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PARACELSUS AND THE NEOPLATONIC AND GNOSTIC TRADITION

By WALTER PAGEL*

INTRODUCTION

EVEN a casual glance at the voluminous works of Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493-1541) cannot fail to show that his contributions lay in many fields: in medicine and chemistry, in mineralogy and meteorology, in epistemology and the knowledge of man as part of the cosmos, in theology and *magia naturalis* including alchemy, astrology and divination. It is not difficult to extract from his work a number of observations and results that can be regarded as stepping-stones in the development of science and medicine. What is not so easy is the demonstration of the link which joins these progressive views and findings with the non-scientific ideas and sentiments with which the *Corpus* of the Paracelsian writings abounds. The proto-scientific as well as the non-scientific parts are products of the same mind and of the same cultural climate - the era of the Renaissance. One of its outstanding features was the revival of Hellenistic philosophy - the doctrines of the mythical Hermes Trismegistos and of neo-Platonism. Associated with this revival there was the attempt at reconciling it with Christian doctrine, whereby belief seemed to acquire support through philosophical and symbolical knowledge - a new type of *Gnosis*. Paracelsus was bound to reflect these general trends of his era. Indeed

"Hermetic" and neo-Platonic speculation as well as Christian belief and symbolism can be recognized in his philosophy without much difficulty, and it has often been said that Paracelsus was influenced by these trends of thought. The detailed examination of this point, however, does not seem to have had sufficient attention, nor has its possible role as a link between the scientific and non-scientific part of the work of Paracelsus been appreciated so far. On the other hand there is a danger of overrating these influences and of overlooking the original way in which Paracelsus made use of traditional lore, and the distinct differences that exist between his ideas and those of Hellenistic philosophy and symbolism. Such differences have been rightly pointed out—we shall discuss them below. The extensive application of speculative and symbolic elements and their association with the faithful observation of nature alone mark Paracelsus out as an original and indeed as a unique figure. Yet a study of his parallels and contacts with the Hermetic tradition is still called for and likely to help in the understanding of Paracelsus—imposing eventually of the unsatisfactory cliché of the "two souls" of Doctor Faustus that has been applied to him far too often.

In the present paper no more can be given than a first sketchy collection of doctrines that appear to be characteristic of Hermeticism, neo-Platonism and Gnosticism and to have found access to the Paracelsian *Corpus*. They will be discussed in the light of their significance for Paracelsus' own natural philosophy and medicine.

BASIC IDEAS CHARACTERISTIC OF GNOSTICISM AND NEO-PLATONISM:
MATTER AND SPIRIT

Gnosticism may be said to present basically a dualist view of the world. In it the dark waters of the material world are set in sharp contrast against spirit, soul and divinity. The former owes its existence to the fall of a lesser deity and embodies original evil as opposed to good. This dualistic idea is symbolized and illustrated in the Gnostic diagrams of the Cosmos. Here we see our world surrounded by detachments of evil forces, the *archons* or *demiurges* who formed it in the abyss of the waters, the *chaos* that was uncreated and aboriginal. It is through the circle formed by the *archons* that the divine element in us, the soul, has to grope its way back to its divine source after death. Knowledge of certain watchwords will enable it to do so—a knowledge that is furnished by the *Gnostic Magus*, by *pneumatic* man who vanquishes the forces of evil and leads the soul to the heights in which divinity dwells!

1 W. Bousset, *Hauptjwoblème del' Gnosis*, Göttingen, 1907, pp. 361 seq. H. Leisegang, *Dante und das christliche Weltbild* (Schriften d. Deutschen Dante-Ges. Heft 6), Weimar, 1941, p. 17; pp. 21-26. G. Verbeke, *L'Evolution de la Doctrine du Pneuma du Stoicisme à St Augustin*, Paris et Louvain, 1945, pp. 287 seq.: Les Gnostiques.

Though probably inspired by oriental, notably Persian concepts, Gnostic dualism is essentially informed by Platonic *idealism*. It was Plato who appeared to a Father of the Church as the "Patriarch of the Gnostics", and Gnosticism stood for "Christian Platonism"². The distinction that had been fundamental in Platonic theory, as notably propounded in the *Timaeus*³, was between that which *is* and never *develops* on the one hand, and that which *develops* and is *not* on the other, between archetype and image, between *Eidos* and *Eidolon*, between the eternal world of the Ideas and the world of fugitive shadows and appearances that is ours.

Similarly neo-Platonism adhered to this basic dualistic view. Yet it emphasized at the same time the principle of continuity in the cosmos. To uphold it meant to bridge the dualistic gulf somehow. This was achieved by a closed system of emanations leading from the highest divinity down to coarse matter, to stone, metal and dirt. Intermediate beings had to be introduced. One such intermediary—a "*tertium quid*"—is the *astral body*. It is a *Pneuma*, i.e. of finest ethereal corporality, enveloping the soul proper which is not a "Pneuma", as it is immaterial. Maintaining soul to be purely spiritual and

* See L. Noack, *Philosophie-Geschichtliches Lexikon. Historisch-biographisches Handbuch zu, Geschichte de, Philosophie*, Leipzig, 1879, p. 314 sub: *Gnostike*, and with reference to Tertullian.

† *Timaeus* 27C-29D. Prelude. The Nature and Scope of Physics. Quoted from F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology. The Timaeus of Plato translated with a running commentary*, London, 1937, pp. 21 et seq.

‡ No more than a casual reference can be inserted as to the parallels with Eastern speculation, notably that of the *Taoists* who can claim our special interest because of their significance for Chinese alchemy. As Joseph Needham writes, they "recognized a considerable number of spiritual essences, even godlings, in the human body-soul complex, almost as many indeed as the limbs and viscera of the human organism itself, but there was no place other than earth for them to inhabit as a coherent entity, and after death they simply dispersed, some rising to join the *pneuma* (*chhi*) of the heavens, some sinking to mingle with that of the earth, and others disappearing altogether". *Elixir Poisoning in Mediaeval China. Janus* 1959, XLVIII, p. 245. See also *idem* in: *Science and Civilization in China*, Cambridge, 1954 et seq, Vol. II, pp. 153, 333 and 490. "At death the three *hun* souls rose up to mingle with the universal *pneuma* in the empyrean, while the seven *pho* souls sank down to mingle with the material of the earth. The *hun* souls were connected with the *chhi*, or *pneuma*, the *pho* souls were connected with the seminal essence, the *ching*, and the *hsueh*, or blood ... -a polypsychical ideology ... in the development of Chinese philosophical organicism. . . . Of course, whether there could be the slightest connexion between these old Chinese ideas and the neo-Platonic traditions in the West, he would be a very bold man who would attempt to say". (J. Needham in a personal C'cm-unication to the present author of 3 November, 1958.) See also: H. Steininger, *Hauch-*

immaterial, neo-Platonism made its stand against Stoic Monism and Materialism-in this the soul had been visualized as a *Pneuma*, a breath of finest corporality⁶.

The soul receives its envelope or vehicle (*ochema*) or "chariot" when passing downwards through the stars and returns it to the latter when after death it retraces its steps to achieve reunion with divinity. It belongs to the stars, it is truly an *astral body*⁷. Its position as a being intermediate between spirit and body was best expressed by Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) who said that it was not body and almost soul, and not soul and almost body⁷. This neo-Platonic thesis in its Ficinian formulation can be regarded as a doctrine fundamental to Renaissance philosophy. It was verbally repeated by Agrippa of Nettesheim (1487-1535)⁸ and introduced into the works of many others.

The astral body was one of the means by which neo-Platonism preserved its basic dualistic attitude without sacrificing the idea of cosmic continuity, coherence and unity⁹. "Steps" with innumerable transitions lead from God, the One, down to matter which forms the last and lowest step. As such, matter is still spiritual, although disguised by a thick material cover. Nature as a whole is seen as a "sleeping spirit". In its realm, Being and Action perform the task that is given to Contemplation in the realm of the spirit¹⁰. The individual object in nature exists not by virtue of its coarse material body, but by its spiritual kernel, the spark that is invisible to the eye. It is the latter that gives the object its specific form and schedule of function; indeed it is the vector of specificity. This commanding role of the spirit makes possible the

⁶ F. Rusche, *Das Seelenpneuma. Seine Entwicklung von der Hauchseele zur Geistseele. Beiträge zur Geschichte d. antiken Pneumalehre* (Stud. z. Geschichte und Kultur d. Altertums XVIII, 3), Pad erbom, 1933, p. 55.

⁷ See E. R. Dodds in: *Proclus, The Elements of Theology. Revised Text with translation, introduction and commentary*, Oxford, 1933, Appendix II: *The Astral Body in neo-Platonism*, P.313.

⁸ Marsilius Ficinus, *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, lib. III, cap. 3, Venetiis. Aldus. 1516, fol. 153r. To this: D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, London, The Warburg Institute, 1958, pp. 38 seq.

⁹ Agrippa a Nettesheim, *De Occulta Philosophia*, lib. I, cap. 14, Lugd. 1550, p. 33.

¹⁰ Verbeke, *loco cit.*, 1945, p. 364.

¹¹ In natura quidem intueri nihil aliud est quam esse tale et tale quiddam facere. Ficinus commenting on Plotinus, *Ennead*, III, 8, 1 et seq., Basileae, 1615, pp. 339 et seq. In Nature to contemplate is nothing but to be something and to do something.-Nature as a "sleeping spirit": W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, London, 1918, vol. I, p. 152, quoting from Schelling.

instantaneous *conversion* of an impulse of the spirit, or will, into material change.

Man, too, is an intermediate being. His body partakes of the divine spark of light. Hence he is a *microcosm*. For in him all constituents of the world are represented: heaven in his spirit and soul, and the dark abyss of the waters of matter in his body. He was created to replace the world of Lucifer and his fellow angels who had sunk into the abyss of matter completely. Through the creation of man the spark of divine light was saved, for it had been possessed by the evil principle who arrogated divinity to himself. In contrast to him, man is eligible for redemption¹¹.

In man, therefore, that cosmic duality is reflected which is caused by the independence of original matter. This is uncreated and hence coordinated to God. There is, however, a struggle between them, the ultimate outcome of which is redemption, the victory of light over darkness. In this sense the early Platonist Numenius of Apamea (2nd century A.D.) had said that the souls adhere to the original water that is animated by the breath of God¹². Hence there is traffic between the upper world of the spirit and the lower world of matter—a process with the uniform aim of redemption—redemption that is of the soul from the fetters of matter— and of the spiritual spark that can be found hidden in matter everywhere. Thus the *Opus* of the *alchemist* is dedicated to such redemption as the perfection of metals will afford. To be successful, the process in the furnace must be accompanied by a corresponding purification of the soul of the worker. Hence the close relationship between Alchemy, Gnosticism and neo-Platonism, not only in Hellenistic times, but

¹¹ According to Origen, *De Princip*, I, 7, 4, God created the world in order to ban the fallen spirits into material bodies. See also: F. Ch. Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religionsphilosophie in ihre! geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Tiibingen, 1835, pp. 173-175 (Fall of Sophia) and p. 591, with reference to BOhme's *AU'ora*, 16, 75; 14,62; *Drei Principien*, 10, 8; 10, II.—The idea was poignantly expressed by the Paracelsist Oswald Croll (158~1609) in the introduction to his *Basilica Chymica* of 1608: "God created man that the number and losse of the rebellious Angells might be made up in the kingdome of Heaven". *PhilosoPhy refo!med in four tractates* translated by H. Pinell, London, 16.57, P.54. See W. Pagel, *Paracelsus. Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the El'a of the Renaissance*, Basle and New York, 1958, p. 207. See also: H. J. Sheppard, *Gnosticism and Alchemy, Ambix*, 1957, VI, 86-101 (p. 92: the material world coming into being through the fall and activity of a lesser deity). *Idem, The Redemption Theme and Hellenistic Alchemy, Ibid.*, 1959, VII, 42.

¹¹ "Prosizanein to hydati tas psychas theopnoi onto" Numenius in Porphyry *Antrum Nympha!um* cap. 10. See: M. Joel, *Blicke in die Religionsgeschichte*, Breslau, 1880, vol. I, pp. 164-165.

also throughout the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance.¹¹ Finally liberation from *disease-medicine-involves* redemption-the conquest of the evil that attacks man in the form of disease seeds and disease demons. These invade the body, breaking up its organic simplicity and coherence by introducing corruption, whereby the parts are forced back into the realm of dead and dark matter.

Alchemy and Medicine thus form two aspects of natural *magic* already in Hellenistic times. The Magus applies the principle of *sympathy*: everywhere like yearns to unite with like. This principle derives from the Platonic correspondences between archetype and image, the world of magisterial and "sophic" models and patterns on the one hand, and that of empirical objects on the other. One technique used by the magus is to shut up a *pneuma* or demoniac or astral force in a cameo (gem, *gamaheu*) or in a ring or in an animal. By capturing a virtue in this way the Magus is able to unite it with a corresponding constituent in his own body and thereby achieves concrete effects in the outside world. In this also lies his *mantic* power of divination. It is due to a traffic between spirits. The "seat" of magic, however, should not be searched for in the Magus, for it lies in Nature in which as by a magic chain everything is interconnected and alive. It is the task of the Magus to adapt himself to Nature so closely that he can influence it by setting, as it were, a SYmpathetic chord into vibration¹².

