

THE TWO MARRIAGES IN ALCHEMY

by Emmanuel LE BOUTER

9, de Chatou Street, 78800 Houilles, France

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to try to shed some light on an aspect of the alchemical work, which at first seems very complex: the concept of the two marriages. A personal definition of the most important terms in alchemy, which are necessary to understand the article, is first given. Then, the two alchemical marriages are covered in a systematical manner, putting in parallel the notions of laboratory and oratory.

Les Deux Mariages en Alchimie

Emmanuel Le Bouter

Abstrait

Le but de cet article est d'essayer d'éclaircir un point de l'œuvre alchimique assez complexe de prime abord : le concept des deux mariages. Une définition personnelle des termes les plus importants en alchimie et nécessaires à la bonne compréhension de l'article est tout d'abord fournie. Puis les deux mariages alchimiques sont traités de manière systématique en mettant en parallèle les notions de laboratoire et d'oratoire.

Las Dos Bodas en la Alquimia

Emmanuel Le Bouter

Extracto

El objeto de este artículo es el de tratar de aclarar un punto de la obra alquímica, el cual a primera vista, parece ser muy complejo: el concepto de dos bodas. Primeramente se da una definición personal de los más importantes términos en la alquimia, lo cual es necesario para poder entender el artículo. Después en forma sistemática se tratan las dos bodas alquímicas, exponiendo en paralelo las nociones del laboratorio y de la oratoria.

As Duas Uniões em Alquimia

Emmanuel Le Bouter

Sumário

O objetivo deste artigo é tentar esclarecer um ponto sobre um aspecto no trabalho alquímico, que no início parece muito complexo: o conceito das duas uniões. Uma definição pessoal dos termos mais importantes em alquimia, que são necessários para compreender o artigo, é fornecida em primeiro lugar. Depois, as duas uniões alquímicas são cobertas em uma maneira sistemática, pondo em paralelo as noções de laboratório e oratório.

Die Zwei Hochzeiten in der Alchemie

Emmanuel Le Bouter

Zusammenfassung

Die Absicht dieses Artikels ist die Erläuterung eines Aspekts der Alchemie, dass auf den ersten Blick sehr kompliziert erscheint: Der Begriff der zwei Hochzeiten. Am Anfang ist eine persönliche Definition der wichtigsten Begriffe der Alchemie gegeben die zum Verstehen des Artikels notwendig sind. Dann sind die zwei alchemischen Hochzeiten auf systematische Weise behandelt, wobei die Ideen von Labor und Redekunst parallel gestellt sind.

Introduction

Here is what Jean D'Espagnet says in paragraph 58 of his book, *Hermetic Arcanum: the secret work of the hermetic philosophy*, summarizing the two alchemical marriages "Recipe then the Winged Virgin very well washed and cleansed, impregnated by the spiritual seed of the first male, and fecundated in the permanent glory of her untouched virginity, she will be discovered by her cheeks dyed with a blushing colour; join her to the second, by whose seed she shall conceive again and shall in time bring forth a reverend off-spring of double sex, from whence an immortal Race of most potent Kings shall gloriously arise."

After having defined some alchemical terms, we will move on to this notion from two points of view: the laboratory and the oratory. The citations all come from the book *Hermetic Arcanum: the secret work of the hermetic philosophy* by Jean D'Espagnet. Some of the definitions are based on the mytho-hermetic dictionary of Don Antoine-Joseph Pernety.

1. Used Terms

To begin, let us clarify the meaning of some alchemical terms. In alchemy, there are five principal protagonists:

1.1. *Prima Materia*

The Prima Materia is the first unknown of the Magister.

The first work consists in distinguishing the Prima Materia from the Materia Prima. In fact, even if linguistically these two terms seem to be synonymous, this is not the case. The Prima Materia (primary matter) is what was used by The One for creation. It is the Waters of Genesis. These Waters are the Mercury principle at its highest degree of purity and are therefore entirely spiritual. It is the prelude to the generation of Chaos, which is the source of the creation of matter.

