

What is alchemy?



Michael Brenner

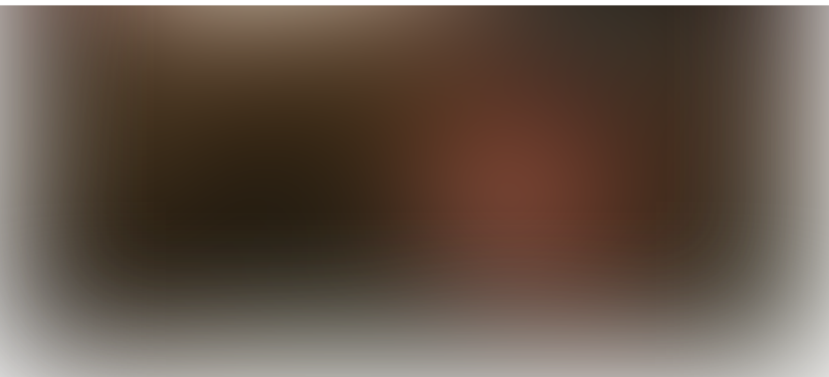
Studied Mechanical Engineering & Comparative Linguistics at Vienna University of Technology · Updated Dec 1

Alchemy seeks *"insight"* whereas science seeks *"knowledge"*: you can learn knowledge but you can't learn insight, you have to gain it. No matter how much knowledge about making steel western scientists have, they don't have the insight to smelt carbon steel directly out of the ore like the Japanese alchemists have done for hundreds of years. Here below in a fascinating video about sword making, from 3:35 through 12:25 we are invited to witness pure alchemical work as it has been practiced for centuries and still is practiced in today's Japan:

Centerstage takes the *"Athakor"*, the quintessential alchemical furnace, the importance of which is meticulously described in Paul of Taranto's *"Summa Perfectionis"* (1310), in the end though like most alchemical scriptures, leaving us with the need for insight into how *"it must be just right for the purpose at hand"*... instead of giving knowledge how exactly to build one, which would be impossible anyways.



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Also here, as likewise described in the *"Summa"* and other western alchemical works *"the master will not sleep for three days and three nights (4:29)....as the furnace works on the dark materials for the worlds sharpest swords"*

"Insight" has always also to do with the non tangible character of *"inspiration"*, which gives the alchemical work the aura of the occult: every alchemical workshop in the world has a shrine dedicated to a *"deity"* which is invoked for help in the *"Great Work"*. This also goes for the blacksmith (12:38–24:50) and the final polisher of the sword (24:50–27:50), all of whom participate in the transmutation and perfection of the *"materia prima"*



A European picture book example of a modern Alchemist was Jack Parsons, the *"father of rocketry"*, a rocket engine being the epitome of energy transformation. He was not an engineer and not a scientist, he was a self taught explosives expert and Thelema occultist. Scientific chemical and physical *knowledge* of Caltech engineers would never have gotten where Jack Parsons got through *insight* and patient as well as courageous experimentation with a small group of followers called the suicide squad. He founded the *Jet Propulsion Laboratory* as well as *Aerojet Engineering Corporation*, and as an Alchemist, not an engineer, became *"one of the most important figures in the US space program"* or at least for the (al)chemically driven lift off, what politicians decided to pretend happened after that was none of his business anymore.





incompatibility disqualifies both. The desperate attempt to hold on to both is exactly that kind of behaviour we hear so often as critique of Alchemy, when it is said that alchemists stubbornly held on to the superstitious belief that one could make Gold from Quicksilver.

First of all, Alchemy - or rather Hermeticism - has the synthesis of macrocosm and microcosm as its foundational concept, not as its goal: *"As Above so Below"* is the starting point of all hermetic philosophy and then, how superstitious was the idea of Quicksilver turning into Gold anyways?

A quick look at the periodic table of elements tells us that Gold and Quicksilver are immediate neighbours to begin with...

