

Hermetic Alchemy
Science and Practice



by Paul Foster Case

The Golden Dawn Alchemy Series 2

HERMETIC ALCHEMY

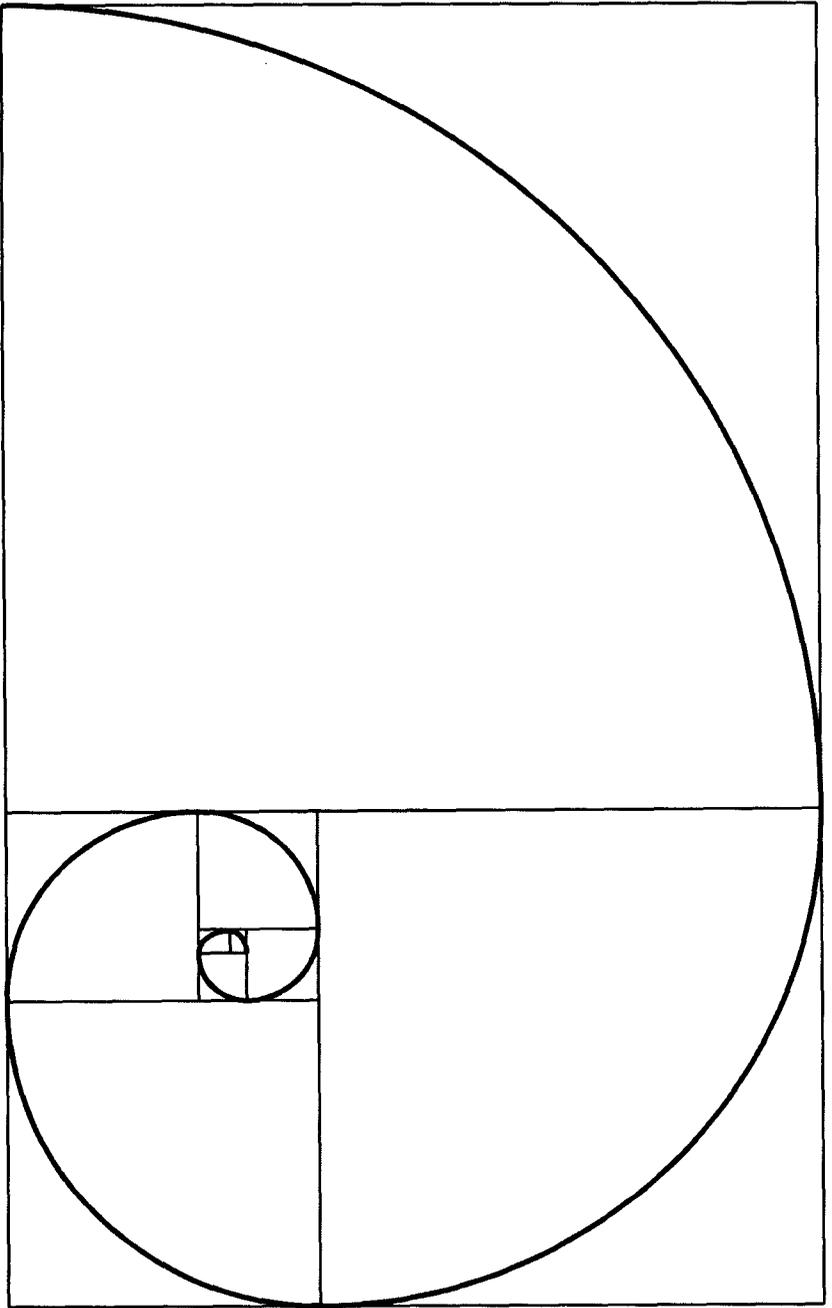
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HERMETIC ALCHEMY

Science and Practice

By Paul Foster Case

“Our Father and Brother C.R. called unto himself at first only three persons, and then four more, and that by these eight the whole Invisible Rosicrucian Order was established.”

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FOREWARD

This volume is an excellent resource for gaining a greater understanding of Alchemy and the Hermetic tradition. Tony DeLuce should be commended for producing such a wonderful edition of Case's original Alchemy course material.

Paul Foster Case – a true Adept within the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (Alpha et Omega) in America – worked for several years under the guidance of Moina Mathers. Upon leaving the Order, he founded his own magical organization called B.O.T.A. (Builders of the Adytum). Case wrote a number of courses for the students in the B.O.T.A. and the material in this book comprised an early version of one of these courses.

Case is known for communicating complex esoteric information and ideas in a clear and precise manner. It is a pleasure to read Case's lesson plan for cutting through the enigma of Alchemy, getting right to the powerful heart of what Spiritual Alchemy is, and how it can be used to benefit the magical life.

Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in the writings of Paul Foster Case and this book is an excellent addition to the library of any Hermetic scholar. I am looking forward to the next book in the 'Golden Dawn Alchemy Series'.

Mr. Darcy Kuntz
Austin, TX. 2009

INTRODUCTION

When Paul Foster Case published this Magnum Opus in 1931, it reflected a period during which he chose to write very clearly. Paul Case later mentioned that it was a mistake to give out this alchemical material “too easily”. After preparing the outstanding ‘Tarot Fundamentals’ and ‘Tarot Interpretation’ lesson series as well as the ‘Tree of Life’ courses, Paul created the ‘Great Work’ course but decided to write in a more cryptic manner with regard to Alchemy. Students who have diligently studied the material and performed the corresponding meditations in the preparatory lesson courses mentioned above, are very well prepared to grasp the inner meaning of the ‘Great Work’ course. Please note that all of the courses mentioned above as well as many others are still available from the Builders of the Adytum by making application via the web site (www.bota.org) or by writing to 5105 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, CA 90042 and requesting an application.

This book will be of great value to those who have not had the opportunity to pursue the B.O.T.A. lesson series through the ‘Great Work’ course but would like to study Alchemy from one of the greatest leaders of the Golden Dawn in the 20th century; those who have already progressed to Paul Case’s ‘Great Work’ course will find this current volume of interest in tracing the evolution of his thought and assisting them in understanding some of the more cryptic aspects of the newer course.

Please note that in this text, Paul Case appears to refer

to Alchemy as if it was a homogenous field of study but it may be better understood as a process of transformation with various independent factions which, in some cases, have very little to do with each other.

For example, it is Paul Case's view that "true" alchemists were not referring to external laboratories and he emphatically states that they were referring to various grades of consciousness as well as the physical human instrument. Well this is definitely true of the particular group of writings that Paul is quoting from, this cannot be assumed across all alchemical literature. In fact there are hundreds of alchemical documents that are referring precisely to laboratory alchemy and do not in any manner refer to the Spiritual Alchemy described in this text. Paul's view is that such Alchemists misunderstood the "real" alchemists endowed with the oral tradition. Rather the evidence supports the view that there was a faction of Alchemists that did involve themselves solely with the study of purely physical processes.

Though Spiritual Alchemy is of the greatest importance in serving as a valuable key to understanding the Golden Dawn Rituals and Teaching, one can not completely dismiss the value of "Lab Alchemy". Observing the changes in color and form of the various materials undergoing chemical change and processes such as extraction, distillation, etc., certainly will develop a deeper understanding of Spiritual Alchemy. But make no mistake, a "plant stone" or "mineral stone" made in a laboratory, will confer no special powers

upon the participating alchemist; rather one can view the observed laboratory processes as a potent series of meditations. The “First Matter” in this text is the Alchemist himself and the alchemical process described is the transmutation of the subject’s own body and consciousness into that of the “Philosophers’ Stone.”

Also note that Paul Foster Case states that the Qabalah provides the necessary key to understanding the oral tradition of Alchemy. While this is certainly true of a certain class of alchemical literature, particularly from a select group of alchemical writings from the 16th century onwards, it cannot be applied to the vast corpus of alchemical literature without discrimination.

In the introductory chapters, Paul Case makes a strong and compelling argument that Western Alchemy and Eastern Yoga are describing the same fundamental reality. But interesting enough, one finds very little Eastern Yoga style practices in the B.O.T.A. curriculum at any level; rather Paul warns repeatedly that such practices can only be safely performed under the guidance of a qualified teacher and definitely not simply out of a book. To this I concur and also note that the various systems of Yoga can be understood from within the basic structure of the Tree of Life and do form the basis of a comprehensive system of alchemical transformation. Such a system is best undertaken from someone in a controlled environment who has completed the corresponding transformation themselves. We are reminded again that one must have the Stone to make the Stone.

Here for the first time in over 75 years are Paul Foster Case's advanced aspects of the Alchemical Process, the Twelve Stages of the Great Work, and practical instruction publicly available to students of the Golden Dawn Tradition. It is with great pleasure that we introduce the second volume of the Rosicrucian Order of the Golden Dawn's 'Golden Dawn Alchemy Series', a collection of distinguished books on Alchemy written by leaders of the Golden Dawn Tradition.

Enjoy!

Tony DeLuce
Laguna Niguel, CA
March 19, 2009

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice WHAT ALCHEMY REALLY IS

Webster's International Dictionary defines alchemy as: "The medieval chemical science, whose great objects were the transmutation of the baser metals into gold, and the discovery of the universal cure for diseases and means of indefinitely prolonging life." This, the commonly accepted exoteric definition of alchemy, gives a partial and therefore distorted idea of the significance of Hermetic science and practice. Our first lesson will therefore be devoted to a consideration of the true meaning of the Hermetic doctrine, its real objects, and the field of its practical operations.

The literature of alchemy is difficult because it is intentionally cryptic. Alchemical authors use a complicated and obscure system of symbolism. They continually resort to blinds, enigmas, cryptograms, and other devices intended to conceal their real meaning from uninitiated readers. Never do they actually lie, but it has been said that when they seem to speak most openly the wary reader should be most ready to suspect a hidden meaning.

The difficulty of getting at the real import of the alchemical literature is further increased by the fact that there are three distinct classes of alchemical books. The first contains the works of the true sages, who were in the chain of the oral tradition of Hermetic science. The second class consists of books written by persons who misunderstood the writings of the genuine adepts, and

supposed them to be explanations of purely physical processes having to do with the modification and transmutation of ordinary metals by means of crude chemical experiments. The third class comprises many volumes written by charlatans and pretenders, who took advantage of popular interest in alchemy to line their pockets at the expense of their dupes.

Fortunately, the oral tradition of Hermeticism has never died out. It is because the School of Ageless Wisdom has become a link in the chain of that tradition that we are able to present this body of knowledge concerning the inner secrets of Hermeticism. We possess the keys to the cryptic symbols of the adepts. We shall use them to give you a clear exposition of the teaching, free from the intentional concealments which were necessary in less enlightened ages.

We know that our claim will be ridiculed by the world. It will be denied, too, by some who have established themselves in the public eye as authorities, by reason of their voluminous commentaries and exposition upon occult and mystical topics. The fact remains that the alchemical teaching given here is by no means the opinion of one person, or group of persons, arrived at after the perusal of ancient tomes. As in our expositions of Tarot and Rosicrucianism, what we give you here is a faithful transmission of instruction received from the Inner School, and confirmed by our own personal experience. Whether you accept it as such just now is not the important thing. We know that if you put this instruction to the tests of reason, intuition, and practice,

you will be able to demonstrate its truth beyond the shadow of a doubt. Furthermore, if you carry the work to its final stages, you will be able to make your own personal contact with the adepts of the Inner School.

The bulk of alchemical literature now extant was written during the Middle Ages, but the beginnings of the Hermetic science and practice may be traced to a much earlier period. For example, a fundamental tenet of alchemy is the declaration of the *Emerald Tablet*: "That which is below is as that which is above, and that which is above is as that which is below, for the performance of the miracles of the One Thing." There can be little doubt that the *Emerald Tablet*, as we have it, is a relatively modern work, although it is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus; but exactly the same doctrine is taught in the Hindu *Katha Upanishad*: "As below so above, as above so below; he passes from death to death who finds here the least shadow of variety. There is no variety in THAT. It should be grasped by the mind alone. He, indeed, passes from death to death who here finds the least shadow of variety."

Swami Vivekananda writes: "In India there was a sect called the *Rasayanas*. Their idea was that ideality, knowledge, spirituality and religion were all very right, but that the body was the only instrument by which to attain to all these. If the body broke now and then it would take so much more time to attain the goal. For instance, a man wants to practice Yoga, or wants to become spiritual. Before he has advanced very far he dies. Then he takes another body and begins again, then

dies, and so on, and in this way much time will be lost in dying and being born again. If the body could be made strong and perfect, so that; it would get rid of birth and death, we should have more time to become spiritual. So these *Rasayanas* say, first make the body very strong, and they claim that this body can be made immortal. Their idea is that if the mind is manufacturing the body, and if it be true that each mind is only one particular outlet to that infinite energy, and that there is no limit to each particular outlet getting any amount of power, why is it impossible that we should keep our bodies all the time? We shall have to manufacture all the bodies we shall ever have. As soon as this body dies we shall have to manufacture another. If we can do that why cannot we do that just here and now, without getting out? The theory is perfectly correct. If it is possible that we live after death, and make other bodies, why is it impossible that we should have the power of making bodies here, without entirely dissolving this body, simply changing it continually? They also thought that in mercury and in sulphur was hidden the most wonderful power, and that by certain preparations of these a man could keep the body as long as he liked." – *Raja Yoga*, pages 207 - 208.

So long ago as 1879, Dr. William A. P. Martin, a missionary to China, published an article in the *China Review*, in which he offered evidence to show that alchemy was known and practiced in China at least three hundred years before the Christian Era, and that it entered Europe by way of Byzantium and Alexandria. He cited many ancient texts, which include the

following points of similarity between Chinese alchemical literature and that of the West: (1) The doctrine that there is a seed of metals; (2) the idea that there is in all things an active principle whereby they may attain to a condition of higher development; (3) the fact that alchemy was perpetuated in China chiefly by oral tradition, supplemented by books written in figurative language; (4) Chinese alchemy, like that of Europe, is inseparable from astrology and magic; (5) the combination of the idea of the transmutation of metals with that of the making of a universal medicine; (6) the secret of making gold was regarded as being inferior to that of the Elixir of Life; (7) success in the work required self-culture and self-discipline; (8) the metals were all regarded as being composite; (9) the true matters of the work were concealed by names also used in the West, including lead, mercury, sulphur, and cinnabar; (10) the same symbolic terms appear in Chinese as in Western alchemical texts—such as, the "Radical Principle," the "Green Dragon," the "True Mercury," the "True Lead," and so on; (11) there were two alchemical processes, the first inward and spiritual, the second outward and material, and there were two elixirs, a greater and a lesser.

We have condensed this account of Dr. Martin's essay from A. E. Waite's *Secret Tradition in Alchemy*. Mr. Waite is obliged to include it in his book, because it cannot be ignored, but he does what he can to minimize its importance. This, because the evidence conflicts more or less with his thesis – which is that the bulk of alchemical writings are the product of sordid lust for

gold, written by deluded men who had in view no other end than the hope of sudden wealth. As usual, Mr. Waite is an indefatigable and successful miner for facts and information, but his every page demonstrates his lack of the keys of oral tradition which unlock the treasure-houses of Ageless Wisdom.

The Western literature of alchemy can be traced back to the days when Alexandria was the meeting-place for that group of adepts of the Inner School who later transferred their activities to Fez, and from that city issued the earliest versions of Tarot. In much of its doctrine, the Hermetic and alchemical philosophy is definitely Neo-Platonic, and as Neo-Platonism is tinged with ideas brought to Alexandria by wandering teachers from India, we can understand how there came to be a mixture of Hindu thought, Egyptian magic, and Greek philosophy in the Hermetic teaching set forth in the symbols of alchemy and Tarot.

Authorities disagree as to the derivation of the noun *alchemy*. Plutarch supposed it to be a combination of the Arabic definite article *al* with the Greek *chumein*, signifying "to pour." An opinion prevailing today is that the true derivation is from *Khem*, an Egyptian noun meaning "black, fertile soil," in contrast to barren sand. *Khem* was the name given by the Egyptians to their country, and even Plutarch knew this, for he mentions it in his *Isis and Osiris*. The derivation of alchemy from *Khem* is further confirmed by the fact that old alchemical books allude to Hermetic practice as "the Egyptian Art."

The esoteric doctrine received by us is that the noun *alchemy*, like many other words in the Western literature of Hermetic science, is derived from Hebrew. It does not follow from this that alchemy is of Hebrew origin. Rather should it be understood that for certain purposes the Inner School adopted the Chaldean-Hebrew language to preserve and transmit esoteric doctrines, just as modern scientists use Latin and Greek for similar purposes.

In Hebrew the word is ALChMH. It is a combination of the Semitic god-name AL, *El*, signifying "strength," with ChMH, *Khammaw*, the Hebrew poetical noun for "sun." Thus "alchemy" may be interpreted as meaning "strength of the sun," or "God the Sun." Both interpretations are in harmony with alchemical doctrine.

Because ChMH, *Khammaw*, is derived from the root ChM, *Khem*, "the black one," which, as we have said, was given by the Egyptians to their own country, and by Egyptian priests to a certain aspect of the father-god, Osiris, alchemy is truly the Egyptian Art, and it is also the Science of God, the Black One, that is, the Hidden One. It is the science of the hidden essence which is veiled by solar energy. It is also the Osirian Art, because it is the system of practice which enables us to control the hidden powers of the "underworld" which, according to the Egyptian doctrine, is governed by Osiris. This hidden realm of Osiris is the world of occult forces and laws concealed beneath the superficial appearances of the world which is perceived by the greater number of human beings.

As this lesson is intended for affiliates of the School of Ageless Wisdom who have had the preliminary training given in the Basic Tarot Course, we may also apply to the word ALChMH the knowledge to be gained from the Tarot Keys. Thus we find that the Hebrew letters of the word correspond to the following Tarot sequence:

<i>Letters:</i>	A	L	Ch	M	H
<i>Key Nos.:</i>	0	11	7	12	4

This may be read in many ways, and you should try to find readings for yourself. Here is one: (A:0) Alchemy is the Art of using the Life-Breath in accordance with the fundamental postulate that no matter how far the physical manifestation of that Life-Breath may have been carried by evolution, further progress is always possible. (L:11) In the practice of this art, one of the great secrets is that of the balance of forces by their opposites, hence it is written that equilibrium is the basis of the Great Work. (Ch:7) Furthermore, alchemical practice is made possible by the fact, alluded to in our quotation from Vivekananda, that each personal mind is one particular outlet to infinite energy - that is to say, that every person is a "House of Influence," receiving and specializing the currents of inexhaustible celestial energy. (M:12) This being rightly understood, it becomes evident that the business of the alchemist has much to do with the reversal of the mental attitudes and ways of life followed by the masses. (H:4) Finally, alchemy aims at nothing less than complete control over all physical conditions, because its object is to make the personal mind an unobstructed channel for

the Constituting Intelligence which already exercises precisely that control.

By adding the numbers of the foregoing Keys, we get 34, and since there is no Tarot Key bearing that number, we add the digits and got 7. Thus we learn from the Key numbers corresponding to the letters of ALChMH that the essential meaning of the word is summed up by Key 7, *The Chariot*. In this connection it is interesting to note that one of the celebrated alchemical texts is named *The Triumphal Chariot of Antimony*. It is one of the subtlest of alchemical books because it teaches the spiritual side of the art while at the same time devoting much space to the medicinal and other virtues of the actual metal antimony. Its author, Basil Valentine, clearly indicates his knowledge of the doctrine conveyed by Key 7, in his instructions concerning the preparation of the student for laboratory practice, wherein he recommends:

"Invocation of God, with a certain heavenly intention, drawn from the depths of a sincere heart and conscience, liberated from ambition, hypocrisy and all other vices which are in affinity with these, including arrogance, boldness, luxury, petulancy, oppression of the poor and similar evils. All these are to be eradicated from the heart, that when a man desires to prostrate himself before the Throne of Grace, in order to obtain health, he may do so with a conscience free from unprofitable weeds, *so that his body may be transmuted into a holy temple of God and purged from all uncleanness.*"

By numeration of letters, ALChMH is 84, and this is a significant number because it is 7 x 12, indicating the working of the seven alchemical metals or planets through their twelve spheres of manifestation, which are represented in astrology by the twelve signs of the zodiac. We shall come to these metals and their real meaning before the end of the lesson.

Furthermore, in Qabalah the number 84 represents these words: AGP, *Aggaph*, a chosen troop; DM, *Dammam*, was silent; OhLVM, *Khalome*, a dream; ChNVK, *Enoch*, signifying "initiation;" and IDO, *Yawda*, to know. The slightest acquaintance with alchemical literature suffices to show that the adepts of Hermetic science are indeed a chosen troop; that they maintain strict silence as to the innermost secrets of the art from all who have not proved their fitness to receive that instruction; that one of their ways of communication is through direct action upon that mode of human consciousness which forms the imagery of our dreams that Hermetic science is the essence of what is taught in all systems of initiation; and, finally, that this science is not mere speculation or theory, but definite and demonstrable knowledge. Thus you may see that even the name of this ancient art, when interpreted in accordance with ancient occult methods, gives a clear statement of what alchemy really is.

Alchemy, then is misunderstood if it be thought to be no more than a crude precursor of modern chemistry. Its true adepts sought other results than those aimed at by the modern chemist. The instruments of their work had

nothing in common with the apparatus of our laboratories. True, they described such apparatus. They even published illustrations of it in some of their books. They did so as part of their plan to prevent uninitiated readers from discovering their real secret. For, as we have already said, the alchemical books were written as supplements to oral instruction. They were aids to memory, rather than complete expositions of Hermetic practice. Thus they were so arranged that none but those who were duly and truly prepared might guess the real meaning from a perusal of their strange, cryptic pages.

The Hermetic art has to do with processes carried out in a *hidden* laboratory. In the works of genuine adepts, the vessels of the art are invariably described as being *secret*. So are the processes. Thus Bernard of Trevisan writes: "Dissolution is the whole mystery of the art, and is to be accomplished, not as some have thought, *by means of fire, but in a wholly abstruse manner*, by the help of Mercury." Here the adjective "abstruse" has the now obsolete meanings: "concealed, or hidden."

Thomas Charnocke gives a hint to the same effect when he says, in his *Breviary*: "I think few potters within this realm have made at any time such cunning ware, as we for our science do fashion and prepare."

Can anything be plainer than this continual repetition of such words as *secret, hidden, abstruse*? Even the adjective "Hermetic" has come to have this meaning, as when we say that a vessel is "hermetically sealed." Alchemical practice is primarily an interior operation.

At the same time, although we have said that alchemy is not crude chemistry, and that all its instruments are contained in a hidden laboratory, you must not jump to the conclusion that it is a pure metaphysical process. It may be correctly described as being a psycho-physiological operation. The Hermetic practice is a method of psychological transformation directed by the conscious mind of man. This is the mode of human consciousness personified by the Egyptians as Thoth, by the Greeks as Hermes, and by the Romans as Mercury. Thus it becomes evident that what Bernard of Trevisan means by saying that the operation is performed by the help of Mercury is little more than a paraphrase of what we have quoted from the Katha Upanishad: It should be grasped by the mind alone."

Dissolution is said to be the whole mystery of alchemy, because Hermetic practice enables us to control those functions of our bodies which dissolve, or break down into their constituent elements, the forms of materials taken from our environment. The laboratory of the alchemist is his own personality. The secret vessels therein are organs in his own physical body, together with their astral and etheric counterparts.

The principal piece of alchemical apparatus is a furnace, called an "athanor." Eliphas Levi says: "We are all in possession of the chemical instrument, the great and sole athanor which answers for the separation of the subtle from the gross and the fixed from the volatile. This instrument, complete as the world and precise as mathematics, is represented by the sages under the

emblem of the pentagram, or five-pointed star, which is the absolute sign of human intelligence. I will follow the example of the wise by forbearing to name it; it is too easy to guess it."

Today there is no need for even the slight concealment which seemed advisable when Levi wrote. The athanor is the human organism. Its name, like many other alchemical terms, is derived from Hebrew. In that language it is *Ath-Ha-Nour*, which means "Essence of Fire." Thus Bernard of Trevisan is correct when he says that the Great Work is not performed by means of fire, and so are the other sages who insist that the fire employed by them is "no common fire." It is the *essence* of fire, manifested as the human organism, which provides us with the instrument for the Great Work. Hence the athanor is defined as a "self-feeding, digesting furnace, in which an equable heat is maintained." Is not this a fairly good description of the human body?

Some reference to the significance of the pentagram has been made in other publications of the School of Ageless Wisdom. It is intended, however to publish as soon as possible a series of texts on magic, in which the arcane meaning of this august symbol will be fully dealt with.

For the present it is enough to say that Levi's own interpretation of the pentagram includes these two points: (1) that the five-pointed star is a figure of the human body; (2) that it expresses the mind's domination

over the elements. Here he plainly states the Hermetic position, which is the same as that of the Hindu adepts mentioned by Swami Vivekananda. The mind of man can, and does, dominate all the forces of nature, through the instrumentality of the body. Hence the primary work of the alchemist is directed toward the purification and perfection of this chemical instrument.

