

Hereward Tilton  
The Quest for the Phoenix



# Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte

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herausgegeben von

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# The Quest for the Phoenix

Spiritual Alchemy and Rosicrucianism  
in the Work of Count Michael Maier (1569–1622)

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Learn O ye students, that which the Philosophers have long since intimated, saying that truth is not discerned but by error, and that nothing begets more grief to the heart than error in this work; for when a man thinks he has done and has the world, he shall find nothing in his hands.

(Baqsam in *The Flying Atalanta*, discourse XXXIX)

## Foreword

The following work is the fruit of research carried out in libraries and archives across Europe under the aegis of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Forschungsstipendium and the University of Queensland Research Travel Award; in the course of my travels a number of people stepped forward to assist me. Amongst those I would like to thank here are Prof. Dr. Karin Figala and Dr. Ulrich Neumann of the Technische Universität München, for their readiness to impart knowledge and their generosity with the sharing of valuable primary sources related to Maier; Dr. José Bouman and Dr. Cis van Heertum of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, for their assistance with a beautiful collection; Dr. Jill Bepler of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, for welcoming me to an illustrious institution; PD Dr. Carlos Gilly of Universität Basel, for sharing his knowledge of Rosicrucian matters; Prof. Antoine Faivre of the Sorbonne, for providing timely advice on methodology; Prof. Vladimír Karpenko of Charles University, Prague, for providing me with food for thought; Assoc. Prof. Michael Lattke of the University of Queensland, Brisbane, for help with logistics; Dr. Tara Nummedal of Brown University, Providence, for engaging in a fruitful dialogue; PD Dr. Heiko Droste of Hamburg, for his insistence that truth is founded only upon error; Dr. Sabine Horst of Stuttgart, for her invaluable language training; and Dr. Lisa Colledge of London, for her kind support during my research at the British and Bodleian libraries. My special thanks go to Assoc. Prof. Richard Hutch of the University of Queensland, Brisbane, for his sage advice; to my parents Harold and Hilary; and to my good friend and wife PD Dr. Michaela Boenke of Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, for her unwavering technical and personal support.



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# I. Introduction: Jung and early modern alchemy

## 1. The alchemical chimera

The early modern period witnessed the emergence of theosophy, Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry as esoteric currents with specifically 'alchemical' concerns. Nevertheless, the task of defining alchemy in this period is fraught with difficulties, and the relationship between the spiritual alchemies of the Western esoteric tradition and the laboratory quest for the alchemical agent of transmutation remains to be clarified. Indeed, the very term 'alchemy' had accumulated a variety of meanings by the turn of the sixteenth century, and the nature of the endeavours to be placed under its rubric remains a contentious issue to this day. Arguing against the implicitly religious interpretation of the ambiguous alchemical corpus put forward by the Swiss psychoanalyst, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), Lawrence Principe and William Newman have recently contended that the symbolic literature of laboratory alchemy in the early modern period dealt primarily with code-names (*Decknamen*) for chemical processes, and for the greater part bore no relation to matters of spiritual or psychological transformation. Furthermore, Principe and Newman argue that Jung's schema falsely implies a discontinuity between alchemy and modern chemistry. In their view, there is a lack of any clear and widespread demarcation between the words *chemia* and *alchemia* in the early modern texts, and consequently they have recommended that we dispense with the term 'alchemy' altogether when referring to this period, utilising instead the more common early modern appellations of *chemia* or *chymia*, whilst reserving the term 'alchemy' for the medieval period alone.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Principe, Lawrence M. and William R. Newman. "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy." In Newman, William R. and Anthony Grafton (eds.). *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Press, 2001, pp. 385-431; "Alchemy vs. Chemistry: The Etymological Origins of a Historiographic Mistake," *Early Science and Medicine*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1998, pp. 32-65; also Newman, William R. "*Decknamen* or Pseudochemical Language? Eirenaeus Philalethes and Carl Jung," *Revue D'Histoire des Sciences*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1996, pp. 159-188.

Although Faivre has dealt extensively with the subject of alchemy from the perspective of the history of Western esotericism,<sup>2</sup> the primary historical enquiry into the status of laboratory alchemy in early modernity continues to take place amongst historians of science. As a consequence the following study enters both these arenas of discourse. Clearly the arguments of Principe and Newman deal not only with questions of historiography and nomenclature, but concern the very nature of laboratory alchemy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its relation to the esoteric traditions. These introductory pages constitute an extended theoretical preamble on this current controversy, which will serve as a prelude for an analysis of the concrete example of the alchemy of Count Michael Maier and his place in the history of early Rosicrucianism. In the course of that analysis it will be seen that the relation of Maier's religious sentiments to his laboratory practice – no less than his role in the history of Western esotericism – presents difficulties for the contentions of Principe and Newman. These difficulties will be detailed in the conclusion with the aim of defining alchemy as a subject of study in the field of the history of Western esotericism. There it will be shown that if the study of esoteric currents of thought (and hence the study of their categories) is taken seriously, the term 'alchemy' becomes entirely indispensable, and appears to refer to a broad yet coherent complex of ideas with precisely its origins in the early modern period and the work of alchemists such as Maier (that author's eschewal of the term 'alchemy' notwithstanding). Indeed, if Carl Gustav Jung's work is itself considered as a religious artefact, then he may be understood as only the latest purveyor of a 'spiritual alchemy' with expressly modern characteristics.

## 2. The reception of Jung amongst historians of alchemy

Whilst the ideas of Principe and Newman have attained a certain popularity at this point in time, the reception of Jung and his psychoanalytic approach amongst historians of alchemy has not always been negative. On the contrary, Jung's alchemical studies earned the controversial and mystery-mongering psychologist his closest encounter with academic respectability. Since his extensive work on the subject in the 1930's, 40's and 50's, Jung's belief that alchemical symbolism expresses psychological processes of an essentially

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Faivre, Antoine. *Access to Western Esotericism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, *passim*.; *The Golden Fleece and Alchemy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993; "Mystische Alchemie und Geistige Hermeneutik." In *Correspondences in Man and World*. Eranos Yearbook, 1973. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975, pp. 323-360.

religious nature has held wide currency in the academic study of alchemy. In 1942 Jung published his *Paracelsica: Zwei Vorlesungen über den Arzt und Philosophen Theophrastus*,<sup>3</sup> in which he boldly declared that the Swiss alchemist Paracelsus (c.1493-1541) had anticipated the findings of twentieth century psychoanalysis:

I had long been aware that alchemy is not only the mother of chemistry, but is also the forerunner of our modern psychology of the unconscious. Thus Paracelsus appears as a pioneer not only of chemical medicine but of empirical psychology and psychotherapy.<sup>4</sup>

In Jung's opinion the symbols of Paracelsian alchemy, and of alchemical literature in general, make more or less veiled reference to the evolution of the individual psyche – a dialectical process of 'individuation' in which consciousness is confronted with the forces of the unconscious mind. Furthermore, Jung felt that alchemy was not only the precursor to the modern psychology of the unconscious, but also a bridge in the history of ideas between his own thought and the religion of the Gnostics.<sup>5</sup> Thus he spoke of Paracelsus as a man whose soul "was intermingled with a strange spiritual current which, issuing from immemorial sources, flowed beyond him into a distant future."<sup>6</sup>

Upon its first appearance Jung's understanding of Paracelsus was met with enthusiasm by historians of chemistry; in his 1946 review of *Paracelsica* for *Ambix*, Gerhard Heym wrote that no modern authority prior to Jung had been able to decipher the 'abstruse and obscure' vocabulary of the 'psychology' of Paracelsus.<sup>7</sup> Heym was joined in his praise by no less

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<sup>3</sup> A revision of two lectures: *Paracelsus als Arzt*, delivered to the Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften at the annual meeting of the Naturforschenden Gesellschaft, Basel, September the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941; and *Paracelsus als geistige Erscheinung*, delivered at Einsiedeln, the birthplace of Paracelsus, on October the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1941, at the celebrations marking the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death; Jung, Carl Gustav. "Studien über Alchemistische Vorstellungen." *C. G. Jung Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 13. Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1978, p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav. "Alchemical Studies." *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. Vol. 13. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 189; Jung, "Studien über Alchemistische Vorstellungen," p. 209: "Es war mir schon lange bewußt, daß die Alchemie nicht nur die Mutter der Chemie ist, sondern auch die Vorstufe der heutigen Psychologie des Unbewußten. So sehen wir Paracelsus als einen Bahnbrecher nicht nur der chemischen Medizin, sondern auch der empirischen Psychologie und der psychologischen Heilkunde."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209: "...Paracelsus, dessen Seele verwoben ist in ein seltsames geistiges Leben, welches, aus ältesten Quellen entspringend, weit über ihn hinaus in die Zukunft strömt."

