PENTAGRAM

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE ALCHEMICAL WEDDING:
A RETURN WITHOUT END.

Seven times a rope is lowered for humanity in order to haul it up from the dark tower.
The candidate has with his weight to withstand seven weights; seven ships, showing seven flames, sail across the lake and all of this occurs within seven days and nights.

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Bronze sculpture by Otto Schouen.
If there is one thing the alchemical wedding makes very clear, it is that it tries to lead the human being to the insight that he is more than a physical vehicle with a thinking faculty and a corresponding consciousness.

In his comments on The alchemical wedding, J van Rijckenborgh lifts the veil of the mystery language and describes the great value of this work for all who are seeking for truth and enlightenment. He also points out that the Brotherhood of the Rosycross considers Christian Rosycross not only to be the head of the order, but above all as the symbol of the human being on his way to the spirit-soul.

By the very mysterious nature of the story, and its many layers, the hidden aspects of the soul are touched. They stimulate the soul to a quest and remind it of a possible development that may release numerous latent powers in the microcosm.

The path of Christian Rosycross can be walked by all of his followers. After a preparation of the personality, it leads first of all to the transmutation of the soul. This in itself is already a miracle of grace. Next, the soul is prepared for its wedding with the spirit in the 'tower of Olympus'. A microcosm returns into the original life! In this sense, the present issue describes aspects of a spiritual path.

The different contributions have been written by pupils of the modern Rosycross, all of them approaching the great task of life from this point of departure.

Spiritual growth is often considered to have seven aspects. In Genesis, the creation is described as a process of seven days, and the Apocalypse is accomplished in seven symbolic images. And somewhere else we read that the life cycles of worlds and humanity revolve in seven cosmic periods in a process of rising, shining and fading. The Alchemical Wedding contains a large number of examples of a sevenfold development. Seven times a rope is lowered for humanity in order to haul it up from the dark tower; the candidate has with his weight to withstand seven weights; seven ships, showing seven flames, sail across the lake and all of this occurs within seven days and nights.

This is why J van Rijckenborgh writes: 'First of all, it is necessary to fathom the perfect number, the number seven... So note: what first of all matters is to be taken up into the natural processes of creation and development of the Gnosis. Only then you can successfully be linked with the great glory of the Seven-Spirit, the perfect number. Hence, seven lessons have to be learned, seven courses have to be lived through, seven virtues have to be known, seven properties have to be acquired.'

Primarily, the seven days of Christian Rosycross indicate a development through the seven layers of the microcosm, leading to the resurrection of the new human being.

It is an exciting journey of discovery into the, as yet, unknown rooms of the royal castle the microcosm is, from the cellars to the highest turret rooms.

For all human beings, this journey can turn into a return, so which there is no end.
It began long ago, in my youth. I enjoyed autumn most, because that’s when life bows toward the earth, and I recognised the feeling of dying. The grass grew between the cobblestones of our street and I became aware that this life and culture, everything that man creates, cannot hold out. Nature breaks even the hardest stone!

Why build anything up, then? Why first blossom, as everything perishes again?

In the nearby wood, there was a place called the seven fountains. That’s where I liked to be, even at night. And what about the star I saw in the night sky? Was it a message from a distant land? I often gazed up at it; it was a friend, just as the sunset.

I sang of this friend, although I didn’t know who he was. This feeling was like a dream for me, an undefined longing that I didn’t understand. This life was alien to me. But I wanted nothing else but ‘the unknown friend’. I would rather die than not have him as a friend.

Once I woke up in the middle of the night. I saw an open door. This image touched me deeply: was it a call to depart? But where to? Unrest, restlessness drove me on. I thought deeply about God and the world. This life surely could not be everything!

I carried a burden of indefinite yearning within me. Strange, during a certain period I always looked at my watch at the same time. Twelve o’clock, what did this mean? And what was this opening of a cave that I saw before my inner eye? A recollection? If so, of what?

I once began to search for a white rose, because I had the feeling that it had to mean something special to me. I tramped from one shop to another. But in those days, a white rose wasn’t so easy to find.

Thus, the ‘other aspect’ wove a thread through my life, though I understood nothing of it. It was a golden thread. I perceived it. It was as if it accompanied me, lived next to me, as if behind glass. What did I have to do with it? What did it have to do with me?

I kept weaving at my net of fate, but my threads proved not to be golden. I got increasingly entangled. I felt lost like a piece of driftwood on the infinite ocean. But then the indefinite longing returned and tore the suffocating net. I was led to a place in which light and power are anchored in time and space. Such places exist! I perceived an echo, a resonance. This profound inner feeling told me that I was in the right place and should stay there. It was not yet a goal or return to a fatherland, but I stood on a bridge, so to speak, which led to the absolute truth.

A new phase of life was beginning. But what I actually had to do, which path I was to follow, was not yet clear to me. At first, I was worried whether the ‘other aspect’ really did exist and was not just a figment of my imagination. I had often thought this in my despair. But now all of a sudden the fact was that it was the greatest thing for me, or rather the goal of all creation.

Where was I then in my insignificance and lack of faith? I was utterly ashamed – and I recognised the ‘other aspect’ as a friend. You were the friend. Why didn’t I recognise you before?

Hence I stumbled onward on the only path I saw before me, and which I had to walk, for the world had not yet become a desert for me. Although I tried to go ‘the way’, whatever that might mean, but the only thing that was left after this effort, struggle and yearning was the feeling of being ‘unfulfilled’ and of nevertheless finding you somewhere one day. Only this undefined longing remained. Everything else paled into insignificance, and became hollow and empty.

That was what ultimately led me to the nadir. Nobody on earth could be lonelier and more lost than I. I thought. All desires and all goals lost their significance, all hope slipped away. Every time I lived through one of those successive nadirs, something within me broke, something for which I know no other name than the ‘I’.

Ego-centricity, willfulness, wrong ideas, dreams of what was important and would be appreciated, the wish to be considered a nice person, jealousy and pettiness con-
How the wedding garment is woven

"After this I prepared myself to set out on my way, put on my white linen garment, girded my loins with a blood-red sash and draped it crosswise over my shoulders." Thus attired, Christian Rosycross sets out to take part in the royal wedding, after having received an invitation from a 'winged, magnificent female figure'.

Throughout the entire tale of The Alchemical Wedding lies a subtly woven network of symbols, which shows all the stages of the process leading to the resurrection of the divine human being, down to the smallest detail. The different ceremonies in which people put on other clothes, the garments and their colours are not an invention of Johann Valentin Andreae and his circle of friends. Since earliest times, clothing has, amongst other things, symbolised the subtle body of the human being which changes colour as a result of one's state of life. In gnostic texts, such as the Manichaean Hymn of the Pearl, the prince takes off his royal garments when he leaves the kingdom of his father to bring the pearl back from Egypt. In Greek mythology, Hercules, having accomplished the twelve labours, at the end of his life received the shirt of Nessus which burned his (old) skin. Similarly, the tradition of purple mantles for sovereigns and for priestly garments leads back to the knowledge of the mysteries, which has, however, been lost.

The garments brother Rosycross and the other persons wear during the seven days are white, red, gold, black and yellow. These colours have not been chosen arbitrarily nor are they 'new'. While the blue garment of the Maiden, during the first and second days, refers to a plane of life, that of the soul, the other colours are related to a process of transformation. It is not surprising that these colours stem from classical alchemy.

They refer to changes, beginning in the subtle body and ultimately expressing themselves in the new etheric-physical vehicle, the vehicle of the original human being, the ultimate goal of true alchemy, about which we can read in The Alchemical Wedding.

