

Splendor Solis

(The Splendor of the Sun)

The *Splendor Solis* is one of the most beautiful of illuminated alchemical manuscripts. The earliest version, considered to be that now in the Kupferstichkabinett in the Prussian State Museum in Berlin, is dated 1532-35, and was made in the form of a medieval manuscript and illuminated on vellum, with decorative borders like a book of hours, beautifully painted and heightened with gold. The later copies in London, Kassel, Paris and Nuremberg are equally fine.

The work itself consists of a sequence of 22 elaborate images, set in ornamental borders and niches. The symbolic process shows the classical alchemical death and rebirth of the king, and incorporates a series of seven flasks, each associated with one of the planets. Within the flasks a process is shown involving the transformation of bird and animal symbols into the Queen and King, the white and the red tincture. This echoes the *Pretiosissimum Donum Dei* sequence which is probably earlier, dating from the 15th century. Although the style of the *Splendor Solis* illuminations suggest an earlier date, they are quite clearly of the 16th century.

The *Splendor Solis* was associated with the legendary Salomon Trismosin, allegedly the teacher of Paracelsus. The Trismosin writings were later published with woodcut illustrations, in the *Aureum Vellus, oder Guldin Schatz und Kunst-kammer*, 1598, which was reprinted a number of times. A French translation, entitled *La Toyson d'or, ou la fleur des thresors* was issued in Paris in 1612 with a number of very fine engravings, some copies of which were hand-coloured.

Images:

1. The Arms of the art
2. Philosopher with flask
3. The Knight on the double fountain
4. Solar King and Lunar Queen meet

The Seven Parables:

5. Miners excavating hill
6. Philosophers beside tree
7. Drowning King
8. Resurrection out of the swamp
9. Hermaphrodite with egg
10. Severing the head of the King
11. Boiling the body in the vessel

The Seven Flasks:

12. Saturn - Dragon and child
13. Jupiter - Three birds
14. Mars - Triple-headed bird
15. Sun - Triple-headed dragon
16. Venus - Peacock's Tail
17. Mercury - The White Queen
18. Moon - The Red King