We can therefore understand the alchemist's view of the World, which stipulates that Spirit is in all things. In fact, Spirit is associated to the Mercury principle. The Mercury principle is at the origin of chaos, which is at the origin of all matter. Thus, the Mercury principle is present in all things. Basically, we can say that the Materia Prima, the spiritual Mercury principle, Spirit, is contained in all things and is the purest part. It is somehow their Divinity.

It is this Spirit seed that the alchemists try to extract and exalt from their work matter. Above being as Below, they attract each other. Manifesting this Spirit by extracting it from matter then permits to attract the universal Spirit to one self. The microcosm calls the macrocosm.

As for the Prima Materia, it is the basic matter on which the alchemist will work. As opposed to the Materia Prima, it is not pure, and it is physical, material. It is therefore necessary to purify it in order to extract the Spirit from it and to make it manifest.

The Prima Materia is composed of three principles:

- The mercury principle, which is the volatile, feminine, passive part.
- The sulfur principle, which is the fixed, masculine, active part.
- The salt principle, which is the stable, neutral (even slightly masculine), coordinating part.

We can say that the mercury principle, extracted from the Prima Materia during the Great Work, is the material equivalent of spiritual Spirit.

The alchemists agree that mercury alone can be sufficient to realize the Great Work in its entirety. It is true, but the difficulty is even greater in this case, because one must succeed in coagulating, fixing, and stabilizing the mercury principle without using any adjuvant such as the sulfur and salt principles whose qualities are interesting. This manner of proceeding is the prerogative of high level Adepts and necessitates a very high spiritual attainment.

Usually, the sulfur principle fixes the mercury principle, and acts as divine breath (sulfur) on the Waters of Genesis. However, the action of sulfur on mercury is often described by the alchemists as a battle or a stormy marriage. In fact, these two principles being antithetical, it is difficult to harmonize them. Hence comes the role of the salt principle. It calms the ardors of the sulfur principle and opens mercury (reincorporating it, meaning making its nature very close to what it was at the beginning of creation, thus more open and suited to be the cradle of a future creation, taking here the form of a generation). Further, it stabilizes the reactions by catching the overflow of energy before restituting it later to the work, when the two protagonists have calmed.

We can take men and women as comparison. They are so different in nature (while being complementary) that they have difficulties getting along. But when a mediator is present (but not any mediator, there is a reason why the salt principle is associated with Love), that mediator being Love, both can only make one and produce a child.

It is the same thing in alchemy. The marriage of the sulfur and mercury principles, via the salt principle, gives birth to the kinglet, the androgyne, the royal child.

Noticing that the Spirit we are looking for is contained in all things, it seems logical to say that any matter can serve as a basis for alchemical work. It is true that some types of matter are better suited than others. Since the advent of alchemy, many types of matter

have been used to accomplish the Great Work. There are about thirty, and as many “alchemical paths.”

Some Prima Materia were unveiled, others remain secret. Here is a presentation of the two better-known alchemical paths:

- The path of antimony and iron.

In this path, the sulfur principle is extracted from iron and the mercury principle is extracted from stibium. In fact, stibium and antimony have often been confused. Stibium is a sulfur of antimony. Antimony is a metalloid. The regulus that some authors mention is in fact the antimony metalloid extracted from stibium by a reaction of hot oxydoreduction (called *cupellation*) with iron. The salt principle is composed of two salts: nitre and tartar.

- The path of cinnabar

In this path, the sulfur and the mercury principles are extracted from a mercury mineral (Hg) called cinnabar. The salt principle is potash KOH.

There is a subtlety that this brief description does not reveal. In fact, common mercury and common sulfur contained in natural minerals are not the sulfur and mercury principles of this path. How to make “Our” Cinnabar remains to be discovered. From this Cinnabar are extracted the true sulfur and mercury principles that will serve to the work. They are then no longer the same elements that have allowed us to make our cinnabar. We can therefore say that the designation “path of cinnabar” is a misnomer.

There are several types of matter, more or less known, more or less remarkable, serving to realize the Great Work: water, earth, clay, charcoal, pyrite, marcassite, galena....

Each must find his/her mirror matter, what is personally revealing.

