

Easter egg
Philosophical egg
Holy Grail

Why did philosophers-chemists name the vessel in the last phase of the Work "Philosophical Egg"?

Why did Easter give birth to the custom of eggs?
And what has this to do the Grail legend?

We are once again faced with symbols we will attempt to decode, but it has long been second nature for the student on the Path to want to decipher such puzzles.

The alchemists say that the three kingdoms (mineral, plant, animal) have similar operations in their principles but differ in rates of evolution and in levels of consciousness.

Animal consciousness is more powerful than plant consciousness, and plant consciousness is more powerful than the mineral consciousness. If man can see well enough the action of consciousness on the evolution in the animal and plant kingdom, by contrast he does not perceive these phenomena properly in the mineral kingdom because they are extreme slow. In the mineral kingdom, only alchemy will render perception possible by means of its ability to accelerate the evolutionary process of nature.

There is an element, a subtle force that animates nature and assumes the creative process. This force is what the alchemists called "the Secret Fire", also called "Universal Fire", "Solar Fire", and "Steel". The Secret Fire (Fire and Air of Alchemy and Qabala) needs moisture, water, to exercise its creative and animating function, so it will act quickly in the animal body rich in water, slower in the less humid plant, and even more slowly in the almost dry mineral.

In the animal kingdom, the typical example of the action of the Secret Fire is on the egg. When the chicken begins to brood, the fire of nature (in this case, the heat of the hen) will gradually awaken the Secret Fire; then, the process of incubation will start. From that moment on it should be noted that if there is an interruption of heat, even of a short duration, the Secret Fire escapes and the animated principles die.

Animal fertilization and incubation are activated with the arrival of the Spring equinox, when the Secret Fire, from the sun, grows in its intensity in nature.

In the plant kingdom, the Secret Fire contained in the seed is awakened by the moisture of the earth and the warmth of Spring. But here as well, lack of heat in the form of a late frost will stop germination.

In the mineral realm, to accelerate the evolutionary process in order to render it perceptible, the alchemist will strive to accumulate adequate provision of "Secret Fire" during the Spring. In this kingdom, the material for the Work will be collected in a glass vessel whose form approaches that of

the egg; however, topped with a rather high neck to allow vapors to circulate. Here the heat is provided by an oven named "athanor". Just as the fire of nature cannot be stopped either during animal incubation or during plant germination, neither can it be interrupted before the end of the metallic work to avoid failure. Indeed, the Secret Fire, the animator, is very fragile during the creative phase.

The creative process in nature being that of the egg, it is understandable that it has become a universal symbol of creation.

Many religions and philosophies equate nature with a Cosmic Egg. Ceremonies celebrating the awakening of nature and the return of the Secret Fire have existed for a long time, long before Christianity. We know that different nations had fixed the start of the calendar year based on the Spring equinox.

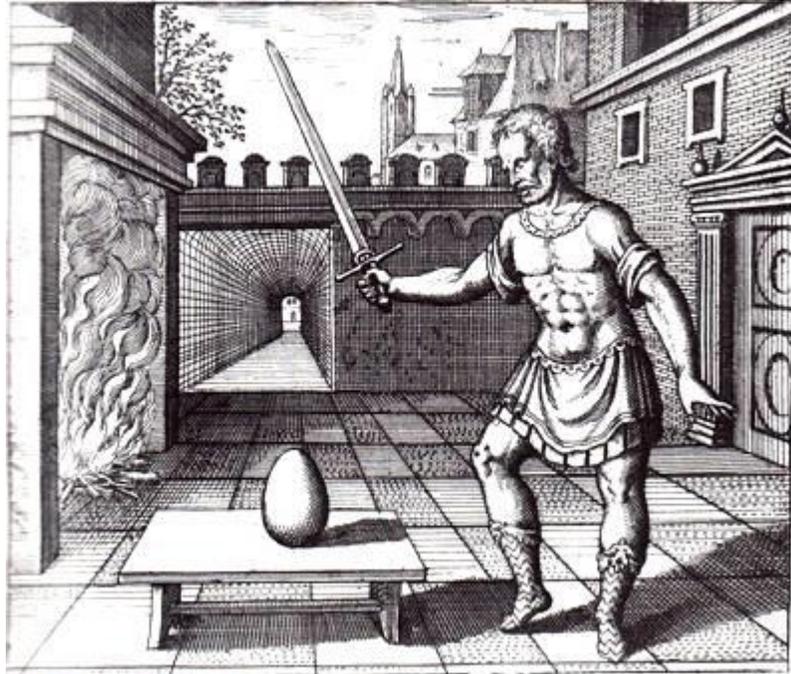
If we consider the symbolic aspect of the Christian Easter holiday, we are led to believe this is a symbol of general resurrection of nature. Especially, the lunar cycle linked to determining the date of Easter (formalized by the Council of Nicaea in 325) will be binding as to the time of sowing.

In the Christian religion we see the resurrection of Christ coincides with the resurrection of nature. Also, the Easter egg finds its place here as survival of ancient pagan customs celebrating this Spring rebirth.

The Grail, meanwhile, is the Vessel of the Holy Supper. The Last Supper is the symbol of the transmission of the Secret Fire (Solar Fire of the vineyard) to the 12 apostles, symbols of the 12 phases of Initiation (still represented by the 12 labors of Hercules, the 12 doors of Philosophy...). It is said that the Grail contains the dried blood of Christ. It can therefore be considered the symbol of all body capable of carrying the Secret Fire. It is also the initiation tool for the use of the Secret Fire (chalice of the Last Supper). Lastly, it is the interpretation of its content, that is to say either the elixir with initiatory power or the dried blood of the Adept with its transmuting power.

And now, Happy Easter! And may the Cosmic Egg bring you the creative energies of the Secret Fire.

Jean DUBUIS



**The “Philosophical Egg:
Symbol of the prima materia,
Divided by fire and by the sword**