It is perfectly true that the alchemist seeks to transmute the baser metals into gold. When he speaks of the seven metals, however, he means something other than the common products of the mine. Thus George Ripley warns his readers (in his *Compound of Alchymie*) against fruitless experiments with various substances, including "meane Mettalls dygged out of the Myne." And the other sages make the same distinction, speaking always of "our" Mercury, "our" Sulphur, "our" Gold and Silver, so as to make it plain that they are mentioning something peculiar to the Hermetic operation. The alchemical metals bear the names of the sun, moon, and the five planets known to the ancients, as follows:

LEAD	SATURN	♄
IRON	MARS	♂
TIN	JUPITER	♃
GOLD	SOL or SUN	☉
COPPER or BRASS	VENUS	♀
SILVER	LUNA	☾
QUICKSILVER	MERCURY	☿

In many alchemical texts and formulas, the astrological symbols of the heavenly bodies named above are used

to represent the metals. Elsewhere in the instruction issued by the School of Ageless Wisdom we have explained the correspondence of these planets to seven "interior stars" located within the human organism. The seven stars are the same as the seven chakras, or lotuses, of the Yoga philosophy. They have been identified with seven centers of the human nervous system, as follows:

SATURN	SACRAL PLEXUS
MARS	PROSTATIC GANGLION
JUPITER	SOLAR PLEXUS
SOL or SUN	CARDIAC PLEXUS
VENUS	PHARYNGEAL
LUNA or MOON	PITUITARY BODY
MERCURY	PINEAL BODY

The transmutation of the baser metals into gold is the process whereby the vibratory action of these interior stars is so modified that the lower rates of vibration are transmuted, (literally, "changed across") and sublimated, or lifted up. This transmutation of the subtle force which works through the seven interior stars or alchemical metals has a triple consequence. It leads to spiritual illumination. It enables the perfected adept to exercise powers which remain latent in most men. It gives him perfect bodily health.

The adept's health is the result of the perfect combination of all the chemical and electrical energies whose coordinated activities maintain the form and functions of his physical body. This state of radiant vitality is communicable. When it is attained, the alchemist can project his own rate of vibration upon

other persons, and by inducing a similar rate in their etheric bodies, can heal their diseases. The alchemist's mental and spiritual vibration is also communicable. By projecting his own state of consciousness upon the mind of another, he can raise the level of that person's consciousness. Of such spiritual contagion there are many examples in the Bible, and in the sacred writings of other nations,

An actual force is projected. The alchemists call it the powder of projection, by means of which, they say, the baser metals may be changed into gold. But Ripley warns us against misuse of the powder. He points out that the metals upon which projection is made must first be properly cleansed.

What is meant is obvious when we understand the figurative language of alchemy. The work of projection refers to the transmutation of the minds and bodies of the adept's disciples. Upon this projection the perfection of the art depends, and it is by this projection of an unwritten something from the consciousness of one who knows to the mind of a properly prepared pupil that the inner secret of alchemy is transmitted, for it is never committed to writing. Indeed, it cannot be, for it goes beyond words.

Alchemy, then, aims at a state of consciousness which is reflected into the physical plane as perfect vibratory equilibrium. That equilibrium already exists in nature, and it is the business of the alchemist to manifest it through his own personality. Thus we are told that

equilibrium is the basis of the Great Work, and admonished by all books on Hermetic practice to "imitate nature."

The higher, perfectly balanced state of personality is none other than the "new mind" of the injunction: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is a new understanding of life, based upon a new kind of first-hand experience.

A prominent characteristic of this experience is that it is permeated with the quality of *eternity*, hinted at in the Rosicrucian inquiry: "Were it not an excellent thing to live always so as if you had lived from the beginning of the world, and should still live to the end thereof?"

Yet alchemy is not exclusively concerned with consciousness. What is aimed at in the performance of the Great Work is more than a belief, more than a state of mind, more than a metaphysical realization. When we say that the Great Work unfolds a new kind of consciousness, we mean you to understand that he in whom this unfoldment takes place is thereby enabled to express all the powers that go with it. He does actually find himself able to command the spirits of the elements, the subtle forces whose interplay of activity produces all the appearances of the physical world. This command enables him to transform his corruptible body into a body incorruptible. By this same mastery he also exerts over the physical forms in his environment such control that he can alter their appearance, and even change their atomic structure, by raising or lowering

their rates of vibration. Thus the alchemical mastery does, in the end, enable its adepts to perform actual physical transmutations.

A great stumbling-block in the way of would-be alchemists is that so few of them perceive that man himself is the *primary* subject of the art. No secret formula can enable you to control the processes of nature unless you begin by learning to control them within yourself. Your mind must be changed, so that you perceive and understand things hidden from the uninitiated. Your body must be changed, too, before you may safely employ it to specialize and transmit the high-tension currents of the Essence of Fire, which would destroy the physical organism of the average person.

Thus it is evident that alchemy is not, as some have supposed, merely a curious veil for religious mysticism. It is true that some alchemists have been mystics, like Jacob Boehme and Thomas Vaughan. It is true also that certain alchemical writings lend themselves easily to such a moral interpretation as was attempted by General Ethan Allen Hitchcock when he wrote his *Remarks on Alchemy and the Alchemists*, Concerning this book, A. E. Waite justly says:

"It renders alchemical literature ridiculous by representing it as veiling in allegory and illustrating by symbols the most familiar principles of ethics, the ordinary laws of conduct and counsels of thinking in the heart – in other words, the daily matters of public

teaching, not only by schoolmen and theologians but by mendicant friars in the booths and marketplaces ."

Mrs. Atwood's *Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery*, originally printed in 1850, only to be withdrawn in a few weeks because its author feared she had said too much, and then republished in 1920, after her death, offers yet another interpretation. Mrs. Atwood's thesis is that the alchemical operation in none other than the procedure we know today as hypnosis or mesmerism. She made a valiant attempt to defend her position, and her book is interesting, but not convincing, even to those who have not entered into the chain of the oral tradition. She and her father believed that the First Matter of the alchemists was identical with the magnetic fluid postulated by Mesmer to account for his cures. They were convinced that the alchemical process was a method for separating this subtle vital fluid from the gross body of man. By this means they believed it possible to heal diseases, awaken clairvoyant powers, and raise the consciousness of the mesmeric subject to higher levels.

As a variant of this interpretation, S. Foster Damon, in an article published some years since in the *Occult Review*, advanced the opinion that the First Matter of the alchemists is the ectoplasm supposed to be the basis of spirit materializations. He reached this view from his study of the writings of Thomas Vaughan.

Now, the three interpretations cited above have all some part of the truth. The observance of certain fundamental

ethical principles is insisted upon by all genuine Hermetic authors. The Great Work does include practices akin to those of Mesmer, although they are far in advance of his inadequate technique. It may even be admitted that the First Matter is the substance employed by genuine mediums for the production of their phenomena, although it should be noted that to admit this is not quite the same as to say that the First Matter is ectoplasm.

The fact is that alchemy is really a Western variation of what Hindus call Yoga. This point we shall endeavor to make clear in the remaining pages of this lesson.

We have already called attention to the identity between the alchemical metals and the chakras of the Yoga system. We have also shown the remarkable similarity of thought and expression between the *Emerald Tablet* and a passage from the *Katha Upanishad*. We may continue these parallels considerably beyond these beginnings.

Fundamental in Hermetic science is the doctrine that all things whatsoever are manifestations of three principles, called SULPHUR, MERCURY, and SALT. They are not the common physical substances. Their names indicate three ways in which the One Thing manifests itself. One of these may be identified by a quality *like* a quality possessed by sulphur. Another has characteristics like those of quicksilver. The third has properties which resemble those of salt.

Sulphur or brimstone burns easily, and has choking fumes. It has been associated for centuries with the fires of hell, and with the soothing passions which those fires typify. Mercury is liquid and flowing, and the surface of each globule of this metal is a mirror reflecting its environment. Its rapid movement, like that of a living creature, accounts for the name quicksilver, in which "quick" means both living and rapid, as we may see from the French *argent vive*, literally, "living silver." Salt crystallizes in perfect cubes, which have been types of earth since the time of Pythagoras; and its property is to arrest dissolution, or disintegrative chemical change. The quality of sulphur, then, is fiery and passionate. That of mercury is vital and reflective. That of salt is arrestive and binding.

Compare these alchemical doctrines with the Yoga teaching. Hindu philosophers declare that three qualities, or *gunas*, enter into the composition of all things. Wherever there is a form, there are the three qualities. Their names are *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. In the fourteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the characteristics of these three qualities are fully described. There we are told that *Rajas* is the embodiment of desire, and the producer of thirst and relish; that it ties the ego through attachment to action; that from it are born such things as greed, initiation of action, energy in great worldly achievements, unrest, and thirst. We learn also that *Sattva* is illuminative; that it is transparent, or light-transmitting, that it ties the ego through attachment to happiness and knowledge; that when it is dominant there is the illumination of

knowledge at every gate of the body, and thus the senses and faculties attain the fullest manifestation of power. Finally, *Tamas* is said to be born of insensibility; to tie up the ego by means of heedlessness, laziness, sleep; to veil the power of discrimination; to be the cause of spiritual blindness. We might represent these three qualities by three English words: Desire-force (*Rajas*); Intelligence (*Sattva*); Inertia (*Tamas*). The same three words could be used in place of sulphur, mercury, and salt.

Again, the alchemists recognize five underlying phases of manifestation, or five classes of expression for the One Thing. The first of these is the Quintessence, or Fifth Essence, so named because it is a fifth thing, extracted in the alchemical operation from the four grosser elements. Yet Hermetic writers are agreed that this Quintessence is really the root or source of the four elements, Fire, Water, Air, and Earth.

Their teaching exactly parallels that of the Yogis, who call the five classes of expression the five *Tattvas*. These are: Akasha (Quintessence); Tejas or Agni (Fire); Apas (Water); Vayu (Air); Prithivi (Earth). Furthermore the Yogi philosophy definitely states that the five *Tattvas* are the subtle principles of sensation; that each *Tattva* has its own peculiar property; and that there is a cyclic ebb and flow of the *Tattvas*, in regular sequence, through all things and creatures.

One of the most important Yogic practices aims at control of this cyclic flow of the *Tattvas*. Similarly, in

alchemy, we hear of the Wheel of the Elements, with the Quintessence at the center. It is illustrated in Key 10 of Tarot, Concerning it Ripley writes:

"But first of these elements make thou rotation,
And into Water thy Earth turn first of all;
Then of thy Water make Air by levigation;
And Air make Fire; then MASTER will I thee call
Of all our secrets great and small:
The Wheel of Elements thou canst turn about,
Truly conceiving our writings without doubt."

--*Compund of Alchymie*, Sec. I: 17

The preparation for the practice of yoga is the same in all essentials as the preparation for the practice of alchemy. Evil tendencies are to be overcome, and positive virtues developed. The gross functions of the body are to be purified, and then comes the finer purification of the interior centers. The object of all these yoga practices is precisely that which is mentioned by Basil Valentine, namely, that the yogi's body "may be transmuted into a holy temple of God and purged from all uncleanness."

Again, the fire of alchemy is said to be a secret fire, which is often compared to a serpent or dragon. Likewise in yoga, the active principle of the operation is a fiery force coiled in the Saturn center at the base of the spine. It is known as Kundalini, the coiled serpent-power.

The aim of all yoga practice is to raise this serpent-power, stage by stage, through the seven chakras which

we have identified with the alchemical metals. Thus the practice of yoga is really a process of sublimation, which lifts up and brings into active manifestation the hidden powers of the sub-conscious life of man. In other words, yoga calls forth the powers of the Osirian "underworld." In alchemy we have exactly the same kind of practice.

Finally, Paracelsus, like the rest of the sages, tells his readers that the Great Work is performed by the aid of Mercury, and that the only other agencies entering into the art are the powers of the sun and moon. In like manner, the yoga system recognizes two agencies. One, hot and fiery, is called *Prana* or *Surya* (Sun). The other, cold and moist, is named *Rayi*, and is always termed the lunar current. Let us conclude, then, by resuming these parallels in a table:

<i>Yoga Philosophy</i>		<i>Alchemy</i>	
All things are expressions of one fundamental energy.		"All things are from one, by the mediation of one."	
All things combine three qualities:		All things combine three principles:	
SATTVA	Wisdom	MERCURY	Wisdom
RAJAS	Desire-force	SULPHUR	Desire-force
TAMAS	Inertia	SALT	Inertia

(continued on next page)

Yoga Philosophy

There are five modes of expression:

AHASHA
TEJAS
APAS
VAYU
PRITHIVI

There are seven principles of vehicles of action called lotuses or chakras:

MULADARA (base of spine)
SVADISTHANA (navel)
MANIPURA (Solar plexus)
ANAHATA (Cardiac plexus)
VISUDDHI (Throat center)
AJNA (Pituitary body)
SAHASRARA (Pineal gland)

There is a secret force, fiery in quality, which is to be raised from the lower chakras to the higher ones.

The Sun (Prana), Moon (Rayu), and Sattva (Wisdom) are the three main agencies of the work of the yogis.

Both alchemy and yoga aim at the illumination of the operator, at the transformation of his physical body, and at control of the subtle forces of nature.

Alchemy

There are five modes of expression:

QUINTESENCE
FIRE
WATER
AIR
EARTH

There are seven principle substances to be transmuted termed metals or planets:

SATURN	Lead
MARS	Iron
JUPITER	Tin
SUN or SOL	Gold
VENUS	Copper
LUNA	Silver
MERCURY	Quicksilver

The lower metals, or their essences, are to be raised in to the forms and essences of higher ones by sublimation.

All alchemists agree that the Great Work is performed through the power of the Sun and Moon, aided by Mercury.

Summing up this lesson, then, we may say that the basis of alchemy is the doctrine that man is the direct expression of the perfectly free, unmodified spiritual essence of all things. The alchemical work is the direction of the energy derived from that essence, according to the perceptions of awakened intelligence. This intelligence, the self-conscious mind of man, though it is not the highest level of life expression, has this power: IT CAN PERCEIVE THE ORDER OF NATURE, BY DISCERNING THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE VEIL OF APPEARANCES. Furthermore, in its ability to discover principles, and in its power of control over the sub-conscious life of the human body, it combines the two greatest potencies known to us. For by the recognition of the principles upon which the body is built, and its environment brought into form, the intelligence of man is able to invent and carry into execution novel applications of those principles. Thus it is possible to bring about a finer adjustment, and a finer organization, of the human body itself.

The result of so doing is the production of a new kind of human being, capable of receiving the influx of forms of energy which would disintegrate the ordinary human body, and able to give expression to modes of consciousness which are not characteristic of the greater number of men and women.

The alchemist himself is the subject of the primary stages of his operation. The laboratory in which he works is his own personality. His practice enables him

to demonstrate that his personality is the field of the Operation of the Sun. Step by step it gradually and gently alters the state of his mind and of his body until he reaches a stage of illumination in which he perceives that all his personal activities are in truth particular modes of a cosmic process.

This understanding enables him to reverse the mental attitude taken by most persons. It also enables him to exercise powers undreamed-of by the mass of humanity. In him is fulfilled the saying of Eliphas Levi: "He who can master and direct the currents of the Astral Light may reduce the world to a chaos and transform its face."

As the alchemist completes the Great Work, he comes to realize his inner identity with the One Power which is always dominant over all things, always the ruler of all forces, and always the determiner of the constitution of everything. At the end of the Great Work the alchemist has so transmuted his personality that he expresses nothing but the inwardly perceived impulses of that One Power in whatever he thinks, says, or does. As a free channel for the dominant principle of the universe, his personality expresses dominion in works of power, and these works appear to be miracles when viewed by uninitiated beholders.

To this high goal we direct your inspiration. It may seem far beyond you now, yet the wisdom of the ages is agreed that whoever will persist in the Great Work, carrying it out perseveringly, stage by stage, will undoubtedly be able to complete it.

In this new age what has been known to the adepts of other generations may be told more openly than ever before. It may not *all* be told, because some of it is actually untellable. But here you will find no false leads, no willful distortions of the doctrine, no unnecessary concealments. Here is the essence of the Hermetic doctrine. Put it into practice, and you will certainly accomplish the Great Work.

Lesson 2 of this book deals with the **FIRST MATTER** of the Great Work. The discovery of the First Matter is preliminary to all other work in alchemy. Lesson 2 will show you how to make this discovery for yourself.

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice
THE FIRST MATTER

Throughout the literature of Hermetic science there is perfect agreement among the adepts as to one fundamental tenet success in the Great Work depends upon what they call the "discovery" of the First Matter. Right here we must be alert. The meaning of words changes as the years pass, and we shall be led astray if we suppose that to "discover", in alchemical doctrine, is exactly the same as to "find." We must go back to the older meanings of the verb "discover," back to its derivation -- even back to the Hebrew verb which is translated "discover" in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament.

Literally, to discover is to lay bare, to denude, to strip of concealment. This is the exact significance of the Hebrew verb GLH, *galah*, which we have just mentioned. One of the meanings of this verb in Hebrew is "to open a book," and in this connection the reader familiar with Tarot will notice that the first letter of the verb is Gimel, represented in the Tarot Keys by the High Priestess, who holds in her lap an open book or scroll. The second letter is Lamed, represented by Key 11, Justice, which has equilibrium for its fundamental meaning. The last letter is Heh, typified by the Emperor, symbol of reason and of dominion over the conditions of physical existence.

Furthermore, since the first letter of GLH is that which is associated with memory, it appears that in order to

denude the First Matter of its veil of concealment, we must employ the power of recollection and association represented by the High Priestess. Indeed, the High Priestess herself is a symbol of the First Matter, as we shall see more clearly by the time we come to the end of this lesson. The discovery of the Matter is not the term of a quest undertaken in the world about us. It is the unveiling of the true nature of something within us, and it is accomplished in very truth by an act of recollection.

Deep in our sub-consciousness lies hidden the secret of the First Matter. To bring it to the surface is the primary object of Hermetic practice, just as it is the primary object of yoga. Thus the letter Lamed, among other things a symbol of that true faith which takes form in persevering action, enters into the composition of the verb GLH. Without faith in the actual existence of the First Matter, it will never be discovered. If we share the world's opinion that the alchemists were fools, we shall never participate in their wisdom, for we shall never be able to persist through the preliminary stages of the Great Work, sticking to our practice day in and day out, through that period of testing and trial in which no outward and visible signs of success reward our efforts. For, as the final letter of GLH shows, the discovery is to be made with the mind alone, even as we learned from the Upanishad quoted in the first lesson. In its initial stages it is a rational process.

We begin with the words of the sages. Over and over, in their books, they tell us what the First Matter is. At first what they say seems to be a meaningless mass of

verbiage. Then, as we persist in bringing our attention again and again to what they say, the inner significance begins to show, like the outline of a figure covered by a drapery. Then, by comparing the various descriptions, we are able to reason out what the First Matter *must* be.

The actual discovery, however, is by no means merely an inference. There is no guesswork about it. It is a vivid, unmistakable experience. When you have discovered the First Matter, you *know* that you have done so. Nobody can argue you out of that knowledge. It is not an opinion. It is not simply what you think. You share the experience of the sages. All that they have written on this topic becomes perfectly clear to you.

At the same time you understand why none of the adepts ever tells, in plain language, what the First Matter really is. You understand that the secret simply *cannot* be told, because it is a knowledge for which there are no adequate verbal expressions.

Perhaps you doubt this now. Perhaps you think that the ingenuity of man is equal to the task of finding a name for anything in his experience. True enough, but the point is that the name will convey no meaning to the person who has not also had the experience. Paracelsus and some others invented names for certain experiences that are familiar to every adept in the Hermetic practice. But how much do these names mean to their uninitiated readers? Less than nothing. Even to those who have made the discovery, these new terms are no better than the old ones. He who knows what the First Matter really

is never has any difficulty with the obscure language of the sages.

Well, if all this be true, you may ask, what's the use of reading the alchemical writers? You say they cannot tell the secret. Why bother with their attempts to do so? The answer to this is that what they do say leads us to the point where we can infer what they mean. Then our inference can be tested by experimental work. If the inference is wrong, it leads to nothing. When it is correct, it leads to the actual discovery.

What we aim to do for you in these lessons is to put you in the way of making the correct inferences from the words of the sages. Then we purpose indicating the methods whereby you may test those inferences for yourself. To this end we shall begin with a series of quotations from various alchemical texts. We have endeavored so to arrange these quotations that as you read them your mind may be led by the mere reading nearer to the truth. In addition to this careful arrangement of the material, we shall also give you a concise commentary which will assist you to arrive at your conclusions as to the real meaning.

Take your time about this. One of the reasons for our decision to make this a monthly course is that haste and impatience will but retard your progress. In separating the ethereal spirit from the gross letter of these quotations, remember the admonition of the *Emerald Tablet*, and perform the operation with sweetness as well as with ingenuity. Bear ever in mind the truth that

the real object of the Hermetic practice is identical with the real object of yoga. That object is nothing less than the complete liberation of the alchemist from the bondage of delusion.

It is by no means an utter abandonment of the world, as many have supposed. As one Eastern writer puts it: "The knower of the Essence, enjoying the pleasures of the senses with moderation, *but knowing them for what they are*, may derive both temporal and spiritual pleasure, even like one having knowledge of two languages." (--*Panchadasi*) And what is it to know the enjoyments that come through the various channels of sensation for what they are? This is the answer given in the *Yogavasishta*:

"The whole world is *Spirit*, there is no thing else in reality; -- Betake thyself to this view of things, and rest in peace, thus regaining thy real *Self*."

So much by way of introduction. Read the quotations starting on the following page slowly and very carefully. At first, let your main object be to grasp what they say. The adepts write carefully, and choose their words with great pains. Your first endeavor should be to impress those words upon your memory, without making any effort whatever to impress interpretation. The less you try to guess what these declarations mean, the quicker will the correct interpretation *dawn* upon you.

THE WORDS OF THE SAGES

CONCERNING THE FIRST MATTER

"The original matter is really a kind of stone, which, being hard and solid like a stone, may be pounded, reduced to powder, and resolved into its three elements (which Nature herself has joined together), and then again may be recombined into a solid stone of the fusibility of wax, by the skilled hand of the artist, adjusting the law of Nature."

--*The Sophic Hydrolith.*

"The Sages have, indeed, purposely concealed their meaning under a veil of obscure words, but it is sufficiently clear from their writings that the substance of which they speak is not of a special, but a general kind, and is therefore contained in animals, vegetables, and minerals. It would, however, be unwise to take a round-about road where there is a shorter cut; and they say that whereas the substance can be found in the animal and vegetable kingdoms only with great difficulty, and at the cost of enormous labour, in the bowels of the earth it lies ready to our hands. It is the matter which the Sages have agreed to call Mercury or Quicksilver. Our quicksilver, indeed, is truly a living substance, so called not because it is extracted from cinnabar, but because it is derived from the metals themselves."

--Edward Kelly, *The Humid Path.*

(N.B. This quotation from Kelly needs to be read with especial care, because it is apparently so open and

matter-of-fact. The key to it, which should unlock the mystery for students of Tarot, is the phrase, "in the bowels of the earth it lies ready to our hands." Observe, too, that Kelly says the sages have agreed to call this matter Mercury, and that he specifically declares that "our" quicksilver is not extracted from cinnabar, the ordinary mercurial ore of the mines.)

"The matter of our Stone, Mercury, is a commonly diffused subject, and though it is found with greater ease in some minerals, it may be discovered everywhere. In this sense Morienus, that illustrious Sage, answered King Calid's question as to the matter of the Stone in the following way: 'It is of thee, O King, and thou art its ore.' And Raymond asserted that he had extracted his substance from a vile and worthless thing.'

-- *Ibid.*

The First Matter is often called Magnesia, and is thus described in the glossary to A. E. Waite's translation of the *Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus*:

"MAGNESIA. This term which is occasionally used by Paracelsus in its alchemical, as distinct from its chemical sense, has received many explanations from the adepts. It is the matter of the stone, which the philosophers sometimes call their red, and sometimes their white magnesia. In the first preparation the chaos is blood-red, because the central sulphur is stirred up and discovered by the philosophical fire, In the second it is exceedingly white and transparent like the heavens. It is something like common quicksilver, but, of such a

celestial and transcendent brightness, that nothing on earth can be compared to it. It is a child of the elements, a pure virgin, from whom nothing has been generated as yet. When she breeds, it is by the fire of Nature, which is her husband, She is neither animal, vegetable, nor mineral, nor is she an extraction from these; she is pre-existent to them all, and is their mother. She is a pure simple substance, yielding to nothing but love, because generation is her aim, and that is never accomplished by violence. She produces from her heart a thick, heavy, snow-white water, which is the *Lac Virginis* (Virgin's Milk) and afterwards blood from her heart. Lastly she presents a secret crystal. She is one and three, but at the same time she is four and five. She is the Catholic Magnesia, the Sperm of the World, out of which all natural things are generated. Her body is in a sense incorruptible; the common elements will not destroy it, neither does she mix with them essentially. Outwardly she resembles a stone, and yet she is no stone. The philosophers call her their white gum, water of their sea, water of life, most pure and blessed water; she is a thick, permanent, saltish Water, which does not wet the hand, a dry water, viscous and slimy, and generated from the saline fatness of the earth. Fire cannot destroy her, for she is herself fire, having within her a portion of the universal fire of Nature, and a secret, celestial spirit, animated and quickened by God, She is a middle nature, between thick and thin, not altogether earthly, not wholly igneous, but a mean aerial substance, to be found everywhere and at all seasons."

"As concerns the matter, it is *one*, and contains within

itself all that is needed. Its birth is in the sand. It is the distilled moisture of the Moon joined to the light of the Sun and congealed.”