Cu Cuprum	Zn Zincum	Ga Gallium	Ge Germanium	As Arsenicum	
g ntum	Cd Cadmium	In Indium	Sn Stannum	Sb Stibium	T Tellurium
g genium	Au Aurum	Hg Hydrargyrum	Tl Thallium	Pb Plumbum	Bi Bismuthum
g genium	Cn Copernicium	Uut Ununtrium	Fl Flerovium	Uup Ununpentium	L Livermorium

... which means chemically they are just one electron apart: **Au79** and **Hg80**. A physical process which would snap one electron out of Quicksilver would turn it into Gold, and lo and behold the radioisotope **197Hg** with a half-life of 64.14hrs turns voluntarily into **197Gold** through *"electron capture"*, that is, the nucleus snaps one electron out of the inner shells and combines it with a proton to form a neutron - and it does so in just under three days! Putting aside practical problems, the insight into how close Quicksilver is to Gold was as correct as it was well established.

With this fundamental misconception about Alchemy being a fools errand out of the way, we can look closer at how Alchemy fits into the greater picture: the overarching framework is **Hermeticism**, a natural philosophy which holds that nature is one and as man is part of nature, it allows him to access the oneness of existence through introspection, through insight - rather than through external analysis. As the essence of the cosmos is Energy, **Alchemy** then is *"the total science of energy transformation"* (Wilmshurst). In modern language this essence of the cosmos is the Aether, and everything we perceive is the result of Aether polarisation. What makes Alchemy difficult to access for us who are used to *analytical* thinking and *mathematical* language is the *associative* language, the stories and images used to transport much more than just the skeleton of physical events. Goethe condenses this dilemma of the analytical approach into a short verse:

"Wer will was Lebendiges beschreiben und erkennen, Sucht erst den Geist hinaus zu treiben. Dann hat er zwar die Teile in der Hand, Fehlt leider nur das geist'ge Band." (Goethe)

"Whoever wants to describe and recognise something living must first drive out the spirit. Then he has the parts in his hand, but misses the spiritual bond."

Dürer puts the meaning of this verse into an image: this is a wonderful study, but the living bird is gone....



.... whereas in eastern art the analytical precision may be missing, but the essence of life, its spirit is conserved:



Walter Lang in his introduction to **Fulcanelli's** *"The Mystery of Cathedrals"* puts it this way:

"To the Alchemist, all the phenomena of the universe are combinations of a single prime energy [Aether] inaccessible to ordinary senses. Only a minute cross section of the total cosmic spectrum is 'bent' by the senses and so rendered tangible. Science has defined this minute abstraction as its total concern and is therefore condemned to turn endlessly inside a nutshell of its own making, learning ever more and more about less and less"

But even an Alchemist like *Fulcanelli* admits the difficulty for the novice in deciphering the associative language used in "the Art":

"...the great difficulty lies in interpreting the symbolism. How is one to reconcile satisfactorily so many diverse images, so many contradictory texts? This is, however, the only means we have of finding the right path among all those blind alleys and dead ends which are offered to us and which tempt the novice, eager to set off"

Noam Chomsky condenses the above into a one liner:

Jagadish Vasudev, alias Sadhguru, emphasises the brutality of Not finding out:

"Ignorance is not bliss, Ignorance is brutal. The brutality of ignorance is such that it will make you dead while alive."

In his 13 volume opus *"History of France"* the author **"Abbot of Montgaillard"** leaves no doubt about what the *"Renaissance"* was all about: political censorship of the distribution of everything that reeks *"insight"*, a decree of ignorance to keep the populace *"dead while alive"*, entertained with pompous decorations but deprived of insights.

"Francis I is called the Father of Letters [as well as father of the Renaissance btw] because of some favours he granted to three or four writers; but one forgets that this Father of Letter issued a royal decree in 1535 by which he prohibited printing under penalty of the gallows; and that after having prohibited printing, he established censoring to prevent the publication and the sale of books previously printed; that he gave the Sorbonne the right of inquisition on consciences; and that after the royal edict, possession of an ancient condemned book prohibited by the Sorbonne endangered its possessors of the death penalty if the book was found in his domicile where the police of Sorbonne were entitled to search; that he showed himself during his entire reign the implacable enemy of the independence of spirit" Paris, Moutardier, 1827, vol. 1, p. 183.