1.2. The Mercury Principle

This principle is the original principle. It is feminine in nature, but androgynous in potential. This principle exists since the beginning. It is the true meaning of Unity. Before the creation of the world, it was alone, All and Nothing at the same time. It was God in potential but not creator. Then, the creative, fixating principle, which is the Sulfur principle, “came out” of it. At the very moment the Sulfur/Mercury duality appeared, Mercury became “definable”: it is the original Waters that Genesis mentions. The Sulfur principle is then the divine breath. As we have said earlier in the paragraph about the Prima Materia, the mercury principle is one of the three components of matter. Its better-known characteristics are volatility, passivity and its association with the feminine principle.

The mercury principle corresponds to Spirit from an inner point of view. We will not discuss here spirit compared to the mental, the intellect or reason. We are referring to Spirit as a part of divinity.

From a material point of view, the mercury principle corresponds to what is volatile in matter. To simplify, we can say that it is not only the liquid part of matter, but also what escapes most quickly from it during the cooking process.

Philosophers are sometimes envious while seeming charitable. In fact, in some paths, the matter obtained after the conjunction of the sulfur and mercury principles can become liquefied. The Adepts are then completely logical when they call this liquid “mercury.” However, it is not the mercury principle.

Play on words is an appreciated sport for alchemists. Further, the word *mercury* is very often used to confuse neophytes. Mercury, mercury of the Sages, philosophical mercury—these are just some of the words that seem to be synonymous but are however far from meaning the same thing.

To simplify things a little, we will explain in a succinct manner the meaning of some terms using the word “mercury.” using terms given in the mytho-hermetic dictionary of Don Pernety:

- Mercury (without adjective): mercury principle
- Dissolving mercury: universal solvent, alkahest
- White mercury of the Sages: White stone obtained after the second phase of the Work
- Red mercury: Philosophers Stone
- Universal Mercury: spiritual mercury principle, Spirit
- Crude Mercury: alkahest, green lion (we say green lion because it is not ripe, it is raw)
- Prepared Mercury: alkahest
- Dusk Mercury: White Stone
- Sterile Mercury: mercury principle from which of all traces of the sulfur principle has been removed
- Crowned mercury: Elixir Vitae
- Sulfured mercury: mercury principle right after its extraction. It still contains sulfur, its “seed.”
- Animated mercury: philosophical mercury. It is in fact the alkahest in which the sulfur principle has been dissolved. It is the step preceding the apparition of the remore, the kingly.
- Double mercury (twice born): philosophical mercury. It is said to be double or twice born because it was subjected to the two marriages.

- Mercury of life: liquid allowing the cold transmutation of metals. It is a byproduct of powder of projection (distinguished philosophers stone in order to act on the metal kingdom).
- Mysterious mercury: mercury of life
- Crystalline mercury: mercury Hg distilled several times and reduced to transparent crystals.
- Vulgar mercury: metal mercury, symbol Hg
- Common mercury: mercury principle not purified

These are general definitions. One should know that authors do not all follow the same path, have the same culture, or even the same religion or beliefs. Therefore, the definitions can change depending on the author. As a result, a rigorous analysis work is always necessary.

1.3. The Sulfur Principle

It is the active, creative, fixating principle. Without it, multiplicity as we know it (and that we mostly know as material form) would not exist. It is masculine in nature. It is regal, in the sense that it “decides” the shape and qualities of each of the elements of multiplicity. It is the second component of matter. Its principal characteristics are its fixedness, its activity, and its association with the masculine principle.

From an inner point of view, the sulfur principle is equivalent to the soul. It is subjected to evolution in humans. It is what must be purified in order to be worthy of merging with Unity, or rather in the part of Unity that each has within under the form of Spirit.

From a material point of view, sulfur can take many shapes. First, color: it is red or white. To relate the sulfur principle with metals, it can be useful to bring forth the distinction between the red and the white metals.