--Anastratus, *The Crowd*.

“Know that our Mercury is before the eyes of all men, Though it is known to few. When it is prepared its Splendor is most admirable; but the sight of it is vouchsafed to none, the sons of knowledge. Do not despise it, therefore, when you see it in sordid guise; of if you do, you will never accomplish our Magistry – and if you can change its countenance, the transformation will be glorious. For our water is a most pure virgin, and is loved of many, but meets all her wooers in foul garments, in order that she may be able to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy. Our beautiful Maiden abounds in inward graces; unlike the immodest woman who meets her lovers in splendid garments. To those who do not despise her foul exterior, she then appears in all her beauty, and brings them an infinite clever of riches and health.

--Philalethes.

Basil Valentino writes: "Cease to seek it in the animal kingdom; for Nature herself could not find it there." He also says it is a mineral, and incombustible. It cannot be found in the animal kingdom because there its real nature is too completely veiled. It is incombustible because no fire can burn the essence of fire. It is mineral, because it is actually the real substance of whatever is to be found in mines.

“It is a stone and no stone, Spirit, Soul, and Body; which if thou dissolvest, it will be dissolved, and if thou dost coagulate it, it will be coagulated, and if thou dost make it fly, it will fly, for it is volatile, or flying, and clear as a tear; afterwards it is made citrine, then saltish, but without shoots or crystals, and none may touch it with his tongue. Behold, I have described it truly to thee, but I have not named it.' Now, I will name it, and I say that if thou sayest it is Water, thou dost say the truth, and if thou sayest it is not Water, thou dost lie. Be not, therefore, deceived with manifold descriptions and operations, for it is but one thing, to which nothing extraneous may be added.”

--Arnoldus de Villa Nova.

"This Mercury of the Wisemen is a watery element, cold and moist. This is their permanent water, the spirit of the body, the unctuous vapour, the blessed water, the virtuous water, the water of the Wisemen, the philosopher's vinegar, the mineral water, the dew of heavenly grace, the virgin's milk, the bodily mercury, and with other numberless names it is named in the books of the philosophers, which names, though they are divers, notwithstanding, always signify one and the same thing, namely, the Mercury of the Wisemen. "

--Albertus Magnus.

"The object of your desire is the one thing out of which all things are made."

--Rosinus.

"The matter itself is found everywhere. It flies with fowls in the air, swims with fishes in the sea, it is

discerned by the reason of angels, and it governs man and woman."

--George Ripley.

"The matter lies before the eyes of all; everybody sees it, touches it, loves it, but knows it not. It is glorious and vile, precious and of small account, and is found everywhere. But, to be brief, our Matter has as many names as there are things in this world; that is why the foolish know it not."

--*The Golden Tract.*

"It is set up for the ruin of many and the salvation of some. To the crowd this matter is vile, exceedingly contemptible and odious, but to the philosophers it is more precious than gems or gold. It loves all, yet it is well-nigh an enemy of all; it is to be found everywhere, yet scarcely any one has discovered it."

--*A Rosicrucian Treatise.*

"The 'dew of heaven' and the 'oiliness of the earth' are the materials for our work. It is therefore neither a mineral nor a metal. The Pythagorean 'Y' indicates that there are two mercurial substances in one root, Fire and Water -- Ischamaim -- namely 'Y', extracted from the substance in which all metals are contained. It is a SALT dew of heaven, but a metallic dew, containing all colors. This dew can be coagulated by the Hermetic Art, and produces a sweet Salt, or MANNA. Its father is the Sun, its mother is the Moon, and from these two it receives its life, light, and brightness. From the Sun it receives its Fire, and from the Moon its light.

"We find this dew in a coagulated state, and also dissolved. It falls into the depths of the earth, and its substance is the most subtle and ethereal part of the earth. From above comes its soul and spirit, Fire and Light, and enters the body of Salt. Thus it receives the power of all things from above and from below.

"This mineral dew appears in all its colors of white, yellow, green, red, and black. It appears corporeal to the external eye, but to the miners in the mountains it appears sometimes thick, watery, and dripping. The best dew is the one which is coagulated like an Electrum, or like transparent Amber.

"This heavenly dew and its power is contained in everything. It is treated by the world with contempt and rejected by it. As it grows, it becomes divided into two branches, white and red, both springing from one root -- 'Y'. This substance grows out of that one root, appearing like a white and red rose of Jericho, and blooming like a lily in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

"It is often prematurely broken by the miners, and tortured by the ignorant workmen. But the true artist observes its influence by his developed internal senses, and gathers it when it is ripe, with its flowers, seeds, root, trunk, and branches.

"Let these hints be sufficient.' It is neither a metal nor a mineral, but the mother of all metals and minerals, and their Prima Materia. It is nothing else but the coagulated blood of the Red Lion, and the Gluten of the Eagle. *If*

you discover it, be silent and keep it sacred."

--The Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians.

"Our Mercury is not common Mercury or quicksilver; but our Mercury is a water which cannot be found upon earth, for it is not made or manifested in the ordinary course of Nature, but by the art and manual operations of man."

--Raymond Lully

"The seed of all things has been placed by God in water. This seed some exhibit openly, like vegetables, some keep in their kidneys, like animals, some conceal in the depths of their essential being, like minerals. The seed is stirred into action by a certain celestial influence, coagulates the material water, and passes through a series of fermentive processes (fermentation being the principle of all transmutation), until it has produced that for the production of which it was especially suited."

--Philaethes

"This mystery, because of the malice and wickedness of men, is given only to few; notwithstanding it lives and moves every day in the sight of the whole world, as it appears by the following parable:

"I am a poisonous dragon, present everywhere, and to be had for nothing. My water and my fire dissolve and compound; out of my body thou shalt draw the Green, and the Red Lion: but if thou dost not exactly know me, thou wilt with my fire destroy thy five senses. A most pernicious quick poison comes out of my nostrils,

which hath been the destruction of many. Separate therefore the thick from the thin artificially, unless thou dost delight in extreme poverty. I give thee faculties both male and female, and the powers both of heaven and earth. The mysteries of my art are to be performed magnanimously, and with great courage, if thou wouldest have me overcome the violence of the fire, in which attempt many have lost both their labour and their substance. I am the Ego of Nature, known only to the Wise, such as are pious and modest, who make of me a little world. Ordained I was by the Almighty God for men; but though many desire me, I am given only to few, that they may relieve the poor with my treasures, and not set their minds on gold that perisheth. I am called of the philosophers Mercury: my husband is Gold philosophical I am the old dragon that is present everywhere on the face of the earth; I am father and mother; youthful and ancient; weak, and yet most strong; life and death; visible and invisible; hard and soft; descending to the earth, and ascending to the heavens; most high and most low; light and heavy; in me the order of Nature is oftentimes inverted, in colour, number, weights and measure. I have in me the light of Nature; I am dark and bright; I spring from the earth, and I come out of heaven; I am well known, and yet a mere nothing; all colours shine in me, and all metals by the beams of the sun. I am the Carbunole of the Sun, a most noble clarified earth, by Which thou mayest turn copper, iron, tin, and lead into most pure gold."

--Quoted in Vaughan's *Coelum Terrae*,
from a Rosicrucian original.

"There exists a force in nature which is far more powerful than steam, by means of which a single man, who can master it and knows how to direct it, might throw the world into confusion and transform its face. It is diffused throughout infinity; it is the substance of heaven and earth; for it is either fixed or volatile according to its degrees of polarization. When it produces radiance it is called light. It is that substance which was created by God before all else when He said: Let there be light. It is substance and motion at one and the same time; it is a fluid and a perpetual vibration. The inherent force by which it is put into activity is called magnetism. In infinite space it is ether, or etherized light; it becomes astral light in the stars which it magnetizes, while in organized beings it becomes the magnetic light or fluid. In man it forms the astral body or plastic mediator. The will of intelligent beings acts directly on this light, and, by means thereof, upon all nature, which is made subject to the modifications of intelligence.

"This agent is precisely what the medieval adepts called the first matter of the Great Work. This Universal Agent, this vital and luminous caloric, this electromagnetic ether, is represented on ancient monuments by the girdle of Isis, which twines in a love-knot round two poles, by the bull-headed serpent, by the serpent with the head of a goat or a dog, and by the serpent devouring its own tail. It is the winged dragon of Medea, the double serpent of the caduceus, and the tempter of Genesis; but it is also the brazen snake of Moses, encircling the Tau; it is the Hyle of the Gnostics; and

lastly, it is the devil of exoteric dogmatism, and is really the blind force which souls must conquer, in order to detach themselves from the chains of earth."

--Eliphas Levi, *Mysteries of Magic*.

Very likely, after your first reading of the foregoing quotations, you will feel more bewildered than enlightened. In time, however, as you go over these words of the sages again and again, the inner meaning will begin to open itself to you. It would do so without any commentary, if you persisted long enough. In this day, however, there is particular need for the performance of the Great Work by just as many as may be made ready to undertake it. Thus what you would have had to learn by the slow method of repeated contemplation of the words of the adepts may now, in some measure at least, be made easier to grasp by means of commentary.

Let it be clearly understood, however, that it is just as impossible for us to discover the First Matter for you as it ever was. What we can and will do is to make it easier for you to draw the inferences which will prepare you to make that discovery. Be on your guard. As you proceed with this lesson, you may come to a point where you will say, "Why, of course! The First Matter is neither more nor less than ____" whatever you may decide. You may conclude that it is identical with the ether of space. Or you may suppose it to be the same as what Hindus term *Akasha*. Mind, we're not saying that if you arrive at either of these conclusions you will be mistaken. What we are warning you against is the

supposition that such a conclusion is the *discovery* of the First Matter.

Suppose you were at the entrance to an unlighted room, and you were hungry. Suppose you found on the door a cryptic description of the contents of the room, from which you drew the perfectly correct inference that on a table within you might find all manner of excellent food-supplies. Could you satisfy your hunger with that inference?

So it is with the First Matter. Reason will show you what it must be, and we shall do all we can to assist you to use your reasoning powers to that end. We may even be able to turn on the light for you. But only you can find and use the things required to perform the Great Work.

First of all we shall call on Paracelsus for an important piece of information, commonly neglected by those who try to interpret alchemical writings. He says, in his *Tincture of the Philosophers*:

"Now, if you do not understand the use of the Cabalists and the old astronomers, you are not born by God for the Spagyric art, or chosen by Nature for the work of Vulcan, or created to open your mouth concerning alchemical arts." He said this because he knew that the methods of the Qabalah, and the underlying ideas of astrology, are keys to the meaning of the alchemical cryptic language. The first use we shall make of his hint is to apply the Qabalah to the elucidation of our first

quotation from the sages.

There we read that the original matter is really a kind of stone, which may be reduced to powder, and resolved into its three elements. Remembering that many alchemical terms are derived from Hebrew, we look up the word for *stone* in that language, and find that it is composed of three elements, or letters: Aleph, Beth, and Nun, which form the word ABN, *Ehben*. The first letter, Aleph, according to Qabalists, represents *Ruach*, the Life-Breath, or Pure Spirit. The second represents Mercury. The third represents the zodiacal sign Scorpio, symbolized sometimes by the Eagle, which typifies the reproductive power in all living things, the principle of growth which is always associated in ancient occult writings with water.

Thus we find that in the Hebrew word for *stone* there are definitely indicated three characteristics which are often mentioned in alchemical descriptions of the First Matter. It is a vital essence (Aleph). It is something that the adepts have agreed to call Mercury (Beth). It is something which they also designate as the Sperm or Seed of the World, which they as often call Water, and which they likewise term the Gluten of the Eagle (Nun).

This is only a beginning. The word ABN, *Ehben*, is peculiar in that its first two letters form the noun AB, meaning "Father," while the last two spell BN, *Ben*, meaning "Son." Thus the First Matter is indicated as being something in which the Qabalistic ideas represented by these two words are conjoined. AB,

Father, is a special name given by Qabalists to that aspect of the Life-power which they name Chokmah, or WISDOM. BN, Son, is one of their names for that aspect of the same power which is termed Tiphareth, BEAUTY.

In Qabalistic psychology, Chokmah or Wisdom is held to be the seat of the life-force in man, while Tiphareth, or Beauty, is regarded as the seat of imagination. Thus the word ABN intimates that the First Matter is really identical with the life-force, and that it is also the power which expresses itself in our lives as the active principle in the production of mental imagery.

Here is a most important suggestion. For it is in full accord with the practical side of the yoga teaching. The latter is founded upon the idea that whatsoever exists is an expression of a conscious, vital energy which produces all the multiplicity of forms, on every plane, by precisely the same power that we exercise in the making of mental images. Patanjali tells us that Yoga is control of the thinking principle, and if this means anything it must mean that yoga is control of the power that takes form as mental imagery. For even the most abstract thinking requires imagery. To be sure, in such thinking the images of physical objects are replaced by symbols, as, for example, in mathematics. Yet the symbols are none the less images, and they are combined and arranged just as if they were actual objects.

It is also noteworthy that the numeral value of ABN is

53, which is also the value of the noun ChMH, *Khammaw*, which we have found to be a component part of the word *Alchemy*. As the word itself signifies "sun," we might say, Qabalistically, "Our Stone and the Sun are one," and we should be less cryptic than many of the alchemical writers. In this connection, also, we may note that the first letter of ChMH is Cheth, which correspond to the sign Cancer, ruled by the Moon; that the second represents the element water; and that the third corresponds to the sign Aries in which the Sun is exalted, according to astrologers. Thus the Hebrew word for *sun* contains Qabalistically the ideas of moon and water as well as that of sun. Hence the alchemists, who are continually reminding us that the matter of the Great Work, the materials, and the result, are all comprised in the right knowledge and use of what they call Sun, Water, and Moon, may well have had what we have just explained in mind when they formulated their cryptic statements.

Before leaving the word ABN, we may also note that the first part of the word (AB, Father) may be taken as a symbol of the universal Life-power, considered as the source, or parent, of all that exists. Similarly, the last half of the word (BN, the Son) is a symbol of Man, reproducing the essential characteristics of his heavenly parent. Needless to say that this should not be taken to mean what it does in ordinary theology. It is simply the idea that man is the offspring of the power which has brought the universe into existence, from which it follows that man shares in the fundamental nature of that power.

Passing now to Edward Kelly's remarks about the First Matter, let us point out more definitely what we had in mind in warning you not to take him too literally. Indeed, the opening words are a warning that no writing of the adepts is other than *intentionally* a veil that must be penetrated before the real meaning can be grasped. The cryptic portion of Kelly's writing, however, begins with the phrase, "in the bowels of the earth it lies ready to our hands." Kelly was a clever Qabalist and a first-rate astrologer. He knew why alchemists call their First Matter *Lac Virginis*, or Virgin's Milk. He understood their reason for describing it as an unctuous, or oily, water. He accepted their doctrine that man is a microcosm. So he had no difficulty in compressing the essence of the alchemical doctrine into a phrase. Understand by "earth" the microcosm, man, and you will easily solve the puzzle. "The bowels of the earth" are the human intestinal tract, ruled by the earthy sign Virgo, the Virgin. The Virgin's Milk, the oily water which will not wet the hand, is actually chyle, the product of stomach digestion, which enters the intestines (the Black Dragon of alchemy) in the form of a milky, fatty fluid, from which the lacteals in the small intestine absorb the various substances required for the replenishment of the blood-stream.

Basically, those substances are organic forms of various minerals. Thus Kelly is essentially correct when he says that the First Matter is derived from the metals themselves, and when he insists that it is a living substance. He shows himself an ingenious Qabalist by declaring that in the bowels of the earth the First Matter

is "ready to our hands." For in Qabalah the sign Virgo is attributed to the letter Yod, and the significance of the letter-name IVD, Yod, is "hand." We shall see that another of our alchemical authors also refers to the letter Yod in connection with the First Matter.

As soon as we have identified the First Matter with the contents of the intestinal tract, we can understand the answer given by Morienus to King Calid. We can also see why Raymond Lully, and many another, asserted that the substance might be extracted from something generally regarded as vile and worthless. We can understand why Philalethes, who also insists that the mysterious water is a virgin, declares that she meets her wooers in foul garments. And in the light of modern knowledge, which shows us that intestinal fermentation is one of the most fruitful sources of disease, we can understand the truth of the Rosicrucian declaration that the First Matter is set up for the ruin of many, and is well-nigh an enemy of all.

Yet here again we must guard ourselves against the unwarranted assumption that we have grasped the whole mystery when we have identified chyle as the *form* of the First Matter which is used in the alchemical process. Some readers of these pages, indeed, may doubt that anything so ordinary can possibly be the precious substance of the alchemists. Let them remember that Thomas Vaughan says that he knows most persons would regard the truth as laughable; and let them recall the story of Paracelsus, who promised to show the faculty of a university the Elixir of Life, and

scandalized them all by uncovering a jar filled with excrement. Most of his contemporaries believed that he was guilty of a gross practical joke. The essence of the joke was that he actually kept his promise. For when the alchemical process is understood and carried out, the adept is able to extract from the chyle a great number of essences which are of inestimable value. These are wasted by the average human being because he does not know how to extract them. By gaining conscious control of the process of intestinal digestion and assimilation, the adepts in alchemy are enabled to fill their veins with the veritable elixir of life, the priceless liquid "gold" (solar energy) that not only maintains the vital functions indefinitely, but also makes possible the preparation of the true Stone of the Wise.

We repeat, nevertheless, that although what we have explained is a revelation of the alchemical mystery more definite than any other which has been given in the plain language of modern times, it is by no means the *discovery* of the First Matter. The quotation from Waite's glossary to Paracelsus (consisting largely of unacknowledged borrowings from Thomas Vaughan) makes this evident. Yet you will notice that even here there is mentioned the production of the Virgin's Milk, followed by that of blood — the same sequence that occurs in the body when chyle is taken up by the lacteals.

At the same time, even a slight acquaintance with the alchemical texts is enough to show that although the *form* of the First Matter employed in the alchemical

operation is the Virgin's Milk, the Matter itself is not restricted to that form. It is therefore declared not to be an extraction from animal, vegetable, or mineral, but to be pre-existent to them all, and their mother. In this doctrine we have a close agreement with the Oriental idea, of Prakriti, the root-substance from which all existing objects are differentiated. Prakriti, which in the seventh chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita is termed the "mysterious power, difficult to cross over," is identical with the Maya of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, which declares: "Know nature to be Maya, and the Ruler of Maya as the Lord Himself."

Now, Maya is also the name of the mother of Hermes, so that from Greek mythology we get the hint that Maya is the root-principle which brings forth Mercury. It is not without significance, we think, that the mother of Buddha was also named Maya, for the illumination of Buddha is precisely the goal of the processes of alchemy and yoga.

Furthermore, there is a close connection between the words *Maya* and *Magia*, the latter being the Latin noun for *Magic*. In both words there is the dual conception of a power which manifests itself in changes and mutations, and of a power which is the cause of all human errors because its illusive nature, so long as it remains unrecognized, leads the mind of man into all sorts of mistaken judgments. Thus the alchemical texts tell us that the First Matter, in some of its aspects, is poisonous, and the enemy of all.

Jacob Boehme, himself steeped in alchemical literature, and blessed with that higher insight which leads to the actual discovery of the First Matter, employed the word *Magic* in the sense just explained. In the fifth chapter of his *Six Mystical Points* he writes: "Magic is the mother of eternity, of the being of all beings; for it creates itself, and is understood in desire... It is the original state of Nature, Its desire makes an imagination (*Einbildung*), and the imagination or figuration is only the will of desire... Magic is the formative power in the eternal wisdom. According as the will makes a model in wisdom, so does desiring Magic receive it; for it has in its property imagination as a longing. Imagination is gentle and soft, and resembles water."

Thus we see that Boehme perceived that the fundamental power which brings things into existence is like that which we know in ourselves as desire and imagination. Observe that he compares imagination to water, the commonest alchemical name for the First Matter. In his *Mysterium Pansophisum* he also says: "We recognize also from whence all things, evil and good, take their origin, namely from the Imagination in the great Mystery, where a wonderful essential life generates itself."

The term "Catholic Magnesia," mentioned on in a prior section, is often employed as a name for the First Matter. The adjective, "catholic," is to be understood as meaning "universal, infinite, all-pervading." As employed in alchemy, "magnesia" means *Magnos Lithos*, or lodestone and thus refers to the magnetic

power peculiar to that mineral. According to exoteric derivations, the magnet is named after the place Magnesia, in Thessaly. Occultists are aware, however, that both "magnet" and "magic" are related to the Sanskrit terms *Mahat* and *Maya*. The Catholic Magnesia, or Universal Magnet, is the universal attractive principle which holds things together. It is therefore represented in Tarot by the High Priestess, For this attractive principle is a mode of consciousness, or intelligence. Therefore it is correctly symbolized by that Tarot Key which represents the Uniting Intelligence. Furthermore, the title of that Key, High Priestess, means "chief feminine elder," and thus intimates what we have found to be a characteristic of alchemical and yoga descriptions of the *Prima Materia*. They all agree that the mysterious power is *feminine* in its quality, and again and again they use the pronoun "she" in referring to it.

Ordinary lode stone is a magnetic mineral which attracts iron, the metal of Mars. In mythology we read of a clandestine relationship between Mars and Venus. In your study of Tarot you learned that Venus is represented by the Empress, and that the Empress is really the High Priestess, become a mother by her association with the Magician. Thus you should have little difficulty in understanding what Thomas Vaughan means when he says the First Matter is a virgin substance, while in the same sentence he also declares it to be a "soft, prolific Venus, the very love and seed, the mixture and moisture of heaven and earth."

Of heaven, because the First Matter is "that which is above," and in that respect appears as the Tarot Magician, who represents the direction Above, and is a symbol also of what Eastern occultists call Purusha, the "superior nature" of the One Thing. So considered, the First Matter is called Mercury, as you will notice in the foregoing quotations. The First Matter is also of earth because it is likewise "that which is below," and then appears as the High Priestess, or virgin, who represents the direction Below, and is a symbol of the "inferior nature" of the One Thing, the Hindu Prakriti or Maya. In this aspect she is what the alchemists term their "Diana," and thus in Tarot the High Priestess wears the crescent, silver horns of the moon goddess. The Empress in Tarot represents the third aspect of the First Matter, as the prolific source of all sorts of forms, both good and evil. This is what Vaughan means when he calls the First Matter by the name Venus. Tarot students will also remember that the Empress represents imagination.

Do not relax your vigilance. It may seem to you that we have been sufficiently explicit. Have we not said that the First Matter is represented by the High Priestess and by the Empress, as well as by the Magician? Have we not told you that it is the power you employ daily in acts of desire and imagination? Is there anything more to know? Indeed there is! All this is no more than to tell you where to look, no more than to indicate to you the direction your research must take, before you may actually discover the First Matter. What we have written will enable you to become well grounded in alchemical

theory but it must not be confused with practice. Be sure that you do not misunderstand us. Although we call the power which is expressed as imagination identical with the First Matter, such identification is not by any means the actual perception of that power.

When Eliphas Levi tells you there is a force more powerful than steam, by means of which you may reduce the world to confusion and transform its face, he is not delivering himself of mere hypothesis, despite the ignorant criticisms of his traducers. He speaks of that which he actually knows, of that which he has actually seen and felt, though the sight and touch are other than ordinary human sensations.

It is not surprising that Levi's principal accuser, A. E. Waite, whose notes on the French adept's writings are a source of combined annoyance and amusement to competent readers, should also declare that the alchemical doctrine of the First Matter is also no more than mere theory. This he does in a footnote on page 113 of *The Secret Tradition in Alchemy*, where he says:

"It seems obvious that if the First Matter is everywhere and hence in all things it can be called by the names of all. But in reality its manifold denominations "rise from the fact that the First Matter is hypothetical and is hence without a name."

This is simply not true. The First Matter is not at all hypothetical, except for persons like Mr. Waite, who, being for one reason or another unable to make the

discovery, are thus brought to believe that want of experience of what the adepts write about is sufficient proof that there is nothing actually to experience. We can ourselves testify that the power which finds expression in desire and imagination is a real entity. We affirm, as the result of experience, that the force described by Eliphas Levi is by no means a mere theory. It is a force, an energy, a power – call it what you will – which is actually and really present, as the sages declare, "before the eyes of all, though seen by few."

The actual perception of this force is indispensable to success in the Great Work. For although we make use of the subtle powers of consciousness daily, though remaining ignorant of the force itself, true adeptship is founded on this actual perception. When the First Matter is, so to say, *seen and touched*, the first step toward adeptship is taken; and he who perseveres in the work until the end will be able, whenever a real need arises, to perform metallic transmutations on the physical plane. This without any metaphor whatever. He will be able to repeat, but it is our opinion that he will seldom find occasion to exercise that particular power.

We trust that we have made our position clear. It does not greatly matter whether or not anyone be convinced that we speak that which we know, and not that which is merely our opinion. Ours is a work of exposition, rather than of persuasion. As Ripley (not the alchemist) says: Believe it or not. Yet you can see how impossible it

would be for one who considers the First Matter to be merely hypothetical ever really to discover it. As we said early in this lesson, they who make up their minds that there is no such thing prevent themselves from finding it.