By virtue of their spiritual character the effective and active powers in this world are *Logoi-it* is these which persist and assume corporality in the form of the *Semina*. Each living being develops from a hidden seed. It eventually Perishes, but not without having fanned new seed. Owing to this *cyclic-circular-process* the individual survives by transmitting the specificity of his breed to succeeding generations. The association of seed with *Logos* originates

¹¹ M. Berthelot, *Intyoduction à l'étude de la Ckimie des Anciens et du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1889, pp. 247 et seq.; p. 235. *Idem*, *Les OYigines de l'Alckimie*, Paris, 1885, p. 76; p. 272: "Le but de la philosophie, c'est la dissolution des corps (matériels) et la separation de l'ame du corps" (with ref. to Stephanus, *De magna et sacya ayte*, lib. I, ed. J. L. Ideler, in: *Physici et medici Gyaeci minoyes*, vol. II, Berol, 1842, p. 215). *Ibid.*, p. 165; Soul as prime matter of things, *ibid.*, pp. 252, 276. E. O. von Lippmann, *Entstekung und Ausbfeitung der Alckemie*, Berlin, 1919, pp. 319, 323, 324, 376, 381. On Gnosticism and Alchemy, pp. 235-247. R. P. Festugiere, *La yevelation d'Hermes ryismegiste*, I: L'Astrologie et les Sciences Occultes, Paris, 1950, pp. 217-282.

¹² Verbeke, *loc. cit.*, 1945, pp. 326-330, referring to A. Dieterich, *Abra~as*, Leipzig, 1891, p. 58. H. Ritter, *Picatri-, ein arabisches Handbuck hellenistischer Magie. Vortrage d. Bibliothek Warbuyg*, 1921-1922, Leipzig u. Berlin, 1923, pp. 94-124 (particularly p. 106). Of older sources see: I. Gaffarel, *Curiositez inovyes sur la sculptuye talismanique des Persans, Hoyoscope des PatYiayches, et lecture des estoilles*, Paris, 1629, pp. 94 et seq.

in the Stoic concept of the *Logoi Spermatikoi*-the seed-bound rational impulses and directions. This concept reflects the Monism of the Stoic School. The world is the original *Pneuma*, the original *Logos* out of which the individual beings arise-each embodying a *Logos*. This idea was partly accepted by neo-Platonism¹⁶.

Neo-Platonism radically altered the status of *Time* in philosophy. Aristotle had defined it as the number that measures motion-thereby degrading it to the rank of a merely conventional aid for the mind. By contrast Plotinus vindicated Time as a power existing in reality-namely that power which makes motion possible. This he achieved by associating time with soul-the soul of the world as well as the soul of the individual. Time thus becomes the instrument by means of which eternity acquires a hold on the cosmos. Owing to its link with soul, time assumes a *qualitative* character. It is no longer a mere measure of quantity, but is determined by the differences between individual processes and actions¹⁷.

NEO-PLATONIC AND Gnostic TRENDS IN THE SPECULATION OF PARACELSUS. THE SPIRIT AND THE ASTRAL BODY. THE LIGHT OF NATURE

Are there any traces of these neo-Platonic and Gnostic ideas in Paracelsus, and if so, how did he develop them and what answers did he give to the problems which they raised?

According to Paracelsus man is the lesser world, for in him all things of the greater world are united-they do not, however, enter the organism as bodies, but in the form of "spirits", i.e. as powers and virtues¹⁸.

In this, Paracelsus expresses the idea fundamental to him that what really interests the "philosopher" is the invisible world of the "occult" virtues that are celestial and "astral", the world of the spirit and "Logoi". Unmasking all material beings and actions as the product of spiritual forces, he implements

¹¹ H. Meyer, *Geschichte der Lehre von den Keimkräften von der Stoa bis zum Ausgang der Patristik*, Bonn, 1914, pp. 13 et seq., p. 64 and *passim*.

¹⁸ H. Leisegang, *Die Begriffe der Zeit und Ewigkeit im späteren Platonismus*. *Beier. z. Gesch. d. Philos. d. Mittelalt.* ed. C. Baeumker, vol. XIII, no. 4, Munster, 1-913. J. F. Callaghan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1948. W. Pagel, *Van Helmont De Tempore and Biological Time*, *Osiris*, 1949, vol. VIII, pp. 346-417. H. Weiss, *Notes on the Greek Ideas referred to in Van Helmont's De Tempore*, *Osiris*, *ibid.*, pp. 41<-449. W. Pagel, *The Reaction to Aristotle in XVIIth century Biological Thought*. *In: Science, Medicine and History*, Oxford, 1953, vol. I, pp. 493-494.

¹⁷ Man a microcosm "not in form and matter, but by possessing all the powers and virtues of the greater world". *Bücher von den unsichtbaren Krankheiten* (1531/32), Eingang des vierten Buches, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, pp. 308-309.

one of the basic postulates of neo-Platonism. Indeed, Paracelsus follows this up in detail in his pathology. What is visible as a pathological change in the organs is the product of an interaction between two spirits: the spiritual cause of the disease which enters the body from outside and the spiritual representative of the body or the organ invaded. This is not attacked directly and physically, but in a more subtle way. It is alienated from its normal functional schedule which is controlled by a spiritual "director", the *Archeus*. "The spirits know each other . . . they speak the same language . . . now suffers the body . . . not in a material way, but from the spirit which calls for a spiritual remedy"¹⁸: Diseases are therefore not "*Corpora*, hence spirit should be used against spirit"¹⁹. Disease is thus seen as a product of the inter-communication of spirits—a feature with which we are familiar from Gnostic and neo-Platonic speculation.

The neo-Platonic emphasis laid on the Invisible and Spiritual leads Paracelsus to take special interest in fugitive and "pneumatic" substances and phenomena in nature. The *Arcana*, the uncreated, divine and miraculously powerful agents, are represented as volatile. They are directed by the *Astra* like "feathers in the wind"²⁰. Paracelsus visualizes a spirit in each "essential thing", and hence as many spirits as individuals and objects in nature²¹. It is these spirits that endow things with "life", i.e. form and function. For "life is a spiritual, invisible and impalpable thing"²². It is the same spirit which makes inert material chemically reactive which renders it "male" ("*miinnisch*")²³.

"Spirit" used in this sense by Paracelsus has nothing to do with reason (ratio) and is particularly alien to Aristotelian and formal logic. What he

¹⁸ The spirits know each other . . . : *Volumen Pa,ami,um* (De Ente spirituali), ed. Sudhofi, vol. I, pp. 217-218.

¹⁹ Diseases are not *Corpo,a* . . . : *Pa,ag,anum*, tract. II (Von der Astronomie), ed. Sudhofi, vol. VIII, p. 178.

²⁰ *Aycana* directed by *Ast,a* like feathers in the wind: *Pa,agranum*, tract. III (Von der alchimia), ed. Sudhofi, vol. VIII, p. 185.

²¹ A spirit in each "essential thing": *De Natura Re,um*, lib. IV, de vita rer. natur., ed. Sudhofi, vol. XI, pp. 329-33°.

²² "The life of each object is a spiritual, an invisible and incomprehensible being, and a spirit and a spiritual thing". *Die neun Bucher de natura ,erum* (Villach, 1537). Lib. IV .De Vita rerum natural, ed. Sudhofi, vol. XI, p. 329.

²³ Spirit making inert material active ("*mannisch*"): sulphur by ignition, mercury by sublimation and salt by resolution—the latter producing a spirit (vitrioli, tartari, aluminis, nitri) with impetuosity ("*Ungestumikeit*"). *Opus Pa,amil'um*, lib. I. cap. 3., ed. Sudhofi, vol. IX, p. 52.

means are the deeper strata of the personality, the sphere of will and wilful imagination. "What lives according to its will, lives in the spirit; what lives according to reason, lives against the spirit" M. Will and imagination are closely linked with what Paracelsus calls the "*Light of Nature*". This embraces all phenomena and things which—though invisible—are accessible to our search and understanding—unlike things divine which are not. More particularly it is the specific form and function of an individual tending towards a specific goal, its *Entelecheia*, which belongs to the "Light of Nature". This in turn is subjected to the world of the Astra and the soul of the world. The "light of nature is a pupil of the Holy Spirit"¹⁵; man receives its teaching in dreams when nature in him speaks to itself. Here again we encounter the traffic between spirits.

The Paracelsian "spirit" in many respects corresponds to the neo-Platonic chariot or vehicle (*oehema*) or envelope of the soul. It is the *sidereal*, the *astral* body. Through it the stars confer on man "all kind of worldly (perishable) wisdom and art". It is wisdom concerned with nature ("*naturliehe Vernunft*") which is here contrasted with eternal wisdom¹⁸. But through it man gains some though inadequate access to eternal wisdom, for there is a correspondence between them. It is finally the astral body, and not his coarse and visible material body, that elevates man over the other creatures. God gave it to the star and from it to man¹⁷.

THE PASSIONS OF THE SOUL AND INSANITY

There is, however, another astral gift which is transferred to man in his astral body: the emotions and passions. Temperament is also an astral gift¹⁸. It operates not as the ancients believed through the visible humours, but through invisible inclination. It is a spiritual effect that emerges in divination and dreams.

¹⁵ Reason versus spirit: *Volumen Paramirum*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. I, pp. 217-218.

¹⁶ *Light of Nature*—a pupil of the Holy Spirit: *Fragm. de Fundam. Sapientiae*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 325.

¹⁷ The *astral body* conferring "*naturliehe Vernunft*": *Philosophia sagax*, lib. I, cap. 1, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 29.

¹⁸ Astral body elevating man over other creatures: *Philos. sagax*, lib. I, cap. 3, *De Compositione Humana*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 55.

¹⁹ Astral nature of temperament and passions: *Philos. sagax*, lib. I, cap. 10, *Von dem Dono Inclinationis*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, pp. 229 *et seq.*, and *ibid.*, cap. 11, *Von dem Dono Aeglorum*, pp. 258 *et seq.*

If emotions and passions are bound up with the astral body, so is *insanity*. It develops when the divine spirit in man is subjugated by his animal instincts: lust, greed, covetousness. These are stirred up by the stars, each star acting on man like a specific drug, for example hemlock. The mean man has chosen Saturn as his mate--each passion one star.

This idea can be directly traced back to Gnosticism. We mentioned the neo-Platonic view of the astral body as the vehicle (*ochema*) of the soul. Owing to its inclination towards the body, the astral body may drag the soul down into the depth of emotional life, the more so the coarser and more material its texture. Indeed, in line with this, several ochemata had been distinguished in later neo-Platonism: the very fine ethereal ochema being even visualized as immortal. In Gnosticism, the astral body is represented as an attachment-*Prosartema-to* the soul, or else as a mimic and coalescing pneuma (*Antimimon* or *Prosphytes Pneuma*). This impresses on our souls the images of wolves, monkeys, lions and thereby evokes those passions that are peculiar to each of these animals³⁰.

To Paracelsus the astral body is a "bodily spirit"-i.e. it must be distinguished from the non corporeal divine soul³¹. In this, too, Paracelsus adheres to the neo-Platonic position as opposed to Stoicism, which knew of no difference between soul and a fine material breath (Pneuma).

The astral body is, therefore, according to Paracelsus, accessible to examination in the "*Light of Nature*". Not so the soul, which belongs to the realm of belief and theology. Further distinctions which Paracelsus made concerning the soul and astral body can be correlated with similar distinctions made by neo-Platonists, notably Proclus. Another neo-Platonist, Jamblichus, emphasizes in his treatise *On Mysteries* the difference between reasoning thought and soul, on the one hand, and the secret (*arrheta*) transcendent works and the power of the ineffable symbols that are only understood by the gods, on the other. It is through these works and SYmbols that the virtues and powers immanent in material bodies achieve union with the gods, whereby theurgy, magical science and divination are made possible³². This idea may well be applicable

²⁹ Insanity and star: *Philosophia Magna 3 Libel' de Lunaticis*, Tract. III, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 59.

³⁰ Prosartemata: Baur, *Gnosis, lac. cit.*, 1835, pp. 214 seq. Bousset, *lac. cit.*, 1907, pp. 361 et seq.

³¹ Astral body to be distinguished from the divine soul: *Philos. sagax*, lib. I, cap. 3, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, pp. 53-54.

³² Jamblichus, *De Mysteriis libey*, ed. G. Parthey, Berol, 1857, sect. I, 21, p. 65; II, II, pp. 96-97; IX, 10, pp. 284-285. See also *ibid.* • V, 23, p. 232.

to the Paracelsian Astral Body. As we have seen, this is represented as a "bodily spirit". If, according to Jamblichus, the forces immanent in bodies are capable of union with the gods, rather than our soul, the astral body *qua* bodily spirit could provide a more suitable medium for divine powers than the intellect, and, in particular, its reasoning powers which Paracelsus deprecated as "animal".

THE MAGISTERIAL POSITION OF THE IDEAS AS EXPRESSED IN
SEX *DIFFERENTIATION-Iliaster-Semina-Archei-The Tria Prima*
(SULPHUR, SALT, MERCURY)

A principle fundamental to Paracelsus' view of the world and man is that of *sexual duality*. It is a principle that he finds operative even in disease. Epilepsy in the female is a different disease from epilepsy in the male³³. A drug effective in men, may fail in women³⁴. Like the Valentinian Gnostics before him³⁵, Paracelsus follows in this the Platonic principle of the preformation and actualization of all phenomena in this world in the divine sphere of the ideas and spirit. There is nothing in the lower world of creation that has not its archetype in the upper world of ideas. Hence there must be an equivalent of male-female duality in the latter. In this the female stands for an emergence of the simple One, quiescent in itself, into the realm of duality and activity. It indicates some loss of status-associated as it is with a process of splitting up and action. Thus Paracelsus says: "God became double, two persons in one"³⁶.

³¹ Disease in the male and female: *Opus Pa'amirum*, lib. IV, *de matrit;e*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, pp. 194-195; *ibid.*, p. 206.

