
Various Translations and Interpretations of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes

Short History of the Tablet

History of the Tablet (largely summarised from Needham 1980, & Holmyard 1957)

The Tablet probably first appeared in the West in editions of the pseudo-Aristotelean *Secretum Secretorum* which was actually a translation of the *Kitab Sirr al-Asar*, a book of advice to kings which was translated into Latin by Johannes Hispalensis c. 1140 and by Philip of Tripoli c.1243. Other translations of the Tablet may have been made during the same period by Plato of Tivoli and Hugh of Santalla, perhaps from different sources.

The date of the *Kitab Sirr al-Asar* is uncertain, though c.800 has been suggested and it is not clear when the tablet became part of this work.

Holmyard was the first to find another early Arabic version (Ruska found a 12th century recension claiming to have been dictated by Sergius of Nablus) in the *Kitab Ustuqus al-Uss al-Thani* (Second Book of the Elements of Foundation) attributed to Jabir. Shortly after Ruska found another version appended to the *Kitab Sirr al-Khaliqa wa San`at al-Tabi`a* (Book of the Secret of Creation and the Art of Nature), which is also known as the *Kitab Balaniyus al-Hakim fi'l-`Ilal* (book of Balinas the wise on the Causes). It has been proposed that this book was written may have been written as early as 650, and was definitely finished by the Caliphate of al-Ma'mun (813-33).

Scholars have seen similarities between this book and the Syriac Book of Treasures written by Job of Odessa (9th century) and more interestingly the Greek writings of the bishop Nemesius of Emesa in Syria from the mid fourth century. However though this suggests a possible Syriac source, none of these writings contain the tablet.

Balinas is usually identified with Apollonius of Tyna, but there is little evidence to connect him with the *Kitab Balabiyus*, and even if there was, the story implies that Balinas found the tablet rather than wrote it, and the recent discoveries of the Dead Sea scrolls and the Nag Hammadi texts suggest that hiding texts in caves is not impossible, even if we did not have the pyramids before us.

Ruska has suggested an origin further east, and Needham has proposed an origin in China. Holmyard, Davis and Anon all consider that this Tablet may be one of the earliest of all alchemical works we have that survives.

It should be remarked that apparently the Greeks and Egyptians used the term translated as 'emerald' for emeralds, green granites, "and perhaps green jasper". In medieval times the emerald table of the Gothic kings of Spain, and the *Sacro catino* - a dish said to have belonged to the Queen of Sheba, to

have been used at the last supper, and to be made of emerald, were made of green glass [Steele and Singer: 488].

Translations in Chronological Order

From Jabir ibn Hayyan.

0) Balinas mentions the engraving on the table in the hand of Hermes, which says:

- 1) Truth! Certainty! That in which there is no doubt!
- 2) That which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above, working the miracles of one.
- 3) As all things were from one.
- 4) Its father is the Sun and its mother the Moon.
- 5) The Earth carried it in her belly, and the Wind nourished it in her belly,
- 7) as Earth which shall become Fire.
- 7a) Feed the Earth from that which is subtle, with the greatest power.
- 8) It ascends from the earth to the heaven and becomes ruler over that which is above and that which is below.
- 14) And I have already explained the meaning of the whole of this in two of these books of mine. [Holmyard 1923: 562.]

Another Arabic Version (from the German of Ruska, translated by 'Anonymous').

0) Here is that which the priest Sagijus of Nabulus has dictated concerning the entrance of Balinas into the hidden chamber... After my entrance into the chamber, where the talisman was set up, I came up to an old man sitting on a golden throne, who was holding an emerald table in one hand. And behold the following - in Syriac, the primordial language- was written thereon:

- 1) Here (is) a true explanation, concerning which there can be no doubt.
- 2) It attests: The above from the below, and the below from the above -the work of the miracle of the One.
- 3) And things have been from this primal substance through a single act. How wonderful is this work! It is the main (principle) of the world and is its maintainer.
- 4) Its father is the sun and its mother the moon; the
- 5) wind has borne it in its body, and the earth has nourished it.
- 6) the father of talismen and the protector of miracles
- 6a) whose powers are perfect, and whose lights are confirmed (?),
- 7) a fire that becomes earth.
- 7a) Separate the earth from the fire, so you will attain the subtle as more inherent than the gross, with care and sagacity.
- 8) It rises from earth to heaven, so as to draw the lights of the heights to itself, and descends to the earth; thus within it are the forces of the above and the below;
- 9) because the light of lights within it, thus does the darkness flee before it.
- 10) The force of forces, which overcomes every subtle thing and penetrates into everything gross.
- 11) The structure of the microcosm is in accordance with the structure of the macrocosm.
- 12) And accordingly proceed the knowledgeable.
- 13) And to this aspired Hermes, who was threefold graced with wisdom.

14) And this is his last book, which he concealed in the chamber.

[Anon 1985: 24-5]

CHALDEAN TRANSLATION

It was first written in the Chaldaen language, then translated to German, and then later to English. It has come from the Chakimim of Bit Nur. According to the story, they sang this like a hymn.

PRAISE AND HONOR BE UNTO OUR LORD WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH THROUGH A WORD. AND HE CREATED THAT WHICH IS ABOVE LIKE UNTO THAT WHICH IS BELOW AND THAT WHICH IS BELOW LIKE THAT WHICH IS ABOVE.

HIS FATHER IS THE SUN, HIS MOTHER THE MOON, AND HIS BREATH THE WIND BLOWED GENTLY OVER THE EARTH FRUCTIFYING IT.

AND THE CREATURES FROM BELOW MIX THEIR POWERS WITH THOSE FROM ABOVE AND THEY BEGET A WONDERFUL BEING.

FOUR ELEMENTS DOES IT CONTAIN WITHIN ITSELF.

IN ITS EARTH IS OUR LORD. IN ITS WATER IS OUR LORD. IN ITS AIR IS OUR LORD. IN ITS FIRE IS OUR LORD.

EARTH, WATER, AIR, AND FIRE PAY ATTENTION TO HIS WILL, AND OBEY THE LAW OF OUR LORD.

THUS IS THE WORLD

Twelfth Century Latin

0) When I entered into the cave, I received the tablet zaradi, which was inscribed, from between the hands of Hermes, in which I discovered these words:

1) True, without falsehood, certain, most certain.

2) What is above is like what is below, and what is below is like that which is above. To make the miracle of the one thing.

3) And as all things were made from contemplation of one, so all things were born from one adaptation.

4) Its father is the Sun, its mother is the Moon.

5) The wind carried it in its womb, the earth breast fed it.

6) It is the father of all 'works of wonder' (Telesmi) in the world.

6a) Its power is complete (integra).

7) If cast to (turned towards- versa fuerit) earth,

7a) it will separate earth from fire, the subtile from the gross.

8) With great capacity it ascends from earth to heaven. Again it descends to earth, and takes back the power of the above and the below.

9) Thus you will receive the glory of the distinctiveness of the world. All obscurity will flee from you.

10) This is the whole most strong strength of all strength, for it overcomes all subtle things, and penetrates all solid things.

11a) Thus was the world created.

- 12) From this comes marvelous adaptations of which this is the procedure.
- 13) Therefore I am called Hermes, because I have three parts of the wisdom of the whole world.
- 14) And complete is what I had to say about the work of the Sun, from the book of Galieni Alfachimi.
[From Latin in Steele and Singer 1928: 492.]

Emerald Tablet of Hermes in Latin

Verum, sine Mendacio, certum et verissimum:
Quod est Inferius est sicut quod est Superius,
et quod est Superius est sicut quod est Inferius,
ad perpetranda Miracula Rei Unius.
Et sicut res omnes fuerunt ab Uno,
meditatione unius,
sic Omnes Res natae ab hac una Re, adaptatione.

Pater eius est Sol. Mater eius est Luna.
Portavit illud Ventus in Ventre suo.
Nutrix eius Terra est.
Pater omnis Telesmi totius Mundi est hic.
Virtus eius integra est si versa fuerit in Terram.
Separabis Terram ab Igne, subtile ab spisso,
suaviter, magno cum ingenio.

Ascendit a Terra in Coelum,
iterumque descendit in Terram,
et recipit Vim superiorum et inferiorum.
Sic habebis Gloriam totius Mundi.
Ideo fugiet a te omnis Obscuritas.
Haec est totius Fortitudinis Fortitudo fortis,
quia vincet Omnem rem subtilem,
Omnemque Solidam penetrabit.

Sic Mundus creatus est.
Hinc erunt Adaptationes Mirabiles,
quarum Modus est hic.
Itaque vocatus sum Hermes Trismegistus,
habens tres partes Philosophiae totius Mundi.

Completum est quod dixi de Operatione Solis.

Translation from Aurelium Occultae Philosophorum..Georgio Beato

- 1) This is true and remote from all cover of falsehood
- 2) Whatever is below is similar to that which is above. Through this the marvels of the work of one thing are procured and perfected.
- 3) Also, as all things are made from one, by the consideration of one, so all things were made from this one, by conjunction.
- 4) The father of it is the sun, the mother the moon.

- 5) The wind bore it in the womb. Its nurse is the earth, the mother of all perfection.
- 6a) Its power is perfected.
- 7) If it is turned into earth,
- 7a) separate the earth from the fire, the subtle and thin from the crude and course, prudently, with modesty and wisdom.
- 8) This ascends from the earth into the sky and again descends from the sky to the earth, and receives the power and efficacy of things above and of things below.
- 9) By this means you will acquire the glory of the whole world, and so you will drive away all shadows and blindness.
- 10) For this by its fortitude snatches the palm from all other fortitude and power. For it is able to penetrate and subdue everything subtle and everything crude and hard.
- 11a) By this means the world was founded
- 12) and hence the marvelous conjunctions of it and admirable effects, since this is the way by which these marvels may be brought about.
- 13) And because of this they have called me Hermes Trismegistus since I have the three parts of the wisdom and Philosophy of the whole universe.
- 14) My speech is finished which I have spoken concerning the solar work
[Davis 1926: 874.]

Translation from Roger Bacon's edition of Secretum Secretorum made c 1445

- 1) Truth hath hym so, and it is no doubt,
- 2) that the lover is to the heigher, and the heigher to the lower answeren.
The worcher forsoth of all myracles is the one and sool God, of and fro Whom Cometh all meruelous operacions.
- 3) So all thynges were created of o soole substance, and of o soole disposicion,
- 4) the fader wherof is the sone, and the moone moder,
- 5) that brought hym forth by blast or aier in the wombe, the erthe taken fro it,
- 6) to whom is seid the increat fader, tresour of myracles, and yever of vertues.
- 7) Of fire is made erthe.
- 7a) Depart the erthe fro the fire, for the sotiller is worthier than the more grosse, and the thynne thynges than the thik. This most be do wisely and discretly.
- 8) It ascendith fro the erth into the heven, and falleth fro heven to the erthe, and therof sleith the higher and the lower vertue.
- 9) And yf it lordship in the lower and in the heigher, and thow shalt lordship aboue and beneth, which forsoth is the light of lightes, and therfor fro the wolfe fle all derknesse.
- 10) The higher vertue ouer-cometh all, for sothe all thynne thynges doth in dense thynges.
- 11a) After the disposicion of the more world rynneth this worchyng.
- 13) And for this prophetisyng of the trynyte of God Hermogenes it called Triplex, trebil in philosophie, as Aristotle seith.

Translation of same source, made c. 1485.

- 1) The trwthe is so, and that it is no dowght,
- 2) that lower thyngis to hyer thyng, and hyer to lower be correspondent. But the Werker of myraclis is on Godde alone, fro Home descendyth eury meruulus werk.

- 3) And so alle thyngis be creat of one only substauns, be an only dysposicion,
 - 4) of home the fadyr is the sonne, and the mone the modyr,
 - 5) qwyche bar her be the wedyr in the wombe. The erthe is priuyd fro her-to.
 - 6) This is clepyd or seyde the fadyr of enchauntmentis, tresur of myracclys, the yessuer of vertuys.
 - 7) Be a lytil it is made erthe.
 - 7a) Depart that qwyche is erthly fro that qwyche is fi Fry, for that qwyche is sotel is mor wurthy han that qwyche is grose, and that rar, porous, or lyght, is mor bettyr than qwyche is thyk of substauns. This is done wyseli or dyscretly.
 - 8) It ascendyth fro the erth in-to heuyn and fallyth fro heuyn in-to erth, and ther-of it sleth the ouyr vertu and the nedyr vertu, so it hath lorchyp in the lowe thyngis and hye thingis,
 - 9) and thu lordschyppest vppeward and downward, and with the is the lyght of lyghtys. And for that alle derkness schal fle fro the.
 - 10) The ouyr vetu ourcomyth alle, for eury rar rhyng werkyth in to eury thyk thyng.
 - 11a) And aftyr the dysposicion of the mor world rennyth thys werking.
 - 13) And for that Hermogines is clepyd threhold in filosofhye, and of the meruellys of he world.
- [See Manzalaoui 1977: 174-5]

Translation of Issac Newton c. 1680.

- 1) Tis true without lying, certain & most true.
 - 2) That wch is below is like that wch is above & that wch is above is like yt wch is below to do ye miracles of one only thing.
 - 3) And as all things have been & arose from one by ye mediation of one: so all things have their birth from this one thing by adaptation.
 - 4) The Sun is its father, the moon its mother,
 - 5) the wind hath carried it in its belly, the earth its nurse.
 - 6) The father of all perfection in ye whole world is here.
 - 7) Its force or power is entire if it be converted into earth.
 - 7a) Seperate thou ye earth from ye fire, ye subtile from the gross sweetly wth great indoustry.
 - 8) It ascends from ye earth to ye heaven & again it desends to ye earth and receives ye force of things superior & inferior.
 - 9) By this means you shall have ye glory of ye whole world & thereby all obscurity shall fly from you.
 - 10) Its force is above all force. ffor it vanquishes every subtile thing & penetrates every solid thing.
 - 11a) So was ye world created.
 - 12) From this are & do come admirable adaptaions whereof ye means (Or process) is here in this.
 - 13) Hence I am called Hermes Trismegist, having the three parts of ye philosophy of ye whole world.
 - 14) That wch I have said of ye operation of ye Sun is accomplished & ended.
- [Dobbs 1988: 183-4.]

Translation from Kriegsmann (?) alledgedly from the Phoenician

- 1) I speak truly, not falsely, certainly and most truly
- 2) These things below with those above and those with these join forces again so that they produce a single thing the most wonderful of all.
- 3) And as the whole universe was brought forth from one by the word of one GOD, so also all things are regenerated perpetually from this one according to the disposition of Nature.

- 4) It has the Sun for father and the Moon for mother:
 - 5) it is carried by the air as if in a womb, it is nursed by the earth.
 - 6) It is the cause, this, of all perfection of all things throughout the universe.
 - 6a) This will attain the highest perfection of powers
 - 7) if it shall be reduced into earth
 - 7a) Distribute here the earth and there the fire, thin out the density of this the suavest (suavissima) thing of all.
 - 8) Ascend with the greatest sagacity of genius from the earth into the sky, and thence descend again to the earth, and recognise that the forces of things above and of things below are one,
 - 9) so as to possess the glory of the whole world- and beyond this man of abject fate may have nothing further.
 - 10) This thing itself presently comes forth stronger by reasons of this fortitude: it subdues all bodies surely, whether tenuous or solid, by penetrating them.
 - 11a) And so everything whatsoever that the world contains was created.
 - 12) Hence admirable works are accomplished which are instituted (carried out- instituuntur) according to the same mode.
 - 13) To me therefor the name of Hermes Trismegistus has been awarded because I am discovered as the Teacher of the three parts of the wisdom of the world.
 - 14) These then are the considerations which I have concluded ought to be written down concerning the readiest operations of the Chymic art.
- [Davis 1926: 875 slightly modified.]

From Sigismund Bacstrom (allegedly translated from Chaldean).

- 0) The Secret Works of CHIRAM ONE in essence, but three in aspect.
- 1) It is true, no lie, certain and to be depended upon,
- 2) the superior agrees with the inferior, and the inferior agrees with the superior, to effect that one truly wonderful work.
- 3) As all things owe their existence to the will of the only one, so all things owe their origin to the one only thing, the most hidden by the arrangement of the only God.
- 4) The father of that one only thing is the sun its mother is the moon,
- 5) the wind carries it in its belly; but its nurse is a spirituous earth.
- 6) That one only thing is the father of all things in the Universe.
- 6a) Its power is perfect,
- 7) after it has been united with a spirituous earth.
- 7a) Separate that spirituous earth from the dense or crude by means of a gentle heat, with much attention.
- 8) In great measure it ascends from the earth up to heaven, and descends again, newborn, on the earth, and the superior and the inferior are increased in power.
- 9) By this wilt thou partake of the honours of the whole world. And Darkness will fly from thee.
- 10) This is the strength of all powers. With this thou wilt be able to overcome all things and transmute all what is fine and what is coarse.
- 11a) In this manner the world was created;
- 12) the arrangements to follow this road are hidden.
- 13) For this reason I am called Chiram Telat Mechasot, one in essence, but three in aspect. In this trinity is hidden the wisdom of the whole world.
- 14) It is ended now, what I have said concerning the effects of the sun. Finish of the Tabula

Smaragdina.

