculations regarding governments, wars, and the like, all prophecy which places too much trust in the stars is utterly illegal and forbidden, together with geomancy, hydromancy, arithmetic, physiognomy and chiromancy. Study and knowledge of such arts are not illegitimate, *but their practice is.*

In the second book, James deals with witchcraft. Sorceresses do not command the devil; they are merely his slaves, whom he brands with a devil's mark. James refutes Wier's thesis that witches are melancholics Melancholics, says the King, are lean, pale, and seek solitude, whereas witches are corpulent, rich, and wordly-wise, and devoted to the pleasures of the flesh. They like company and merriment, lawful or unlawful.

They fly, in reality and in imagination. They counterfeit the divine service. There are twenty women to one man, because women are more frail and thus caught more easily by the serpent, as the story of Eve teaches. They make

wax images, James continues, for evil purposes. The devil gives them stones that cause diseases Witch poison is not a natural poison but is made with the power of Evil.

Sorceresses can make men and women love or hate one another; they can raise storms, in the measure that God will permit it. They can render man maniacal, they can dispatch spirits to haunt men and houses; they can cause people to be possessed.

The witches' evil is inflicted upon sinners as a punishment, upon godly people who are guilty of a great sin or exhibit weakness in faith, and also upon the best, in order to try their patience

Although the pious is most protected, no one is safe. Every evil occurs by the will of God for whom the devil serves as executioner The devil visits the captured witch in prison, he clothes himself with dead bodies and appears thus as Incubus or Succubus, mingling with man and woman To Philomathes' question as to why the devil can make use of the cadavers of good men for evil ends, Epistemon answers with Mark, 7 15 "It is not anything that enters man that defiles him but that which proceeds and cometh out of him."

In the third and last book, James gives anew the proof of his learnedness in expounding the different species of spirits, specters, Lemures, Ziim and Iim, fairies, etc He dwells on the evil deeds of the Incubi and Succubi, who according to the king are much more frequent among barbaric peoples such as the Finns, the Laplanders, and the inhabitants of the Orkney and Shetland Islands.

Conviction of sorceresses can be obtained by *pricking* and *fleeting*, i.e,. diving The bleeding of the murdered is also a proof of guilt, as well as the witch's not shedding tears In the sixth chapter of the third book, Philomathes asks about the punishment that witches deserve

"EPISTEMON They ought to be put to death according to the law of God, the civil and the imperial law, and the municipal law of all Christian nations

PHILOMATHES What kind of death, I pray you?

EPI.. It is done commonly by fire, but that is arbitrary, to be decided in every country according to the law and the custom thereof

PHIL But is there no sex, age, or rank that may be made exceptions?

EPI.· None at all .

PHIL : Then bairnes (youth) may not be spared?

EPI . Yea, not a hair less of my conclusion, for they are not that capable of reason as to practice such things And for any being in company and not reviling thereof, their lesser and ignorant age will excuse them no doubt.

PHIL I see ye condemn them all who are of the council of such crafts?

EPI.. No doubt "

And the amiable conversation ends thus

". the consummation of the world and our deliverance drawing near makes Satan rage all the more through his instruments, knowing his kingdom to be so near the end."



Fig 121 An Expert in Witchcraft Matthew Hopkins

James' opinions are in accord with the prevalent ones of his epoch. His timid attempt to moderate the judges should, however, be noted in his favor. One should also recall the fact that in 1597 he revoked all indictments which had been piling up throughout Scotland. They were degenerating into a social catastrophe. But this apparent progressiveness was contradicted by the *Daemonologie* published in the years of the Scottish affair. One might have expected that James would at least have cautioned more energetically his overzealous magistrates But the book seems rather a recantation than a justification of his leniency. One reads between the lines that James feared that the public opinion might interpret his stand in Scotland as a signal for a new course to be taken in the English jurisdiction of witches. The king's opinion in a controversial matter must have carried decisive weight, and the matter was already open to dispute, as we learn from the skeptical questions James makes Philomathes ask, and still more from Reginald Scot's book, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which appeared eleven years before the *Daemonologie*. Scot was a student of Wier, who in his turn had acquired his skepticism from Agrippa von Nettesheim In the latter's *Vanity of the Arts and Sciences*, with its superficial and sweeping statements, a controversy which he had with Savini, the Inquisitor of Metz, is reproduced

We learn about his defense of an accused witch in that city The inquisitor "had hail'd a poor country woman into his slaughter house", his chief argument was that the suspected woman's mother had been burned as a witch. Agrippa contested this opinion alleging the grace of baptism. Satan is cast out of us and we are made new "creatures of Christ from whom man can be separated only by his *own* sin, for it is far from truth that he should suffer for another man's sin " The inquisitor had nothing to answer, "and the bloody monk stood rebuk'd and shamed before them all, and ever after was infamous for his cruelty And the accusers of the poor woman in the Capitol of the Church of Metz whose subjects they were, were very considerably fined "

Agrippa was never forgiven by the judges for this courageous stand After his death his name remained stained with the suspicion of witchcraft, though Wier did all he could in his master's defense.

John Wier advocated the existence of the hellish monarchy because the devil was, and still is, inseparable from theological dogma. But the Brabantian doctor, though admitting the existence of witches who use vain words and operate with the devil's help, stresses rather the ineffectiveness of such operations They are not based upon any true knowledge Fantasy is the witches' only teacher They cannot heal, but may harm the cattle by some poison. They have lost all understanding, thinking as they do that they have executed the devil's command They believe foolishly that they can cause disturbances in the air and other impossible things Their operations are as strange as they are ridiculous They are not heretics but fools. Even their evil designs should not be punished, for a child's or a melancholic's bad and ineffectual intentions are not punishable All those who repent and recognize their folly should be forgiven at any rate, and in case of obstinacy a fine, as ordained by

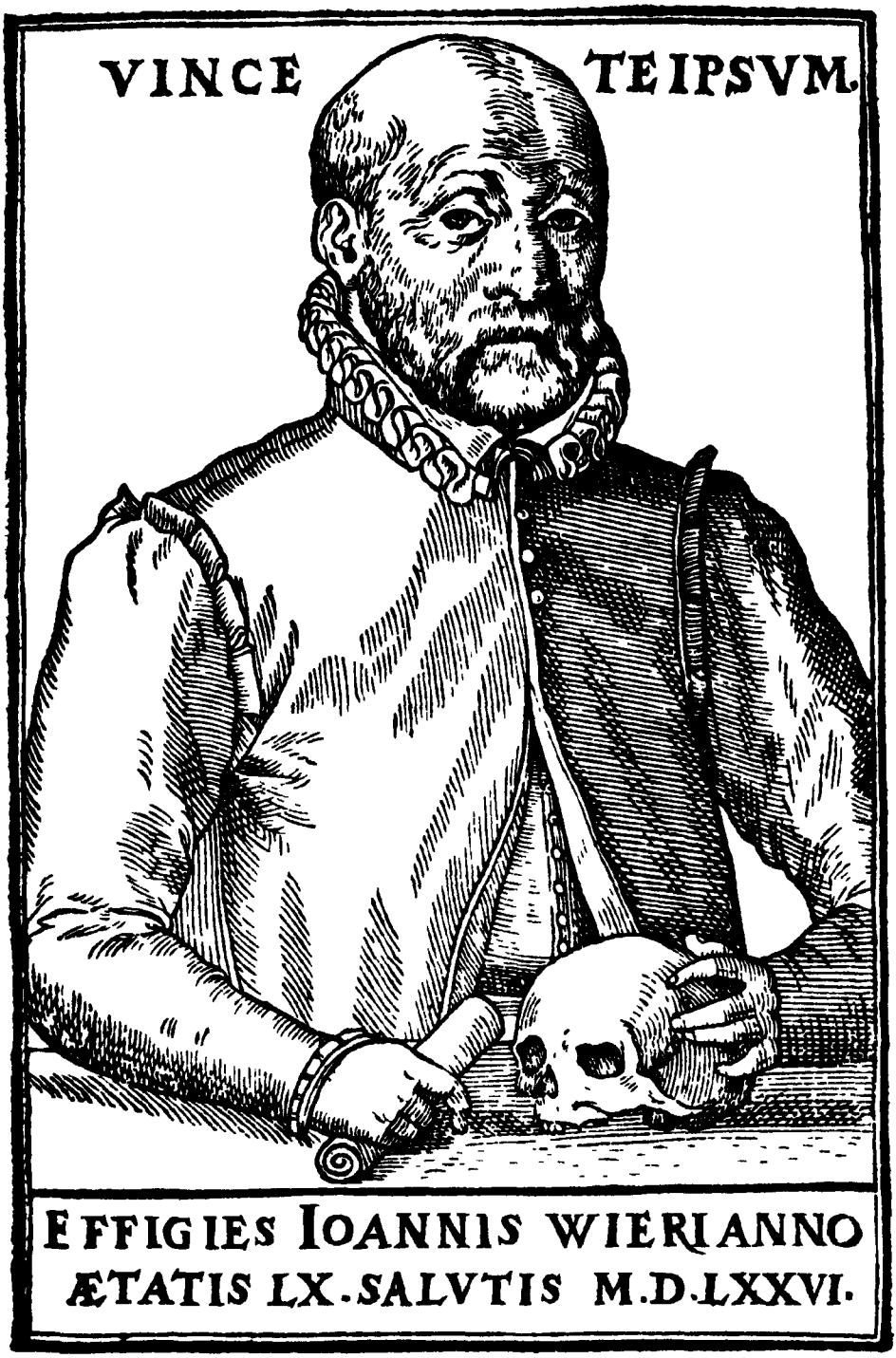


Fig 122 John Wier

the Pope, is sufficient punishment. By no means should they be executed cruelly.

Such ideas uttered as early as 1567 are of a different nature from James' compromises. They stem from a physician who could report with a legitimate satisfaction that he had cured many witches, in an epoch when judges boasted of having burned hundreds of helpless women.

In Germany, three Jesuits initiated the cleansing process. Adam Tanner (1572–1632) and Paul Laymann (1575–1635) strongly advised the judges to be careful in lawsuits against witches Friedrich von Spee (1591–1631) published anonymously in 1631 his *Cautio Criminalis*. Scarcely thirty years old, he was asked by the bishop of Wurzburg why his hair had turned gray. "Through grief," he replied, "over the many witches whom I have prepared for death; not one was guilty "

In Holland, witch prosecution was abolished in 1610; in Geneva it ceased in 1632. From this we can gather that James' skepticism and leniency should not be overrated. His sanction of fleeting and pricking gave the signal for further monstrosities.

But let us turn to Reginald Scot, whose suggestions had injected some skepticism in James. The titles of a few chapters in Scot's *Discoverie* will illustrate the writer's enlightenment

That Incubus is a natural disease, with remedies for the same (besides magical cures) expressed herewith.

Of four capital crimes brought against witches, all answered fully and refuted as frivolous

A confutation of witches' confessions, concerning especially their league (with the devil).

A conclusion of the first book, wherein is foreshown the tyrannical cruelty of witch-mongers and inquisitors, with a request to the reader to peruse the same.

Of vain apparitions· how people have been influenced to fear bogies, which is partly reformed by the preaching of the Gospel, the true effect of Christian miracles.

Scot's ideas fell apparently upon barren ground, and the controversial literature concerning witches continued unabated into the seventeenth century. James' *Daemonologie* was reprinted in 1603. In 1616, John Cotta published his *Trial of Witchcraft*, in which he cautions the judges, as Wier had done before, although he accepts the entire witch dogma In 1617, Thomas Cooper presented to the public his *Mystery of Witchcraft*. He agrees essentially with the famous William Perkins, a Calvinist minister whose *Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* appeared in 1608 Equally conservative was Alexander Robert's *Treatise of Witchcraft* (1616) Robert was "minister of God's word at King's Lynn " Richard Bernard's *Guide to Grand Jurymen* (1627) shows the Anglican views on the matter, full of reservations Then follows *Antidote against Atheism* (1653) by Henry More the Platonist, who believes that witchcraft is evidence for the reality of the unseen world

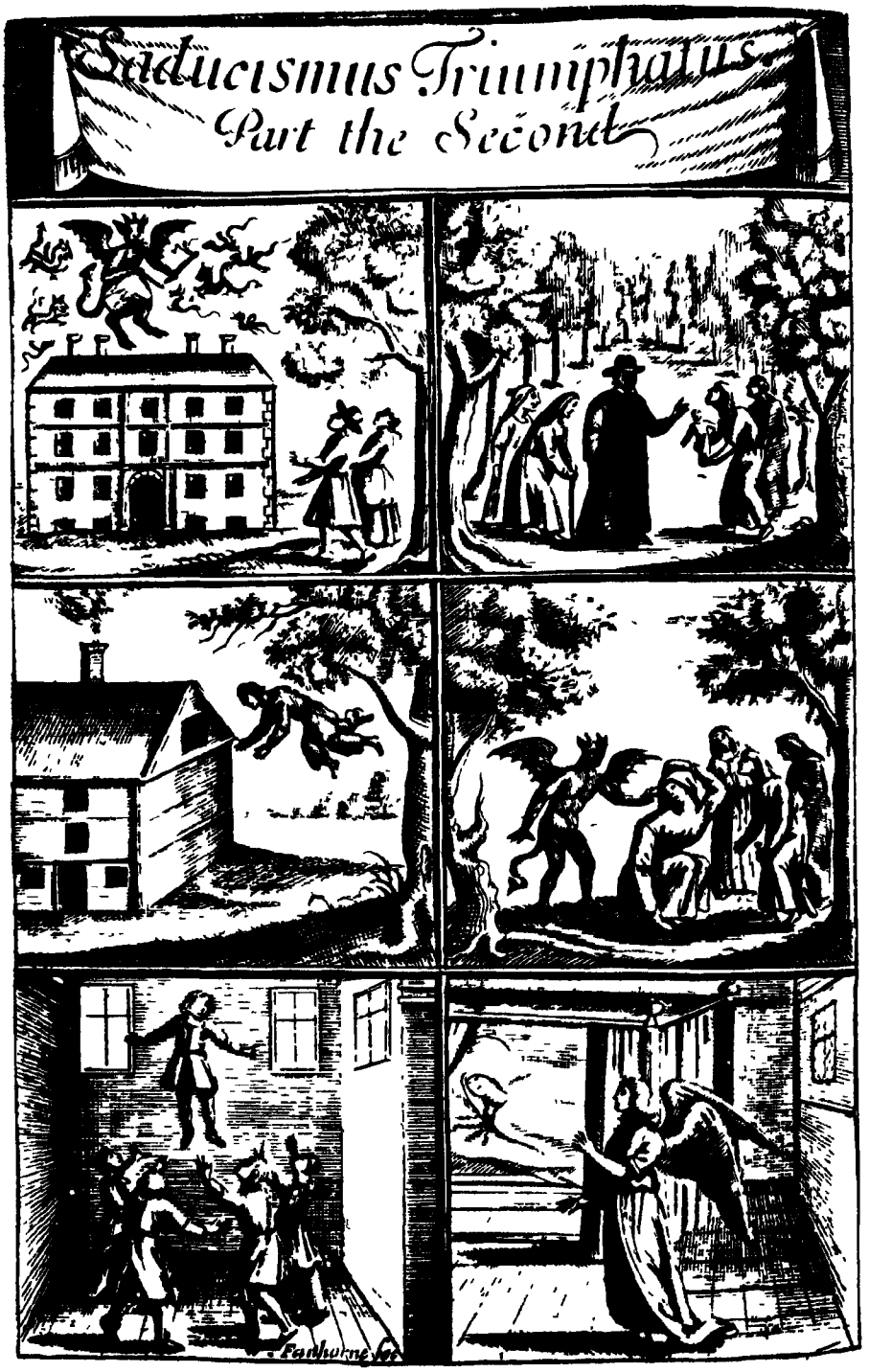


Fig 123 Diverse Manifestations of the Devil

Many more writers on this controversial theme could be cited. They are, however, overshadowed by Joseph Glanvil, the last "great" defender of the belief in witches on the British Isles As a member of the newly founded Royal Society and Rector of the Abbey Church in Bath since 1666, Glanvil's opinion carried considerable weight. He published three books on witchcraft. His *Blow at Modern Sadduceeism* ran into four editions (1668–1669). It was reprinted in 1681, as *Sadducismus Triumphatus.*

Glanvil's book contributed the last glamorous touch to the decaying art of extorting proof for learned theories from ignorant women. It is divided into two parts· the first deals with the possibility of the real existence of witches, and the second proves it.

An artless yet revealing frontispiece in the second part of the book depicts various manifestations of the Evil One (fig 123) The engraving is divided into six small pictures The first shows the devil, accompanied by some uncanny companions, drumming on the top of the house of one Mr Montpesson Then follow scenes of the devil as a black clergyman, of a man flying through the air, of the devil in his natural apparel marking a witch upon her eyebrow, of Mr Montpesson's little son being held by infernal powers in the air, and finally of an angel (or is it the devil?) appearing to a sleeping woman From Glanvil's preface we learn with satisfaction that there are people who "have unalterably fixed and determined the point, that witches and apparitions are things ridiculous, incredible, foppish, impossible " And he is "assured beforehand that no evidence of fact is possibly sufficient to remove the obstinate prejudice of divers resolved men, and therefore I know I must fall under their heavy censures "

These expected censures did not prevent Glanvil's book from being reprinted in 1683, 1689, 1700, and 1726, whereas John Wagstaffe's skeptical *Questions of Witchcraft Debated* (1669), as far as we know, was never reprinted.

Webster, in his *Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (1677), clings still to the belief that there is a corporeal league between the devil and the witch, but otherwise he is absolutely skeptical He attributes manifestations of the witches' evil activities to deceit and imposture, to melancholy and fancy. He denies utterly that devils or imps suck witches' bodies, that there is any carnal copulation among mortals and spirits, that witches can transform themselves into dogs and cats, that they can raise tempests and the like Since Scot, no other book dealing so brilliantly with the theme had appeared in England.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, probably encouraged by Glanvil's success, the defenders of witchcraft published a few treatises. Richard Boulton's *Complete History of Magic* is an incomplete narrative of witch trials, ghostly apparitions and the like. John Beaumont's *Treatise on Spirits* (1705) is called by Montague Summers a sound one, exhibiting a reasonably conservative tendency One should rather call it the work of a psychopath, who was constantly tormented by ringing in his ears He thinks that this denotes a presage: "that it be no natural thing, but something different from the natural. As it was in that ringing, wherewith I was admonished for many years, of any

fame and rumor concerning me. For this was not like a morbid effect, which now I have sometimes experience of. . . ."

The final chapter in the witch controversy is Francis Hutchinson's *Historical Essay on Witchcraft* (1718). Hutchinson was Chaplain-in-Ordinary to his majesty and minister of St James' Parish in St. Edmund's-Bury The Bible furnished him the proofs of the vanity of the witch belief. "I have hated them who hold superstitious vanities: But I trust the Lord (Psalm xxxi, 6) . . Refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness (1 Tim. 4 7)"

Hutchinson deals extensively with the trial of Jane Wenham, indicted in 1712 as a witch. Against the convictions of the judge, Justice Powell, she was condemned formally. However, she was pardoned soon and placed under the protection of Colonel Plummer. After his death, a small pension was allowed her by the Earl and Countess of Cowper. She died in 1730 An extensive "Wenham literature" flooded England after the trial Hutchinson took the trouble of visiting this last English witch of whom he says· "I have very great assurance that she is a pious and sober woman. . I verily believe that there is no one who reads this but may think that such a storm as she met with might have fallen upon them, if it had been their misfortune to have been poor and to have met with such accidents as she did, in such a barbarous parish as she lived in."

In the conclusion of his book, he says: "I have shown plainly that accusing and prosecuting and hanging in that case does not cure but increases the evil, and that when a nation of people are in such a state, they are under a very great calamity."

DIABOLIC RITES

Black Magic

> that by magical mutterings rapid rivers can be made to run backwards, the ocean be congealed, the winds robbed of breath, the sun stopped in his course, the moon made to drop her foam, the stars plucked from their spheres the day annihilated, and the night indefinitely prolonged
>
> APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses, Book I*

TURNING from the witch to the "black" magician, we may now uncover the latter's secret ritual, the means by which he conjures up the infernal powers, and holds them in servitude For unlike the witch, who is the slave of the devil, the magician *commands* He has the knowledge and sells his soul at a high price, he knows how to control the spirits, whose strange names he has learned in secret books, the *grimoires*, or black books

"O men, feeble mortals, tremble at your own temerity," starts the famous instruction to the magician which is recorded in the *Great Grimoire*. "Do not heed blindly such profound wisdom Raise your spirit beyond your sphere and learn from me that before undertaking anything, one should be firm in all decisions."

The infernal powers are to be controlled craftily They are like a horse, aware of the horseman's timidity They will try by every means to dismount him. People who are impressed easily, who fear horrible apparitions and infernal noise, should abstain from summoning the forces below, for these will manifest themselves at first in terrifying images When called, the devil will appear in the most bizarre forms, before condescending to that of man, and if the conjuror cannot stand quietly in his protective circle, if he allows only a finger to trespass across the magic line, he will be torn to shreds For devils hate to serve magicians, and it is only for the reward of the costly human soul that they accept servitude They rejoice in catching unaware the conjuror who has infringed upon the rules.

"If you wish to make a contract with hell," it is written in the book *Sanctum Regum*, "you must first decide whom you want to call" It is not necessary to disturb Satan in person, when an inferior hellish prince can fulfill your wishes. "Two days before the conjuration, you must cut a bough from a wild hazel tree

with a new knife, that has never before been used. It must be a bough which has never carried fruit, and it must be cut at the very moment when the sun rises over the horizon.

"After this, take a bloodstone, as it is known by the druggists who sell it, and two blessed wax candles and select a lonely place where the conjuration



Fig 124 The Devil Pointing out Hidden Treasures

may proceed undisturbed. Old ruined castles are excellent, for spirits like decayed buildings; a remote room in your house may do equally well With your bloodstone, trace a triangle upon the floor, and set the candles at the sides of the triangle. At the bottom of the triangle, write the holy letters I H S, flanked by two crosses (fig 125)

"Take your stand within the triangle with your hazel wand and the papers containing the conjuration and your demands, and summon the spirit with hope and firmness:

" 'Emperor Lucifer, master of the rebellious spirits, I beg you to be favorable to me, when now I call for your minister, the great *Lucifuge Rofocale*, as I desire to sign a contract with him I beg also that Prince Beelzebub may protect my enterprise O Astaroth, great count, be favorable likewise, and make it possible for the great Lucifuge to appear to me in human form and force, without bad odor, and that he grant me, by the agreement which I am ready to sign with him, all the riches which I need. O great Lucifuge, I pray that you leave your dwelling wherever it may be to come here and speak to me If you are

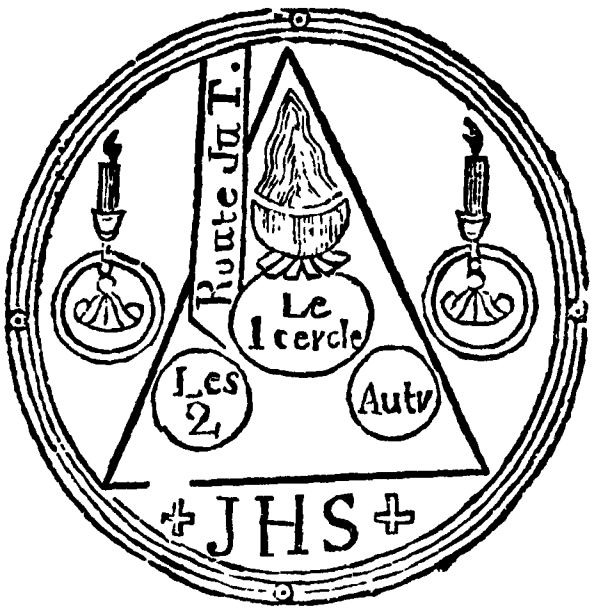


Fig 125 Magic Circle

not willing to come, I will compel you to do so by the power of the great living God, of the Son and the Spirit. Come promptly, otherwise I will torment you eternally by the power of my mighty words and by the great *Key of Solomon*, which he used when compelling the rebellious spirits to accept a pact Thus appear as quickly as possible, or else I will torment you continuously by the powerful words of the Key "Aglon Tetagram Vaycheon Stimulamathon Erohares Retragsammathon Clyoran Icion Esition Existien Eryona Onera Erasyn Moyn Mefhas Soter Emmanuel Sabaoth Adomai, I call you, Amen " ' "

This incantation is irresistible Before you have finished it, Lucifuge will appear and will speak thus· "Here I am, what do you want, why do you disturb my repose? Answer!"

The conjuror "I wish to make a contract with you to the end that you give me wealth as quickly as possible, otherwise I will torment you with the powerful words of the Key "

Lucifuge will answer with an established ceremonial, according to the rules of diplomacy:

"I cannot obey your command if you do not surrender your soul and body, after twenty years, agreeing that at such date I may do with you whatever I wish."



Fig 126 The Devil Pointing out Hidden Treasures

This is the crucial point The magician has to be on his guard and not commit himself in any way He must try to force Lucifuge into obedience without promising anything But such artifices are of little avail For hell will not give without reward. This is the way in which one should, according to the black

book, circumnavigate the dangerous reef· throw your pact out of the circle. The script must be set upon virgin parchment and it must be signed with your blood. It shall read: "I promise to the great Lucifuge to reward him after twenty years for all the treasures which he will have given me."

This devious document, Lucifuge will not accept at first. The magician will insist; in reading the grand appellation and the fiend-smiting words of the Key, he will force Lucifuge to appear again

"Why do you torment me still more. If you will leave me alone, I will give you a treasure not far from here My condition is that you will consecrate a piece of money to me every first Monday of every month; and that you will call for me once every week between ten at night up to two in the morning. Take up your pact which I have signed And if you do not keep your promise, you will belong to me after twenty years "

There is some doubt as to whether our black book reports the whole truth, for it is strange that Lucifuge gives his signature, a thing which devils keep ordinarily for themselves The conditions set down are unfavorable to hell, and Lucifuge does not even demand a copy of the foul agreement Lucifuge will appear in the form as shown in figure 124 which contains his signature as well. The magician will answer thus:

"I agree with your suggestion, provided that you show me now the treasure you promised me, as I wish to take possession of it immediately."

Lucifuge "Follow me and take up the treasure, which I will show you." (Fig. 126.)

Now the conjuror will step out of the magic triangle at the point indicated in figure 125 and follow the evil spirit to the riches, which he will touch with the magic wand. He will also place the agreement upon the treasure, and after having taken as much money as he can carry, he will return to the magic triangle, walking backward. Then he will dismiss the spirit with these words:

"O great Lucifugè, I am satisfied with you, for now I will leave you, go in peace, and I permit you to retire wherever you desire, but without noise or stench "

This is a simple way of conjuring up the evil powers—and to become rich quickly. Other black books prescribe far more complicated rites. There is, however, the *Black Pullet* whose virtue is also simplicity. According to the author, the magician must carry a black hen that has never laid an egg, to the crossing of two roads, there, at midnight, cut the fowl in half and pronounce the words. *"Eloim, Essaim, frugativi et appellavi."* Then he must turn his face towards the east, kneel down, and pronounce the great appellation, holding a cypress staff before him—and "he" will rise immediately (fig 127).

King Solomon was considered the master of all dealings with the underworld, and many "original" texts of his conjuration circulated among the magicians. The wording was Hebrew, written in Roman characters (fig. 128). Solomon's seal was considered a most efficacious magic design, recommended by Peter of Abano for the summoning of an air spirit It should take place when the moon is expanding (fig 129). Another magic design, four concentric circles, Abano recommends for the invocation of good spirits in the first hour of the

Lord's day in springtime. It is a circle of white magic in appearance, the name of Varcan being that of the Lord's king-angel of the air, Tus, Andas and Cynabel are his holy ministers. The highest angels of the Lord's day, Abano says, are Michael, Dardiel and Huratapal. The wind which carries them is the north



Fig 127 Apparition by the Secret of the Black Hen

wind These angels may be invoked in magical ceremonies which should be rendered efficacious with incense made of red sanders.

Other magic circles and signs may be found in the rare black books wrongly attributed to Pope Honorius, in the *Little Albert*, and in the *Red Dragon*. Especially suggestive symbols illustrate a series of works attributed to the archwizard, Dr Johann Faust, who lived in the sixteenth century

There are several versions of the Faustian *Hollenzwang* (Hell's Coercion), like that said to have been printed in Rome during the pontificate of Alexander VI (1492–1503). It is known, however, that Faust did not start his occult career before 1525, or even 1530, a fact which makes the little treatise somewhat suspicious. At any rate, the magic drawings which it presents are very fine Figure 130 shows Faust's magic circle inscribed with Hebrew letters, and his wand.

SALOMONIS
(CITATIO)

(חסהצץאחסאצחץצחסח)



YWOLEH.VAY.BAREC
HET.VAY.YOMAR.HA.ELOHE
ELOHIM.ASCHER.TYWOHE
HYTHALE.CHUABOTAY.LEP
HA.NAWABRA.HAMVEYS.HA
HAKLA.ELOHIM.HARO.HE
OTYMEO.DY.ADDHAYON
HAZZE.HAMALECH.HAGO

Fig 128 Magical Incantation According to the Key of Solomon

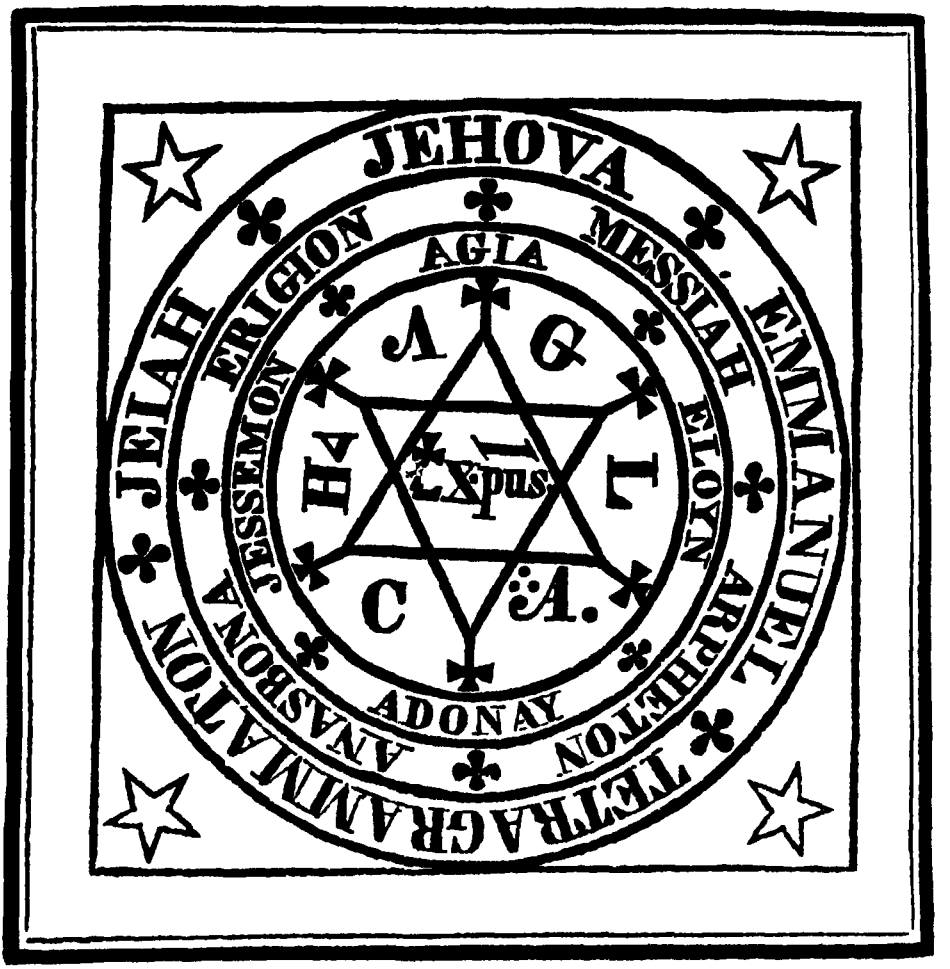


Fig. 29 The Great Magic Circle of Agrippa

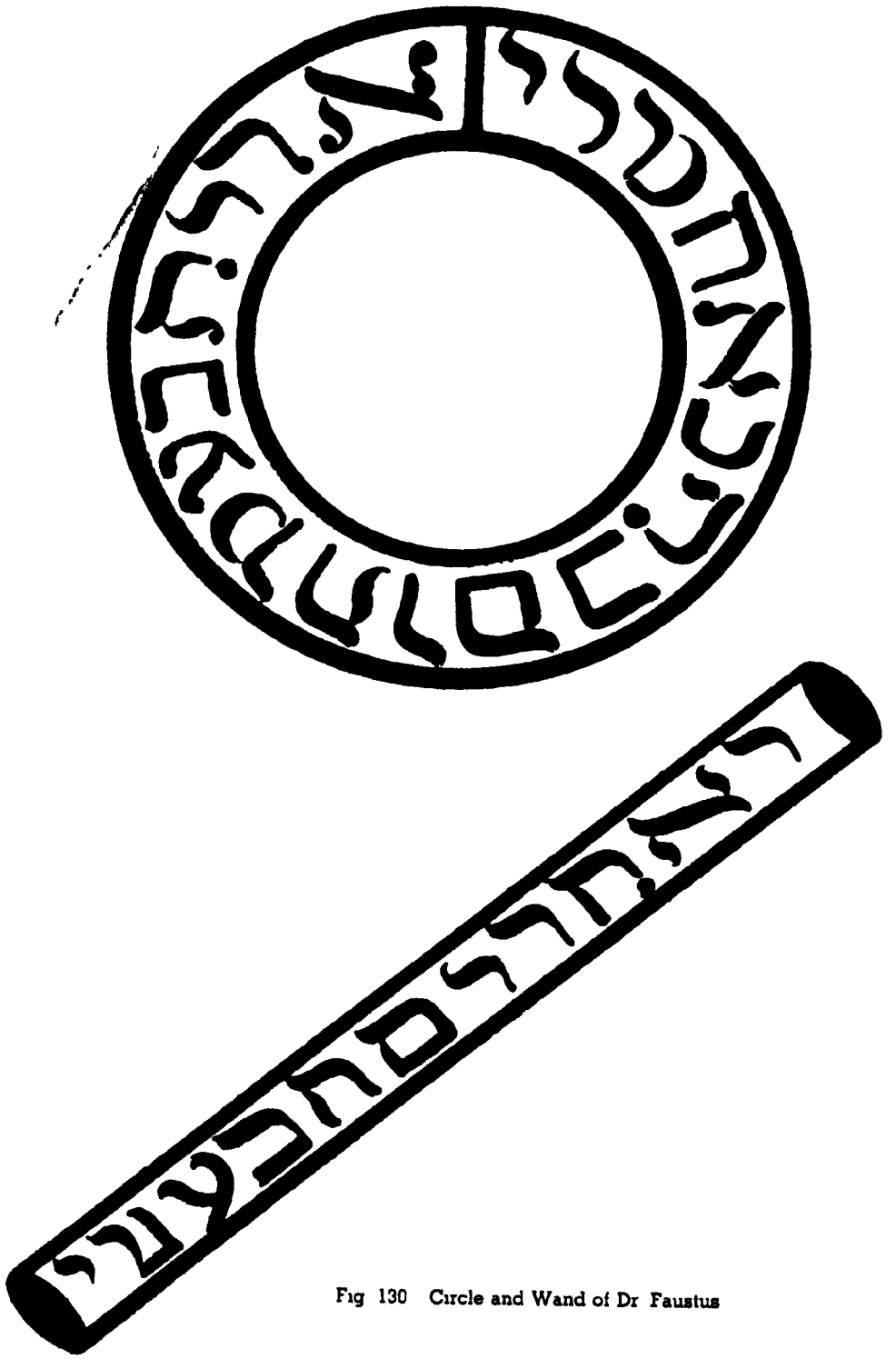


Fig 130 Circle and Wand of Dr Faustus

Another, undated, *Hollenzwang* was found in the collection of a nineteenth-century occultist and bears on its title page a striking fantasy portrait of the famous sorcerer, the Magus Maximus from Kundlingen, or Knittlingen. A third black book attributed to Doctor Faust is that printed in Passau, carrying the date 1407, i.e , before the invention of printing with movable types, and about a hundred years before Faust was born It contains a curious circle, in which the cross is a part of a wholly unreligious design, perhaps composed in this way for the deception of the devil (fig 131)

Dr. Faust's *Great and Powerful Sea Ghost* is the title of a black book, printed

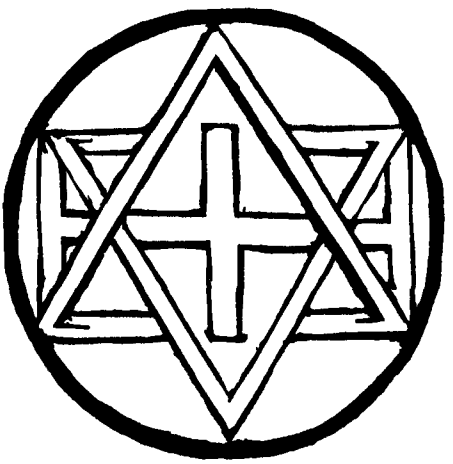


Fig 131 Magic Circle

in Amsterdam in 1692, to be obtained from Holbeck Boecker, salesman at the Cabbage Bridge In its introduction, Faust gives a summary account of his dealings with Beelzebub who sent him a servant spirit, Mephistopheles "Such a thing," he says, "will only be doubted by people who have entrenched themselves in prejudice and who deny that such compacts can be made " The making of the circle is rather difficult it has to be cut out in sheet metal. With every stroke of the hammer, one has to pronounce "Made strong against all evil spirits and devils " The triangle in the center (fig 132) has to be formed by three chains taken from gibbets and nailed down with those nails that have gone through the forehead of executed criminals, who were broken upon the wheel, and other such horrors Then the magician addresses himself to God with holy prayers, which have to be said in great devotion, but are intermingled with exclamations. "yn ge tu y ge sy San mim ta chu."

After an unctuous amen, a curse must be pronounced over Satan. "Hound of hell, Spirit, precipitated in the abyss of eternal damnation; see me standing courageously amidst the hordes of devilish furies,"—and more of such boasts Three times Satan must be cursed before he fulfills the magician's wishes. With horrid expressions he is sent away. And the booklet ends thus:

"When you have taken possession of the money and the jewels, and Lucifer is gone, then thank God with a psalm. With all your possessions, go to another country. Remain pious Do not forget the poor and the converts."

The *Red Dragon* and the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* tell us about the principal spirits of hell and their signatures (fig. 133) *Lucifer* is the emperor; his sign

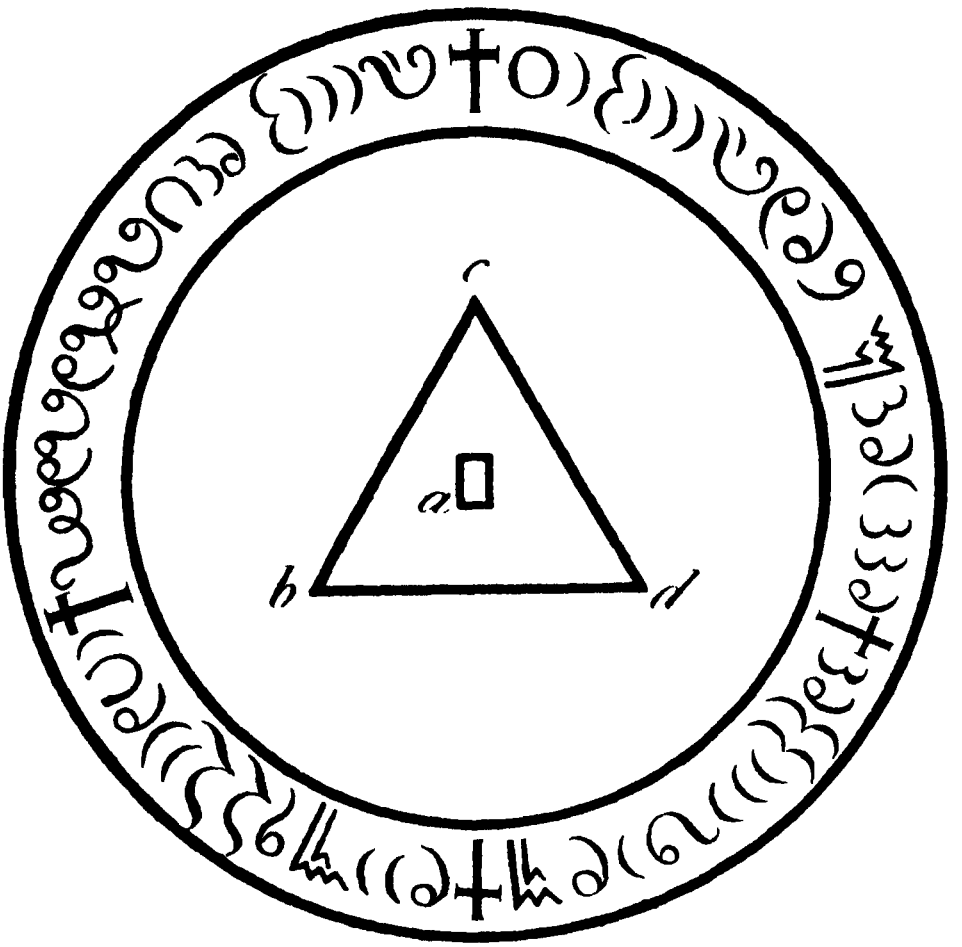


Fig 132 Magic Circle and Character

is a four-horned head. Prince *Beelzebub* recognizes himself in an unpleasant profile Grand Duke *Astaroth* thrusts his tongue out, as if to rail at such useless things as signatures. *Lucifuge*, chief of the cabinet, shows some resemblance to the American Indian. *Satanachia*, chief of the armies, signs with an insect-like image. *Agaglıarept*, a general, uses two heads for his seal. *Fleurety*, lieutenant-general, is characterized by a clumsily drawn horse hoof and by a sharp



Fig 133 A few Authoritative Portraits of Demons



Fig 134 The Philosopher Deriding Magic

profile that does not fit his lyrical name. Brigadier *Sargatanas'* signature is a butterfly of hell, and *Nebiros*, the field marshal, has adopted as his seal a leaf and a being which is half insect, half baby. These quasi-official effigies are not very frightening. Are they caricatures drawn by some fearless humorist?

Related closely to the conjuration of devils by the magician is the old necromantic art, the evocation of the dead. At the operator's demand, they rise from the tomb to reveal the future and to tell of treasures which they had hidden during their lifetime.

The deceased walking by night appear often without being summoned; at times, they form weird processions, marching silently through the terrified city. In Mediterranean countries, this belief is still alive, and in many towns the inhabitants barricade themselves in their homes at nightfall, in fear of the wandering dead.

Sometimes these ghosts are garrulous, adding thus to the terror of their appearance. So in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "the sheeted dead did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets"

Ghosts do not find peace in their graves because they have committed evil, have neglected to accomplish something important during their lifetime, or have taken a secret with them to the grave. They return but, having been separated from life, they bel ave in unnatural and incomprehensible ways. They guard their money chests yet are unable to reveal the place where these are buried They stare, mumble, remain immobile. They walk without moving their legs, they haunt the places which they used to like, unable to forget the delights of life which have now become alien to them. They sit in their rocking chairs at the fireplace and attempt with their half-decayed hands to seize the old pipe still lying there. At times they seem completely insane, re-enacting their former deeds or simply frightening their beloved ones with their unearthly behavior.

The necromancer has found means by which he can call them to order. They must answer his questions truthfully, and disappear into their graves when he dismisses them Through his magic words, the dust in the decayed coffin takes shape again, and rises from a long t [illegible] past.

The notorious Edward Kelly, alias [illegible] who exerted so great an influence upon Dr John De [illegible] with him search of occult and alchemical adv[illegible] escape from prison. Dr Dee returr memoirs, which were published in *Relation of What Passed for Many Y[illegible]* Though in this work he does not speal nevertheless known that he and Kelly land, evoked the dead in a lonely cem dryness does not attenuate its macabre gether within the magic circle. Kelly h[illegible] book, whereas the frightened Dr Dee rai[illegible] before them stands the deceased in her s read distinctly the words, *Raphael, Rael, M*



ard Kelly summoning the Dead

more that holy angels of white magic could be misused for the blackest kind of sorcery.

In the *Red Dragon*, we learn a most curious way of summoning the dead. In the chapter, *The Great Art of Speaking with the Defunct*, it is said that it is indispensable for a true necromancer to assist at Christmas Mass, at midnight precisely. As the host is raised, he must bow down and say in a low voice, *"Exurgent mortui et ad me veniunt,"* 'the dead rise and come to me.' After this, the necromancer must leave the church and go to the nearest graveyard. At the first tomb, he shall say

"Infernal powers, you who carry disturbance into the universe, leave your somber habitation and render yourself to the place beyond the Styx River."

After a few moments of silence, he adds:

"If you hold in your power him whom I call, I conjure you, in the name of the King of Kings, to let this person appear at the hour which I will indicate." Next, the conjuror takes a handful of earth and spreads it like grain, murmuring all the while

"May he who is dust wake from his sleep. May he step out of his dust and answer to my demands which I will make in the name of the Father of all men"

Bending his knee, he turns his eyes to the east. Thus he must remain until the "gates of the sun open," whereupon he gathers two human bones and holds them in the form of a St Andrew's cross Then, leaving the yard, the magician shall toss the two bones into the first church he encounters. Afterwards, walking towards the north and having made exactly four thousand and nineteen hundred steps, he lies down upon the ground, outstretched, his hand on his legs, his eyes raised to heaven in the direction of the moon In this position, he summons the deceased, saying: *"Ego sum, te peto et videre queo"*

The specter will appear readily It is dismissed with the words: "Return to the Kingdom of the chosen. I am happy about your being here" Leaving the spot, the necromancer returns to the grave, where his experiment began, and with his left hand he traces a cross upon the stone

The instructions in the black book end like this "Do not forget the slightest detail of the ceremonial as it is pre you would risk falling into the snares of hell"

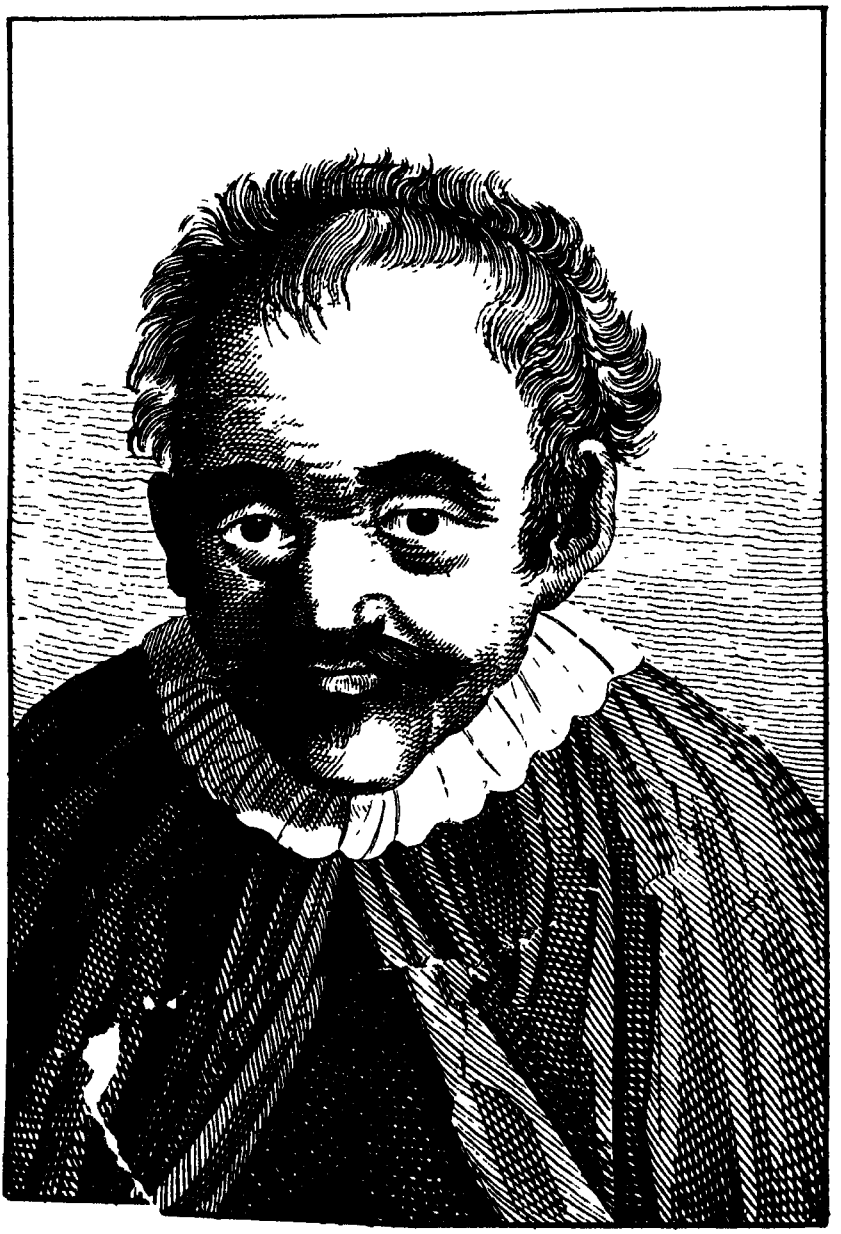


Fig 136 Ideal Portrait of Doctor Faustus

PORTRAITS

The Magus

We think of the magus as the possessor of occult secrets, a master of esoteric wisdom, who makes use of this knowledge for his own good as well as for that of his fellow men He is a "white" magician, less fond of prodigies than of the contemplation of nature, in which he discovers marvelous active forces where others only see familiar things For him the power of God is not concentrated in the One, but permeates every being of the universe

The three wise men of the Orient were magi Through the centuries, they have preoccupied the theologians Some believed that they were astrologers who abandoned their defective knowledge after having recognized the Saviour, but others affirmed that they were true sages who followed that heavenly sign which led them to the crib of Bethlehem They conjectured that it was not a real star, moving on the heaven's vault but a light attracting their inner light or enlightenment.

