

Alchemy Journal



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The Life and Legacy of Hermes Trismegistus

by Jamie McGraw < jemkym@mrbean.net.au >

Who Was Hermes Trismegistus?

So many thousands of years have passed and so many scholars have written about the ancient gods and deities that it is difficult to decipher the being known as Hermes Trismegistus and separate fiction from fact. Unfortunately, conflicting views exist on whether Hermes Trismegistus was a man or a god. Frances A. Yates suggests those living in Renaissance times believed he was a man: "It was on excellent authority that the Renaissance accepted Hermes Trismegistus as a real person of great antiquity and as the author of the Hermetic writings." A city known as Hermopolis that existed in Egypt in ancient times strengthens the claim.

Other scholars conjecture that different individuals completed the Hermetic writings over several

hundred years. Perhaps the most important piece of evidence to back up this claim is the Syrian philosopher Iamblichus crediting Hermes with writing over 20,000 books and an Egyptian priest named Manetho crediting him with writing more than 36,000 books. Both of these men lived around 250-300 BC. Iamblichus went on to state he had seen forty-two of these books, thirty-six of which contained "the whole of human knowledge".

Many scholars have long held Hermes Trismegistus to be the equivalent of the Egyptian god Thoth, which certainly suggests he was *not* a real person. Frans A. Janssen subscribes to this view, describing Hermes Trismegistus as a "fictitious author" in his essay *Dutch Translations of the Corpus Hermeticum*. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Hermes was a man elevated to deity status and even if Hermes Trismegistus did not write the texts attributed to him, it is likely that a priest of the Egyptian god Thoth did. Others, such as Stock, state that Hermes Trismegistus was actually the grandson of the Hellenistic god Hermes, the messenger of the gods.

The word *Trismegistus* literally means "thrice-greatest" and some believe Hermes' title may actually come from the Rosetta Stone. There are many theories on the acquisition of the name *Trismegistus*, but most academics believe Hermes acquired his name from the epithet used for the Egyptian god Thoth – "greatest and greatest god, great Hermes." Another popular and widely accepted interpretation of the term "Thrice Great" comes from Hermes' reputation as the greatest philosopher, king and priest in the entire world.



The Emerald Tablet

The [Emerald Tablet](#) or *Tabula Smaragdina* is Hermes' most famous legacy and his best known work among modern-day practitioners of alchemy. Many legends exist regarding the discovery of the *Emerald Tablet*, although the most popular seems to be the story of Alexander the Great unearthing the text in Hermes' tomb. The original *Emerald Tablet*, however, is lost to time.

The content of the Emerald Tablet is quite short and deals with the nature of magic and the creation of life and matter by one God. Philosophical in nature, the text is often ambiguous and requires abstract interpretation. Hermes may have also derived his moniker "Thrice Great" from the tablet, its twelfth entry stating: "Therefore am I called Hermes Trismegistus, possessing the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world." It is difficult to identify the "three parts of the philosophy of the whole world". It may have been in reference to the process of deifying a mortal. Others apply a more literal meaning, stating he was the greatest

philosopher of various intellectual disciplines, such as natural science.

The Corpus Hermeticum

Whereas the Emerald Tablet remains lost to modern civilization, the *Corpus Hermeticum* presents a different tale. The texts of the *Corpus Hermeticum* remained comparatively obscure until 1460, when Cosimo de Medici received them as a gift. He immediately commanded the texts be translated into Latin so he might read them for himself. Almost two hundred years later, in 1650, a man by the name of John Everard translated the texts into English.

Much of the *Corpus Hermeticum* is theoretical in nature, but the teachings often clearly set out the nature of alchemy. Hermes' writings also recorded accurate scientific observations, such as the polarity of objects and the principle of cause and effect.

The repressive Inquisition had a terrible effect on uncovering the knowledge of Hermeticism, however a number of cathedrals – including the one in Sienna, Italy – bear depictions of Hermes Trismegistus. It is important to remember that Hermes Trismegistus (assuming he was not a god himself) was a monotheist and one of his disciples was actually reputed to have been the Biblical Moses. Some believe that Hermes even prophesied that a man from the "lower social classes" would lead the Jews to freedom.

In the *Corpus Hermeticum*, there are accounts of the creation of mankind, although in this creation theory man is somewhat more powerful than in the Biblical version: he creates the animals of Earth after traveling through the "seven levels of reality" (keeping in mind that seven is a holy number) and becoming subject to the vagaries of fate.