[See Hall 1977: CLVIII,]

From Madame Blavatsky

- 2) What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is similar to that which is below to accomplish the wonders of the one thing.
 - 3) As all things were produced by the mediation of one being, so all things were produced from this one by adaption.
 - 4) Its father is the sun, its mother the moon.
 - 6a) It is the cause of all perfection throughout the whole earth.
 - 7) Its power is perfect if it is changed into earth.
 - 7a) Separate the earth from the fire, the subtile from the gross, acting prudently and with judgement.
 - 8) Ascend with the greatest sagacity from earth to heaven, and unite together the power of things inferior and superior;
 - 9) thus you will possess the light of the whole world, and all obscurity will fly away from you.
 - 10) This thing has more fortitude than fortitude itself, because it will overcome every subtile thing and penetrate every solid thing.
 - 11a) By it the world was formed.
- [Blavatsky 1972: 507.]

From Fulcanelli (translated from the French by Sieveking)

- 1) This is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth:-
 - 2) As below, so above; and as above so below. With this knowledge alone you may work miracles.
 - 3) And since all things exist in and emanate from the ONE Who is the ultimate Cause, so all things are born after their kind from this ONE.
 - 4) The Sun is the father, the Moon the mother;
 - 5) the wind carried it in his belly. Earth is its nurse and its guardian.
 - 6) It is the Father of all things,
 - 6a) the eternal Will is contained in it.
 - 7) Here, on earth, its strength, its power remain one and undivded.
 - 7a) Earth must be separated from fire, the subtle from the dense, gently with unremitting care.
 - 8) It arises from the earth and descends from heaven; it gathers to itself the strength of things above and things below.
 - 9) By means of this one thing all the glory of the world shall be yours and all obscurity flee from you.
 - 10) It is power, strong with the strength of all power, for it will penetrate all mysteries and dispel all ignorance.
 - 11a) By it the world was created.
 - 12) From it are born manifold wonders, the means to achieving which are here given
 - 13) It is for this reason that I am called Hermes Trismegistus; for I possess the three essentials of the philosophy of the universe.
 - 14) This is the sum total of the work of the Sun.
- [Sadoul 1972: 25-6.]

From Fulcanelli, new translation

- 1) It is true without untruth, certain and most true:
 - 2) that which is below is like that which is on high, and that which is on high is like that which is below; by these things are made the miracles of one thing.
 - 3) And as all things are, and come from One, by the mediation of One, So all things are born from this unique thing by adaption.
 - 4) The Sun is the father and the Moon the mother.
 - 5) The wind carries it in its stomach. The earth is its nourisher and its receptacle.
 - 6 The Father of all the Theleme of the universal world is here.
 - 6a) Its force, or power, remains entire,
 - 7) if it is converted into earth.
 - 7a) You separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, gently with great industry.
 - 8) It climbs from the earth and descends from the sky, and receives the force of things superior and things inferior.
 - 9) You will have by this way, the glory of the world and all obscurity will flee from you.
 - 10) It is the power strong with all power, for it will defeat every subtle thing and penetrate every solid thing
 - 11a) In this way the world was created.
 - 12) From it are born wonderful adaptations, of which the way here is given.
 - 13) That is why I have been called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the universal philosophy.
 - 14) This, that I have called the solar Work, is complete.
- [Translated from Fulcanelli 1964: 312.]

From Idres Shah

- 1) The truth, certainty, truest, without untruth.
 - 2)What is above is like what is below. What is below is like what is above. The miracle of unity is to be attained.
 - 3) Everything is formed from the contemplation of unity, and all things come about from unity, by means of adaptation.
 - 4) Its parents are the Sun and Moon.
 - 5) It was borne by the wind and nurtured by the Earth.
 - 6) Every wonder is from it
 - 6a) and its power is complete.
 - 7) Throw it upon earth,
 - 7a) and earth will separate from fire. The impalpable separated from the palpable.
 - 8) Through wisdom it rises slowly from the world to heaven. Then it descends to the world combining the power of the upper and the lower.
 - 9)Thus you will have the illumination of all the world, and darkness will disappear.
 - 10) This is the power of all strength- it overcomes that which is delicate and penetrates through solids.
 - 11a) This was the means of the creation of the world.
 - 12) And in the future wonderful developements will be made, and this is the way.
 - 13) I am Hermes the Threefold Sage, so named because I hold the three elements of all wisdom.
 - 14) And thus ends the revelation of the work of the Sun.
- (Shah 1964: 198).

Hypothetical Chinese Original

- 1) True, true, with no room for doubt, certain, worthy of all trust.
 - 2) See, the highest comes from the lowest, and the lowest from the highest; indeed a marvelous work of the tao.
 - 3) See how all things originated from It by a single process.
 - 4) The father of it (the elixir) is the sun (Yang), its mother the moon (Yin).
 - 5) The wind bore it in its belly, and the earth nourished it.
 - 6) This is the father of wondrous works (changes and transformations), the guardian of mysteries,
 - 6a) perfect in its powers, the animator of lights.
 - 7) This fire will be poured upon the earth...
 - 7a) So separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, acting prudently and with art.
 - 8) It ascends from the earth to the heavens (and orders the lights above), then descends again to the earth; and in it is the power of the highest and the lowest.
 - 9) Thus when you have the light of lights darkness will flee away from you.
 - 10) With this power of powers (the elixir) you shall be able to get the mastery of every subtle thing, and be able to penetrate everything that is gross.
 - 11a) In this way was the great world itself formed.
 - 12) Hence thus and thus marvellous operations will be achieved.
- [Slightly altered from Needham 1980: 371.]

From Dennis William Hauck

In truth, without deceit, certain, and most veritable.

That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracles of the One Thing.

And just as all things have come from this One thing, through the meditation of One Mind, so do all created things originate from this One Thing, through Transformation.

Its father is the Sun; its mother the moon.

The Wind carries it in its belly; its nurse is the Earth.

It is the origin of All, the consecration of the Universe.

Its inherent Strength is perfected, if it is turned into Earth.

Separate the Earth from Fire, the Subtle from the Gross, gently and with great Ingenuity.

It rises from Earth to heaven and descends again to Earth, thereby combining within Itself the powers of both the Above and the Below.

Thus will you obtain the Glory of the Whole Universe. All Obscurity will be clear to you. This is the greatest Force of all powers, because it overcomes every Subtle thing and penetrates every Solid thing.

In this way was the Universe created. From this come many wondrous Applications, because this is the Pattern.

Therefore am I called Thrice Greatest Hermes, having all three parts of the wisdom of the Whole Universe. Herein have I completely explained the Operation of the Sun.

TEXTUAL REMARKS

On #3 Some Latin texts have *meditatione* (contemplation), others *mediatione* (mediation). Some texts have *adaptatione* (by adaptation), some have *adoptionis* (by adoption).

On #6 'Telesmi' is a greek word, some texts have 'thelesmi'.

On #6, 7 In some texts 'Its Power is Complete' is a separate line. In the generally accepted reading, this runs into #7 producing 'Its Power is complete if versa fuerit to earth'. Where possible this has been indicated by diving these lines in 6, 6a, 7, & 7a

On #7, 8 In some texts the 'Wisdom, capacity' (*magno ingenio*) is read as referring to #7, and hence the operation of Separation is to be carried out 'carefully', in other readings the 'wisdom' is held to refer to #8 and the product of the Separation which thus ascends with 'wisdom'.

Needham quotes Ruska to the effect that sections 3, 12 and 14 are probably late additions (op. cit)

COMMENTARIES

General Commentaries by Rubric

On #1

Hortulanus: "... the most true Sun is procreated by art. And he says most true in the superlative degree because the Sun generated by this art exceeds all natural Sun in all of its properties, medicinal and otherwise" (Davis modified by `Linden')

On #2

Albertus Magnus: Hermes says "the powers of all things below originate in the stars and constellations of the heavens: and that all these powers are poured down into all things below by the circle called Alaur, which is, they said, the first circle of the constellations". This descent is "noble when the materials receiving these powers are more like things above in their brightness and transparency; ignoble when the materials are confused and foul, so that the heavenly power is, as it were oppressed. Therefore they say that this is the reason why precious stones more than anything else have wonderful powers" (60 -61). While the "seven kinds of metals have their forms from the seven planets of the lower spheres" (168).

Hortulanus: "the stone is divided into two principle parts by the magistry, into a superior part which ascends above and into an inferior part which remains below fixed and clear. And these two parts

moreover are concordant in their virtue since the inferior part is earth which is called nurse and ferment, and the superior part is the spirit which quickens the whole stone and raises it up. Wherefore separation made, and conjunction celebrated, many miracles are effected."

Burckhardt: "This refers to the reciprocal dependence of the active and the passive... essential form cannot be manifested without passive materia.. the efficacy of the spiritual power depends on the preparedness of the human 'container' and vice versa.... 'Above' and 'below' are thus related to this one thing and complement one another in its regard".

Schumaker: "There are corresponding planes in various levels of creation, hence it is safe to draw analogies between macrocosm and microcosm, the mineral kingdom and the human, animal and vegetable kingdoms etc".

Needham: "the whole affirmation looks remarkably like the doctrine that extreme of Yang generates Yin, and vice versa".

On #3

Hortulanus: "our stone, which was created by God, was born and came forth from a confused mass, containing in itself all the elements- and hence our stone was born by this single miracle".

Trithemius: "Is it not true that all things flow from one thing, from the goodness of the One, and that whatever is joined to Unity cannot be diverse, but rather fructifies by means of the simplicity and adaptability of the One" "What is born from Unity? Is it not the ternary? Take note: Unity is unmixed, the binary is compounded, and the ternary is reduced to the simplicity of Unity. I, Trithemius, am not of three minds, but persist in a single integrated mind taking pleasure in the ternary, which gives birth to a marvelous offspring" (Bran)

Burckhardt: "the undivided, invisible Light of the unconditioned One is refracted into multiplicity by the prism of the Spirit". As the Spirit contemplates the Unity without full comprehension "it manifests the 'many-sided' All, just as a lens transmits the light it receives as a bundle of rays".

Schumaker: As God is one, all created objects come from one thing, an undifferentiated primal matter.

On #4

Hortulanus: " As one animal naturally generates more animals similar to itself, so the Sun artificially generates Sun by the power of multiplication of...the stone.... in this artificial generation it is necessary that the Sun have a suitable receptacle, consonant with itself, for its sperm and its tincture, and this is the Luna of the philosophers"

Redgrove: Sun and Moon "probably stand for Spirit and Matter respectively, not gold and silver".

Burckhardt: Sun "is the spirit (nous), while the moon is the soul (psyche)".

Schumaker: "If the moon is associated with water, as because of its 'moisture' [as] was usual, and the sun with fire, the prima materia is understood to have been generated by fire, born of water, brought down from the sky by wind, and nourished by earth".

On #5

Albertus Magnus: by this Hermes "means the levigatio [making light weight] of the material, raising it to the properties of Air. And why he says the wind carries the material [of the stone] in its belly is that, when the material is placed in an alembic- which is a vessel made like those in which rosewater is

prepared- then by evaporation it is rendered subtle and is raised towards the properties of Air... And there distills and issues from the mouth of the alembic a watery or oily liquor with all the powers of the elements" (17). In metals the moisture is not separated from the dryness, but is dissolved in it; and being so dissolved, it moves about there as if it had been swallowed by the Earth and were moving about in its bowels. And on this account Hermes said "The mother of metal is Earth that carries it in her belly".

Hortulanus: "It is plain that wind is air, and air is life, and life is spirit... And thus it is necessary that the wind should bear the whole stone.... [However] our stone without the ferment of the earth will never come to the effect, which ferment is called food"

Trithemius: "the wind carries its seed in her belly".

Maier: By "the wind carried him in its belly" Hermes means " 'He, whose father is the Sun, and whose mother is the Moon, will be carried before he is born, by wind and vapour, just as a flying bird is carried by air'. From the vapours of winds, which are nothing else but wind in motion, water proceeds, when condensed, and from that water, mixed with earth, all minerals and metals arise". The substance carried by the wind is "in chemical respect.. the sulphur, which is carried in mercury". Lull says "'The stone is the fire, carried in the belly of the air'. In physical respect it is the unborn child that will soon be born". To be clearer, "'All mercury is composed of vapours, that is to say of water, which the earth raises along with it into the thin air, and of earth, which the air compels to return into watery earth or earthy water" As the elements contained within are each reduced to a watery condition, they either follow the volatile elements upward as in common mercury, or they stay below with the solid elements as in philosophical Mercury "and in the solid metals". So "Mercury is the wind which receives the sulphur... as the unripe fruit from the mothers womb, or from the ashes of the burnt mother's body and takes it to a place where it may ripen". Ripley says "our child shall be born in the air, that is the belly of the wind" [de Jong 1969: 55- 7.]

Maier (2nd Comment) on "The earth is its nurse": Food changes into the substance of the eater and is then assimilated. "This harmony dominates the whole of nature, for the like enjoys the like". The same happens in the Work and Nature "just as is the growth of the child in the mother's womb. So also a father, a mother and a nurse have been attributed to the philosophical child... it comes into being from the twofold seed and then grows as an embryo does". As a woman must moderate her diet to avoid miscarriage, "in the same way one must set about philosophical work with moderation". The Seeds also have to be united. "Philosophers say that the one comes from the East and the other from the West and become one; what does this mean but combining in a retort, a moderate temperature and nourishment?". "One may wonder why the earth is referred to as the nurse of the philosophic child, since barrenness and dryness are the main properties of the element earth". The answer is that not the element, but the whole Earth is meant. "It is the nurse of Heaven not because it resolves, washes and moistens the foetus, but because it coagulates, fastens and colours the latter and changes it into sap and blood... The Earth contains a wonderful juice which changes the nature of the one who feeds on it, as Romulus is believed to have been changed by the wolf's milk into a bellicose individual" [de Jong 1969: 63 -5.]

Burckhardt: "The wind which carries the spiritual germ in its body, is the vital breath". Vital breath is the substance of the realm between heaven and earth, it "is also Quicksilver which contains the germ of gold in a liquid state". The earth is "the body, as an inward reality".

On #6

Burckhardt: the word talisman is derived from Telesma. Talismans work by corresponding to their prototype, and by making a "'condensation', on the subtle plane, of a spiritual state. This explains the

similarity between the talisman, as the bearer of an invisible influence, and the alchemical elixir, as the 'ferment' of metallic transformation".

On #7

Hortulanus: The stone is perfect and complete if it is turned into earth "that is if the soul of the stone itself... is turned into earth, namely of the stone and is fixed so that the whole substance of the stone becomes one with its nurse, namely the earth, and the whole stone is converted to ferment"

Trithemius: it is the seed from #5 that must be cast upon the earth.

Bacstrom: "Process- First Distillation".

Burckhardt: "when the Spirit is 'embodied', the volatile becomes fixed".

Schumaker: if the prime matter is to be used it must be fixed into a substance "capable of being handled".

On #7a

Hortulanus: "You will separate, that is, you will dissolve, because solution is separation of parts.."

Burkhardt: The separation "means the 'extraction' of the soul from the body".

Schumaker "Since the volatile principle is fire -or sometimes, air- stability is produced by its removal. Or, alternatively but less probably, the earth is impurity ('the gross') and a purified fire ('the subtle') is what is wanted.

On #8

Albertus Magnus: In intending to teach the operations of alchemy Hermes says the stone "'ascends to heaven' when by roasting and calcination it takes on the properties of Fire; for alchemists mean by calcinatio the reduction of material to powder by burning and roasting. And the material 'again descends from heaven to earth' when it takes on the properties of Earth by inhumatio, for inhumation revives and nourishes what was previously killed by calcination".

Hortulanus: "And now he deals with multiplication [of the stone]." "Although our stone is divided in the first operation into four parts... there are really two principle parts". The ascending, non fixed, and the earth or ferment. "It is necessary to have a large quantity of this non fixed part and to give it to the stone which has been made thoroughly clean from dirt.... until the entire stone is borne above by the virtue of the spirit"

"Afterwards it is necessary to incerate the same stone,..with the oil that was extracted in the first operation, which oil is called the water of the stone" Roast or boil by sublimation until the "entire stone descends... and remains fixed and fluent". "That which is coporeal is made spiritual by sublimation, and that which is spiritual is made corporeal by descension".

Trithemius: "When the ternary has at last returned to itself it may, by an inner disposition and great delight, ascend from the earth to heaven, thereby receiving both superior and inferior power; thus will it be made powerful and glorious in the clarity of Unity, demonstrate its ability to bring forth every number, and put to flight all obscurity".