40 years after Gutenberg, the first censorship bureaus were installed in Germany and Henry II banned all imported books in England, turning *meditative, introvert insight of the Gothic period* into superficial outwardly directed *pomp and decoration* of the Renaissance. The French Revolution doubled down on that in making sure that intellects like that of a *William Blake* as well as books like his *"Marriage of Heaven and Hell"* would no more find a wider audience. (in the image below a rendering of Aether polarisation in the allegory of a compass where one leg remains unmoving - Dielectricity, infinite Potential, Counter-space, while the other is moving - Magnetism, Loss of energy, Space)



William Blake (1757-1827)

-Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.

*-Energy is the only life and is from the Body and **Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.***

-Energy is Eternal Delight.

Because the 19th century towards its end got very close to rediscover the Aether as the one inexhaustible source of energy....

Gold, Father) whereas virgin mother is the body (Luna). Ulimanus (1415) calls Mary the "Mirror of the Holy Trinity" and Jakob Böhme (1623) calls her "the exhaled force" [i.e. magnetism, space, force and motion] or "what is found of the eternal nothing" [i.e. Dielectricity, counter-space, inertia and acceleration].

One of the oldest alchemical procedures is the extraction of mercury from cinnabar, for which there are two procedures: cold or hot extraction. **Theophrastus** in his book "On Stones" says about cold extraction:

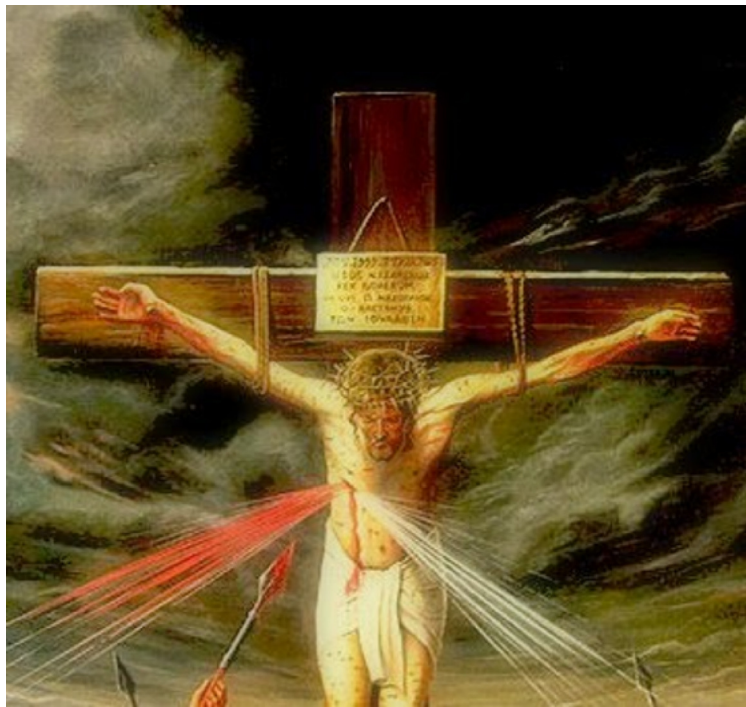
"Mercury is produced by grinding cinnabar with vinegar in a copper mortar with a copper pestle".

In modern chemical symbolism that would read as: **HgS** + Cu → CuS + **Hg**.

Although vinegar doesn't show up in the equation it is emphasised by all ancient texts as absolutely crucial for success, and modern reproductions of the experiment confirm that.

Hot extraction - contrary to what is claimed in textbooks about alchemy - has not been simply the roasting of cinnabar, but heating in the presence of Iron. Although roasting works with high temperatures according to **HgS** + O₂ → SO₂ + **Hg**, the practice was to heat cinnabar in the presence of Iron and under exclusion of Oxygen according to **HgS** + Fe → FeS + **Hg**.

The crucifixion then is the imagery synthesis of cold and hot extraction of the mercurial spirit: the nails are the metals Iron (hot extraction) or Copper (cold extraction), the lance is the fire (hot extraction) and the vinegar served to Jesus represents the cold extraction. The red and white fluids out of the wound in the side of the crucified are sulphur (red) and mercury (white)



Here below an Adept collecting the "living water and oil of joy", the "tinctorial blood of the mercurial Christ crucified on the tree of seven metals" (Kunrath 1708)



In the "Book of the Holy Trinity" (1415–1419) we find the "Coronation of the Virgin" as a complex alchemical allegory:



"Jesus Mary mother of God He himself is She his own Mother in his humanity"

Mary is the divine matrix, the great mystery from which all being springs.

