

Astrologia e politica in Inghilterra tra età puritana e Restaurazione.

di Davide Arecco

Contemporaneo e quasi coetaneo di Athanasius Kircher, William Lilly - o Lily, come riportato da altre fonti - nacque nel 1602 e morì nel 1681. Astrologo di corte, divenne presto molto celebre, con la pubblicazione di un suo oroscopo per Carlo I, all'incoronazione del re di Scozia avvenuta nel 1633. I suoi pronostici divennero assai celebri e diffusi nell'età pre-rivoluzionaria¹, Lilly sapeva trovare bene un termine di collegamento per porre in relazione reciproca le costellazioni planetarie ed i movimenti di carattere politico dei giorni storici della sua epoca.² Fu così che le sue previsioni in merito al Parlamento inglese risultavano favorevoli e vantaggiose a seconda dei casi, una sorta di griglia astrologica lungo cui fare scorrere la lettura dei fatti politici.³ Poi le cose, si sa, andarono come andarono⁴.

Dopo la Restaurazione e l'ascesa di Carlo II sul trono (1660), Lilly, il quale era stato anche schernito con il nome di Sidrophel nell'*Hudibras* di Samuel Butler, vide diminuire in una misura notevole la sua influenza. In quel tempo, aveva tuttavia già acquistato, presso Horsham, la tenuta dove avrebbe concluso i suoi giorni. La sua figura, con tutte le variegata sfaccettature che presenta, risulta emblematica non solamente di un'epoca ma anche di una precisa e radicata mentalità, ritrovandosi nei suoi scritti una caratteristica compresenza di istanze ermetiche e rosi†ruciane, alchimistiche e massoniche. Sopravvivenze vive e reali nell'Inghilterra restaurata, che

¹ Cfr. C. HILL, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, London, 1964.

² Cfr. G.M. TREVELYAN, *Storia della società inglese*, tr. it. Torino, 1948.

³ Cfr. MICHAUD, *Biographie Universelle*, Paris-Leipzig, 1968, XXIV, p. 539.

⁴ Cfr. C. HILL, *The Century of the Revolution*, Edinburgh, 1961; M. KISHLANSKY, *L'età degli Stuart. L'Inghilterra dal 1603 al 1714*, tr. it. Bologna, 1999.

vedeva i piani del messianismo politico e della palingenesi religiosa ancora strettamente intrecciati tra di loro⁵.

Come ha ricordato Kurt Seligmann, da Valentin Andreae la Massoneria, rimontante al tardo XVI secolo, ricevette un nuovo e forte impulso. Nel 1645, durante la prima fase dei disordini, pochi Rosacroce inglesi s'incontrarono per accumunare i loro sforzi. Essi erano il *natural philosopher* di formazione baconiana John Parson, l'antiquario ed alchimista Elias Ashmole, l'ingegnere militare Robert Moray e il già famoso astrologo William Lilly.

Essi giustificarono la segretezza a cui facevano ricorso con il fatto che la generale intolleranza di quegli anni violenti non li avrebbe sopportati⁶, e ricercarono il modo di guadagnarsi nuovi proseliti pur restando occulti. Poiché ogni cittadino londinese, allora, era obbligato dall'uso a iscriversi in una corporazione, Ashmole escogitò la soluzione segnandosi come muratore (*mason*). Gli altri seguirono il suo esempio e, quindi, poterono radunarsi liberamente nella sala di riunione della loro associazione, contribuendo a fondare il cerimoniale della *masonry*, o Massoneria⁷.

Tra i numerosi libri ed almanacchi astronomico-astrologici redatti dal Lilly, sono da ricordare il *Merlinus anglicus* (London 1644), il *Messenger of the Stars* (London 1645), le *Prophecies* (London 1646) e, soprattutto, la famosa *Christian Astrology Modestly Treated of in Three Books* (London 1647). Opere storiche ed esempi di una manualistica esoterica a un tempo, in cui l'abilità dell'Autore risiede proprio nell'indubbia capacità di sapere mediare da una parte impianto teorico e dall'altra versante applicativo, non senza rinunciare ai quadri di taglio più generale, sorretti da un'esposizione spesso piacevole⁸. I precedenti, di certo, non mancavano. Basti pensare agli *exempla* medievali di Michele Scoto e Pietro d'Abano, tra il XII e il XIII secolo.