<sup>7</sup> Heym, Gerhard. "Review. *Paracelsica*, Zwei Vorlesungen über den Arzt und Philosophen Theophrastus," *Ambix*, Vol. 2, No. 3, December 1946, pp. 196-198.

eminent a scholar of Paracelsianism than Walter Pagel, who likewise claimed that Jung's *Paracelsica* had finally made 'accessible' to him the obscure terminology of Paracelsian iatrochemistry.<sup>8</sup> Writing in *Isis* in 1948, Pagel described Jung as the creator of "an encyclopaedia, atlas and new interpretation of alchemical symbolism which will be fundamental for all future studies on the subject."<sup>9</sup> In the same place Pagel reviewed Jung's *Psychologie und Alchemie* (1944), a work based on two lectures delivered to the *Eranos Tagung* in 1935 and 1936.<sup>10</sup> In this work Jung attempted to correlate alchemical symbolism with motifs from the dream life of one of his patients – a man we now know to be Wolfgang Pauli, the Nobel prize-winning physicist and Jung's collaborator on the synchronicity theory. Having argued that both the alchemical corpus and the dreams of contemporary citizens express a psychological process of self-realisation, Jung embarks on an exploration of what he understands to be religious conceptions in alchemy, during which he sets forward a succinct account of his theory of projection and the historiography it entails:

What [the alchemist] sees in matter, or thinks he sees, is chiefly the data of his own unconscious which he is projecting into it. In other words, he encounters in matter, as apparently belonging to it, certain qualities and potential meanings of whose psychic nature he is entirely unconscious. This is particularly true of classical alchemy, where empirical science and mystical philosophy were more or less undifferentiated. The process of fission which separated the *φυσικά* from the *μυστικά* set in at the end of the sixteenth century and produced a quite fantastic species of literature whose authors were, at least to some extent, conscious of the psychic nature of their "alchymical" transmutations.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Pagel, Walter. "Jung's Views on Alchemy," *Isis*, Vol. 39, No. 1, May 1948, pp. 44-48.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> *Traumsymbole des Individuationsprozesses*. Eranos Yearbook, 1935. Zurich: Rhein, 1936; *Die Erlösungsvorstellungen in der Alchemie*. Eranos Yearbook, 1936. Zurich: Rhein, 1937. First published in English as *The Integration of the Personality*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939.

<sup>11</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav. "Psychology and Alchemy." *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. Vol. 12. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, p. 218; Jung, Carl Gustav. "Psychologie und Alchemie." *C. G. Jung Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 12. Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1972, p. 267: "Was er im Stoffe sieht und zu erkennen meint, sind zunächst seine eigenen unbewußten Gegebenheiten, die er darin projiziert; das heißt es treten ihm aus dem Stoff diesem anscheinend zugehörige Eigenschaften und Bedeutungsmöglichkeiten entgegen, deren psychische Natur ihm gänzlich unbewußt ist. Dies gilt hauptsächlich von der klassischen Alchemie, in welcher naturwissenschaftliche Empirie und mystische Philosophie sozusagen ununterschieden vorliegen. Der mit dem Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts einsetzende Spaltungsprozeß, welcher die *φυσικά* (das Physische) von den *μυστικά* (das Mystische) trennte, hat nun eine wesentlich phantastischere Literaturgattung hervorgebracht, deren Autoren die seelische Natur der „alchymistischen“ Wandlungsprozesse einigermaßen bewußt war."

It is this notion of the supposed post-Reformation ‘fission’ in the alchemical literature of the *physica* and the *mystica*, elements that were formerly unified in the ‘classical’ period of ancient and medieval alchemy, which Principe and Newman refute on the grounds that no clear distinction between *chemia* and *alchemia* arises in the literature prior to the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> In their eyes, any effort to distinguish a ‘mystical’ alchemy from a ‘physical’ chemistry in the seventeenth century is presentist – that is to say, it projects contemporary categories into a time in which such distinctions were alien. Furthermore, they argue that Jung’s schema supports the false notion of a discontinuity in the evolution of chemistry, a disjuncture between a modern mechanistic science and an alchemy that is defined by its ‘spiritual or psychic dimension’.<sup>13</sup>

Principe and Newman also see Jung as the chief progenitor of a tendency “to downplay or eliminate any natural philosophical or ‘scientific’ content in alchemy”<sup>14</sup> – and as we shall see, this has been a common criticism voiced by historians of science, be they partisans or foes of the Jungian approach. Indeed, in his review of *Psychologie und Alchemie* Pagel also stated that Jung was “prone to belittle the role of alchemy as a precursor to modern science” by overemphasising the psychological aspect of the texts he studied.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, he felt that Jung had revolutionised the academic study of alchemy:

[Jung] succeeds: (1) in placing alchemy into an entirely new perspective in the history of science, medicine, theology and general human culture, (2) in explaining alchemical symbolism, hitherto a complete puzzle, by utilising modern psychological analysis for the elucidation of an historical problem and – vice versa – making use of the latter for the advancement of modern psychology; and all this in a scholarly, well documented and scientifically unimpeachable exposition. If not the *whole* story of alchemy, he has tackled its “mystery,” its “*Nachtseite*,” i.e., the problem most urgent and vexing to the historian.<sup>16</sup>

Pagel was an early opponent of positivism in the field of the history of science; whilst many of his contemporaries had dismissed the magical and religious beliefs of pre-modern and early modern scientists as retrogressive, Pagel attempted to demonstrate the ‘organic coherence’ of such beliefs with recognisably ‘modern’ elements in the scientific worldviews he studied.<sup>17</sup> On

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<sup>12</sup> Principe and Newman, “Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy,” pp. 404, 407–408.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 417–418.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

<sup>15</sup> Pagel, “Jung’s Views on Alchemy,” p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> On this subject, and on the historiography of alchemy in general, see Debus, Allen G. “Chemists, Physicians, and Changing Perspectives on the Scientific Revolution,” *History*

this count he felt Jung's theories were an antidote to the positivist view of science as progress towards a truth divorced from its philosophical and psychological context.<sup>18</sup>

Another early contributor to the influence of Jung's ideas in the academic study of alchemy was the Swiss-educated John Read, who commented in 1947 that it had required 'the discernment of a master' to elucidate the intimate relationship of alchemy to psychology.<sup>19</sup> Soon the conception that alchemy had involved the projection of unconscious psychological processes into the objective world of the laboratory became a commonplace amongst academics in the field. Even those positivistic writers who were antagonistic towards the role of the irrational in alchemy referred to Jung's theories in order to demarcate the realm of 'genuine' science from mere superstition. Thus Eduard Farber in *The Evolution of Chemistry* (1952) scorned the 'mystical' class of alchemical texts as a collection of 'fantastic tales', devoid of both art and science, which might interest a psychoanalyst such as Jung but were of no use for the historian of chemistry.<sup>20</sup> In similar vein, Maurice Crosland wrote in his *Historical Studies in the Language of Chemistry* (1962):

The psychologist Jung considered the paradox as 'one of our most valued spiritual possessions' and stated that a religion 'becomes inwardly impoverished when it loses or reduces its paradoxes', because an unambiguous language is unsuited to express the incomprehensible. It seems clear that, whereas mystical alchemy may well have thrived on paradox, its existence in the literature was stultifying to alchemy as a science.<sup>21</sup>

Although more rationalistic sensibilities were offended by the mystically-minded 'adept', whose "cloud of obscure nomenclature and speculation contributed nothing to chemistry,"<sup>22</sup> other historians followed Pagel in an attempt to address the complete intellectual output of the alchemists. One such writer was Betty Dobbs, who – in stark contrast to Principe and Newman – utilised Jung's ideas to emphasise the continuity of the alchemical tradition with modern chemistry in her work *The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy* (1975). There she traced the influence on Isaac Newton's

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of Science Society Distinguished Lecture, *Isis*, Vol. 89, No.1, March 1998, pp. 66-81; also Pagel, *William Harvey's Biological Ideas*. New York: Karger, 1967, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup> Pagel, "Jung's Views on Alchemy," p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> Read, John. *The Alchemist in Life, Literature and Art*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1947, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Farber, Eduard. *The Evolution of Chemistry*. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952, pp. 39-40.

