STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

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PARACELSUS

PARACELSUS
THE MAN AND HIS REPUTATION
HIS IDEAS AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION

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LIST OF PREFACE

I should like to thank Professor Heiko Oberman for accepting this volume for publication in the Series. Earlier versions of most of the chapters in this volume were originally presented in a symposium held at the University of Glasgow in September 1993 entitled: The Transformation of Paracelsianism—to celebrate the quincentenary of Paracelsus’s birth. The symposium was organised by the Director of the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine at the University of Glasgow, Dr. Johanna Geyer-Kordesch, Dr. David Weston, Keeper of Special Collections, Glasgow University Library, and Professor Friedrich Niewöhner, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel. A generous grant from the Wellcome Trust to the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine at the University of Glasgow, and additional financial support from the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Germany, made the symposium possible and thus provided the foundation for the present volume.

It should be noted, however, that most of the chapters in this volume were ready for publication in 1994, and accordingly the contributors have been unable to include a number of relevant works in their footnotes which have appeared since.

Finally, I should like to thank Ms Tamara Hug for her expert skills in bringing all the chapters into a unified format and likewise Mr Howarth Penny for his help in collating the three indices of the volume.

Ole Peter Grell
Cambridge, 22 April 1998
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

‘INVISIBLE DISEASES’ – IMAGINATION AND MAGNETISM: PARACELSUS AND THE CONSEQUENCES*

Heinz Schott

Some scholars of Paracelsus’ work show him as a harbinger of psychosomatic medicine. Thus, they interpret his well known treatise *De causis morborum invisibium* (On the invisible diseases)¹ as an essay pointing to modern theories of medical psychology and psychotherapy, in spite of its occult, magical and even cabalistic impact.² I take the opposite view. I assume that the occult, magical and religious content of Paracelsus’ writings is reflected in modern psychosomatic medicine in a secularized form. To this extent, modern concepts, especially the Freudian paradigm, are disguised latecomers from the period of the Renaissance. The currents of the natural philosophy and the specifically scientific approach of the Renaissance are hidden today, but they are still to be found.

When we study the different psychosomatic concepts in the history of medicine, we generally notice the double character of psychosomatic ideas. On the one hand there are ideas, pictures, illusions within a person’s mind which may imprint themselves upon his own body or infect other bodies by communication. We may call this the power of imagination (Vorstellungs- or Einbildungskraft). On the other hand there are energies or natural powers which correlate the individual organism with the whole organism of nature. This we may call the correlation between microcosm and macrocosm. The most essential idea of natural philosophy, from the Stoics up to romanticism, claims that all bodies, including the human organism, are connected by networks of magnetic influence. This concept of magnetism,


¹ Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 9, 251–350; complete title: ‘de causis morborum invisibium, das ist, von den unsichtbaren krankheiten und iren ursachen’.

especially the concept of sympathetic interaction, covers the energetic problem: the transference of vital powers within the body or from one body to another.3

Imagination plays a great role in the history of medicine. The images of visualized pictures may represent healing powers (Sigmund Freud's 'Eros'). Others may represent destructive powers (death instinct, Freud's 'Todestrieb').4 We know the traditional quasi-scientific methods within the history of medicine: The mantic methods of dream interpretation or interpretation of prognostic signs and visions. The painted images of the saints in the Middle Ages, for example, play an important role in the religious medicine of the Middle Ages. The power of the icons may be explained by a power exerted by imagination over the body functions. Evil imaginations, suggestions by the Devil or demons, on the other hand, could produce illness or death. We may think of the imagery of monsters predicting social disaster.5

The idea of magnetism derives from the cosmological concept of interaction. Occult powers within the natural world influence the human organism. Magic medicine tries to cure sick persons by so-called magnetic techniques. They tend to strengthen the vital forces of the organism: in other words, to accumulate vitality. But there are also destructive powers of magnetism. They weaken vitality and take away life energy—like vampires.6 The long tradition of magical practices and sympathetic cures documents the importance of magnetic influence as a medical idea.

6 The term 'Od-vampirism' (Od-Vampirismus) describes the negative (weakening) powers of persons in the middle of the 19th century according the 'Od' theory of the German chemist Carl Reichenbach; cf. Karl Spiesberger: Justinus Kerners 'Seherin von Prevorst' in Betrachtung esoterischer Tradition und im Lichte psychischer Forschung, in, Erich Sopp and Karl Spiesberger, Auf den Spuren der Seherin, Sersheim 1953, 64.