⁵ Cfr. V. GABRIELI, *Puritanesimo e libertà*, Torino, 1956; C. GIUNTINI, *La Grande Instaurazione e il problema della scienza puritana*, in "I", III (1983), pp. 651-666.

⁶ Cfr. P. ADAMO, *La libertà dei santi. Fallibilismo e tolleranza nella Rivoluzione inglese (1640-1649)*, Milano, 1998.

⁷ Cfr. K. SELIGMANN, *Lo specchio della magia*, tr. it. Firenze, 1951, p. 436.

⁸ Cfr. H. BIEDERMANN, *Handlexicon der Magischen Kunste*, Graz, 1968, pp. 217-218.

Medicina ed astronomia, astrologia e politica tornavano ad essere, nel secolo della “rivoluzione scientifica”, i due volti inscindibili di un’unica (quanto ancestrale) sapienza di origine divina, quella *philosophia perennis* a cui si sarebbe dedicato, alle soglie dell’Illuminismo europeo, lo stesso Newton⁹.

Tra i testi di Lilly che rimasero manoscritti nel corso della sua vita, la *Introduction to Astrology* avrebbe visto la luce solo nella prima metà del XIX secolo, stampata a Londra nel 1832, non senza inoltre notevole successo editoriale, grazie all’iniziativa di Richard James Morrison, sotto lo pseudonimo curioso di Zadkiel, insieme con il testo dedicato al banchetto della Natività ed alla lilliana *Grammar of Astrology*. A San Diego, nel 1918, è stata infine edita la *Anima Astrologiae*, concepita dall’Autore alla stregua di una “Astrologer’s Guide Containing 146 Considerations of the Famous Astrologer Guido Bonatus” (l’astrologo e medico forlivese coevo di Dante e Cecco d’Ascoli), un vero e proprio testamento spirituale di quel ‘giullare al servizio del tempo’ che fu, secondo l’Allibone, il nostro Lilly¹⁰. Forte, fortissima nell’opera la presenza di istanze e procedimenti riconducibili ai testi di Girolamo Cardano, più volte esplicitamente menzionato¹¹. Senz’altro una conferma della presenza di quell’eredità rinascimentale che Lilly sentì sempre viva e durevole, un punto di riferimento costante nella stesura dei tanti suoi almanacchi¹².

La *Anima astrologiae* – contenente, accanto alle considerazioni bonattiane, “faithfully rendred into English”, un elenco dei “Choicest Aphorisms of Cardan’s Seaven Segments, translated, and methodically digested under their proper Heads with a New Table of the fixed Stars, rectified for several years to come, and divers other necessary Illustrations” - venne pubblicata in prima edizione a Londra,

⁹ Cfr. L. THORNDIKE, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, New York 1957, VII, pp. 90-94.

¹⁰ Cfr. D. ALLIBONE, *Dictionary of English Literature*, Detroit, 1965, I, p. 1100.

¹¹ Cfr. L. SIMONUTTI, *Miracula e mirabilia in alcune opere di Cardano*, in *Girolamo Cardano*, Milano, 1999, pp. 27 ss.; L. SIMONUTTI, *Cardano in Inghilterra*, in *Cardano e la tradizione dei saperi*, Milano, 2003, pp. 124 ss.

¹² Cfr. A. GRAFTON, *Il signore del tempo. I mondi e le opere di un astrologo del Rinascimento*, tr. it. Roma-Bari, 2002.

da Harris, nel 1676, concepita dal suo Autore come un testo ad uso, oltre che dei “Sons of the Art”, degli studenti di medicina delle tante università inglesi, in quegli anni alle prese con una delicata fase di ridefinizione ad opera del Parlamento dei programmi e delle stesse funzioni istituzionali. Nella dedica, scritta da Lilly a Walton upon Thames, il 2 agosto 1675, l’Autore ricorda agli “Ingenious Lovers of Art” che