Bacstrom: "Last Digestion". "The Azoth ascends from the Earth, from the bottom of the Glass, and redescends in Veins and drops into the Earth and by this continual circulation the Azoth is more and more subtilised, Volatilizes Sol and carries the volatilized Solar atoms along with it and thereby

becomes a Solar Azoth, i.e. our third and genuine Sophic Mercury". The circulation must continue until "it ceases of itself, and the Earth has sucked it all in, when it becomes the black pitchy matter, the Toad [the substances in the alchemical retort and also the lower elements in the body of man -Hall], which denotes complete putrifaction or Death of the compound".

Read, suggests this section describes the use of a kerotakis, in which metals are suspended and subject to the action of gasses released from substances heated in the base, and from their condensation and circulation.

Burckhardt: "dissolution of consciousness from all formal 'coagulations' is followed by the 'crystalisation' of the Spirit, so that active and passive are perfectly united."

Schumaker: "Separate the volatile part of the substance by vaporization but continue heating until the vapour reunites with the parent body, whereupon you will have obtained the Stone".

On #9

Trithemius: When the ternary has returned to Unity cleansed of all impurities "the mind understands without contradiction all the mysteries of the excellently arranged arcanum".

Bacstrom: the black matter becomes White and Red. The Red "having been carried to perfection, medicinally and for Metals" is capable of supporting complete mental and physical health, and provides "ample means, in finitum multiplicable to be benevolent and charitable, without any diminution of our inexhaustable resources, therefore well may it be called the Glory of the whole World". Contemplation and study of the Philosopher's Stone ("L. P.") elevates the mind to God. "The Philosophers say with great Truth, that the L.P. either finds a good man or makes one". "By invigorating the Organs the Soul makes use of for communicating with exterior objects, the Soul must aquire greater powers, not only for conception but also for retention". If we pray and have faith "all Obscurity must vanish of course".

Burckhardt: "Thus the light of the Spirit becomes constant..[and] ignorance, deception, uncertainty, doubt and foolishness will be removed from consciousness".

On #10

Trithemius: The Philosopher's Stone is another name for the 'one thing', and is able to "conquer every subtile thing and to penetrate every solid". "This very noble virtue... consists of maximal fortitude, touching everything with its desirable excellence".

Bacstrom: "The L.P. does possess all the Powers concealed in Nature, not for destruction but for exhaltation and regeneration of matter, in the three Departments of Nature". "It refixes the most subtil Oxygen into its own firey Nature". The power increases "in a tenfold ratio, at every multiplication". So it can penetrate Gold and Silver, and fix mercury, Crystals and Glass Fluxes.

Burckhardt: "Alchemical fixation is nevertheless more inward... Through its union with the spirit bodily consciousness itself becomes a fine and penetrating power". He quotes Jabir "The body becomes a spirit, and takes on... fineness, lightness, extensibility, coloration... The spirit... becomes a body and aquires the latter's resistance to fire, immobility and duration. From both bodies a light substance is born , which.. precisely takes up a middle position between the two extremes".

Schumaker: The product of the distillation and reunion will "dominate less solid substances, but because of its own subtlety it will 'penetrate' and hence dominate, other solid things less pure and quasi-spiritual than itself".

On #11

Burckhardt: "the little world is created according to the prototype of the great world", when the human realises their original nature is the image of God.

Schumaker: "The alchemical operation is a paradigm of the creative process. We may note the sexual overtones of what has preceded"

On #12

Burckhardt: "In the Arabic text this is: "This way is traversed by the sages".

On #13

Hortulanus: "He here teaches in an occult manner the things from which the stone is made." "the stone is called perfect because it has in itself the nature of minerals, of vegetables and of animals. For the stone is three and one, tripple and single, having four natures.... and three colours, namely black, white and red. It is also called the grain of corn because unless it shall have died, it remains itself alone. And if it shall have died... it bears much fruit when it is in conjunction..."

Newton: "on account of this art Mercurius is called thrice greatest, having three parts of the philosophy of the whole world, since he signifies the Mercury of the philosophers.... and has dominion in the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, and the animal kingdom".

Bacstrom: the wisdom of the world (?) is hidden in "Chiram and its Use". Hermes "signifies a Serpent, and the Serpent used to be an Emblem of Knowledge or Wisdom."

Burckhardt: "The three parts of wisdom correspond to the three great divisions of the universe, namely, the spiritual, psychic and corporeal realms, whose symbols are heaven, air and earth".

Schumaker: "The usual explanation of Trismegistus.. is that Hermes was the greatest philosopher, the greatest priest, and the greatest king".

General Commentaries on the Tablet

Trithemius: "our philosophy is celestial, not worldly, in order that we may faithfully behold, by means of a direct intuition of the mind through faith and knowledge, that principle which we call God...."

Trithemius: "Study generates knowledge; knowledge prepares love; love, similarity; similarity, communion; communion, virtue; virtue, dignity; dignity, power; and power performs the miracle".

Newton "Inferior and superior, fixed and volatile, sulphur and quicksilver have a similar nature and are one thing, like man and wife. For they differ from one another only by degree of digestion and maturity. Sulphur is mature quicksilver, and quicksilver is immature sulphur: and on account of this affinity they unite like male and female, and they act on each other, and through that action they are mutually transmuted into each other and procreate a more noble offspring to accomplish the miracles of this one thing". "And just as all things were created from one Chaos by the design of one God, so in our art all things... are born from this one thing which is our Chaos, by the design of the Artificer and the skilful adaptation of things. And the generation of this is similar to the human, truly from a father and mother".

Blavatsky: the mysterious thing "is the universal, magical agent, the astral light, which in the correlations of its forces furnishes the alkahest, the philosopher's stone, and the elixir of life. Hermetic philosophy names it Azoth, the soul of the world, the celestial virgin, the great Magnes, etc" It appears to be that which gives organisation ("the maze of force-correlations"), and form i.e. the perfect geometry of snowflakes.

Sherwood Taylor: "the operation of the Sun.. was carried out by a 'spirit', universal, the source of all things, having the power of perfecting them. Its virtue is integral [# 6a] (ie having the power to convert the diverse into a single substance), if it be turned into earth (ie. solidified). This conveyed that the Stone was to be a solidified pneuma. Pneuma was the link between earth and heaven, having the virtue of the celestial and subterranean regions- the power of the whole cosmos from the fixed stars to the centre of the earth. It overcomes every nature and penetrates every solid. It is the source of the whole world and so it can be the means of changing things in a wonderful way. The three parts of the philosophy of the whole world are presumably of the celestial, terrestrial, and subterranean regions".

Shah: The table is "the same as the Sufi dictum... 'Man is the microcosm, creation the macrocosm - the unity. All comes from One. By the joining of the power of contemplation all can be attained. This essence must be separated from the body first, then combined with the body. This is the Work. Start with yourself, end with all. Before man, beyond man, transformation".

A COMMENTARY OF IBN UMAL

HERMUS said the secret of everything and the life of everything is Water.... This water becomes in wheat, ferment; in the vine, wine; in the olive, olive oil.... The beginning of the child is from water.... Regarding this spiritual water and the sanctified and thirsty earth, HERMUS the great, crowned with the glorious wisdom and the sublime sciences, said [#1] Truth it is, indubitable, certain and correct, [#2] that the High is from the Low and the Low is from the High. They bring about wonders through the one, just as things are produced from that one essence by a single preparation. Later by his statement [#4] Its father is the Sun and its mother the Moon he meant their male and their female. They are the two birds which are linked together in the pictures given regarding the beginning of the operation, and from them the spiritual tinctures are produced. And similarly they are at the end of the operation. Later in his statement [#7 ?] the subtle is more honourable than the gross, he means by the subtle the divine spiritual water; and by the gross the earthly body. As for his later statement [#8] with gentleness and wisdom it will ascend from the earth to the sky, and will take fire from the higher lights, he means by this the distillation and the raising of the water into the air. As for his later statement [#8a] It will descend to the earth, containing the strength of the high and the low, he means by this the breathing in (istinshaq) of the air, and the taking of the spirit from it, and its subsequent elevation to the highest degree of heat, and it is the Fire, and the low is the body, and its content of the controlling earthly power which imparts the colours. For there lie in it those higher powers, as well as the earthly powers which were submerged in it.

The natural operation and decay causes it to be manifest, and hence the strength of the earth, and of the air, and of the higher fire passed in to it. Later he said [#9] it will overcome the high and the low because it in it is found the light of lights: and consequently the darkness will flee from it. [See Stapleton et al. p 74, 81.]

Everard's Commentary on Emerald Tablet

[Transcribed from Ms. Ashmole 1440.]

Tabula Smaragdina or The Table of Emerald said to be found in the Sepulchre of Hermes

with glosses (in italic)

by John Everard, Doctor of Divinity

1. It is true without any lying, certain and most true, that which is inferior, or below, is as that which is superior or above **there being one Universal matter and form of all things, differenced only by accident, and particularly by that great mystery of Rarefaction and Condensation,** and that which is superior as that which is inferior, to work and accomplish the Miracles of one thing, **and to show the great variety and diversity of operations wrought by that Spirit that worketh all things in all things.**

2. And as all things were from ONE, by the Mediation of one, **God having created all things in the beginning, which is the beginning of all things, and the wisdom of his Father,** so all things spring and took their original from this one thing by adaptation or fitting itself accordingly **in number weight and measure, for Wisdom builds her own house.**

3. The Father of this one thing, **or that which he useth instead of an Agent, in all the Operations thereof,** is the Sun, and the mother thereof **or which supplies the place of a female and Patient** is the Moon; the Nurse thereof **receiving in her lap all the influences of heat and moisture, the Sulphur and Mercury of Nature (for the Spirit of GOD moveth not but upon the Face of the water)** is the Earth. The Wind or Air carried in its Belly **as one of the links in the chain, that link superior things to them that are below.**

4. This is the Father **original and fountain** of all perfection, **and all the secret and miraculous things done in the world;** Whose force is then perfect and complete **to perform those Miracles, and many more** when it is turned into Earth; **that is from a volatile and unfixed thing as it was both before and in the preparation, to a most fixed Earth, but quintessential, wherein all the virtues are both concentred and doubled, nay infinitely increased. To which purpose** Thou shalt separate the Earth from the Fire, **for they being united, and the subject being but one thing (like Adam and Eve before their separation, or Plato's Hermaphrodite, a man and a woman joined together back to back) could not generate or beget, till all parts be separated, and purged;** and the subtle or fine aethereal from the thick or gross, **sweetly and with much leisure all haste being from Hell, and with a greate deal of wit, judgment and discretion: for to every thing there is an appointed time, and for the production of all animals, vegetables and minerals, the measure of the Igne (fire) is measured, 2. Edras 4, 37. And therefore is requisite both patience to persevere and expect the appointed time, and wit or judgment to find, and order the fire.** It ascendeth from Earth to Heaven, and descendeth from Heaven to Earth, **even as the rain, which in like manner is often cohobated upon the earth; and one part of it is by the appointment of wisdom fixed into earth, whilst another part of earth is attenuated and dissolved; this being the perpetual motion of wisdom itself : and by this means it acquireth the virtue and power of all things above, the subtilty, purity, penetrative activity of fire, light, heaven and things below, the fluidness, fixedness and**

capableness of all influences, which the lower elements of Earth and Water have. So shalt thou have the glory of the whole world which consisteth in long life, health, youth, riches, wisdom and virtue, Therefore shall all obscurity fly from thee the obscurity and darkness of the body, its distemper and sickness; of the Soul and Mind, that which ariseth from these ignorances which is cured not in the branch only but in the root, when we have put our light in a clear glass. This is the most strong strength of all strength, the mightiest expression of all the power strength and efficacy of nature which can be in sublunary things, for it will overcome any subtle thing, as metals in Mercury, and the spirit of the bodies; which though they be thin it will be congealed, and though they be volatile, it will fix: and likewise in living weight, there is no disease so spiritual but it will root it out: and every hard thing it will pierce as well in compact metals with whom it will join inseparably, as in diseases that affect the solidest part of bodies. Thus was the World created: Therefore do the philosophers call their Stone, the little world made of the same Chaos, and after the same manner that the great one was. From whence will be wonderful adaptations, or fittings of Agents and Patients, and by that means strange productions in all the kingdoms of Nature, animal, vegetable and mineral : and the manner of them is this, which is showed and set down before, and the method of operation the same: Therefore am I called Hermes Trismegistus or the thrice greatest Mercury, having the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world, and endowed with the knowledge of the Body, Soul and Spirit, whereof all things consist, and of all things that are in the three kingdoms of Nature. Thus endeth that which I have spoken of the operation of the Sun: for whatsoever is made or done in all sublunary matters, is done only by the power of the Sun, of whom the Psalmist saith the Almighty hath placed his Tabernacle, it being the Fountain of all natural heat or Nature itself in the Creatures, which is nothing but the finger or ordinate power of the Almighty; And the finger or power of God, is God himself, to whom is due all that, and infinitely more, than the creatures can possibly ascribe unto him.

A Commentary on the Emerald Tablet

This 13 stanza verse may be, to those who understand it, one of the most profound examples of wordmanship ever recorded. To this writer, these words hold within their scope the essence of all scripture, myth, and spiritual metaphor.

The following interpretation of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes is offered by this writer who has spent many years contemplating, and proving, its content. My intent is only to aid those whose inner being responds to the tablet's song. Please understand that there are as many interpretations as there are interpreters, but there is only one Tablet. Did Hermes write it? Was there such a person, after all? We cannot be sure, nevertheless, the words are before us and they resonate with the truth and power of their meaning.

Each person who is drawn to the Emerald Tablet will have their own ideas and understanding of it, as it should be. Hopefully, some of these ideas will be shared so that everyone may benefit. No one person, in my opinion, can comprehend all that these words contain. - Cohn de Toraeke.

[Back to pieces on Emerald Tablet.](#)

THE EMERALD TABLET OF HERMES

I. I SPEAK NOT FICTION, BUT WHAT IS CERTAIN AND MOST TRUE.

II. WHAT IS BELOW IS LIKE THAT WHICH IS ABOVE, AND THAT WHICH IS ABOVE IS

LIKE THAT WHICH IS BELOW FOR PERFORMING THE MIRACLE OF ONE THING.

III. AND AS ALL THINGS ARE PRODUCED FROM ONE, BY THE MEDIATION OF ONE, SO ALL THINGS ARE PRODUCED FROM THIS ONE THING BY ADAPTATION.

IV. ITS FATHER IS THE SUN, ITS MOTHER WAS THE MOON, THE WIND CARRIED IT IN ITS BELLY, ITS NURSE IS THE EARTH.

V. IT IS THE CAUSE OF ALL PERFECTION THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD.

VI. ITS POWER IS PERFECT IF IT BE CHANGED INTO THE EARTH.

VII. SEPARATE THE EARTH FROM THE FIRE, THE SUBTLE FROM THE GROSS, GENTLY, AND WITH JUDGMENT.

VIII. IT ASCENDS FROM THE EARTH TO HEAVEN, AND DESCENDS AGAIN TO EARTH, THUS YOU WILL POSSESS THE GLORY OF THE WHOLE WORLD AND ALL OBSCURITY WILL FLY AWAY.

IX. THIS THING IS THE FORTITUDE OF ALL FORTITUDE, BECAUSE IT OVERCOMES ALL SUBTLE THINGS, AND PENETRATES EVERY SOLID THING.

X. THUS ARE ALL THINGS CREATED.

XI. THENCE PROCEED WONDERFUL ADAPTATIONS WHICH ARE PRODUCED IN THIS WAY.

XII. THEREFORE AM I CALLED HERMES TRISMEGISTUS, POSSESSING THE THREE PARTS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

XIII. WHAT I HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE OPERATIONS OF THE SUN IS COMPLETE.

The EMERALD TABLET OF HERMES - an interpretation.

First: The meaning of the term - HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY.

The word "Hermetic" comes from the name Hermes Trismagistus; the Egyptian God of Wisdom who was blessed with three Magisteries, and who, it is traditionally believed, wrote the Emerald Tablet.

[hermetic] - sealed and impenetrable from the outside.

[philosophy] - from philo(s); Greek/Latin - beloved, or loving

+ sophia; Greek - wisdom. Therefore, Hermetic Philosophy means "The Sealed and Beloved Wisdom."

Hermes' words are simple and eloquent, and yet they encompass the whole Philosophy of the Great Art which includes the practical work of making the plant stone and mineral stone (referred to as The Minor Work and The Major Work, respectively).

Understand that Hermetic Philosophy IS the key. How one makes the stones, according to the sages, is as simple as making bread once the ingredients and processes are understood. They say that when the

seeker understands the NATURE of the stones and their correct PROCESSES they will, with industry and perseverance, easily accomplish the work.

In this Spirit and Light Hermes' words apply to the comprehension of both stones for they are similar in nature, but very different in degree. Above all else, according to the sages, you will succeed in possessing the Stone when you have first succeeded in possessing it, metaphorically, within your heart. This is called, "At-One-ment", which is more commonly pronounced, atonement. Also - isn't it curious that At-One-ment and (S)tonement share the same numerical value of 8?