At the beginning of the story, Christian Rosycross wears a white linen garment with a blood-red sash. White is the colour of purity, and red that of the...
Once this work has been realised in the first birth, the candidate continues in the second phase. Now the candidate’s attention is focused on bidding farewell to the old temple and the old field of life, and to the construction of the new temple, or the original temple of the human race.

Blood. His clothing shows that he has already well prepared himself before receiving the invitation to the wedding. For only in this way can we enter the atmosphere of the soul on the second day, after which he enters the castle through the three gates. He is given a new pair of shoes in order not to soil the floor, which is made entirely of marble. He is weighed in the same clothes at the beginning of the third day.

Since ancient times it has been known that the soul is expressed in the blood, yes, that the blood is ‘the soul’! The blood is a subtle fluid, in which the desires, instincts and feelings of the human being who is bound to nature are expressed: anger makes the blood boil; strong desires and fear result in a turbulent blood circulation and shame makes us blush. But that is not necessarily all the blood can also carry the highest spiritual values.

The state of the blood of Christian Rosycross is not yet totally pure. As he himself says: ‘I also discovered that my body, my seemingly decent behaviour and my neighbourly love had not been properly cleansed and purified’. Even so, he wore white linen clothes with a red others, which may be seen as fully harmonious co-operation with the seven radia-
tions emanating from the Seven-Spirit.

Brother Rosycross and his companions, who had withstood the seven weights, received a red velvet robe and a green bay wreath. Now their clothing matched that of the Maiden, who had presided over the ceremony in the morning. They are now welcome in the atmosphere represented by the Maiden. It is the field of the soul, the radiation or vibration of which surpasses that of earthly nature. A divine firepower, referred to by the colour red, is active in this field. The first victory has been won and this is crowned and affirmed by the bay wreath. They eat the midday meal at a table covered with red velvet and everyone receives a special distinction: ‘Before we had seated ourselves the two pages came in, presenting everyone on behalf of the bridgroom with the Golden Fleece, embazoned with a white lion, requesting us to wear it at the table, and as became us to observe the reputation of the Order, which His Majesty had now vouchsafed us and in which He would soon confirm us with suitable ceremonies’.

When they later asked the Maiden the name of the Order, she responded that ‘the moment had not yet come to reveal it as the prisoners had not yet been sentenced’.

The golden wedding garment of the fourth day

On the morning of the fourth day, Christian Rosycross and ‘the group of devoted alchemists’ washed themselves in the fountain in the garden and drank with their golden cups from the living water that welled up from it. ‘Hermes is the primordial fount’ was inscribed on a commemorative plaque that ‘had been taken from the ancient monuments’. Once again, they received new garments ‘made entirely of gold thread and embroidered with flowers’. In addition, they receive another golden fleece, encrusted with precious stones, and a medallion ‘on which were figured the sun and the moon in opposition’.

The new radiaisons have transformed the vital body to such an extent that the divine building stones are now solidly anchored. It is ‘the vehicle that is in the middle’, which is located between the desire vehicle and the physical body. The living new soul radiates in this body in the light of the new morning.

The beautiful flowers on the garments refer to the system of chakras and plexicircles, the power centres in the ethereal body that are now charged with new energies. The brilliance of the golden wedding garment will accompany the newborn soul during all the following days.

The meeting with their Royal Majesties

On the fourth day, now that the golden wedding garment has been demon-
strably woven, brother Rosycross meets their Royal Majesties in a vaulted upper room. He is very impressed at the sight of them. ‘For besides that the room glittered with gold and precious stones, the Queen’s robes were moreover so radiant that I was not able to look upon her. And whereas I before esteemed everything as beautiful, here all things were as far above the rest as the stars in the heavens’. The companions are presented to the King. This encounter and the overwhelming impression made by the royal robes are the consequences of new insight due to the activity of the spirit. For at this mo-
ment, the union of spirit, soul and body is shown to be a glorious plan, which is the very possibility to be realised during the following day.

Everything is ready, but brother Rosycross is still more perplexed than happy. He can barely endure the sight and he is rendered speechless. Another spectacle follows. Now they see three kings and three queens, all six dressed differently. Among them is also the young bridal couple. Above their heads, a precious crown is hanging. Here the principal character remarks: 'Yet they were not at this time so fair as I had earlier imagined; so be it.' Christian Rosycross becomes a servant of the royal bridal couple.

The story continues at another level and the true nature of *The Alchemical Wedding* now comes to light. Although brother Rosycross and his companions are essential, it turns out not to be about them. It is their Royal Majesties who are transformed during the alchemical process.

After a meal, the candidates meet the royal couple again when they are invited to a play. The bridegroom is ‘dressed in plain black satin after the Italian fashion’ and the bride is also dressed in black. The reference to the Italian fashion is interesting. Did Johann Valentine Andreae perhaps mean to say that the hermetic writings and Greco-Arabian alchemy became known in Europe via Italy?

Only during the communal meal, the first meal the candidates take at the royal table, do the royal persons wear ‘snow-white, radiant’ garments for the last time. Then everything becomes black: the garments of their Royal Majesties, the hall, the man with the axe, as well as the garments of the candidates. The deserted atmosphere that is noticeable during the meal completely dominates the brothers. And when the Kings and Queens are beheaded before their very eyes, the Maiden admonishes them: ‘The lives of those persons are now in your hands. If you follow me, their death will make many alive.’

Thus, here black is the colour of death, of ruin. At the end of the fourth day, everything that is old dies, and it will depend on the brothers’ perfect readiness to serve whether everything will turn out well.

**The Garments of the Fifth and Sixth Days**

The Maiden as well as Christian Rosycross and his companions spend the fifth and sixth days dressed in black and they cooperate actively in the preparation of the alchemical wedding. Thus, their mode of life proves to be wholly focused on the great work. During the two days in the Tower of Olympus, their garments do not change, because they are now only ‘devoted servants’. They grind herbs and gems and prepare juices and essences for the revivification of the beheaded bodies of the royal bridal couple. The transformation occurs by means of what they accomplish with the aid of the Maiden and the ‘ancient one’. They extract a snow-white egg from a golden globe. A bloody bird breaks free from the egg and changes from black to white, then into multicoloured, and finally changes to blue. They let the ruby-red blood of the bird drip on the lifeless bodies of the bridal couple which, having the appearance of young children, now grow into a man and a woman of adult size. They had ‘golden-yellow, curly hair’. But, as it is written: ‘...there was not yet any natural warmth or sensibility in them; they were still dead figures, albeit of a lively and natural colour.’

After the bodies have been prepared in this way, several preparations are carried out to vivify them. The Maiden brings new garments and lays them down: ‘two precious white garments, the like of which I had never seen in the castle, neither can I describe them, for I thought naught else than that they were made of pure crystal’.

This description reminds us of the words of the alchemist Bernard Trevisan (1426-1498) when he describes the ‘little work’: ‘I say to you, and God is my witness, that this mercury, once sublimated, seems to be covered with a film of pure white like the snow of the high mountains, with a gentle and crystalline brilliancy; upon the opening of the vessel there rose up a fragrance, so sweet, like nothing else in the world.’

Trevisan speaks about the accomplishment of the so-called ‘little work’ in alchemy, in which form, body and soul are brought back to their original purity. The ‘little work’ is also called the spiritualization of the body. After this follows the ‘great work’ itself, which consists of the
`embodiment of the spirit'; or as it is said in Christian terminology, 'the Word became flesh.'