The monarchs of the Eastern empires used to have such magi at court. They were the councilors, and during times of epidemics, famine and war, a sage's word could halt the course of adverse events The magi of old were the spiritual leaders of the community, as opposed to the sorcerers whose evil works undermined the foundations of society, they were forerunners of the prophets But their power ultimately vanished, and their light was given to the saints of the new faith Theology, in the belief that nothing good can spring from unorthodox theories and practices, subsequently made no distinction between magi, sorcerers and witches

Although the magus now found himself without official status, yet it was not his wisdom which was condemned by the sages of Christianity, but rather his pagan creed The precious fragments of the ancient lore were collected and incorporated into the mosaic of the new world image During the Renaissance, the influence of ancient magic gained new strength Profane learning, though led by religion, ventured into the most recondite compartments of human thought. Many inquired eagerly into wisdom formerly forbidden The printing press was already working at full speed, and before 1500 more than eight million books had flooded Europe Among these were not only the Bible and the accepted Greeks, but also works strongly tinted with magical elements The divinatory arts were held in high esteem, palmistry, astrology, physiog-

nomy, and similar occult arts were in vogue Even magic incantations and the summoning of good and evil spirits were accepted by some writers who expressed boldly their opinions in matters upon which dogma had formerly set its ban.

More than ever the Orient fascinated people The Crusades had brought the East closer to the West, its mysteries now seemed less impenetrable, as expanding trade reached across the Mediterranean. Also, with the discovery of America, the equilibrium of Europe was disturbed The social revolution implicit in the Peasants' War in Germany, the Reformation, the political expansion by the House of Hapsburg, the economic marasmus aggravated by inflation, caused partly by the abundance of gold imported from America, and the constant threat of Turkish invasions, created an atmosphere of instability. These things weakened the social structure and were favorable to new or long repressed ideas

Magic became a distinct branch of learning The magus, though despoiled of his antique splendor, made his official entry into Christian society But simultaneously arose the critics, who railed at those who believed in magical wonders

Skepticism found its expression in the praise of folly All is vanity, men are sinners, but still more, they are fools Those who bought magical books and could not understand them laughed at themselves In his *Ship of Fools*, Sebastian Brant declares that in the fool's dance the first round is his own, for he possesses countless books which he neither reads nor understands Magic also carried men of the clergy into the occult whirlpool Trithemius (1462–1516), a Benedictine, encouraged Agrippa to write on magic, after having himself written on the names of angels and their government, on cabalistic cryptic alphabets, and the like

In Agrippa's revealing treatise, *Three Books on Occult Philosophy*, we find instructions for the magician and the worker of miracles He recommends purity and "dignification " The faculty of the soul is the only producer of wonders, "which when it is overwhelmed by too much commerce with the flesh and occupied with the sensible soul of the body is not worthy to command the divine substances " Such moral commandments do not let us forget that miracles have become a secular affair

The Renaissance magus has in common with the wise men of old the belief that magical forces dwell in the visible and the invisible world, forces which can be controlled for good as well as for evil

Such ambivalence makes it impossible to define clearly the Western magus Faust, the black wizard, made use of that same force which enlightened Paracelsus, the white magician The distinction is slight between the charlatan and the scholar, both promoters of magic However, even the worst of them exerted in some way a beneficent influence Their enchantment awakened interest in nature's mysteries and challenged the critical attitude of the skeptic They leveled social differences, showing the value of the individual who could, unassisted, accomplish great things by the power of his intelligence and knowledge

If "purity and dignification" are more important than piety and submission, then rank, race and faith are no longer the criteria

Preoccupation with ancient magic, moreover, encouraged the study of languages, of antique learning; and, finally, it stimulated experimental science in general. Seen in this light, magic cannot be called a false or sinful practice but an important promoter of intellectual activity in the West.

The characteristics of the magus can best be described by giving a few short biographies of some of the well-known defenders of the occult.

Pico della Mirandola

1463–1494

THE woodcut reproduced from Porta's *Celestial Physiognomy* is accompanied by a description of Pico's features· His skin was of a yellow cast, subtle in coloring, his body was well proportioned He had small eyes, the whites of which were also yellow, his face was attenuated and so was his nose. His lips were refined, his face youthful, very beautiful and angelic.

Fu di tanta altezza d'ingenio, Porta says in his full-sounding Italian, which we may translate to mean that Pico was high-spirited "His memory was that of a phoenix, his speech and writings incomparably prolific, he was a philosopher, a mathematician, and he explored the secrets of theology He wore the most elegant clothes, ate and drank little Exhausted by study and insufficient rest, he died in his youth."

Pico, Count of Mirandola, was born in 1463 in Mirandola castle, near Modena His precocity was considered a marvel, comparable to that of the painter Masaccio who died at twenty-seven after having given a decisive impetus to the plastic arts At twenty-four, Pico went to Rome, where he posted his nine hundred theses for public debate. Among these, many were concerned with magic and the Cabala, a secret doctrine which will be discussed in some later chapters. These occult systems were to prove the divinity of Christ Pico's plan did not win the approval of the Church. Pope Innocent VIII, whose rigorous attitude toward matters of witchcraft has already been noted, appointed a commission to examine the whole of Pico's theories. The verdict was unfavorable four theses were judged to be rash and heretical, six others were also condemned, though less severely, three were called false, heretical, erroneous

In his work Pico favors the prediction of the future by dreams, sibyls, spirits, portents, and also by birds and the intestines. The two latter methods, being irretrievably pagan, certainly could not be tolerated by the Roman theologians. His leanings towards Chaldean oracles, Orphic hymns, and the like were no more acceptable to them Some of his propositions have a Neo-Platonic flavor. with Proclus, he speaks of the junior gods.

But Pico's ultimate goal went beyond that of reviving old, more or less known magical ideas and of introducing new ones His ambition was to reconcile the offi-



Fig 137 Portrait of Pico Della Mirandola

cially sanctioned Aristotelianism and Platonism which the Renaissance scholars were studying again This he strove to accomplish with the help of the Cabala, which he had studied on the recommendation of his Hebrew teachers.

With the condemnation of Rome, Pico's troubles were only beginning He offered an apology, published in 1487, in which he defended the thirteen rejected propositions and accused the judges of being heretics, implying, moreover, in his preface that they were unable to express themselves in good Latin.

This was too much for the "stammering barbarians" Two bishops with inquisitorial power brought the rebel to submission A papal bull interdicted the printing of the theses Pico fled to France where he was arrested by the Roman nuncios and confined in a dungeon at Vincennes. Through the intervention of Lorenzo de' Medici and others, he was allowed to return to Florence Pope Innocent VIII remained mute and hostile It was only from Alexander VI that he was able to obtain forgiveness and safety from the Inquisition This happened one year before his death, which occurred in 1494, in his thirty-first year.[1]

Trithemius

1462–1516

DURING the time that Trithemius was a student in Heidelberg, he met a mysterious teacher who instructed him in the secret sciences When in 1482, Trithemius decided to return to his native town, Tritenheim, in the district of Trier, the teacher informed him that on his journey he would find the key to his life As Trithemius reached Sponheim, snow was falling heavily and he sought shelter in the Benedictine monastery There, life appeared so attractive that he decided to become a monk—and this was the famous key of which the master had spoken At twenty-two, he succeeded the old abbot who had died in 1483 Trithemius found the monastery in a state of complete disintegration. Parts of the building had fallen to ruin Debts, chaos, laziness and ignorance were the obstacles which he had to fight But he brought order into the neglected affairs and soon the Benedictines of Sponheim became famous

He taught the monks many crafts and kept them occupied constantly, preparing parchment, writing books which they adorned with gilded initials, and gardening The debts were paid and more money was earned with which Trithemius bought rare manuscripts In 1503, his library consisted of two thousand volumes, a rarity in that time People from France, Italy and Germany came to see the collection, and to meet the famous abbot whose erudition had become proverbial Princes and kings sent their emissaries to Sponheim, Emperor Maximilian asked the cleric's advice on political questions As early as 1482, it is said that Trithemius was summoned to the emperor's court to give his counsel upon a matrimonial question The Empress Mary of Burgundy had died as a result of an accident Maximilian wished to marry again. According to the legend, Trithemius advised the emperor to evoke the spirit of the deceased queen and to have her decide whom he should choose for a spouse The conjuration took place and Mary appeared in all her beauty Maximilian left the magic circle to embrace her He fell to the ground, thunderstruck, at which moment the apparition vanished But before disappearing, she had re-

vealed many future events and also named her successor, Bianca Sforza, Galeazzo's daughter.

In 1505, Trithemius was summoned to the court of Philip, count palatine He traveled to Heidelberg where he became dangerously ill In the meantime, the monks at Sponheim revolted, hoping to gain more leisure and freedom by ridding the convent of the over-zealous abbot Utterly disappointed, Trithemius did not return to Sponheim though it caused him unhappiness to abandon the monks and especially the marvelous library At Wurzburg, he was offered direction of the abbey of St James, which he entered in 1506 and where he remained to the end of his life, writing, and sending out his admonitions. He is buried in St James

Though most of his works are ecclesiastical treatises, Trithemius wrote also on magic Alchemy attracted him greatly and he declares in his books that transmutations can be made and that the philosophers' stone can be attained through adequate operation This stone, he says, is the soul of the world, or *spiritus mundi,* rendered visible One might call it the petrification of God's breath, as the abbot affirms that the world soul is the breath emanating from its divine source In this sense, we may understand his saying that God permeates everything, a belief which became widespread after Trithemius, for in the midst of the sixteenth century, Copernicus discovered a new world, that of the planets circulating together with the earth around their central star, the sun, a discovery which demolished the old Christian dogmatic hierarchy God could not be *above,* as there was no above and no below, and there was nothing outside the world Therefore a new dwelling had to be found for Him The belief then became prevalent that God's residence was everywhere

Trithemius was very modest and timid and, as a man of the clergy, he did not wish to do or say anything that was contrary to the established tradition He invented all sorts of secret methods of writing by which profound thoughts could be disguised in apparently harmless texts

The fact that he influenced Paracelsus and Agrippa suffices as an indication that he was sympathetic to magic learning He speaks often in dissembling terms, saying, for instance, that the Golden Age would arrive when the lion and the lamb would dwell together In this Biblical symbol he clothed the thought that the philosophers' stone was attained when the Fire of God, the lion, and the Divine Light, i e , Christ, are joined mystically

His fondness for the occult is revealed in the advice which he sent to Agrippa after having read the latter's book *On Occult Philosophy*

"I have only one more admonition to give you Never forget it to the vulgar, speak only of vulgar things, keep for your friends every secret of a higher order, give hay to the oxen and sugar to the parrot Understand my meaning, lest you be trod under the oxen's feet, as oftentimes happens "

Trithemius' book on the *Seven Second Causes* is certainly not for the oxen, and the parrot will find little in it about which he can chatter The seven second causes are the seven highest angels, whom Trithemius correlates with the seven planets God is the first cause The second causes are his ministers in charge of the government of the world The spirit or angel of Saturn, for in-



Fig 138 Portrait of Trithemius

stance, is *Orifiel* who governed the universe immediately after the creation His rule started on the fifteenth of March, in the first year of the world, and he governed for 345 years and four months Under his reign, men were rude and savage, like beasts, as the Genesis reports Orifiel was succeeded by *Anael*, spirit of Venus, who ruled from 345 to 705 Trithemius draws the dynastic data of the heavenly spirits up to the year 1879, when the rule of Gabriel ends The seven angels govern in turn, and from the order of the past one can prophesy that of the future, because heavenly institutions are unchangeable

According to modern occultists, these apparent trifles contain an enormous amount of magic wisdom It is expressed in a code, they say, each word having a double meaning, but the key to this mystical work Trithemius carried to the grave Since the words should be read according to certain combinations, the book loses its sense completely when translated from its original Latin

Agrippa von Nettesheim.

1486–1535

In the whirlpool of the Renaissance, Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, perhaps the most important figure among the occultists of that age, was driven from one position to the other, from country to country, from high favor to prison, from silent study to the battlefield, from wealth to poverty. As a man of erudition, he corresponded with the great Humanists of his time, such as Melanchthon, Erasmus, and Cardinal Campegius Agrippa was encouraged by abbot Trithemius to commit to writing his knowledge of the occult, toward which by nature he was greatly inclined His acceptance of Neo-Platonism, which at that time had burst into a veritable flowering, was championed by the Humanists as opposed to the Aristotelianism of the Middle Ages In his study of the Neo-Platonists, such as Plotinus, Iamblichus and Porphyry, Agrippa became immersed in the supernatural and the occult, and his enthusiasm for these philosophers overwhelmed his scholar's sense of criticism With a mind open to every current of occult thought, he strove, like Mirandola, to conciliate various magical doctrines and to unite philosophy with Cabala In his later years, however, Agrippa, probably under the influence of the Counter Reformation, recanted his magical writings. Now, as incredulous as he had been credulous before, he professed that nothing was certain either in the arts or in the sciences, and that the only reliable thing in the world was religious faith In order to find an interpretation of this astonishing development from credulity to utter distrust in the competence of Man, it may be interesting to follow the magus through various episodes of his life

When still a young man, he went to Paris on a perilous mission for the Emperor Maximilian There he met some young scholars, noblemen, with whom he founded a secret society They formed a mystical plan for a reformed world, and promised each other mutual assistance One of their members, a young nobleman from Gerona in Catalonia, learned that the peasants of his domain had dispossessed his family and had assumed power Under the leadership of Agrippa and assisted by a detachment of soldiers, these noble 'Freemasons' met with the revolting peasants However, their effort to reinstate the lord of Gerona into his rights proved a failure, and the group disbanded.

In 1509, Agrippa arrived at Dole of which Margaret of Austria, Maximilian's daughter, was mistress, together with Burgundy. With the aid of a friend, Agrippa obtained permission to lecture at the university, where he expounded Reuchlin's cabalistic treatise, *The Mirific Word.* Wishing also to win Margaret's patronage, he composed *The Nobility of the Female Sex* and *The Superiority of Women* With arguments borrowed from the Bible, the Church fathers, and philosophy, he praises the fair sex in exalted phrases. The work was dedicated to the "divine Margaret, the august and very clement princess."

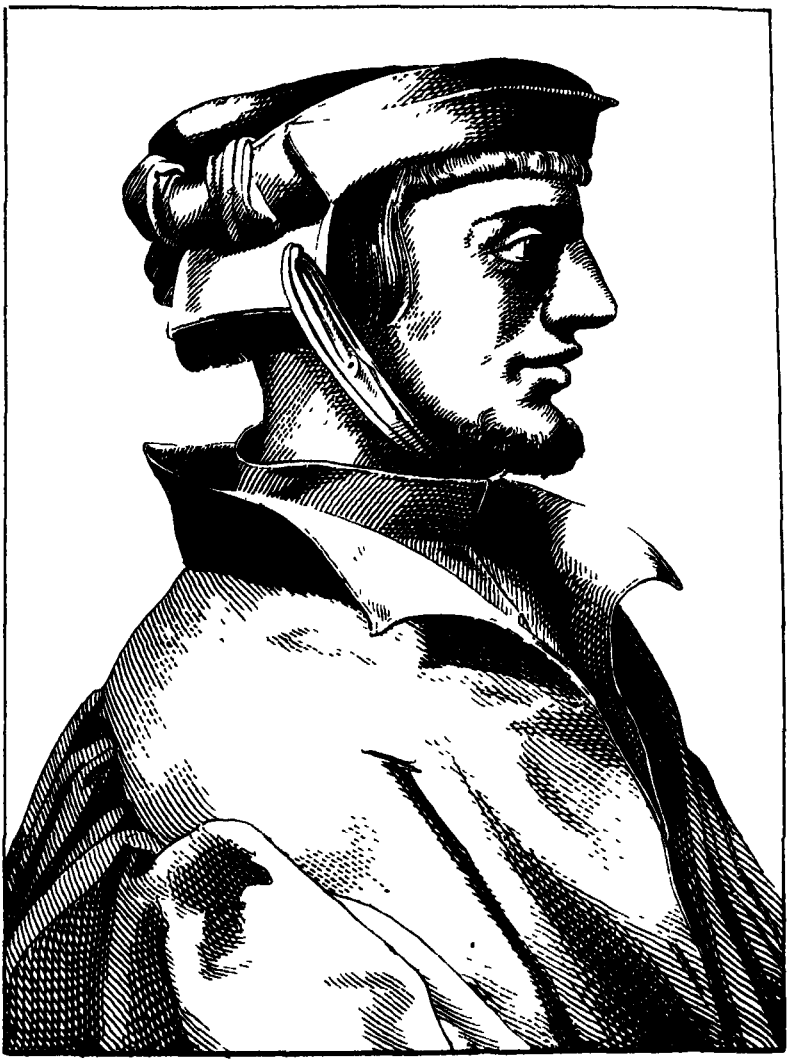


Fig 139 Portrait of Agrippa von Nettesheim

Margaret's favors were slow in coming and Agrippa's enemies were quick to rise, especially clerics who detected in his sympathy for the Jewish Cabala a dangerous heresy At Ghent in the Netherlands where Margaret resided, a Franciscan friar, Catilinet, preached before her against this impious Cabalist, and he was prevented by his adversaries from publishing his praise of women. He relinquished his cause and went to England and later to Cologne where he lectured publicly His clumsiness in financial matters became notorious, and various blunders estranged him from his admirers and sponsors.

In 1515, he followed Maximilian's army to Italy and was knighted on the battlefield The Cardinal of St Croix sent him to Pisa as representative to the

Council. This was his last chance to right himself with the Church and to please Pope Leo X from whom he had received a friendly letter. But the Council was disbanded and the assemblies were discontinued.

Leaving behind his military and ecclesiastical career, Agrippa taught at Turin and Pavia, where he lectured on Hermes Trismegistus, earning more fame than money. In 1518, the lords of Metz chose him as Advocate, Syndic, and Orator of the City. Two years later, he left this post, after his quarrel with the inquisitor Savini from whom he had rescued an innocent country woman, unjustly accused of witchcraft, an episode which has been related in a previous chapter. Subsequently he lectured in Cologne, also in Geneva and Fribourg, where he practiced medicine

Then, in 1524, he was finally granted a pension by Francis I, and appointed physician to the Duchesse Louise of Savoy, the King's mother She wanted Agrippa to predict the future from the stars, but he replied that his talents should be used for more important matters When the duchess left Lyons, Agrippa did not follow her and his name was removed from the pension list.

In 1529, fickle fortune once again seemed to smile He was summoned by four different sponsors Henry VIII, king of England, the German Emperor's Chancellor, an Italian marquis, and Margaret of Austria, Governor of the Netherlands Twenty years after the composition of *The Superiority of Women*, Margaret seemed finally to have been won over, and Agrippa was made Historiographer

It was at this time that he published his famous work, *On the Vanity of Arts and Sciences*, in which he declared that every human thought and activity is vain Once more, his enemies were exasperated. The Pope's legate, Cardinal Campegius, and the Cardinal De la Mark tried in vain to defend him His pension as an imperial historiographer was cancelled and, being unable to pay his debts, he was imprisoned at Brussels. He was released after one year Now finally appeared his *Occult Philosophy*, which he had written in his early days but which had remained unpublished The belated publication created incredible confusion because its contents had already been recanted by his work *On the Vanity of Arts and Sciences* The *Occult Philosophy*, on the contrary, indulged in the optimistic belief that men were able to work miracles by the power of their wisdom. Once more Agrippa decided to leave Germany, and ultimately sought shelter at Grenoble in the house of a M Allard, Receiver General of the Provence, where he died in 1535

The *Occult Philosophy*, having so greatly influenced Western occultism, may well deserve a brief résumé Magic, says Agrippa, is a powerful faculty, full of mystery, and comprising a profound knowledge of the most secret things, their nature, power, quality, substance and effects, as well as their relationships and antagonisms It is a philosophical science; it is physics, mathematics and theology Through physics we learn the nature of things, through mathematics we comprehend their dimensions and extent, and the movement of heavenly bodies can be calculated, through theology we come to know God, angels and demons, intelligence, soul and thought Physics is terrestrial; mathematics, celestial, theology concerned with the archetype world

The magus, in his study of nature, will increase his wisdom by degrees· through the study of stones, he will learn the essence of the stars, from the planets his knowledge will be led to the sublime. Agrippa starts with the four elements. fire, water, earth and air These elements occur in three types here below, they are mixed, impure, in the stars, they are pure, thirdly, there are composite elements which can change and which are the vehicle of all transformations. He affirms the opinion of the Neo-Platonists that the elements are found here below, in the whole universe, in spirits and angels, and even in God.

From the elements are born natural virtues of things, but not occult virtues. The latter are infused into things through ideas by means of the world-soul

In order to ascertain occult virtues, we should explore the world by means of *resemblances* For instance, fire here below excites celestial fire, the eye cures the eye, sterility produces sterility Therefore sacrificial fire reacts upon the divine fire or light, frogs' eyes cure man's blindness, mules' urine renders women sterile As there is accord between things akin, there is discord between things hostile Experience has shown, for instance, that between the sunflower and the sun there is accord, whereas between the lion and the cock there is hostility, just as between the elephant and the mouse It is the task of the magus to recognize these sympathies and antipathies in order to operate magically through nature

Similar dispositions are to be found in the planets, whether friendly or hostile to one another Such relations, when made use of, yield magical results, for all things inferior submit to those above Not only single objects depend upon the stars, but whole provinces, countries and kingdoms, to which planetary and zodiacal signs have been allotted In tracing such celestial signs, the magus propitiates virtues from above. The sign of Sagittarius brings down the virtues of that constellation and, in attaching such a talisman to a horse's neck, the animal's well-being is guaranteed, since the horse and Sagittarius are akin Thus, through various contrivances, well prepared and coordinated, favorable influences are attracted, not only from the stars, but also from good demons, and even from God

Agrippa enumerates these marvelous contrivances They are fire and smoke, pomades, plants, animals, metals, gestures and words Explaining at length the essence of divination and augury, he states that such mysterious predictions are brought forth through the knowledge of sympathies and antipathies Knowing relationships between things on earth and their masters above, the inspired will discover signs of events to come which are hidden from the profane.

Mathematical sciences are indispensable to the magus as natural virtues are governed by numbers, weights and measures Moreover, light, movement, even the world's harmony take their origin from mathematics In order to know the plan of the world's architecture, it is necessary to comprehend the proportions upon which it is built. Numbers conceal virtues having marvelous capacities in either world Thus the number one, the base of all numbers, expresses also the one God, the cause of all creation According to the Pythagoreans, says Agrippa, there are sacred numbers dedicated to the elements and the plane-

tarian gods. These numbers should be used in magical diagrams. Knowledge of mathematics is necessary for musical harmony, which is a reflection of the harmony of the universe

In the third book, Agrippa asserts the necessity of religion in every magical venture. "Religion is the most mysterious thing," he says, "and one about which one should keep silent, for Trismegistus says that it would be an offence to religion to confide it to the profane multitude." Religion is the accomplishment and key of magic, a discipline leading to the dignification of man Agrippa's conception of religion is far from being orthodox, it is rather a mixture of Christianity, Neo-Platonism and Cabala He speaks of planetarian spirits, of demons, good and bad, of conjurations and sacred pentacles, of the ten sacred names of God, to which he attributes magical power. He knows the language of the angels and their names as well as those of the star spirits, those of the elements, and those of the four corners of the world. He exposes the secret of sacred cabalistic hieroglyphs, and all this with the intention of instructing the magus in the manner of conjuring the supernatural, for, in his words, "though man is not an immortal animal, like the universe, he is nonetheless reasonable, and with his intelligence, his imagination and his soul, he can act upon and transform the whole world."

Paracelsus

1493–1541

His device was: "Be not another if thou canst be thyself " There is no one comparable to Paracelsus, physician, astrologer, anthroposophist, theologian, mystic and magus At a time when knowledge was assuming many ramifications, when faith was divided into opposing dogmas, when the earth was about to lose its proud position as the center of the universe, in short, when the old unified world structure collapsed, Paracelsus achieved what had seemed impossible he wove his knowledge, practice and faith into one

Pursuing this magic ideal he betrays himself as being solidly tied to the bygone Middle Ages, an epoch in which such unification of every branch of thought was still a possible thing

But contrary to his fondness for the past is his empiricism When he publicly burned the works of Galen, denouncing the sterility of his fellow physicians, he made it clear that his own world was to be welded into one by other means than those offered by conventions. He wanted to know the true nature of things through investigation and not through the study of dusty volumes

These bold views guided his critical attitude toward classical authorities to whom the past had clung with unshaken faith Paracelsus believed that nature was the highest authority, because nature, unlike man, does not commit errors.



Fig 140 Theophrastus Paracelsus

Everything in nature partakes of the *machina mundi*, the world machine, built according to a divine plan And the various forms and events of the corporeal world have their profound meaning and are just so many manifestations of the divine

Man's first doctor is God, the maker of health, Paracelsus says, for the body is not a thing apart but a house for the soul The physician, therefore, must treat the two simultaneously and strive at bringing them into harmonny, which is the only true health Such inner accord harmoniously unites in man the things of the world with the divine Religion is derived from the Latin *re-ligare, i e.,* to unite again The curative process shares this characteristic Religion is the basis of medicine In his prophecies, Paracelsus predicts an evil end for people who fail to achieve self-recognition, for they do not know the true nature with which they are endowed Living rightly and healthily is the attainment of harmony with one's true self Therefore the physician must be an astrologer as well, he should know about the harmony of the spheres and their influence. Moreover, he must be a theologian to comprehend the needs of the soul He must be an anthropologist in order to understand the needs of the body He must be an alchemist to perceive the universal substances which are found in harmonious mixtures everywhere in the material world Also, he should be conscious of the primary creative cosmic forces because they are universal and are in man himself And he must be a mystic, to recognize that there exists something beyond logic, as the ancients have demonstrated, thus mysticism will complete the system

Paracelsus affirms that God has given various qualities to things at their creation, forces which enable them to exist independently The divine intervention is, therefore, not constantly to be sought, for man has the capacity to help himself, like the stars which move by their own initiative

The heavenly bodies influence man They are inhabited by the Greco-Roman divinities who emit a mortal light—for everything in creation is mortal God alone sends forth a divine light which is immortal and which is received by that which is immortal in man These two kinds of light are the essence of all

The astrologer inquires into the mortal light of the stars, by whose contemplation he gains knowledge Man is molded from the dust of the stars, his older brothers, whence emanate reason, art and science All these are mortal The astrologers do not investigate Christ, the Apostles and the Prophets—religion and mysticism fulfill this high function

Man is receptive to the radiance of the stars, and to be attracted to their light is godly, but mortal at the same time It existed before the coming of Christ, it still exists and grows even stronger During Christ's earthly life, astronomers, magi and diviners quite understandingly abandoned their art to follow the eternal light Paracelsus reminds us of Dionysius the Areopagite of Athens who relinquished astrology to follow St Paul, for he wished to rise from the lesser to the greater, and so should we all strive for the greater, each according to the essence bestowed upon him by the stars

But man, unfortunately, is blind to his essence and to the twofold light that is in him When it becomes completely disunited, he must fall sick, his body

being severed from the current which animates it Most men are neither truly pious nor truly scientific. "Were Christ to descend from heaven, he would find no one with whom he could converse, were Jupiter to come down from his planet, he would encounter here below no inquirers but only *schools* of men who repeat the wisdom gathered by their forefathers from the stars These schools of old are dead and their followers remain blind to the mortal light."

How few raise their eyes to the starry heaven, from which flows a constant enlightenment guiding mankind to new sciences and arts Music, for instance, is offered by the planet Venus If any musicians were open to receive her light, they would create a music more beautiful, more celestial, than the tunes of the past which are still repeated mechanically

★

Such poetic images uttered by a physician were too much for his colleagues, who based all their knowledge upon the herb medicine of Galen. Their recipes were complicated and expensive Their Philistine minds abhorred the ways of Paracelsus, his negligence about clothes, his rude language, his writing in German rather than in Latin These good bourgeois detected the vagabond in him They considered his magic signs and talismans as objects of heresy In vain Paracelsus explained that in this physical world all things were related, that the sign of a specific planet engraved upon a talisman was endowed with astral forces, that such ore used for the magic medal was related to that same planet, enforcing thus the power of the talisman, that these signs were the marks imprinted by the stars like signatures upon earthly bodies.

Paracelsus clothes his theories into concrete forms derived from mediaeval realism, where ideas are not abstractions, but entities His will to render visible and palpable everything induces him to make at times fantastic assertions which would provoke a smile in the most indulgent critic He professes, for instance, that mythological beings like fauns and nereids actually exist, that it is possible to produce an artificial man, the homunculus Viewed in detail, these assertions do not make sense, yet, seen as a part of the Paracelsian system, they group themselves logically into the whole

What is more important, in spite of such errors, Paracelsus performed miraculous cures with his fantastic methods, whereas the patients of the reasonable Galenians died It was this fact, rather than mythological stories, which aroused the scholars against Paracelsus who was driven from town to town His rugged character and irascibility forbade him to compromise, and he became a tramp haunting the highways in search of wisdom In his surgical writings, he enumerates the many countries through which he traveled. "Everywhere," he says, "I inquired diligently and gathered experience of the true medical art, not alone from doctors but also from barbers, women, sorcerers, alchemists, in convents, from the low ranks and from those of the nobility, from the intelligent and the simple-minded "

Many of the simple ways of the country people he recognized as being better than the intricate compounds of the learned His prescriptions are simple and,

given by a man whose strong conviction produced confidence and optimism, they worked wonders. The fear of disease, he said, is more dangerous than disease itself.

Through his alchemical studies begun in childhood, he was led to the idea of using minerals as medicaments. Thus he added a new branch to science: pharmaceutical chemistry He treated syphilis successfully with mercury and recommended also guaiacum, which the Spaniards imported from San Domingo.

Alchemy was transformed completely by Paracelsus and his followers, for he professed that the alchemical task above all is to separate the pure from the impure and to develop various species of primordial matter. What nature has left imperfect shall be perfected by alchemy, be it metals, minerals, or other substances, thus the hermetic art is liberated from its early bonds. Gold can be produced by alchemical methods, Paracelsus asserts; the physico-chemical procedure, however, is poor. The finest gold should be made by *psycho-chemical* means, an idea which led away from the gold-cooking to the consideration that the main object of the experiment is the perfection of *man*.

As a mystic and a magus, Paracelsus was very much concerned with prognostication. It is an uncertain art, he says, because man within himself is doubtful He who is doubtful can accomplish nothing certain, he who hesitates can bring nothing to perfection.

Prophecy requires imagination and faith in nature In a similar way, medicine makes use of imagination, fixed strongly on the nature of herbs and upon healing He who imagines, compels herbs to reveal their hidden nature.

"Imagination is like the Sun, the light of which is not tangible, but which can set a house on fire Imagination leads man's life If he thinks of fire, he is on fire; if he thinks of war, he will cause war All depends only upon man's imagination to be *Sun*, i e., that he imagines wholly that which he wills."

About intelligence, Paracelsus professes that there are two kinds—that of the carnal man and that of the spiritual Prophecy is caused by the spiritual, which he calls *Gabalis* "You should know that man can foresee the future *from the books of the past* and from those of the present" Describing what today we would call clairvoyance, he says "Man also possesses the power by which he may see his friends and the circumstances by which they are surrounded, although such persons may be a thousand miles away from him at that time"

Elsewhere he speaks of the practice of *divination*, which can be caused by sortilege But the customary ceremonies, he says, are mere superstition, invented to lend an air of solemnity to the operation. At any rate, those who practice the art are often ignorant of the laws that control it.

He mentions several other preternatural capacities, having explored these dark realms with a thoroughness worthy of a man of science.

Nostradamus

1503–1566

After my earthly death, my writ shall do more than when I was among the living
NOSTRADAMUS

NOSTRADAMUS (Michel de Nostre-Dame), greatest of all seers and astrologers, was born in St Remy, France. Though his prophecies are styled in the scurrilous language of most predictions, the fact remains that many lent themselves to striking interpretations of happenings that have occurred centuries after the stargazer's death Even names mentioned by the seer coincide at times with those connected with the predicted events Here is an example.

Le part soluz mary sera mitré
Retour conflit passera sur la thuille
Par cinq cens, un trahyr sera tiltré
Narbon et Saulce par couteaux avous d'huille

The separated husband will be capped with a miter
Returned—conflict shall spread over the tile
By five hundred—a traitor will be called Narbon
And Saulce watchman over oil-barrels

This apparent nonsense can well be interpreted as predicting certain events of the French Revolution Louis XVI, *separated* from Marie-Antoinette (who underwent a similar treatment in another room) was capped by the Jacobins with the Phrygian bonnet *(miter)* and the tricolor cockade This was after his *return* from Varennes, where the fleeing royal family had been arrested. *Conflict* broke out two months later at the Tuileries (a palace built upon the site of a former *tile* manufactory, from which the name derives). It was caused by the resistance of the Swiss guard, *five hundred men* The *traitor* Count *Narbonne-Lara* was the minister of war whom Louis dismissed abruptly under suspicion of treason. *Sauce* owned a general merchandise store at Varennes. He had the royal family arrested. Marie-Antoinette was sitting between *oil cans* and *candles* in Sauce's store when the arrest took place All this happened in the years 1791 and 1792, two and a quarter centuries after Nostradamus' death. The conflicting spellings of the names involved can be explained by the changes of French orthography

Many more such astounding predictions and their interpretations may be found in the works of Pierre Rigaud, in the English version of Theophilus de Garancières, in the books of L. Pissot, A Le Pelletier, Torné-Chavigny, P. Piobb, and in a recent book, *The Story of Prophecy*, by Henry James Forman.

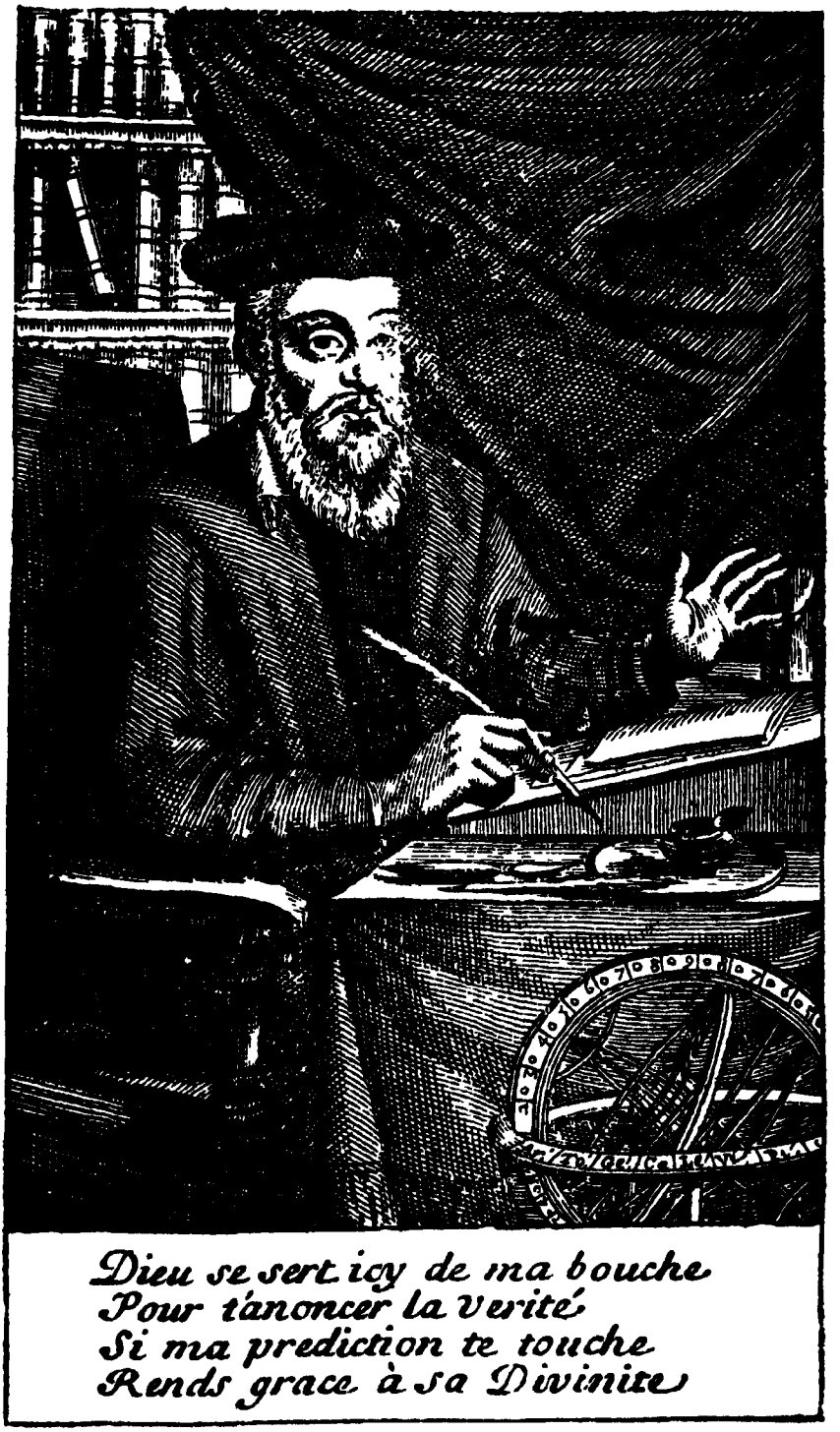


Fig 141 Nostradamus

A forgotten fact is that the great seer has written besides his predictions an often-reprinted work on cosmetics, on perfumes, on the art of making jam with sugar, honey and cooked wine. This indicates that Doctor Nostradamus was also well-versed in the science of herbs and minerals, like his grandfather, Jacques de Nostre-Dame, physician at the court of King René of Provence. Michel was one of the greatest physicians of his epoch. When studying medicine at Montpellier University, he interrupted his studies and helped to stamp out an epidemic of the black death which appeared simultaneously in different provinces and countries. Nostradamus, apparently immune to the pest, traveled from city to city performing miraculous cures. In Aix, the grateful citizens offered him a pension, which he distributed among orphans and widows, and after a most beneficent stay at Lyons, he settled in Salon, Provence. His prophecies which he called *Centuries* were published in 1555, long after his book on cosmetics. These predictions made an enormous impression, and people from all classes traveled to Salon seeking the seer's prophecy and advice. Salon, the modest town, became famous through him.

Catherine de' Medici, who was greatly attracted by occult science and magic, had attached to her court several astrologers and soothsayers, such as the questionable Ruggieri, more sorcerer than sage, and the mathematician Reignier for whom she had an astrological column built which is still to be seen in Paris There was also the famous Luc Gauric, who had warned Catherine's husband, King Henry II, to avoid single combat, alleging that he was threatened by the stars with being wounded on the head, or with blindness

The king, though rather skeptical, did not object to the summoning of Nostradamus who arrived in Paris in 1556. The queen was eager to know the future of her three sons, who were living at Blois, and Michel was sent there to see them. When he returned to Paris, he predicted that all three would sit on a throne. He did not want to be more explicit, for he often said that it was harmful to know the whole truth. Catherine believed the prediction, but Michel may have meant that they were to ascend, subsequently, to the *same* throne, which actually happened.

Michel had enemies at court and he suffered especially from those who feared his influence upon the queen. A poet, perhaps Bèze or Jodelle, wrote an acid couplet against him, playing upon the seer's name:

Nostra damus cum falsa damus, nam fallere nostrum est
Sed cum falsa damus, nil nisi nostra damus.

We give what is ours in giving lies,
For to deceive is our business
And measuring out the false
We give nothing else, but our very own

The carpers, however, were silenced when under strange circumstances King Henry died in the following year He had been celebrating the wedding of his sister, Marguerite de France, with the Duke of Savoy, during which a tournament was held Henry invited the young Earl of Montgomery to cross lances

with him Having first modestly declined this honor, Montgomery yielded finally to the king's wish. An accident occurred; the Englishman's lance pierced the grill of Henry's golden helmet and entered the king's eye, wounding him cruelly.

Luc Gauric's warning was remembered now, but also the thirty-fifth verse in the first book of Nostradamus' *Centuries:*

Le lyon jeune le vieux surmontera,
En champ bellique par singuliere duelle,
Dans cage d'or les yeux luy crevera
Deux playes une, pour mourir mort cruelle.

The young lion will conquer the old
In a single combat upon the lawn
He will pierce his eye in a cage of gold,
Two wounds One, to die a cruel death

And in the fifty-fifth verse of the third book one reads

In the year when the one eye rules in France,
The court will be utterly disturbed,
The lord of Blois will slay his friend,
The kingdom will be treated ill and double doubt

That there was trouble because of the dying "one-eye," everybody at court knew Henry died soon from his wound But what did the other verses signify? The three young princes who were all to be kings, according to Nostradamus, knew a sad fate The first, now Francis II, was only sixteen He died a year later. The second, the ten-year-old Charles IX, ascended to the throne under his mother's regency Catherine began to suspect that the predicted royal crowns were one and the same In 1564, she journeyed with Charles to the pest-stricken and desolate Salon, seeking Nostradamus' advice Little is known of what the seer told the aggrieved mother The Huguenot storm arose in France, dividing the kingdom under the rule of an intriguing mother and of a child Bloody St Bartholomew's Eve brought horror and hatred, and Charles died at twenty-two, leaving his land in disorder

The last of the princes was crowned Henry III He resided at Vincennes, and he loved sorcery and every occult practice Sometimes he retired to the Tower of Paris at Vincennes, and people whispered horrible tales about his conjurations After his death, they found there the tanned skin of a child and blasphemous implements of silver which his adversaries readily reproduced in a pamphlet

Henry III had summoned the Etats Généraux, the representatives of the state, to the city of Blois There he had his friend, the Duke of Guise, murdered treacherously.

"The lord of Blois will slay his friend "

Civil war broke out and Paris revolted. Just as Henry was ready to besiege the city, in 1589, a monk named Jacques Clément murdered the most inept king of France, and Nostradamus' prophecy about Catherine's family was fulfilled. But the seer did not live to see it; he died in 1566 under circumstances which he had predicted in his *Centuries* His last interview with any member of the royal family was with Charles IX, who gave him on that occasion the title of Councilor and Physician to his Majesty. Suffering from dropsy, he had lived "between bed and bench" (the bench of his writing desk). On July 1, 1566, in the morning, they found him sitting dead at his desk More than a decennium before, the seer had written about himself:

> Back from embassy, gift of the king, confined to place,
> Nothing he will do with it, will have gone to God,
> Nearest family and friends of my blood,
> Find all dead, near the bed and the bench.

Guillaume Postel

1510–1581

THE erudite magi were considered healers of both body and soul. They wanted to help their fellow man. To accomplish this, it was first necessary to establish a world system into which man could be harmoniously incorporated For did not all the magi share the belief that man was the replica of everything that existed?

Guillaume Postel was one of these architects of an idealistic world Born in Dolerie, in Normandy, he learned early to face adversity. When he was eight he lost both his father and his mother during an epidemic At thirteen, he was a schoolteacher Saving his modest earnings, he was able to go to Paris, where he entered the Collège St. Barbe By his own initiative he learned Hebrew and Greek, and he was soon considered a prodigy of his time

The Emperor Charles V was at that time fighting in Tunisia, thus threatening France. The French king negotiated a treaty with the Osmans directed against the Germans. The Ambassador of France took Postel to Constantinople where the latter could make use of his knowledge of oriental languages Having successfully accomplished his task, Postel traveled in Greece, Asia Minor, Syria. On his journeys, he learned the New Greek, Armenian and a Slavic tongue. When he returned to Paris, he accepted the chair of a professor of mathematics and Oriental languages, which was offered him by Francis I The life of this scholar seemed settled; he had many sponsors and admirers, among whom were the king and his sister.

But now his career of a seer and reformer began. He gave up his respectable post and traveled through Europe, hoping to mold society into a completely new form. Several times he was offered brilliant positions by European potentates, but he always declined. From the Orient he had brought back an extraordinary library of ancient Arabic and Hebrew works which poverty compelled him now to sell.

A witness reports that he heard him preach in Venice that all religions should be fused into one, the Mohammedan, the Hebrew, and the Christian Postel wanted to unite the whole known world under the hegemony of the French king, with the Pope ruling over spiritual matters, though elected by a secular assembly He advocated one religion, one king, one Pope, one government, one humanity, a scheme which attracted the interest of many scholars and statesmen Naturally, the Germans were displeased with the planned French hegemony, yet, strangely enough, the emperor protected Postel and sent him to Vienna to supervise the printing of Arabic books In consideration for his learnedness Postel's adversaries treated him leniently, for they saw in him the dreamer rather than the dangerous revolutionary Postel, however, was very serious about his plans, although they were as impractical as they were ambitious, they testify to his unshakable confidence in the power of man's intelligence

Postel claimed that he had received his ideas by divine revelation The Hebrew scholar read the will of God in the stars In archaic Hebrew letters eternal laws were written upon the heavenly vault In drawing lines between the stars, one could form letters and words This idea was later adopted by Richelieu's librarian, the Cabalist Gaffarel (fig 143)

Postel also concerned himself with the purification and completion of the Christian faith Being a syncretist in the Gnostic sense, he shared the Gnostics' interest in the female sex The soul is divided into the *animus* and the *anima*, the male and the female part which have their separate residences in the brain and in the heart. Christ, he said, had redeemed the male element of the soul, redemption still awaits the lower, female part, which could be raised from sin only with the help of a woman This chosen saviour-woman he had met in Venice Her name was Joan, she was fifty years old and died before her mission was fulfilled, but her spirit penetrated Postel, who called himself male and female simultaneously

Had Postel clung to his general Christian ideas and political plans, he probably would not have encountered open hostility But this idealist and magus was attracted to Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, whom he visited in Rome. The two men seemed to agree, Postel was accepted as a novice in the Society of Jesus, but after eleven months he had to be dismissed, Loyola being opposed to his reading of Oriental books and his reformatory plans

The dismissal was followed by his incarceration He seemed doomed to spend the rest of his life in the prisons of the Holy Inquisition But there was a revolt in Rome, the prisons were opened, and Postel escaped He traveled again and settled finally in Paris where his position as professor of Oriental languages had been kept open for him.



Fig 142 Portrait of Guillaume Postel

His courses now became so successful that the rooms of the university were not large enough to hold his audience The mystical allusions in his discourses were reported to the authorities, and Postel was compelled to recant some of his assertions His recantation, however, was not a capitulation With great dignity he defended his ideas, correcting only some of his views about Joan, the Venetian Virgin This document, written for Catherine de' Medici, was never printed It is preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris

He was ultimately granted a refuge in the Convent of St Martin des Champs where he remained the rest of his life Not a prisoner there, as some have asserted, he continued his studies undisturbed, receiving friends, students, sponsors, and various people whom his brilliant rhetoric had converted to his faith and wisdom

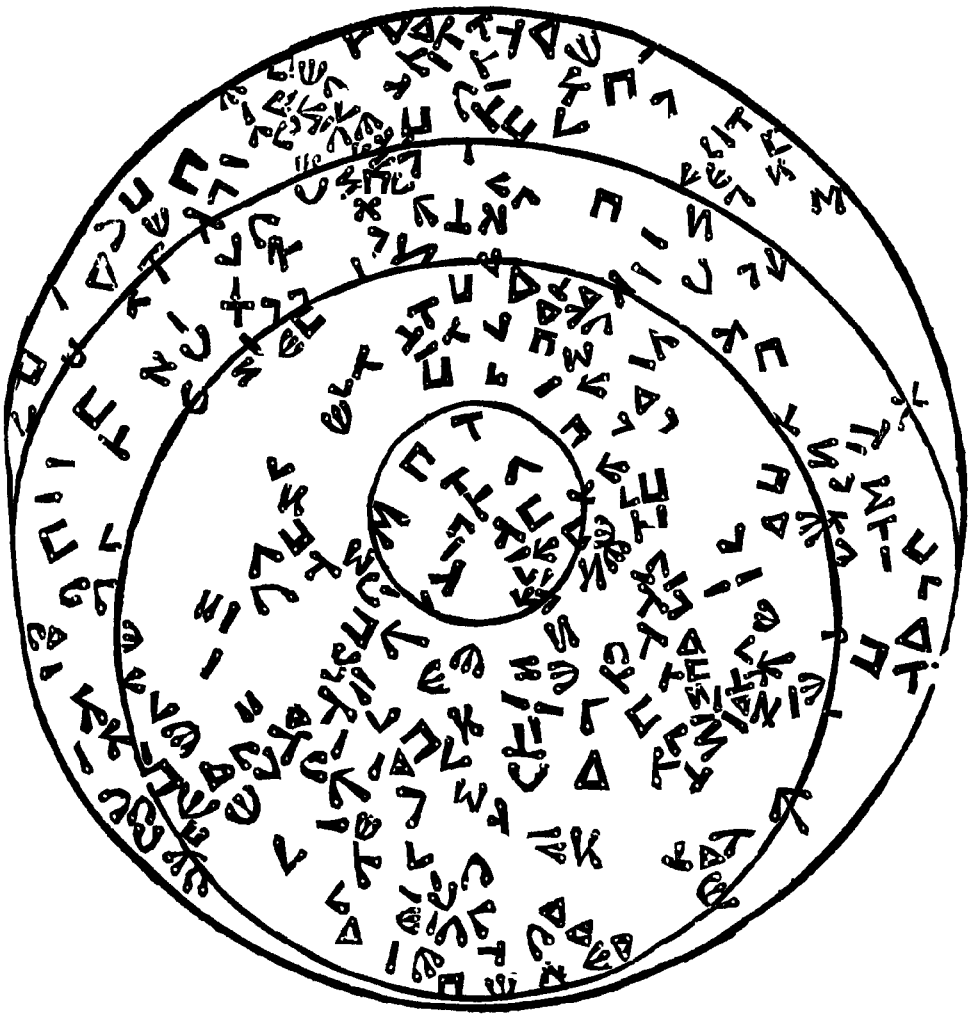


Fig 143 The Celestial Alphabet

Giambattista della Porta

1538–1615

FROM the Renaissance Porta inherited imagination, elasticity of thought and a taste for intellectual adventure. He stood upon magical ground and interpreted the world alchemistically, a few of his experiments, however, were of a scientific nature To the camera obscura he added the lens, for which reason he has been called the father of photography. He also invented and described other optical instruments. Modern ophthalmology is indebted to him for his study of the human eye

Porta in his later years collected rare specimens of the animal, the vegetable and the mineral world and grew exotic plants in his garden. Travelers used to go to Naples to visit this private museum, one of the first of its kind, and also his botanical station It is likely that Porta's activity inspired the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680) to start his famous collection in Rome.

