

OK;

or,

HANDEL WITH CARE

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Reprinted for private circulation from
COMMON KNOWLEDGE
Winter 1996/97 Volume 3
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Marc Sbell

EUREKA!

εὕρηκα! [I have found it]—Archimedes, naked, uttered this famous word when he finally figured out how to determine whether the actual weight and purity of the king's gold crown was equal to its stated weight and purity.

A couple of years ago, I attended a conference hosted by a Chicago foundation whose fabulous wealth came from an eccentric billionaire who had made his fortune in the 1930's selling real estate and insurance policies.

One afternoon, while sauntering through a working-class suburb in Chicago, I unexpectedly came across a curious object in the corner of a dusty bin. It was a canvas, or a wooden plank—I could not be sure which—overpainted with visual designs and alphabetic signs. There it was, discarded in a deserted heap of yellowing etchings, old postcards, antique ticket-fragments, vintage pawnshop tokens, and torn and painted curtains and veils.

At that moment, I felt like Legrand in Poe's short story "The Gold-Bug," in which detective tale that eccentric Franco-American comes across an abandoned scrap of paper with a fantastic design and some fragmentary words on it. His was a paper whose design of a gold bug he managed, Midas-like, to turn into solid gold.

To me, this *objet trouvé* in the dust at the deserted corner was a founding—a εὕρημα, found like Oedipus in the desert more or less by chance, without known provenance or name.

What to do?

"Arise, pick up the child."¹ I remembered the command, spoken to Abraham's concubine Hagar, that she should pick up the son Ishmael, whom she had abandoned to die in the sun-baked desert: "Adoption" is one way to understand the Hebrew [si-i, יִשְׁמָעֵל]. It is a word that Saint Jerome had translated into Latin as *sublatio* and Luther

¹Genesis 21:18.

For Batus,
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