In this way, the 'little work' is accomplished. The delicate, still inanimate bodies of the bridal couple and their crystal-clear soul garments are ready. Now brother Rosycross consciously experiences, as the only one of the four brothers present on the eighth floor of the tower, how new life is blown into the inanimate bodies. Thereupon the royal couple awakens. Spirit, soul and body are now fully united. When the alchemical process has been accomplished, the royal couple, in the new pure crystal garments that cannot be described with words, leave the Tower of Olympus to sail back to the castle.

THE YELLOW HABITS OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN STONE

The seventh day dawns and the 'devoted servants' take off their black garments. They receive 'completely yellow habits' to wear with the Golden Fleece. The Maiden finally gives them the name of their Order: they are Knights of the Golden Stone. Later, during a celebratory banquet after their return to the castle, they receive the rules of the Order and are made Knights. Yellow garments appear in the story on the last day. It seems obvious to think again of the gold of the Spirit. But in the symbolism of J V Andreae, which is exact down to all details, yellow also has a special meaning. In classical alchemy, the three principal colours go from black (nigredo, or decay) via white (albedo, or fading) to red (rubedo, the 'highest blaze').

Thus Burckhardt (1928-1984) says of this: 'After the spiritualization of the body, which equates in some way to a fading of the initial black or decay, comes, at the end, the incarnation of the Spirit with its royal crimson colour.'

J V Andreae did not emphasize the royal crimson, but he says that 'I saw... a bright stream of fire shooting down the tube and passing into the lifeless body...'.

It is apparent from these events that the 'embodiment of the Spirit' takes place on the eighth floor, which corresponds to the description by the medieval alchemist Aristeidus: 'Boil the (body) in our white water, that is to say in mercury, until it is dissolved in the black; then by decoction it will lose its blackness and at the end the dissolved body will ascend with the soul, and they will embrace each other in such a manner that they can no longer be separated. Then, however, will the spirit truly be united with the body so that together they become immutable. That is the dissolving of the body and strengthening of the spirit that are one and the same work.'

We have followed the colour changes of the garments during the seven days of The Alchemical Wedding. They turn from white to red, then to black and finally to yellow. As we have seen, in the first four days these colours are used in a different context than in classical alchemy. The typical colour symbolism from alchemy has been preserved on the fifth and sixth days during the alchemical transformation of the bird.

During this transformation another colour also plays a role: shortly before the bird is sacrificed, it is blue. And just like blue, the colour yellow also often appears in the classical alchemical texts as an extra colour. According to Aristeidus: 'just as heat works on what is moist, causes black or brings forth the primary or first colour, in the same way, more and more heat that works on what is dry, and brings forth white, which is the second colour, through continual decoction, and because it then works on what is pure and perfectly dry, it brings forth this citrinitas and red, hence almost four colours.'

The candidates have progressed to the yellow-gold coloration (citrinitas) in the alchemical process. Now, as knights of the Golden Stone, they will be active in the service of the order. It is an important task and the result of a laborious development. Therefore, all persons present in the castle are filled with joy. Only to Brother Rosycross, the seventh day looks very different. After the dubbing, he is the only one who leaves his Golden Fleece and his hat behind in a small chapel 'for an eternal memorial.' Before the story unexpectedly breaks off, we read that 'this was the last time I would see him (the King) in this shape...', and that he was then, with 'both the old men, the Lord of the Tower and Atlas, conducted into a glorious bedroom, in which they lay down.'

What happens after that cannot be told with words, because it does not belong to the seven days of our temporal-spatial world.
On the morning of the third day, Christian Rosycross passes the test of the seven weights. He even holds his own, when three men are hanging onto the opposite side. With that, he proves that he is ready for deeper insight. Subsequently, he explores the castle that evening with an entirely new consciousness.

What he sees – the order of the divine creation – far exceeds the familiar world of the ordinary human being. For this reason, it can only be described in symbolic language. The symbolism of The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross contains also alchemical, cosmological, mythological, and other symbols. The Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdjaev writes in his book The philosophy of the free spirit:

"The word symbol means "intermediary," "sign", but also "link". A symbol and symbolising are based on the existence of two worlds, two states of being. A symbol is a bridge between two worlds."

His words clarify that the metaphorical language of The Alchemical Wedding is not pure embellishment. These metaphors enable the reader to forge a link with the inner vision brother Rosycross experiences on the third day. He too, as seeker, receives answers to the questions: "Who is the human being and what is the meaning of his life?" and "What is human nature and what are inner laws?"

About this time the curious fountains, mines and various art studios were also shown to us, of which there was none but surpassed all our arts, even if all these were put together. All these rooms were built in a semicircle, so that the precious clock in the centre of a magnificent turret was constantly before us and one could regulate oneself according to the courses of the planets, gloriously visible upon it. Now I could easily see in what our artists fail, although it is not my duty to inform them."

Fountains, mines, and studios filled with works of art

The harmony and splendour of the fountains, mines, and art studios fascinate Christian Rosycross. He immediately notices the large difference with earthly 'art', which generally refers to the earthly creative process. At the same time, he recognises the relationships with 'higher' and 'lower' astronomy, and with astrology, astroosophy, and alchemy.

We may consider the mine to be a symbol of the 'alchemical womb', the oven, in which the invisible fire of the Spirit is burning. The fountains give an impression of the liveliness of the invisible substance that is used for the manifestation of the divine plan.

The mines, fountains and art studios
are arranged in a semicircle. Why is this particular semicircular form used? Perhaps astronomy can help answer this question. The most important tool of the medieval astronomers was the astrolabe. This instrument was already known to the Greeks, and was further developed by Islamic scientists since the eighth century and later introduced into Europe by the Moors in Spain.

The astrolabe was used for representing the sky and its stars and planets as they could be seen at a certain time and at a certain place. In a mechanical way, it was possible to make certain constellations visible and solve astronomical problems without making complicated mathematical calculations. There are different types of astrolabes. The basis consists of a round metal disk, representing the celestial globe, and a rotating disk, the so-called ‘spin’, on which the projections of the zodiac and various fixed stars can be seen. Other disks could be added.

For our explanations, the partition of the main disk is important. By a horizontal line, an upper and a lower semicircle are formed. The upper semicircle represents the Firmament, the lower one stands for the celestial globe ‘under the earth’, which the observer cannot see from his or her standpoint. The representation of the spheres by means of semicircles was, at that time, very common and certainly known to the circle of friends, in which The Alchemical Wedding was written.

The cosmological illustrations of the medieval alchemists often show a semicircular partition. Nowadays, however, they are often interpreted differently. A good example is a seventeenth-century etching by Matthias Merian, in which the great work of the alchemists is represented. This also shows the planetary spheres: the horizontal line separates the divine sphere from the wheel of nature, the earthly world.

The tower and the clockwork

In the centre of the semicircle, a tower with a wonderful clockwork is standing. Fascinated, Christian Rosycross observes it. This tower is a symbol of the twofold energy flow, with which the salvation of the world and humanity is carried out.

The light of the descending power stream awakens the desire to return to his original fatherland in the human being. The ascending stream shows the stages of the return. In The Alchemical Wedding, these stages are symbolised by the eight floors of the tower of Olympus because there the transfiguration of the awakened soul in the original, divine human being takes place.

The clockwork of the tower in the semicircle points to the exact movements of the planets and shows the constant rhythm, in which the divine powers are transformed and used. Brother Rosycross immediately observes these things the first time he sees them, because the other semicircle is missing here. Without the earthly veils, he is able to observe the heavenly harmonies directly.

On the evening of the third day, Christian Rosycross is able to observe the essence of the divine creation for the first time, as has been described above. It becomes clear to him that no ‘artist’, active on the earthly plane, is able to achieve the vivid, harmonious creation of God. At this moment, the actual work, the transfiguration, ahead and will be accomplished between the fourth and the seventh day. His perceiving the laws of the cosmos and the divine plan of salvation for humanity, however, fills him with great astonishment and profound joy on the evening of the third day.