Porta's master, we read, was Arnold of Villanova But the latter died in 1311, two hundred and twenty-seven years before Porta was born Arnold's works probably did influence Porta since they contain items which reappear in the latter's book on *Natural Magic*, and both stress the importance of experimentation. Upon one point, however, the two physicians disagree completely, namely on the influence of the stars upon the human body, on man's features, his complexion and his destiny

An article by Casey A. Wood (New York, 1935) draws the conclusion from Porta's book, *The Celestial Physiognomy*, that the Neapolitan physician believed in astrology. Wood attributes this "superstition" to the influence of the Church. But both assertions are erroneous. The Church by no means appointed herself a promoter of astrology, and in the book mentioned, Porta states repeatedly that neither complexion nor inclination derives from the stars but from man's *humors* "The ensemble of a constellation, the astrologers say, is like a painting whose force derives from the various colors. The heavenly aspect at man's birth will prescribe in him customs, habits, and a disposition to certain diseases Thus speak the astrologers, but things work differently, they do not derive from planets we declare that *they are caused by humors* . ."

But how are such humors produced? People who work hard, like those in the country, become dry and hot and sweat out their aquosity. They consume coarse food, as their parents did Such habits cause their humors to develop in a different way from the humors of people who live quietly, who eat succulent meals, who relax often, whose humor will be more even-tempered, more fluid, and whose skin is more tender.

"Man's form is a gift from heaven, not from the heaven of the planets but from God the creator who stamps and adorns the individual with his character. And this character or these features may be beautiful, splendid, majestic, be-

cause they are shaped in the image of paradise, of the angels, and finally of God Himself in Whom resides the sum of beauty, splendor, and majesty . . ."

Porta defends free will and possible development from the lower degree to the higher, for he knows several people of mean ancestry who have achieved wisdom and honor

There is no doubt that the Neapolitan physician was favored by heaven. At six, Porta wrote a composition in Latin and Italian. At fifteen, he composed his three books on *Natural Magic*, a work which was reprinted many times and later amplified by him In his youth, he traveled with his brother in Italy, Spain and France, visiting the learned and conversing with them Upon his return to Naples, he founded, in 1560, the Academy of the Secrets of Nature which Pope Paul V ordered to be closed Porta was called to Rome to give an account of the society's activities His explanations were accepted, for after this episode he was no longer molested

He wrote two tragedies and numerous comedies, of which one was still being performed on the stage in the eighteenth century, namely the *Astrologer*, presented in London in 1773

A work on *Curvilinear Elements* is his contribution to geometry, also an architectural treatise and a book on hydraulics, works which certainly cannot be classified as magic

His world image was, however, a magical one, like that of Pico della Mirandola, who at times also rejected astrology, while accepting other magical beliefs Porta's system is a magico-spiritualistic metaphysics, which leads him constantly to conclusions of analogies between plants, animals and men Similar humors are found in various apparently unrelated organisms Plants and animals that correspond in shape are interrelated A leaf formed like a stag horn shares the characters of the deer (fig 145). The horse is a noble animal, therefore it is a sign of nobility to walk erect with the head held high Men who resemble a donkey are like that animal timid, stupid, nervous He who looks like an ostrich is akin to it in character he is timid, elegant, vicious, stolid A man who reminds us of a swine, *is* a swine, eating greedily and having all the other characteristics, such as rudeness, irascibility, lack of discipline, sordidness, lack of intelligence and modesty In a similar way, men who look like ravens are impudent, those who resemble oxen are stubborn, lazy, irascible; men who have lips shaped like those of a lion are hearty, magnanimous, courageous others who make us think of a ram are timid, malicious, and humble.

When practicing medicine, Porta had many occasions to observe his patients, and to study their character and complexion, the results of this studious inquiry are laid down in his book *Physiognomy*, presenting a striking and convincing system, not to be dismissed lightly.

Porta's early experiments in physiognomy influenced the eighteenth century philosopher, Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801), who wrote many volumes on the art of judging men by their features His elaborate system includes morphological, anthropological, anatomical, histrionical and graphical studies. Lavater quotes excerpts from Porta's books and inserts illustrations from the latter's work About Porta's woodcut of a bovine face (fig. 146), the amiable

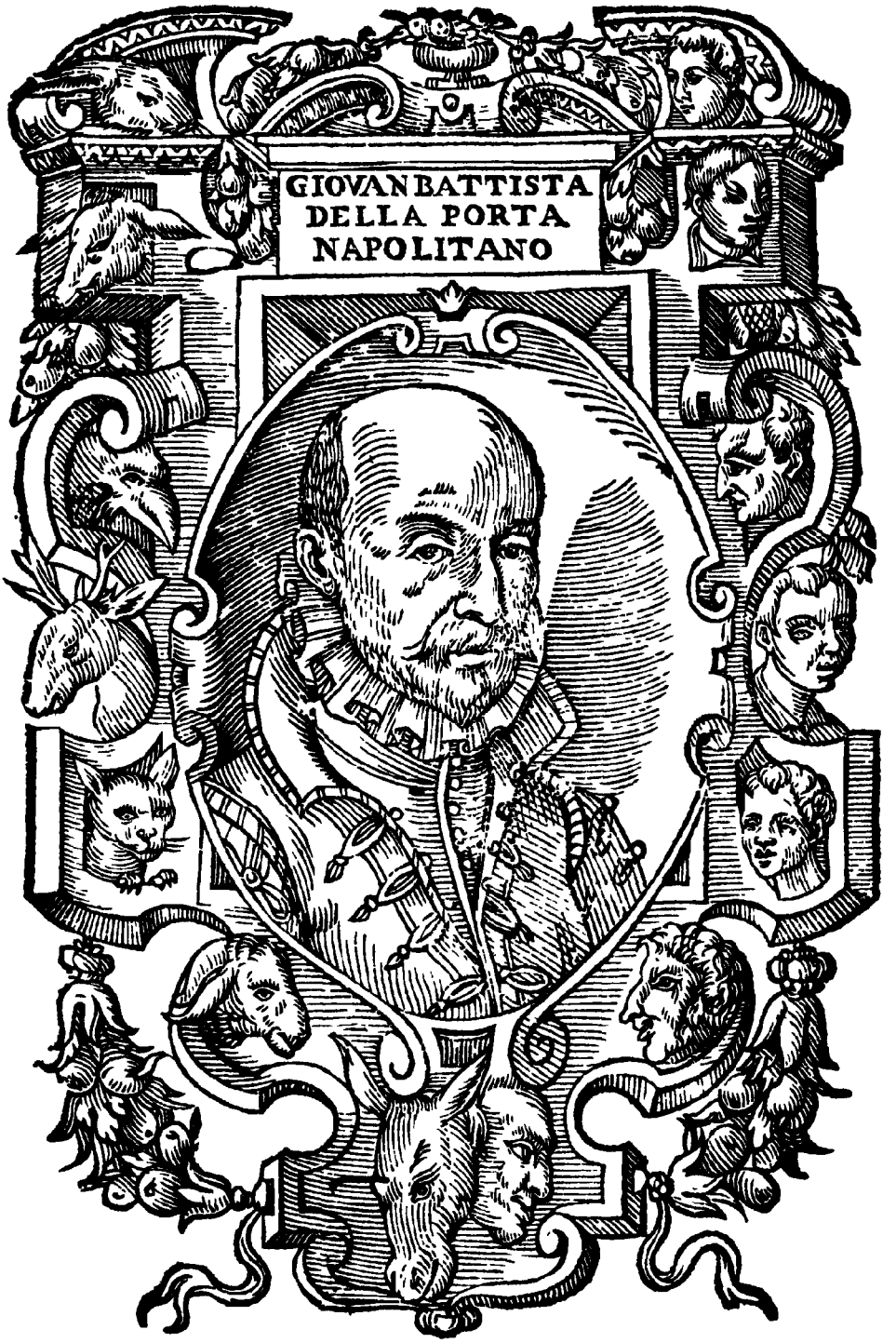


Fig 144 Giambattista della Porta



Fig 145 Occult Affinities between the Animal World and the Vegetable World

Lavater remarks indignantly, "among a million men are there only two who approach the brute to such a degree? And suppose there existed only one individual of this type, how superior he would still be to the ox!"

Based upon the testimonies of antiquity, such as that of Pliny, Porta introduced into his theory the idea that some beings are mutually attracted, others repelled Creation is built upon these two principles, which balance and unite all things

In his *Natural Magic* Porta, referring to these principles as disagreement and accord, says that "some things are joined together as if they were in a mutual



Fig 146 A Man of a Bovine Nature

league, and others are at variance and discord among themselves, or they have something in them which is a terror and destructive to each other, *whereof there can be rendered no probable reason*"

He offers many examples of such mutual reaction A wild bull tied to a fig tree will become tame through a sympathy which pervades the two beings in their very essence to such a degree that beef, boiled with fig leaves, will rapidly become very tender, a fact which according to Porta was known to Zoroaster. Such power can be used chemically, so that the milky juice of figs, together with other ingredients, is a remedy against the drought of the blood of bulls

Many other wonderful things are described in Porta's book on magic He asserts the frequently described marvel of animals being produced spontaneously from putrefaction He describes the dangerous art of making bread heavier by increasing the weight of wheat and gives instruction for the counterfeiting

of precious stones and for similar arts which his honest readers were undoubtedly most eager to learn The chapter on physics contains items such as how to make a man mad for a day, or how to cause sleep with a mandrake This chapter deals also with the art of causing pleasant and troublesome dreams They are produced by making the subject consume beans, lentils, onions, leeks, garlic, and the like Special parts of Porta's work are devoted to distillation, fireworks, cookery, hunting and fishing, and other activities that render life agreeable.

For those having weak eyes, there are descriptions of convex and concave glasses and other optical wonders, and finally in a last chapter which he calls *Chaos*, he enumerates a few experiments "which are set down without classical order." One of them, for which a zealous engraver has made a striking image, is the experiment with a lamp We quote it in full so that the reader may test the incredibly marvelous virtue of a mare's excretion "I much rejoiced when I found among the ancients that Anaxilaus the philosopher was wont to make sport with the snuff of a candle and the wick, and by such delusions would cause men's heads to look like monsters, if we may believe Pliny But taking venomous matter that comes from mares newly having taken horse, and burning it in a new lamp, it will make *men's heads seem like horse heads*, and such like I do not know whether this is true as I never tried it But I take this for truth" (Fig 147)

Thus ends Porta's book, and its conclusion contradicts somewhat its beginning, where he states "I shall observe what our ancestors have said Then I shall show by my own experience whether they are true or false. . . ."



Fig 147 Astonishing Transformation Produced by Natural Magic

CABALA

Christian Cabalists and the Jews

THE humanists of the Renaissance rediscovered the beauty of art and learning of antiquity Pagan literature was considered the ideal for good writing The study of ancient languages became widespread Pico della Mirandola, Reuchlin, Pistorius, Melanchthon, Erasmus were contemptuous of the half-educated who wrote and spoke a barbaric Latin or Greek Agrippa uses as an argument against his opponents the fact that they ignore Latin grammar and write idolatry with a Y, implying that such men cannot possibly be the defenders of a good cause

Trithemius considered the knowledge of languages more important than any other erudition. He alluded to a secret universal language, comprehensible to all mankind Recalling the confusion of tongues at the time of the Babylonian tower, he suggests that through language a divine curse might be lifted from humanity

During the Middle Ages, Hebrew had been utterly neglected The great Christian scholars, with the possible exception of Raymond Lully, ignored it A few magicians pretended to Hebrew knowledge, inserting in their incantations generally known words such as *Elohim* or *Adonai*, or borrowing from Jewish magical texts cabalistic anagrams whose meaning was not always clear to them

In the early Middle Ages the Jews had been propagators of Arabic wisdom However, cultural exchange between Christians and Jews later became difficult Persecution changed their intellectual course They restricted themselves to the study of their holy scriptures and the Cabala Moreover, the Jewish people indulged in numerous popular superstitions and magical customs whether adopted from their Christian neighbors, or carried along from time immemorial Especially in the Germanic North, the Jews were regarded as sorcerers, poisoners, philtre-cooks, and in times of epidemics, they were accused of having attempted mass poisonings of their Gentile neighbors In vain did the Jews plead that their community was just as pest-stricken as the rest of the city Popular logic shifting from superstition to religious ethics saw in the Jews' disease a divine punishment of the criminals

Mediaeval science offered no tool for the systematic spreading of disease The Jews, however, though unjustly accused of magic in this particular instance, did practice magical arts, and many magical customs had worked themselves into the Hebrew religion

Like other Europeans, the Jews were powerfully affected by the Renaissance Now the new spirit penetrated their seclusion and through the dismal lanes of the Ghetto echoed the optimistic words of Hutten· "It is a delight to live"

Erudite Gentiles must have been attracted by the secretiveness of the Jewish people whom they believed some superhuman knowledge had kept alive



Fig 148 Portrait of Johann Reuchlin

long after the other nations of antiquity had vanished. Curiosity overcame prejudice. Hebrew could be learned from the Jews, their neighbors, who recited their prayers in the language of their ancestors and wrote their books in the handsomely shaped characters of old

This intellectual exchange was encouraged by humanistic Popes and prelates who needed translators of holy texts In Italy, a considerable number of Jews took part in public life teaching at universities, like Lazaro de Frigeis, who lectured in Padua. Others were known as authorities in philosophical matters and more than once were they called upon as arbiters in learned controversies. It

is also significant that in Mantua the first book-printer was the Jewish doctor Elia.

The rising interest in Jewish lore and wisdom was stimulated by the Humanists' search for a philosophical or metaphysical system that would free them from the mediaeval bonds of Aristotelianism. Such a system they discovered in an esoteric doctrine, the Cabala.

Participating actively in the intellectual life of Europe, Jewish scholars were no longer able to withhold the Cabala from their Gentile colleagues And soon Christian cabalists arose, some of them challenging their teachers in subtlety and erudition.

Pico della Mirandola, having gained knowledge of Hebrew grammar, explored the scriptures of the Talmud as well as the Cabala. He surrounded himself with Jewish teachers, such as the famous Eliah del Medigo, Flavias Mithridates, and Johanan Alemanno In his *Heptaplus*, Pico wrote cabalistically on the seven days of creation; his book upon selected and obscure cabalistic texts *(Cabalisticarum Selectiones)* was printed in Venice in 1569 Cabalistic ideas are also expressed in many of his nine hundred theses *(Conclusiones Philosophicae Cabalisticae et Theologicae,* Rome, 1486) In Pico we meet with the first Gentile collector of Hebrew manuscripts

He was succeeded by Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522), who signed his works with the Hellenized name "Capnio." Reuchlin's interest in Hebrew lore was awakened when he met Pico during a journey to Italy in 1490 Like Pico, Reuchlin sought knowledge of the Cabala from Jewish scholars Among his teachers were the philosopher Obadja of Sforno and Emmanuel Provinciale, physician of the Popes since Alexander VI. Reuchlin is the author of a Hebrew grammar, a Hebrew orthography, and two famous works, *On the Mirific Word* (1494) and *On the Cabalistic Art* (1517) He defended Hebrew scriptures against the accusations of a baptized Jew, Pfefferkorn, who, encouraged by the Dominicans, had demanded that all Hebrew manuscripts in Frankfurt and Cologne should be burned. Upon Reuchlin's favorable report, however, Emperor Maximilian rescinded his edict

John Pistorius (1544–1607), a follower of Luther, compiled the most important works of cabalism His book *Artis Cabalisticae Tomus I* (1587) exerted a widespread influence. Sir Thomas Browne used it as a source, and other English scholars consulted it in the following century. Pistorius' anthology comprises works of Paulus Ricius, a converted Jew, of Rabbi Joseph, Reuchlin, Leone Ebreo and commentaries on some of Pico's nine hundred theses Not knowing the magnitude of the literature of cabalism, Pistorius endeavored to publish them all· "Others will follow in the second volume," he writes in his preface; but this project was never realized

In his *Three Books on Occult Philosophy,* Cornelius Agrippa expounds the Word-Cabala, the marvelous operations performed with Hebrew anagrams, magic squares and the names of angels which are discovered through calculation In his second book, he speaks of the magical virtue immanent in numbers Chapter I bears the suggestive title *Of the Necessity of Mathematical Learning and of the many Wonderful Works which are done by Mathematical*



Fig 149 Robert Fludd

Arts only. Agrippa laid stress on the practice of cabalistic operations, which he considered a hitherto neglected part of natural magic

Guillaume Postel injected his knowledge of the secret doctrine into numerous writings He published in 1538 a book on the origin of the Hebrew people and their language, and in 1547 *The Key of Hidden Things (Absconditorum Clavis)*, in which he asserts that for the knowledge of God it is necessary that one's study be guided by the "perscrutation" of sacred letters He translated into Latin for the first time the *Book Yetzirah*, printed in Paris, in 1552

Among the English cabalists the greatest one and perhaps the only one who grasped the ensemble of the doctrine was Robert Fludd (1574–1637). In some respects akin to Pico, as he tried to reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, Fludd attempted to identify the ten spheres of Aristotle with the ten Sefirots of the Cabala which are the various manifestations of the divine being. Like his famous predecessors, Fludd was acquainted with Jewish scholars. Under their influence and that of Agrippa, he wrote his *Mosaical Philosophy* (1659) and *Summum Bonum* (1629), in apology of the Rosicrucian brotherhood, defending alchemy, magic and the Cabala In agreement with the Jewish mystics, Fludd believed that illness is caused by demons, his work, *The Whole Mystery of Diseases (Integrum Morborum Mysterium*, 1631), is entirely based upon this conviction.

The impulse given by the early Christian cabalists lasted throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1642, Stephan Rittangel, professor at Konigsberg, published his Latin version of the *Book Yetzirah*.

Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–1689) compiled with the help of a rabbi his *Cabala Unveiled (Kabbala Denudata*, 1677 and 1684) It includes in Latin translations three of the oldest fragments of the *Book Zohar* and an extensive commentary on the transcendental meaning of words occurring therein. The *Cabala Unveiled* contains in addition several treatises among which are *The Books Druschim* by Isaac Luria, founder of a cabalistic sect in the sixteenth century, and the *Treatise on the Soul* by Moses Cordovero who founded at that same period his own school. These two contemporaries are distinguished from one another by their approach to the sacred Cabala Luria was a dreamer whose imagination led him away from the true tradition, Cordovero followed the prescribed way the fact that both of them appear in *Cabala Unveiled* is significant Rosenroth compiled writings of varying quality and alongside of precious scriptures he published also others of negligible value In spite of this flaw, the *Cabala Unveiled* is one of the most important publications concerned with the old Hebrew doctrine, and is still used as a source by modern scholars.

Secrets of the Bible

THE Cabala is a metaphysical or mystical system by which the elect shall know God and the Universe It will raise him above common knowledge and make him understand the profound meaning and the plan of creation. These secrets are immanent in Holy Writ, yet not to be grasped by him who understands the texts literally The Old Testament is a book of symbols; its narrations are the mantle in which are clothed sublime revelations "Woe to him who takes the mantle for the law " To such a one, these simple accounts are the whole truth If this were so, Writ could not be called the Book of books, if the wise men of today would meet and compose collectively a similar book, it would without doubt be more coherent, less obscure and less shocking.

The Hebrew letters in which the sacred texts are written are not just signs invented by man for the recording of things, events and thoughts. Letters and numbers are reservoirs of divine power "Immovable numbers and characters," Agrippa says, "breathe forth the harmony of the Godhead, being consecrated by divine assistance Therefore, the creatures above fear them, those below tremble at them "

The cabalists' task is to unriddle this hidden meaning through methods handed down by tradition The verities thus gathered are in accord with the principles established by the founders of the Cabala But who were these founders? History and legend disagree on this point In cabalistic writings we read that God Himself revealed the Cabala to mankind in Biblical times Adam received a cabalistic book from the angel Raziel, and through this wisdom he was enabled to overcome the grief of his fall and to regain dignity The Book of Raziel was handed down to Solomon who by its power subdued earth and hell In another account, the *Book Yetzirah* is attributed to Abraham, but the prevalent opinion is that on Sinai, Moses received the key of how to interpret mystically the Scriptures No one before Esdras had set down such interpretation (fifth century B C) Some fifty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Rabbi Akiba wrote the *Book of Yetzirah*, and his pupil, Rabbi Simon bar Yohai, composed the *Zohar* So much for legend, ever fond of the marvelous, and yet not entirely wrong when placing the origin of the Cabala in the pre-Christian epoch A cosmogony based upon letters existed in Israel 150 years before our era It is also likely that the Hebrew priesthood heeded oral traditions, as did the priests of other nations That such empirical lore lived beside the scriptures we may gather from Esdras who refers to the revelation made to Moses. "These words," speaks God, "thou shalt declare and these thou shalt hide" (II, 14 5, 6).

Remnants of so venerable an age are not evident in the numerous works of the Cabala But many of its ideas are latent in the apocalyptic texts written in the first and second century of our era Yet, the origin of a well-defined cabalistic doctrine must be placed in still more recent times. During the Gaonic period

which lasted from A.D. 591–1038, Neo-Platonic and Pythagorean influences transformed the bulk of learning into a metaphysical system of a speculative character. This change took place, not in Palestine, but in Babylon where the Geonim, presidents of the Jewish Academy, decided in religious matters. The worthy to whom the secrets were revealed were called Mekkubalim The oldest cabalistic book, the *Sefer Yetzirah* (Formation) originated in the Gaonic period. The word Cabala, however, does not appear in literature before the eleventh century, and the *Book Zohar* (Light) seems to be a product of the late thirteenth century, an epoch when the Cabala spread into a vast literature. The *Zohar* was and is considered the holy book, the pillar of cabalistic wisdom It owes its present shape to the famous Moses de Leon (1250–1305)

The Cabala betrays the influence of Gentile philosophy and esoterism in the fundamental ideas that the plan of the world architecture can be grasped by man and that the divine being can be comprehended (though not entirely) through speculation.

From Greek philosophy sprang the cabalistic idea that the world is constructed upon numbers and letters In the *Timaeus*, Plato deals with the proportions in which the universe is built Neo-Pythagorean philosophers understood numbers and letters as divine beings endowed with supernatural powers Alien to ancient Hebrew theology is also the cabalistic idea of the *Sefirot*, manifestations of God's existence in Creation They are akin to the Neo-Platonic Intelligences, intermediaries between the intelligible and the material world

The ten *Sefirot* are contained in *Adam Kadmon*, the Primordial Man to whom Paul perhaps alludes when saying, "God created a heavenly Adam in the spiritual world and an earthly Adam of clay for the material world" (1 Cor 15 45-50) And a Hebrew scripture, the *Midrash*, says that this first Adam is the Messiah whose spirit is ever-present That things and beings exist as ideas before they are materially created has been expressed by Plato and also by Zoroaster Moreover, akin to Zoroastrian teaching is the cabalistic *En Soph*, the incomprehensible, limitless Godhead from whom sprang the Sefirot by emanation, just as everything emanated from the Zoroastrian Zrvan Akaran, the divinized Space-Time

More such similitudes exist between the teachings of the Cabala on the one hand, and the Gnostic doctrines, the doctrines of the Alexandrian School, the philosophy of Philo and that of the Stoics, on the other

The earliest cabalists, unwilling to ignore or unable to withstand these influences, were faced with the problem of how to accept them without doing violence to the existing scriptures which were inspired by God and could therefore not be altered The solution which they found was to read into the ancient texts whatever they wished to discover in them and to affirm that these ideas had been hidden in Writ from the beginning In order to prove this, they resorted to means like that of changing the value of letters or rather to substitute one letter for another, thus forming new words in accord with the cabalistic teaching This procedure can serve equally well the most diverse ideas And, in fact, it had been made use of before for the interpretation of the Talmud From bibliomantic practices, moreover, there is only a short step to magical



Fig 150 Allegory of the Cabala

operations. The practical Cabala is nothing else but magic, endeavoring to induce marvelous effects through the power of the spoken word

This apparent discrepancy between cabalistic theory and practice is comparable to that existing in Neo-Platonism. Plotinus attacked the Gnostics because of their belief that the spoken word could expell demons, yet, he could not prevent his followers from indulging in numerous magical customs. It is in the nature of theories that they call for practical application And instead of decrying these practices we may rather ask ourselves to what extent they have been encouraged by the theories. In reading the cabalistic texts, we will soon discover that they abound in magic For the analogies which they establish between the real and the ideal are the products of the magical belief that the order of ideas is identical with that in nature

All that falls under our senses, the cabalists affirm, can reveal divine thought, and everything that occurs in the world of intelligence will manifest itself in the world of matter.

Magic of Letters

Words do not fall into the void

Zohar

WHILST some learned investigators followed the Jewish scholars into the sublime realms of metaphysical speculation, others were attracted by the practical adaptations which the cabalistic books seemed to suggest Bibliomancy, i e , divination from scriptures, talismanic arts, and more generally thaumaturgy, still continued to haunt the magicians' minds when the true knowledge of the Cabala began to dwindle in the Christian West

Fantastic reports about Jewish adepts who performed wonders with the Cabala consolidated confidence in the power of the word The sixteenth century master, Elijah of Chelm, had with the help of the *Book Yetzirah* made an artificial man, a *Golem* (literally: shapeless matter) who came to life when Elijah wrote the secret name of God upon the clay figure's forehead A similar feat was later ascribed to Rabbi Judah Low ben Bezalel of Prague who, frightened by the evergrowing monster, erased the secret word on the Golem's forehead, whereupon the artificial man turned back again into a lifeless mass. The latter fact proved clearly that the marvel was done by the word alone, though Eleazar of Worms had, in the thirteenth century, given a very complicated recipe for the making of such monsters The same Eleazar of Worms is the supposed author of the cabalistic book which legend attributes to the angel Raziel. This book is littered with strange names, surnames and aliases of angels, formed upon known models like Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, etc.

Other such names were composed by the cabalists with a root term in accordance with the angel's specific activity or function, to which was added the suffix "el" (God). For instance: the angel who revealed to Adam the Mysteries (Hebr.. Raz) is Raziel; the angel of evil (Hebr.: Sam—poison) is Samael, the angel of the Moon (Hebr : Yerah) is Yarhiel, etc.

This simple rule, and also more complicated ones were formulated in the Talmudic period and elaborated during the Middle Ages. Three of them will

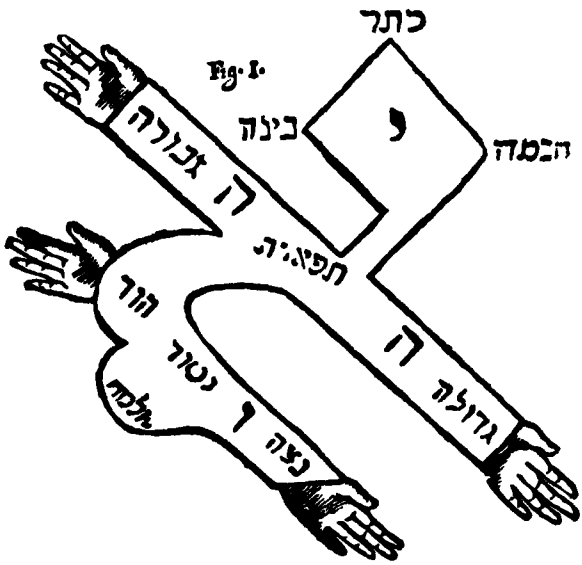


Fig 151 Cabalistic Ideogram of the Hebrew Letter Aleph

be considered here as the principal methods of the symbolic Cabala which discovers hidden meaning in letters and words of the Hebraic Bible, forming new words, anagrams and numbers, for magical use

Gematria was called a process of discovering relations between words through calculation of their numerical values. Words with the same numerical value may replace one another; or they may by their number indicate a new meaning. In the Hebrew language like in the Greek, numbers are marked with letters (fig. 157). The numerical value of Jehovah (Yehova), יהוה is 10, 5, 6, 5, totalling 26. These numbers contained in the name of God were interpreted mystically, and by similar calculations the cabalists discovered that the most mighty name of God must contain seventy-two letters. The knowledge of this name was the greatest power that man could assume.

As an instance of Biblical interpretation by Gematria the passage Gen. 14:14 may be adduced, where Abraham rescues the captive Lot with the help of his three hundred and eighteen slaves. Did Abraham really need so many men,

inasmuch as God was on his side? To this Gematria answers that the sum of the name of Abraham's majordomus, Eliezer,

א	ל	י	ע	ז	ר
1	30	10	70	7	200

of Damascus, is three hundred and eighteen and that Abraham defeated the four kings and rescued Lot with the help of one man. Gematria permitted the magician to melt together words of the same numerical value, thus forming new obscure words which were considered endowed with power.

The *Notarikon's* method was to consider the Hebrew words as consisting of abbreviations, each letter of a word being the initial of another word. Or else the first and the last letters of words were detached and arrayed in new words. Famous talismans and magical words were invented with the help of Notarikon The word *Agla*, so often occurring in magic circles, is shaped from the first letters of the benediction *Atha Gibor Leolam Adonai* (Thou art mighty for ever, O Lord) The Genesis starts with the word *Bereshit*—"at the beginning" According to Notarikon this word can be decomposed into the initial letters of the sentence· "He created the firmament, the earth, the heavens, the sea and the abyss" Another example of Notarikon's procedures is the talisman which Agrippa reproduced in his *Occult Philosophy* (fig 152) It reads *Ararita*, and it endows its owner with the power of solving all riddles of the divine word He will also be protected against evil spells, and all his desires shall be fulfilled *Araríta* are the initial letters taken from the sentence "The One, principle of His unity, the principle of His Oneness, His changing form being One" In Hebrew this reads (from right to left):

אהד ראש אחדותו ראש ייהודו תמורתו אחד

Temurah substitutes, transposes and permutes letters of words Any word may yield a hidden meaning by its anagram. In writing the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in a special order and in two lines, the letters above and below placed in relationship may substitute for each other The normal alphabetical sequence of the Hebrew letters is indicated in figure 153 Arranged in two rows of eleven letters as shown in the following scheme, A is related to L, B to T, G to Sh, etc The result is an alphabet which reads AL BT GSH DR HK WTZ ZP CHI TS YN KM This secret alphabet is called Albath, from the first two combinations.

כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א
K	Y	T	CH	Z	W	H	D	G	B	A
מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת	ל
M	N	S	I	P	TZ	K	R	SH	T	L

Based on similar arrangements, there exist numerous different alphabetical combinations which are called Abgath, Agdath, Adbag, Abbad, etc., according to their first two combinations Using such alphabets, the cabalists would dis-

cover hidden meanings everywhere in the Bible, and one word would produce another, especially when we remember that in the original Hebrew vowels are not clearly indicated. Even without mystical alphabets, one can in a scripture



Fig 152. Cabalistic Seal of Agrippa

based on consonants read various meanings into words Imagine that the English word 'boat' were written BT! It could be read bat, but, beat, bit, bait, bet.

No wonder that the cabalists, calculating words into numbers and numbers into words, discovered the entire world organization, the names of angels and those of God, and the number of the heavenly hosts which is 301,655,172.

Such was the symbolical Cabala which extracted hidden things from the Scriptures and used words for magical operations

Before leaving its realms, a story from modern Palestine will demonstrate that today the cabalists are still able to induce wonders with the help of the

Temurah When in the last war, the German army occupied Greece, the Jews in Syria were in great fear that the Germanic invasion might extend into their country. As Allied strategy seemed powerless to stem the tide, the Jews sought help from the Mekkubalim, the cabalists The latter retired to meditation, and having sat up all night, they came forth and declared to the waiting crowd that the danger was averted. They had transposed the letters of the word Syria, סוריה, into the word Russia, רוסיה, composed in Hebrew of the same letters, though differently arranged "And it came about just as they had provoked it by their magical art," for Hitler, instead of continuing his advance towards the Near East, attacked the Soviet Union shortly after

By the power of words and numbers the cabalists summoned spirits, extinguished fires, banished diseases. But a few Gentiles used their knowledge for another purpose With arguments gathered from cabalism, they sought to convert the Jewish scholars to Christianity In the *Zohar* we learn that the highest *manifestation of the Supreme, Adam Kadmon, is shaped like man, as the form* of man includes all that is in heaven and on earth For this reason, *God has chosen man's form as His own.* To the Gentile cabalist, God assuming the form of man could be no one else but Christ Moreover, we read in *Zohar* that, having created this Celestial Man, God used him as a chariot for His descent

In Heinrich Khunrath's cabalistic scheme (fig 153), the nucleus of the divine emanations, the En Soph, is occupied by the figure of the Saviour He is standing on the phoenix, symbol of resurrection and immortality From the luminous center flash forth the ten appellations of God which correspond to the ten Sefirot, circularly arranged in this scheme And the Sefirot throw their rays upon the Ten Commandments which form the outer circle of the scheme The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet group themselves as mediators between the Sefirot and the Commandments Scattered in the luminous center are the five letters ישוה (Yeshuah), Jesus Though well imagined, this diagram might hardly have converted the Jews For in placing Christ within the En Soph, the Infinite and Unlimited Being, Khunrath has disregarded the dogma accepted by both Christian and Jewish cabalists, namely that Adam Kadmon is contained in the Sefirot.

In Knorr von Rosenroth's *Cabala Unveiled* (Frankfurt, 1684), a curious dialogue between the Cabalist and the Christian Philosopher serves also the purpose of converting the Jews It enumerates all arguments produced as proof that Adam Kadmon is no one else but Christ The short treatise is, according to its author, "an application of the Hebrew doctrine of the Cabala to the dogmas of the new covenant, with the aim of forming an hypothesis, profitable to the conversion of the Jews"

Is it necessary to say that in this dialogue the Christian Philosopher wields the power? The half-converted Cabalist initiates the conversation, saying "Do you not know my friend, that there is nothing more urgent than our conversion?" Probably few such discussions had the desired effect, for Adam Kadmon was endowed with too many attributes which could only through farfetched subtleties be identified with those of Christ Did not the *Sefer Zohar* say about his traits "He appears in the form of the old man par excellence, as the ancient

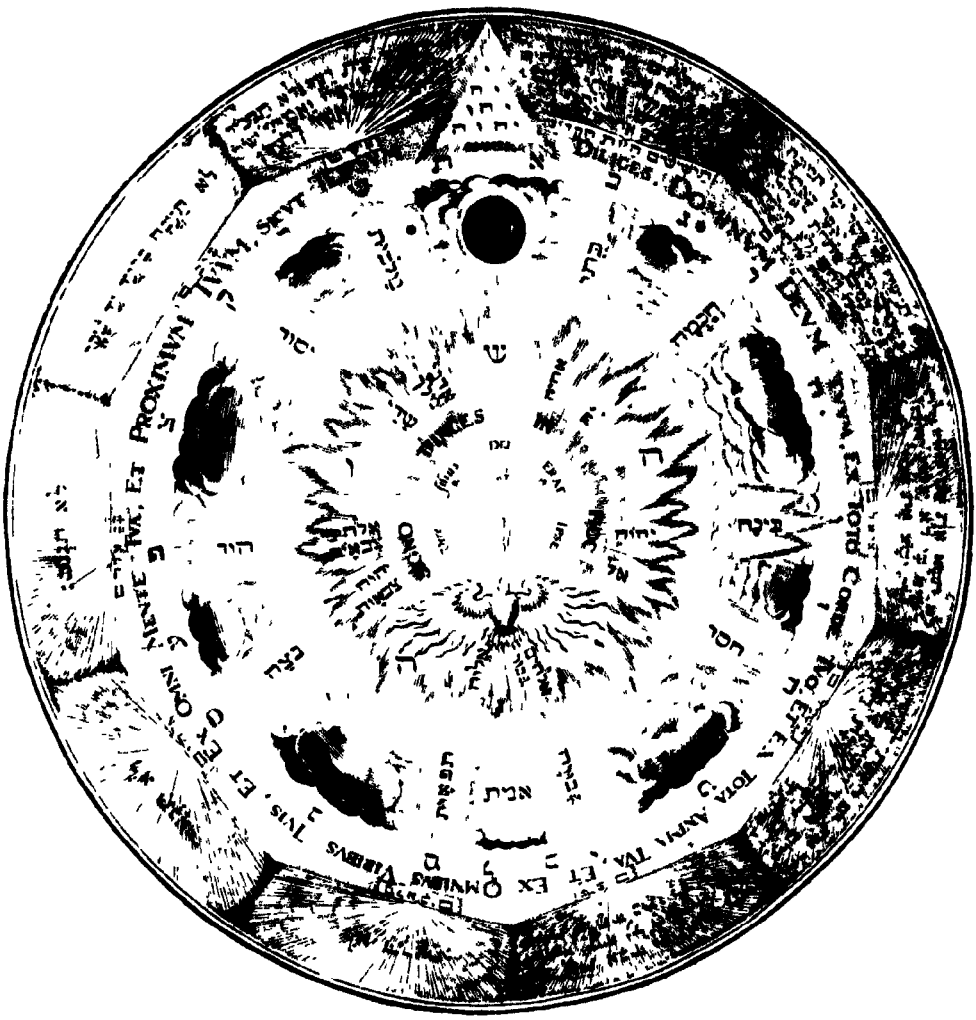


Fig 153 Cabalistic Allegory

among the ancients, that which is the most unknown among the unknown. But in the form in which he makes himself known to us, He remains still unknown. His garment is white and his mien brilliant He is seated upon a throne of

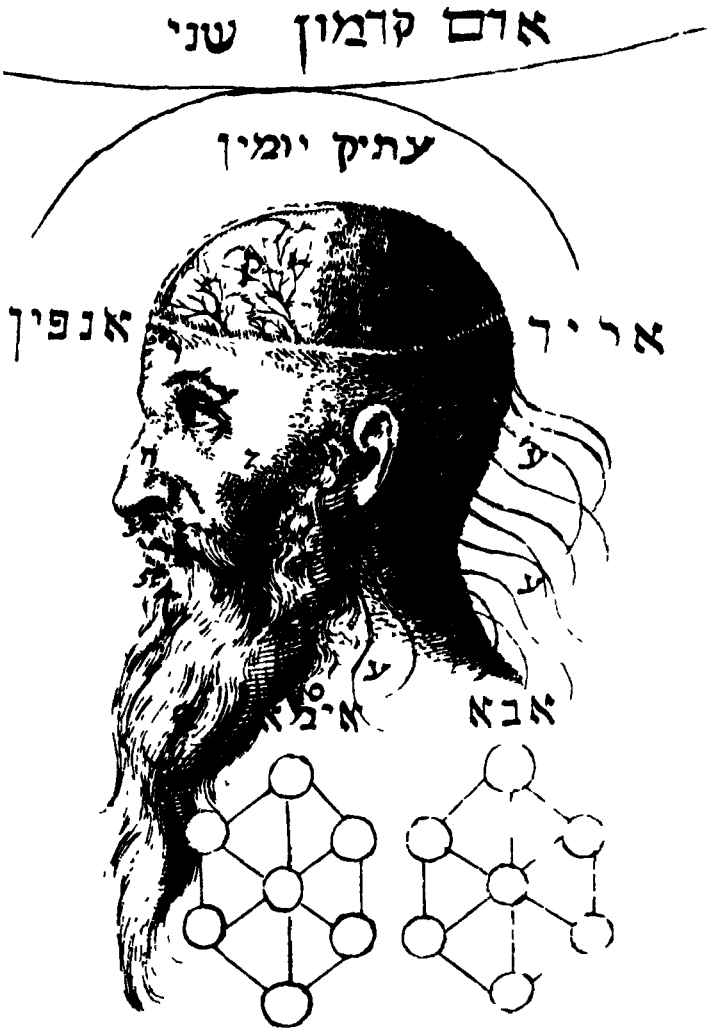


Fig 154 The Head of Adam Kadmon

sparks which he commands at will. The white light of His head illuminates a hundred thousand worlds. . . The length of His face is three hundred and seventy thousand worlds. He is called the Long-Face, for this is the name of the ancient of the ancients . . " (Fig 154)

Conscious of these difficulties, Athanasius Kircher reshaped the Cabala more energetically than his colleagues He left little of its original form. Kircher re-

placed the famous ten Sefirot by twelve Christian appellations of the Eternal. The seventy-two hidden epithets of God, he says, are simply God's name pronounced in the various tongues: God, Dieu, Dio, Gott, etc. The anti-cabalistic scheme suggests that, when God is summoned with fervent faith in any language of the earth, He will grant help more readily than when called with intricate magical formulas and bizarre appellations

The Book Yetzirah

A SHORT résumé of the *Book Yetzirah* [1] may help to convey to the reader a general idea of the character of theoretical Cabala.

"This book," says Juda Halevi, "teaches us the existence of the One God, in showing us that amidst variety and multiplicity there exists harmony and unity which can only derive from the One Coordinator."

The *Sefer Yetzirah* reveals the formation of the universe, created by the One and sustained by Him, and everything has sprung from Him through emanation

Unlike the Bible, the *Book Yetzirah* tells us that God shaped the universe, not out of nothing but from Himself. *God is the matter and form of the universe.* Everything exists in Him, He is at the bottom of all things and beings, which carry the symbols of His intelligence The Whole, God and the universe, is a perfect unity The uniting bond in creation are the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the first ten numbers (expressed by the first ten letters). These two types of signs are called the thirty-two marvelous ways of wisdom, upon which God has founded His name They are identified with thought rendered visible, and they are superior to bodies and substances God's breath is in the Hebrew letters They are equally of man and of God

They must be distinguished in three different forms the *Sefar*, i e , the numbers which express proportions, weight, movement and harmony, the *Sipur*, the word and voice of the living God which are alluded to in the words. "Let there be light, and there was light " The *Sefer*, finally, meaning writing. God's writing is the creation, God's word is His writing; and His thought is His word Thought, word and writ are one and the same in God, whereas in man they are three The ten numbers are the essential form of all that is, the number 10 is the basis of the world plan Through them, intelligence perceives the world's existence and the divine action These numbers are called the *Sefirot*

Their names are· Kether, Crown, the ideal principle of all entities, and which in itself embraces all other beings, Chochma, Wisdom, the principle of all life; Binah, Intelligence, the principle of everything that has understanding, Chesed, Goodness, the model of all grace, Geburah, Power, the principle of the distribution of reward or punishment, Tiferet, Glory, the principle toward which converges all that is beautiful and perfect, Nisah, Victory, to which conforms the permanent and the lasting, Hod, Honor, the principle of all that belongs to the glory of superior beings; Yesod, Foundation, the principle of all that flows

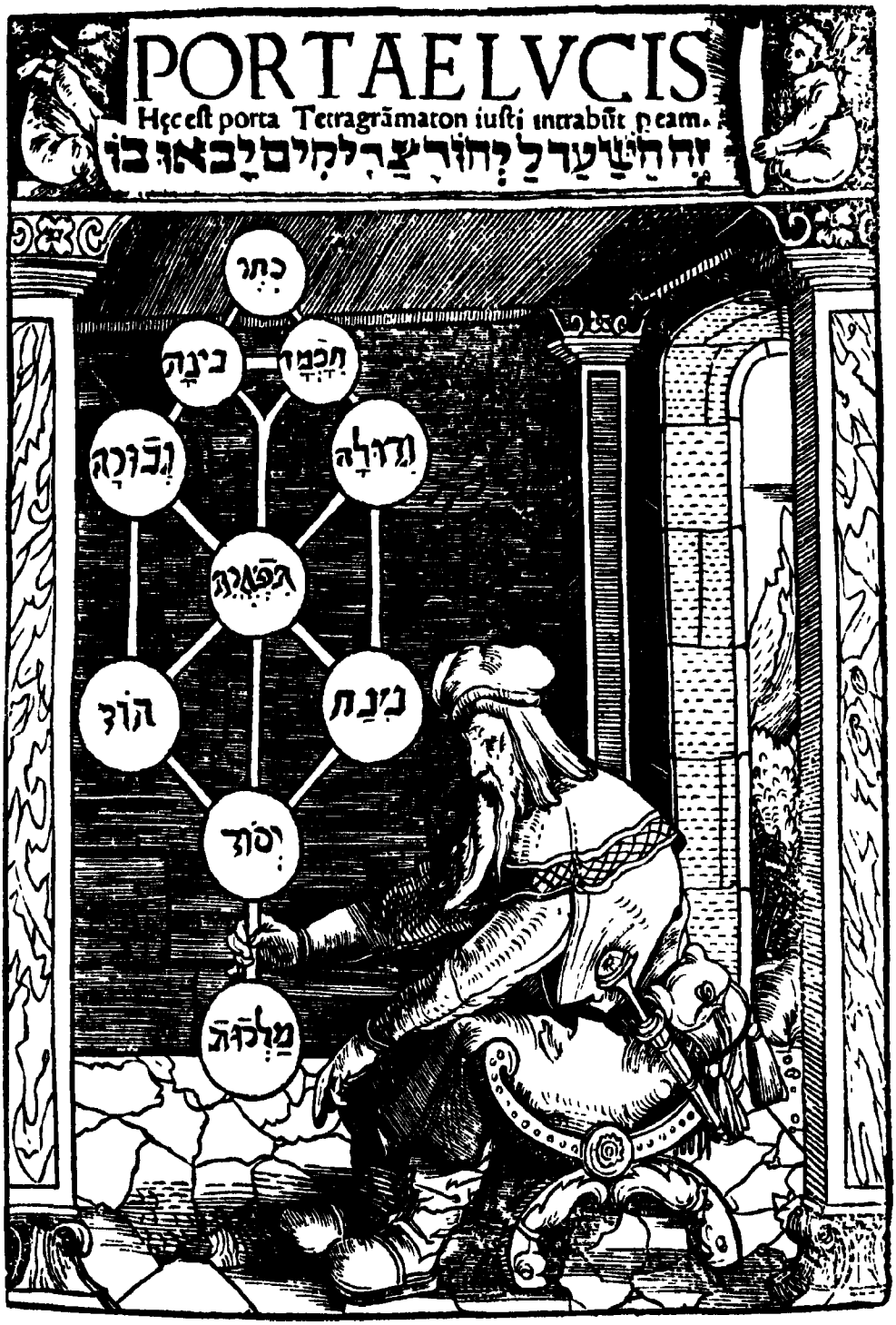


Fig 155 The Sefirotic Tree, according to Ricius

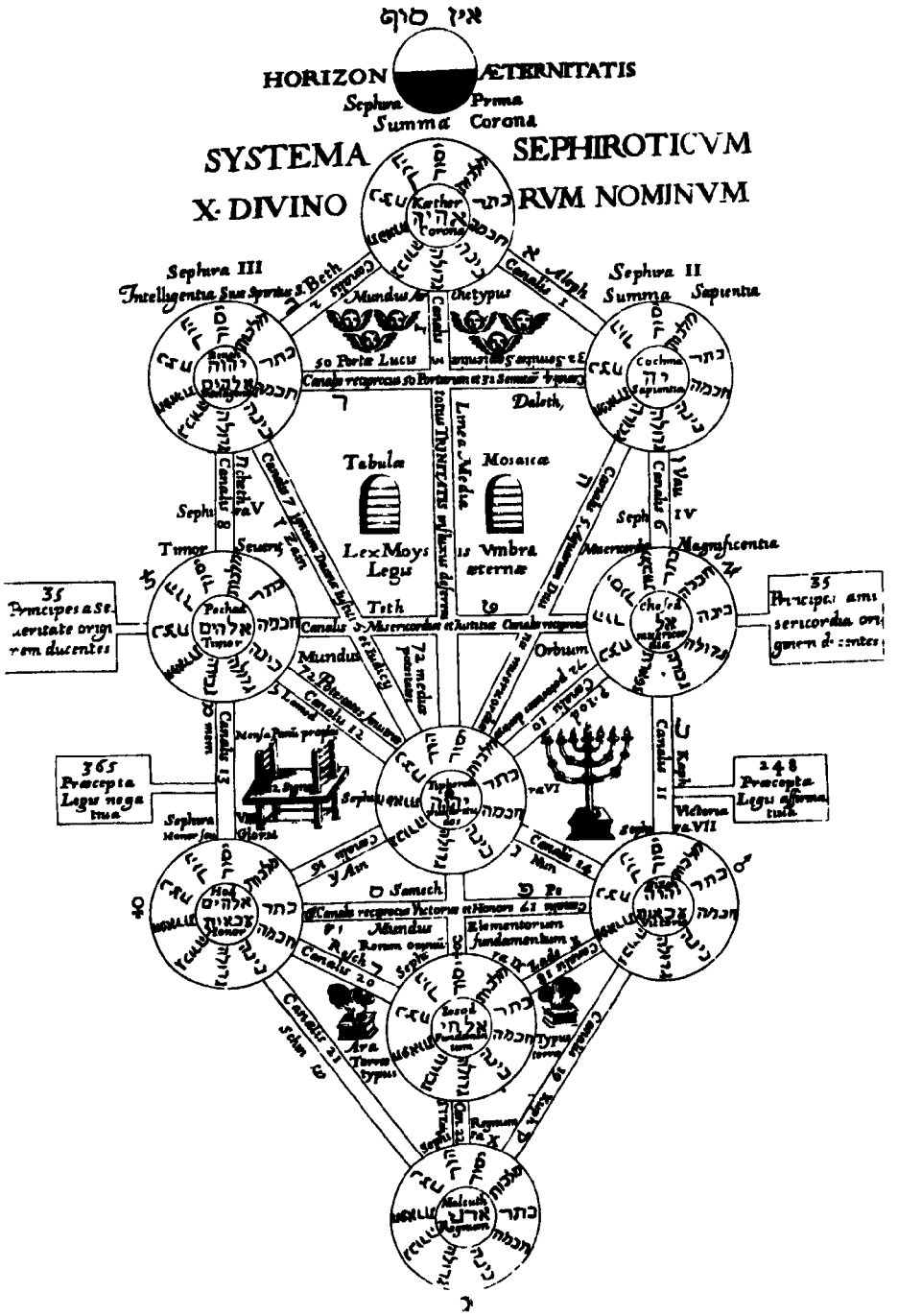


Fig 156 The Sefirotic Tree, according to Kircher

down to inferior beings; Malchut, Kingdom, the link which transmits all things from the superior to the inferior, and which helps the inferior to assimilate itself to the superior

In Paulus Ricius' book, *Porta Lucis*, Augsburg, 1516 (fig. 155) the fourth Sefira, Chesed, is replaced by Gedulah, Magnificence And in Kircher's *Cabala Haebraeorum* (Rome 1652), Pachad, Fear, figures instead of Geburah (fig 156).