Before we deal with Paracelsianism and Mesmerism we should try to construct a rough typology of psychosomatic models. Firstly, the imago may come from outside into the mind, which takes it up and imprints it on the body. This mechanism is called 'introjection' in psychology. Secondly, the imago may originate from inside the human organism, for example, by a disorder of bodily function. In this case the psyche takes up the imago and regards it as a real phenomenon. This mechanism is called 'projection' in psychology. Both these mechanisms, introjection as well as projection, may support either healing processes or destructive ones.

In a similar way, there are two processes of magnetic activity. Firstly, a magnetic influence from outside means an input of energy into the body. It is a positive transfer which may be compared to charging a battery. The flow of energy through the medium of the nervous system, for example, aims (as a healing method) at strengthening the vitality. Secondly, there is the model of attraction—of driving out the germ of disease. The magnetic power may attract the pathogenic 'seed' (Krankheitssamen) according to Paracelsus. The human organism is considered as a psychosomatic entity into which energy can be introduced (input) or extracted (output) by an outside agent. To this extent the power of magnetism is based on transference of energy.

A special method of prophylaxis is the defense mechanism (a term borrowed from Freud's psychoanalysis).7 Special practices such as wearing an amulet, for example, are intended to give protection against both bad images and bad magnetic influences.

Often Paracelsus has been admired as a genius who attained new insight into the human body and mind and their disorders, and who gave physicians a philosophical and ethical basis for their practice. But he is by no means the founder of the theory of imagination and magnetism. Rather, he took up fairly common ideas and attitudes of his period and adapted them to his specific purposes. He is a representative of his time.8 Walter Pagel is the chief among those who have demonstrated the enormous impact of neo-Platonism, alchemy, gnosis, and, last but not least, the cabbala on Paracelsus. He is directly influenced by Renaissance Platonism, especially

7 Cf. Laplanche/Pontalis, 'Abwehrmechanismen', 30–33.
8 In this regard we may compare him with Sigmund Freud, who represents the spectrum of scientific and cultural currents at the turn of the 19th century.
as represented by Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) of the Florentine Academy, as stressed by Pagel. The influence of the cabbala on Paracelsus has usually been underestimated. The religious mysticism of the Jews, its metaphors and symbols, were generally of great interest in the humanistic period. I mention only Johannes Reuchlin and his fight for the acceptance of the Jewish cabbala. The Christian cabbala developed during the period of the Reformation. Millenianism (chiliasm), Swabian pietism, the Rosicrucians and even romantic natural philosophy and its offshoots (up to and including modern depth psychology) were influenced by cabbalistic elements.

Page points out: ‘...even if Paracelsus had no first hand knowledge of cabbalistic ideas and sources, he could not fail to arrive at concordant views in his doctrine as a whole as well as in certain specific points. Such concordances are largely the result of the dominant role played by the theory of Microcosm in both.

This aspect is often ignored by scholars, at least in the German tradition. It may be a consequence of either open or more subtle antisemitism that they considered Paracelsus to be the ‘Luther of physicians’ (Lutherus medicorum). He appeared as the incarnation of the German art of healing, a genius fighting against un-German trends in medical theory and practice. This interpretation flourished during the Third Reich, a subject recently explored by Udo Benzenhöfer.

18 Antisemitic and anti-scholastic statements by Paracelsus seemed to prove his independence not only of the Jewish tradition but also of the classical authorities of Galenism and Arabism. Such sentiments, which were not evaluated within their historical context, could be taken to serve as affirmations of nationalistic and imperialistic propaganda. Thus, it was often overlooked ‘that Paracelsus was a strong admirer of the Cabalah’, as Kudlien put it.

Important concepts of Paracelsus point to cabbalistic sources. I will just hint at his central term Licht der Natur (light of nature). In a treatise belonging to the topic of the ‘invisible diseases’, Paracelsus identifies the cabbalistic art with the adept’s discoveries in the ‘light of nature’ within himself: ‘Look at Adam and Moses and others, they searched for that within themselves that is in man and opened it, and it belongs all to cabbala; they knew no strange things from the devil or [evil] spirits, but from the light of nature; that is what they evoked within themselves.’ The inward approach to the divine sources of the spiritual light recalls the mystical practices of the cabbala (and other religious subsystems). The successful process depends on a quasi-scientific scholarly self-purification. From the ‘Sohar’, the holy scripture of the cabbala, we know about the model of the divine light emanating throughout the material world, the famous doctrine of Sefroth.