"If She dissolves, it is to give male nature, and if She congeals, it is to take on a female body."
(i.e. **Solve et Coagula**, a core principle of Alchemy)

This higher trinity of **Body** (Luna, Silver) **Spirit** (Mercury) and **Soul** (Sol, Gold) is joined by the four Evangelists as the 4 sublimated elements:

- Luke, the Bull is **Fire** and Mars (bottom right)
- Matthew the Angel is **Water** and Venus (bottom left)
- John the Eagle is **Earth** and Saturn (top left)
- Mark the Lion is **Air** and Jupiter (top right)

The shield with the double eagle represents the Saturnine putrefaction (black birds in general, mostly Crows) and the two heads the twofold nature of matter: an exoteric, i.e. outward-material and esoteric, i.e. inward-sublime. It is the Earthly Cross (i.e. the crucible) on or in which the Christ-Lapis raises humanity. John, to whom the black beast is assigned here was the patron Saint of the Alchemists. (A.Roob)

"The cross is the alchemical hieroglyph of the crucible, from the vulgar Latin crucibulum, crucible, has as its root crux, crucis, a cross. It is indeed in the crucible that the first matter suffers the Passion, like Christ himself. It is in the crucible that it dies to be revived, purified, spiritualized and transformed" (Fulcanelli)

In Hindu Alchemy the final truth, the final transformation is in the complete interpenetration of Shiva and Shakti ♀, of Male and Female energy, of Purusha (form) and

and motion)



Exactly the same concept we find in western alchemical texts, like in Michael Maier in *"Atalanta fugiens"* (1618):

"If the triangle has now attained its highest perfection, it must be brought back into a circle, that is, into an immutable redness. Through which operation the woman returns into the man and from their legs, a single one is formed"

... or here in the *"Museum Hermeticum"* from 1749: the "Eternal Lapis" is produced by the unification \star of the upper Δ and the lower ∇ , of fire and water, while Apollo (Sun, Gold) in the underground in company of the six metals.



Gothic Cathedrals and gothic art in general are neither "Christian" nor are they "Gothic" in the sense of stemming from the Goths. "Gothic art (*art gothique*) is simply a corruption of the word "argotique" (*cant, argot*), which sounds exactly the same. This is in conformity with the phonetic law, which governs the traditional cabala in every language and does not pay any attention to spelling." (Fulcanelli)

Nothing demonstrates that better than all the "Notre Dame" cathedrals, which are all dedicated to Isis, the "Matrona" (not the "Madonna"), the primordial female principle, the Mother of the Gods, in hermetic language the "first matter in mineral state, as it comes out of the ore-bearing strata".

In Hindu tradition this Ur-mother was called Lalita: shown here literally sitting on Shiva and clearly in control of all the other gods.



In western Antiquity it was Isis, Ceres, Rhea, Cybele....



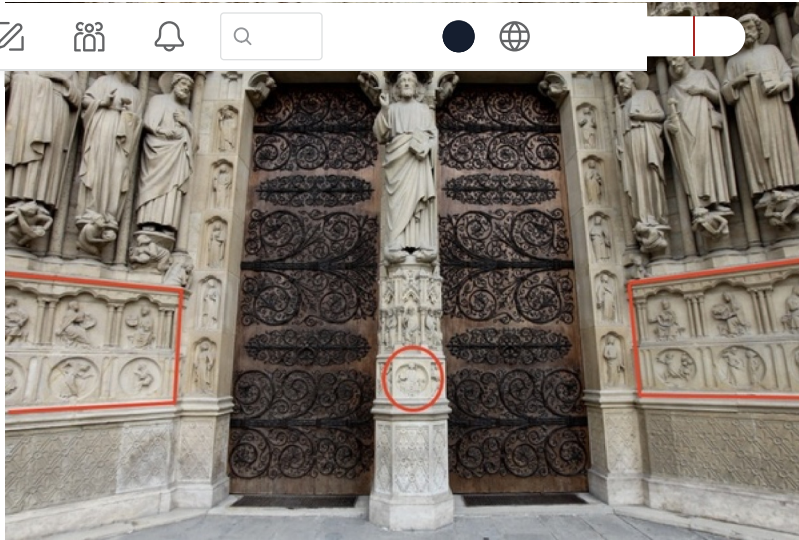
... and in gothic times it was Isis in form of the "black madonnas"....



