

THE ALCHEMICAL ALLEGORY OF THE SEED AND THE FIELD

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In the mystical philosophies, the alchemical processes involving the regeneration of the energies of the soul and consciousness are said to unfold through a cycle very similar to the passing of the yearly seasons of nature: there is the black winter, followed by the white bloom of spring, the red hot summer, and the golden autumn when our fruit is ready for the harvest. These are the color phases of the Great Work.

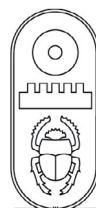
Let us begin by exploring the allegorical symbolism of the blackening of winter. As our days were shortened and our nights lengthened, a somber and darkening condition was felt in an all-embracing sense. Nature entered into a state of sleep, which very much alludes to a sort of death as the external activities of nature slowed down. Consciousness itself collectively seemed to be reduced as many kinds of creatures hibernated for the season. Plants, flowers, trees, and all kinds of vegetation became dormant and lifeless as they lost their vivid colors and gave way to the blackening and darkness of winter.

It would seem to be a very sorry state, melancholic and depressing. Yet if we look a little deeper into the esoteric principles that transpired, we might see that this blackness is really a blessed darkness, which is how it is viewed by mystics and Hermetic philosophers. A cold stillness and darkness may overshadow the world, yet a regeneration, and a new life is warming and developing within nature's very womb, and within the seeds of life itself.

It is in late fall, prior to the beginning of winter, that farmers plant their corn and other seeds into the earth. This ensures that the seed can have the time to undergo the alchemical process of the dissolution and the putrefaction. In order for the seed to bear fruit, it must die, putrefy, and be opened and readied for just the right time to germinate and come to life when the etheric energies of life pour out their greatest influences upon it in the spring.

The Kybalion states that "While All is in THE ALL, it is equally true that THE ALL is in All." This expresses for us the law of correspondence as "what is above is as what is below." We can readily understand that the forces of nature that operate in the macrocosm are also the forces that operate in the microcosm of humanity. There must therefore also be a certain correspondence between the outer activities of nature and the inner process of the transformation and elevation of humanity's soul and consciousness. The greater forces of nature can be found in the little universe of individuals. Therefore through the correspondence that exists between the outer and the inner world, there can be seen a sort of mirroring in the process of nature's regeneration, and the regeneration of humanity and the unfolding of everyone's soul and consciousness.

A seed holds within itself its potentiality of being. Within a tiny seed there lies the potentiality of a giant tree. One should meditate on this mystery, for this seed also contains within itself its entire species. One tiny seed contains





within itself an entire forest. If we succeed in our meditation, we will come to realize that this tiny seed also contains within itself all the trees of its species that have ever germinated into life. For it came from the first tree. In a deeper esoteric understanding, it is in itself the first tree and the last tree, the Alpha and the Omega. "All is in THE ALL...THE ALL is in All."

After the seed of our soul is placed in the black earth symbolizing the womb and the raw richness of the unconscious, the tomb of Osiris, or the sepulcher of Christ, it is reborn following putrefaction. It is in the cycle of our philosophic winter that, as a seed, our consciousness is sown into the earth to be broken, to be opened, to pass through philosophical death, to putrefy and enter our tomb, where we come face to face with the depths of our inner darkness. Oh, what a sorry state, what an agonizing situation. How can this be the blessed darkness of the alchemists?

In Michael Maier's *Atalanta Fugiens*, in emblem six (seen above), there is a man sowing gold into a tilled field. The caption states, "Sow your gold into white foliated earth," that is into pure and tilled earth. It is said that it takes gold to make gold.

Here gold is used as seed and is planted to harvest more gold. Gold is the symbol of the sun, of the soul, and of consciousness. The earth and the field is the body.

The darkness of the tomb, and the cultivation of the earth and the field, readily bring to mind the saturnine aspect of matter and the body. In Chapter XIII of the Bhagavad Gita the body is called the field, and those who know this are called the knowers of the field. In the *Zohar* (3.141b, 1.27b), it is said: "Those alone to whom the mysteries are confided, are called the cultivators of the fields." In *The Hermetical Triumph* (page 31), Eudoxus states that, "The Stone is a Field that the wise cultivate, into which Nature and Art have planted the seed that must produce its fruit."

In Basil Valentine's *Eighth Key* (seen on the following page) there is a man in a cemetery resurrecting from a grave. At the foot of the grave, corn is sprouting, representing the fruition of our seed. Corn is also a symbol of immortality. Adjacent to the grave lays a corpse in a tilled field, symbolizing the idea that the seed that is not sown in the earth does not resurrect. We also see a man sowing grain, who is

met by an angel sounding a trumpet heralding the beginning of the Great Work. Basil Valentine said that, “Neither human nor animal bodies can be multiplied or propagated without decomposition; the grain and all vegetable seed, when cast into the ground, must decay before it can spring up again.” This is the conversion of the old self and the ordinary personality. Two men have hit the target in the distant field with a key resting on its top surface. This represents that putrefaction is the key and they have attained the process.

Mystics and students of the esoteric philosophies know that this allegorical sowing of the seed is the sowing of our consciousness and must be understood as an inward process.

Consciousness must be turned inwards through a backward flow, and into the depths of our being, there to find the Gold within. This is that great task that we undertake when we meditate and practice inner spiritual techniques

and spiritual exercises. Rosicrucians know this process especially as the “Overall Exercise.” The slow fire of our putrefaction is really the regiment of the secret fire of our purified psychic energies, which allows for the blackest of our metal, the lead of the unconscious self, to be whitened through the action of the inner heat. “Decay is a wonderful smith,” according to *The Golden Chain of Homer*, meaning that it transforms one element or state to another. The dedicated and disciplined sower knows his field and knows the body within which one can also find the psychic body. Through his vigilance he will see in the coming spring the efflorescence and

blooming of his unfolding consciousness. This is the first order of our transmutation. The darkness of our inner saturnine condition is transmuted into the brightness and shimmering reflective nature of silver. As we become accustomed to the action of the psychic energies, we are readied for the intensity of the solar fire of our philosophical summer. Our lunar reflective silver will proceed through transmutation and become our most noble, glittering, and incorruptible metal of gold, symbol of man’s highest attainment and Cosmic Consciousness in the golden fall when our Great Work will be completed.

This theme speaks unanimously through the works of the alchemists. In Mylius’s *Philosophia Reformata*, in emblem fourteen, we can see again a man sowing grain, symbolizing the virtues of the soul having the power to tinge or convert. He is greeted by the winged angel of the revelation sounding

the trumpet of resurrection.

To everything there is a season, and the dark night of our winter will give way to glorious blossoming spring, where if we have kept our vigil, we will understand the words of 1 Corinthians 15:42: “What was sown in the earth as a perishable thing is raised imperishable.”

Let us then obey the laws of nature and “follow in her footsteps.” Let us look forward to our inner seasons and let us always be prepared for the work that is to be done in them as the blackening of winter, the white bloom of spring, the red hot summer, and the golden autumn.