Hermes Trismegistus and Alchemy

Hermes is perhaps alchemy's most important ancient figure, and a patriarch of the art. Hermes Trismegistus was the god of mathematics, writing and scholars and the reason why alchemy is now often known as the "Hermetic Art". Many believe he also designed the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, built several pyramids and even taught the great mathematician Pythagoras.

The long correlation between alchemy and Hermes began two hundred years after the birth of Jesus Christ, when Gnostics interpreted the texts of Hermes Trismegistus literally and began consistently applying the teachings to their alchemical pursuits. Jean-Pierre Mahe believes there were Judaistic Gnostic communities who acted much like secret societies do today in addition to a

more open system of Hermeticism in Egyptian lands prior to extensive Roman conquest.

The knowledge moved to Arab lands in the following centuries, possibly due to the rise in power of the Roman Catholic Church, but found its way back into Europe via Cosimo de Medici during the Renaissance. With independent learning once more encouraged and buoyant, alchemists used the texts and alchemy eventually became known as the "Hermetic Art".

The *Corpus Hermeticum* was invaluable in advancing learning throughout the Renaissance. In the book *Hermetica*, Adrian Gilbert writes: "The Hermetica have had a long and checkered career and attitudes towards them have alternated between the extremes of enthusiasm for a lost source of knowledge to scholarly disdain... It provided a justification for studying astrology and this in due course led inevitably to the discovery that the sun and not the Earth lies at the center of the solar system."

Despite the significance of the Hermetic texts to the study of ancient civilizations and the belief systems of ancient times, the study of alchemy quickly became the poor cousin of chemistry as the world entered the Industrial Revolution and the modern age. Alchemy concentrated first on the purification of the mind followed by self-knowledge, but chemistry skipped straight to the lesser, *physical* aspects of the art.

Alchemy endured a long period where scholars disregarded and scoffed at it whenever the opportunity arose. Hermes Trismegistus was a figure of new age spiritualism, one to ignore and consider a myth like so many other ancient gods.

That has changed. Even if Hermes Trismegistus did not write all of the texts attributed to him, the works that collectively make up the Hermetic writings were a bastion of learning in ancient times and allow us a fascinating insight into the progression of knowledge up to the present day. The University of Bristol School of Chemistry even features alchemy and Hermes Trismegistus on its website. Perhaps one day Hermes Trismegistus will be as well-known to the everyday person as Benjamin Franklin or Sir Isaac Newton... and rightly so.

"Leave the senses of the body idle, and the birth of divinity will begin." - Hermes

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On the Emerald Tablet of Hermes

by Janet K. Turner



The [Emerald Tablet](#) not only operates on the grand scale of personal enlightenment but also on an every day, day to day, level when you are seeking answers to questions and situations. Each question or situation you find yourself to be in represents a different aspect of the whole macro process of enlightenment. So even if you find yourself to be perplexed about a seemingly small matter, by following the procedure of the Emerald Tablet and letting go of the dross and piercing the clouds of unknowing, the answer to that small matter will be revealed to you just as the experience of total enlightenment was. That is the whole theme of the Emerald Tablet, a continuing spiral stream of enlightenment, knowledge by

going from Above to Below and back again. No matter how small, no matter how large, it is the same – Above to Below and back again, a continuing spiraling process.

After Enlightenment – what next – chop wood, carry water, do the laundry. The small chores of life can be just as entangling as the search for your essence and so to retain your balance, your Enlightenment, you must continue to employ the same process over and over again seeking your answers in the Above and bringing them down to the Below.

After all, as sophisticated as man is with his technology and his vast accomplishments and levels or

organization, it is the small thing, the O-ring, the microbe, that can bring those “measures of mankind” crashing down into oblivion. And so the process goes, above to below, work and prayer, labor and oratory – always asking, checking, verifying, praying, being unattached – watching for the rock in the road. The big ones are easy to see. It is the small, the minute that are treacherous, that can spell unseen disaster and that is the message of the Emerald Tablet in so many words. As Above so Below – as Below, so Above – continually over and over – as long as you live this earthly life.

For it is in the above, the universal knowledge, that unseen cosmic swirl of energy and information that you must tap into for your answers – for all your answers come from above and all your questions come from below.

