

# alchemy today

On heroism, courage, the struggle for truth and inner change

**H**eroism is deeply interwoven with the fabric of our human state. Among the ancient myths, we always find stories about heroic deeds. Not only is the brave, unselfish knight a hero and the chaste virgin a heroine, but this is also true for the human being who proves his deep friendship for a fellow human being by self-sacrificing deeds. And what should we think of the person who possesses special knowledge? Every year, high awards are given to scholars with special merits for the development of human knowledge.

He who fights for truth, may also become a hero. Here we must say 'may', because only if he courageously perseveres in his ideal and his mission is successful, will he gain hero status.

In the various stories, the hero is always the person who subordinates his self-interest to deeds that benefit others – animals, nature, people, sometimes many people. His deeds stem from a certain degree of love for his fellow human being or he is inspired by religious motives: love for God and man. His properties are: pureness, friendship, knowledge, truth, courage.

**THE FIRST FIVE STAGES OF ALCHEMY** Pureness, friendship, knowledge, truth, courage. Who would not long for these properties, either consciously or deeply hidden subconsciously? These characteristics do not seem to have been chosen randomly and will not have been put into this order without a reason. In each of these properties, we recognise an alchemical task. In alchemy, the opus

magnum, the great work, is divided into seven processes, into seven main works. The five mentioned properties more or less correspond to the first five main works of alchemy, namely: calcinatio, solutio, coagulatio, sublimatio and mortificatio.

If we see alchemy as an allegory of the development of the human soul, these concepts refer to the important first five steps of rebirth: the Light pierces the darkness and fills it; the forces of the sixth cosmic plane are linked with the seventh and finally, the vertical aspect is linked with the horizontal one: the cross, on which the symbolic rose of the heart will blossom.

The human being who is touched in the heart by the divine spirit, will initially receive an impression of pureness, of purification. He is confronted with the radiation of a pure, unsullied field and must react to it by seeking. In this stage, the calcinatio, the first ray of the Seven-light touches the human being. In alchemical terms, we might say: 'Lovingly separate what is pure from what is impure and become aware of your current state, of the path you have to walk, of your beginning and of your goal.'

He who seriously starts with this first task and consciously admits the unmasking light into his life, will discover that he, from that moment, experiences life differently. For some people there will be a stage of sorrow, farewell and loneliness, for others a stage of sometimes violent confrontations and intense contacts. In all cases, friendships will change and be put to the test.









## There is not something like a good mood. Both a good as well as a bad mood drive away our pure objectivity

Then it is clear that we inadvertently have set out on a path. Then we are soon confronted with the second alchemical task, the *solutio*, which we may, in the language of our five properties, interpret as: 'Heed your emotions. Accept all people in pure friendship. Do not let yourself be guided by feelings of antipathy and sympathy.'

Through love, the second ray of the Seven-light enables the human being to liberate himself from too great emotional turbulence. This implies rest as to our moods or, as we may learn from alchemy: 'There is not something like a good mood. Both a good as well as a bad mood drive our pure objectivity away.' The basis of this friendship for all cannot be emotionality, but stems from the rest and the balance of the living new soul. This balance, this pure objectivity, is also the necessary basis for the next step on the path.

Franz Kafka, the renowned author from Prague, expressed the essence of this as follows: 'You do not have to leave your room. Remain seated at your table and listen. You do not even have to listen, only wait. You do not even have to wait, only learn to become quiet, silent and alone. The world willingly offers itself to you to be unmasked. It does not have a choice: it will make itself known to you in exaltation.'

We now reach the next alchemical stage. He who has become aware of the state in which he lives, and to a certain extent dissociates from the turmoil in which he must act, will want to achieve knowledge. He wants to know who he is, and how his life charts its course, what moves him and what keeps him imprisoned. This concerns another type of knowledge, the knowledge about what is the driving force behind things. He is no longer satisfied with the traditional explanations by nature religion and the sciences, but he tries his utmost to penetrate to true knowledge. Many seeking people in whom

the longing for this knowledge, Gnosis, has been aroused, no longer want to hang onto outward teachings and texts. They no longer want to sharpen their intellect only, because they are well aware that such an approach would not help them further on the path.