we have formerly some thoughts of revising our Introduction to Astrology, now out of print, and to have enriched it from another edition with the choicest aphorisms, both from the writings of the ancients and our own many years’ experience, but the laboriousness of that work, considering our age and many infirmities of body, with the discouragements we have already me with from some ungrateful persons, caused us to lay aside (at least for the present) those intentions. Yet that we might not be wholly wanting to promote anything that might tend to the advancement of Art and gratification of its painful students, and knowing how necessary the ensuing Considerations of Guido Bonatus and Aphorisms adjoined, are to be known and regarded, which many of our ingenious countrymen could not do, for they have hitherto remained in the Latin tongue with the rest of the works of these authors in large volumes, difficult to be got at and too chargeable for man to buy, we therefore recommend them to a friend to be translated by themselves, which he has judiciously performed in plain significant language, so that we judge the work may deserve the title *Anima Astrologiae* which we have given it, comprehending the marrow and substance of Astrology, and much excellent matter necessary to be observed by all honest students that practice Art to discover truth and not to vapour with. We doubt not but the legitimate Sons and well-wishers of Urania will find considerable advantages from hence, directing them to a certainty in giving judgments upon all occasions, and they will for this publication have cause to

thank their old friend¹³.

Il successivo premio, ad opera di Henry Coley e risalente al 29 aprile del 1675, avverte il pubblico dei lettori che

amongst those things that appertain to giving judgment in questions of Astrology, there are six to be considered: - 1st - Nations, and their particular kinds. 2nd Families, and the constitutions and ordinations of Families and Houses. 3rd - Rich and potent persons, Dispositions and affairs. 4th - Regard is to be had to the Individuals of human kind. 5th Elections or times proper for the beginning of any Work or Enterprise. 6th -Questions as well universal as particular, pertinent and fit to be demanded. But first of all there are some things necessary to be premised: As the fit manner of propounding a question, and divers other points to be observed in diving judgment. Of which sort of considerations we shall reckon up no fewer than One Hundred Forty and Six, which though 'tis impossible they should happen or be so observed altogether; yet they all deserve to be known, and without them an Astrologer shall never be able to give true and perfect judgement. But before we treat distinctly of them it will be convenient to say a little of the right way or manner how a question should be proposed; for to judge of things to come is no easy task, nor indeed can it always be exactly performed; but we may come near the truth, and differ from it only in some small time or circumstances; which difficulty should not at all discourage us from studying and endeavouring to obtain as great a knowledge therein, as Human minds are capable of; for since inferiors are governed by superiors (as all agree), and that the nature and disposition of such superiors may be known by their motions, which are now exactly found out by the learned in Astronomy; we may thence undoubtedly arrive at an ability of judging of things to

¹³ W. LILLY, *Anima Astrologiae, or a Guide for Astrologers*, London, 1676, pp. 5-6.

come: That is declare what will happen by or from such their motions, and by consequence foretell future accidents; for this art has its peculiar rules and Aphorisms and its end in judgement, which takes off their objection who say that Astrology is nothing worth; for it would not be an Art, unless it had its proper precepts; but that it is an Art, we have sufficiently proved elsewhere, and the same is generally acknowledged; and its end is to give judgements as aforesaid, which are accidents imprinted on inferiors by the motions of the superior bodies and their qualities and effects in or upon the same. Thou art here presented with two choice pieces of Art in our mother tongue; the first, the Considerations of Guido Bonatus, a person no less happy in the practice than skillful in the theory of Astrology of which I will here give thee one instance as it is recorded by that eminent Historian Fulgusos, That Guido Earl of Mount-Serrant being besieged in that city, our Author Bonatus sent him word, that if such a day and hour he would make a sally on the enemies' camp, he should give them an absolute defeat, and force them to raise their siege and quit the place, but should himself receive a dangerous (but not mortal) wound in the thigh. The Earl providing himself of all things necessary in case of a wound, and according to the prediction, though vastly inferior in numbers, obtained a most signal and entire victory, but following the pursuit was wounded in the place foretold, of which in short time he recovered. The second, consists of the choicest Aphorisms of Cardanus, a man famous to the learned world, and of whom the judicious and severe Scalier (though an adversary) in the preface to the book he wrote against him, gives a most respective and applauding character. These Aphorisms (by which is meant short comprehensive and approved rules of Art) were in the original delivered promiscuously, but I for better method have taken the pains here to marshal them under their distinct and proper titles, and that I might not unnecessarily charge the reader, have omitted such as seemed trivial or superfluous; this much I

thought fit to premise, and have only more to add, that by reason of my absence some faults have escaped the press, besides those which myself may be chargeable with in the translation; the Reader will show his judgment in distinguishing, and his good nature in pardoning them¹⁴.