He receives the strength and develops the confidence to look optimistically forward to the events of the coming days.

For notes on this article, see page 33
The reader of the book "The Alchemical Wedding" comes across many strange and mysterious figures. It is often hard to decipher their hidden meaning. At times, the reader is at a loss with the wide range of bizarre scenarios. Perhaps, this also applies to the Moor whom Christian Rosycross encounters, three times on his path of initiation. The striking transformation the Moor undergoes in the meantime is amazing. He changes from a violent Moor king into the black executioner, whose head finally plays a role as a dynamic force in the alchemical process. What does this black figure tell us and what does it symbolise?

The Moor — a typical figure of that time — appears for the first time on the fourth day of The Alchemical Wedding, namely in the 'Play in the House of the Sun'. This 'comedy' is performed for brother Rosycross and his companions to make them aware of something. This play is about a princess (the soul) who was betrothed to a prince (the Spirit). However, she falls into the hands of a violent Moorish king. Again and again, she succumbs to the temptations of the Moor, although she already knows her bridegroom and should actually know better. The struggle for the soul is staged dramatically: on the one hand the Moor, on the other the bridegroom. In the middle is the soul, which is torn between them, between darkness and light. Despite her weakness and the fact that she surrenders to the Moor, she is eventually saved. At the end, the decisive battle is fought by the bridegroom and the Moor. The play ends happily. The Moor is defeated and the people cheer: 'Long live the bridegroom, long live the bride!'

The three scenes: the House of the Sun, the Upper Room and the Tower

The House of the Sun symbolises the heart sanctuary of a human being. It is the abode of the soul and at the same time, it is the great stage on which the struggle for the human being is fought, the struggle to penetrate to the right understanding of nature and the Supernature, the struggle between dark feelings and desires and the light.

The Moor appears for the second time in The Alchemical Wedding when the play in the House of the Sun is over. Now the Moor appears in the Upper Room of the castle as a black executioner. His unavoidable task is to behead the three royal couples sitting on their thrones there. In turn, he himself is beheaded when leaving the hall.

It is hard to believe and understand this story, if one does not realise that it refers to aspects of the consciousness. The three royal couples refer to the aspects of the old consciousness, which are purified by experience, ready for the process of transmutation. They have to die, just like the Moor, the helping executioner, in order to be reborn as spiritual aspects.

Christian Rosycross encounters the Moor for the third time on the second floor of the Tower of Olympus, where mysterious alchemical processes are taking place. Here, the Moor's chopped-off head is liquefied in a cauldron and serves as the solvent for the alchemical transmormation of the beheaded royal couples. This refers to the transmutation of the ether body, the matrix for the new body.

What do the three appearances of the Moor signify to modern people? They only reveal their secrets when a human being takes his first steps on the path to the alchemical wedding. In a threefold process, he is then confronted with the power of the Moor. He is shown the path to self-realisation in a symbolic way.
My source:

Far away from all paths,
far away from the paths
that are leading me to life and death,
I am lying down like buried in a dark grave.
Lying there, I am waiting for you.
My feet are resting
and the tears stop flowing from my eyes.
I come to you as if I went to bed. [1]

Recognise me from your lofty height,
don’t leave me alone in the desert.
I wish to be your angel
and sing in praise of you although I am weak.
The mark you left on me long ago,
at the moment I was delivered from my
mother’s womb, is burning in my heart.
When I behold your light,
I did not want the darkness
to cover my face forever.

I am dreaming of your worlds,
I am flying across your skies.
While I am flying, my life is darkened
and I am losing my way.
So many worlds are drifting past my eyes.
Their breath absorbs me,
and I am buried in the sea of stars above.
Below, the angels with their wings come
close to me, and drink all my strength.
Days and years are pouring out of me,
and I will be part of eternity.

The stream of sounds of Mozart and Bach
are ascending from the ground and reach
my ears.
I can hear their resounding breath.
I myself became sound.
The world is already responding in eternity.
New flowers are blooming at my feet,
and their fragrance takes me from my sleep.

From: Angels by Marc Chagall, 1935

In many ways, the universal theme
of the alchemical wedding is
expressed. "The Song of Solomon"
V; Marc Chagall.
Oil painting on
linen.
The Moor represents the wilfulness of human beings who do not have a conscious link with the spirit field. It is an aspect of the personality. With its energy, it drives the desires of the heart, the mental functions of the head and the bodily functions. As a result, it confuses and entangles the soul principle in different ways. Man is blinded, so that he cannot see the 'one thing necessary'. Man is deafened, so that he cannot hear the silent voice. He is paralysed, so that he cannot do what is necessary. With regard to the path, the own will can be considered to be the enemy. Only after a profound purification, this function can support the soul in its striving for the light as we will see later.

The Play on the Stage of the Heart

The candidate's soul on the path of initiation is, up to a point, like the princess in the play. She is born anew and is destined to marry her bridegroom, the Spirit. She is pure as snow, but for the time being she lacks the consciousness that results from experience. She is not yet a 'knowing soul'. She knows the yearning, but not yet the other personality aspects influencing her. This is why she repeatedly 'falls' for her wilfulness, the Moor. In a very painful process, she has to learn that she is imprisoned in a world of delusion. She has to recognize and live through all these processes and conflicts with the dark powers. Hence, it is her task to free herself from the power of the Moor. Everyone is tied to the nature of opposites by views, behaviour and habits which impede us and are even harmful. They can be traced back to desires, to the state of the heart. If the candidate consciously follows her yearning for the light, and thus dissolves his ties to this nature, he calls up the Moor, the great adversary. The liberation of the soul and the intended spiritual wedding imply the end of one's own will, something the latter will not allow without a struggle!

The Struggle with the Moor

By the longing of the soul for true life, the personality finds itself in the midst of the process of the endura. A purification, a change occurs in the orientation of its desires, and the human being immerses himself in it with joy. It will be perfectly clear to him: 'I must decrease.' This 'I' comprises thinking, feeling and eventually the whole old consciousness. The other one, the pure principle, the spirit-spark can grow. This is why the human being who lives the endura, is prepared to engage in the struggle with the Moor! In the 'Play in the House of the Sun', this struggle is staged in splendid and imaginative language.

If we transfer these images to the current life of those who want to walk the path of the soul life, we may say: this human being will learn to open himself very consciously to the influences of the primordial atom, the centre of his being. He will place himself under its guidance and thus learn how to reject and give up the influence of his wilfulness.

During the struggle on the stage, the princess – the soul – is again and again saved by the merciful powers 'from the land of the Moor'. These are experiences that give human beings a feeling of freedom. They experience a sublime and very pure vital feeling. Their whole essence then says, 'Yes, I will' to the path of liberation. A closer contact with the bridegroom, the Spirit, is generated. A betrothal between the yearning soul and the spirit takes place and the preparations for the wedding can begin. What is being prepared? Above all, it is the decisive and lasting reversal of human longing. If the Light overcomes the Moor on this battle-field in the heart, the candidate is ready to sacrifice his old state of consciousness. This allows the process to continue. This moment is tremendously important since now the situation gets captivating: the Moor, who has until now acted as wilfulness, voluntarily offers his services to the process of renewal and, armed with his axe, he enters the Upper Room.

The end of the fourth day of The Alchemical Wedding describes how all six aspects of the consciousness assemble in the Upper Room. Two poles representing human evil are constantly facing the two poles of what is good in him. Moreover, there is the young queen, the great yearning of the new soul, with next to her the permanent influence of the Seven-Spirit. But all of them are bound to the old life sphere. This is why they must die in the play. The seventh aspect is the executioner, the acting part, the will of the candidate.

