

Alchemy as a Path to Integration

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**"Understand, ye sons of the wise,
what this exceeding precious stone proclaims . . .
And my light conquers every light,
and my virtues are more excellent than all virtues . . .
I beget the light, but the darkness too is of my nature . . ."**

-- Hermes the Thrice Great

The main goal of Alchemy is the creation of a spiritually complete individual whose several components of consciousness are united, resulting in an integrated, independent, enlightened human being. The Art of Alchemy stretches far back into antiquity and was anciently known as *Theurgy*, the divine work. While many alchemists did work in chemical laboratories, there were also men and women of the highest spiritual aspirations who considered the Stone of the Wise not only as tangible evidence of successful metallic transmutation, but also the equivalent of spiritual metamorphosis. The object of Alchemy is to promote a more rapid growth in spiritual and intellectual evolution through the mechanics of meditation, reflection, magical practices, and interior prayer.

Not much effort is needed at the beginning of the work as it is sufficiently approached with a "free and empty mind." But one important rule must be observed, the mind must be in harmony with the work, and the work must be above all else. The texts suggest that in order to acquire the *aura apprehensio* (golden understanding), one must keep the eyes of the mind and soul well open, observing and contemplating the inner light which God lit in Nature and in our hearts from the beginning. Since the investigator's psyche is so tightly bound up in the work, not only as its necessary medium, but also as its cause and point of departure, it is understandable why so much emphasis is laid on the psychic condition and mental

attitude of the laboratory worker. Alphidius said, "Know that thou canst not have this science unless thou shalt purify thy mind before God, that is, wipe away all corruption from thy heart." Alchemy is also called Hermetics, and according to the *Aurora*, the treasure-house of Hermetic wisdom rests on a firm foundation of fourteen principles:

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| 1. Health | 8. Hope |
| 2. Humility | 9. Charity |
| 3. Holiness | 10. Goodness |
| 4. Chastity | 11. Patience |
| 5. Virtue | 12. Temperance |
| 6. Victory | 13. Spiritual discipline or understanding |
| 7. Faith | 14. Obedience |

The theories of Alchemy, along with Magic, state that in the long course of time, Nature has gradually evolved an intricate instrument of response commonly referred to as Man, who, although divine in nature, manifests several defects. It is held that Nature has fallen from a divine state and, unassisted, cannot regain her previous condition of blessed equilibration--and alchemists believe that every manifested thing falls within the natural realm, especially the unawakened and unenlightened man. Man's consciousness has relegated itself to a subordinate position from the Divine Spirit, and in order to achieve something other than this merciless state of conflict, misery and suffering, a higher medium of expression must be found in the natural state to transcend the constant companions of fear, inferiority, and insecurity. Man's own efforts in an intellectual direction cannot and will not elevate him beyond this natural state and will only spawn a similar kind of unregenerate, unilluminated condition, hence the continued failure of philosophy, politics, and religion. Alchemy asserts that as long as this natural state of conflict and ignorance exists, the element of Wisdom, inherent in all mankind, will remain latent and dormant, and the entire art is based upon the premise of uncovering this inner faculty of insight and wisdom, the pure essence of mind, by removing the veils which exist between the mind and its hidden divine cause.

From a psychological standpoint, it is the disintegration of the rigidity of mind, a process called dissolution or putrefaction, whereby consciousness is broken down into its component parts and reassembled on an entirely new and healthy basis, allowing the divine root, subordinated by the arrogance of man's ego, to manifest through a personality that is free from the defects which generally characterize the average intelligence.