Hermes, through his words, becomes a metaphor for Creation's process.

1. I SPEAK NOT FICTION, BUT WHAT IS CERTAIN AND MOST TRUE.

"I SPEAK . . ." In the Christian Bible, at the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, it is written, 'In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the Word WAS God.' This implies sound (vibration) as the first cause or affect upon Creation by 'I' (God), the Source of all that is to follow. EveryTHING in the universe, from the incomprehensible, to the most rarefied thought, even black holes, flows from 'I' and carries the essence of 'I' within it, flesh of its flesh, so to speak.

"NOT FICTION, . . ." Fiction is imaginary falsehood. Though a thought may be false within its context, it still exists and has its being in Mind; only its application can be false. Just as there is no fiction in a giant redwood that began from a single seed, there is no fiction in Creation, which began from a single word. The first infinitesimal SOUND of the first Word instantly established infinite MIND.

"BUT WHAT . . ." This inquisition opens the void of the NO-THING like a mother's womb opens to receive her husband's seed. Though there IS only the ONE, the ONE must acknowledge Itself to become itself, and thus the Word becomes two in ONE Mind - positive, and negative, male and female.

"IS CERTAIN . . ." The first stirring of the Word is Potential, undefined yet CERTAIN (Absolute) - 'Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Omnipotent.

". . . AND MOST TRUE." Potential desires expression. Inherent within the dual nature of Mind, which is both male as LIFE, and female as LAW (here, Law implies the principles of universal structure), is WILL, which, in turn, empowers Mind's desire to express itself through CONCEPTION. Their offspring is LOVE or the REALITY of LAWful LIFE, which is the 'MOST TRUE' love. . . . What is more lovable than the TRUTH itself - their Son?

The phonetics of Son and Sun, or Sol and Soul, is not accidental. Life, Law, and Truth are, alchemically speaking, Spirit (Mercury), Body (Salt), Soul (Sulfur), respectively. The TRINITY.

With these first eleven words Hermes has described creation.

II. WHAT IS BELOW IS LIKE THAT WHICH IS ABOVE, AND THAT WHICH IS ABOVE IS LIKE THAT WHICH IS BELOW FOR PERFORMING THE MIRACLE OF ONE THING.

"WHAT IS BELOW IS LIKE THAT WHICH IS ABOVE, . . ." and "AND THAT WHICH IS

ABOVE IS LIKE THAT WHICH IS BELOW . . ." These words bring to mind so many interpretations that it seems redundant to comment upon them. From the Bible - God speaks to Moses, I AM THAT I AM, to the most common contraction - AS ABOVE, SO BELOW.

In essence, for use with alchemical theory and philosophy, my sense is that these words should best be regarded to mean that the universal energies [ABOVE] work through and have their being in their physical counterpart [BELOW], such as a plant, for example.

I define REAL as that which is eternal, and ACTUAL as that which is temporal. Therefore, there is a Real pattern for the plant which represents its eternal idea and, for a period of time, an ACTUALized physical body. Likewise the experiences of the temporal body can exert an influence on the eternal counterpart.

A Stone is made by separating the three essentials, Salt, Sulfur, and Mercury; purifying them, and recombining them. Once done they are empowered exponentially by repeated imbibitions and circulations. The Philosopher's Stone and the Plant Stone, to a lesser degree, are like lenses through which the universal power and perfect intelligence pass. The stone focuses and concentrates the threefold primal energy of the creative Word. That is why it will transmute metal, or flesh, to its level of potency. The more potent the stone, the more profound its affects.

". . . FOR PERFORMING THE MIRACLE OF ONE THING." Transmuting lead to gold, or restoring the sick, or old, to health is unexplainable and implies a divine source for the Stone's goodness. One thing, which represents the ONE in all its forms; One Universe, One Mind, One energy, One power, One intellect, in one object - the Stone. That is a miracle!

III. AND AS ALL THINGS ARE PRODUCED FROM ONE, BY THE MEDIATION OF ONE, SO ALL THINGS ARE PRODUCED FROM THIS ONE THING BY ADAPTATION.

"AND AS ALL THINGS ARE PRODUCED FROM ONE . . ." Again, this would first imply the ONE original Source of All. Secondly, since we know that the Above has a Below, and visa-versa, it also implies a physical counterpart which is the Philosophical Mercury, the Prima Materia. Also known as the Great Sea from which springs all life, the Mother of Christ - Mary; from mare - the sea (as in, mariner, etc.). It is written that all things in the objective universe can be absorbed and dissolved in the Mercury of the Wise - without a trace. So, this One thing as a concept is represented by THE Mercury - not metallic mercury.

"BY THE MEDIATION OF ONE . . .," The mediator in alchemical philosophy is universal MIND, or SOUL, of which there can only be one. In alchemy this is represented by the philosophical Sulfur [Soul Fire] objectified in our solar system by our sun. Our planet and everything in it and on it came from the differentiation of Solar material [particles].

". . . SO ALL THINGS ARE PRODUCED FROM THIS ONE THING BY ADAPTATION." Solar particles may be looked upon as SEED ideas. From this seed grows all things by adaptation. Just as a seed adapts to its environment to grow and fulfill itself, so does a universe, a planet, or a person grow from a seed.

IV. ITS FATHER IS THE SUN, ITS MOTHER WAS THE MOON, THE WIND CARRIED IT IN ITS BELLY, ITS NURSE IS THE EARTH.

"ITS FATHER IS THE SUN . . ." The sun is radical; it radiates and is masculine.

"ITS MOTHER WAS THE MOON, . . ." The moon is magnetic; it concentrates and is feminine.

Here, the past tense of "WAS" is used. In my opinion this means that the elemental or nuclear universe was created once only and is constantly renewing and evolving by adaptation, though stimulated by a constant barrage of NEW solar energy - therefore the sun IS its Father. To expand this concept; the infinity of suns [stars] provides the universe with constant renewal and expansion. Black holes [negative polarity] contract the universe. The universe breathes - exhaling / inhaling. In some teachings this is referred to as the Divine Breath.

These are metaphors for the duality of the objective universe. The pure spiritual energy streaming from our sun has to have some kind of body - a photon. This photon carries within itself its identity, or its soul, and as a seed represents that which is above the sun [nonphysical]. It will contribute its seminal virtue as it joins other seminal particles [protons] to coagulate within the concentrating negative field of electrons [the MOON factor], and form a more complex particle like an atom. The atoms make elements which make molecules, etc. - all by Adaptation.

"THE WIND CARRIED IT IN ITS BELLY, . . ." This, I think, is literally true. The solar wind showers our high atmosphere with photons and other solar particles [solar seeds] which are carried about the sky in the wind and moisture [when isolated from rainwater it is called Gur, or Ghur]. The seed is then brought to earth via thunder storms and charged with electrical energy. That's why the spring rain and the morning dew are so valued by alchemists; they contain electrically charged solar seed.

One of my early mentors explained that the seven color rays of the sun correspond to the seven tones of the musical scale, and they also correspond to the seven primary particles, or seeds, of material existence, at least on Earth. He taught that from these seven distinct particles, which contain the whole universe in potential, every element on the periodic scale was, by adaptation, created.

". . . ITS NURSE IS THE EARTH." Adaptive growth occurs as the earth's rich and infinite array of elements is made available to the solar seed. Whether in the mineral, vegetable, or animal kingdom, the seed will find fertile options with which and in which to evolve. Realize that we are talking about the REAL seed not a seed kernel, like a grain of rice. One cannot see the seed, only its tangible body, the kernel.

Each of the 7 primary solar seeds [masculine] has, within the elemental mix of the earth, a crystalline counterpart that is feminine [negative]. They are alive in nature and they attract one another. The Marriage spoken of by the adepts, when they describe the making of Stones, is the purified union of these two, male and female, which are the volatile and fixed aspects of the same element. While in the marriage chamber, the philosophical vessel, the volatile becomes fixed and the fixed becomes volatile. Eventually, after they have consummated their union by consuming one another their SON (Stone) is born.

V. IT IS THE CAUSE OF ALL PERFECTION THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD.

Here, I think, is meant perfection as nature has it rather than as man would design it. The universe is slightly out of balance, though it perpetually tends toward balance. If it were in balance there would be no movement and no time, no sense of evolution or growth. However, what we experience as perfection is a form of calm balance within the fray of nature's arena. Perhaps our words joy, bliss, ecstasy, or contentment, may convey this type of perfection.

Another kind of perfection is objective perfection. Gold we say is a perfect metal, a diamond a perfect gem, and so forth. Something without flaws. We also say a strong, healthy, person, is perfectly fit, and our natural scientists are always looking for the perfect specimen. Man can recognize and facilitate what in nature he accepts as perfection, but man cannot create perfection. Only God is perfect.

To the alchemists, perfection was represented by the epitome of the world's virtue, which they thought was the universe's virtue as well - the concentration and empowerment of the Prima Materia - the TRUE Philosophical Mercury. To them, everything that had reached the zenith of its potential had arrived there by virtue of the Mercury and thus contained it, yet some natural objects contained more than others - i.e., the metals.

VI. ITS POWER IS PERFECT IF IT BE CHANGED INTO THE EARTH.

Understand that in nature the Mercury is volatile, vaporous, and both male and female; the Spirit contains the Sulfur within it. Only after it is isolated, separated, and purified, are the male and female separately discernible.

Through art they are reunited in their perfection with their proper body [Salt] and, once empowered exponentially by many circulations, enabled to penetrate all matter and raise its vibrations to its own highest potential of perfection, like the transmutation of illness to health. Think of the Stone as a super conductor of the virtues of the sun.

The sun's light and virtue passes THROUGH the stone rather than from it. Metaphorically speaking, Jesus (God's Son) felt virtue, which he always acknowledged came from his Father in heaven, go out of him when a sick woman touched the hem of his robe (his outer garment, which is analogous to the physical Earth [as the Stone] as stated in stanza VI).

Years ago I had come down with the flu. I had all the symptoms, fever, chills, dry mouth, and headache. My teacher put two drops of his preparation under my tongue and had me lie down. In two hours I was fine, even energetic. What was it? I don't know. Perhaps a charged Antamomial Theriac? By charged I mean it either contained the PM (Philosophical Mercury), or the mixture had been distilled out of a host menstruum of PM. It tasted extremely floral yet metallic.

VII. SEPARATE THE EARTH FROM THE FIRE, THE SUBTLE FROM THE GROSS, GENTLY, AND WITH JUDGMENT.

"SEPARATE THE EARTH FROM THE FIRE, . . ." Here, Hermes talks about the process, but he's also implying that nature performs the same operation - As Above, So Below. Think of the Universe as analogous to water's characteristics. You have vapor [moisture], humidity [steam], fluid [water], solid [ice]; and before they combined to make water you had the elements hydrogen and oxygen, which are common to all its forms. Also common to all its forms is FIRE which is put there by the sun.

When you separate the water from most of its fire you have ice - its CRYSTAL formation. Likewise, even one of the most dense element known, osmium, has a melting point of 2700o C as it becomes fluid, and a boiling point of more than 5300o C as it becomes a vapor. Everything is bound by four natural qualities; warm, cold, dry, wet, and four natural states; fire, air, water, earth.

Specifically, he indicates here that the Mercury [fire] - and Sulfur - is to be separated from its body or vehicle, perhaps a plant or metallic ore.

"THE SUBTLE FROM THE GROSS, . . ." In the case of a plant, the essential oils must be separated from the gross oils. In the case of minerals and metals - the subtle fire is locked up in their crystalline structure which has to be cracked and broken.

"GENTLY, . . ." This is a primary KEY to all alchemical operations. Separation of the subtle parts from the gross parts will usually require an application of some type of externally manipulated heat. If this heat is too violent and too fast it will drive the subtle virtues away; if it is too weak, the subtle virtues can never break free. The great secret of alchemical operations is the CONTROL OF THE FIRE!

"AND WITH JUDGMENT." You do not want to destroy the life in the things you work with. Each kingdom has its own comfortable life sustaining range of temperature, even the metals.

For example: To hatch a fertilized chicken egg there must be the right amount of heat for the right amount of time - approximately 110o F. for several days. Too much heat and you have a cooked chick, too little and it cannot germinate and grow. It is the same in the plant and mineral kingdoms. That's why an alchemist knows that a foundry cast metal is dead because the heat required to melt it drove out the spirit - its Mercury. Learning to correctly sense the heat and the character of your fire takes time and practice. Meditation upon the fire does not hurt, either.

VIII. IT ASCENDS FROM THE EARTH TO HEAVEN, AND DESCENDS AGAIN TO EARTH, THUS YOU WILL POSSESS THE GLORY OF THE WHOLE WORLD AND ALL OBSCURITY WILL FLY AWAY.

At this juncture many opinions flourish. What, exactly, ascends and descends? The Mercury? The Sulfur and the Mercury? Nature herself may give a clue.

The sun radiates its energy into earth's ionosphere, stratosphere, and atmosphere, its light penetrates the cloud cover, and eventually reaches the earth's surface. Sun rays penetrate the oceans, rivers, lakes, ponds, and polar ice fields, invigorating, purifying, and sanitizing them all. It interacts with the earth's water in its various states. Water [the Moon factor] is highly magnetic, and crystalline - a liquid crystal, if you will. It is not only the most abundant fluid on the planet, but the most abundant chemical, and probably the least known and understood.

The earth is an organic, multidimensional, fluxing plasma of life forces, magnetic fields, and energy vortexes, all of which are potentially fertile and depend on water. From the arctic poles to the equator the earth's substance constantly moves. Winds, rains, erosion, volcanoes, tornadoes and hurricanes, undersea volcanic action, and tectonic plate movement all bring forth elemental material that intermixes with the Earth's water and is CIRCULATED.

"IT ASCENDS FROM THE EARTH TO HEAVEN, AND DESCENDS AGAIN TO EARTH, . . ." The elementally laden waters evaporate and ascend to the high altitudes where they are charged by the Sun and impregnated under the influence of the Moon before they condense as rain, snow, hail, mist, or dew, and descend back to the earth. They have regained the power to germinate bringing forth new life that will contribute to nature's drama. This process repeats itself perpetually. All life forms cycle through their term from birth to death whether it be for millions of years, or milliseconds. It is a

constant circulation that everyday, little by little, evolves the whole planet.

" . . . THUS YOU WILL POSSESS THE GLORY OF THE WHOLE WORLD . . ." Here Hermes suggests that through personal observation one will understand Nature's processes, which are gloriously straightforward, and come to know her Laws. Knowledge of the Laws of nature are indispensable in guiding one through the maze of pitfalls one encounters in producing the Great Stone. The lack of true knowledge instead of wild and confusing theory is the reason so many try, but so few succeed.

For example, observe a rose: During the night, between midnight and three, especially during the full moon, the blossom will cover its petals with microscopic droplets of its precious oil. As dawn nears the descending dew condenses on the rose petals and bonds with the tiny droplets of rose oil. As the first rays of the sun strike and warm the petals the charged water evaporates and ascends into the air with its little passenger of oil. This scene recurs with every tree, plant, and flower in our gardens and meadows and regenerates our atmosphere with its sweet aroma, to say nothing of the medicinal advantage it lends to one who breaths the morning air [prana?]. This happens over the whole planet each day. It is the natural process of steam distillation.

The dew also carries trace minerals and metals that have been exposed through the natural processes of erosion and other surface disturbance.

". . . AND ALL OBSCURITY WILL FLY AWAY." I, for one, agree with the sages; nature is our best teacher. We should study the relationship between the three kingdoms and focus on understanding natural dynamics. It is plain and simple once the concept begins to formulate and clarify. The books we pour over represent what someone else perceived - and they can keep us blind to our own light.

To quote a sage that I once studied, "You must break free from thinking with your ego and be like a child observing the wondrous domain you call Earth. Open your heart and be like an infant suckling your daily ration of Wisdom from her breast."

The Stones are made by artificially duplicating Nature's processes as long as we follow her Laws. Indeed, there is a place in this work for Astrology, Qabala, and Magic, but true alchemy has no better friend than Nature herself.

Man is an ignorant being; his knowledge is limited, but his ignorance is infinite.< Ram Ashied

IX. THIS THING IS THE FORTITUDE OF ALL FORTITUDE, BECAUSE IT OVERCOMES ALL SUBTLE THINGS, AND PENETRATES EVERY SOLID THING.

On the mental plane, after a stone has been successfully accomplished, a humbling sense of knowing occurs which brings with it understandings of those things pondered in vagueness and obscurity before. It marks a rite of passage that leaves one aware that the accomplishment was not an end of a quest, but rather a preparation for greater responsibility.

"THIS THING IS THE FORTITUDE OF ALL FORTITUDE,..." One's meditations are deeper and more profound. A bit more weight is felt spiritually but this is accompanied with joy and a sense of well being. Yet, one may feel more isolated as one's life changes due to changes in inner values and desires. This can mean changes in relationships and social choices. The FORTITUDE to meet these challenges is in you, nor are you alone because inner dimensional assistance is certainly evident.

