

Thirteenth Plate

When examining this *thirteenth plate* the reader will immediately notice that it closely resembles the *tenth plate* with its partition between the practical and the symbolical parts of the image. We can conclude that there have been six consecutive plates that appear in pairs. Each pair at first glance seems identical but this is not quite the case, as we have pointed out earlier, and neither is it the case for this plate. Upon closer examination a number of surprising discrepancies will come to light.

Let us have a closer look at the man who simultaneously pours out two flasks, each into one of the two plates of the scale. Now only two asterisks appear in the flask in his right hand whilst the one he is holding in his left hand shows no more than a tiny sun instead of the *flosculus* it was marked with previously.

The two little signs which have disappeared and which have remained inside the recipient together constitute the famous RE, in other words, two thirds of RER and half of the initial RERE.

It is not our intention here to try and complicate or obscure the earlier mentioned elucidation by Fulcanelli on this matter. Jacob Sulat's teachings, to which we rigorously adhere, preceded the *Mystery of the Cathedrals* by two and a half centuries. The book of the Master refers to the *compost* and it is this same enigma to which the Lallemand hotel and the *tenth* and *thirteenth engravings* of the *Mutus Liber* refer. This compost is the term used in ancient treatises for the philosophic *composite* which is ready to raise itself and go through the progression that is ponderable both in terms of colour and sound and which is in perfect harmony with the progressive growth of the external or elementary fire.

Although the Master takes great care to follow the ancestors in respecting the secret, he did not neglect to reveal that the RER hides what is perhaps the most important arcane secret of the

Great Work. According to the Master, the RER expresses the vase which allows the cooking of the RERE *compositum* and which gives rise to the surprising and successive transformations of this *compositum* until it reaches ultimate perfection. When Fulcanelli assured us that the knowledge of RER, of the vessel, easily leads to the knowledge of RERE, one should understand that the Egg of the Philosophers can be compared with a chicken's egg in that the shell, or the container, is formed at the same time as its contents and the diverse substances which are destined to develop into the new individual.

It seems appropriate at this point to return to the subject of the vitreous appearance of the philosophic egg which the Sieur des Marez himself willingly insisted upon revealing through the shape of the round-bottom flask which is closed by the flame that is provided by the 'alchemist-blower'.

Although the recipient has once again received an overabundant amount of influx from its second exposure and has been tipped practically horizontal in order for it to be closed, there are two singularities that should not have gone unnoticed by the reader. Firstly, the sign for harmoniac has disappeared. Secondly, the surface of the mercurial liquid remains unchanged while one would expect it to be flat and perpendicular to the vertical axis. The coincidence of these two singular indications lead to the idea that the ordinary laboratory flask is nothing but a symbol for the egg in the composition of which the mysterious *harmonious salt* finds itself absorbed.

On the *tenth plate* which is practically the same, the philosophic mercury still had the mobility of a liquid whilst the hieroglyph with eight rays is not present. One could add that the incorporated sulphur at that point was in a vegetative state, as was neatly symbolized by the flowering wild Rose of the Sages. As a first step towards the future triumphant rose, the hermetic flower in this plate is replaced by the sun to which it gave birth.

Hortulanus, whose writings we have quoted earlier, wrote the following about the mineral star and about *verissimum* in his comments on Hermes' *Emerald Tablet*. He commented on the *Emerald Tablet* sentence by sentence and even word by word:

'For the most veritable sun is engendered by Art. Hermes states most veritable in the superlative, because the sun engendered by this Art, excels above the natural sun in all its proprieties, both medicinally and otherwise.'¹¹⁵

This sun, as we know, signifies both Sulphur and the Gold of the Sages. In the fourth partition of the image, the alchemist and his wife place this sun in the heart of the athanor.

Heated by an external flame, the coagulating quality of this *solar sulphur* raises the *mercury* to the highest point of fixity. Both of these matters can be found at the bottom of the page to the right of the philosophic furnace in the personification of Diana and Apollo. The goddess wears on her head the moon as indicated by the thin crescent. The god wears on his head the daily star which is depicted as encircled with rays.