They who reject the idea that the First Matter is an actual perceptible entity can never hope to know whether it is or not. On the other hand, if you accept too readily, you will probably be lacking in that eagerness for certainty which will carry you to the point where you can obtain it. The ideal state of mind in which to approach the Hermetic doctrine is one of moderate agnosticism, in the true sense of that abused word. If you say to yourself, "I do not *know* that the First Matter is a perceptible reality, neither do I *know* that it is not, but I intend to find out," you will be adopting the mental attitude most favorable to success in this kind of research.

We approach the conclusion of this lesson, but we have by no means completed our commentary on the words of the sages. This will be continued and completed in Lesson 3, and will include an extended commentary on the Rosicrucian document referred to earlier. We have already issued a short explanation of this text in the alchemical section of the First Year Extension Course, but even if you have that, we believe you will find much that is of great interest in the next lesson.

During the coming month we advise you to familiarize yourself thoroughly with the various writings given in

this lesson. Read and re-read them. Have at hand a notebook, for as you read you are likely to find ideas arising in your mind, some of which may be seed-thoughts that will later on prove to be very valuable. Our own experience has been that the study of the words of the sages puts one *en rapport* with those members of the Inner School who have specialized in alchemy. We know very well that our own researches have been greatly aided from that source. The assistance often comes in the form of sudden inspirations or flashes of insight. These should be carefully recorded. The best way is to note them down as soon as they come. Otherwise the impression is apt to fade, sometimes beyond recovery.

We cannot impress too strongly upon you the thought that in taking up the study of Hermetic science and practice you are entering into an active circle of minds which includes various grades of adeptship. Every serious student of this subject attracts the attention of those who know more than himself, and if he shows ability and perseverance he will be helped.

The performance of the Great Work is no chimera, no figment of the imagination. It is being carried on by numbers of sane, sensible human beings throughout the world. You are in some sense a candidate for admission to the company of those who have completed the Great Work. The more clearly you are assured of their actual presence among us, the more likely will you be to succeed in this undertaking.

On the other hand, what we have just said should not be construed to mean that more or less interest in alchemy, such as might lead to taking this course of lessons, or to the perusal of alchemical books, is enough to gain recognition from adepts of the Inner School. What is required is a degree of earnestness by no means common in this era of superficial dabbling in things occult.

We counsel you to a serious consideration of your aims in undertaking this study. Think well what it means. To succeed in the Great Work is no small thing, If such success be possible – and we find all the sages perfectly agreed that it is – what can be more important? What other concerns of your life can possibly take precedence over it? What else, of all that interests you, can be so thoroughly worth all the time and effort spent upon it?

Since it is the Occidental form of yoga, alchemy leads to precisely the same result as do the Oriental systems. That result is thus described by Vivekananda: "When the Yogi become perfect there will be nothing in nature not under his control. If he orders the gods to come, they will come at his bidding; if he asks the departed to come, they will come at his bidding. All the forces of nature will obey him as his slaves, and when the ignorant see these powers of the Yogi they call them miracles." (*Raja Yoga*, p. 31).

It is to no less a goal than this that the Great Work is directed. May you persist in it unto the end, which is the realization of perfect mastery, the demonstration of freedom from every kind of bondage.

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice
THE FIRST MATTER – continued

In the preceding lesson you will find the statement: "She is one and three, but at the same time she is four and five." In this one sentence are several clues to the arcana of Hermetic science.

The First Matter is in itself a perfect unity. Hence the Emerald Tablet says: "All things are from one, by the mediation of one,... all things have their birth from this one thing by adaptation." And Kelly declares, "It is a commonly diffused subject." Similarly, Anastratus (quoted in Lesson 2) says that the matter is one, and contains within itself all that is needed. The same declaration, with some variations of wording, is to be found in the writings of Rosinus, Ripley, and Eliphas Levi.

The First Matter is also three, because it contains within itself the three principles, sulphur, mercury, and salt. These are not three things of which the first matter is *composed*. It is not a composition, but a perfectly homogeneous unity. Rather are the three principles to be understood as being three aspects of the nature of the First Matter, inseparable from it and from each other.

Again, the First Matter is said to be four because it is manifested in the form of the four elements, fire, water, air, and earth. These, as the *Book of Tokens* tells us, are really subtle or invisible entities, and should not be understood to signify anything which is limited to the

physical plane. From the Yoga philosophy we learn that fire is the subtle principle of sight; that water is the subtle principle of taste; that air is the subtle principle of touch; and that earth is the subtle principle of smell. Each principle has also a characteristic property. The property of fire is expansion; that of water is contraction; that of air is locomotion; and that of earth is cohesion. Each principle has also a characteristic taste-quality. Fire is hot; water is astringent, or bitter; air is acid or sour and sharp; earth is sweet. These last should be compared with what Jacob Boehme has to say about a twofold fire, and about bitterness and sharpness. Boehme knew nothing of Yoga philosophy as such, but he had had the same kind of experience which results from Yoga practice, and the same kind of insight. It is very significant, therefore, that he used alchemical language in all his attempts to explain what he had experienced.

The subtle principles of the Yoga philosophy are sometimes called *ethers*, as in Rama Prasad's book, *Nature's Finer Forces*, where we read that tejas (fire) is the luminiferous ether; that apas (water) is the gustiferous ether; that vayu (air) is the tan-giferous ether; and that prithivi (earth) is the odoriferous ether.

We do not like this confusing use of the word "ether." In the esoteric teaching, there are said to be subdivisions of the ether, and these are sometimes loosely designated as the first, second, third, and fourth ethers; but the term properly belongs only to what H. P. B. rightly calls the grossest manifestation of Akasha, and Akasha, as

shown in Lesson 1, is identical with the alchemical quintessence.

The Hindu name for "principle" is *Tatva*, sometimes spelled *Tattwa*. Its literal meaning is "reality." This meaning carries a genuine significance. It indicates that the Tatvas are not merely hypothetical entities. They have actual being. They are not just human notions or names. They are the real forces which give us our consciousness of sight, and taste, and touch, and smell. From these, and from the fifth principle, out of which they all proceed or are derived, we formulate our whole consciousness of the world around us. We perceive nothing whatever directly. All that we are aware of is the combination of sensations. Not that what we perceive in the world around us is not real. But the reality is not the same as our sensory perceptions. *Our* world is a synthesis of sensations. The real world cannot be known directly by sensation.

The First Matter is five, because it also includes another principle besides the four whose activities produce in us the ordinary experience of a physical world. In alchemical writings this principle is called the quintessence, and is usually said to be "extracted" from the four elements in the course of the Great Work. This is said because we derive our awareness of the fifth principle from our experience of the operation of the other four. The quintessence, however, is not in itself an extraction from the four other principles. It is not derived from them. They are derived from it.

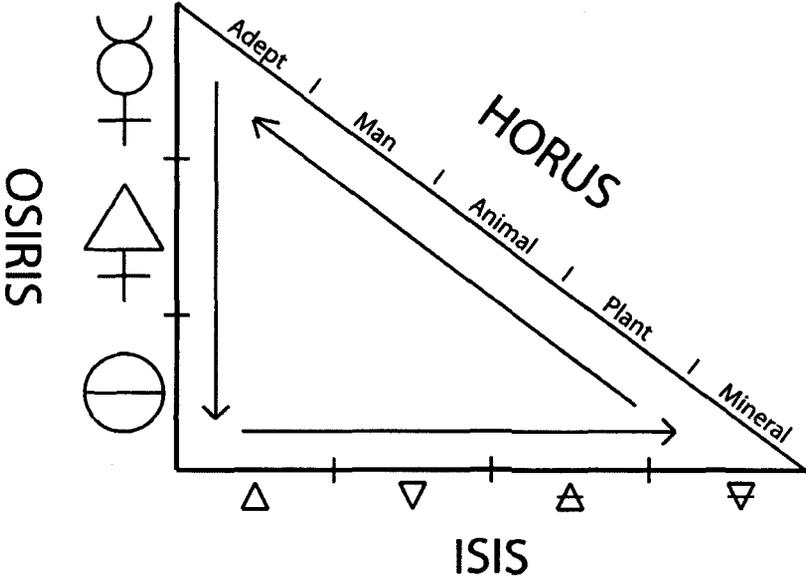
The Hindu term is Akasha. Akasha is said to have neither touch, taste, color, nor odor. Its fundamental quality is that of space. But here we encounter a difficulty. There is a difference between absolute space, or Akasha, and relative space, such as we ordinarily conceive. The relative space, as Einstein has indicated, is curved and finite. It may not be very exact to say that Akasha, or absolute space, contains relative space, but this is as near as we can come to the truth of the matter, considering the limitations of human speech.

Akasha, moreover, is the subtle principle of sound. It is not the ordinary sound which is carried in waves through the air. It is the original power of vibration. It is the undifferentiated Life-power, the source of all other manifestations of every kind. For this unmanifest reality we can frame no adequate definition. To us it seems to be no-thing, or we find ourselves thinking of it as being perfectly empty space. This is why the sages of India declare that space is the fundamental quality of Akasha. Because space is omnipresent, they also teach that Akasha is all-pervading.

Rama Prasad says: "The Akasha is the most important of all the Tattvas. It must, as a matter of course, precede and follow every change of state on every plane of life. Without this there can be no manifestation or cessation of forms. *It is out of Akasha that every form comes and it is in Akasha that every form lives.* The Akasha is full of forms in their potential state. It intervenes between every two of the five Tattvas." Here, by the way, is a hint for Tarot students as to the place of the Fool in the

whole series. In the pack of cards, the Fool, comes before the number 1. The power he represents, however, is that which precedes every number, and follows every one. Between every number there is the zero, so that what is understood in the series, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. is really 0, 1, (0), 2, (0), 3, (0), 4, (0), etc. It is also noteworthy that the zero-sign, an oval, is also the Hindu symbol for Akasha.

Many symbols refer to the idea that the First Matter is "one, which is also three, four, and five." Among them is the Great Pyramid, ONE structure, representing the number THREE by its triangular faces, the number FOUR by its square base, and the number FIVE by its apex and four corners.



The apron worn by Free Masons (which, when properly proportioned, contains the fundamental Pyramid measures) is also a UNITY, representing the number THREE by its triangular flap, the number FOUR by the square shape of the apron itself, and the number FIVE by the five corners of the apron and flap combined. Yet another familiar symbol of the First Matter is the celebrated Pythagorean triangle, sacred to Osiris, Isis, and Horus, having these proportions.

In this triangle the figure itself is the ONE representing the all-pervading First Matter. The descending vertical line of Osiris, the Father, is attributed to the THREE principles, mercury (☿), sulphur (♁), and salt (Θ). The horizontal line, attributed to Isis, the Mother, has FOUR units, representing the four elements, fire \triangle , water ∇ , air \triangleleft , and earth ∇ . The second line, containing FIVE units, and representing Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, shows the five stages in the development of the Life-power's manifestation. The first stage is that of the mineral. Then comes the plant. After the plant is the animal. Above the animal is the natural man. Above the natural man is the man who has made himself the subject of the Great Work, the man who is adept, master, and magus, the man who completes the Great Work by becoming one with the Father, even as the line of Horus in this triangle completes itself by arriving at the point whence the line of Osiris descends.

You will remember that in the preceding lesson we discussed the esoteric meaning of the word ABN, *Ehben*, and found that it combines the words AB, *Ab*,

Father, and BN, *Ben*, Son. We also noticed that the value of the word is 53, and that this is likewise the value of ChMH, Khammaw, poetical Hebrew for "Sun." We have just seen that the descending line of the Pythagorean triangle is ascribed to Osiris, and the ascending hypotenuse to Horus. Osiris is the Father, and Horus is the Sun. Thus Osiris is AB, and Horus is BN. Both, too, are solar deities. Hence it is interesting to find that the angle formed by the junction of the hypotenuse, or line of the Son, with the vertical line, or line of the Father, is an angle of 53 degrees. This, of course, makes the other angle of the triangle, at the point where the hypotenuse springs upward from the base, or from Isis the Mother, an angle of 37 degrees.

The angular relation of the hypotenuse to the base is always that of 37 degrees, and the angular relation of the same line to the line of Osiris is always 53 degrees, at any given point on the hypotenuse. The relation of the evolving forms of the Life-power to Mother Nature is always the same. The same laws and forces are at work in the stone as in the adept or master. Only the degree of expression is higher in the master than in the mineral. In the stone the direction or impulse of those laws and forces is also the same as it is in the master. All the forces of nature move together toward the perfect union of the Son with the Father, and toward the perfect union, also, of the powers of the Father and the Mother in the manifestation of the Son.

But we must not give too much space to this triangle. It deserves, and will have, a special essay, for all its

wonders cannot be compressed into a few paragraphs, or even a few pages. The main point, however, should be clear. The Pythagorean triangle is a summary of the fundamentals of alchemy, showing the descent of Spirit into Nature as the cause of the ascent of consciousness through five great stages, back to perfect identification with the Primal Source.

It may be well, however, to say that we are by no means advancing the opinion that the ancient Egyptians had alchemy in mind when they adopted the Pythagorean triangle as a symbol of their Holy Family. All that we affirm is that there is evidence that this triangle has been used by alchemists to summarize their doctrine, because its mathematical properties are such that it lends itself easily to that purpose.

There are occasional references to this triangle in alchemical books. Again, several esoteric societies have made the alchemical meanings which we have briefly summarized an important part of the occult instruction imparted to their members.

There is abundant evidence that the Pythagorean triangle is a key to much in Rosicrucian symbolism. It is itself a prominent Masonic symbol, and is also clearly related to the most important of Masonic emblems, the white lambskin apron. Besides this, one finds references to it in many ancient rituals of organized Western occultism, always in connection with Hermetic doctrines.

The main point, however, is that its lines and angles do really constitute a remarkable summary of the main points of Hermetic science. We have received our knowledge concerning this fact through the channel of oral tradition, but the fact would still remain if the writers of these pages had been the first to notice it.

When Anastratus, in *The Crowd*, says of the First Matter, "Its birth is in the sand," he is referring to the mineral stage of development represented in the Pythagorean triangle. But to those who remember that one must apply Qabalistic principles to the interpretation of alchemical writings his words convey still more. In Hebrew "sand" is ChVL, *khool*, derived from a verbal root meaning "to turn, to twist, to dance." Its significance in relation to sand is easily understood when one thinks how sand whirls and dances as wind passes over it. The same noun also means: 1) a circle, reminding us of the esoteric idea that the circle is the fundamental form of manifestation; 2) a bird, traditionally the phoenix, which is a familiar alchemical term, signifying the fire in the quintessence, and also the physical substance, stone. ChVL, moreover, is the root of the Hebrew proper name *Havilah*, the land, according to Genesis, "where there is gold."

The numeral value of ChVL, again, is 44, and this is the value of the word DM, Dam, "blood," and of the name of the eleventh zodiacal sign, DLI, *dolee*, "Aquarius." Thus we have a clear indication that the first manifestation of the Matter is in the mineral kingdom, that it is also to be found in blood, and that it has some

connection with the esoteric meanings of the zodiacal sign Aquarius. As man uses it, the First Matter is actually a mineral substance, circulating in the bloodstream, and directly connected with the functions of the heart, which is influenced, astrologers tell us, by the sign Aquarius, through reflex action. It might be still more accurate to say that the First Matter is present as a mineral in the blood, in the form of the 12 tissue-salts (and then it would be apparent that the 12 divisions of the Pythagorean triangle might also refer to these 12 salts).

Like the phoenix, the First Matter is incombustible, because its inner nature is the very essence of fire, and this cannot be injured by fire. It is a whirling, circulating essence, that dances through our veins, moves more slowly through the lymphatic vessels, and gyrates rapidly through the entire nervous system. But the main point to bear in mind is that it actually is ready for our use in its mineral forms.

Let us now take up in detail the statements of the Rosicrucian alchemical text quoted in the preceding lesson. The first sentence of this quotation is an allusion to Genesis 27:28: "Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine."

DEW OF HEAVEN. In Hebrew this is TL HShMM, *Tal Ha-Shamaim*, and its number is 434. This is the number of DLTh, *Daleth*, the Door, the Hebrew letter which is the sign of the Luminous Intelligence and of the planet

Venus, associated with the center at the well of the throat. In this connection remember that more than one alchemist speaks of the First Matter as *Venus*.

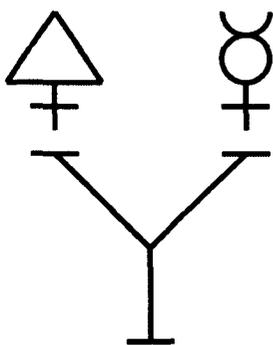
The heavenly dew is light. It is identical with electricity. It is granular in structure, so that it actually falls like dew upon the earth, and the weight of its fall may be measured. In the 16th, 18th, and 19th Tarot Keys this dew is shown falling in drops shaped like the letter YOD, or "Y", and in some of the older exoteric versions of the cards, these drops are blood-red, reminding us that there is a correspondence between ChVL, Sand, and DM, Dam, Blood.

THE OILINESS OF THE EARTH. In Hebrew this is ShMNI HARTz, *Shemeni Ha-Aretz*. Its number is 696. The digits of this add to 21, and 696 is itself the multiplication of the sum of the numbers from 1 to 21 (231) by 3. Qabalistically, therefore, 696 represents the threefold multiplication of the extension of the idea contained in the word AHIH, *Eheyeh*, Existence, the Divine Name attributed to the first aspect of the Life-power, the Primal Will. In other words, for any Qabalist, the number 696 would represent the fullest possible development of actual existence.

The word "oil" in Hebrew is ShMN. Its numeration is 390, also the number of ZKR VNQBH, "male and female," of ShMIM, "heaven", and of SPRIM, *Sepharim*, "letters." The oil (ShMN) is identical with the power of the heavens (ShMIM), is manifested on every plane as male and female (ZKR VNQ3H), and is

expressed by the vibratory and conscious forces represented by the twenty-two letters (SPRIM). In plain language, *the oiliness of the earth* is human flesh and blood, male and female, incarnating the invisible but real forces of the heavens, and expressing those forces through the twenty-two modes of intelligence represented by the Keys of Tarot.

NEITHER MINERAL NOR METAL. This seems to contradict some of the other alchemical authorities, but the intention is to show that although the First Matter expresses as minerals and metals, it is not restricted to those forms. It is more than metal, more than mineral. Yet we must remember that because it is heavily veiled in the animal and vegetable forms of its manifestation, the discovery of the First Matter is most easily made by means of meditative contemplation of mineral forms, particularly crystals and stones which have been taken from the depths of the earth or from running water.



THE PYTHAGOREAN "Y." In the original text from which we have quoted, the "Y" is shown as in the margin. The left-hand branch is surmounted by the alchemical symbol for sulphur, and the right-hand branch by the symbol for mercury. Sulphur is a symbol for fire, and mercury, as a fluid metal,

represents alchemical water. These are the "two mercurial substances in one root, fire and water." The "root" is said to be Y because Y is the Roman letter

equivalent to Hebrew Yod, and Yod, as the letter which corresponds to the sign Virgo, represents that in us whence the material used in the Great Work is derived. According to ancient tradition, the letter "Y" was used by Pythagoras as a symbol of human life, with its two roads, the familiar "right-hand" and "left-hand" paths of occult development.

ISCHSCHAMAIM is one way of rendering a compound Hebrew word combining the nouns ASH, *Isch*, fire, and ShMIM, *Schamaim*, heaven. Ash ShMIM has a total numeration of 691. This is the value of the noun ThRVPH, *teroofoaw*, a remedy, a medicine. Notice that the digits of this word add to 7, thus hinting at the balanced operation of the seven alchemical metals in the Universal Medicine, or Elixir of Life. 7 is also the number of the letter Zayin, and the letter-name ZIN is the number 67, equivalent to BINH, Binah, Understanding.

Now, in BINH are combined the letters of IH, *Jah*, the Father and BN, *Ben*, the Son. BINH is therefore similar in meaning to ABN. What this means is that the adept's consciousness, in which the fire of heaven (ASH HMIM) is fully manifested, is a perfect union of the personal mind with the universal. This consciousness is correctly termed the Universal Medicine, because it is a mode of knowing which automatically establishes a condition of wholeness throughout the organism. Adepts have perfect bodily health because they are mentally at one with that which is the directive principle of all physical activity.

Y, EXTRACTED FROM THE SUBSTANCE IN WHICH ALL METALS ARE CONTAINED. Y, as we have said, is the letter Yod. In Qabalah it is also the symbol of the Intelligence of Will. It corresponds to the 9th Tarot Key, The Hermit. There you see the dew of heaven falling from a lantern, which contains as a light-source the hexagram, or six-pointed star, formed from the male, upright triangle of fire, interlaced with the female, inverted triangle of water. The substance from which all metals are extracted is light. Y is said to be extracted from it because the most important work of alchemy has to do with the physiological functions in the part of the body ruled by Virgo. Those functions extract the alchemical materials from the chyle, or Virgin's Milk, but the force extracted is light-force.

A SALT DEW OF HEAVEN, BUT A METALLIC DEW. A slight current of electricity has a saltish, and a metallic, taste. The heavenly dew is metallic because every metal is made from light. The text goes on to say that this metallic dew contains all colors. That is to say, it is the pure, white brilliance of the Primal Will. White light contains all colors, and colors, as we shall see, mark the stages of the alchemical process.

COAGULATED BY HERMETIC ART. Coagulation is defined as "the change from a liquid to a thickened, curd-like state, not by evaporation, but by a chemical reaction; as, the spontaneous coagulation of freshly drawn blood; the coagulation of milk by rennet, or acid, and the coagulation of egg albumin by heat; also, the reaction itself, consisting in the change of a soluble

substance (usually albuminous) into an insoluble form." (*Webster*).

In Hermetic practice, coagulation is the fixation of the volatile astral light in physical forms, *as cells in the human body*. Thus the power of the dew of heaven is "turned into earth," where it becomes an integrating force. The "sweet salt" thus produced is the purified body of the adept, which has actually a sweet savor and odor.

This sweet salt is called *manna* because one spelling of the Hebrew word for "manna" is MNA. The number of this word is 91, or 7 x 13, which suggests the sevenfold manifestation of the One Thing, inasmuch as 13 is the number of the word AChD, Achad, UNITY.

Words corresponding to 91 in Hebrew are AMN, *Amen*, Faithful; IHVH ADNI, *Jehovah Adonai*, Jehovah Lord; and MAKL, *mahakawl*, food, fruit. These correspondences draw attention to the relation between *food*, on the one hand, and the completeness and perfection suggested by the word "Amen" on the other. This relation is summed up in IHVH ABNI, *Jehovah Adonai*, "That which was, and is, and will be, manifested as the LORD, or ruling power."

Jehovah Adonai is in one sense represented by the Hermit in Tarot, the Key corresponding to the letter Yod. When the alchemist is faithful (AMN) in perfecting the work of equilibrium whereby food (MAKL) is chemically changed in the body area

corresponding to the sign Virgo, his body becomes actually the dwelling-place and vehicle of Jehovah Adonai. It is then that the mighty powers of adeptship are manifested through his organism, which has become an unobstructed channel for the "Intelligence of Will" represented by the letter Yod.

ITS FATHER IS THE SUN, ITS MOTHER IS THE MOON, etc. This is a quotation from the *Emerald Tablet*. The "Sun" is the same as the solar current of Prana described by the Yogis, and the "Moon" is the cool current of the same force which they name "Rayi." "Sun" and "Moon" also refer to the two centers of the human body named after these two light-sources. The sun center is the cardiac ganglion; the moon center is the pituitary body. In the body of man these two centers specialize the First Matter for its manifestation through personality. The sun center is that which admits the cosmic fire into the house of personality. The action of the moon center does really bring enlightenment into personal consciousness.

The second paragraph of the Rosicrucian text is very clear. Remember, it refers to the "dew of heaven," which is light. This we find coagulated into solid forms, and present also in fluidic modes of manifestation. Note particularly what is said in the second sentence of this paragraph, -- it falls into the depths of the earth, and its substance is the most subtle and ethereal part of the earth." Few persons, when those words were written, had any idea that certain kinds of light penetrate deep into the earth. Few understood that light itself is the

subtle substance out of which all forms are built. Even so recently as 1884, Col. Olcott was severely taken to task by British scientists for asserting that light is the fundamental substance of the physical plane. Today we have the researches of Millikan, whose work has revealed the presence of cosmic rays whose penetrating power requires the employment of thick shields of lead in order to intercept them. Alchemists will not be slow to grasp what is meant by the fact that this particular metal seems to be the one which is required to stop the passage of the cosmic rays.

COLORS OF WHITE, YELLOW, GREEN, RED, AND BLACK. Compare this with Jacob Boehme, who says: "These are the colours wherein all things lie: blue, red, green and yellow. The fifth, white, belongs to God; and yet has also its lustre in Nature. In the fifth essence, a pure unblemished child; as is to be seen in gold and silver, and in a white clear stone that resists fire. For fire is the proof or trial of all the colours, in which none subsists but white, the same being a reflection of God's Majesty. The black colour belongs not to the mystery of the wonders of creation, but is the veil or the darkness wherein all things lie."

--Mysterium Pansophicum

Color is important in Hermetic science, and is one of the great arcana in all occultism. Until very recently, practically all published color-scales have been full of "blinds," because knowledge of color is truly magical. The Rosicrucian text we are studying is no exception. The blind it employs is the substitution of black for

deep indigo-blue. Boehme's "blind" consists in the use of "blue", without indicating the darkness of the shade.

