



On the Splendor Solis

**A Summary of Joseph L. Henderson’s December 7, 1985
slide and lecture presentation before the San Francisco
Friends of ARAS, entitled “The Splendor Solis.”**

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In collaboration with Joseph L. Henderson, M.D.

Dr. Henderson presented the first San Francisco Friends of ARAS lecture on December 7, 1985. His topic was a psychological commentary on a series of paintings from an alchemical text entitled “The Splendor Solis”. Subsequently, in 1987, Dr. Henderson presented his material for a smaller gathering and a video production team. The video of this lecture was presented to the Friends of ARAS on May 22, 1988. The following summary is based on my own notes as well as material from both presentations available in the Virginia Allan Detloff Library at the C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco.

“The Splendor Solis: Alchemical Treatises of Solomon Trismosin - Adept and Teacher of Paracelsus” is an alchemical text, dated 1582, which now resides in the British Museum. It has 22 beautifully painted illustrations depicting the different stages of transformation in three different series. There is a frontispiece to the whole series followed by the first treatise with 10 images, the second treatise with 7 images and the third treatise with 4 images. Some of these pictures are included in Jung’s “Psychology and Alchemy,” some in Johannes Fabricius’ “Alchemy: The Medieval Alchemists and their Royal Art.” Most of the images are reproduced in color in Alexander Roob’s “Alchemy and Mysticism.” Fortunately, there is a reproduction of the book itself, but the pictures based on the originals are in black and white. Full color slides of the 22 images are available in the ARAS Collection. In addition, Dr. Henderson, with the assistance of Dyane Sherwood, has written a book-length discussion and interpretation of the Splendor Solis, complete with all the images printed in color. Note: This book was completed in 2003, titled “Transformation of the Psyche: The Symbolic Alchemy of the Splendor Solis.”

Dr. Henderson first learned of the “Splendor Solis” in 1937 while still in analysis with Jung. At this time, Jung was deeply interested in alchemy and saw in it a “metaphor of the work we do in Analytical Psychology” (JLH). Thus, the strange alchemical preoccupations of trying to change lead into gold, or the mixing and juggling of mythological material with more recent historical material, or the efforts to bring about chemical transformations, or the strange representations of sex, death, dismemberment, hermaphrodites, royalty, geometric shapes, and so on, suddenly take on new meaning when we recognize them as philosophical play in which the alchemists knowingly (or unknowingly) imbued their chemicals, their laboratories, their diagrams, and their treatises with personal and cultural meaning. This projection of psychology into substance enabled the alchemist to work (play) at the transformation of his depressed mind into an enlightened mind and in metaphor, to transform his lead into gold.

The following summary of Dr. Henderson’s presentation includes descriptions of the 22 paintings. These paintings, composed of vivid imagery framed by detailed borders, are too beautiful and too elaborate to be rendered in words so the descriptions will be brief.



Plate 1 The Frontispiece

The frontispiece for the series shows a border of flowers and birds. At the lower border, a monkey is seen feeding a fish to a bird, while another monkey is playing a mandolin. In the center image, two men, the alchemist and his adept (student) are entering a building through a gate. To the right, on a coat of arms, a sun can be seen with a tilted, sickly-looking face. The eyes and the mouth have been replaced with

demonic little faces. Above, there is a crowned black helmet, topped by three crescent moons. In the background, a blue star-studded cloth. Above the crescent moons. There is a beautiful radiant sun with a serious face, looking forth into the eyes of the viewer. The text above says “Arma Artis.”

Dr. Henderson suggested that the sickly face represented a disintegrating old cultural image and that there was a promise of replacing it with a new image. “I took this scene as analogous to the beginning of a therapeutic encounter between analyst and patient. We might say that with the alchemist there is a healthy sun and a sick sun. The sick sun is isolated, distorted, cut off from all relationship and morbidly subjective, suggesting a state of self-doubt and self-loathing. Is this not a true description of neurosis?” (JLH)

“These paintings were done in the late 16th century. Philosophical alchemy reached its peak in the 17th century. So, this is just before the time when, in the humanistic light of the Renaissance, there appears the overprotective or overaggressive, and, as Cervantes said, even ridiculous symbol of the knight, the chivalric order. It is a true configuration, you might say, of a certain schizoid condition that threatens to become paranoid. This is brought out in the open and, as it were, partially exorcised by being shown in the presence of the healthy sun above the helmet. Why is it healthy? The healthy sun is not alone. It shines by its own light, but it is in the correct archetypal relation to the crescent moon below. So, it acknowledges the changeable, the related, the vulnerable nature of human life, as seen in the moon, as well as the positive nature of human will, symbolized by the sun.” (JLH)

“I saw this as a picture of an outworn persona represented by the helmet about to be discarded or displaced or, as it were, transcended by the golden crown of Alchemy - the Kingly Art. But this is not to be viewed as a unified goal but as an imaginal union of two complementing opposites, solar strength, willingly uniting with the lunar rhythm of change. In turn, this whole symbolism might be seen as compensatory to the lower image embodying the raw psychic image of self-doubt to be processed and perhaps healed if treatment can be agreed upon by both therapist and patient, as adept.” (JLH)

The First Treatise**Plate 2 Treatise 1, Image 1**

This plate has a border of flowers, insects, and birds as well as a doe and buck in the bottom panel. The main image shows a man dressed in red robes, a red cap and a purple cloak. He is seen standing in profile on a hill, overlooking a town, far away and a tree. He holds a flask (alembic or cucurbit) in his left hand and points to it

with his right hand. The alembic contains a yellow liquid and out of the top flows a ribbon on which is written the words “Eamus Quesitum Quator Elementorum Naturas.”