.... often with inscriptions like "*Isidi, seu Virgini ex qua filius proditurus est*" or "*Virgini pariturae*"

They are black because of the blackness of the "*prima materia*", or like Cybele, "*Matri Deum*" venerated as a black stone fallen from heaven (Kaaba) and they are always kept in the crypt, as the prime matter is found deep down in the womb of earth.

That the gothic cathedral is nothing but a hermetic "*mutus liber*", a mute book of alchemy cast in stone is no more clear than in "*Notre Dame de Paris*": at the very entrance at eye level of human visitors we are greeted with a first lesson, a veritable introductory course into as well as a summary of all that is Alchemy:



Centerstage takes the vey emblem of Alchemy:



Here we see a woman with her head in the Ionosphere (Energy) holding a sceptre in her left as symbol of power, and two books in her right, one open (exoteric knowledge) and one closed (esoteric insight). To reach her head, that is, the power of the ionosphere, we see the nine runged ladder (scala philosophorum) as symbol of the nine successive operations of the hermetic labour as well as symbol of the patience and apprenticeship of the adept.

To the left and right of her there are double rows of six emblems and figures, in total 24 representations of core elements of alchemical knowledge: *"It is here that we are going to find in stone the name of the subject of the Wise; here that we shall witness the processing of the secret solvent, and here, finally, that we shall follow, step by step, the work of making the Elixir, from calcination to ultimate coction."* (Fulcanelli)



It would be too much to go through every single one here, suffice to say that none of them has anything you would call Christian connotations, except one maybe where we see a cross, which only tells us that the cross has originally a different meaning from what Christians believe it has: it represents the two metallic principles sun and moon i.e. sulphur and mercury, and the four fields it creates represent the four elements.



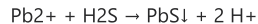
That metal's principles and elements everywhere here can be seen in an image on the north portal. "In the centre of the tympanum on the middle cornice, we see the sarcophagus which figures an episode in the life of Christ. The seven circular emblems are not decoration, but representations of the seven planetary metals. Gold(Sun) - Silver(Moon) - Venus(Copper) - Mars(Iron) - Saturn(Lead) - Jupiter(Tin), the crosses and spiral staves in between them signify perfect and imperfect metals."



ceiling full of alchemical symbols describing the Great work



opposed to *dead matter*, in alchemical lingo that would be *"philosophical lead"* as opposed to *"elemental lead"* for instance, and yet another is the widely reported excitement about a *"black precipitate"*: here below Lead Sulphide precipitating as black crystals out of a solution of Lead salts after adding Hydrogen Sulphide:



This lead sulphide also called *"Galena"* was used widely in 1920ies for **wireless** as well as **powerless** reception of radio signals: the crystal radio operates without battery, driven by the power of the signal alone.



This should give us pause for thought: Alchemy was primarily concerned with *"creating live matter"* that could do something for us, or rather harness a power all around us *"out there"* or *"up there"*



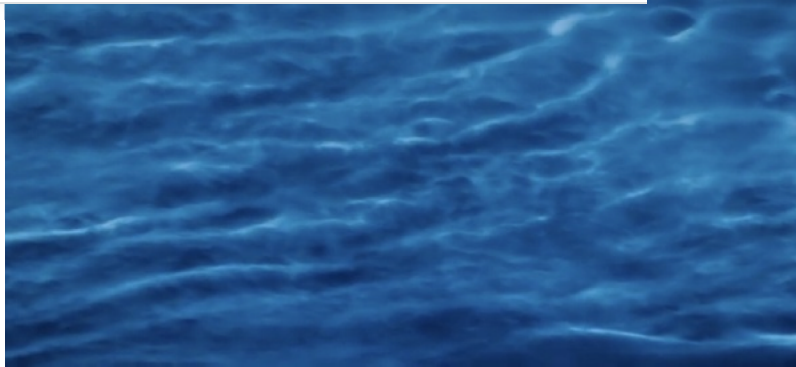
... in the Ionosphere in order to do something for us - and it's almost a platitude to say the most valuable gift, more valuable than all gold in the world, is health.