The Sefirot are Godly emanations, aspects of the infinite "For them there is no end, in the future, in the past, in the present, nor in the good or bad."

The higher they are placed, the closer they are to the divine. Kether, the first emanation, is the spirit of God—Chochma is His breath, coming from the spirit. In Chochma are engraved the twenty-two letters. Three is the water that flows from the breath, four is the fire, born of the water The succeeding six numbers express the four extremities of the world, and its height and depth.

The elements issued from each other, and the more remote they were from the Highest, the more gross they became. Air is the highest and the most subtle element, earth (condensed water) is the least noble among them.

Everything emerged from God's bosom, and this emanation is symbolized by radiation of light, or flames

God's word is identified with His spirit It is the generating element, the substance of the universe, the absolute form

His holy spirit, His voice and His word are *one* and the same.

He is the Word that became World.

With such a conception, substance is resolved into one principle and brought under one law.

The letters partaking of the intelligible and physical world leave their imprint upon all things, they are signs by which we recognize the supreme intelligence in the universe And through their mediation, the holy spirit reveals itself in nature.

With letters, God has created the soul of every form, in mingling them and combining them in infinite ways Upon letters, He has established His ineffable and sublime Name

Through word and writ, man can penetrate the most hidden divine secrets, and with words and signs work wonders Such a possibility is not expressed in the book *Yetzirah*, but only in later writings and traditions

The Hebrew letters according to the *Sefer Yetzirah* are grouped into three types: the *mother letters*, which are Aleph—A, Mem—M, Shin—Sh; the seven *double letters*, which have two sounds, and the twelve *single letters* (fig 157).

Aleph is air, because the letter is pronounced with a slight aspiration. Mem is water, being "mute" Shin is fire, because of its hissing sound. Thus the Cabala knows only three elements, instead of the familiar four.

Three, seven, and twelve are the numbers with which the world is built They recur in the three realms of nature.

In the general composition of the world,
In the division of time,
In man.

Final Letters.	Figure.	Names.	Corresponding Letters.	Numerical Power.
Mother	א 1	Aleph	- - -	1
Double	בּ } 2	Baith	B	2
	ב }	Vaith	V	- -
	ג 3	Gimmel	G	3
	ד 4	Daleth	D	4
Single	ה 5	Hay	H	5
	ו 6	Wav	W	6
	ז 7	Zayin	Z	7
	ח 8	Cheth	Ch	8
	ט 9	Teth	T	9
	י 10	Yood	Y	10
Double	כּ } 11	Caph	C	20
	כ }	Chaph	Ch	- -
Single	ל 12	Lamed	L	30
Mother	מ 13	Mem	M	40
Single	נ 14	Noon	N	50
	ס 15	Samech	S	60
	ע 16	Ayin	- - -	70
Double	פּ } 17	Pay	P	80
	פ }	Phay	Ph	- -
Single	צ 18	Tzadè	Tz	90
	ק 19	Koof	K	100
Double	ר 20	Raish	R	200
Mother	שׁ } 21	Sheen	Sh	300
	שׂ }	Seen	S	- -
Double	תּ } 22	Tav	T	400
	ת }	Thav	Th	- -

Fig 157 Hebrew Alphabet

Fire is the substance of heaven, water the substance of earth, air is the mediator between the two, the dominator and also reconciler, God's breath or word.

Fire is summer; water, winter, and air, spring and fall For either time or season contains the same number arrangement as Man and World

In man, the number three is head, heart and stomach.

The seven double letters are twofold in their essence, their effect being ambivalent, either good or bad. The cabalist knows of the seven planets whose influence changes according to their position, exactly like the star gods of Chaldea In the realm of time, seven are the days and nights of the week, in man they are the openings of his head the eyes, the nostrils, the ears, and the mouth.

In the universe there are twelve signs of the zodiac, in time, twelve months of the year, in man, twelve capacities: sight, smell, speech, hearing, nutrition, generation, touch, locomotion, wrath, laughter, thought, and sleep

Summing up *the material form of intelligence*, represented by the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, is also the form of all that exists; for, outside man, time and the universe, only the infinite is conceivable Therefore, the three realms are called the faithful witnesses of truth

The world of letters and words is built in steps One dominates three, three governs seven, and seven is superior to twelve, yet each part of the system is inseparable from the others

They are one, although many of their elements are in opposition, arrayed against one another Finally, above man, above the universe, beyond time, above the letters and numbers, or Sefirot—is the Lord, Who tolerates no duality or any definition, as He is the infinite, yet partaking of everything.

But He does not submit to the law, which He embodies He *is* the law The closer things and beings are to Him, the more they are bathed in His light To the cabalist, Evil is not a separate force, but rather the scarcity or absence of light

As in Genesis, the beginning of the world is His Word, and similarly to the Gospel of St John, the Word became flesh But to the cabalist, the Word is not *with* God, but *is* God, or a part of the threefold Jehovah The Egyptians, as we have seen, have given a similar importance to the word, without which nothing exists They attributed its invention to Thoth, the god of wisdom, magic and writing The cabalists attribute still greater power to the Word. To them, words are the principles and laws which we distinguish in the universe

In the Word they discover the invariable signs of thought which repeat themselves in every sphere of existence, and by which all that exists can be reduced to one plan The number one, finally, is the most sublime and the most absolute manifestation of God His thought and intelligence

MAGICAL ARTS

The Wonder Cave

Architecte de mes feeries
Je faisais, a ma volonte,
Sous un tunnel de pierreries
Passer un ocean dompte

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

THE secret science was an entity, unalterable, neither to be expanded nor improved. It had existed in its totality since its inception, and could be reached by one path alone The doctrine did not teach one how to study phenomena, it simply pointed the way which the adept was to follow.

An illustration in Khunrath's *Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom* shows the cave of wisdom hewn into the rock, and becoming narrower as the student approaches enlightenment Six rays illuminate the cavern to console the subterranean traveler It is inscribed with admonitions: "Cleanse yourself, be pure; to the One give praise and offerings, and hymns to the inferior, etc " There is no scientific inscription, no secret is revealed They are simply ethical commandments, the foundation of all progress (fig 4)

Another of Khunrath's illustrations represents the secret doctrine in the form of the dragon of Hermes, who lives in an impregnable fortress (fig 158). It has twenty-one entrances, which seem to invite the seeker to enter the sanctum, yet twenty of the ways lead him to closed compartments The bewildered student of the occult may wander from one to the other, without ever reaching the drawbridge, of which Hermes is the watchman But once the right track has been found, the adept advances from the humble to the high

Agrippa shows man's various attitudes, enclosed in circles and triangles. The world being built to human proportions, he explains, man moving in harmonious gestures means that he is expressing the world's harmony He is in relation with the All (fig 159) When his body moves according to these ideal figures, then he has captured the magical meaning of the earliest sacred dances that are performed in mystical rites Such movements cause the gods to rejoice, and echoes to haunt the planets, like stringed instruments that vibrate when their harmonies are sung. The dance creates curative forces. When a person is

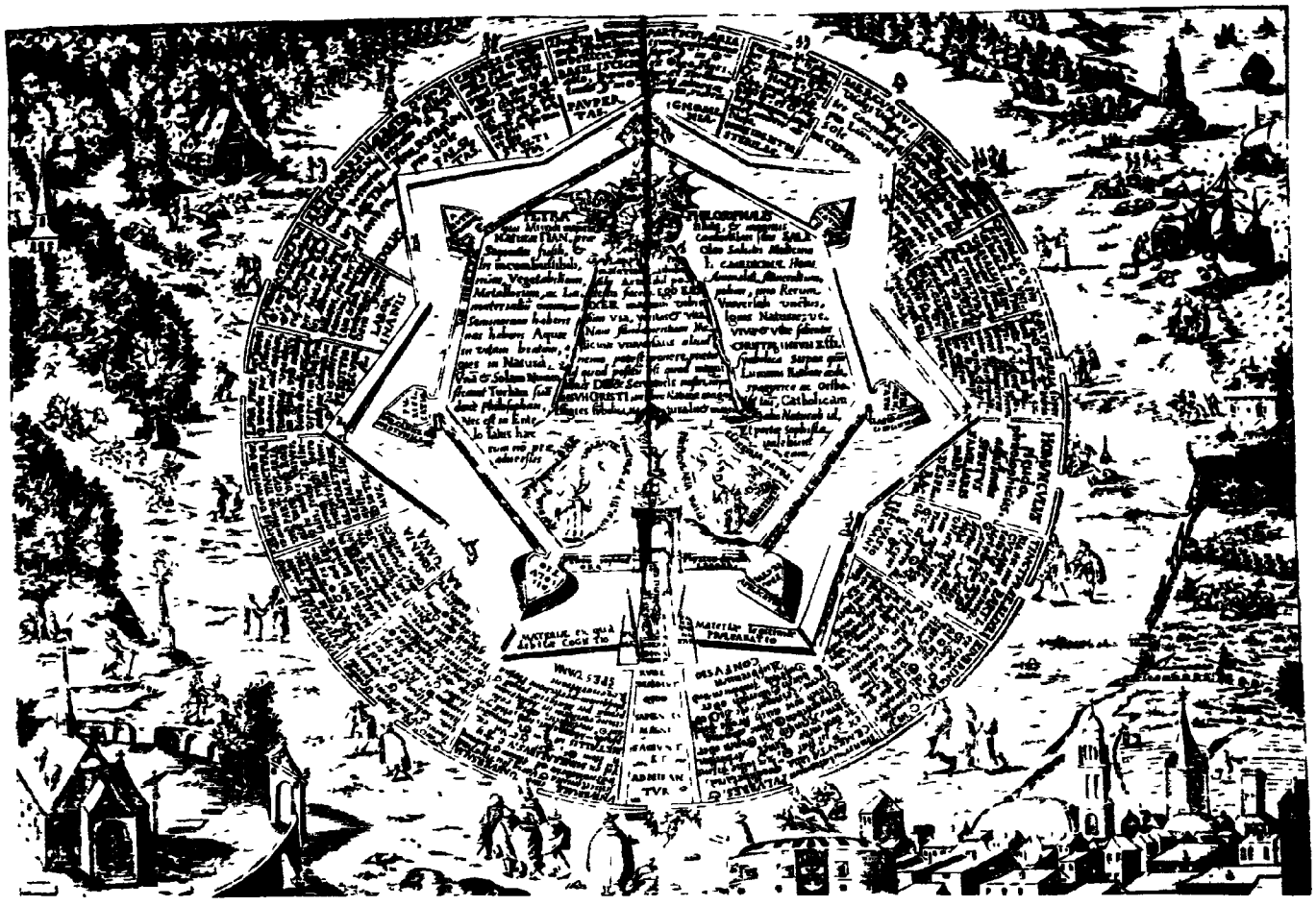


Fig. 158. Hermetic Citadel

sick, he is in discord with the universe. He may again find harmony and regain health, when he tunes his movements to those of the stars

Who would believe that song and music are real magic! Yet there can be no doubt of it when we accept traditions that are most venerable. That the planets whirling in their orbs produce sounds is a discovery of the legendary Pythagoras We cannot hear this celestial music, the Pythagoreans say, for our ears are not attuned to it, just as our eyes cannot look into the sun without being blinded.

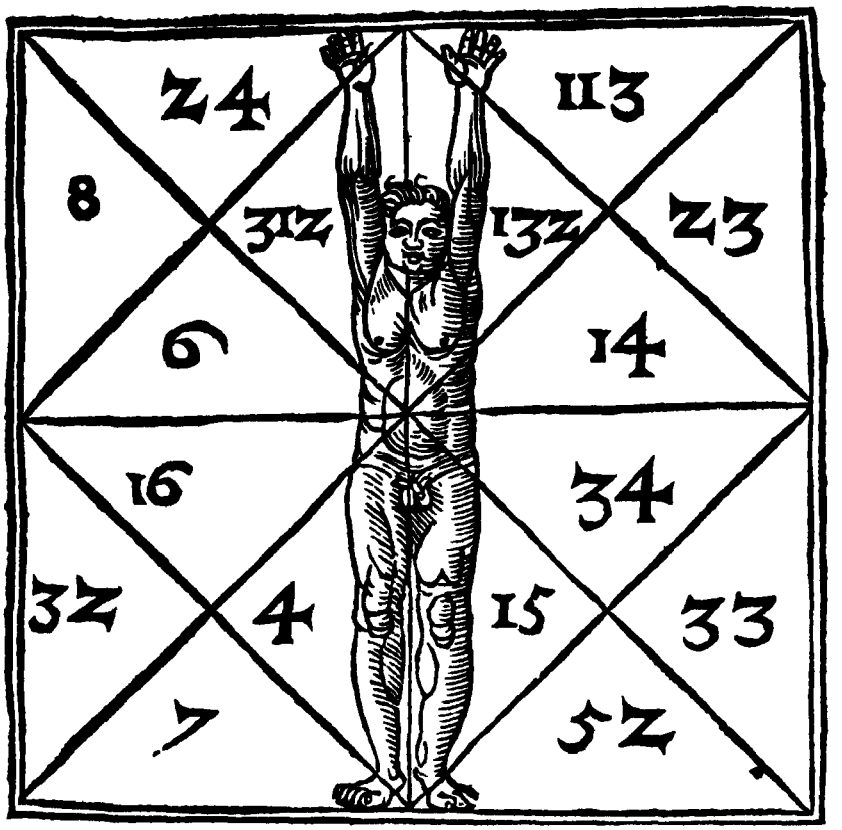


Fig 159 The Proportions of Man, and their Occult Numbers

In *Scipio's Dream*, a fragment of Cicero's *Republic*, the younger Scipio is dreaming that his grandfather leads him to the stars which vibrate with a wonderful symphony "You hear," Scipio the Elder says, "the Harmony It is formed by unequal intervals, calculated according to perfect proportions, and reproduced by the movement of the spheres The deep sounds are mingled with the shrill ones, united in ever-changing accords For these huge movements cannot be accomplished in silence, and nature wants shrill sounds to re-echo at one extremity, and deep ones to emerge from the other Thus the stelliferous world whose revolution is more rapid circulates with a precipitated shrill sound whereas the inferior course of the moon utters a slow and hollow sound . . .

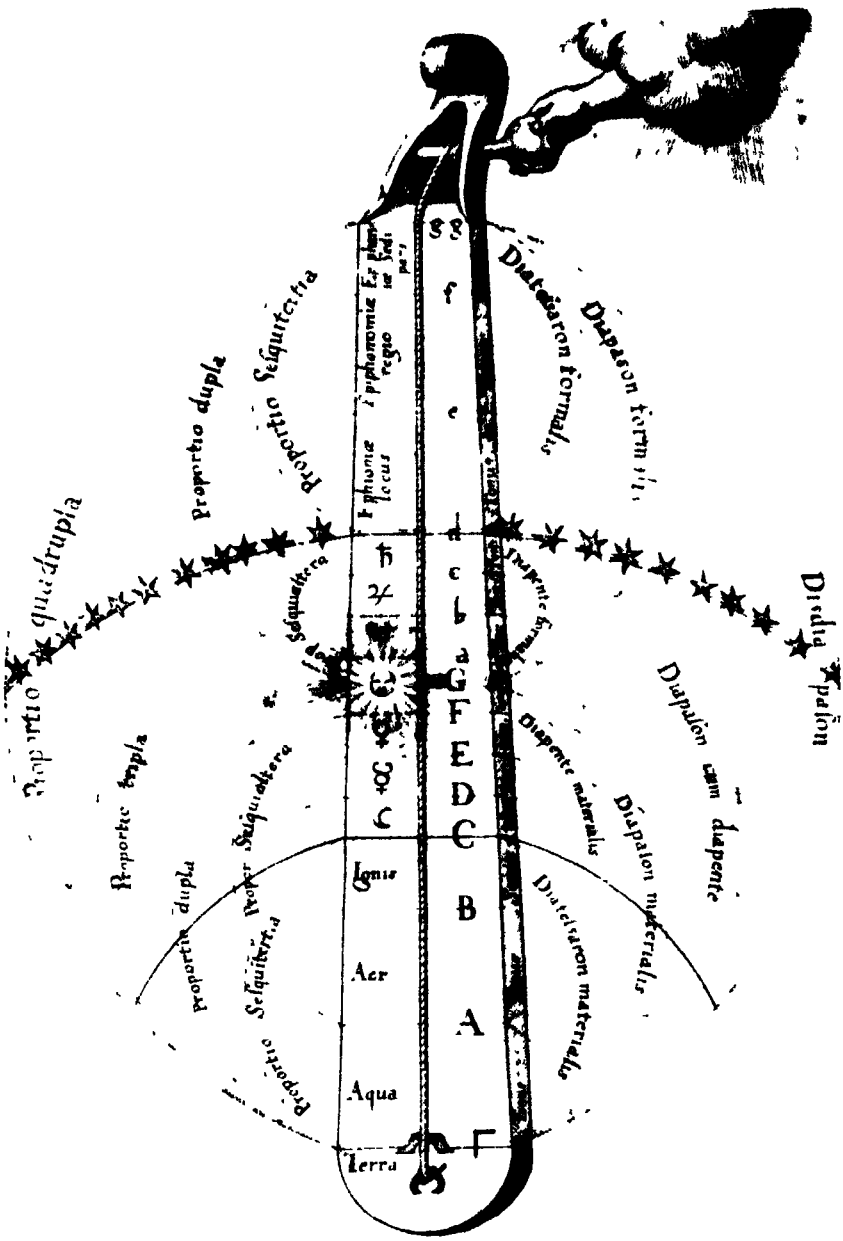


Fig 160 The Universe Conceived as a Monochord

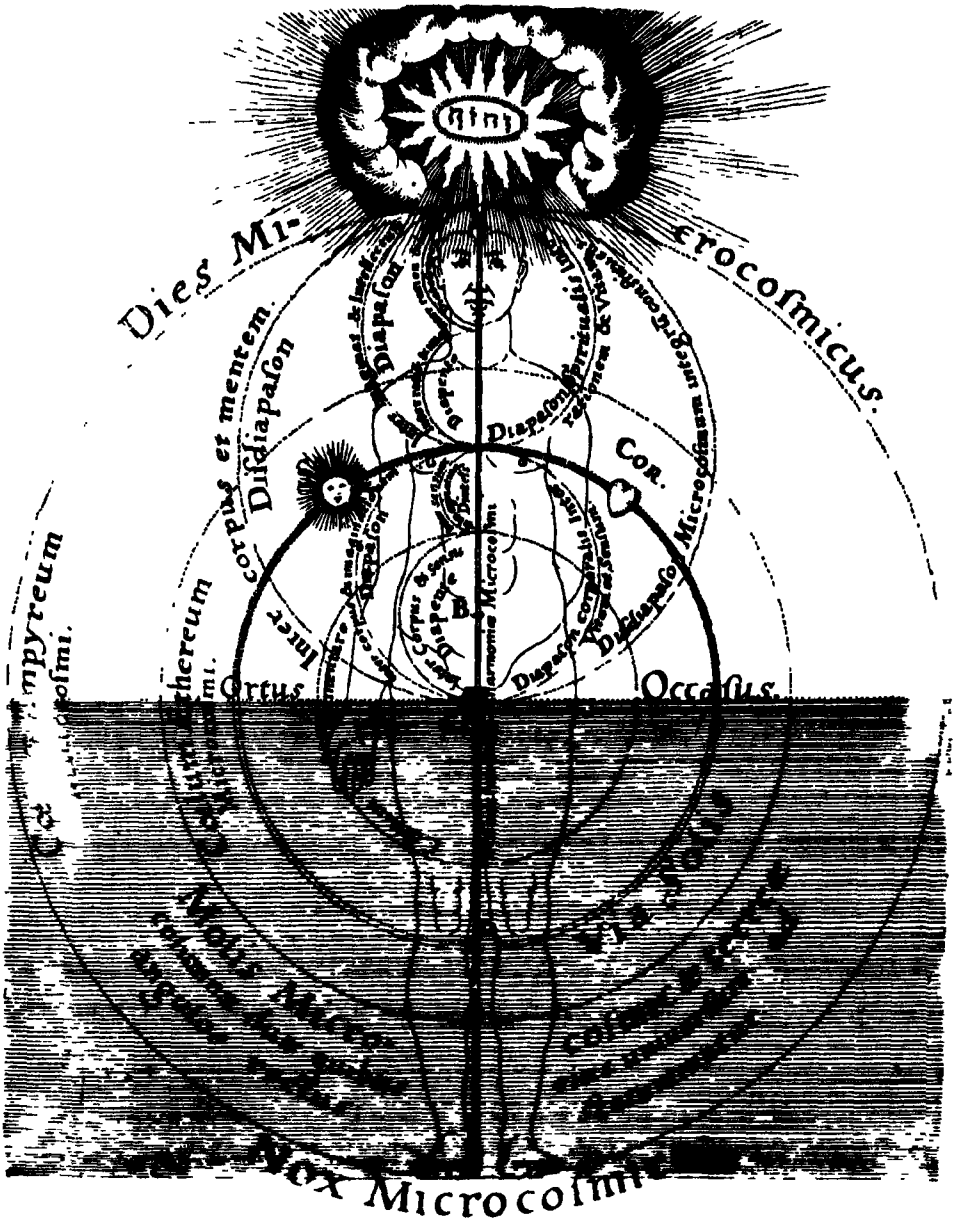


Fig 161 Man is a Microcosm

Thus the spheres . . . produce seven distinct tones; the septenary number is the nucleus of all that exists. And men, who know how to imitate this celestial harmony with the lyre, *have traced their way back to this sublime realm;* in the same way as others who have by their genius raised themselves to the knowledge of the divine . . ."

Music is harmony, and harmony is the mystery of the universe

Music will magically cure a sick person Kircher and Caspar Schott (1608–1666) explained this, although the belief is much older.

Aesculapius ordained that fever shall be cured with songs. Damon cured drunkards with music. Chants and the playing of flutes and harps cure the soul as well Had not Empedocles by his music caused a murderer to forego his abominable crime? Did not the divine Terpander pacify the revolting people of Lesbos with songs? Mecorna the Roman was sick at heart because the Emperor Augustus had taken Terentia from him He endured insomnia for three years, until finally music cured him of his sorrow

The proportions upon which the universe is built are those of the musical intervals; Robert Fludd says that the whole world, together with God's heaven, is like an instrument, and its keyboard is composed of the intervals between the angelic hosts, the fixed stars, the planets, and the elements. God tunes the instrument, whose cord is fastened to the earth (fig 160) The first diapason swings from God to the sun, the second spans the sun and the earth. The world being built upon the laws of music, man who is the world's replica must as well contain this mysterious keyboard Fludd did not forget this. In his beautiful treatise *On the Music of the Soul,* he offers an image depicting man, the microcosm, tuned to the harmony above, built in musical intervals, reaching from the head to the hips and comprising his soul and mind as well as his physical being Above, there is the *diapason spiritualis* extending from the head to the heart, which marks the separation from the *diapason corporealis* This dividing line is not arbitrary. as in the greater world the sun is the giver of life, so in the lesser universe the heart takes the place of the sun Day and night, sunrise and sunset, are contained in Fludd's ingenious scheme (fig 161).

Fludd had built these poetic images upon Agrippa's conceptions of the all-uniting power which music exerts in nature "Musical harmony," Agrippa says, "is a most powerful conceiver It allures the celestial influences and changes affections, intentions, gestures, notions, actions, and dispositions . . It lures beasts, serpents, birds, to hear pleasant tunes Fish in the lake of Alexandria are delighted with harmonious sounds; music has caused friendship between dolphins and men The playing of the harp affects the Hyperborean swans. Melodious voices tame the Indian elephants *The elements themselves delight in music!* The Hulesian fountain, otherwise calm, rises, rejoicing at the trumpet's sound, and overflows its banks And in Lydia, the Nymphs' Islands leave the shore when music is played and travel to the middle of the sea where they dance, and when the trumpet is mute they float back to the mainland and attach themselves to the shore "

Dancing, singing, making music are the operations of white magic; and similarly writing and reading are magical activities, as we have learned from the

Cabala. In the book *Zohar*, we read: "Throughout the expansion of the sky which encircles the world, there are figures, signs by which we may know the secrets and the most profound mysteries. These signs are formed by the constellations which are to the sage a subject for contemplation and delight ."

"He who travels in the early morning shall look carefully to the east He will see there something like letters marching in the sky, some rising, others descending. These brilliant characters are the letters with which God has formed heaven and earth. . . ."

Following the ancient sages' advice, many magi have scrutinized the starry sky. Postel had read predictions from above and cabalistic mysteries; Agrippa

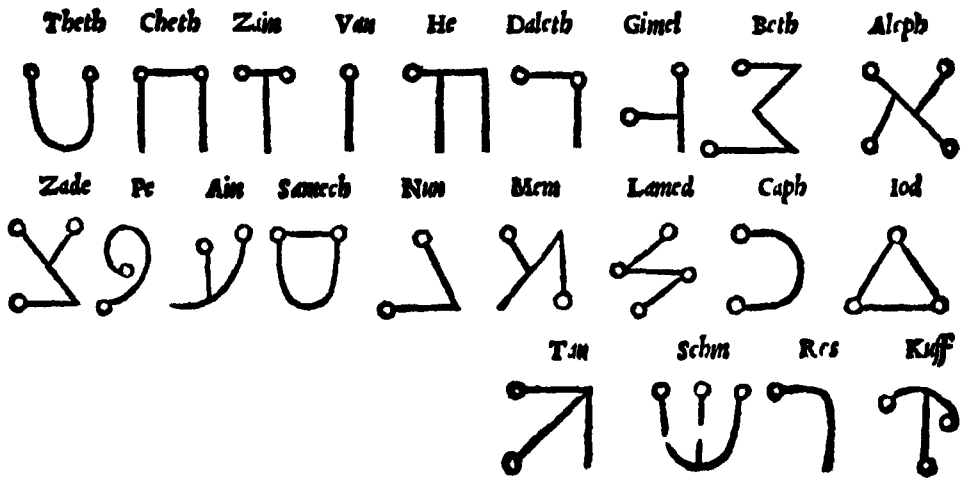


Fig 162 Celestial Scripture

had set down the secret alphabet of heaven (fig 162); Jacques Gaffarel had added to his book, *Unheard-of Curiosities*, a celestial chart summing up the results gathered during his nightly vigils (fig 143)

"Since time immemorial," he says, "people in the Orient have read the prophetic words of the wandering stars. We Europeans have utterly neglected this marvelous art Reuchlin was the first who called our attention to it, and he was followed by Pico della Mirandola . Talismans, engraved stones, and metal plates, are endowed with magic power " And how can we explain the fact that people are moved by beautiful paintings, that they smile and weep before the artificial work of a painter or sculptor, if there were not something like a magical sympathy between the depicted scene and nature? The magi of Gaffarel's time clung to the idea of the Chaldeans and Egyptians that artistic activities were magical operations, based upon the principle which J G Frazer has called the law of sympathy It is possible that the Hebrew legislators of old shared such conceptions with neighboring nations, and that they forbade every representation of reality as being contrary to religion and magical in its very essence.



Fig 163 Whimsical Portrait of Nostradamus

Astrology

To understand the wonderful order that rules the world and the ever-changing position of man in relation to it, we have to discover the means by which the heavenly influences can be measured We must examine the world clock to find the laws that govern its wheels From the dial plate, we must be able to know when the clock is going to strike

Mathematical knowledge of the heavenly movements is as old as civilization We have seen that Chaldeans, Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks and Persians were masters of astrology, cunning mathematicians who without our telescopes or our delicate instruments discovered many important astronomical facts Let us remember that spyglasses were first made at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and that the first telescope was not in use before 1663. Throughout the Renaissance, the stargazers used in their observations a stick or ruler whose function it was to guide the eye Copernicus and Tycho Brahe worked with such aids

To later generations, scrutiny of the sky without the telescope was unimaginable The early astrologers were represented surrounded by fantastic instruments, among which a clumsy spyglass is usually included. The "portrait" of Nostradamus, published in Plancy's *Infernal Dictionary*, is of this type (fig. 163) The seer's pointed hat and magician's robe are purely imaginary, for astrologers never dressed pretentiously They were clothed simply, like the learned men of their time Guillaume Postel's portrait (fig 142) is that of a sixteenth-century scholar, William Lilly's effigy (fig. 164) shows an English savant of the



Fig 164 William Lilly



Fig 165 An Astrologer Casting a Horoscope

mid-seventeenth century, and in Robert Fludd's *History of Both Worlds* (1617), an etching depicts an astrologer conservatively clad, wearing a fur-lined cap that protects his head against the drafts in his outdoor study

Significantly, in all three pictures, the spyglass is missing, though Fludd's work was published in 1619, after Galileo had already used the newly invented instrument The scarcity of instruments is in fact noticeable, besides armillary spheres, there is little to remind us of astrology a desk, a pair of spectacles, a compass, inkwell and pen constituting the sole equipment (fig. 165).

Astrologers were scholars, not charlatans, and astrological wisdom required a knowledge of languages for the study of original texts, as well as considerable mathematical skill

The stars either are favorable or bode ill to man's health and activities, and to those of the state Nothing depends upon chance, everything is regulated and guided in a world built upon order When a man is born, the aspect of heaven impresses its seal upon his future But this is not its only influence; after this original impetus, the stars continue to exert their power. Rulers used to retain astrologers at court for their own benefit as well as for that of the commonwealth No war was declared, no building begun, no financial transaction made until the stars were consulted The astrologer then made a horoscope, a scheme that showed the ensemble of the stars exerting their supposed influence at the hour for which the action was planned. Such horoscopes were elaborated according to the following principles and methods

The planets and the signs of the zodiac are always present in the heavenly vault, but not all are visible, some being above, others below the horizon. It was necessary for the astrologers to establish rules by which the quality of the visible heavenly bodies could be judged in order to know their influence, their strength and weakness their exaltation and dejection At particular points or regions of the heavens, certain planets or stars were supposed to be powerful, at others, their influence was considered negligible The basis of the method was therefore to define these areas, to establish a system for the starry globe.

The planets were considered the most important heavenly bodies, since they exhibit initiative by their individual course, acting according to their own laws and moving in a direction contrary to that of the fixed stars, which travel collectively The circuit of the different planets covers varying spans The orb described by the moon is much smaller in diameter than that of Saturn In one month, the moon achieves its journey around the earth whereas Saturn requires thirty years for the same circuit Each planet has its own way. Their signs, established by astrology, were.

♄ Saturn	☉ Sun
♃ Jupiter	♀ Venus
♂ Mars	☿ Mercury

☽ Moon

Their journeys, though unlike in length, carry them through the same areas,

the signs of the zodiac, which mark the twelve compartments of heaven. The zodiac's inner ring is the ecliptic, i.e, the circle described by the sun in its yearly circuit around the earth.

The northern signs of the zodiac are

♈ Aries	♋ Cancer
♉ Taurus	♌ Leo
♊ Gemini	♍ Virgo

The southern signs are.

♎ Libra	♑ Capricornus
♏ Scorpio	♒ Aquarius
♐ Sagittarius	♓ Pisces

To every planet the astrologers attributed two *houses*, or headquarters one of the night, the other of the day Sun and Moon, being the heavenly bodies of day and night *par excellence*, have only *one* house each, the Sun resides in Leo, the Moon in Cancer The zodiac was partitioned into the halves of Sun and Moon Each half contains six signs Those of the Moon, or night, are Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, those of the Sun, or day, are Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricornus

This is the primary partition made by astrology The important thing is now that *each planet gains power or influence*, when entering his house At night, he is most powerful in his night house, by day, in his day house

But things are more complicated, for the greatest power of each planet is *not* in his headquarters, but upon another degree The Sun, for instance, has according to tradition his greatest influence upon the nineteenth degree of Aries, and his weakest spot is exactly opposite to his *exaltation*, upon the nineteenth degree of Libra This position of extreme weakness is called *dejection* or *fall* Why these mark the rise and fall of the Sun's power is not known

The other planets have their exaltations and dejections too They are indicated in the figure 166

There exists a third demarcation of the power of the planets, one which played an important role in ancient astrology The whole heavenly globe being marked by 360 degrees, each sign of the zodiac is thirty degrees Ten degrees of each sign are consecrated to a planet which becomes influential when passing through this *decan*, so-called There are thirty-six such decans at ten degrees, in which the planets alternate, *Sun and Moon being excluded*

With the day and night houses, exaltation and dejection, and the decans, the astrologers established a system of correspondence between the zodiacal signs and the planets By these means, they will be able to judge various good or bad influences, according to the favorable or unfavorable position of the planets Their individual qualities, little changed since the time of Chaldea, are stressed or modified according to their position

But now, it is necessary to know from which point of the heaven the astrolo-

ger will receive the answers to his questions The most important spot is the degree of the ecliptic or Sun trajectory which rises on the eastern horizon at the very moment of the birth or enterprise, of which a horoscope shall be drawn Originally, it was not the mathematical point but some important star rising in the east which was considered.

The rising degree of the ecliptic was called *ascendant* The rising sign of the zodiac in which this degree lay was called *horoscope* The name was given

Planets	Houses		Exaltation	Dejection
	Day Houses	*Night Houses*		
☉	♌		♈ 19°	♎ 19°
☽		♋	♉ 3°	♏ 3°
♄	♑	♒	♎ 21°	♈ 21°
♃	♐	♓	♋ 15°	♑ 15°
♂	♏	♈	♑ 28°	♋ 28°
♀	♎	♉	♓ 27°	♍ 15°
☿	♍	♊	♍ 15°	♓ 15°

Fig 166 The Houses of the Planets and their Exaltation and Dejection

later to the entire constellation, the theme which was to be examined. Two other points were of importance the degree in the west (that is, the disappearing point of the ecliptic), and the center between these extremes in the middle of the way of the Sun. Starting from the rising degree in the east, twelve partitions of *loci* were made, which contained the answers to the twelve questions They were. 1 life, 2 wealth, 3 inheritance, 4 land and ancestral tombs, 5 wife or city, children, brothers and parents, 6 health and disease, 7 marriage; 8 death, 9. gods, religion, travels; 10 habitation, state, honors, art, character, etc , 11 friends, charity, and 12 enemies and captivity

The twelve *loci* are divisions which contain the questions and correspond to twelve strips in the visible heaven, and are inscribed in a scheme which is commonly quadrangular (fig 167)

The interpretation of the stars is guided by the radiation or the *aspects* which are explained in figure 168 In this scheme, Aries is opposed to Libra This is

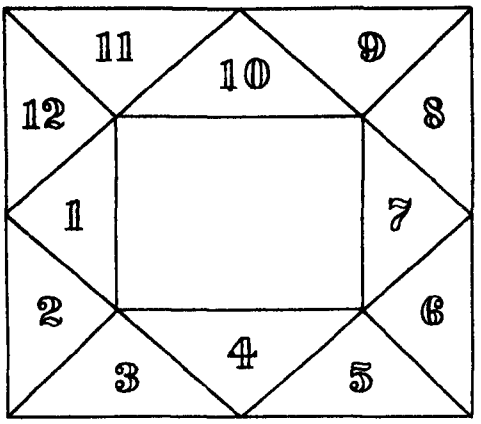


Fig 167 The Twelve Divisions of the Horoscope

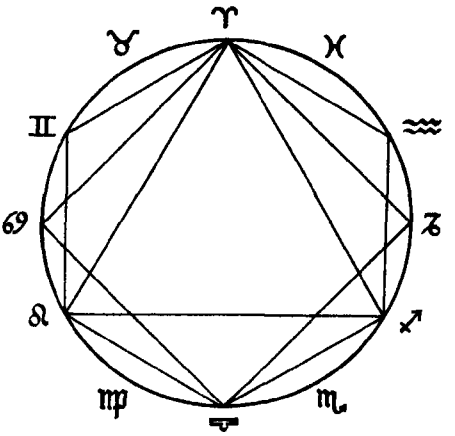


Fig 168 Scheme of the Configuration of the Planets

called *opposition* and is marked ☍ If we draw in the same scheme lines between Aries, Sagittarius, Leo, and back to Aries, we obtain a triangle, called trine, whose sign is △ If we draw lines between Aries, Cancer, Libra, Capricornus, we obtain the tetragonum or quartile which is marked □ Lines drawn between every second zodiacal sign produce a hexagon, or sextile, marked ✶ .

When a planet, for instance, is in Aries, another planet in Libra, they are in opposition, which is judged to be unfavorable. When three planets face each other in Aries, Sagittarius, and Leo, they are trine, which is favorable, and similarly lucky is the sextile The quartile is unfavorable Finally, there is the conjunction whose sign is ☌ It signifies that two planets are in one and the same degree of a zodiacal sign, and this, according to the astrologers, is either good or bad, as the planets are either friends or enemies

Not only do the planets have their personal character each sign of the zodiac is also endowed with particular virtues Taurus is a feminine, nocturnal, melancholy, bestial, furious, sign, cold and dry Gemini is a masculine sign, hot and moist, diurnal, aerial, double-bodied, etc Cancer is feminine, nocturnal, phlegmatic, cold and moist Leo is diurnal, hot and dry, bestial, choleric, barren, etc.

With all these combinations, astrology has developed a subtle means of star interpretations Friendly and contradictory forces combat each other with ever-changing strength Indifferent stars stand by, others, in the stage of dejection, try in vain to change the course of things Here the planets dwell in propitious houses, grouped in a friendly trigon or sextile, promising the newly-born a most brilliant career [1]

Astrology has endowed the stars with the virtues of man, and the stars in turn impose upon man these earthly gifts As the solar ecliptic swings up in the east and descends in the setting west, so do man's ideas rise to the stars and descend again, in an all-embracing, never-ending movement



Fig 169 Allegorical Figure of an Astrologer

Divination by Moles

In the Zohar, we read: ". . all happens here below as it does above . . . , on the firmament which envelops the universe, we see many figures formed by the stars and planets They reveal hidden things and profound mysteries. Similarly, upon our skin which encircles the human being there exist forms and traits that are the stars of our bodies "

Magi who interpreted this saying literally examined the skin in their search for prophetic signs They chose the legendary Melampus of ancient Greece for their patron His brief treatise interprets the moles according to their position in the anatomy

"A mole on a man's forehead," Melampus says, "signifies wealth and happiness, on a woman's forehead, it denotes that she will be powerful, perhaps a ruler Close to the eyebrow of a man, the mole predicts a happy marriage with a pretty and virtuous woman, and it foretells similar fortune to girls. Moles on the bridge of the nose mean lust and extravagance, for both sexes. When appearing on the nostrils, the mole signifies constant travel Moles upon the lips of men and women betray gluttony, and on the chin—that they will possess gold and silver! Moles in the ear and on the neck are lucky omens, they predict wealth and fame When upon the nape of the neck, however, the beauty spot carries an ill omen, that of being beheaded! Moles upon the loins are unfortunate, signifying mendacity, and ill luck for the descendants. When appearing on the shoulders, they predict captivity and unhappiness, on the chest, poverty. Moles on the hands announce many children, and under the arm-pits, they bring luck as they promise a wealthy and handsome husband or wife Ominous are moles when found upon the heart and bosom and belly, as they signify voracity They are a good omen when seen on the upper leg, announcing wealth, when upon the lower part of the stomach, they presage intemperance for men but the contrary for women," etc

Melampus concludes this miniature essay by implying that a still more elaborate method of mole interpretation exists, adding that one should observe whether the mole is on the right or the left side of the body, as left carries a sinister and morbid meaning, and right predicts general wealth and probity Moreover, according to Melampus, moles have their correspondents; spots upon certain features of the face have their counterpart on the body.

The diviners of the occident, dissatisfied with these inadequate indications, have built a more elaborate system upon the theories of the Greek occultists.

Jerome Cardan gave more precision to the doctrine by adding to it the signs of the zodiac (fig 170) Moles upon the forehead, he says, need interpretation according to exact position, to determine whether they denote the signs of Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Virgo, or Leo When appearing on the bridge of the nose, moles are correlated to Libra; on the cheekbones, to Scorpio and



Fig 170 The Relations between Moles and Signs of the Zodiac

Sagittarius; on the jaw, to Capricornus; between the nose and upper lip, to Aquarius, on the chin, to Pisces Accepting Melampus' views that a mole on the nape of the neck predicts decapitation, Cardan assigns to it the sign of the planet Saturn, the Great Misfortune as the Babylonians used to call it.

Jean Belot, vicar of Mil-Montant and professor of celestial sciences, disagrees with Cardan and Melampus, placing the planet Saturn upon the left ear. Mars,

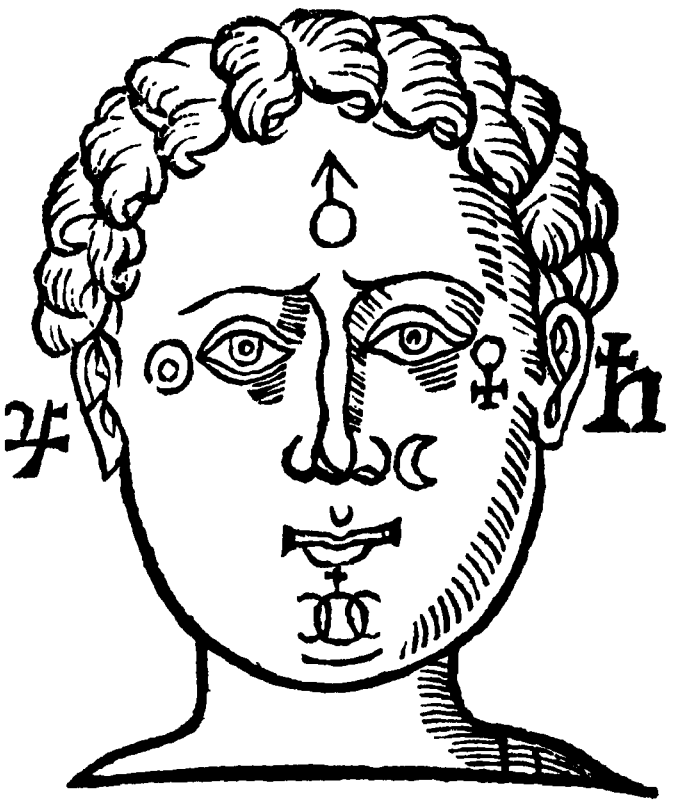


Fig 171 Position of the Planets in the Human Head

Belot says, rules the forehead, the sun, the right eye, and Venus, the left one The moon influences the nose, Jupiter, the right ear, and Mercury, the chin (fig 171)

The art of predicting the future and character from moles made little progress until the end of the seventeenth century when Richard Saunders published his treatise, *"resolving the Nature and Significance hereof largely, in more than three hundred particulars"* Having investigated carefully the correlation between facial spots and those on the body, he published the results of his inquiry together with an engraved copper plate (fig 172) Besides this, he shows on a female figure some hundred and fifty moles that are scattered over the body, resembling a chart of the starry heavens (fig 173) All these spots are interpreted according to the varying character and destiny of their owner Saun-

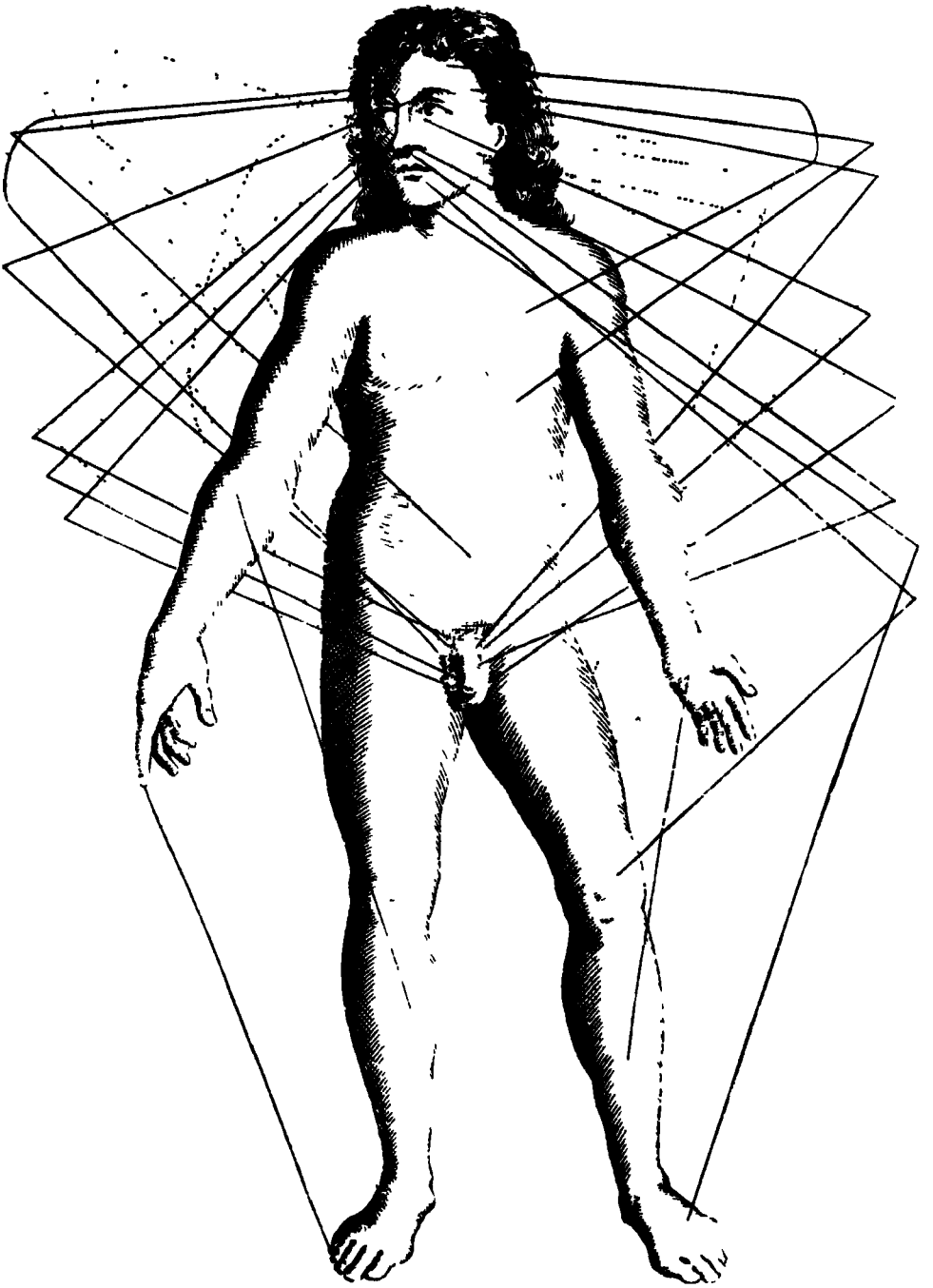


Fig 172 Relation between Moles of the Body and those of the Head

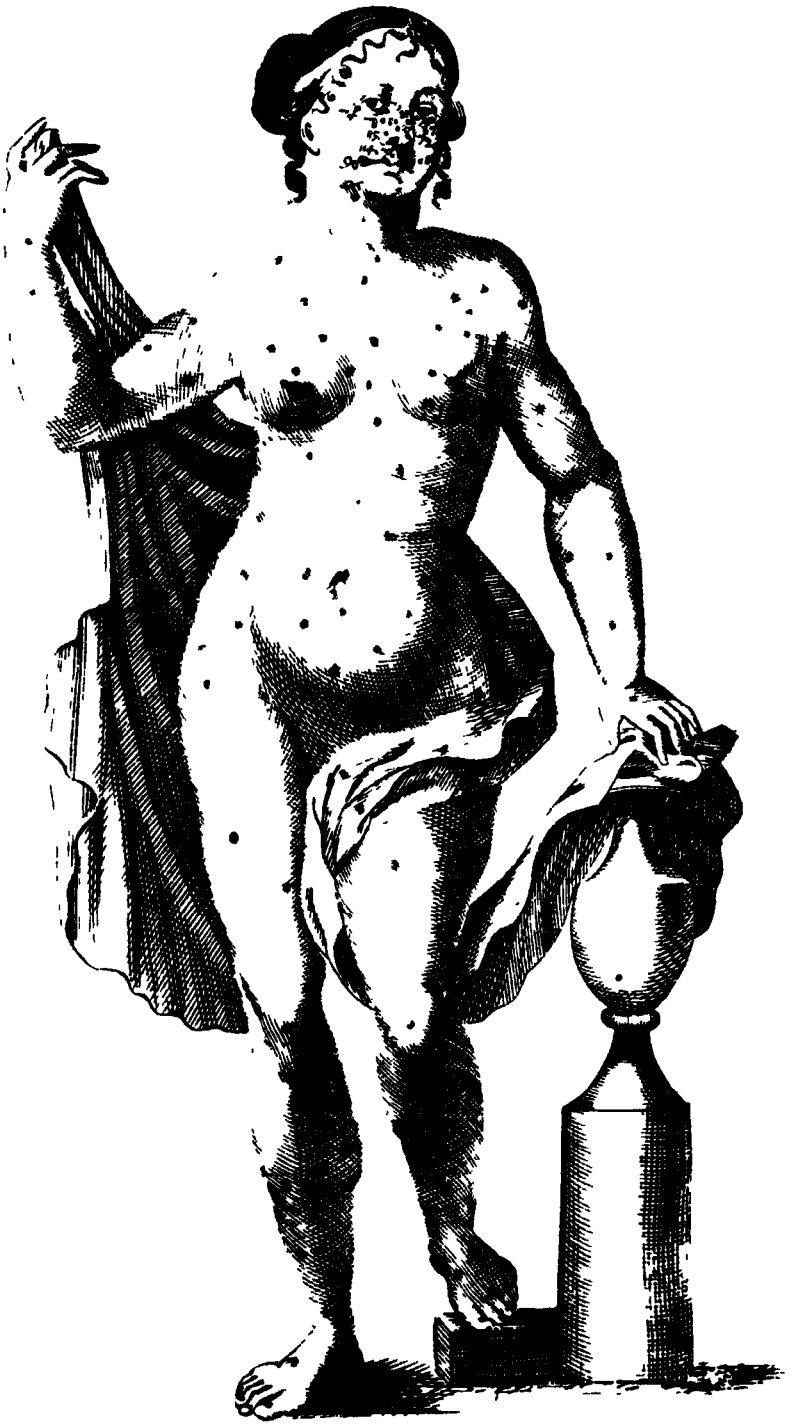


Fig 173 The Distribution of the Principal Moles on the Human Body



Fig 174 Head Used in the Interpretation of Moles on the Face

ders went further and reproduced a most curious face in an engraving made entirely by circular lines, as if to imply that the circular movement of the heavenly orbs has its counterpart in man (fig 174) The face is covered with moles that bear numbers, to which his text refers extensively Concerning number one, for instance, which is on the right side of the upper forehead, Saunders remarks.