The colors are the same as those given in the Hindu systems, where they are attributed to the Tattvas. Following the color-names of our text, the correspondences are: WHITE, the Apas Tattva, or Water (the commonest name for the First Matter); YELLOW, the Prithivi Tattva, or Earth; GREEN, the Vayu Tattva (really a greenish-blue); RED, the Tejas Tattva, Fire; BLACK, a blind for deep-indigo, the Akasha Tattva, or Quintessence.

Another attribution of colors comes from the color-scale we have learned to associate with the Hebrew letters and Tarot Keys. According to that scale, WHITE is the color of undifferentiated light. Yellow is Mercury, represented by the Magician. Green is the color of Venus, corresponding to the Empress. Red is that of Mars, typified by the Tower. Black (really deep indigo) is the color of Saturn, represented by The World.

These color correlations are very complex, and are really a field of occult study to which years of study might be devoted. For the purpose of this commentary however, and for the practical work to be undertaken in this course of lessons, the two attributions here given will suffice. To avoid confusion, remember that the first, or Tattvic attribution, applies particularly to the five subtle principles of sensation from which we construct our world-picture.

CORPOREAL TO THE EXTERNAL EYE. This is to be taken at face value. The First Matter does appear to human eyes as bodies. No matter what we look at, we are seeing a form of manifestation of the Prima Materia; but the differences in the appearances of these bodies hide from us the fact that they are presentations of a single essential reality.

MINERS IN THE MOUNTAINS. Students of Hermetic science, who are engaged in the alchemical work of interior contemplation. Thus what they see is contrasted to what appears to the external eye. To them the First Matter appears to be thick, watery, and dripping. In other words, interior contemplation is not pure abstraction, or formless, at the stage represented by "mining." The miners are perfecting the activity of the *inner* sensorium, and they perceive the First Matter phenomenally. Thus we read that it "appears" to them. These interior, subjective appearances are just as real, just as valid, for scientific purposes, as the exterior, objective appearances of the physical plane. To this inner sight and touch the First Matter is a thickish, slow-moving fluid, having a tendency to form itself into globules or drops.

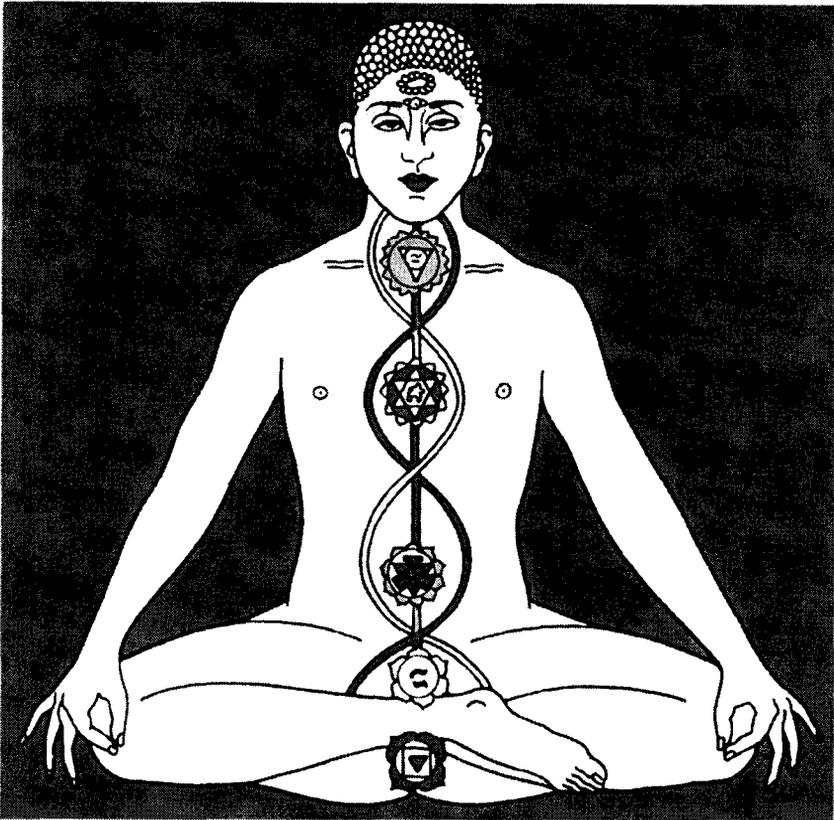
THE BEST DEW. The use of the superlative indicates the highest manifestation of the "dew" or light. It refers to the coagulation of the Matter as an amber-colored prism in the pineal gland. This prism is made by the fusing of the granules of "brain-sand," and the fusion is effected by a current of energy, or light, passing through that organ. When this prism is produced it is an actual

physical stone. It may be ground to powder. It is the Transparent Jewel of the Yogis – the physical instrument which interrupts and enables us to utilize the high-tension vibrations of the astral light.

THE FOURTH PARAGRAPH of the text reiterates what we have found in other alchemical writers. It emphasizes the omnipresence of the First Matter, and goes on to make clear a point which is often overlooked by students of alchemy. The First Matter is *known* by the whole world. Otherwise it could not be held in contempt and rejected. What remains undiscovered by most people is its wonderful potency. It is like the sparks which fly from a cat's fur in the dark. Who, a hundred years ago, would have believed that the force thus manifested could change the face of the world, make possible instantaneous communication, give us automobiles and airplanes, enable Lindbergh to fly to Paris and Byrd to cross both poles, and multiply the actions and words of men through the agency of the radio and the talking-picture? In like manner, the First Matter is present in everything, and some of its manifestations have led alchemists to the discovery of its hidden potencies. But the world at large would and does find the alchemical doctrine laughable.

TWO BRANCHES, WHITE AND RED. These are said to spring from the one root, "Y," because the development of the energy of the First Matter within the human organism is actually rooted, as we have seen, in the assimilative functions of the intestinal tract, governed by the sign Virgo, attributed to Yod.

Plate 1 in Arthur Avalon's book, *The Serpent Power*, (drawn by a Hindu artist), shows a Yogi sitting in meditation. From the Saturn center at the base of the spine, rises the central line termed the Sushumna by the Yogis. On either side are shown the rising currents called Ida and Pingala. They cross each other, and remind us of the serpents on the caduceus of Hermes.



Our crude copy of this plate does scant justice to the original, but serves to bring out the detail just mentioned. In our copy the black ascending spiral represents the red of the original. The two similar but

contrasting lines, like the serpents of the caduceus and like the pillars in the Tarot Key of the High Priestess, relate to the positive and negative currents of the life-force in the body, the cool, white, lunar current (Rayi, or the alchemical moon), and the hot, red, solar current (Prana, or the alchemical sun).

The references to the rose of Jericho and the lily of the Valley of Jehoshaphat involve a very complicated piece of Qabalism, too intricate, we believe, to be included here. But it may be said that the root of the name Jericho is a Hebrew word that means "moon," while that of Jehoshaphat has definite correspondences with the sun. Note that the red rose is associated with Jericho, or the moon, and the white lily with Jehoshaphat, or the sun. Here is an intimation that there is an interplay of apparently opposing forces.

Compare the symbolism of this paragraph with that of the lilies and roses in the garden of the Magician in Tarot. The fundamental meaning is the same. Note also that the substance is said to *grow*, thus clearly indicating that it is a *living* substance.

THE FIFTH PARAGRAPH indicates certain dangers. Even those who know enough to seek the First Matter by looking within sometimes handle it clumsily. They "break" it by wrong forms of practice which cause "short circuits" in its flow. Ignorant workmen torture it by all sorts of silly attempts to force its natural growth too rapidly. The true artist, note well, is the passive, quiet *observer* of its influence, or inflowing. He is

patient enough to wait until it is ripe, when he can gather it in its full perfection.

THE COAGULATED BLOOD OF THE RED LION.

This is the lion of the 8th Tarot Key. Alchemical books mention three lions—the Green Lion, the Red Lion, and the Old Lion. The Green Lion is the animal nature in its unripe, or natural state, before it has been perfected by the processes of Hermetic art. The Red Lion is the animal nature after it has been modified and brought under control. The Green Lion becomes the Red Lion by confection with animated Mercury, say the alchemists, meaning thereby that the alchemical male or sun (the solar energy which is the actual force at work in all human activities on the physical plane) has been mixed with thought-force, called animated Mercury. In other words, the Red Lion represents the forces of the physical organism after they have been combined with what is represented by the Magician in the Tarot.

The blood of the Red Lion is actually human blood, as we are repeatedly informed by the alchemists. It is chemically different from ordinary blood. It is more highly energized, and contains subtle elements not present in ordinary blood. These elements are introduced at two points: 1) at the point of assimilation, where the substances in the chyle, or Virgin's Milk, are introduced into the bloodstream through the action of the lacteals in the small intestine; 2) in the lungs, where the blood is aerated, and where the subtle elements of the atmosphere are combined with those taken from the Virgin's Milk. Unless the subtle elements derived from

food are in the blood-stream as it passes through the lungs, the other subtle elements derived from air cannot be added. For the latter will not combine with the blood unless it contains the substances derived from food.

What are those subtle elements? Various names have been given to them by alchemists, but none of the names are adequate. In time to come, they may be recognized by exoteric chemistry, and they will then be given names which will serve to identify them. Names, however, are not important. The point is that by the processes of Hermetic art we may avail ourselves of the presence of these subtle elements in food and air. Thus we may coagulate the blood of the Red Lion, and this coagulation is the fixation of these subtle elements in the substance of our brains and nervous systems, so that we become new creatures.

GLUTEN OF THE EAGLE. The Eagle, says A. E. Waite, is a name which "has been applied by the philosophers to their Mercury after sublimation, firstly, on account of its volatility, and, secondly, because even as the eagle devours other birds, so does the Mercury of the Sages destroy, consume, and reduce even gold itself to its first matter."

This Eagle is the symbol of the zodiacal sign Scorpio, after reproductive energy represented by that sign, and by the letter Nun in the Hebrew alphabet, has been sublimated, or raised to its highest potency. The Yogis call the "gluten of the eagle" by the name Ojas, which means literally "the illuminating or bright." Of it Swami

Vivekananda writes:

"The Yogis claim that of all the energies that the human body comprises the highest is what they call "*Ojas*." Now this *Ojas* is stored up in the brain, and the more the *Ojas* is in a man's head, the more powerful he is, the more intellectual, the more spiritually strong will that man be. This is the action of *Ojas*. One man may speak beautiful languages and beautiful thoughts, but they do not impress people; another man speaks neither beautiful languages nor beautiful thoughts, yet his words charm. This is the power of *Ojas* coming out. Every movement coming from him will be powerful.

"Now in all mankind there is more or less of this *Ojas* stored up. And all the forces that are working in the body, in their highest form, become *Ojas*. You must remember that it is only a question of transformation. The same force which is working outside, as electricity or magnetism, will become changed into inner force; the same forces that are working as muscular energy will be changed into *Ojas*. The Yogis say that that part of the human energy which is expressed as sex energy, as sexual functions, and so on, when checked and controlled, easily becomes changed into *Ojas*, and as this lowest centre is the one which guides all these functions, therefore the Yogi pays particular attention to that centre. He tries to take up all this sexual energy and convert it into *Ojas*."

We close this part of our lesson with the words of the Rosicrucian text itself: IF YOU DISCOVER IT, BE

SILENT AND KEEP IT SACRED. The natural impulse, when the discovery is made, is to "tell the world," but experience shows that this is a mistaken impulse. What one knows, after making the discovery, seems so perfectly plain, so crystal clear, that there is always a great temptation to become a missionary. Actually, this knowledge is incommunicable. However clear it may be to those who possess it (and we can testify that no knowledge is clearer, that none has a greater degree of certitude) the fact remains that ordinary human language cannot possibly convey this knowledge from the mind of one having it to the mind of one unprepared to receive it.

We can be assisted by the counsel of others in our attempts to make the discovery. Each of us, notwithstanding, must make the actual discovery *alone*. Buddha had no companions under the Bo-tree. Jesus and Moses learned their final lessons in solitude, under the stars. This knowledge has its price, and the price is the personal effort of the seeker. Those who know can communicate the fact of their knowledge to each other. They signal to each other from age to age, using, always code of words and symbols. But they never *tell* the Great Secret because it never can be told. And always they warn their pupils: Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they turn and rend you.

Already, since this course has been going to our affiliates, we have had evidence that it is accomplishing its object. One writes us that we are doing everything possible to lead others to the vision of what he calls the

"Eternal Sparkle." And by his very choice of words he demonstrates that he has glimpsed the Thing Itself.

Another writes: "I rejoice to tell you that *I have it now*. I have seen it in wonderful flashes many times, but now I have "grasped it with my mind" and have faith that I can hold it. I didn't get it *all* from the alchemical quotations. In fact I had been reaching out for it all through the Basic Course, but – the *Hermit* was the lesson that I got the *least* out of in the whole course! Last night, after reading my second lesson, I saw 'men like trees walking;' and I said, 'Several of these quotations are in The Hermit. Perhaps he will throw more light on the mystery.'

So I re-read the Hermit – devoured it, I should say – hungrily. And there it was, all so plain and clear; so intelligible; so exactly what I had been groping for in vain. And now – I know that whereas I was blind when I studied that ninth lesson nearly a year ago — now I see."

A few words, in closing, about the mental attitude that prepares one for this discovery. You will notice that the letter just quoted speaks of "reaching out for it" and of "groping for it." It also intimates that the writer was *hungry* for the illumination.

Compare this with Boehme's statement: "I am not a master of literature nor of arts, such as belong to this world, but a foolish and simple-minded man. I have never desired to learn any sciences, but from early

youth I strove after the salvation of my soul, and thought how I might inherit or possess the kingdom of heaven. Now while I was wrestling and battling, being aided by God, a wonderful light arose within my soul. It was a light entirely foreign to my unruly nature, but in it I recognized the true nature of God and man, and the relation existing between them, a thing which heretofore I had never understood, and for which I would never have sought."

This discovery comes about through the awakening of the function of the "Third Eye," as it is often called. This is the brain center which we also call the "Adytum," or "Secret place of the Most High." Its bodily correspondence is the pineal gland. Its function is expressed in direct knowledge of the fiery essence hidden behind the manifold veils of physical form.

The awakening comes to those who are hungry for it, to those who wrestle and battle for it, to those who will not be content with anything less. But, paradoxically, it does not come in moments of stress and struggle. The hunger, the wrestling, the battling – these are but the preparation. Thus we are told, in *Light on the Path*:

"Look for the flower to bloom in the silence that follows the storm; not till then.

It shall grow, it will shoot up, it will make branches and leaves and form buds, while the storm continues, while the battle lasts. But not till the whole personality of the man is dissolved and melted – not until it is held by the

divine fragment which has created it, as a mere subject for grave experiment and experience – not until the whole nature has yielded and become subject unto its higher self, can the bloom open. Then will come a calm such as comes in a tropical country after the heavy rain, when nature works so swiftly that one may see her action. Such a calm will come to the harrassed spirit. And in the deep silence the mysterious event will occur which will prove that the way has been found. Call it by what name you will, it is a voice that speaks where there is none to speak – it is a messenger that comes, a messenger without form or substance; or it is the flower of the soul that has opened. It cannot be described by any metaphor."

Readers who possess the Tarot may assist themselves in their quest for the perception of the First Matter by using these Keys as a means of evoking their hidden interior knowledge of it:

0, THE FOOL. This represents the most abstract aspect of the First Matter, its unconditioned essence.

1, THE MAGICIAN. This corresponds to what the alchemists term "their" Mercury.

2, THE HIGH PRIESTESS. This symbolizes the Virgin Sperm of the World, the Catholic Magnesia, and the Diana of the Wise.

3, THE EMPRESS. This represents the First Matter as the mother or matrix of all things in this world, "the

soft, prolific Venus," as Thomas Vaughan says.

Look at one of these Keys at a time. Do not try to guess what it means. Endeavor to absorb yourself in it, with the idea that it shall draw forth ideas from the depths of your mind. As the ideas come, make notes of them.

Be sure, also, to make yourself more and more familiar with the words of the sages given in Lesson 2. It is a good plan to read several of these quotations before concentrating on the Tarot Key you have selected for the day's experiment.

The next lesson will deal with the three alchemical principles, Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt.

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice THE THREE PRINCIPLES

As you learned in the first lesson, there is a close parallel between the yoga doctrine concerning the three gunas, or qualities, and the alchemical teaching concerning the three principles. In that lesson you were told that the Sattvaguna corresponds to the alchemical Mercury, the Rajasguna to alchemical Sulphur, and the Tamasguna to alchemical Salt. We shall now proceed to a further exposition of the nature of these three principles or qualities.

Sattva means literally, "illumination material," or the essence of enlightenment. In his translation of the Bhagavad-Gita, Charles Johnston calls it Substance, and renders the sixth verse of the fourteenth chapter as follows: "Substance, luminous through its stainlessness, and free from sorrow, binds by the bond of pleasure and the bond of knowledge." He translates the eleventh verse of the same chapter thus: "When light shines in at all the doors in this dwelling, when wisdom shines, then let him know that Substance has prevailed." Again: "The fruit of works well done is stainless, belonging to Substance... From Substance is born wisdom... Those who dwell in Substance go upward."

Johnston's translation of Sattva as "Substance" is valuable to us because he is a thorough Sanskritist, and we may be sure that he did not decide on his English rendering without weighing the matter carefully. Thus it becomes evident that Sattva is very like what we have

been considering in the two preceding lessons under the designation of First Matter, which, you will remember, is called Mercury by Kelly, Philalethes, Albertus Magnus, Raymond Lully, and many other alchemists. In other words, there is no difference between the First Matter and the first of the three principles.

Whether we call the first principle Sattva or Mercury, we are to think of it as a luminous substance. Thus we can understand why the alchemical treatise *Aesch Mezareph*, The Book of purifying Fire, attributes the principle Mercury to Kether, the Crown, the highest of the ten aspects of the Life-power composing the Tree of Life.

On the diagram of the Tree of Life, the Crown is represented as a sphere of brilliant white at the top of the diagram. It is called the Crown because it is the supreme or ruling principle; but it has other names which clearly indicate its identity with Sattva, or "illumination material." Among them are: AVR MVPLA, *aur mopeleh*, Hidden Light; AVR FShVT, *aur pawshut*, Simplest Light; and AVR PNIMI, *aur penimi*, Inner Light.

Qabalists declare that Limitless Light, *Ain Suph Aur*, condenses itself in Kether, and sets up a whirling motion which is the beginning of manifestation. Thus the initial activity of the Life-power is represented as the selection of a point at which to begin, so that Kether is termed NQVDH RAShVNH, *nequdah rashunah*, the Primordial Point, and this point is said to be the root of

all manifestation. Like the First Matter, it is also called the "Existence of Existences," and the "Concealed of the Concealed."

What we wish to emphasize just here is that these Qabalistic doctrines are by no means mere philosophical abstractions. Hebrew Wisdom, like yoga and alchemy, is founded upon human experience, and that experience is the direct perception of a self-luminous substance as the root of all things, the self-sustaining existence (or better, *subsistence*) which enters into all forms whatsoever. Furthermore, it is perceived as essentially identical with the energy which produces the physical manifestations of light.

It is to the purest state of this subsistent light that Hindus give the name Sattva, and alchemists the name Mercury. Arthur Avalon says: "The first is Sattvaguna, the function of which, relative to the other gunas, is to *reveal* consciousness. The greater the presence or the power of Sattvaguna, the greater the approach to the condition of Pure Consciousness... The truly Sattvik man is a divine man, his temperament being called in the Tantras Divyabhava. Through Sattvaguna passage is made to Sat, which is Chit or Pure Consciousness, by the Siddhayogi, who is identified with Pure Spirit." (*The Serpent Power*, p. 53). It is also said by Hindu authorities that Prakriti or Shakti (First Matter) in its aspect of Perfect Unity is the divine perception which is pure Sattva and attribute of Ishvara, the Supreme Self.

Ishvara is defined by Vivekananda as: "The Supreme

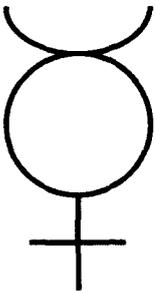
Ruler; the highest possible conception, through reason, of the Absolute, which is beyond all thought." This conception is precisely what is behind the Qabalistic term IChIDH, *Jechidah*, the Indivisible, which also designates the Supreme Ruler, or ONE IDENTITY, attributed to Kether.

The Sattvaguna also predominates in what Hindus call Buddhi, the principle of determination, concerning which it is written that Buddhi, the basis of all cognition, sensation, and resolve, is the charioteer; Manas, the deliberative faculty of the mind, the reins; and the senses, the horses. That is to say, Buddhi is the driver of the chariot in the seventh Key of Tarot, and in this sense Buddhi is indistinguishable from Ishvara or Jechidah, the true Self. What we must keep continually before us, in this connection, is the fact that this One Self is itself identical with the Limitless Light concentrated in the Small Point of original manifestation. In other words, the Self is a point of manifestation for a dynamic energy, a point through which the energy is continually passing. It is the tendency of our minds to think of the Self, or I AM, as being something static or fixed, but Ageless Wisdom declares the opposite. It may help us to recall the geometrical definition of a point – "simple location, without length, breadth, or thickness." In other words, nothing whatever that has shape, size, or form.

This conception is beyond our mental grasp. Thus we are told that the *residuum* after all grasping is at an end is the true Self. True knowledge causes even this Self to

vanish. It is swallowed up in the infinity of the Limitless Light, the radiant energy which is termed by Qabalists Ain Suph Aur, and by Hindus, Mulaprakriti, the root-matter.

We have just said that Sattva, or alchemical Mercury, is the attribute of Ishvara or Jechidah. Here it is interesting to note that the numeral value of IChIDH, Jechidah, is 37, which we have seen to be the number of degrees in the angle which determines the relation of the hypotenuse of a Pythagorean triangle to its base. (See lesson 3). In other words, the number 37 signifies the power which maintains the relation of the evolving forms of the Life-power to Isis, or Mother Nature. That same power is Jechidah, the Self.



With this in mind, let us analyze the geometrical properties of the Mercury symbol shown in the margin. We find: 1. a semicircle, corresponding to the number 11; 2. a circle, corresponding to the number 22; 3. a cross composed of two lines, each representing the number 2, so that the cross stands for 4. (In occult geometry any circle is 22, because of the approximate Pi-proportion which makes a circle $3 \frac{1}{7}$ times its diameter. Thus the smallest whole number which can represent a diameter is 7, corresponding to a circumference of 22. The valuation of the semicircle as 11 is derived in the same way. Readers of these pages are probably also familiar with the Pythagorean dictum that any line is the geometrical equivalent of the number

2. If, then, we add together the numbers corresponding to the parts of the Mercury symbol, the total is 37.

After all this, it should be evident that the name "Mercury" was deliberately chosen for the first principle because of its mythological associations. Mercury, or Hermes, was the messenger of the gods. It was his office to *reveal* the divine will, just as it is the office of the Sattvaguna to reveal consciousness. Mercury invented all the arts and sciences, and so corresponds to the determinative faculty, Buddhi. In particular he revealed the arts of astrology, magic, and alchemy, and every one of these, rightly understood, has for its object the maintenance of the true relation of evolving form to the fundamental characteristics of Mother Isis, or Nature. In the forms of life below man, this determinative power is exercised upon the vehicles of life without their conscious co-operation. In man there is conscious awareness of what is going on, which leads to his voluntary co-operation in the process which results finally in the perfect unification of his consciousness with that of the Originating Principle, as shown in the diagram in Lesson 3.

In that diagram, the first of the three divisions of the line corresponding to Osiris is attributed to Mercury, because the first differentiation of the One Life-power is this same principle of pure knowing, Sattva or Mercury.

This principle is that aspect of the Life-power which has been termed super-consciousness throughout the lessons issued by the School of Ageless Wisdom. Super-

consciousness is the plane of life-activity above the level of human self-conscious knowing; but when we call it a plane we must again be careful not to fall into the error of supposing it to be static. It is a field of intense activity, a sphere of vibratory movement, a region of energy beyond the limits of our ordinary awareness.

That energy is the true Mercury of the sages. It is the power which flows down from above into the uplifted wand of the Magician in Key 1 of Tarot. A power invisible and intangible, but a real power, nevertheless. A power which becomes manifest on the physical plane as light, the Great Magical Agent described by Eliphas Levi. A power hidden behind the manifold veils of name and form. A power perfectly simple and indivisible in itself, but seemingly subdivided into an intricate criss-cross of complex manifestations. A power which is correctly described as Inner Light, which may become actually visible to the awakened inner sensorium of the alchemist as he progresses toward the completion of the Great Work.

Rajas, the second of the three qualities, is rendered "Force" by Johnston. In his translation of the fourteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita we read: "Force, of the essence of desire, engendering thirst and attachment, binds the lord of the body by the bond of works... Desire of possessions, activity, the undertaking of works, restlessness, longing, these are born when Force prevails... The fruit of Force is pain... In the midst stand those who dwell in Force." Arthur Avalon writes:

"The function of Rajasguna is to *make active* – that is, it works on Tamas to suppress Sattva, or on Sattva to suppress Tamas."

Compare this with the words of Jacob Boehme:"The wise heathen have in some measure understood this ground, for they say, that in *Sulphur, Mercury, and Sal*, all things in this world consist; wherein they have not looked upon the matter only, but upon the spirit: for the ground of it consisteth not in gross salt, quicksilver, and brimstone, they mean not so, but they mean the spirit of such properties; in that, everything indeed consisteth, whatsoever liveth and groweth and hath being in this world, whether it be spiritual or material.

