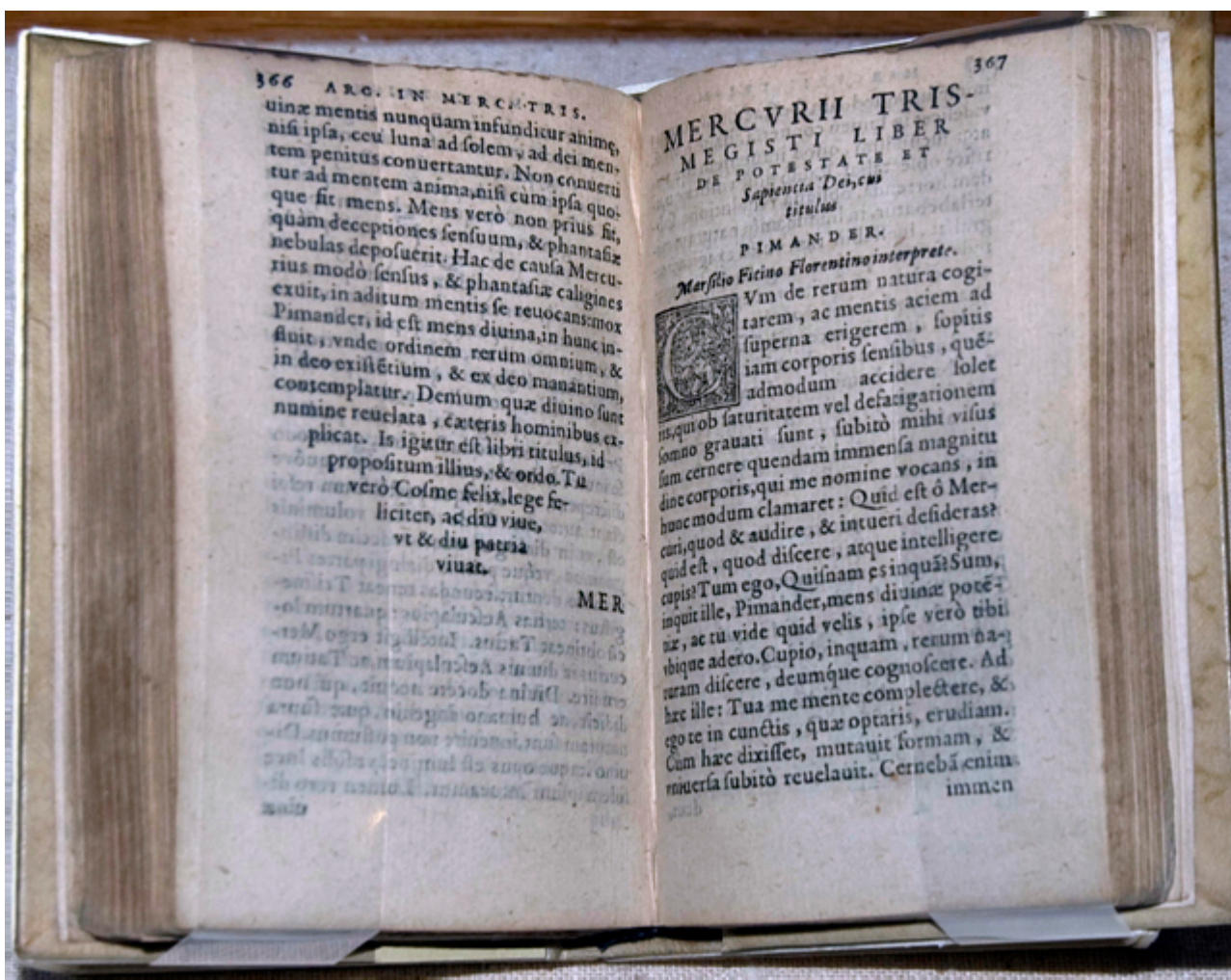


## The Hebdomary



### The Hebdomary

The term Hebdomary in the context of the Hebdomian Way refers to the individual who is undertaking an esoteric journey or quest (ἄνοδος) for Lapis Philosophicus by means of following the path that is the Hebdomian Way. The Way consists of seven stages which ancient hermetic tradition symbolized by the seven classical planets beginning with Lune, the Moon, and ending with Saturni, Saturn:

Saturni	Iovis	Martis	Solis	Veneris	Mercurii	Lune
♄	♃	♂	♌	♋	♁	☾

The illustration above is from a copy of the Latin text known as the Picatrix and which Latin texts date from c.1300 - c.1459 CE, with a manuscript in the British Library known as Sloane MS 3679 providing a useful summary of the text, a table of contents, and a listing of the seven planets.

