

*Meditation on the  
First Major Arcanum of the Tarot*

THE MAGICIAN

LE BATELEUR

*Spiritus ubi vult spirat: et vocem  
ejus audis, sed nescis unde veniat,  
aut quo vadat: sic est omnis,  
qui natus est ex spiritu.*

(John iii, 8)

The wind blows where it wills, and  
you hear the sound of it, but you do  
not know whence it comes or whither  
it goes; so it is with every one  
who is born of the Spirit.

(John iii, 8)

Into this happy night  
In secret, seen of none.  
Nor saw I aught,  
Without other light or guide.  
Save that which in my heart did burn.

(St. John of the Cross)\*

# LETTER I



## THE MAGICIAN

Dear Unknown Friend,

The words of the Master cited above have served me the key for opening the door to comprehension of the first Major Arcanum of the Tarot, "The Magician", which is, in turn, the key to all the other Major Arcana. This is why I have put them as an epigraph to this Letter. And then I have cited a verse from the "Songs of the Soul" of St. John of the Cross, because it has the virtue of awakening the deeper layers of the soul, which one has to appeal to when the concern is the first Arcanum of the Tarot and, consequently, all the Major Arcana of the Tarot. For

*'Canciones del Alma, The Dark Night of the Soul, verse iii; Cisi. G. C. Graham. London, 1922, p. 29.*

the Major Arcana of the Tarot are authentic *symbols*, i.e. they are "magic, mental, psychic and moral operations" awakening new notions, ideas, sentiments and aspirations, which means to say that they require an activity more profound than that of study and intellectual explanation. It is therefore in a state of deep contemplation—and always ever deeper—that they should be approached. And it is the deep and intimate layers of the soul which become active and bear fruit when one meditates on the Arcana of the Tarot. Therefore this "night", of which St. John of the Cross speaks, is necessary, where one withdraws oneself "in secret" and into which one has to immerse oneself each time that one meditates on the Arcana of the Tarot. It is a work to be accomplished in solitude, and is all the more suitable for recluses.

The Major Arcana of the Tarot are neither allegories nor secrets, because allegories are, in fact, only figurative representations of abstract notions, and secrets are only facts, procedures, practices, or whatever doctrines that one keeps to oneself for a personal motive, since they are able to be understood and put into practice by others to whom one does not *want* to reveal them. The Major Arcana of the Tarot are authentic symbols. They conceal and reveal their sense at one and the same time according to the depth of meditation. That which they reveal are not *secrets*, i.e. things hidden by human will, but are *arcana*, which is something quite different. An arcanum is that which it is necessary to "know" in order to be fruitful in a given domain of spiritual life. It is that which must be actively present in our consciousness—or even in our subconscious—in order to render us capable of making discoveries, engendering new ideas, conceiving of new artistic subjects. In a word, it makes us *fertile* in our creative pursuits, in whatever domain of spiritual life. An arcanum is a "ferment" or an "enzyme" whose presence stimulates the spiritual and the psychic life of man. And it is symbols which are the bearers of these "ferments" or "enzymes" and which communicate them—if the mentality and morality of the recipient is ready, i.e. if he is "poor in spirit" and does not suffer from the most serious spiritual malady: self-complacency.

Just as the *arcanum* is superior to the *secret*, so is the *mystery* superior to the arcanum. The mystery is more than a stimulating "ferment". It is a spiritual *event* comparable to physical birth or death. It is a change of the entire spiritual and psychic motivation, or a complete change of the plane of consciousness. The seven sacraments of the Church are the prismatic colours of the white light of one sole Mystery or Sacrament, known as that of the Second Birth, which the Master pointed out to Nicodemus in the nocturnal initiation conversation which He had with him. It is this which Christian Hermeticism understands by the *Great Initiation*.

It goes without saying that nobody initiates anyone else, it we understand by "initiation" the Mystery of the Second Birth or the Great Sacrament. This Initiation is operative from above and has the value and the duration of eternity. The Initiator is above, and here below one meets only the fellow pupils; and they recognise each other by the fact that they "love one another" (cf. John xiii. 34-35).

There are no longer any more "masters" because there is only one sole *Master*, who is the Initiator above. To be sure, there are always masters who teach their doctrines and also initiates who communicate some of the secrets which they possess to others who thus become in their turn the "initiates"—but all this has nothing to do with the Mystery of the Great Initiation.

For this reason Christian Hermeticism, in so far as it is a human concern, initiates no one. Amongst Christian Hermeticists nobody assumes for himself the title and the function of "initiator" or "master". For all are fellow pupils and each is master of each in some respect—just as each is a pupil of each in some other respect. We cannot do better than to follow the example of St. Anthony the Great, who

subjected himself in all sincerity to the pious men whom he visited and made it his endeavour to learn for his own benefit just how each was superior to him in zeal and ascetic practice. He observed the graciousness of one, the earnestness at prayer in another; studied the even temper of one and the kindheartedness of another; fixed his attention on the vigils kept by one and on the studies pursued by another: admired one for his patient endurance, another for his fasting and sleeping on the ground; watched closely this man's meekness and the forbearance shown by another; and in one and all alike he marked especially devotion to Christ and the love they had for one another. Having thus taken his fill, he would return to his own place of asceticism. Then he assimilated in himself what he had obtained from each and devoted all his energies to realizing in himself the virtues of all. (St. Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Anthony*, ch. 4; trsl. R. T. Meyer, Westminster, 1950, p.21)

It is the same conduct which must be applied by the Christian Hermeticist in that which concerns knowledge and science—natural, historical, philological, philosophical, theological, symbolical and traditional. It amounts to learning the *art of learning*.

Now, it is the Arcana which stimulate us and at the same time guide us in the art of learning. In this sense, the Major Arcana of the Tarot are a complete, entire, invaluable school of meditation, study, and spiritual effort—a masterly school in the *art of learning*.

Dear Unknown Friend, Christian Hermeticism therefore has no pretension to rival either religion or official science. He who is searching here for the "true religion", the "true philosophy", or the "true science" is looking in the wrong direction. Christian Hermeticists are not masters, but servants. They do not have the pretension (that is, in any case, somewhat puerile) of elevating themselves above the holy faith of the faithful, or above the fruits of the admirable efforts of workers in science, or above the creations of artistic genius. Hermeticists are not guarding the secret of future discoveries in the sciences. They do not know, for example.

just as everyone at present is ignorant of it, the effective remedy against cancer. Moreover they would be monsters if they were to guard the secret of the remedy against this bane of humanity without communicating it. No, they do not know it, and they will be the first to recognise the superiority of the future benefactor of the human race, that savant who will discover this remedy.