"For they understand by *Salt* the sharp magnetical desire of nature; and by *Mercury*, they mean the motion and separation of nature, by which everything is marked with its own image and shape; and by *Sulphur* they mean the sensible, desiring, and growing life." (*Clavis*, 82.)

The Rajasguna is active in that manifestation of the Life-power which the Hindus call Ahankara, the "I-maker." Ahankara is the realization of oneself as a person. It is the self-consciousness of worldly experience, in which one thinks of oneself as a particular person who stands in relation with the objects of his experience. It is the power that Johnston, in his translation of the Gita, calls "self-reference."

According to alchemical doctrine, the office of the

principle named Sulphur is to swallow and transmute Mercury. This idea is presented under many curious veils of symbolism, but one need not enter into an elaborate examination of these. The meaning should be clear in the light of what has just been written. The alchemical Sulphur is the active principle of self-consciousness, and the office of this is to bring down the super-conscious energy (Mercury) so that it may be assimilated.

In Tarot, therefore, the invisible force which is drawn down from above by the Magician is Mercury, and Sulphur is represented by his red robe, typifying action. Super-conscious energy is the true food of self-consciousness which differentiates the Mercury so received into various forms of self-conscious activity. Thus the Hindus tell us that in the operation of Ahangkara (self-consciousness), Buddhi, in which the Sattva quality (Mercury) prevails, is the principle.

In the *Book of Purify Fire* the alchemical Sulphur is attributed to the second aspect of the Life-power named Chokmah or Wisdom. Chokmah is understood as signifying practical as well as theoretical wisdom. It is not merely the distilled essence of experience. It is power to do, power to make active, and thus exactly corresponds to the nature of Sulphur and the Rajasguna.

In human personality, Chokmah is declared to be the seat of the vital force. This vital force is the "spiritual seed of Sulphur," mentioned by Ripley and other alchemists.

They also declare that this seed is their secret fire. This corresponds to the Qabalistic doctrine that Chokmah is the "Root of Fire." It agrees also with the statement of the alchemist El-Habib, who says that in the tincture Sulphur is the part of fire.

The noun "tincture," in its alchemical sense, means "mixture of colors." It is a fairly obvious figure of speech for human personality. The tincture is contained in the philosophical egg. This is the human aura seen by those who have awakened the inner sensorium, as an ovoid, transparent body in which there is a continual play of colors. This philosophical egg, containing Mercury, Sulphur and Salt, is the "vessel of glass" in which the matter of the work is brought to perfection.

Raymond Lully says that the true philosophical Sulphur is not to be sensibly distinguished from the true Mercury. The same writer also insists that the living Sulphur has no connection whatsoever with the ordinary substance bearing the same name. Again, in various alchemical writings, one reads that the Sulphur of Sol is the Soul of Gold, that the Sulphur of the Moon is the Soul of Silver, and so with the other metals. Spenser gives us a key to this in the lines:

"For of the soule the bodie forme doth take;
For soule is forme and doth the bodie make."

That is to say, Sulphur is the power of formation, inherent in the life-force. Here, again, we have

confirmation from the Qabalah, for Chokmah, to which Sulphur is attributed, is said also to be KChMH, *Kachmah*, the power of formation. The Universal Sulphur is therefore said to be the light from which all particular sulphurs proceed. Thus Boehme says: "All life and motion, with understanding, reason, and senses, both in animals and vegetables, consist originally in Sulphur, viz. in nature's desire. . . Man, and every life also, as to the kingdom of this world, was created and generated out of the outward Sulphur; man out of the inward Sulphur, and the outward creature only out of the outward... "Whatever grows, lives, and moves in this world, consists in Sulphur, and Mercury is the life in Sulphur, and the Salt is the corporeal being of Mercury's hunger." (Condensed, from *Signatura Rerum*.)

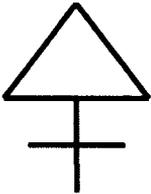
The alchemical Sulphur, then, is to be regarded as the middle principle. Thus its symbol is assigned to the second of the three divisions of the Osiris line in the Pythagorean triangle. Mercury is the Spirit, and Sulphur is the Soul, in all forms of the Life-power's manifestation. Hence Mercury corresponds to what the Greeks term *Pneuma*, and Sulphur is what they designate as *Psyche*. As the yogis declare, this principle stands in the midst, as the quality which may act upon Sattva to suppress Tamas or upon Tamas to suppress Sattva. It may operate in either direction.

In the natural man it feeds upon Tamas, upon the bodily sensations, which are below it in the scale of consciousness. It is then drawn into the conflicts of

sensation which are called the brimstone fires of hell.

In the spiritual, or "pneumatic" man who has entered upon the performance of the Great Work, this principle opens itself to the descending power of the Sattva quality, or Mercury, which is its proper food. This leads to the regeneration which is the object of the Great Work. Hence Boehme says that Sulphur is the womb where into we must enter, if we would be new born.

Sulphur, active in the desiring and growing life of self-consciousness, works either for the gratification of the senses, or for man's release from this bondage. Sulphur is that in us which drives us to undertake works that shall lead us to higher levels. It is the transforming power, represented by the Tarot Magician in his red robe.



The Tarot Keys make this clear. If you are familiar with them, you will remember that Key 4, the Emperor, is explained as representing the same essential power as the Magician. The Emperor is the Magician, after the Magician's mating with the High Priestess has transformed her into the Empress. In all the older Tarot packs, as in the B.O.T.A. version, the composition of the picture of the Emperor is based upon the symbol of Sulphur shown in the margin – a triangle surmounting a cross. The same figure is also the basis of the design of Key 7, the Chariot, except that a square, forming the body of the chariot, encloses the cross.

There are two ways to analyze the Sulphur symbol. One is to consider each of its five lines as representing the number 2. Then the whole symbol corresponds to the number 10. The other is to think of the symbol as a triangle (3) surmounting a cross (4). Then the number represented by the symbol will be 7. Every student of these pages who is familiar with the esoteric meaning of numbers will see that there is a close correspondence between 10 and 7. In Tarot, 7 and 10 are the third and fourth terms of the series of Keys which begins with 1, the Magician, and includes 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, and 19. Every card in this series has some reference to alchemical Sulphur.

Key 1 is Sulphur as the transforming power. Key 4 shows it as the martial, regulative power of the Constituting Intelligence. Key 10 represents it as the whirling motion which makes all things active, the fly-wheel, one might say, of nature's mechanism. Key 13 represents it as the power of growth associated with the meanings of the letter Nun, and presents it symbolically as the power which produces the outward phenomena of death and change. Key 16 shows it as the lightning-flash, destroying the structures of error. Key 19 is a symbol of the regeneration effected by the Great Work, a symbol of the making of philosophical Gold, or Sol; and in connection with this Key of Tarot we may remember that Bernard of Trevisan says: "Gold (Sol) is nothing but quicksilver congealed by its Sulphur."

The Hebrew noun for Sulphur is GPRITH, *gofreeth*. Observe that the letters composing it are G, referred to

the Moon, P, referred to Mars, R, referred to the Sun, I, referred to the operation of Mercury in Virgo, and Th, referred to Saturn. The Moon center is the pituitary body. The Mars center is that which governs the reproductive functions. The Sun center is that which is directly connected with the action of the heart, with the function of the spleen, and with the admission of solar energy into the sphere of personality. The operation of Mercury in Virgo has been explained in connection with the First Matter. The Saturn center is that in which the Kundalini force, or secret fire, is coiled, and is that also which controls excretion and the orgasm which occurs at the climax of the sex function.

Modern knowledge of the functions of the glands makes it evident that the parts of the body represented by the letters of GPRITH are actually those which are fundamental in all the activities of personality. It is by the forces operating through these centers that all human work is done. We do not go so far as to say that the word was intentionally spelt this way in order to preserve ancient knowledge of these centers and their functions, although we do know that modern "discoveries" in this field are but the uncovering of what has been known before. All that we assert is, that whether by chance or intention, the letters of GPRITH do actually correspond to parts of the human organism which are actively concerned in alchemical work. In this connection the student should remember that the uplifted wand in the Magician's hand is a phallic symbol, which has been explained in our works on Tarot as typifying the sublimation and modification of

the forces ordinarily employed in physical reproduction.

Self-consciousness (Sulphur), on account of its identification with the desire-nature, is inseparable from those basic activities of the human organism which have to do with the perpetuation of the species. It is an open secret now-a-days that the alchemical process is one which utilizes the nerve-force which energizes the organs of reproduction, and diverts its activity to effect chemical and structural changes in the alchemist's own body. The Kundalini force, or serpent power, coiled in the Saturn center at the base of the spine, is the electric fire which fuses the brain-sand in the pineal gland into the crystal which is the true Philosophers' Stone. Subtle modifications of the blood-stream by the internal secretions of the gonads, under the rulership of the Mars center, and of the pituitary body, or Moon center, are a necessary part of the Great Work. So is the charging of the blood-stream with certain elements derived from food in the region of the body corresponding to the operations of Mercury in Virgo. Indispensable to the success of the operation, also, is the function of the Sun center near the heart. All these activities are under the control of Sulphur, or the Rajasguna, when it works on Sattva (Mercury) to suppress the operation of Tamas (Salt).

Johnston translates Tamas as "Darkness." In his version of the fourteenth chapter of the Gita we read: "Darkness, born of unwisdom is known to be the deluder of all who are embodied; it binds through heedlessness, indolence and sleep... Darkness,

enwrapping wisdom, causes attachment through sloth... Obscurity, inactivity, sloth, delusion, these are born when Darkness prevails... The fruit of Darkness is unwisdom... Those who dwell in Darkness go downward, under the sway of the lowest powers."

Hence Boehme, who calls this principle *Sal*, or Salt, declares it to be the intense magnetical desire of nature, which draws the life-force down into itself. Nature here should be understood as being represented by the base-line of the Pythagorean triangle, into which the stream of cosmic energy represented by the vertical line corresponding to Osiris descends, to be involved in the forms of the four elements, represented by the four divisions of the Isis line.

Boehme says also: "Whatever grows, lives, and moves in this world, consists in Sulphur, and Mercury is the life in Sulphur, and the Salt is the corporeal being of Mercury's hunger, though the body is manifold. The outward world's desire is in Sulphur, Mercury, and Sal; for such an essence it is in itself, viz. a hunger after itself, and is also its own satisfying; for the Sul desires Phur, and Phur desires Mercury, and both those desire Sal; for Sal is their son, which they hatch in their desire, and afterwards becomes their habitation, and also food. Each desire desires only the essentiality of Salt according to its property; for Salt is diverse; one part is sharpness of cold, and one part sharpness of heat; also one part brimstone; and one part salniter from Mercury."

Boehme, it will be noted, divides Sulphur into a twofold nature. He represents its union with that which is above it (Mercury: Sattva) by the syllable Sul, which he calls the "oil of nature, wherein the life burns, and everything grows." Its union with that which is below it (Salt: Tamas) he represents by the syllable Phur as being the "desire of the free lubet." This word *lubet* is used by Law, in his translation of Boehme, for the original German *lust*. It is practically the same as the *libido* of analytical psychology.

Boehme also clearly indicates his knowledge that the lowest of the three principles partakes of the qualities of those above it, when he says that Salt is one part brimstone (Sulphur) and one part salniter from Mercury. Observe, too, that he recognizes a pair of opposites in Salt: sharpness, or intensity, of heat, and sharpness of cold, viz. extremes of expansion (heat) and contraction (cold).

Ordinary salt retards the chemical processes which cause decay. On account of this it is used to preserve meat. This is what is regarded as the main characteristic of alchemical Salt. It is due to the quality of inertia attributed to Tamas in Hindu philosophy. This quality is definitely associated with the idea of *body*.

Thus Paracelsus writes: "Hermes truly said that all the seven metals were made and compounded of three substances, and in like manner also tinctures (understand bodies—P.C.) and the Philosophers' Stone. These three substances he names Spirit, Soul, and

Body... Now, in order that these three distinct substances may be rightly understood, namely, spirit, soul, and body, it should be known that they signify nothing else than the three principles, Mercury, Sulphur, and Salt, from which all the seven metals are generated. For Mercury is the spirit, Sulphur is the soul, and Salt is the body. The metal between the spirit and the body, concerning which Hermes speaks, is the soul, which indeed is Sulphur. It unites these two contraries, the body and the spirit, and changes them into one essence."

Paracelsus also declares that; the properties of Salt are compaction, congelation, and unification. And he writes: "Know that Salt is a balsam, and conserves Mercury so that its properties shall not putrefy or decay."

In the book *Aesch Mezareph* the principle Salt is attributed to the third aspect of the Life-power, *Binah*, or Understanding. On the Tree of Life *Binah* is represented as a black circle, the color corresponding to the idea of Salt or Tamas as the principle of Darkness. *Binah* is the Great Mother, or dark womb of manifestation. *Binah* is also called the Great Sea, which is characterized by its saltiness. This aspect of the Life-power is clearly indicated to be the source of all embodiment, throughout the Qabalistic philosophy.

Binah is the diversifying power, which produces the *appearance* of multiplication of bodies throughout the universe. Its real action is to veil consciousness, and thus produce world-experience. Thus it corresponds

exactly to what Hindus call Shakti (Power) in its aspect of Maya. Thus Arthur Avalon writes:

"Maya Shakti is that which seemingly makes the whole (Purna) into the not-whole (Aurna), the infinite into the finite, the formless into forms, and the like. It is a power which thus cuts down, veils and negates. Negates what? Perfect consciousness." (*The Serpent Power*, page 29.)

He also says: "The general action of Shakti is to veil consciousness... In fact, like the *materia prima* of the Thomistic philosophy, it is a *finitising* principle. To all seeming, it finitises and makes form in the infinite formless Consciousness. So do all the gunas. But one does it less and another more. The function of Tamaguna is to suppress and *veil* consciousness... The lower descent is made in the scale of nature the more Tamaguna prevails, as in so-called 'brute substance,' which has been supposed to be altogether inert."

Now this is precisely the import of the essential Qabalistic teaching about Binah, the lowest, or outermost, of the "Three Supernals" among the Sephiroth. Binah is the same as the Thomistic *finitizing* *prima materia*. Throughout the Qabalah the Great Mother is described in language such as Hindus invariably apply to Shakti as Maya. Even the English translation of the word Binah – "Understanding" – means by derivation exactly the same as "Substance," literally, "that which stands under,"

This is true even though Binah is said to be the seat of the higher soul, *Neshamah*, through which one receives the interior teaching by the operation of intuition. The point is that even the highest instruction is yet a veil for the Absolute Reality. Whether it come from without or from within, teaching is but a preliminary to true illumination. As Eliphas Levis says, revelation is really a reveiling. Hence the power of the Tamasguna may be discerned even at these high levels, since there can be no instruction without form, no communication without the dualism of speaker and hearer, and thus no intuition without some tinge of Avidya, or unwisdom.

The Hindu point-of-view, which often regards the appearances of finite existence as unmitigated evils, is reflected in the view that the Tamasguna is also evil. This is an erroneous opinion, however, because all the older sages are agreed that some mixture of the Tamasguna is present even in the highest aspects of divinity, so long as there is any manifestation whatever.

The relative evil from which both yoga and alchemy seek to deliver us is the undue predominance of Salt or Tamas. In the Western schools of Ageless Wisdom this is emphasized. Thus, although Salt is used in the story of Lot's wife to represent the crystallizing and limiting consequences of that mistaken mental attitude which always harks back to precedent and to the conditions of past experience, we find that Jesus compares his pupils to the same principle, on account of its preservative quality.

In the Qabalah, too, the usefulness of Salt is emphasized. The Hebrew word for it is MLCh, *melakh*, which is referred originally to the sea itself, from a verbal form, spelt with the same letters, meaning to flow, to dissolve, to vanish away. In Aramaic, the same combination of letters is used for a verb meaning "to subsist." The idea is that subsistence, or manifestation, is really an eternal flux, even as the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, asserted.

But MLCh has the value 78, and this is three times 26, or IHVH, "That which was, is, and will be." Thus MLCh is a numerical formula of the threefold manifestation of reality. Readers of these pages who are familiar with the conceptions of the constitution of matter which have been developed during the last thirty years under the influence of such thinkers as Planck, Einstein, Heisenberg, Dirac, and others, will see that here we approach the ideas which have been forced upon physicists by their mathematical analysis of the results of strictly scientific laboratory research.

By Gematria, or correspondence of words to the same number, the noun MLCh is equivalent to ChNK, Enoch, the name of the patriarch who "walked with God." This proper name means "initiation." Another word equivalent to MLCh is LChM, lechem, food or bread. (Here note that the birth-place of Jesus, whose name signifies, "Reality liberates," is in Bethlehem, BITH-LChM, "the house of food." This corresponds to what has been said already about the importance of the Virgo area of the human body, in which the assimilation of

food is carried out. And it may also give some light on the real significance of the dogma of Jesus' virgin birth). Finally, MLCh, by Gematria, is equivalent to MZLA, *mezla*, a Qabalistic term designating the descending power flowing from Kether, the Crown. The literal meaning of *mezla* is "to drip, to flow down in drops." *Mezla*, for Qabalists, is the same as Shakti for yogis. As Shakti produces the seeming multiplicity of appearances, so *mezla* produces all the manifold aspects of being which are summarized in the ten circles of the Tree of Life, representing the ten aspects of the One Identity, and the twenty-two connecting paths, representing the forces of consciousness attributed to the Hebrew letters.

The number 78, moreover, is the sum of the numbers from 1 to 12, and may therefore be taken to relate to the 12 lines which bound a cube. Ordinary salt crystallizes into perfect cubes, and representations of the cube are shown in Tarot Keys 2, 4, and 7. In the Basic Tarot Course they have been explained as representing the physical plane, or world of embodiment, and as being also representations of the word IHVH, Jehovah, inasmuch as the numbers which designate the limitations of a cube (6 faces, 8 points, and 12 lines), add up to 26, the number of IHVH.

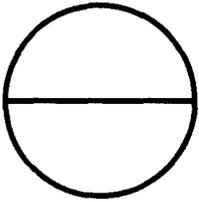
This numeral symbolism may seem rather complicated to some who are taking this course. But it should be considered very carefully. In the performance of the Great Work, as in ordinary chemistry, numeral formulas have an important part. The science of sacred

numeration (as distinguished from its divinatory counterfeits) will, we hope, be more adequately dealt with in future publications of the School of Ageless Wisdom. At present we need only say that the better you understand the numeral correlations given here and there through our work, the more evident will become the real inner significance of much of this instruction. In the present instance, the various considerations that have been developed from the number 78, as applying to Salt, all point to the idea that this lowest of the three principles is really just as truly an aspect of Reality as either of the others.

The truth is that the ONE REALITY HAS THE POWER OF FINITIZING ITSELF through the operation of the Tamasguna or Salt. That this principle does produce inertia and darkness, that it is the principle of embodiment which veils consciousness, is undoubtedly true. Thus, if we add the digits of 78, we get 15, and this is the number of the Tarot Key named THE DEVIL. That Key represents the exoteric ideas which are held in respect to the Tamasguna, and these exoteric ideas sometimes affect men of considerable enlightenment. Thus Mohini Chatterji, in his commentary on the Gita, explicitly identifies Tamas with "badness;" and even Swami Vivekananda permits himself to speak of "getting rid" of this quality.

The real esoteric doctrine is that Tamas is just as useful as any of the other principles. Its preponderance, to the point of extinguishing the operation of Sattva in our lives, is what we seek to overcome. By right use of

Sulphur the alchemist effects an equilibration between Mercury and Salt. Note, an *equilibration*. It would be just as unfortunate to have the balance tipped too far on the side of Mercury, or Sattva, even though it has been said that the divine man is "Sattvik."



The fundamental idea in the Great Work is the maintenance of equilibrium, and that idea is suggested by the symmetrical symbol representing Salt. This shows clearly the balance between that which is above and that which is below. If the line be valued as 2, then the symbol stands for the number 24, and for the words: GVIH, substance, a body; ZIZ, abundance; and KD, a pot, a large earthenware vessel. The significance of these words in relation to Salt is plain. But if the line be taken as a diameter (7), then the figure stands for the number 29, corresponding to the words: HDK, to break down, to overturn; and KZB, to spin, to bind together. These, because alchemical Salt has both these properties of destruction and correlation.

The preliminary processes of the Great Work consist in the union of Sulphur with Mercury (Rajas with Sattva) to overcome the inertia, darkness, and heaviness of Salt (Tamas).

Little by little, through the influx of power from the super-conscious level (Mercury), effected by control of thought and action at the self-conscious level (Sulphur), the preponderance of fixed, habitual sub-conscious

impulses (Salt) over self-conscious determinations (Sulphur) is overcome. Eventually the sub-conscious level of the Life-power's activity is purged and purified. Its fixed conditions are volatilized (that is, its complexes are dissolved), and new and beneficent fixations ensue under the influx of the super-conscious powers.

Mastery of sub-consciousness (Salt) is not brought about by dissolving all complexes and keeping them dissolved. On the contrary, *we must have complexes*. A complex is simply a group of mental forces clustered around a nucleus. What we are to get rid of is the wrong kind of complexes.

The first steps in yoga and alchemy have to do with their dissolution. In yoga: 1. Yama, non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, non-receiving of gifts; 2. Niyama, cleanliness, contentment, self-control, study, devotion; 3. Asana, posture and muscular control; 4. Pranayama, control of nerve-currents through regulation of breath; 5. Pratyahara, observation of the workings of the mind, similar to the catharsis of analytical psychology. In alchemy: 1. Calcination, the purgation of the "Stone," by a gentle heat which expels the volatile matters; 2. Dissolution, the breaking up of complexes, through works similar to Niyama; 3. Separation, akin to the first stages of Pratyahara wherein the flow of ideas is observed; 4. Conjunction, a second stage of Pratyahara, in which the philosophical Man and Woman are united. A hint of this is given in the symbolism of the sixth Key of Tarot, THE LOVERS; but the final stage of this work of Conjunction is represented by the

Hermit (whose letter, YOD, signifies Coition or Copulation). 5. Putrefaction, closely related to Pranayama, which, by changing the nerve-currents in the body, affects also the subtle states of sub-consciousness, and dissolves still further the complexes which retard free life-expression.

We do not mean to say that the stages of yoga, as commonly given, are precisely the same as the alchemical processes – the same in order, that is. All that is intended here is to show that both forms of the one art deal with purification, equilibration, and transformation, and that purification comes first. That which is purified is really the Tamasguna, or Salt, the sub-conscious level of the Life-power's self-expression.

Summing up then, we may say:

1. That Mercury, or Sattvuguna, is the super-conscious level of life, corresponding to the highest of the three Supernals on the Tree of Life, Kether, the Crown. In another kind of symbolic expression, the Mercury of the sages is represented by the Tarot FOOL.
2. That Sulphur, or Rajasguna, is the self-conscious level, corresponding to Chokmah, the seat of the life-force. In the Tarot Keys this aspect of consciousness is represented primarily by the MAGICIAN, but all the Keys in the sequence including 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, and 19 are symbols of alchemical Sulphur. As Boehme indicates by

dividing the word into its two syllables, Sul and Phur, this principle works both ways. In combination with that which is below it, it works to veil consciousness by inertia, and lowers the level of personal consciousness. In combination with that which is above it, it works to unveil consciousness by illumination, and thus raises the level of personal awareness. Sulphur is therefore the actual transforming power.

3. That Salt, or Tamasguna, is the sub-conscious level, corresponding to Binah, the Great Sea of Substance, on the Tree of Life. In the Tarot Keys this principle is primarily represented by the HIGH PRIESTESS. In a certain recondite sense, however, Salt is represented also by the following pairs of Keys: 2 and 3; 5 and 6; 8 and 9; 11 and 12; 14 and 15; 17 and 18; 20 and 21. For all these Keys represent the working of forces which are chiefly sub-conscious, or below the threshold of self-conscious awareness.

From these considerations, it will be apparent that the burden of the Great Work falls on Sulphur. Thus we read this summation of the whole operation in *The Book of Lambspring*: "Cook the Sulphur well with Sulphur." So also Ripley tells us that the spiritual seed of Sulphur is the secret 'Fire' burning in the Athanor, the unique chemical instrument, or alchemical furnace, whose name itself means "Essence of Fire."

When the self-conscious level of personality is rightly

understood and utilized, it acts, even as shown in Key 1 of Tarot, as a mediator and transformer. Then the Sulphur assimilates, or swallows, the Mercury of the sages. In consequence of this, the Salt is purified, after having passed through the stages mentioned above. In plain language, sub-conscious states of mind are modified, and the power of sub-consciousness to build physical structure and control the functions of the body is turned in the right direction.

This, you will see, is quite another interpretation of alchemy from those given by Mrs. Atwood and Ethan Allen Hitchcock. The former thought of alchemy as a sort of hypnotism, performed by the alchemist upon a patient other than himself, whereby clairvoyant lucidity may be produced. Hitchcock supposed that alchemy was merely a system of morals veiled in symbols, Neither was right, but neither was wholly wrong. Alchemy, like yoga, does include certain practices akin to hypnosis; but this part of alchemical technique is applied by the alchemist to himself, and throughout his use of it, he retains self-conscious control of the process. The result is certainly the attainment of those qualities of character discussed by Hitchcock – rather part of the result is the *expression* of those qualities in their highest and best terms. This, however, is made possible by a transformation which is more than an ordinary "moral awakening." This is a bodily transformation, which makes of the alchemist virtually a member of a new species, *beyond man*, as man is beyond the lower animals, and possessed of powers which go far beyond those of the average human being,

including extraordinary control of the molecular and atomic structure of "matter," so-called.