For we, humans, came from above to learn these special earthly lessons – the answers and solutions and exercises come from Above to be realized here in the Below. So the Emerald Tablet is not just an archaically phrased bit of ancient knowledge for us to ponder it’s meaning in our lives. It is to be used each and every day, each and every minute, so to speak, constantly throwing off the dross, cutting to the chase – piercing the clouds of unknowing and reaching into the Above for the answer.

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The Hermetic Significance of Planetary Changes

Submitted by L. Dee and Roy Rohe of the Earth Changes Group

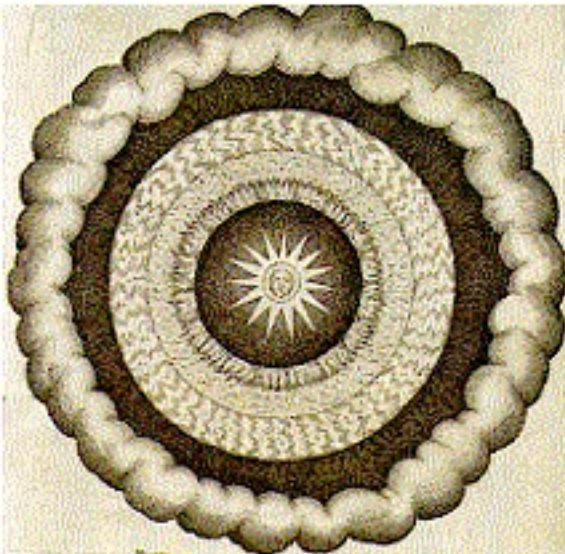
Recent work by Russian scientist Dr. Dmitriev (Russian National Academy of Sciences Planetary Research Project in Novosibirsk, Siberia) shows that the planets themselves are physically changing at an accelerated pace. Most notably, they are undergoing major changes in their atmospheres.

For example, the Martian atmosphere is getting sizably thicker than it was before. The Mars observer probe in 1997 lost one of its mirrors, which caused it to crash, because the atmosphere was about twice as dense as they calculated, and basically the wind on that little mirror was so high that it blew it right off the device. Earth's moon is growing an atmosphere Also, the moon is growing an atmosphere that is made up of a compound Dmitriev refers to as alchemical “Natrium.” Dmitriev says that, around the moon, there is this 6,000-kilometer-deep layer of Natrium that was not there before. And we are having this kind of change in Earth's atmosphere in the upper levels, where HO gas is forming that was not there before; it simply did not exist in the quantity that it does now. It is not related to global warming, and it is not related to CFCs or fluorocarbon emissions or any of that stuff. It is just showing up.

Magnetic fields and brightness of the planets are also changing. The planets are experiencing sizable changes in their overall brightness. Venus, for example, is showing us marked increases in its overall

brightness. Jupiter has gotten to have such a high energetic charge that there is actually a visible tube of ionizing radiation that is formed between its moon, Io. You can actually see the luminous energy tube in photographs that have been taken more recently. And the planets are having a change in their fields. The magnetic fields are becoming stronger. Jupiter's magnetic field has more than doubled. Uranus's magnetic field is changing. Neptune's magnetic field is increasing. These planets are becoming brighter. Their magnetic field strength is getting higher. Their atmospheric qualities are changing.

Uranus and Neptune appear to have had recent pole shifts. When the Voyager 2 space probe flew past Uranus and Neptune, the apparent north and south magnetic poles were sizably offset from where the rotational pole was. In one case, it was 50 degrees off, and in the other case the difference was around 40 degrees, both of which are pretty big changes. The overall changes could essentially be broken down into three categories: Energy field changes, luminosity changes, and atmospheric changes. Overall volcanic activity has increased 500 percent since 1975.



On the Earth, we are seeing the changes even more completely. For example, Michael Mandeville has done research that has shown that the overall volcanic activity on the Earth since 1875 has increased by roughly 500 percent. The overall earthquake activity has increased by 400 percent just since 1973. Natural disasters increased 410 percent between 1963 and 1993. Dr. Dmitriev did a very elaborate calculation of natural disasters. He showed that if you compare the years 1963 through 1993, the overall amount of natural disasters of all different kinds - whether you are talking hurricanes, typhoons, mud slides, tidal waves, you name it - have increased by 410 percent. The Sun's magnetic field increased by 230 percent since 1901. There is a study by [Dr. Mike Lockwood](#) from Rutherford Appleton National Laboratories in California, who

has been investigating the Sun. He has discovered that since 1901, the overall magnetic field of the Sun has become 230 percent stronger than it was before. Some people get into the idea that there is an interaction between the Earth and the Sun that is going on here. Very, very few people are aware of the work that is being done in the Russian National Academy of Sciences in Siberia, specifically in Novosibirsk, where they are doing this research.