The Ancients have separated in two groups the metals they were familiar with (or better, the metals that they “recognized,” because they knew other metals but considered them as secondary):

- The white metal having a white sulfur, allowing to dye metals into silver if extracted correctly:
 - o Silver
 - o Tin
 - o Lead
- The red metal having a red sulfur, allowing to dye metals into gold if extracted correctly:
 - o Gold

- Iron
- Copper

The metal mercury is apart because it does not contain the sulfur principle (which explains the fact that it is liquid at room temperature).

The sulfur principle can appear as a greasy oil (red for the red metals and white for the white metals) or as crystals (more difficult to obtain).

Alchemists have sometimes used misnomers by calling sulfur any state of matter that is solid. It is therefore necessary to always pay attention to the context in which this term is used.

Here are a few definitions of terms using the word “sulfur,” taken from the mytho-hermetic dictionary:

- Common sulfur or vulgar sulfur: mineral sulfur formula S
- White sulfur: sulfur principle extracted from white metals. It also designates any state of matter that has reached the end of the second phase of the Work and has been fixed.
- Red sulfur: sulfur principle extracted from red metals. It also designates matter that has reached the end of the third phase of the Work and has been fixed. In the cinnabar path, it designates carnate food.
- Living sulfur: same thing as red sulfur
- Vitriol sulfur: sulfur principle extracted from roman vitriol
- Unctuous sulfur: philosophic sulfur obtained during the second phase of Work (to be put in parallel with philosophical mercury)
- Narcotic sulfur: extracted from chemical vitriol
- Ambrosian sulfur: natural vulgar sulfur whose color leans toward red
- Green sulfur: oil of cinnabar. This term is used to designate vegetation matter
- True sulfur of Philosophers: seed of sulfur contained in sulfured, animated or double mercury. It is the seed allowing the birth of the future kinglet.
- Zarnich sulfur: philosophical sulfur
- Occult sulfur: same as above
- Sulfur of nature: same as above

It should be noted that there is also a very particular usage of the term sulfur: black sulfur. Fulcanelli talks about it. It is in fact the coagulation giving a pasty or oily appearance to

the first mercury extracted from the Prima Materia of the royal path (the most powerful and secret path). Some alchemists (especially contemporaries) compare it to antimony. However, antimony (and not stibium) is not black....

1.4. The Salt Principle

It is the stabilizing principle. It allows all that surrounds us to “live” in harmony. It does not have gender; it is androgynous. Salt is associated to the Secret Fire because it is its best representative. Salt is therefore igneous, and has a stabilizing as well as catalyzing action. It brings to evolution while facilitating inertia. This element offers a strange paradox ...

It is the last component of matter. Its mention in alchemical text came late. It is mainly with Paracelsus that we start hearing about it. Its principal actions are catalyzing and harmonizing.

It is common for alchemists to talk about two salts and not only one. It is obvious for example in the path of antimony and iron, where nitre and tartar are both used as salt principle. Nitre carries an inner fire (secret fire contained in matter), which allows to facilitate reactions between the sulfur and mercury principles. Further, it has the propriety of opening metals (if correctly prepared). As for tartar, it is stabilizing.

Nitre is very important in alchemy. However, we must distinguish between nitre and nitres. In fact, nitres are a family including all the salts with acidic characteristics. As for the alkaline salts, they are called alkali (tartar and potash are part of it).

Subsequently, we must differentiate the earthly nitre from the celestial nitre, which stores so much spiritual fire that it is at the limit of matter. An example of celestial nitre is dew salt.

The salt principle is associated to the physical body of human beings. In fact, it is the stabilizer, allowing the soul and Spirit to be incarnated in the same place. The body, like salt, has some quantity of energy within it, allowing it to live and grow. But this salt, which is our body, does not renew this energy; it wears out and dies.

Here are a few definitions of terms using the word “salt”; these terms come from the mytho-hermetic dictionary:

- Salt: salt principle or leafy earth of the Sages in some cases.
- Sal alkali: salt having alkaline characteristics
- Sal Alembrot: alkali salt or White Stone for some authors
- Fusible salt: White Stone multiplied (it is named *fusible* because it melts like wax)
- Salt of metals: salt extracted from metals in a philosophical manner. It is the prelude to the extraction of the universal solvent.

