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Loosing Faith in Progress: Capitalist Patriarchy as an „Alchemical System“

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INTRODUCTION

Why is it that we in the west have such a hard time conceptualizing alternatives to corporate globalization, particularly Maria Mies' „Subsistence Is The Alternative“ - SITA? I contend that the difficulties that we have in imagining alternatives stem directly from the fact that especially women, nature, and the colonies have been subjected to domination, exploitation and also a fundamental *transformation*. The concept we normally use to refer to this exploitative, violent, and sexist history is „patriarchy“ (along with its flipside „matriarchy“). In my opinion, patriarchy has not yet been fully analyzed, and I will therefore attempt to deepen this analysis in order to redefine the very concept of patriarchy.

Patriarchy has neither been *systematically* related to other significant phenomena of our society nor has it been interpreted as a system of changing and multifunctional concrete politics in every day life as well as on a general social level. In one word, it has been *underestimated* as an interdisciplinary historical category and reality. Patriarchy has not vanished with progress. On the contrary, it is developing with progress: It is progress itself! Capitalism is only the latest stage of patriarchy and not its contradiction, as many people (especially women) seem to believe today. So we live in a society that should be defined as „capitalist patriarchy“.

My contribution to this theoretical debate consists in the use of the seemingly obsolete historical concept of „*alchemy*“. In relating alchemy to patriarchy, however, I found the „key“ (the key is the main symbol of alchemy) not only to understand the history and concrete versions of patriarchy, but also the forms of patriarchal behaviour, of concrete patriarchal politics towards people, women, nature, society, and the world in general. In one word: I found out that alchemy is the „method“ of patriarchy. Using this method, politicians, technocrats, scientists and experimenters try to transform the world not just into a modern one, but also into a patriarchal one. This way patriarchy has become what I call an „Alchemical System“.

I will first consider religion, namely Christianity, and how it is related to alchemy and to the violence of capitalist patriarchy. In reality, we in the West believe in violence. The „Alchemical System“ as the form capitalist patriarchy has developed can only survive because people put all their faith in it. Therefore the question is how to rid ourselves of this misguided and self-destructive belief. Only then can our eyes be opened to real alternatives to the limited choices that global capital is forcing us to accept.

I am sure that my friend Maria Mies will like this approach as an extension of her own analysis of „Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale“ (Mies 1986).

The Thesis

Is it possible to say that our economics and technology, capitalism, is the practical side of our religion, Christianity? Is it possible to say that with capitalism society has assumed the Christian goal and task of proving the existence of God? If so, what would „God“ then be?

From this point of view our economics and technology would actually be a form of religious practice, while our religion would in truth be an economic and technological theory. However, whereas this is not necessarily true for all systems of economics and for all religions, it could nonetheless be true for us in the west (see Weber 1993).

If our hypothesis about such a narrow relationship between capitalism and Christianity is true, then we would need to abandon this faith in order to be able to change the economic and technological order. In the search for real alternatives we therefore are required to liberate ourselves from a set of beliefs. But what is wrong with our beliefs?

If we begin with the results, then we are certainly forced to admit that our modern economic and technological system, capitalism (including socialism) as „modernity“, is in fact systematically destroying the earth: the final outcome having much less to do with „God“, than with the question of ecology (Brown/Ayres 1998).

On the other hand, if we focus on religion, we see, surprisingly, that at least our religious institutions, paramount among them the Church, are apparently not at all opposed to this destruction. In any case, the Church seen as the centre of a world power has until now said or done very little about the ecological problem (as exception see Drewermann 1991). Of course, this is not true for many Christian grass-root movements around the world or for feminist theology. But these groups did not succeed in changing the attitude of the „top ten“ of the church. At first glance this might seem very surprising, because it is „God's creation“ which is being destroyed, and we would expect the Church as such stand up and say, „Stop! We can't do

this". Yet this seldom happens, let alone is it followed by concrete political acts. In my opinion this is tantamount to saying that the Church, along with most other institutions – like the majority of the governments, political parties, trade unions, entrepreneurs and social movements – is in agreement with the destruction that is happening. The real question is: "Why?" We must take the lack of the Church's response very seriously, and we cannot make excuses by saying that the Church has only forgotten to respond or does not properly understand that the earth is gradually being destroyed, or that a distinction must be made between the Church and Christianity, or between the Church and its members.

Thus I have to conclude that the Church – in theory and in practice – is in agreement with the destruction of the earth by the modern economic and technological system (see Hunke 1987). So, having faith either in our religion or in capitalist progress is to have faith in the destruction that corporate globalization is visiting on the earth.

THE PATRIARCHAL PROJECT

From this perspective, the Church and Christianity on the one hand and the capitalist system on the other hand appear in reality as one and the same project. I call it "The patriarchal project". But, what is it that both are attempting to achieve, and by which practical method? How can this explain the negative results for most of us and our planet?

I will hereafter refer to this common denominator of Christian religion and capitalist system as "Patriarchy". Thus, for me the first and most central question is: what is patriarchy really? As of yet there has been no proper definition of patriarchy which can offer an explanation for the observable relationship between Christianity and capitalism.

"Pater" and "arché"

If one examines the word patriarchy from a literal viewpoint – and this is always a good starting-point, because the names of things are no accident – we see that it is a combination of the words *pater* and *arché*. *Pater* means "father", and *arché* basically means "origin", "beginning", or also, in a concrete sense, "uterus". Over the centuries the meaning of "arché" shifted to include "power, rule, domination", which of course is something rather different. We generally only think of this second meaning when we see the word "arché", thus patriarchy and matriarchy translate to mean "rule of fathers" or "rule of mothers", and accordingly we wrongly think of matriarchy as society ruled by mothers/women. This, however, is a condition which has never existed: in any case there is no evidence of it in pre-patriarchal societies anywhere on our earth (see Weiler 1993, Lerner 1991; Göttner-Abendroth 1988; Meier-Seethaler 1992; Eisler 1993). Correspondingly, many people wrongly explain and justify patriarchy as the logical reverse of "mothers"/or "women's rule".

Much of this confusion can be eliminated if we return to the older meaning of *arché*. With the older meaning in mind, matriarchy translates simply as "in the beginning the mother" (see Göttner-Abendroth *ibid*). All life originates from and is born of mothers, **in the last instance or Mother Earth**. This is and always has been simply the state of things here on earth, a fact which banal may seem at first glance, but which has potentially paradigm-shattering implications. With that in mind, the concept of patriarchy, translating as "in the beginning the father", seems like a strange notion. This would be like saying that fathers are the originators of life, i.e., fathers are men with uteruses. Suddenly patriarchy, *pater arché*, seems like a seriously more complicated and difficult concept than that of *mater arché*, or matriarchy, because it is not referring to any concrete event, fact, or state of things. Therefore *pater arché* cannot be the reverse of *mater arché*, simply because it does not exist.