This will has undergone a complete change. The insight that the natural state with its thinking, willing, feeling and acting actually leads nowhere, turns the Moor, who initially focused his destructive power against the newborn soul, into its servant. He is perhaps not yet the Divine will of the resurrected New Man who is still to come, but he paves the way...
for the total self-surrender. As before willfulness and instincts dominated, there is now willingness to voluntary sacrifice.

Without the human will, no progress is possible. This is true for paths focused on matter, but also for the path of new human genesis. There is a familiar saying: Where there’s will, there’s a way. But we can also state: The will leads to where it came from. Only when the longing has turned around, the will can become active in the Upper Room for its ‘last’ act of the will. On the path described in *The Alchemical Wedding*, one thing is certain: the black executioner in the Upper Room does not survive his ‘executioner’s work’, which in this respect is in fact a heroic deed. Outside the hall, behind the door, his head is separated from his body. He dies. Night is falling.

After all this has happened, Christian Rosycross sees in the night of the fifth day the seven ships with the seven flames sail across the sea to the Tower of Olympus. On board are the corpses of the six royal persons and the head of the Moor.

**The Magical Essence**

We now move on to the events on the second floor of the Tower of Olympus. The chopped-off head of the Moor and the remains of the other consciousness powers still have to fulfill a vital task in the formation of the new ether body. The Moor’s black head is boiled in a cauldron. As a result, a preparation is obtained which is used as a solvent for the corpses of the kings. This is another, seemingly sinister activity! We, however, understand it as a reference to the alchemical process of blackening (Nigredo)¹, which takes place on the etheric plane. The willpower acts as dynamic energy in the tenous body. Only because the old will is beheaded, i.e. is separated from its old natural vitality and its body, its fiery power can be used for the formation of the new etheric body. In this way, the development to transfiguration continues in the Tower of Olympus until the resurrection of the new man on the eighth floor. The purified power of the Moor can now be used. In this story, the will’s dynamics lend wings to the process of initiation. It enables the candidate to break loose from the old nature and to accomplish the transfiguration of spirit, soul and body.

¹ Nigredo is the black that occurs at the beginning of the distillation in the alchemical process when the substances evaporate. A black raven is often used to symbolise this process. The cloud means confusion and has to be overcome to allow the new to be born.

At the end of the fourth day, the six royal persons are beheaded. They are placed in coffins, and on the morning of the fifth day, they are in a ceremonial way brought to the graves that have been hewn in the meantime.

During the night, only Christian Rosycross witnesses an impressive spectacle: the coffins with the six royal corpses, and the head of the executioner, are brought aboard seven prepared ships. After the burial, the ships with also Brother Rosycross and his companions on board travel to the Tower of Olympus. The conclusion from this is that in the morning, empty coffins were lowered into the graves, and the burial is only a play or a farce. This is one of the key scenes for which this classical Rosicrucian manuscript was dismissed by many as simply a farce.

From this description, however, it is clear that there is more going on than an ordinary burial, because reality is turned upside down as it were by the events during the night. Not the outer events are real, but that which is unveiled inwardly in the night, when the soul being is active in its own realm. The reader’s attention is moved to the true inner events. The symbol of the empty coffin and the empty grave is often encountered. In ancient Egypt, according to esoteric researchers, the priests would lay the pupil in a sarcophagus. He was brought into a death-like sleep in order to forge a link with the invisible spheres. There he perceived what was beyond life in matter. He saw how the divine powers worked in nature and the human being. Once he had this insight and understanding, he awoke as a new human being, as someone who had beheld the secret of the eternal return.

The Greeks knew another form of this healing sleep in their Asclepius sanctuaries. Germanic tribes practised similar customs. According to the biblical stories, also Jesus was, after the crucifixion, laid in a cave in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea. The freemasons have a ritual in which the candidate must spend some time in a symbolic coffin. This is considered to be the end of the old life.
THE MYSTERIAL DEATH

In The Alchemical Wedding, the mystical death is a decisive moment. Seen alchemically, it is the 'solve et coagula', letting go of what is old and forging a link with what is new.

All kinds of aspects of the old consciousness die. The illusion that the I is the centre of the universe stands in the way of the process. The consciousness, determined by the sensory organs, cannot grasp the profound meaning behind the death of the self – that would be too much to expect. On the morning of the fifth day, the friends who are allowed to attend the alchemical wedding are still standing before the inner event that will take place in the Tower of Olympus. Until now, they only see the outside of things. This is why they believe that a real burial is taking place, when the empty coffins are lowered into the earth, and experience the attendant grief. But the fifth day is also a day of love. The soul human being, who is symbolised by Christian Rosycross, recognises the spiritual reality, the necessity, behind the alchemical process. He recognises it because he is realising the two properties of soul life. He is marked by a great longing to be one with Life, which is, after all, the essence of the royal couple.

Christian Rosycross is yearning to be linked with the spiritual life that is in everything and everyone: on the one hand linked with the suffering of humanity, and on the other hand taken up into the perfect peace of the activity of the divine streams of love that constantly accompany us. They can help us when we open our lives to them and accept their consequences. In this way, the new soul will be born!
work) that has to be accomplished in this phase of our alchemical tale. They are symbolic and veiled, because in this stage words are indeed insufficient. Therefore, we approach these events knowing that the full truth can only be known through personal life experience, acquired on the path of soul liberation.

Yet, Aristeus also speaks of the thread of Ariadne helping us to find the way in the labyrinth of symbols. This thread of Ariadne is hidden within the human being. It is the longing for a life that extends beyond the borders of time and space into the unknown world of eternal divinity.

Deeply rooted in the human system, it will one day surface, and whoever knows this longing and makes room for it within himself, will find the one exit and will unveil the secret.

The birth of the bird

A wonderful bird emerges from the white-golden egg. The animal is bloody and misshapen, and the Lady Alchimia demands it to be bound. Brother Rosycross and his companions are told to feed the bird. They give it three different kinds of food:

1. the blood of the beheaded royal couple, diluted with prepared water,
2. the blood of another royal person,
3. some other food, later on called ‘its food’.

The first food causes the bird to grow fast, but it behaves viciously, baring in all directions, and is black and wild. With the second kind of food, it loses all its black feathers and snow-white ones grow in their place. It also becomes more tame. When given the third kind of food, the feathers of the bird become magnificently coloured, as has never been seen before.

Now the bird has become tame and peaceful and can be released.

These descriptions closely follow some phases of classical alchemy. There a parallel process takes place, in matter (the outside world) and within ourselves (the inner world). This is based on Hermes’ words: ‘as above, so below, as within, so without’. The purpose of the alchemists was preparing the philosopher’s stone, which would be able to sublimate all base metals (outside world, laboratory work) and at the same time transfigure the mortal human being into an immortal, spiritual, human being (inner world, work at the level of the spirit and the soul).

Old images of the preparation of the philosopher’s stone often show a bird in a distilling flask in its different stages of transformation. Firstly, the blackening or putrefaction (nigredo, putrefactio), then the whitening or purification (albedo) and finally the reddening or ripening (rubedo). What does this language still have to say to the present-day human being?

The foods of the soul

The bird symbolises the newborn, immortal soul. It is born, now that the separate aspects of the human system have been fully neutralised. The divine soul does not find its destiny within itself, either. It is always the mediator. Ultimately, it will forge spirit and soul into a unity that cannot be separated.

Although the bird is the embodiment of the new soul, it cannot stay the way it was when it came out of the egg. It needs to develop towards that ultimate destiny. For the travellers on the path it is important that the newborn, still helpless and ‘wild’ bird is nourished with the right food.