Likewise they recognise without reserve the superiority of a Francis of Assisi — and of many others — who was a man of the so-called "exoteric" faith. They know also that each sincere believer is potentially a Francis of Assisi. Men and women of faith, of science and of art are their superiors in many essential points. Hermeticists know it well and do not flatter themselves to be better, to believe better, to know better or to be more competent. They do not secretly guard a religion, which to them is appropriate, to replace the existing religions, or a science to replace the current sciences, or arts to replace the fine arts of today or yesterday. That which they possess does not comprise any tangible advantage or objective superiority with regard to religion, science and art; what they possess is only the *communal soul of religion, science and art*. What is this mission of conserving the communal soul of religion, science and art? I am going to reply with a concrete example, as follows:

You know without doubt, dear Unknown Friend, that many — and several of them are writers — in France, Germany, England, and elsewhere, promulgate the doctrine of the so-called "two churches": the church of Peter and the church of John, or of "two epochs" — the epoch of Peter and the epoch of John. You know also that this doctrine teaches the end — more or less at hand — of the **church of Peter**, or above all of the papacy which is its visible symbol, and that the spirit of John, the disciple loved by the Master, he who leaned on his breast and heard the beating of his heart, will replace it. In this way it teaches that the "exoteric" church of Peter will make way for the "esoteric" church of John, which will be that of perfect freedom.

Now, John, who submitted himself voluntarily to Peter as leader or prince of the apostles, did not become his successor after his death, although he outlived Peter by many years. The beloved disciple who listened to the beating of the Master's heart was, is, and always will be the representative and guardian of this heart — and as such he was not, is not, and never will be the *leader or head* of the Church. Because just as the heart is not called upon to replace the head, so is John not called upon to succeed Peter. The heart certainly guards the life of the body and the soul, but it is the head which makes decisions, directs, and chooses the means for the accomplishment of the tasks of the entire organism — head, heart and limbs. The mission of John is to keep the life and soul of the Church *alive* until the Second Coming of the Lord. This is why John has never claimed and never will claim the office of directing the body of the Church. He *vivifies* this body, but he does not direct its actions.

Now Hermeticism, the living Hermetic tradition, guards the communal soul of all true culture. I must add: *Hermeticists listen to* — and now and then hear —

*the beating of the heart of the spiritual life of humanity.* They cannot do otherwise than live as guardians of the life and communal soul of religion, science and art. They do not have any privilege in any of these domains; saints, true scientists, and artists of genius are their superiors. But they live for the mystery of the communal heart which beats within all religions, all philosophies, all arts and all sciences —past, present and future. And inspired by the example of John, the beloved disciple, they do not prehend, and never will pretend, to play a directing role in religion, science, art, in social or political life; but they are constantly attentive so as not to miss any occasion to *serve* religion, philosophy, science, art, the social and political life of humanity, and to this to infuse the breath of life of their communal soul — analogous to the administration of the sacrament of Holy Communion. Hermeticism is — and is only— a stimulant, a "ferment" or an "enzyme" in the organism of the spiritual life of humanity. In this sense it is itself an *arcanum* — that is to say the antecedent of the Mystery of the Second Birth or the Great Initiation.

This is the spirit of Hermeticism. And it is in this spirit that we now return to the first Major Arcanum of the Tarot. Of what does this first Card consist?

A young man, wearing a large hat in the form of a lemniscate, standing behind a small table on which are arranged: a yellow-painted vase; three small yellow discs; another four red discs, in two piles, each divided down the middle by a line; a red beaker with two dice; a knife withdrawn from its sheath; and lastly a yellow bag for carrying these various objects. The young man—who is the Magician— holds a rod in his right hand (from the standpoint of the observer) and a ball or yellow object in his left hand. He holds these two objects with perfect ease, without clasping them or showing any other sign of tension, encumbrance, haste or effort. What he does with his hands is with perfect spontaneity— it is easy play and not work. He himself does not follow the movement of his hands; his gaze is elsewhere.

Such is this Card. . That the series of symbols, that is to say of the revealers of the Arcana, which is the game of Tarot, is opened by an image representing a player of tricks — a magician (or juggler) who plays—is truly astonishing! How may this be explained?

The first Arcanum—the principle underlying all the other twenty-one Major Arcana of the Tarot — is *that of the rapport of personal effort and of spiritual reality.* It occupies the first place in the series because if one does not understand it (i.e. take hold of it in cognitive and actual practice), one would not know what to do with all the other Arcana. For it is the Magician who is called to reveal the practical *method* relating to all the Arcana. He is the "Arcanum of the Arcana", in the sense that he reveals that which it is necessary to know and to will in order to enter the school of spiritual exercises whose totality comprises the game of Tarot, in order to be able to derive some benefit therefrom. In fact, the first and fundamental principle of esotericism (i.e. of the way of experience of the reality of the spirit) can be rendered by the formula:

*Learn at first concentration without effort; transform work into play; make every yoke that you have accepted easy and every burden that you carry light!*

This counsel, or command, or even warning, however you wish to take it, is most serious; this is attested by its original source, namely the words of the Master Himself: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew xi, 30).

Let us examine in succession the three parts of this formula, in order to penetrate the Arcanum of "active relaxation" or "effort without effort". Firstly—*learn at first concentration without effort*—what is this in a practical and theoretical sense?

Concentration, as the faculty of fixing maximum attention on a minimum amount of space (Goethe said that he who wants to complete something of worth and of skill, "*der sammle still und unerschlaft, im kleinsten Punkt die grosste Kraft*", i.e. that "quietly and unceasingly he directs the greatest force upon the smallest point"), is the practical key to ail success in every domain. Modern pedagogy and psychotherapy, the schools of prayer and spiritual exercises—Franciscan, Carmelite, Dominican and Jesuit—occult schools of every type and, lastly, ancient Hindu yoga, all approaches are in agreement about this. Patanjali, in his classic work on yoga, formulates in his first sentence the practical and theoretical essence of yoga—the "first arcanum" or the key of yoga—as follows:

*Yoga citta vritti mrodha* (Yoga is the suppression of the oscillations of the mental substance, *Yoga Sutras* 1.2)

— or, in other terms, *the art of concentration*. For the "oscillations" (*vritti*) of the "mental substance" (*citta*) take place automatically. This automatism in the movements of thought and imagination is the opposite of concentration. Now, concentration is only possible in a condition of *calm* and *silence*, at the expense of the automatism of thought and imagination.

The "to be silent" therefore precedes the "to know", the "to will" and the "to dare". This is why the Pythagorean school prescribed five years silence to beginners or "hearers". One dared to speak there only when one "knew" and "was able to", after having mastered the art of being silent—that is to say, the art of concentration. The prerogative "to speak" belonged to those who no longer spoke automatically, driven by the game of the intellect and imagination, but who *were able to* suppress it owing to the practice of interior and exterior silence, and who *knew* what they were saying—again thanks to the same practice. The *silentium* practised by Trappist monks and prescribed for the time of "retreat", generally to all those there who are taking part, is only the application of the same true law: "Yoga is the suppression of the oscillations of the mental substance" or "concentration is the willed silence of the automatism of the intellect and imagination".

There are nevertheless two sorts of concentration to be distinguished, which



are essentially different. The one is *disinterested concentration* and the other is *interested concentration*. The first is due to the will free of *enslaving* passions, obsessions and attachments, whereas the other is the result of a *dominating* passion, obsession, or attachment. A monk absorbed in prayer and an enraged bull are, the one and the other, concentrated. But the one is in the peace of contemplation whilst the other is carried away by rage. Strong passions therefore realise themselves as a high degree of concentration. Thus, gluttons, misers, arrogant people and maniacs occasionally achieve a remarkable concentration. But, truth to tell, it is not a matter of *concentration* but rather *obsession* in connection with such people.