The target on the left side of the image is larger now. It contains the four main colours which distinguish the four phases of the coction. The black outer ring gives way to the six colours that show through a prism: violet, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. Indigo does not exist. The only reason the colour indigo used to be distinguished was to arrive, one way or another, at the number seven. Few have realized that this was the only reason why indigo is mentioned.

The short sleeves of Apollo's acton now show two lion faces instead of the single face as shown on the *tenth engraving*. This signifies the union of the two sulphurous principles within him, in other words, of the *green* and the *red lion*. Manget did not indicate anything of the like in his engraving. On the cuff of the

god's half boots, one can see the three dots that the freemasons must have borrowed from the Great Work and which the author of the invaluable *Bibliotheca* either could not or did not want to point out.

Our intentions are different however and our attention here is caught by the bowstring which was relaxed on the *tenth plate* but which is now strung in such a way that it is suitable to approach the target with the greatest precision.

Diana and Phoebus, divinities from the hermetic Olympus who consistently express their magnetic link, have turned over their hands which are placed on top of one another, palm on palm, whilst their power which began at ten is multiplied by ten again. This power is thus multiplied over and over and the progression runs into the thousands. This is indicated by the locution *et cætera* of limitlessness:

‘... to the extent that with this Medicine,
a small portion thrown into the sea
would suffice, if the sea were made of quicksilver,
To transform it entirely into gold.’¹¹⁶

Hence, in conclusion, what we see here is the *multiplication* that constitutes the final phase of the Great Work. Magophon barely speaks of this in his explanation of this image, after having dedicated no more than a meagre three lines to the previous image, the *seventh plate*.

When studying a compartment of the marvellous ceiling found in the castle at Dampierre-sur-Bouronne, Fulcanelli proves to be much more forthcoming in his second work. It is important to make careful note of the long passage which we are now going to clarify with the details as presented by Jacob Sulat and of which Guillaume Salmon himself corroborated in his *Dictionary*:

‘The Multiplication was hidden by the sages in the tale of

the Snake Hydra. When one of its heads was cut off, ten more grew in its place: for with each Multiplication the Stone gains ten times its quality. That is the nature of true Multiplication.’¹¹⁷

The anonymous commentator in the *Journal des Sçavans*, who was undoubtedly triggered by the successive multiplications of the base number, briefly noted: ‘The *thirteenth plate* contains the Projection.’

‘The powder of projection,’ Dom Pernety explains, ‘is a powder which is projected in tiny quantities onto imperfect metals in fusion, with which they are transformed, depending on their degree of perfection.’¹¹⁸

Fourteenth Plate

Each of the three ovens which occupy the upper frame of this penultimate *fourteenth plate* correspond to the three characters placed directly beneath them. Together they represent the three principle parts of the final coction, each clearly distinct from one another. We see two women with their distaffs tucked into their belts and the boy who has put down his racket and ball. They express just how important it is that the heat is maintained and well-regulated during this meticulous operation by the manner in which they dedicate their complete attention and care in looking after the heating lamp. This is why they are depicted as cutting off, deftly with a pair of scissors, the carbonated part of the wick while simultaneously filling the reservoir with flammable material.

It is doubtlessly with a sense of black humour that an alchemical treatise which has influenced the opinion of a majority of good authors merrily begins — *incipit fauste* — with the following sentence which would be entirely fitting as a subtitle to the image of our three unique characters here:

‘The advance of the work is called all women’s work and children’s play — *Operis proccession dicitur omne upus mulierum, & ludus puerorum.*’

The invaluable text ‘was copied from a very old book, by a certain doctor who resided in the famous city of Leipzig — *est per quondam doctorem in famosa civitate Lypsi commorantem, ex vetustissimo libro exscriptus.*’

‘This ancient book, which used to belong to the Roman Emperor Charles IV, is the one he worked from to make our Stone and which helped him to accomplish it in perfection.

What is more, he founded many monasteries of various orders and built a number of remarkable collegiate churches and cathedrals, etc.¹¹⁹

It was of course inevitable that the monarch of the Holy Empire, born in Prague in 1316 and a true patron of the Arts and the Sciences, would be generously scorned and mocked.