<sup>21</sup> Crosland, Maurice. *Historical Studies in the Language of Chemistry*. New York: Dover, 1962, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> Farber, *Evolution of Chemistry*, p. 40.

intellectual development of alchemical writers such as Michael Maier, who inspired Newton to dabble with his 'chemical' interpretation of myth and hieroglyph and study the older texts of the alchemical canon.<sup>23</sup> Dobbs charted Newton's efforts to experimentally verify the notions of alchemy, particularly those of the Neoplatonist alchemists, and she described Newton's career as 'one long attempt to integrate alchemy and the mechanical philosophy.'<sup>24</sup>

Although she also criticised Jung's ahistorical approach, Dobbs followed Jung's historiography in the course of her work, describing an 'older' ancient and medieval alchemy in which psychological processes remained largely unconscious to the adept, and a 'newer' alchemy arising with the advent of the Reformation, in which divisions began to appear between a conscious alchemical mysticism and an experimentally-based alchemy.<sup>25</sup> Attempting to give some more historical grounding to Jung's schema, Dobbs called upon the ideas of the left-leaning psychoanalyst Erich Fromm.<sup>26</sup> According to Fromm, large-scale 'individuation' or reflexive personal development emerged in the wake of the collapse of medieval social structures; Dobbs suggested such a socio-historical process may have given rise to 'a more spiritual variety of alchemy'.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, a more rigorous experimental study of alchemical processes also ensued:

That was excellent for chemistry, which was thereby enabled to incorporate into itself a rational alchemical paradigm, but it was deadly for the older alchemy. It had been too thoroughly chemicalised to carry out its older functions of a religious and psychological nature, for those functions required a considerable ignorance about the substances with which the alchemist worked. From that time on the intertwined halves of the older alchemy were irrevocably separated.<sup>28</sup>

So although Dobbs followed Jung in his distinction between a 'scientific' and a 'spiritual' alchemy in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, she did not believe Jung's work supported the notion of a radical discontinuity in the evolution of chemistry. Rather, she believed modern chemistry had emerged from a new 'experimental alchemy' that was integrally linked to the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment:

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<sup>23</sup> Dobbs, Betty Jo Teeter. *The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 90, 192.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 42, 80.

<sup>26</sup> It should be said that Dobbs incorrectly refers to Fromm as an 'analytical psychologist', the term utilised by Jungian psychoanalysts.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

...it seems clear that both the mechanical philosophers and the reformers who were descended intellectually from the mystical Rosicrucians contributed to the new alchemy which insisted upon full communication of alchemical secrets, experimental study of alchemical processes, and full description of experimental results in common chemical terminology... The function of the movement towards the rationalization of alchemy was to join alchemy to the mainstream of the scientific revolution, destroy its quasi-religious aspect, and set it on a path of gradual evolution into objective chemistry.<sup>29</sup>

The first major challenge to the historiography promoted by Jung came from the French historian of alchemy, Barbara Obrist. From the outset of her *Les Débuts de l'Imagerie Alchimique (XIV<sup>e</sup> – XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (1982), a study of alchemical illustration in the late medieval period, Obrist felt it necessary to dispense with Jung's perspective – a perspective which, she lamented, had acquired the status of a self-evident truth and was no longer questioned by historians of alchemy.<sup>30</sup> Arguing against its 'monopolisation' of the academic study of alchemy, Obrist described Jung's theory as an 'ahistorical vision' which does not take into account the specific political, social and intellectual contexts of the periods and societies in which alchemy has functioned. Whilst we have seen that this criticism had been voiced by earlier writers more sympathetic to the Jungian approach, Obrist extended her critique to the historiography proposed by Jung. Thus Jung's 'early' or 'classical' alchemy – to which Dobbs had recourse in her work – is an erroneous construct presented as a 'great timeless unit' framed by late antiquity and the seventeenth century. Obrist believed that Jung utilised his theory of universal archetypal propensities of the human psyche "in order to make products as strange as alchemical writings and illustrations, pertaining to fundamentally 'other' intellectual milieus, accessible to the reader of the twentieth century."<sup>31</sup>

According to Obrist, this ahistorical approach of Jung led him to propagate two mistaken conceptions regarding alchemy, which were later reinforced by the historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, in *The Forge and the Crucible* (1962): firstly, the fundamental religiosity of the alchemists, and secondly, their 'animistic' (that is to say, vitalistic) worldview.<sup>32</sup> With regard to the first error, Obrist cites Jung's attitudes towards Christological motifs in the late medieval literature, which she believes served the primarily rhetorical purpose of explaining purely chemical processes figuratively. Stating that the medieval alchemist possessed "a very developed consciousness of the levels of designations and strategies of language," she argues that there is nothing to

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81, 91.

<sup>30</sup> Obrist, Barbara. *Les Débuts de l'Imagerie Alchimique (XIV<sup>e</sup> – XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)*. Paris: Le Sycomore, 1982, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.



justify the notion that laboratory workers of this time were engaged in a spiritual quest for selfhood.<sup>33</sup> Rather, she believes Jung projected the Protestant myth of the solitary, interior search into the Middle Ages, thus portraying the medieval alchemist as a lone pre-Reformer, and all alchemy as an enterprise opposed to the dogmas of the Church. These misconceptions of Jung, Obrist argues, are inspired primarily by the esoteric literature of the seventeenth century and its perpetuation into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the form of ‘theosophy’ – a literature in which mystical quests, religion and alchemy are indeed bound together.<sup>34</sup> As for the second error referred to by Obrist, the views of Jung and Eliade merely echo those of Hélène Metzger, who sought to distinguish alchemy from a mechanistic chemistry with reference to its supposed vitalistic and organic view of the cosmos – a distinction recently undermined by Newman’s identification of a corpuscularian tradition within medieval and early modern alchemy.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. The arguments of Principe and Newman

In a manner similar to Obrist, Principe and Newman reject both Jung’s historiography and his theory of projection, although their criticisms focus on the alchemy of early modernity rather than that of the medieval period. In his first foray into the subject of the Jungian interpretation of alchemy and its reception, *Decknamen or Pseudochemical Language? Eirenaeus Philalethes and Carl Jung* (1996), Newman draws upon the work of the pseudonymous seventeenth century author Eirenaeus Philalethes to demonstrate that the surreal symbols of seventeenth century laboratory alchemy are in fact “secretive names for mineral substances” rather than “parables of the psyche unfolding its own transformation,” as Jung had proposed.<sup>36</sup> Newman cites the work of Obrist, as well as that of Robert Halleux, in support of his contentions, and states that in view of the rejection of Jung by such “serious historians of alchemy,” his own critique could be considered ‘otiose’.<sup>37</sup>

Whilst there is much that is to be commended in the extensive work of Principe and Newman on the subject of early modern alchemy, an even-handed appraisal of their contribution to the field requires that we sort the

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Metzger, Hélène. “L’évolution du règne métallique d’après les alchimistes du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Isis*, Vol. 4, 1922, pp. 466-482; Newman, William R. “The Corpuscular Theory of J. B. Van Helmont and its Medieval Sources,” *Vivarium*, Vol. 31, 1993, pp. 161-191.

<sup>36</sup> Newman, “*Decknamen or Pseudochemical Language?*,” pp. 160, 174.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

wheat from the chaff and dispense with a number of methodological and factual errors in their analyses from the outset. On this count, it must be stated that Halleux by no means holds “an overtly anti-Jungian position.”<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, in the passage cited by Newman (and referred to again by Principe and Newman in their most recent work on the matter<sup>39</sup>) Halleux praises Jung’s scrupulous adherence to the fruits of erudition concerning the dating and authorship of texts, and speaks of Jung’s ‘brilliant’ exegesis of certain particularly ‘mystical’ texts such as the Hellenistic Egyptian *Visions of Zosimos*.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Halleux draws directly from Jung’s writings in his exposition of medieval alchemy; his only caveat is that put forward by those other partisans of Jung, Pagel and Dobbs – namely the ahistorical nature of the Jungian approach.<sup>41</sup> Contrary to Principe and Newman, Halleux’s opinions on the matter of medieval alchemy are diametrically opposed to those of Obrist on precisely the subject of Jung; for example, Halleux refers to the corpus of pseudo-Arnoldus de Villanova to emphasise the close connection of religion with alchemy in the medieval period, and to show that the medieval adept was often concerned with ‘a process of spiritual self-transformation’.<sup>42</sup> Obrist, on the other hand, refers to the same corpus in the following manner:

In the texts attributed to Arnold, the metaphor of Christ appears amongst others which are used as examples, helping to demonstrate chemical processes that are difficult to understand. They are metaphors like the others, and nothing but metaphors, a fact which Arnold and the authors who follow in his tradition explain extremely well, and which also applies to the illustrations of such treatises. Nothing allows us to speculate on the religiosity of an author when he uses a consciously rhetorical process.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Principe and Newman, “Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy,” p. 406: “...the historians Barbara Obrist and Robert Halleux have presented detailed arguments against Jung’s interpretation based upon their extensive reading of late medieval and Renaissance alchemical texts, indeed, some of the very same figurative texts that Jung found most attractive.”

<sup>40</sup> Halleux, Robert. *Les Textes Alchimiques*. Brepols: Turnhout, 1977, p. 55.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>43</sup> Obrist, *Les Débuts de l’Imagerie Alchimique*, p. 21: “Dans les textes attribués à Arnaud, la métaphore du Christ figure parmi d’autres qui servent d’*exempla*, aidant à démontrer des processus chimiques difficiles à comprendre. Ce sont des métaphores comme les autres, et rien que des métaphores, ce qu’Arnaud et les auteurs qui le suivent dans la même tradition expliquent fort bien et qui vaut aussi pour l’illustration de tels traités. Rien ne permet de spéculer sur la religiosité d’un auteur lorsqu’il utilise consciemment un procédé rhétorique.”