"That man and woman who hath a mole on the right side of the forehead under the line of Saturn (the planets are also marked in Saunders' scheme) but not touching this line, in the first figure, they shall have another on the right side of the breast; this party may claim good fortune in building, in sowing, planting, and tilling of the earth And this mole, if it shall shine with a honey or ruby color, he and she shall have good fortune during the whole course of their lives, if black, his condition shall be mutable, if like a lentil, he shall be advanced and the first and chief person in a family For a woman, it denotes the fortune of inheritance and gifts from the dead This mole is of the nature of Venus, Mercury, and Mars, and receives its denomination from Lyra, a star of the first magnitude"

Following the tradition of Melampus, Saunders predicts evil for him who has a mole on the left part of the hind neck On the figure, it bears the number eight, which is opposed to number one upon the forehead, though that is bad luck as well, extremely bad, for Saunders says that it denotes imprisonment; if it is of a honey color, he is imprisoned for frivolous causes, many enemies and contentions oppose him. If the mole is red, he shall be discharged quickly; when black, however, he shall end his life in prison To a woman, destiny seems to be somewhat more lenient, for if she has a similar mole, it means affliction, leaving the country, or two husbands, which does not necessarily imply a change from the good to the bad

Saunders' work on moles was the apotheosis of this divinatory art, which has been lost entirely if we except those picture postcards depicting attractive young ladies covered with the most flatteringly interpreted beauty spots.

Metoposcopy

> She is going to offer her hand and brow to the diviner's scrutiny
>
> JUVENAL

THE doctrine of moles was overshadowed by another related occult science, metoposcopy, which judges man's character and his destiny from the lines engraved upon his forehead The discovery of this divinatory art is attributed to Jerome Cardan in spite of the fact that his metoposcopic treatise appeared later than other works on the subject

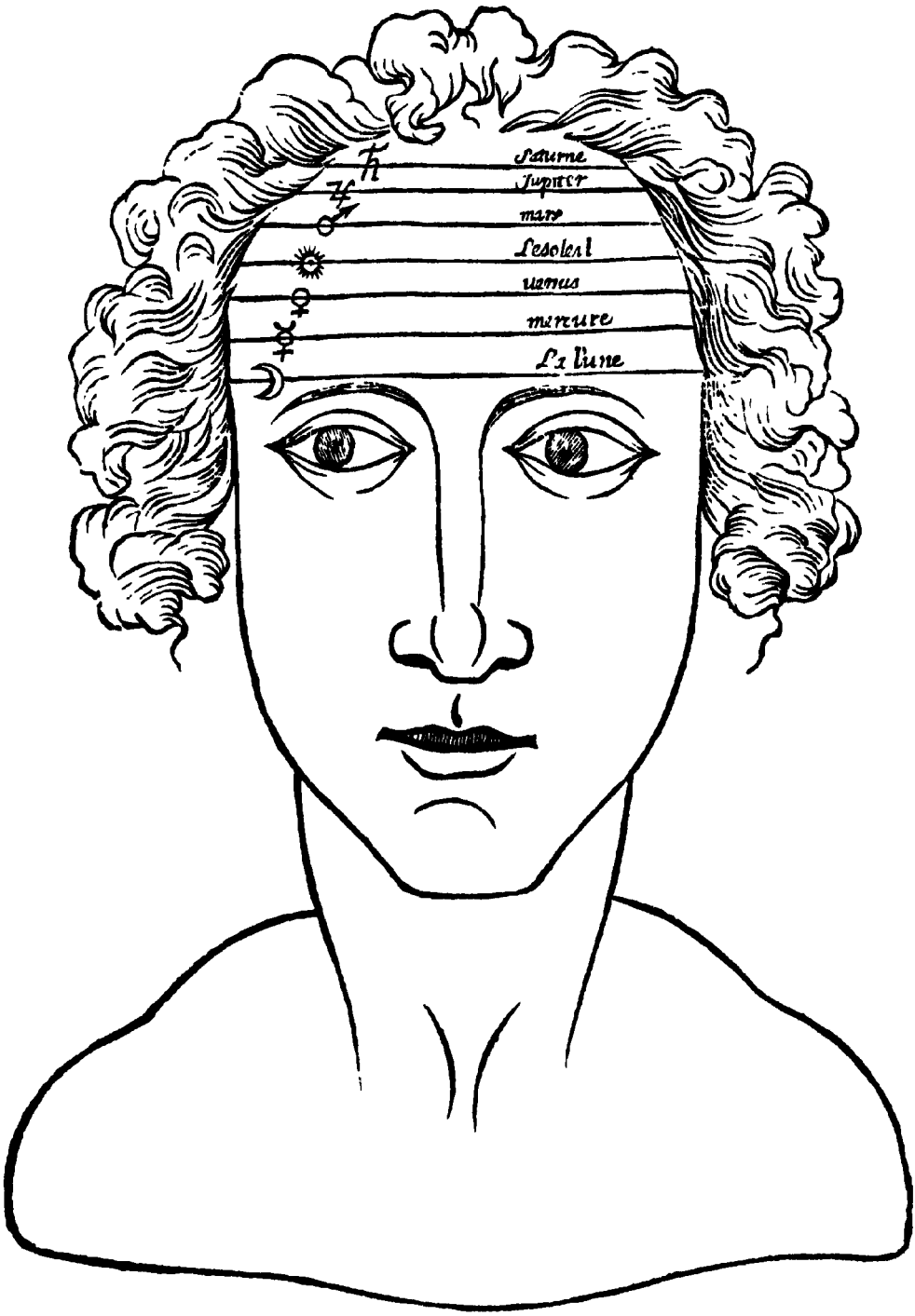


Fig 175 The Planets on the Human Forehead

Metoposcopy is a mixture of astrological calculation and empirically collected knowledge. Astrology teaches that every part of the body is influenced by the stars; the study of the lines in the forehead gains special importance since it is *closer to heaven* than any other part of man.

Once this idea was accepted, it became necessary to control the results obtained through astrological mathematics with observations gathered from nature Cardan searched and compared hundreds of human foreheads, a painstaking and tedious task. His work is illustrated by some eight hundred woodcuts depicting heads and their frontal celestial demarcations.

A full-page illustration at the beginning of the book shows the location of the planets upon man's forehead (fig 175), which is divided by horizontal lines into seven compartments The order of the planets corresponds to that in astrology. Saturn is the "highest", then follow in turn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon Having thus established theoretically the planets' spheres of influence, the practicing metoposcopist will, when examining his patient, mark the latter's forehead with seven equidistant and parallel strips, with the purpose of recognizing his subject's planetary zones that are narrow or wide according to the measurements of the forehead

A wrinkle in the zone of Jupiter is endowed with the characteristics attributed to the planet· magnanimity, nobility, pride, etc. If the line crosses from one zone to another, it signifies that the two planets are in conjunction; their characteristics act upon and reinforce each other Metoposcopy is nothing more than the astrology of the microcosm whose existence had been accepted long before, though it had never been controlled systematically.

Let us consider a few of the instances offered by Cardan Figure 176 shows a man whose forehead is marked by three parallel lines on its higher part "It denotes," Cardan says, "pacific and quiet character He will possess a farm which he will manage with varying success. His fortune will be unstable Moreover, he is in danger of being wounded on his head "

"When the three lines are placed in lower compartments," Cardan says, "they reveal the man's irascible character. He will be a murderer " (Fig 177.)

When more distant from each other, the three lines predict clerical charges and good fortune, intelligence and goodness (fig 178)

A short diagonal touching the left eyebrow (fig 179) foretells a violent death! And a straight line curved at one end means disease, infirmity, and other afflictions (fig 180)

A slightly tilted line, as indicated in figure 181, predicts victory over various enemies, luck in war, to women, it announces felicity, and superiority over the husband.

There are, however, more complicated designs imprinted by the planets For instance, that of figure 182, which indicates death by fire, by witchcraft or incantations

And the gentleman with the melancholic smile, figure 183, will not enjoy a lucky life, as his signs predict violent death from a head wound or death inflicted upon him by a member of his own family

In 1648, Philip Phinella published his treatise on metoposcopy. The work has

become rare, and the two volumes are hardly ever found complete with all their roughly cut images.

Figure 184 shows the meek face of a man who is, according to Phinella, predestined to perish at sea. His curved wrinkles remind us of the rolling waves of the ocean, and it is more upon this magical similitude than upon calculations that the *metoposcopist* has pronounced his *foreboding*.

He who has a single line, shaped as in figure 185, Phinella says, is destined to travel from the Sun to the Moon He partakes also of the Venereal and the Mercurial Such a man will never be stable and settled To women, this line denotes even greater evil, for she will be heavy with laziness, light in her morals, and volatile in temperament.

The author seems to have depicted his own character by the image of the woman in figure 186, on which he has commented thus· "She will be held in high esteem by princes who seek her advice. And it is her natural inclination and disposition to predict the future "

The little dots which traverse all foreheads, illustrating Phinella's theory, are evidently the demarcations of the planetary regions. The author seems, however, to set his wandering stars in an order not acceptable to tradition. Cardan rightly places Jupiter second from above, but Phinella occasionally assigns this house to Venus, figure 187, he explains, shows the two lines which cross each other as a conjunction of the Sun and Venus Such disagreement is even more confusing since Phinella does not explain or justify the innovation

His figure 188 shows a man whose features seem to express doubt, uncertainty. These lines, however, are good omens, Phinella says He will be famous, a scientist establishing a well-founded doctrine Also, his morals are excellent; such a man is trustworthy

Finally, Phinella's lady with the toothache is an ominously marked and ill-behaved person. Do not trust her hypocritical piety and sad mien, she is a monster, libidinous and terrifying, a betrayer of her best friends, and the author of manifold ignominious deeds (fig 189).

After the Dutch baroque of Phinella's figures, we shall now turn to those of the Signor Cavaliere Spontini. They have the detached air and the impassibility of old French playing cards.

Ciro Spontini's booklet was published in Venice in 1637. His first image (fig 190) depicting the order of the planets upon the forehead awakens doubt as to whether metoposcopy can rightly be called a science, for he assigns to it zones that differ from those of Cardan and of Phinella. According to Spontini, the planets descend right to the middle of the nose, and the lowest heavenly body is not the Moon, as is generally accepted, but Venus; whereas the nightly companion of Mother Earth has found new headquarters upon the temples of the forehead It is difficult to understand why he has changed the planetary order so arbitrarily unless we consider Spontini's desire to be original, a reprehensible trait in this special case

His figure 191 denotes an individual predestined to die from excessive indulgences though his physiognomy seems to betray a rather sober and stable character Figure 192 signifies imbecility and a short life, marked paradoxically



Fig 176 Forehead of a Peaceful and Successful Man



Fig 177 Forehead of a Quarrelsome and Murderous Man

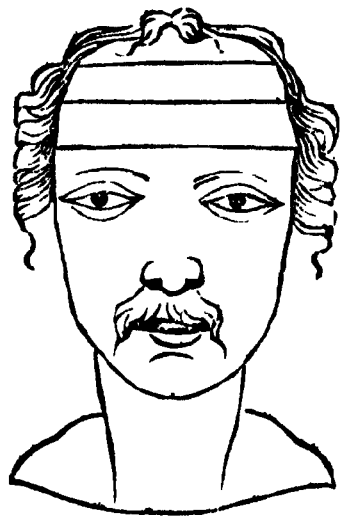


Fig 178 Forehead of an Exalted Man with a Predilection for the Priesthood



Fig 179 Forehead of a Man Destined to Die a Violent Death



Fig 180 Forehead of an Infirm Man



Fig 181 Forehead of a Man Successful in War

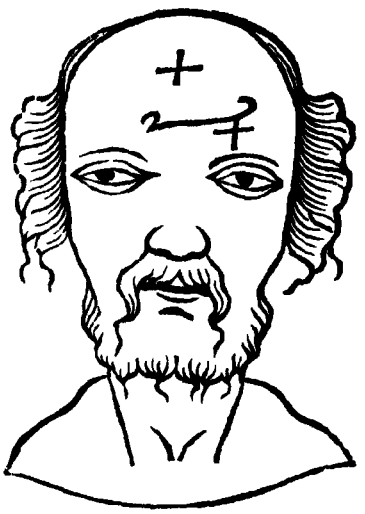


Fig 182 Forehead of a Poisoner



Fig 183 Forehead of a Man Destined to be Wounded in the Head



Fig 184 Forehead of a Man Destined to be Drowned



Fig 185 Forehead of an Unstable Man



Fig 186 Forehead of a Happy and Fortunate Woman



Fig 187 Forehead of a Loving Man



Fig 188 Forehead of an Upright and Intelligent Man



Fig 189 Forehead of a Vicious Woman



Fig 190 Position of the Planets on the Human Forehead

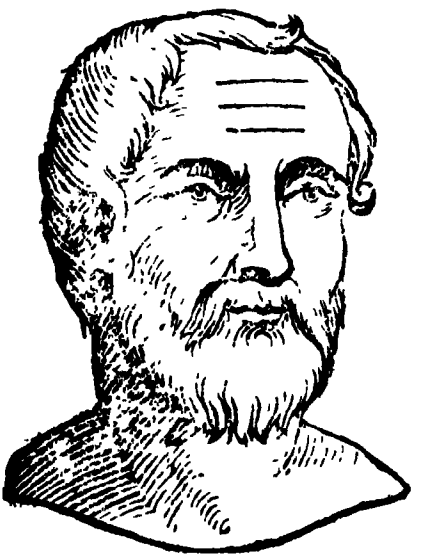


Fig 191 Forehead of an Immoderate and Sick Man

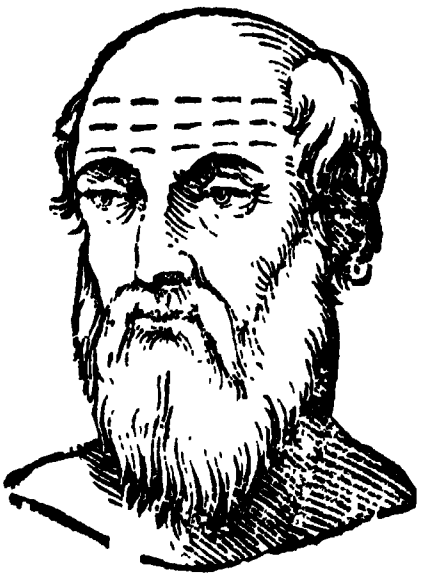


Fig 192 Forehead of an Unintelligent Man



Fig 193 Forehead of an Imbecile and Long-lived Man



Fig 194 Forehead of an Adventurer



Fig 195 Forehead of a Poet and Musician

upon the forehead of an old man If these lines were not intersected, Spontini says, they would designate every imaginable good· courage, Jovian wisdom, Solarian moderation and continence, Martial accuracy and promptitude, Mercurial memory and imagination, and Venereal playfulness

Configuration 193 with its horizontal lines intersected by a vertical one predicts a variable life, spiced with dangers, impediments, and permutations The defiant mien of the victim of these signs, however, betrays his indifference to such accidents that he may overcome successfully

More depressed by the knowledge of his future seems the young man in figure 194 He will be a vagabond, obstreperous; he will possess little faith and energy and will err in many ways. Yet he should be grateful to destiny that his lines are not intersected or slightly oblique, for then greater evil would befall him· he would be inclined to murder, be threatened by exile, and very probably, Spontini says, he would be killed

Let us mention also one of the metoposcopist's good omens so that we may leave him with a more pleasant impression Figure 195 is very favorable. The full-faced youth will profit from a propitious conjunction of Venus and Mercury This means that he is inventive, a famous poet, a still greater musician He will charm his fellow men Beloved by beautiful women, a lucky gambler, he shall know every pleasure of life And he may thank God that his lines are not tilted, as that would signify viciousness, dilettantism, and stupidity.

Physiognomy

Less certain in its principles but more artistic in its consideration was the physiognomic art which judges the character of an individual by his facial expressions and traits The promoters of this were John of Indagine, or Jaeger, of Nuremberg, Bartolommeo Cocle or della Rocca (1467–1504), of Bologna, and the Frenchman Michel Lescot.

Cocle, who was also a famous metoposcopist, published in 1523 his textbook on physiognomy, which contains a list of famous people and the great dangers that await them Such an enterprise meant above all danger to himself Jovius, the historian (1483–1552), admits that many of Cocle's predictions came true. Little is known of Lescot whose *Physionomie* was printed in Paris in 1540 Indagine's book on divinatory arts was published in Strassburg in 1531

Its title page shows a striking physiognomic study the author's portrait by the painter Hans Baldung (fig 196) Clad in brocade, capped by the doctor's beret, the proud Indagine glances disdainfully through a handsomely decorated Renaissance window, fully aware of his own importance

Other woodcuts in Indagine's book with their primitive and lapidary execution are charged with life They have been reproduced so many times in later editions by less talented engravers that they have lost a great deal of their



Fig 196 Portrait of John of Indagine, by Hans Baldung



Fig 197 Lips of a Mendacious and Lustful Man, and those of a Modest and Temperate Man



Fig 198 Teeth of a Choleric Man, and those of a Timid Man

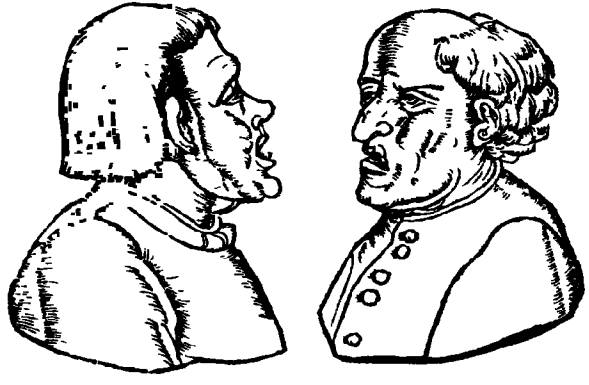


Fig 199 Chin of a Bold Man, and that of an Impotent Man

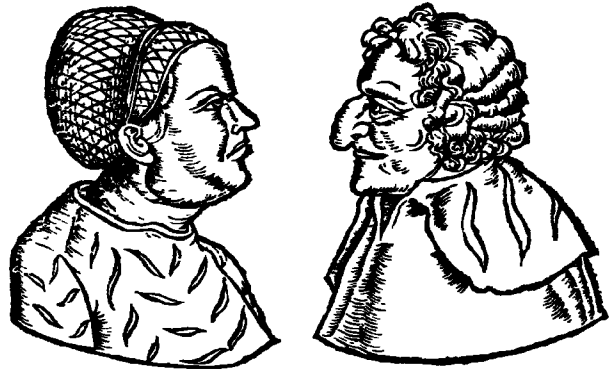


Fig 200 Nose of an Arrogant Woman, and that of a Magnanimous Man



Fig 201 Hair of an Arrogant Character, and that of a Weak Character



Fig 202 Eyes of a Malicious Man, and those of a Lustful Man



Fig 203 Eyes of an Unreliable Man, and those of an Ignorant Man



Fig 204 Hair of an Arrogant Character, and that of a Weak Character



Fig 205 Hair of a Homely Man,
Beard of a Ruthless Man



Fig 206 Foreheads of a Liberal Man
and of an Irascible Man



Fig 207 Foreheads of Vain and Lustful Men



Fig 208 Eyelashes of a Malicious and Mendacious Man, and of an Audacious and Conceited Man



Fig 209 Eyelashes of a Crafty Man, and of a Guileless Man



Fig 210 Eyes of a Peaceable Man, and those of a Man of great Intellect



Fig 211 Noses of Vain and Lustful Men



Fig 212 Man and Woman of Excellent Disposition

original power. The earliest and most rugged portraits are therefore shown here with only one of the later ones added for comparison.

Figure 197 shows two audacious and impudent men. They are impostors, liars, debauched, for their mouths are open and their lips wide.

A well shaped dentition betrays an upright character and honesty (fig 198). When the teeth are close together and sharp, they denote a healthy complexion and predict a long life. When they protrude like those in the left figure, they reveal a garrulous and insolent, pompous and unstable individual.

Of noses, Indagine has made a series of curious observations Those whose noses are curved, like in figure 199, betray by such facial deformation that they are choleric, audacious, and tyrannical If their chin is pointed, it means that their body is mutilated Similar characteristics are inherent in those with a snub nose, like that of the opposite face People with strongly curved noses like the jovial gentleman in figure 200 laugh often at others They, like the rhinoceros of the proverb, are amused by the snouts of others In ancient Persia, a large nose was a mark of beauty—and Xerxes was a most beautiful man Such people as a rule are magnanimous, courageous, and good fellows People who have noses like the lady in the same figure are severe, always angry, complicated, and snobbish

Hair is a most important physiognomic element Hirsute people, as in figure 201 (of a later edition), are choleric, their hair being coarse and dry because of their hot humors, whereas soft, silky, and smooth hair denotes a pacific, timid, and meek character

Indagine begins his observations concerning eyes with Matthew, 6 22 "If your eye is sound, your whole body will be light " And sound eyes should be wide open, clear, shining, and round (fig 202) Such proportions reveal integrity and health But sunken and small eyes are the signs of envy, malice, wrath, and suspicion

The two examples of ears offered by Indagine are both unfavorable, reflecting their bearers' capacities and characters Large ears, he calls asinine, an expression which already suggests the physiognomist's judgment· ignorance and stupid behavior Small ears, like those of monkeys, are simian, that is—they betray their owners' instability and fallaciousness (fig 203).

Bartolommeo Cocle's *Compendium of Physiognomy*, Strassburg 1533, is enhanced with masterly engraved plates The artist's name is unknown; it seems, however, that he was inspired by the flamboyant Gothic of Strassburg Cathedral Like Indagine, Cocle depicts in figure 204 two individuals who reveal their contrasting temperaments by their hair If Cocle copied them from Indagine's book (compare fig 204 with fig 201), he added two new types of hirsuteness of his own discovery (fig 205). Men whose temples are covered by a dense growth of hair are simple, vain, credulous, stubborn, of mediocre intelligence, and somewhat boorish in manners and language Bearded fellows like the one in the same figure are brutal, vengeful, have poor memories, are unfortunate and covetous

People with high and rounded foreheads are liberal, gay, and possess a good intellect. They excel in many crafts and are manageable (fig. 206). Their coun-

ter-images, those whose forehead is short and covered with hair, are quarrelsome and simple rather than refined. Others whose forehead is too small in every way, like the laurel-crowned Roman at the right of figure 207, are simple, irascible, cruel, covetous, and fond of beauty, especially of stately buildings. Men with well-rounded foreheads that have humps and little hair are intelligent and enterprising, high-minded even in adversity. They appreciate beauty, honors, responsibility, and worldly pleasures

Eyelashes may also reveal man's disposition: Men having curling eyelashes (fig. 208, right) are vainglorious, haughty, heinous, and the like, whereas lashes that curve downwards (fig. 208, left) denote malice, fallaciousness, dishonesty, laziness, secretiveness.

Cocle judges eyes differently from Indagine: large and round eyes, he says, signify a fickle and lazy fellow At times he is bold, at others, meek; often he may speak the truth, then he lies; in short, he is like most men, whether they have large or small eyes. Little, sunken eyes belong to those of an obviously bad character suspicious, malicious, bad tempered, deceitful, lewd, vain, etc There is, however, another type of small eyes which denote very different things (fig 209, right). If they are round, they signify the owner's timidity, weakness, and sluggishness, as well as his credulity. Tilted eyes betray wisdom, dishonesty, and malice (fig. 209, left)

Big noses, Cocle says, are a good sign (fig. 210), whether they are curved or straight. Such people are peaceful though not shy, and very intelligent. They may at times have an outburst of temper, but such reactions disappear quickly and are succeeded by long periods of generosity Snub-nosed and flat-nosed people lack intelligence (fig. 211), and indulge in lies, vanities, and extravagance They are fickle and, though acquainted with the technique of lying, believe in other people's lies

Figure 212 shows the ideal features of young people who are in good physical and mental health. The man wearing the beret is gifted in many ways He is fond of normal pleasures and of healthful food, of which he partakes at the proper hours His digestion is good, his blood of the right temperature, the modest young lady shares these qualities.

Chiromancy

> Nature has made the hand of man the principal organ and instrument of man s body
>
> ARISTOTLE

WHY should the hand more than the other parts of the body reflect the forces from above? To this, the magus answers that since the world is a hierarchy, then the miniature world—i e , *man*—must necessarily be organized similarly. In the system of man, the hand fulfills a unique function, that of the mediator between the above and the below, between the intellectual micro-

cosm, residing in the head, and the material microcosm, which dwells in the body. If the brain is comparable to the unmoved mover, the magi say, then the hand may be called the active force through which the mover manifests himself. For this reason, the hand occupies the second rank in the microcosmic hierarchy and is, after the head, the most worthy of investigation.

In the eighteenth century when many magical traditions had been lost, overzealous chiromancers believed it useful to investigate the *plants of the feet*, a ludicrous misconception. The feet are the most remote from the planets. Turned towards the earth, they receive the weakest light from above. They dwell, according to Fludd, in the microcosmic night, which is not tuned to the music of the spheres (fig 161).

Chiromancy gathers from the heavenly imprints upon the hand two verities: character and destiny, a conclusion which all divinatory methods share. This is deductive as well as prophetic, rational and irrational When reading his patient's hand, the chiromancer uses his reason and his divinatory gift. The lines whose significance was established by tradition are the scaffold upon which the magus sets his imagination *Imagination* is the force which performs the marvel, as Agrippa, Paracelsus, and others have affirmed

The chiromancers searched the Bible for verses that might prove the legitimacy of their art, for religion was believed to sanction magic, as in our days the occultist rashly relates his wisdom to true science Thus, in the book of Job, 37 7, we read "He seals up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work" And in Proverbs, 3 16 "Long life is given in her right hand In her left are riches and honor"

It is not within the scope of this book to explain the method of hand reading, on which there exists an extensive literature, but rather to give a few of the most striking illustrations of the periods when chiromancy was at the height of its popularity, *i e*, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is useful, however, to compare these early schemes with that of modern palmistry, and for this reason we offer to the reader, figure 213, showing the modern demarcation of a left hand Far more importance is given to the *fingers* today They confirm the marks in the palm and add many interesting details to the more general information gathered from the palm The upper phalanx of the thumb expresses will, the lower, logic In the three phalanxes of the index finger reside religion, ambition, and sensuality The middle finger contains prudence, the tendency to experiment, and concentration The ring finger informs us of the individual's artistic gifts, his critical sense, and his successes The little finger belongs to sociability, it is marked with the signs of study, speculation, and shrewdness All the upper phalanxes give information concerning the subject's intellect, the middle phalanxes, of his intelligence, and the lowest phalanxes, of his instincts

The most important lines of the palm are those of life, of destiny, of the heart, of the head, and of intuition A shorter line that descends from the art or ring finger reveals artistic talents; and several parallel lines upon the wrist give supplementary information about the length of life.

Besides the lines of the hand, its "mounts" are important to the palmist The hump of the thumb, called the mount of Venus, informs us about the individ-

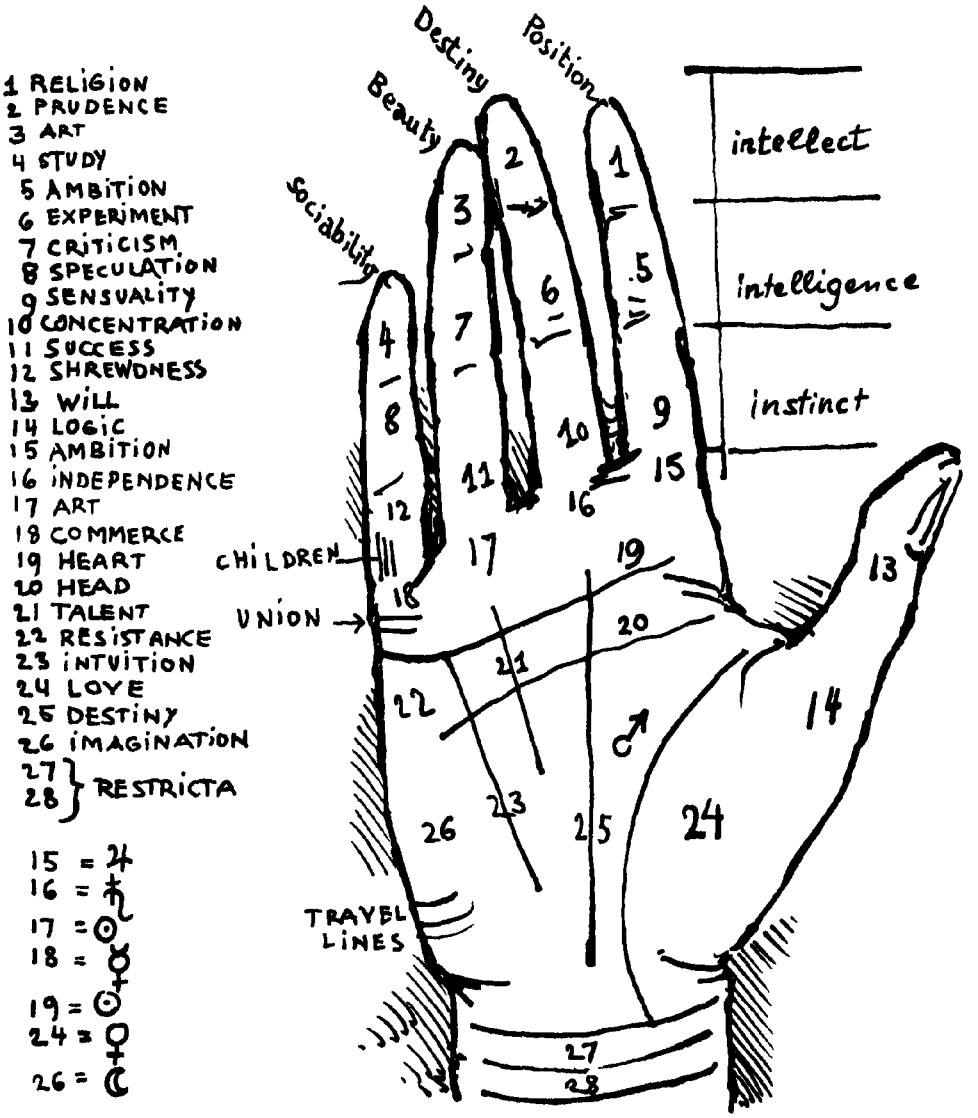


Fig 213 The Lines of the Hand, according to Modern Chiromancy

ual's love, the mount of Jupiter, below the index finger, is marked by ambition; the mount of Saturn, below the middle finger, reveals man's independence; the mount of the Sun, below the annular finger, is that of Apollo, or art And below the little finger, the mount of Mercury reveals commercial aptitudes At the edge of the palm, opposed to the thumb, there are the mounts of Mars, denoting steadiness and resistance, and of the Moon containing the marks of imagination and melancholy

Close by are the lines of travel, and above, in the mount of Mercury, those of union. Distant from the mount of love, in the realm of shrewdness (lowest phalanx of the little finger), is marked the number of children the person will beget or conceive.

To the question of whether the right or left hand or both should be inspected, no definite answer can be offered From tradition, it has been accepted that in the left hand, which does not work as much as the right, the signs are preserved better and not distorted Others say that in the left is inscribed the primitive destiny given by the stars at man's birth, whereas in the right hand are marked those changes which man causes daily by his will and work This argument cannot be accepted lightly If man's will is free, why should one inspect his left hand? If he modifies his destiny, the stars' original marks offer no valuable information But if the stars are omnipotent, then there is no point in inspecting the right hand, for will, labor, and intelligence cannot overcome that which has been decided by the horoscope This perennial strife as to whether man is free or not can certainly not be ended by the chiromancer. In his defense, one could say, however, that in the left hand, he reads man's natural disposition, whereas the right hand reveals to him what he has made with his gifts Thus one may recognize whether the subject is living according to his inclinations, if his activities are in accord with the gifts bestowed upon him at birth, and the like Accepting this, we can say that the stars influence but do not irretrievably decide our destiny

The palmists or chiromancers render their judgment according to the various lengths of the lines, the depth of their engraving, their color, their continuity They also consider whether the lines are doubled, like those in Indagine's woodcut (fig 214)

Indagine considers as the main lines, the *linea mensalis*, identical with our line of the heart, the *linea media*, or middle line, the *linea vitae*, or life line, which he calls also line of the heart, and the *linea hepatis* or liver line which reveals according to a few experts disturbances of the lower functions The four mounts below the fingers correspond to those of modern palmistry

The Dominican Tricasso de Cerasari (died 1550) shows a similar disposition of the principal lines in his treatise on chiromancy (fig 215)

"Four grooves," he says, "regulate and command the whole art of palmistry, and all the others depend on them The life line must be divided into three parts—youth, maturity, and old age From its length, we can recognize how long its owner has to live When the heart line is short, without ramifications, it denotes mortal danger, conjured up by negligence When the head line is stopped below the middle finger, this means that the individual will wound

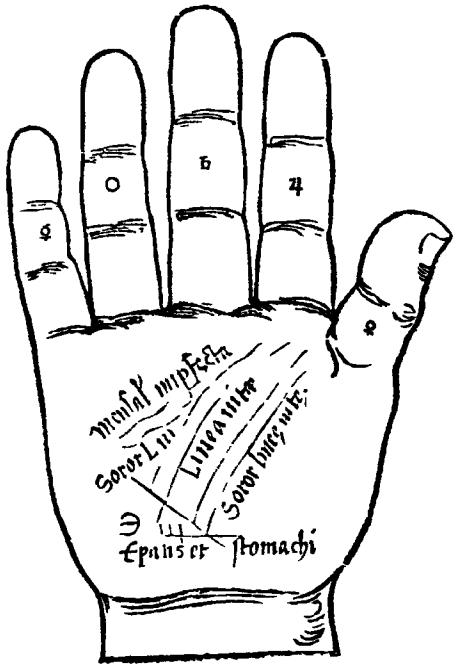


Fig 214 The Right Hand, after Indagine

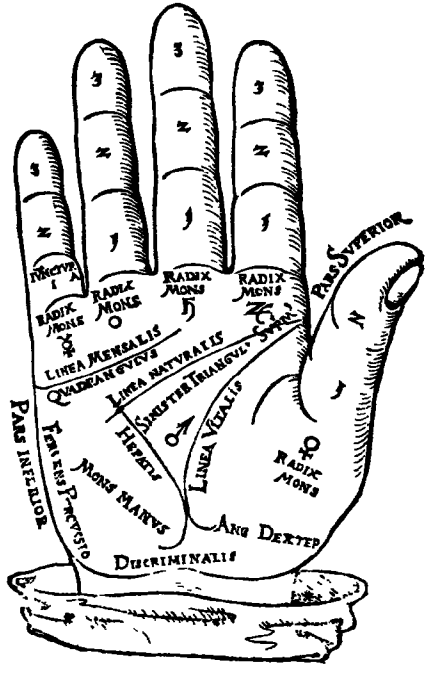


Fig 215 The Right Hand, after Tricassus

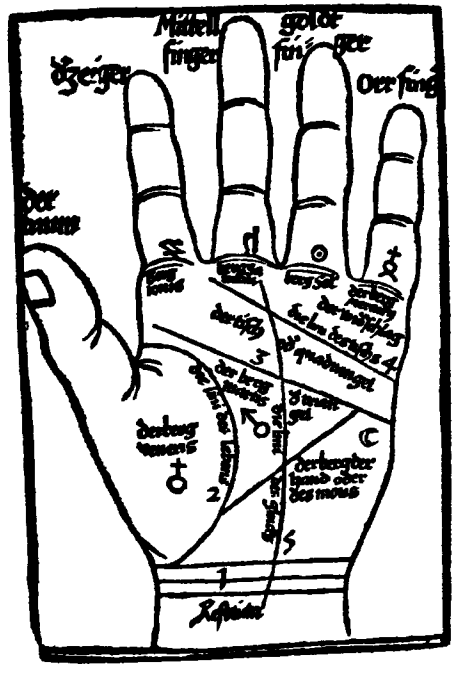


Fig 216 Chiromantic Hand, after Cocle

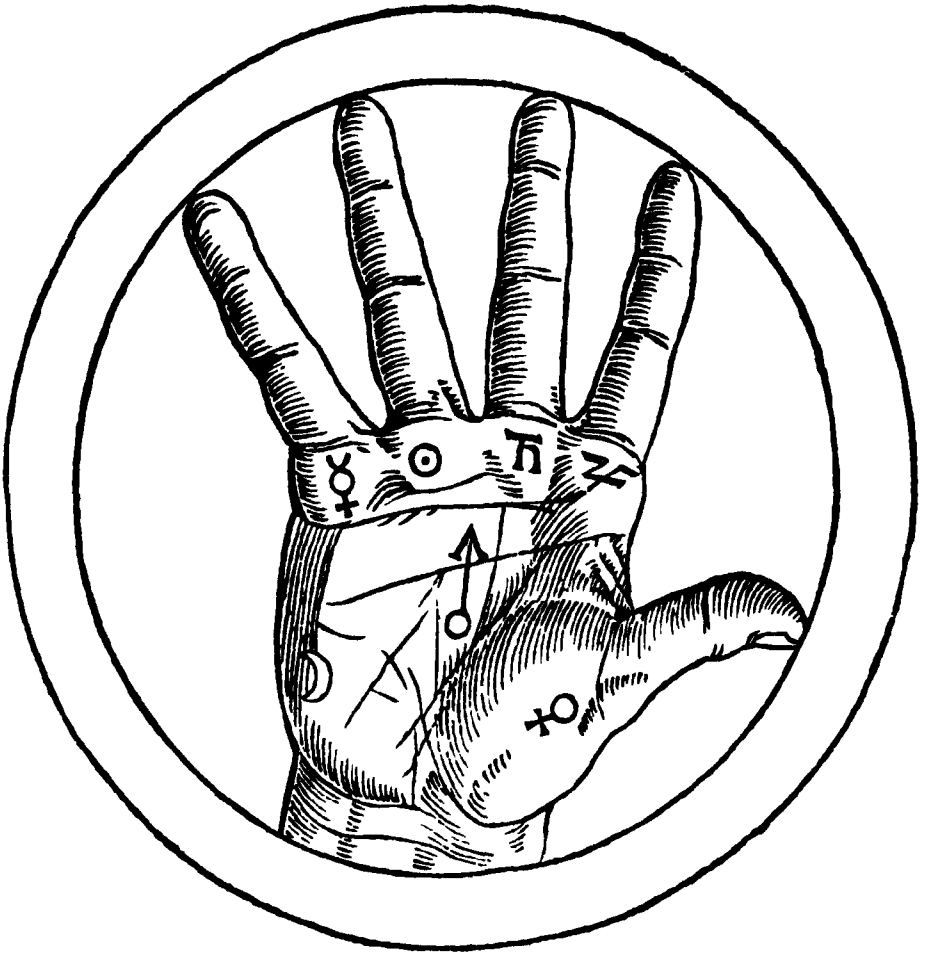


Fig 217 Position of the Planets on the Right Hand after Agrippa

himself dangerously When the liver line is very distant from the one of life, it denotes a vain or an insane being," and so on

Neither Indagine nor Tricasso count the line of Saturn, or destiny, among the important marks of the hand The *linea Saturni* is, however, not a later invention for it is plainly marked in Bartolommeo Cocle's handsome woodcut (fig. 216)

Agrippa's chiromantic hand (fig 217) shows the locations of the planets, they are not different from those of modern palmistry with the exception of the headquarters of Mars which occupy the center of the palm

In the seventeenth century, the number of principal lines was increased The Parisian Ronphyle adds to the older schemes the line of Saturn, which he also calls, arbitrarily, liver line, and the line of Apollo, that of artistic talents (fig 218)

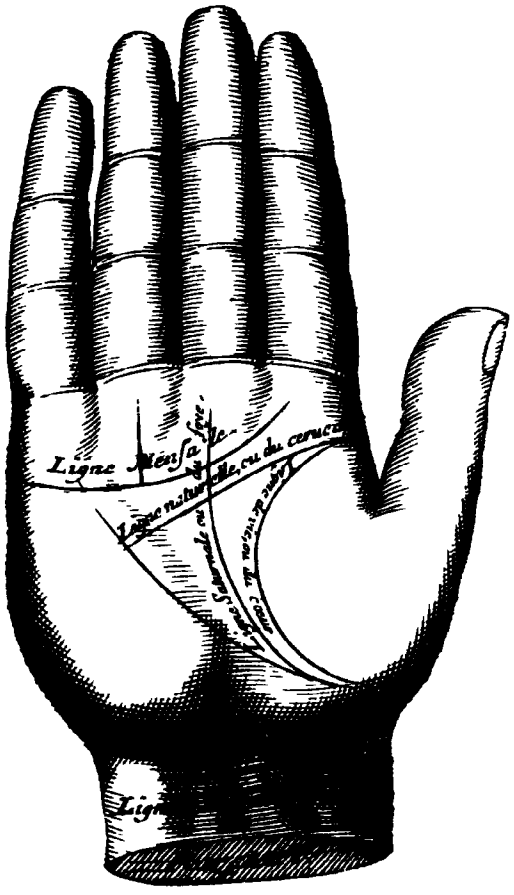


Fig 218 Principal Lines of the Hand, after Ronphyle

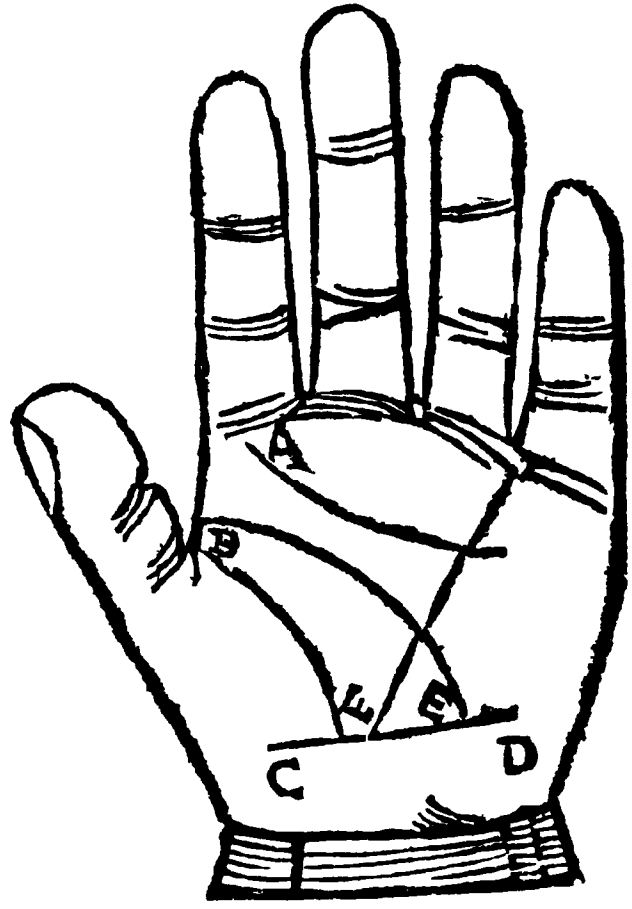
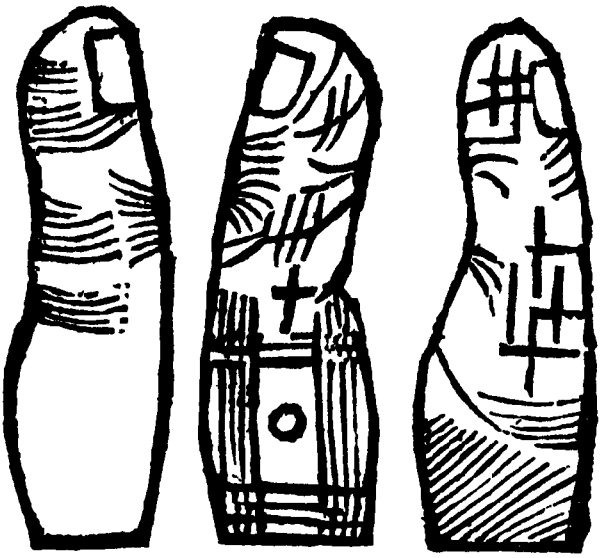


Fig 219 Principal Lines of the Left Hand, after Indagine



VENUS.



