

Introduction

THE DISCONCERTING IMAGES AND AGENDAS OF ALCHEMY

*“You are now in this Degree permitted to extend your
researches into the more hidden paths of nature and science.”*

From the Initiation of the Fellow Craft¹

IF WE WERE TO TELL YOU that there is an alchemical agenda that transcends religions, secret societies and spans the millennia, you would probably - and rightly - at least entertain the suspicion that we had taken momentary leave of our sanity. If we were to tell you, further, that this alchemical agenda spans virtually every discipline that you can think of - from biology to history, physics, topology, art, music - even, as we shall see in the main text, literary criticism - you would probably entertain that idea more seriously, for that, indeed, is what we are going to tell you in these pages, for superintending all the alchemical images and their implied agendas that we survey here, there is one standing out above them all, that both compels the agendas, and simultaneously reveals some of them as forms of false alchemy; the image is that of primordial simplicity, or androgyny, or “Nothingness,” or physical medium, or aether, or “ocean of quantum flux,” or Grand Architect of the Universe. The image goes by many names, depending on the fashion of the age, and the particular agenda emphasized, but it is, nonetheless, the same image.

This means that modern man is in a predicament, for he is about to be sacrificed, either upon an apocalyptic altar of alchemical science, or, if one is to believe the “Three Great Yahwisms” - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - slaughtered by a righteous God come back to restore justice to the world by an unparalleled bloodletting, prior to mankind’s final transformation - if one is to believe a certain strand of Christian fundamentalist eschatology - into the very same sorts of alchemical creations as proffered by the transhuman-

ist science they excoriate. Either way, the transhumanist gospels of Science or the revelations, prophets, and ministers of Yahwism are saying the same thing: the New Age is here; prepare to die as part of your process of alchemical transformation.

For those caught in the middle, neither worshipping the unrestrained power lust of modern science, nor the bloodthirsty “God” of the “revealed monotheisms,” this is, indeed, a predicament.

In this book, we propose to examine the first pole of this sacrificial dialectic, the “scientific” one, reserving our comments on the bloody eschatology of the Three Great Yahwisms for a future work and sequel to this, though we shall, of course, treat it briefly here. Nonetheless, we *are* concerned here with altars and an alchemical, transhumanist apocalypse, for in this case, the altars are not only in churches, but the altar in preparation is the earth, the sacrifice is mankind, and the alchemy is...well... alchemy, for there is nothing terribly modern about the goals and agendas being discussed and advanced in “modern” science at all. In the Introduction to our previous book, *The Grid of the Gods*, we wrote;

Modern science is but a technique of the imagination to bring into reality the operations of the magical intellect and the mythologies of the ancients, with consistent and predictable regularity. This implies, therefore, that the magical intellect encountered so often in ancient texts, myths, and monuments is, in fact, the product of a decayed science, but a science nonetheless. Much of modern physics may be viewed as but Hermetic metaphysics with “topological” equations,² and by a similar process of examination, much of modern genetics may be viewed as but the myths of Sumer, Babylon, and even the Mayans, given flesh by the techniques of genetic engineering.³

Though we both noticed this odd coincidence of modern science and ancient myths, each of us came to the writing of this book by very different, and yet in many respects, by very parallel routes. Indeed, for both of us, a heavy atmosphere of synchronicity hovers over the observations and experiences that brought us here, to this book. For each of us, the process began when we were both at Oxford – though at different times – pursuing our PhD’s in theology, and we each kept what we were noticing carefully to ourselves, in hidden thoughts written in notebooks of observations, carefully held away from

public view or hidden even more carefully away on the tablets of our minds. There, like Percy Shelley's⁴ tormented monster-creator, Victor Frankenstein, we began to "notice" things in the writings of Medieval schoolmen, alchemists, theologians, and novelists:

These thoughts supported my spirits, while I pursued my undertaking with unremitting ardour. My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement. Sometimes, on the very brink of certainty, I failed; yet still I clung to the hope which the next day or the next hour might realize. One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself, and the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding places. Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil ...⁵

We too were after an answer regarding how the ancients understood Nature, life, death, and the creation or re-creation of life., and quite naturally so, for as students of theology and philosophy, our journey was to be a focus of our doctoral research as well as lead us down paths that, until now, were shared only between the two of us in private conversations.

A. ALCHEMO-CHIMERICAL MAN,
ALCHEMO-VEGETABLE MAN, ALCHEMOSEXUAL MAN:
DEFINITIONS AND PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Why was it, we wondered, that the basic ancient myths - excepting those offshoots of Yahwism - were based on the idea of mankind's descent from a Primordial Androgyny, through the Mineral, through the Vegetable, and finally into the Animal Kingdoms? How could the ancient myths even *speak* of a "Mineral Man" or "Vegetable Man?" These images are disconcerting, even nonsensical, but the most disconcerting thing about them, as we discovered, was that they also reappeared in the snapshots of modern science that every so often make a column filler-article in a newspaper, or make their way around internet sites.

Why was it, we wondered, that ancient esoteric lore could speak of the lowest level of mankind's descent, that of the Animal Kingdom, populating its mythological world with chimerical hybrid creatures, half animal, and half human, and modern science could speak of the same things - even calling them "manimals" - as a *goal to be sought?*