Scientists have come to the conclusion that the only possible thing that could be causing this energetic change all throughout the Solar System is that we are moving into an area of energy that is different - that is higher. The glowing plasma at the leading edge of our Solar System has recently increased 1000 percent. The Sun itself has a magnetic field, of course, and that magnetic field creates an egg around the Solar System, which is known as the heliosphere. The heliosphere is shaped like a teardrop, with the long and thin end of the drop pointing in the opposite direction from the direction that we are traveling. It is just like a comet, where the tail is always pointing away from the Sun. The Russians have looked at the leading edge of this heliosphere, and they have observed glowing, excited plasma energy there. This plasma energy used to be 10 astronomical units deep (an astronomical unit is the distance from the Earth to the Sun, 93,000,000 miles). So ten astronomical units represents the normal thickness of this glowing energy that we used to see at the front end of the

Solar System. Today, that glowing plasma has gone to 100 astronomical units deep. Although Dmitriev's paper does not give an exact timeline, we can assume that this increase happened in the same 1963 to 1993 period as the increase he found in natural disasters.

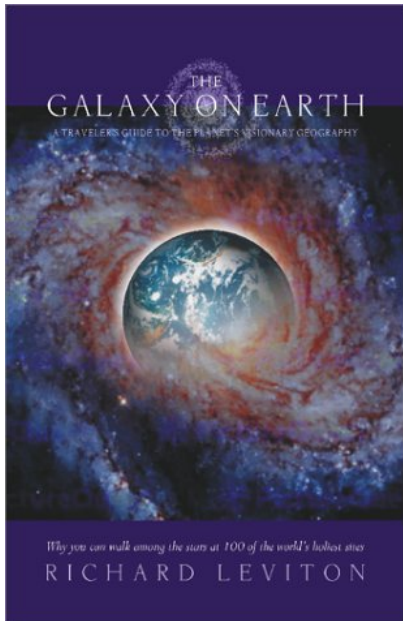
In any case, that is a 1,000 percent increase in the overall brightness of the energy at the front end of the Solar System! And this means that the Solar System itself is moving into an area where the energy is more highly charged. That higher-charged energy is in turn exciting the plasma and causing more of it to form, so you see more luminosity, more brightness. This energy is then flowing into the Sun, which in turn emits the energy and spreads it out along its equatorial plane, which is called the Ecliptic. This in turn is saturating interplanetary space, which causes the solar emissions to travel more quickly and charge up the energy on the planets.

From the Hermetic viewpoint, this is conscious energy that is changing how the planet works, how it functions, and what kind of life it supports. The harmonics of the DNA spiral itself are also altering because of this. There is some evidence that solar changes are the real, hidden cause of spontaneous mass evolutions in previous epochs of time. All these planetary changes are happening on all levels (physical, mental, and spiritual) at the same time. Many who are familiar with ancient teachings point to the prophecies of planetary change that will work up to a crescendo leading to a sudden shift in our reality. In other words, we will get to the point where we are so far into the new level of energy that there will be a sudden expansion of the basic harmonic wavelengths that the Sun emits as it radiates energy out of itself. This increase in energy emission will change the basic nature of all matter in the Solar System. The planets are pushed slightly farther away from the Sun and the atoms and molecules that make them up actually expand in terms of their physical size. As Above, so Below!

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FEATURES

New Releases



The Galaxy on Earth: A Traveler's Guide to the Planet's Visionary Geography

by Richard Leviton < blaise@hrpub.com >

<< *Click on Book Cover to Order!*

Galaxy on Earth: A Traveler's Guide to the Planet's Visionary Geography (Hampton Roads, 2002, 577 pages) is an unusual new book with a very Hermetic interpretation of sacred sites. According to the author, the Earth's landscape is an interactive living copy of both the cosmos and the spiritual nature of the human and is has an integral part to play in the spiritual transformation of the planet and its people. This book is a tourist guide to the Earth's spiritual energy with important revelations on how to access

and benefit from that energy.