The knowledge of the Gnosis works as power, as vibration. He who directs himself toward this knowledge, with the help of the eternal element within him, receives it as a suggestion in his heart and in his blood. During the stage of coagulation, the merging of two influences, the pupil-alchemist increasingly realises: 'The highest knowledge is that we know nothing.' Apart from experiencing life differently, it also gradually changes course. To many people, this third main work of alchemy is a stumbling block. There is a risk that we hold onto all the knowledge we have acquired. Like the rich young man from the biblical story, we prove to be too heavily burdened to continue on the path. Rich, that is, our heads filled with outward knowledge, we lapse into complacency, because he who is unable to give up his 'own wisdom', cannot partake of the all-wisdom. If relinquishing our own knowledge is too great a sacrifice, the seed, formed during the first two steps, is unable to take root in the great mystery of not-knowing.

Our great work began with faith in the possible truth of the transformation of lead into gold, or of earthly life into spiritual life, with the return to the original field as our point of departure. The applied concentration enabled universal love for every creature. Now a constant and certain basis is necessary to continue on the path. This steadfastness, this faith, is like a burning fire in the heart that should become inextinguishable during the next stage. This is why the fourth main alchemical work is the *sublimatio*. It is the stage of the entrance of the spirit, and doubt is the great impediment in this process.

He who does not overcome doubt, cannot discover the truth. Doubt is the negative pole of interest and of the drive to investigate. It is the very instrument of the counterforces, accumulated in our inner being, while an active mind is necessary to keep us alert and sharp. In this way, we are

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protected from delusion and illusion, while this active mind is a help par excellence for finding the truth.

However, doubt is the last straw of the dominance of the intellectual power over the whole human being. After all, the mind wants to hold onto something of what is old and is unable to surrender trustingly to faith. True faith shows unexpected vistas of new life to the inner being, and incites the mind to explore the ways leading to it. This is why we can express the fourth alchemical task by: 'Behold the truth and accept it. Let truth take possession of your being. Let it burn away any doubt from your being.' He who reflects on the truth, realises that it can only be accepted without any reservations.

With the powers of the sixth cosmic plane, the truth descends into us, so that we become thoroughly true, so that our horizontal directedness is really and literally thwarted. What now matters is that we do not extinguish the fire; it should become inextinguishable. It is important to allow the process to occur in self-surrender, by absolutely accepting that 'without me, you can do nothing.' Therefore, it is not accepting the truth with our I, it is not a personal struggle, but it is the faith that, motionless and without doubts, goes up into the truth. That is the sublimatio...

The ultimate sacrifice of the personality is death.

This is why the fifth main work of the opus magnum is the mortificatio: putting the soul body above the physical body, the fundamental victory above the I of the old nature. In this stage, courage is required and the Seven-Spirit enables the human being 'to muster up courage' by holding onto the one principle of life. He who consistently follows this principle, will clear away all impediments. Then seemingly automatically, room is created in life, room and time to do what is necessary, and to serve the world and humanity, to serve our neighbour. However, this does not mean that first room will be made, so that we can devote ourselves to this one principle later. He who, in the middle of the chaos and despair of daily life, nevertheless follows the one principle, will discover that the original powers of the micro-cosmic human being are released. In this way, the path is also cleared, because it is lying within us, and forces are released to which others can react.

Courage belongs to the great, original powers of the Spirit-Soul. It is the realising power of the hero who takes all the consequences of the cross upon himself. It is not the compelling power of the I-human being, but it is the meek power of the 'humble person', who fearlessly faces death, knowing that the hour of his liberation is near. The mortificatio, the hour of death, is actually the liberation from death, the ascent into immortality.

Therefore, the fifth task of the opus magnum is a decisive task. In the words of our five properties, we might express it as: 'Accept with joy the tension between the earthly and the original nature within you. Accept the sorrow of this cross. Allow the power of love of the sixth cosmic plane, the love power of the Gnosis, to accomplish its work within you. Be courageous, remain steadfast.' ★