This also applies to the soul. The details of the merging process are very complicated; this is fully reflected in the description of the events in the tower. It also applies to the human being in whom the original soul has awakened. He has to do all he can to care for this tender being in the right way.

The blood is the soul

For the perceptive reader, the language of *The Alchemical Wedding* contains many concrete hints about the background of this process. Particularly remarkable are the large quantities of blood in the descriptions of the bird. ‘The blood, that is the soul,’ as stated by the universal wisdom teachings. The bird is described as bloody and misshapen after its birth. This is clearly referring to the nature of the soul (bloody), which still requires further development and purification (misshapen). In addition, the new ensoulment is still closely linked – ‘bound’ we read in the text – to the personality and the physical system.

The friends feed the bird with blood: firstly with the blood of the beheaded persons, diluted with ‘prepared water’. We remember that these beheaded people were the three royal couples that represented the old consciousness. Their blood was collected in a goblet. Now, the essential energy of the old consciousness, mixed with ‘prepared water’, is served to the bird.

The alchemical water

Alchemy does not work with ordinary water, but with so-called ‘antimonial water’. Antimony is a chemical element between metals and non-metals. It can dissolve all other metals and separate gold (spirit) from silver (soul) and from all impurities. Contrary to the seven familiar metals, antimony, the eighth metal, is not found in the human body. Hence, it embodies a superhuman energy that can separate body, soul and spirit and raise them to a higher octave (the number 8). Artephius says about this antimonial water that it is ‘the medium of the soul. Without it, nothing can be done in our art... This is why it is a property of our water that it liquefies or dissolves gold and silver and reinforces their natural colour. For it turns their bodies from a physical state into a spiritual nature... Gold and silver are excited (raised) in our water. It destroys, falls over and transforms bodies and metallic forms, making them to be not bodies, but a fixed spirit.’

The ‘prepared water’ in our tale elevates the old consciousness forces in the blood and raises them to a higher vibration level. Here, we are no longer dealing with the lower aspects of the old consciousness, which after all disappeared long ago. We are dealing with the more subtle, higher aspects, which should now be cultivated by the soul, the ‘fixed spirit’ of these forces.

The alchemical bird drinks this mixture of blood and water. We already know the result: it grows, but becomes ‘black and wild’. The inner confrontation with the old consciousness forces that are refined to the utmost, is causing many problems. The colour black in the alchemical process signifies the stage of rotting or putrefaction. The dissolved alchemical substance is then subjected to a heat induced process of decay (fermentation). Everything that is without eternal value perishes and dissolves into its constituent elements. By the confrontation with the old consciousness forces, which possess an enhanced potential, the soul bird experiences his own putrefaction in the tower of Olympus. To assist the development of the bird, it is given another type of food from the second stage: perhaps the blood of another royal person, as Christian Rosycross suspects. Whom this refers to, remains an open question. This blood is certainly ‘different’, because it no longer carries the old consciousness
The sixth day, the actual transfigerent work takes place. Our leading figure and his friends work on the resurrection of the royal couple, the spirit-soul human being. The alchemical work moves from floor to floor and is ever more developed. In this way, the reader obtains an increasingly better impression of the mighty inner laboratory, in which himself is working on accomplishing his spiritual restoration. The alchemist harvests the fruits of his work on the sixth floor: The young king and queen have been resurrected. However, they are not yet united until the unifying principle of eternity descends into them. This is the spirit emanating from God. It vivifies the royal couple, the original human being, who has been created from the purified powers from below, through transfiguration, and from the power from above, the spirit. This makes us think of the great hermetic axioms: "as above, so below" that is represented by two triangles symbolizing the number six.

After the brothers have completed this work, Christian Rosicrucian sleeps a deep and long sleep during the sixth night.

forces. And the bird is starting to feel better too. Its essence is being purified and it becomes tame. It loses all black feathers and receives snow-white ones.

And thus it enters the second alchemical phase: becoming white (albedo). In classical alchemy, white develops through the dissolution of sol (gold, spirit) and Luna (silver, soul) in antimony. The solution is exposed, on moderate heat, to the process of blackening. What is purified then rises up as the 'spirit of white' (spiritus albus). The black is left behind as a 'cloud of earth' on the bottom of the basin.

The spiritus albus is also called 'the vulture, flying in the air without wings', the 'gander' or 'the bird of Hermes'. This is the white bird in our story.

Now it has been sufficiently purified to receive the third food, so mysteriously called 'its food'. This ultimately leads it to the 'highest perfection'. Only with this food, the holy food, can the soul truly grow and prosper, so that it can finally be 'released'. This release means that the soul reaches a point of true freedom and independence, separate from the system of the personality. In the text, this is described as the Maiden, who leads the released bird out of the sight of the candidates. In this situation, the soul turns away from the serving brother Rosicrucian and follows the messenger of the spirit, the Lady Alchimia.

The blue bird

On the fifth floor, the bird undergoes another alchemical transformation. Again, a certain fluid plays an important role. In this hall a bath was prepared for our bird, which was so coloured with a fine, white powder that it looked like milk.

In the fifteenth chapter of his secret book, Archeopahias speaks about a 'second water': 'This aqva vita or water of life, put together in the right way and spread throughout the body, causes it to change into its white colour. For this water is a white vapour and this is what whitenes the body... This is called a second and living water, 'azoth', the water that [...] washes the body that was put together from sol and Luna by our first water. It is also called the soul of the dissolved body... It is the royal fountain in which the king and queen bathe themselves...'

During the alchemical work in the laboratory, the sequence of dissolving, blackening and whitening is often repeated. Progressively, the substance becomes more refined, until it has become the 'white stone', which, in turn, is purified and dissolved, until it ultimately becomes white vapour. This is what the alchemists refer to as the 'milch of virgins', indicating that the soul gradually becomes more subtle and transparent as the process advances. We also find this in The Alchemical Wedding.

By bathing in the white milky substance, the bird loses all its feathers. Everything hard and crystallised is being dissolved. The feathers dissolve in the bath water and its skin becomes as smooth as that of a human being. But the dissolved feathers colour the water blue. Now the bath water is boiled and changes into a blue stone. The 'faithful group' grinds this stone into a powder and dies the skin of the bird with it. Now it is again beautiful to behold: it shines with a beautiful blue colour, only the head has remained white.

In alchemy, the colour blue is associated with the element silver, representing the aspect of the soul. In alchemy, blue does not mark the end result of the opus magnum – that is the colour red – but an intermediate stage. Blue is also regarded as a colour that radiates the light of the human soul. Through the alchemical process of transmutation, the bird has become a truly human soul: blue, with the skin of a human being. Now it embodies the new human soul in its, to human eyes, strange beauty.

Yet, however perfect the soul has become in the meantime, it cannot continue in this shape. The bird is led away by the Maiden and disappears for the second time out of the sight of the companions. Let us ascend the tower of Olympus and try to understand what is happening there.

The sixth floor

When the Maiden has disappeared with 'her' blue bird the companions are summoned to the sixth floor. There, brother Rosicrucian, with a heavy heart, sees the magical altar, which had amazed him already on the fourth day in the King's Hall, when he was confronted with the three royal couples for the first time. There are six objects on the altar:

1. a black velvet book overlaid with gold,
2. a burning candle,
3. a small clock, whereon
4. a little fountain flowing with blood-red water,
5. a celestial globe, turning around by itself,
6. a skull, in which a white serpent is creeping.