Dr. Henderson translates the text as “We are seeking the nature of the four elements.” These are presumably Earth, Air, Fire and Water, all of which must be contained in the alembic before the process of separation can begin. “Dreams early in analysis connoting the container suggest the need for psychic containment. Why? Because people are so collectively oriented, they don’t know how to protect themselves, even when they may be strongly motivated to enter into a process of self-discovery. I often notice that people at the beginning of analysis have dreams of people coming into my waiting room, possibly even into my consulting room, and interfering with discussions. Sometimes this is so disturbing that the whole room is taken over by a cacophony of externalized comments on what is going on. This simply represents public opinion within the individual himself: what people might think is reflected by the people within himself, - what they might think he is up to when he gets into therapy. So, all the doubts come up immediately, and are projected onto the outer world as public opinion.” (JLH)

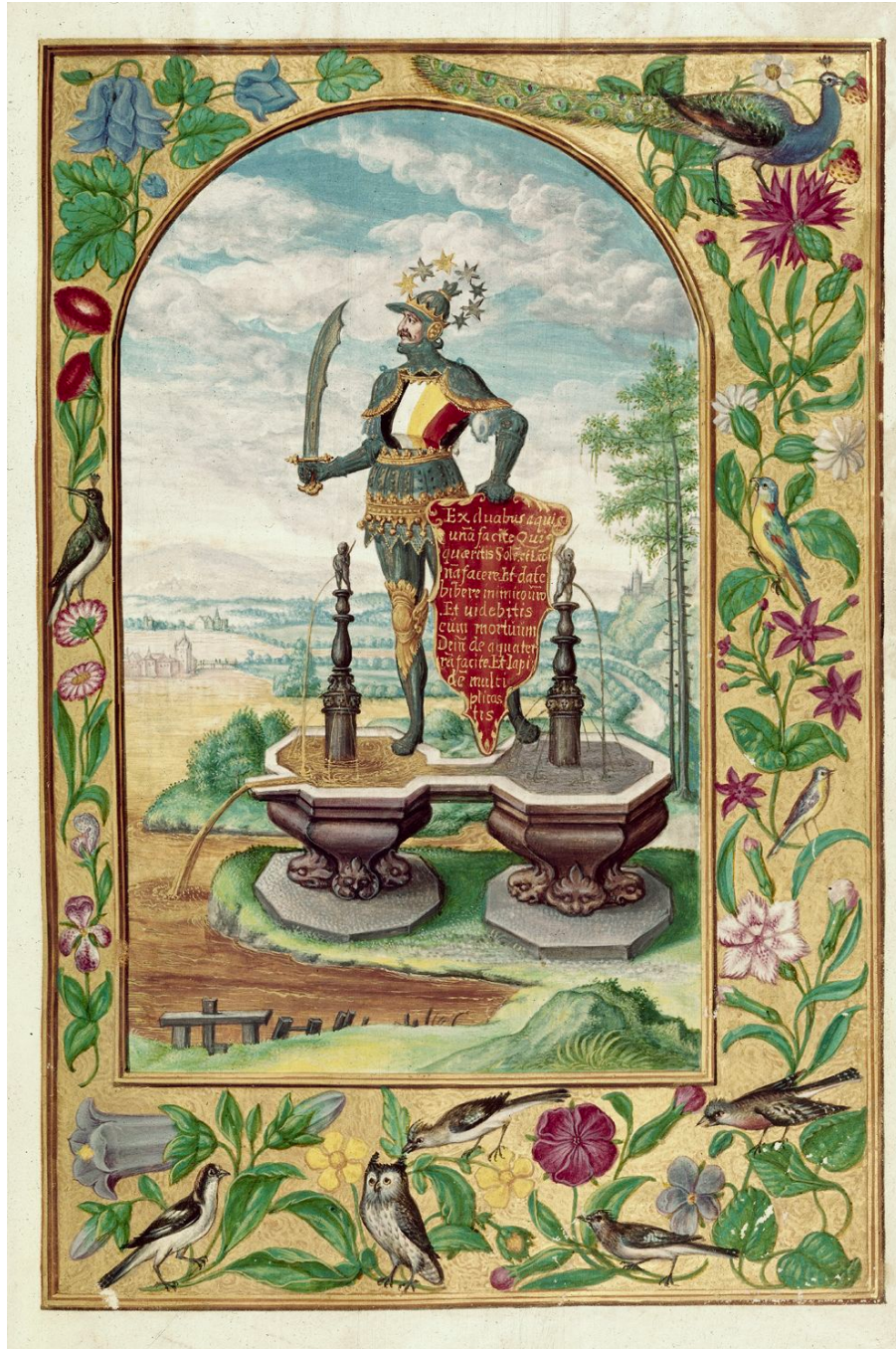


Plate 3 Treatise 1, Image 2

This plate has a border of flowers and birds. In the middle scene a knight in dark armor, ornamented in gold, is standing facing two fountains. His sword is raised.

