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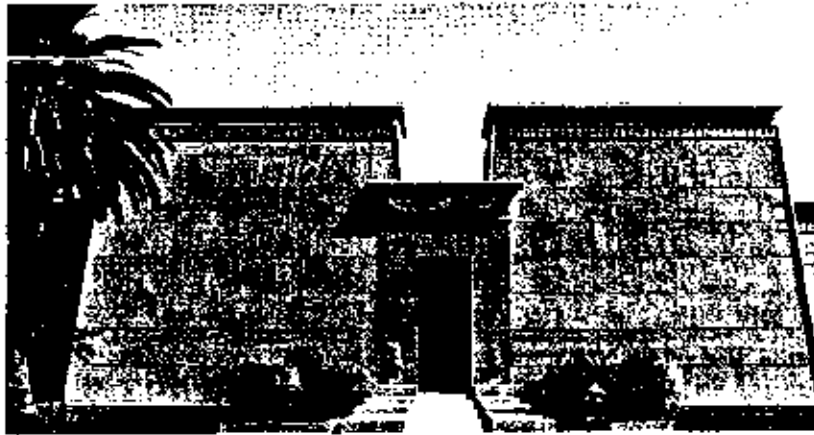
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Supplementary Monograph

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"Consecrated to truth and dedicated to every Rosicrucian"

SPECIAL SUBJECT
HERMETIC TEACHINGS
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INNER HERMETIC TEACHINGS

The earliest known references to the Emerald Tablet are Arabic of the 9th century probably by way of Syrian versions. These ascribe its origin to Greek authors but differ as to who did write it. Legend has it that the Tablet was found with Hermes in his tomb or with Alexander the Great in his tomb. It was supposedly written in Phoenician characters in an emerald tablet.

Versions of the tablet differ in some significant points. I have used the Latin and German versions found in Heinrich Khunrath's Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom, and this version is given in one of the lecture series on Symbols.

The tablet expresses the Hermetic axiom, As above, so below, but it is not the only source of this concept. It is found in other terminology in many religious and philosophical writings.

The tablet is unique because it is put in alchemical terms and was one philosophical or metaphysical basis of alchemy. Astrology and magic are also based on this concept, or on the idea of the macrocosm and microcosm.

The Emerald Tablet is in alchemical terms and sets forth alchemical theory. The Hermetic writings are in terms of mystical philosophy. However, the ideas in both can be applied to alchemy. The concepts, therefore are parallel; one corresponds to the other.

EMERALD TABLET, translated from Khunrath's Amphitheatre
(Translated by R. Phelps)

"True, without falsehood, certain and most true, that which is below (or inferior) is like that which is above (or superior), and that which is above is like that which is below for accomplishing the wonder of the one thing. As all things are created (or restored) from one, by the will and command (or by the meditation) of the one United who created it, so all things are born (or spring) from this one thing by dispensation and union (or adaptation.) Its father is the sun, its mother is the moon, the wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the earth. This is the father of all perfection in this whole world. Its power is perfect when it is changed into earth; so you should separate the earth from the fire, and the subtle from the thick or gross but lovingly with great understanding and discretion. It ascends from earth to heaven and from heaven again to earth and receives again the power of the Above and the Below. Thus you will have the splendor of the whole world. All lack of understanding and lack of ability will leave you. This is of all power the most powerful power, for it can overcome all subtlety and can penetrate all that is solid. Thus was the world created. Thus many rare combinations originated, and wonders are wrought, of which this is the way to work. And thus I am called

Trismegistus, having the three parts of the wisdom of the whole world. All that I have said concerning the work of the sun is fulfilled."

In order to understand the Emerald Tablet, we will first point out some of the main concepts in it, then read the text itself, and then explain some of the concepts further. Finally, since as far as I know it has not been done, parallels between the Tablet and the Hermetic writings will be discussed.

First and basic to Hermetic philosophy in any form is the As above, so below idea, or as the Tablet says, "That which is below (or inferior) is like that which is above (or superior)." This is analogous to the macrocosm and microcosm, the great world which is the cosmos and the small world which is man. It is expressed in the writings by saying that the cosmos is made in the image of God, and man in the image of the cosmos.