True concentration is a free act in light and in peace. It presupposes a disinterested and detached will. For it is the condition of the will which is the determining and decisive factor in concentration. This is why yoga, for example, demands the practice *oiyama* and *niyama* (*yama*— *the* five rules of moral conduct; *niyama*— the five rules of mortification) before the preparation of the body (through respiration and posture) for concentration and the practice of the three degrees of concentration itself (*dharana*, *dyana*, *samadhi*— concentration, meditation and contemplation).

Both St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila do not tire of repeating that the concentration necessary for spiritual prayer is the fruit of moral purification of the will. It is therefore useless to strive to concentrate oneself if the will is infatuated with something else. The "oscillations of the mental substance" will never be able to be reduced to silence if the will itself does not infuse them with its silence. It is the *silenced will* which effects the silence of thought and imagination in concentration. This is why the great ascetics are also the great masters of concentration. All this is obvious and stands to reason. However, what occupies us here is not just concentration in general but particularly and especially *concentration without effort*. What is this?

Look at a tightrope walker. He is evidently completely concentrated, because if he were not, he would fall to the ground. His life is at stake, and it is only perfect concentration which can save him. Yet do you believe that his thought and his imagination are occupied with what he is doing? Do you think that he reflects and that he imagines, that he calculates and that he makes plans with regard to each step that he makes on the rope?

If he were to do that, he would fall immediately. He has to eliminate all activity of the intellect and of the imagination in order to avoid a fall. He must have suppressed the "oscillations of the mental substance" in order to be able to exercise his skill. It is the intelligence of his rhythmic system—the respiratory and circulatory system—which replaces that of his brain during his acrobatic exercises. In the last analysis, it is a matter of a miracle—from the point of view of the intellect and the imagination—analagous to that of St. Dionysius, apostle of the Gauls and first bishop of Paris, whom tradition identifies with St. Dionysius the Areopagite, disciple of St. Paul. In particular, he was

beheaded with the sword before the statue of Mercury, confessing his faith in the Holy Trinity. And at once the body of Dionysius stood erect, and took his head in its hands; and with an Angel guiding it and a great light going before, it walked for two miles, from the place called Montmartre to the place where, by its own choice and by the providence of God, it now reposes. (Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*; trsl. G. Ryan and H. Ripperger, *The Golden Legend*, New York, 1948, pp. 620-621).

Now, the tightrope walker, he too has the head—that is to say, the intellect and imagination—severed for the time of the exercise of his skill, and he also walks from one point to another, carrying his head in his hands, under the guidance of another intelligence than that of his head, which acts through the body's rhythmic system. For the tightrope walker, the juggler, and the magician, their skill and ability are, fundamentally, analogous to the miracle of St. Dionysius; because with them as with St. Dionysius, it is a matter of transposing the centre of directing consciousness from the head to the chest—from the cerebral system to the rhythmic system.

Concentration without effort is the transposition of the directing centre of the brain to the rhythmic system—from the domain of the mind and imagination to that of morality and the will. The great hat in the form of a lemniscate which the Magician wears, like his attitude of perfect ease, indicates this transposition. For the lemniscate (the horizontal eight: o o) is not only the symbol of infinity, but also that of *rhythm*, of the respiration and circulation—it is the symbol of *eternal rhythm* or the *eternity of rhythm*. The Magician therefore represents the state of concentration without effort, i.e. the state of consciousness where the centre directing the will has "descended" (in reality it is elevated) from the brain to the rhythmic system, where the "oscillations of the mental substance" are reduced to silence and to rest, no longer hindering concentration.

Concentration *without effort*—that is to say where there is nothing to suppress and where contemplation becomes as natural as breathing and the beating of the heart—is the state of consciousness (i.e. thought, imagination, feeling and will) of perfect calm, accompanied by the complete relaxation of the nerves and the muscles of the body. It is the profound silence of desires, of preoccupations, of the imagination, of the memory and of discursive thought. One may say that the entire being becomes like the surface of calm water, reflecting the immense presence of the starry sky and its indescribable harmony. And the waters are deep, they are so deep! And the silence grows, ever increasing. . . what silence! Its growth takes place through regular waves which pass, one after the other, through your being: one wave of silence followed by another wave of more profound silence, then again a wave of still more profound silence. . . Have you ever *drunk silence*? If in the affirmative, you know what concentration without effort is.

To begin with there are moments, subsequently minutes, then "quarters of an **hour**" for which complete silence or "concentration without effort" lasts. With **time**, the silence or concentration without effort becomes a fundamental element *always present* in the life of the soul. It is like the perpetual service at the church of Sacre-Coeur de Montmartre which takes place, whilst in Paris one works, one **trades**, one amuses oneself, one sleeps, one dies... It is in like manner that a "perpetual service" of silence is established in the soul, which continues all the same when one is active, when one works, or when one converses. This "zone of silence" being once established, you can draw from it both for rest and for work. Then you will have not only concentration without effort, but also *activity without effort*. It is precisely this that comes to expression in the second part of our formula:

*transform work into play*

The changing of work, which is duty, into play, is effected as a consequence of the presence of the "zone of perpetual silence", where one draws from a sort of secret and intimate respiration, whose sweetness and freshness accomplishes the anointing of work and transforms it into play. For the "zone of silence" does not only signify that the soul is, fundamentally, at rest, but also, and rather, that there is contact with the heavenly or spiritual world, *which works together with the soul*. He who finds silence in the solitude of concentration without effort, *is never alone*. He never bears alone the weights that he has to carry; the forces of heaven, the forces from on high, are there taking part from now on.

In this way the truth stated by the third part of the formula:

*make every yoke that you have accepted easy and every burden  
that you carry light,*

**itself** becomes experience. For silence is the sign of real contact with the spiritual **world** and this contact, in turn, always engenders the influx of forces. This is the *foundation* of all mysticism, all gnosis, all magic and all practical esotericism in general.

All practical esotericism is founded on the following rule: it is necessary to be *one* in oneself (concentration without effort) and *one* with the spiritual world (to have a zone of silence in the soul) in order for a revelatory or actual spiritual experience to be able to take place. In other words, if one wants to practise some form of authentic esotericism—be it mysticism, gnosis, or magic—it is necessary **to** be the *Magician*, i.e. concentrated without effort, operating with ease as if one were playing, and acting with perfect calm. This, **then, is** the *practical teaching* of the first Arcanum of the Tarot. It is the first counsel, commandment or warning concerning all spiritual practice; it is the aleph of the "alphabet" of practical rules of esotericism. And just as all numbers are only aspects (multiples) of unity, so are all other practical rules communicated by the other Arcana of the Tarot

only aspects and modalities of this basic rule.

Such is the practical teaching of the Magician. What is its theoretical teaching?