Each fountain has a central pillar-like piece, surrounded with little heads and topped with a boy on one and a girl on the other. Water issues forth from the mouths of the heads and as urinary streams from the boy and girl. A gray stream of mercury from the girl, a golden stream of sulfur from the boy. The water from the two fountains gathers in one golden pool that spills forth into nature out of a spout. The knight's helmet is surrounded by seven stars. In his right hand he holds his sword upright and in his left hand he holds a shield on which it says "Ex Duabus Aqui Unam Facite, Qui Quaeritis Sole Et Luna Facere Et Date Bibere Inimico Vino. Et Videbitis Cum Mortuum. Deinde de Aqua Terra Facite, et Lapidem Multiplicastis."

The inscription reads "From two waters make one. Eventually from water make earth and the stone (philosopher's stone) will be multiplied." (JLH) Dr. Henderson called our attention to the use of colors in this picture. "The Black represents the Nigredo or blackness with which the alchemical process begins. It turns white, which represents a resolution of the blackness and a rebirth or sense of renewal. Then the process turns yellow, which represents a transitional stage from the white to the red where the red represents the final result. Nigredo, Albedo, Citrinitas, and Rubedo are the colors as they are usually described in alchemy. So, throughout this process, we are concerned with the transition to be made between these colors." (JLH) "The knight with the sword suggests the heroic stance of the ego that says, 'Yes, I will do something about all this containment.' and what he is doing is separating the opposites as represented by the two fountains." (JLH)

Dr. Henderson explains that this image represents the separation of the opposites and that “We see this kind of symbolism continually in modern dreams. The bathroom, with its wash stand, its bath and its toilet, is the most common setting for dreams with this kind of symbolism.” (JLH)

“This is an initial stage of initiation, which always begins with water symbolism, a purification by water, a sort of *solutio*, as a beginning stage of transformation undertaken in the service of the archetype of initiation. The reason I say initiation here is not only because of the little boy and the little girl, who might be said to be at the beginning of an initiation themselves, but by the fact that over the head of the knight are seven stars. Why seven stars? Seven is the traditional number associated with initiation as an inner process, something that goes on within the individual to acquaint him with his need for change of the kind that is necessary to take him from one stage of development to another.” (JLH) But even with all this hope the process can either go forward or slide back in a negative regressive movement. “At this point the alchemist recognized what we recognize in our analytic work with patients, that what comes up from the unconscious may be full of promise or full of meaning and then suddenly be devoured or go back again into the unconscious as if it didn’t exist.” (JLH)

Dr. Henderson went on to say, “I remember a dream of my own from an early stage of analysis where I dreamt that there were two underground lakes flowing together. I couldn’t see them. I just knew they were there. Two lakes flowing together in a kind of abstract memory as if I had always known about these lakes but now they

were flowing together. This was associated somehow with my sister, although she didn't appear. When I was a boy, my sister was, for me, a kind of anima figure. She was eight years older and I didn't really know her very well at that early stage. She had red hair and a very fair complexion, and something about her coloring, I think, influenced my unconscious, and so it had to do with the change from white to red, you see, as the anima figure. The constellation of that would be like an initiatory experience in which one could imagine unifying the opposites." (JLH)