Let us turn our attention to what is written in this extraordinary work, which may well have been the breviary of John of Luxemburg's son. We will focus on the writings that are most closely linked to the portion of the plate we are currently examining. To the comfort of those new to the field of hermetics, both from a chemical and a spagyric perspective, the trio of matters is barely hidden at all. First there is the cleansing saltpetre, then the ammonium chloride, and lastly the toughest combustible:

‘However the three children’s games must precede the women’s work. For children play with three things. Firstly they often play with very old walls. Secondly with urine. Thirdly with coal.’¹²⁰

Following this, the same Adept briefly yet effectively explains the philosophical and scientific meaning of these three strange games:

‘The first game obtains the Matter of the Stone. The second game increases its soul. The third game prepares the body for life.’¹²¹

As far as women are concerned, the anonymous alchemist mentions that their work consists of cooking — *opus earum est coquere* — before concluding with a sentence pointing towards the necessary predisposition towards intelligence, namely with the

same sentence which Magophon used at the end of the passage dedicated to the *fourteenth plate* in his *Hypotyposis*:

‘*Qui ergo potest capere capiat.*
Let him who understands understand.’

There is no doubt that the bookseller cum hermeticist who was a distinguished Latinist and Hellenist had read, long before we did, the above quoted treatise in the second volume of the *Art of Making Gold, Called Chemistry*.¹²² This reading may have led to his prudence when it comes to explaining Sulat’s engraving:

‘We cannot betray the author’s wishes, which clearly seem to show his staunch aim to allow the symbols alone to express his whole idea.’

The successive numbers vi, ii and x which appear as Roman numerals are linked to the colours of which the first six we have already noted being the ones also observed in a prism, fading into black. This series of colours can only be verified by the eyes, quoting Fulcanelli, ‘through glass.’¹²³ This is followed in the middle of the coction by the *peacock’s tail* and thereafter by *whiteness*. These two coloured stages and their separation in the middle are portrayed by the boy and his number ii. This also shows the point at which the continuous heat must begin to diminish, as symbolized by the difference in height between the boy and the two girls.

In addition to these colours there are two final colours, yellow and dark red, which bring us to the number x of their totality. The red which appears at the end of the prism that comprises the dark period was always considered as *false*, when compared with the final *ruby* which characterises the *Stone* or *Universal Medicine* that is also called the Great Red Wax — *Optima Cera Rubea*. This is an important periphrasis of which Fulcanelli provides a

comprehensive explanation in *Dwellings of the Philosophers*.¹²⁴

At the start of our *Introduction*, we expounded on the succinct definition that Martinus Rulandus provides in his *Lexicon*: ‘Alchemy is the separation of the impure from the purest substance.’ The same idea of constant progression and improvement coincides with the development of the inner being of the *artist*. This is conveyed by the word with which the alchemists reserved for designating the colour and the nature of the Philosopher’s Stone: *purple*. The word purple comes from the Latin *purpura*, which is dark red. According to the alchemy of the Word, this is the *pure of the pure* [*pur du pur*], *πυρ πυρός*, *pur puros*, in other words, the *fire of fire*.

The third framed section of the image depicts the two parts of the coction which we have previously adumbrated. The first part ends with the *white Stone*, and the second ends with the *red Stone*. The first part is characterised by the moon, the second part by the sun. The cutaway drawing of the inside of the two ovens shows the vase of nature, closed by a lid or a cover plate, in the course of the two phases of the same preparation. Each of these phases of preparation should take three days as is indicated by the two spheres next to the athanors, each of which contains three times the alchemical symbol of the day. This alchemical symbol of the day consists of a very small circle with a stem attached to it on a vertical axis.