It corresponds in every point to the practical teaching, its theoretical operation being only the mental aspect of the practice. Just as the latter proceeds from concentration without effort, i.e. puts *unity* into practice, so does the attendant theory consist in the basic *unity* of the natural world, the human world and the divine world. The tenet of the basic oneness of the world plays the same fundamental role for all theory as that of concentration for all practice. As concentration is the basis of every practical achievement, the tenet of the basic unity of the world is the same with regard to all knowledge—without it no knowledge is conceivable.

The tenet of the essential unity of all that exists precedes every act of knowledge, and every act of knowledge presupposes the tenet of the unity of the world. The ideal — or ultimate aim — of all philosophy and all science is TRUTH. But "truth" has no other meaning than that of the reduction of the plurality of phenomena to an essential unity—of facts to laws, of laws to principles, of principles to essence or being. All search for truth—mystical, gnostic, philosophical and scientific—*postulates* its existence, i.e. the fundamental unity of the multiplicity of phenomena in the world. Without this unity nothing would be knowable. How could one proceed from the known to the unknown—and this is indeed the method of progress in knowledge—if the unknown had nothing to do with the known? If the unknown had no relationship with the known and was absolutely and essentially a stranger to it? When we say that the world is knowable, i.e. that knowledge as such exists, we state through this fact itself the tenet of the essential unity of the world or its knowability. We declare that the world is not a mosaic, where a plurality of worlds which are essentially strangers to one another are fitted together, but that it is an *organism*—all of whose parts are governed by the same principle, revealing it and allowing reduction to it. The relationship of everything and of all beings is the *conditio sine qua non* of their knowability.

The open recognition of the relationship of all things and beings has engendered an exactly corresponding method of knowledge. It is the method generally known under the title THE METHOD OF ANALOGY; its role and its import in so-called "occult" science has been illumined in an admirable way by Papus in his *Traite elementaire de science occulte* (Paris, 1888 pp. 28ff). Analogy is not a tenet or postulate—the essential unity of the world is this—but is the first and principal method (the *aleph* of the alphabet of methods) whose use facilitates the advance of knowledge. It is the first conclusion drawn from the tenet of universal unity. Since at the root of the diversity of phenomena their unity is found, in such a way that they are at one and the same time different and one, they are neither identical nor heterogeneous but are *analogous* in so far as they manifest their essential kinship.

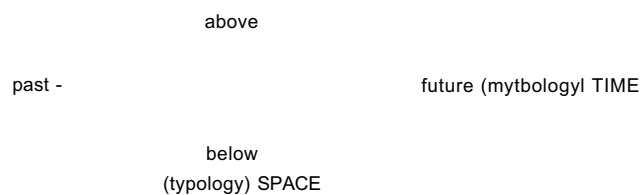
The traditional formula setting forth the method of analogy is well known. It is the second verse of the *Emerald Table* (*Tabula Smaragdina*) of Hermes Trismegistus:

*Quod' superius est sicut quod inferius. el quod inferius est sicut quod est superius, ad perpetranda miracula rei unius.* That which is above is like to that which is below and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of (the) one thing. (*Tabula Smaragdina*, 2; trsl. R. Steele and D. W. Singer, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* xxi, 1928. p. 42; see the appendix to Letter 1 concerning the problem of the authenticity of the *Tabula Smaragdina*).

This is the classic formula of analogy for all that exists in *space*, *above* and *below*, the formula of analogy applied in *time* would be:

*Quodfuit est sicut quod erit. et quod erit est sicut quod fuit. ad perpetranda miracula aeternitatis.* That which was is as that which will be. and that which will be is as that which was, to accomplish the miracles of eternity.

The formula of analogy applied in space is the basis of *typological* symbolism, that is, of symbols expressing correspondences between *prototypes* above and their manifestations below; the formula of analogy applied in time is the basis of *mythological* symbolism, that is. of symbols expressing correspondences between *archetypes* in the past and their manifestations in the present. Thus the Magician is a typological symbol; he reveals to us the *prototype* of the MAN OF SPIRIT. Whilst the Biblical accounts of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and if you wish, also, the *schisme d'Irschou* of Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (cf. *Mission desjuifs*, vol. ii. Paris, 1956, pp. 191ff.) are, on the other hand, *myths*; they reveal the *archetypes* which manifest themselves endlessly in history and in each individual biography - they are mythological symbols pertaining to the domain of time. These two categories of symbolism, based on analogy, constitute through their mutual relationship a cross:



Here is something written on myth (i.e. on the symbolism of time, or history, according to our definition) by Hans Leisegang, the author of a classic book on gnosis:

Every myth expresses, in a form narrated for a particular case, an eternal idea, which will be intuitively recognised by he who

re-experiences the content of the myth. (Hans Leisegang, *Die Gnosis*, Leipzig. 1924, p. 51)

And this is what Marc Haven says concerning typological symbols in the chapter on symbolism in his posthumous book *Le Tarot*:

Our sensations, symbolising external movement, do not resemble them (i.e. the phenomena) any more than the undulations of sand in the desert resemble the wind which raises it up into sand dunes, or any more than the ebb and flow of the sea resembles the combined movements of the sun and moon. They are symbols of it...The opinion of *Kant*, *Hamilton* and *Spencer*, which reduces inner movements to simple symbols of a hidden reality is truer and more rational (than naive realism — author's note). Science ought to resign itself to being only a symbolism conscious of itself. . But the symbolic has quite another significance: the "science of sciences" as it was called by the ancients (cf. Decourcelle, *Traite des symboles* , Paris. 1806), the universal and divine language, which proclaims and proves the hierarchy of forms from the archetypal world down to the material world and the relationships which unite them; it is, in a word, the living and tangible proof of the kinship of beings. (Marc Haven *Le Tarot*, Lyons, 1937, pp. 19-20, 24)

Above, therefore, two definitions —of symbols of time or of myths, and of that of space or of the correspondence of worlds "from the archetypal world down to the material world"—are formulated, the one by a German savant (Hans Leisegang) at Leipzig in 1924 and the other by a French Hermeticist (Marc Haven) at Lyons in 1906. which express exactly the ideas of the two types of symbolism (mythological and typological) which we are setting forward here. The *Emerald Table* only alludes to typological symbolism or space —analogy between that which is "above" and that which is "below". This is why it is necessary to add to it, by extension, the corresponding formula pertaining to mythological symbolism or time, which we find, for example, in the book of Genesis of Moses.