Material things absorb the divine light, covering it like clothes and producing darkness. The sun, often visualized as the ‘eye of God’, symbolizes the archaic fount of divine light and wisdom. Like the sun, God sends life energy to all beings on the earth. ‘The glamour [created by God] went from one end of the world to the other and


22 Pagel, Paracelsus, 214.

23 This expression appeared as a term of abuse in Basel, where Paracelsus taught at the university in 1527/28; it was also used afterwards in a positive sense; cf. Ernst Kaiser, Paracelsus, mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten. Reinbek bei Hamburg (Rowohlt Taschenbuch) 1984, 86.
then remained hidden’, we read in the ‘Sohar’. ‘The whole of heaven is nothing other than imaginatio influencing man, producing plagues, colds, and other diseases’, we hear from Paracelsus. The same happens in the microcosm, i.e. within the individual human organism. Paracelsus uses the metaphor of an inner sun: ‘Well, what else is imaginatio than a sun within man, having such an effect in his globum [body], that is, where on it shines.’ Indeed, there are—according to Pagel—‘concordances in detail between the lore of the Caballah and the teaching of Paracelsus.’

Let us come to the main topic. What is the basic model of imagination and magnetism for Paracelsus? Firstly, the attractive power of the magnet symbolizes the power of imagination, moreover, Paracelsus identifies both powers. ‘As the magnet can attract steel, there is also a magnet in the imagination, which also attracts. There is an imaginatio like a magnet, and an impressio like the sun and heaven, making a man by the power vulcani.’ Paracelsus gives us an example (Exempel), a parable to explain the identity of imagination and magnetism. The magnet is just a metaphor for imagination: ‘Without hands and feet, the magnet attracts iron. Like the magnet attracting the visible, the corpora (bodies) are invisibly drawn to the imagination by itself. But it is not the corpus (body) that enters, but what the eyes see and is not palpable, i.e. form and colour...’

There are two steps: the attraction (incorporation) of an object (ding) by the imagination (a quasi-magnet) is followed by an impression of this introjected object, similar to the sun and heaven impressing man. ‘What climbs up into heaven is imaginatio, and what falls down is impressio born out of the imagination’. This movement describes a sort of reflex action, crossing microcosm and macrocosm. A macrocosmic reflex occurs, for instance, when the (evil) imagination of a human individual poisons the stars, which send back the poison to the earth causing plagues and disorders.

In his treatise De causis morborum invisibilum (On the invisible diseases) Paracelsus uses the term imaginatio to explain the correlation between body and soul.

The imagination is a master by itself and has the art and all instruments and all it wants to produce, for example as a cellarmen, painter, metalworker, weaver etc.; ... What does imagination need? Nothing more than a globe on which it can work, that is, the screen on which it paints what it wants to paint.

In this way, the imagination of a pregnant woman can express itself directly on the body of the child in the uterus:

The woman with her imagination is the workmaster and the child is the screen on which the work is perfected. The hand of the imagination is invisible, the instrument also, and both work together. ... So the imagination does its work at that place, in the way the imagination has decided it.

In this regard, Paracelsus also calls the power of imagination ‘belief’ (Glaube). Belief is ‘like a workman’s instrument’ which can be used for good as well as for bad purposes. Belief can produce all diseases. Paracelsus compares it with a weapon. Disease will be produced when the weapon is active against its own originator. Paracelsus uses the parable of the man with a rifle which exactly describes the reversion of affections (Affektsverkehrung) in modern psychology:

We produce our diseases, so we become similar to a man who has got all his weapons and rifles. But when he meets a manakin aiming at him with a ready rifle the big man is anxious about the weapon and is frightened by it—the same happens to us. ... When we become weak the power of our belief hits us as a shot from a rifle and we have to tolerate and to suffer what we have thrown against us.