Un interesse particolare riveste per lo storico delle idee il libro secondo dell'opera, che Lilly dedica agli aforismi di Cardano. Dopo quelli generali e gli altri "relating to Nativities", è la volta dei venti "Aphorisms relating to Revolutions". Leggiamo che

Revolutions may be said to be accomplished five ways, first, by the return of the Sun to the same point, which is most valid. Secondly, the return of the centre of a planet to the same place of the Ecliptic, of which kind that of the Moon first, and then those of Saturn and Jupiter are chief. Thirdly, the return of the centre of some smaller Circle to the same place. Fourthly, the return of a Planet to his place in a smaller circle. Fifthly, the return of a Planet wherewith he was in the beginning joined as it is the place of another Planet. When the Dragon's Tail in a Nativity unfortunately beholds the Lord of the Ascendant and in a Revolution the Moon shall be joined therewith, and the Lord of the House of Death being then in the place of an Infortune in the Radix, shall likewise behold it, the Party that year will die. When the Infortunes are strong in the Radix, and the Moon applies to a powerful Fixed Star of the Nature of Mars in a Revolution, the Party will be apt to commit manslaughter that year, or be in danger about it. Revolutions may produce effects happening in the years following, either because one year is preparative to another, or because the Nativity decrees what the Revolution perfects, or by reason of the greatness of the event as death, or of the causes, as when the Sun is exactly in opposition of Jupiter. When the Ascendant of a Revolution is the same with that of the Person's Nativity, something promised in the geniture happens,

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.

but much more certainly is the Moon shall be also in her place of the geniture, or the Lord of the Ascendant in a place partially behold the same house of the Radix. If in a Revolution the Lord of the Geniture Retrograde (if he be one of the Inferiors), begins to be under the Sun-beams, or (if he be one of the Superiors) if he be afflicted by an Infortune, you may expect some danger of your life that year. When Jupiter in a Revolution beholds the Moon or Venus, or be in an Angle in either of their places in the Radix, it inclines the Party, if of fit age that year, to marry. When in a Person's Revolution whose only significator of life was debilitated in the Radix, the Fortunes shall be combust in any house but the Ascendant, and the Infortunes being above the Earth, shall behold the Sun, Ascendant and Moon, or the Moon be under the Earth, such person without any ill direction may die that year. If a Geniture be weak as to Life, and three Planets be joined in a Revolution, there is imminent danger of some eminent disease, especially if they happen in the 6th house. When at ripe Age a Revolution shall have Venus in Sextile of Mercury, who was joined to her in the Genesis in the same place, the Native will be strangely haunted with wanton thoughts and venereal imaginations, and if they shall be in conjunction in the same place where before they were Sextile, he shall that year enjoy some mistress that he is much enamoured of. When in the hour of a Revolution the Superior Planets or others shall be joined in the place of a Radical Significator, except from thence some notable matter to happen of that kind which is thereby naturally promised. When the Moon is joined with Saturn in a Revolution, and he casts a Square to the Ascendant, such person shall that year suffer in his body by reason of a disease of his mind. The additions that are made by the procession of the Sun in an annual Revolution, transfer the significations for near upon so many days after the Revolution, as there are years past. When the Moon agreeing with Saturn in the Radix, or being with any other Planet in his dignities, if she happen in a Revolution (after the age of forty years) to be corporally joined with Saturn in the same latitude, or being full of light shall be in opposition to him