The distinction of these two forms of symbolism is not entirely devoid of practical import; it is owing to their confusion that many errors of interpretation of ancient sources, including the Bible, must be attributed. Thus, for example, certain authors take the Biblical account of Cain and Abel as a typological symbol. They want to see in it symbols of "centrifugal and centripetal forces" etc. However, the story of Cain and Abel is a *myth*, i.e. it expresses, in a form narrated for a particular case, an "eternal" idea. Consequently, it refers to *time*, to history, and not to space and its structure. It shows us how brothers can become mortal enemies through the very fact that they worship the same God in the same way. The source of religious wars is revealed here; and it is not the difference in dogma nor that

of cult or ritual which is the cause, but uniquely the *pretention to equality* or, if one prefers, the *negation of hierarchy*. Here also is the world's first revolution — the archetype (Goethe's *Urphanomen*) of all revolutions which have taken place and which will take place in the future of humanity. For the cause of all wars and revolutions—in a word, of all violence—is always the same: the negation of hierarchy. This cause is found already, germinally, at such a lofty level as that of the communal act of worship of the same God by two brothers—this is the staggering revelation of the story of Cain and Abel. And as murders, wars and revolutions continue, the story of Cain and Abel remains ever valid and relevant. Being always valid and relevant throughout the passage of centuries, this is a myth and, moreover, a myth of the first order.

It is the same with the accounts of the Fall of Adam and Eve, the Deluge and Noah's ark, the tower of Babel, etc. These are *myths*, i.e. in the first place *historical* symbols referring to time, and not symbols expressing the unity of the worlds in physical, metaphysical and moral space. The Fall of Adam and Eve does not reveal a corresponding fall in the divine world, within the womb of the Holy Trinity. Neither does it express directly the metaphysical structure of the archetypal world. It is a particular event in the terrestrial history of mankind whose importance will cease only with the end of human history; in a word it is a true *myth*.

On the other hand it would be erroneous to interpret, for example, the vision of Ezekiel, the *Merkabah*, as a myth. The vision of the celestial chariot is a symbolic revelation of the archetypal world. It is a typological symbol; it is that which, furthermore, the author of the *Zohar* so well understood, which is why he took the vision of Ezekiel as the central symbol of cosmic knowledge — according to the rule of analogy that that which is above is as that which is below. For the *Zohar* knows this rule well. Not only does it make implicit use of it, but also it gives it an explicit expression. It is thus that we read in the *Zohar*.

For as it is above so it is below: as all the supernal "days" are filled with blessing by the (heavenly) Man, so are the days here below filled with blessing through the agency of Man (i.e. the righteous). ("Waera", *Zohar* 25a; transl. Sperling-Simon-Levertoff, London-Bournemouth. 1949, vol. iii, p. 84)

India also has her version of the Hermetic maxim. Thus the *Vishvasara Tantra* states the formula:

What is here is there. What is not here is nowhere\*

The use of analogy is not limited, however, to the "accursed sciences"—magic, astrology and alchemy — and to speculative mysticism. It is, truth to tell, universal.

\**Vishvasara Tantra*; transl. Arthur Avalon. *The Serpent Power*. London, 1919, P- 72.

For neither philosophy, nor theology, nor science itself can do without it. Here is the role that analogy plays in the logic which is the basis of philosophy and the sciences:

(1) The procedure of *classification* of objects on the basis of their resemblance is the first step on the way of research by the inductive method. It presupposes the *analogy* of objects to be classified.

(2) Analogy (argument by analogy) can constitute the basis of *hypotheses*. Thus the famous "nebular hypothesis" of Laplace was due to the analogy that he observed in the direction of the circular movement of the planets around the sun, the movement of satellites around the planets, and the rotation of the planets about their axes. He concluded therefore, from the analogy manifesting itself in these movements, their common *origin*.

(3) As J. Maynard Keynes says in his *A Treatise on Probability*: "Scientific method, indeed, is mainly devoted to discovering means of so heightening the known analogy that we may dispense as far as possible with the methods of pure induction." (J. Maynard Keynes, *A Treatise on Probability*, London, 1921, P- 241)

Now "pure induction" is founded on simple enumeration and is essentially only conclusion based on the experience of given statistics. Thus one could say: "As John is a man and is dead, and as Peter is a man and is dead, and as Michael is a man and is dead, therefore man is mortal." The force of this argument depends on number or on the *quantity* of facts known through experience. The method of analogy, on the other hand, adds the *qualitative* element, i.e. that which is of *intrinsic* importance, to the quantitative. Here is an example of an argument by analogy: "Andrew is formed from matter, energy and consciousness. As matter does not disappear with his death, but only changes its form, and as energy does not disappear but only modifies the mode of its activity, Andrew's consciousness, also, cannot simply disappear, but must merely change its form and mode (or plane) of activity. Therefore Andrew is immortal." This latter argument is founded on the formula of Hermes Trismegistus: that which is below (matter) (energy) is as that which is above (consciousness). Now, if there exists a law of conservation of matter and energy (although matter transforms itself into energy and vice versa), there must necessarily exist also a law of conservation of consciousness, or immortality.

The ideal of science, according to Keynes, is to find the means to elaborate the scope of *known* analogy so far as to be able to do without the hypothetical method of pure induction, i.e. to transform the scientific method *into pure analogy*, based on pure experience, without the hypothetical elements immanent in pure induction. It is by virtue of the method of analogy that science makes discoveries (in



passing from the known to the unknown), formulates fruitful hypotheses, and pursues a methodical, directing aim. Analogy is its beginning and its end, its alpha and its omega.

In that which concerns speculative philosophy or metaphysics, the same role is reserved there for analogy. All conclusions of a metaphysical nature are based only on the analogy of man, Nature and the intelligible or metaphysical world. Thus the two principal authorities of the most methodical and most disciplined philosophy—mediaeval Scholastic philosophy—St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventura (of whom one represents Aristotelianism and the other Platonism in Christian philosophy) not only make use of analogy but also assign it a very important theoretical role in their doctrines themselves. St. Thomas advances the doctrine *oianalogia ends*, the analogy of being, which is the principal key to his philosophy. St. Bonaventura, in his doctrine of *signatura rerum*, interprets the entire visible world as the symbol of the invisible world. For him, the visible world is only another Holy Scripture, another revelation alongside that which is contained in the Holy Scripture properly said:

*Et sic patet quod to/us mundus est sicut unum speculum plenum luminibus praesentantibus divinam sapientiam, et sicut carbo effundens lucem.* And it thus appears that the entire world is like a single mirror full of lights presenting the divine wisdom, or as charcoal emitting light. (Bonaventura, *Collationes in Hexaameron* ii, 27)

Now, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventura have been proclaimed (by Sixtus V in 1588, and again in 1879 by Leo XIII) "*duae olivae et duo candelabra in domo Dei lucentia*" ("two olive trees and two chandeliers shining in the house of God"). You see therefore, dear Unknown Friend, that we are able, you and I, to declare openly our faith in analogy and proclaim aloud the formula of the *Emerald Table*, consecrated by tradition, without appearing thereby to be infidels to philosophy, science, and the official doctrines of the Church. We are able to use it in good conscience as philosophers, as scientists and as Catholics. There is nothing to be said against it according to these three points of view.

But the sanction accorded to analogy does not stop here: the Master Himself has endorsed it by the use which He made of it. As well as the parables, the *a fortiori* argument which He made use of in His sayings demonstrates it. The parables, which are *ad hoc* symbols, would be devoid of sense and purpose, if they were not statements of analogous truths made in the language of analogy and making appeal to the sense of analogy. With respect to the argument *a fortiori*, its entire strength lies in analogy which is its foundation. Here is an example of an *a fortiori* argument employed by the Master:

What man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him

a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him. (Matthew vii, 9-11)

Here we have the analogy of terrestrial kinship (human) to celestial kinship (divine), on which is founded the force of the *a fortiori* argument, where "how much more" is the result of imperfect manifestation in relation to the ideal prototype. The analogy of father and Father is the essence here.