As the seventh object, he sees the blue bird
standing behind the altar. Seven is the number of the fulfilment, and also the sum total of the properties of the first six. Here the soul bird realises its work. It now takes a draught of the blood-red water and then it starts to peck away with its beak at the serpent, until the serpent is bleeding heavily. The companions catch this blood in a cup and pour it down the throat of the resisting bird. Then they dip the head of the wounded serpent in the fountain, after which it is revivified and disappers into the skull.

During all of this, the globe has continued to turn and the clock strikes three times. At the third chime, the blue bird meekly lays its neck on the book and one of the companions chops off its head. The magical events on the sixth floor finally end with the burning of the dead bird together with a tablet hanging behind the altar. To this end, a fire has been lit with a candle on the cleared altar. The ashes are purified several times and stored in a small box of cypress wood.

It is indeed as Aristeius says: if we try to understand in the ordinary sense of the word what the Hermetic philosophers have written, we are likely to get lost in a labyrinth, from which we will never emerge. What then is the thread of Ariadne that is lacking?

**The sacrifice of the soul**

In his commentary on *The Alchemical Wedding*, J van Rijckenborgh explains the meaning of the altar. The altar is a space in the pineal part of the brain, while the objects symbolise aspects that must be present for the sacrifice to take place. These are:

1. The aspect of fate: the book with the names of all those who are willing to sacrifice themselves. The name of each candidate has been recorded in the book: he has to be predestined.
2. The aspect of the Gnostic: the white serpent in the skull symbolises the ever-active divine wisdom and immortality.
3. The aspect of the right moment: the clock with its related aspects of the right cosmic influences: the celestial globe.
4. The aspect of the state of the blood, the state of the soul: the fountain.
5. The aspect of the serpent fire, the consciousness state: the burning candle.

Let us return to the blue bird, the symbol of the new human soul. One last time, it sacrifices itself for the ultimate unification of spirit, soul and body. This is a sacrifice that will probably surprise most readers. Would the existence of the immortal human being not already have become a fact with the white-golden egg that was developed from the golden globe on the fourth floor of the tower of Olympus?

This egg indeed contained the entire new life, but only potently, in concept. And now, on the upper floors of the tower of Olympus, this concept proves its value and the resurrection becomes a glorious living reality. It is the crowning of the 'opus magnum': the progression of the living soul to the life-giving spirit.

When the bird allows itself to be killed voluntarily, this initially went to the heart of brother Rosycross and his companions. Ultimately he admits: 'His death went to the heart of us, and yet we could well understand that a naked bird would not have helped us at all. So we let it rest...' This bird is killed, because it represents the aspect of the soul alone, while the fulfillment, the spirit, is still absent.

Now the moment of the wedding approaches, also spoken of in the treatise *On the Soul* in the Nag Hammadi codices: 'For this wedding is not a wedding of the flesh... For when it is consummated, they become one life.' For the soul bird, this is an hour of crisis.

**The secret of the blue bird**

The text literally reads: 'Finally, while we were observing the third conjunction, and this was announced by the clock, the poor bird of himself submissively laid down his neck upon the book, and willingly suffered his head to be chopped off by one of us, thereto chosen by lot. However, he yielded not one drop of blood, till he was opened on the breast, and then the blood sprung out so fresh and clear that it seemed like a ruby fountain.'

This is the secret of the blue bird. This sacrifice is not death, because the new soul is immortal. This is why no blood flowed at the moment of death. Yet, the pure ruby red soul blood wells up from its breast, the symbolic 'red rose' of the Rosicrucian, as proof of the completed alchemical transmutation.

This death is the transfigurative sacrifice of the soul that gives its own blood to enable it to be united with the spirit. Previously, it had been changed alchemically by the powers of the water, now it is influenced by the fire powers to enable it to merge with the spirit. This magical fire is kindled with the help of the consciousness – the candle on the altar – following an earlier determined plan: the tablet hanging behind it. The purified ashes are stored in a small box of cypress wood. This small box has the shape of a cube, opening out in the form of a cross.

It is this death, prepared by the water, purified in the fire and ultimately taken up into the cross, that is 'swallowed up in victory', as we can read in the Bible. For the purified ashes of the burned bird become the *prima materia*, from which on the eighth floor the new royal couple, the spirit human being, shall arise.

**Notes:**

**Sources:**
5. See also http://deutsche-museen.de/ausstelle/meister/astrochemical and http://astrolabes.org/astrolab.htm
THE EIGHTH FLOOR AND THE RESURRECTION

After the burning of the bird on the sixth floor of the tower of Olympus, the story takes an unexpected turn. Instead of receiving a reward for their faithful work and being allowed to ascend to the seventh floor, as might have been expected, brother Rosycross and three other candidates were scorned and de Brady by the maiden and, accompanied by the noise of a strange wind band, sent off through a side door. Where this door leads to, is kept hidden to the rest of the company. However, we will follow them.

It is understandable that Christian Rosycross now feels desperate. What has he done wrong? Yet, things prove to be totally different. As soon as the door has shut behind him, the musicians are led up a winding staircase leading past the seventh floor to the space under the roof. Then they reach the hidden eighth turret room, where they were already expected. The ‘old gentleman’ whom they hadn’t seen yet, cordially receives them. He is standing over a little furnace. Now also the maiden appears with a little box that contains the ashes of the blue bird. She pours the ashes into a vessel and fills the box again with another substance. She takes it to the candidates who had stayed behind on the seventh floor in order ‘to cast a mist before their eyes’, as she says.

Guided by the ‘Ancient One’, the four companions mix the ashes of the bird with the previously prepared water and heat up the thin dough, after which they cast it into two moulds provided on this floor.

THE GATE OF SATURN

The eighth floor has a peculiar form. The inside consists of seven hemispheres, the central one of which is somewhat higher, and in the highest part there is a small round hole which is shut and is not noticed by anyone but brother Rosycross. Eight is the number of the planet Saturn that closes off the old planetary sphere of our solar system. This is why we speak about the ‘gate of Saturn’. The numbers 1 to 7 form a self-contained cycle, ‘fullness’ or ‘perfection’. Then, beginning with number 8, a new cycle starts, a higher octave.

In The Alchemical Wedding, the eighth floor represents the gate to the spirit-soul world. To the four chosen candidates, this is the resurrection field, the entrance to the field of the original human being. But why does the way to it lead via a hidden winding staircase, and past the seventh floor?

THE SEVENTH FLOOR AND THE WINDING STAIRCASE

While the casting forms cool down, brother Rosycross succeeds in peeping at the seventh floor through a hole in the floor. Earlier, the maiden had given the gathered companions a special substance from the box with the ashes, with which they could now start to work. They tried hard to make gold of it, but they fanned the fire so much ‘that they had hardly any breath left’.

We can also consider the tower of Olympus with its seven floors as the serpent fire with its seven chakras. The consciousness fire is burning in the spinal column. Hence it is said that the candidates constantly climb up ‘through a hole in the ceiling’, symbolically expressed by the vertebrae which are hollow. The seventh chakra is located at the top of the head sanctuary, in the part of the brain where the pineal gland can be found. In this royal organ of the human being, the consciousness is concentrated. Above the pineal gland, one pole of the monad, the spirit, hovers. The original human being was wholly one with the spirit, which entered the serpent fire via the pineal gland, had its unimpeded entrance and exit there, and thus provided the whole human system with energy and vitality.

This situation has ceased to exist; the
the eighth floor via the usual way – in the story through a hole in the ceiling. The seventh floor symbolises the pineal gland, the eighth floor the monad of the spirit field. This connection can only be achieved through a hidden door to a winding staircase past the seventh floor. This is strange.