and in contrary latitude from the sixth house to the eighth, the Native will undoubtedly fall into some strange disease and die thereof. When the houses of the Ascendant or Moon in the Radix shall be in Square or Opposition to the Infortunes in a Revolution, the Native will suffer much trouble, but if the Moon be in Conjunction with them, then he shall do much mischief to other people, but if besides this the Infortunes are Lords of inimical places, He shall both do damage to others and suffer much himself. The Particular times of accidents happening are to be found out from annual and monthly revolutions and transits. Fatal will that year be to the Native's health, when in the Revolution many of the Hylegicals come to bad places of the Figure, or to the Aspects of the Infortunes. If any Planet be afflicted in an annual revolution, the effects will appear when he shall apply be body, Square or Opposition to the Planet that is Lord of the sign wherein he is. Diseases are for the most part of nature of the Lord of the sixth house, or the Planet therein posited as well in Revolutions as Nativities. The Revolution of a year is one thing in time, which is the return of the Sun to the same point from the Equinoctial: --another thing in the World, which is its return to the same Fixed Star, and yet another thing in Nativities, which is its return to its former place; but with the addition of so much of the Ecliptic as he passes through in one natural day¹⁵

Agli aforismi cardanici inerenti “Diseases and physics”, fanno seguito quelli “relating to Elections”, sedici in tutto. Lilly sottoscrive le ipotesi teoriche di Cardano secondo le quali

an Election signifies nothing or very little unless it correspond with the Nativity, and time wherein you elect. If you would have anything kept secret let the Moon be under the Sun beames when you do it. Make no new clothes, nor first put them on when the Moon is in Scorpio, especially if she

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 46-48.

be full of light and beheld of Mars, for they will be apt to be torn and quickly worn out. When in an Election you cannot fit the Moon to two Planets that you have occasion for, at once, join her to some fixed Star that is of the nature of them both. When you would suddenly finish a thing, place the Moon and Significator in moveable signs, but if you would have your work last long, let them be in fixed ones, and for this reason it becomes so difficult for a man to attain to do both. The best election a man can make is to the place of his habitation: for if the Ascendant of the City he dwells in be the place of his Ascendant, he will have his health well; if the Mid-heaven, he will come to preferment; if it be the place of the Sun in the Nativity, he will undoubtedly obtain honour and dignities; if of Jupiter he will grow rich; if of the Moon he will be very happy in most respects there. Every man's geniture in some things agrees with, and in some differs from another's, we should therefore deal with people (as to important matters) only in things wherein their Nativities sympathize with ours, but in other things to forbear, and indeed we ought generally to avoid the society of a person the Lord of whose Ascendant is an Infortune and joined with the Dragon's Tail or any malevolent Fixed Star, for unless there be a great agreement between our Nativities they will do us some mischief, though perhaps against their will. When the significators of journies are in watery signs and the Infortunes (or the Fortunes themselves unfriendly posited) be elevated above them, the querent will be much troubled in his journies with bad weather and tempests, and note that the causes or business of journies is to be discovered from the dispositors of the significators. You may sometimes use the Infortunes as Physicians do poisons, for they produce strong effects; but use them like those, sparingly and with caution. News or reports raised and spread abroad whilst the Moon is in the beginning of Scorpio or Capricorn are generally false, but if she be with Jupiter in a masculine sign they are like to prove true. Begin not to build whilst the Moon is in Scorpio or Pisces or when a southern sign ascends, nor let the Moon or Lord of the fourth apply to a Retrograde Planet, for it threatens that such edifices shall soon fall or be ruined. At Play and in War it is said that it is considerable for a man to have his face look towards a friendly Part of Heaven, and that if both parties do so, the contest will be tedious; if neither of them, then both in battle will be much prejudiced, and in gaming there will be little won on either side, but if one of them only look that way,

he will soon conquer his antagonist. In every Election, let the Moon and Lord of the Ascendant be free from impediment of affliction. But if when the Moon suffers some impediment from another Planet, thou art forced on that day to make an election, let a sign ascend that is either the house or exaltation of that Planet so impeding. It is best to undertake journeys when the significators are in moveable signs, for they signify celerity and return with dispatch of business, but fixed signs in such cases are very bad, so also it is if the Lord of the Ascendant or Moon happen to be in the 6th, 8th, or 12th houses. It is undeniable thing (in general) to deliver a petition or request to a great person when the Moon applies to Jupiter, and he is joined with the Dragon's Head in the Midheaven.¹⁶