At this point, a feeling of unease could arise in the conscientious reader: "There are many arguments and authorities cited *in support* of the method of analogy, but what is there here as an argument *against* this method, as regarding its weaknesses and dangers?"

Well, it must be acknowledged quite plainly and frankly that the method of analogy presents many negative sides and many dangers, errors and serious illusions. This is because it is entirely founded on *experience*; and all superficial, incomplete or false experience is bound to give rise to superficial, incomplete and false conclusions, by analogy, in a direction parallel with the experience from which they are the outcome. Thus in making use of insufficiently powerful telescopes "canals" were seen on Mars—straight, continuous lines—where it was inferred by analogy that these "canals" must be artificial and that consequently the planet was inhabited by civilised beings. Now, the subsequent perfecting of telescopes and exact observation has demonstrated that the "canals" are not at all continuous, but that they display breaks, and are not rectilinear as they first appeared. The argument by analogy therefore loses its value in this case, owing to the error of experience on which it was based.

With respect to the occult sciences, Gerard van Rijnberk has published (cf. *Le Tarot*, Lyons, 1947, p. 203) a table of astrological "correspondences" of the Tarot according to different authors. There, for example, the seventh card—"The Chariot"—corresponds to the sign Gemini (according to Etteila), to Sagittarius (according to Fomalhaut), to Gemini (according to Shoral), to Sagittarius (according to an anonymous author), to the planet Mars (according to Basilide), to the planet Venus (according to Volguine), to the Sun (according to Ely Star), to the sign of Libra (according to Snijders), to the planet Venus (according to Muchery), to the sign of Cancer (according to Crowley), and to the sign of Gemini (according to Kurtzahn). Here the relativity of the correspondences obtained by means of the method of analogy is readily apparent.

But, on the other hand, the concordance of correspondences between the metals and the planets, obtained by the same method, is maintained by ancient, mediæval and modern authors. Greek astrologers of the fourth century B.C., continuing the Babylonian tradition, where gold corresponds to the Sun and to the god Enlil, and silver to the Moon and to the god Anu, accepted the following correspondences: Gold—Sun, Silver—Moon, Lead—Saturn, Tin—Jupiter, Iron—

Mars, Copper—Venus, and Mercury —Mercury (cf. E.J. Holmyard, *Alchemy*, London, 1957, pp. 18-19)\* The same correspondences were accepted by astrologers and alchemists of the Middle Ages, and again today by all authors in the occult sciences and in Hermeticism (including Rudolf Steiner and other anthroposophical authors), which correspondences you will find in the book by Papus, *Traite elementaire de science occulte* (Paris, 1888 p. 145). On the subject of the universality of these analogous correspondences between the planets and metals, I may add that the forty-four years of my studies and experiences in this domain have not led me to modify anything in the table of given correspondences and that, on the contrary, they have supplied numerous proofs—direct and indirect—which have confirmed their truth.

It must be concluded, therefore, that the *method of analogy* on the one hand is in no way infallible but on the other hand it is qualified to lead to the discovery of essential truths. Its effectiveness and value depend on the fullness and exactitude of the experience upon which it is based.

Let us return now to the Arcanum "The Magician". As concentration without effort finds expression in the whole picture of the Card — as well as in all its details — and thus constitutes the practical Arcanum here, one also finds expressed in it the method of analogy, which constitutes the theoretical Arcanum. For, seen from the level of the intellect, the practice of the method of analogy corresponds completely to the practice of concentration without effort. Also, it appears there not as "work" but rather as "play".

The practice of analogy on the intellectual plane of consciousness does not, in fact, demand any effort; either one perceives ("sees") analogous correspondences or one does not perceive or "see" them. Just as the magician or juggler has had to train and work for a long time before attaining the ability of concentration without effort, similarly he who makes use of the method of analogy on the intellectual plane must have worked much—i.e. to have acquired long experience and to have accumulated the teachings which it requires—before attaining the faculty of immediate perception of analogous correspondences, before becoming a "magician" or "juggler" who makes use of the analogy of beings and of things without effort as in a game. This faculty constitutes an essential part of the realisation of the task that the Master charged his disciples with: "Truly, I say to you,

Trans. note: E. J. Holmyard's research concerning the planetary metals. cited here by the author, stands in need of some modification. The list of correspondences between the planets and the metals given by Holmyard is the standard one found in Arabic alchemical texts. It is also referred to by the Christian astrologer Theophilus of Edessa, who lived in Baghdad in the eighth century A.D. (cf. Arthur Ludwich, *Anecdotaastroiologica*, Leipzig, 1877, p. 121). This list is almost identical to the earliest known list of the planetary metals, that of the second century A.D. Greek astrologer Vettius Valens (cf. *An-Mogiarum* i, 1; ed. W. Kroll, Berlin, 1908). with the exception that Valens gives electrum (an alloy of gold and silver) as the metal corresponding to Mercury, instead of quicksilver. It is possible that the Arabic alchemical tradition took over the correspondences between the planets and metals from the Greek astrological tradition, and later substituted quicksilver for electrum. (It is not surprising that quicksilver is not mentioned by Vettius Valens, as its distillation became established only later—at some time around the fourth century A.D.).

whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark x, 15).

The little child does not "work"—he plays. But how serious he is, i.e. concentrated, when he plays! His attention is *still complete* and undivided, whereas with he who approaches the kingdom of God it becomes *again* entire and undivided. And this is the Arcanum of intellectual geniality: the vision of the unity of beings and things through the immediate perception of their correspondences—through consciousness concentrated without effort. The Master did not want us to become puerile; what he wanted is that we attain the geniality of intelligence and heart which is analogous—not identical—to the attitude of the child, who carries only easy burdens and renders all his yokes light.

The Magician represents the man who has attained harmony and equilibrium between the spontaneity of the unconscious (in the sense given to it by C. G. Jung) and the deliberate action of the conscious (in the sense of "I" or ego consciousness). His state of consciousness is the *synthesis* of the conscious and the unconscious—of creative spontaneity and deliberately executed activity. It is the state of consciousness that the psychological school of C. G. Jung calls "individuation", or "synthesis of the conscious and unconscious elements in the personality", or "synthesis of the self" (C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, *Introduction to a Science of Mythology*; trsl, R. F. C. Hull, London, 1951, p. 115). This synthesis renders possible concentration without effort and intellectual vision without effort, which are the practical and theoretical aspects of all fruitfulness in both practical and intellectual realms.