- Salt of India, salt of Hungary, tarbarzet salt, crystalline salt, cappadocius salt, adrom salt: gemma salt
- Red salt: red sulfur
- Sal anderon: nitre
- Sal allocaph: ammoniac salt
- Salt of bitterness: sal alkali
- Salt of Greece: alum
- Indian salt: mercury of the Sages
- Sal panis: common salt, NaCl
- Crazy salt: saltpetre
- Red salt of India: anathon=salt growing as saltpeter on walls
- Salt of the Sages: White Stone
- Infernal salt: nitre
- Solar salt: armoniac salt
- Flowering salt: mercury principle
- Burnt salt: matter of the Black work
- Spiritualized salt: philosophical mercury
- Salt of the earth, glass salt, sea salt: mercury of the Sages
- Armoniac salt: matter that has reached the White, at the end of the second phase of the Work.
- Acidic salt: philosophical mercury
- Fixed salt: sulfur of the Sages
- Vegetal salt: tartar salt
- Universal salt: mercury of the Sages.

We can see that the authors often use plays on words and mix sulfur, mercury, and salt in order to lose the neophytes. We must therefore be very vigilant regarding the context. In fact, depending on the alchemical paths followed, salt and secret fire are or are not the same thing. To simplify my own understanding, I talk about secret earthly fire, which is

the salt principle, and secret spiritual fire (or celestial), which is the secret immaterial fire. The latter acts on matter without help from the alchemist.

1.5. *The Secret Fire*

The secret fire is the second great unknown of the Magister. Alchemists are quite evasive about it.

What we will present to you in this section is a personal view and is not in any case the absolute Truth. It should only be considered as a simple sum of hypotheses, a set of markers allowing a deeper study.

The secret fire is One in essence, but two in application. It is One because from a spiritual point of view, it solely corresponds to universal love. It is double in application because the alchemist works primarily on Earth with his body incarnated in matter, therefore he is subjected to the duality body/spirit.

The first distinction that we can make is the difference between physical love and spiritual love. The first is symbolized by Eros, god of love. The second is symbolized by Eros, god born before all the gods, or by the Holy-Spirit of the catholic trinity.

The second distinction between the two is more pragmatic, but concords with the first. The secret fire has two focuses in matter: the center of matter and the center of the Universe.

The inner secret fire of matter is very well describes by Fulcanelli. As visual example, he indicates that iron manifests its inner fire when beaten. In fact, it produces sparks. It is the same thing for sugar, which produces light when violently broken up in a dark room.

The outer (or spiritual) secret fire is carried by solar light. That is the reason why cathedrals have the ability of transmuting metals during summer solstices via the solar light. Henri Coton Alvarit talks about this secret outer fire as Hyle light.

Alchemy allows the attraction of this secret outer fire through the exaltation of the secret inner fire of the worked matter. That is why matter worked in a canonic manner (according to the alchemical laws) takes the name "Lover of Sages" at a certain moment of the work.

One should know that the inner fire allows the transmutation but at the very small scale. It is in part because of this that nuclear fusion gives very poor results in particles accelerators. The particulars depend on the secret inner fire of matter to operate transmutations. Results are more important than those of current science due to the fact that matter is worked at a minimum, following alchemical laws. Fulcanelli is therefore correct when he advocates working on particulars to better understand the laws directing the Great Work.

The true agent of transmutation is thus the secret outer fire. Consequently, the alchemists talk of corporifying the Spirit. They want to underline that the Philosopher's Stone is the

matter prepared, very purely, allowing to attract to it and keep within this formidable energy, which is the secret spiritual fire.

Whence also comes the fact that some Adepts say that Mercury alone suffices to accomplish the work. In this case, they mean the mercury principle, but also (and mostly) the Spirit, in other words, the secret spiritual fire. That is the reason why cathedrals only need solar light to accomplish transmutations.

This corporification of the secret spiritual fire necessitates pure matter. However, purity is not only synonymous with absence of impurity. We must not forget that alchemists rely heavily on the philosophy of Plato. For Plato, purity is also geometrical. Matter must therefore have a perfect molecular, atomic, even subatomic geometrical arrangement. This perfect geometry is still found in cathedrals. Companions and mostly Master Engravers therefore had a very good knowledge of alchemical laws.