³² Drug action and sex: *Op. Parami'um*, lib. IV, *de matrice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, pp. 202 *et seq.*; see also *ibid.*, pp. 184 *seq.* On sex and disease: P. Diepgen, *Paracelsus und das Problem del' Frau*. *Nova Acta Pa'acels*, 1957, VIII, pp. 49-54.

³³ Sex differentiation in Valentinian Gnosis: Baur, *Gnosis, lococit.*, 1835, pp. 150-154.

³⁶ God became double: *Libel' de Sancta T'initate*, in Sudhoff, *Paracelsus-Handschriften*, No. 86, B1.264b-276b, Berlin, 1899, p. 348.-The idea was fully expressed in the theosophic literature of the early seventeenth century, for example in the *Studium Universale (1618)* attributed to Valentin Weigel: "God is the Word, one God, but divided as personality, there is God and His wife, His wisdom, a complete God and creator: just as Adam was made complete man together with his Eve. This heavenly Eve made God in the beginning God and creator, she is the mother of all that is alive, through her all is manifested, without her there would be no God, no creature, only eternity without time. Therefore eternal and incomprehensible divinity emerged from His eternal hiding and manifested Himself through heavenly Eve. She was in the beginning and before all creature. Afterwards through her God emitted the Son to the world, that is God made himself Son through Wisdom, and yet remained the old God unchanged". Cap. 4, Ed. used 1695, *s.l.* (Sam. Muller), sig. B5.

However "heavenly woman" is not endowed with "power", but "fills the place of God the Father and makes Him manifest and complete as a Father". This development was repeated by Adam according to the principle of correspondence. Adam corresponds to God the Father and hence is more intimately connected with the world and the elements than is the woman³⁷. Adam carries the "*Limbus*"³⁸, that is the threshold on which spirit and matter come together in the smallest possible compass to form the seed from which the world and he himself were made. Woman serves to manifest and perfect Adam, just as she served God, and again without acquiring any of his power. The apex of perfection wherever achieved is thus symbolized by a hermaphroditic being. Such is the *Rebis* in Alchemy, the peak obtainable in the process of transmutation, the *Quinta Essentia*, the Salt which, according to Thurneisser³⁹, is characterized by its dual, acid-alkaline nature. Ficino said that the Indian sages already called the world a hermaphrodite whose male and female parts are kept together by the world soul⁴⁰. From the bi-sexual nature of the whole follows that of the individuals, including the planets. Female air is attracted by male fire, male water by female earth. The action of the magus is that of the ploughman who marries heaven to earth, joining divine life as contained in the seed with matter. The same idea is expressed in the *Hermetic Books*, notably the *Poemander U*.

The Platonic correspondences between our world and the invisible magisterial worlds above us are reflected in Paracelsus' idea of the *Iliaster*. This embraces in an ideal form all possible beings and events that can occur in reality. Similarly the term *Aquaster* stands for the "sophie" archetype of all that is watery. Paracelsus pays particular attention to the liminal stages which lead from the ideally preformed to the really existing. These threshold objects between the Ideal and the Real, between Spirit and Matter are the *Semina*. From them, Paracelsus says "comes the foundation in all our knowledge and insight"⁴¹. For all things have a seed, and in the seed all things are

³⁷ The male (Adam) and the elements: *Labylinthus Medicorum*, cap. 3. ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 178.

³⁸ *Limbus: Opus Pal'amil'um de mat'lice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 201.

³⁹ Thurneisser zum Thurn, Leonhart, *Quinta Essentia, das ist die hOchste subtilitet, k'rafft und wirkung beyder ... Kilnsten, del' Mediein und Alchemy*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1574, p. 162. See also: *Aureum Velus*, Tract. III, *Splendor Solis*, Rorschach, 1598, p. 191: Von dem Rebis einem Stein.

⁴⁰ Ficinus, *De Vita coelitus comparanda*. Lib. III, cap. 26, ed. Aldus, 1516, p. 168.

⁴¹ *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander* rec. G. Parthey, Berol, 1854, cap. I, pp. 4-8.

⁴² *Semina as the foundation in all our knowledge: Philosophia sagax*, lib. I, cap. 7 (*Probatio partie. in scientiam signatam*), ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 177.

enclosed. In them we observe nature at work—that nature which Plotinus visualized as a "sleeping spirit" and in which action and being are equivalent to contemplation in the spiritual world. In this we may find the very root of the Paracelsian dictum: "the seed lies in speculation"⁴³. He thus tries to express the intimate connection of material effects as emerging from the *semina* with the sphere of will and imagination. To Paracelsus each seed stands for one idea, one logos that is about to be translated into our reality—this closely approximates the meaning of the *Logoi spermatikoi* of the *Stoa*, as accepted in neo-Platonic speculation. The Hermetic treatise *Poemander* expressed the same thing, identifying God's universal and creative power with that of the sower: in heaven he sows immortality, on earth transmutation, in the universe life and motion".

The *semina* are "astral", i.e. they hail from heaven and have a power superior to that of the material elements. In this they are emulated by the three principles *Mercury, Sulphur and Salt*—as long as these have not yet "impregnated matter", i.e. assumed a material cover. In this pre-material form they are "*Simplicia formalia*" that give matter a certain directive. Thus Mercury enlivens the parts, sulphur makes them grow, and salt keeps them together by giving them firmness. This the principles achieve by means of their seminal properties and through the occult vital powers of "*signature*" that account for taste, smell and colour. These are immanent ("*insitae*") to the principles. Both the *semina* and the *principles* are more closely related to spirit than to matter, and hence both form the class of the "formal simples"—as opposed to the traditional elements of fire, water, earth and air, which should be regarded as "material simples" ("*Simplicia materialia*"). They are the passive substratum that is acted upon by the active *principles* and *semina*. The former are visible, the latter not, and they are only recognized by the life, motion and function which they maintain.

It was thus that the foremost French Paracelcist Quercetanus (Duchesne 1544-1609)⁴⁵ saw the *semina* and *principles* of Paracelsus in two stages: (a) an ideal form—that of the *Simplicia Formalia* which belong to the celestial sphere

⁴³ Seed and speculation: *Das Buck von der gebtirung der empfindlicken dinge in der vernunft*, tract. I, cap. 4, ed. Sudhoff, vol. I, p. 256.

↳ *Poemander*, ed. Parthey, *lococit.*, 1854, cap. XIV, 10, pp. 133-134.

⁴⁵ Quercetanus, Jos., *Ad veritatem Hermeticae medicinae ex Hippocratis veterumque decretis ac therapeusi: nec non vivae rerum anatomiae exegesi, ipsiusque naturae luce stabilien-dam, adversus cujusdam Anonymi phantasmata Responsio*, Lutet. Paris, 1604, p. 162, cap. XIV (De tribus Chemicisprincipiis, quae in quovis naturali corpore continentur, ipsumque constituunt).

of magisterial forces not yet incorporated in material objects, and (b) as directive forces present in the empirical objects of nature. Thus mercury makes itself noticeable by the acidity and penetrating power that it lends to fluids, being an ethereal body of highest subtilty, a spirituous substance, the essence and pabulum of life. Sulphur is distinguished by conferring sweetness, viscosity and an oily quality which supports and maintains flames, and by emollient and agglutinating properties. Salt makes a body dry and earthy; it promotes solution, coagulation, cleansing, and evacuation.

The three principles, says Quercetanus, correspond to the *Spiritus*, *Anima* and *Corpus* of the *Hermetic* literature; the Spirit to Mercury; the Soul to Sulphur and the Body to Salt. Sulphur forms the intermediary joining Spirit to Body. It is the *vinculum animae* that has affinity both to body and spirit-like the astral body of the ancients and Paracelsus. In our elemental sphere air is most akin to mercury: all that is powerful and vital, all "*vis* and *acumen*" in spirit of wine, for example, derives from its aerial parts. Air, together with the mercury adherent to it, either escapes or is converted into a "spiritual" or "mercurial" water which owes its sharp astringent taste to mercury or *sal armoniac*. Air and earth are joined together by water. In the elemental sphere the triad of air, water and earth thus corresponds to the three principles in the astral or celestial sphere. There is no need for a fourth element-fire. For this is identical with "heaven" or "ether" -the *fourth* (formerly called *fifth*) *essence*. This had already been the view of the Hermetic thinkers, Quercetanus says. Heaven, therefore, is a pure ethereal fire endowed with virtues far more subtle, pure and powerful than those of the elements, enabling it to penetrate everywhere and to distribute forms and virtues to each individual object. It impregnates the earth by transferring its *semina* to it through the winds, thus being the primary cause of all form, power and action in every object of the inferior world. These *semina* the heavens received from God; they include the most simple and perfect ones such as the stars and planets and also an infinity of other "*astra*" which confer "vital faculties and complexions" to the host of the inferior elements, which they animate and "inform". In action the lower elements are similar to heaven, but they differ in that heaven is activity pure and simple, whereas the inferior elements also involve corruption and suffering by their action.

It is the celestial-spiritual-essences and forms which the physician and naturalist must study and try to extract, for they alone are productive of miraculous effects. These "formal and spiritual principles" constitute the "universal balsamic medicine" in which all parts are homogeneous, most simple, pure and highly spiritual. It is the true "*quarta essentia*" ("Quint-essence") and "celestial stone of the philosophers".

Paracelsus saw working in the *semina* an active force, the *Archeus*. The world is full of such "workmen" or beings intermediate between matter and spirit. Late neo-Platonism had visualized the world split up into innumerable emanations-to which the Paracelsian idea of innumerable *Archei* is comparable. In this field we also find the emphasis laid by neo-Platonic speculation on the traffic between spirits and on the information which we receive about the realm of the spirits-points that were equally emphasized by Paracelsus, who made them the cornerstone of his concept of magic and divination. The *Poemander* too, had expressed these ideas: soul-like principles--demons--can take possession of the soul which they subject to torture and stimulate to evil deeds. There is a communication between souls--the souls of the Gods with human souls and those of man with those of animals⁴⁸. Man occupies an exalted position, for he is possessed of *Nous* and therefore eligible for communication with God who speaks to him through dreams and symbols. It is thus that he acquires the power of divination⁴⁷. Paracelsus' speculations on the traffic between spirits are in many respects reminiscent of those of the Kabbala, notably the *later-Lurian-trends* of the 16th and 17th centuries, including the idea of psychical pregnancy (*Ibbur*) and possession (*Dibkuth*)⁴⁸.

The Paracelsian *Archeus* may well be interpreted as the object itself in its pre-formed "astral", magisterial or "sophie" state. As such the *archeus* is a principle responsible for the moulding of an individual with its specific plan of form and function. It is an individualising principle. At the same time it is part of the world soul and as such connected with divinity. Owing to this it confers the gift of life on individual objects. In this we may see a reflection of the Gnostic idea that the *archon* joins the powers of light with matter, whereby the latter is transformed. These powers are the sparks of life that are specific to each individual. The *archon* can join them to matter as well as separate them from it, an activity comparable to the spa-gyric, i.e. separating and

⁴⁷ *Poemander*, cap. X, 20-22, ed. Parthey, *loc. cit.*, 1854, pp. 80-82.

⁴⁸ *Poemander*, cap. XII, 19, ed. cit., pp. 110-111.

⁴⁸ *Ibbur* and *Dibkuth* see the loci quoted by Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 1958, pp. 216-217. On possible, but rather doubtful connexions between Paracelsus and the Kabbala see: G. Scholem, *Alchemie und Kabbala. Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte der Mystik. Monchr. Gesch. u. Wissensch. d. judent.*, 1925, LXIX, 13-30; 95-110. R. Eisler, *Zur Terminologie der jüdischen Alchemie, ibid.*, pp. 364-371 (notably on the term *suspitha-residual* deposits -and its kinship with "*sepsis*"-corruption and fermentation to which also the metals are subject. According to Eisler gold must ferment and corrupt in order to convert metals into their primordial matter--the dark *chaos-then* into red copper, white silver and finally yellow gold.) See also: G. Scholem, *Nachbemerkung* to Eisler, *ibid.*, pp. 371-374. K. Preis, *Die Medizin im Sohar, ibid.*, 1928, LXXII, pp. 167-184, especially p. 170.

combining work of the alchemist⁴⁹. Paracelsus calls the *archeus* (*archon*) the *internal alchemist*. It forms the individual being and directs its vital functions -first and foremost digestion. For this is the main agency through which the body communicates with the outside world. Material belonging to the latter is transmuted into constituents of the individual with its own properties that are specific to it and its species. Their consumption and excretion, i.e. their return to the non-specific state in the outside world, is also governed by the *archeus*.

THE ELEMENTS-WATER AS ORIGINAL (PRIME) MATTER

Archei not only act in man and other beings, but also in the *Elements*. These Paracelsus sees not as the atomic constituents of every object in the ancient sense, but as dwelling places and matrices. Each of the elements thus has its own offspring: water the minerals and metals, earth man and plants. The *archeus* of water forms the minerals, and these bear the «seal" of their mother: water. Though a «fruit" of water, however, the minerals and metals grow in the earth where they are moulded by the terrestrial *Archeus*⁵⁰. Or in symbolic language: Nature generates a tree in water. This grows out into the earth where it brings forth fruit: the earthborn minerals and metals⁵¹. This is the product of a vital action, i.e. it is specific and cannot be reproduced *in vitro*. Hence the alchemist finds it much easier to transmute than to generate metals⁶².