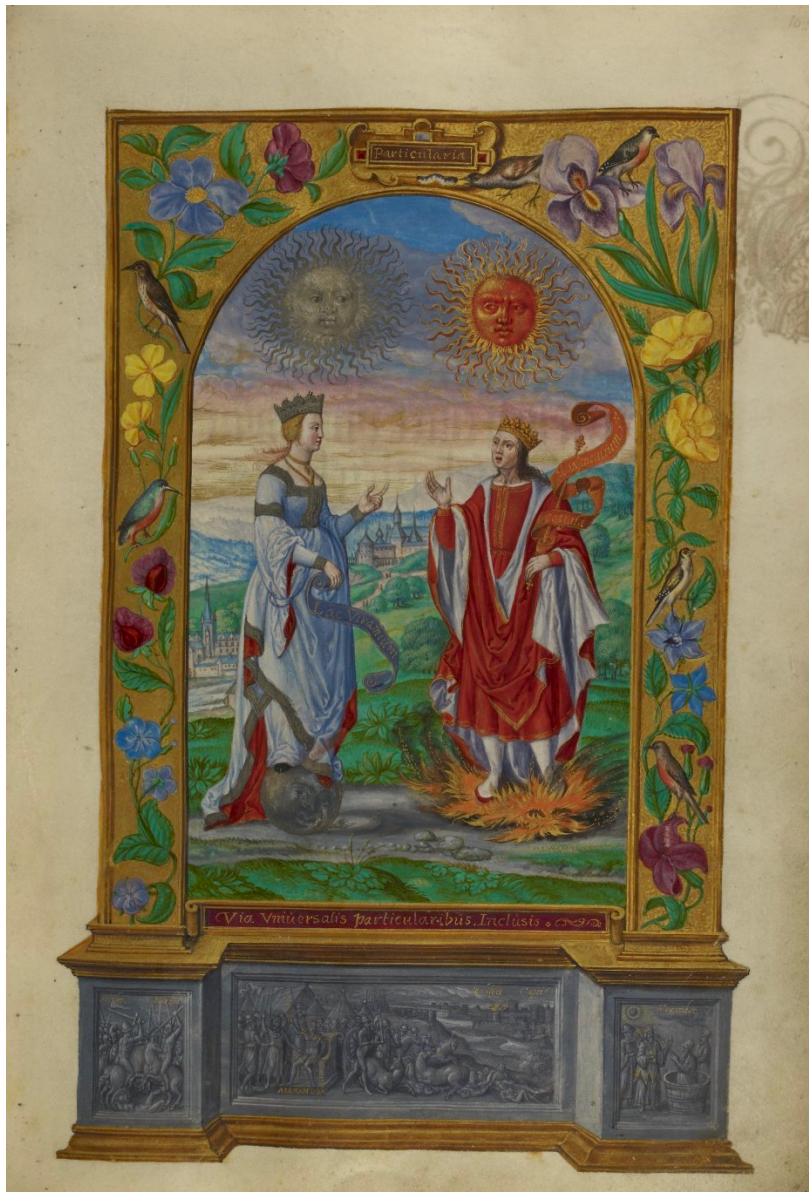


Plate 4 Treatise 1, Image 3

Within the border of flowers and birds. The bottom looks like a furniture stand on which are scenes of battle, a gathering around Alexander on a throne and a man in a barrel with others seemingly officiating over him. At the top is the word

“Particularia.” At the bottom it says “Via Universalis, Particularibus Inclusis.” In the middle, a scene in which a king dressed in red robes is standing in a fire. He holds a scepter and a ribbon, which says “Coagula Masculinum.” He is addressing a queen, dressed in blue robes, standing on what looks like a dark full moon, but according to Jung and Henderson, it is actually the earth. She holds a ribbon that says “Lac Virginus.” Above the queen, a silvery sun is looking at the king. Above the king a golden red sun is looking at the queen.

“Instead of the opposites being represented by raw mercury and sulfur, here they are represented by human figures, the King and Queen, as Sol and Luna, as sun and moon.” (JLH) The ribbons in this image proclaim the “Masculine Substance” and the “Virgin Milk” and “The universal way including the particular.” (JLH)

Dr. Henderson finds that Analytical Psychology understands this as the process of transformation, requiring the tandem participation of both the ego, with all of its personal ramifications, as well as the Self. Without the ego’s participation the process floods the psyche and without the recognition of the non-personal components there is another kind of danger. Dr. Henderson says, “It happens inevitably, in the course of the early part of treatment, that there is established a transference from the patient to the analyst, and possibly a response of a similar kind of countertransference, and the danger at this point is to take it too personally and think, ‘Aha, I’ve found my soulmate and this is where I belong, or we belong, together forever and ever, or at least unified for the duration of this journey.’ But,” Henderson says “the alchemist and the analyst, if he knows his work as he should,

realizes that this is an illusion and that underneath is the archetypal base of this whole process.” (JLH)

Reading from Jung’s “Psychology and Alchemy”

Dr. Henderson brought to our attention a dream of one of Jung’s patients that bears a striking resemblance to the alchemical process, Jung writes in “Psychology and Alchemy,”: “It may not be superfluous to point out here, with due emphasis, that consciously the dreamer had no inkling of all this. But in his unconscious he is immersed in this sea of historical associations so that he behaves in his dreams as if he were fully cognizant of this curious phenomenon in the history of the human mind. He is in fact an unconscious exponent of the autonomous psychic development, just like the medieval alchemist or the classical Neoplatonist. Hence, one could say, with a grain of salt, that history could be constructed just as easily from one’s own unconscious as from the actual texts.” (Jung, 1953) Dr. Henderson continued, “This is why I speak of a cultural unconscious. There is an awareness of our cultural background that comes to light in people’s dreams and it is quite separate from both the personal life and the archetypal level of the unconscious. And this statement of Jung’s seems to me to be Jung’s verification of that.” (JLH) And thus, Dr. Henderson presented for us a concise definition of his concept of the Cultural Unconscious residing intermediate between Jung’s designations of the Personal Unconscious and the Collective Unconscious.



Plate 5 Treatise 1, Image 4

The border for this plate looks something like an armoire. Above, a winged human head and two naked infants with birds. Below, a scene from the Bible story of Esther and King Ahasveros. In the middle. the only round picture in the series. In this

scene two men are using their hammers to mine gold from a great rock. At the bottom of the scene is a bronze crescent moon with a face looking up at them.

Dr. Henderson tells us that as a metaphor for analysis the digging represents 'the working through' in depth psychology. It is a digging back not only to the early childhood experiences and the origin of the neurosis but possibly to recover a buried treasure - that is, to find something long forgotten and that may now be useful and redemptive. It represents a regression not just in the service of the ego but in the service of the Self as well.