Finally, remember that in alchemy, equilibrium is the basis of the work. All three principles are required. None is to be utterly abandoned, as those believe who tell us we must get rid of body (Salt) and dissipate completely the cohesive virtue of Tamas. Our alchemical Mercury must be perfectly *balanced* with our alchemical Salt, so that the latter is an adequate and useful embodiment of the former. In other words, the power of sub-consciousness must be so adapted by the work of self-consciousness (Sulphur) that sub-consciousness will give itself to the building and maintenance of suitable vehicles for the expression, here on earth, of super-conscious powers.

The right performance of this work requires a thorough knowledge of the properties of what alchemists call "elements," and yogis, "tattvas." We shall begin our instruction on this in the next lesson, which will be devoted to **THE ELEMENT OF FIRE.**

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice

FIRE

Alchemy is a philosophy of fire, a science of fire, and an art which consists mainly in the direction of fire. By Qabalah and Tarot we may unlock the secret meaning of alchemical writings and symbols, but we cannot use the keys until we have examined the locks. We shall begin this lesson, therefore, with quotations from the alchemists concerning the element of fire.

Paracelsus says: "First and chiefly, the principal subject of this Art is fire, which always exists in one and the same property and mode of operation, nor can it receive its life from anything else. It possesses, therefore, a state and power, common to all fires which lie hid in secret, of vivifying. The fire in the furnace may be compared to the sun. It heats the furnace and the vessels, just as the sun heats the vast universe. For as nothing can be produced in the world without the sun, so also in this Art nothing can be produced without this simple fire. No operation can be completed without it. It is the Great Arcanum of Art, embracing all things which are comprised therein; neither can it be comprehended in anything else. It abides by itself, and needs nothing; but all others which stand in need of this can get fruition of it and have life from it. Know, then, that the ultimate and also the primal matter of everything is fire. This is, as it were, the key that unlocks the chest. It is this which makes manifest whatever is hidden in anything.

"By the element of fire all that is imperfect is destroyed

and taken away, as for instance, the five metals, Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Saturn. On the other hand, the perfect metals, Sol and Luna, are not consumed in that same fire. They remain in the fire: and at the same time, out of the other imperfect ones which are destroyed, they assume their own body and become visible to the eyes. For fire tests everything, and when the impure matter is separated the three pure substances are displayed. Fire separates that which is constant or fixed from that which is fugitive or volatile. Fire is the father or active principle of separation. Whatsoever pertains to separation belongs to the science of Alchemy. It teaches how to extract, coagulate, and separate every substance in its peculiar vessel. Fire contains within itself the whole of Alchemy by its native power to tinge, graduate, and fix, which is, as it were, born with it and impressed upon it."

Nundinus writes: "The fire which includes all our chemical processes is threefold: the fiery element of the air, of water, and of earth. This is *all* our magistry requires." Bondinus declares: "Our Stone is fire, and has been generated in fire, without, however, being consumed by fire." According to Medales, "The fire of the sages may be extracted from all things, and is called the Quintessence. It is of earth, water, air, and fire."

Basil Valentine hides the secret in plain sight, thus: "Our fire is a *common* fire, and our furnace is a *common* furnace. The fire of a spirit-lamp is useless for our purpose, nor is there any profit in horse-dung, nor in the other kinds of heat in the providing of which so much

expense is incurred. Neither do we want many kinds of furnaces. Only our threefold furnace affords facilities for properly regulating the heat of the fire. Our furnace is cheap, our fire is cheap, and our material is cheap. He who has the material will also find a furnace in which to prepare it, just as he who has flour will not be at a loss for an oven in which it may be baked."

Thomas Vaughan writes: "Fire, notwithstanding the diversities of it in this sublunary kitchen of the elements, is but one thing from one root. The effects of it are various, according to the distance and nature of the subject wherein it resides, for that makes it vital or violent. It sleeps in most things – as in flints, where it is silent and invisible. It is a kind of *perdue*, lies close like a spider in the cabinet of his web, to surprise all that comes within his lines. He never appears without his prey in his foot; where he finds aught that's combustible, there he discovers himself, for – if we speak properly — he is not generated but manifested. There is nothing in the world generated without fire. This fire is at the root and about the root – I mean about the centre – of all things, both visible and invisible. It is in water, earth and air; it is in minerals, herbs, and beasts; it is in men, stars, and angels; but originally it is in God Himself, for He is the fountain of heat and fire, and from Him it is derived to the rest of the creatures in a certain stream or sunshine. Now, the magicians afford us but two notions whereby we may know their fire: it is, as they describe it, moist and invisible. Hence have they called it the horse's belly and horse-dung; but this is only by way of analogy, for there is in horse-dung a

moist heat but no fire that is visible. Now then, let us compare the common Vulcan with this philosophical Vesta, that we may see wherein they are different. First of all then, the philosopher's fire is moist, and truly so is that of the kitchen too. We see that flames contract and extend themselves, now they are short, now they are long, which cannot be without moisture to maintain the flux and continuity of their parts. But the common fire is excessively hot, but moist in a far inferior degree, and therefore destructive, for it preys on the moisture of other things. On the contrary, the warmth and moisture of the magical agent are equal; the one temperates and satisfies the other: it is a humid, tepid fire, or, as we commonly express ourselves, blood-warm. This is their first and greatest difference in relation to our desired effect; we will now consider their second. The kitchen fire, as we all know, is visible; but the philosopher's fire is invisible and therefore no kitchen fire. This Almadir expressly tells us in these words: 'Our work,' saith he, 'can be performed by nothing but by the invisible beams of our fire.' And again, 'Our fire is a corrosive fire, which brings a cloud about our glass or vessel, in which cloud the beams of our fire are hidden.' To be short, the philosophers call this agent their bath, because it is moist, as baths are; but in very truth is no kind of bath, neither of the sea nor of dew, but a most subtle fire and purely natural, but the excitation of it is artificial." (Condensed from *Lumen de Lumine*.)

Boehme says: "When life and movement appears, which previously existed not, a principle is present. Fire is a principle with its property, and light is also a principle

with its property, for it is generated from fire, and yet is not the fire's property. It has also its own life in itself, but fire is cause thereof. All sense, and whatever is to come to anything, must have fire. There springs nothing out of the earth without the essence of fire. It is a cause of all the three principles, and of all that can be named."

Many alchemical works quote from the *Chaldean Oracles*, a collection of Neo-Platonic fragments often attributed to Zoroaster, who probably had nothing to do with their composition. Their substance is practically the same as the teaching of Porphyry, in whose writings there is the following:

"There is above the Celestial Lights an Incorruptible Flame always sparkling; the spring of life, the formation of all beings, the original of all things. This Flame produceth all things, and nothing perisheth but what it consumeth. It maketh itself known by itself. This Fire cannot be contained in any place; it is without body and without matter. It encompasseth the heavens.

"The heart should not fear to approach this adorable Fire, or to be touched by it; it will never be consumed by this sweet Fire, whose mild and tranquil heat maketh the binding, the harmony, and the duration of the world. Nothing subsisteth but by this Fire, which is God Himself. All is full of God, and God is in all."

This universal fire of the alchemists is the same as the Agni or Tejas of Hindu Philosophy. Hindu Scriptures declare that Agni is the supreme deity, and attribute to

him the powers of all the other gods of the pantheon. They represent him as a young ram, carrying a notched banner, inscribed with a swastika. This is precisely what is shown on the medals used by the Roman Church to represent Christ as the Lamb of God, or *Agnus Dei*. The only difference is that instead of the swastika, the banner bears a cross of equal arms. (See illustration, *Agnus Dei*, in *Webster's New International Dictionary*.)

In our interpretation of the Rosicrucian pamphlets, *Fama Fraternitatis* and *Confessio Fraternitatis*, we have shown how this peculiar symbolism of the young ram, or lamb, is employed to indicate the true nature of the Founder of the Rosicrucian Order, "Our Brother and Father, C. R." He represents the spiritual source of the higher consciousness attained in the alchemical Great Work, or by the practice of Yoga. He is what the *Book of Tokens* calls, "The circle of eternal flame, self-fed," and he is also a representation of the true alchemical fire.

Thus the quotation from Paracelsus tells us that the secret fire of the alchemists is the very life of the alchemical Art itself, and goes on to say that this hidden fire possesses the power of vivifying. The furnace he mentions is the athanor, which we have explained as being the human organism, itself produced from the "Essence of Fire," (ATh HNVR, *Ath Ha-Nour*). Observe, too, that he calls it a "simple" fire, meaning thereby that it is one without a second, a fire unmixed with anything whatsoever. The rest of the first paragraph from his writings is almost a paraphrase of the

quotation from Porphyry. It plainly indicates that the secret fire is by no means to be confused with that which is manifest in ordinary combustion.

His remarks about the effect of fire on metals are to be understood as referring to the secret metals, or centers in the nervous system. Note that Sol and Luna, or Gold and Silver, are not destroyed by the secret fire. In the alchemical operation, the powers of all the other centers are transmuted into the powers of the "Sun" and "Moon." But here let it be remembered that the other *centers* are not destroyed. Their essential activities are raised, or sublimated, so that they all contribute to the perfect manifestation of the alchemical Gold, or spiritual illumination.

Nundinus and Medales identify the secret fire of alchemy with the Stone and with the Quintessence. The Stone, ABN, *Ehben*, is by Qabalah the same as the Sun, or Gold, ChMH, *Khammaw*. The Quintessence is the same as the *Akasha* of the Hindus and the *Aether* of the Greeks.

Basil Valentine, as I have said, hides the secret in plain sight, by the use of the adjective "common." Uninstructed readers would suppose from this that he meant ordinary fire. The real thought is this: The philosophical fire is a fire common to all things, a fire shared by all. So also is the alchemical furnace a common possession. Everybody has the fire and the furnace, and those who waste their time and substance in looking outside themselves for these things betray

their ignorance of the alchemical doctrine. The furnace is threefold, according to the esoteric division of the human personality into Body or alchemical Salt, Soul or alchemical Sulphur, and Spirit or alchemical Mercury.

Thomas Vaughan develops Valentine's doctrine that the fire is a *common* fire in several examples. He is careful to say, "He is not generated but manifested." This, of course, is common knowledge today. We do not generate any of the forces that modern invention utilizes in so many wonderful ways. We simply provide suitable conditions for the manifestation of those forces. Vaughan, furthermore, is confirmed by present-day science when he declares that the secret fire "is in water, earth and air; in minerals, herbs and beasts; in men, stars and angels." Recently some of the most important figures in the scientific world have also shown a disposition to agree also that this fire is, as Vaughan says "originally in God Himself." It will be no new thing to readers familiar with other publications of the School of Ageless Wisdom to think of this magical agent as an influx of power which may properly be called "a certain stream or sunshine." Without any metaphor whatever, the alchemical fire *is* the essence of the radiant energy of the sun, and this also is the substance of all things whatsoever.

It is moist, or like water, because it flows in streams, forms itself into whirlpools, collects like water in suitable reservoirs, has currents which may be charged almost as definitely as those of the sea, and forms itself into waves. At the same time, in itself it is invisible. We

see its effects, but the energy itself remains hidden from us.

Vaughan's second quotation from Almadir deserves comment, the fire is said to be corrosive because it does actually "eat away by degrees." The glass or vessel is the auric egg. The cloud is the Physical body, which, according to certain esoteric doctrines is formed inside the auric egg by the action of the vital fire. This body is the veil which hides the beams of the secret fire.

The Hebrew word for fire is ASh, *Ash*. The same letters, with different vowel points, form the word ASH, *Ish*, signifying *entity*. They are also the letters which spell the Aramaic noun ASh, *Osh*, a foundation. To the first letter, Aleph, the Ox, Qabalists attribute Ruach, the Life-Breath, and this undifferentiated Life-Breath they call "Fiery or Scintillating Intelligence." The second letter is Shin, the Tooth, which is itself the letter of Fire, and the sign of the "Perpetual Intelligence." Furthermore, in Qabalah Shin is called the "Holy Letter" because its number, 300, is also the number of the words RVCh ALHIM, *Ruach Elohim*, Life-Breath of the Creative Powers. Thus the two Hebrew letters which represent their noun for fire and both symbol for a fiery power, and symbols also of the Life-breath. They are likewise the first and last of the three "mother letters."

The alchemist's fire actually is *Ruach*, the all-pervading Life-Breath. Its primary manifestation is shown in Tarot as the Fool, which represents the Life-Breath as about to

descend into the abyss of manifestation. This is true even in those ancient versions of this Key, which show a man about to fall into the open mouth of a crocodile. For the crocodile represents the lower nature, typified in our version of the Key by the depth which opens at the feet of the Fool. The fire of the alchemist, when it has entered into the abyss of manifestation, passes through all the transformations typified by the numbered Keys of Tarot following the Zero card, until it completes the circle of its activities in the resurrection typified by Key 20, attributed to the letter Shin.

The scene pictured in Key 20 is the anastasis, or "rising again," usually called "resurrection" in the New Testament. Here we should be careful to remember that this is an esoteric term, especially in the four Gospels. There is reason to believe that it was misunderstood almost from the beginning of the public teaching of the Gnostic doctrine veiled in the exoteric letter of Christianity. In that doctrine the "dead" are those who are caught in the world's illusion, "dead in trespasses and sins." This point is made very clear by Ouspensky in his recent book, *A New Model of the Universe*. He says:

"In St. John's Gospel the idea of 'new birth' is introduced in explanation of the principles of esotericism.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (*John 3. 3*).

"Then follows the idea of resurrection, resuscitation. Life without the idea of esotericism is regarded as death.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will (*John 5. 21*)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice (*John 5. 25, 28*).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man shall keep my saying, he shall never see death (*John 8. 51*).

These last passages are certainly interpreted wrongly in existing pseudo-Christian teachings.

“Those that are in the graves” does not mean dead people who are buried in the earth, but, on the contrary, those who are living in the ordinary sense, but dead from the point of view of esotericism.

"The comparison of people with sepulchres or graves is met with several times in St. Matthew and St. Luke:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within

full of dead mens' bones, and of all uncleanness
(*Matt. 23. 27*).

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
for ye are as graves which appear not, and the
men that walk over them are not aware of them
(*Luke 11. 44*).

"The same idea is developed further in Revelations.
Esotericism gives life. In the esoteric circle there is no
death." (page 181, *New Model of the Universe*).

Now, the word *anastasis*, according to the Greek values
of letters, is equivalent in number to the word *techne*,
art, craft, skill, whence we derive our English word
technic. The "rising again" is NOT a natural process.
Thus Vaughan says that the magical agent is "a subtle
fire and purely natural, *but the excitation of it is
artificial*." The same idea recurs again and again in
esoteric writing. We are told that there is a force
tremendously powerful, but man must direct it. Eliphaz
Levi goes so far as to say it is the burning body of the
Holy Ghost. Yet he says also that it is the devil of
exoteric dogmatism, and the blind force which souls
must conquer, if they would be freed from the chains of
earth.

In other words, the alchemical fire must be first of all
known, and then controlled. It will not, as many have
imagined, change the present human race into supermen
by any process of natural evolution. We may look
forward to a day when the earth is governed and

inhabited by none but Masters of Wisdom, but when that day comes, it will be because men and women have themselves taken in hand the direction of the alchemical fire. Not without reason is this work called The Great Art.

The Aramaic word for fire is NVR, Noor. This is the word which we have already noticed in connection with ATh H-NVR, *Ath Ha-Noor, athanor*. It also appears in the word MNVRH, *Menorah*, a candlestick, which is the same by numeration (301) as ASH, Ash, fire. NVR by its letters gives further indications as to the nature of the secret fire.

The first letter is Nun, to which the sign Scorpio, governing the organs of sex, is attributed in Qabalah. The second letter is Vau, to which is attributed the sign complementary and opposite to Scorpio, the sign Taurus, ruling the throat. The third letter is Resh, to which the Sun is attributed.

Now, in Scorpio Mars is the ruling planet, and Uranus (the Fool in Tarot) is exalted in that sign. In Taurus, Venus is the ruling planet, and the Moon is exalted, these two being represented in Tarot by the Empress and the High Priestess respectively. The Sun, symbolized by Key 19, is the ruler of the heart and spinal cord, through the heart center and the sign Leo, and is exalted in the sign Aries, ruled by Mars, governing the head and brain.

Thus in the one word NVR a Qabalist would find

references to the Sun, Moon, Venus and Mars, and to the bodily areas of the brain, throat and ears, heart and spinal cord, and organs of sex. The corresponding Tarot Keys are 19 (Sun center) 2 (Moon center), 3 (throat center), 16 (Mars center), 4 (head and brain), 5 (throat and ears), 8 (heart and spinal cord), 13 (sex organs).

These are valuable clues. For in the actual Hermetic practice, the centers and areas just named are of primary importance. The secret fire of the philosophers is, as Valentine asserts, a *common* fire, present everywhere, and available to all men. It is also the essential vital principle in all forms of manifestation whatsoever. At the same time, it has certain special types of manifestation which are the ones the alchemist employs in the technical operations of the Great Art. These are the forms of the secret fire which are at work in the parts of the human body indicated by our analysis of the word NVR.

Hence alchemy must remain today, as it has in the past, more or less a secret doctrine. A full, detailed explanation of certain facts about the secret fire cannot be made, even if one desired to make it, without incurring severe penalties. Greater freedom in the explanation and discussion of the facts of sex is possible than heretofore, but there still exist legal restrictions to plain speaking, and every effort to change these restrictions is met with vigorous opposition from the organized, influential powers to whose interest it is to maintain popular ignorance.

Let it be said once more, however, that the alchemical process is not concerned with any sort of jugglery with the sex-function. Our inability to discuss the matter freely arises from the fact that neither the physiology nor psychology of that function may be accurately described or defined in any work intended, as this is, for general circulation.

As to the practice, even though there were no restrictions such as we have just mentioned, only the most general indications can be given. Consider only the centers and organs involved. They are the most delicate, and the most important in the human organism. It is extremely dangerous to try any tricks with them. Even under the personal guidance of a competent instructor, who knows every detail of the alchemical process, there is some degree of danger. Without such guidance a rash experimenter runs very real and very terrible risks.

For the secret fire is indeed a corrosive flame, and when it is intensified by the practical operations of the Great Art, it is more than strong enough to destroy like lightning, unless proper precautions be taken.

In Tarot, fire is represented primarily by the letter Shin and Key 20. This Key gives the most direct intimations concerning the nature and use of the secret fire. Three other Keys are also connected with fire, because they represent the three fiery signs of the zodiac, Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius. The corresponding Keys are 4, The Emperor; 8, Strength; and 14, Temperance.

Key 20, Judgment, illustrates the threefold manifestation of the One Fire, mentioned in the quotation from Nundinus, by the symbolism of the three figures rising from the coffins of stone. These figures may be interpreted as representing the same idea as that which is typified by the three sides of the right-angled triangle, discussed in Lesson 3. The man is Osiris, the Father. The woman is Isis, the mother. Between them is Horus, the child, who is the Son, "one with the Father."

The angel overhead, who is, by the implications of the scene and of the title of the Key, the archangel Gabriel. But according to the Qabalah, Gabriel is the angel of water. Here there seems to be a contradiction, until we remember the alchemists' own explicit declaration that they "burn with water," and call to mind also the several hints given by authors quoted in this lesson, to the effect that there is a fluidic quality about their secret fire.

The icy peaks or glaciers in the background of the 20th Key, and the expanse of water supporting the coffins, are symbols of this fluidic fire. The coffins themselves are made of stone, and they float upon the sea, to intimate that the solid forms of the mineral kingdom are really supported by the universal fluidic energy. The human figures have been enclosed in the coffins, but are now emerging. Here is the idea that the potencies of human consciousness are present even in mineral forms. To this the passage of Scripture refers which declares that God is able out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The letter Shin, corresponding to this Key and to fire, is, as has been explained, related by its number to the words *Ruach Elohim*, Life-Breath of the Creative Powers. 300 is the extension of 24 (the sum of the numbers from 0 to 24 inclusive.) Thus 300 represents the full development of the idea symbolized in Revelations by the twenty-four thrones of the Elders. 24 itself is the number of the Hebrew word GVIH, *geviyah*, meaning "substance," or "body." Thus here is a hint that the secret fire is simply the extended manifestation of that same reality which gives body to all things, or is the substance of everything. Hence in the diagram of the Egyptian triangle of Lesson 3, you will notice that the first space in the line attributed to Isis is that assigned to the element of fire. Similarly, in Qabalah, the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, IHVH, is said to stand for the same element. This letter is I or Yod, and Qabalists declare that among the Ten Sephiroth, Yod belongs to ChKMH, *Chokmah*, Wisdom, the second aspect of the Life-power. This again connects with the idea of fire, because Chokmah is said to be the "Root of Fire." Chokmah, again, is the seat of ChlH, *Chaiah*, the Life-force, and is also the Sphere of Masloth, "the highways of the stars."

Complicated as these Qabalisms may appear to some readers of these pages, they are clues to the alchemical mystery. In this connection we must remember the words of Paracelsus, in the second chapter of his book, *The Tincture of the Philosophers*:

"Now, if you do not understand the use of the Qabalists

and the old astronomers, you are not born by God for the Spagyric Art, or chosen by Nature for the work of Vulcan, or created to open your mouth concerning alchemical arts."

"Spagyric Art" is a name for alchemy, derived from two Greek roots, one meaning "to separate," the other, "to assemble." Thus the whole art has been summed up in two Latin words, *Solve*, to dissolve, and *Coagula*, to *thicken*; and it is said to consist in the volatilization of the fixed and the fixation of the volatile.

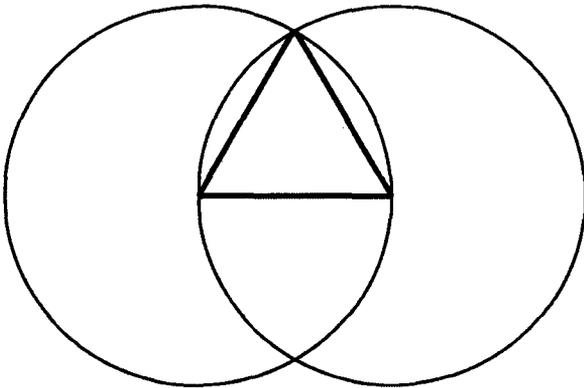
The process of assimilation, for example, is a phase of the alchemical process. It begins by the destruction of the solid forms of food, and their gradual volatilization (by mechanical and chemical activities in the alimentary canal and stomach), up to the point where the "Virgin's Milk" is taken up by the lacteals in the small intestine. From that point fixation begins, as the energy assimilated is built into the structure of the body. This on the Physical plane.

On the Mental plane, analysis of experience leads to the discovery of the forces, laws, and principles behind what affects our senses. This analysis is performed with the help of Mercury, or self-consciousness, and the Magician in Tarot is a picture of the process. It is followed by the synthesis of the principles, laws, and forces discovered by analysis. New combinations are made through the operation of creative imagination, as symbolized by the Empress. Thus man is enabled to introduce into the operations of nature new manifestations

of her own laws, which she cannot produce except through human agency.

Knowledge of the "use," that is, of the methods, of the Qabalah and of the old astronomy, or astrology, is indispensable to would-be alchemists, because long ago the fundamental laws of mental and physical analysis and synthesis were found out by the Inner School, and embodied in the symbolisms of astrology and Hebrew Wisdom.

The Qabalah is fundamentally a mathematical system, and its root ideas are developed through number and geometry. All the intricacies of Qabalistic geometry are derived from the following simple problem, with which Euclid began his famous works. It is the method for constructing an equilateral triangle, as follows:



Describe a circle. With unaltered compasses describe a second circle, using any point on the circumference of the first circle as the center of the second. The space enclosed by the intersecting lines of the two circles is

called a Vesica Piscis. It is a key to many secrets of architecture, Free Masonry, and Qabalah. Connect the upper point of the Vesica with the centers of the two circles by straight lines, and the centers of the two circles by another straight line. The three straight lines will form the equilateral triangle which is the alchemical symbol for the element of fire.

The two circles forming the Vesica Piscis are an ancient symbol of the threefold nature of Reality, because the two arcs of the Vesica are each two-sixths of a circle, and each of the circles outside the Vesica has, besides that part of it which is included in the Vesica, a remaining arc of two-sixths. The triangle also definitely indicates the number 3. So does the numeral value of

The letter Shin, 300, because 300 may be Qabalistically reduced to 3. The form of the letter *sh* is also immediately suggestive of the number 3. So also, as you have seen, is the symbolism of the 20th Tarot Key. The number 3 is also hidden in the number of this Key, 20, because the sum of the numbers from 1 to 20 is 210, and the digits of 210 add to 3.

Key 4, The Emperor, illustrates the activity of the alchemical fire in the head of man, in the faculty of vision, and in the power of reason. Through the connection of this Key with the letter Heh, the symbolism is all related to the sign Aries.