Consciousness, in order to be energized and quickened, cannot be separated from the Unconscious but must have full access to all levels of the psyche, and the goal of

alchemy is a purified and integrated consciousness which has evolved after various stages of the Work have been completed. There is an intrinsic tendency toward reconciliation within the nature of consciousness--and the conscious union with the Essence (pure potentiality) of mind, as represented by the Supernal Triad on the Tree of Life, is the final goal of all spiritual techniques. The Three Supernals of Kether, Chokmah and Binah are often classed together as a unit and as such, this triad is governed by the attributions of the third Supernal, Binah, which synthetically represents all three. Binah means Understanding and conceals within herself the Wisdom of Chokmah and the essence of the Divine Light, Kether. The Supernals are divine Wisdom and Understanding--Truth. They are Spirit, the Light itself, the concealed and unknown Higher Self of Man. One of the astrological attributions of Binah is Saturn, whose correspondences include such ideas as stability, peace, blackness, death, and time. Binah, as the Great Mother, gives birth to the newly formed Stone after her alternate symbol, the Vulture, has devoured and purified the substance from which it was formed. The Vulture, whose color is black, refers to that aspect of the psyche that is the unredeemed animal soul, Malkuth.

"... And the Voice of Ages answered unto my soul

I am He who formulates in Darkness

The Light that shineth in Darkness

Yet the Darkness comprehendeth it not."

- Excerpt from the Neophyte Ritual

The Supernals are conceived of as the Light, the highest extreme of the Tree, and represent residual earth brought to a transcendent perfection.

Daath, the unnumbered center of the Tree is made manifest in man as evolution proceeds, developing awareness of Self and perfection. Microcosmically, it is the throat, the seat of the voice and the instrument of the expression of Mind. Speech is the *logos* of thought and is one of its manifestations.

There are various components of consciousness, such as memory and will, represented by Chesed and Geburah, whose commingling produces a third and reconciling factor of balance and rhythm known as Tiphareth, the vital center of the solar system, the preserver of life. This is the Ruach, the center of man's rational intellect without which, man would not be man. Alchemically, the intellect is identified with the principle of Mercury, described as essential and profound. The development of a Tiphareth consciousness is often referred to as Gold, the most perfect and precious of metals.

Netzach is the emotional, passionate urge that gives motive and direction to life, and its nature is fiery. In Alchemy, emotion and feeling are identified with the principle

of Sulfur, fiery and dynamic, on whose correct employment and application the Work demands. The union of Mercury and Sulfur, or the intellect and the *anima* (the passionate, emotional nature), produces a wholeness and a higher synthesis of being.

Hod implies form. It is the vehicular side of consciousness, and its nature is substantive. Referred to the planet Mercury, it implies intelligence and consciousness, and its elemental attribution is Water. Mercury, on some occasions, has application to the substantive principle of Salt, referring it to Hod, whose attribution represents energy and the fluidity of substance or the material of the astral Body of Light.

The symbol of the Cup is attributed to the Sphere of Hod, and the Cup has a special shape to express fundamental ideas in symbolic form. The base is pyramidal, surmounted by a circle, with the crescent above as the actual bowl of the Cup. The base is the symbol of Fire, representing every aspect of fire: astral, solar and terrestrial. Fire is characteristic of the instinctive, emotional principle. Using the Hindu tattwa system, the circle refers to the Element of Air, which is attributed to the mind and represents consciousness. Above the circle is the crescent, representing the Element of Water, and signifies the spiritual part of man, his aspirations, higher yearnings, intuition and imagination. The reconciler between the opposites of Fire and Water is Air, consciousness. These three Elements refer to the three fundamental divisions of man's psyche. Therefore, Man, as represented by this symbol, is an integral psychic entity receiving the influence of the Universal Spirit of Life, Kether.

Yesod represents the mental body that is clothed in a fluidic, pliable substance forming the astral body of the mind. The Water of the Wise is a general concept that is more or less associated with the magician's Astral Light and the Collective Unconscious, and the First Matter is often referred to as Water. The idea of an astral body is important because it touches upon what the Alchemists called their First Matter. There is an astral body within the physical frame which is the continuous medium between mind and body, and it is the vehicle of the mental and emotional faculties. It is this psychic form which is the subject of the alchemical experiment, and because of its appearance to spiritual vision, when remolded and perfected, is called the Philosopher's Stone. The Egg of the Philosophers is the aura, that ovoid emanation radiating from the astro-mental body, and it is this shape which is the subject of the work. Yesod represents the state of the first purification of which the term Quintessence can be used. Malkuth is also appropriate for the alchemical Principle of Salt, conceived of as an inert, heavy, mineral body. It is the residual earth and its color is black. It is often depicted as the sphere of the operation of the four elements and is considered the instinctive life, the body consciousness or brain mind. In alchemy, Yesod and Malkuth can be considered as conjoined principles.