Second, there are three expressions which use the idea of the one, and we must understand what they mean. The Tablet states, "That which is above is like that which is below for accomplishing the one thing." This one thing which is accomplished is what the alchemists called the philosopher's stone, but in mystical terms it refers to the attunement and Cosmic consciousness.

The Tablet also says, "As all things are created from one. . . . so all things are born from this one thing. . . ." The one from which all things are created is the first matter (prima materia) of the alchemists. We say all is vibratory. All things are created from the first matter. All things are born from the philosopher's stone.

The Tablet teaches that all things are created by the will and command of the one United, or, depending on the version, a similar term. This, of course, refers to God as creator, or in terms of the Hermetica to Mind the Maker.

Third, Creation is by the will and command of God, and the command is verbal; hence, it is the Creative Word. Creation, then, is by the will and Word.

Fourth, its (meaning the stone's) father is the sun, its mother is the moon, representing duality, but duality within the one.

Fifth, the Tablet says, "This is the father of all perfection in the whole world." God, being perfect, is the father of perfection in the world. But since God created the first matter, it too could be considered the father of perfection. And the philosopher's stone or Cosmic consciousness properly used also creates perfection.

Sixth, "Its power is perfect when it is changed into earth." It attains perfect power in earthly manifestation.

Seventh, "So you should separate the earth from the fire, and the subtle from the thick or gross." Whether the alchemy is practical or transcendental, the earthly and material must be separated from the spiritual or psychic.

Eighth, "It ascends from earth to heaven and from heaven again to earth and receives the power of the Above and Below." It is the descent to earth and ascent to heaven in birth and death, or during life the ascent and descent in meditation, or the ascent and descent in the alchemical vessel which give power.

Ninth, "This is the most powerful power, for it can overcome all subtlety and can penetrate all that is solid." This power is both material or physical and psychic or subtle.

Tenth, "Thus was the world created . . . of which this is the way to work." That is, as God created the world, and as the cosmos creates, so can man. Man should work the same way as does God and nature.

One key to the meaning of the Emerald Tablet is the interpretation of the "one thing" in the phrase "for accomplishing the wonder of the one thing."

The first sentence of the Tablet says that the Above and Below, the superior and inferior, the macrocosm and microcosm are alike because of their correspondence and for the purpose of accomplishing the one thing. Superior and inferior refer to the realms above and below, and in ancient times this usually meant the realm above the moon and that below the moon.

By the law of correspondences, the "one thing" refers to the Divine or Cosmic itself, the Cosmic in the universe, and in man. This may be symbolized in alchemical terms by the philosopher's stone, or the union of duality, or the chymical marriage. It is represented in mythology, in medieval legend, and in mystical symbolism.

But the "one thing" is both the Cosmic and the result of the transmutation, which is a return to the Cosmic or the primal cosmic state of being. The "one thing" which is accomplished is the transmutation, whether it is physical or transcendental transmutation.

The second sentence tells us that all things are created from one by the will and command of the one United (eines einigen) or by the meditation of the one United who created it. The one from which all things are created is the prima materia, the first matter, from which all elements arise. The elements evolve from this matter to perfection, and metals evolve from the lowest form to perfection or gold. Development is from the "one" created by the will of the one United, or God, to the one thing which is accomplished.

The "one thing" which is accomplished, and the one which is created by God, and the one United or God Himself are all related and might be considered as essentially the same or one. The first matter is the beginning of creation emanated from God, the "one thing" is the return to perfection, the Cosmos, or God.

The one which is created by God may also be considered to be the cosmos, which in the Hermetic writings is an image of God, or to be man, who is an image of the cosmic and God. Then the "one United" is God, who creates the "one" which is the cosmos or man or the first matter, from which the "one thing" is accomplished or transmuted.

The passage also says that all things are created from one by the will and command or by the meditation of the one United in the same way as things are born from the one thing. As God creates, so do the cosmos and man.