Thus the Cathedrals with their towering spires were power plants, places of energy harnessing and transforming, when tuned right, into an environment of energetic healing. Indeed when we read how Notre Dame de Paris was used until the reset of the renaissance, this was precisely what was happening: in the square in front of the cathedral until mid 18th century stood monumental fountain with the inscription:

Qui sitis, huc tendas: desunt si forte liquores,
Pergredere, aeternas diva paravit aquas.

*You, who are thirsty, come hither: if, by chance the fountain fails
The goddess has, by degrees, prepared the everlasting waters.*

These are the everlasting waters of the Ionosphere, where we have seen the head of the Lady Alchemy residing:



It was until 1454 that the faculty of medicine held their lectures in Notre Dame, doctors would give their consultations around the holy water stoup (energised, "living" that is, charge separated water), and the sick used to stay on till they were cured. They were allotted a chapel near the second door and there they spent the night.

These cathedrals were the annual meeting place of hermetic societies, as well as the starting point of the annual very popular "Feast of the Fools, a processional hermetic fair, which used to set out from the church with its pope, its dignitaries, its enthusiasts and its crowds, the common people of the Middle Ages, noisy, frolicsome, jocular, bursting with vitality, enthusiasm and spirit, and spread through the town. . . . What a comedy it all was, with an ignorant clergy thus subjected to the authority of the disguised Science and crushed under the weight of undeniable superiority. Ah! the Feast of Fools, with its triumphal chariot of Bacchus, drawn by a male and a female centaur, naked as the god himself, and accompanied by the great Pan; an obscene carnival taking possession of a sacred building; nymphs and naiads emerging from the bath, gods of Olympus minus their clouds and minus their clothes; Juno, Diana, Venus and Latona converging on a cathedral to hear Mass. And what a Mass it was! composed by the initiate Pierre de Corbeil, Archbishop of Sens, and modelled on a pagan rite. Here a congregation of the year 1220 uttered the bacchanal cry of joy: Evoe! Evoe! - and scholars in ecstasy replied :

"Haec est clara dies clararum clara dierum! Haec est festa dies festarum festa dierum!"

"This day is the celebrated day of celebrated days ! This day is the feast day of feast days!"

..... then there was the "Feast of the Donkey", the "Flagellation of the Alleluia" the "Devilry of Chaumont" and until 1538 there was upheld the custom of a peculiar **Ball Game** played inside Saint-Etienne, the cathedral of Auxerre.

So Cathedrals were places of celebration of LIFE and life-energy, NOT mea culpa self flagellation!

Until the Renaissance shut it all down:

*"At about the same time (1770ies), the chapter of Notre Dame received the order to suppress the statue of **St. Christopher**. This colossus, painted in grey, stood back to the first pillar on the right, as you enter the nave. It had been erected in 1413 by Antoine des Essarts, Chamberlain to King Charles VI. Its removal was suggested in 1772, but Christopher de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris at that time, opposed this formally. It was only at his death in 1781 that it was dragged away and broken up."....."Auxerre Cathedral's fine statue, dating from 1539, was destroyed by order in 1768, only a few years before the one in Paris."*

Although we still can find statues and frescoes of Christopherus, the ones who had any kind of center stage position where all removed and destroyed. Why? didn't it depict the heart warming Christian story of a dull giant bearing the infant Jesus across troubled waters to the benefit of mankind? obviously not - except the "for the benefit of mankind" part. This is in fact a powerful alchemical hieroglyph which could lead to some unwanted level of understanding and for that reason it had to go: let's therefore have a closer look into its technological symbolism:

First a quick rerun of the storyline: a goodhearted but dull-witted (our materia prima) giant named **Offerus** wants to serve the strongest king, and when in the service of such he finds the king avoiding Satan, he figures Satan must be stronger and switches alliance, but when Satan avoids the Cross he figures the "master of the cross" be stronger and seeks to serve him. In search of Jesus (incarnate spirit, fire of life incorporated in all matter) he asks a hermit where to find him and the hermit tells him "everywhere" and that he is served by "prayer, fasting and watching" (part of the routine of the alchemist who sharpens his

evening a child wakes him up by calling his name three times (*three times* is a central alchemical theme) and begs to be carried across. In the middle of the river the child becomes so heavy that Offerus had to root up a tree to support himself and asks the child why it was so heavy, saying *"I feel as I'm carrying the world"...* the child answers: *"not only are you carrying the world, you are carrying the one who made it"* and blessed Offerus who from now on was named **Christopherus**.