"We live," says the author, "on a planet where gods and myths are alive in the landscape, and visions of the spiritual world and mystical experiences are abundant. It is all part of the Earth's multi-layered spiritual body. Think of it as the esoteric side of the Gaia Hypothesis, as Gaia's secret galactic life."

The book looks at 57 holy sites around the Earth and shows how historical, archeological, mystical, and mythic facts and attributions are clues to a site's geomantic nature, Hermetic signature, and mode of use. All such sites are holy and numinous, but not for the same reasons, and the author explains why in the book. He also explains that the geomantic and energy structures — let's call them subtle but interactive temples — found at these sites can be classified into at least 45 different types. Each type of energy structure has a different and predictable effect on consciousness and can be used as part of a self-directed initiatory process independent of any religious or spiritual dogma.

Further, the author shows that these 45 geomantic features correspond to equivalent structures in the spiritual worlds and in the overall human constitution. These equivalencies put one in immediate and effortless resonance with these sites. This is in accordance with the Hermetic axiom, "As above, so Below," and to which the author would add: "and in the Middle too." This means the archetypes of the spiritual world (Above) are mirrored in the organization of the human (Below) and in the Earth's visionary geography. The spiritual terrain of sacred sites gives us a galaxy on Earth to tap into and use for our own alchemical transformation.

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Alchemy Lectures and Workshops

Mysterium 2003. Las Vegas. February 7-9, 2003.

Mysterium 2003: A Weekend of Magic, Alchemy, and Ritual Theater will be held February 7-9 at the the Las Vegas Magical Arts Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. This event promises to be one of the most important Hermetic conferences of the new year. During this volatile time, the principles of alchemy offer effective tools to thwart our apocalyptic bent. The classical arcane goal of turning lead into gold is an apt metaphor for the transformation we require now, both personally and globally. How can we enlighten the lead of depression, fear and despair that holds so many people hostage? By what methods can we turn the pandemic of environmentally based diseases into opportunities for a healthier and more fulfilled future? Whether responding to global issues or specific personal needs — whether for physical healing or for spiritual growth and development, our inherent ability to recognize and utilize available intelligence is often underestimated and overlooked.

- Friday Feb. 7 8:00 CANDLEDANCE drum and dance celebration with special ritual theater presentations.
- Saturday Feb. 8 1:00 ALCHEMICAL RITUAL THEATER. Opening circle and Keynote address with Jeff McBride, Abbi Spinner, and Desert Moon Circle.
- Saturday Feb. 8 2:00 Lecture by Dennis William Hauck: "Alchemy for Personal Transformation."
- Saturday Feb. 8 4:00 Lecture by Nicki Scully: "Egyptian Magic and Alchemical Healing - Ancient Magic, Modern Form."
- Saturday Feb. 8 8:00 The Alchemical Journey: Alchemical Meditations with Dennis William Hauck and Nicki Scully.
- Saturday Feb. 8 10:00 Sylvia Braillier: Dreamcircle - A Magical Ritual.
- Sunday Feb. 9 9:00 Sylvia Braillier: DreamWork - Part 2. (10:00 Brunch included with Dream Workshop)
- Sunday Feb. 9 12:00 "The GREAT WORK-shop": Explorations in Magic Ritual and Alchemy with all of our artists (open to all).
- Sunday Feb. 9 4:00 Mysterium ritual and closing circle.

Tuition: \$100.00 for all events. Includes the Candelance celebration, lectures, workshops, the overnight dream ritual, and Sunday brunch. Space is limited, so if you want to participate in all the events you must register by calling Abbi at 702-540-0021. Separate pricing available for individual days. For more information, visit <http://www.mcbridemagic.com/MAC/details.php?id=91> .

Experience Festival. Madras, India. February 9-15, 2003.

At the "Experience Festival" in the "Golden City" outside Madras/Chennai in South India, February 9-

15, 2003, the participants will have a unique introduction to ancient wisdom from around the globe. The intent of the festival is based on the belief that humanity in ancient times were more able to live in profound happiness, heal illnesses, develop extrasensory perception and even reach spiritual enlightenment. The Experience Festival will feature workshops within various themes of knowledge such as Ayurveda, Kabbalah, Vaastu, astrology, the Mayan calendar, Vedic Art, mysticism, enlightenment, and much more. There will also be all sorts of playful activities such as music, singing, dancing and creation of collective art. The first courses in the World University will take place during the nine days immediately after the Experience Festival, February 17-25, and in the same location. For more information - please see <http://www.experiencefestival.com> or send an email to info@experiencefestival.com .