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18 Der Sohar. Das heilige Buch der Kabbala, ed. by Ernst Müller. 5. Aufl. München 1991, 50; cf. also 49-52 and 76-78.
19 ‘als der ganz himel ist nichts als imaginatio, derselbe wirkt in den menschen, macht pesten, kaltsehe und anderst.’ Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 14, 311 (present author’s translation to the original quotations).
20 ‘mut treus ist imaginatio anderst, als ein sonn im menschen, die dermaßen wirkt in sein globus, das ist, do hin sie scheint?’ Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 14, 310.
21 Pagel, Paracelsus, They need to be considered by scholars in the future. Recently, such a project—sponsored by the German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development—started: ‘Jewish and Renaissance Thought in the Works of Paracelsus.’
23 ‘der magnet zeucht an sich das eisen an hand und fuß. zu gleicher Weise wie also der magnet das sich im ansicht zeugt, also werden auch die corpora unsicht durch die imaginatio an sich gezogen. nicht das das corpus hinein gang, sondern das get hinein, das die augen sehen und nicht greifflich ist, also die form und die farbe...’; Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 9, 290.
26 Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 9, 287.
Belief which is self destructive Paracelsus calls ‘despair’ (Verzweiflung). It is a reversal of our belief which makes us weak and sick. The rifle is directed against its owner. The pathological imagination may even give origin to an epidemic, for example a plague or pestilence. The most important cause of plague, therefore, is that people in despair may ‘poison heaven, so some will suffer from plague depending on their belief.’

Imagination becomes a very dangerous phenomenon if it is combined with despair, and so returns to its own origin. As it was pointed out before, this mechanism constitutes a sort of a reflex activity.

Paracelsus compares persons in despair also with a thief, who hangs himself, being in discordance with god and sentenced to self-hanging. ‘They are not worthy to be hanged by another [person].’ The wealthy opposite of despair is ‘simplicity’ (Einfalt), which is a refuge from self-destruction.

As I mentioned above, the magnet is a symbol or a metaphor for magnetic healing in the context of magia naturalis, natural magic. At the same time, to Paracelsus it is a real instrument for curing several diseases. The magnet symbolizes the occult powers of natural bodies, their secret sympathies (attractions) and antipathies (repulsions) like those of real magnets. In particular, the interaction between certain bodies can be understood by magnetic techniques. The modern history of ‘magnetism’ as one of the most important ideas of natural philosophy and its medical derivations starts with Paracelsus. In the Herbarius Paracelsus describes the application of the Persicaria. This is a plant with magical healing powers. In the same way as a magnet ‘marvellously attracts the iron’, Persicaria works against wounded flesh.

You may understand the herb, you should know that you have to take the herb drawing it through a fresh stream, then you have to place it on the part you wish to cure for as long as you need to eat half an egg. Then you have to bury it in a humid place so that it can rot, and the disorder will heal in the same time. . . It is not necessary to make the sign of the cross over the wound or to pray, because it is a natural action, working naturally, not superstitiously or magically beyond nature.

The magnetism of the herb is compared with the interaction between a magnet and a piece of iron. As the piece of iron can be magnetized by passing the magnet along its surface, so the wound can be magnetized by stroking the herb over its surface. In both cases a correspondence will develop between two bodies, ensuring that magnetic interaction occurs. How this ‘concordance’ works is a miracle, a great work of God (‘magnate’), a mystery of nature. However, in addition, the magnet is more than a metaphor. It attracts not only iron or steel, but also all ‘martial diseases’ (which come from the planet Mars). So, it supports the influence of Mars, (e.g. in diarrhoea or the menstrual bleeding). The magnet can draw the materia peccans to the right place, so it can be digested and then be driven out at the right time. ‘The uterus, the stomach and the bowels are organs which can be influenced directly by the magnet. If the uterus is displaced upwards, it can be driven back by the magnet. The same is possible in the case of epilepsy (falling sickness, fallende Sucht). Some magnets in a certain conformation ‘drive the illness from the head to the center (stomach).’ The magnet can also cure convulsions, stop bleeding, and heal haemorrhoids. No medical author emphasises the power of the magnet more than Paracelsus.