Friedrich Schiller seems to have had consciousness of this Arcanum when he advanced his doctrine of the synthesis between intellectual consciousness, imposing heavy burdens of duties and of rules, and the instinctive nature of man, in the *Spieltrieb* (the urge to play). The "true" and the "desired" must, according to him, find their synthesis in the "beautiful", for it is only in the beautiful that the *Spieltrieb* renders the burden of the "true" or the "just" light and raises at the same time the darkness of instinctive forces to the level of light and consciousness (cf. Friedrich Schiller. *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*; trsl. E. M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, Oxford, 1967, pp. 331-332, note). In other words, he who sees the beauty of that which he recognises as true cannot fail to love it—and in loving it the element of constraint in the duty prescribed by the true will disappear: duty becomes a delight. It is thus that "work" is transformed into "play" and concentration without effort becomes possible.

But *the first* Arcanum, the Arcanum of practical and theoretical fruitfulness, whilst proclaiming the effectiveness of *serious play* (which is the complete Tarot) contains at the same time a serious warning: there is Play and play, there is the Magician and the magician; this is why anyone who confuses lack of concentration with concentration without effort, and streams of simple mental associations with the vision without effort of correspondences by analogy, will necessarily become a *charlatan*.

The Arcanum of "The Magician" is twofold. It has two aspects: he invites us

on the path which leads to *geniality*, and he warns us of the danger of the path which leads to charlatanism. I must add that often — too often, alas! — the teachers of occultism follow the two paths at the same time and that which they teach contains elements of genius mixed with elements of charlatanism. May the first Arcanum of the Tarot be always present before us as a kind of "guardian of the threshold"; may he invite us to cross the threshold of work and effort in order to enter into activity without effort, and knowledge without effort, but may he at the same time warn us that the more we go beyond the threshold, the more work, effort and experience on this side of the threshold will be indispensable for the attainment of real truth. May the Magician say to us, and may he repeat it each day:

To perceive and to know, to try and to be able to, are all different things. There are mirages above, as there are mirages below; you only *know* that which is verified by the agreement of all forms of experience in its totality—experience of the senses, moral experience, psychic experience, the collective experience of other seekers for the truth, and finally the experience of those whose knowing merits the title of wisdom and whose striving has been crowned by the title of saint. Academia and the Church stipulate methodical and moral conditions for one who desires to progress. Carry them out strictly, before and after each flight into the region beyond the domain of work and effort. If you do this, you will be a sage and a mage. If you do not do this — you will be only a charlatan!

### Appendix to Letter I:

#### *Historical Note Concerning the Emerald Table*

Here is the Latin text of the *Emerald Table*, known since the time of Albertus Magnus, as given by Julius Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina* (Heidelberg, 1926), p. 2:

*"Versio Tabulae Smaragdinae Hermetis" — Qualis ea vulgo Latino Idiomate, e Phoenicio expressa circumfertur— Verba secretorum Hermetis Trismegisti.*

1. *Verum, sine mendacio, certum et verissimum.*
2. *Quod est inferius, est sicut (id) quod est superius, et quod*

*est superius, est sicut (id) quod est inferius, ad perpe-  
tranda<sup>1</sup> miracula rei unius.*

3. *Et sicut omnes res fuerunt ab uno, meditatione<sup>2</sup> unius: sic omnes res natae fuerunt ab hac una re, adaptatione*
4. *Pater ejus est Sol, mater ejus Luna; portavit eum ventus in ventre suo; nutrix ejus terra est.*
5. *Pater omnis thelesmi totius mundi est hic.*
6. *Vis (virtus) ejus integra est, si versa fuerit in terram.*
7. *Separabis terram ab igne. subtile a spisso, suaviter, cum magno ingenio.*
8. *Ascendit a terra in coelum, iterumque descendit in terram, et recepit vim superiorum et inferiorum. Sic habebis gloriam totius mundi. Ideo fugiat (fugiet) a te omnis obscuritas.*
9. *Hic (haec) est totius fortitudinis fortitudo fortis: quia vincet omnem rem subtilem. omnemque solidam<sup>4</sup> penetrabit.*
10. *Sic mundus creatus est.*
11. *Hinc adaptationes erunt mirabiles. quarum modus est hic.*
12. *Itaque vocatus sum Hermes Trismegistus, habens tres partes Philosophiae totius mundi.*
13. *Completum est quod dixi de operatione Solis.*

The following English translation from the Latin text *Tabula Smaragdina* is based on that by Robert Steele and Dorothy Singer, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* xxi (1928). p. 42. who also discuss the manuscript tradition of the text, its content, and the sources of the text (*ibid.*, pp. 41-57).

1. True it is, without falsehood, certain and most true.
2. That which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of (the) one thing.
3. And as all things were by contemplation (meditation) of (the) One, so all things arose from this one thing by a single act of adaptation.
4. The father thereof is the sun, the mother the moon; the wind carried it in its womb; the earth is the nurse thereof.
5. It is the father of all works of wonder (*thelema*) throughout the whole world.
6. The power thereof is perfect, if it be cast on to earth.

1. According to K. C. Schmieiden *Geschichte der Alchemie* (Halle, 1832), p. 30. one meets also the variants "*penetranda*" and "*praeparanda*".

2. According to an Arabic manuscript, discovered subsequently, this should read "*meditatione*".

3. Another (inexact) variant is "*adoprine*".

4. Another variant is "*et omne solidum*".

7. It will separate the element of earth from that of fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with great sagacity.
8. It doth ascend from earth to heaven; again it doth descend to earth, and uniteth in itself the force from things superior and things inferior. Thus thou wilt possess the glory of the brightness of the whole world, and all obscurity will fly far from thee.
9. This thing is the strongest of all powers, the force of all forces, for it overcometh every subtle thing and doth penetrate every solid substance.
10. Thus was this world created.
11. Hence there will be marvellous adaptations achieved, of which the manner is this.
12. For this reason I am called Hermes Trismegistus, because I hold three parts of the wisdom of the world.
13. That which I had to say about the operation of *sol* is completed.

As the above (Latin) text has been known in the Occident only since Albertus Magnus (1193/1206-1280) and as no other text or manuscript for an earlier date could be found over the centuries, historians at the beginning of this century were of the opinion that Albertus Magnus was the author of the *Emerald Table*. It was considered apocryphal not only from the point of view of its authenticity as a work of Hermes Trismegistus, but also from the point of view of its intrinsic authenticity as a work worthy of inclusion in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (= the collection of apocryphal texts from the first centuries of our era attributed to authors writing under the name—or pseudonym—of Hermes Trismegistus). Now, the text of the *Emerald Table* is not contained in what is considered to be the most complete edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum*—that of Walter Scott, *Hermetica* (4 volumes; Oxford, 1924). The same remark applies also to *Corpus Hermeticum* edited and translated by Nock and Festugiere (4 volumes; Paris, 1960). Scott wrote the following:

.. .the masses of rubbish which fall under the . . .head. . .of writings concerning astrology, magic, alchemy and kindred forms of pseudo-science.. . the contents of which are also ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. (Walter Scott, *Hermetica*, Oxford. 1924, vol. i, p. 1)