On the physical plane the alchemists assure us that the Stones, both Major and Minor, when ingested in very small doses, strengthen the body organically by reinvigorating each system. This is accomplished on an atomic level in each cell by balancing all forces and bringing the cell's body, mind, and spirit into perfect harmony. Fortitude in the physical sense means that one regains the ability to meet all health and personal challenges with full strength.

"...BECAUSE IT OVERCOMES ALL SUBTLE THINGS,..." Diseases are incapable of taking root in the body, the power and virtue of the Stone augments the immune system and overwhelms them. The Philosopher's Stone is, of course, more permanent and more powerful than the plant stone.

Channels are opened as the body rejects its drosses and toxins. The chakras open allowing more vital hormone secretion to occur. The body actually transfigures to a higher state of energy. And the mind opens and expands becoming more psychically sensitive.

"...AND PENETRATES EVERY SOLID THING." On the mental plane this refers to the sages' claim that one can pierce the veil and perceive past and future clearly. One's mental power increases so that one may achieve a certain power and control over the elements, especially the weather.

On the physical, it is claimed by some who write of the virtues of the Philosopher's Stone that they have experienced the renewal of teeth, darkening of hair, renewed sexual potency and desire. Women who have passed menopause conceive and give birth in their fifties and sixties. Tumors and skin blemishes disappear, such as liver spots. Glasses are put away as normal eyesight returns.

In metal transmutation the stone transmutes a metal to its next highest level, tin to copper, copper to silver, silver to gold. According to the story of Bit Nur*, a light emitting crystal called a Billur, made by monastery alchemists, Chakimim, in the Himalayas, transmuted any metal exposed to its brilliant light into the next highest metal, silver to gold, for example. The author stated that the monks told him that their crystal was the TRUE Stone of Hermes.

Are these claims true? Only those who accomplish the glorious Stone will know.

*Paracelsus Research Society, Alchemical Laboratory Bulletins 1960-1972, Page 154.

X. THUS ARE ALL THINGS CREATED.

He speaks here of All THINGS. Creation is a process that is still going on from minute to minute. A constant flow of energy expressing countless forms of objective existence that mirror the unseen. The Stones epitomize that concentrated power that is exercised every moment by Divine Mind. They are artificial, man made, but divinely directed, and yet they transmit the creative power of God.

XI. THENCE PROCEED WONDERFUL ADAPTATIONS WHICH ARE PRODUCED IN THIS WAY.

Once the Stone(s) is in hand, its bearer will be directed from within as to its use - where, when, and how, and for whom. It has been claimed that the stone will make a dead branch flower, a blind person see, a tremor removed from one, palsy from another, and a barren field produce abundantly.

XII. THEREFORE AM I CALLED HERMES TRISMEGISTUS, POSSESSING THE THREE

Fresh and hale all his life long,
Until the predestined time
That cannot be overstepped by any creature.
All this, as I have stated, clearly
Is contained within this figure.
Three separate shields are to be seen,
And on them are eagle, lion, and free star.
And painted in their very midst
Artfully stands an imperial globe.
Heaven and Earth in like manner
Are also placed herein intentionally,
And between the hands outstretched towards each other
Are to be seen the symbols of metals.
And in the circle surrounding the picture
Seven words are to be found inscribed.
Therefore I shall now tell
What each meaneth particularly
And then indicate without hesitation
How it is called by name.
Therein is a secret thing of the Wise
In which is to be found great power.
And how to prepare it will also
Be described in the following:
The three shields together indicate
Sal, Sulphur and Mercurium.
The Sal hath been one Corpus that
Is the very last one in the Art.
The Sulphur henceforth is the soul
Without which the body can do nothing.
Mercurius is the spirit of power,
Holding together both body and soul,
Therefore it is called a medium
Since whatever is made without it hath no stability.
For soul and body could not die
Should spirit also be with them.
And soul and spirit could not be
Unless they had a body to dwell in,
And no power had body or spirit
If the soul did not accompany them.
This is the meaning of the Art:
The body giveth form and constancy,
The soul doth dye and tinge it,
The spirit maketh it fluid and penetrateth it.
And therefore the Art cannot be
In one of these three things alone.
Nor can the greatest secret exist alone:
It must have body, soul, and spirit.
And now what is the fourth,
From which the three originate,
The same names teach thee
And the sevenfold star in the lower shield.

The Lion likewise by its colour and power
Showeth its nature and its property.
In the Eagle yellow and white are manifest.
Mark my words well, for there is need of care:
The imperial orb doth exhibit
The symbol of this highest good.
Heaven and earth, four elements,
Fire, light, and water, are therein.
The two hands do testify with an oath
The right reason and the true knowledge,
And from what roots are derived
All of the metals and many other things.
Now there remain only the seven words,
Hear further what they mean:
If thou dost now understand this well
This knowledge shall nevermore fail thee.
Every word standeth for a city
Each of which hath but one gate.
The first signifieth gold, is intentionally yellow.
The second for fair white silver.
The third, Mercurius, is likewise grey.
The fourth for tin, is heaven-blue.
The fifth for iron, is blood-red.
The sixth for copper, is true green.
The seventh for lead, is black as coal.
Mark what I mean, understand me well:
In these city gates, indeed,
Standeth the whole ground of the Art.
For no one city alone can effect anything,
The others must also be close at hand.
And as soon as the gates are closed
One cannot enter any city.
And if they had no gates
Not one thing could they accomplish.
But if these gates are close together
A ray of light appeareth from seven colors.
Shining very brightly together
Their might is incomparable.
Thou canst not find such wonders on earth,
Wherefore hearken unto further particulars:
Seven letters, and seven words,
Seven cities, and seven gates,
Seven times, and seven metals,
Seven days, and seven ciphers.
Whereby I mean seven herbs
Also seven arts and seven stones.
Therein stands every lasting art.
Well for him who findeth this.
If this be too hard for thee to understand
Here me again in a few other particulars:
Truly I reveal to thee

Very clearly and plainly, without hatred or envy,
How it is named with one word
Vitriol, for him who understandeth it.
If thou wouldst oft figure out
This Cabbalistic way with all diligence,
Seven and fifty in the cipher
Thou findest figured everywhere.
Let not the Work discourage thee,
Understand me rightly, so shalt thou enjoy it.
Besides that, note this fully,
There is a water which doth not make wet.
From it the metals are produced,
It is frozen as hard as ice.
A moistened dust a fuller wind doth raise,
Wherein are all qualities.
If thou dost not understand this,
Then I may not name it for thee otherwise.
Now I will instruct thee
How it should be prepared.
There are seven ways for this art,
If thou neglectest any of them thou workest in vain.
But thou must, before all things else, know
Thou hast to succeed in purification.
And although this be twofold,
Thou art in need of one alone.
The first work is freely done by it
Without any other addition,
Without distilling something in it,
Simply through its putrefication.
From all of its earthliness
Is everything afterwards prepared.
This first way hath two paths,
Happy is he who goeth on the right path.
The first extendeth through the strength of fire,
With and in itself, note this well.
The second extendeth further
Until one cometh to treasure and to gain.
This is done by dissolving,
And again by saturating, I inform you:
This must be undertaken first of all,
So comest thou to the end of the fine art.
After the whole purification hath been completed
It will be prepared and boiled in the sun
Or in the warm dung of its time,
Which extendeth itself very far
Until it becometh constant and perfect,
And the treasure of the Wise is in it.
The other ways are very subtle
And many mighty one fail therein,
For here is the purpose of the distillation
And the sublimation of the Wise Men.

The separation of the four elements

Is also called by the Wise Men

Air, water, and rectified fire.

The earth on the ground hath misled many,

Having been deemed a worthless thing,

Although all the power lieth in it.

Some know not how to separate it

From their Cortibus, therefore they fail.

It was cast behind the door,

But the Wise Man taketh it up again,

Purifieth it snow-white and clear:

This is the ground, I say in truth.

But if thou dost wish to separate it,

Note that it is of no little importance,

For if they are not prepared

Then you are in error, that I swear.

Therefore thou must also have some vinegar

Which is revealed to the Wise Men,

Wherewith thou wilt effect the separation,

So that nothing earthly remaineth in it any mo

Till body and soul have to be separated,

Otherwise called fire and earth

And after they are thus purified,

And thereupon followeth the mixture, observe!

And so it cometh to a wondrous strength,

The finished figures with the unfinished.

And if the fire be likewise rightly controlled,

It will be entirely perfect

In much less time than a year.

Now thou hast the entire way in its length

On which are not more than two paths.

From these one soon wandereth and goeth astray,

Else it all standeth clear and plain.

The one is the water of the Wise Men,

Which is the Mercurius alone.

The other is called a vinegar,

And it is known only to a very few.

And this vinegar doth circle

Away from the philosophical iron.

It is Lord Aes whom it maketh glad.

Therefore they have combined so closely

Many hundred forms and names are given

After each hath chosen it.

One way springeth from the true source,

A few have worked on it for a whole year.

But many through their art and craft

Have shortened so long a space of time.

And quickly is the preparation set free

As Alchemy doth point out.

The preparation alone

Maketh this stone great and glorious.
Although there is but one matter
It lacketh nothing else.
But when it is clarified
Its name hath misled many.
However, I have revealed enough to thee
In many ways, forms, and fashions.
There are many names; I say
Let not thyself be misled from the true way.
In their scriptures the Elders write
That it is a draught, a great poison.
Others call it a snake, a monster,
Which is not costly anywhere.
It is common to all men.
Throughout the world, to rich and also to poor.
It is the property of the metals
Through which they conquer victoriously.
The same is a perfection
And setteth a golden crown upon it.
Now the practice is completed
For him who understandeth it and knoweth the matter.
Only two things more are to be chosen
Which thou wilt find by now
If thou dost follow the right way
And attend carefully to thy work.
The composition is the one
Which the Wise Men kept secret.
The nature of the fire also hath hidden craft;
Therefore its order is another.
With that, one should, not deal too much
Or else all execution is lost.
One cannot be too subtle with it.
As the hen hatcheth out the chick
So also shall it be in the beginning,
And time itself will prove it.
For just as the fire is regulated
Will this treasure itself be produced.
Be industrious, constant, peaceful, and pious,
And also ask God for His help:
If thou dost obtain that, then always remember
The poor and their needs.

Glory of the World

This text is included in the *Musaeum Hermeticum* of 1625, though it was first published in German as *Gloria Mundi sonsten Paradeiss Taffel*, Frankfurt, 1620. Contained in the third part is an explanation

of the Emerald Tablet.

The Emerald Table

It is true, without any error, and it is the sum of truth; that which is above is also that which is below, for the performance of the wonders of a certain one thing, and as all things arise from one Stone, so also they were generated from one common Substance, which includes the four elements created by God. And among other miracles the said Stone is born of the First Matter. The Sun is its Father, the Moon its Mother, the wind bears it in its womb, and it is nursed by the earth. Itself is the Father of the whole earth, and the whole potency thereof. If it be transmuted into earth, then the earth separates from the fire that which is most subtle from that which is hard, operating gently and with great artifice. Then the Stone ascends from earth to heaven, and again descends from heaven to earth, and receives the choicest influences of both heaven and earth. If you can perform this you have the glory of the world, and are able to put to flight all diseases, and to transmute all metals. It overcomes Mercury, which is subtle, and penetrates all hard and solid bodies. Hence it is compared with the world. Hence I am called Hermes, having the three parts of the whole world of philosophy.

Explanation of the Emerald Table of Hermes.

Hermes is right in saying that our Art is true, and has been rightly handed down by the Sages; all doubts concerning it have arisen through false interpretation of the mystic language of the philosophers. But, since they are loth to confess their own ignorance, their readers prefer to say that the words of the Sages are imposture and falsehood. The fault really lies with the ignorant reader, who does not understand the style of the Philosophers. If, in the interpretation of our books, they would suffer themselves to be guided by the teaching of Nature, rather than by their own foolish notions, they would not miss the mark so hopelessly. By the words which follow: "That which is above is also that which is below," he describes the Matter of our Art, which, though *one*, is divided into two things, the volatile water which rises upward, and the earth which lies at the bottom, and becomes fixed. But when the reunion takes place, the body becomes spirit, and the spirit becomes body, the earth is changed into water and becomes volatile, the water is transmuted into body, and becomes fixed. When bodies become spirits, and spirits bodies, your work is finished, for then that which rises upward and that which descends downward become one body. Therefore the Sage says that that which is above is that which is below, meaning that, after having been separated into two substances (from being one substance), they are again joined together into one substance, i.e., an union which can never be dissolved, and possesses such virtue and efficacy that it can do in one moment what the Sun cannot accomplish in a thousand years. And this miracle is wrought by a thing which is despised and rejected by the multitude. Again, the Sage tells us that all things were created, and are still generated, from one first substance and consist of the same elementary material; and in this first substance God has appointed the four elements, which represent a common material into which it might perhaps be possible to resolve all things. Its development is brought about by the distillation of the Sun and Moon. For it is operated upon by the natural heat of the Sun Moon, which stirs up its internal action, and multiplies each thing after its kind, imparting to the substance a specific form. The soul, or nutritive principle, is the earth which receives the rays of the Sun and Moon, and therewith feeds her children as with mother's milk. Thus the Sun is the father, the Moon is the mother, the earth the nurse -- and in this substance is that which we require. He who can take it and prepare it is truly to be envied. It is separated by the Sun and Moon in the form of a vapour, and collected in the place where it is found. When Hermes adds that "the air bears it in its womb, the earth is its nurse, the whole world its Father,"

he means that when the substance of our Stone is dissolved, then the wind bears it in its womb, i.e., the air bears up the substance in the form of water, in which is hid fire, the soul of the Stone, and fire is the Father of the whole world. Thus, the volatile substance rises upward, while that which remains at the bottom, is the "whole world" (seeing that our Art is compared to a "small world "). Hence Hermes calls fire the father of the whole world, because it is the Sun of our Art, and air, Moon, and water ascend from it; the earth is the nurse of the Stone, i.e., when the earth receives the rays of the Sun and Moon, a new body is born, like a new foetus in the mother's womb. The earth receives and digests the light of Sun and Moon, and imparts food to its foetus day by day, till it becomes great and strong, and puts off its blackness and defilement, and is changed to a different colour. This, "child," which is called "our daughter," represents our Stone, which is born anew of the Sun and Moon, as you may easily see, when the spirit, or the water that ascended, is gradually transmuted into the body, and the body is born anew, and grows and increases in size like the foetus in the mother's womb. Thus the Stone is generated from the first substance, which contains the four elements; it is brought forth by two things, the body and the spirit; the wind bears it in its womb, for it carries the Stone upward from earth to heaven, and down again from heaven to earth. Thus the Stone receives increase from above and from below, and is born a second time, just as every other foetus is generated in the maternal womb; as all created things bring forth their young, even so does the air, or wind, bring forth our Stone. When Hermes adds, "Its power, or virtue, is entire, when it is transmuted into earth," he means that when the spirit is transmuted into the body, it receives its full strength and virtue. For as yet the spirit is volatile, and not fixed, or permanent. If it is to be fixed, we must proceed as the baker does in baking bread. We must impart only a little of the spirit to the body at a time, just as the baker only puts a little leaven to his meal, and with it leavens the whole lump. The spirit, which is our leaven, in like fashion transmutes the whole body into its own substance. Therefore the body must be leavened again and again, until the whole lump is thoroughly pervaded with the power of the leaven. In our Art the body leavens the spirit, and transmutes it into one body, and the spirit leavens the body, and transmutes it into one spirit. And the two, when they have become one, receive power to leaven all things, into which they are injected, with their own virtue.

The Sage continues: "If you gently separate the earth from the water, the subtle from the hard, the Stone ascends from earth to heaven, and again descends from heaven to earth, and receives its virtue from above and from below. By this process you obtain the glory and brightness of the whole world. With it you can put to flight poverty, disease, and weariness; for it overcomes the subtle mercury, and penetrates all hard and firm bodies." He means that all who would accomplish this task must separate the moist from the dry, the water from the earth. The water, or fire, being subtle, ascends, while the body is hard, and remains where it is. The separation must be accomplished by gentle heat, i.e., in the temperate bath of the Sages, which acts slowly, and is neither too hot nor too cold. Then the Stone ascends to heaven, and again descends from heaven to earth. The spirit and body are first separated, then again joined together by gentle coction, of a temperature resembling that with which a hen hatches her eggs. Such is the preparation of the substance, which is worth the whole world, whence it is also called a "little world." The possession of the Stone will yield you the greatest delight, and unspeakably precious comfort. It will also set forth to you in a typical form the creation of the world. It will enable you to cast out all disease from the human body, to drive away poverty, and to have a good understanding of the secrets of Nature. The Stone has virtue to transmute mercury into gold and silver, and to penetrate all hard and firm bodies, such as precious stones and metals. You cannot ask a better gift of God than this gift, which is greater than all other gifts. Hence Hermes may justly call himself by the proud title of "Hermes Trismegistus, who holds the three parts of the whole world of wisdom."