Dr. Jung writes in his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, "Without doubt the question of making the opposites conscious (conversion) means reunion with the laws of life represented in the Unconscious, or expressed in Chinese terms, the bringing about of the *Tao* (the conscious way of union)", and quotes an

alchemical text as saying, "Restore thou it, also, to the superiors by its proper winds." Kether is Air, Chokmah is Fire and Binah is Water and these three Sephiroth constitute the first and most important triad of the Tree. This triad reflects downward, causing the elements to make a criss-cross pattern. Therefore, Chesed reflects the Waters of Binah, Geburah reflects the Fire of Chokmah and Tiphareth reflects the Air of Kether descending the Middle Pillar. These latter three complete the second triad, which again reflects downward like a mirror, causing Netzach to reflect the Fire of Geburah, Hod the Water of Chesed, and Yesod the Air from Tiphareth. This third triad also reflects itself but this time forms a new element, Earth, the combination and base of all the others, referred to as Malkuth, the sphere of the Four Elements. In order to restore the Elements to their Superiors (Supernals), the spiritual energy, the life force manifesting through the Unconscious, must be gradually referred back to its ultimate source. This requires sublimation, the creation of a spiritual awareness functioning outside the area of consciousness, which destroys destructive habits and corrects the deviation of the Life Force back to its proper channel.

According to the *Golden Treatise* of Hermes, the sequence of the alchemical working runs Black, White, Green, Red, and Gold. Black represents the decomposition or putrefaction of the Stone in its original, unrefined state. This form of disintegration, of conscious schizophrenia, is precisely what the alchemists wished to produce as their first step and implies an understanding of the mechanism of the Unconscious. Such knowledge confers freedom from unconscious automatism, from compulsion created by repression, and safeguards against danger from lack of insight and discrimination. According to Pseudo-Thomas, the author of the *Aurora*, one should "Purge the horrible darkness of our mind" and gives as a parallel Senior's statement of "He maketh all that is black white." Compare this idea to the concept expressed in the Prayer of Osiris which says, "These are the elements of my body which I destroy in order that they may be renewed," for only that which can destroy itself is truly alive.

White refers to the first purified and refined state. Hermes' remark that "the virgin milk is whitened" means that the alchemical Salt, the astral substance of the interior body about to be glorified and illuminated, has not yet attained maturity.

This is followed by Green, which expresses immaturity and the possibility of complete spiritual growth. The color signifies Nature in Spring, a time of hope and expectancy. At this stage, life is fueled by a union with the emotional nature, and is often referred to as the Vitriol of Venus or the Green Lion, both implying the volitional power of perception, fiery and crude, and an immature but evolving spiritual energy.

Red succeeds this stage for Red indicates maturity, full growth and ripeness and is the result of raising the heat of the fire to its highest intensity. With the passage of time and by itself, the Son grows and becomes reddened, full grown and mature. With regard to this stage, Hermes said, "The Son is invested with the red garment

and the purple is put on." As the white stage can be considered daybreak, not until the red stage is it sunrise.

Gold signifies the value of worth, and it is the final and desired result.

