Alchemy has come to be regarded as the ultimate transformative occult science. Throughout her voluminous writings Mme Blavatsky makes frequent references to this mysterious transmutation process – be it of man or metals. In Isis Unveiled she says: ‘Alchemy is as old as tradition itself.’ In Isis and The Secret Doctrine she asserts that alchemy was developed in Atlantis and perfected in the Far East before being exported to Egypt and then disseminated into Europe.

She describes alchemy as ‘magnetic magic’ and tells us that alongside the purification of base substances and flawed human spirits there was a third lost element: ‘the conscious immortality of the spirit’.

Alchemy is commonly associated with Egypt where it became associated with the mythical and composite figure of Hermes Trismegistus, the thrice great Hermes. It is from his name that we derive the name Hermetic, although alchemy is also often referred to as the royal or noble art. Alchemy was practised elsewhere in Greece and Mesopotamia as well as India. It reached the West through Islamic adepts like Jabir where it took hold.

Alchemy’s Golden Age in Europe from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries is replete with persuasive and well-documented accounts of adepts concocting the prized Philosopher’s Stone and turning mundane metals into gold. Their notion was that all metals aspired to be gold and alchemy was the science which could cure them of imperfections. Some city states boasted literally thousands of practising alchemists. Individuals such as Raymond Lully, Nicholas Flamel, Bernard of Treviso and Thomas Vaughan all achieved this in front of often sceptical witnesses.¹ There were many other apparently successful practitioners but they were outnumbered by greedy charlatans and fraudsters.

The rise of rationalism and science (which ironically alchemy had helped to inspire) diverted the hermetic art from matter to spirit. Bubbling alembics gave way to notions of spiritual alchemy and personal transvaluation. Alchemy was intimately incorporated into numerous occult organisations from the Rosicrucians to the Golden Dawn. But as alchemy assumed a more metaphysical mantle, some adepts continued to experiment in manipulating matter, not with the intention of producing pure gold from lead but in manufacturing an Elixir of Life which would cure disease and prolong life indefinitely.

Paracelsus (c.1493-1541) was both an alchemist and a doctor, who railed against the traditional medical methods of his day based as they were on the four humours of Galenic medicine. Paracelsus is known as the father of modern medicine because of his radical and revolutionary approach to curing disease. His ideas can best be seen in homeopathy which uses almost imperceptible traces of substances to cure disease. For him the alchemical practitioner was central to the entire process. ‘You will transmute nothing if you have not transmuted yourself first,’ he said.

By the twentieth century alchemy had become almost exclusively a metaphysical science of personal transformation and only a small coterie of practical alchemists remained. Frenchman Jean Dubuis, a distinguished alchemist and influential scientist, defined the Hermetic Art as the science of manipulating life and consciousness in matter to help cure it
of its inner disharmony.\textsuperscript{2} He asserted that successful alchemical operations could enable the consciousness of matter to be transformed so that 100 million years of evolution could be shoe-horned into a mere two months. Materialist science was also carrying out transmutations of its own. In 1919 Ernest Rutherford became the first scientists to transmute one element into another when he succeeded in converting nitrogen into oxygen. With the emergence of nuclear physics, scientists turned platinum into gold. The ultimate in nuclear transformation became apparent in August 1945 when the Allies dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In 1909 H. Spencer Lewis, the individual responsible for resurrecting the Rosicrucian movement, is reputed to have transformed zinc into gold before witnesses. At the same time leading members of the Theosophical Society were also exploring the constitution and manipulation of matter. Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater conducted extensive experiments into what they termed occult chemistry.\textsuperscript{3} Leadbeater, who found atoms to be dramatically different to the way scientists imagined, is said to have been able to use psychokinesis to turn one molecule into another. Occult chemistry remained a neglected area of research until revived in the 1970s by scientists such as S. M. Phillips and E. Lester Smith who re-examined the topic.\textsuperscript{4}