The second problem arises from the transformation of the meaning of *arché* from "origin" to meaning "rule, domination". First, a "right to rule" is deduced from the fact of origin. This could mean either the power of the body of the mother, of the female (e.g., Mühlmann 1984), or mother-power (Canetti 1986), or "mother-right" as well (Bachofen 1978). But in this case there is no "rule". Or possibly what is meant is that the maternal power, which by nature is necessary for nurturing, protecting, and accompanying new life until it is able to take care of itself, is replaced by a father's "right to rule". Either the father "rules" and assumes the power of the mother while she is giving birth, or the "father" makes his claim to the power because he himself is the one giving birth. This would mean a kind of "father's power". However, since fathers are not (yet) able to give birth and thus are not by nature "powerful" in this sense, we still have the problem of explaining which non-maternal birth and non-maternal ruling power we are talking about here.

Things are just as difficult when we look at the word "pater". In the discussion on patriarchy it is often not taken into account that – as far as we know – the word father did not even exist in pre-patriarchal society, and when it finally appears with patriarchy, it does not mean any of the things we usually associate with it. When the concept of father appeared in history, it did not mean the physical father who takes care of his children. The concept of father was from the beginning an abstract institutional one **instead**, a concept of hierarchy, rule and domination (e.g. von Braun 1990). The father appears from the beginning in connection with the concept of domination, the lawful ruler, God, something superhuman (see Freud 1974). The father concept thus did not necessarily mean physical fatherhood, and it did not originate in the sensual culture of matriarchies (here and elsewhere in the text I will use the term "matriarchy" with the concrete pre-patriarchal meaning "in the beginning the mother" rather than the mythical "rule of the mothers"). Only with this in mind can we understand that the concept of father is a purely *utopian* concept, in the sense that the "rule" of the "father" is: a) possible; b) desirable; c) so all-comprehensive that it could even include the maternal, real origin, the birth event; and/or d) no longer needs the maternal, because it has completely "replaced" it.

Patriarchy as Utopia

This way patriarchy is basically the expression of a *social utopia* which states that it is the father and not the mother, in the abstract institutional form of “fatherhood”, i.e., as a supposed God or his “law”, or even a “natural law”, who creates life, or who ideally one day will be able to do so.

So patriarchy is in the end an unimaginable, incomprehensible, almost inexpressible claim totally unattached to and abstracted from the concrete conditions of earthly existence, going far beyond anything as banal as some sort of “birth envy”. Its goal is nothing less than the transformation of the birth-giving female body into an all-producing and universally reproducible thing, to replace the birth-giving body with a non-bodily, non-female machinery and claim this machinery to be the goal and end of human history. The same is true for Mother Nature and the earth herself. Patriarchy thus means “motherless society” and ends in the policy of attempting to replace the concrete mother/nature with the abstract father/“second” nature (Bruiger 2006). Only when we realize this can we really understand why patriarchy begins with matricide and the conscious killing of animals (see Weiler 1991; Tazi-Preve 1992; Wolf 1994), with the subjugation of maternal culture co-operative with nature, and ends by trying to replace it with an artificial social “design”, which means to have finally replaced society and nature by a “system”, the “machine” (Merchant 1987, Genth 2002).

This attempt at substitution is a true obsession which continues to haunt us and whose menace is as immediate and threatening as ever. Accordingly, as long as there are real, concrete mothers and independent natural processes in this world, patriarchy is not complete and does not really even exist. And so there is a continuous, repeated need to prove over and over again that the Father, as the “Also-Mother”, lording over the world, i.e., God, as presented in all monotheistic religions (not just Christianity), really exists. Thus, from a religious point of view, the real “sin” of women and nature is simply the fact that they still are needed as mother/s because of the fact that life comes into the world only through their bodies. In Christian (or monotheistic) religion, all women are by nature sinners, unless, like Mary, they are mothers without sensual bodies or nine-month pregnancies. This is because in patriarchy a “spirit” does what is normally done by (fe)male bodies, a spirit which does not inhabit the supposedly “spirit-less” body and which enters it from outside in the form of a masculine-godly act, an act which also calls the latest reproduction technologies to mind, not to mention the many sperm-theories in the history of breeding (Aristotle et. al. in Treusch-Dieter 1990). In any case this vision presupposes a paradoxical separation of body and mind, matter and spirit, “mater”/mother and life.

Just as Mary was the ideal image of a patriarchal Yet-Mother, we are also in possession of an even older image of the father as Also-Mother, namely the Egyptian pharaoh Echnaton, who, as the founder of the first monotheistic religion, the Egyptian religion “Aton”, is said to be also the founder of Judaism (see Freud 1974). The god Echn-Aton appears as a pregnant man (see Wolf 1994). Thus from the very beginning of monotheistic religion we witness the claim of the Father uniting all into one, God as the “One and All”. The “one and all” is no longer the cosmic all-mother, the goddess Nut, who interestingly enough had her name stolen and used – written backwards – as the name of the new reversed father religion. The so-called Father was established in her stead, a completely unnatural, contradictory and paradoxical artificial being placed in (and above) the world as a political theory about the goal and end of history. So, long before our present economical and technological system developed, the political theory of monotheism was accompanied by the politics of despotism, which from then on defined and determined the practical, daily methods for the realization of the patriarchal obsession of replacing the mother and Mother Nature. The ideological part of this system is that which we refer to as monotheistic religion (see Assmann 1998, Girard 1992).

Patriarchy is the concept of a utopian system which goes hand in hand with monotheistic religion. Patriarchy wants to construct a form of society which not only makes a claim, but also in the course of time attempts to prove it. This claim is non other than the assertion that the better, more divine world is the one inhabited by the pater arché, the “birth-giving” and thus legitimately ruling Father-God, or his “Father-Law”, instead of the “natural right” of the mother and of the laws of nature (see von Werlhof 1996, Lauderdale 1996). But since the political theory of patriarchy, the rule of the birth-giving-origin-father, is purely a claim, it needs a whole system of proofs while at the same time calling for the actual realization of its utopia. This is necessary, because in the long run a whole civilization cannot be based on something which does not exist and which contradicts everything that our daily experience teaches us.

Patriarchy as violence

Thus it becomes typical and necessary for patriarchy to attempt to construct its own reality and that it speculates upon rather than explaining existing reality. This speculation goes along with a sort of “violent thinking” (Ernst 1986) which is formative for the reality it constructs. From that point on “violent thinking” is permanently connected to a politics of brutal force which will ruthlessly remake anything in its way which does not fit its theory. This practice of force and violence also turns up in science and technology, as well as, last but not least, in economics. From then on there is a constant effort to turn the world completely upside down, to transform nature, which is no longer regarded female-maternal, into something male-paternal (see Boehme 1988; Merchant 1987).

