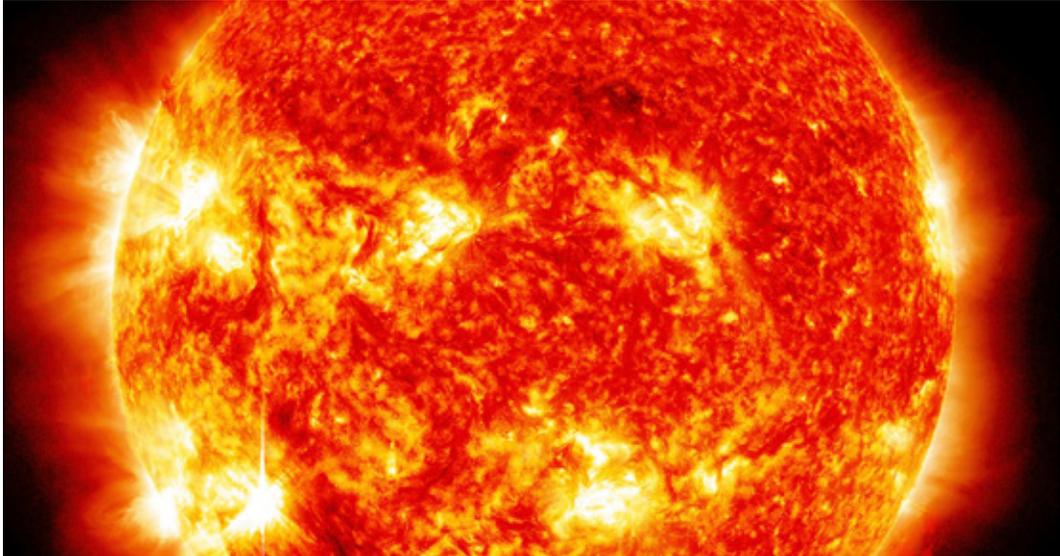


THE SUN INVINCIBLE

Timothy J. O'Neill, FRC

In this article, Timothy J. O'Neill, a member of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC's International Research Council, explores the esoteric meaning of the Sun in Alchemy and the Mystery Religions.



The shaman, alchemist, and blacksmith all share one surprising and outstanding characteristic: they are all masters of fire. And each of these fire masters is expert in the art of transformation.

From the awakening of human awareness, it was clear that fire and heat contain the mystery of change, death, and rebirth. That which is burned is often the grounds for new life, as anyone who has watched the process of plant re-growth following a forest fire will understand. It was also apparent to earliest people that the greatest source of fire—that embodied in the Sun—was the origin or basis of all life and being. The warmth of the flesh, the heat of the internal organs, the passion, excitement, and enthusiasm for life, all this was likened to the gentle warmth of the Sun. Thus a subtle or esoteric link between humans and the Sun eventually became part of the traditional teachings of the great philosophical schools. The Sun came

to be seen as the localization of the great universal driving force of evolution and life itself.

As one of the great philosophical and mystical traditions, alchemy can be simply defined as the art of accelerating nature's slow and gradual work of universal perfection as exemplified in the process of biological evolution. In our context, it is the solar fire of evolution which speeds alchemy's refined work of perfection.

As the alchemists quickly learned, though, the unbridled heart of the solar force burns too quickly and intensely by itself. That is why, in the practice of alchemy, the Sun is rarely found apart from its natural companion, the moon, which is characterized by its moist, cooling, vaporous currents. The alchemists often symbolized this hidden unity between the opposites—sun and moon—as a mystical marriage or as the cycle of falling dew and rising moisture. You see, it was believed

in antiquity and the Middle Ages that as the heat of the morning sun warmed the cold, wet earth, the rising vapors would circulate and fall as dew. We now know the process to be far more complex. Yet this archetypal cycling of hot and cold, dry and moist, fiery and watery, illustrates perfectly the harmony and balance of Sun and moon to be found at the heart of the alchemical process.

The famous *Mutus Liber* or *Silent Book* illustrates this alchemical process of the circulation of dew in great detail (see Image 1). As the solar and lunar forces act together to accelerate the turning of the wheel of life, so is evolution hastened, ultimately producing the perfected “gold” or purest potential essence of the object or person put through the alchemical process. In the traditions of esoteric alchemy, it was most often the alchemist who was the object of the process, the purpose being spiritual perfection.