⁴⁹ The *archon* works like the alchemist, joining the spark of light to matter whereby the latter is endowed with qualities and virtues and transformed. These virtues become separated from matter, however, when the *pneuma* achieves liberation and returns to divine simplicity. Again, this process corresponds to the joining and disjoining (*spa-gyric*) action of the alchemist and also to the migration and creation of soul. In the Gnostic treatise *Kore Kosmou* the demiurge prepares "un melange d'animation" for the creation of the soul in the same way as the alchemist prepares the "sophie mercury" destined for the animation of all metals. It forms a foam on the surface, comparable to the foamy spermatic fluid, and is a fiery water and fluid spirit ("water of life"). See: A. J. Festugiere, *La creation des dmes dans la Kore Kosmou*. In: *Pisciculi. Studien z. Religion und Kultur des Altertums* F. 1. Dolger dargeboten, Munster, 1939, pp. 102-116. The present author is indebted to Professor J. R. Partington for this reference.

⁵⁰ Metals, water and earth: *De Natura Rerum*, lib. I, edt Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 318.

⁵¹ *Das Buck de Mineralibus*, edt Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 37. Cf. *Philos. Paracelsica de gener', et fruct. quatt. elementor*, Tract. III, cap. 10: Vom Archo der Metallen, edt Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 105.

U'De Natura Rerum, lib. I de gener. rer. natur., edt Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 318.

Water has a much farther reaching significance, however. In Gnostic and early alchemical speculation, it stood for matter at large. It was the dark abyss, the primeval *chaos*. This was represented as the *uncreated* principle of evil and matter and, in a dualistic view, coordinated to divine light. All matter was water and all transmutation operated by the powers of light, all creation and separation took place in and on water. Paracelsus says: "The water was matrix; for in water there was created heaven and earth and in no other matrix ... as the world was nothing but a water and the spirit of the Lord was on the water, the water was made into the world⁶³. Moreover, water is lithe receptacle of the seed from which man grows, which seed is the *limbus*"^M. Finally: "Man with his angelic body was in heaven, that is the part above his belt; with the other part he was on the water"⁵⁵. In the last resort these ideas go back to the Biblical saying that the spirit of God hovered over the waters. Any possible connection with a succession in time which may have been construed from this-to the effect that water was the first thing to exist-had been rejected already by the early Jewish and Christian commentators. There is no intention in the *Thorah* to fix any chronological order in the narrative of the creation, let alone any implication that God found water as the pre-existing material from which to create the world⁵⁶. Just this, however, is the Gnostic position according to which matter was uncreated and pre-existing. With this several other ideas were connected: the material world was created in connexion with the fall of Lucifer and the angels whereby these were banned into the prison of material bodies. Moreover the material world including man was said to be due to the activity of a fallen deity (*demiurge*). Finally the divine spark was thought to have been transferred from the *demiurge* to man who was destined to replace the world of the fallen deity (Lucifer). Man thus forms a world of his own-a microcosm-which like the cosmos at large is composed of water and divine spirit. Possession of the divine spark makes man eligible for redemption-which is closed to Lucifer and his realm. In and through man the spirit of God returns to God⁵⁷.

⁶¹ Water was matrix: *opus Pat'amt'um*, lib. IV, *de matt'ice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 191.

¹¹⁸ Water receptacle of seed (limbus): *Opus Paramirum de mat,ice*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, P-191.

¹¹⁶ Man in heaven and in water: *Libe., Azoth*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 593.

¹¹¹ Raschi to Genesis at several places: No chronological order intended by the report on creation. See also: Hirsch Graetz, *Gnosticismus und judentum*, Krotoschin, 1846, pp. 30-35. M. Joel, *Blicke i.d. Religionsgesch., loco cit.*, pp. 162-166; Excurs II: Die Gnosis.

¹¹⁷ See above (note 111) the loci from Origen, Baur, BOhme, Croll, Pagel and Sheppard.

The return of the soul to God and of the astral body to the stars was also assumed by Paracelsus⁵⁸. We shall see presently that he also incorporated some of the other Gnostic positions which we mentioned.

PRIME MATTER-CREATION VERSUS PREFORMATION

First of all we must discuss the position of the primeval waters, the abyss of matter, in the cosmology of Paracelsus. Did he also follow in this the Gnostic doctrines and speculations? Did he also regard original matter as something coordinated to God, a power uncreated and not originally subjected to Him? Indeed passages could be adduced from the Paracelsian *Corpus* which seem to support this. On the other hand, the opposite view could be defended—namely that Paracelsus believed in the creation of matter by God. A final decision in this question is therefore hardly possible, even when the testimony of the Paracelsists is called in. We must content ourselves with reviewing the evidence.

Paracelsus says of God that "He made an element water and from it generates the minerals so that they grow daily for the use of mankind"⁵⁹. Thus water was destined to become the matrix of ores, metals and stones. So far the passage is clear. What follows, however, is less so. Here it says that "the first was with God (*bei Gott*), the beginning, that is *ultima materia*; this *ultima materia* He made into prime matter. As fruit that is to yield other fruit has seed, the seed is in prime matter. Thus ultimate matter of the minerals is made into prime matter that is a seed and the seed is the element of water ... "⁸⁰. In other words God created water as the mother of minerals. This created water, however, was not primeval matter, which here appears to be called ultimate matter and was "with God". From it God created the "prime matter" of the minerals, i.e. their seed, and this divine seed is the element of water which he created.

¹⁸ Return of astral body to stars: "Through death the elemental body with its spirit goes to the grave, the ethereal is consumed in its firmament, the spirit of the (divine) image goes to Him whose image it is. Hence each dies in that from which he is, and in this he is buried", *Philosophia sagax*, Lib. I, Prolog., ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 1B. "As the first father dies and with his body returns to the elements, and also with his heaven returns to the star, and hence both are consumed in their father, their children are consumed and buried in their father likewise, that is, what is flesh and blood, in the elements, and that where art and senses lie, in the star; also what is martial is buried in Mars, what is venereal in Venus ... ", *ibid.*, Lib. I, cap. 2, pp. 47-48.

¹⁹ He made an element water: *Das Buck de Mine l'alibus*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 33.

¹⁰ The first was with God: *Ibid.*, p. 34.

The significance of this passage in our context is that primeval matter is assumed to exist "with God" ("*bei Gott*").

In another passage God, Prime Matter, Heaven and finally the soul (*Gtmüt*) of man are juxtaposed as eternal and imperishable⁶¹. From this a primary co-existence of matter with God could be deduced. From the context, however, it would appear to be visualized as one aspect of divinity rather than something independent and of equal status.

It is, however, plainly expressed in the Paracelsian *Corpus* that the "*Mysterium Magnum*", i.e. the first "mother of all creatures" was un-created. It was "prepared" (*zubereitet*) and ever since, nothing like it has existed or ever will exist. Hence God is not a creator, but a separator. For the "*Mysterium Magnum*" contains the individual objects, as a block of marble or wood contains the future statue. The generating power which "was at the beginning of all birth-giving" was separation (*Trupkat*)-"the greatest miracle of philosophy". The elements, including water, are late derivatives from the "*Mysterium Magnum*" or, as it is usually called, the *Iliaster*⁶².

We read this in a treatise that is often regarded as spurious, the *Philosophia ad Atenienses*⁶³. There is, however, no doubt that it was popular in Paracelsian circles and expresses genuine Paracelsian thought.

We merely learn from these passages that the original matrix was un-created. It is not stipulated, however, that it existed beside and outside God, in a dualistic and Gnostic sense. It may be just as well interpreted in Pantheistic terms, visualizing the original matrix as a God from whom everything emanates. This could find support in Paracelsus' idea of the *Arcana* which are direct emanations from divinity-stepping out to provide the spiritual soul-like specific power and virtue to each individual object. This is the teaching of a treatise which has always enjoyed the reputation of authenticity. Here it says: "all natural things flow from God and no other source ... the things are His, the herb He created, not however the virtue that is in it. For each virtue is uncreated; that is, God is without beginning and not created. Thus all virtues and powers were in God, prior to heaven and earth, and before all things were created, when God was a spirit and hovered

⁶¹ God, Prime Matter, Heaven and Man: *Liber de Imaginibus*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p.383.

⁶² *Philos. ad Athenienses*, text II-IX, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, pp. 390-393.

⁶³ *Phil. ad Atken.*, unauthentic: K. Sudhoff, *Paracelsus Samtl. Werke*, I. Abt., vol. XIII, München and Berlin, 1931, p. xi. J. Strebel, following Sudhoff in his Paracelsus edition, St. Gallen, 1945, vol. II, p. 428.

penalty for the devil, first the element of air that is the *chaos* or heaven and thereafter the other elements.

This expresses the characteristically Gnostic idea that the coming into being of the material world was closely bound up with the fall of Lucifer and his activity. We quoted above the idea expressed by Origen that God created the world in order to ban the fallen spirits into the narrow confinement of material bodies⁶⁷. We may also recall the saying of Poemander that the word of God that was in the elements left them on their downward journey and joined the *Nous* of the creator. Thus the elements of nature, deprived of *logos*, remained and became matter⁶⁸.

Again the passages from Paracelsus just quoted show that the creative act of God appertained to the elements and not necessarily to prime matter. It should be added in fairness, however, that the elements are again definitely stated to have been created from nothing ("also ist der anfang der vier elementen aus nichten beschaffen"). Nevertheless further close contacts with Gnostic ideas emerge from these passages. They are still more evident in what Paracelsus called the *Cagastrum*.

This stands for the splitting up of God's simplicity and unity into the infinite multitude of beings, for elemental materiality, and hence for decay and corruption. All this is due to the fall of Lucifer and of man. Paracelsus believed that some diseases are due to cagastric seed which takes possession of the body after invading it from outside-by contrast with hereditary and endogenous disease which is due to "iliastric" seed. Pleurisy, plague and fevers are such "cagastric" diseases⁶⁹. All *spontaneous generation* belongs to the *Cagastrum*, that is any coming into being without proper parents. The seed of an apple, pear or nut has been there for ever. The cagastric seed emerges here and now from corrupting material. Its offspring differs according to the properties of the matrix.

After the fall the flesh of Adam became cagastric, i.e. subject to corruption-before that it had been iliastric, i.e. divine, immortal and truly alive. Now it is mortal, false and a caricature ("*monstrum*") of its archetype⁷⁰. All that is genuine is iliastric, all that is fake-false metal, a false prophet-is cagastric. In short, *cagastrum* is falsehood, the fallacious phantom of the phenomenal world. Yet in it there resides a positive and independent original power-as it

⁶⁷ Fall and creation of material world see above (notes II and 57).

⁶⁸ *Poemander*, I, 10, ed. Parthey, *lac. cit.*, p. 5.

⁶⁹ Cagastric diseases: *Labyrinthus Medicorum*, cap. II, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, pp. 215-216.

⁷⁰ Cagaster as "*monstrum*": *Liber. Azoth*, cap. I, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 549.

on the waters, that is when God's spirit walked over the waters"⁵⁵. The virtues immanent to objects are therefore divine, supernatural, and without beginning and end-returning to their origin when heaven and earth are destroyed. It goes on to say that God at one point created things-stars, the earth, mountains, herbs, water, fire, air, metals, minerals and planets. "After he had created them they came into being, became apprehensible and visible, and from nothing there was matter which we put to use".

Here, then, the creation of "matter" is mentioned, and that in a genuine Paracelsian treatise. However, "matter" in this context does not mean "primary matter", but the material cover of individual objects. It is therefore hardly relevant in our discussion.

In the genuine book *De Meteoris (Liber Meteororum)*⁵⁶ each of the four elements-the dwelling places and matrices of objects-is said to have its own body that was made from nothing. It was solely made by the word of God: *Fiat*. Each of these four elements has its own "prime matter": "one is *materia prima* of water, another of earth, another of air, another of heaven". Again a comparatively late stage in the creative process is discussed: the production of a material base for the four elemental realms. It is not, however, the general unqualified matter, the *chaos* and *limbus* which embraces all the elements yet unseparated and in a potential form.

Later, in the *Prologue to the Books on Meteors*, we are told that the place occupied by the four elements had originally been the "heaven of Lucifer who was not ejected from it, but the same heaven was made perishable and elemental; this is his punishment that he must stay therein, whereas he could not foresee that God would convert such a heaven, such a bliss into elements"⁶⁶. Here, then, we learn that something preceded the elements at the place where they are found today: namely Satan and his realm. This, before his punishment, was heaven-to be converted into hell by the creation of the elements from nothing. To be relegated to the sphere of the elements was the very punishment that was meted out to Lucifer. What greater retribution could be exacted than confinement to things perishable and the change from the light of heaven to the darkness which is the transitory world? Hence the devil and his henchmen dwell in the elements, some in water, some in fire, some in air and others in earth. It is the perishable world that God has created as a

⁵⁵Virtues uncreated: *De vera influentia rerum*, tract. I, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 215.

⁵⁶*De Meteoris*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 134.

⁶⁶Heaven of Lucifer: Prolog. *Konzepte u. Ausarbeitungen zum Libel' Meteororum*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, pp. 253-254.

was visualized in Gnostic speculation on the original force of the abyss of darkness and evil.

In spite of all the evidence which we have collected in favour of or at least not against, a Paracelsian belief in uncreated original matter, we do have one outspoken piece of testimony for its creation in the Paracelsian *Corpus*: "Thus God the Father created through His word things not in their ultimate state, but He only created *Prima Materia confusa*, that is the matrix, in which all Nature of the whole world was mixed together ... called abyss and earth or a thing in which all things lie hidden . . . and this *Prima Materia* was the water on which the spirit of the Lord had hovered . . . *Materia prima* made from nothing and hence called *Abyssus* .. .". This is what the *Secretum Magicum de Lapide Philosophorum* tell us⁷¹. Matter is created; not so the individual object, or only to the extent that it is part of the prime matter from which it emerges as the result of the separating and composing work of the *Archei*.