The First Matter, which is the hard, inflexible condition of consciousness, must be subjected to heat and boiled. By these means the dry, rigid qualities of the etheric substance are destroyed, leaving only the essential root nature, devoid of the restricting characteristics exacted upon it by the mind. It is the nature of the human mechanism to set or harden into fixtures of habit and this is true not only of the body, but also the mind and emotions. The material must be brought to a perfectly uniform, fluid consistency, and the relaxation of habitual restraint is comparable to a melting process. Here we encounter the "Secret Fire" of the alchemists, and it is the effect of this fire that reduces the silver-gray substance of the astral vehicle to dark ashes, the Black Saturn. All operations depend upon this regimen of Fire, and it is the central secret of the alchemical art. The dynamic nature of feelings and emotions could be symbolized by fire, but from a philosophic standpoint, it could also be the penetrating, incisive and illuminating quality of the intellect. According to Freud, heat is sexual excitation or the libido which he defines solely in terms of sexual desire. However, the alchemists were not indulging in adolescent fantasies and using this as a means of interpretation, we learn nothing of value to assist in the integration of the human psyche, the development of latent faculties or the elevation of the mind. Dr. Jung in his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower* states, "These verses contain a sort of alchemist instruction as to the method or way of creating the 'diamond body' which also appears in our text.

'Heating is necessary', or more simply put, there must be a heightening of consciousness in order that the dwelling place of the spirit can be 'illuminated.' But not only consciousness, life itself must be heightened. The union of these two produces conscious life." According to the *Hui Ming Chin*, the ancient sages knew how to bridge the gap between consciousness and life because they cultivated both. In this way the immortal body is "melted out" and "the great Tao" is completed.

Attributing some of these symbols to the sexual organs, *i.e.* the flame as the male reproductive organ, the furnace as the womb, can indicate something whose action is generative, from which pleasure may be derived, and which has a definite association with emotion. The female symbol is the furnace/Unconscious, while the male symbol is the flame or fire/libido. Fire is the internal, creative agent suggesting an intensity of feeling and emotion. On the other hand, the action of a keen and penetrating intellect, which burns the dross of confused thinking, may well be likened to Fire.

The intellect, the purified Mercury, defined as "philosophic, fiery and vital," is one of the Three Principles of Alchemy. This Principle has the ability to be mixed with all other metals and again be separated from them, and it is prepared in the innermost chamber of life and there coagulated. In the *Golden Treatise* of Hermes, referring to the Philosopher's Stone, it is said "In the cavern of the metals, there is hidden the

Stone that is venerable, splendid in color, a mind sublime and an open sea." The cavern is referring to the interior depths of man, the consciousness itself, the principles of whose external form are the metals drawn from the mineral kingdom and as such, is an excellent representation of the Unconscious. The Stone is represented by a scintillating gem of untold price and brilliance which only becomes so after several alchemical operations where it has been dissolved, coagulated, calcined, purified, refined and sublimated into the newly risen King's son, crowned with Spirit. Here, the connection to Tiphareth is obvious.

Just as the alchemical Mercury refers to consciousness, and Sulfur to emotion and feeling, Salt refers to the vehicle in which these faculties are grounded. The *Rosarium* says, "Who therefore knows the Salt and its solution knows the hidden secret of the wise men of old. Therefore turn your mind upon the Salt and think not of other things, for in it alone (*i.e.* the mind) is the science concealed and the most excellent and most hidden secret of all the ancient philosophers." Consequently, Mind and Salt can be considered as close cousins - *cum grano salis* (with a grain of salt). According to Khunrath, the Salt is not only the physical center of the earth, but is at the same time the *sal sapientiae* (Philosophic Salt) of which he says, "Therefore direct your feelings, senses, reason and thoughts upon this Salt alone."

The Stone represents the union of Mercury, which is consciousness, and Sulfur, the fire of emotion or the *anima* of the psyche, using Salt as their vehicle of operation. In its proper sense, the Stone is a term used to denote the unity of the Aura, the essential magnetism of the individual, with the central core of consciousness itself. Therefore, we have a mental body which is the seat of all mental faculties: intelligence, emotion, will, memory, etc., held together by a vital, fluidic substance. The Three Alchemical Principles of Salt, Sulfur and Mercury, considered as an undivided whole, when purified and integrated, form what the Alchemists called the Philosopher's Stone. By studying the philosophers, man acquires the skill to attain this Stone, but again, the Stone is Man. Thus, Dorn exclaims, "Transform yourselves from dead stones into living philosophical stones!" Here, he is expressing in the clearest possible way the identity of something within man which is concealed in matter.