Imagination and magnetism remained major topics for two or three centuries after Paracelsus’s death. The further development of this topic cannot be dealt with in detail here. The dualism between soul and body introduced by René Descartes, the anatomical and physiological research on the nervous system and especially the brain (e.g. by Thomas Willis), the new physical paradigms from Kepler to Newton and the development of the physical and chemical analysis of the human or animal organism all specified the concepts of imagination and magnetism. Imagination was increasingly interpreted as an idea fundamentally affecting psychosomatic interaction. The

29 Cf. Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 9, 357.
30 ‘Dami und in den brauch des krauts verstanden, so sollen er wissen, das in der gestalt

gebraucht wird, nemlich man nimpt das kraut und zeucht durch ein frischen bach, demnach so legt mans auf das selbig, das man heilen wil, als lang als einer nacht hafft ein essen. der nach so vergibt man an ein feucht ort, demit das faul werde, so wird der schad gesund in der selbigem zeit . . . das etlich ein kruzz, uber die schinden machen, etlich hieben darzu, solch alles ist von unnften, gehort nit darzu, den es ist ein natürliche wirkung da, die das natürliche tut, nit superstitionisch und zauberisch.’ Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 2, 18.
31 Cf. the chapter on the magnet in Herbarius, Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 2, 49–57.
 invisible diseases' are born of the imagination, explains Paracelsus. The imagination afflicts the spiritual regulation forces, the so-called archet or archei. A pathological idea (idea morbosa) may infect other human beings and may thus even start an epidemic of disease. The theory of mass psychology is based on the concept of transferrable ideas. The image (image) seems to be a contagion, like the germ of an infectious disease.

The magnetic effect gradually became interpreted more and more as a natural law, an analogue to Newton's law of gravitation. Power (Kraft) is a universal phenomenon, an active principle, as Newton pointed out. The cosmological ether seems to be the medium of power. It penetrates all matter like subtle rays.

When Franz Anton Mesmer began his 'animal magnetism' in Vienna about 1775, it was obviously not a direct offspring of Paracelsian thought. As a doctor Mesmer was quite up to date with the scientific developments in medicine. Indeed, he was a representative of the Enlightenment, and—as Robert Darnton pointed out—the Mesmerists in Paris played an important role in the French Revolution. The classical concept of Mesmer's animal magnetism was based on the new concept of electricity and its therapeutic application (electrical therapy), and the fashionable use of steel magnets for the cure of diseases in the second half of the 18th century. Mesmer's dogma of a universal fluid (Alfluft, fluide universel) was nothing other than a credo in Newtonian physics.

Mesmer believed in his new foundation of medicine as a natural science. Strictly speaking he was an 'iatrophysicist'. The transfer of energy as a healing power was mediated by the nerves. By his techniques of magnetization (Mesmerization)

Mesmer evoked 'crises' (Kräfte) which today can only be understood as psychosomatic or psychodynamic group phenomena. But in his self-understanding Mesmer found no place for anything called 'soul' or 'mind'. He did not even discuss the theory of imagination. We know that his critics told him that his animal magnetism was nothing more than the effect of the powers of imagination.

Mesmer was a genuine positivist. He systematically ignored the possibility of negative energies or of pathological transfer of the fluidum. His magnetic 'manipulations' transferred only the healing power of fluidum; they never had to extract pathological complexes or matter. Mesmer never used magnetic 'passes' for the manipulation like some Mesmerists 30 or 40 years later.

When Mesmerism became an element of the Romantic movement and the natural philosophy of the early 19th century, the power of imagination was rediscovered. The concept of somnambulism shows us a fascinating combination of the concept of the power of imagination and the power of magnetism. The altered state of consciousness experienced in somnambulism revealed the imagination as a manifestation of nature itself. When a somnambulist patient produced daydreams, visions or prophetic ideas, these were understood to be secret messages from hidden (occult) nature. The 'Seher aus Preuern' (Die Seherin von Preuern), the famous case history of a patient written by the Swabian doctor and poet Justinus Kern (1786-1862), is a valuable document in the characterization of a concept of the imagination in natural philosophy of the Romantic era.

The scientific explanation followed the anatomical and physiological guidelines of the age. People could be mesmerized by directing

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35 Mesmer's scientific ideas are very problematic; cf. e.g. Ernst Florey, Franz Anton Mesmer's magische Wissenschaft, in, Franz Anton Mesmer and der Mesmerismus. Wissenschaft, Schriftenkunde, Poesie. Gereon Wolters, Konstanz 1998, 11-40. Nevertheless, as a member of the medical faculty in Vienna, Mesmer was well informed about scientific standards.
39 Gereon Wolters pointed out the scientific problem of Mesmer's theory refused by two commissions in Paris; he analysed the report at the Royal Academy of Sciences as an epistemological document of the Enlightenment; see Gereon Wolters, 'Mesmer and sein Problem, Wissenschaftliche Rationalität', in, Franz Anton Mesmer und der Mesmerismus, 121-137.
the vital powers within the nerves from the ‘cerebral system’ to the ‘ganglion system’. In practical terms that means, the vital power has to be pulled down from the head to the stomach (abdomen). That could be managed by magnetic manipulations or it could happen spontaneously. When magnetic life (magnetisches Leben) according to Justinus Kerner arose in the Seeussm, the interplay of imaginations could flourish: e.g. the vision of a secret language of nature could develop or the spirit of a dead grandmother could appear. Even healing of other patients by praying at a long distance was reported.41