In recent history modern technology gives us a very clear picture of this. In particular, modern reproductive technology “reproduces” not so much actual life itself as the ideal process of life “production”: the pregnancy machinery, or birth machine, in the true sense of the word, which in the end would function without the female body, or at least without parts of it (see Rifkin/Perlas 1983). This goes even so far as to include the fiction of the pregnant man (no matter how simple, stupid, and ugly this fiction might be), into whom birth-giving organs can be implanted. The perverse idea of an artificially pregnant man goes all the way back to the pharaoh Echnaton.

The same is true for all the intents to produce an “artificial life” outside of the human sphere in animal and plant-life and even within the machinery itself (Weizenbaum 1978, Rifkin/Perlas 1983).

Still today not all thinking takes place upon purely patriarchal lines, neither consciously nor unconsciously. But those who are busy shaping our destinies certainly do think in this way, as evident by their constant, unmitigated thirst for power and money, a fact for which we would otherwise have no explanation (see von Werlhof/ Schweighofer/ Ernst 1996).

We thus can say that the patriarchal project is both an ideological (religious, philosophical) and a practical (technological, political, economic, cultural) attempt to convert the entire world into its opposite, a world which would then be “better”, more “divine”, and more in line with what is assumed to be its own, real “evolutionary” tendencies. For this reason, from a religious as well as from a technological and economical perspective, the world appears as a place in need of improvement, an imperfect, “evil”, “unclean”, worthless, low, or somehow insignificant place. Thus there is always a basic need for redemption or salvation – not only *of* the world, but also *from* the world (see Kippenberg 1991). In patriarchal religions (beginning with the Gnosis: see Sloterdijk/Macho 1991; and also Buddhism) the world, all earthly existence, is seen as a form of suffering, and must be overcome, the most important difference among them being the way salvation is to be attained.

From a pre-Socratic viewpoint (see Ernst 1997), the world was originally a Garden of Eden, which is then later lost: for we have been driven from Paradise. It is also believed that, although we might be able to construct a new paradise, we can never go back to the old one. And this is the point where the new concept of economics and technology comes into play: the construction of that new world, that new paradise. We can never be satisfied with the way the world (supposedly) is, with nature as it (supposedly) is, we can never be satisfied that nature is something “maternal”, that life comes from the female. No, for us this seems to be something almost outrageous, even diabolical. This is why from the religious point of view all women and nature itself are seen as automatically “low” and “bad”. This “fundamentalist” damnation of all that is female and/or natural (see Girard 1992) stems from the belief that women/nature should not bring forth life, but only God, the Father. In reality, nevertheless, heterosexual intercourse and sexual desire are necessary to the life-process, as well as to the entire scope of bodily, spiritual, intellectual, and sensual experience, all the things which are capable of uniting men, women, and children in a completely non-patriarchal way, in a this-worldly, erotic and creative community (see Schubart 1989). Patriarchy’s task is thus to break the power of the senses, the power of sense, and to get rid of the entire bodily sphere, along with all life-celebrating emotions and sensibilities. What is meant is the dulling of the senses and the replacement of the sensual world, of sense itself, with an un-sensual, sense(s)less, non-sensical world, a world in which all sensibility has been lost, a world which makes no sense (see Kutschmann 1986), and a world that has nothing to do with original nature any more.

And thus we can explain why the patriarchal project, beginning with its very basic concept of “pater arché”, is such a thoroughly violent one, making use of the most systematic, all-inclusive, and thoroughgoing violence in all of known history; why it has grown to such insane proportions and spread itself so globally: and why it is a thoroughly irrational project in which all of rationality itself is used as a tool to achieve its irrational and illusionary ends of turning the entire globe upside down along with all previous culture, and of changing nature into something which it exactly is not: an *anti-nature*. And this is what women-kind, or people in general, still do not grasp: the perpetrators of this system are dead serious, *they really mean it*.

What we are dealing with here is not the denial of the testing or of the development of something new, as many voices perhaps would say. What needs to be recognized is that this something new which patriarchy is seeking is really something thoroughly opposed to the world, something inimical, perverted, and destructive for it. We cannot seriously desire that everything non-patriarchal be destroyed and eventually be prevented from existing at all (Deschner 1994; Ullrich 1980; von Paczensky 1970; Illich 1982, 1983).

In the meantime we quietly assume that the new is better than the old, no matter how, why, or at what cost this “new” is constructed. Where living beings are constantly suffering injury, we ought to be hearing alarm bells ringing everywhere, but this alarm is not heard: Destruction supposedly has a creative aspect, or will be followed by “creation”. See for example the concept of the world-renowned Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter who literally speaks of “creative destruction” (Schumpeter 1962). All that religious guilt, so present otherwise, is gone here, because Christianity is not concerned at all with any of these questions. Instead, the crimes against nature, against women, matricide, the murder of the “sweet and wise body”, the murder of women’s culture and of Eros – these are the very goals of the patriarchal project and the prerequisites for its achievement. Thus the persecution of witches has never really stopped – it just changed shape (Kimmerle 1980) – yet no one seems to feel very guilty about it, there is no evidence of any strong present or future feeling of responsibility, neither in the Church nor among men in general. So, the murder of women appears as a somehow normal and understandable event in criminal history, too (see Trube-Becker 1987). From the logic of this point of view it is – to the contrary – sinful to love women and not to punish them, and to love nature instead of trying to dominate it.

Patriarchy and “improvement” (“evolution”, machinery)

The patriarchal utopia could therefore not be realized as long as (unless) women/nature still did (not) exist, except in some “improved”, i.e., perverted, form, twisted through some unspeakable method, some new form which has nothing at all to do with the reality of nature or of women. When everything is seen as evil – the human being, especially women and nature - then this legitimizes the right to “improve” them, make them “ripe” for civilization, or to “cleanse” the world of them. This principle of human “evolution” is very obvious if we look at all sexist, racist, and especially educational practices (Dressen 1982; Hammer 1997).

To this end the human being, the world, nature and women, must – firstly – all be *transformed* into something really evil, a dirty, low or bad matter, not only ideologically but also empirically, in reality. This is the initial task of religion, technology, politics, and economy. Without first undergoing degradation, there would have been no need for “improvement”. However, the original act of degradation, of “making out” something to be bad, i.e., making it bad, leaves some pretty irreversible results. That is how it is supposed to be, so that afterwards almost anything would seem to be an improvement. We see the same thing happening in the destruction of the jungle, in land erosion and desertification due to modern farming and mining-techniques, or in the “breeding” of “enobled” species and “races” (Chargaff 1988).

After having degraded the world and its beings one has a justification for their improvement or even replacement. Investment in “human capital” seems to liberate us from the “risks” living beings mean for the system. It seems to be able to produce a purified, healthy, happy and perfect life “free” from suffering (Bergmann 1992): a life which has been transformed into machinery. In this way we have become accustomed to accepting a new primitiveness, brutality and irrationality, combined with a planned ignorance – the totalitarian outcome of “violent thinking”.