Salt, Sulfur and Mercury are concepts synthesized in the term Quintessence (fifth essence)--the First Matter, also thought of as the unity of the four elements or qualities of dryness and moisture, heat and cold. Basil Valentine, defining the nature of the First Matter, said, "It is not to be compared to any form of manifested matter whatever", and that "all description fails in respect to it without light of experience." This is what must be sought out and discovered.

Generally speaking, we can associate the Mother with the Sea and as the source which has given us birth. Transferring this objective symbol to a purely subjective level, the Mother is related to the Unconscious. Consciousness is born from and issues out of the dark, creative depths of the Unconscious, and it is well known that consciousness is a fairly recent development in the history of man. This concept is

conceived of as having two poles and to explain their nature, we must add an additional term, the Superconscious, which includes all the finer spiritual aspirations, inner faculties of discrimination, innate wisdom, and love. Both of these principle concepts have become united in the general term Unconscious. Immersion of consciousness in the disintegrating Sea of the Unconscious divides it from "its rust which yet holds it in death" or the childish attitudes which are so inhibiting and disturbing to consciousness. When seen for what they are, in the light of a dawning understanding and discrimination, they are discarded.

The Philosophic Water is the Unconscious in its widest sense which includes not only instinct and emotion but also intuition and wisdom, and it is the domain of the libido, the vital energy and fire of life. The association of Water and Fire is a very curious one. "The fire of thy water." "Inwardly at its heart (water) burns the purest infernal fire." "Water which is as a live coal holding the fire." Nervous and physical symptoms of disorder, as well as psychic compulsions, owe their existence to the repressed structure within the psyche that refuses to abide quietly in the Unconscious. Left unattended, it becomes explosive and dangerous. This unconscious material, set free and assimilated rationally into consciousness, becomes purified and no longer acts on consciousness in a compulsive way. Thus, the powerful stimulus within the Unconscious is withdrawn, and the inhibited, neurotic symptoms, the fiery redness, are made pure. The rationale of this process is purification by understanding because to understand the Unconscious is to be freed from its domination.

Although the elements of Fire and Water are antagonistic and even constitute a pair of opposites, they are one and the same thing. Like the *Prima Materia*, Water has a thousand names. It is even said to be the original material of the Stone, "that permanent water out of which water, our most precious Stone is generated." On the other hand, we are assured that Water is extracted from the Stone or *Prima Materia* as its life-giving soul (*anima*). By whatever names the Stone is called, they always refer to this one substance, *i.e.* Water, from which "everything originates, in which everything is contained, which rules everything." The Philosophic Water is the Stone or the *Prima Materia* itself, but at the same time it is also the solvent. Vulgar or ordinary water is simple and unmixed; Philosophic Water is composed of two substances, male and female, positive and negative, and is the psychological equivalent of the Consciousness and *Anima* conjoined. The union of these two separated components of the personality creates a totality and synthesis of being. Eudoxus speaks of the homogeneous substance, the Philosophical Water, concealing the Three Principles which are comparable to the spirit, soul, and body. Sendivogius proffered that, "Our Water is heavenly, not wetting the hands, not the vulgar, but almost rainwater." It is likened to rainwater only because it descends from Heaven.

It can also be shown that Fire played the same role as Water. Another, no less important, idea is the Hermetic vessel, typified by the melting furnace that contained the substance to be transformed, which has particular connection to the *Prima Materia*. It had to be egg-shaped to imitate the spherical cosmos so that the influence

of the stars could contribute to the success of the working. In this matrix or uterus the *filius philosophorum* (philosophy's son), the miraculous stone, is born. The vessel is more a mystical ideal, a true symbol, like all the central ideas of alchemy. Thus, we hear that the vessel is the Water or *aqua permanens* (permanent water) which is none other than the Mercurius of the Philosophers. Not only is it Water, it is also its opposite, Fire. "When therefore we speak of 'our vessel' understand 'our water'; when we speak of fire again understand water; and when we discuss the furnace, we mean nothing that is different or distinct from water." -- Philalethes.