J van Rijckenborgh tells about this staircase:

“This staircase symbolises the connection between the heart chakra and the uppermost chakra, which corresponds to the pineal gland. When the soul has been born and the seven candles of the candelabra are united and burning in harmony, a link of etheric light develops, literally and bodily, between the heart and the head. This link does not have any anatomical aspects, being formed from reflecting ether and light ether which are mental and senso-rial, and it has a distinct spiral motion. This is why we speak of a spiral staircase.”

The central figure has already walked this new upward path, via the serpent fire, for the first time on the fourth day. At that time, he did not go via the tower but from the castle, and he was accompanied by Al-chimia. She led him to the upper hall where he was allowed to see the three royal couples and the magical altar for the first time. However, he could not stay there or do anything, because his development did not yet allow this. When they went down again, the door was bolted behind them.

In the story, the blue bird symbolises the soul. Through its sacrifice, the door has become visible to the four companions. The four are now led through this door in a dynamic way. The story tells about a wind band which almost ‘blows’ them through it. Next, they ascend via the staircase around the back to the eighth floor, the new pineal room, where the ‘Ancient One’ and the primordial images of the new human being are already awaiting them.

The ‘Ancient One’ is not surprised at their entrance and already seems to know what is necessary for the continuation of the process. Who is the Ancient One and what is his task? We already met him earlier in the story. While the group of true alchemists is sailing towards the island of Olympus, the old gentleman, together with some white-robed servants, approaches them in a small golden ship. He is the guardian who, from the outset, overlooks everything that happens in the tower. This ‘Ancient One’ is not an invention of the author. He is a spiritual figure who is truly ‘ancient’. We already encounter him in the vision of Daniel: ‘As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool.’ In addition, it is said: ‘I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom.’

The old wise man is the archetype of human experience... The indication ‘old wise man’ originates from Asia. ‘You should not forget about the old man who dwells in the heart and sees everything...’ The old wise man in the collective subconscious of humanity is already one million years old and guards the eternal laws between the consciousness and the subconscious.

The modern Rosycross also points to the meaning of the ‘Ancient One’ and refers to a peculiar quotation from the universal teachings: ‘The spirit cannot be held until the soul stands in the presence of the Ancient of Days.’

After these indications, it becomes clear whom Christian Rosycross and his companions meet on the eighth floor of the tower of Olympus: the highest priest of the highest God, the one of whom Jesus Christ received his power and who was before Abraham was.

J van Rijckenborgh says about him: ‘So everything depends on a divine value that contains within it a trinity, a tri-unity: Father, Mother and Son; king, queen and Christian Rosycross. In abstracto, this triinity is the great divine, unifying, primordial plan of creation; it is the great, primordial principle that the Kabbala calls the Holy Ancient One or the Ancient of Days.’ So he who travels to the square island as a candidate in the gnostic mysteries, will experience an encounter in the tower with the warden and his helpers. In other words, he meets the divine tri-unity which makes the trinity, the three principles in the candidate, into one.

J V Andreae weaves this highest principle, in which the initiation is accomplished, into his story with a wink, when he writes: ‘But after he understood the fright we had gone through, his belly was ready to burst with laughing that we had taken such good fortune so badly. “Hence, my dear sons”, said he, “learn that man never knows how well God’s intentions are with respect to him.” That is certainly true.

The resurrection of the royal couple

The Ancient One is also the guardian of the primordial image of the divine human being, which is present on the eighth floor, as in eternity. In the story, they are the two casting forms. The *prima materia* is now poured into these forms. It has been manufactured by the
four candidates from the ashes of the blue bird and 'prepared water,' and heated over the fire.

When the four companions are finally allowed to open the casting forms, they saw two beautiful, bright, and almost transparent figurines, the like of which man's eyes never saw, a boy and a girl, each of them only four inches long. These angelically fair children we first laid on two little satin cushions and held a good while, until we were almost besotted by such exquisite objects."

It is also described how Christian Rosycross feeds the two children with the blood of the blue bird. They become ever more beautiful and grow up to the size of adults, but they do not yet possess a life of their own.

**The Last Trumpet**

The 'Ancient One', who in his inner being combines the age-old knowledge of the unification of spirit, soul and body, now prepares the entrance of the spirit-soul into the bodies of the new royal couple. There is only one person who can see and comprehend this last stage of the alchemical process: Christian Rosycross. Only he perceives in which way the spirit-soul flows as a fiery flame out of the hole in the seventh arch of the roof via the wide part of a trumpet, which is placed on their lips, into the still lifeless bodies of the royal persons. The other three candidates let themselves be deluded during this period by a minor matter, by a 'fire trick,' and do not see what really happens. The central figure says about this: 'My companions kept looking at the figures, but I had other thoughts.'

What did he think of?

When he dreamt during the first night that he was kept prisoner in a deep shaft, trumpets and drums resounded to announce the salvation which was near. Here the trumpet had a calling and arousing sound. It was the call of the brotherhood. The trumpet thus links us with the powerful manifestation of the spirit in the human being and in the whole of creation. Its sound is directly linked with the mystery of resurrection. What matters during the alchemical events on the eighth floor of the tower of Olympus, however, is not the sound of the trumpet as it resounded in the shaft. Here something totally different happens.

**The Life-Giving Spirit**

We see the royal couple lying on a long table. By means of the sacrificial blood of the soul bird, they have become fully-grown and are inexpressibly beautiful. But there is still no new life in them. The Ancient One now places a trumpet on their lips, as if they were to blow it themselves. Then he kindles the green decoration which is wound around the instrument. At that moment, a ray of fire flashes from the hole in the ceiling via the open sound hole of the trumpet into the lifeless bodies. The fiery spirit-soul has entered the new bodies and woke them to life.

Isn't this a strange event? Shouldn't we have expected it to happen in the reverse way, approximately like this: Out of the hole in the ceiling a trumpet is lowered, its sound hole turned downward; then a blast of the trumpet is given to blow life into the bodies, just as in the story of creation? Anyway, something like that took place in the dream during the first day. At that time, it was the fallen human being who was called to return to the original field of life by the blast of the trumpets of the brotherhood. But the bodies, which are now lying on the table, CRC becomes guardian of the gate and returns home...
are already the new bodies of the original divine human being. The original human being is an image of God, destined to blow the trumpet himself in order to awaken the original substance to life. He was a God in a seminal state, the life-giving spirit.

Now, here, in this resurrection field, the time for restoration has come. This is why the spirit-soul now returns into its renewed body via the same way. The body has attracted it through the sound hole of the trumpet like a magnet. Paul has predicted it: "The first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." 99

In the story, this prophecy was fulfilled in the eighth turret room. After the spirit had descended into the royal couple, the spiritual power of the 'Ancient One' begins to circulate in the bodies by means of fiery tubes. The revived royal persons are, after a period of rest, dressed by the maiden with splendid garments that looked like crystal: the subtle ethereal structure of the new bodies.

Now the company descends the spiral staircase "through all the gates and past all the watches to the ships." 100 From this, we can see that the new link between the heart chakra and the pineal gland is now completely ready. All powers are able to ascend and descend in an unimpeded way and accomplish their tasks in the system.

Thus, the work of Christian Rosycross and his companions in the tower has come to an end. Now, on the evening of the sixth day, the 'opus magnum' has been accomplished. The resurrection of the new human being, the alchemical unification of soul, spirit and body, has become a fact. The 'group of true alchemists' which has worked on the seventh floor, guided by Alchimia, together ate supper. The group prepares for the last day of the Alchemical Wedding, for which they have to enter the castle again. There they are made 'knight of the golden stone'.

2 Daniel 7:9
3 Daniel 7:13-14
5 Idem, p. 174.
6 Idem, p. 181.
7 Idem, p. 178.
8 Idem, p. 181.
9 Cor. 15:45