Thus economics - in conjunction with technology - appears to be the secular arm of the patriarchal project, as originally formulated theologically in religion and politically-philosophically in politics. Despite its claims of having left all its irrational and religious aspects behind it, it seems that capitalism today, in exact continuity with religious patriarchal thought, is attempting to take that very same religious patriarchal utopia and turn it into reality: to prove the existence of One (male) God and to create a “divine” world as the realization of Utopia, the “good”, the “beautiful”, and the “true” world, a new “Paradise” on earth (compare with Plato 1962).

Patriarchy as scarcity

It thus becomes apparent why our modern system defines itself in terms of the task of overcoming scarcity (Illich 1982; Gronemeyer 1988; Sachs 1993). There are, however, two interesting aspects to this scarcity. One of these, which as far as I can discover has never been examined, is the “*scarcity of patriarchy*”. For, there simply are no “birth-giving” fathers, nor are there any real substitutes for nature, nor any nature-less, motherless worlds. One can thus say that patriarchy itself is in fact scarce, extremely scarce. What is utopian about patriarchy is that it is presented as normality, as anything but scarce. In order to prove this one tries to make it plentiful. Not only much money and giant masses of commodities in a literal “production-battle” are the outcome, but also “great” men (Godelier 1987) and many small “lords”, as well as conception and fertilization theories which claim – the same way as in antiquity already – that it is only the male sperm which carries life, and that women are merely “black boxes” for its transformation and growth (see Treusch-Dieter 1990). It constructs a “second nature”, no longer born as “*natura naturata*” from “*natura naturans*” any more, not self-creating nature, but rather a “nature” put upon or forced into nature, an artificial un- or anti-nature. Like Ernst Bloch one could say, patriarchal civilization moves in the world like “an army in the enemy’s territory” (1967). In the meantime even women see their bodies and their ability to give birth as something unimportant, ugly or old-fashioned; to the point that they themselves campaign its abolishment and replacement through industry (see the “gender” approach of Firestone 1975 to Haraway 1995).

There is also a second aspect to the overcoming of scarcity through capitalism, one which has been well-documented. I am referring to the fact that scarcity, i.e., need, which the economic system is supposed to free us from, is actually caused by it, i.e., created through policies of monopolization, accumulation, and destruction (see Bergfleth 1992; Mies/von Werlhof 1999). On the one hand we possess an entire, artificial armory of means and products, and on the other hand we see an unbearable, artificially-produced scarcity of these very means and products, as well as the supposed lack of any alternatives to them. This becomes especially obvious when we look at the means and products which are basic and essential for life (see von Werlhof 1983; Krieg 1980; Mies/Shiva 1993). Economics presents itself as the saviour, but it actually creates the problem it is supposed to save us from (see George 1980; Imfeld 1985). This is essential to the general acceptance of the economic program. Only then, when misery, disaster, infertility, and destruction, i.e., a scarcity of paradise, really do exist, is there also the necessity for constructing a “better world” with less scarcity, a new paradise: but this time a paradise that is assumed to never disappear – like “evolution”.

The belief in progress is going to run into the last form of scarcity which emerges when non-renewable resources are unlimitedly looted, always more species go extinct and soils and waters have irreversibly died.

So, in reality, things go the opposite way than pre-supposed. Instead of heaven we are inventing hell on earth.

Patriarchy as metaphysics

This cynicism of producing scarcity through accumulation and destruction leads to a *delusion*: that it would be possible and recommendable to construct a new world which, in the final analysis, would certainly be a metaphysical one, beyond physics, beyond the body, matter, the mother (physein in Greek also means to give birth), i.e., beyond all of nature (Shiva 1989). The incredible strength of our faith in this patriarchal religion is revealed in our acceptance of the nihilistic notion that the existing world must first be destroyed in order to get a better one: for, what happens if this self-generated natural catastrophe, this apocalypse, only ends in a big “self-made” Nothing – instead of God, instead of the world as a “functioning machinery”? And much seems to speak for this eventuality (see Schütz-Buenaventura 2000). It is an incontestable fact that there is not even a shred of evidence for any credible replacement for this Nothing on the horizon. The project of the supposed conquest of nature, originally expressed in religious terms as God’s instruction to Adam to “rule over the earth”, has ended in her accelerating retreat (see Colburn et. al 1996).

But, our behaviour towards nature and women remains the same, and the legitimization of this behaviour remains the same, although everyone knows what a lie it is. The “valuation” of nature means the destruction of its real value, its transformation into waste. Patriarchal thinking has “penetrated” our consciousness so deeply that it is nearly impossible for us to imagine anything other than the destruction and subsequent “improvement” of the world, even when we see that this is not possible. For example, the mention of the “curse” of technology is always countered with mention of its apparent “blessings”, which are nothing but short-lived illusions of “improvement” that can only be sustained if we manage to ignore the violence and degradation that was necessary to produce them and/or is their consequence. Yet there is only one real alternative to this dire situation: the acceptance of nature as it is, and a relationship with it based on this acceptance (see Mességué 1989). This acceptance is prerequisite to any co-operation with her. But this sort of reasoning has not been possible in our “reasonable” age and civilization. We are no longer (even) capable of recognizing what nature is, and (even less capable) of knowing who women are.

THE METHOD OF PATRIARCHY: ALCHEMY

In a second step I deal with the methods used to set up the patriarchal utopian dream as a “concrete” utopian world and to prove this “new world” through religion and belief-systems and, particularly, through economics and technology. That there must be such a method clearly follows from the fact that patriarchy, as a utopian theory, initially does not exist; it is a “wannabe”. Patriarchy as a social system must remain unproven as long as reality does not conform to the theory or to the utopia. Patriarchy is always in need of a proof, especially over the longer term, for we have often seen that mere terror and lies will not work forever in keeping people in bounds, and intimidation and deception alone will never turn them into true believers in patriarchy. All over the world we can still hear women laughing – those that still are able to laugh – at the male patriarchal version of how life is created and of what a tremendous role they play in it (see Diotima in Plato 1985). Moving beyond the religious or ideological expressions of patriarchy one has always felt the need to put its theory into practice through politics, technology, science, and economics, in order to prove the correctness of its hallucinations. And in fact, from the beginning in all of patriarchy’s theories, even in philosophy and in other supposedly nonreligious disciplines, we have seen the attempt to formulate patriarchy’s perverted train of thought in such a way as to expand the *faith* in the correctness of its claims, although - or perhaps because - there can be no real *knowledge* of these claims (see Hunke 1987). And so we have here a system of belief which is considered as particularly divine and which must be maintained over and against everything we know. This faith begins where there is no knowledge, and where knowledge cannot exist. The absurd can only be believed, it cannot be known: “credo quia absurdum” (Galtung 1995). In the long term, however, the problem of the practical realization of the theory plays an increasingly important role. How can a patriarchal world really be brought about, so that faith in it, permanently precarious, can be replaced by “concrete” knowledge of it?