The misappropriation of Halleux by Principe and Newman could be explained as a simple matter of error in translation, and undoubtedly does not hinder the main thrust of their arguments; nevertheless, by exaggerating the weight of evidence in favour of their own ideas, newcomers to the subject are liable to gain a false impression concerning the acceptability of certain conceptions in the academic milieu. And here we must emphasise the importance of utilising an inclusive and ideally value-neutral language when dealing with the history of alchemy, lest we appear to repeat the positivist errors of authors such as Herbert Butterfield, who famously derided historians of alchemy as being “tinctured with the same type of lunacy they set out to describe.”<sup>44</sup> On this count Newman caricatures the Jungian interpretation of alchemy by stating that the work of Eirenaeus Philalethes is not “the product of a disordered mind” or the work of “an irrational mystic unable to express himself in clear English.”<sup>45</sup> It matters little that ‘irrational mystics’ have given rise to some of the finest literature in the English language; what is at stake here is the devaluation of religious sentiments – be they present in the work of Eirenaeus Philalethes or not. Furthermore, if we follow Principe and Newman in counterposing a positively valued ‘correct chemical analysis’<sup>46</sup> carried out by ‘serious historians of alchemy’<sup>47</sup> with a negatively valued ‘analysis of unreason’<sup>48</sup>, we not only run the risk of committing a violence against the texts at hand, but we also perform a disservice to contemporary scholarship on the subject of alchemy by excluding certain voices (principally those of the psychoanalysts) from the realms of valid discourse.

This initial criticism should serve to clarify the approach adopted by the current author – and it should also be abundantly clear that the criticisms I will shortly direct at the Jungian hermeneutic are not the work of a follower of Jung, lest I too should be accused of being “tinctured with the same type of lunacy” as the people I study.

The second error committed by Principe and Newman, and one that stands closer to the heart of their argument, is their fundamentally inaccurate portrayal of the Jungian theory of projection and its relation to the unconscious. Thus in their most recent work, “Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy,” Principe and Newman make a general

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<sup>44</sup> Butterfield, Herbert. *The Origins of Modern Science, 1300-1800*. New York: MacMillan, 1952, p. 98; cited in Principe and Newman, “Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy,” p. 389.

<sup>45</sup> Newman, “*Decknamen* or Pseudochemical Language?,” pp. 165, 188.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161; Principe and Newman, “Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy,” p. 401.

<sup>48</sup> Newman, “*Decknamen* or Pseudochemical Language?,” p. 174.

description of Jung's approach to alchemy in which they portray the projection of the symbols of 'individuation' onto the elements in the alembic as a conscious process:

According to Jung, alchemists were concerned less with chemical reactions than with psychic states taking place within the practitioner. The practice of alchemy involved the use of 'active imagination' on the part of the would-be adept, which led to a hallucinatory state in which he 'projected' the contents of his psyche onto the matter within his alembic... the actual substances employed in a process made no difference at all to the alchemist so long as they stimulated the psyche to its act of projection.<sup>49</sup>

To state that the alchemists were 'concerned with psychic states', or that they utilised 'active imagination' – a Jungian psychotherapeutic technique involving a 'dialogue' between the conscious and unconscious minds – implies that they held a conscious understanding of self-transformation as the goal of their Art; according to Jung's theory of projection, the alchemists were by and large *unaware* of the course of their psychic life during laboratory practice, and were conscious only of the very worldly goal of the transmutation of metals. Thus Jung and his followers do not suggest the alchemists were indifferent to the chemical nature of the substances in their retort, as Principe and Newman expressly state.<sup>50</sup> Rather, Jung argued that the 'classical' alchemy he referred to was "a chemical research into which there entered an admixture of unconscious psychic material by the way of projection;" and on this point it is pertinent to note that Principe and Newman misrepresent Jung's declaration that the alchemists dealt "*not only* with chemical experiments," giving instead "*not* with chemical experiments *as such*."<sup>51</sup> In Jung's view, only a minority of adepts through the centuries demonstrated a conscious understanding of the 'interior' dimensions of their work:

Certainly most of the alchemists handled their *nigredo* in the retort without knowing what it was they were dealing with. But it is equally certain that adepts like Morienus, Dorn, Michael Maier, and others knew in their way what they were doing. It was this knowledge,

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<sup>49</sup> Principe and Newman, "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy," p. 402.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Jung, "Psychologie und Alchemie," p. 282: "Im alchemischen Opus handelt es sich zum größten Teil *nicht nur* um chemische Experimente *allein*, sondern *auch* um etwas wie psychische Vorgänge, die in pseudochemischer Sprache ausgedrückt werden" (emphasis mine); Principe and Newman, "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy," pp. 401-402: "We are called upon to deal, not with chemical experimentations as such, but with something resembling psychic processes expressed in pseudo-chemical language."

and not their greed for gold, that kept them labouring at the apparently hopeless opus, for which they sacrificed their money, their goods and their life.<sup>52</sup>

As for those adepts whom Jung believed were more or less aware of the psychological dimensions of their work, and whose numbers increased following the sixteenth century ‘fission’ he stipulates, there is no indication in Jung’s work that he “wrote laboratory experimentation out of the picture” when considering such individuals.<sup>53</sup> Thus Jung describes Paracelsus as *both* the father of modern pharmacology *and* ‘a pioneer of empirical psychology and psychotherapy’, and makes mention of the post-Paracelsus emergence of a ‘fantastic species of literature’ to which the works of Count Michael Maier belong – fantastic because they are neither wholly unconscious projections upon a ‘chemical research’, nor are they purely speculative alchemical tracts of the ilk of the theosopher Boehme.<sup>54</sup>

Whilst Jung’s portrayal of medieval and antique alchemy as ‘a great timeless unit’ is indeed problematic, there remains no justification for the assertion of Principe and Newman that Jung believed any alchemical text that could be decoded into modern chemical language must thereby be excluded from the realms of a ‘good’ or ‘genuine’ alchemy.<sup>55</sup> In light of this fact, the insistence of these authors that the strange symbols utilised by the alchemists are “the products of a skilled use of traditional techniques of deception that extend back many centuries in the literature of alchemy” in no way contradicts the Jungian interpretation of alchemy.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in the early twentieth century it was widely understood that alchemical symbolism was a secret vocabulary of *Decknamen* for chemical substances, and Jung cited the definitive works of Ruska on this very matter approvingly.<sup>57</sup> Ruska

<sup>52</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav. “Mysterium Coniunctionis.” *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*. Vol. 14. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 521; Jung, Carl Gustav. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. Vol. 2. Düsseldorf: Walter Verlag, 1995, p. 298: “Ganz gewiß haben die meisten Alchemisten ihre nigredo in der Retort behandelt, ohne zu ahnen, was sie handhabten. Aber ebenso gewiß ist es, daß Adepten wie Morienus, Dorneus, Michael Maier und andere in ihrer Art wußten, worum es ging. Aus diesem Wissen und nicht etwa aus Goldgier entsprang bei ihnen die Nötigung zu dem anscheinend hoffnungslosen opus, dem sie Geld, Gut und Leben opferten.”

<sup>53</sup> Principe and Newman, “Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy,” p. 402.

<sup>54</sup> See above, n. 11.

<sup>55</sup> Jung’s assertion that there are “good and bad authors in alchemical literature” refers merely to the existence of charlatanism in the alchemical corpus; the fact that the texts of such charlatans are recognisable, in Jung’s view, by their ‘studied mystification’, clearly reveals that Jung was not referring to texts that were decodable into modern chemical language; see Jung, “Psychology and Alchemy,” p. 316.

<sup>56</sup> Newman, “*Decknamen* or Pseudochemical Language?,” p. 188.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Jung’s *Mysterium Coniunctionis*: “Die ‘Chelidonia’ kommt als Geheimname vor in jener Fassung der *Turba*, die vom Text, den Ruska gibt, nicht

testified to the wide acceptance of this fact in his formulation of the theory of *Decknamen*:

It is well known that the Greeks, Syrians, Persians, Arabians, Latinists, in short all nations that concerned themselves with alchemy in the course of two thousand years, gave codenames to the substances utilised in their secret craft, in order to protect the Art against the ignorant masses. The names are taken in part from the characteristics of the bodies concerned, so that quicksilver was known as the "volatile slave," tin the "gnasher," copper "the green" because of the colour of verdigris and the colour of its flame, or ammonia was given the names of various birds. Often they are connected with mystical and religious conceptions, as when the metals are defined with the names of the planets or their assigned Gods. Sometimes the names are also arbitrarily invented.<sup>58</sup>

The central flaw in Principe and Newmans' exposition of the theory of *Decknamen* as it relates to the Jungian hermeneutic lies in their use of a simplistic either-or logic – *either* the symbols of alchemy are products of the unconscious psyche, *or* they are secret code-names for chemical substances. This leads them to the following completely untenable position:

...if the images used in alchemical texts are in fact irruptions of the unconscious, then there would be no possibility of "working backwards" from them to decipher such images into actual, valid laboratory practice.<sup>59</sup>

Of course, the notion that a symbol may possess more than one significance is as integral to psychoanalysis as it was to seventeenth century alchemy. As Ruska states, certain symbols in the history of alchemy have borne explicit religious or mystical significance alongside their narrowly chemical meaning; thus we shall soon explore the import of the lead-Saturn-melancholy correspondence in the work of Maier, and his pietistic interpretation of the relationship between gold, the sun and the human heart. As for those symbols which Ruska describes as being of 'arbitrary invention', Principe and Newman explain them away simply by stating that the physical appearance of chemicals in the vessel is sometimes 'evocative'.<sup>60</sup> Whilst the latest neurophysiological research on the nature of religious experience has lent

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unerheblich abweicht. 'Quidam Philosophi nominaverunt aurum Chelidoniam, Karnech, Geldum' usw. Geldum erklärt Ruska als Chelidonium maius L." Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, p. 252, n. 81. Throughout his works Jung cites Ruska and his translations as authoritative.