In some alchemical paths, the fire principle and the secret fire are confounded (for example, in the path of antimony and iron and in the path of cinnabar). It is true but only in the case of the secret inner material fire. The secret outer fire is not material and is not worked on or controlled by the alchemist. It is only “captured” and confined, we might say. We must always keep this nuance in mind.

To end with another comparison, we can say that the secret inner fire corresponds to the Kundalini within each of us, and that the secret outer fire corresponds to the Ki around us.

2. What is a Marriage in Alchemy?

In alchemy, words are often used to mean something different than their usual common meaning. The alchemical marriage is, in fact, a conjunction of two elements, most of the time facilitated by the action of a third element. Of the two “marrying” elements, one is of the masculine nature; the other is of the feminine nature. The third actor is “sexless” and does not act, but facilitates or tempers the action of the two others. Often, this third element is called the name of a divinity linked to Love.

It can therefore be Eros, who has the tendency to be quite “material.” Why “material”? That is because our conception of this divinity carries a more sexual view of love. It is a god who causes two human beings to fall in love (here, we can find a parallel with the angel of Love: Cupid). Therefore, this remains on a “human” material plane.

It can also be the Angel Gabriel or the Holy Spirit. Its dimension then becomes much more spiritual. It is divine Love, and no longer only human love. As such, it goes beyond our daily concepts of love as we experience it. We can add a remark regarding the god Eros. In their first conception of the divine pantheon, the Greeks considered Eros as the primordial God, the Black God, father of all the gods and creation. This completely corresponds to the spiritual nature of the Secret Fire. Eros can therefore be considered as double, material, and spiritual, like the Secret Fire with which it is associated.

3. The First Marriage: A Spiritual Marriage

The first chemical marriage is, in fact, the impregnation of the Virgin by the Divine Word.

The best allegory of this marriage is the annunciation of the birth of Jesus to the Virgin by the Angel Gabriel, who announced to her that she would give birth to the Son of God. But wouldn't he be, in fact, the vector of this divine pregnancy? Mary is "impregnated" by a ray of divine light containing the divine breath (Sulfur). Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus. Therefore, the love that gave birth to Jesus is not physical love, but a purely spiritual love.

How can we understand this notion of spiritual love if we are working on matter in a laboratory? What is a spiritual marriage? It is a marriage serving as feminine matrix but lacking masculine semen as such. The classic Sulfur principle can therefore be put aside for this process.... Since Mary is immaculate in conception, the metallic Virgin must not "see" a masculine protagonist in this first marriage.... In summary: a Mercury, no Sulfur but still, a marriage...

Which element would allow this? And is there really conception of some matter from a physical point of view, or is it only a modification of matter allowing a future physical pregnancy? We could in fact see this first marriage as the opening of the Virgin to her future physical marriage so that the conception of a new being does not occur simply in a physical marriage, but that the spiritual dimension of her open-mindedness allows a royal child to be born...

This first marriage is, in fact, the opening of the Mercury principle.... It is the opening of the mineral serving as matrix in the work. The question is now to know how to act to open our Virgin in a spiritual manner so that she then becomes able to procreate a royal bloodline.

We can underline the fact that the annunciation was done through the Angel Gabriel. His descent and his presentation are quite reminiscent of the descent of the tongues of fire on the Disciple on the day of Pentecost.... We find therein the spiritual nature of the Secret Fire, the Divine Love. It would therefore be one of the two natures of the Secret Fire that could open our Virgin/Mercury. What can we say then of a simple saline action (with the appropriate protagonist and worked on in a canonic manner of course) on our feminine mineral? I think that it is the most likely hypothesis.

This saline action could "purify" our Virgin and therefore make it able to conceive a royal child (the kinglet, the little king, another name for Jesus Christ).

Regarding this, Jean D'Espagnet said in paragraph 26: "Nevertheless Spiritual love polluteth not any virgin; Beia might therefore without fault (before her betrothal to Gabritius) have felt spiritual love, to the end that she might thereby be made more cheerful, more pure and fitter for union."