Le ultime quattro sezioni di aforismi cardaniani riportati dall'astrologo inglese riguardano invece, rispettivamente, "Eclipses and Comets", "Weather and Meteors", "Husbandry" e i più generali "Accidents". Chiude l'opera una "table of fifty principal Fixed Stars", posta da Lilly a conclusione del libro con lo scopo di "showing their true Longitude, Latitude, Magnitude, and Natures, to the Year of Christ 1700, Jan. 1. For every year before, subtract, and for every Year after add fifty seconds to or from their Longitude in the Table, and you have their true places for any time past, present or to come".¹⁷

APPENDICE

Tra le fonti medievali di William Lilly compare il poema filosofico di "Hortulanus the Philosopher", l'assai poco nota *Discussion of the Emerald Tablet*, un "briefe Commentarie upon the Smaragdine Table" di Ermete Trismegisto, l'"Hermes of Alchimy" delle pagine lilliane. Si fornisce, qui di seguito e per la prima volta, il testo completo del documento.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 62-64.

¹⁷ Ulteriori informazioni sulla vita e le iniziative di Lilly si possono rintracciare nella voce di S. LEE, *William Lilly*, in *Dictionary of National Biography*, London, 1909, XI, pp. 1137-1141.

HORTULANUS DISCUSSION OF THE THE EMERALD TABLET

THE PRAIER OF HORTULANUS

Laude, honour, power and glorie, be given to thee, O Almighty Lorde God, with thy beloved sonne, our Lord Iesus Christ, and the holy Ghost, the comforter. O holy Trinitie, that art the onely one God, perfect man, I give thee thanks that having the knowledge of the transitorie things of this worlde (least I should bee provoked with the pleasures thereof) of thy abundant mercie thou hast taken mee from it. But forsomuch as I have knowne manie deceived in this art, that have not gone the right way, let it please thee, O Lord my God, that by the knowledge which thou hast given me, I may bring my deare friends from error, that when they shal perceive the truth, they may praise thy holy and glorious name, which is blessed for ever. Amen.

THE PREFACE

I Hortulanus, so called from the Gardens bordering upon the sea coast, wrapped in a Iacobin skinne, unworthy to be called a Disciple of Philosophie, moved with the love of my welbeloved, doo intend to make a true declaration of the words of Hermes, the Father of Philosophers, whose words, though that they be dark and obscure, yet have I truly expounded the whole operation and practise of the worke: for the obscuritie of the Philosophers in their speeches, dooth nothing prevaile, where the doctrine of the holy spirit worketh.

CHAPTER I

THAT THE ART OF ALCIMY IS TRUE AND CERTAINE

The Philosopher saith. It is true, to wit, that the Arte of Alchimie is given unto us, Without leasing. This hee saith in detestation of them

that affirme this Art to bee lying, that is, false. It is certaine, that is proved. For whatsoever is proved, is most certaine. And most true. For most true golde is ingendred by Art: and he saith most true, in the superlative degree, because the golde ingendred by this Art, excelleth all naturall gold in all proprieties, both medicinall and others.

CHAPTER II

THAT THE STONE MUST BE DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS

Consequentlie, he toucheth the operation of the stone, saying: That which is beneath, is as that which is above. And this he sayth, because the stone is divided into two principall parts by Art: Into the superior part, that ascendeth up, and into the inferiour part, which remaineth beneath fixe and cleare: and yet these two parts agree in vertue: and therefore hee sayeth, That which is above, is like to that which is beneath. And this division is necessarie, To perpetuate the myracles of one thing, to wit, of the Stone: because the inferiour part is the Earth, which is called the Nurse, and Ferment: and the superiour part is the Soule, which quickeneth the whole Stone, and raiseth it up. Wherefore separation made, and coniunction celebrated, manie myracles are effected in the secret worke of nature.

CHAPTER III

THAT THE STONE HATH IN IT THE FOURE ELEMENTS

And as all things have proceeded from one, by the meditation of one. Heere giveth hee an example, saying: as all things came from one, to wit, a confused Globe, or masse, by meditation, that is the cogitation and creation of one, that is the omnipotent God: So all things have sprung, that is, come out from this one thing that is, one confused lumpe, by Adaptation, that is by the sole commandement of God, and miracle. So our Stone is borne, and come out of one confused mass, containing in it the foure Elements, which is created of God, and by his sole miracle our stone is borne.