<sup>58</sup> Ruska, Julius and E. Wiedemann. "Alchemistische Decknamen," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften*, Vol. 67, 1924, pp. 17-36; verdigris is a green or greenish blue poisonous pigment resulting from the action of acetic acid on copper.

<sup>59</sup> Principe and Newman, "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy," p. 406.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.

some credence to Jung's ideas,<sup>61</sup> one need not adhere to the Jungian theory of a phylogenetically determined collective unconscious to see that Principe and Newman's 'explanation' is no explanation at all. When Theobald de Hoghelande describes "the wonderful variety of figures that appear in the course of the work... just as we sometimes imagine in the clouds or in the fire strange shapes of animals, reptiles or trees," there can be no doubt that the 'arbitrary' symbols of alchemy are evoked from the psyche of the individual alchemist as much as from the physical processes in the vessel.<sup>62</sup> The psychoanalyst, of course, admits of no 'arbitrary invention' of the psyche – there is a hidden cause behind every product of consciousness, and each symbol thrown up by imaginative association betrays an unconscious complex of ideas. That the processes in the alchemical vessel were guided by a recognised chemical logic in no way precludes the possibility that another purely subjective logic came into play through the assignment of *Decknamen* to those processes by such association (a phenomenon known as *pareidolia* to the contemporary psychiatrist).<sup>63</sup>

Be this as it may, the following study will have no recourse to psychoanalytic ideas, be they Freudian or Jungian; my purpose here is to reconstruct the worldview of Count Michael Maier via an 'empirical' approach to the study of Western esotericism similar to that recently outlined by Wouter Hanegraaff, and wherever possible to rely upon the alchemists' own testimony concerning the nature of their work.<sup>64</sup> But it is necessary to establish from the outset that an art which variously promises unlimited abundance of worldly wealth, freedom from disease, ancient wisdom and eternal life could not fail to bear a deep psychological significance for its practitioners, and that the substances in the alchemical vessel carried the weight of the adept's hopes and imaginings. In the work of Maier (as Jung correctly surmised) that psychological dimension of the *opus* is consciously

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<sup>61</sup> See Newberg, Andrew and Eugene D'Aquili. *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2001, pp. 75-76 *et passim*.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Jung, "Psychology and Alchemy," pp. 238-239.

<sup>63</sup> Whilst the objection may be raised that the majority of alchemists dealt only with an established symbolic topology rather than their own imaginative inventions, it is difficult to deny that symbols as burdened with psychological import as the Passion of Christ or as rich in traditional cultural associations as Saturn would continue to constitute a repository for imaginary factors within the practitioner.

<sup>64</sup> On the distinction between 'religionist', 'reductionist' and 'empiricist' approaches to esotericism, and the necessity of recognising the historicity of religious phenomena whilst maintaining a methodological agnosticism concerning meta-empirical claims in the data at hand, see Hanegraaff, Wouter. "Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1995, pp. 99-129; see also Hanegraaff, Wouter. "Beyond the Yates Paradigm: The Study of Western Esotericism between Counterculture and New Complexity," *Aries*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2001, pp. 5-37.

recognised and expressed, and there is no need to draw on reductionist assumptions from modern psychoanalysis to identify or explain it. On the contrary, the origins of Rosicrucianism and the emergence of primarily Germanic 'spiritual' alchemies from heterodox Protestant sources casts a revealing light on the place of Jung's own psychological theories in the history of ideas.

This point leads us back to the criticism voiced by Pagel, Dobbs, Halleux, Obrist, Principe and Newman alike, namely the ahistorical nature of the Jungian approach. By consciously eschewing an historical analysis of alchemical literature, and treating its symbolism as a mythology of timeless origin in the collective psyche, Jung failed to give an adequate account of the cultural matrix from which his own ideas emerged, and consequently failed to recognise the bewildering diversity of endeavours that – for better or worse – have been gathered together under the rubric of the term 'alchemy'. Thus we would not expect alchemists such as the Paracelsian Gerhard Dorn or the traditionalist Michael Maier to be motivated by greed for gold – as Jung suggests in the passage we have cited – because their primary interest lay in *iatrochemia*<sup>65</sup> and the production of the Universal Medicine. Furthermore, Maier understood his relentless *peregrinatio* in search of patronage as a macrocosmic image of the operations within the alchemical vessel, a process of spiritual purification that was indeed integrally linked to his struggle for worldly wealth. And without a detailed understanding of the ultimate goal of Maier's laboratory experiments – a 'medicine of piety' that would cure diseases and impious urges alike by restoring the balance of humours in the body – it is not possible to understand the intimate connection of the 'chemical' and psychological dimensions of his alchemy. Despite the fact that the alchemical canon is littered with pseudonymous and anonymous tracts that are difficult to date, and despite the paucity of biographical data pertaining to many known alchemists, in the case of Count Michael Maier we are presented with a wealth of explicit autobiographical allusions that offer self-avowed insight into the psychological wellsprings of his alchemy.

There are a number of key elements in Maier's alchemy – a distinctively Protestant and individualistic spiritual quest, a paradoxical conjunction of spiritual and material factors, a confluence of pagan and Christian sentiments, an esoteric 'tradition' stemming from antiquity, a nascent German nationalism, solar mysticism, and Rosicrucianism itself – which

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<sup>65</sup> Although most frequently used in reference to Paracelsian practice, *iatrochemia* in the more general sense of the manufacturing of medicines from inorganic material existed prior to Paracelsus, e.g. in the work of Johannes de Rupescissa in the fourteenth century (see Haage, Bernhard Dietrich. *Alchemie im Mittelalter*. Düsseldorf: Artemis und Winkler, 2000, p. 195). As Maier was not a Paracelsian, the term *iatrochemia* will be used in this broader sense in the following pages.



confirm Obrist's contention that Jung's views have their origins in precisely the type of 'alchemy' propagated by Maier. However, this fact mitigates against Obrist's statement that Jung is dealing with worldviews that are fundamentally 'other' when it comes to early modern alchemy. For all its very tangential relation to the course of modern psychology, Jung's 'analytical psychology' clearly possesses the four fundamental characteristics of modern esotericism set forth by Faivre,<sup>66</sup> i.e. a doctrine of correspondences and sympathies;<sup>67</sup> a belief in a living and revelatory Nature;<sup>68</sup> an emphasis on imagination as the means to revelation;<sup>69</sup> and the practical objective of personal 'transmutation' through such revelation.<sup>70</sup> When we also consider Jung's tendencies towards solar mysticism,<sup>71</sup> his rather unflattering entanglement with a mystical German nationalism,<sup>72</sup> and his explicitly prophetic utterances concerning the imminence (i.e. at some time between 1997 and 2012) of an astrologically determinable catastrophe leading to a New Age in which pagan and Christian doctrines will be united,<sup>73</sup> we are no

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<sup>66</sup> See Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, pp. 10 ff.; also Faivre, Antoine and Karen-Claire Voss. "Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions," *Numen*, Vol. 42, 1995, pp. 60 ff.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. the concept of 'synchronistic' events arising as the result of acausal correspondences in the universe, c.f. Jung, Carl Gustav. "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle." In *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 8. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, pp. 417-531.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. the ultimate indivisibility of psyche and matter, c.f. Jung, Carl Gustav. "On the Nature of the Psyche." In *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 8. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, pp. 159-234, and the existence of archetypes in Nature as expressions of a 'meaningful orderedness', c.f. Jung, "Synchronicity."

<sup>69</sup> E.g. the use of 'active imagination' as a means of uncovering the archetypal layers of the psyche, c.f. Jung, Carl Gustav. "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious." In *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 9, Part 1. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 42-53.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. the process of 'individuation' towards the Self through the encounter with the archetypal realm, c.f. Jung, Carl Gustav. "On the Psychology of the Unconscious." In *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 7. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, pp. 1-119.