After examining various natural sciences and the history of technology, I have gradually come to the conclusion that the method for realization of patriarchy was and still is *alchemy*. Alchemy, as a kind of all-comprehensive theology, philosophy, psychology and technology is the key to the question of *how* patriarchy puts its theory into practice, in all areas and at all levels of society.

The word alchemy goes back to the Arab word “keme”, the meaning of which includes “the black mud of the Nile”. The annual flooding of the Nile left behind thick layers of this black mud on its banks, making them fertile. Through nature’s chemistry of mixing water and earth new life was created. Alchemy must originally have been the attempt to observe this natural phenomenon, to understand it, to help it along, and to imitate it. This is most likely the phase of the pre-patriarchal alchemy of gardeners and peasants, of men and women who wished to help this process along and co-operate with this natural process, without changing the principles behind it (e.g., the early notion of the Garden Eden or the famous “Hanging Gardens” of Queen Semiramis).

Alchemy is known to us through the history of religion, philosophy, psychology and technology. It has existed throughout the world in many forms. Most certainly alchemy had its origins in ancient matriarchal cultures and over time became more and more patriarchalized and perverted – turned into its opposite. There is much evidence of alchemical practices and theories in China, India, Africa, Middle East, and throughout Europe, especially in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (see Eliade 1980; Jung 1985; Binswanger 1985; Bologne 1995; Gebelein 1996; Biedermann 1991, Schütt 2000). But as far as I can discover, there have been no attempts until now to examine alchemy from the perspective that I have suggested here. Thus I am crossing into new territory, at least subjectively. However the time appears ripe to attempt an initial thesis on the role of alchemy in patriarchy and vice versa, and later to substantiate these beginnings with further research (von Werlhof 2000a).

Whereas our economy, the “capitalist world system” (Wallerstein 1974, 1986, 1989), appears to be the practical side of our religion with the goal of achieving patriarchy by adding “In the beginning was the father” to the idea of “paradise”, then alchemy, according to the thesis, is the concrete method for achieving this goal.

Let us examine what the method of alchemy is. The central concept in Egyptian alchemy, going back much more than 5000 years is the key (Binswanger 1985). Egyptian alchemy actually saw itself as the key to deciphering the world. I will similarly use alchemy as the key to the interpretation of the method for constructing patriarchy.

Patriarchal alchemy

The principles of nurturing and co-operation of early alchemy are entirely different from those of patriarchal alchemy, such as the production of the so called “materia prima”, (or) “massa confusa” or “nigredo” on the one hand, and of “dissolve and combine”, in Latin “solve et coagula” on the other hand. The “materia prima” is the outcome of a process in which the alchemist wants to go back to the supposed origins of matter. For this purpose he has to “blacken” and to dissolve all matter mostly by using fire, producing the so called “nigredo” which is supposed to be the all including original substance of matter. In other words, the alchemist starts with bringing death to matter. This process is called “mortification”, from latin “mors” = death (Bologne 1995). It is no coincidence that blacksmiths and all forms of pyro-techniques played a special role in alchemy, (Eliade 1980), and that women, seen as witches, were burned.

After that, according to the principle of “dissolve and combine”, pure “elements” like mercury in a first and sulphur in a second step, in the case of metals, are recombined with the materia prima – here mostly lead – which through this procedure is supposed to gain the “higher” level as silver or the highest as gold.

It is the same process which in the social sciences we refer to as “divide and rule”. This is also the principle of patriarchal technology. The “raw” material first undergoes the process of abstraction, dissolution and “death” (filtering, isolation). The

“mortificated” substances are then combined with other substances that have been “abstracted” from their natural surroundings (see Ernst 1993). This method anticipates machine technology (Mumford 1977), which, although appearing much later, does the same thing (see Bammé et al. 1983). Machine technology shares with alchemy this principle of separation and “purification” of “elements” (see the experiment in sciences), as well as the principle of producing “raw materials” primarily as “resources” first of all. Here we have a context, a common ground, reaching through various epochs and expressing itself in the development of various periods of patriarchal thought, intention, and practice. Thus alchemy shows up right within the capitalist system, despite the fact that our modern world claims to have left the superstitious and ignorant or naive method which alchemy is labelled to be, far behind it. The reason is that alchemy failed to succeed in producing the “highest”, “godly” matters: gold and life. Nobody would therefore want to relate to it any more.

But if we compare alchemy with the modern experiment it is obvious that there are many similarities.

The central principles of “blackening” and of “dissolve and combine” are those of force and violence. They require sacrifice, that of matter e.g. nature, and that of people, especially women (Eliade 1980). The isolation of so-called “elements” as “pure” substances (characteristic of modern chemistry as well), comprises the “construction” and later destruction of the “*materia prima*”, reducing it to essences which do not occur in nature. Alchemy goes about its work of producing new, “improved” substances and materials by combining these “pure” substances with the raw material of the *materia prima* and with one another. The alchemist completes his “great work” through the so-called “chemical” or “holy marriage” of matter. “Holy marriage” is a metaphor taken from matriarchal culture. Whereas “holy marriage” originally was the coming together of the goddess and her hero in a great celebration of Eros from which all life springs and is confirmed (see Weiler 1993), in alchemy it appears as a connection between, and forced upon, artificially abstracted substances characterized as either “male” or “female” (e.g., gender as a truly “social construction”; see Jung 1985). For example, the blacksmith often was responsible for circumcision, thus producing “pure” sexes (see Wolf 1994). The ceremony is no longer one of the mixing of the natural manifoldness and polarity of matter (materials) as a “great work” of nature, it is the forced putting together of artificial opposites (see Ernst 1993; 1996), from which the “great work” of the alchemists springs. The alchemist sees himself (here) as the true creator, as the procreator of a completely new kind of “higher” matter or life. He sees himself as a sort of new “great mother”, or rather, God. Apparently in the latter’s name, like the priest at a wedding, he completes the holy ritual in the “sacrament” of bringing the couple together. Only from this established act of bringing together - and, correspondingly, the first sexual act is only permitted following this ceremony - springs something (entirely) new, so it is supposed, in particular new life (see “heterosexual reproduction”). This life is even defined as a “higher” one than “normal life” as it is based on the sacrifice of the woman’s life, because she is denied in her self-creative power and by ritual “mortification” reduced to the “raw material” for the alchemist’s “creation”.

However, the whole principle of the combination of pure substances or “elements” with the *materia prima* as raw material seems all the more puzzling in that “pure” substances as well as the mortificated *materia prima* are essentially dead ones, from which no life is very likely to grow. And so patriarchy is in principle *barren* (see Colburn et al. 1996). This fact is gradually being noticed by modern chemistry which has begun mixing its pure substances with “impure”, living ones (Rifkin/Perlas 1983).