Fig 220 Lines of the Thumb, after Indagine

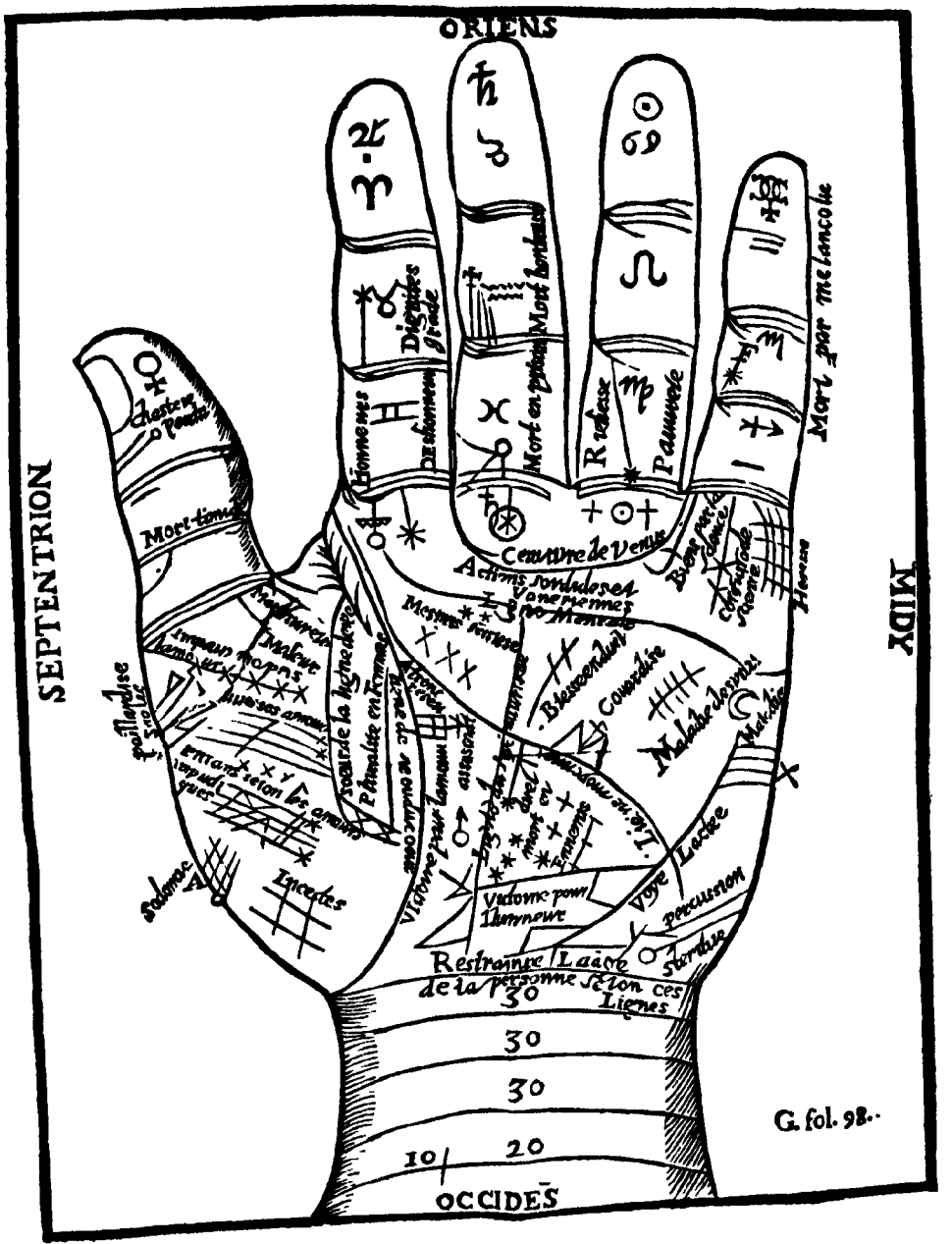


Fig 221 Diagram of the Left Hand, after Belot

As late as 1676, however, an English edition of Indagine's book clings still to the four lines of old (fig 219). To stress its conservatism, this book is printed in obsolete Gothic characters The line of life, it says, has already been rightly judged by Pliny Its length marks the boundaries of life. The middle line (E) reveals health and disease, the table line (A) informs us of our physical constitution and strength, of our temperament and mind The wrist line (C, D) promises riches and felicity, when it is well colored. But when it reaches into the hill of the Moon, it signifies betrayal by women, and many storms in fortune Special attention is given in this little treatise to the conformation of the thumb (fig 220) "If there be about the first joint of the thumb a crest like a ring going round about, and dividing the thumb, many do sternly judge and say, that this man shall be hanged The which thing I have proved true in one man But because I have seen many hanged who have lacked that mark, I leave it as uncertain"

A very instructive woodcut illustrates Jean Belot's treatise on chiromancy (fig 221) It shows a synthesis of many lines and districts Moreover, Belot added to his scheme a novelty, introducing the *signs of the zodiac* into the four fingers The index contains Ram, Bull, and Twins, the middle finger, Goat, Water Bearer, and Fishes, etc Upon the thumb is marked the lost virginity. and the mount of Venus contains other items which apparently interested the abbot's contemporaries. In the hollow of the hand, in the region of Mars, we read wounded in a duel, which shows that the occult sciences, like the true ones, adapt themselves to their epoch Further down, in the triangle, formed by the middle line, that of the liver and the line of Saturn, we read about similar yet greater misfortunes killed in a duel Such sad predictions are separated only by a few millimeters from good news close to the wrist, we read Victory in defense of honor Below the mounts of the Sun and of Saturn reside sordid actions, and close by, upon the Mount of Mercury, the good things brought to science Between thumb and life line, finally, are the marks of polygamy, in the table of Mars, close to the life line, dwell success in love affairs, assassination, and insults received

Belot's illustration suggests an ensemble of one hand. Innumerable other combinations are possible They are as inexhaustible as those of human physiognomies But this recognition should not discourage us from showing a few more instances of manual conformations, if only to give the reader an idea of the prodigious richness of the chiromantic literature

An early treatise, signed by Andreas Corvus of Mirandola, another pseudonym for Cocle, reproduced numerous types of hands upon everchanging backgrounds, in a rustic Renaissance style Figure 222 represents an extended line of Saturn which is interpreted thus "When you see this line of prosperity, going through the hand down to the wrist and being deeply engraven, it denotes prosperity and good business If you find the contrary, it signifies an inventive man or woman, an innovator of science, yet shabby, greedy, etc"

A little triangle at the wrist, as in figure 223, predicts a quiet life, the peace of the soul, honor, force of the mind and of the hand



Fig 222 Hand of an Avaricious and Thoughtless Man



Fig 223 Hand of a Stubborn and Iniquitous Man



Fig 224 Hand of an Irascible and Evil Man



Fig 225 Wrist of a Woman Unsuited for Motherhood

If the restricted lines at the root of the hand are formed as in figure 224, they denote inventiveness, specially in evil matters, bad fortune, disobedience to one's father, and contempt

If such lines diminish in strength towards the arm (fig 225), they predict increase up to the middle of life of wealth and honor, and afterwards a decrease in both

It is remarkable how many of these combinations of lines are unfavorable omens, how little the palmists of old objected to communicating to others their inveterate pessimism, unlike the amiable disposition of modern palmists, who predict when paid well the good things to come, mingling with their ingratiating talk a few friendly warnings In these old books, we read nothing about fatal dark-haired persons and favorable blonds, or of a letter that will change the course of our fate

Palmistry of old was considered a science, the inspection of the hand was as grave as a doctor's visit is today, and the chiromancers were very serious about their craft In his preface, Indagine describes the painstaking procedure necessary for efficacious investigation

"I look upon the hand and therewithal behold the whole body, with the lineament and proportions of the same, which is called his physiognomy. Then I focus my mind upon the hour of nativity, month, day or year, which I refer to the rules of natural astrology, I judge none of these by themselves sufficient, and think it better not to be rash or foolish in passing sentence I gather all things and select those which I consider useful Only then do I utter judgment, believing it madness to examine the hand and hastily interpret a life, and a body"

The chiromancer's verdict, pronounced with such strong conviction, was certainly endowed with a suggestive power Sometimes it may have been based upon a general knowledge of man, on logical deductions, and the like, things which did not require much astrological calculations and chiromantic inspection Indagine's statement that he can read the palm like a physiognomy is revealing. experience can produce a routine which may have, in serious cases, been more than idle fancy

A Greek chiromancer predicted to Alessandro de' Medici that he was to suffer soon a violent death, which happened when he was assassinated by his cousin Lorenzo

In the last century, the physician Bruhier reported the true story of a young man in whose hand a lady had read an evil future "What a pity," she exclaimed, "that you have only one more month to live" Some time after, the youth went hunting, caught a fever, and died at the appointed date, as the amateur palmist had predicted

A famous case of a chiromantic prophecy which came true is that of a M. Raillois who had been warned by a gypsy to beware of the scaffold His whole life seemed to disprove this prediction made when Raillois was a boy. He would often mention in jest that he would suffer an ignominious death. He had a new house built on one of the fashionable Parisian boulevards. While inspecting the progress of the work, he stepped from a window upon

the scaffold which, being fastened carelessly, collapsed. Raillois died from his fall.

Cocle read in the hand of Bentivoglio, ruler of Bologna, that he was to be exiled and would die in a battle The angry Bentivoglio decided to have Cocle killed He chose for this task a Bolognese nobleman to whom the palmist had predicted that he was going to commit an ignominious murder He railed at the dying Cocle, saying that his prediction had now come true

The earliest chiromancer of the Renaissance, Antioco Tiberto of Cesena, was stabbed by the tyrant of Rimini, Pandolfo Malatesta, to whom he had prophesied death in exile and poverty Tiberto was a lively and intelligent scholar held in high esteem, even by those intellectuals who thought little of the chiromantic art.

The Tarot

No calculation or scientific observation is necessary for the Tarot game Its entire magic theory rests upon the belief that in nature there is no accident—that every happening in the universe is caused by a preestablished law

The most insignificant event is subject to this fundamental rule· cards mixed at random do not yield haphazard results but a suit of figures bound magically to the diviner and to the inquirer

The practice of the Tarot is based upon a prophetic gift of man which manifests itself through a special condition, called clairvoyance by the occultists, and hyperaesthesia by the scientist

No doubt this state arises more frequently than we care to admit Who has not, even if only once in his life, had that sensation called foreknowledge? Some future event is witnessed so clearly, so plastically, that its beholder knows immediately and with absolute certainty this *will* happen And it does!

There are people specially gifted with such prescience or premonition, the born diviners They stimulate their abnormal sensibility in many ways Gazing at the crystal produces an autohypnotic condition, in fact, any glistening or colorful object when stared at for a time, may become equally stimulating to the imagination Some clairvoyant people are able to tell where the stone which they press against their forehead was found They can describe the landscape in which the stone lay, as well as the person who picked it up, etc.

The primary function of the Tarot cards seems to be such stimulation In scrutinizing the vividly colored images, the diviner will provoke a kind of autohypnosis, or if he is less gifted, a concentration of the mind resulting in a profound mental absorption. The Tarot's virtue is thus to induce that psychic or mental state favorable to divination.

The striking Tarot figures, specially the trumps or major arcana, appeal mysteriously and waken in us the images of our subconscious

Many of the Tarot figures are mediaeval allegories the eighth trump card, Temperance, the allegory of Force of trump eleven is no mystery to the ico-

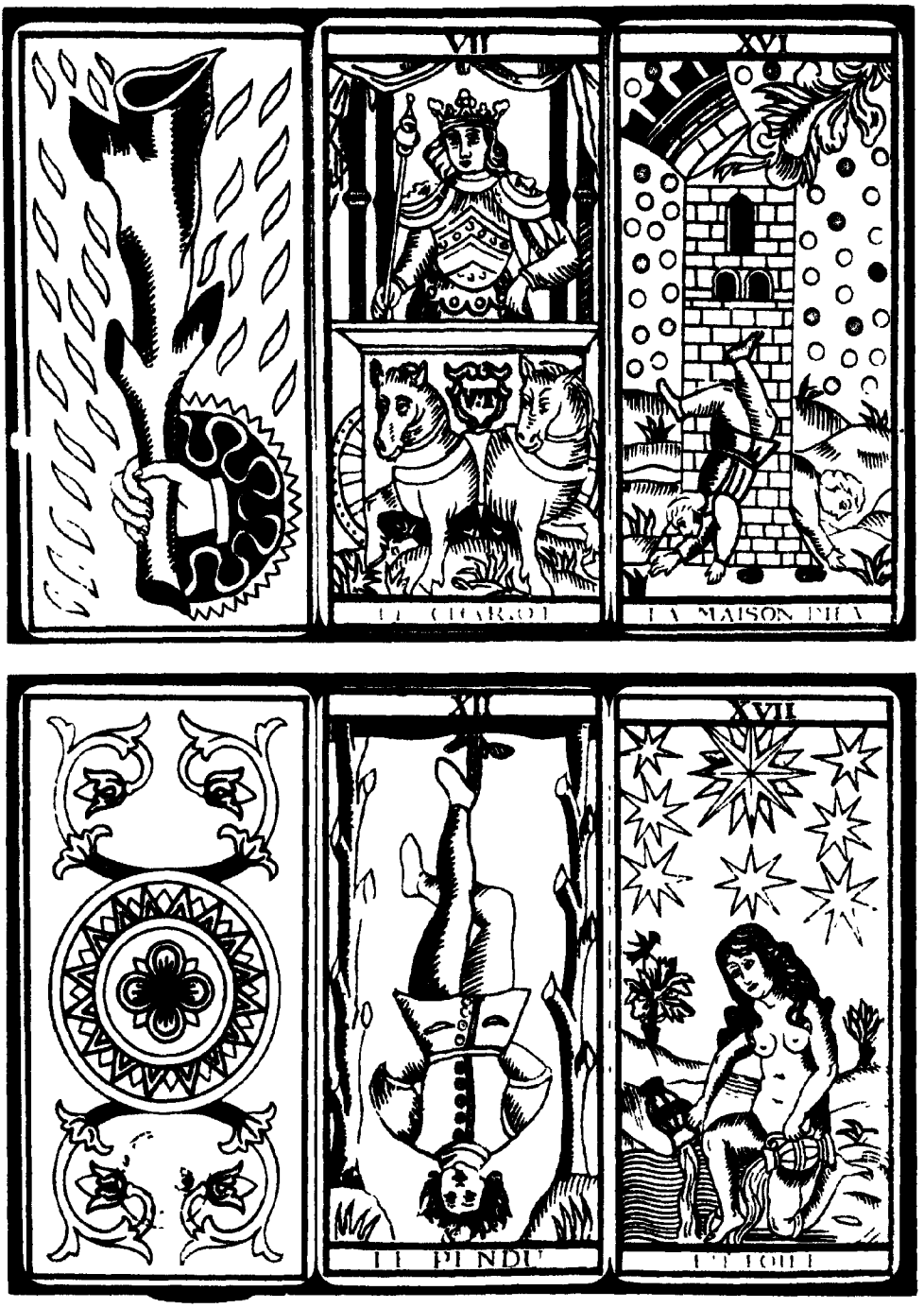


Fig 226 Tarot Cards

nologist. The wheel of Fortune, Trump ten, is a theme used in Romanesque rose-windows. Similar other affiliations can be detected without too much difficulty. Most if not all of these figures belong to the orb of the Christian civilization.

The Tarot experts have, however, insisted that the trump cards and pip cards are of a more venerable age, that they date back to antiquity. The impetus to this theory has been given by the French scholar, Court de Gébelin (1728–1784), who says in the eighth volume of his *Primitive World*. "If one were to know that in our days there existed a work of ancient Egypt, one of their books that escaped malicious destruction . . a book about their most pure and interesting doctrines, everybody would be eager no doubt to know such an extraordinary and precious work"

This Egyptian book, according to Gébelin, is the Tarot. The ancient wisdom survived, he says, because it was clothed shrewdly in the garment of a game. Its frivolous character saved it from barbarism, ignorance, and every destruction

In Gébelin's time, the interest was turned towards Egypt whose literature was still undeciphered and whose vestiges were unexplored Egypt was the land of mysteries For a knowledge of its civilization, one had to rely upon the ancient authors, Plutarch, Herodotus, Iamblichus A lack of proofs gave rise to conjecture, and Gébelin, carried away by his imagination, convinced himself that the Tarot was nothing more than the unbound leaves of the book of Thoth

Thoth-Hermes, the presumable author of the earliest Hermetic books, whom the alchemists claim as their Grand Master, was credited by Gébelin with the invention of the Tarot leaves He was the inventor of magic, of languages, writing and figuration, and had according to the myth painted all the gods. His mystical sketch book was called *A-Rosh*· "*A*" meaning doctrine, "*Rosh*," beginning *A-Rosh* had inspired the Tarot with its images, and the word Tarot itself, Gébelin says, is derived from *Tar*, way and *Ro*, or *Rog*, royal, kingly. Thus Tarot would mean the Kingly Way.

Gébelin's theories are based on shifting sand, but he promoted interest in the civilization of Egypt, and only eleven years after the publication of his *Primitive World* a discovery brought clarity into the dark realms of conjecture. In 1799, a fragment of basalt was found in the town of Rosetta on the Nile It contained two inscriptions, one in Greek and one in Hieroglyphics By comparing the two texts which were obviously identical, one could establish after many centuries of complete mystery, the first scientific contact with the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic characters

Influenced by Gébelin, most of the writers on magic declared that the Tarot was of Egyptian origin The wig-maker Alliette (ca. 1750–1810) published a series of essays on the famous game under the pseudonym Etteilla. He undertook to restore the original form to the Tarot figures which had been mistreated by Gébelin's engraver (fig 227) Alliette, more artistically than scientifically minded, embellished them according to the taste of his epoch (fig 228), but he also gave them some new and rather unorthodox attributes, and



Fig 227 Tarot Trump Temperance, after Court de Gebelin



Fig 228 Tarot Trump Temperance, after Etteilla



Fig 229 Tarot Trump Temperance, after Oswald Wirth



Fig. 230 Tarot Trump Temperance, French, 19th Century

added astrology and the Cabala to the game It is curious how many occultists believe and profess that an original secret wisdom has perpetrated itself through millennia, traditions which they readily distort or destroy They seem to forget that their bad habits must have existed before them and that for this very reason no doctrine could have come to us in its original form If any esoteric wisdom of old were still extant, it would be so thoroughly transformed that its inventors would not recognize it as their own child.

Alliette, the vainglorious hairdresser, decided that the Tarot game should be rectified, and reinstated to its original glory He changed the sequence of the leaves, discarding some and adding new ones which he declared were the oldest images, lost during the peregrinations of the game from Egypt to Europe—in brief, he confused everything completely

During the nineteenth century, Alliette's reforms were discarded and the old game was adopted again, yet none of the occultists could refrain from adding a few curlicues to the Tarot figures Oswald Wirth, a pupil of the famous magus Stanislas de Guaita (1860–1897), like Gébelin reversed his Tarot images, in the belief that he was correcting a mistake of the early engravers Wirth in his designs made numerous additions, which are based on his own presumptions (fig 229)

Comparing his Temperance with the original figure (fig 230), we see that in keeping with the lavish taste of his time he found it useful to place the allegory against a golden background, and to add a flower where the old image has only a little shrub Wirth represents the two jugs, which in the original are similar, as being made of different metals, the one of gold and the other of silver The original colors—brilliant and transparent—are in this new suit of trumps subdued to saccharine pastel effects salmon pink, pale ochre, moss green, and chalky blue At least two of the nineteenth-century magi sanctioned this modified Tarot game. Guaita and Papus, who published it in their works.

Wirth's cards are numbered with Arabic instead of the traditional Roman numerals, and Hebrew letters are added whose numerical values correspond to the cards' numeration.

Gérard Encausse, whose pen name is Papus (1865–1917), considered it necessary to start his book on the Tarot with an introduction on a Cabala of his own Stanislas de Guaita organized his extensive treatise on occultism, the *Serpent of Genesis*, according to cabalistic numbers and images of the Tarot. His *fourteenth* section deals with *Temperance* It is illustrated by the fourteenth leaf of the trumps—Temperance—and the design betrays the talent of his secretary, Oswald Wirth. Alphonse Louis Constant, alias Eliphas Lévi (1816–1875), likewise accepted the cabalistic interpretation of the Tarot In his colorful work on dogmatic and ritualistic magic, he uses the Hebrew letters and the Arabic numbers for the numeration of his chapters

Still more marvels were added to the Tarot pack in the twentieth century Mrs John King Van Rensselaer published in 1911 her conclusive book on *Prophetical, Educational, and Playing Cards*, which is devoted largely to the "Kingly Way." She states that the Egyptian Thoth, the Greek Hermes, the

Babylonian Nebo are of an identical character, and that the Tarot was consecrated to all three, united in a syncretistic godhead

The game, Mrs. Van Rensselaer says, is derived from the old practice of seeking knowledge of the future by divining rods, tablets, or arrows, a practice common to Egypt, Greece, and Babylonia. In the ancient Egyptian temple halls, the images, now appearing on the Tarot cards, were painted on the four walls The priest tossed the sticks upon the altar "As these rods fell, they naturally pointed toward the pictures on the walls, and since they represented nearly every event of life, the commands of the gods were interpreted readily by the priests who thus proved that Thoth was the god of speech . ."

The four figures of the pip cards, the king, the queen, the cavalier, and the knave, may be connected with the four signs engraved on the divining rods These symbols represented the father, the mother, the child or children, and the servants, people about whom the inquirer wished to obtain the god's oracle.

Mrs Van Rensselaer concludes that in times of decadence and persecution the priests left their temples and carried secretly with them the temple wall images in the form of the Tarot deck with which they continued to render oracles to the faithful From Egypt, these priests traveled to Italy on the famous corn route between Alexandria and Baiae, near Naples

The experts of the Tarot wanted at any cost, even by forcing some of their arguments, to connect the game with the divinatory art of antiquity They rationalized this desire by believing that such noble antecedents would make the Tarot more venerable To us, such preoccupation seems unnecessary, the Tarot cards with or without this famous ancestry have attracted many and still fascinate those who ignore their assumed history

The twenty-two trump cards were called *Man*, and with him they are concerned—with his desires and fears, his wisdom and activities, his goodness and badness, and his physical constitution The whole world simmers down to man, in two cards only is the human element missing in the Wheel of Fortune, number X, where animals caricature the human, and in figure XVIII, the Moon, in which two stargazers of the sixteenth century have been replaced by a dog and a wolf barking at the Moon They too are caricatures of man

In this quality, the Tarot cards resemble the images of other arts the paintings, sculpture, and stained glass windows of the cathedrals, which also clothed ideas in human form Their world, however, is the one above, while the world of the Tarot is below The trumps depict the relation of the powers and the virtues to man, the cathedrals on the other hand embody man's relation to the divine But both images impress themselves upon the mind. They are mnemonic They contain a wide complex of ideas that would fill volumes were they written down. They can be "read" by the illiterate and the literate alike, and they are destined for both. The Middle Ages were concerned with techniques that would enable man to remember and to compare many such areas of ideas Under this impulse, Raymond Lully wrote his *Ars Memoria*, the Art of Memory. Similar preoccupations also resulted in the early block print, *Ars Memorandi*, printed about 1470 The author undertook the difficult

task of making concrete the themes contained in the Four Gospels. For each Gospel, he created a few images, angels, bulls, lions, and eagles, emblems of the four Evangelists, upon which he imposed objects that were to suggest the stories treated in each chapter Figure 231 shows the angel (Matthew), containing eight smaller emblems that were to recall Matthew's eight first chapters In visualizing every figure of *Ars Memorandi* with all their emblems, one would remember the stories of the entire Gospel

To us, such visual memory would seem prodigious, but it was surely not unusual in times when only a few could read and write, and when images played the role of writing.

The Tarot cards by their mnemonic character are related to the images of *Ars Memorandi*, and if we accept the tradition that every detail in the Tarot trumps with their ornaments, implements, colors, etc , are just so many symbols, the cards contain a considerable number of elements to be remembered.

But what exactly is there to remember? The difference consists in this that *Ars Memorandi* refers to the well-known Biblical texts, whereas the Tarot confronts us with riddles The Kingly Way leads us into an enclosure, where we are faced with our own subconscious

The Tarot is both the generator and the battery It gives birth to one's thoughts, and also nurses them In studying the cards, one is stimulated to visualize images of our intellectual and psychic experiences, and returning again to them later, we will recall these images, which would have "fallen into the void" without this mnemonic help The Tarot produces for us an independent and self-sufficient world, and our psyche is made objective, and detached for contemplation

The Tarot figures are stereotypes, but what they suggest is in constant flux They do not express or lead to an established doctrine On the contrary, they liberate us from such bonds This liberation may have a psychotherapeutic effect, as modern scientists have suggested, but above all, they *free faculties* in us which are suppressed by conventions and daily routine They stimulate a creative power which appeals to the artist They are the "poetry made by all" of the surrealist postulate

There is no key to the Tarot, but there are as many interpretations as there are individuals who consult the cards The cards, we repeat, are not manipulated by means of theories and doctrines; they are interpreted through a natural gift, found among the learned and the profane The nineteenth-century magi sought to introduce into the game an esoteric doctrine, resembling Hermetism Their ideals might be justified as a reaction against the shallowness and the extravagant optimism of their contemporaries But their rigid self-assurance is, so to speak, "antitarotic," and they lack a virtue found in some Tarot cards, namely humor and irony What they believe to be the truth they profess with a prophetic vigor which does not tolerate contradiction They call sublime secrets inherited from the sages of antiquity, what we would describe as perennial human traits

If the desire to establish an infallible dogma of the Tarot is a mistake, it is also wrong to change or "correct" the figures of the game which are timeless



Fig 231 Mnemonic Figure

prototypes. The beautiful trumps have risen from nowhere, and this is precisely one of the attractions of the game To reform them to fit dogmatic expressions of a vanished civilization is to deprive them of their *constant* values. Such corrections are not sought by those who have accepted the images for centuries and still discover marvels in them now

Like astrology, the Tarot proposes a method for predicting future events and man's character But the Tarot abhors the scientific aspect of astrology. The future, the cartomancers say, cannot be explored by mathematics; the stargazers wish to discover the world order by calculations and abstractions, and are like dogs howling helplessly at the indifferent Moon. The Tarot diviners, on the other hand, discover futurity by intuition, prophetic images drawn from the vaults of the subconscious

Neither does their strife have much in common with Hermetism. Their social element, in fact, is diametrically opposed to it Hermetism isolates the adept, the Tarot is a means of communication The Hermetic is concerned with his own felicity or improvement, the cartomancer is preoccupied mainly with his patients' disquietudes The hermetic master grows more indifferent to the accidents of life, the higher he ascends the degrees of self-initiation, the Tarot diviner wants to know what will happen here below, how the supernatural will act upon man He is earthbound

Tarot Pips and Trumps

THE fifty-six pip cards are divided into four groups, Rods, Swords, Money, and Cups, numbered from one to ten Each suit is ruled by four court cards, King, Queen, Cavalier, and Knave. One could identify the four groups as the mediaeval society the peasantry is symbolized by the rod, nobility, by the sword; the tradesman by the coin, and the clergy by the chalice or cup (fig 226, left, and fig 232, left).

In their organization the pip cards recall modern card games. They were originally, without doubt, separated from the trumps which form an independent set. The two do not mingle well

The twenty-two trumps depict the following figures.

I. The Juggler or Pagad· executing some legerdemain behind his table.
II The Popess a woman crowned with a tiara, enthroned.
III. The Empress a woman with scepter and coat of arms
IV The Emperor· a crowned and enthroned man, seen in profile.
V The Pope, blessing two kneeling people
VI The Lovers a youth between two women; above, Cupid with his bow.
VII The Chariot, pulled by two horses carrying a king or hero.
VIII Justice its allegory, a woman with scales and sword.
IX. The Hermit an old man with lantern and staff
X The Wheel of Fortune, whirling around three animals
XI Strength a female figure forcing open a lion's mouth
XII. The Hanged Man· a person suspended by one foot from a gibbet.
XIII Death, cutting off with his scythe the heads and members of man
XIV Temperance a female figure pouring a liquid from one jug into another.
XV The Devil and two satellites
XVI The Tower, men precipitated from a tower struck by fire or lightning
XVII. The Stars a woman kneeling in the water, pouring out two liquids from two jugs. Above are eight stars
XVIII The Moon two dogs bark at the Moon, in a pool is the cancer of the zodiac, the Moon's house
XIX. The Sun two children in front of a wall, above, the luminary
XX. The Judgment· an angel blowing the trumpet, which summons the resuscitated
XXI The World· a nude woman in the mandorla, at the four corners, the emblems of the four Apostles.



Fig 232 Tarot Court Cards



Fig 233 Tarot Trump Cards

One trump is not numbered: the Fool. Dressed like a king's jester, carrying his bundle on a stick or spoon, he walks dreamily, unaware that a dog is biting his thigh

We give here the full list of the direct significance of the cards, according to Papus:

Pip cards

Rods

King, darkhaired man, married, having family, a friend
Queen, dark lady, serious, good counselor, mother.
Cavalier, young man, darkhaired, a friend
Knave, child, darkhaired, friendly, sent by near relation
Ace, beginning of an enterprise
Two, difficulty, obstacle to the enterprise, unforeseen.
Three, initial success, the base is laid out, encouragement
Four, renewed difficulty
Five, obstacle overcome by assiduity, victory
Six, failure, the obstacles overcome the enterprise
Seven, success, one part of enterprise achieved.
Eight, opposition to final achievement
Nine, final success, the task is performed
Ten, uncertainty in the conduct of the enterprise

Cups

King, blond man, friend, judge, clergyman, bachelor
Queen, blond woman, friend, mistress, sweetheart, fiancee.
Cavalier, young man, blond, lover, beloved
Knave, blond child, arrival, birth
Ace, beginning of love
Two, obstacles deriving from one of the couple
Three, both have fallen in love
Four, a third person provokes opposition
Five, the obstacle is overcome
Six, destroyed love, widowhood
Seven, triumph of love
Eight, deception
Nine, pregnancy.
Ten, uncertainty

Spades
King, darkhaired, evil man
Queen, calumnious, darkhaired woman, evil action
Cavalier, spy, young man, darkhaired, enemy
Knave, bad news, delay, bad child
Ace, beginning of tense relation *(This and the following cards indicate that the opposition comes from outside.)*
Two, opposition which will not last
Three, hatred
Four, success against the enemy
Five, having been overcome, the enemy is now triumphant
Six, overcoming the opposition, the enemy is rendered harmless
Seven, the enemy has been able to achieve his evil plans.
Eight, but he is only partly successful.
Nine, persistent hatred.
Ten, insecurity in matters of friendship

Money
King, blond man, enemy or also indifferent
Queen, blond woman, enemy or indifferent
Cavalier, young man, foreigner, blond, arrival
Knave, letter, envoy, blond child
Ace, heritage, gifts, economy
Two, difficulties concerning the establishment of wealth.
Three, moderate gain
Four, loss
Five, another transaction restores the equilibrium
Six, heavy loss
Seven, fortune
Eight, the established wealth is again reduced by losses.
Nine, durable fortune
Ten, changeable luck, gains and losses
The money cards indicate things that come from uphill, the country, the exterior

A few examples of pip cards are reproduced in figure 226 (ace of money and ace of rods), and in figure 232 (ace of spades, king of cups, queen of spades, ace of cups, cavalier of money, and knave of rods)

The Trump Cards

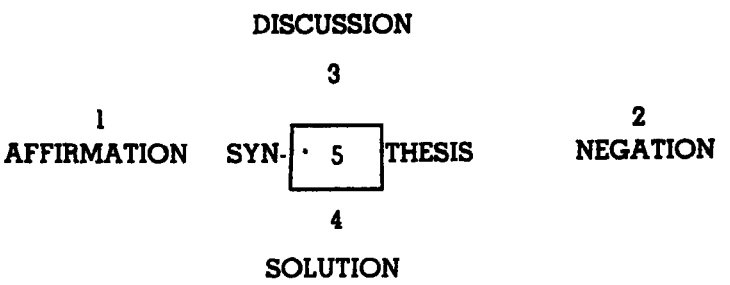
For these higher Arcanes, we give only the immediate meaning:

I	The Juggler	The inquirer, all cards lying close to the juggler are important for the inquirer's destiny
II	The Popess	The female inquirer, this trump has the same qualities as the juggler, but for inquiring women
III	The Empress	Initiative, Action
IV	The Emperor	Will
V	The Pope	Inspiration
VI	The Lovers	Passion
VII	The Chariot	Triumph, Protection by Providence
VIII	Justice	Justice
IX	The Hermit	Wisdom, Prudence
X	The Wheel of Fortune	Destiny
XI	Strength	Force
XII	The Hanged Man	Sacrifice, Ordeal
XIII	Death	Death
XIV	Temperance	Economy, Moderation
XV	The Devil	Disease, Great Strength
XVI	The Tower	Ruin, Deception
XVII	The Stars	Hope
XVIII	The Moon	Danger, Enemies, False Friends
XIX	The Sun	Marriage, Happiness
XX	Judgment	Transmutation, Change
XXI	The World	Success, Harmony, Attainment
--	The Fool	Folly, Inspiration

For minor inquiries, Oswald Wirth recommends consulting *only five cards* of the twenty-two trumps These are mixed and the inquirer is asked by the cartomancer to name a number lower than twenty-two If he chooses seventeen, the seventeenth card is taken from the pack and set out Its meaning is affirmative The cards are shuffled again, and by the same process another card is selected whose meaning is negative In this way, five cards are exposed and arranged according to the scheme below One means affirmation, two negation, three discussion, four solution, and five determination or synthesis



Fig 234 Tarot Trump Cards



The synthesis is gained by the study of the whole "conjunction." The arrangement of the great game for the consultation of an important decision is indicated below (fig. 235) Pip cards and trumps are mixed together and laid out in the order indicated by numbers. The cards lying in the upper part of the arrangement, *i e*, the farthest away from the cartomancer, express the present, the cards to the left, the future, and the cards to the right, the past One leading card is placed in the middle

It is clear that the more cards are chosen, the more difficult it is to bring their meaning to a synthesis, and greater lucidity is demanded from the diviner. It is therefore advisable to begin with a small game—and not to unfold the cards too often, or for frivolous reasons, a moment of concentration should be expected, or a feeling that "it will work." According to most Tarot experts, the trumps change their meaning when they are turned upside down An ill-boding image like the Tower may be interpreted as ambivalent in this case Moreover, it should be remembered that the trumps' numbers are interpreted prophetically as well If the inquirer wishes to know *when* the prediction will come true, numbers may be counted as days, months, years, according to the diviner's premonitions. The numbers of the cards are also interpreted cabalistically by some experts.

Additional information cannot be given here, specialized books, the most important of which are those by Papus, Wirth, Marc Haven, Odoucet, Vaillant, Pelladan, de Sivry, Mathers, and Waite, contain further references. Unfortunately, most of these works have become rare, and the recent books on the Tarot are not all worthy of recommendation.

Valuable scientific views on the Tarot have been expressed in the books and essays of Tassin, Foster Case, MacMonnies Hazard, Elizabeth Whitney, and others

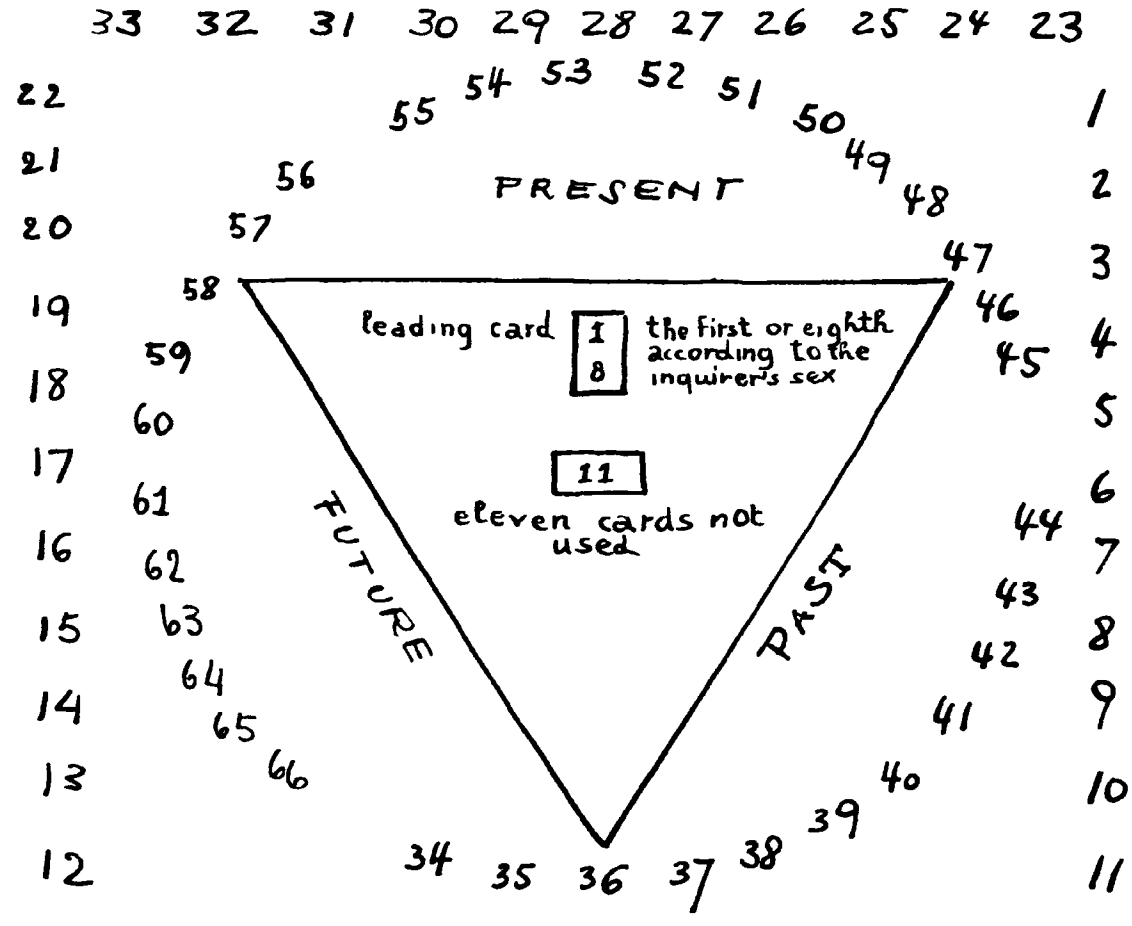


Fig 235 Layout of the Tarot Cards for the Great Game

The Juggler

Poetic license may be forgiven to the tellers of unusual stories

ELIPHAS LEVI

IT IS difficult to leave the Tarot without offering more details of at least one trump card, for which purpose is chosen the first leaf, the Juggler (fig 236).

His number is One, to which in modern cards the Hebrew Aleph has been added (fig 237) Why should a legerdemainist be placed at the head of this marvelous game? Was it to indicate that despite every effort to read order into the world one remains the victim of illusion? Aleph in the Cabala expresses the spirit of the living God To attribute the number one to a juggler might seem a blasphemy, the juggler being the magician's and the cleric's enemy, because he mimicked wonders by his dexterity, and was a promoter of skepticism Yet certain diviners identified the figure cabalistically with the spirit of God. The letter aleph ℵ they said, underlies the figure of the juggler; his torso bends backward, one arm is raised, the other bent downwards He is



the Aleph, the master-spirit of the universe which stretches before him like the juggler's table All things of creation are tossed about by him as if they were the juggler's objects

He is pointing at the above and the below, confirming the teaching of Hermes Trismegistus that here below all is like that which is in heaven, that the little world, man, contains all the elements of the universe, and that the study of man will make us understand the wonders of the whole creation

Court de Gébelin's interpretation of the juggler is very sober, expressing the pessimism of the pre-Revolution savant The game, he says, starts with a deceiver and ends with a fool Man in the middle deserves their company Who was the fool and who the juggler in Gébelin's time? The French king, whose politics was half jugglery and half sentimentality, allowed things to drift, and the learned and the philanthropic, who believed they were chosen to lead the people to better times, forgot that their dreams and theories could not feed the hungry masses,—ready to assault them like enraged beasts The juggler upholds the people's staff or rod, which will sweep from the table the coins of the traders, the chalices of the clergy, and the swords of the nobility!

The Egyptians, Gebelin says, counted their Tarot cards from the highest number to the lowest The juggler to them was an allegory of the world here below "He is at the head of the worldly government, he indicates that this life is but a dream, a legerdemain, a perpetual game of hazard, dependent upon a thousand sets of circumstances"

Of a political character is the juggler of a Tarot game printed in Paris in 1500 (fig 238) Dressed like a shepherd or magus, he is depicted giving advice to



Fig 236 The Juggler,
Traditional Design



Fig 237 Tarot Trump: The Juggler,
after Oswald Wirth

the king who is pondering over a chart spread out upon a table. The ruler's gesture expresses both confusion and meditation, as he tries to solve a dilemma. A third figure, the king's jester, listens with intense interest, following the juggler's hands which point at two different places on the chart. Is it the above and the below, or does it signify that the juggler can by his intellectual faculties coordinate contradictory elements? King, fool, and juggler are discussing the destiny of the commonwealth. They will not succeed, as their endeavor is caricatured in a monkey searching for fleas on the hide of a sleeping dog.

Alliette held this trump in low esteem. He thought that such an undignified figure could not have been the one to open the Kingly Way. He placed the juggler on number XV where according to the Tarot tradition the Devil resides. "The Juggler," he says, "signifies disease, though he had been unjustly considered as the symbol of Health."

Such simplified methods of interpretation did not please the famous magi of the nineteenth century. Eliphas Lévi, though calling Alliette an inspired hairdresser, denounced these trivialities. The meaning of a card has to be discovered in many realms, in the divine world, in the world of nature, in that of man, in that of the intellect, and in the world of darkness! For Lévi, the Tarot is a monumental summary of all ancient revelations, the key to the Egyptian hieroglyphs, to Solomon, the primeval scriptures of Enoch and Hermes. Such an implication opened new horizons for the cartomancers. Under Lévi's influence, Papus pronounced his pompous interpretation of the juggler:

"He is Man as the collective unity, the principle of mastership and domination over the earth. From this hieroglyphic meaning are derived the ideas of *unity* and of that principle which *determines* unity. Men or the microcosm, unity and principle: this is the sense of the Juggler."

"But an attentive consideration of this first trump," he continues, "will enlighten us still more." According to Papus, the juggler's hat is shaped like the symbol of Eternal Life ∞, or the infinite, according to mathematics. The lower part of the figure signifies Earth adorned with the symbols of nature. The middle shows man's body placed behind a table, upon which lie chalices, swords, and money. The fourth emblem of the pip cards, namely the rod, he holds in his raised hand. The meaning of these four emblems is explained by Papus cabalistically. They conceal the four letters of *Jehovah* יהוה, the tetragrammaton. י is identical with the rod, signifying the active principle of God; ה, the chalice or cup symbolizing the passive principle of the universe; ו, the spade or sword, is the symbol of the equilibrating principle—or of man. The second ה (the last letter), is "the cyclic symbol of eternity uniting the three other principles."

These symbols, Papus says, correspond to the four great human castes: the men of י are the inventors, the nobility of the intelligence; the men of ה are the keepers of the great verities discovered by the inventors. The third caste is that of the sword men, the defenders of the acquisitions of the thinkers. They are warriors, the nobility of the sword. The last caste is that of the masses, the multitude from which the three nobilities emerge.



Fig 238 The Juggler,
Renaissance Design



Fig 239 Tarot Trump The World,
French, 19th Century

These symbols are placed on the juggler's card at random, whereas in the twenty-first trump, the World, they are ordered, set in the card's four corners. The four emblems of the apostles are nothing more than the tetragrammaton (fig. 239). The two cards complete one another, numbers one and twenty-one added produce twenty-two, the whole suit of trumps.

Summing up, Papus declares that "above in the figure are hidden the number of letters, below the 'vulgar names' of the card. At the right of the figure reside the three worlds: that of God, of Man, and of Nature. Below is found the absolute key according to the image of the revolutions of the word YHVH."

How can we use these occult hints for the interpretation of the Juggler's card? This is another question which Papus does not answer plainly. Eliphas Lévi declared that "the truth must be veiled, yet not hidden from the people." We believe that Papus added to the juggler just one veil too many Let us therefore resort to the amiable Oswald Wirth who declares that this figure alludes in a positive sense to the following qualities of man· initiative, spontaneity of intelligence, acuity of discernment and comprehension, ready wit, self-control, autonomy, rejection of other people's suggestions, emancipation from all prejudice.

In an ambivalent or negative sense, the juggler may be interpreted as dexterity, cleverness, refinement, diplomacy, persuasiveness, lawyer, shrewdness, cunning, agitation, lacking in scruples, aggressive, intriguer, liar, rogue, charlatan, and exploiter of human candor.

Thus we have finally a complete interpretation of the first trump's ambivalent qualities, upon which the cartomancer must decide according to the other cards laid out for the oracle. It is clear that those cards which lie closest to the trump are more influential than others Ill-boding figures surrounding the juggler will decide the inquirer's unlucky destiny, as well as the fact whether the card is lying reversed or upright, the first position having a negative meaning and the second a positive one.

In his metaphysical interpretation of the figure, Wirth relies mostly upon Papus' interpretations. The four Hebrew letters of God, the four emblems of the Evangelists, are also identified by him The synthesis is enriched by Wirth who added the four elements to this mystical tetrad His chart reads like this.

Money	Sword	Cup	Rod
Diamond	Spade	Heart	Clubs
Earth	Air	Water	Fire
Bull	Eagle	Angel	Lion
ה	ו	ה	י

In order to possess the four mystical instruments, one must have endured the ordeal of the elements. One has to triumph over the air, which for the cabalist is achieved through the word This victory will yield the sword, the symbol of the word which drives away the phantoms of terror The conquest over water signifies the acquisition of the Holy Grail, the cup of wisdom The

fire ordeal, the highest initiation, will be rewarded with the commander's staff, which is the king's scepter and signifies that the wise man rules by his own power and embodies sovereign will.

Wirth does not show the inquirer's *dispositions* only, he offers also ethical hints concerning self-improvement. The first condition is always to be active, even fruitlessly so, rather than to be indolent Indeed the juggler's trump expresses the everlasting motion that exists in the world and in man's body and mind. "The individual," Wirth says, "must accomplish his mission which is to *create himself*, to become an entire man, a *homo totus*" The character of such self-development, modern scientists would call the process of individuation. The entire man is, according to Wirth, the refraction of the first cause, the principal unity in the self.

This idea is not wholly alien to the psychological theories of C. G. Jung, of whom we are reminded when the Tarot experts allude to Hermetism as a means of accomplishing this task The fact that only *three* legs of the juggler's table are visible, is not a coincidence. According to Wirth they signify Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury, the three pillars of the material world, "the supports of the elementary substance which falls under our senses"

Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer adds a few interesting observations. Convinced that the divining arrows or rods are the ancestors of the Tarot, she dwells upon the fact that the juggler is manipulating his staff before the table. This is the magician's wand, "readily recognized as such by the shrewd Frenchman (Gébelin)."

"It is one of the pip devices that has been reproduced in the ace of Rods, Staves or Scepters and by placing it in the hand of the inquirer, it denotes that he has been given the power to consult the oracle." The table, Mrs Van Rensselaer believes, was used in an ancient cult

In antiquity, there existed the custom of asking the godhead about the future profession of a child Among the Greeks and Egyptians, it was customary to conduct boys who had reached manhood to the temple where they had to take from the altar an object of their choice. If the boy grasped the sword, it meant that he was to be a soldier. The cup signified priesthood or love This would explain that the juggler, or the inquirer of the Tarot cards, is at the decisive point of questioning the oracle about his future, that all possibilities are latent, and that the Tarot game will now give its verdict Good and bad lay ahead, as the arms' gestures indicate Papus had remarked already that "man with one hand seeks God, and with the other he plunges below to summon the demon, and thus unites the divine and the diabolic in humanity."

The cartomancer must decide whether his consultant will choose that which he considers desirable, the good or the bad, that which is befitting to him or alien to his essence. It is a most dangerous moment for the inquirer who is abandoning himself to the Tarot player's cunning His feelings may be similar to that of the patient who is led to the operating room, not knowing whether his surgeon is capable. Eliphas Lévi warns his readers, saying that "cartomancy in its proper understanding is a literal consultation of spirits." A good medium, he says, is a necessary condition, "otherwise the Tarot is dangerous

and we do not recommend it to anyone." If one falls into the hands of a charlatan, the latter may offer him the wrong alternatives, like the cobbler who replaces the juggler in a disfigured Italian game (fig. 240). The first Tarot trump is also called Pagad, a mysterious word derived, according to Paravicinio, from Paghead, meaning fortune. The Italians have interpreted the word as *bagatto*, cobbler, upon whose table are lying awls and the like: a bad choice for the inquirer! Others called the juggler: *Il Bagatel*, i.e., the trifle But as we learn from all experts, there is nothing trifling about the Tarot and its figures

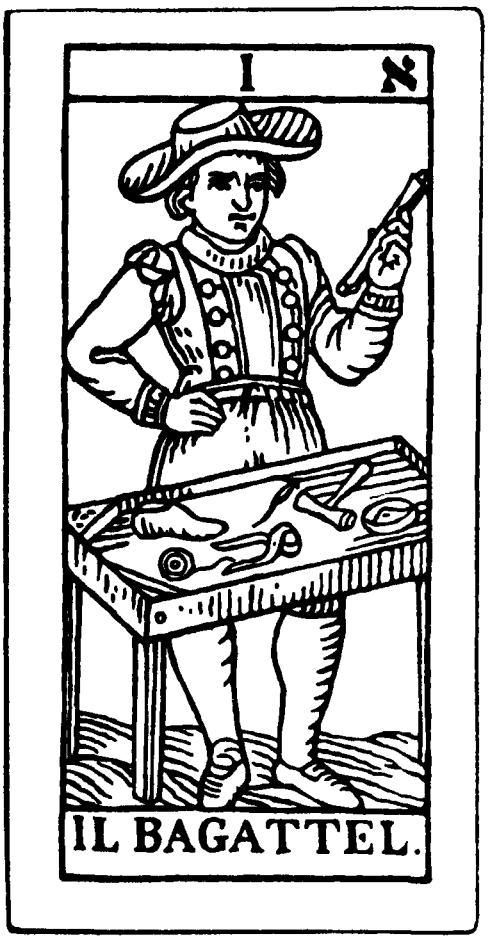


Fig 240 The Juggler

REFORMERS

The Rosicrucians

Learn to know all, but keep thyself unknown
Gnostic device

In the sixteenth century, Paracelsus had prophesied that the world was soon to be reformed In his treatise on metals, he prognosticates that "God will permit a discovery of the highest importance to be made, it must be hidden until the advent of the artist Elias" The learned world and especially the Paracelcians conjectured about this coming world-transformation and its initiator.

No one doubted that such a fundamental change, which everyone desired, was possible Had not the Reformation been one of the great turning points in man's history? Paracelsus' attitude, however, toward this religious revolt was enigmatic Accepting Luther as a great reformer, still he remained a Catholic, declaring that he wanted to be a reformer in his own field, Brother Martin was not sufficiently devoted to magic or to the Cabala Though he had uncovered the evils of his epoch, he was unable to eliminate them.