<sup>71</sup> C.f. Jung, Carl Gustav. "Symbols of Transformation." *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 5. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, *passim*.

<sup>72</sup> C.f. "Wotan." In *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 10. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 179-193.

<sup>73</sup> C.f. Jung, Carl Gustav. "Aion – Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self." *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 9, Part 2. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 86, 94, *et passim*.; also Jung, Carl Gustav. "A Psychological Approach to the Trinity." In *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 11. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, pp. 107-200; for Jung's last prophetic utterances, see Whitney, Mark (dir.). *Matter of Heart*. Los Angeles: C. G. Jung Institute, 1983.

longer dealing with a doctrine that stands in the realms of science as it is known today; rather, we are hearing the distant but distinct echoes of seventeenth century esotericism and a syncretic Protestant millennialism that once found expression in the Rosicrucian phenomenon.

#### 4. The origins of Jung's alchemy and the work of Richard Noll

Rather than taking their cue from Jung's explicit claim that the 'historical nexus' of his work lies in the Freemasonic and Rosicrucian traditions, Principe and Newman follow Richard Noll in emphasising certain nineteenth century occultists as the predecessors of Jung's interpretation of alchemy (we might more simply state 'the predecessors of Jung's alchemy', if we follow Eco in characterising alchemy primarily as a hermeneutic tradition).<sup>74</sup> On this count Principe and Newman ascribe the origins of Jung's views to the English occultist Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942); the rather insubstantial basis for their assertion is Noll's observation that Waite's works were circulating amongst members of Jung's Zurich Psychological Club in the 1910's.<sup>75</sup> Principe and Newman point to the supposed influence of Waite in order to support their central historiographic thesis that the conception of alchemy as a process of personal transmutation from a base, earthly state into "a more noble, more spiritual, more moral, or more divine state"—a conception which we shall follow Principe and Newman<sup>76</sup> in describing as 'spiritual alchemy'—has its origins in the nineteenth century:

Although it was in fact a commonplace of the early modern period to build extended religious conceits on alchemical processes and to draw theological parallels therefrom — an aspect of alchemical writing Luther praised in passing — the occultists of the nineteenth century went much further to claim that alchemy itself was an art of internal meditation rather than an external manipulation of apparatus and chemicals... The similarity of Jung's psychologising view to the 'spiritual evolution' system of A. E. Waite's *Azoth* is clear, and what we now know of Jung's juvenile interest in the occult and the currency of Victorian esoterica in Jung's early circles supports this observable similarity... we therefore come to the rather surprising conclusion that the residues of Victorian occultism have deeply colored the historical study of the discipline. It seems unlikely that many historians would continue

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<sup>74</sup> On the history of alchemy as the history of the interpretation of alchemy, see Eco, Umberto. *The Limits of Interpretation*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990, pp. 18-20.

<sup>75</sup> Principe and Newman, "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy," p. 402; Noll, Richard. *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung*. New York: Random House, 1997, pp. 229-230.

<sup>76</sup> Principe and Newman, "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy," p. 388.

to engage in the blithe generalizations criticized in this chapter if they realized their dubious origins.<sup>77</sup>

We shall soon contest the crypto-positivist notion that early modern alchemists merely built 'extended religious conceits' on purely 'chemical' processes, and the assertion of Principe and Newman that the 'yoking' of natural magic and astrology to alchemy was "consummated only during the final years of the *ancien régime* in France."<sup>78</sup> For now it will suffice to mention that, even if we accept the unsubstantiated theory of Waite's role in the formation of Jung's views, the Englishman did not disregard laboratory experiment in his portrayal of the history of alchemy, nor did he believe in the possibility of gold-making, as Principe and Newman claim; rather, he adopted the position that the alchemists advanced a 'theory of universal development' with equal application to metals and human beings, and that 'a few of the Hermetic symbolists' focused on 'man' as the subject of their work.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, Jung's approach has little in common with Waite's argument in the *Azoth, or the Star in the East* (1893) that "all alchemists were mystics and alchemy a mystic work."<sup>80</sup> Rather, his historiography more closely parallels Waite's work of 1926, *The Secret Tradition in Alchemy*, in which Waite revises his earlier opinion and traces the origins of 'spiritual alchemy' to the age of Luther – the time of the 'fission' which Jung believed to herald the widespread emergence of a conscious recognition of the psychological aspects of the alchemical work.<sup>81</sup>

In any case, we find no mention of Waite's theories on alchemy in Jung's works. On this count it must be said that Principe and Newman rely too heavily on the partisan diatribes of Noll, an ex-Jungian who has sought to expose his former mentor as a dangerous right-wing cultist and charlatan. Considerable controversy was aroused in 1994 by the publication of Noll's *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement*, in which Jung's analytical psychology was depicted as an attempt to fuse Freudian psychoanalysis with neo-pagan sun worship. Employing loosely Weberian conceptions, Noll portrays Jung as a prophet of the *völkisch* movement emergent in German Europe at the *fin-de-siècle*, and a founder of the

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 388, 418.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 387-388.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 394; Waite, Arthur Edward. *Lives of the Alchemystical Philosophers*. London: George Redway, 1888, p. 33: "...though it be impossible for the metal, it is true for the man."

<sup>80</sup> Waite, Arthur Edward. *Azoth, or the Star in the East*. London: Theosophical Publishing, 1893, p. 54.

<sup>81</sup> Waite, Arthur Edward. *The Secret Tradition in Alchemy*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1926, p. 366.

charismatic cult that is contemporary Jungianism.<sup>82</sup> At the time of his book's publication a strange polemic of Noll's featured in the editorial pages of *The New York Times* entitled *The Rose, the Cross and the Analyst*. Rather than legitimately drawing attention to Jung's place within the history of esotericism, as his title would naturally suggest, Noll oddly had nothing to say concerning Rosicrucianism. Rather, he argued that Jung was a cult leader and 'new Christ' of the same ilk as Luc Jouret of the Order of the Solar Temple, whose followers had been led to their deaths by "the same potent mixture of sun worship, alchemy and spiritual rebirth" espoused by Jung. Noll also took the opportunity to affiliate Jung with David Koresh of the Branch Davidians and Jim Jones of the People's Temple – and given the violent and tragic history of these groups, such inaccurate associations understandably provoked a chorus of protest from Jungian psychotherapists and sympathisers.<sup>83</sup> Whatever genuinely religious foundations analytical psychology may possess, a comparison of Jungian psychotherapy to the millennialist cults in question was simply inaccurate and misleading from the perspective of the academic study of religion,<sup>84</sup> and merely demonstrated Noll's well-established predilection for sensationalism.<sup>85</sup>

There was an unacknowledged personal subtext to the inaccuracies of Noll's work: a clinical psychiatrist by training, he had earlier published a number of articles in which he garnered experimental evidence to support Jung's conceptions of the archetype, psychological projection, and a transpersonal and atemporal 'collective unconscious'.<sup>86</sup> The uncritical naïveté

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<sup>82</sup> Noll, Richard. *The Jung Cult – Origins of a Charismatic Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

<sup>83</sup> Noll, Richard. "The Rose, the Cross and the Analyst," *The New York Times*, October 15, 1994, p. 19. Two days prior to the publication of this article, Luc Jouret had led 52 of his followers in a mass murder/suicide in Switzerland and Canada; according to Noll, both Jung and Jouret were charismatic Swiss occultists posing as 'new Christs'. For the Jungian response to these outlandish claims, see Kirsch, Thomas B. "The Rose, the Cross and the Analyst," *Anima*, vol. 21, 1994, pp. 67-69.

<sup>84</sup> For scholarly critiques of Noll's thesis, see Segal, Robert. "Critical Notice," *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, vol. 40, 1995, pp. 597-608; Shamdasani, Sonu. *Cult Fictions: C. G. Jung and the Founding of Analytical Psychology*. London: Routledge, 1998.

<sup>85</sup> Consider, for example, Noll's *Bizarre Diseases of the Mind* – a book which demonstrates an entirely exploitative attitude towards its 'real-life' subject matter that is strongly reminiscent of contemporary American television culture. A small sampling of the chapter contents should suffice to demonstrate this point: 'True Tales of Lycanthropy' ("Werewolves? In the twentieth century? You bet there are!"), 'Vampires!' ("these are rare instances – but they do happen. Be certain of that...") and 'Deathly Horrors: Mummification and Necrophilia' ("Morbid? Yes. But many cases have been documented..."); Noll, Richard. *Bizarre Diseases of the Mind*. Berkeley: Berkeley Publishing Group, 1990, pp. 88, 109, 165.