Synesius' Epilogue on the Emerald Tablet.

This epilogue to the true book of Synesius is included in *Basil Valentine His Triumphant Chariot of Antimony, with annotations of Theodore Kirkringius. M.D. With The True Book of the Learned Synesius a Greek Abbot taken out of the Emperour's Library, concerning the Philosopher's Stone.* London, 1678.

The Epilogue according to Hermes.

Thus art thou to separate the *earth* from the *fire*, the *gross* from the *subtil* gently, with great Judgment, that is to say, separate the parts that are united to the Furnace, by the dissolution and separation of the parts, as the earth from the fire, the subtile from the gross, &c. that is to say, the more pure substance of the stone, until thou hast got it clean, and free from all spots or filth. And when he saith, *it ascends from the earth up into Heaven and returns again into the earth*, there is no more to be understood by it then the Sublimation of the Bodies. Further, to explain what distillation is, he sayes *the Wind carryes it in its belly*, that is, when the water is distilled by the Alembick, where it first ascends by a wind full of Fume and Vapour, and afterwards returns to the bottom of the Vessel in water again. When he would also express the congelation of the matter, he sayes, *Its force is absolute, if it be turned into earth*, that is to say, be converted by decoction. And to make a general demonstration of all hath been said, he sayes, *It shall receive both the inferior and superior force*, that is to say, that of the Elements, for as much as, if the Medicine receive the force of the lighter parts, that is to say, air and fire, it shall also receive that of the more grave and weighty parts, changing itself into water and earth, to the end, that the Matters being thus perpetually joined together, may have permanence, durance, constancy, and stability. Glory be to God.

Salmon's Commentary on the Emerald Tablet

This commentary is included as Chapter 14 in the section on Hermes 'The Golden Work' in William Salmon's *Medicina Practica*, London 1692. It draws heavily from Hortulanus' commentary.

The Smaragdine Table of Hermes.

Hermes. *This is true, and far distant from a Lie; whatever is below, is like that which is above; and that which is above, is like that which is below: By this are acquired and perfected the Miracles of the One Thing.*

Salmon. That is to say, the truth of this our Art is confirmed by Experience, we know it to be truth by very matter of Fact; and notwithstanding all the Sophisms, and Logomachia of the Schools, there is no Argument can stand against Experience. The Waters of the Cataracts of Heaven above, are like to the Waters below, when the great Fountain of the deep is broken up; and the Waters below, are like to the Waters above. There are two parts in our Stone, a Superior part that ascends up, and an Inferior part which remains beneath; and yet these two parts agree in One. The inferior Part or Earth, is called the Body or Ferment. The superior part or Spirit, is called the Soul or Life, which quickens the Stone, and raises it up: The first must be dissolved, and made Water, like the Superior; and the Superior must be coagulated, and made Earth, like the Lower, that they may be united, and become the Miracle of the

one Thing; then it will be evidently demonstrated, that whatsoever is below, is like that which is above, and contrarywise. Nor do they differ one from another but by Accident, as Corruptible and Incorruptible, Pure and Impure, Heavy and Light, Clear and Opaque, Agent and Patient, Masculine and Feminine, etc. all which are Accidents, not Substances. Heaven or that which is above is Incorruptible, where the pure Elements are made, from a Corruptible matter elevated or lifted up, in the Concavity of which Firmament, the Body or Substance of Luna is Graduated. Hence it is apparent that this our Medicine must resemble Heaven itself, in Activity, Penetrativeness, and Incorruptibility; nor must it work as the Elements in Natural Bodies, which are as it were Dead, and destitute of any Power or Action.

II. Hermes. *Also, as all things were made from One, by the help of One: So all things are made from One thing by Conjunction.*

Salmon. That is, as all things were made or come from One Confused Chaos, by the help of One Omnipotent or Almighty God; so our Stone is born or brought fourth out of one Confused Mass, by the help of one particular Matter or Thing, which contains in it four Elements, Created by the determination of God. Here Hermes points forth the Universal Medicine in imitation of the Worlds Creation; which is performed by one Universal Spirit, and so by a Supernatural Experiment, points forth this Our Natural Work. It is the Opinion of many Philosophers that the Spirit of Natural things, or the Spirit of Nature is the Medium between the Soul and the Body, as being that which makes the absolute and firm Conjunction. But the opinion of some is though the Spirit is said to be the more subtile Substance; yet it can be no more separated from the Soul, than Light from the Sun.

III. Hermes. *The Father thereof is the Sun, and the Mother thereof is the Moon: the Wind carries it in its Belly, and the Nurse thereof is the Earth.*

Salmon. As living Creatures beget their Like or Kind, so Gold generates Gold by the Virtue of Our Stone: The Sun is its Father, that is, Our Philosophical or Living Gold. And as in every natural Generation, there must be a fit and convenient receptacle, with a certain likeness of kind to the Father; so likewise in this Our Artificial Generation, it is requisite that the Sun, or our Living Gold, should have a fit and agreeable Receptacle or Womb, for its Seed or Tincture; and this Our Philosophical or Living Silver, i.e. Mercury, which is the Mother thereof. What Sol and Luna are in the Heavens above, the same are Our Gold and Silver in Our Heavens below. The Universal Masculine Seed is the Sulphur of Nature, the first and most Potent cause of all Generation: And if Sol does Live, it is necessary, as Paracelsus saith, to live in some things, viz. in its own Radical Humidity, and most pure and simple Air, which contemperates the heat thereof by its Humidity. The Wind is the Air, and the Air is the Life, and the Life is the Soul, which quickens the whole Stone. And therefore the Wind, Air, Life and Soul must carry the Stone, viz. bring forth Our Magistry: which being brought forth, it must be nourished by its Nurse, which is the Earth; for The Earth (saith Hermes) is its Nurse. The Wind Carries it in its Belly; by which the Universal, Inferior, and Feminine Seed is dilated through the Air, and joynd to the Universal Superior and Masculine Seed; the Air or Mercury is the Womb wherein the two Seeds are conjoynd. The Air arises from Fire and Water, as the Heaven from Fire and Air. Under the Appellation of Fire, is comprehended the most pure substance of the Earth, ascending with Fire: and under the Name of Air the most pure Substance of Water; The Belly or Womb of Nature, is a most pure Breath or Matter, raised from all the inferior Elements, converted into a Volatility or Air, in which is conceived by the help of Luna, the Universal Seed of the Sun, specificated also by the other Lights or Stars. Hermes will have three Elements, two under the Names of Sol and Luna, the third under the Name of Ventus, the Wind. The Earth is the Nurse of this Birth of the Air, by whose Breasts it is Nourished, whence it Sucks the Mercurial Milk, (that is the more thick substance of the Inferior Water remaining yet in the Earth) by which it grows and increases to its Substance and Perfection, as a Child to the Stature and Strength of a Man.

IV. Hermes. *This is the Mother or Fountain of all Perfection, and its Power is Perfect and Intire, if it be changed into Earth.*

Salmon. As if he should say, this Arcanum which I here shew you is the Original and Fountain of all Arcanums and Mysteries, the secret Treasure of the whole World. But it is not brought to its Perfection till it is changed into Earth; then indeed is its Power perfect and intire: that is, if the Soul of the Stone (of which we have spoken before and which may be called the Wind or Air, which is also the Life, Virtue, Power and Spirit) be converted into Earth, viz. a fixt Substance or Matter; so that the whole Air, Spirit, Life and Soul of the Stone may be conjoynd to its Earth, which is its Nurse, and be all turned into Ferment. As in making of Bread, a little Leaven Ferments and Transmutes, a great deal of Meal or Paste: so also must Our Stone be Fermented, that it may become Ferment to the Eternal Multiplication thereof. That which the Wind does bear in its Belly must be converted into Earth, then is the Work completed; which is done by a long and Unwearied Decoction (not by evaporating, but retaining the Spirits) till it becomes inspissated, and in success of time is dried to a Poudrer or Earth. But the time will be long and tedious, therefore you must attend it with Patience, according to the Matter you work upon. Some things are remote from Perfection, other things more remote, and others most remote, whilst other things are near to Perfection, others neerer, and some things nearest of all. He that knows not these things before he begins his Work, may afterwards deplore his Error, with very great loss.

V. Hermes. *Separate the Earth from the Fire, and the Subtile and Thin from the Gross and Thick; but prudently with long Sufferance, Gentleness and Patience, and Wisdom, and Judgement.*

Salmon. Hetherto he has only discoursed the Theory, he now comes to shew you the Practical Part, shewing first the Purification of the Matter of the Stone. You must do it gently, by little and little, not Violently, but Prudently and Wisely, after a Philosophick manner: By Separating he means Dissolving: for Dissolution is the Separation of parts: Some will have it, that by the Earth here, he means the Lees or Dreggs of the matter, which is to be Separated from the Fire, the Air, and the Water, and the whole Substance of the Stone, that it may become Pure, and free from any Putrefaction or Defiled Matter: and this the Spagyrick Philosophers say is the first Operation or Preparation of the Matter or Parts of their Stone. But some understand hereby, the Separation of the four Elements, and this doubtless is the thing if it be spoken of a Spagyric, and not Vulgar Separation. Under the Appellation of Fire, the two other are understood, viz. Air and Water; for the Fire cannot want or subsist without Air, nor is the Air without Water; for Air is made of Water by the Mediation of the Fire, by which it is forced to Ascend upwards. But as to the Earth, it partly Ascends and is made Volatile, and partly remains fixed below. By separating the Earth from the Fire, some will have it, that he would have the Thick to be separated from the Thin, not the Thin from the Thick, because the Earth is thicker than the Fire. But by separating the subtil from the gross, is to be understood, the subtilizing of the Thick Matter, and Spagyrically to reduce that subtilized Matter into Aether or Spiritual Air. But this most prudently be done which gentleness, long Suffering, Patience, etc. that is according to the Laws of Art, but gently, even with a gentle Heat according to Natural Generation. The Instrument of Nature, and of the Spagyrist's Fire, without which the Work cannot be done. This Fire is either Internal or External. The Internal is proper to the substance or Matter, and Naturally dwells within it, which you must prudently stir up and Excite. The External is either Violent, or Temperated in four several Degrees. The Violent is that with which some things are Calcined, other Sublimed, others (as Metalls) Liquefied or Melted. The Temperate in its several Degrees, imitate or resemble Nature, and are used for Putrefaction, Digestion, and Congelation, or Circulatorily to dissolve and fix. But Various are these kinds of Fire which are to be applied according as the Subject requires, and the prudence of the Artist directs, being continual without interruption from beginning to the End.

VI. Hermes. *It Ascends from the Earth up to Heaven, and descends again from the Heaven to the Earth, and receives the Powers and Efficacy of the Superiors and Inferiors.*

Salmon. Here it to be observed that though Our Stone be divided in the first Operation into four Parts, which are the four Elements, yet as we have already said there is but two principal Parts of it, One which Ascends upwards and is Volatile, and another which remains below, and is fixed, which is called Earth, and ferment which Nourishes and Ferments the whole Stone. But of the unfixed or Volatile part we must have a great quantity, that I may Nourish the purified Matter of the Stone, till it be made to Ascend, is sublimed, and subtilized: then being thus subtilized and made Volatile, it must be incrated with the Oyl, extracted from it in the first Operation, which is called the Water of the Stone, and so often Boyled by Sublimation, till by Virtue of the Fermentation of the Earth exalted with it; the whole Stone does again descend, from the Heaven to the Earth, and remains fixed and flowing; that is, that the Corporeal be made Spiritual by Sublimation, and the Spiritual be made Corporeal by Descension: Here is a Circulatory Distillation admirably declared, and the Construction of a Spagyric Vessel, to the Similitude of Nature. It Ascends from the Earth, i.e. from the inferiour part of the vessel; to Heaven, i.e. the superiour part: The matter generated of Sol, and Luna ascends, i.e. the thick Terrean substance thereof is converted or resolved, into Heaven, viz. into a subtile substance like to Heaven: he demonstrates the Spagyric solution, by what Instrument and Artifice it is done; then he teaches the Fixation, It Descends again to the Earth; as if he should say, after its substance is dissolved and made to Ascend under the Obedience of the Internal Celestial Virtues or Powers, standing there the determined time of Its Maturity, it returns again, or descends, that is to say, the Spirit is made Corporeal, which was before a Body or made from a Body, Spiritual, which is nothing but the Philosophick Riddle. *Fac Fixum Volatile, & rursus Volatile fixum, & totum habebis Magisterium.* And by this means it will obtain the Virtues of the Superior and Inferiour Powers, i.e. the Heavenly and Volatile Power, to penetrate, grow, increase or multiply: and the Earthly Power to give Substance, Corporeity, and Fixity.

VII. Hermes. *In this Work, you acquire to your self the Wealth and Glory of the whole World: Drive therefore from you all Cloudiness or Obscurity, Darkness and Blindness.*

Salmon. Possessing this Stone thus perfected, you possess all the Wealth and Treasures of the World; so that you may live free from Care and Trouble, from Discontent and Fears, from every Sickness and Disease: It is a Remedy for all Diseases both of Body and Mind: It strikes at the root of Infirmities; and destroys that which would destroy or undermine the Health and Prosperity of the Humane Body. This Stone, this Wealth, this Treasure, though it be but like to a Grain of Mustard-seed, yet it grows to be the greatest of all Trees, in whose Branches the Birds of the Air make their Nests, and under whose shadow the Beasts of the Field dwell.

VIII. Hermes. *For the Work increasing or going on in Strength, adds Strength to Strength, forestalling and over-topping all other Fortitudes and Powers; and is able to Subjugate and Conquer all things, whether they be thin and Subtil, or thick and Solid Bodies.*

Salmon. There is no Comparison of the Powers of other Natural things, to the Power of the Stone, for it is able to overcome and master all other Powers: it can convert common Quick Silver into a Congealed substance, and Transmute it into fine Gold or Silver: and it can Penetrate and Peirce through all other hard solid or compact Bodies, and strike them with a never fading Tincture, so firm and fixt, which the Power and Strength of the Strongest and most Violent Fire can never conquer or overcome. This is as much as if he should say, it is the compleat Virtue of total Nature, the Power, Efficacy and Potency of all things, and even (as it were) above Nature, so that it may not improperly be said to be a Work Metaphysical, for that it seems to act above or beyond Nature. It overcomes or conquers all things, that is, it makes all subtil and thin things (as Quicksilver) thick and coagulates them: and on the contrary it

Penetrates all thick and solid things, i.e. It makes every hard Metal whether Perfect or Imperfect (as Sol, Luna, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars and Venus) subtle and thin, and brings them to the greatest Perfection, expelling all the Malign and Dark Spirits possessing them and giving to them Tincture and Fixity, by its Subility and Spirituality.

IX. Hermes. *In this manner was the World made; and hence are all the wonderful Conjunctions or Joynings together of the Matter and Parts thereof, and the Marvellous Effects, when in this way it is done, by which these Wonders are Effectuated.*

Salmon. The Creation of the World he brings as a Prior Example, or Exemplification of the Work of Our Philosophick Stone, for as the World was Created, so is Our Stone composed. As in the beginning the whole World and all that is therein was a Choas or confused Mass, but afterwards by the Virtue Word, Power, or Spirit of the Great Creator, a Separation was made, the Elements were divided and rectified, and the Universal World was produced and brought forth Beautiful and Perfect in Number, Weight and Measure. So also in this our work, we separate the Elements, which we divide and rectifie by many sublimateions, depressions, and percipitations, whereby the perpetual and wonderful conjunction is made, which is the product of the prime matter, and the root of the Golden Kingdom, in which power is produced into Act.

X. Hermes. *And for this Cause I am called Hermes Trismegistus, for that I have the knowledge or understanding of the Philosophy of the three principles of the Universe. My Doctrine or Discourse, which I have here delivered concerning this solar Work, is compleat and perfect.*

Salmon. Hermes Trismegistus signifies the Thrice greatest Hermes, for that he had the Knowledge of the three Principals of the Universe, viz. Salt, Sulphur and Mercury, answering to the Body, Soul, and Spirit; Mineral, Vegetable, and Animal, of which he had the true Knowledge, he knew the way how to separate them, and conjoyn them again, to make the fixt Volatile and the Volatile fixt, to take away Tinctures, and restore better again, all which are contained in Our Philosophick Mercury which is the Womb in which Our Philosophick (which is the true) Gold is Generated. It is said to be perfect, because I. It contains all the Principles. 2. From its never fading Color. 3. Its never perishing Body. It is resembled to a grain of Wheat, which unless it Dies, it brings forth no Fruit; but if it Die, and is Putrefied, passing through Death and Putrefaction or Dissolution, to Life and Heaven, there by perfecting its Nature, it is infinitely profitable. What he has delivered concerning this Matter, viz. of the three Colors, Black, White, and Red; of the three Principles, Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury; of the three Subsistences, Body, Soul, and Spirit; of the three Operations, Volatilization, Tincture, and Fixation; of the three States, Imperfection, Anihilation, and Perfection, he declared to be True and Compleat, and that the Stone thus Generated (existing and being in one only thing, viz. the Philosophick Mercury) by a series of Natural Operations, is Perfect and Intire, wanting nothing.

