

ment as professed by the Valentinians: the pious will witness the divine marriage of Sophia with Soter, the redeemer, and he will experience, in the image of the heavenly marriage, the union with his angel. The generative, active male element and the vegetative, passive female element must be united in order to become the perfect unity. We have said that the sun was considered by the adept to be male, its warm radiance was active, and heat and dryness were thought to be male attributes. On the other hand, the moon was female as it does not send forth rays other than those it has received from the sun. The moon is the receptacle, and its expansion was pregnancy.

Often the alchemists represented in their allegories the union of sun and moon, prototypes of both sexes. In Michael Majer's *Chemical Secrets of Nature* (1687) a curious etching shows sun and moon embracing in front of a cave which symbolizes the hollow of the retort. The etching is explained thus: 'He is conceived in water and born in air; when he has become red in colour, he walks over the water.' The offspring of the sun and the moon is the philosophers' red stone, floating upon the liquid in the crucible. Another emblem of the philosophers' stone is that of the androgyne, a being half male, half female, half sun, half moon, holding in its hands the philosophic egg, which symbolizes, like the serpent, the universe.

The alchemical furnace expresses similarly this union. It was not without reason that this apparatus was called the cosmic oven. Did it not perform that generative process which the adept



26. The Hermetic
androgyne