The magi hoped that in the days to come another reformation would take place whereby unlike the one initiated by the temperamental monk, the sages of the world would unite for the good of mankind This brotherhood of the chosen should be animated by the most noble aspirations their aims were to be the perfection of the self and of nature

This ideal gave birth to secret societies, such as the Brothers of the Golden Cross, founded by Agrippa, the Cross-bearing Evangelic Militia of Luneburg, and several groups of Hermetics who identified the philosophers' stone with the *Absolute*, believing that transmutation was just one and a minor sign of the attained mastership Paracelsus had declared that the comet of 1572 was "the sign and harbinger of the approaching revolution" [1] Many magi and intellectuals were eager to join forces in order to face the future collectively, and not a few offered their plans for the spiritual content and the organization of this society of sages

In 1614 appeared a pamphlet written in German, entitled *The Reformation of the World* No one seemed to know how it had originated. The brief satirical treatise used the god Apollo as spokesman, assisted by the wise men of antiquity and of the modern world, and proposed an attempt to reform the universe, or rather, it maintained that Apollo had made such an attempt in vain.

It has been debated whether this little tract is a Rosicrucian product. At any

rate, it appealed to many intelligent people of various countries and was reprinted and translated many times

It is safe to say that the originator of this text was an Italian, Trajano Boccalini, whose book had appeared two years earlier in Venice, and who was murdered in the following year. *The Reformation of the World* in the German version is a translation of a chapter of Boccalini's book, but contained in addition a manifesto: *Fama Fraternitatis, or a Discovery of the Fraternity of the Most Laudable Order of the Rosy Cross* A résumé of its contents is given in the following paragraphs.

The new discoveries, such as that of America, have increased man's knowledge and raised the hope that all arts and sciences might be perfected to a degree theretofore unheard of Man will finally appreciate his own nobility and capacities, and the true meaning of himself as a microcosm

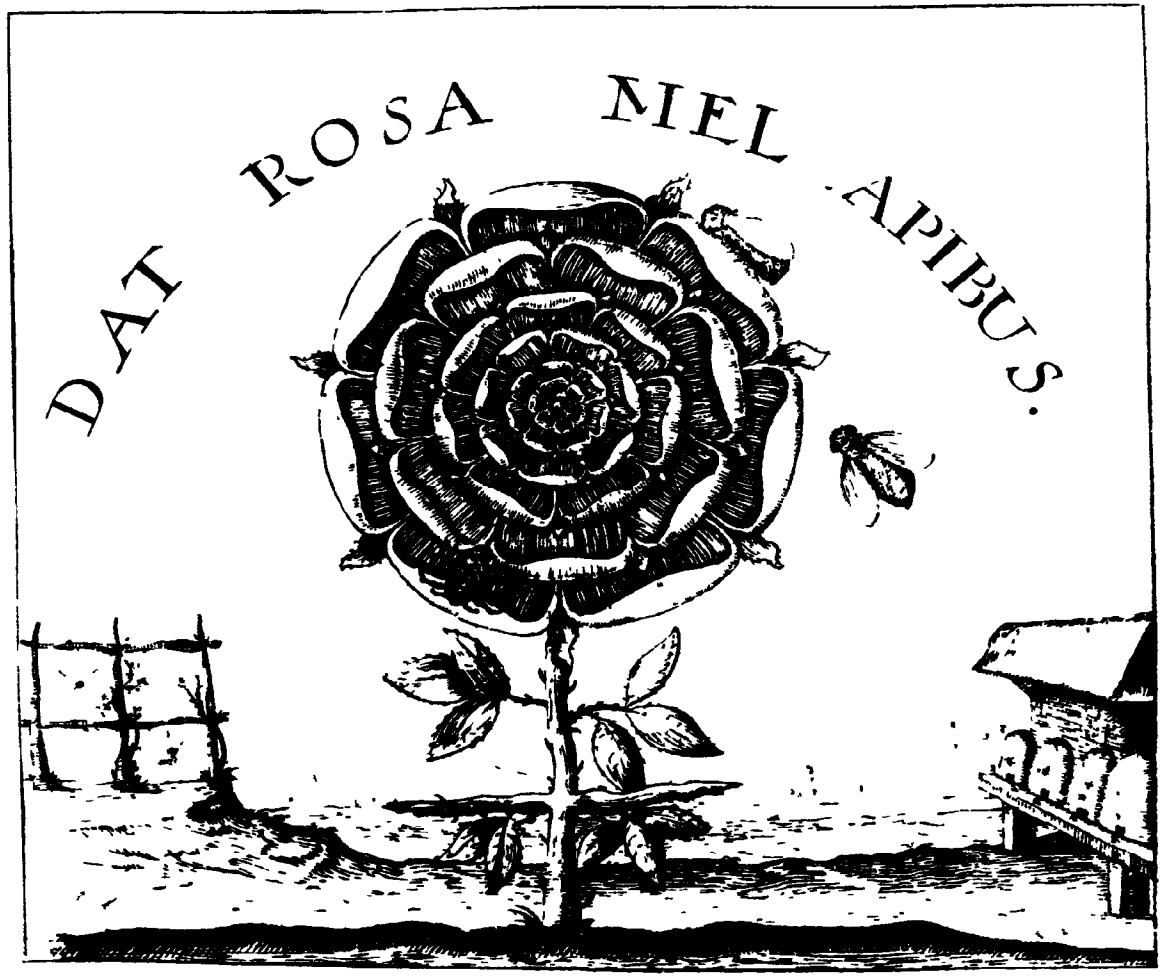
If agreement rather than ridicule existed among the good and the learned, mankind would be able to discover the greatest secrets of nature. The reactionaries with their Galen, Porphyry and Aristotle should be brought to reason. Such an attempt was once made by the Illuminated Father and Brother C R C (Christian Rosencreutz), the most venerable ancestor of the Fraternity At sixteen this great man traveled to the Holy Land, to Turkey and Arabia where he learned a sacred and secret wisdom, which he translated into Latin, the book *"M"* Then he traveled to Fez in Morocco, in accordance with the recommendation of the sages Whoever he met imparted to him his wisdom under the seal of secrecy

In Fez, Rosencreutz acquired mastery of all secret wisdom Man must be attuned to God, Heaven and Earth His religion, his policy, health, nature, language, words and works must be in accord with the All Diseases come only from the devil

From Fez, Rosencreutz went to Spain, rejoicing at the good things he was carrying to Europe There he conferred with the sages, showing them the new and marvelous fruits that were growing on the old tree of philosophy But they ridiculed him Unwilling to learn new things, they merely said "He who loves disquietude, let him be reformed!", and Rosencreutz heard the same refrain in the other parts of Europe What great gifts were thus refused by the intelligentsia of the Occidental nations!

Yet the world in those days was already big with commotion And in painful labor did the world beget only a few sages, such as Paracelsus who, although he was not of the Fraternity, still was not one of those shallow, chattering philosophers and physicians, who were enemies of the Cabala, magic and secrecy Paracelsus read the book *"M"* by Rosencreutz, and his genius was exalted thereby

Rosencreutz returned to Germany and, seeing that the world was not yet ripe for his reform, built himself a house where he lived peacefully, devoted to his studies He possessed the philosophers' stone, i e , he could produce gold and jewels, although he refrained from doing so, as he had no use for treasures which he could not share with the unworthy He accepted only three disciples to whom he taught all that he knew, and who had to record his doc-


DAT ROSA MEL APIBUS.

trine for the future members of the Brotherhood In this way, the Fraternity was begun by four persons in all Later when there were eight, they agreed on the following points

They would not profess anything but curing the sick without reward.

They should wear no special habit

They were to meet every year in the House of the Sainted Spirit.

The brothers were to choose their successors.

The letters R C should be their only seal and character

The Fraternity should remain secret for a hundred years

Five brethren were selected to carry out the philanthropic mission. They traveled through many countries, accomplishing wonderful charitable deeds A few books were written which contained their ideology In 1484, when Christian Rosencreutz died at the age of one hundred and six years, he was buried in secrecy, so that the location of his tomb was unknown

Not long afterwards, however, a Brother by chance discovered a concealed door that led to the burial chamber Above the entrance were engraved the words, *"POST CXX ANNOS PATEBO"* "After one hundred and twenty years, I will appear"

The discovery gave impetus to the Rosicrucian movement According to the Master's prophecy, the Fraternity was now to break its silence, and more Brothers were to be initiated and received among the chosen The conclusion of the manifesto contains a profession of the Christian faith of the Brothers, and the announcement that another pamphlet would be issued to the learned men of Europe Every opinion will reach the Brothers though they have not yet made public their names Those who want earnestly to join them and are worthy shall be accepted

This first manifesto made a tremendous impression, and there was universal response to it The curious wanted to know more about this mysterious brotherhood. Artistically minded people were fascinated by its attractive presentation Scientists wished to grasp the superhuman wisdom of which the pamphlet spoke in such convincing terms Mystics and magicians, men of high morality, were conquered by the proposed noble goal Politicians hoped to learn from it the fine art of restoring peace, order, financial equilibrium and international understanding The greedy (and there must have been quite a few of them) scented treasures The sick longed now for the UNIVERSAL MEDICINE that would restore the harmony of their bodies And everyone wanted to live, like Rosencreutz, to be a hundred and six years old and more

As promised, the second pamphlet, *Confession*, was distributed in the following year, and this promptitude confirmed the expectations of the learned world Indeed, these Rosicrucians were not men addicted to vain words! The second publication was printed in Cassel in 1615 by Wesselius It soberly cautioned the reader against making hasty judgments either of believing or of doubting After these wise preliminaries, it was necessary to face the facts, some of which were disappointing

East and West (Mohammed and the Pope) were condemned by the Brothers for their blasphemies The *Confession* violently attacks the Pope "who will be

torn to pieces with nails." The Fraternity offered its help to the Roman Empire, and it meant *material* help gold and jewels as well as advice

The second chapter of the Rosicrucian *Confession* attacked philosophy, which was "fetching its last breath." It was to be renovated in a rejuvenated world, "if some of the more orderly among the learned respond to our fraternal invitation, they shall find among us far more and greater wonders than those they did heretofore believe, marvel at, and profess"

Such boasts were followed, in the third chapter, by a greater caution the secrets are not esteemed lightly by the Brothers, because they do not wish to influence the vulgar

Again, the succeeding chapter is full of extravagances Whatever wisdom has come to man, through God's grace, by the angels and spirits, through sagacity and observation—all has been known by our Father, C R ! If every book in the world were destroyed, it would not matter, for with their wisdom, they can teach everything in one volume

Then again the voice is lowered modestly their wisdom is not so much for the princes as for the common people But their arcana will not move gross wits, and every newcomer will be judged by the inspired Brothers

The *Confession* continues in this cleverly modulated tone which, if not attuned to the world's harmony, is certainly so to the reactions of men, awakening hopes and doubts But the latter are counteracted ingeniously by sober remarks and other signs of modesty, by alleging that all they possess has come to them without their having deserved such gifts, and they promise not to disappoint or deceive their followers

In the remaining chapters, the reader is acquainted with more of their ideas, of which we select the following as the most important The Lord has inscribed great characters upon the world's mechanism, the wise can read them and thus comprehend creation

The end of the world is near, the catastrophe, however, shall be enlightened by the new reform to be initiated by goodness

The Brotherhood does not arrogate to itself the merits of other highly intelligent minds.

God has sent messengers new stars have appeared in the constellations of Cygnus and Serpentarius The tongue shall come into honor when wise men with an open heart, bare heads and feet shall go merrily forth at the sun's rising The stars predict an eclipse of the Church and how long it will last Written letters and characters, placed by God in the universe, comprise the heavens, the earth, and all beasts From this secret code has been borrowed our magical writing, whence has come this new language Ever since the beginning of the world, there has been a book more excellent than the Bible Blessed is he who possesses it, more blessed he who reads it, most blessed he who understands it

Transmutation is a natural miracle, and the universal medicine can be made by natural means, but one must not abuse these marvels Throw away the books of the pseudo-chemists, deceivers of man Destroy their monstrous symbols. They jest by applying the most Holy Trinity to vain things!

The Fraternity offers money, it does not wish to receive any

The curious and the greedy may be led by knowledge into idleness, luxury, a pompous life They shall not disturb us and our sacred silence They are chastised by the will of God, and though we possess the means of helping them, we must obey God's decrees

To the reader acquainted with some of the ideas of Paracelsus, it will be apparent that nothing new has been announced by the Fraternity beyond summoning the people to make a more unified application of the knowledge of isolated masters of the preceding century

The tract, however, betrayed the strong minds of writers and leaders gifted with suggestive power How many there were, it is difficult to ascertain. The *Confession* indicates that the movement was already in full swing One did not have to endure the difficulties implicit in the building of such societies; everything had been prepared for those who wanted to join, and the secrecy of the movement encouraged also those who feared to expose themselves, to be ridiculed, or persecuted The mystery in which the whole affair was clothed was the very kernel of its success

Ever since, secret societies have exerted their attraction upon man The Rosicrucian Fraternity became the object of the most violent controveries. Famous scholars, like Robert Fludd, Michael Majer, John Heydon, and the Hermetic Philalethes wrote apologies for the Brotherhood Others spattered forth their invectives The defenders, however, were on a higher level

Admittance into the society was sought, but nobody knew where the sages lived, nor where to find the House of the Sainted Spirit Applicants vainly deposited their letters at the town halls of their cities, hoping that a mysterious traveler would gather them at a chosen time But the Rosicrucians never appeared In this manner the struggle about the invisible society continued among the learned As impatience grew, a few charlatans took advantage of the Rosicrucian name, claiming that they were the delegates of the Fraternity, and succeeding in extorting high sums from a few, but ending in jail or on the gibbet

In Paris, where the Brothers had announced themselves by a poster, opinion was divided, as in Germany Officials detected a political plot fomented by the governments across the Rhine Descartes had the affair investigated carefully and dispatched spies to Germany, but no Rosicrucian Brother could be found In France the good people believed them to be sorcerers, working for the devil, possessing the gift of rendering themselves invisible, and paying with gold which changes after a while into leather or horn They were supposed to be recognizable by huge sapphire rings on their fingers The clergy warned their flocks to beware of these wizards Sailors claimed to have seen, near the English coast, a Rosicrucian flying through the air upon a demon who disappeared suddenly into the waves, pamphlets were issued in considerable numbers—but the Brothers still remained invisible.



Fig 242 Valentine Andreae

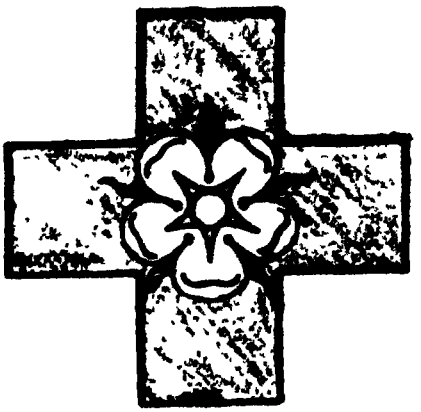


Fig 243 The Rosicrucian Emblem

Valentine Andreae

THE German name, Rosencreutz, signifies Rose Cross, or Cross of Roses The name of the Fraternity was derived from its presumable founder Its emblem was a dark cross and a light rose, combined in various ways (fig. 243). The dark cross symbolized sacrifice and hardship, and the light rose, delectation and reward A contemporary of these Rosicrucians, Andreas Libavius, mentions that Luther's seal (fig 244) resembles strangely some Rosicrucian signs and he concludes that the Fraternity had formed itself under the spiritual ascendency of Martin Luther However, despite the intolerant points in their program, the Rosicrucians followed a higher ideal than that of combatting the Pope Their ideal was not Luther alone, but also Theophrastus Paracelsus, on whom was based their idealism, earthbound and irrational simultaneously Their marvels, the homonculus, the mediatory and the elementary spirits, the signature with which nature has signed every being, all this is derived from the great Paracelsus

But Paracelsus had been dead for many years, and so had Rosencreutz The manifestoes must have been written by someone, a being of flesh and bone, though people began to suspect that their authors were ghosts or devils Among the apologists for the Fraternity was a Lutheran pastor, Valentine Andreae, or Andreas (1586–1654) He published several treatises, printed in Strassburg in 1619 and 1620 These little works, *The Tower of Babel, The Christianopolitan Republic*, and others, propose a general transformation of European society, implying the necessity of gathering energetic reformers and people of good will

Andreae was a brilliant scholar, he knew five languages, and in his youth traveled to several European countries. Rising through various clerical charges to the position of a Chaplain at the Court of Wurttemberg, he resigned be-

cause of ill health, the hostility he had encountered, and most of all on account of the misery into which his German fatherland had been plunged by the Thirty Years' War. Embitterment and despair shortened the pastor's life. He died from apoplexy.

Andreae's coat of arms (fig 242, upper right corner) shows a St Andrew's cross and four roses. It is believed by many that he is the founder of the Fraternity; his armorial bearings resemble too closely those of the Rosicross not to arouse suspicion. Moreover, Andreae was the author of a Rosicrucian novel: *The Hermetic Romance, or The Chemical Wedding, written in high Dutch by Christian Rosencreutz* Andreae admitted as his own creation this supposed allegorical autobiography of Rosencreutz, printed in 1616 The novel contains the following passage "Hereupon, I prepared myself for the

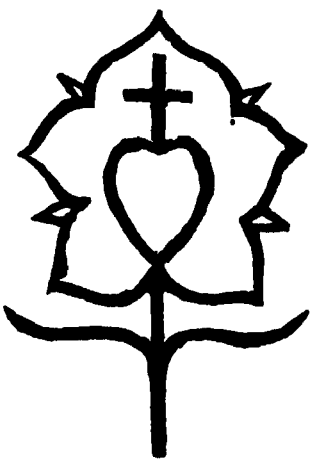


Fig 244 The Seal of Martin Luther

way, donned my linen coat, girded my loins with a blood-red ribbon that reached over my shoulders In my hat, I stuck four roses" ' This means that Christian Rosencreutz adorned himself with the armorial bearings of the Andreae family From this we may surmise that Rosencreutz and Andreae are one and the same person, however a complete elucidation of the Rosicrucian origin has not been possible, and a few modern writers believe that the society originated in the Middle Ages

The Chemical Wedding has been termed "a comic romance of extraordinary talent." This furtive appreciation is the only one which we could find among the critical writings on the Rosicross, a rather astonishing fact, for *The Chemical Wedding* is a unique piece of writing In it, we travel through a Hermetic wonderland

Most, if not all alchemical treatises, contain a multitude of symbols, incongruously piled up and interrelated by dry and doctrinary elucidations or rather occultations, so that even the mysterious becomes boring through monotony and pomp

The reading of Hermetic treatises, especially those of the baroque period, is tedious because none of the writers or poets was able to bring into plastic form so many stereotyped symbols Andreae, however, overcame this tradition in a congenial way He relates the most profound arcana in a light, at times jesting manner The alchemical allegories come to life and partake of the action as mythological beings, human beings, animals, and implements. Unlike the slow pace of other alchemical treatises, Andreae's novel is full of action. The hero, Rosencreutz, is eating his paschal lamb when an angel delivers a golden letter to him

Today, today, today
The royal wedding is
Was this why you were born,
Destined for joy by God
And unto joy of God designed?

The royal wedding is itself the alchemistic process, the seven stages, during which the female and the male principles are joined together, the King and the Princess

The angelic letter carrier departs by moving her eye-covered wings. "But in mounting upward, she gave so mighty a blast on her gallant trumpet that the whole hill echoed thereof, and for a full quarter of an hour, I could hardly hear my own words"

Rosencreutz reading the letter perceives that this is the appointed wedding of which seven years before he was told in a corporeal vision He faints with fear

In a dream, he sees himself with other sufferers who in the darkness climb upon each other, rattling their heavy chains He and a few others are rescued by a cord lowered into the dungeon Having adorned himself with the Rosicrucian emblems he starts out on his adventurous journey to the wedding of Silver and Gold His emblematic provisions are bread, salt and water He encounters marvelous trees and birds, day and night, symbolic castles, a venerable doorkeeper, beautiful maidens, strange inscriptions upon golden tablets, glowing lanterns, mysterious gates engraved with secrets and images, hills, rocks, and plains unfold themselves, until he reaches the Palace, where one can wander for years without exploring all its marvelous rooms, cellars, staircases, clocks, astronomical instruments, doors, paintings, lights and torches, invisible angels, musicians, warriors in armor, pages, and beautiful virgins, crowned with laurel and draped in sky-blue velvet

In a huge banquet hall, he meets the other adepts, both the invited and uninvited, witnesses of the Marriage His modesty arouses laughter At the meal, the unworthy are the noisiest, until a holy maiden declares that all are to be judged the following day On a scale, they are weighed against seven stones, and most of them are dismissed according to their merits Charlatans who could not even move the scale are stripped and driven away with scourges Kingly adepts who were unable to attain mastery are dismissed honorably and a drink of forgetfulness is given them to save them from undue torment A few scoffers are beheaded

The worthy are conducted into the garden where they behold still greater marvels Alchemistical animals appear, a lion is swinging his shining sword, and amidst awe and admiration, a unicorn, white and majestic, emerges from the cluster of dark trees, jangles its golden necklace, and kneels venerably. "The lion, who stood motionless like a statue of brass, broke his naked sword in two, the pieces sank to the bottom of the fountain, and he reared until a white dove brought a branch of olive in her bill, which the lion devoured instantly, and grew quiet The unicorn returned to its place joyously, while our virgin led us down the winding stairs" They descend 365 steps They are crowned with laurel, and wear garments embroidered with the Golden Sun and the Silvery Moon And afterwards the thing for which they had awaited anxiously happens -they are presented to the king, who was there all the while, concealed behind a curtain. A wonderful comedy is now enacted, describing the seven stages of the arcanum The happenings are despoiled of their symbolic conventional garments, and the adventures of the king and the queen are portrayed cleverly, revealing the author's psychological insight

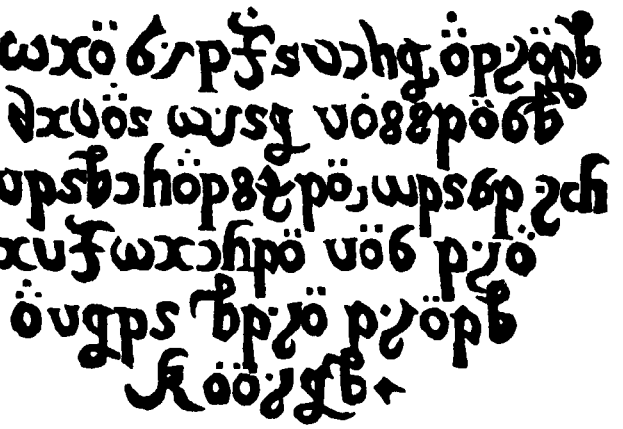
Putrefaction is the king of the Moors who leads the princess away into his dark kingdom She is rescued, but surrenders voluntarily to her tormentor. Again, the young king frees her from the Moor, and once more she falls prey to the monster, who has her scourged She is condemned to die by poison, which does not kill her but afflicts her with leprosy

The imprisoned wench refuses to see the good king's ambassadors Defiled, ill, and robbed of her royal honors, she submits to the tormentor After a decisive battle, she is rescued against her will The seventh stage of the process is approaching, the mystical wedding "The good parents are now invited Long enough has she been kept, so in honor increase, till thousands rise, and spring from your own blood" The wedding is celebrated with baroque pomp and from the stage the action moves imperceptibly to the real But reality is stranger than fiction It turns into a nightmare Seated at the banqueting table, everybody is overcome by a fearful premonition a little crystal fountain is brought in, together with a very small crystal glass from which the royal family drink Afterwards, it is offered to all, and this is called the *draught of silence*

"Music was heard, and if we demanded anything, we were fain given short answers All things had so strange a face that the sweat began to trickle down over my body" The whole royal family is beheaded in the banquet hall, quickly darkened with black velvet A day of despair and mourning follows, transfigured by unheard-of events Deep in the dungeon, Venus is lying naked on a fantastic couch, Cupid is perambulating in the silent passageways, a tree is melting tossing its shiny fruits into a basin, "sirens, nymphs, and sea-goddesses attend us," the princes and princesses are buried with dream rites, golden globes, mirrors, "forced to look out at windows," and fantastic barges appear on the nea.-by lake

The alchemists are confined by the virgins in a tower where they work at the resurrection of the king and queen They produce a phoenix whose egg

ſahe ich Frau Venerem gantz bloß (dann die Decken hatte er auch auff gehebt) in ſolcher zierd vnd ſchöne da ligen / das ich ſchier erſtarret / auch noch nicht weiß / ob es nur alſo geſchnitten / oder ein Menſch todt hie lig / dan ſie war gantz vnbeweglich / noch dorffte ich ſie nicht anrühren. Hiemit wurde ſie wider bedecket / vnnd der fürhang fürgezogen. Mir aber war ſie noch als in Augen / doch erſahe ich bald hinder dem Bett ein Taffel / darauff ſtund alſo geſchrieben: *Deſcripſio corporis ve nerei dormientis.*



Ich fraget meinem Knaben vber die Schrifft / Er aber lachet / mit verſprechen / ich ſolte es noch wol erfahren / Alſo leſchet er die Fackel auß / vnd ſtiegen wir wider herauff : Da beſahe ich alle Thürlein beſſer / vnd befand erſt / das auff jedem Eck / ein Pfirdes Liechlein brante / deren ich zuvor nicht war genommen / dann das Fewr war ſo hell / das es einem Stein viel gleicher ſahe / denn einer Liechte. Von dieſer hitz muſte der Baum zuer- *Arborū ſolor ex facilius.*

Fig 245 Page from the Original Edition of *The Chemical Wedding*, Strassburg, 1616

is cut with a diamond. The bird is nourished with the blood of the executed. His blood, in turn, resuscitated the murdered who appear first as homunculi, little beings not taller than four inches. They grow miraculously, and the reborn man and wife are wrapped together in velvet carpets, "neatly laid by each other," and carried gently to bed where behind closed curtains and under Cupid's surveillance the mystical wedding is consummated The novel continues with ever-changing images, figures, and events "The king and queen for the sake of recreation began to play together It resembled chess, only the game had other laws, for it was the virtues and vices against each other, where it might be observed ingeniously with what plots the vices lay in wait for the virtues, and how to re-encounter them again This was so properly and artificially performed that it was to be wished that we had a similar game too" Then, after a few more pages, the novel ends abruptly. "for two pages are wanting," and the reader is left in a state of uncertainty about the hero's fate and the further adventures of the royal couple.

Secret Societies

THE *Chemical Wedding* satisfied man's longing for the marvelous, for the continuation of childhood dreams, and for a refuge from the banalities of daily life In every man there is a child that yearns to play and the most attractive game is occultation, mystery The underground of the human psyche converges in the meanderings of a mythical labyrinth, subterranean meetings by candlelight, secret passages hidden within the double walls of castles, treasures concealed in gullies

It was through Andreae that Freemasonry, which probably originated in the eighth or ninth century, gained a new impetus. In 1645, a few English Rosicrucians met for the purpose of organizing their efforts They were William Lilly, the famous astrologer, Elias Ashmole, the antiquary and alchemist, John Parson, Robert Moray, and others They justified their secrecy with the claim that the general intolerance of that wicked epoch would not otherwise endure them, and they considered ways of gaining new members despite their concealment. Elias Ashmole found the solution As every Londoner was obliged by custom to be the member of a corporation, Ashmole registered himself as a stone mason, the others followed his example and under the sign of the masons they now met freely in the assembly hall of the corporation. From this group of Ashmoleans originated the ceremonial of the Freemasons

The Rosicrucian game was, like the ancient initiation rites, a serious one. Its motive was true magic, not make-believe Magic symbolized man's power over the material world, the belief that through thought and action he could ascend into realms where all men were brothers. Such an achievement was

magic, on a level higher than that of making a broomstick walk All the brotherhoods agreed on the dignity of man, his infinite power, his rights, his duty to unite all men within the circle of the "Sainted Spirit." But before this gigantic task could be fulfilled, before humanity could attain so universal a bond, the Rosicrucians met their fellow men not on elevated intellectual planes but in the mysterious hall of the common human psyche Andreae calls it the King's Palace, the magus, St Martin (1743–1803), describes it as the Temple which men of peace and spiritual yearning shall some day enter.

The Chemical Wedding is a guidebook to this rendezvous. In his wanderings, Rosencreutz is directed by the magnetic needle and with its help he finds the way to the palace It is the compass of the sage that fathoms man, "that compact which man has to renew constantly with himself." Being one's better self is the highest morality, and morality and good deeds are the discipline that counteracts the evil pride which might arise in the brother conscious of his mission The practice of charity transmutes man's intentions into reality, suggesting that whatever is in the mind can be realized "For every physical fact," St Martin says, "is a neighbor of an intellectual truth "

The Chemical Wedding, a lonely flower in the arid German baroque literature, links Paracelsian magic to the Romanticism of the nineteenth century Does not Novalis evoke the mysterious travels of Rosencreutz when saying "World becomes Dream, and Dream the World"?

In like manner, Holderlin recalls to man his identity with the macrocosm "O Sun, O Air, with you alone lives my heart, as with brothers "

Heinrich von Kleist expresses grief in the terms of an alchemist "Now, I descend into the depths of my heart; into the subterranean mine, and I dig up a deadly feeling, cold like ore, this ore, I purify in the crucible of my pain "

That the philosophers' gold could be made by children was not ignored by Jean Paul "If the remembrances of infancy charm so much, this is not because they are merely memories . The attraction must derive from their magical obscurity, and the reminiscence of that early expectation in which we were then living, of a felicity without an end."

★

During the Thirty Years' War, interest in the invisible philosophers was kept alive by anonymous men who brought help here and there, and disappeared without leaving any traces Were they the Brothers of the Rosicross, or candidates who desired to make themselves worthy of the fraternity by good deeds? Or were they men who, despairing of ever meeting the true brothers, began their charitable work independently?

In later years also the appearance and disappearance of the hermetic philosophers betrayed a Masonic character The reader will remember the adventure that befell Helvetius in 1666, and the strange travels of Alexander Sethon, who left behind wherever he journeyed his projecting powder or alchemical gold.

But simultaneously men existed, as they always have, who had no wish to play the game of mystery. Fervent nationalists were displeased with these societies, whose ultimate goal it was to destroy the fences that separated nations A novel, published in Paris in 1670, seems to imply such convictions Its title was *The Count of Gabalis*, or *Extravagant Mysteries of the Cabalists and Rosicrucians* Its author, Montfaucon de Villars, says in the first chapter. "Since common sense has always made me suspect that there was a great deal of emptiness in all that they call secret sciences, I never ventured to turn over a leaf of such books. And yet, not finding it reasonable to condemn without knowing why, I took the resolution of feigning myself to be a great devotee of these sciences. I decided, therefore, to make the acquaintance of these wise men, very learned for the most part, and eminent in gown and sword, people from whom I could learn about that clan."

The booklet was obviously written to amuse the Parisians; nevertheless, it is interesting because it reveals that in Villars' time there were still Paracelsians who sustained the old theories of elementary spirits, cabalistic signs, talismans, and the whole apparatus of the sixteenth-century magi. Moreover, we learn that these secret societies had a spiritual leader, the German Count of Gabalis so-called, who went to France with the specific intention of initiating Villars.

Villars' book was dear to the defenders of common sense and reason, words now increasingly used in attacks on the idealists Dull arguments were often introduced under the guise of common sense True, there were also intelligent and even excellent writers who opposed and suspected the occult wisdom. The members of the French Academy were no magicians, but among them were men whose sentiment on the question is not well-defined. Even its founder, Richelieu, was not very definite in his opinions He had been the dupe of the false alchemist, Dubois, who promised him mountains of gold that would increase France's wealth, and he had protected Jacques Gaffarel and the famous Thomas Campanella, both occultists.

Villars' betrayal of Rosicrucian secrets had another effect In spite of its satirical character *The Count of Gabalis* awoke an interest in the occult, so much so that it is believed by some that Villars intended rather to promote Paracelsian magic than to destroy it Only a few years after the appearance of the book, however its author was murdered by the Rosicrucians, it is said, to avenge his indiscretion and mockery

Although science was still in its swaddling clothes, the champions of common sense were rejoicing over the progress of knowledge They were inadvertently using the same arguments as the authors of the Rosicrucian manifestoes Science was soon to solve all problems and mysteries The Golden Age seemed to be approaching, the gold cooks and brothers were to become bogies to frighten children and the laughingstock of adults

The greater the failure of economics and politics, with the consequent corollary that science cannot solve all problems, the louder grew the mockery of the advocates of common sense

The Classical Ideal

THE lack of common sense in France in Villars' time may be illustrated by a few trials which took place during that period.

A beautiful noblewoman, the Marquise of Brinvilliers, was said to have poisoned her parents, her friends, and her servants without any motive. It was alleged that, searching for new victims, she went to the hospital, where she administered deadly potions to the poor Convicted as a witch, she was judged to have been enticed by the devil, and was burned at the stake in 1676.

In 1663, one Saint-Simon, a native of Aumale in Normandy, preached that he was Christ incarnate The "reasonable" Parisian judges, overlooking insanity, condemned this man to the stake

About the same time, a wealthy widow confessed that she had had intercourse with the devil The Parliament of Paris had her exiled, but not until she had been branded with a hot iron.

The famous trial of Catherine Deshayes, called la Voisin, began in 1679. The tribunal assembled in the "Fiery Chamber," where mortal crimes were tried Investigation revealed that ranking members of the nobility were involved. La Voisin told fortunes with coffee grounds and a magical crystal; but this divinatory trade was only a façade for larger enterprises She evoked the dead and the devil, and solemnized magical rites in her back-chambers. She had many assistants, among them the two hangmen of Paris who brought her horrible gifts from the gibbet Abbé Guibourg, a priest of noble descent, then sixty years old, performed black masses Madame de Montespan offered herself as "altar cloth." She lay naked on the altar, the chalice was placed upon her belly; Guibourg slit an infant's throat and let the blood run down into the chalice. Many other equally dreadful acts were committed

La Voisin was burned at the stake in 1680 Several who were indicted died in prison; others committed suicide. Thirty-six were executed, five were sent to the galleys, one hundred and forty-seven were sentenced to prison. Among the indicted were the flower of the French nobility—two nieces of Cardinal Mazarin, the Duchesses of Bouillon, Lusignan, Vivonne, and Vitry, the Countesses of Soissons, Polignac, and Montmorency; the Princess of Tingry; the Chevalier de Varnens; the Count de Longueval, the Marquis de Feuquières and, probably, the Duke of Buckingham!

However, the nobility was spared, and many documents vanished. To the counts and duchesses, the whole indictment seemed a bad joke When the Councilor of State asked the Duchess of Bouillon whether she had seen the devil during these evocations, she answered "I see him right now; he is disguised as a Councilor of State, and he looks rather ugly!" Everybody laughed. Yet during the black masses these witty people had witnessed the slaughter of two thousand five hundred babies.

The position of Louis XIV was rather difficult. Having interdicted witch prosecutions, he was now compelled to provide new laws against crimes of magic. But he had the word magician replaced by the phrase, "people who call themselves magicians." The punishment was not death but hard labor. Murder was judged as such and not as sorcery.

Connected with the Voisin affair was the scandal of the Maréchal de Luxembourg, a famous and capable war lord. He had committed "only" one murder, that of a woman blackmailer, la Dupin, whom he and his helpers had cut to pieces. Among his papers was found a pact with the devil. The investigation showed that he was affiliated with la Voisin; perhaps the responsibility was shifted to her in order to protect Luxembourg. The confused judges deliberated for fourteen months, but no judgment was rendered, the Maréchal went to the country for a few days and then returned to his duties.

Ten years later, a new affair flared up. This time the indicted were shepherds, and the judges were less embarrassed in giving their verdict. In the Brie region, the cattle died from an epidemic, and peasants believed that a spell had been cast over the animals The malefactors were discovered and sent to the capital. The chief sorcerer, Bras-de-Fer (Iron Arm), and many of his accomplices were condemned to death.

The incredible confusion which ruled over this epoch, supposedly devoted to "classical ideals," is illustrated by a series of demonological books published simultaneously with such masterpieces of French literature as those of Corneille, Racine, Molière and LaFontaine.

François Placet, in his *Superstition of Our Time*, attacked the belief in talismans and magical healing which had been defended by an anonymous writer a short time before. He was reasonable enough to leave out the usual devil lore, and his little treatise is factual and interesting

In his *Pagan Theology*, Benjamin Binet passionately defends the existence of demons and attacks the Dutch parson, Balthasar Bekker, who, in 1691, had published his *Enchanted World (De Betoverde Weereld)*, a formidable assault on the Inquisition and an indictment of the whole devil lore.

Jean Baptiste Thiers declares in his treatise that magic is mere superstition, but that it ruins faith and the Church, and must be severely combated. His enumeration of magical rites and customs is interesting.

But the most curious of these publications is that of the Capuchin Chevannes. Its significant title is, *Learned Disbelief and Ignorant Credulity*. This scholar attempted to bring order into the discordant views of the Church, of jurisdiction, of the nobility, of the people, and of the demonologists. Such a task kept him moving constantly among the various camps In endless discourses, he proves that the existence of demons is in accord with the Church. His description of the sabbath occupies seven chapters. Then follows his struggle with astrology, which he attempts to reduce *ad absurdum* His verdict, heard often both before his time and since, is that it is enough for a mathematician to tell the truth once to make him famous, whereas he may lie a thousand times without discrediting himself

Having thus demonstrated his "reason," he is again ensnared by "ignorant

credulity" in a subsequent chapter, saying that sorcerers can heal with the aid of the devil Whatever effects they produce, their simple remedies are ridiculous Figures and characters are signs of witchcraft, and sorcery too can heal by the practitioner laying his hands upon the sick Yet, he continues with a bow to the throne, by the grace of God French kings can accomplish such marvels, for everybody knows that their touch will cure the scrofulous.

Having thus humored the court, Chevannes returns hastily to the Church. witches are marked by the devil This is not a fairy tale, but, continues Chevannes, casting a malignant look towards the other shore of the Channel, witches should not be "fleeted" This is a barbaric custom The treatise goes on gropingly until he speaks of Agrippa, dead now for a hundred and forty years He calls him and Paracelsus incarnate demons Agrippa, he claims, pretended that he had derived his diabolic art from the Holy Ghost Chevannes knows that in attacking the great magi he is also attacking the secret societies which continued to pursue their magical ideal in the midst of this turmoil

Chevannes' book, reprinted several times, had considerable success at an epoch when, according to a modern history of French Literature, "Boileau had definitely overcome the enemies of Reason and Truth"

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Revolt Against Reason

A RELIGIOUS movement, Jansenism, was spreading rapidly in France Its originator was Cornelis Jansen (1585–1638), Bishop of Ypres In his work on Augustine, this peaceful and humble cleric had expressed an idea neither new nor voiced by him alone Man, he said, has not the capacity of loving God purely, as he is constantly under the influence of sinful desires Only by heavenly grace can he free himself from cupidity and attain purity and felicity The man upon whom God confers grace will be saved, whereas he who is without this grace will remain in the bondage of original sin.

The eternal question as to whether man's will is free or bound to a higher power was introduced once more, arousing a commotion that lasted until the second half of the eighteenth century. Without the resistance of those defenders of free will who caused the tempest, few people would have read Jansen's learned treatise

But now France was divided into two camps, the Jesuits, who had official support, and the Jansenists This passionate controversy would not be included in a book on magic had not miraculous happenings occurred in the Jansenists' camp which many failed to recognize as miracles

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, a young man, the deacon François de Pâris (1690–1727), a Jansenist, lived in the capital in piety and seclusion After his death, strange events took place at his tomb in the St Médard cemetery Sick people who went there to pray were freed from their bodily afflictions Crowds gathered, praying and trembling with nervous convulsions Many fell into a state of ecstasy or trance, Paralytics were carried to the gravestone, the insane, the blind, the cancerous, the dropsical rubbed themselves against the deacon's tomb and were cured Rich and poor made their pilgrimage to the cemetery and many returned home cured

St Médard resembled a witches' sabbath The aspect of the frenzied crowd, the display of hideous diseases, the howls and the macabre surroundings bore little resemblance to that elegance and refinement which we ordinarily associate with the eighteenth century But these scenes were enhanced by the aura of the marvelous

The ten-year-old niece of the great Pascal (1623–1662) had suddenly been cured there of a painful eye disease, a marvel which converted Pascal to Jansenism The little daughter of the painter, Philippe de Champaigne (1602–1674), had been cured of her complete paralysis in the same way, and her

grateful father had painted the portraits of several of the holy women at Port Royal. Philippe, of course, had also been converted to Jansenism.

At a time when medical science was hardly developed, these marvelous healings must have exerted a formidable attraction; moreover, the disregard of the rigid, classic, Apollonian ideal, and the acceptance of the Dionysian frenzy, the uncontrolled, is significant in the epoch following the death of the dominating Louis XIV, who believed that he was the state, and who called himself the King Sun (Apollo)

Voltaire did not exhaust the Jansenist problem when he said. "There is apparently little advantage in believing what Jansen believed, namely that



Fig 246 Miraculous Healing of a Paralytic at St Medard

God demands the impossible of man This is neither consoling nor philosophical The secret pleasure, however, of belonging to any party, the hatred of the Jesuits, the wish to excel, and the general spiritual unrest, all this leads quickly to the formation of a sect."

When finally a decree ordered the St Médard cemetery to be closed, a witty Parisian posted a libel at its gate:

> In the name of the king 'tis forbidden to God
> To let miracles happen upon this spot

The righteous and the stubborn did not want to accept defeat. A Councilor at the Parliament who had seen the miracles, Carré de Montgeron (1686–1754), published a compilation of proven facts from among the happenings at St. Médard. His *Verity of the Miracles*, printed in Holland, is adorned with numerous fine copperplates (fig 247) One hour after the appearance of the work in the windows of bookshops, in 1737, Montgeron was arrested and con-



Fig 247 Miraculous Healings at St Medard

fined to the Bastille. He died in prison at Valence, after seventeen years of captivity. But other influential people carried on his efforts, such as the Chevalier Folard, and Fontaine, Secretary of the King's Commandments. Moreover, the hysteria spread to several cities, a fact which is seldom mentioned Valence in particular, where Montgeron was imprisoned, was the scene of convulsions.

St Médard being closed and guarded, the sectarians tried to revive their miracles at home But Louis XV did not tolerate private assemblies of this kind His police was constantly active and hundreds of believers were arrested Despite this rigor, the movement survived The miraculous cures, however, now happened infrequently, and in their place developed a tendency toward self-torture comparable to fakirism An eyewitness, Condamine, describes one of these *séances* which took place in 1759 in the apartment of Sister Françoise, the eldest of the hysterical group For twenty-seven years, she had been subject to frenzy. She had been twice crucified, as explained by Condamine in his report The day he went to visit Sister Françoise, two crucifixions were to take place Sister Mary, a woman of twenty, was kneeling in the center of the room, awaiting her agony. About twenty devotees were present, among them de Mérinville, councilor at Parliament, de Latour-Dupin, brigadier of the king's armies, Janson, officer of the musketeers, and others of lower standing.

First, Françoise lay upon the floor and was beaten with chains At seven o'clock, she stretched herself out on a huge cross to which the leader of the ceremony nailed her hands and feet At a quarter to eight, the cross was erected Seeing it, Sister Mary was seized by a fit Françoise remained on the cross until half past ten Meanwhile, Mary was nailed to another cross, but after forty-five minutes she exclaimed "Take me down, quick, I am dying" This was done readily by the frightened assistants. She was removed to the next room and washed with the "miraculous water of blessed Pâris" Soon she returned smiling to witness Françoise's unnailing "Both women," Condamine adds, "are workers and need their hands for their livelihood Tomorrow they have to go to work with their bruised members." [1]

Through what strange realms did Jansen's ideas travel before reaching Sister Françoise's apartment on the rue Philippeaux! But the glorious times of the frenzied were over Instead of healing, the saint now spread suffering. Even the patient Françoise grew weary of her tormentors When Father Timothée wanted to burn her clothes, assuring her that it would not hurt, she revolted The priest insisted and she yielded, but when the fire began to spread, Françoise shrieked and a Brother threw water upon her "What are you doing!" Timothée exclaimed indignantly, "you are destroying our miracle A few more minutes and the thing would have been accomplished"

The thing was accomplished, though without Father Timothée's miracle. The fire of Jansenism was burned out, extinguished with Françoise's shabby garments It smoldered weakly until 1787, and vanished a year before the conflagration of the Bastille Day.

Vampires

> If there ever was in the world a warranted and proven history, it is that of vampires nothing is lacking, official reports, testimonials of persons of standing, of surgeons of clergy men, of judges the judicial evidence is all embracing
>
> J J Rousseau

We have already gathered, from the happenings at St Médard, that the so-called skeptical period ushered in by the eighteenth century was less skeptical than it was stereotyped

The number of occult publications did not diminish but rather increased The old prophecies were revived and reprinted along with new ones for an expanding public Secret societies found leaders and grew quickly Magi and seers attracted public interest, magical cures, alchemy, divining rods, physiognomy, mystical sects, were the talk of the town The Baroness d'Oberkirch wrote in her memoirs "Never were the Rosicrucians, the adepts, the prophets more numerous than today, never were they listened to with more credulity The conversation turns constantly to these matters, they preoccupy every mind, strike every imagination, even of the most serious people . "

Louis XV was fond of working in his alchemical laboratory, and the royal example encouraged many gentlemen at court, as well as the citizens of Paris

Ancient magical texts were systematically compiled That this was done exclusively in the interest of science is difficult to believe The textual reproduction of magical verses, customs, incantations, and the extensive list of dream interpretations attracted readers more than the authors' skeptical prefaces, and shrewd publishers certainly did not ignore this fact

Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy (1674-1755) published many of these old documents The prelate refrained from exhibiting too much skepticism, and his works sold excellently In his later days, however, this reserve grew more difficult for the scholar to maintain, and in his treatise on Joan of Arc, his true feelings exploded "That this girl," he says, "had any visions, apparitions, and revelations, I do not believe in the least "

Like Joan, he died in the fire he was reading before the fireplace, became drowsy, and fell upon the burning logs

The Benedictine, Dom Augustine Calmet (1672-1757), a famous Bible commentator, also turned towards the occult He treated the unusual subject of vampires, those evil dead who leave their graves to suck the blood of the living, and he found abundant material and avid readers in his time. Vampires were never as numerous as they were in the eighteenth century.

As cases of vampires were seldom reported in France, tales concerning them came from Russia, Silesia, Moravia, Slovakia, Hungary. In Poland, vampires were called Upirs; in Greece, Brucolacas, in Arabia, Ghouls. Following are some reported cases of vampires which were taken seriously.

Peter Plogojowich, who lived in the Hungarian village of Kisilova, near Gradish, became a celebrated vampire. He haunted the people, with the result that the villagers opened the grave; and Peter was found lying peacefully therein, his skin still fresh, although he had lain buried for six weeks. His cheeks were pink, and his nails had grown, but his mouth was full of fresh blood sucked from his recent victims, all of whom had perished within eight days He was disinterred and burned to ashes, and not until the cadaver had been destroyed completely did the vampire relinquish his bloodsucking activities

Vampires did not always suck the blood of their victims. In that same notorious village of Kisilova died a man sixty-two years old. Three days after his burial, he appeared to his son, demanding food. Having been served, he ate and returned to his grave, but two days later he again appeared, and once more asked to be fed Perhaps he was not satisfied with the food, for the next day the son died, and at the same time five others in the town became seriously ill, and died shortly afterwards The villagers disinterred the five victims with the father and son, and burned all of them, as they knew that he who dies of the vampire will become one himself. This story was printed in a newspaper, *The Gallant Mercury*, in 1732

That the dead experienced hunger was a common belief of that period. German professors investigated this matter with characteristic thoroughness, and one of them, Michel Ranfft, published his *Treatise Upon the Dead who Chew in Their Sepulchers* He must have been morbidly attracted by this theme, and we may omit readily what he professed.

Another tale concerns two officers of the Belgrade Tribunal, assisted by men of the government, a doctor and the Count Cabreras, who journeyed to a certain village They had been alarmed by the story told them by a soldier, who said he had been invited to dinner by a peasant While they were eating, a stranger entered the room and without invitation joined them. Everyone showed signs of fright, but the soldier did not ask why, lest he seem indiscreet The next day, the master was dead, and the people now related that the stranger was the grandfather who had been dead for ten years and was now a vampire. The rest of the tale is taken from the official protocol made by the examiners. The old man's tomb was opened by the officers, who found the vampire in a state of perfect preservation. The physician opened a vein and fresh blood gushed out. Count Cabreras ordered the cadaver's head to be severed and the body to be returned to the grave.

At this sight, several people stepped forward, declaring that this was an occasion to rid the village of other vampires. Cabreras had four more tombs opened, that of a villager who died thirty years earlier and those of his victims, members of his family and a valet, who had also become vampires after their deaths. Like the others, the thirty-year-old corpse was found in a state

of perfect preservation, and the blood in all the corpses was fluid. They were nailed into their graves, which caused people to grumble at Cabreras' ignorance. The count then commanded that another vampire be burned to ashes. This man had been dead for sixteen years and two of his sons had been killed by his blood-sucking. The commissioner who recorded the happenings sent his report to the General Officers who ordered him to give a verbal account at the emperor's court The emperor had a new commission investigate the case and several officers of the law, physicians, and a few scholars were sent to the village.