In the scene below, the feminine has become central in the work. "Esther was the Jewish maiden who was made Queen after convincing King Ahasveros to free the Jewish people from the dictatorial rule of Haman. It was the beginning of the Jewish Festival of Purim. The freeing of the Jews from persecution is a metaphor, in this case, for the freeing of the woman to become equal to man." (JLH)



Plate 6 Treatise 1, Image 5

The border for this plate also looks something like an armoire at the top but toward the bottom it looks more like the interior of a building. At the top are two angels and two figures riding what appear to be winged horses. At the bottom are four women

bathing, two women attendants and several men off to the side watching them. In the middle is a fruit tree with golden fruit. At the top are thirteen birds flying from the tree and a fourteenth remaining to eat the fruit. There is a crown surrounding the base of the trunk from which there is also a river flowing forth. There is a ladder leaned up against the tree with a man dressed in black with golden boots picking fruit. He stands at the top of the ladder on the sixth and seventh rungs. Off to the side are two other men looking on at the scene - one seemingly showing the scene to the other. One man has a branch from the tree and the man on the ladder is passing another branch to the other man.

The birds are black and white, symbolizing a movement from the nigredo to the albedo - from the blackening to the whitening. The man is bringing the golden branches down to the men below, the water is flowing from the tree into the building and the women are bathing while the men are watching. "The principle of masculinity and kingship is in abeyance in terms of the new appearance of the feminine, no longer as a purely archetypal figure but as real women in a setting that completely acknowledges them as open to the world, about which they have no need to feel ashamed of themselves." (JLH) As an analytic metaphor it represents a comfortable and very open and intimate stage in the analysis.



Plate 7 Treatise 1, Image 6

This plate has a border of flowers and birds, fruit and a butterfly. The bottom looks like three plaques. On the left, a depiction of a man beating a Satyr and a woman

with a stick. On the right, is a depiction of a man beating another man and two women with a stick. The man being beaten is trying to protect the women from the attacker. In the middle is simply a field of red. The main image above shows a scene in which a young King (or Queen), dressed in golden robes is standing in nature. He holds a scepter encircled with seven stars in his right hand and a golden ball with a bird on it in the other hand. Above, a golden star and a golden sun are shining down. In the background, an old king is drowning in the water.

This scene represents the death of the old king (the worn-out, old personality. the Senex; our conventional attitudes, habits, loyalties) and the birth of the new king (the new potential). The king is dead. Long live the king. Jung explains, "The king personifies a hypertrophy of the ego which calls for compensation... His thirst is due to his boundless concupiscence and egotism. But when he drinks, he is overwhelmed by water -- that is, by the unconscious." (Jung, 1965, paragraph 365)

The white bird on the ball represents the establishment of the albedo.



Plate 8 Treatise 1, Image 7

The border shows flowers and birds. The border below shows two bucks and two monkeys. In the center image, a naked man is standing knee-high in black mud in a natural setting. His body is black, white, and red. His head appears to be composed

of a large red orb having small facial features. He is standing in profile and facing a winged Queen dressed in green, blue, red and gold robes. She holds out to the man a red robe.

“This picture is called The Regeneration of the Ethiopian.... The Ethiopian is a figure that appears often in alchemy and it represents a new and more essential problem pertaining to the nigredo or blackness.” (JLH) Here, the feminine principle rescues the masculine principle from contamination by the inferior function. “It seems to me, that this is a metaphor for the appearance of that which has never been cultivated and yet seems to represent the greatest potential for growth - something that has to be redeemed from the unconscious and yet is much more profound than what was represented by the old king in the previous painting.” (JLH)



Plate 9 Treatise 1, Image 8

The border shows flowers and birds. In the main scene a two-headed person with wings stands in a natural setting, holding in one hand a disc-like shield and in the

other hand a golden egg. One head is that of a redheaded woman with a silvery glow and the other of a blonde man with a golden glow. He has a red wing on the right and she has a whitish-purple wing.

This picture represents the union of the masculine and the feminine in the image of the hermaphrodite. Their red and white wings symbolize the processes of the albedo and the rubedo, or as it is sometimes called “the red man and his white wife.” The egg symbolizes the containment of the four elements and is a promise of future development. The egg also represents the microcosm or inner experience, while the landscape represents the macrocosm or outer world and the hermaphrodite represents the Self, bringing together the opposites that were previously separated out of the original mass. It is an image of balance but not of completion. Similarly, analysis not infrequently reaches a point where it appears to have ended or fulfilled its purpose but it is not quite over.



Plate 10 Treatise 1, Image 9

This plate has a border of flowers, birds, and a butterfly. At the bottom are three plates. The middle plate is blank. On the left, a king is driving four horses pulling a

boat with a woman holding the reins. On the right, a woman is standing in a boat holding a trident in one hand and the other hand is guiding three river horses.

Three women, a merman and a Satyr are also in the scene. The scene at the center of the piece includes a fierce looking man with wild hair holding a great sword in his right hand and a severed head in his left hand. Lying before him on the ground is a dismembered body with the arms and legs freshly severed from the torso. The missing head is presumably the head that is being carried in the standing man's hand. In the background there is a large building.