<sup>86</sup> Noll, Richard. "Multiple Personality, Dissociation, and C. G. Jung's Complex Theory," *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, Vol 34, No. 4, October 1989, pp. 353-370; Noll,

Noll exhibited in his earlier writings appears to be inversely proportional to the antagonism expressed towards Jung following his break with the Aion Society and the C. G. Jung Center of Philadelphia in 1993, a fact that leads one to suspect he was less than objective on both counts.<sup>87</sup> Through a repeated emphasis on certain doctrinal commonalities between analytical psychology and Nazi ideology – commonalities that have stronger, older roots in German esoteric tradition than racialist *fin-de-siècle* occultism – *The Jung Cult* utilised a guilt-by-association methodology that played on lingering anti-German sentiments in the English-speaking West. For example, Noll presented Jung's 'Gnostic' myth, the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* (1916) as central evidence that Jung was involved in "a *völkisch* intellectual and spiritual elite, an underground 'secret Germany'" that would revitalise the German peoples by means of an Aryan 'inner sun'.<sup>88</sup> It is more pertinent to note that the hero of Jung's adolescence, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, composed a similar 'Gnostic' tract amidst his own existential crisis, a work inspired by the alchemical and gnostic conceptions he had received from the Pietist Moravian Brethren.<sup>89</sup> As Goethe before him, Jung stood within an esoteric tradition emphasising the unity of pagan and Christian truths. Nevertheless, the one-sidedness of Noll's anti-Germanic caricature in *The Jung Cult* was counterbalanced somewhat in his *The Aryan Christ: The Secret Life of Carl Jung* (1997) – a work which, whilst still advocating the erroneous thesis that Jung believed himself to be an 'Aryan Jesus',<sup>90</sup> dealt at greater length with Pietist and Rosicrucian currents as the ideological source of Jung's thought.<sup>91</sup>

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Richard. "C. G. Jung and J. B. Rhine: Two Complementary Approaches to the Phenomenology of the Paranormal." In Shapin, Betty and Lisette Coly (eds). *Parapsychology and Human Nature*. New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 1989.

<sup>87</sup> Hence Noll's introduction to the *Encyclopedia of Schizophrenia and the Psychotic Disorders*, where he speaks with adulation of Jung as a 'giant' on whose shoulders he has stood, and thanks the deceased psychoanalyst "for the tremendous impact his life and work have had on my life, both personally and professionally." Noll, Richard (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Schizophrenia and the Psychotic Disorders*. New York: Facts on File, 2000.

<sup>88</sup> Noll, *The Jung Cult*, pp. 244-246.

<sup>89</sup> Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Poetry and Truth*. Vol. 1. Trans. Minna Smith. London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1911, p. 313.

<sup>90</sup> In the very same lecture that Jung deals with his vision of self-transformation into the Mithraic/Gnostic *leontocephalus*, he clearly states that anyone who succumbs to the temptation of personally identifying with such an image 'would become a crank or a fool', a statement in keeping with his 'phenomenological' approach; Segal, "Critical Notice," p. 605; Noll, *The Jung Cult*, p. 211.

<sup>91</sup> Noll, *The Aryan Christ*, pp. 3-21.

### 5. 'Secret threads': the seventeenth century 'Carl Jung of Mainz' and Count Michael Maier

However, rather than following the unreliable work of Noll, or looking for Jung's influences on the basis of perceived doctrinal similarities – insignificant as they might be in the case of Waite – we should first look to Jung's own testimony on the matter when considering the genesis of his spiritual alchemy. In the winter of 1955-1956, following the death of his wife, Jung was decorating the tower-house he had constructed on the shores of Lake Zurich at Bollingen. Whilst chiselling the names of his paternal ancestors on three stone tablets for the courtyard of his tower, Jung tells us he became aware of certain 'fateful links' with his forebears:

I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my parents and grandparents and more distant ancestors... It has always seemed to me that I had to answer questions which fate had posed to my forefathers, and which had not yet been answered, or as if I had to complete, or perhaps continue, things which previous ages had left unfinished.<sup>92</sup>

In accordance with this sense of evolving family destiny, Jung painted the ceiling of his tower with the heraldic arms formulated by his grandfather and namesake, a Grand Master of the Swiss Lodge of Freemasons. Jung's antipathy for his father, a Calvinist preacher, and for the 'lifeless' orthodoxy he represented had led to his strong identification with Carl Gustav Jung senior – a famous Basel physician and Romantic who, family rumour had it, was the illegitimate son of Goethe.<sup>93</sup> The arms of his grandfather apparently

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<sup>92</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav. *Memories Dreams Reflections*. Trans. R. and C. Winston. New York: Vintage Books, 1973, p. 233; Jung, Carl Gustav. *Erinnerungen Träume Gedanken*. Stuttgart: Rascher Verlag, 1962, p. 237: "Ich habe sehr stark das Gefühl, daß ich unter dem Einfluß von Dingen oder Fragen stehe, die von meinen Eltern und Großeltern und den weiteren Ahnen unvollendet und unbeantwortet gelassen wurden... So schien es mir immer, als ob auch ich Fragen zu beantworten hätte, die bei meinen Ahnen schon schicksalsmäßig aufgeworfen, aber noch nicht beantwortet worden sind, oder als ob ich Dinge vollenden oder auch nur fortsetzen müsse, welche die Vorzeit unerledigt gelassen hat."

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41. Whilst Jung described the story of his descent from Goethe as an "annoying tradition," a student friend recalled Jung's pride in recounting the tale – according to Gustav Steiner, "it was not the legend that perplexed me, but the fact that he told us about it;" Ellenberger, Henri. *The Discovery of the Unconscious*. New York: Basic Books, 1970, p. 665. Jung makes no attempt in his autobiography to clarify the question of his ancestry for his readers; the editor of *Erinnerungen Träume Gedanken*, Aniela Jaffé, mentions in an appendix the improbability of Goethe's siring a son by Jung's great-grandmother, but she also recalls Jung's sense of gratification as he recollected the legend: Jung, *Erinnerungen*, p. 399.

depicted a blue cross in the upper right of the shield, separated by a blue bar from blue grapes in a field of gold in the lower left. The symbolism, according to Jung, was 'Masonic or Rosicrucian' – just as the Rosicrucian motif of the cross and red rose represents opposing Christian and pagan forces, so the blue cross and grapes symbolise "the heavenly and the chthonic (i.e. earthly) spirit."<sup>94</sup> In the midst of the separating blue bar is a golden star, which Jung referred to as the *aurum philosophorum* ('philosophers' gold') or symbol for the unity of opposites. For the ageing psychologist, this esoteric symbolism represented "the historical nexus of my thinking and life."<sup>95</sup>

Crucially, in his autobiography Jung goes on to trace the roots of his destiny as the founder of analytical psychology beyond his grandfather. Although his train of thought is typically obscure on this point, Jung suggests he is descended from a Dr. Carl Jung of Mainz (d.1645), whom he portrays as a follower of none other than Count Michael Maier, a 'founder' of Rosicrucianism. As a 'Paracelsian' this supposed ancestor was purportedly acquainted with Gerhard Dorn, a man whom Jung believed to have "grappled with the process of individuation" more than any other alchemist. Jung goes on to comment suggestively that "all this is not without a certain interest" in light of his own concern with alchemical symbolism and the *coniunctio oppositorum* ('conjunction of opposites').<sup>96</sup> In this way Jung intimates that the unanswered questions he felt driven to resolve through his lifelong intellectual and therapeutic work stretch back to the Rosicrucianism of Count Michael Maier and the alchemy of the Paracelsians.

My concern here is not to cast judgment upon Jung's imaginings. Rather, it is to demonstrate that Jung considered the esoteric traditions of Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism as his own spiritual heritage, and that there are good reasons for accepting his claim. Indeed, if we wish to look to citations of theory rather than Jung's autobiographical musing when tracing the origins of his hermeneutic, then our starting point is provided by Herbert Silberer (1882-1923), the man whom Jung followed in proclaiming the *coniunctio oppositorum* to be the central idea of alchemical procedure.<sup>97</sup> Silberer was a Freemason and pupil of Freud who toyed with Jung's theory of archetypes and the progressive nature of the unconscious prior to his suicide in 1923.<sup>98</sup> In the work Silberer dedicated to alchemy, *Probleme*

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<sup>94</sup> Jung, *Erinnerungen*, p. 236.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

<sup>97</sup> Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, p. 228; as its title suggests, the *coniunctio oppositorum* is the central problem tackled by Jung in this work.