Hortulanus Commentary on the Emerald Tablet

This famous commentary on the Emerald Tablet is found in a number of books and alchemical collections in Latin. The first published English version was included in Roger Bacon, *The mirror of alchimy*, London 1597.

A briefe Commentarie of Hortulanus the Philosopher, upon the Smaragdine Table of Hermes of Alchimy.

The praier of Hortulanus.

Laude, honour, power and glorie, be given to thee, O Almightye Lorde God, with thy beloved sonne, our Lord Iesus Christ, and the holy Ghost, the comforter. O holy Trinitie, that art the onely one God, perfect man, I give thee thanks that having the knowledge of the transitorie things of this worlde (least I should bee provoked with the pleasures thereof) of thy abundant mercie thou hast taken mee from it. But forsomuch as I have knowne manie deceived in this art, that have not gone the right way, let it please thee, O Lord my God, that by the knowledge which thou hast given me, I may bring my deare friends from error, that when they shal perceive the truth, they may praise thy holy and glorious name, which is blessed for ever. Amen.

The Preface.

I Hortulanus, so called from the Gardens bordering upon the sea coast, wrapped in a Iacobin skinne, unworthy to be called a Disciple of Philosophie, moved with the love of my welbeloved, doo intend to make a true declaration of the words of *Hermes*, the Father of Philosophers, whose words, though that they be dark and obscure, yet have I truly expounded the whole operation and practise of the worke: for the obscuritie of the Philosophers in their speeches, dooth nothing prevaile, where the doctrine of the holy spirit worketh.

Chapter I.

That the Art of Alchimy is true and certaine.

The Philosopher saith. *It is true*, to wit, that the Arte of *Alchimie* is given unto us, *Without leasing*. This hee saith in detestation of them that affirme this Art to bee lying, that is, false. *It is certaine*, that is proved. For whatsoever is proved, is most certaine. *And most true*. For most true golde is ingendred by Art: and he saith most true, in the superlative degree, because the golde ingendred by this Art, excelleth all naturall gold in all proprieties, both medicinall and others.

Chapter II.

That the Stone must be divided into two parts.

Consequentlie, he toucheth the operation of the stone, saying: *That which is beneath, is as that which is above*. And this he sayth, because the stone is divided into two principall parts by Art: Into the superior part, that ascendeth up, and into the inferiour part, which remaineth beneath fixe and cleare: and yet these two parts agree in vertue: and therefore hee sayeth, *That which is above, is like to that which is beneath*. And this division is necessarie, *To perpetuate the myracles of one thing*, to wit, of the Stone: because the inferiour part is the Earth, which is called the Nurse, and Ferment: and the superiour part is the Soule, which quickeneth the whole Stone, and raiseth it up. Wherefore separation made, and coniunction celebrated, manie myracles are effected in the secret worke of nature.

Chapter III.

That the Stone hath in it the foure Elements.

And as *all things have proceeded from one, by the meditation of one*. Heere giveth hee an example, saying: as all things came from one, to wit, a confused Globe, or masse, by meditation, that is the cogitation and creation of one, that is the omnipotent God: *So all things have sprung*, that is, come out *from this one thing* that is, one confused lump, *by Adaptation*, that is by the sole commandement of God, and miracle. So our Stone is borne, and come out of one confused mass, containing in it the foure Elements, which is created of God, and by his sole miracle our stone is borne.

Chapter IV.

That the Stone hath Father and Mother, to wit, the Sunne and Moone.

And as wee see, that one living creature begetteth more living creatures like unto it selfe: so artificially golde engendereth golde, by vertue of multiplication of the foresaid stone. It followeth therefore, the Sunne is his father, that is, Philosophers Gold. And as in everie naturall generation, there must be a fit and convenient receptacle, with a certaine consonancie of similitude to the father: so likewise in this artificiall generation, it is requisite that the Sunne have a fitte and consonaunt receptacle for his seede and tincture: and this is Philosophers silver. And therefore it followes, the Moone is his mother.

Chapter V.

That the coniunction of the parts of the stone is called Conception.

The which two, when they have mutuallie entertained each other in the coniunction of the Stone, the Stone conceiveth in the bellie of the winde: and this is it which afterwarde he sayeth: *The winde carried it in his bellie*. It is plaine, that the winde is the ayre, and the ayre is the life, and the life is the Soule. And I have already spoken of the soule, that it quickneth the whole stone. And so it behoveth, that the wind should carry and recarry the whole stone, and bring forth the masterie: and then it followeth, that it must receive nourishment of his nurce, that is the earth: and therefore the Philosopher saith, *The earth is his Nurse*: because that as the infant without receiving food from his nurse, shuld never come to yeres: so likewise our stone without the firmentation of his earth, should never be brought to effect: which said firmament, is called nourishment. For so it is begotten of one Father, with the coniunction of the Mother. *Things*, that is, sonnes like to the Father, if they want long decoction, shalbe like to the Mother in whitenesse, and retaine the Fathers weight.

Chapter VI.

That the Stone is perfect, if the Soule be fixt in the bodie.

It followeth afterward: *The father of all the Telesme of the whole worlde is here*: that is, in the worke of the stone is a finall way. And note, that the Philosopher calleth the worke, the Father of all the Telesme: that is, of all secret, or of all treasure *Of the whole worlde*: that is, of every stone found in the world, is here. As if he should say, Behold I shew it thee. Afterward the Philosopher saith, *Wilt thou that I teach thee to knowe when the vertue of the Stone is perfect and compleate?* to wit, when it is converted into his earth: and therefore he saith, *His power is entire*, that is, compleate and perfect, *if it be turned into earth*: that is, if the Soule of the stone (whereof wee have made mention before: which Soule may be called the winde or ayre, wherein consisteth the whole life and vertue of the stone) be converted into the earth, to wit of the stone, and fixed: so that the whole substance of the Stone be so with his nurse, to wit earth, that the whole Stone be turned into ferment. As in making of bread, a little leaven nourisheth and fermenteth a great deale of Paste: so will the Philosopher that our stone bee so fermented, that it may bee ferment to the multiplication of the stone.

Chapter VII.

Of the mundification and cleansing of the stone.

Consequently, hee teacheth how the Stone ought to bee multiplied: but first he setteth downe the mundification of the stone, and the separation of the parts: saying, *Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the thinne from the thicke, and that gently and with great discretion*. Gently, that is by little, and little, not violently, but wisely, to witte, in Philosophicall dounge. Thou shalt separate, that is, dissolve: for dissolution is the separation of partes. *The earth from the fire, the thinne from the thicke*: that is, the lees and dreggs, from the fire, the ayre, the water, and the whole substance of the Stone, so that the Stone may remaine most pure without all filth.

Chapter VIII.

That the unfixed part of the Stone should exceed the fixed, and lift it up.

The Stone thus prepared, is made fit for multiplication. And now hee setteth downe his multiplication and easie liquefaction, with a vertue to pierce as well into hard bodies, as soft, saying: *It ascendeth from the earth into heaven, and again it descendeth into the earth.* Here we must diligently note, that although our stone bee divided in the first operation into foure partes, which are the foure Elements: notwithstanding, as wee have already saide, there are two principall parts of it. One which ascendeth upward, and is called unfixed, and an other which remaineth below fixed, which is called earth, or firmament, which nourisheth and firmenteth the whole stone, as we have already said. But of the unfixed part we must have a great quantity, and give it to the stone (which is made most clean without all filth) so often by masterie that the whole stone be caried upward, sublimating & and subtiliating. And this is it which the Philosopher saith: *It ascendeth from the earth into the heaven.*

Chapter IX.

How the volatile Stone may againe be fixed.

After all these things, this stone thus exalted, must be incerated with the Oyle that was extracted from it in the first operation, being called the water of the stone: and so often boyle it by sublimation, till by vertue of the firmentation of the earth exalted with it, the whole stone doo againe descend from heaven into the earth, and remaine fixed and flowing. And this is it which the Philosopher sayth: *It descendeth agayne into the earth, and so receyveth the vertue of the superiours by sublimation, and of the inferiours, by descension:* that is, that which is corporall, is made spirituall by sublimation, and that which is spirituall, is made corporall by descension.

Chapter X.

Of the fruit of the Art, and efficacie of the Stone.

So shalt thou have the glorie of the whole worlde. That is, this stone thus compounded, that shalt possesse the glorie of this world. *Therefore all obscuritie shall flie from thee:* that is, all want and sicknesse, because the stone thus made, cureth everie disease. *Here is the mightie power of all power.* For there is no comparison of other powers of this world, to the power of the stone. *For it shall overcome every subtil thing, and shall pearce through every solide thing.* It shall overcome, that is, by overcoming, it shall convert quick *Mercury*, that is subtile, congealing it: and it shall pearce through other hard, solide, and compact bodies.

Chapter XI.

That this worke imitateth the Creation of the worlde.

He giveth us also an example of the composition of his Stone, saying, *So was the world created.* That is, like as the world was created, so is our stone composed. For in the beginning, the whole world and all that is therein, was a confused Masse or Chaos (as is above saide) but afterward by the workmanship of the soveraigne Creator, this masse was divided into the foure elements, wonderfully separated and rectified, through which separation, divers things were created: so likewise may divers things bee made by ordering our worke, through the separation of the divers elements from divers bodies. *Here shal be wonderfull adaptations,* that is, If thou shalt separate the elements, there shall be admirable compositions, fitte for our worke in the composition of our Stone, by the elements rectified: Whereof, to wit, of which wonderfull things fit for this: *the meanes,* to wit, to proceede by, *is here.*

Chapter XII.

An enigmaticall insinuation what the matter of the Stone shoulde be.

Therefore I am called Hermes Trismegistus. Now that he hath declared the composition of the Stone, he teacheth us after a secret maner, whereof the Stone is made: first naming himselfe, to the ende that his schollers (who should hereafter attaine to this science) might have his name in continuall remembrance: and then hee toucheth the matter saying: *Having three parts of the Philosophie of the whole world:* because that whatsoever is in the worlde, having matter and forme, is compounded of the foure Elements: hence is it, that there are so infinite parts of the world, all which he divideth into three principall partes, Minerall, Vegetable, and Animall: of which jointly, or severally, hee had the true knowledge in the worke of the Sunne: for which cause he saith, *Having three parts of the Philosophie of the whole world,* which parts are contained in one Stone, to wit, Philosophers Mercurie.

Chapter XIII.

Why the Stone is said to be perfect.

For this cause is the Stone saide to be perfect, because it hath in it the nature of Minerals, Vegetables, and Animals: for the stone is three, and one having foure natures, to wit, the foure elements, & three colours, black, white and red. It is also called a graine of corne, which if it die not, remaineth without fruit: but if it doo die (as is above said) when it is ioyned in coniunction, it bringeth forth much fruite, the aforementioned operations being accomplished. Thus curteous reader, if thou know the operation of the Stone, I have told thee the truth: but if thou art ignorant thereof, I have said nothing. *That which I have spoken of the operation of the Sunne is finished:* that is, that which hath beene spoken of the operation of the stone, of the three colours, and foure natures, existing and being in one onely thing, namely in the Philosophers Mercurie, is fulfilled.

Here endeth the Commentarie of Hortulanus, upon the Smaragdine table of Hermes, the father of Philosophers.

Commentary on the Emerald Tablet Of Hermes

By Rawn Clark

The exact origin of the Emerald Tablet (ET) of Hermes lies shrouded in mystery. Opinions vary widely, from the scholarly theory that it originated in the early period of Arabic alchemy, to the speculative fantasy of an Atlantean origin. The original document has not survived and all we are left with are translations of it. Of greatest impact on western thought, have been three 12th century Latin versions. In the past 200 years, several older Arabic translations have been discovered and rendered into English as well.

Some Arabic versions contain lines that claim the ET to be the testament of a person named 'Balinas', who enters a cave and sees Hermes sitting there holding an "emerald" (meaning "green stone", not necessarily that it was specifically an emerald) tablet upon which were written certain words in ancient Syriac. Apparently, Balinas left the cave and subsequently wrote down what he saw engraved upon Hermes' tablet. Whether historically accurate or not, these lines present us with a valuable mythological image: the inner search for meaning.

The Emerald Tablet is the foundation of western Alchemical thought and practice as we know it today. Alchemy is, essentially, the practical application of the Hermetic Philosophy, contrary to the common perception which posits Alchemy as a mere lust for gold.

There are quite a few different translations of the Emerald Tablet available, and I have chosen to use the 12th Century Latin translation from Steele and Singer (1928:p.492). I have however, constantly referred to my library of translations (14 in all) throughout my commentary, as each difference in

wording produces a slightly different interpretation. I have tried to blend the meanings of the many into my comments upon this single version.

THE EMERALD TABLET OF HERMES

- 1) True, without falsehood, certain, most certain.
- 2) What is above is like what is below, and what is below, like that which is above. To make the miracle of the one thing.
- 3) And as all things were made from contemplation of one, so all things were born from one adaptation.
- 4) Its father is the Sun, its mother is the Moon.
- 5) The wind carried it in its womb, the earth breast fed it.
- 6) It is the father of all works of wonder in the world.
- 7) Its power is complete if turned towards earth, it will separate earth from fire, the subtle from the gross.
- 8) With great capacity (Wisdom) it ascends from earth to heaven. Again it descends to earth, and takes back the power of the above and the below.
- 9) Thus you will receive the glory of the distinctiveness of the world. All obscurity will flee from you.
- 10) This is the whole most strong strength of all strength, for it overcomes all subtle things, and penetrates all solid things.
- 11) Thus was the world created.
- 12) From this comes marvelous adaptations of which this is the procedure.
- 13) Therefore I am called Hermes Thrice-Crowned because I have three parts of the Wisdom of the whole world.
- 14) And complete is what I had to say about the work of the Sun.

Commentary

1) TRUE, WITHOUT FALSEHOOD, CERTAIN, MOST CERTAIN.

The Emerald Tablet (ET) begins by stating that its words are universally true. There are many, many levels of Truth, and the ET here specifies that its words apply on all of these levels. In this way, the ET gives us a key by which to test our understanding of its words...if at any level of our experience, these words do not ring true, then our understanding of them must needs be broadened.

2) WHAT IS ABOVE IS LIKE WHAT IS BELOW, AND WHAT IS BELOW, LIKE THAT WHICH IS ABOVE. TO MAKE THE MIRACLE OF THE ONE THING.

Here the ET defines The One Thing as an Infinite Continuum. The term above (or any of its variant translations) establishes two concepts: 1) the starting point from which there is an above; and 2) an unlimited upwardness. The term below likewise, establishes: 1) the starting point from which there is a below; and 2) an unlimited downwardness. The statement that ABOVE IS LIKE WHAT IS BELOW, and vice versa, places them on a continuum of likeness. This creates an Infinite Continuum with only one thing clearly defined -- the Center, from which above and below stretch infinitely.

In an Infinite Continuum, Center occurs any and every who, what, when, where and why. There is no point along the Continuum from which above and below do not extend infinitely, and thus, equally. In this sense, the Infinite Continuum is a One Thing.

I call this One Thing: Self. It includes all things and all not-things, and is perhaps the most inclusive and powerful Continuum we can posit. Such a Continuum places us in relation to a bird in a tree, an other person, a substance worked with in an alchemical laboratory, an Archangel, disparate aspects of our personality, a river, to essentially anything we can imagine.

Within the Continuum, there is no such thing as a miracle in that the word implies an occurrence outside of Nature's Laws. The perspective of Hermetics is that what we assume to be miraculous is

merely the interplay of Nature's Laws in ways that we do not comprehend, and not a breaking of those Laws. With that in mind, the ET's statement of the MIRACLE OF THE ONE THING, implies that only at the level of the whole of the Infinite Continuum, is the truly miraculous an actuality; and, that everything we do here within the Continuum, is merely the manipulation of Nature's Laws.

3) AND AS ALL THINGS WERE MADE FROM THE CONTEMPLATION OF ONE, SO ALL THINGS WERE BORN FROM ONE (by) ADAPTATION.

Having established the Infinite Continuum of Self -- The One Thing -- the ET now turns to a discussion of the production of life within this Continuum. The ET posits the ONE as "All Mind" and states that all THINGS arise from the CONTEMPLATION (meditation) of this ONE. Each of these THINGS, within the Continuum of Self, are self-conscious aspects of the One, of the All Mind, mirroring the power of the One, and must follow the methods of the One. So, as the One "makes" THINGS by contemplation, these THINGS must then "birth" what they desire by a similar process -- by adaptation of the process followed by the One.