The *Secretum Magicum*, however, is certainly not normally regarded as a genuine work of Paracelsus. It first appeared in Huser's Folio edition of 1603 under the title: *Von dreyen gebenedeyten Magischen Steinen, Theophrasti Paracelsi, welches auss seiner Handschrift kommen*. It was then reprinted on several occasions, for example in Gottfried Arnold's *Kirchen-und Ketzerhistorie* where it forms one piece of evidence for the piety of Paracelsus⁷². Thus at all events the treatise informs us about the opinion of some *Paracelsists* in this matter. It is worth while to hear what they have to say⁷³.

A straightforward account of our question is found in the work of Robert Fludd (1574-1637). In his *History of Both Worlds of the Macrocosm and Microcosm*, he raises the question of the origin of prime matter, whether it was created or not. On this question, he says, there is "*ingens dissensio*" among

⁷¹ *Secretum Magicum*, ed. Huser Fol, vol. II, pp. 672-673.

⁷² See K. Sudhoff, *Bibliographia Paracelsica*, 1894, Repr. Graz, 1958, p. 445, and the Huser-Folio of 1603.

⁷³ Among the *Paracelsists*, Oswald Croll (1580-1609) fails to give a clear-cut answer about the position of prime matter. He seems to take a Pantheistic view: God is the All out of himself and man is All made by God. *Basilica Chymica* (1608), ed. Hartmann, Genevae, 1643, p. 60, Engl. transl. by H. Pinnell, *Philosophy reformed*, London, 1657, pp. 58 *et seq.* Nor can any direct information be obtained from the author of: *Introductio Hominis oder kurtze Anleitung zu ein Christlichen Leben*, in: *Philosophia Mystica. Eilff Theologico-Philosophische Tractatlein, auss Theophrasti Paracelsi, zum theil auss Valentini Weigelii* ... , Newstadt, 1618, pp. 23&-237. Here prime matter is said to have come into being (*ihren Anfang bekommen*) before all time and to embrace all four elements unseparated and mixed together.

philosophers. Most of them believe with Artephius that God created Nature and First Matter. Others, however, with Paracelsus and his followers, call matter a *Mysterium Magnum* that was neither created nor resembles any other creature, but was simply "prepared" by God. The Paracelsists argue that the scriptural verse: "In the beginning (*prineipio*) God created heaven and earth" does not prove the creation of matter. *Prineipium* need not mean first in time; it could mean first in some order or process or even first at some place. Indeed when creation occurred there was no time. Nor can heaven and earth have been created first without matter already existing, for "heaven and earth" are *Prineipiata*, i.e. something formed from some more primitive material, from a *prineipium*. Nor can this *prineipium* really be a place, for the creative word of God is beyond human comprehension and thus not associable with any place in this world. Paracelsus therefore interprets the scriptural verse differently: God created heaven and earth in the *Mysterium Magnum* that was un-created⁷⁴. With this Fludd has recourse to the doctrine of the *Philosophia ad Athenienses*. He himself, however, does not wish to decide the issue, though from indirect evidence we can say that Fludd favoured the orthodox view of Artephius. Finally Fludd invokes St. Augustine, with whom he declares prime matter not to be anything real, but something that our imagination presents as a "nearly nothing", an intermediate stage between the absolute nothing and something created and endowed with form. It merely exists by virtue of its potentiality; it is really a nothing that may, however, become something through endowment with divine form⁷⁵.

Among Paracelsists who definitely asserted that God created prime matter, the abyss of the waters, the *Chaos*, from nothing, we quote Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605) and Quercetanus whom we mentioned above.

Khunrath says⁷⁶ that the very first *weltanfiingliehe* (world-inchoating) *Chaos* was created by the unique tri-une God. From this afterwards the world was built up. It consisted of heaven, earth and water in tri-unity and was impregnated and animated by the spirit of the Lord, who hovered on the

⁷¹ R. Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi majoris sc. et minoris ... Historia*, vol. I, Oppenheim J. Th. de Bry, 1617, pp. 23-24.

⁷⁵ R. Fludd, *Tomi Secundi Tractatus Secundus De Praeternaturali Utriusque Mundi Historia*, Frankfurt, 1621. Sect. I, Part. I, Part II, lib. I: De primariis naturae elementis. Cap. 5: De scrupulo nonnullorum, qui adversus opinionem meam, qua hylem increatam esse statuo, insurgunt, pp. 89-90. The present author is indebted to Mr. Allen Debus for this reference.

⁷⁶ Heinr. Khunrath, *Yom hylealischen, das ist Pri-materialischen Catholischen oder Allgemeinen Natürlichen Chaos der naturgemässen Alchymiae und Alchymisten*, Magdeburg, 1597; ed. used: Leipzig, 1786.

water, i.e. the dark watery abyss formed by heaven, earth and water mixed together. God therefore created prime matter-but, Khunrath adds, he did not create Nature. This developed independently through separation and partition of the ground of primary matter tilled and sown by the spirit of God.

Quercetanus said⁷⁷ that God created from nothing the *Chaos*, that is the abyss of the waters. These were animated by the spirit of God. There followed the separation of Light or ethereal heaven-a spiritual body of greatest purity, the *Quinta Essentia*, from the darkness of the waters. The latter became subjected to a process of separation in its turn. A more subtle-mercurial and aerial-liquor was separated from an oily-sulphureous one and this finally from a dry residue-the salt. Heaven, that is light as separated from "dark" water, also consists of these three fundamental "principles" without which nothing can exist or generate. However, only the finest and purest "ethereal" mercury, sulphur and salt are brought together to form the crystalline and diamond-like most simple body of heaven. From it the forms and *semina* are infused into the thicker elements for the generation of each individual object. These forms and *semina* are heaven's "fruit" which in essence is similar to the substance of heaven itself. They generate something similar again inside the elements that provide "thick" covers, through vital impression and influx. The ratio of thick to subtle matter determines the durability of the individual object. One that belongs to air is much less subtle than heaven, but still much finer and more durable than the offspring of water and earth. Mercurial fruit-spirits-of the air are the winds; the sulphur of air makes itself perceptible in the comets, its salt in manna, dew and frost.

In conclusion we must admit that Paracelsus conceded a position of prominence and independence to Prime Matter (*Mysterium Magnum, Iliaster, Limbus*)-an assignation that is reminiscent of Gnosticism and Platonic dualism. The evidence suggesting that he believed that it was uncreated and co-existed with God is controversial. He may have meant this in a Pantheistic sense, visualizing prime matter and nature as one aspect of divinity. Nevertheless in his view the creation of individual objects from nothing seems to be overshadowed by a process of separation and the demiurgic activity of the *archei* (archons). The more the world is split up into individual objects and beings-and this individuation seems to be the essential process in the coming into being of the world-the more the need for the material and elemental, for intermediate beings, for residues-the products of corruption of more and more independent primary matter, remote from divine simplicity and oneness and the realm of the spirits.

⁷⁷ Jos. Quercetanus, *Ad vefitatem Hefmeticae Medicinae, loco cit.*, Paris, 160.10 p. 184.

CAGASTRUM-TARTAR-DISEASES VERSUS DISEASE

We mentioned the *Cagastrum* as a reminiscence of Gnosticism in Paracelsus. It embraces the splitting up of simplicity owing to the egotistic yearning of individual objects for independence, resulting from their "fall". This process leads to the efflorescence of "fruit" from the smooth surface of an elementary medium or receptacle. This is the pattern of all bodily change that is indicative of disease. The disease "fruit" consists of residual deposits, the products of pathological coagulation which normally are dissolved and thus do not appear. Health is the solution and assimilation of all that finds access to the body from outside. Disease is the failure of the internal "balm", the "mummy" or *archeus* to dissolve and assimilate. Hence the quest for the universal solvent, the *Liquor Alkahest*, which at the same time acts as a universal remedy.

From these ideas the *Tartar* pathology of Paracelsus developed. He compared the pathological changes in the organs with deposits of tartar in wine vats. They also deserve their name because of the hellish pain and suffering they cause, and finally as the visible expression of cagastric-satanic-interference with the dissolving and assimilating forces of the body, the seduction of the *archeus* from the function allotted to it in the commonwealth of the organism. In this doctrine of tartar, attention is focused on the outside origin of the pathogenic agent. There are as many such agents as there are diseases. Disease and agent are the same thing. Each disease therefore really exists as such, forming an organism of its own with its own functional schedule, imposing it on the body like a parasite. This "ontological" view of disease is alien to ancient medicine, in which disease in general was more important than diseases-there were no classifiable diseases as determined by specific exogenous agents and anatomical changes varying accordingly. There was only the sick man, and any differences in symptoms and signs were thought to be due to differences in temperament as the result of a humoral mixture that was characteristic of the individual.

The independent agents that introduce diseases into the human body from outside bring us back to the *Semina* and *Logoi*. Each object and each phenomenon in the world of Paracelsus represents something specific and spiritual-so does disease and even more so its specific "seed". Hence not only the seeds from which objects and organisms are generated, but also those that cause illness are connected with the spheres of will and wilful imagination. Thus are explained the intimate psycho-somatic associations, the "conversion" of thought, inclinations, and desires, into symptoms and pathological changes. One such example is the mole on the skin of a fetus due to the imagination of the mother.

AIR-LIFE-COMBUSTION-FIRE

One reflection of the exalted position granted to spirit in neo-Platonism may be seen in the attention given by Paracelsus and Renaissance philosophers to the *air*. It is the medium that makes life possible in man as well as the universe. It transmits the influence of the stars including "astral poison" such as the *contagium*. Air is closely associated with the "*Mysterium Magnum*", the "Mother of all Things", the giver of divine life⁷⁸. Life, generally speaking, was to Paracelsus a process of combustion. "If I say it cannot burn, this is as much as if I said it cannot live". "For in the air is the force of all life"⁷⁹. Life is invisible celestial fire, air enclosed in a body, a tingling spirit of salt⁸⁰. Similarly Agrippa⁸¹ had called the air the spirit of life which penetrates all, endowing it with life and support. It is the spirit that binds all, moves all and fills all. Air is the mirror which reflects all and in which all astral powers are concentrated. Air, and all that it contains, enters through the skin, and that includes even the "spirit of a place", explaining the terror we may experience at the site of a murder. The transmission of spiritual images, and traffic between spirits through the air, explains the phenomena of prophecy and the Paracelsian *Chaomantie*⁸². Not only spiritual, but even corporeal images (*idola*) can become detached, condensed in air and through light and motion fall into perception or exert miraculous effects in us, as Plotinus already taught. Many optical phenomena such as mirages and the *Camera obscura* belong to this field. A further source for the significance of the air as the seat of invisible spirits, of demons and heroes can be found in the hermetic *Asclepius*⁸³.

Two types of *Fire* had been distinguished in Stoic as well as neo-Platonic speculation: the "sophic" fire of the stars, the fire of the soul that nourishes and confers life (*Pyr Noeron*) and ordinary fire that is merely destructive⁸⁴. Later and notably Gnostic sources mention the bright fire that is in the nature of

⁷⁸ Paracelsus, *Volumen Paramirum: De Ente Astrorum*, cap. VI, ed. Sudhoff, vol. I, p. 182.

⁷⁹ Paracelsus, *Liber Azoth*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, pp. 549 and 558.

⁸⁰ Paracelsus, *De Natura Rerum*, lib. IV, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 330.

⁸¹ Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, lib. I, cap. 6, ed. Lugduni, 1550, pp. II seq.

⁸² Paracelsus, *Philosophia Sagax*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 95.

⁸³ *Asclepius*, ed. Mars. Ficino, cap. XII, *loc. cit.*, 1.516, fo 1.13IV.-132V.

⁸⁴ Fire of the soul: E. Kroll, *Lehre des Hermes Trismegistos*, Münster, 1914, pp. 266, 285, 301. E. O. v. Lippmann, *Alchemie*, *loc. cit.*, 1919, p. 197.

light and the "dark" fire⁸⁶. Similarly Paracelsus distinguishes between "essential" and "material" fire—the former operates by means of its specific "essential" virtues and powers, the latter through its consuming flame⁸⁸. The Paracelsist Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605) calls the essential fire "*Ignis Magorum*" and devoted a special treatise to it⁸⁷.

Fire and air from the upper sphere are the sources of the soul and life of the body, a breath or spirit infused by God into man—thus we are told by the theosophic author of the *Studium Universale*⁸⁸.

PARACELSUS' CONCEPTION OF TIME

Paracelsus' ideas on Time present aspects that concur with the new orientation introduced by Plotinus and Proclus. Following in their footsteps, Paracelsus interpreted time in terms of qualitative standards—as opposed to its quantitative-numerical determination in Peripatetic philosophy. Paracelsus' attitude is partly prompted by his criticism of traditional astrology—another point of contact with Plotinus⁸⁹. Yet time, according to Paracelsus, is still closely correlated with the stars, though not in quantitative-numerical terms. The stars are luminous indicators of time, but do not generate time as the measure of their motion. Nor do they govern or direct man and man's actions. On the contrary, the wise will dominate the stars. It was precisely for the desire to appropriate the power of the stars through magic, that Paracelsus was blamed and associated with the heathen doctrines of Pomponatius (1462-1524) by his main adversary Thomas Erastus⁹⁰. In this, however,

⁸⁶ Light and "dark" fire: see loci quoted in W. Pagel, *Paracelsus, lococit.*, 1958, pp. 212-213.

⁸¹ Essential and material fire: *De Renovatione et Restofatione*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 209. The salamander lives in essential fire: *Libel' Azoth*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 577.

⁸⁷ H. Khunrath, *De Igne Magorum Philosophorumque secrete externo et visibili, das ist Philosophische Efklüfung des geheimen, iusselichen, sichtbaren Glut und Flammenweisers der uftalen Weisen und andre' wahrer Philosophen*, Strasburg, 1608. Edition used: Leipzig, 1183.