CHAPTER IV

THAT THE STONE HATH FATHER AND MOTHER, TO WIT, THE
SUNNE AND MOONE

And as wee see, that one living creature begetteth more living creatures like unto it selfe: so artificially golde engendereth golde, by vertue of multiplication of the foresaid stone. It followeth therefore, the Sunne is his father, that is, Philosophers Gold. And as in everie naturall generation, there must be a fit and convenient receptacle, with a certaine consonancie of similitude to the father: so likewise in this artificiall generation, it is requisite that the Sunne have a fitte and consonaunt receptacle for his seede and tincture: and this is Philosophers silver. And therefore it followes, the Moone is his mother.

CHAPTER V

THAT THE CONIUNCTION OF THE PARTS OF THE STONE IS
CALLED CONCEPTION

The which two, when they have mutuallie entertained each other in the coniunction of the Stone, the Stone conceiveth in the bellie of the winde: and this is it which afterwarde he sayeth: The winde carried it in his bellie. It is plaine, that the winde is the ayre, and the ayre is the life, and the life is the Soule. And I have already spoken of the soule, that it quickneth the whole stone. And so it behoveth, that the wind should carry and recarry the whole stone, and bring forth the masterie: and then it followeth, that it must receive nourishment of his nurse, that is the earth: and therefore the Philosopher saith, The earth is his Nurse: because that as the infant without receiving food from his nurse, shuld never come to yeres: so likewise our stone without the firmentation of his earth, should never be brought to effect: which said firmament, is called nourishment. For so it i begotten of one Father, with the coniunction of the Mother. Things, that is, sonnes like to the

Father, if they want long decoction, shalbe like to the Mother in whitenesse, and retaine the Fathers weight.

CHAPTER VI

THAT THE STONE IS PERFECT, IF THE SOULE BE FIXT IN THE BODIE

It followeth afterward: The father of all the Telesme of the whole worlde is here: that is, in the worke of the stone is a finall way. And note, that the Philosopher calleth the worke, the Father of all the Telesme: that is, of all secret, or of all treasure Of the whole worlde: that is, of every stone found in the world, is here. As if he should say, Behold I shew it thee. Afterward the Philosopher saith, Wilt thou that I teach thee to knowe when the vertue of the Stone is perfect and compleate? to wit, when it is converted into his earth: and therefore he saith, His power is entire, that is, compleate and perfect, if it be turned into earth: that is, if the Soule of the stone (whereof wee have made mention before: which Soule may be called the winde or ayre, wherein consisteth the whole life and vertue of the stone) be converted into the earth, to wit of the stone, and fixed: so that the whole substance of the Stone be so with his nurse, to wit earth, that the whole Stone be turned into ferment. As in making of bread, a little leaven nourisheth and fermenteth a great deale of Paste: so will the Philosopher that our stone bee so fermented, that it may bee ferment to the multiplication of the stone.

CHAPTER VII

OF THE MUNDIFICATION AND CLEANSING OF THE STONE

Consequently, hee teacheth how the Stone ought to bee multiplied: but first he setteth downe the mundification of the stone, and the separation of the parts: saying, Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the thinne from the thicke, and that gently and with great discretion. Gently, that is by little, and little, not violently, but wisely, to witte, in Philosophicall dounge. Thou shalt separate, that is, dissolve: for dissolution is the separation of partes. The earth from the fire, the

thinne from the thicke: that is, the lees and dreggs, from the fire, the ayre, the water, and the whole substance of the Stone, so that the Stone may remaine most pure without all filth.

CHAPTER VIII

THAT THE UNFIXED PART OF THE STONE SHOULD EXCEED THE FIXED, AND LIFT IT UP

The Stone thus prepared, is made fit for multiplication. And now hee setteth downe his multiplication and easie liquefaction, with a vertue to pierce as well into hard bodies, as soft, saying: It ascendeth from the earth into heaven, and again it descendeth into the earth. Here we must diligently

note, that although our stone bee divided in the first operation into foure partes, which are the foure Elements: notwithstanding, as wee have alreadie saide, there are two principall parts of it. One which ascendeth upward, and is called unfixed, and an other which remaineth below fixed, which is called earth, or firmament, which nourisheth and firmenteth the whole stone, as we have already said. But of the unfixed part we must have a great quantity, and give it to the stone (which is made most clean without all filth) so often by masterie that the whole stone be caried upward, sublimating & and subtiliating. And this is it which the Philosopher saith: It ascendeth from the earth into the heaven.