The criterion which Scott makes use of to establish if a writing attributed to Hermes Trismegistus is to be included in the *Corpus Hermeticum* or to be rejected is whether it is concerned with religious and philosophical problems or not. In other words, the writings dealing with problems of religion and philosophy belong to the *Corpus Hermeticum*, whereas the others are not worthy of inclusion, e.g. those

writings concerned with *Nature* (in a "pseudo-scientific" manner) are to be rejected. However, Hermes himself says:

I bear in mind that many of my writings have been addressed to him (Ammon), as again *many of my treatises on Nature*. . . have been addressed to Tat. . . {*Asclepius*, Prologue; trsl. W. Scott, *Hermetica*, vol. i, p. 287)

How can it be permitted to reject all the writings on Nature and to consider the sole category ("addressed to Ammon") as authentic, when one has knowledge of the fact that the author of a writing (*Asclepius*), recognised as authentic in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, has proclaimed in an explicit manner that he is the author of another category of writings, namely those concerned with Nature? With respect to the *Emerald Table*, the affinity of its ideas with those expressed in *Asclepius* are all too apparent. Thus, for example, Hermes says:

(Air) enters into earth and water; and fire rises into air. That only which tends upward is life-giving; and that which tends downward is subservient to it. Moreover, all that descends from on high is generative: and that which issues from below is nutritive. Earth, which alone stands fast in its own place, receives all that is generative into itself, and renders back all that it has received. (*Asclepius*; trsl. W. Scott, *Hermetica*, vol. i, p. 289)

Why should these ideas be considered as more "religious and philosophical" than those of the *Emerald Table*, which also speaks of movements above and below and of *generation* by father sun and mother moon, and similarly of the *nourishing* function of the earth? Perhaps because at the time of Walter Scott's researches no other text of the *Emerald Table* had been found prior to the thirteenth century?

Now, in 1926 the *Heidelberger Akten der Von-Portbeim-Stiftung* published a work by Julius Ruska: *Tabula Smaragdina. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hermetischen Literatur*. This book contains a description of G. Bergstrasser's manuscript in Arabic. This manuscript comprises 97 folios, of which 25 relate the history of Joseph, 40 contain an alchemical treatise, which includes as a summary the text of the *Emerald Table* (in Arabic, like the entire manuscript), followed by 32 folios devoted to other subjects, notably particulars concerning the calendar of the prophet Daniel. The alchemical treatise was written by a priest named Sagijus of Nabulus—its contents originating from the master Balinas the Wise (which is the Arabic name for Apollonius of Tyana), who himself had discovered it in an underground chamber. Here is a rendering in English of the German translation of the Arabic text of the *Emerald Table* that is given in Bergstrasser's manuscript (cf. Ruska, pp. 113-114):

Here is that which the priest Sagijus of Nabulus has dictated



concerning the entrance of Balinas into the hidden chamber (the following words of wisdom were found at the end of the book by Balinas the Wise): After my entrance into the chamber, where the talisman was set up, I came up to an old man sitting on a golden throne, who was holding an emerald table in one hand. And behold, the following—in Syriac, the primordial language—was written thereon:

1. Here (is) a true explanation, concerning which there can be no doubt.
2. It attests: The above (comes) from the below, and the below from the above—the work of the miracle of the One.
3. And things have been (formed) from this primal substance through a single act. How wonderful is this work! It is the main (principle) of the world and is its maintainer.
4. Its father is the sun and its mother the moon; the wind has borne it in its body, and the earth has nourished it.
5. (It is) the father of talismen and the protector of miracles,
6. whose powers are perfect, and whose lights are confirmed(?),
7. a fire that becomes earth. Separate the earth from the fire, so you will attain the subtle as more inherent than the gross, with care and sagacity.
8. It rises from earth to heaven, so as to draw the lights of the heights to itself, and descends (again) to the earth; thus within it are the forces of the above and the below; because the light of lights (is) within it, thus does the darkness flee before it.
9. (It is) the force of forces, which overcomes every subtle thing and penetrates into everything gross.
10. The structure of the small world (microcosm) is in accordance with the structure of the great world (macrocosm).
11. And accordingly proceed the knowledgeable.
12. And to this aspired Hermes, who was threefold graced with wisdom.
13. And this is his last book, which he concealed in the chamber.

But Julius Ruska is not the only one to have discovered an Arabic text of the *Emerald Table*. The author of *Alchemy*, E.J. Holmyard (Pelican, London, 1957), points out that he found a shortened text of the *Emerald Table* in Arabic. This text is part of the *Second Book of the Element of the Foundation* by Jabir or Geber (722-815). Prior to this discovery, made in 1923, only the mediaeval Latin text was known of. Subsequently, another variant in Arabic was discovered by Ruska in <sup>a</sup> book entitled *The Secret of Creation* attributed to Apollonius. Jabir (or Geber) himself, in giving the text of the *Emerald Table* states that he is quoting Apollonius. Now, Kraus has shown that *The Secret of Creation* was written, at least in its final edition, during the Caliphate of al-Ma'mun (813-833), and it includes

parallels with a book written at this same time by Job of Edessa. The latter was a scholar whose translations from Syriac into Arabic merited the praise of even such a severe critic as Hunain ibn Ishaq. Therefore, even if Job did not write *The Secret of Creation*, he probably drew from the same, more ancient sources as the author of the said treatise. Kraus has shown that one of these sources was the writings of Nemesius, bishop of Emesa (Horns) in Syria during the second half of the fourth century A.D. Nemesius wrote in Greek, but his book *On the Nature of Man* does not contain the text of the *Emerald Table*. To summarise, it can be concluded that the most ancient rendering of the *Emerald Table* that is known, namely that in Arabic, was probably translated from Syriac, but this can equally well have been based on an original Greek text. Whether this original dates back to the time of Apollonius is an insoluble problem (cf. Ruska, op. cit., pp. 78-79, pp. 96-97).

The present state of historical studies on the *Emerald Table* is therefore as follows: it was known in Arabic as a translation from Syriac at the beginning of the ninth century; two variants in Arabic are extant; there is no reason to reject the Arabic tradition that it was translated from Syriac, or for that matter the tradition that it originated with Apollonius.

One could add that if there is no reason to doubt that it originated with Apollonius, there is no more reason to reject the tradition that Apollonius in his turn found it in the manner described by the priest Sagijus of Nabulus. Be that as it may, it is immediately apparent that the *Emerald Table* is of a considerably more ancient origin than was believed up to 1923. and consequently there is room to reconsider the opinion that it is not worthy of inclusion in the *Corpus Hermeticism*.

For our part, we have every reason—subjective as well as objective—sufficient for us *inforo interno* (i.e. in good conscience) to be sure that the *Emerald Table* is without doubt the only absolutely authentic fragment in the whole *Corpus Hemeticum*. And this, moreover, in the sense that its author is neither the "third Hermes" nor the "second", but actually the first, that is to say the founder of the Hermetic tradition as such—in which tradition the principal links (according to Ficino, writing in 1471) are: Hermes Trismegistus —Orpheus —Pythagoras —Philolaus (*Divi Platonis nostri praeceptof*) —Plato—the Neopythagoreans (Apollonius) — the Neoplatonists (Plotinus).