⁸⁸ Pseudo.Weigel, *lococit.*, cap. I, sig. A2 recto.

⁸⁹ See for the more important loci: Plotinus, *Ennead*, III, lib. I, cap. 5-6, ed. H. F. Muller, Berlin, Weidmann, 1880, vol. I, pp. 161-163. Paracelsus, *Philosophia Magna; De Vera Influentia Rerum*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 219. *De Inventione Artium*, *ibid.*, p. 251 seq.

⁹⁰ Th. Erastus, *Disputat. de Medicina Nova Paracelsi*, I, Basil, 1572, p. III; see also pp. II7 and 128. Against Paracelsus on the "augural" power of words and "characters," p. 169. Against augurs and the omens derived from the action of birds: pp. 198-199, 221-222. See Pagel, *Paracelsus, lococit.*, 1958, p. 317.

Paracelsus had been foreshadowed by Ficino, who taught the scholar how to overcome the adverse influence of "his" star (notably Saturn) on his body. Paracelsus recognizes a close connexion between time and the stars in so far that the latter maintain, as it were, a register or "portrait" of all change and all events on earth and in the life of man. Moreover, the virtues immanent to all objects and man are "astral" and each follows the pattern indicated by its cognate star. Virtue in this sense stands for the course that is specifically followed by the individual in unfolding his own life according to his own specific schedule. This is the "internal knowledge" (*scientia*) which enables the organism to direct its form and function towards the achievement of its own specific purpose in life, to its own perfection. This internal working of nature towards perfection in the individual, Paracelsus calls the "Light of Nature" - at all events that is one of the principal meanings of this term, whereby it is associated with the stars. For the intrinsic plan of form and function lies with the astral body, the quintessence and spirit of the individual organism - a spirit that is in the last resort derived from the stars. Each individual object reaches its perfection at a certain moment. This climax in the life of the individual, Paracelsus calls its "monarchy". Time, then, is determined by the points at which individual objects achieve perfection. One group of objects comes to such maturity in summer, another in autumn or even in winter; some things reach their monarchy at a quick, others at a slow pace. Time, therefore, is the chain that connects the summits of monarchy experienced by individual objects at certain points. It indicates the relationship between these monarchies. In other words it entirely depends upon the quality and "virtue" of the object. Hence all that matters in time is the present⁹² - the moment that is, when perfection is reached. Time is therefore no number, no instrument of counting; it has nothing to do with succession as such, with "empty" time. By contrast, each individual thing has its own time, its own pace and rhythm of life, as intrinsic in its seed and derived from the "astra".

Not only individuals, but also periods and epochs in the life of humanity have their own time. This is the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of time). What is valid today may have lost its reality tomorrow. Ancient medicine had its climax in antiquity; it is of no use today. Paracelsus thus feels his vocation for the creation of a new medicine born out of the specific exigencies of his own time.

ⁿ Ficinus, *De Vita coelitus compafanda* (1489); see Pagel, *Paracelsus, loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 220.

^u Importance of the present, the "now": *Die erste Defension* (1537-38), ed. Sudhofi, vol. XI, pp. 127-128. On the Light of Nature and its connexion with the stars: *Philos. sagax*, I, cap. I, ed. Sudhofi, vol. XII, p. 23. See Pagel, *loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 75.

Before Paracelsus, Arnald of Villanova (1235-1311) had been actuated by similar motives. There are further points of contact between these figures, although Paracelsus himself gives Arnald but limited credit and only for such Franciscan- Joachimite and Chiliastic ideas⁹³ as were connected with the prophecy of an impending end of the world, the coming of the Anti-Christ and the "Third Kingdom". In the same field we find Paracelsus quoting with approval the prophecies of Hildegard of Bermersheim (commonly called Hildegard of Bingen, 1098-1179)⁹⁴.

In associating Time with the specific virtue intrinsic to the object, Paracelsus foreshadowed the biological concept of Time that was to be developed by Joh. Baptista Van Helmont (1579-1644). The latter in turn was inspired in this by neo-Platonic speculation.

THE PRINCIPLE OF TRICHOTOMY AND THE TRIA PRIMA

One of the principles adhered to by Paracelsus is that of *trichotomy*. Man consists of a divine spirit, an astral body and an elemental body. This division repeats the trichotomous anthropology of Hermetic and Gnostic literature and of neo-Platonism. It was also preceded by mediaeval alchemy in which metals were compared with organic bodies ascribing to them body, soul and spirit. For example the "Philosopher" says: The "dragon" is "live silver" extracted from bodies and possessing body, soul and spirit⁹⁵. Mercury (*A urum vivum*) is cold, moist and black in virtue of its body, but warm and dry; in virtue of its spirit, and white in virtue of its soul⁹⁶.

A further significant example is the *Tria Prima*: Salt, Sulphur and Mercury which are supposed to be the principal constituents of all objects. This trichotomy is largely an original Paracelsian conception⁹⁷. At all events it was Paracelsus who inculcated and applied it in detail. His alchemist predecessors had preferred such dichotomic divisions as male-female, active-passive,

⁹³ *opus Paramirum*, I: De Orig. morbor. ex tribus substant. prim., ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 54. On Paracelsus and Arnald de Villanova see: P. Diepgen, *Die Weltanschauung Arnalds von Villanova und seine Medizin*, Scientia Milano, 1937, p. 41. *Idem*, "Theophrastus von Hohenheim", *Research and Progress*, 1942, VII, III-112. Pagel, *Paracelsus, lococit.*, 1958, p. 249 et seq.

⁹⁴ Paracelsus, *Fragmenta cum libro de fundamento sapientiae congruentia*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 334. Pagel, *lococit.*, 1958, p. 210 seq.

⁹⁵ *Rosarium Philos.*, ed. Manget, *Bibl. Chern.*, vol. II, p. 94.

⁹⁶ Roger Bacon, *De Arte Chymica*, Francof., 1603, p. 46.

⁹⁷ See R. Hooykaas, *Chemical Trichotomy before Paracelsus?*, Arch. Internat. d'Hist. des Sciences, 1949, XXVIII, 1063-1074.

Sulphur-Mercury. The *Salia* of metals had been discussed-but not in the Paracelsian sense of a third principle; they rather indicated a state of hardening which called for solution. It is also true that the *Latin Gebers* speaks of the *Tria Principia* of metals, namely Sulphur, *Argentum Vivum* and Arsenic-but in this Arsenic occupied no position similar to that of *Sal* in the Paracelsian scheme's.

No chemical or alchemical predecessor of the Paracelsian scheme is therefore readily demonstrable. There is no doubt, however, that it is in accordance with neo-Platonic and Hermetic tradition. Paracelsus himself referred to Hermes who called the soul the intermediary between Spirit and Body. This soul Paracelsus identified with Sulphur: "the soul is the sulphur which reconciles two opposites and joins them together into one"⁹⁹. Hermes rightly said, Paracelsus adds, that all seven metals, and also the "tinctures" and the Philosophers' Stone derive from three substances which he calls spirit, soul and body. These are indeed the *Three Principles*.

In this context it is of particular interest that Ficino is quoted by the commentator of a late, probably spurious "Hermetic" tract dealing with alchemical problems, which also gives itself a "Hermetic" garb by interpreting the trichotomy of soul, spirit and body in chemical terms. This is the *Tractatus Aureus de Lapidis Physici Secreto*, first coming to light as late as 1600¹⁰⁰. Here we are told of the conjunction between heaven and earth-the former corresponding to the soul, the latter to the body. For this conjunction there is need for "something third"~this Marsilius Ficinus called something most subtle, no longer body and almost soul and not soul, but almost body¹⁰¹. In the physical world heaven corresponds to "useful water" and earth to "useless residue", the "*Faex*". Between these two stands the spirit--endowed with two aspects: that of a physical substance and that of an occult spirit. It is comparable to a subtle smell or fine balm and as it is believed to be combustible presented as sulphur.

Here, then, we find in an alchemical tract composed in the ancient-"Hermetic"-fashion the trichotomy of the Principles: the fluid-airy heaven

⁹⁸ Geber, *Summa Perfectionis*, lib. I, cap. 27. In: *De Alchimia*. Niirnberg, Joh. Petreius, 1541, p. 60, also cap. 25, p. 55, and cap. 26, p. 56. See on the position of arsenic in comparison with the Paracelsian Salt: Hooykaas, *loc. cit.*, 1949, p. 1070. W. Ganzenmiiller, *Paracelsus und die Alchemie des Mittelalters* in: *Beitrage z. Geschichte d. Technologie und Alchemie*, Weinheim, 1956, p. 306. W. Pagel, *loc. cit.*, 1958, p. 269, note 215 and p. 270.

⁹⁹ Paracels, *Us, De Natura Rerum*, lib. I, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XI, p. 318.

¹⁰⁰ In: Manget, *Bibliotheca Chemica et CUfiosa*, Genevae, 1702, vol. I, pp. 400-445 (notably pp. 422 *et seq.*).

¹⁰¹ See above, note 7.

animating the universe and corresponding to Paracelsian Mercury; earth representing dead 'j"aex"-the Paracelsian Sal, and as the intermediary bridging the contrast a combustible subtly corporeal spirit or smell-the Paracelsian Sulphur.

Neo-Platonic trichotomy could not fail to appeal to Paracelsus also because of its connotation with the Christian-religious trichotomy.

THE SYMBOL OF THE CIRCLE

Traces and reflections of neo-Platonic circle symbolism can also be found in Paracelsus. He visualizes the *Iliaster* and *Idechtrum*, the ideal world in which all possible events and creatures are preformed, as a Globule¹⁰². "Sphaera-globule" is the term commonly used for heaven and universe¹⁰³. Man, an offspring partly of the star and partly of the earth, is microcosm and quint-essence of the whole "machina mundi", he is the *centre* into which all *spheres* "infuse" their rays. Man is in the centre of all creatures and of the whole "machina mundi". Indeed the latter was created because of and for the centre. All that is external to man, converges upon him and he as the centre receives it¹⁰⁴.

More explicitly the Symbol of the circle was used by some Paracelsists, notably Croll, Severinus and Michael Maier.

It is the centre of all circles which we must approach in our investigation of nature-as against the circulatory motions of the elements which were the subject of ancient philosophy. God's work is circular in that all that was made tends back to Him in "circular rotation". Hence the work is perfect. God is the centre-for all derives from Him. He is the circle-for he embraces all. This we are told by Oswald Croll (1580-1609)¹⁰⁵ the Paracelsist. He also connects the spheres which compose the world, each with a specific seed. In this again we find traces of circular symbolism, for all comes from and returns to seed-as we witness in plants and trees. Hence prime matter is the seed of the whole world and the latter the seed of Adam.

¹⁰² Paracelsus, *Fragmenta Anatomiae TheQPhrasti*, ed. Huser Fol., vol. II, p. 21; ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 465. *Secretum Magicum von dreyen Gebenedeyten Magischen Steinen*, ed. Huser Fol., vol. II, p. 671. K. Goldammer, *Paracelsus. Natur und Offenbarung*, Hannover. 1953. p. 35 (quoting from *Psalmenkommentar* to PS, 150, 22).

¹⁰³ See M. Miiller's *Registerband zu Sudhoff's Paracelsus-Gesamtausgabe*, Nova Acta Paracels. Einsiedeln. Supplementum, 1960; p. 101, sub: *globul*.

¹⁰⁴ *Entwurfs zur Astronomia Magna, De Compos. humanae generat*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 454.

¹⁰⁵ O. Croll, *Basilica Chymica*, ed. Hartmann, *lococit.*, 1643, p. 57 seq.

The seed-owing to its intimate blending of body and spirit-is a true *Ens*. Developing into the corruptible object it becomes *Non-Ens*. Before perishing, however, this has developed further seed, and thus regenerated its seminal *Ens-a* cycle that is ever repeated. This "circular perfection" of the seeds makes the continuity of the world possible. Thus we are told by another Paracelsist, some thirty years prior to Croll: Peter Severinus (1542-1602)¹⁰⁶. He also saw in the seed the carrier of internal wisdom-a *scientia* that can neither be taught nor learned. It is that intrinsic awareness that enables things to realize their specific life-aims within their own time. With all this Severinus felt himself to speculate on Platonic lines.

Finally we may refer to the "physical circle" which the Rosicrucian and Alchemist Michael Maier (1568-1622) believed himself to recognize in gold¹⁰⁷. It indicates the perfect equality of all its constituents-an equality that is also found in the sun, the king of the planets, and in the human heart. Gold, sun and heart make harmony in the world possible. In this a circulation is operative: Divine strength flows into the sun, from there into the gold harboured by the earth and from the latter into the heart. It is by rotatory movement that the "circle of gold" achieves simplicity and homogeneity-the squaring of the circle. .

MAGIA NATURALIS-GAMAHEU-ENGRAVED IMAGES

Mighty power is wrought in Words, Plants and Stones. According to neo-Platonic as well as Paracelsian speculation, the *magus* transfers the powers of the stars to plants and in particular to gems-these are the *Gamaheu* of Paracelsus and may be regarded as the successor of the Gnostic and Abraxas gems with their characteristic graven images. Paracelsus believed in the natural occurrence of such images as are found on rocks and in caves and secret passages. They appeared at God's command, carrying a secret message that is understood by magicians and chiromancers¹⁰⁸. With this Paracelsus took sides in a controversy that had stirred up mediaeval opinion. Consciously or unconsciously he supported the view of Konrad von Megenberg¹³⁰⁹⁻¹³⁷⁴) whose *Buch dey Natur* he is likely to have known. This was largely, but not entirely, a German version of the Encyclopedia written in Latin by Thomas of Chantimpre (c. 1201-1270). One of the points in which Konrad disagrees

¹⁰¹ Peter Severinus, *Idea Medicinae Philosophicae*, Basel, 1571, pp. 89-90. See W. Pagel, *William Harvey and the Purpose of Circulation*. *Isis*, 1951, XLII, p. 34.