The Latin Picatrix derives from a Spanish translation of an earlier Arabic text known as Ghayat al-hakim (c.1050 CE) where the seven planets are symbolized thus:

زحل	المشتري	المريخ	الشمس	الزهرة	عطارد	القمر
♄	♃	♂	♌	♋	♁	☾

The seven stages were symbolized in various ways in later texts, such as in the book *Azoth Sive Aureliae Occultae Philosophorum* published in 1613 CE which included the following illustration using planetary symbols still in use:





The above illustration also includes (in the lower triangle) the sigils of the three fundamental alchemical substances, Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury, whose combinations provide Azoth, the living water of life, illustrated in colour in the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, {1} an 18th century manuscript containing an English translation of *De Alchimia Opuscula Complura Veterum Philosophorum* published in 1550 CE. {2}



### The Hermetic Quest And Pathei-Mathos

The hermetic quest was described in terms of a journey, the progression, from the first, lower, sphere to the seventh, higher, sphere in the Ποιμάνδρης (Poemander/Pymander/Poemandres) tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, written in Hellenistic Greek, and which dates from between c. 100 and 230 CE.

καὶ οὕτως ὁρμαῖ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῆι πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικὴν, καὶ τῆι δευτέρῃ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆι τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῆι τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῆι πέμπτῃ τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῆι ἕκτῃ τὰς ἀφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλοῦτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῆι ἑβδόμῃ ζώνῃ τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.

"Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait."  
{3}

In the Hebdomian Way the seven spheres are as anciently named and in the sequence Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, with each sphere associated with a *pathei-mathos*, πάθει μάθος, where by *pathei-mathos* in the context of the Hebdomian Way is meant a personal learning from or a personal discovery due to a particular and practical experience.

What is learned is germane to the individual, but the fundamental aim of each learning experience, each task, is to develop the faculties, both physical and perceiverational, of the individual with the perceiverational faculties including insight, rational understanding, and empathy. Thus, the task, the learning experience, of the stage associated with the sphere of the Sun involves the perceiveration of one's own physis (φύσις) - our character, persona, psyche, being, nature - and the perceiveration of the physis of Nature and of the κόσμος (cosmic order) beyond, and thus of the connexion between one's own physis to (α) Nature, to the living beings, (emanations) of Nature on our planet including other human beings, and to (ω) the Kosmos beyond, and which Kosmos includes (i) other star-systems in our Galaxy and the planets around some of those stars and the possible living beings (life-forms) on some of those planets, and (ii) the billions of other Galaxies with their star-systems and planets and possible life-forms.

This personal learning by means of a graded journey of seven stages each of which stages involve a suggested practical task is all that is involved in the Hebdomian Way. There is thus no initiation, ritualized or otherwise; no ceremonies or rituals Occult or otherwise, and no named Grades such as the one which some Occult praxises term 'Adept'.

The quest, or progression along the Way, is simply the natural change, the evolution, which can occur in the physis of the individual by means of undertaking the suggested tasks in the suggested order.

### **Philosophical And Hermetic Foundations Of The Hebdomian Way**

The Hebdomian Way is based on two philosophical principles. The first, deriving from hermeticism and alchemy, is that there is an inner - an esoteric, *batin* {4} - nature to Being and to we human beings which is not perceptible to our physical senses and which cannot be discovered by the experimental method of science.

The second principle, also hermetic and alchemical, is that this inner nature can be apprehended, or represented, by a particular symbolism or by various symbolisms and also by the relationships between symbols, because of the Aristotelian principle that existence/reality is a reasoned order (κόσμος) capable of being rationally understood, with human beings in their natural state of physis (φύσις) - or *fitrah* - an *eikon* (εἰκὼν) of that ordered structure.