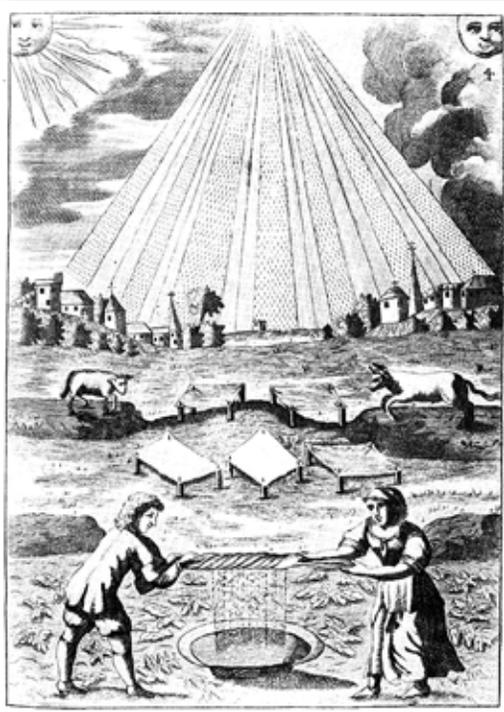


Image 1. The alchemical couple as the lower correspondence to the Sun and moon in the harvesting of the dew, which must occur in the months of April (Aries) and May (Taurus), when according to Kunrath, the green world spirit is at its strongest.

It is important at this point to understand that the alchemists certainly used the actual forces of the physical solar system in their art, but most often they were referring to more subtle etheric forces, apparent only to a highly refined sense of spiritual perception. The apparent simplicity of the process of solar circulation belies a highly complex and subtle alchemical science operating upon the invisible world of spirit. Our physical Sun is merely the most gross manifested aspect of the concentrated force of life and evolution.

A Vast Philosopher's Stone

There is also a virtual continuum of subtle or “etheric” suns coexisting with the physical Sun at all possible levels of being. The trained alchemist learns to separate these various levels of the invisible body of the sun into their refined components and constituents. Thus, the “Black Sun” represents the fertile solar chaos or the most unorganized and primal level of the evolutionary force. The “Green Sun” represents a more harmonized and healing level of the life-force, and the “Golden Sun” or “Red Sun” represents the pure solar force raised to its highest inherent evolutionary potential. It is at this point in the subtle existence of the Sun that it operates as a vast philosopher's stone, acting as an evolutionary agent for the life-wave of the entire solar system.

The entry of the alchemist into an awareness of this incredibly powerful and profound force in the etheric sun is known in the esoteric traditions as an aspect of the “Golden Dawn” or true spiritual awakening. This experience is perfectly represented in the famous sixteenth century alchemical text *Splendor Solis*, or “Splendor of the Sun,” a work imputed to Solomon Trismosin, supposed instructor of the great Paracelsus. This important esoteric text focuses upon the Sun as the



motive force for all transmutation and its traces, in allegorical form, the evolution of the Sun as a philosopher's stone itself.

Of course, this subtle solar force is not only known in the Western tradition. In the East, the evolutionary force is known as *kundalini* or *Baraka* and is also broken down into its solar and lunar aspects. The art of circulating the subtle solar and lunar currents has been reduced to a near mathematical precision in the Eastern traditions as described by Paramahansa Yogananda in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*. In that book, he details this ancient alchemical science in terms of an inner solar system within the human body; a concept equally familiar to the West, as evidenced in the words of the great Doctor, Hermeticist, and Rosicrucian apologist Robert Fludd.



esoteric alchemy: the enhanced spiritual evolution of the practitioner through accelerated passage on the wheel of life. Many of the details of the Eastern system are found in the works of Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe), particularly in his well-known book, *The Serpent Power*.

One of the most gripping examples of the incredible power of the solar force is described in Gopi Krishna's classic autobiography, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*. As a practicing yogi, he accidentally awoke the full might of the solar force, causing overwhelmingly powerful mental, spiritual, and physical effects. After much travail, he was able to bring the cooling and mediating lunar current into play and thus balance the "parching quality of the sun." His experience has much to teach Western alchemical students and provides great insight into the essential nature of the solar force.