¹⁰⁷ Mich. Maier, *De Circulo Physico Quadrato*, Oppenheim, 1616. See W. Pagel, *Isis*, *loc. cit.*, 1951, XLII, 36.

¹⁰⁸ Paracelsus, *De Imaginibus*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, pp. 373-375.

with the master is precisely the natural occurrence of the images: Thomas had denied, Konrad asserted it¹⁰⁹. The latter referred to the consonant opinion of Techel the Jew (Thetel, Zabel), in almost the same laudatory terms as the author of the Paracelsian treatise *Liber Principiorum Paracelsi*, the so called *Schlangen-und Spinnenbuch*¹¹⁰. Here Techellus, the author of a lapidary, translated and incorporated in Thomas' encyclopedia, is praised both by Konrad and by the *Liber Principiorum* as a great master in Israel. It is true that this Paracelsian treatise, although admittedly based on genuine Paracelsian sentiments, is commonly regarded as spurious¹¹¹. However, the same support is given to Konrad's opinion in *De Imaginibus*, a treatise of the Paracelsian *Corpus* which has always enjoyed the reputation of authenticity¹¹².

POSSIBLE PATRISTIC, MEDIAEVAL AND RENAISSANCE SOURCES FOR NEO-
PLATONIC TRENDS IN THE SPECULATION OF PARACELSUS
LIGHT OF NATURE-CHAOS-SEMINA

The frequency and significance of neo-Platonic ideas in the work of Paracelsus are not surprising. For it was in Renaissance neo-Platonism that he could find the sources and traditions that led to the uncovering of the Occult and Invisible in Nature. These *Magnalia Naturae* were to Paracelsus the *Magnalia Dei*; to search for and acquire knowledge of them fulfils divine will and human destiny. Hence this is the way to truth—it is given to the layman, the simple and unlearned, the observer of nature, unprejudiced by complacent human reasoning, formal logic and book learning. It comes to the chosen in their sleep, in dreams and visions and in the constraining reality of signs and symbols that reveal the truth at once. "*Scientia*" is primarily in the object, and we acquire it as the result of a union of the observer with the object. This he can attain by virtue of being a microcosm in which all components of the greater world are represented. As like unites with like, such a union can take place in him, supported by the action of the world soul. This is the way that will confer power over the stars, it is the royal road of natural science and medicine: all that may be briefly summarised in the term *Magia Naturalis*—the art of marrying heaven with earth, as Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) had defined it.

¹⁰⁹ Konrad von Megenberg, *Das Buch der Natur*, ed. Fr. Pfeiffer, Stuttgart, 1861, Lib. VI, 84, Von dem Tethelspuechl, p. 469.

¹¹⁰ Paracelsus, *Liber Principiorum*, cap. 5, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIV, p. 503.

¹¹¹ E. Schubert and K. Sudhoff, *Paracelsus-Forschungen*, vol. II, Frankfurt, 1889, p. 137, note.

¹¹² See for a detailed discussion: W. Pagel, *Paracelsus and Teckellus the Jew*, *Bullet. Hist. Med.*, 1960, XXXIV, pp. 274-277.

We mentioned in several places Marsilio Ficino and Agrippa of Nettesheym. Both these can be safely regarded as fixed points in the literary sources through which neo-Platonic and magic tradition came to Paracelsus. There are, however, other probable sources of inspiration, notably Trithemius (1462-1516), one of the learned ecclesiastic teachers of Paracelsus, and the large library which he is known to have possessed and continually enriched with alchemical and "pansophic" treatises¹¹³. There was also contemporary alchemical literature such as Brunswig's *Destillirbuch*. For leading philosophical ideas such as the rejection of scholastic and book-learning in favour of the simple experience that leads the mind of the apparently ignorant to truth, Paracelsus could have found a number of predecessors since the days of Petrarch (1304-74), notably in Nicolaus Cusanus (1401-64). It was here that the *layman-Idiota* was introduced in a dialogue with the learned philosopher whom he has no difficulty to confound, and it is here that we find the first recommendation of the use of the balance in biology and medicine as a means of uncovering the occult laws and rules inherent in vital functions¹¹⁴.

In propounding his anthropocentric philosophy and basing it on neo-Platonic speculation, Paracelsus is rightly regarded as an exponent of the Renaissance. It must be borne in mind, however, that there is much that is mediaeval in his speculations. In this he can be seen in contact with those trends in mediaeval philosophy that brought about a revival of Platonism. It is not accidental that through this neo-Platonic aspect, and its reception of Stoic elements, mediaeval philosophy inspired naturalism. Thus the symbolism connected with light as a direct divine force in the cosmos greatly advanced the study of optics. This neo-Platonism was as close to mysticism as to natural science¹¹⁵.

Paracelsus throughout the phases of his literary activity used the term *Light of Nature* to indicate a concept of considerable importance in his speculations on man and his position in the cosmos. He regarded nature as the totality

¹¹³ On Trithemius and the alchemical tracts of his "pansophic" library: W.-E. Peuckert, *Die grosse Wende*, 1948, pp. 430-431. See also K. Goldammer, *Die bischöflichen Lehrer des Paracelsus*, *Arch. f. Gesch. d. Med.*, 1953, XXXVII, 234; *idem*, *Paracelsus-Studien*, Klagenfurt, 1954, pp. 35 *et seq.*; *idem*, *Lichtsymbolik in Philosophischer Weltanschauung, Mystik und Theosophie vom 15.-17. Jahrhundert*. *Stud. Gen.*, 1960, XIII, 670-682 (p. 674).

¹¹⁴ On Nic. Cusanus see literature quoted by W. Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 1958, *loc. cit.*, p. 199 and pp. 279-284.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, on Petrus Hispanus in this connexion: H. Schipperges, *Alte medizinische Unterricht im Mittelalter*, *Deut. Med. Wochschr.*, 1960, LXXXV, pp. 856-861. *Idem*, *Makrobiotik bei Petrus Hispanus*, *Arch. f. Gesch. d. Med.*, 1960, XLIV, pp. 129-155. On the mediaeval and Renaissance tradition, see also: W. Pagel, *Religious Motives in the Medical Biology of the XVIIth century*, *Bullet. Hist. Med.*, 1935, III, 97-312 (p. 220 on Patrizzi and light-symbolism).

of active impulses that are specific to each living being and notably man. In it he believed the same *Logos* to be operative as the cosmic-astral-force that "illuminates" the mind. It is a light immanent in cosmic life of which individual objects partake. Paracelsus consistently emphasized the superiority of the divine Light of the Spirit over the Light of Nature. Yet he could not avoid giving the latter a theological meaning, and finding in it, too, a divine gift—at all events at some periods in his life¹¹⁶. We mentioned above Paracelsus' use of the concept to illustrate the perfection that is reached by the individual in his own time and in connexion with the *Astra* (see above, note 92). The various phases and versions of the Light of Nature in the work of Paracelsus have recently been fully investigated by Goldammer¹¹⁷.

The influence of mediaeval neo-Platonism may have reached Paracelsus in various ways. He knew Amal of Villanova and Hildegard of Bermersheim, as we mentioned above¹¹⁸. He also knew the alchemical Lullists and John of Rupescissa. Miss Yates has shown recently how much of John Scotus Eriugena (9th century) can be found in Lull (1234-1315)¹¹⁹. Some of John's positions can be correlated to Paracelsian ideas. To explain the coming into being of our phenomenal world, John tried to reconcile the neo-Platonic and the Christian point of view—with the result that the former prevailed. The world is seen

¹¹⁶ The interdependence of the Light of Nature and the Light of Grace is well expressed in Pseudo-Weigel, *Studium Universale*, cap. I, ed. 1695, *loc. cit.* sig. A2 verso and A3 recto: Our physical body is maintained by the earth. The firmament gives us all earthly wisdom, arts, languages, faculties (except Theology), offices and crafts. The spirit of God teaches us true theology, and through theology we learn astrology, magic, philosophy, physics, alchemy, arts and crafts ... and although such things derive from the star, the Light of Nature must be kindled by the Light of Grace, that is by Christ, the Word of God, the Spirit of God that is in all things. The light of Nature is briefly called: *Astrologia* and that of Grace: *Theologia* (cap. 2). Similarly Simeon Particicus of Spitzberg invoked both these lights as the way to knowledge and learning in chemistry. The sidereal spirit "attracts" all human wisdom, sciences and arts and crafts through the rays of the upper stars, whereby heaven is the father and teacher of all knowledge except theology which is taught by the Holy Spirit. The Light of Grace makes the true theologian, not however without philosophy. The Light of Nature makes the true philosopher, not however without theology which is the fundament of true wisdom. *Medici Systematis Harmonici* . . . *Prodromus*, Francof, 1625, p. 70.

¹¹⁷ K. Goldammer, *Lichtsymbolik in Philosophischer Weltanschauung, Mystik und Theosophie vom 15. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, *loc. cit.*, *Studium Generale*, 1960, XIII, pp. 670-682. This also contains a detailed account of Nic. Cusanus, Agrippa, Seb. Franck, Weigel and Boehme.

¹¹⁸ See above, notes 93 and 94.

¹¹⁹ F. A. Yates, *Ramon Lull and John Scotus Eriugena*, *J. Warburg and Courtauld Inst.*, 1960, XXIII, pp. 1-44.

as a process of emanation in which necessity seems to override free divine disposition. God is made to "descend" to the primordial causes and hence to the lower products of their *creative* activity¹²⁰. In order to explain how the immaterial God was able to effect material creation, John followed Gregory of Nyssa. The latter had regarded corporeal quality as primarily spiritual and only becoming perceptible through a secondary modification¹²¹. Finally John strove to demonstrate the *microcosmic* nature of man. The latter embraces all stages of created being, for he knows intuitively like an angel, reasons like man, perceives like an animal, is alive like a plant and exists with a body as well as a soul¹²². This position of man is closely associated with the idea of redemption. Man is eligible to it, as he represents the whole creation returning eventually to God¹²⁸. In this connexion we may recall the Gnostic view of microcosmic man created to replace another world—that of fallen Lucifer and his angels. In contrast to the latter man *qua* microcosmis accessible to redemption. Similar ideas can be found in Paracelsus and such Paracelsists as Croll and Bohme¹²⁴.

We mention these ideas as characteristic of mediaeval neo-Platonism in general. We have no evidence that they influenced Paracelsus directly. However, as Miss Yates puts it: Scotus Eriugena was "hidden in Lullism" and the latter was a strong source of inspiration for the Renaissance. Its influence on alchemy has always been obvious through the Pseudo-Lullians who correctly searched in Lull for "systems for calculating elemental influences which they proceeded to use and to adapt for their own purposes"¹²⁵. Moreover, in formulating his conception of *Chaos*, Lull shows striking similarities to John Scotus' ideas. In creating the elements the attributes, the "names" of God are instrumental: the elements are visualized as essences without bodily form. As *Igneitas*, *Aeritas*, *Aqueitas*, *Terreitas* they constitute the *Chaos*. Similarly John Scotus Eriugena had developed the late-Platonic idea that bodily qualities such as colour, gravity, consistency, quantity, size and form are spiritual determinations, not unlike the Aristotelian categories, belonging to the

¹¹⁰ A. Schneider, *Die Erkenntnislehre des Johannes Eriugena im Rahmen ihrer meta-Physischen und anthropologischen Voraussetzungen*, Berlin u. Leipzig, 1921-1923 (Part I), P.15.

¹¹¹ m Schneider, *loc. cit.*, p. 17.

¹¹² Schneider, *loc. cit.* (Part II), p. 74.

¹¹⁸ Yates, *loc. cit.*, pp. 5 and 12.

¹¹⁹ See the loci quoted in W. Pagel, *Paracelsus, lococit.*, pp. 205-207.

¹¹⁶ Yates, *lococit.*, 1960, p. 41.

divine intellect¹¹⁸. All this may remind us of the Paracelsian *Iliaster* and *Aquaster-the* ideal prelude of the created world. It is from the *Primordial Causes*, the *Logos*, that the *Chaos* of John Scotus emerges—the *Materia Informis* that also embraces space and time to give rise in turn to the four elements. At the top of the ladder we have God, the source of all, creating and not created, who is only definable by negative statements. He is followed by the attributes ("names") of God: Bonitas, Essentia, Vita, Sapientia, Ratio and others. These constitute the *Primordial Causes*, the *Logos*. Though *created* themselves, they are *creative* in their turn. There follows the *Chaos* with space, time and the elements-created and not creating—and finally, again God to whom the All returns through redemption. This is the Scotist scheme of the four *Divisions of Nature* and essentially the platform from which the Lullian "tree of the elements" arises¹²⁷. Paracelsus' speculation on Prime Matter which we followed up in detail, as an important part of his cosmology and natural philosophy, offers certain comparable aspects, for example the creation of the elements in prime matter (*Chaos*) as the first act through which heaven and earth are formed (see above, p. 144). On the other hand the term *Chaos* is introduced by Paracelsus in various meanings that are more remote from the conception of prime matter. Generally speaking *Chaos* stands for any medium or habitation from which an object derives its means of subsistence or certain qualities. There is for example a *chaos mineralis* that "leads and feeds immovable things"¹²⁸. It is from its *chaos* that urine derives its colour¹²⁹. Most consistently the term is used in connexion with air as the atmosphere surrounding the living being and providing the source of its life. It is the "*medium interstitium*" between heaven and earth, of a greenish transparency, almost invisible and of "miraculous clarity". Fire, the globe of the earth, and water are suspended in it—"as yolk in the egg is held by the white". It also feeds them, however; for example it feeds fire that may "hang" in the air¹³⁰. Such *chaos* is not only *on* the earth, but also *in* the earth, notably in mines where it may poison the miner by causing "*Bergsucht*"—miners' disease¹³¹. Similarly it is found *in* the human body—it is the air that is dispersed throughout it, causing epilepsy when moved

¹²⁸ Yates, *lococit.*, p. 19.