The shadow figure who has dismembered the man reminds us that “the hermaphrodite is an imperfect and premature image of the self.” (JLH) It reminds us of the threat of dissociation. Dr. Henderson says, “It seems to me, that it represents the fear of madness, the fear of the collective, the fear of what the individual has been in need of protection from all through the process, the fear of being at the mercy of all those disturbing forces from the unconscious that affect society in general - the worldly wantons.”

“At crucial points in depth psychotherapy, a fear of madness may be necessary, in fact, to ensure that we know fully how valuable true consciousness is, in the psychological sense. And ritual dismemberment, so characteristic of shamanism, is a close relation to therapy. This certainly does not mean that our patients should become shamans or that therapists should be shamans either, but that we recognize that the shamanistic model, the shamanistic image is naturally one that may come to light in the course of treatment. And that it is represented by a physical

dissociation of parts, so that they can subsequently come together on a more effective level.” (JLH)



Plate 11 Treatise 1, Image 10

This plate has a border of flowers, birds, a bee, and a butterfly. In the central scene, two men appear to be in a courtyard of a building. One man is sitting naked immersed in a tub filled with water, having a white bird on his head. The other man has a bellows and is apparently stoking a fire that is heating the water in the tub. In front of the tub there is a flask with a yellow fluid. In two niches we see Mercury and Jupiter. At the base of the pedestal Vulcan is working as a blacksmith with his assistant.

Vulcan or Hephaistos is the god of the forge, who transforms the chaos of the base material into beautiful jewelry. Hephaistos then becomes the overseer of the transformation of the psyche as well. The transformation is not one that ends in inflated images of transcendence such as the ability to fly but rather in the image of an ordinary man who has developed a spiritual attitude. Dr. Henderson explains that unlike traditional Christian belief, where spiritual enlightenment comes down from above, alchemical doctrine teaches that spiritual enlightenment emerges from within. Thus, the white bird on the adept's head, which symbolizes spiritual enlightenment, is not seen as having descended onto the head but rather emerged from the head! This represents the completion of the process as described in The First Treatise.

The Second Treatise

The Second Treatise is composed of seven images. All seven images have borders

composed of scenes from daily living and a chariot at the top. The image in the center is of a small alcove-like space with a flask or cucurbit in the middle with a crown on its neck and one thing or another inside of the cucurbit.



Plate 12 Treatise 2, Image 1

This plate has a border composed of scenes including a hanging, a funeral, a man pouring water into a barrel that is spilling the water out below, men begging, a man driving a team of horses to pull a plow, a man being beaten, a woman feeding a pig, another pig being loaded into a box, a man trampling skins in a tub, and a man shaving a hide. The image in the center shows a small alcove with two carved flowers at the top. A flask or cucurbit is placed on a green wreath. Inside the cucurbit, a naked boy is pouring a black fluid into the mouth of a dragon, while holding a bellows in his other hand. Above, Saturn is driving the chariot pulled by two green and gold dragons. The wheels on the chariot bear the symbols of Aquarius and Taurus.

Saturn, the personification of death and limitation, presides over this scene of death, suffering, unhappiness and futile action. The old man pouring water into a leaking barrel resembles the Senex or “old man” attitude that simply repeats itself. In the alembic a little monster appears, representing the prima materia. The little boy is pouring water into the mouth of the monster for the process of the solutio (dissolving) and at the same time conducting the calcinatio or the heating or burning of the prima materia, the original chaos. This pertains to the invigorating and enlivening healing waters as well as to the divine fires, so commonly seen in dreams and fantasies.



Plate 13 Treatise 2, Image 2

This plate has a border composed of various scenes. One shows the steps of the Vatican, where a man sits next to a scale placed on a table. He is discussing something with two men - perhaps something pertaining to the two trunks in the foreground. The Pope, surrounded by cardinals is also seen crowning a man.

Hunters are seen in the distance. At its center there is a cucurbit placed on a green wreath. Inside are three birds - a red bird and a white bird are attacking a black bird. Above, Jupiter is driving a chariot that is being pulled by two peacocks. The wheels on the chariot have the symbols of Sagittarius and Pisces.

Jupiter, the king of the Gods, presides over this scene. It compensates for, or represents an opposite of, the last scene. Here we see fulfillment, money, coronation by the Pope, the community, the state, the empire. The little boy has gotten things going and now the red bird and the white bird are in conflict with the black bird. The monster has become or been replaced by three birds in conflict.



Plate 14 Treatise 2, Image 3

This plate has a border composed of scenes of war and violence against civilians.

The central image shows a small alcove, surrounded by flowers and ornaments. At its center a cucurbit is placed on a red wreath. Inside the cucurbit is a three-headed

bird with a gold crown on each head. The chariot above, is pulled by two dogs and Mars is the driver. On the wheels are the symbols of Capricorn and Cancer.

In contrast to the wealth and power of the previous picture we see here a battle scene presided over by Mars, the god of war. It is a scene in which a weaker, oppressed people are rising up, unsuccessfully, against a superior dominating power. The three-headed bird in the cucurbit represents a process in conflict with itself - it is unresolved and dynamic.