We might rephrase the first part of the Tablet: The macrocosm and microcosm correspond for accomplishing the one thing (transmutation). As all things are created from one (first matter) by the will and command of the one United (God), so all things are born from this one (first matter) by dispensation and union (in the work of man).

This is the Divine Mind which creates itself by itself and restores itself to itself. It is also the Divine in man, the artisan, who creates by imitating the Cosmic Creator. These basic concepts in different forms are common to both the Tablet and the Hermetic writings.

The command is analogous to the Word or Logos in the Hermetica. Creation and transmutation are accomplished by means of the will and the command or logos, or as some versions of the Tablet say, by meditation. Furthermore, this is a creation or restoration, which implies a cyclic renewal, a continuing process.

The creator is the Cosmic agent or artisan who uses will and command. The cosmos and man are agent and artisan who use dispensation and union or adaptation.

The third sentence begins, "Its father is the sun, its mother is the moon." The sun and moon symbolize duality of which the "one thing" is the union. But they also represent the Above and Below, the superior and inferior realms.

Thus the "one" is born of a duality. The sun is the light giving, the active, the sulphur, the king, gold. The moon is the light receiving, light reflecting, the passive, the mercury (or salt), the queen, silver. The sun is immaterial, the subtle, the volatile, the psychic; in relation to the sun, the moon is the material, the gross, the fixed, the lower vibratory rates.

". . .the wind carries it in its belly" refers to the pneuma, the spiritus, the breath and vital force, the immaterial element breathed in with the air. The belly refers to the womb and birth. The one is formed and brought to birth by the wind or vital force.

". . . its nurse is the earth" represents the concept that in creation or manifestation the earthly, material element is necessary. But the nurse cares for, feeds, and brings the one to its proper development and perfection. The nurse is the Platonic receptacle, that which receives the vital force or soul.

The wind and earth form another duality, so that we have two pairs, sun and moon, wind and earth.

The one in turn is the "father of all perfection in this whole world." That is, the first matter is the father of the "one thing" or the philosopher's stone. The one United creates the one first matter which in turn is father of the "one thing" or philosopher's stone which itself is a return to the Cosmic or the one United.

The "one" is born from the duality of the sun and moon but is itself father of all perfection. All things are born from One and created by One and are perfection in the One.

"Its power is perfect when it is changed into earth." In other words, mundane, material manifestation is necessary for perfection and power. It is part of the cyclic process necessary for accomplishing the "one thing." First it is manifest in earthly form, then it is separated into earth and fire.

". . . you should separate the earth from the fire, and the subtle from the gross."

Only after this separation does it ascend "from earth to heaven and from heaven again to earth, and it receives again the power of the Above and the Below.

The steps given here are:

1. Earth, the receptacle, receives the soul or vital force.
"It is changed into earth."
2. Earth or the gross is separated from the subtle or fire.
3. The subtle (the soul or psychic part) ascends to the Above and receives power, and it descends to the Below and receives power.

"Thus you will have the splendor of the whole world." This splendor in terms of the transmutation of man is illumination or Cosmic consciousness. It is a union or oneness.

"All lack of understanding and lack of ability will leave you. This is of all power the most powerful power, for it can overcome all subtlety and can penetrate all that is solid."

"Thus was the world created," that is, by God.

"This is the way to work," meaning this is the way for man to work.

As the alchemical process requires separation of the subtle and gross, so meditation requires the separation of the psychic self from the physical.

The work must be done "lovingly with great understanding and discretion" or the student will attain neither physical nor transcendental transmutation.

The one or first matter is separated, and part ascends and descends just as the consciousness of the mystic is said to ascend and descend during meditation.

The Tablet says, "And thus I am called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the wisdom of the whole world." This could refer to the three basic steps which we have outlined. It refers to Hermes Trismegistus as king, philosopher, priest. It also corresponds to the three realms: eternal, celestial or astral, and mundane or temporal, or to God, nature, and man. Knowledge of all three is required for the threefold mastery implied by Trismegistus.

"All that I have said concerning the work of the sun is fulfilled." The sun is the symbol of God as well as of gold which represents perfection, the end of the process of transmutation.