The fire of the furnace can be considered as concentrated attention brought to bear on consciousness during introverted meditation, where outer awareness is completely withdrawn and focused inward. The statement of Hermes, "Observe that none of the spirits escape" may imply that critical attention must not be allowed to wander from the sometimes unpleasant images and sensations which arise during meditation. The alchemical texts seem to encourage inner conflict, but only when it is deliberately cultivated with the full intent of hastening the termination of unconscious discord which is always inhibitory and leads to incisive action and loss of physical and mental tone. This state of disunity invariably arises from a one-sided and unbalanced attitude towards life. Conscious conflict has value, however, aside from the fact that it can be dealt with deliberately, because conscious analysis and meditation increase the perception of internal discord so that its true extent can be fully realized and dealt with. What follows is a new birth and an integration of attitude.

While this battle proceeds, every care must be taken to prevent consciousness from flying off its mark by an abrupt change of course via escapism. Patiently the appalling, unsettling of the self and the threatened disintegration of being must be endured with the quiet stoicism of a sage. This is done by a full acceptance of self and the conflict raging within. If the aspirant can endure the exposure to the inner life, the destruction of long-cherished points of view, the elimination of beloved yet destructive behavior, and the cognizant understanding of self, consciousness is tremendously enriched. By knowing and assimilating the wealth of content stored within the Unconscious, awareness is enhanced by the vast inspiration, peace and power contained therein.

"In the alembic of thy heart

Through the anathanor of affliction

Seek thou the true stone of the wise."

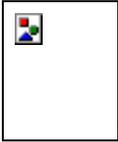
- Hermes

"And the voice of my Undying and Secret Soul said unto me,

Let me enter the path of Darkness and, Peradventure,

There shall I find the Light . . ."

- Excerpt from the Neophyte Ritual



The Caduceus of Mercury is another symbol representing the elements within the psyche. Its interpretation employs what are called the Three Mother Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet: Aleph a, Mem m and Shin c, which have elemental attributions. In Qabalistic philosophy all things in the cosmos and man's psyche were born from these three major elements. While the Cup is passive and receptive, the Caduceus is its reverse -- aggressive and out-pouring. For above is Fire, the letter Shin c, three pronged and symbolic of the two overshadowing wings with a central stem, and whose numerical equivalent is a Hebrew phrase meaning the Spirit of the Gods or the Divine Spirit. Inspiration, religious thought, mystical pursuit, and artistic expression are the result of its descent into the mind of man. In the middle is the letter Aleph a, referred to the Element of Air and consciousness, which symbolizes the two heads and necks of the twining serpents. Below is the letter Mem m (signifying the rest of the serpents' intertwined bodies) which is the passionate, watery nature of man, the animal soul, which can be either tumultuous and fierce or indolent and idle.

All of the Elements require regeneration and purification before being reconstructed in a new and perfected form. In the Golden Dawn initiatory system, the candidate must pass through elemental initiations where the spirits of the elements are separately invoked in four specific rites. Their impact and power upon the candidate awakens and purifies that corresponding element within the psyche, imparting the true power of that particular element to the interior self which is being unified by the ceremonial system. C. G. Jung remarked in his commentary on the *Secret of the Golden Flower*, "Magical practices are the projections of psychic events which, in cases like these, exert a counter-influence on the soul and act like a kind of enchantment of one's own personality. That is to say, by means of these concrete performances, the attention or better said, the interest, is brought back to an inner sacred domain, which is the source and goal of the soul. This inner domain contains the unity of life and the consciousness which, though once possessed, has been lost and must now be found again." The object of Magic is not only to bring students to an awareness of their own divine nature but also to effect a psychological integration, a release from the bondage of unconscious projection, and an elevation of consciousness to the Light.