However, other researchers such as the British doctor Archibald Cockren were also delving into alchemical means of curing disease. During the war Cockren published a fascinating account of how he had produced medicines from purified metals using largely Paracelsian techniques.\textsuperscript{5} Cockren claims to have extracted the ‘quintessence’ of metals which can then be used to cure disease. He stressed that conventional, allopathic medicine administered its remedies in too crude a form. And he adds, ‘In the administration of a metal, for instance, it must be understood that the body of a metal is worthless; as a medicine it cannot heal; it is the essence alone that is curative.’ Despite his far-reaching research and apparent success in treating patients, his work was largely ignored by mainstream medicine and his ideas have slipped into obscurity.

Scientific scepticism sealed the fate of other alchemical medical breakthroughs. In France after World War II, Armand Barbault began intensive research into ‘spagyric’ alchemy, using plants and dew as his starting matter.\textsuperscript{6} As with Rudolf Steiner’s biodynamic farming this dew had to be collected at the right time seasonally and astrologically. Over a three year period Barbault carried out a long series of cyclic distillations and produced potable (drinkable) gold. The most sophisticated laboratory available at the time failed to identify what it was, although it yielded spectacular results on terminally ill patients. Far from being impressed scientists hurled abuse at Barbault and the pharmaceutical companies were uninterested in substances which were commercially unviable because of their extended preparation time.

More recently scientists have discovered that gold itself has remarkable properties especially when it is in a high-spin or monatomic state.\textsuperscript{7} This is achieved by heating the gold using a method known as direct current arc emission spectroscopy. Normally metals are heated for fifteen seconds but researchers at the Russian Academy of Sciences discovered that if you extended the burn time to 300 seconds, the very atomic structure of the gold fundamentally changed. The atoms are no longer bonded together. They are now known as Orbitally Realigned Monatomic Elements and it seems as if the gold is resonating in another dimension.

According to Dr Hal Puthoff, director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Austin, Texas\textsuperscript{8} when this occurs it loses fourth-ninths or 44 per cent of its weight. But other very odd things occurred. The more the monatomic gold was cooled, the heavier it became, sometimes
outweighing the original by a factor of several hundred per cent. Conversely when the substance was heated it was found to weigh less than nothing. Even more bizarrely, at this point the white powder vanished altogether.

This white powder of projection could be that enigmatic substance on which the alchemists lavished so much attention. This monatomic gold is being hailed as a miracle substance which could have far-reaching effects on medicine with the potential to cure immune system deficiencies and cellular breakdown as in AIDS or cancer because it resonates with the light frequency of DNA.\textsuperscript{9} It is also seen as having huge industrial potential in the development of fuel-cells because it is a superconductor and offers no electrical resistance. There are even suggestions that M-state gold could hold the key to the teleportation of matter.

Could this substance in fact be the elusive Philosopher’s Stone of the alchemists? Laurence Gardner suggests this could be a white powder called mfkt by the Egyptians, shemanna by the Mesopotamians and manna (food of the Gods) elaborated by the Israelites. Egyptian illustrations show this mysterious white powder with its life-enhancing properties being baked into cakes and fed to the pharaohs and priest caste.

In the early twentieth century the British archaeologist Sir William Flinders Petrie found a pile of this white powder during excavations on Mount Horeb (the Biblical Mount Sinai where Moses was given the commandments). Petrie discovered crucibles and large amounts of this white powder in what appears to have been a factory for producing manna.

The Bible offers some clues. In Chapter 32 of Exodus, Moses on returning from the mountain was enraged that his countrymen had turned all their gold into the graven image of a calf. The story continues that Moses burned the gold, ground it into white powder, mixed it with water and fed it to the Israelites.

Did he know something modern science is only rediscovering?

References

2 Interview with Mark Stavish, 1998 and found online at http://www.hermetic.com/stavish/
4 E. Lester Smith, Occult Chemistry Re-Evaluated, (Wheaton, Theosophical Publishing House, 1982).
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