A famous account of vampires is that of Arnold Paul of Medreiga at the Turco-Serbian border During his lifetime, he had often complained of having been tormented by a Turkish vampire He died when a hay wagon fell upon him, before he had had a chance to eat some earth covering a vampire's grave, supposedly the only medicine that kept the dead quiet in their graves.

Arnold Paul developed into a arch-vampire After forty days, he was exhumed His blood, it was reported, bubbled in his veins and the whole body and shroud were covered with it When the bailiff ordered his heart pierced, the vampire shrieked horribly, but this was his last protestation, as fire consumed him entirely. This occurred in 1730

A terrible story is reported by Charles Ferdinand de Schertz in his *Magia Posthuma,* dedicated to Prince Charles of Lorraine In the village of Blow, in Bohemia, a vampire killed people by summoning them Many had heeded this sinister call, until finally the villagers opened the monster's grave and fastened him to the earth with a post "How friendly you are," the vampire said, "to give me a stick with which I can drive away the dogs " That same night, he arose and suffocated five people He was dug out the next day by the hangman, and pierced repeatedly Carried on a cart to the pyre, he was howling all the while and moving his arms and legs After his execution, in 1706, the Bohemian village grew quiet "Thank God," Dom Calmet adds, "that we are not credulous. We must admit, however, that the light of physical science has been unable to cast its rays upon this case "

Having termed this occurrence *Epidemic Fanaticism,* Dom Calmet, shifts from the psychical to the physical, and tries to explain the phenomenon of the vampire scientifically Chemical substances of the soil may conserve corpses indefinitely By the influence of warmth, the nitre and sulphur in the earth may render liquid coagulated blood The screams of the vampires are produced when air passing through their throats is stirred by the pressure which the stake causes in the body Often people are buried alive, and certain dead, such as the excommunicated, can rise from their tombs, but it is not possible to leave the grave bodily without digging up the soil, and none of the stories about vampires mention that their tombs were disturbed.

Magic Unveiled

SALT, heat, and motion is the whole secret of the vampire, according to the Abbé de Vallemont, Pierre de Lorraine (1649–1721). Anything, which has been, can appear again· there is nothing alarming about this! The dead can return, just as plants and animals can be revived, at least temporarily. Take a flask and put into it the vital essence of the seed of a beautiful rose. Burn this to ashes, imbue it with the morning's dew, collecting enough for a modest distillation Extract the salt from the ashes and mix it with the distilled dew, seal the bottle with pounded glass and borax Lay the vessel on fresh horse manure and leave it there for a month Then expose it alternately to the sunlight and to the moonlight. When the gelatinous matter at the bottom of the vessel swells, this shows that the experiment has been a success Now, each time you expose your bottle to the sunlight, the specter of the rose will appear in the glass in all the beauty of its leaves and petals When cooled, it will disappear; when heated, it will appear again, this process can be repeated indefinitely

There has been no other age in which rose petals, vampires, steam engines, electricity, ghosts, horror and elegance, balloons and garlands, legerdemain and occult sciences, refined ceremonials and hysteria are mingled so intimately as in the eighteenth century. In the glass retort of nascent science a fantastic past reappeared, just as the specter of the rose (fig 248)

Where the salts proved ineffectual, humors, vapors, exhalations, atoms, and magnetism served as arguments in the explanation of occult phenomena Everything had to be explained scientifically The dark past was to be enlightened, and rendered agreeable Since all research depended on the sponsorship of the nobility, things had to be expounded elegantly and harmlessly in order to humor the patrons The explorers of the new and the hidden imply that there is no cause for fear, demonstrations can be held in any *salon* Do not worry about soiling your embroidered velvet jackets; simply be amused

Benjamin Franklin made known his discoveries during an "electric evening," for the amusement of his guests The rediscovered force which was to bring light and power to mankind was then used for fireworks and the like The first balloon, a most dangerous engine for the man who rode in it, was embellished by the brothers Montgolfier with the initials of King Louis, showing garlands and other urbane decorations intended to pacify the frightened spectators. The fear of steam and electricity still haunted the men of the early nineteenth century Adelbert von Chamisso, who had traveled around the world in a six-hundred-ton sailboat, says in his journal that steamships might be efficiently replaced by tamed whales which could pull the boats with greater speed than any engine.

Towards the end of the century, Henri Descremps, a mathematician (1746–1826), published his books on *Amusing Physics* in which he explains magical phenomena rationally as legerdemain One of his works, *White Magic Unveiled* (Paris, 1785), has as its frontispiece the "professor and demonstrator of physics," an elegant prestidigitator performing his show against a background covered by Bourbon lilies (fig. 249). The frontispiece of the second



Fig 248 The Specter of the Rose

volume illustrates Descremps' prescription for pacifying savage tribes. From a Montgolfier balloon, three paper divinities descend into the midst of the awed South Africans The figures will ascend again after a while, when the burning sulphur has severed the string attached to the lead weight which made the figures descend. Then the governor of the island will offer to the native chief the gift which Pallas Athene has brought down from heaven, and the formerly dangerous people will become friendly. It is an amiable way of pacifying savages, whose reasoning is absurd, Descremps says, though not as shocking as that of civilized people (fig 250)

The most amusing part of Descremps' book, however, is that many automatons and the machinery with which marvels were to be performed are con-



Fig 249 A Demonstration of Legerdemain, 18th Century



Fig 250 Miraculous effect of Montgolfier Balloons

trolled, according to the author, by a concealed canary or a magnet. In reality, neither would be strong enough to overcome gravity and friction and produce such results Descremps' mathematics have calculated more than one impossibility, as has been correctly pointed out by Jean Baptist Fiard (1736–1818) In 1803, this cleric published a venomous booklet: *France Deceived by Magicians and Demonolators* Many of the eighteenth-century magicians and prophets are branded in Fiard's work, and Descremps does not escape the invective "These automatons cannot be moved by any means but one, the devil"

But let us return to the Abbé de Vallemont, whose palingenetic studies were preceded by those of the *divining rod* This mysterious implement, by whose reactions metal, coal and water, can be located in the earth, was then, and still is, a matter of conjecture Some modern scientists are skeptical about the efficacy of the divining rod An American geologist working in Brazil has discovered water in many places without any rod, entirely with modern methods, yet he still carries the traditional implement with him as a make-believe Other moderns accept the workings of the *virgula divina*, or divining rod as a matter of fact Gérin-Ricard, whom we cannot rank among the credulous, is of the latter group. One is tempted to classify the famous rod among the "damned" phenomena, as Charles Fort calls them, snubbed and ignored by modern science

That the divining rod was successfully used by sixteenth-century miners, is known from an early standard work on mining, published in 1571 by George Agricola (fig 251) A plate shows the preliminary exploration for a coal mine Two prospectors manipulate the instrument, while another is cutting his rod from a willow tree Two surveyors point to the spot indicated by the "kicking" rod. Agricola's book deals only with technical matters and is in no way connected with the occult.

The practice was continued and in 1692, Pierre Garnier, a physician of Montpellier, published an astounding report the rod could detect crimes! Aymar, a laborer in the Dauphiné district, discovered several thieves and murderers with the help of his instrument He was summoned to Lyons where a wine merchant and his wife had been assassinated In the cellar where the murder had been committed, Aymar's rod swirled frantically Guided by the rod, he followed the criminals' traces, he stopped at the inns where they had rested, designated the bottles which they had touched, traveled down to the south of France, and finally halted in front of the jail of Beaucaire, declaring that within it was the murderer His verdict proved correct, one of the three assassins admitted the crime, declaring that the two others had fled across the border

The Abbé de Vallemont attempted to explain this occult phenomenon by his never-failing science In this case the wondrous natural causes were described as the action of *corpuscles* "They perspire in the hand of him who holds the divining rod, they are sent forth, or exhaled by water beds and mines, or they emanate in columns from the perspiration of the fugitive assassin These corpuscles cause the rod's reactions" (Fig 252)



Fig 251. The Divining Rod, 16th Century



Fig 252 The Divining Rod, 17th Century

Whether explained or not, the occult continued to manifest itself. How can we interpret the cures at St. Médard? And even if science could show how the miracle worked, there still remains the marvel that such efficacy was discovered spontaneously and collectively by the populace What blind man or paralytic today would refuse to endure the St Médard test on account of his scientific convictions? Magical healing is indeed one of the most startling phenomena of the occult.

Hildegard von Bingen, the mediaeval saint, cured her patients with the virtues of precious stones annd bread upon which a cross was drawn Diseases which demand surgical intervention like appendicitis could of course not be cured by these prescriptions, but many other ailments have been successfully combatted by such irrational methods To call it suggestion does not explain the degree to which these wonderful qualities exist in man, nor their effect upon his health Among the primitives, anthropologists say, an infraction of a taboo may kill the culprit instantaneously. How else can this be explained if not as magic? If you prefer the word suggestion, go to a hypnotist and ask him *why* his power functions Besides a few commonplaces, you will learn little, he himself does not have the explanation. Concepts and convictions cure and kill And this is as magical as any Cabala

A wizard who believed that he knew how he cured his patients was Friedrich Anton Mesmer (1734–1815), the inventor of animal magnetism Based upon older theories such as those of Van Helmont he professed that the human body and all living bodies emanate corporeal rays that are controlled by the soul The vital spirit, known to the old magi, descends from heaven and can be captured in a receiver From there, this force can be guided to enter the sick, and such a transfusion revives the weakened spirits People endowed with a powerful vital spirit can transmit their health to others if they know how to direct the rays that carry his force They may lay their hands upon the sick, or direct the emanation with an iron stick, the conductor. The receiver was a huge bucket which Mesmer had installed in his beautiful apartment. The bucket had the shape of a gigantic circular box and was filled with converging bottles whose vital power was led toward the main bottle in the center They contained magnetized water, glass powder and iron filings. This accumulator was covered by a lid A series of metal rods emerged from it

The sick had to grasp these sticks or use them as support for their ailing limbs Comfortable chairs surrounded the instrument and a small orchestra played during the *séances*, for music is a great healer The influence of the stars, their sympathy and attraction, was also considered by Mesmer Nothing in his private clinic was unpleasant or reminiscent of a hospital People met there for coffee and held animated conversations Beautiful paintings, precious clocks and crystal-ware created the impression of wealth and position Mesmer was a charming conversationalist and at the same time was filled with delightful modesty All Paris went to see him, including the poor, for whom this benefactor reserved special afternoons His success was enormous, his cures miraculous They continued despite the hostile reports of the

Medical Academy. Mesmer was accustomed to such opposition. He had left Vienna for similar reasons But Louis XVI was his defender; the king offered him a generous yearly pension, which Mesmer refused. He wanted to have a clinic built for him, but these grandiose plans were never realized. In the end, Mesmer was no longer in fashion, and his adversaries increased in number. His most fervent patient and defender was Court de Gébelin, the great linguist. But Gébelin, apparently cured, died suddenly in front of the bucket. In our day, how many patients must die before an authority is discredited!

But the eighteenth-century Parisians were different. They were like those monkeys painted on the panelling of elegant Parisian interiors. They became passionate about something, let it drop, and turned to something new.

Mesmer left France, and lived incognito in England and then in Germany, where he died

Masonic Lodges

In the eighteenth century, magic and philosophy, politics and religion, were so intimately mingled that it is difficult and perhaps impossible to define the true character of the secret societies that now flooded Europe Philanthropy was a slogan used by everyone by kings, nobles, citizens, workers, and philosophers Most of them, however, were content with the gesture. They considered equality established when the count and the worker sat together in the Mason's assembly hall, both wearing the white apron, singing the same hymns, and expressing the same ideas But when the meeting was over, the count returned to his elegance, and the worker to his misery.

The contrasting political ideas and clashing interests of the classes were reconciled by sentimental phrases and an ostentatious charity which was very different from that of the anonymous seventeenth-century Rosicrucian Brothers Everything was arranged theatrically and calculated to arouse sympathy An idea of such lachrymose proceedings may be gained by the following description of a session of the lodge *Candor* in the year 1782. The event was a dinner given in honor of the Montgolfier brothers, inventors of the balloon On this occasion, a young war hero, Claude Thion, was to be crowned by the Masons One hundred and seventy persons of both sexes were present The president, the Marquis of Saisseval, made an impassioned speech on the discovery, emphasizing what an honor it was to have present one of the two inventors The unassuming M Montgolfier had to step forward to take his place on the stage, where he received a wreath from the Countess of Choiseul-Gouffier. At this moment, the echo of drums could be heard; the sound came closer; the doors opened wide, and soldiers entered unfurling the white and golden flags of France

In this troop marches the young and brave Thion who has lost an arm while carrying a grenade. He advances to the stage, where beautiful ladies crown him with a golden laurel wreath. Drums are beaten, and the blowing of the trumpet causes the windows to rattle. Amid general applause Madame la Comtesse presents a medal to the valiant youth The trumpets sound again, and everyone rushes to tables heaped with delicacies A member of the Lodge now reads the couplet he has prepared.

"Victim of fate and weapons,
If their blows could not make me retreat
At this moment full of charm
Feeling can only speak in tears
Tears I did not shed when suffering."

And what may we expect after such well calculated verses but that Thion should burst into tears—and everyone is happy and weeps.[2]

It would, however, be an error to attribute such nonsense to all secret societies. There were other lodges, not supported by the king. Some groups were led by their Masters to revolution, while others defended ultra-Catholic ideals Most, if not all of the brotherhoods, worked zealously for the dissolution of the Inquisition, which was still powerful in those days Opposition against the decaying organization of the state was advocated and fostered by Freemasons, Martinists, Rosicrucians and Swedenborgians with more or less vigor. In many cases, this opposition was no more than a gesture, a demonstration with no immediate consequence At length, however, this mingling of the poor and the rich, of the noble and the humble, had its good effects, and the hollow phrases of a human brotherhood, of equality of rights and duties, bore fruit because they contained a truth Seen in their totality, the lodges promoted political progress, democracy, and the honest defense of an ideal. For the most part the Brothers were peace-loving citizens and the fear they inspired was greater than the danger they actually embodied. Their resistance was passive—but it was resistance.

The fear they inspired in the authorities led early to the persecution of the brotherhoods. Such policy created martyrs, heroes, opponents. In 1738, Pope Clement XII excommunicated all the Freemasons of Europe, and Louis XV interdicted Masonry in France. Many members were imprisoned A new prohibitory decree was issued in 1744, despite the fact that Louis de Bourbon Condé was the French Grand Master

However, the lodges proved ineradicable, a fact which impressed the intelligent, and cast doubts on the action of both spiritual and secular authorities On the other hand, many leaders of Masonry were unworthy people, and interior strife impeded concerted action The confusion and sectarianism prevalent in France before the Revolution is comparable to the chaos in the first centuries of our era The Freemasons, and especially the Martinists, shared the ancient ideal of raising man from sin to felicity Initiatory rites were reminiscent of paganism The candidates' ordeal was inspired by Greek

and Egyptian precedents. The Masons were to be regenerated, like the initiates of Eleusis, to ascend to higher realms and thus acquire knowledge, revelation, and secret wisdom.

However, the Masonic initiations were more than antiquated rites culled out of a dead past The will to regeneration had its significance in an epoch of decay. The acquisition of wisdom for the good of the commonweal, the hope of better times, the trust in humanity, the renewal of bonds with the Eternal: all this contained genuine ethical values

The times were not ripe for a complete regeneration through science. Help was to be sought rather by faith Nearly all of the Brothers were religious But the official faith did not satisfy their longing, and on it they grafted marvels which had been discarded in times when the Church had been purged of Oriental extravagances The cleansing process had been too radical, precious wisdom had been tossed away, and had to be recovered. Not without reason was one lodge called the Great Orient

Distrust in science is clear in the case of the Swedish savant, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) He is the moving spirit of all the secret societies of that time He was devoted to the study of Greek, Latin, Oriental languages, and several European tongues He promoted metallurgy, anatomy, mathematics, geology, in short, he was the prototype of the scholar, methodical, sober and skeptical But suddenly he experienced apparitions, travels into the marvelous beyond, apocalyptic revelations The champion of science turned seer, and a true one, if we are to believe Immanuel Kant The clairvoyant Swedenborg saw the great Stockholm fire at a distance of some three hundred miles His Church, the New Jerusalem, still has some several hundred thousand adherents

But his influence went further Pasqually, St Martin, Pernety and Cagliostro borrowed ideas from Swedenborg

Seeing the misuse of the slogan 'equality,' some magi soon abandoned the idea of attracting the masses Antoine Joseph Pernety (1716–1801) gathered mainly the nobles and princes The former Benedictine and librarian of the Prussian king was an admirer of Swedenborg, whose Latin works he translated into French Pernety had traveled around the world with Bougainville, and his wide knowledge of men and countries spurred him to unite all mankind under the sign of the philosophers' stone Under the influence of Plutarch, he wrote a fantastic work on the Greek and Egyptian fables, showing that all these allegories can be condensed into one magical kernel, the hermetic process, or Great Arcanum.

An Hermetic also was the Rosicrucian Martines Pasqually who founded, in 1754, the new Masonic rite of the Chosen Cohen His main ideas are likewise borrowed from Swedenborg, man's creation, his disobedience and fall, his punishment and mental sufferings these form the nucleus of Pasqually's initiatory rites Man was to recover his "primary dignity, and having approached his creator on the path of speculation, he will be animated by the divine breath. He will know the secrets of nature· alchemy, Cabala, and divination."

Pasqually's Swedenborgian rites were modified by his friend Louis Claude de St Martin (1743–1803) who spread the doctrine over all Europe, when Pas-



Fig. 253 Lavater in his Study

qually had retired to Port-au-Prince, in the Republic of San Domingo. The Martinists had their ramifications in Russia, especially among the nobles led by Prince Galitzin. The great attraction exerted by the Martinists were magic rites which resemble those of modern spiritualists. The dead were evoked, and hallucinations were stimulated by magic circles, aromatic herbs, beautiful black silk robes, and diamond-studded insignia The enlightened communicated with divine powers and gathered from them advice as to how to promote their humanitarian ideal.

Among these magi, the Zurich pastor Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801), was foremost as a promoter of tolerance. This modest author of a famous work on physiognomy had his own views on religion: those who could not find peace in his Church, he sent over to the "good mother," Catholicism. He observed his fellow men with deep insight, for the physiognomic art was the study of man's features as the signs and characters formed by nature to reveal the inner man. His urbanity often proved more effective than the tempestuousness of his fellow magicians. "I have seen," Mirabeau writes, "letters which Lavater sent to sovereigns I have seen monarchs answer him with expressions of the highest esteem. They obey him, they become his tributaries "

One would think that such a learned and influential man would not need advice from a fellow magus And yet, in 1780, Lavater traveled to Strassburg where he hoped to gather more wisdom from the Count Cagliostro The latter, however, refused to see him They exchanged letters. To Lavater's question: "In what precisely does your knowledge reside," Cagliostro answered laconically· *"In verbis, herbis et lapidibus,"* [1] in words, herbs, and stones—alluding to his marvelous cures which he performed with simples concocted from minerals and vegetables, and with the suggestive power of his word. Such an answer was unusually modest, as the "count" (whose real name was Giuseppe Balsamo) made little secret of his miraculous knowledge, his adventurous travels in the Orient and his most noble descent Cagliostro was less talkative when referring to his stay in London where he had committed several frauds Nor did he mention the fact that he had been expelled from Russia for similar reasons Goethe, in his *Voyage in Italy*, refers to Cagliostro in the following terms "I answered that indeed, in the eyes of the public, he posed as an aristocrat of high birth, but that to his friends he liked to acknowledge his humble origin."

In spite of Cagliostro's shady past, even his enemies did not deny the magician's astounding intelligence And many friends and followers acknowledged their master's scandals and lies as extravagances to be weighed against his wisdom, his charity and truly superhuman talents of a seer, healer, and Hermetic.

It was in Strassburg that Cagliostro produced alchemically a diamond which he offered to Cardinal Louis de Rohan The gem was evaluated by the prelate's jeweler at twenty-five thousand livres. One day Cagliostro conjured up a dead lady whose memory the cardinal cherished. De Rohan's affection for the magician was boundless In his study he placed Cagliostro's bust bearing the inscription *To the Divine Cagliostro* It was an irony of fate that this friendship was

finally shattered through an affair in which Cagliostro was in no way involved the scandal of the *necklace* which the Countess de la Motte had acquired for Louis de Rohan who wanted to offer it to the queen of France Madame de la Motte had concealed the cardinal's money, set aside for the necklace—and the



Fig 254 Portrait of Cagliostro

necklace as well When questioned by the judges, she involved Cagliostro. At that time, his star was declining He wanted now only to live quietly and honestly, a thing which proved more difficult for him than adventures and deceits

Cagliostro was the founder of the Egyptian Lodge The power of his word attracted numerous adherents and whole groups of Freemasons abandoned their rites to follow those invented by the Grand Kophta, as Cagliostro called

himself Brothers of every creed were accepted. The only postulate was to believe in the immortality of the soul

During the *séances*, magical ceremonies were performed with the intention of communicating with the seven "pure spirits" An innocent girl, the "Dove," was led to a table where a glass bottle was flanked by two torches. The girl had to stare into the bottle, in which absent persons, future happenings, or angels would appear; or she was led behind a screen where she would experience a mystical union with an angel Similar rites were performed in the Egyptian Lodge "Isis" whose members were women. Their Grand Master was Lorenza Feliciani, Cagliostro's wife Men were admitted in these *séances*, and the highest Parisian nobility was wont to gather there. But still greater was Cagliostro's influence upon the populace When he was released from the Bastille, where he had been detained under false suspicion, ten thousand Parisians carried him triumphantly through the streets, and the following day, the Boulevard Saint-Antoine where he resided was filled with a crowd cheering Cagliostro Rioting was feared and the seer was ordered to leave Paris within eight days When this decree became public a new crowd gathered around his house From the balcony, Cagliostro appeased them by saying. "The moment will come when I will let you hear my voice."

The Count of Saint-Germain

WHO was he and where did he come from? The riddle has never been solved. The dates of his birth and death are unknown Incredible things are claimed of him Frederick the Great called him the man who cannot die; and the count himself asserted that he had lived 2000 years based on the professed discovery of the liquid that could prolong human life He would speak familiarly of a chat with the Queen of Sheba and of wonderful happenings at the marriage of Cana. He knew the gossip of the court of Babylon, tales thousands of years old, yet resembling so strangely the current Parisian court stories, that he captivated everybody at the court

His knowledge of European history was uncanny. He would mention various happenings in the reigns of Henry IV and Francis I To an astounded lady, he would whisper family secrets, true things the lady said, which he had heard from her ancestor on the battlefield of Marignano. The count was neither tall nor very handsome, he always appeared about forty, and dressed exquisitely. He was dark-haired, lively, and smiling His clothes were covered with precious jewels.

He spoke and wrote Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, English, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish His erudition verged on the supernatural; he was also a talented painter, a virtuoso on the harpsichord and violin, and his chemical knowledge far surpassed that of his contemporaries. He knew

how to remove flaws from diamonds, an art which has since been lost. In this way, he improved one of the diamonds of King Louis XV, increasing the value of the gem considerably. He could make gold and of course he also possessed the elixir of life Besides this, he was extremely rich.

He composed little operas and folk songs and it was said that he collected

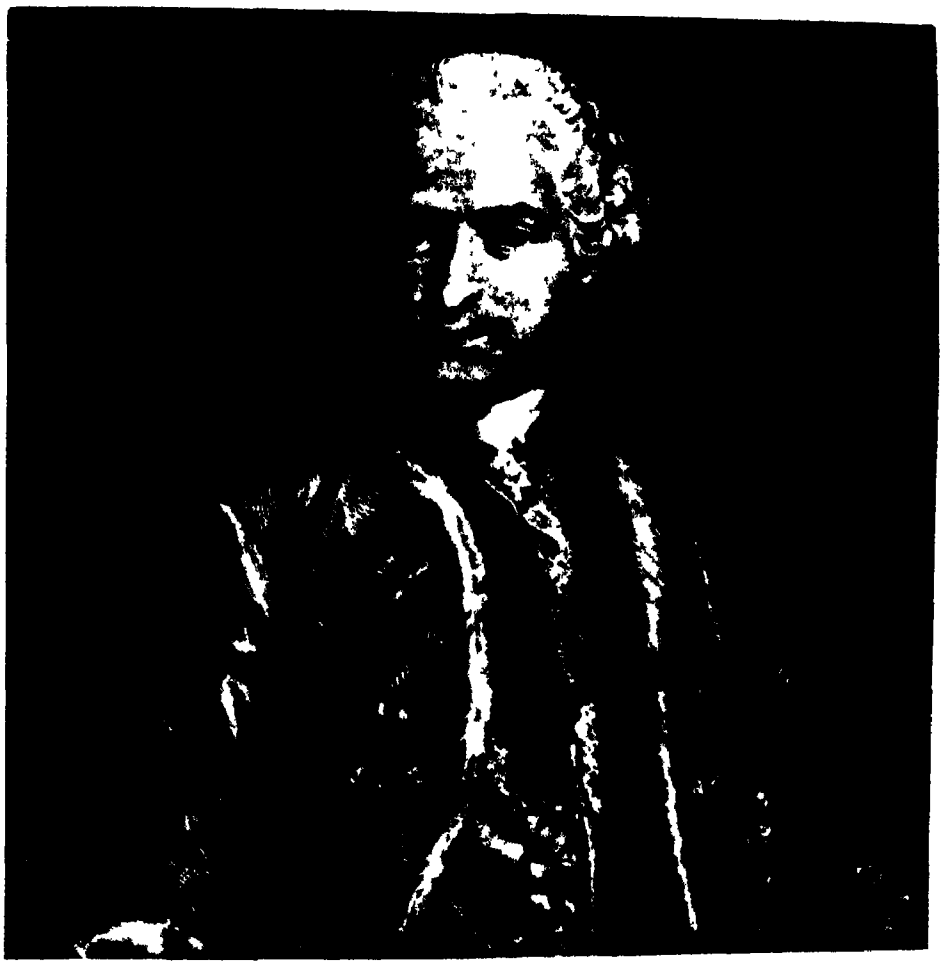


Fig 255 Portrait of the Count of Saint Germain

paintings, in particular Murillo and Velasquez He also spoke about his invention of the steamboat, which was to unite the people of the next century. He could render himself invisible, and reappear wherever he wished, a fact which was witnessed by several of his friends He hypnotized others and could fall at will into a state of auto-hypnosis His knowledge of pigments was also extraordinary, and the painters Latour and Van Loo begged him in vain to reveal this secret.

He was surrounded by servants and valets who told many astounding stories about their master A skeptic said to Roger, Saint-Germain's butler: "Your master is a liar," to which Roger answered: "I know this better than you: he tells everyone that he is four thousand years old. But, I have been in his service only a hundred years, and when I came, the count told me that he was three thousand years old. Whether he has added nine hundred years by error, or whether he is lying, I do not know." Such were the tales told by his valets; but the nobles affirmed similar accounts. When Saint-Germain arrived in Versailles, he met the Countess of Gergy who said to him. "Fifty years ago, I was ambassadress in Venice, where I remember having seen you. You looked exactly as you do now, though perhaps somewhat more mature, for you have grown younger!" The composer Rameau, who was then an old man, remembered having seen Saint-Germain in 1701, at which time the count appeared to him about fifty years old, a little older than in 1743.

King Louis XV ordered Saint-Germain to be lodged at Chambord, and in later years, he had free access to the king's private chambers.

Let us try to unravel the baffling mystery, and show the true character of this magus.

The first suspicion arises from Frederick's statement that Saint-Germain could not die. Why should the skeptical Prussian king promote such a fantastic tale? The only explanation would be that he had an interest in doing so, that he followed some plan. Saint-Germain had come to France with the French Ambassador, Monsieur Belle-Isle; he was graciously received by Louis and lived like a nobleman of high rank.

This implies that he was on a mission, and that he was on a secret mission, his person being intentionally surrounded by mystery. Frederick's statement is not the only proof of this. The ostentatious declaration of Countess Gergy is also suspect; she had been "ambassadress," that is· on a diplomatic mission. Apparently, the shrewd old lady had been taken into the secret by the king. She was probably the only woman at court who could be trusted in so delicate an affair; and a court lady was needed to promote the fantastic tales. Old Rameau may have been mistaken, and have confounded Saint-Germain with someone else whom he had once met, or perhaps he too knew the secret.

Saint-Germain betrays himself as a diplomat, with his astounding tales of a political past. Having access to secret files, he studied European history methodically and with purpose, whereas his other talents, whatever the legend relates, were amateurish. His operas were inconsequential, his gift as a painter must have been unimportant, since none of his works remain His chemical discoveries were anodyne, and have been lost The painters Van Loo and Latour may have flattered him, for nothing is more common than a professional giving credit to a dilettante.

Saint-Germain's knowledge of languages must have been astounding; but here to we must make an abstraction of the accounts. A witness relates that no matter where the count journeyed, he invariably passed as a native, he is said to have had complete knowledge of the various tongues. We wonder who substantiated such facts in China, which Saint-Germain, according to his own boast-

ing, visited often. And what about his Sanskrit? If he knew all these languages so perfectly, how can we explain that the only tongue which he spoke constantly in France, his French, revealed a foreign accent, as many witnesses relate?

Extraordinary things about Saint-Germain were told with ever increasing exaggeration, and were sanctioned and promoted by the kings of Prussia and France.

Regarding Saint-Germain's art of transmuting base metals into gold, it is doubtful that he knew the arcanum. There is a story recorded by the famous Casanova, who visited Saint-Germain at the Hague. The count transmuted a piece of silver into gold, but Casanova refused to believe in the transmutation, saying that it had been performed by legerdemain The count politely ushered the guest out of his house and refused to see him again Would it not have been wiser to give an irrefutable proof than to be offended at someone's not believing the unbelievable? Regarding the king's diamond, which Saint-Germain kept for more than a month, this could well have been dispatched to Amsterdam, where the count had many relatives, and exchanged for a similarly cut gem. Perhaps Saint-Germain wanted the king to believe that after all he was not entirely an invented prodigy, and the wealthy agent may have been willing to pay for this mystification whatever fee was necessary to exchange the old diamond for the new one. Even the count's collection of valuable paintings is somewhat suspicious. Famous art works have a history and a pedigree, and to our knowledge, there is no Velasquez or Murillo that can be traced back to a Saint-Germain collection

The count was apparently preoccupied with matters that forbade him to waste time with collections and travels to China. He may have made frequent journeys east, but his trips went no further than Berlin, where Frederick awaited his report, or to Vienna, the Rosicrucian headquarters It is certain that he was in Frederick's service, and it is also likely that he took orders from the Fraternity But how could the interest of the Brothers and those of the Prussian king have been linked together in Saint-Germain? Here we enter the realms of pure conjecture, although nothing too fantastic emerges from such speculation. The more prominent groups of German Rosicrucians were conservative, they pursued Johann Valentine Andreae's political ideal, monarchy and German hegemony over Europe and the Pope Why should this program have displeased Frederick? He wanted to weaken France, and events indeed seemed favorable. Yet, actually to destroy the monarchy was the aim neither of Frederick nor of the Brothers Their common offer to the King was the preservation of the French monarchy; but they certainly demanded a counter-service!

In Louis XV's time, the situation of France was grave but not desperate The capable minister of foreign affairs, the Duke of Choiseul, was continuing the late Louis XIV's policy which was to weaken Prussia But it was a trait of Louis XV to handle certain matters alone, without consulting his ministers, and he conducted his negotiations with Saint-Germain in secrecy The "immortal" count was characterized as a wonder-man who had attracted the king's interest by his transmutations, and the two met often in Louis' alchemical laboratory.

But Choiseul did not trust his master's hermetic studies, and soon began to suspect the Count of Saint-Germain The latter, as he discovered through discreet investigation, had never received funds from abroad. He collected great sums of money from a source within France, perhaps the German embassy or the Masons' treasury.

Saint-Germain's subreptive activities became evident when he suddenly appeared in Holland, through whose government he attempted to negotiate a peace with England. This must have been his own idea, as neither the French Ambassador in the Netherlands, d'Affry, nor Choiseul knew of it Both would have disapproved of this step D'Affry complained about this to Casanova, and sent him to the count Instead of taking Casanova's visit seriously, Saint-Germain played the juggler, and at Casanova's demand to know what he was doing in Holland, he answered that it was to negotiate a loan to France. The shrewd and seductive Casanova had found his master He invited Saint-Germain to dinner, but the latter refused with the excuse that no one has ever seen him dine with unknown people and that he consumes only pills, bread, groats, and the like (which was perfectly true).

Choiseul could not permit this secrecy He enjoined d'Affry to have Saint-Germain arrested But the Netherlands refused to extradite the count The king officially abandoned his agent, but only officially, for, a few days later, Madame d'Urfé encountered Saint-Germain in the Bois de Boulogne. She hastened excitedly to Choiseul, who told her calmly that Saint-Germain had been in his study all night This meant that the secret could no longer be concealed, and that Louis had ordered Saint-Germain to report his plans to the foreign minister Choiseul was aware that England was supporting Prussia and disapproved of the plans, he had Saint-Germain dismissed. However, Louis retained him as a spy, and in this capacity he traveled to Germany and Russia Soon after his arrival in Russia, the emperor changed the Francophile policy and made an alliance with Frederick.

Shortly before leaving France, the count had been questioned by Louis XV about some mysterious crime, the details of which were known only to Saint-Germain. The latter had offered to reveal the facts under one condition· "Sir," he said, "become a Rosicrucian, and I will tell you "

Had Louis accepted this proposition, he might have saved his dynasty. But time was growing short, it was too late for efficacious intervention, and Saint-Germain was becoming old despite his "immortality " Louis XVI ascended the throne, and the mysterious envoy of the Rosicross appeared once more in France. He tried desperately but unsuccessfully to win the new monarch over to his cause He had been sent to save the throne and the royal family, but after a last effort to convince Marie Antoinette, Saint-Germain took his leave. He knew that such prolonged insistence was interpreted as the activity of an enemy agent The minister Maurepas was after him, and a longer stay would end in prison Every border was guarded, but he managed to escape to Germany, and lived at the court of the Landgrave of Hessen-Cassel, a fervent alchemist.

Now he admitted to being eighty-eight years old, and during the Landgrave's absence, died suddenly in the arms of two chambermaids.

But in spite of his supposed death, many instances of his reappearance have been recorded. After the fall of the Bastille, Marie Antoinette received an anonymous letter: "Oppose yourself energetically. No more maneuvers. Destroy the rebels' pretext, by isolating yourself from people whom you do not love any longer. Abandon Polignac and his kind They are all vowed to death and assigned to the assassins who have just killed the officers of the Bastille . ."

At the same hour, Madame Adhemar, Marie Antoinette's confidant, received word: "All is lost. You are a witness that I have done everything I could to give another trend to the events. One has disregarded me. Too late. I wanted to contemplate the work prepared by that demon Cagliostro. It is infernal . . . I promise to meet you, but do not demand anything. I can help neither the king nor the queen, nor the royal family. . . ." Both letters were written by Saint-Germain.

Madame Adhemar went to the rendezvous with the count, "dead" now for five years. They met in a chapel. Saint-Germain, knowing that the court lady ignored his motives entirely, fell back upon his fantastic tales, though mainly to disguise his emotion. He had just arrived from Japan, and "by Jove, how they have compromised Louis XIV's politics. You cannot know all this, Madame, but I have seen it from the beginning."

He showed himself many times During the revolution, he appeared in Paris here and there, and not infrequently at the Place de la Grève, where stood the guillotine. He said that he wanted to see the infernal work initiated by his pupil Cagliostro.

But this great magus, the anti-monarchist Cagliostro, was arrested in that same year in Rome and thrown into the prisons of the Holy Inquisition Shortly before his imprisonment, he wrote to the National Assembly, begging to be admitted to France, he who "had taken so much interest in the people's liberty." His request remained unanswered.

One did not have to be a seer to understand that the Holy Office was waiting patiently for its prey. Cagliostro could not escape. He was caught in Rome, for all the Italian states had expelled him from their territory.

Cagliostro had cured hundreds of people by magic In Strassburg, his house was filled with the crutches of cripples whom he had restored to health He had spent a fortune in alms. He had established innumerable lodges that followed his rites and prescriptions. "One million Europeans," he said in his defense, "believe in the Egyptian rite which I have founded" But now he was alone, completely abandoned. His last effort to escape the Inquisition was a project in which he asked all Egyptian lodges to send delegates to Rome, instructing them to rescue him, in case he was arrested and, if necessary, set fire to the Castello, or any other prison where they might conduct him.

He entrusted the papers to two unworthy men who delivered them readily to the Inquisitors.

Epilogue

In France, events moved on, and while the guillotine accomplished its bloody work, magic had not lost its influence The famous Alliette gave cabalistic lessons to the populace, and in Mademoiselle Lenormand's parlor the heroes of the Revolution met to have their fortunes told Danton, Desmoulins, Marat, Saint-Just, and even Robespierre Later, when her clients had perished under the axe, new customers arose in the Directoire and under the Empire. Napoleon, predisposed to magic, tolerated Mademoiselle Lenormand in Malmaison, where she predicted to Josephine that the emperor was to divorce her

Like Socrates, Napoleon had a demon—a red man who appeared at times in the passageways of the Tuileries Just as the Roman emperors of old, he sanctioned his own magic and condemned that of others Did he not persecute Fabre d'Olivet who had cured the sick with the methods of ancient Egyptian priests? Guided by his clairvoyant wife, d'Olivet attempted to revive Pythagoras' religion He died at the foot of the altar he had built for his gods.

Fantastic apparitions continued to haunt the people of the West. Magicians were still at work in a period when science was moving forward with giant strides Throughout the nineteenth century, seers and magi continued the lineage of the ancient wise men

Hoene Wronski, former artillery officer in the Napoleonic armies, expressed theories based on Pythagorean mathematics and on the Cabala Charles Fourier, a philosopher and sociologist, strove towards the complete reformation of society by semi-magical means In 1814, Madame d'Eldir, a seductive lady of Oriental origin, revealed her visions to a group of wealthy Frenchmen. A vicar of Notre-Dame, William Oegger, having met Judas Iscariot in England, turned to occultism Alphonse Cahagnet, a modest artisan, sent his revelations to Pope Pius IX The Baron Du Potet believed that his hypnotic gift was related to magic Eliphas Lévi, former deacon of St. Sulpicius in Paris, revived occult doctrines of antiquity which he wanted to fuse with science and religion Louis Lucas wrote on "transcendental" physics and chemistry The Baron Guldenstubbe evoked spirits of illustrious dead Plato, Caesar, Germanicus, Abélard and others were conjured up, and wrote their signatures and opinions upon the baron's tablets [1] Albert Poisson abandoned his medical career and became a practicing alchemist St. Yves d'Alveydre established a system of affinities between numbers, colors, odors, letters, planets, etc; he had this system patented in 1909. Madame Helena Blavatsky and Annie Besant astounded the world with their esoteric writings and their prophecies Stanislas de Guaita, Oswald Wirth and Gérard Encausse carried on Eliphas Lévi's work.

The epoch of positivistic science could not break the spell. Many savants suspected the occult forces to be some unknown power, like electricity, still un-

discovered. They weighed and measured magical phenomena, photographed apparitions, and in darkened *salons* linked hands with more or less successful mediums. They witnessed cases of levitation, persons or objects being raised into the air without apparent mechanical help. They investigated table-rapping, ectoplasms, clairvoyance, premonition, haunted houses, etc. Some of them believed that they had discovered the reality of the occult Others cautiously concluded that nothing should be denied, so long as it is not disproved.

Conclusion

HEGEL says that magic has existed in all times and among all people. Our shortcut through the occult history of the Old World has shown this to be no overstatement. Magic has exerted a powerful influence on the human intellect. Whether such influence was beneficent or nefarious to mankind has been discussed by several scientists Eusèbe Salverte who published his *Essay on the Occult Sciences* in 1829 regards magic as a means of deception used by the leaders of ancient peoples Science, he implies, has liberated man from superstitions arising from the faulty observation of nature.

At the end of the last century, Sir James Frazer voiced a similar opinion. Magic was a lie, he says, but a lie which had beneficial results: social and scientific progress

Modern anthropologists, such as Hubert and Mauss, assert that the primitive magician was no impostor, but that in agreement with his fellowman he believed himself endowed with supernatural power, and that his rank was given him by common consent

In the light of modern psychology this theory seems more acceptable than the idea that, through thousands of years, true knowledge of nature was deliberately concealed by a minority The longevity of magic suggests that it is deeply rooted in the psyche of man

The psychologist Jean Piaget has shown that up to the age of six or seven every human being lives in a magical world sharing beliefs and habits with the remote past no less than with the modern primitive

Magic still is popular among all peoples Hardly one among us can say that he is entirely free of magical thought or action "There is a desire in everyone of us," says Malinowski, "to escape from routine and certainty. To most men nothing is more cheerless and oppressive than the rigidity and determination with which the world runs Even the most skeptical at times rebel against the inevitable causal chain which excludes the supernatural and, with it, all the gifts of chance and good fortune " Within our society astrologers, palmists, crystal-gazers and mediums prosper as numerous perhaps as in ancient Rome. Mystic and esoteric sects, their publications swelling the book market, are ever on the increase Magic, as Probst or Bachelard have revealed, still lurks behind scientific thinking

Civilizations have vanished, together with their beliefs. But man's desires are constant, and whatever promises their fulfillment is apt to perpetuate itself over newly-risen dogmas and often against all reason.

In the fairy tale the magician bids the poor man eat his fill, make his own the treasure in the marvel cave. Through his courage and wealth the hero overwhelms his enemies, is chosen king, marries the beautiful princess, and so on. Such tales recount man's desires, and reveal his wish that they may be somehow marvelously realized.

The witch or the village magician promised tangible boons. They hardly rationalized their operations such ceremony, they knew, would produce such an effect But the Why was as dark to them as it was to their clients.

The best minds of the West were influenced by a higher type of magic. The investigators of nature followed for centuries the path trodden before them by the ancient philosophers and magi. They believed that in magical wisdom lay the secret of the world's harmony. The religions of the West have admitted that Satan's revolt split the universe, that he infests the world of matter, and that the ever-tempted believer may gain lasting felicity only after death.

The magical systems of old did not admit disharmony. They encircled the totality of being, good and evil, life and death, the visible and the invisible. All is contained in All. And All is One The supernatural is not separate from the world of matter but is infused in every object Good and evil sprang from the same source, both obey the same law. The magical world is a huge wheelwork of which man forms the main pivot. Were he removed—were anything removed—the world clock would come to a standstill.

This figure, however, does not convey the entire magical man. Not only is he harmoniously integrated within the All, but he can act upon it. He strives for cognizance of the world mechanism. The wise, he believes, can penetrate this mystery, move the world of matter, and conjure the supernatural, angels and elementary spirits

In its purest form, magic in Christianity sprang from man's longing to partake of the divine *through knowledge*, from his will to attain felicity, not in the hereafter but here upon earth.

This type of magic was akin to mysticism, yet it contained a stimulus to scientific research, because to partake of the divine through the knowledge of creation meant an investigation of nature. Throughout the Middle Ages the sole counterweight to blind belief lay in clumsy and often most faulty research into the real "virtue of things" by magically minded scholars Thorndike, in his *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, has established this fact, already stressed by Maury and others.

Magic gave a stimulus to experimentation and, in a broader sense, to thinking, not only in Christianity, but in the Ancient World as well. The ancient wise men, taking over primitive magical traditions, were faced with the task of transmuting apparent absurdities into a magico-religious system adequate to their more advanced civilization. The more absurd the belief, the more intense was their effort to weave around it a sparkling web of philosophy or transcendental doctrine.

And if we trace our way further back, into the eras of primitive mankind, here too we have reason to believe that magic was no vain observance. The early wizard was a benefactor of his tribesmen, promising assistance against the fearful unknown Just as today there are many who feel the need to lay their guilt in the hands of a confessor or psychiatrist, so also did the so-called savage entrust his worries and anxieties to the magician.

Magical operations constituted a discipline which permitted men to go about life's daily business to overcome the oppression of hostile reality through regular intercourse with supernatural forces. Such were the real gifts which man was able to extract from magic, his invention, the only system in its day that could achieve these goals

Of course, the magician's power could serve evil purposes too, for evil was ruled by the same laws as good, and the temptation was ever present to bridle the occult forces with destructive intent This fact, however, is not inherent in magic alone. In every society, leaders may use their influence for various ends

But a system that prevailed in society for thousands of years hardly needs an apology The fact remains that magic upheld the great civilizations of the ancient world. Its predominance did not prevent man from leaving behind him works of constant value, from tolerating his neighbor, cherishing his family, doing the adequate thing at the right time

Magic was a stimulus to thinking It freed man from fears, endowed him with a feeling of his power to control the world, sharpened his capacity to imagine, and kept awake his dreams of higher achievement.

NOTES

MESOPOTAMIA

1-5 The incantations are translations from François Lenormant, *La magie chez les Chaldéens*

6 François Lenormant, *La divination chez les Chaldéens*

7-10 Franz Johann Boll, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung.*

11, 12 James G Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, Vol. I.

PERSIA

1 Franz Johann Boll, *op cit*

2 A V. William Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies*

3-5 James Darmesteter, *Sacred Books of the East, the Vendidad.*

THE HEBREWS

1 The interpretation of Dagon as a female divinity follows Athanasius Kircher (1652), although Dagon was originally regarded as a male divinity

2, 3 James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*

4 Gustav Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels*

5 James G Frazer, *op cit*

EGYPT

1 E A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic*, 1899.

2 James H Breasted, *A History of Egypt*

3 Amélineau, *Histoire de la superstition dans l'ancienne Egypte*, quoted by L de Gérin-Ricard, *Histoire de l'occultisme*

4 James H Breasted, *op cit*

5 The content of this chapter in the main is based on E A Wallis Budge, *The Papyrus of Ani*

6-8 François Lenormant, *op cit*

9 A Moret, *Du caractère religieux de la royauté pharaonique*

GREECE

1 Wilhelm Heinrich Roscher, *Ephialtes*

2-6 Jacob Burckhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*

7 Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (trans by F C Conybeare) The story of Menippus is somewhat embellished from P Christian, *Histoire de la magie*

8, 9 Jacob Burckhardt, *op cit*

10 F C Conybeare, *Introduction to Philostratus, op cit*

11, 12 Jacob Burckhardt, *op cit*

GNOSTICISM

1 The quoted passages are from G Horner's translation of *Pistis Sophia* from the Coptic

2, 3 C W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*

ROMAN EMPIRE

1, 2 Lynn Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science.*
3 C W King, *op cit*
4-5 W C (France) Wright, *Julian's Relation to the New Sophistic and Neo-Platonism.*
6 G. Negri, *Julian the Apostate.*
7, 8 C W. King, *op cit.*

ALCHEMY

1 William J Wilson, *Historical Background of Greco-Egyptian Alchemy.*
2 M. Berthelot, *Les origines de l'alchimie.*
3, 4 William J Wilson, *The Greek Alchemical Papyri.*
5 M. Berthelot, *op cit.*
6 William J. Wilson, *op. cit.*
7 James H Breasted, *op cit*
8 Louis Ménard, *Etude sur l'origine des livres hermetiques*
9-11 *Musaeum Hermeticum,* transl by Arthur E. Waite.
12 Louis Figuier, *L'alchimie et les alchimistes.*
13-17 *Musaeum Hermeticum*
18 R Allendy, *Le symbolisme des nombres*
19 Arthur E. Waite, *Lives of Alchemistical Philosophers* (Modern scientists like C G Jung accept Cremer as an historical figure.)
20 *Musaeum Hermeticum.*
21 Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption,* Book I
22 Passage quoted from Reginald Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* London, 1584
23, 24 Louis Figuier, *op. cit.*
25 A E Waite, *op cit*
26 Nicholas Flammel, *His Exposition of the Hieroglyphical Figures*
27, 28 Louis Figuier, *op. cit.*
29 Arthur E Waite, *op. cit.*

MIDDLE AGES

1 Grillot de Givry, *Le musée des sorciers*
2, 3 Montague Summers, *The Geography of Witchcraft*
4 This section follows roughly Lynn Thorndike's *History of Magic and Experimental Science*
5 L de Gérin-Ricard, *Histoire de l'occultisme*
6-8 Lynn Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*
9 Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien.*
10 Lynn Thorndike, *op cit*
11 D M. Menendez Pelayo, *Arnaldo de Villanova.*
12 Montague Summers, *op cit*
13 John H Randall, Jr , *The Making of the Modern Mind.*
14 Lynn Thorndike, *op cit.*
15 Albertus Magnus, *De Alchimia*
16 Lynn Thorndike, *op cit*

THE DEVIL

1 Paul Carus, *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil.*

WITCHCRAFT

1-7 Ian Ferguson, *The Philosophy of Witchcraft*
8 C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials.*

PORTRAITS

1 This treatment follows closely Thorndike's articles in his *History of Magic and Experimental Science.*

CABALA

1 This follows mainly Ad Franck, *La Kabbale.*

MAGICAL ARTS

1 The explanation of the principles of astrology follows roughly Franz J Boll, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung*

REFORMERS

1, 2 Arthur E Waite, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians*
3 The English version of *The Chemical Wedding* has been reprinted in Arthur E Waite's *Real History of the Rosicrucians*

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1 Louis Figuier, *Histoire du merveilleux*
2 Henri d'Almeras, *Cagliostro*
3 Cagliostro's answer recalls Johann Rudolph Glauber's treatise *Explicatio, oder Auslegung uber die Worte Salomonis in herbis, verbis et lapidibus magna est virtus,* Amsterdam, 1664

EPILOGUE

1 A description of the principal French magi of the nineteenth century is given by Auguste Viatte, *Victor Hugo et les illumines de son temps*

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