Every phase of the rituals and every specific teaching are designed to assist the aspiring candidate in discovering that unity of being which is the Inner Self, the pure essence of Mind. The intervention of symbol, ceremonial and sacrament assist to "lead the soul that it may be delivered from the absorption of matter wherein it walks in somnambulism knowing not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth." All magical initiations necessitate the presence of officers and from one point of view, those officers represent the psychic projections Dr. Jung referred to above. They also represent the different aspects of man and are personifications of psychological principles active within the psyche. In ritual, these psychic principles are dramatically portrayed, inducing a reaction in consciousness, and this is done to awaken, without the conscious effort of the candidate, those dormant principles whose potential qualities are represented by the different officers. The Kerux, who carries the Lamp of the Hidden Knowledge and the Caduceus Wand (its directing power), personifies the reasoning ability, the intelligent part of the mind that is functioning in obedience to the will. The Hegemon, who forever seeks the rise of Light, represents the higher part of that mind, the Neschamah, or the aspiring, sensitive, intuitive consciousness. This officer, situated between the Two Pillars (or contending forces), is the reconciler between Light and Darkness and represents the higher aspirations of the soul. The Hieres is the mighty guardian against the "multitudes that sleep through the Light and awaken at the twilight." His station is in the West, which symbolizes the increase of Darkness and the decrease of Light, and carrying the Sword of Judgment, he represents the dynamic will of man. The Hierophant, guardian of the Dawning Sun, is Master of the Hall and represents the higher spiritual soul-- that divine self we all too rarely comprehend. As the bringer of the Light and the expounder of the Mysteries, the Hierophant represents an essential state of enlightenment, the Higher Self, Osiris glorified through trial and perfected through suffering.

The Neophyte Ritual has a definite connection with the Alchemical dissolution, and all subsequent initiations depend upon the strength and effect of this ritual. If the Hierophant is successful, with the help of fellow officers, a spiritual charge is transferred to the candidate which then acts as a ferment. Slowly through the months following the ceremony, this vital agitation stirs up the psyche of the aspirant, unconsciously breaking down resistance and fixation, allowing the Light to enter the sphere of the mind.

The goal of the following five grades is to awaken and purify the elemental substructures thereby consecrating them to the Great Work. After the dissolution of the internal psyche to its uniform base, a conversion of the elements follows. First, however, it is necessary that they be awakened for until their presence is realized, their regeneration cannot be accomplished. The importance of this step cannot be overemphasized as the elements are the essential levels of the Unconscious psyche. Through the use of symbolism, the initiation ceremony of each grade calls forward the spirits of each particular element for just as steel placed close to a magnet receives some degree of its magnetism so also does the presence of power convey

power. Contact with the appropriate elemental force produces an identical type of reaction within the sphere of the Neophyte resulting in growth and advancement.

The element offered for transmutation in the grade of Zelator is Earth, or the earthy part of the candidate's psyche, and it is here that the alchemical conversion of the elements begins. This initiation ritual symbolically admits the candidate to the first rung of the Ladder of Lights, Malkuth. The stability of the element is established within the consciousness by the invocation of Earth elementals, permitting the aspirant to be a worthy temple of the Holy Spirit.

The grade of Theoricus follows, which is attributed to Yesod, the sphere of Luna, and is a reflection of the element of Water. In this ritual, the candidate is presented to the four stations of the Kerubim, who are the presidents of the elemental forces, the animated powers of Tetragrammaton operating through the four elements, under whose power, authority and zodiacal symbol, the elemental spirits and their rulers are invoked.

Succeeding Theoricus is the grade of Practicus, referred to Hod, which is the sphere of the planet Mercury, but more specifically the element of Air, which is invoked to power and presence. The two paths leading to this sphere are the path of Fire from Malkuth and the path that reflects the Sun from Yesod. Fire is paternal and fertilizing while Water is maternal and germinating, creating growth. From their interior stimulation, the emotional nature is accentuated and a strong stimulus is transferred to the Unconscious of the candidate. In this grade, the candidate's consciousness, symbolized by stagnant water, is vitalized and regenerated by the influence of solar and fiery elements, producing a fertile and creative psychic foundation.