19. The dark sun
20. Children at play
21. Women washing clothes
22. Sun rising over the city

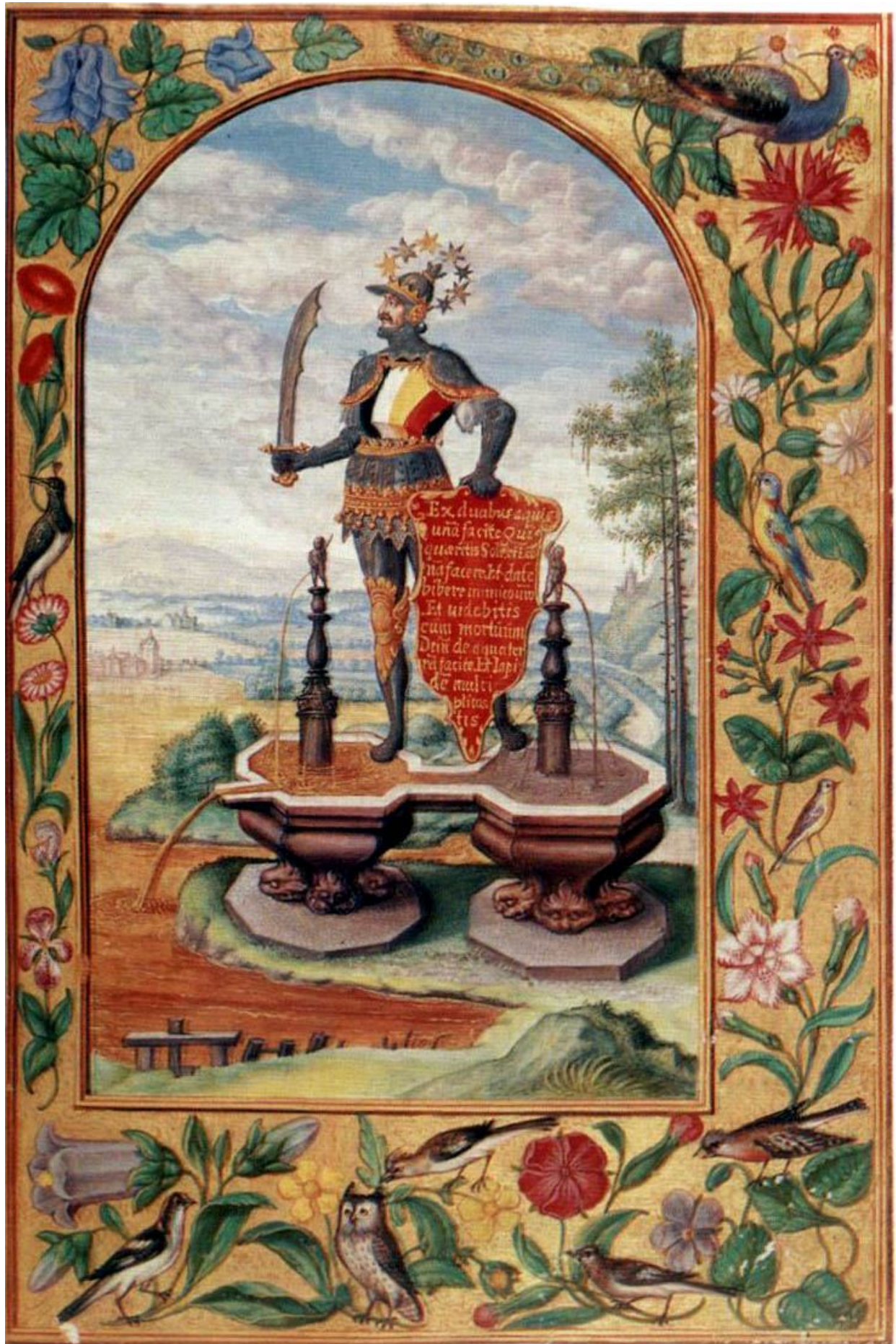