4. The Second Marriage: A Physical Marriage

The first marriage having been consummated, we enter in the second, which is physical.

This is what Jean D’Espagnet wrote about it:

“Procreation is the end of lawful Wedlock. Now that the progeny may be born more vigorous and active, let both the combatants be cleansed from every ill and spot, before they are united in marriage. Let nothing superfluous cleave unto them, because from pure seed comes a purified generation, and so the chaste wedlock of Sol and Luna shall be finished when they shall have climbed the love bed, enter into combination, and be conjoined, and Luna shall receive a soul from her husband by this union; from this conjunction a most potent King shall arise, whose father will be Sol and his mother Luna.” (Paragraph 27)

As such, it requires the action of a masculine protagonist and a feminine protagonist. Jean D’Espagnet talks about it as the marriage of the King and the Queen who are lying down on the love bed during conception.

This mention of the love bed is not trivial. Could it be the allegory of the position that our “material” love representative must have, our Eros? We often talk of the importance of disposition in Alchemy. Could it be one of the important points of the Work, a sort of saline bed at the bottom of the crucible with our marrying couple lying on it? The love bed would then be a saline bed. This salt would be the physical nature of the secret fire.

The King is often represented as an elder during his marriage on the alchemical figures, whereas his companion is shown as young and fresh (and even as a virgin). We must therefore “direct” our man so that he can honor his Queen. Here again is the symbolical importance of Eros, but mostly of his homolog, Cupid. Let us direct, tip of the arrow.... Interesting coincidence.... It therefore acts as a primer and catalyst of the reaction that will occur between our two lovers.

What will be obtained at the end of this second wedding? Well, the royal son, the androgyne. We can see him under a particular shape: the Green Lion, the Vitriol. In fact, Jean D’Espagnet specifically indicates that this second marriage occurs three times, because the two spouses have a difficult time to “love one another.” And as in our daily life, the amorous passions are often submitted to tornadoes “bickering.” The first time, we get a sort of black deposit, the second time, a white deposit, and finally, the third time, a sort of green foam. This foam is the vitriol, which has often been compared to nostoc (a green algae that can show up in the morning in fields gorged with dew). It contains the fixed seed of sulfur. Subsequently, it is then necessary to sustain it with carnate food (which is good sulfur).

5. The Spiritual Dimension of these Two Marriages

Let us now try to see this allegory of the two marriages from a spiritual point of view in alchemy.

The first marriage is purely spiritual. It represents true Divine Love, which does not corrupt the one experiencing it. It is the light of the religio (linked to God). The true meaning, the true essence of faith is this Love. We must love God without expecting anything in return, as it is not valid to pray to obtain what we want (like an exchange: I pray you, you give me health, God is not a merchant...). Nevertheless we should know that the Alchemist has a rather pantheistic tendency. He sees Life in all: mineral, vegetal, animal.... But this life is first and foremost Light, and this Light is the Divine. The “God” of the Alchemists is

therefore not a distinct entity from its creation; it *is* its creation, and it is more than that. Like human beings, it is a collection of cells, but it is also more than that....-

The first marriage is therefore the reaching of this consciousness of the true dimension of Love. The alchemist must love everything around him or her because it is God. The alchemist has reverence for all that the Grand Architect of the Universe represents. However this love is not selfish; the alchemist must love in order to help, and not love in order to be helped. If the alchemist goes into his or her laboratory to try to make gold only to become rich, the he or she did not assimilate this notion of spiritual love. One must work on metals by “loving” them, by helping them to reach their evolutionary goal. From an alchemical point of view, this purpose is gold. The alchemist therefore does not intend to become richer by transmuting “vile” metals into gold, but rather, to help those metals accomplish their evolutionary path, which was stopped when they were taken out of the Earth/Gaia.