<sup>98</sup> Apparently Silberer also experimented with sleep deprivation in his quest to unlock the secrets of the 'hypnagogic' and 'hypnopompic' states between waking and sleeping; as he poignantly remarked when discussing the Jungian term 'introversion', "Die Intro-

*der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik* (1914), we find the fundamental tenets of Jung's alchemy in embryonic form. These include Silberer's comparison of alchemical symbolism with dream motifs and his conception that the "elementary types" of the unconscious had "insinuated themselves into the body of the alchemical hieroglyphics" as the alchemists struggled with the "riddles of physico-chemical facts."<sup>99</sup> Here we have the theory of a projection of psychic contents of a supra-individual nature onto the alchemical work of the laboratory, formulated more than twenty years prior to Jung's first public utterances on the subject. In his autobiographical *Erinnerungen Träume Gedanken* ('Memories, Dreams, Reflections,' 1961) Jung appears (somewhat characteristically) to downplay Silberer's role in the genesis of his own thought by stating that he had 'completely forgotten' the psychoanalyst's work prior to his own 'discovery' of the psychological import of alchemical symbolism in 1928.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, in the foreword and conclusion of the work he considered to be his *opus magnum*, the *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1956), Jung pays homage to Silberer as the 'first' researcher to uncover the psychological significance of alchemy, with the proviso that his predecessor was still constrained by the 'primitive' state of psychological knowledge in 1914 – an allusion to Silberer's dependence on Freudian theory and the undeveloped state of Jung's own ideas at that time:

Herbert Silberer, who unfortunately died too early, has the merit of being the first to discover the secret threads that lead from alchemy to the psychology of the unconscious. The state of

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version ist kein Kinderspiel. Sie führt zu Abgründen hin, von denen man verschlungen werden kann, rettungslos. Wer sich der Introversion unterzieht, gelangt an einen Punkt, wo sich zwei Wege trennen; und dort muß er eine Entscheidung treffen..."; Silberer, Herbert. *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik*. Vienna: Hugo Deller & Co., 1914, p. 171.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206: "Die viel besprochenen Elementartypen haben sich also bei der Gelegenheit in das Corpus der alchemistischen Hieroglyphik eingeschlichen, als die Menschheit, den chemisch-physikalischen Tatsachen als Rätseln gegenüberstehend, mit dem Ausdruck rang zu ihrer gedanklichen Bewältigung..."

<sup>100</sup> "Merkwürdigerweise hatte ich ganz vergessen, was Herbert Silberer über Alchemie geschrieben hatte. Zur Zeit, als sein Buch erschien, kam mir die Alchemie als etwas Abseitiges und Skurriles vor, so sehr ich auch Silberers anagogischen, d. h. konstruktiven Gesichtspunkt zu schätzen wußte. Ich stand damals in Korrespondenz mit ihm und habe ihm meine Zustimmung ausgedrückt. Wie sein tragisches Ende zeigt, war jedoch seine *Ansicht* von keiner *Einsicht* gefolgt... Erst durch den Text der „Goldene Blüte“, der zur Chinesischen Alchemie gehört, und den ich 1928 von Richard Wilhelm erhalten hatte, ist mir das Wesen der Alchemie näher gekommen." Jung, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 207-208. On this matter also see Jung's letter to Erich Neumann dated the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, 1935, in Jung, Carl Gustav. *Letters*. Adler, Gerhard and Aniela Jaffé (eds.). Vol. 1. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 206 ff.; and Martin, Luther H. "A History of the Psychological Interpretation of Alchemy," *Ambix*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1975, pp. 10-20.



psychological knowledge at that time was still too primitive and still too much wrapped up in personalistic assumptions for the whole problem of alchemy to be understood psychologically.<sup>101</sup>

Jung's intellectual hubris notwithstanding, it is clear that the confluence of alchemical and psychoanalytic doctrine to be found in the works of Silberer and Jung alike marks a qualitatively new phase in the history of alchemical interpretation. However, if Silberer and Jung are to be evaluated from a broader perspective in the history of ideas as the purveyors of a 'spiritual alchemy', as Principe and Newman suggest, then we must follow those 'secret threads' of which Jung speaks and trace the sources of their (non-exclusive) conception of alchemy as a process of self-transformation within the alchemist.

In his *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik*, Silberer attributes the 'rediscovery' of the psychological content of alchemy to the 'profound' Ethan Allen Hitchcock (1798-1870); throughout his work Silberer states that he is indebted to Hitchcock when he argues that the central subject of the Hermetic Art is humankind – i.e. its subject is *das Subjekt*.<sup>102</sup> Hitchcock was a Union general and military adviser to Abraham Lincoln who, like Silberer, was influenced by Freemasonic doctrine: indeed, his father Samuel was a prominent Freemason who incorporated the society's motifs into the seal of the state of Vermont.<sup>103</sup> Hitchcock's thesis as set forward in his *Remarks*

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<sup>101</sup> Jung, "Mysterium Coniunctionis" (English edition), p. 555; Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (German edition), p. 334: "Dem leider zu früh verstorbenen Herbert Silberer kommt das Verdienst zu, der erste gewesen zu sein, die geheimen Fäden, die von der Alchemie zur Psychologie des Unbewußten laufen, entdeckt zu haben. Allerdings war der Zustand der damaligen psychologischen Erkenntnis noch zu primitiv und zu sehr in personalistischen Voraussetzungen befangen, als daß das Gesamtproblem der Alchemie psychologisch hätte erfaßt werden können."

<sup>102</sup> Silberer, *Probleme der Mystik*, pp. 211, 97: "Das Verdienst, den über das Chemische und Physikalische hinausgehenden Gehalt der Alchemie wiedergefunden zu haben, gebührt wohl dem Amerikaner Ethan Allen Hitchcock, der seine Ansichten über die Alchemisten in dem Buch "Remarks upon Alchemy and the Alchemists" niederlegte, das 1857 in Boston erschien... Die Entdeckungen, zu welchen der tiefsinnige Hitchcock gelangte, sind für unsere Analyse so wichtig, daß ihre ausführliche Entwicklung nicht umgangen werden kann... Hitchcock liefert uns in einem einzigen Wort den Schlüssel zum Verständnis der hermetischen Meister, wenn er sagt: Das Subjectum ist – der Mensch. Man kann sich auch eines Wortspiels bedienen und sagen: das Subjectum ist das Subjekt."

<sup>103</sup> See Smith, Henry Perry. *History of Addison County Vermont*. Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1886, p. 143; also Thomas, John D. "The Engine of Enlightenment: Samuel Hitchcock and the Creation of the University of Vermont Seal." Unpublished paper, an abstract of which is to be found in *The Center for Research on Vermont Newsletter*, Vol. 24, No. 1, April 1999. Although I am loath to further propagate unsubstantiated myths and fabrications concerning the history of esotericism, it has been alleged that Ethan Allen Hitchcock belonged to a certain 'Council of Three' in the Freemasonic 'Order of

upon *Alchemy and the Alchemists* (1857) is that the alchemists were concerned with the procurement of a spiritual 'new birth' through the casting out of the 'superfluity' of evil.<sup>104</sup> Thus he declares that "the *subject* of Alchemy was Man, while the *object* was the perfection of Man," but as true 'Reformers' of the Church the alchemists were compelled to obscure their properly religious purpose in a pseudo-chemical language.<sup>105</sup> Silberer did not adopt as untenable a position on the question of *Decknamen* and laboratory experimentation as his predecessor, but rather dealt at length in *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik* with "the problem of multiple interpretation."<sup>106</sup> His research led him to propose three simultaneous significations of alchemical symbolism: a regressive significance "leading to the depths of the impulsive life;" an 'anagogic' or progressive significance leading to "high religious ideals;" and a chemical significance pertaining to the realms of science and natural philosophy.<sup>107</sup> If we dispense with the 'regressive significance' drawn from Freud, we have the broad outlines of the dual interpretation proposed by Jung – on the one hand alchemical symbolism reflects laboratory experiment, and on the other it reflects 'individuating' tendencies towards the realisation of the 'Self', to translate Silberer's terms into those of Jung's spiritual alchemy.

As we cannot accept Jung's claim that he had 'forgotten' Silberer's work, replete as it is with Jung's own theories applied to the subject of alchemy, then we must recognise *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik* as Jung's first documented and most formative encounter with alchemy, and it behoves us to examine more closely the origins of the ideas advanced by Silberer. Both Silberer and his predecessor Hitchcock drew their spiritual alchemy in large part from conceptions expressed in the higher degrees of Freemasonry, which have as their goal the progressive transformation of the human personality from a state of primitivity and darkness to a higher level of human consciousness. Indeed, since the late eighteenth century various Freemasonic Lodges have incorporated spiritual alchemical conceptions into their higher degrees, a fact which has led many authors in the last two centuries to trace the origins of modern Freemasonry to Rosicrucian

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the Lily', which claimed its descent from Rosicrucianism by charter of the Supreme Grand Lodge of France; Hitchcock supposedly took his place in this 'Council' alongside Abraham Lincoln and the occultist P. B. Randolph (1825-1875). These assertions have been discredited in the article "Abraham Lincoln was not a Freemason," *Lincoln Lore*, No.1595, January 1971.

<sup>104</sup> Hitchcock, Ethan Allen. *Remarks upon Alchemy and the Alchemists*. Boston: Crosby, Nichols, and Co., 1857, pp. 226-227.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. viii-ix, 22.

<sup>106</sup> Silberer, *Probleme der Mystik*, pp. 133-146.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 145-146.