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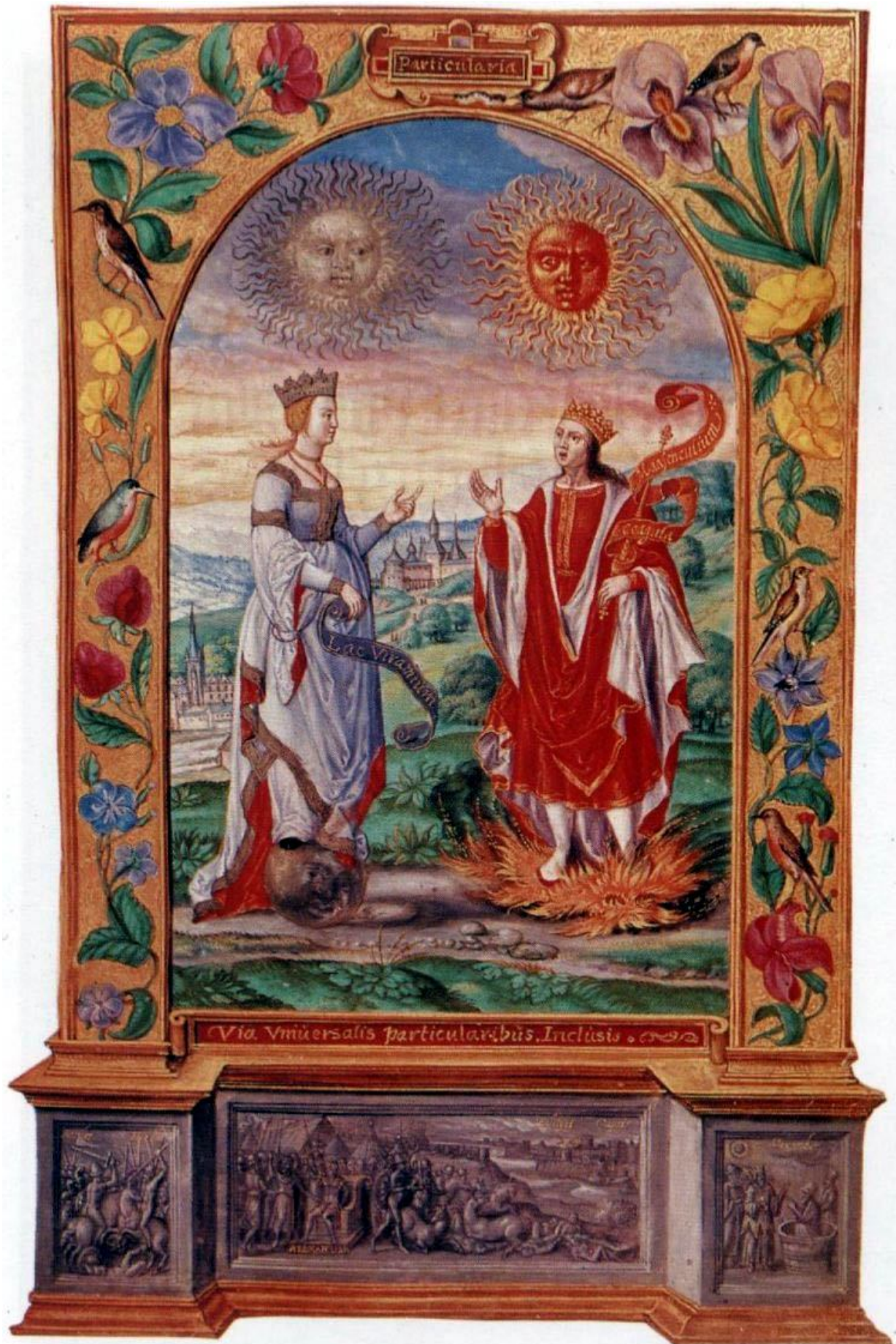
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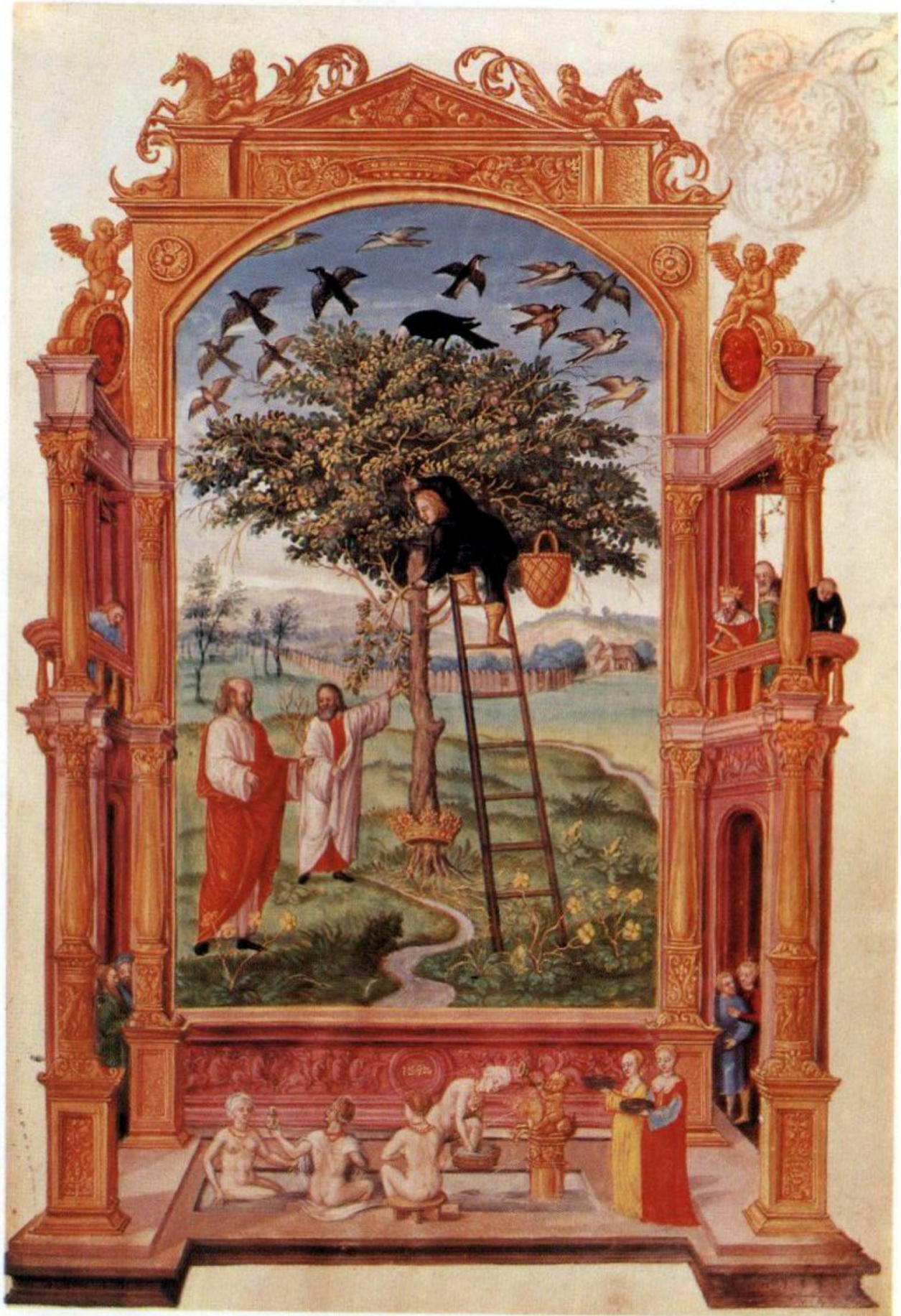