Although the Romantic speculations about cosmological and religious dimensions of nature as a whole organism were increasingly rejected by the scientific community in the middle of the 19th century, the Mesmerist concept of somnambulism provided the first modern psychosomatic model. It was based on anatomical, physiological and clinical findings and furnished physicians with both experimental and treatment methods. The research activities of Mesmeristic scholars are fascinating. Here we see the beginnings of modern psychotherapy, medical psychology and psychosomatic medicine.42

It is interesting to notice traditional concepts in contemporary medical practise. Parapsychological mediumism uses imagination and visions for practical purposes. The progress of science has not eradicated the human belief that we may call superstition. Today we may also see a type of Mesmerists practise magnetopathy with magnetic ‘passes’ and the magnetic tub (baguet). In 1992 I met a psychiatrist—a medical doctor—at a workshop on hypnosis, and he told me that he successfully uses the magnetic tub for his therapeutic group sessions. During the sessions he imitates Mesmer by wearing a violet robe and applying magnetic ‘passes’. The motive for such practices is not, I assume, primarily historical interest. It originates in discontent with the present situation and the hope of coming into contact with the primary natural sources of life.

Today healing methods by ‘invisible’ powers again are very popular. I refer only to so-called spiritual healing and magnetopathy (Heilmagnetismus), with its complex religious, spiritual (and even spiritistic), magical and psychological techniques. These phenomena are often condemned as old superstition, but a historical review should take into account their long tradition in the history of medicine and natural (religious) philosophy. The cabbala, for example, played an important role in the transfer of religious mysticism to natural philosophy and science in the Renaissance. So, Paracelsus as a philosopher and alchemist may sometimes resemble a cabalistic scholar more than a laboratory researcher or natural scientist in the modern sense.

We should realize the unique situation of Paracelsianism at the beginning of the modern era. Natural philosophy and natural science were saturated by religious attitudes and rites. Research in the ‘light of nature’, e.g. the production of new medicines by alchemy, was at the same time an approach to the light of God, a process of personal purification, and worship. C.G. Jung’s concept of individuation has shown its psychological importance.43 The ‘scientific communities’, small groups of adepts with more or less secret rules of behaviour, were essential. Moreover, there were possibilities for friendly discussions between Jews, Christians and Muslims without repression—at least, this was an ideal, praised among others by Johannes Reuchlin in the dialogue of his treatise De arte caballistica.44

This intensive communication between mutually respecting scientists strikes me as highly important. Today we need a multi-cultural (‘multi-religious’) atmosphere in which intellectuals and scientists can exchange their experiences and findings to overcome dangerous prejudices.

Finally, it is very interesting that the theory of imagination and magnetism is traditionally linked with social and political phenomena and tries to explain events of mass psychology, e.g. the attraction a leader exerts on a crowd of people. In this regard Paracelsus again uses the magnet as a metaphor: ‘You find a man who knows to speak, so that all the world runs to him and listens. Know, then, that his mouth [Maul] is a magnet, powerfully attracting the people.'45


42 I remember the pioneering work of Henry F. Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious, 2 vols., Bern 1973. Ellenberger shows the importance of mesmerism and somnambulism for the development of modern ‘dynamic psychiatry’.

43 Cf. e.g. C.G. Jung, Einleitung in die religionspsychologische Problematik der Alchemie, in, C.G. Jung: Gesammelte Werke, vol. 12, 17–54. See also Chapter 8 above.

44 Max Brod emphasized this aspect especially in his sympathetic book, Johannes Reuchlin.

45 ‘du findest ein man, der kann reden, das im alle welt zulauf, und hört im zu, na wäs, das das maul ein magnet ist, zeucht an sich die laut in der kraft.’ Paracelsus, ed. Sudhoff, vol. 9, 363.