But the supposedly higher life is meant to come into being in a way that makes the alchemist, rather than nature or women, appear as the “divine creator” (c.f. patents on life forms). And above all, the alchemist’s goal is to construct not just any (old) new life, but rather a very special new form of life which is not only supposed to be better, but which also leads to the discovery of the so-called “philosophers stone” – the “tincture”, the “elixir”, the “powder” – all terms for the “quintessence”, the “fifth” element or final “essence”, with which all matter can be transformed into the most valuable of all matter: gold, meaning: “life”. Finding life in its “pure” form is the ultimate goal of all alchemical filtering.

The purpose of alchemists, however, is not to promote and protect life and fertility. It needs the philosopher’s stone in order to get hold of the “essence of life” which is thought to be lurking somewhere inside all matter. Here, the pre-patriarchal experience in the unity of matter and mind is still maintained. But the (eventual) rejection of this unity is foreshadowed by the attempt made by the alchemist to separate this unity, which is an act of violence against living matter in order to convert it into something deteriorated, subdued, “female” in a patriarchal sense. In contrast to the unity of mind and matter the supposedly separate mind from now on appears to belong to something “higher”, “holier” and “male” in a patriarchal sense. “Pure mind”, the mind without matter, combined with transformed matter again, this is the philosopher’s stone. It seems to be the pure power of life in a material form, with which one believes to be able to produce living beings even beyond nature and women: the so-called “homunculus”, the small human often depicted as sitting in a test tube. Homunculus would be, so to speak, the first successful test tube baby, a creation of the alchemist experimenter – something that has never really (happened or) existed. For example, Paracelsus, the famous alchemist and physician of the 16th century, still tried to produce new life by combining male sperm with human (female?) blood (see Paracelsus 1990). Similar experiments using alchemical methods have taken place through the centuries up until the present day (von Worms 1988).

Unlike earlier, pre-patriarchal “alchemy” with its principle of co-operation with nature, what we see here is an attempt at the *usurpation* of the female pregnancy and birth process, not only in theory, but also in *reality*, an attempt to “improve” them and replace them with something else. This is what we have previously referred to as the attempt to prove the existence of God: the proof that a male, omnipotent creator *above* matter really does exist. For previously there were only female gods and female creators *within* matter. And nothing has changed within patriarchy until today. Using alchemical principles modern scientists are still attempting the same thing, but since then they have not succeeded in proving the existence of a metaphysical God and have not brought about a “male” creation of (new) life as it springs from nature and from women. In this sense alchemy has been a failure, but it has in its current form – in “chemistry”, physics and the scientific experiment in general – produced something else, namely artificial forms of a so called “life” beyond the cycles of nature, effectively retaining all of the former goals and methods of alchemy. The main question, however, remains: Can these anti-natural “life” forms “replace” life and nature on the destruction of which they have been and are “created”? Only when this question can be answered with Yes, this would be a proof for the existence of “God”, be he beyond the world or within it – namely as the

modern alchemist as a “Demiurg” himself. But as far as we can see, the logical answer is No. “Creation out of destruction” can, of course, not replace creation as such (Chargaff 1988).

Alchemy, capitalism (speculation) and individual identity

Let us now turn to alchemy as the patriarchal method in the field of economics (itself). The Swiss economist Hans Christoph Binswanger, in his book “Geld und Magie” (money and magic), discusses the connection between modern economics and alchemy – without, however, any reference to patriarchy (1985). For Binswanger, Goethe’s “Faust” symbolizes modern capitalist economics as an alchemical process. The goal is a new creation out of nothing, which in the end is supposed to be possible as a pure abstraction. Whereas previous alchemists attempted to reduce matter to its supposed “basic essence”, (to reduce its form to) last but not least gold, i.e., to suggest that gold, the “pure metal”, respectively “life as such”, is the ultimate essence of matter - this would be a good place to apply the term “essentialism” -, modern economy for its part starts with the belief that gold is the ultimate value and most convincing symbol of wealth and power. After the invention of paper-money this belief changes from having gold = having power over life, to having money = having power over life (see Binswanger 1985 and Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis, 1985). This way the belief is changing into speculation: the belief in a piece of paper. This means to attempt to change even paper, or just “information”, as today, back into money or gold, and last but not least into life/power over life, be it now or in the future. Whereas in alchemy real materials served as the basis, today the belief in the potential of paper - currency notes - or information must suffice to serve as the claim to the treasure, namely gold and life. And thus, in our economic system, money as a form of “capital”, even more so than gold or life as such, by the time is raised up as the philosopher’s stone, and its existence then, logically, represents the proof of the supposed existence of God.

In the real world, money, as the new philosopher’s stone (itself), appears to be the means for turning everything else into money as well. Money appears to be life itself, or the cosmic life power, which can incite or force the continual production of something new, even something previously unknown. Money “is born” through the “alchemical” mixing of land and labor, later increasing (even) more by being mixed again with capital, itself the “product” of labour and land. Capital, soil and labour are filtered out of the world and of human existence as more or less “pure substances”. As such they exist in the form of the “labourer”, the cultivated field, “*Blut und Boden*”, machinery. They amalgamate to form new “life”, the commodity as fetish (see Marx 1974). The commodity, rather than any other “antiquated” form of life, seems to guarantee, even to be, a new and “better” form of life. (Later) The same increasingly applies to machines, which today are referred to as “beings” - this is the “essentialism” of the “post modern” discourse -, while human beings are conversely regarded as post human “systems” (see Weizenbaum 1978).

Money really does begin to seem like a kind of philosopher’s stone, because it keeps this process in motion, in particular by mobilizing people as “labour” and placing them at the service of the alchemical process of turning - their - life into money/capital while at the same time succeeding at keeping them faithful to the beliefs that underpin the system, namely that they contribute to “improve” not only their own lives, but also the life of the whole society. The separation (abstraction) of humans from their surroundings by so-called “original accumulation”, i.e., their separation from land and other means of production – from the alchemical point of view their “mortification” - forces them to concentrate all their productive capabilities onto the production of pure “human material”, the “labour power”, and to reduce all their hopes and desires to the goal of making money like a modern alchemist, or of placing themselves at his disposal as “pure substances”. And the women have to play the part of the general “materia prima” without developing into “pure substances”, having been transformed from witches to “housewives”. So, the women were forced into sacrifice and then had to continue to sacrifice themselves in the process of patriarchal “life-production”: Going all the way from mothers to “mother-machines” (Corea 1980), they are even told to have become a more essential part in the male creation of life-process, a sort of a new pure substance, whereas in reality they contribute to the alchemical aim of being in the end totally replaced by machines. This indeed would be the ultimate sacrifice of women: the general murder of the mother.