Alchemy Initiation Workshop. Los Angeles. April 12, 2003.

Dennis William Hauck will present an all-day workshop at the EarthSpirit Center in Los Angeles on Saturday, April 12, 2003. The intensive workshop will focus on methods of alchemical initiation, including meditations, engravings, and other experiential tools. Initiatic tinctures and oils will be used in this class to facilitate the production of alchemical states of consciousness. The class meets from 10 AM to 6 PM and the fee is \$85. Space is limited. To register or for more information, contact the EarthSpirit Center at P.O. Box 412141, Los Angeles, California, 90041. Phone: (323) 254-5458. Website: www.EarthSpiritCenter.com. Email: info@earthspiritcenter.com.

Philosophical Research Society. Los Angeles. April 13.

"Taming the Alchemical Dragon" is the topic of a lecture by practicing alchemist Dennis William Hauck to be presented at the Philosophical Research Society in Los Angeles on Sunday, April 13, 2003, at 11:00 AM. The presentation focuses on the mysterious First Matter of the alchemists and reveals how they worked with this chaotic and powerful energy in their labs and within their own souls. The slide lecture features original paintings and engravings by alchemists from around the world depicting the First Matter. The fee is \$5 and may be paid at the door. For more information, contact the Philosophical Research Society, 3910 Los Feliz Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90027. Phone: (323) 663-2167. Website: www.PRS.org. Email: info@prs.org.

Transformative Energy Workshop. Los Angeles. April 13.

"How to Connect with Transformative Energy" is the title of a workshop with Dennis William Hauck. He will discuss the true nature of the First Matter and instruct participants in connecting with this hidden energy on all levels of body, mind, and soul to perform alchemical transformations. The workshop is from 1:30 to 3:30 PM on Sunday, April 13, and costs \$15. For more information, contact the Philosophical Research Society, 3910 Los Feliz Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90027. Phone: (323) 663-2167. Website: www.PRS.org. Email: info@prs.org.

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EDITORIAL

From the Editor ([Dennis William Hauck](#))

One of the first tenets of alchemical initiation is that you must experience the ancient truths firsthand. You will never understand these principles just by reading about them. Sometimes this "illumination" happens in the inspired presence of your teacher, and sometimes it happens in the inspired space of your own private meditations. This "inspired" presence or space is a very real thing in alchemy. It is the Hermetic Incubator, the Holy of Holies, where divine energy and wisdom pour down from Above. This is Mercury Space, the sacred realm of Thoth, where the Hermetic reality is most obvious. If you cannot access this space, if you cannot purify your own environment (physically, mentally, and spiritually) to make the sacred space manifest, then you cannot finish your alchemical initiation. The Work is never just in the head, but in the heart and body as well.

I am reminded of the words of the 16th-century alchemist, Simon Forman, when asked to give advice to those interested in pursuing the Great Work. "Crave wisdom of God, the sense to understand," he warned, "or else meddle not herewith, nor take it in hand. For it will cost thee much worldly wealth. But trust no others, and do it yourself. Learn therefore, first to cleanse, purify and sublime; to dissolve, congeal, and distill; and sometimes to conjoin and separate, and how to do it all -- so that when you think to rise, you do not fall. Trust only yourself and no other. I can say no more to you if you were my brother."

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Submissions

Submit your articles on any aspect of alchemy. We are looking for biographies, historical articles, practical laboratory work, spagyric recipes, philosophical pieces, experiences in personal transformation, spiritual insights, Hermeticism, Gnosticism, book reviews, film and video reviews, website reviews, artwork, etc. Please submit your material or queries to the *Alchemy Journal*, P.O. Box 22201, Sacramento, CA 95822-0201. You may also submit materials via email to the Editor at DWHauck@alchemylab.com or to the Assistant Editor, Tiffany-Nicole Hill at Zyons_touch@yahoo.com.

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- **Alchemy Guild** (Membership Organization) <http://www.AlchemyGuild.org>
- **Alchemy Lab** (Alchemy Articles, Files, and Gallery) <http://www.AlchemyLab.com>
- **Alchemy Website** (Original Alchemy Texts) <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/>
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