Plate 15 Treatise 2, Image 4

This plate has a border composed of scenes of people engaged in sport. Below, is the king with ten courtiers. The image in the center shows a small alcove with flowers,

fruit and a bird. At its center is a cucurbit containing a three-headed dragon. One head is white, one is red and one is black. Above is a chariot pulled by two horses and driven by the King, the Sun. On the wheel is the symbol of Leo.

In contrast to the previous picture we see here a peaceful scene - cooperation, diplomatic association, friendly sports. The three heads of the dragon are very dynamic but the red dragon's head is in ascendance, which represents the rubedo or the final stage of the work. The sun, riding the chariot with the symbol of Leo, reiterates the strength and fullness of rubedo or power.



Plate 16 Treatise 2, Image 5

This plate has a border composed of scenes of people enjoying being together. They are eating, reading together, and playing music. Others are walking, or laying, while

some couples are kissing. The central image shows a small alcove with four pillars. At its center is a cucurbit. Inside the cucurbit is a peacock with its tail feathers spread wide. The chariot above is pulled by two doves and is driven by Venus. On the wheels are the symbols of Aries and Libra. Cupid stands at the front.

This image, known as the Peacock's Tail, was Dr. Henderson's favorite. A beautiful stained-glass reproduction of it was created in Dr. Henderson's honor by Dr. Loren Pederson and now hangs at the C.G. Jung Institute of Northern California. The peacock represents the moment when the black is about to turn to white and it becomes iridescent. "This represents the beginning of the process of redemption of the shadow, I would say, in a psychological sense, when people really have, as it were, accepted the shadow side of life fully enough - that is the nigredo. Then perhaps they can go into this next stage of feeling that they are really ready to affirm a new and more-healthy attitude to life. It is not an inflating image because it does not represent the day but only the beginning of the day. It is dawn, not noon or afternoon. People are relating to each other and the scene is being watched over by Venus and Cupid." (JLH)



Plate 17 Treatise 2, Image 6

This plate has a border composed of scenes of people engaged in commerce, science, literature, sculpture, and music. In the background is a scene of a busy city. In the

center there is a small alcove surrounded by flowers. At its center is a cucurbit. Inside the cucurbit is a woman surrounded by a yellow oval. She wears a crown, holds a scepter in one hand and a golden orb in the other. She wears a blue robe and golden necklaces. Her breasts are exposed. Beneath her feet is the face of the golden sun. The chariot above is pulled by two chickens and is driven by Mercury. On the wheels are the symbols of Gemini and Virgo.

In this scene we find the complement to the Eros, or relatedness, of the previous scene. In this scene we see representations of the logos principle - the arts and sciences - “tangible creativeness in terms of mind, spirit, artistic ability, the philosophic, the aesthetic, the scientific.” (JLH) Above it all is the Hermetic symbol - the astrological sign of Mercurious. The woman in the center could be seen as the anima in men or as the creative feminine in general.



Plate 18 Treatise 2, Image 7

This plate has a border composed of scenes of people fishing, hunting, hawking, washing clothes, riding, boating. There is also a mill wheel turning under the force of a moving stream. In the center image there is a small alcove with birds and

flowers on the two sides. At its center is a cucurbit. Inside the cucurbit is a youthful king in a golden oval wearing red robes and holding in his hands a gold scepter and an orb. He stands on a crescent moon. The chariot at the top is pulled by two women (one red and one gold) and is driven by a woman representing the Moon. On the wheel is the symbol of Scorpio.

In this last picture of this series, the boy-king in red and gold represents the triumph of the rubedo, but he is not a symbol of a pure masculine principle but rather the masculine principle tempered by the moon - the feminine principle. While the first picture in this series represents nature exploited, this picture is about using and honoring nature - the cooperation of man and nature. And thus ends the Second Treatise.

The Third Treatise

The First Treatise presents the complete alchemical process of transformation in ten images. The Second Treatise presents the complete alchemical process in seven images. The Third Treatise presents the complete process in four images. The four images of the Third Treatise have borders and an image in the center.



Plate 19 Treatise 3, Image 1

This plate has a border of flowers, birds, butterflies, insects, snails and a frog. In the middle is a landscape with green grass and bushes, a tree stump and a dead tree. In

the middle of the landscape is what appears to be a setting sun with a worried expression on its face. The sun has mostly set so that only a crescent of the sun is above the horizon but we can still see the shape of the whole sun superimposed within the landscape and its worried eyes are seen looking off to the side through a lake in the landscape. Off in the distance there appears to be a city.

Once again the work begins with the *prima materia*, the original chaos, the blackness, the *nigredo*. Dr. Henderson said, “When people are depressed, it’s as though the light had gone out and they are, as it were, in darkness, without any hope of coming out of that, even though the sun is still somehow there, it is not there for them.” (JLH) In the alchemical tradition, as well as in analysis, the *nigredo* must be accepted not as the end of life, as it may appear to the adept or the patient, but as the beginning of a creative or redemptive process.



Plate 20 Treatise 3, Image 2

This plate has a border of flowers, birds, butterflies, insects and strawberries. In the middle is the interior of a home with children playing. They are playing with

pinwheels and hobbyhorses. Some children are pulling a pillow along the floor while another child rides the pillow. At the back of the room are two women looking after some younger children. Two cucurbits are placed on a back shelf and a small black bird is standing on the floor. Through a door and in the distance a servant girl can be seen.