The fourth grade of Philosophus conducts the candidate to Netzach, the Sephirah of the planet Venus and the element of Fire. The paths that connect to the lower rungs of the Ladder are primarily of a Water nature, and the elements encountered in this grade are of an identical nature as those of the Practicus grade; however, their order and power are reversed. Previously, Water was dominant; now, Fire rages in passionate tempest. For Fire to reveal itself, Water is used as the complementary element in order to maintain equilibrium. Through Fire and Water, warmth and moisture, feeling and emotion, candidates comprehend their own chaotic condition and psychic confusion caused by ignorance and spiritual deficiency. These two elements when combined, intelligently controlled, and creatively utilized, bring about a synthesis, an integration of the mind. The Light may now manifest within the psyche, for chaos has been transcended through equilibration, and by this transmutation, a new kingdom has been created from the darkness.

The fourth grade of Philosophus completes the four elemental initiations, and now that the candidate's consciousness is implanted with the seeds of Earth, Water, Fire and Air, the alchemical conversion of the elements has been completed. Following the Fire grade is the grade of Portal whose technical attribution is the element of Akasha or Spirit which intermediates between the elemental grades and the higher

accomplishments beyond them. It is the crown of the four elements, the uppermost point of the Pentagram, and formulates above the Earth, Air, Water and Fire, revealing the Light over and through the kingdom of the natural world. It concerns itself with a reiteration of the former grades, coordinating and equilibrating the elemental self which is offered to the service of Divine Will. Therefore, this grade concerns itself with the Quintessence or Mercury of the Philosophers. In this ceremony, the Second and Third Adepts' wands represent the principles of Sulfur and Salt, and the Hierophant's wand represents all three principles of Mercury, Sulfur and Salt as this grade clearly corresponds to that stage of the alchemical art where the concept of the Quintessence, developed as the synthesis of the four elements, is realized to be concealed within the Three Alchemical Principles.

What follows is the grade of Adeptus Minor, and the function of the higher grades is to develop these Principles, to separate them from their base and to become consciously aware of their essential existence. The attainment of Adeptus Minor marks a distinct phase in spiritual realization.

The first steps in magical work are analytical, the leveling down of all that was formerly held true and sacred. This is an unhappy state, but a very necessary one if progress is made, for if chaos is transcended, a temple of Light is built from its ashes. Aleister Crowley is noted to have said, "The aspirant on the threshold of initiation finds himself assailed by the complexes which have corrupted him, their externalization excruciating him and his agonized reluctance to their elimination plunging him into such ordeals that he seems (both to himself and others) to have turned from a noble and upright man into an unutterable scoundrel." The hallmark of successful initiation and alchemical practice seems to lie in the occurrence of these and similar experiences. Increased awareness of the conflict within the psyche, under the stimulation of the magical elements and inward analysis, causes the aspirant's universe to crumble. This is the first half of the alchemical *solve et coagula* formula. Dissolution must precede synthesis because corruption is the primitive base from which the pure gold of the spirit is drawn. So far as the candidate's environment, personal understanding and creative potential allow, the task required by the *coagula* formula is to reassemble and reshape these principles closer to what is desired.

Magic and Alchemy are parallel because they both lead from a dissolution of psychic rigidity, by the light and power of Spirit, towards an animated manifestation of the spiritual self. It frees the inner personality from emotional and imaginary entanglements; it is an emancipation, a unity of being, which is consciously felt. This attainment of spiritual puberty, a significant stage in spiritual growth, marks the fusion of the Stone of the Wise, fulfilling the quest for regeneration of the bodily lead into the gold of conscious awareness of Spirit.

**" I come in the Power of the Light
I come in the Light of Wisdom
I come in the Mercy of the Light
The Light hath healing in its wings."**

--Excerpt from the Neophyte Ritual