

Liber CCCXLIII: AMRITA

Some Comments on the Elixir of Life

1. Extracted from the Magical Record of the Beast 666 for the year 1920 e.v.

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7 June 1:55 a.m.

I feel inspired to jot down a few notes upon the Elixir of Life.

The Elixir of Life by the Master Therion

The conditions of life are that the organism should be able to adjust itself continually to its environment. Any individual, to do this for long, needs either very great intelligence or very great luck. His chief physical asset is elasticity, the power of compensation and recuperation. Our bodies are some 75% pure water; we are a mere sponge, our strength arises from the great mechanical ingenuity of our structure. But we are not `solid bodies' like most inanimate beings. This water, by kidneys, lungs, and skin, constantly cleanses us, and carries off most of our waste and noxious matter. Block one of these conduits; death follows very rapidly. However, this drainage system is not quite perfect; our pipes `fur' like a kettle. Disease and accident apart, we die of arterio-sclerosis caused by the gradual deposits of insoluble salts which harden the arteries and destroy the elasticity which enables them to adjust themselves to new conditions. In fact, we `perish' like india rubber. Old age is simply a solidification of the tissues, all of which become hard, dry and brittle.

As in philosophy, change is life, stagnation death; we should not fear a brisk metabolism. Why should the process which we call growth only a few years ago become degeneration? For the same reason that a well-kept well-oiled machine works more easily with age while a rusty one wrecks itself. Exercise helps us to sluice our sewers, but we must flush them well with water to dissolve mineral waste. We must avoid the ingestion of foods likely to leave insoluble deposits.

But there is another cause of decay, cause also in part of this poisoning. Our organs would repair themselves perfectly, if they were given sufficient rest. In their haste they absorb the first material to hand, be it good or bad. Also, we call on them to work before they are fully rested and so wear them gradually out. Exercise is necessary to keep us clean; but our rest must be perfect restoration also. We can give the muscles this benefit by Asana, and also reduce to a minimum the work of heart and lungs. We can give our digestions rest by eating only at noon and sunset, thus allowing them a clear twelve hours of the twenty-four. Pranayama is the ideal exercise as it promotes metabolism to the utmost with the minimum of fatigue, and can be combined with Asana.

The Hindus, to whom we owe these practices, realize also (as I, above) that the solidity of the food is an objection. They try to live on the Prana (subtle energy) contained in it. For instance, they teach people to reject their food before it has passed out of the stomach. In the West, we have sought rather to discover concentrations of good, and pre-digested preparations with a minimum of substance liable to form waste insoluble or poisonous products. We thus endeavor to diminish the work necessary to assimilation, as well as to avoid dirt and disorder in our Temple. We even eliminate on occasion the whole alimentary canal, and feed our patients by direct injection into the blood, or by absorption of nutriment in some convenient mucous membrane.

But mankind--in temperate climes--does not ask merely to exist; it demands joy; and joy, physiologically speaking, consists in the expenditure of surplus energy. Men living in the tropics need very little food since all we require beyond the repair of tissues and supply of mechanical force, is the heat required to keep our bodies at 37o Centigrade, as above the temperature of the air. If that be already 27o or so, we need but half of that necessary if it be 17o, or one third if it be 7o. Yet men in the tropics are not more energetic than our Scots and Norsemen. Those like dolce far niente, repose, as these take pleasure in activity. Even their phantasies attest to it, the one inventing Nirvana as the other Valhalla.

We admire the frolics of the young horse turned out to grass; we cultivate rough games, wild sports, and athletics. The Struldbruggs of Swift are perhaps, to us, of all his creations the most horrible. The immortality we ask is neither idleness nor stagnation. We want infinite Youth to squander, just as we wish a bottomless purse not to hoard but to

spend. We cannot rest, just as the tropical peoples cannot work properly and efficiently. By our theory they should live longer than we do; but the same high temperature that favours them befriends their enemies, bacteria; and they lack our science of health.

Now all the means that we take to prolong life, such as I have outlined above, have so far failed to supply this superfluity of energy which we really desire. People with diets and breathing exercises and the like are usually walking sepulchres--some of them whited! The animal who thinks about his health is already sick. Absence of noise and friction is the witness of free mechanical function. Fear actually creates disease, for the mind begins to explore and so interferes with, the unconscious rhythm of the body, as the Edinburgh Review killed John Keats.

The man with the best chance of prolonged youth is he who eats and drinks heartily, not much caring what; who does things vigorously in the open air, with the minimum of common-sense precautions; and who keeps his mind at the same time thoroughly active, free from worry, and his heart high. He has come, with William Blake, to the Palace of Wisdom by the Road of Excess. He is on friendly terms with Nature, and though he does not fear her he heeds her, and does not provoke her. It is better says he, to wear out than to rust out. True, but is there need to wear out? He tires himself improperly, and he digs his grave with his teeth.

It is this surplus of good food, this codocil to our Will to Live, that makes us, like the Englishman on the fine day, want to go out and kill something. And so Death pays in some much Uric-Acid at his human Savings-Bank.

There are only two solutions possible, the invention of either a solvent more perfect than water, or a super-Food. The first alternative is theoretically none too probable. As to the second, if food were merely a chemical and mechanical agent in us, the problem would be one of diet. But there is some reason to believe that food contains a substance yet unanalyzed and unweighed which is of the nature of pure Energy. Live foods, like oysters, stimulate inexplicable; foods long stored lose their nutritive value, though the chemist and physicist can detect no change. We need no psychical research but only common sense and common experience to tell us that there is a difference between a live thing and a dead one beyond the detective powers of the laboratories of Mid-Victorian arrogance and dogmatism.

