

Appendix 5

The Cover Illustration

Our cover illustration is taken from the *Musaeum Hermeticum*, a compendium of alchemical texts and images first published in 1652, with subsequent editions. Such emblems were widespread in alchemical literature, and were intended as “master keys” not merely to support text (which is typically the purpose of contemporary illustrations) but to transcend the text, acting as sources of direct insight during contemplation. When accessed in this manner, the alchemical emblems awaken as living visions, and hold many potential insights and realizations.

There are two standard contemporary ways of interpreting an alchemical emblem...one is a materialistic approach that describes alchemy as pseudo-scientific or kind of proto-chemistry or neo-physics, while the other is a psychological interpretation, also essentially materialistic, assuming that the alchemical transformations described are crude descriptions of psychic or mental/emotional processes within the individual. Neither of these interpretations are offered here, as they are both inadequate. In our context, the cover illustration is interpreted as a demonstration of the esoteric structure and operation of the Sphere of Art: it shows a pattern of subtle forces of energy and consciousness, and, reaching further, provides clues to a practical method of transformation. Such transformation is more than a merely psychological process or an alternative approach to chemistry.

Within and Without the Sphere

The emblematic picture shows the Sphere of Art extending above into the starry OverWorld and below into starry UnderWorld. Beyond the circumference of the Sphere the influence of the all-pervading Four Elements - Air/Fire/Water/Earth, is shown. The Elements are represented by traditional emblems: the winds for air, the salamander for fire, ships at sea for water, and a landscape for earth. The Sphere itself is defined by two hemispheres: the upper is a light hemisphere, the lower is a dark hemisphere, for the over and under worlds respectively. In each are shown the traditional images of the Seven Luminaries : Sun and Moon, with five stars/planets, representing Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. We will find this sequence mirrored inside the earth, beneath the hill.

The Sphere of Art is a reflection or miniature of the greater cosmos. The Four Elements are the active expressions, in the world of nature, of Four Primal Powers of Life/Light/Love/Law that emerge from the Void, as both the source and the ground of all manifestation.

On the Hill Top

Seated on the hill are three figures, traditionally representing initiates or adepts of alchemical and magical art that consciously unite the powers of above and below: these figures may be understood, however, at a deeper level as Male, Female, and Androgyne. The figure on the left is male, holding an upward pointing triangle that represents the Rising Light from the center of the Earth, or telluric and ascending consciousness/energy. This figure mediates the Evolutionary stream. That on the right is female, holding a downward pointing triangle that represents the Descending Light from the Stars, or stellar and planetary descending consciousness/energy. This figure mediates the Involutionary Stream. The central figure, which is androgyne, combines the Evolutionary and Involutionary, the telluric and the stellar, through the Hexagram.

It is through the union or sacred marriage of those ascending and descending powers that a New Sun is created in the center – as shown by the Hexagram. From within this New Sun the power of

the Aesch Mezareph or Purifying Fire emerges. Through our Sphere of Art practices we discover that this New Sun is a power of fusion rather than of fission.

Beneath the Hill

Beneath the hill are the Elders seated in silent communion within the Underworld, a motif found in both faery tradition and Rosicrucian mysticism. Before them is a well that leads deeper into the Mystery of the UnderWorld. This is the Well of Light found in UnderWorld and faery traditions worldwide, which can be opened through a specific practice to admit the Rising Light Below. At a deeper level of interpretation, the figures beneath the hill are the seven luminaries, the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, embodied within the elements and metals, Gold, Silver, Quicksilver, Copper, Iron, Tin, and Lead. The figure holding a lyre is the solar image of Apollo, as the sun and gold in the UnderWorld, in the center. While we may reasonably interpret these figures as being literally the metals, at a deeper level of understanding we find that they embody the spiritual forces of the Seven Luminaries that manifest energetically through the physical metals.

By conscious sacromagical work with the spiritual forces of the UnderWorld and OverWorld, we may transform the elements and metals within our body and blood. The methods of the Sphere of Art enable such a transformation. This is the true alchemy from within, which in turn enables transformation of the outer world of nature.

(With thanks to Harry Vincent who identified the relationship between the historic illustration and the Sphere of Art methods described in this book.)

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