¹²⁷ Yates, *lococit.*, p. 41.

¹²⁸ *Chaos mineralis: De modo phatmacandi*, lib. I, tr. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IV, p. 448, and *Fragm. de modo phatmacandi*, lib. I, tr. 1, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IV, p. 473.

¹²⁸ *Kut'zes Buchlein de Ur'inis*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IV, p. 623.

¹³⁰ Paracelsus, *Philosophia de generationibus et fructibus quattuor elementorum*, lib. I de elemento aeris cap. 10, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XIII, p. 16.

¹³¹ Paracelsus, *Von der Bet'sucht*, lib. I, tr. 1, cap. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 465.

violently, or fever when impeded in its movements¹⁸¹. It "feeds" the body being drawn from the air which is the specific "food" of the lung¹³⁸. Lying between heaven and earth it is governed by the stars and varies in its composition according to their will. Hence the seasonal changes of the chaos and its "fruit", for example dew (*tereniabin*), or skin pustules (as "fruit" of the inner chaos inside the body)¹³⁹. As a reflection on their astral origin Paracelsus also calls the *Arcana* the original divine uncreated forces in *nature-Chaos*. *Arcanum*, he says, is a "chaos and can be directed by the *astra* like a feather by the wind" or "*arcana* that are virtue and power and hence are volatile and have no bodies and are chaos and are clear and transparent and subject to the star"¹³⁵. Perhaps it is only in this connexion with the *arcana* that reminiscences of the prime matter as an ideal prelude to creation can be found. For the *arcana* are presented as essentially spiritual-life giving-forces and magisterial ideas that direct the formation and function of concrete objects. The same could be said of the Three Principles-Salt, Sulphur and Mercury-which are in the first place such directing powers and only in a very late development finally become as it were crystallized or coagulated into the chemical substance with which we deal in the laboratory or household. We refer in this respect to the ideas of Quercetanus about the *Formal Simples* which we have discussed above (p. 137).

Among the *patristic* sources from which neo-Platonic speculation entered mediaeval philosophy, including John Scotus and Lull, St. Augustine stands in the first rank. It is tempting to find in him a source for Paracelsus, too. The latter mentions him once as the author of voluminous works¹³⁶. This is not much and we should not overrate the inclination and time for actual Augustinian studies which an itinerant physician and lay-theologian of Paracelsus' stamp would have. Nevertheless a few points of contact with Augustinian ideas must be mentioned. In the world of St. Augustine matter is formed according to a preceding ideal creation which is all and at once, and serves as the directive pattern for the concrete world that unfolds itself in time and space. Here

¹³² Paracelsus, *Seholia in lib. Paragraphorum*, De Caducis comment. in cap. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. V, p. 290. *Theorieae figurae univers. morbor.*, Tab. IX de febris. Febres ex aere (cc) Oppilatum, ed. Sudhoff, vol. III, p. 453.

¹³⁸ Paracelsus, *Ursprung der jrantzosen*, lib. II, cap. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. VII, p. 211.

¹³⁹ Paracelsus, *Blatern, leme, beulen . . . der jrantzosen*, lib. III, cap. 8, ed. Sudhoff vol. VI, p. 364. Chaos under astral influence: *Bergsueht*, lib. I, cap. 2, ed. Sudhoff, vol. IX, p. 465.

¹³⁶ Paracelsus on *Arcana: Paragranum*, tr. III von der alchimia, ed. Sudhoff, vol. VIII, p. 185. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹³⁶ Paracelsus, *Auslegung der Papstbilder*, ed. Sudhoff, vol. XII, p. 576 (to fig. XXVI).

again we meet the ideal *chaos-the* "seed of heaven and earth". the receiving "womb" *in* which (rather than *out of* which) things are made¹³⁷. Paracelsus elaborated the idea of the elements as "wombs" and "mothers" in great detail, modifying the original Platonic and Augustinian idea in his own way. Prime matter is represented as the "seed of heaven and earth" by such Paracelsists as Croll and Quercetanus (see above, p. 148). We referred to the significance of the *Semina* in the whole doctrine of Paracelsus at some length (see above, p. 142). Indeed we are justified in speaking here of Augustinian motives. For it was St. Augustine who conceived of "seeds hidden in the corporeal elements of this world of all things that are bodily and visibly bom"¹³⁸. These are "causal" and "primordial reasons" laid by God into the earth. Preformed and encompassed by these "seeds" all future denizens of the earth-plants, animals and men-wait to be called out in the course of time. Thus the earth is the mother of all living beings, the receptacle of its germinal forms, and the world is pregnant with the causes of all beings; it is like a grain of seed¹³⁹. The "seminal reasons" (*logoi*) watch over the objects stepping out from seminal potentiality into the actuality of the concrete object.

In these speculations St. Augustine is indebted to neo-Platonism and the idealistic version that it gave to the Stoic idea of the *Pneuma* as a "breath" of finest--ethereal-corporality¹⁴⁰.

The same neo-Platonic influences are operative in Hellenistic and mediaeval alchemy and the latter may well be more intimately related to the world of Paracelsus than any of the original sources including St. Augustine. Indeed, Cumont's *Disciples infideles de Plotin* are the direct ancestors of Paracelsus¹⁴¹.

EPILOGUE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEO-PLATONIC AND Gnostic IDEAS IN THE WORK OF PARACELSUS AND ITS LIMITATION

The affiliation of Paracelsian speculation to neo-Platonism has often been mentioned in the many essays written on all aspects of Paracelsus' life and work. This, however, is usually couched in general terms and without a detailed

¹³⁷ *De gen. c. Manich*, I, 7. II. See: H. Meyer, *Geschichte der Lehre von den Keimkräften*, Bonn, 1914, pp. 145-15°. For the Platonic original of *womb-symbolism* in connexion with the *Chaos*: *Timaeus* 49A and 51A. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology. The Timaeus of Plato translated with running commentary*, London, 1937, pp. 177, 181.

¹³⁸ *De Trinitate*, III, 7, 13. Meyer, *lococit.*, p. 163.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 9, 16. Meyer, *lococit.*, p. 171.

¹⁴⁰ See Meyer, *lococit.*, p. 212 *et seq.*

¹⁴¹ E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, London, 1958, p. 174.

account of the actual ideas that are consonant in both. More recently healthy warnings against overrating the contacts and parallels have been given, especially by Goldammer!¹⁴². uParacelsus is no dualist, hence he is no neo-Platonist". He saw spirit and matter united rather than separated by the gulf between good and evil, spirit and body, that Platonism and Gnosticism had erected. Again, Paracelsus insisted on the sharp division between God the creator, and the world—a division which was blurred in the emanative cosmos envisaged by neo-Platonism. Finally, the neo-Platonic vision of many worlds returning in succession to their origin, could not appeal to Paracelsus to whom the world was unique and single.

Further limitations have been suggested by Peuckert!¹⁴³. He refers to the neo-Platonic catalogue of demons as elaborated by Trithemius and Agrippa, as against Paracelsus who reduced their multitudes to the comparatively short list of the Elemental Spirits (*Elementar-Geister*). However, just this belief in the elemental spirits has been made a cornerstone in the demonstration of Paracelsus' dependence upon his master Trithemius, by Jaques Gohory whose work was published in 1567¹⁴⁴. He was in no way prejudiced against Paracelsus. On the contrary, he was intent on propagating Paracelsism. What is more, he belonged to the first generation of Paracelsists, removed from the era of the master by no more than two decades. His testimony must therefore be taken seriously and regarded as closer to reality than anything we can say today.

Even so, we have no intention of disputing the originality of Paracelsus where he deviates from the neo-Platonic, Gnostic and alchemical tradition. The strong influence of the latter remains, however, and has been recognized by Goldammer as well as by Peuckert. We would add that Paracelsus elaborates Ficino's and Agrippa's ideas through observation and research into the working of nature. This appears to us as an extension of an existing tradition rather than as an embarkation on a new venture—a first attempt at "technical thinking", as Peuckert sees it. Contacts with Ficino go into "technical" detail in the work of Paracelsus, for example in his ideas on the plague¹⁴⁶. Like Ficino, Paracelsus enjoins us to find the ways of overcoming the evil influences of the stars by wisdom and moderation, especially in our emotional life, which is largely directed by the stars. To both-Ficino and

¹⁴² Goldammer, *Paracelsus. Natur und Offenbarung*, Hannover, 1953, pp. 33-35, 61-63.

¹⁴³ W.-E. Peuckert, *Pansophie. Ein Versuch zur Geschichte dey weissen und schwarzen Magie*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1956, pp. 200-206, 2⁹⁷-213 and *passim*. *Idem, Die grosse Wende-das apokalyptische Saeculum und Luther*, Hamburg, 1948, pp. 60, 426 *et seq.*

¹⁴⁴ *Paracelsi Compendium Leone Suavio auctore*, 2nd ed., Basileae, 1568, pp. 218-225.

m W. Pagel, *Paracelsus, loc. cit.*, 1958, pp. 176-178.

Paracelsus-the work of the physician belongs to the realm of "natural magic". Beyond Paracelsus, this part of Ficino's doctrine has deeply influenced medical theory-for example Fracastor's ideas on the *contagium*. Ficino had defined infection as an attraction of like by like-a special case of that sympathy which rules throughout the cosmos, comparable to the response of a cord to the striking of another cord consonant with it¹⁴⁸. These contacts and parallels between Ficino and Paracelsus remain impressive, even if we find with Walker¹⁴⁷ that the tenor of Ficino's "magic" is "whiter", i.e. more spiritual than the "demonic" brand chosen by Trithemius, Agrippa and Paracelsus.

Moreover, Paracelsus was no systematic thinker, as Goldammer himself has pointed out. Hence we may hit upon Unitarian (monistic) as well as dualist, Theist as well as Pantheist, Christian as well as Heathen, materialist Stoic, as well as spiritualist, neo-Platonic, and Gnostic tendencies, in the work of Paracelsus. We refer to our discussion of the *Prima Materia*, the *Arcana* and related subjects.

Even this very combination of monist and dualist views may remind us of the neo-Platonic attempt at bridging the gulf between them.

Indeed it was *Platonicae Doctrinae* that inspired and informed Paracelsus. It was the *Prisca Philosophia*-the wisdom of the Magi of old, the Rabbis, the Kabbalists and Platonists, given to Adam by God Himself and on His command kept secret and transmitted orally in myths, fables and allegories. Thus we are told by the best of Paracelsian commentators: Peter Severinus (1542-1602) and the latter's admirer William Davison the Scot (1593-ca. 1669). It is the *Hermetic Doctrine* which embraces "Pyrotechnia-the chemical art that operates by the aid of fire and makes the physician"¹⁴⁸.

Ever since the days of Erastus, Paracelsus has been accused of Gnostic heresy¹⁴⁹. This appertained not only to his cosmology and anthropology, but stigmatized even his ideas on disease, and such detailed views as the postulate of independent disease semina which invade man from outside. Other such views which we have mentioned refer to the *Cagastrum*-the deposits caused by coagulation of excretory matter, the products of corruption and spontaneous generation, the fruit of matter and evil prevailing over spirit and good.

¹⁴⁸ *Idem, ibid.*, pp. 182-183, note 153.

¹⁴⁹ D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, London, The Warburg Institute, 1958, pp. 41, 104 and *passim*.

¹⁵⁰ W. Davison, *Commentariorum in sublimis Philosophi . . . Petri Severini Dani Ideam Medicinae: Philosophicae propediem proditurorum Prodromus*, Hagae Comitum, 1660, p. 31.

¹⁵¹ Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 1958, *lococit.*, pp. 42-43, 204, 315.

There is, however, redemption from evil-liberation from disease as afforded by medicine, liberation from crude matter as provided by the chemist for the soul hidden in minerals and metals, succour and redemption brought to the human soul by "pneumatic man", the *Magus* of the Gnosis, against the threatening *archons* that impede the ascent and reunion of the soul with its divine origin.

In the last resort, this liberating and redeeming act operates through a synthesis of the realms above with those below-and it was Paracelsus who attempted such a synthesis throughout all realms of Nature. In this we are inclined to see his uniqueness and originality. Taken as a whole this attempt is non-scientific and indeed a fruit of "Hermetic", neo-Platonic and Gnostic speculation and practical work, the struggle of the Gnostic *magus* and Ficino's priest-physician for the liberation of body and soul.

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the text incipit, 136, and for the prologue 703. See further TK 246, 343 (Thorndike, IV, 335); 720; Dorothea Waley Singer, *Catalogue of Latin and Vernacular Alchemical Manuscripts in Great Britain and Ireland* (Brussels 1928-31, 3 vols.), henceforth to be cited as DWS, I, no. 339; James Corbett, *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques Latins*, I (Brussels, 1939), *Manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de Paris*; II (Brussels, 1951), *Manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements français*: these volumes henceforth to be cited as Corbett, I, 66, 125, 197; also *Ibid.*, I, 193, for a compendium of the work; and *Ibid.*, II, 43. There is also what appears to be a commentary on the work by Johannes Mohen in Cambridge Univ. 1256 (Ff.IV.13), a. 1528-29, fols. 105v.-165V. It there has a pro!. HStudionamque fiorenti phisico. Investigavi radices principii ... ". The text that follows opens: HPresenstractatus in theoricam et practicam dividitur ... ".