And here reading *"cant"* or *"argot"* is the key to understanding the message:

"χριστοφορος" versus *"χρυσοφορος"* where *"chrysophorus"* means *"bearer of gold"*. He is mostly depicted dressed in grey (mercury) red (sulfphur) and gold, and if that isn't enough the child bears a *"globe with a cross"* in the way we've seen above, representing mercury and sulphur plus the four elements (cross) and the prima materia (globe).



As cross on top of the globe δ it is the alchemical symbol of the *"hermetic dew"*, the *"philosopher's vitriol"*, or the *"green lion"*



.... but the earliest depictions of Chrysopherus are actually dog headed, representing the *"Dog of Corascene"*, which is argot for the *"animation of exalted mercury"* in the state of a black precipitate.



Important for this technology is the presence of water and the oak tree in the hands of Chrysophorus is key to the correct reading:

"The stream of living water flows at his feet; it gushes out bubbling from the old hollow oak." is the description of one of the above mentioned emblems at the entrance to Notre Dame:



In the "Mutus Liber" from 1677 we see technology clearly depicted: "hermetic dew" exposed to the "cosmic fluid" in plates, clearly vibrating as a sign of it being energised by radiation.



... and in fact, water in contact with a hydrophilic surface and exposed to radiation will become charge separated, that is a semi-crystal, EZ (Exclusion Zone) water as Gerald Pollack calls it in his highly recommended book *"The Fourth Phase of Water"*.

This was also called *"our Magnesia"* or *"Libethra"* after a famous double spring in the province Magnesia in Greece, which poured forth two different kinds of waters from a rock shaped like a woman's bosom. It was therefore also called *"Virgin's Milk"* and depicted as such:



In a church in Tyrol we can read under a fresco:

*"Dum fluit e Christi benedicto Vulnere sanguis, Et dum Virgineum lac pia Virgo premit,
Lac fuit et sanguis, sanguis conjungitur et lac, Et sit Fons Vitae, Fons et Origo boni."*

"While the blood flows from the blessed wound of Christ and the holy Virgin presses her virginal breast, the milk and the blood spurt out and are mixed and become the Fountain of

... sulphur and Gold to extract energy from the Ionosphere or the earth, and the buildings we always are told to be either tombs, temples or defence systems, were in fact all energy harnessing power plants.

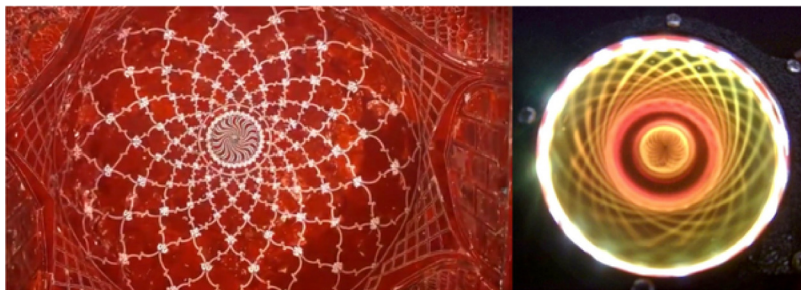
The pyramids all originally hosted capstones covered in **electrum**, a mix of gold and silver, the quintessential alchemical metals Sol and Luna. And these here below are antennas, not religious symbols:



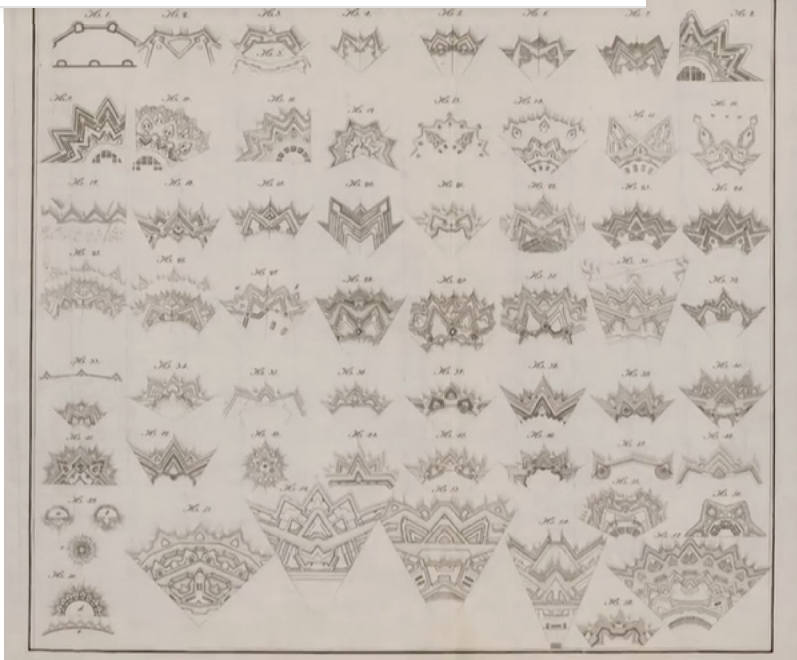
The Gothic windows are harnessing vibrational energy, based on the same concept as magnetrons found in microwave ovens:



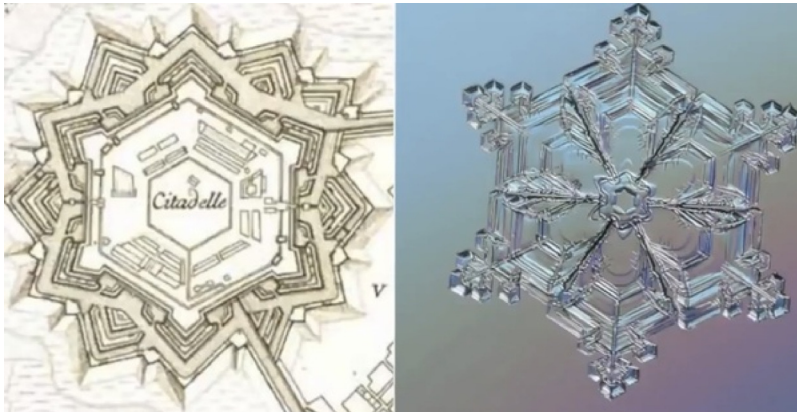
Aether polarisation technology is depicted in cupolas as if it were a modern ferro cell - that's how far insight can penetrate:



Star-Forts were not defensive structures, but energy harvesting plants - defensive only maybe by confusing the enemy by sheer complexity: here below a book about star fort patterns - which are cymatic patterns, frequency resonating patterns:



....in practice therefore when used for defence we can read in historic sources that they never worked particularly well:



Apart from all that, the effort of building the "defensive structure" here below in relation to the buildings it "defends" would be beyond any rime and reason:



In the "Mutus Liber" we find "Church" and "Castle" represented as structures of transmutatory power, the church with the alchemical symbol δ on top and the castle in the image of an Athanor:



All the above is Alchemy: "the total science of energy transformation" - and we have lost it all, it having been replaced by childish as well as futile fantasies about colonising a desert wasteland like Mars - instead of healing ourselves and our realm!

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1 of 24 answers



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Nicholas Cianfanelli · Nov 26

That's funny, from your unending depiction of alchemy one could infer that it's just an unhinged prototype of Dungeons & Dragons, or the Harry Potter saga 😊 In its heyday, most of its practitioners didn't buy that much into the woo-woo [side \(more\)](#)



6



Reply



Tim Good · Nov 26

Why would anyone read this? If someone wanted an answer that long they would go to an actual reputable source... like maybe sign up for a four year program in history at a major university.



3



Reply



Michael Brenner · Nov 27

Major Universities run by string theorists you say? the most elaborate "woo-woo" in the history of mankind? what meaningful would I learn from them? that particles wade knee deep in Higgs quicksand and thus gain mass? no... [\(more\)](#)



1



Reply



Tim Good Yeah, because you so need "string theory" to study history. Apparently you misse...



New Perspective · Nov 26

Wow. This is amazing! I've decided to make a one page compilation of this one for easy reference. I'll save any more specific responses for now. Sent a test message to the full name spelled out with a dot in between the first and last then a dot at [\(more\)](#)



1



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