“If we are thinking about doing something to alleviate a depression, what might we suggest? Presumably, play, if it were possible to play. ‘Children at play’ is the antithesis of what a depression might mean. Children play because they can’t help it; it’s their nature to play with things, to play with life, to not care about achieving anything through play, but simply to play at it. Very often people in a depression are suffering from disappointed hopes and expectations. They can hardly wait to get back to the achievement program that they left behind and yet, this is the advice that might be given to them: Don’t do that, just try to play.” (JLH)



Plate 21 Treatise 3, Image 3

This plate has a border of flowers, birds and butterflies. In the center image there is a landscape with green grass, bushes, trees and a house. In the foreground, a blazing fire heats a pan of water that appears to be supported by some large black urns.

Next to the fire are women washing white sheets in barrels as well as in a river that flows through the center of the scene. Behind them are other women laying out the sheets to dry on the grass and another woman is hanging sheets on a clothesline.

Several large buildings can be seen the background.

Dr. Henderson explained that this very domestic scene of women washing sheets might mean that the daily habits of life have a redemptive function. “Just keep doing what you have been doing, might be good advice to somebody in a state of depression. Don’t try. If you can’t change it, then don’t. Just keep doing what you can do, which is to keep clean and do your habitual thing. Well, once when I suggested this to be an explanation of this picture at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich, Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz jumped on me and said: ‘Oh, no! It is a very mystical picture. It’s not a mundane picture at all.’ And she was right. It represents a combination of the solutio and the solificatio on a higher level.” (JLH) The solutio represents the washing, dissolving and purification of the depression. Then, leaving the laundry out to dry is a way of saying “Let nature do it. Let the moisture rise.”

(JLH)



Plate 22 Treatise 3, Image 4

This plate has a border of flowers, birds and strawberries. In the center image there is a landscape with green grass and bushes, a tree stump and a dead tree. Behind the landscape is a large city with houses and tall buildings with steeples on top. Above the city is a red and gold sun. It is full and glowing. The face on the sun

appears serious but less worried than the sun at the beginning of this Third Treatise.

Dr. Henderson explained that the serious look on the sun's face meant that while the depression was lifting it had not completely lifted. "I say to my depressed patients, 'I don't know, but I've never seen a case of depression that didn't lift. But don't let it lift too quickly. Cling to the depression as long as you possibly can, so that when the sun does rise, it will be serious and protect you from falling back into that kind of depression again.'" (JLH) However, the processes of personal change and alchemical transformation are not linear. They don't begin in one place and end in another. They are circular. Thus, there is a continuous working through of the same material in new ways and hopefully at new levels.

In distinguishing the differences between the three treatises, Dr. Henderson said, "I don't know, and we have no way of knowing, because the text doesn't tell us, but I think that Solomon Trismosin wanted people to see that alchemy could be understood in different ways. The first way, it seems to me, pertains to the more basic material of alchemy and the second is more of a philosophical alchemy. The first part is more like real alchemy, the alchemy where they really thought they were making gold. Jung once said to me 'You know, in the Middle Ages, they really did think that they were going to make the gold.' And that's what made their imagery so real and so vivid. In the later stages, during the later Renaissance, in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, alchemy became detached from the actual work, from the

laboratories, and the ‘Puffers’ as they were called, who believed they could still make the gold. When it became completely detached from this thought, it became less real and more philosophic, more like you could think this, or think that, or think something else. But when they really believed that they could make the gold, it was like the modern chemist or physicist; they would know that they were working with real things. That was how they felt about what they were doing.” (JLH)

“So that’s why I think that the First Treatise was more in line with that earlier period and the Second Treatise was more in line with philosophical alchemy that started with Paracelsus in the 14th and 15th centuries and reached its zenith in the 17th century. So, I think the Second and Third Treatise pertain more to this later period. ... In analysis, active imagination may come more spontaneously and seem to be purer in the early period of analysis. At later periods it begins to be a little too composed and becomes more like works of art instead of representing real material that is coming up.” (JLH)

“Trismosin was supposedly a follower of Paracelsus, who both lived in the 15th and early 16th centuries. At this time there was a whole new idea of medicine, of healing, of the use of drugs and herbs for healing as well as the psychic healing that went on which the doctors until then had all, on the whole, ignored. An entirely new use of nature was being discovered and while they were still miles away from understanding the true psychophysiological meaning of the illnesses of the time, they were beginning to get on to it. Certainly, Trismosin must have felt that he was adding what he knew, and what he was interested in to that whole tradition. It

would take 200 years before chemistry and physics became the sciences that we know today, and yet these men were fascinated by the changes that went on in matter, in the change from one metal to another, and they projected into it the idea of psychic transformation. They didn't know that it was psychic transformation, they thought it was physical but gradually it became clearer that these two principles would have to depart from each other, the physical and the psychological. So, by the end of the 17th century, they had separated completely, and the practical part of alchemy went into chemistry and the philosophical part went into the discovery of the unconscious." (JLH)

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