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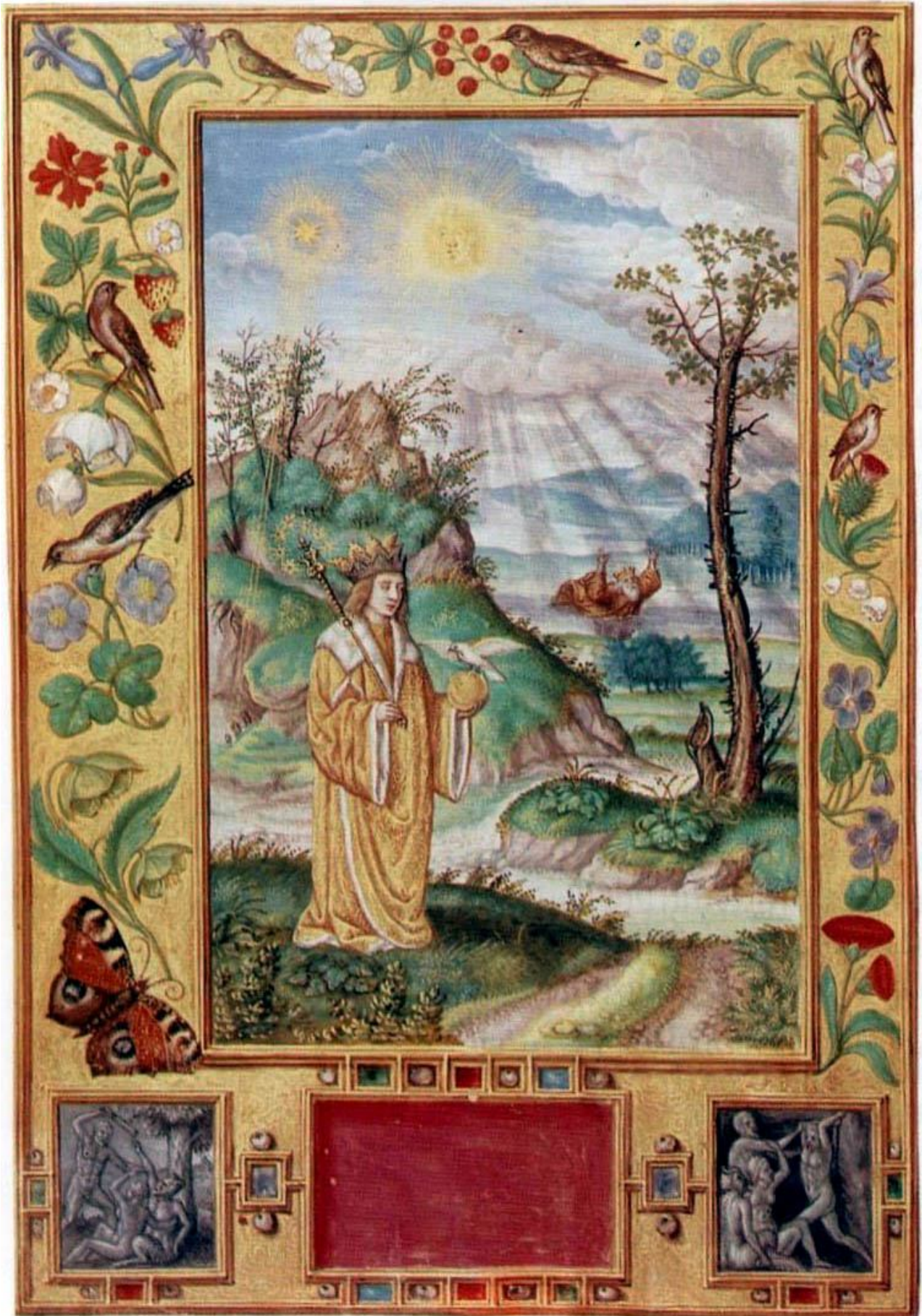
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