Tractatus Aureus and the Double Alchemical Cross

By Iulia Millesima

The double cross, in Alchemy, suggests a real compendium of all processes. Or at least it indicates those defining the Opus Magnum operative structure.

tractatus aureus double crossThe best specimen I have ever seen is in “Tractatus Aureus de Philosophorum Lapide”, or Golden Treatise on Philosophers Stone, by an unknown German author. You can find it in Museum Hermeticum, Frankfurt 1677, page 1.

The first observation is that the Tractatus Aureus cross is unusually double armed. Theologically pointless, the double-armed cross, was rather a heraldic mark. The emblems of Slovakia and Lithuania, and that of french dukes of Anjou, as well as Lorraine cross, put in display such a representation. In heraldry, the shorter arm was said to recall the epigram I.N.R.I. with Christ’s epitomes.

Today the double-armed crosses are known by the name of Byzantine, or patriarchal crosses. They were used in Byzantine religious-imperial rites as a reliquary of the True Cross. Below we can see the passage of the double-armed, in Byzantine culture, from a Christian veneration object to a reliquary. The reliquary form is known as “Staurotheke” ( from Greek stauros “cross” and theke, “collection”. Often the staurotheques present on the back epigrams in honor of the Cross and the name of the customer. From this tradition, comes the use of whole texts in the shape of a cross.

byzantine\_crossbyzantine double crossstaurostheque esztergom treasure double cross

In the case of the Tractatus Aureus cross we are examining, in my opinion, we are before a real cross, not a mere text in the shape of a cross. We have already seen that both Alchemy and Christendom share the cross symbol (1). In Alchemy this was a real ancient sign, though, representing different meanings. This variety of significations may not be amazing, since the “Rule of Three” ( every symbol means at least three different ideas) is an alchemical hinge.

So we have seen that the cross may be an allegory of something, or someone, to be literally hung (2). A cross requires a symbolic hanging by means of nails. Inside the vessel it may require a “hanging” by means of heat and distillation-sublimation tools.

One may be surprised by the blaspheme side by side of religious and alchemical concepts. But they are very common in Alchemical imaginary and iconography. In the place of Christ, we can also have Dionysus or even Taurus horns be suspended. This symbolic imaginary shared numerous fields. In Tractatus Aureus we are before the simplest case, that’s to say a so-called “fixation” cross. Or a cross metaphor of something being suspended in the superior part of vessels, not to fall to the bottom, or fly away.

We know that our Secret Fire/Mercurius, or our First Matter-Universal Dissolvent, out of salts volatilization, is very volatile and needs a “Fixation” to be more handling. The methods to do so are various and depending on the very starting raw matter. But a common one was to push the volatile part with air currents or fumes, till a powder-like substance is being formed (3). So from a volatile Mercurius we have a Mercurius Philosophorum, featuring the wonderful dissolving and generative Mercurius characteristics, but being no more volatile. The flowing Water has become a steady Earth.

This stage was the end of the preliminary works, those to achieve our Universal Dissolvent indeed. But this first “fixation” shall not be unique in the alchemical works. In fact, the end of the third work ( see an Opus Magnum scheme) is the last cooking, with the last fixation of our perfect Red. In fact, during the so-called Main Work, we have fed the alchemical baby with mercurial milk (4) and then directly with red drops (5). Of course, all these, which may seem heterogeneous substances, are instead the same Mercurius, become Mercurius Philosophorum, then divided (6) and used as Milk, then dried and become red drops, or Sulphur. All these operations are performed inside the great alchemical engine of the Solve et Coagula, or to dissolve and fix.

So a double-cross for a double fixation.

tractatus aureus museum hermeticumWe are ready to read the Latin mottos forming the Tractatus Aureus cross, now. There is a vertical segment ending, at the bottom, with a Moon, and at the top with a Sun. The inferior Moon is the female symbol of our Volatile Mercurius (7) to be fixed by the male operation of Sun (8), during the Solve et Coagula process. The substance is always the same Mercurius to be transformed into Mercurius Philosophorum-Azoth-Salt-Sulphur. The vertical formula is: “Habet in se Omnia Lapis Benedici“, or the stone has everything in itself. That’s to say the substance is always the same, although its transformations.

The first arm from the top says: “Omne Decus“, or all the glory……., and depicts the first operation to fix a volatile Mercurius. The second arm says: “Nisus in Arena“, ….relies on sand (powder). So, my not verbatim translation: The stone has everything in itself. All the glory relies on powder.

Continuos passages of states ( from Water-Moon to Earth-Sun) are the foundations of alchemical works. In this way, Secret Fire comes from power to the act. Every Sun-fixed substance retains the dissolving ability and, in its turn, a dissolving Moon repeats all the processes.

With a preponderance of Suns, since we end the first and the third part with two definitive male conversions, or fixations. And Suns are also the metallic substances able to fix the dissolving Moons (9).

See also Sun and Moon at the turn of the first Millennium ;

See also Franz Kieser and the two Perceivable Lights ;

See also Philosophia Reformata & the Angel with a Trumpet , Cabala Mineralis or the She Horse on Urine Work part 1 , Orthelius1 Commentary on Maria Prophitissa. Part 1 ;

See also Kamala Jnana from Black to White , Cabala Mineralis or the She Horse on Urine Work part 1 ;

See also Cabala Mineralis or the She Horse on Urine Work part 2 , Ripley Scroll/ the Soul Drinks only Blood ;

See also Artephius and Antimonium est de Partibus Saturni ;

See also Stoll, the Lacinius Translator on Male and Female ;

See also Kriegsmann/ Sun, Moon, Wind and Earth in Tabula Smaragdina ;

 See also Atalanta Fugiens and the Golden Apples ;

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