CHAPTER IX

HOW THE VOLATILE STONE MAY AGAINE BE FIXED

After all these things, this stone thus exalted, must be incerated with the Oyle that was extracted from it in the first operation, being called the water of the stone: and so often boyle it by sublimation, till by vertue of the firmentation of the earth exalted with it, the whole stone doo againe descend from heaven into the earth, and remaine fixed and flowing. And this is it which the Philosopher sayth: It

descendeth agayne into the earth, and so receyveth the vertue of the superiours by sublimation, and of the inferiours, by descension: that is, that which is corporall, is made spirituall by sublimation, and that which is spirituall, is made corporall by descension.

CHAPTER X

OF THE FRUIT OF THE ART, AND EFFICACIE OF THE STONE

So shalt thou have the glorie of the whole worlde. That is, this stone thus compounded, that shalt possesse the glorie of this world. Therefore all obscuritie shall flie from thee: that is, all want and sicknesse, because the stone thus made, cureth everie disease. Here is the mightie power of all power. For there is no comparison of other powers of this world, to the power of the stone. For it shall overcome every subtil thing, and shall pearce through every solide thing. It shall overcome, that is, by overcoming, it shall convert quick Mercury, that is subtile, congealing it: and it shall pearce through other hard, solide, and compact bodies.

CHAPTER XI

THAT THIS WORKE IMITATETH THE CREATION OF THE WORLDE

He giveth us also an example of the composition of his Stone, saying, So was the world created. That is, like as the world was created, so is our stone composed. For in the beginning, the whole world and all that is therein, was a confused Masse or Chaos (as is above saide) but afterward by the workemanship of the soveraigne Creator, this masse was divided into the foure elements, wonderfully separated and rectified, through which

separation, divers things were created: so likewise may divers things bee made by ordering our worke, through the separation of the divers elements from divers bodies. Here shal be wonderfull adaptations, that is, If thou shalt separate the elements, there shall be admirable compositions, fitte for our worke in the composition of our Stone, by the elements rectified: Whereof, to wit, of which

wonderfull things fit for this: the meanes, to wit, to proceede by, is here.

CHAPTER XII

AN ENIGMATICALL INSINUATION WHAT THE MATTER OF THE STONE SHOULDE BE

Therefore I am called Hermes Trismegistus. Now that he hath declared the composition of the Stone, he teacheth us after a secret maner, whereof the Stone is made: first naming himselfe, to the ende that his schollers (who should hereafter attaine to this science) might have his name in continuall remembrance: and then hee toucheth the matter saying: Having three parts of the Philosophie of the whole world: because that whatsoever is in the worlde, having matter and forme, is compounded of the foure Elements: hence is it, that there are so infinite parts of the world, all which he divideth into three principall partes, Minerall, Vegetable, and Animall: of which jointly, or severally, hee had the true knowledge in the worke of the Sunne: for which cause he saith, Having three parts of the Philosophie of the whole world, which parts are contained in one Stone, to wit, Philosophers Mercurie.

CHAPTER XIII

WHY THE STONE IS SAID TO BE PERFECT

For this cause is the Stone saide to be perfect, because it hath in it the nature of Minerals, Vegetables, and Animals: for the stone is three, and one having foure natures, to wit, the foure elements, & three colours, black, white and red. It is also called a graine of corne, which if it die not, remaineth without fruit: but if it doo die (as is above said) when it is ioyned in coniunction, it bringeth forth much fruite, the aforementioned operations being accomplished. Thus curteous reader, if thou know the operation of the Stone, I have told thee the truth: but if thou art ignorant thereof, I have said nothing. That which I have spoken of the operation of the Sunne is finished: that is, that which hath beene spoken of the operation of the stone, of the three colours,

and foure natures, existing and being in one onely thing, namely in the Philosophers Mercurie, is fulfilled.

HERE ENDETH THE COMMENTARIE OF HORTULANUS, UPPON
THE SMARAGDINE TABLE OF
HERMES, THE FATHER OF PHILOSOPHERS