“Homo oeconomicus” and “femina domestica” (Illich 1982) are the product of a total mobilization in service of the artificial “uterus”. This way they seem to regard themselves as a kind of philosopher’s stone, which each individual in the economic “melting pot” of human raw materials has created in, “for”, and “of himself”: “self-realization” is a word for “self-alchemization”. Nowadays everybody has become his/her own alchemist - see the truly alchemical notion of “gender”. Individualization seems to mean to become one’s own alchemist (“*alchemization*”). This is the *generalization* of alchemy instead of its retreat from the world which supposedly happened when modernity began (Schütt 2000).

Today, the stated goal of people is to do anything for money, to be eternally “prepared” for money, in order to have a God-related, “self-determined” modern “piece of life” (Duden 1991). And the necessity of this goal, including the faith in it, is what defines the person as a “homo christianus”: a “good Christian”, someone to be found especially among the prosperous, who are considered to be God’s chosen ones. According to Calvin, to have money is proof of the proper faith in God’s existence, for He has provided those riches, and He does not do the same for everyone. *Faith in God and faith in money* has become one and the same thing. It becomes a (matter of, a) proof of faith when the individual spends all his time and thought on nothing other than making money. Otherwise one is regarded as heretic, immoral or vagabond (see the debates in Weber 1993; Foucault 1977; Dreßen 1982; Schütz-Buenaventura 1996). Faith itself, Christianity, through its connection with modern economics, becomes a kind of philosopher’s stone. For, where there is a (permanent) lack of money, this lack is replaced by faith, which assumes the task of calming the poor and the losers, while at the same time motivating them to continue doing exactly that which caused their misery in the first place.

The fact that everyone is busy doing the same thing, is searching for the same “main thread”, is characterized later by Adam Smith as being God’s secular will set in motion and directed by the great “invisible hand” (see Smith 1823). It is as if the new

cooperation between economics and religion were a holy act, although it should more appropriately be regarded as a “black mass” or “conjuring the devil”. And thus the murderous egoism of each individual, which is thus systematically brought to the fore, appear afterwards to be beneficial for society, socially good and (socially) valuable, part of a good or godly society, in any case as a part of the best of all possible worlds. What other social system and religion has ever managed to view humankind as bad, to literally make them bad, and to push this fact off as an *improvement* or as “evolution” of humankind, as the triumph of humankind over nature? (e.g. Hobbes 1984, Locke 1970). How is it possible that the “mind who wants the evil” - violent thinking=alchemical thinking - nevertheless “creates the good”? (c.f. Ernst 1986) The answer is: It has not been possible!

With the *great alchemist reversal*, we finally have the explanation for modern Europe’s success at and through its colonization of most parts of the world. Who else among the world’s peoples were individually and collectively as mobile, laborious, arrogant, active, unscrupulous, merciless, violent, convinced of their mission to bring real i.e., patriarchal civilization to the entire world: united, like an army, oriented towards a single goal, everywhere, permanently, and without needing even a command from above? (see Todorov 1980). The *alchemy of patriarchy*, especially in the *mixture of Christianity and capitalism*, has transformed the entire world, has turned it upside down. After all, it possessed “pure” Christian faith and “pure” cold economic calculation – God and Money – as “pure”, abstract “substances”, both originally separate things (and they still are made to appear as such today). And then they were put together in an unholy marriage built upon the decline of nature and women’s culture: transformed into “capital” – money, command, machinery – as the proof of God’s existence.

The other result of this mixture is, however, not the noble Civilized Man and Paradise on Earth: on the contrary, the result rather resembles something like hell on an earth serving as a home for Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Evil, the devil, sin, “scarcity”, all those things from which religion claims to free us, and which economics claim to improve, are really produced by them, and then systematically spread throughout the world. Alchemy has not generated any jolly homunculus, or any gold; it has generated a menagerie of freaks and monsters, e.g., the god-fearing exploiter, the honourable mass murderer, the gentleman conqueror, the salvation-bringing missionary, the torturer in service of the good cause, the innocent rapist, and the creative maker of the atom bomb; it has invented such marvels as “creative destruction”, war as the “father of all things”, the “ethics” of degradation, the “morale” of repression, education to self-destruction, “modesty” as toleration of domination, violence in sexuality, cynicism as the “normal” intellectual posture, and war as a “humanitarian” act (Chossudovsky 1996; Klöss 1985; Daly 1970; Theweleit 1977; Easlea 1986; Sloterdijk 1983).

And yet, in patriarchy all of this is considered as neither evil, sinful nor diabolical, because, in contradiction to what really has taken place, patriarchy sees itself as the one and only instrument, the “weapon”, against evil, sin, and the devil which it sees lurking everywhere in nature, in life, in everything feminine, sensual and erotic, and ultimately in the very world itself. This is *the real distortion* of things.

The alchemical system, with its goal of patriarchy, has in the meantime become so internalized and is so strongly present in the back of the mind that for humankind, driven from its “paradise”, there generally is no need of any external force for one to be squeezed into the alchemical mortification and purification process. The modern person continually “alchemizes” himself by transforming his “passions” into “interests” (see Hirschman 1987). And although his empirical experience tells him that his life does not seem to be improving and is neither becoming “precious”, nor attaining a special “identity” or “individuality”, but is in the end wasted, that his life is being hardened into something dead - Marx’ s concept of capital as “past”, “dead” labour -, he still hangs on to his *alchemical superstition* without knowing that the whole process is, as it always has been, nothing but a swindle (see von Werlhof 1983/92).

Even women, who ought to know better because it is still they through whom self-creating life enters the world without the assistance of any alchemy, have begun to believe this dangerous patriarchal non-sense. They, too, now wish to be “equal” with patriarchal men, as labourers, individuals, as possessors of commodities, sexuality, power and money. They want to catch up with men’s supposedly more advanced development to make this development generally accessible, copy it, rather than to see to it that the insane notion of a “better” life be exposed as the *deadly illusion* it is. Many of them even accept the new reproductive technologies dealing with pregnancy, birth, and maternity, not realizing that the goal of these technologies is the final, last possible - or impossible - step towards their total removal from the “power to be”, as well as the replacement and destruction of the last remaining form of life and subsistence which have not yet been split asunder. Many women today act as if they did not know what this means, as if the patriarchal attempts to construct a motherless world were possible, even desirable (Butler 1991).

In the final analysis, of course, there is no such thing as the philosopher’s stone. Money, God, the male “creator” and the faith in these things are all illusions. The belief in the philosophers’ stone is the superstition that blinds us all to the strength and power with which we are naturally endowed from birth, the erroneous belief that drives us to seek strength and power instead in God, in money, in dead objects - capital - or in political and military “power”. Indeed we cannot imagine finding strength and power within ourselves, unless and until our lives have somehow been “cleansed” of everything living. Thus we seem not to object in the slightest to sacrificing either ourselves or others, because we believe that it is all for the cause of the improvement of humankind and of the world. This explains the paradox of “progress” demanding sacrifices (Gambaroff et al. 1986). And from a theological point of view it seems that the sacrifice and further “higher existence” of Christ is seen as the “model” for our own alchemical transformation. Christ himself appears as “*Christus lapis*” (Jung 1985), as the “philosophers’ stone” for the redemption of humanity.