A copper wire changes not in colour, weight, or chemical composition when a current of electricity passes through it; must we deny the existence of that force whose nature is still perfectly mysterious despite our knowledge of its properties, our measurements and our control of it? Why then deny a Life-bearing force? Ostensibly because 'there is no evidence of it'; but mainly because the hypothesis happened to be packed in with the theological parcel of rubbish. But we have nothing to span the gap between the two well-ascertained groups of facts familiar to all; namely the facts of 'matter' and the facts of 'mind'.

To our copper wire again! Electricity is matter of a subtle and tenuous sort, in a peculiar state of motion; so is my hypothetical Life-bearing force. The charged copper wire does not wear out; why should the human body do so, if only we could feed it with pure Life?

Nature everywhere is prolific of live things, animal and vegetable. (Pray note that these things, and only these avail to feed us.) What wealth of 'spiritual' force in and acorn! What history, its beginning veiled beyond all search! What potentiality of future life, of growth, of multiplication, beyond all conjecture! Like us, it has the power of Life; it can take live things and dead things into its own substance, bidding them, for its own purposes, to live again, transfigured! There's far more energy in the acorn than in radium, at which fools gape so wide in wonder. Far more, and far higher; radium only degenerates and dissipates; the acorn lives!

But all that energy is latent and potential; the acorn must be fed, like the fire that it is. (For every growth is a chemical change, a kind of combustion, element married to element with violence, with change of state, with heat, light pleasure, pain, as its by-products. Growth crowns itself with bloom or scent, with flame or colour, with wisdom conscious or unconscious.) The acorn cannot hoard its wealth or experience, use its credit of possibility, except by taking earth, air, and water into partnership, and invoking on the Venture, the Benediction of the Sun. If we destroy the fragile walls of its huge Library of Wisdom, we do not otherwise than the Saracen at Alexandria. The ages draw black hoods over their mighty foreheads; they cover their inscrutable eyes; they breathe no more upon us; their voice is Silence, Mystery, Oblivion; and we are left orphan, exposed like Oedipus, cheating croupier, Malice, has loaded with a curse. Where is the treasured wisdom of that dead world? Where is the Sphinx that hid in our crushed acorn? It was; it is not. Love itself no more intangible, more fugitive, more tragic, or more heedless. Its Fate? The oracles sneer; the hieroglyphs are indecipherable; the black lamb is found without a heart, and we must make our pilgrimage perforce to the altar of the Unknown God. All we can say is: It is not. Nay, but it was; and so, in some strange form, must be; else were all science and all mathematics falsehood and mockery.

But, as long since we learned, first to distinguish rubbed from unrubbed amber, next to measure, last control, though never yet to understand, the nature of, the force that made that distinction; so we can tell the living from the dead, can even measure life roughly, by taking heed of its external shews and proofs; so we shall come to control it, perhaps--nay, surely!--to create it.

We cannot yet direct the forces of the acorn, save within narrowest limits; we can stop, thwart or foster, even distort its growth; but we cannot lure it so far from its path as to grow Elms from it. But that is due to the definite bent and scope of the particular structure of the physical basis of the Life-force which must be one even as Electricity is one.

We shall be able to gather, if not to create, this Life; to transmute it into other forms of force, as now we transmute heat to light. We shall be able to store it, to harness it, to guide it; to absorb its energy ourselves directly, without resorting to our present gross, inefficient, cumbrous and dangerous means of abstracting it from ores (if I may say so) mechanically, blindly, empirically, and with such toil and strife. Our journey--by such means of transit--is necessary and hateful; our travelling companions are our diseases, and the host to ease us at the end of the short, the weary day, is Death.

As we cannot drink at the source of Life, keep Youth perpetual as we can keep Light--strange realization of the Rosicrucian's dream, or, it may be, discovery of his secret!

But we have found the Super-food. We know a vehicle of which a few grains can house enough pure light to fill a man not only with nourishment, but with Energy almost superhuman, and parallel, Intelligence incredibly sun-bright for four-and twenty hours. That substance is theoretically easy, but practically hard to obtain. In England and America it would be impossible to procure any quantity even of the raw material, at least in strength and purity; much less to prepare it. We know how to charge this substance with the Life-force. The process is at present laborious and expensive; great skill is required, and much precaution for errors in preparation are hard to detect, and may result in hideous mischance.

It is now six years since we gained our knowledge. They have been crowded with experiment; we are arrived at the practical stage. We cannot understand the true Nature of this force; we cannot measure it; we cannot create it, or obtain it synthetically. But we can purify and intensify it; we can, within wide limits, determine at will the quality and scope of its action; we can postpone death, increase energy, or prolong youth; and we are justified in saying that we possess the Elixir of Life

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Note: The Elixir is only administered to selected individuals for good reason shown. The normal course of treatment consists of two or three months' preparation in the place prepared for the purpose in Sicily, followed by the necessary period, usually one month, of the actual experiment which is made in the greatest secrecy.

Here at 5:50 a.m. (legal time) on the
Day of Diana, being the 7th of June,
An XVI Sol in Gemini.