The flames that are depicted licking the philosophic egg here are much higher than any oil lamp could provide, regardless of whether it has many wicks or not. Yet these flames are indicative of a heat that only barely exceeds 400 degrees. We would like to take this opportunity to bring to the reader’s attention that modern science itself has refuted the erroneous idea that very high temperatures would be a requirement for the realisation of any type of transmutation. A mere thirty years ago the main argument used against alchemists was that they did not have the means to

provide a sufficiently high degree of heat. Today it is recognised that the real agent of transmutation at the heart of the mineral realm is magnetism. This magnetism unquestionably must be activated by a certain external energy source.

Under the two mineral stars in exaltation, an invisible hand empties two cupules into two dishes with thin edges and long handles attached to them. Apart from their size, these cupules appear to be quite similar to the recipients shown in the furnaces directly above them. A thin stream of viscous liquid pours out and fills the dish on the left, yet slightly misses the dish on the right and pours outside of it. On one side the woman signals this as being a serious mistake with two fingers lifted in imitation of the devil’s horns. On the other side the man points out success with his index finger. Both of them cover their lips with their left hands as a sign of silence.

This dish with a rim and a handle is reminiscent of the mirror which the ancient authors were so discreet about and by which all of nature’s secrets come within grasp of the alchemist. That marvellous looking glass is made up of the Mercury of the Sages that has been raised to the highest level of purification. This solar mercury can be seen inside the bowl and underneath the well-known hieroglyph. The symbol of solar mercury is now completed with the addition of the central point that turns the circle into the symbol of gold and of the sun.

Undoubtedly the flask is open. It is placed between the two strange mirrors right above the tongs. Magophon sees it as ‘the hermetically sealed flask with its rounding’. Apart from that he says very little when adding that this ‘*fourteenth plate* is primarily dedicated to instrumentation’.

It is true that one can see a mortar and pestle, a spoon for skimming, the scales and the two series of weights placed one within the other. As far as our philosophical point of view on these different elements is concerned, the reader may refer to our

comments included with the *tenth plate*.

Regarding the remarkable piece of advice that the alchemist and his wife indicate with their sign of silence, we consider it to be so important that it cannot be repeated often enough:

Pray, read, read, read, read again, work and you will discover.

Let us once more revisit the *Journal des Sçavans* for a perspective that we know originates from the middle of the reign of Louis XIV. It is all the more relevant because it rouses the same sort of curiosity that is associated with our moon's vegetative quality and the virtues offered by the Tree of Diana. This curiosity is the nascent crystallisation, elegantly appearing in a spagyric way as a result of the amalgamation of mercury and silver in the nitric acid:

‘... the *fourteenth engraving* seems to teach about an artificial and perpetual mine in which gold and silver grow like plants on earth. This is based on the experience that an ounce of silver from a cupel dissolved into spirit of Nitrate grows, within a phial, into a metallic Tree if one adds half a pound of spring water and roughly two ounces of good common Mercury.’

We here find ourselves quite far removed from Jacob Sulat's alchemical allegory. The interpretation of Sulat's allegory would be incomplete without mention of the astounding symbolic reach of his three athanors. One might not have imagined that they represent the trinity under the aegis of which the *labourer* becomes a *philosopher by fire* — *philosophus per ignem*.

Three fires are used in the Great Work. Artephius expounds upon this by saying, ‘without which our art cannot be perfected; and whosoever works without them goes through a great deal of labour in vain.’¹²⁵ The first — the noblest — is the *natural fire*

which is also the spirit of life hidden within matter. The second is the *secret fire*, or the *Lunar Vulcan*, which is enclosed within the adjuvant salt or hyaloid as composed by the alchemist. The third is the *fire contrary to nature* which nourishes, excites and animates the two preceding fires and which produces all combustibles.

Fire of oil, for example, was preferred by the Adept of the *Mutus Liber* and the anonymous alchemist who wrote *Ariadne's Thread*.¹²⁶ It has proven to be the ideal source of stable heat, both gentle and moist, as well as being favourable towards putrefaction. When making thorough and careful comparisons the student will notice, again in our third preface to *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*, what putrefaction means for man at the moment of his death. The dissolution of the body, both slow and necessary, at the very maternal heart of the earth: a dissolution for which SCIENCE, poisoner of the water and of the air, today shows such specious and inexplicable interest!