The second marriage is physical. Its purpose is to truly join the masculine and feminine parts of matter. However, this also has a repercussion on the alchemist, who must find balance between his or her masculine and feminine sides. The alchemist must recover the primordial equilibrium of the androgyne state. This was the state of the first Adam, the first man before being separated from his half: the woman. The creation of Eve is in fact a metaphor. Annick de Souzennelle clearly brings it up by underlining the translation of Genesis. Eve was not issued from Adam’s side, but is one of the sides of Adam! We must therefore find again our latent side: feminine for men, masculine for women.

In this difficult quest, there is an ally in Eros. This ally is not the simple love that a man and a woman might feel, but rather the general love for all human beings. This love allows us, in fact, to become “cultivated” by being in contact with others. And thus through discussions, confrontations of ideas, and introspection, we can become conscious of our true dimension, which is androgynous; and by that we mean a *complete being*.

6. More Subtle Symbology of these Marriages

In this section we will use a more “kabbalistic” language, which might make it incomprehensible for some. Do not be troubled, we only here go farther in the hermetic symbology of the alchemical marriage. But this is not the most important thing.

The first marriage occurred between a Mercury and a Sulfur of a particular nature. In fact, a marriage by definition must be between a male and a female. The alchemists with their habit of mixing up terms, have therefore maliciously used the amalgam between male and Sulfur in order to obscure the path. Only the spiritual nature of Salt (Secret Fire) can be the actor of this marriage as male. In fact, the male should not corrupt our Virgin, but on the contrary, should purify her. It is in part because of this that the Ancients say that the Secret Fire (Salt principle) takes after Sulfur. In fact, it is by its action that Salt can act like Sulfur, in a masculine manner.

This first marriage is therefore the action of a spiritual male on a Virgin. It is a purification in order to make Mercury purer. “Winged Virgin” as D’Espagnet calls her. It is therefore the Mercury principle whose qualities (volatility and feminine matrix) are intensified.

Furthermore, it is the revelation of the divine part of the alchemist. During this marriage, the alchemist becomes conscious of his or her divine spark and knows that he or she must now make it grow and make his or her soul merge with this divine part.

In fact, the divine part is the Spirit of the Alchemist; it is the Mercury principle. As for the alchemist's soul, it is the Sulfur principle. This soul is linked to the personality of the alchemist. It is therefore his or her ego. This ego must be purified in order to then "melt" in the Spirit, which is omnipotent, omniscient, and mostly is the true nature of ourselves and all that is around us. This fusion is "consummated" by the physical marriage. Sulfur is worked on, quite pure (this corresponds to removing the weaknesses and flaws of the personality of the Artist), and the Spirit is "awakened," freed from its gangue, which prevented the alchemist from being conscious of it, and therefore prevented him from giving all the importance to the divine dimension of all that is around him or her. Thus, we have the marriage of the King (soul/Sulfur) and of the Queen (Spirit/Mercury). The son of this union is of royal blood and is the androgyne.

We can notice that this conception of the world is rather antimachist because the real actor, the Mercury principle, truly has all the powers, and without it, creation would not have been possible. It represents Spirit, the divine part in each person and each thing. Nevertheless, the Mercury principle is feminine....

7. Conclusion

We now understand better why two marriages and not only one--the mercurial, feminine, and divine dimension of matter and of the alchemist--must be awakened and prepared in order to start the process of fusion in the divine for the artist, in the sulfur principle for matter.

The term *spiritual marriage* is therefore to be considered more in the sense of an analogy than literally. Love is, of course, involved, but there is only one protagonist in this "marriage": the divine part of the person and his or her superior homolog who are One. It is therefore a reunion, an awakening. For matter, we could name this marriage by the simple term of "purification" or "reincrudation."

The second, physical marriage is the true marriage: two protagonists, a true mutual love and an androgyne "son." It is a fusion of one's ego in the divine spark we were all endowed with. From a material point of view, it is the same thing: the two principles, Sulfur and Mercury, are very different, and even opposites, in their qualities. Another actor is therefore necessary to calm their ardors and facilitate their concord. It is the work of the physical nature of the Secret Fire. At the end of the consummation of their union there appears a new being, a new matter: the little King, the Kinglet, the Androgyne.... It is, in fact, the Christic nature of the individual.

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