Another aspect of the Sun also relates to esoteric alchemy in its work of human evolution. During the Roman Empire, various mystery religions, such as those of Mithras, Aion, and Sol Invictus (The

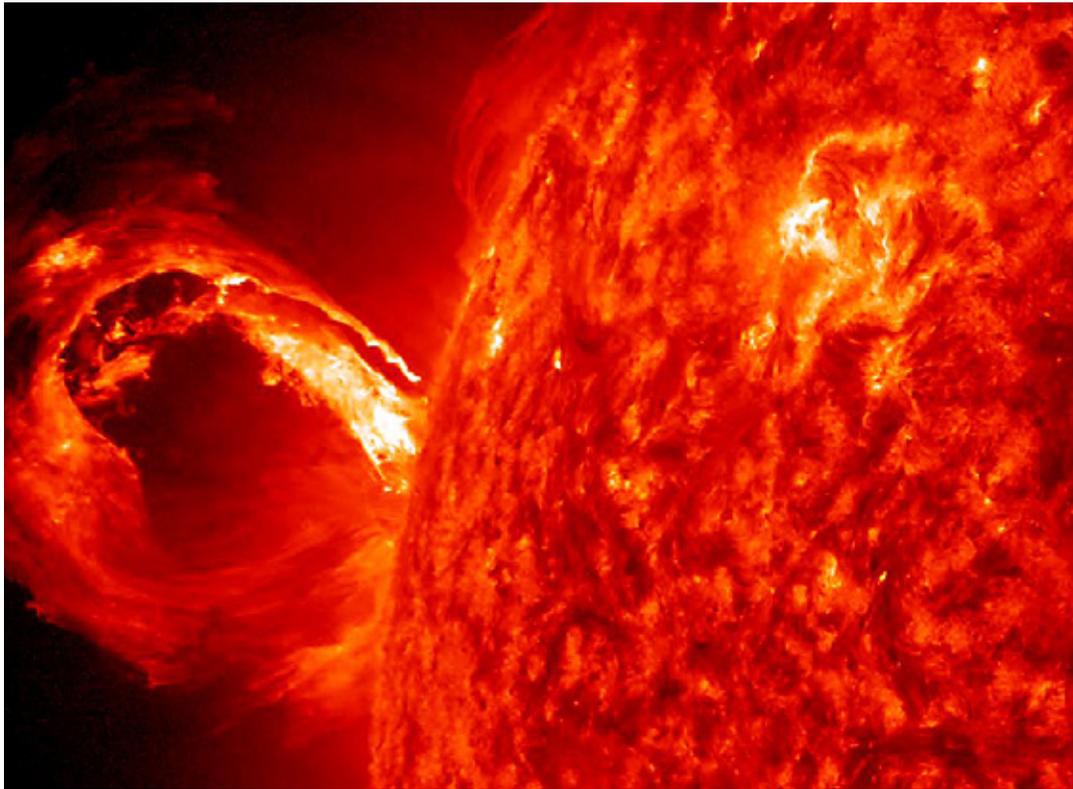


The entire art of Kundalini Yoga in the East involves the careful circulation and harmonization of the fiery solar and cooling lunar currents within the body. These forces are turned around the spinal column in a great circle so as to achieve much the same goal as found in Western

Invincible Sun) treated the Sun as a symbol of the true essence of self, the shining light of consciousness which was to be resurrected out of the darkness of the flesh into the light of spirit by the process of initiation.

As a state of transformation, initiation into the mysteries bears a strong resemblance to an alchemical process. Under this model, we all possess an inner “sun” in the exact center of the body, usually assumed to be in the region of the solar plexus. It is with this inner sun, in conjunction with the actual Sun and stars in the sky that the alchemist most truly performs the science of spiritual perfection, seeking the great universal *Harmonia Mundi* or “harmony of the world.”

Thus, this inner sun is the true “central fire” of the alchemical process, the source of the rising heat which turns the *Rota Mundi*, great wheel of life. This wheel of life is a natural analogue to the globular vessel of the alchemist, the subtle, egg-shaped body or alembic, in which the circulating solar force works its evolutionary magic. Plato describes this in his *Timaeus* as the spherical, androgynous form of the soul. This subtle inner solar system is the true microcosmos or “small universe” which mirrors the outer universe in its mathematical and geometric essence. The Sun, mighty regent of the universe, is the embodiment of the fiery force which drives us through the infinite halls of existence. Alchemy is truly then a solar art—a path of the Sun.



REFERENCES

- Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe), *The Serpent Power*. Dover Publication, 1974.
- Godwin, Joscelyn, *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World*. Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1981.
- Godwin, Joscelyn, *Robert Fludd: Hermetic Philosopher and Surveyor of Two Worlds*.
- Phanes Press, 1991 Krishna, Gopi, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man*. Shambala Publications, Berkeley, 1971.
- McLean, Adam, *A Commentary on the Mutus Liber*. Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks, Edinburgh, 1982.
- Trismosin, Solomon, *Splendor Solis*. Yogi Publication Society, Chicago, n.d.
- Yogananda, Paramahansa, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Self Realization Fellowship Publications, Los Angeles, 1969.