In the modern world we only maintain the illusion of the effectiveness of the so-called philosopher’s stone, because pure substances have been mixed not only with the “nigredo” of all sorts of raw materials as well as with other pure substances – as already invented in pre-modern patriarchal alchemy – but have also been combined with living ones, with life itself. Just as

in chemistry: as long as the artificial fertilizer is not put into the fields, it will never have any effect; as long as no one uses those machines, they are only heaps of junk; and the artificially fertilized egg still needs a uterus for the embryo to develop. Without *impure life* there is still no outcome at all. This is of course why so much money is being spent on research in such areas as plant growth without earth, self-producing and self-maintaining systems – so-called artificial intelligence – as well as artificial birth machines. But in the meantime it has become obvious that patriarchal “new life” - beyond a simple cell-combination! - is not the better or even “higher” form of life at all, but it is a weak, susceptible, monotonous, dependent, primitive, reduced form of life, life without spirit/mind, machine-“life”, a pseudo-life beyond the cycles of nature and therefore without a past and a future – not to mention the ecological destruction which generally seems to go hand in hand with it (see Chargaff 1988; Dahl 1989; Shiva 1992).

Paradoxically, this is becoming even more apparent in the most recent phase of alchemy, the combination of different, but living substances in genetic engineering and all sorts of biotechnology (called “algeny” by Rifkin 1983). This is essentially because artificial life can in a way “be made”, but it would never be able to “replace” born life - and, may be, it even does not want it!

Alchemy without matter?

The power of money to force all of life into prostitution and to present this perversion as a quasi-religious act characterizes our system to be a kind of Christian pimping, or, in other words, shows up procuring (souteneuring) to be the real kernel of the patriarchal economic system, especially of capitalism. This means that western, Christian capitalism is a form of exploitation of peoples’ life-powers and their alchemical transformation into the life power or –energy of others. In reality it is general *cannibalism*.

Where money is concerned, the alchemical procedure still appears to be a success – even after the breakdown of the financial markets. It is no accident that the word for a return on money is “interest”. The money which comes to exist in the alchemical process of the modern economic system, capitalist money, appears to “give birth” to more money. Money has children and grandchildren, i.e., simple interest and compound interest. It really does seem to appear – to be “created” – almost out of nowhere, from pure abstraction. In the earlier stages of alchemy, as long as someone had to work in order to produce simple and compound interest, this was not the case. However, we can observe how interest is meanwhile being paid out on future, not yet accomplished, supposedly potential, production and services whose eventual realization we are required to simply believe in. Interest thus is actually coming out of a temporary nothing, a not-yet, it is a mortgage on the future which will soon be due for payment. Today, in the sphere of floating speculation – i.e., faith – capital is no longer directly connected to actual production processes (see Kennedy 1990). The material alchemical transformation process of economics seems to be no longer applicable, and is being temporarily replaced with an invisible, “non-material alchemy”, alchemy without matter (see von Werlhof 1997). But it is alchemy nonetheless, although on a level of the “pure” mind – without matter – and “pure” theology – without nature. For, certainly the images of the goose who laid the golden egg, or of water transformed into wine, without anyone lifting a finger, amazingly still do not appear to incite people’s doubts. On the contrary, alchemy appears to have finally reached its goal of creating a world in which milk and honey flow - for no reason: As if the self-creating original nature has finally really been replaced:

- by philosopher’s stones everywhere - a machinery, out of which automatically flows all we want;
- by “pure” money that is not the result of work and the transformation of nature any more;
- by the “pure” mind, a sort of life –“energy” divided from matter; and
- by the one-and-all God beyond the world, appearing in this world.

It even seems as if the “post-modern” economic system has only need of imaginary services in order to reach a stage, in which the philosopher’s stone in the end apparently is made of only “pure thought” or “pure life” without matter. What progress for alchemy! Thought as a sort of “life power” or “energy” alone is now all that is needed. This is then seen as “intellectual development” and spiritual “energy supply”. Would non-material alchemy not be the best proof that God, the “Creator”, patriarchy, really exist? And would alchemy without matter not be the best proof, that producing the Nothing via the destruction of the world is no problem at all, but to the contrary, that the Nothing is even God himself?

In this case patriarchy would really have come through!

One simply assumes that it will all work out in the end, for everyone, and forever. What a rude awakening is in store for the “true believers”!

THE NECESSARY FAILURE OF THE “ALCHEMICAL SYSTEM”

One can say that in contrast to former times, alchemy as a method of thinking, feeling and acting has been expanded to all spheres of society, all sorts of production processes and all people living under modern conditions. Therefore it is justified to speak of the existence of an “alchemical system” today. Alchemy has progressed by means of generalization and “globalization” (see von Werlhof 2000b). Its methods of usurpation/negation, mortification/degradation, abstraction/isolation, perversion/“improvement”, construction/production and speculation/ nihilism seem to leave us without any alternative. After 5000 years of the alchemical implementation of the patriarchal project, we feel incapable of imagining that the world could function in another way.

But, meanwhile it is finally becoming obvious that the utopian project of constructing patriarchy, of creating the pater arché, is a true catastrophe. Our belief in alchemy is being shaken as we come to realize that countless human and nonhuman beings are being pushed towards their destruction and driven to extinction. Alchemy has never produced a better or even higher form of life without producing its opposite at the same time, nor has it come up with anything with which to replace the original form. The construction of patriarchy as an empirical fact rather than as a utopia has still not succeeded and is further from success than ever. (And) It cannot succeed, because the world is being ruined in the process. There is nothing after the

devastation. From nothing comes nothing. The “scarcity”, the waste, the loss of faith, they are all pointing to this fact. It makes room for a different, “dissident” world view, the scope of which is no longer anthropocentric and andro-centric. The “Goddess comes back” – the women say – though only to a world in which not only “holy water” is holy, but all water.

The first decisive step beyond the nihilistic-tautological forms of patriarchal thinking, feeling and doing would therefore be to finally stop believing that the destruction of the earth is not such a terrible thing after all, or will even lead to our redemption from nature: Yet it is believed that the world will be followed by something better, a “post-natural”, “post-worldly”, “post-human” paradise.

Seen worldwide, I think that we are already approaching the “critical mass” needed to rid ourselves of the alchemical belief in deadly miracles. Let us restore our view of the world by putting our feet back on the earth and turning our reality right-side-up again. Let us begin to celebrate the liberation of our earth, our bodies, our minds and our souls from the destructive faith in patriarchy, alchemy, and corporate globalization!

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