4) ITS FATHER IS THE SUN, ITS MOTHER IS THE MOON.

5) THE WIND CARRIED IT IN ITS WOMB (belly), THE EARTH BREAST FED (nursed) IT.

6) IT IS THE FATHER OF ALL WORKS OF WONDER IN THE WORLD.

The ET now describes this "adapted" process of creation. As it applies to all things, my discussion here will of necessity, be able to cover only a few aspects of its applicability.

The imagery used is that of the human generative process (Father, Mother, Womb, Breast Fed), which is concurrently correlated to geo-centric symbols (Sun, Moon, Wind/Air, Earth). As an equation, it looks like this:

(Father/Sun + Mother/Moon + Wind/Womb + Earth/Breast)

= equals =

Father of all works of wonder in the world.

Father/Sun:

This is the archetype of Force (as opposed to Form), of light (as opposed to dark), of Fire (as opposed to Water), of thought (as opposed to physical matter). It is half of a polarity -- its existence implying the simultaneous existence of its opposite pole (Mother/Moon).

Force, energy, creative intent, Mind, Yod, whatever level of this archetype one employs, it always seeks expression in Form. In an Hermetic sense, each specific vibration seeks expression through the levels of vibration which are directly below it. So each specific vibration is the expression of that which lies above it, and simultaneously, expresses itself through the levels below it. The creative process outlined in this section of the ET, is a "downward" movement of Force into Form (the "upward" movement of Form into Force, comes later). The sperm of the Father, seeks the egg of the Mother; the rhythm of the Sun (12) is bound to the Earth by the rhythm of the Moon (13); the Individuality expresses itself through the personality; the mental infuses the astral; the light knows itself only when piercing the dark; Chokmah enters Binah.

Mother/Moon:

This is the archetype of in-Form-ing. It is the continuous movement of energy down the scale of vibration, expressing itself through ever denser manifestation. It receives the Sun's rays, changes them, and then reflects them to the Earth; it wraps its Womb around the egg which has captured the seed; it is the first Heh of Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh; Binah transformed by the seed of Chokmah, from her state of Dark Sterile Mother, to that of Bright Fertile Mother.

Creation is primarily a Mother's Work, and this is shown by the next symbols which are aspects of the Mother archetype.

Wind/Womb:

In classical Hermetic treatment of the Elements, Air is seen as the product of Fire and Water, representing a synthesis of the two. Air acts as the intermediary between Fire and Water, and is in effect, produced by their interaction. Each, implies the existence of all three -- they exist only in combination. If we posit Fire as "upwardness", and Water as "downwardness", then Air would be a state of non-movement, a center between the two. Air has no movement of its own accord, yet adopts any movement which is impressed upon it. In the ET's equation, the movement impressed upon the Air is downward. Here the Air is WIND, implying a Force behind it, and stressing that it is an expression of this Force. This expression acts as a WOMB, carrying the creation through gestation to birth. The Air clearly acts here as the agency of a downward Force in its accretion of Form.

In Qabbalistic terminology, this is Tiphareth as the product of Chokmah and Binah; but in its active downward flow towards Malkuth. The Vav of YHVH in its aspect of seeking downward expression through the Heh-final. This is the inclusion of the other planetary influences into our earthly experience by the cycles of Sun and Moon. This is the Individual Self of the "Adept's consciousness", which expresses itself through the personality and physical body.

Earth/Breast Fed:

Fire + Water + Air = Earth, is a common conception of the Element's relationship; but at an archetypal level. Practically and functionally however, Earth is experienced as an individual Element just like Fire, or Water. This is the archetype of Form itself. Whereas Water is the tendency to Form, Earth is the product of this tendency, the final clothing given to Force in its descent into expression. The Earth nourishes the creation, giving it solid and independent form.

This is Tiphareth clothed in Yesod, and manifest in Malkuth. The Heh-final of YHVH. This is the Individual Self, expressed through the personality, within a physical body.

Father of all works of wonder in the world:

These four Elements combined, plus the Fifth -- the conscious awareness of the creator -- result in independent life. The ET symbolizes this here by describing the result as a Father, which brings us back to the beginning of our equation, like the Uroboros, finding its end in its beginning in an endless cycle of self discovery. This nascent Father is said to generate all works of wonder in the world. Note the distinction here between works of wonder and miracle, implying that within the Continuum, the Father obeys the Laws of Nature.

Of paramount importance in the process of creation outlined in the ET is the factor of the creator's conscious awareness. It is the Fifth Element, the Quintessence, and though assumed throughout, it is never directly named. While the expression of the higher through the lower is a natural phenomena, it is only through the addition of conscious awareness that it produces the Father of all works of wonder in the world.

7) ITS POWER IS COMPLETE (integra) IF TURNED TOWARDS EARTH. IT WILL SEPARATE EARTH FROM FIRE, THE SUBTLE FROM THE GROSS.

The product of the ET's downward equation of creation, is a Father; or in an Elemental sense, a Fire. This is an active Force, though clothed in denser layers of vibration than Father/Sun. This Father/Fire is none other than the Quintessence clothed in physical Form -- the power of conscious awareness as expressed through the human being.

The ET states that this power of conscious awareness is *integra* (whole, complete, entire) if *versa fuerit* (turned-toward, cast to) the earth. This means that conscious awareness at the human level (Father/Fire), re-establishes contact (implying then, a participation in the Whole) with its more

archetypal expressor (Father/Sun), when it is turned inward to the Self clothed in densest matter (Earth).

This turning inward upon itself, is what initiates the cycle of return, and brings us to the next equation, that of Force arising from Form.

Whereas the ET's first equation was a downward one of the addition of Form onto Force, this new Father causes an opposite action, one of separation of Force from Form. The power of this introspection is two-fold: A) it will separate Earth from Fire; and B) it will separate the Subtle from the Gross.

With 'A', we see it separating the denser Earth (physical manifestation) from the initial inspiration of its subtler Fire. This is the Quintessence working upon itself, from the ground up, so to speak. Its effectiveness begins from the starting point of its densest manifestation, separating itself from its Self. This is a very apt description of the process of human introspection, or of alchemical putrefaction and fermentation. Here the Fire acts upon the Whole, and separates the Earth from its Fire (itself), consciously shedding its clothing of matter.

With the Fire thus freed from its Earth, the ET leads us to the perspective of 'B', where there is a reaching down, and a separating of the Subtle, this time, from the Gross. 'A'(Fire-minus-Earth) and 'B'(Gross-minus-Subtle) are the same processes, but on different levels and as seen from different perspectives: 'A' from Below, and 'B' from Above. The action of the Father/Fire is one of separation throughout, but in 'A' that action is a movement from Below toward Above; and in 'B', it is an action from Above, reaching down into Below to raise it to Above.

This outlines a double process of separation. First the earth is removed from the Fire, which implies an ascent of conscious awareness, from Earth to that of Fire. This Fire then acts upon itself anew, separating its own essence from its Gross aspects. As a whole, it is a process of the Father/Fire self-consciously releasing its Self from Form -- almost a direct reversal of the initial creative process.

8) WITH GREAT CAPACITY (Wisdom) IT ASCENDS FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN. AGAIN IT DESCENDS TO EARTH, AND TAKES BACK THE POWER OF THE ABOVE AND THE BELOW.

Conscious awareness, now liberated from its clothing of Form, rises upward through the levels of vibration within the Continuum. It does so with **magno ingenio** according to the ET. This term translates roughly as "great (magno) natural ability or talent (ingenio)", and is often posited as Wisdom. It is a very subtle force, one which implies an inherent ability -- a natural aspect of the Self-realized awareness.

This ascent is from Earth, or the clothing of Form (the Below), to Heaven (the Above), or a state of no-Form, and completes the ET's second equation of 'Force from Form'.

The descent of Force into Form, and its subsequent ascent back to a Form-less state, is however a process of a Self-conscious awareness, an awareness that learns throughout the process. The Force that originally descended into Form, is no longer the same, now that it has ascended -- it has changed and been transformed by the experience of Form. It now has

the power, the Wisdom if you will, to descend anew into Form, bringing with it the increased awareness of its nature as a Force. Through its second descent into Form, Force integrates its Above aspects within its Below aspects, and becomes a clear expression of the whole Continuum of Above and Below (again we are brought back to the beginning of our equation, illustrating that the Uroboros is not merely a circle, but a spiral). The result is a Self-aware Force, consciously clothed in Form, intentionally uniting the Above with the Below.

9) THUS YOU WILL RECEIVE THE GLORY OF THE DISTINCTIVENESS (light of Lights) OF THE WORLD. ALL OBSCURITY (darkness) WILL FLEE FROM YOU.

The ET presents a three-fold equation: 1) Force descends into Form in an act of creation (a four-fold process); 2) Force acts upon its in-Formed self, consciously ascending to a Form-less state (a three-fold process); and 3) Self-realized Force descends anew into Form, seeking to consciously express its Self therein (a one-step process). Through this sequence, Force acquires a degree of Self-realization, re-connects with the powers of its true source, and is transformed into a new Father which receives the glory of the world.

Another active Force is produced, this time with the symbols of "light" attributed to it (an important echoing of Father/Sun), and is clearly a higher octave of the Father of all works of wonder in the world (the Father/Fire). This new Father/Light, has the power of Understanding and Wisdom, which illumines all darkness. Notice the progressive shift from a physically active Force, to a mentally active one.

10) THIS IS THE WHOLE MOST STRONG STRENGTH OF ALL STRENGTH, FOR IT OVERCOMES ALL SUBTLE THINGS, AND PENETRATES ALL SOLID THINGS.

Here the ET describes this new Father/Light, the completely Self-realized awareness. It does so in three parts, echoing the three-fold pattern we see throughout.

Part 1: the whole most strong strength of all strength.

This is another triple-superlative, similar to the opening line of true, without falsehood, certain, most certain. Strength implies a usable storehouse of Force and here we see that this Force is applicable on all levels. It is even effective with all other levels of Force, as this Father/Light is the most strong of all the active Forces within the Continuum. Please note the similarity between this aspect of the Father/Light and the initial 4-fold process of creation -- both are downwardly active, initiated from Above upon Below.

Part 2: it overcomes all subtle things.

This is the Father/Light's upward power to surpass any upward-tending thing. The second part of the ET's 3-fold equation, that of the upward movement of Force from Form, is echoed here and attributed as a power of the Father/Light.

Part 3: penetrates all solid things.

This is the Father/Light's downward power to inhabit (express itself through) any denser vibration of matter. The active Force represented here is equivalent to the third part of the ET's equation, that of the conscious re-descent of Force into Form.

Father/Light, the product of the ET's three-fold equation, mirrors the attributes of the One Thing, the whole of the Infinite Continuum. It appears capable of an equal creativity, but only *within* the Continuum -- an octave lower than the Miracle of the One Thing -- an expression of it.

This, of course, implies an infinite, cyclic process of continual re-creation, wherein this Father/Light becomes the Creatrix to a new generation of Father/Light, and so on.

11) THUS WAS THE WORLD CREATED.

This is a very deep statement. The Divine Pymander (Librum 1:Corpus Hermeticum) describes a similar sequential, cyclic process of Force descending into Form, becoming self-aware and then creative anew, followed by another descent further into Form. The eventual result is "the world". This is also seen in Qabalah as the Kethric Light descends into Malkuth, and becomes creative anew at each step of the way.

This says something very important about the world around us. It says that everything is alive. Every thing, every person, animal, tree, rock, drop of water, pile of dung, everything, is alive and is the

product of the One Thing. Each thing has the power of the Father/Light tucked away inside of it...no matter at what level of manifestation we look, this is true, without falsehood, certain, most certain.

12) FROM THIS COMES MARVELOUS ADAPTATIONS OF WHICH THIS IS THE PROCEDURE.

The this from which come marvelous adaptations, is the world. Here we see into the heart of Alchemy as the ET states that every natural thing has the Father/Light within it, and each thing is therefore the seed of its future self. It is at the level of marvelous adaptations that we humans intervene, for we must, as physical beings, work with the substance of the world. We work *within* the Continuum, mirroring the powers of the One Thing, performing marvelous adaptations as opposed to the miracle of the One Thing.

Conscious awareness within a physical body, is an example of Force within Form, of the Above inhabiting the Below. This is what we have to work with -- this is the world upon which we turn our Fire, our Father/Light, and self-craft our future selves. What has preceded this point in the ET, has been a description of the natural processes of the formation of our prima materia -- the world. Only now do we come to the procedure by which we create our marvelous adaptations (the Stone), and this is revealed in the two closing lines:

13) THEREFORE I AM CALLED HERMES THRICE-CROWNED, BECAUSE I HAVE THREE PARTS OF THE WISDOM OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

14) AND COMPLETE IS WHAT I HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE WORK OF THE SUN.

These lines break down to three sections in echo of the overall three-fold nature of the ET:

A) Therefore I am called Hermes Thrice-Crowned --

Therefore implies a sense of consequence, and I am called implies a second-hand knowing. This is the initial bringing of Force into Form...the novice studying, praying and experimenting...the Father/Light turning upon itself with its Fire, in cyclic adaptation of the process of the One Thing...the seed rotting in the earth, dynamizing the power which will inevitably spring forth.

Hermes Thrice-Crowned is a very potent and broad symbol; one which I cannot do justice in the space of this short commentary. Briefly, it is a symbol of the Three-In-One, an image of thesis, synthesis and antithesis combined. It is Sun and Moon, and every thing that lies between these two archetypes. More to the point in this context, is that it represents the power that Center has within an Infinite Continuum -- it can occur any where and/or every where, and is in effect a mobile, self-directed agent of the Whole. That Hermes is Thrice-Crowned, is an indication that this power is active on the three levels of physical, astral and mental (Sal, Sulphur and Mercury). Section 'A)' clearly mirrors the first part of the ET's basic equation: the creative descent of Force into Form, the inevitable, natural result of which is the Father/Fire who initiates the subsequent ascent:

B) because I have (the) three parts of the Wisdom of the Whole World. --

Here there is a sense of personal knowing, of I have, indicating individual experience. The actual possession of the three Fathers is implied by the term Wisdom, the Supernal Fire. And here we also see that they are powerful *within* the Whole Continuum. This represents the achievement of the second part of the ET's equation, that of the ascent of Force from Form. There is also an indication that this process is to be accomplished three times (mentally, astrally and physically). Please note how this Wisdom of the Whole World is a slightly different expression of the Father of all works of wonder in the world (which I've designated with the term Father/Fire).

C) And complete is what I had to say about the Work of the Sun. --

As in part three of the ET's equation, the procedure of marvelous adaptations is made complete, whole,

entire (an echo of "integra") by the conscious re-descent of Force into Form. Here this is symbolized by the phrase what I had to say, which implies a past-tense, intentional expression of an idea (Force) through words (Form -- remember now, this was supposedly inscribed upon green stone!).

Work of the Sun is another broad symbol. In short, it points here to the fact that this is an active process *within* the Continuum. The Sun-Tiphareth connection points to this being a Yetziratic, or creative, process, carried out by the Individual Self. In a Qabbalistic sense, this constitutes a metallic Work, specifically that of gold. It is furthermore Mercurial, in that it is predominantly Fire mixed with Air (Helios). The Sun also implies a specific rhythm, symbolically uniting the 4-fold Elements and the 3-fold Principles in its journey through the 12-fold zodiac. This 3-fold procedure of marvelous adaptations is very similar to the ET's archetypal equation; yet has distinct differences, occurring as it does, on a lower octave *within* the Continuum. And so the Emerald Tablet of Hermes ends. "Integra" by virtue of its having finished with the decent of its essential Force into the Form of instructions for our enlightenment.

Epilogue

The ET outlines an essential three-part equation:

- 1) The creative descent of Force into Form (a 4-step process).
- 2) The ascent of Force from Form, in a conscious act of Self-realization (a 3-step process).
- 3) The re-descent of Self-aware Force into Form (a 1-step process).

In the first part of the equation, the Father/Sun acts as the initial agent of the One Thing, producing the Father of all works of wonder in the world, or the Father/Fire, as I have designated it here. The Father/Fire is the active agent of the second part of the equation, and produces the Father/Light who re-descends in the third and final part.

This equation cycles three times throughout the ET. In the first cycle, the One Thing produces the initial Father/Light; the second cycle is that of the Father/Light, acting upon itself, producing the world; and the third cycle is represented by human action, those marvelous adaptations performed upon the prima materia of the world.

These are just a few of my observations of the meaning contained within the Emerald Tablet. It is one of the "root texts" of humanity...a bit of archetypal poetic symbolism, which presents a different glimmer of Wisdom to each who approaches it, each time it is approached. Over the years that I've studied the ET, meditating upon it and experimenting with its precepts, I've come to see it as a brilliant beacon of Wisdom's light...so different from my first impression of it as something so dense I'd never penetrate its enigma.

I pray that my commentary inspires you to consider the ET in your own way, pulling from it your own portion of Wisdom.

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See also:

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