Hence Marsilii Ficini in his *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* writing in 1489 CE that:

"Quomodo per inferiora superioribus exposita deducantur superiora, et per mundanas materias mundana potissimum dona."

"How, when what is lower is touched by what is higher, the higher is cosmically presented therein and thus gifted because cosmically aligned." {5}

Which is a re-expression of the hermetic principle *quod est inferius est sicut quod est superius* (what is above is as what is below) from a Latin version (*Liber Hermetis de alchimia*) of a commentary on the Arabic alchemical text *al-Lawh al-Zumurrud*, The Emerald Table. {6}

As Ficini goes on to explain - *Est igitur non solum corporeus, sed vitae insuper et intelligentiae particeps. Quamobrem praeter corpus hoc mundi sensibus familiariter manifestum latet in eo spiritus corpus quoddam excedens caduci sensus capacitatem* - the world/kosmos (mundus) and by extension we ourselves as part of the kosmos are not only material (corporeal) but also imbued with the *vitae* (Life; Being; ψυχή) and the *intelligentiae* (apprehension) of that which is above; and that beyond obvious outer appearances there is a hidden, an inner, animating (*spiritus*) aspect which our 'lower', more mundane, senses are unaware of.

### **Hermeticism And Alchemy**

Alchemy, *al-χημεία* (from *χῶμεία*) is the flowing, the changing; and the secret, or esoteric, alchemy was often understood not as a transformation, a changing, of inert, lifeless, substances (metallic, chemical or otherwise) but as the transformation, the changing, of the alchemist: as a type of symbiosis between the alchemist and the substances (ὕλη) or *materia* being used such as the living ones associated with a particular septenary sphere or several or all of the spheres, and which living *materia* in Arabic texts included the *Ruhaniyyat* - celestial beings - associated with the



seven spheres and the human-made imago - "a semblance"- by which an individual can re-present them and which representations include sigils.

This alchemical symbiotic transformation was arguably first described in the Ποιμάνδρης tractate: as the quest, ἄνοδος, through the seven spheres and thus as the desire to both know/discover the physis of beings, νοῆσαι τὴν τοῦ τῶν φύσιν, and to acquire knowledge of, to know, the theos, γνῶναι τὸν θεόν, where the theos is later described as ἄρρενόθηλυσ, both male-and-female. In the same tractate it is written that there are seven celestial διοικητάς:

"Theos, the perceivation, male-and-female, being Life and phaos, whose logos brought forth another perceivation, an artisan, who - theos of Fire and pneuma - fashioned seven viziers to surround the perceptible cosmic order in spheres and whose administration is described as fate." Poemandres, v. 9, translated Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum*, op.cit

Thus, the Hebdomadary could be considered as a modern alchemist in the hermetic tradition.

The Seven Oxonians  
2021 CE

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{1} MS Ferguson 210, University of Glasgow Library.

{2} A copy of *De Alchimia Opuscula Complura Veterum Philosophorum* is available at <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=SQ9Non4XspUC> [Accessed November 2021]

{3} Poemandres, v. 25, translated by D. Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum, Eight Tractates*, 2017, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf>. It should be noted that Myatt reads (with several of the MSs) ὑπερηφανίαν not προφανίαν.

Myatt's commentary on the Poemandres tractate explains much about Hellenic hermeticism and which hermeticism arguably influenced the much later Arabic Ghayat al-hakim.

{4} The term batin and the following term fitrah are taken from Islamic philosophy.

{5} The translation is by Myatt, from his commentary on section 2 of tractate IV in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, op.cit.

{6} The title refers to a precious jewel - emerald - and recalls the meaning of Lapis in the alchemical term Lapis Philosophicus. Incidentally, Zumurrud is a female character in two of the stories from the Persian/Arabic tales known in the West as *The Thousand And One Nights*. She is from Samarkand with her full name being "emerald from Samarkand".

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Image credit:

Page from the 1577 (CE) book Iamblichvs De mysteriis Ægyptiorvm, Chaldæorum, Assyriorum: Proclvs in Platonico Alcibiadem de anima, atque dæmone, Idem De sacrificio & magia: Porphyrius De diuinis atq, dæmonib: Psellvs De dæmonibus: Mercvrii Trismegisti Pimander, Eiusdem Asclepius.

The book contains the Latin text of the Corpus Hermeticum by Marsilius Ficinus.

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