Now, Aries is typified as a young ram, or lamb, called TLH, *Taleh*, in Hebrew. This word is numbered 44, and

is equivalent to DM, *Dam*, Blood, to ChVL, *Khool*, Sand, and to LHT, *Lahat*, Flame and Magic. The connection between Aries and the Hindu fire-god Agni is obvious. And in another lesson of this series we have considered the correspondences between blood, sand, and flame. Just now, what I would emphasize is the idea of rulership, or control, intimated by the title of Key 4. The alchemical fire is the fire of reason. It is the fiery energy that is at work in the brain. It is the force which takes form in physical and mental vision. It is the power whereby order is established throughout the manifested universe. This power, when we recognize it, and permit it to work without interference through us, is a magic power. In itself it is the power of composing, framing, or constituting worlds. Thus when it finds expression through a properly prepared human brain it enables the possessor of that brain to see things as they really are, and bring about so perfect a personal manifestation of reason that all details of that person's life are rightly ordered.

Key 8, Strength, is connected with the sign Leo, through its attribution to the letter Teth. Some of the profound alchemical significance of this Key has been touched upon elsewhere in this course. This Key also has links of connection with the central mystery of Free Masonry, which has to do with the raising of the dead body of Hiram Abiff, by means of the "strong grip of the lion's paw." In the Masonic legend, we are told that the body was at an advanced stage of putrefaction, which is a direct reference to the alchemical doctrine that the materials of the Great Work must be utterly

decomposed before they can be raised, or sublimated. In this connection, remember that ChVRM ABIV, the Hebrew spelling of Hiram Abiff, is the number 273, and this is the number also of ABN MASV HBVNIM, *Ehben Masu Ha-Bonim*, The STONE which the Builders rejected. Careful consideration of these three words may also lead some of my Masonic readers to discover a clue to the true significance of the "substitute" for the Lost Word, for the syllables of the substitute are concealed in these three words.

It is also interesting to note that the Temple which was nearing completion when Hiram Abiff was killed was situated on Mount Moriah. The bearing of this on our present study is that the words HMVRIH HR, *Ha-Moriyah Har*, Mount Moriah, add up to 471, which is the spelling of the word ASH, *Ash*, fire, "in plenitude," thus: ALP-ShIN. The implication of this Qabalism is that the "Temple" is built upon a foundation of fire. This is further borne out by the fact that MVRIH, Moriah, means "seen of Jah," or "hill of vision," so that it is directly connected with the power of vision already noticed in connection with Key 4. And to confirm this, the Hebrew for "temples," HIKLVTh, *Haikaluth*, is also the number 471.

Here is another point. The Aramaic word NVR, Nour, written in its plenitude, is NVN-VV-RISH, and totals 628. 628 is 4×157 , and 471, the value of ALP-ShIN, or ASH in plenitude, is 3×157 . Thus there is a relation between the numbers representing these two words. 157 is the number of the words in the phrase DMDVMI

ChMH, The setting of the sun, and of the words ZQN, *zaqan*, the Beard, MVPLA, *mowpeleh*, Occult, miraculous, hidden (applied to Kether, the Crown, in Qabalah), and NQBH, *neqebah*, Female. The "beard" is regarded by many Qabalists as being a euphemism for the masculine aspect of the creative power, and the word Neqebah, Female, is directly derived from a root meaning "that which is pierced." Thus these two words correspond more or less to the ideas represented by the Hindu lingam and yoni. The idea suggested is that the secret fire is both male and female, and this is exactly what is taught by the Hindus when they say that the secret fire used in Yoga is both solar and lunar, active and passive, male and female.

Key 14, Temperance, corresponds to the letter Samekh, which has the value 60. This is the value of the word BChN, *bachan*, to try or test, applied especially to metals, and implying that the trial is by fire. Here students of our writings on Qabalah will remember that the path of intelligence attributed to the letter Samekh is called "Intelligence of Probation or Trial." Again, the number 60 is the number of the word KLI, *keliy*, a vessel, something prepared, apparatus. It refers to the secret vessels of alchemy, and these are symbolized in Key 14 by the vase which the angel holds, and from which water is poured upon the head of a lion. In older exoteric versions of this Key there are two vases, one in each hand of the angel, who pours a triple stream from cup to Cup, without spilling a drop. This is also excellent symbolism, if not quite so specific as that of the esoteric Tarot which is the basis of the design issued

by us.

The zodiacal sign Sagittarius, corresponding to Key 14, is called QShTh, *qesheth*, meaning primarily "bow," and often used to designate the rainbow, but also signifying "bowman" or "archer." This word has a particular significance in Qabalah, because it is composed of the letters assigned to the three paths connecting Malkuth, the Kingdom, with the higher Sephiroth on the Tree of Life.

The number of QShTh, *qesheth*, is 800, and this is the value of the letter Peh when it comes at the end of a word. Peh is the letter of Mars, and is connected with the Mars center in the body. This is the center which innervates the reproductive organs, and corresponds to the Svadisthana Chakra of the yogis. This center is said to be the seat of the Apas Tattva in the yoga doctrine, and since this is the Tattva of Water, we have here once more the apparent confusion of fire and water which we noticed in connection with the angel Gabriel. And it is to be noticed that in the 14th Key water is a prominent symbol. So, also, in Key 16 of Tarot, which represents the Mars-force, there are storm-clouds, so that the implication is that the fiery force there shown destroying the tower is somehow connected with water.

Again, the number 800 is the number of ShRSh, *shoresh*, a root, indicating that whatever occult significance there may be in the word QShTh, *qesheth*, may be expected to lead us to a better understanding of that which is the root, or fundamental, of all the forms

of growth and development.

Years of familiarity with this material have undoubtedly made it easier for me to trace the connections between these Qabalistic clues to the occult doctrine of the secret fire. Just as an Apache tracker can discern marks on a trail which would be of no significance to the eyes of the average passer-by, so does one who has devoted years to making himself acquainted with the symbolic language of the Qabalah see plain indications when another will see nothing at all.

Nevertheless, I believe that when the clues are brought together, as they are in these lessons, any person who is really in earnest in his desire to penetrate the veil of symbolism behind which the secrets of the Hermetic Art are hidden will be able, if he thinks through what is given here, to discover the truth of the matter.

It must always be remembered, however, that the most important secrets of Hermetic Science *cannot* be put into ordinary language. We would tell them, if telling were possible, but there are no words in any human language which can communicate this knowledge. There are words, and other forms of symbolic expression such as Tarot, which, if meditated upon, will bring the student's mind to the point where he can know for himself. Then all the words and symbols will take on a new meaning for him. He will understand that there is truly a magical language, and that it does serve, like all language, to aid communication *between those who understand it*.

The study of Tarot and Qabalah are preparations for this understanding. The mental effort expended in such study has its inevitable physical results. It does actually modify the structure of the brain. It makes one more and more receptive. Thus I have felt it necessary to include a considerable number of Qabalisms in this lesson, to the end that earnest students may be given the necessary materials for the exercise of mental functions which no other kind of thinking can call into play.

In recent years much nonsense has been written about the verbal "juggling" of the technical Qabalah. As I. Muraskin says, in his introduction to Harry Watson's valuable work, *The Philosophy of the Kabbalah*, "Far from being arbitrary word juggling, the technical Kabbalah constitutes a well ordered mathematical system, in no wise inferior to our own system of symbolic logic." Furthermore, even juggling requires and develops dexterity, so that if nothing further were to be brought about by the use of this technique of permutation, transposition, and numerical valuation of the letters in Hebrew words, it would be worth doing for the sake of the mental flexibility and agility which it certainly does result in.

What really happens, however, is an unusual training of the power of association. The numeral correspondences between words are merely signals, so to say, which arrest our attention. On the surface, the words have no obvious relation to each other; but when we notice that they have the same number, we begin to look for the connecting links between them. And it is in the pursuit

of these chains of association that we unfold the hidden knowledge.

For example, AChD, *achad*, Unity and AHBH, *ahebah*, Love, both correspond to the number 13, and this is a fairly obvious relation that almost anyone can see. But what is meant by the fact that AIB, *ayab*, Hate, is also numbered 13? Hate repels, and love attracts. Surely these are exact opposites. But are they? What more surely attaches our minds to another than to hate him? Is there any force more binding than thorough aversion? Recent developments in analytical psychology have shown conclusively that hate and love are but opposite sides of the same shield. Thus this one example of technical Qabalah is also an example of the transcendental logic which Ouspensky expresses thus: Everything is both A and Not-A at one and the same time. (*Tertium Organum*).

Paracelsus understood the Hermetic Science and was a great adept in the Hermetic Art. If, then, you are disposed to chafe a little at the Qabalisms in this lesson, remember his words, quoted in an earlier lesson. The only way you can "understand the use of the Qabalists" is by considering examples of their method. At first you may be like a child who is learning to read. You may be so occupied with your attempts to pronounce single words that the story told by them will make no impression upon you. Persist, and the time will come when the story will be all that you notice, because practice has made easy the reading of the symbols in which it is told.

Summing up this lesson, then, the main points are as follows:

1. The fire of the alchemists is closely related to their First Matter, for it is, as Paracelsus tells us, "the principal subject of this Art."
2. It is not the ordinary fire of combustion, but a hidden, occult force which is characterized by its power of vivifying.
3. Some call it a "common" fire, meaning that it is common to all things.
4. It is identical with the STONE.
5. It is one thing, from one root.
6. In many respects it resembles a fluid, and is often disguised by alchemical writers under the name "Water."
7. It is silent and invisible.
8. It is not generated but manifested.
9. It is purely natural, but the excitation of it is artificial.
10. This fire, according to Boehme, is the root of light, which is generated from it.
11. It is the cause of the three principles, and of all that can be named.
12. It is God Himself.
13. It is the power which forms the physical body of man.
14. It is identical with *Ruach*, the Life-Breath.
15. It is the power which raises the "dead" (in the esoteric sense), as shown in Key 20 of Tarot.
16. The means whereby this result is accomplished is the Great Work of alchemy.

17. In the human body, where it becomes the subject of the alchemical operation, this fire is particularly connected with the nerve centers and organs of reproduction. It is also active in certain other centers.
18. This fire is represented by the first letter of the Tetra-grammaton, IHVH, consequently it is identical with the life-force in the human organism, because the first letter of IHVH is also attributed to Chokmah, the second aspect of Reality, and to Chokmah the Qabalah assigns ChIH, *Chaiah*, the Life-force.
19. This life-force is identical with the radiant energy which emanates from suns, and which is the motive power of all the heavenly bodies.

A careful consideration of these points, and equally careful rereading of this lesson should serve to plant deep in your sub-consciousness the seed-thoughts of the alchemical doctrine of fire. Give these seed-ideas time to germinate. Nobody learns alchemy altogether from books. The written word is but the means to awaken the sub-conscious process of deduction. This lesson provides you with the essence of what the sages have written concerning their fire. Your inner consciousness will develop their doctrine into the ripe fruit of understanding and realization.

In the next lesson we shall consider the alchemical doctrine concerning the element of water.

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice
WATER

Water, in the alchemical doctrine, is the element which contains the potencies of all forms of manifestation. Thus it is often called the "Mother," and in the account of creation in the Book of Genesis, it is designated as the first element, or matter, of the world. There we read: "The Life-Breath of the Creative Powers brooded upon the face of the abyss of waters," and the consequence of this brooding was the whole creation. Yet this alchemical water is by no means our common water. This you will see for yourself, after reading the following quotations from the writings of various alchemists.

In the *Turba Philosophorum* it is said: "The ignorant, when they hear us name water, think it is water of the clouds; but, if they understood our books, they should know it to be a permanent or fixed water, which without its Sulphur -- to which it hath been united -- cannot be permanent."

Thomas Vaughan declares: "Our subject is no common water, but a thick, slimy, fat earth. This earth must be dissolved in water, and that water must be coagulated again into earth." (in this short statement is to be found one of the clearest and most accurate descriptions of the actual material used in alchemy, and of the process by which it is manipulated.) Vaughan also writes: "Among visible things the water first shone forth; this was the fruitful mother of figurable things, the feminine in

correspondence with the masculine of indwelling fire."

Sendivogius wrote: "Our water is a heavenly water, which wets not the hand, not that of the common man, but almost, as it were, pluvial." The adjective "pluvial" means literally, "rainy," but the context denies that the alchemical water is the ordinary fluid which falls from the clouds. The meaning is that the alchemical water descends in drops. It is "heavenly," that is to say, metaphysical, yet it does assume a drop-like, or corpuscular, form.

Raymond Lully is even more specific in his indication that the alchemical water is not common water. "It hath the likeness of the sun and moon," he writes, "and in such water it hath appeared unto us." The sun is a "likeness," or presentation, of this water, and so is the moon. Here is a definite identification of the heavenly or celestial water with that current of energy whose flux and reflux is the agency of all manifestation, presented to the human eye in the actual forms of sun, moon and stars.

Another alchemist tells us: "as the world was generated out of that water, upon which the Spirit of God did move, all things proceeding from thence, both celestial and terrestrial, so this philosophical chaos is generated out of a certain water that is not common, not out of dew, nor air condensed in the caverns of the earth, nor artificially in the receiver; nor out of water drawn from the sea, fountains, pits, or rivers, but out of a certain tortured water, that hath suffered some alteration

obvious to all, but known to few. This water hath in it all that is necessary for the perfection of the philosophical work, without any extrinsical addition."

In his *Mysterium*, Jacob Boehme says: "When I behold the external water, I am forced to say, 'Here in the water below the firmament is also contained water from above the firmament.' But the firmament is the middle, and the link between time and eternity, so that neither one of them is the other. By means of the external eyes, or the eyes of this world, I see only the water below the firmament; but the water above the firmament is that which God in Christ has instituted for the baptism of regeneration."

In the *Aurora* he writes: "The water of life became separated from the water of death; but in such a way that in the time of this world they are linked together like body and soul. But the heaven, having been made from the middle-part of the water, is like an abyss between the two, so that the conceivable water is a death, but the inconceivable one is the life.

"The water upon the earth is a degenerated and deadly being, like the earth herself. This material water, contained within the most external generation, has been separated from the inconceivable one.

Thomas Vaughan also says, in *Anthroposophia Theomagica*: "I am now to speak of the Water. This is the first element we read of in Scripture, the most ancient of principles and the Mother of all things among

visibles. Without the mediation of this, the Earth can receive no blessing at all, for moisture is the proper cause of mixture and fusion. The Water hath several complexions (understand here "Combinations in certain proportions") according to the several parts of the creature. Here below, and in the circumference of all things, it is volatile, crude, and raw. For this very cause Nature makes it no part of her provision, but she rectifies it first, exhaling it up with her heat, and thus condensing it into rains and dews, in which state she makes use of it for nourishment. Somewhere it is interior, vital, and celestial, exposed to the breath of the First Agent, and stirred with spiritual eternal winds. In this condition it is Nature's wanton – *Foemina Gatacissima*, as one calls it. This is that Psyche of Apuleius, and the Fire of Nature is her Cupid. He that hath seen them both in the same bed will confess that love rules all. But to speak something of our common, elemental Water. It is not altogether contemptible; there are hidden treasures in it, but so enchanted we cannot see them, for all that the chest is transparent. 'The congeled spirit of the Invisible Water is better than the whole earth,' saith the noble and learned Sendivogius. I do not advise the reader to take this phlegm to task, as if he would extract a Venus from the sea, but I wish him to study Water that he may know the Fire."

Finally, Paracelsus says: "The first matter of minerals consists of water; and it comprises only Sulphur, Salt and Mercury. These minerals are that element's spirit and soul, containing in themselves all minerals, metals, gems, salts, and other things of that kind, like different

seeds in a bag."

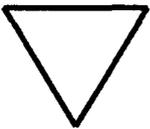
The chemical formula for ordinary water is H_2O , or two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. Recently it has been discovered that there are two kinds of hydrogen atoms, one heavier than the other, and by isolating the heavy atoms it has been possible to make a "heavy" water which differs from ordinary water in several particulars. Plants and tadpoles are poisoned by it, and it seems to have certain other properties which are just now engaging the interest of research chemists. But even "heavy" water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen.

Hydrogen, though not resembling the metals physically, is like metals in that it is electro-positive, and is the positive ion (H^+) of all acids. Chemically, hydrogen is the typical monad, or universal element. Oxygen is eight-ninths, by weight, of ordinary water, and nearly one-half, by weight, of the rocks composing the earth's crust. Liquid oxygen is strongly magnetic. Thus even the ordinary water is a compound of elements having the characteristic qualities of the alchemical "sun" and "moon," for the former, like hydrogen, is electro-positive, and the latter, like liquid oxygen, is invariably distinguished as being magnetic.

These facts, brought to light by modern chemical research, confirm the alchemical dictum that water is the seed and root of all metals. Yet we must remember that alchemical water is not precisely the H_2O of chemistry. One key to its real nature is the oft-repeated

declaration that it is a "heavenly" water which "does not wet the hand." It is metaphysical, or heavenly, in its inner nature, although it does give rise to phenomena which make their appearance on the physical plane.

The methods whereby the sages arrived at their knowledge were not the methods of the modern chemist. Yet their conclusions are in many particulars identical with those of modern chemistry, because their methods were really practical. Instead of observing chemical reactions in test-tubes and retorts, they studied the forces of nature *directly*, utilizing a higher order of perception. Thus they perceived the existence of an all-pervading element which FLOWS, which has CURRENTS, which falls upon earth in a drop-like formation, and which presents itself to the physical eye as the sun and moon.



This element they symbolized by precisely the same figure as that which they used for Fire – an equilateral triangle. But they turned the point of the triangle down-ward, as shown in the margin. By so doing they indicated that when it manifests as the element of water, the One Thing, or Single Force, moves, so to say, in a direction opposite to that which it takes when it manifests as the element of Fire.

Thus Paracelsus says: "Know, then, that the ultimate and also the primal matter of everything is fire. This is, as it were, the key that locks the chest. It is this which makes manifest whatever is hidden in anything." The

fire is the One Thing mentioned in the *Emerald Tablet*. When it ascends from earth to heaven it is symbolized by the upright triangle, and by the various other emblems which have been discussed in the preceding lesson.

When this same force descends to earth it is represented by the triangle pointing downward. Thus we know, at the very beginning of this study, that the alchemical water is really that movement of the One Force which is mentioned in the *Emerald Tablet* when it is said: "its power is integrating, if it be turned into earth." In other words, the alchemical water is the form-producing operation or aspect of the One Thing.

Thus we find that this element is represented by the second letter of the Tetragrammaton, IHVH. And in Qabalistic works we read: "Creation took place with the letter Heh (H)." And since we have seen elsewhere that the second letter of IHVH is also the symbol for the Qabalistic "world" or plane called BRIAĦ, *Briah*, the Creative World, we may understand the metaphysical water of the alchemists as being the aspect assumed by the One Energy on the plane so named.

Here it is important to say that when we call the alchemical water "metaphysical," we do not by any means mean to imply that it is a mere intellectual abstraction. It is just as "real" as physical water, just as actual as a brick. Occultists use the term "metaphysical" in a special, and literal, sense. By this adjective they mean "existing *beyond* the range of physical sensation."

In the Qabalistic philosophy which the alchemists adapted to their special purposes, the highest metaphysical reality is called AIN, or No-Thing; AIN SVP, *En Soph*, or the Limitless; and AIN SVP AVR, *En Soph Aur*, or Limitless Light. These are the names given to the One Reality prior to the beginning of a cycle of manifestation, and they are called "Veils of the Absolute" because Qabalists understand perfectly well that any description or definition of the Absolute must necessarily conceal, or veil, its real nature.

Yet it is always needful to remind ourselves that the Absolute of the Qabalists is *not* an abstraction. It is not the result of speculative philosophizing. It is a Reality which has been directly experienced by the sages, to whom it is something truly *known*, even though it is also something which remains ineffable because there are no human words to describe it.

Just below that aspect of the One Reality which is termed AIN SVP AVR, *En Soph Aur*, or Limitless Light, is the "octave" or "field" or "world" or "plane" of manifestation called Atziluth, the Archetypal World. This plane is related to the element of fire, and is attributed to the first letter of IHVH. It would be correct to say, then, that alchemical fire is the metaphysical substance of the archetypal world, and that alchemical water is the metaphysical substance of the creative world.

You have just seen that the symbol for alchemical water is identical with the symbol for alchemical fire, except

that its direction is reversed. The identity of the alchemical water with alchemical fire is also declared by the alchemists themselves, who say, "Philosophers *burn* with water." So also Synesius, who writes: "I advise thee, my son, to make no account of other things; labour only for that water which *burns to blackness*, dissolves, and congeals." Elsewhere this same water is called "golden," which is to say, "solar," since Gold and Sun are equivalent in alchemy.

In the Hebrew alphabet, the Mother letter corresponding to water is MIM, *Mem*. This is the letter represented in Tarot by the 12th Key, THE HANGED MAN. The name of the letter itself means water, and represents the equation $40+10+40 = 90$, which is the value of the letter-name. As a character, M, the letter has the value 40.

Beginning with this number, 40, we find that it is the value of the verb GZL, meaning primarily, "to cut off, to take away." Here we have a direct reference to what is implied in the alchemical idea that the element of water is the source of *form*, and that it is associated with the "creative letter," Heh. Since all things are manifestations of One Reality, besides which there is, or can be, nothing whatever, it follows that what seems to us to be the multiplication of forms is actually only a subdivision of the ONE into various *parts*. Thus the Hebrew verb BRA, which is the root of the word BRIA, *Briah*, the Creative World, means "to cut apart." This agrees with what has been said in Lesson Four concerning the diversifying power of the Sephirah

Binah.

Again, 40 is the number of the word ChBL, which, as a verb, means: 1.) to wind together, to bind; 2.) to pledge; 3.) to wound, to damage, to destroy, as a noun it means: 1.) pain, sorrow; 2.) a cord, a rope; 3.) a measuring-line; 4.) a snare. Compare the first of these meanings with the words of Vaughan, quoted on earlier: "Moisture is the proper cause of mixture and fusion." And since the creative process is a breaking up of the "still calm of Pure Being," there is a sense in which the original purity of the subsisting ONE is damaged or destroyed by the creative process. Thus we hear again and again that the One Life sacrifices Itself for the sake of manifestation. We hear, too, that limitation and measurement are inseparable from creation; that the world of appearances resulting from the creative process is a scene of pain and sorrow; and that this world is a delusion and a snare to those who misapprehend the meaning of its appearances.

A third Hebrew word corresponding to 40 is ChLB, which means 1.) milk; 2.) fatness; 3.) superabundance; 4.) the best part. Here we are reminded that what is called "Water" by some alchemists is termed "Virgin's Milk" by others. Again, fatness is a characteristic of alchemical water, according to the quotation from Thomas Vaughan in a prior lesson. It is from the alchemical water that the wise derive all their supplies of substance for manifestation as external forms, and our quotation from Synesius seems to indicate it as being the "best part," or most desirable thing.

A fourth correspondence to 40 is the Hebrew idiom ID IHVH *Yod Tetragrammaton*, which means literally "The Hand of the Eternal," but really signifies the *power* (understand *formative power*) of the One Reality. Thus we may understand that the alchemical water is actually the agency, or power, whereby the One Reality projects Its creative energy into specific shapes or forms.

Turning now to the correspondences to 90, the number of the noun MIM, Mem, the first is DVMM, *Domom*, "in silence." This is directly connected with the letter Mem, which is said by Qabalists to be "mute, like water."

The second correspondence to 90 is IKIN, *Jachin*, the name of one of the pillars before the porch of Solomon's temple. This word, familiar to Free Masons, signifies, according to some, "firm one, strong one, patron." It is interpreted in Masonry as meaning "He will establish," and thus has somewhat the same underlying significance as ID IHVH, *Yod Tetragrammaton*, The Hand of the Eternal. The noun is from a Semitic root meaning "Unity," and refers to the creative power of the One Thing.

A third correspondence to the number 90 is the word MLK. As a verb it means "to administer, to reign, to rule, to counsel." as a noun it means "king, ruler, prince." Thus it conveys the idea of rulership, royalty, command, and the like. For the alchemical water is actually the agency whereby the rule or administration

of the Life-power over all forms is established.

A fourth correspondence is to the proper name LMK, *Lamech*. This is important in Free Masonry also, since *Lamech* is the name of the Biblical character (Gen. 4.18) who, according to Masonic tradition was the father of that ancient Craft. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Greek spelling of this name, as used in the New Testament is LAMEX=676, which is the *square* of 26, the number indicated by the Divine Name IHVH, *Tetragrammaton*.

The literal meaning of the word is "powerful." The traditional connection of this name with Free Masonry, and the correspondence of its Greek equivalent to the number 676 are indications (however slight they may seem to a person unversed in the subtleties of the Qabalah) that the alchemical water is somehow related to all things having to do with creation and construction.

Now, Paracelsus says also: "The first principle with God was the ultimate matter which He Himself made to be the primal, just as a fruit which produces another fruit. It has seed; and this seed ranks as primal matter. Likewise, out of the ultimate matter of minerals the primal element was made, that is, it was made into seed, which seed is the element of water... So, then, the element of water is the mother, seed, and root of all minerals; and the Archaeus therein is he who disposes everything according to a definite order, so that each comes to its ultimate matter, which at length man receives as a sort of artificial primal matter: that is,

where Nature ends, there the Art of man begins, for Nature's ultimate matter is man's primal matter. After such a wonderful method has God created water as the first matter of Nature, so soft and weak a substance, yet from it as a fruit the most solid metal, stones, etc. – the very hardest from the very softest: -- and so that from the water fire should issue forth, beyond the grasp of man's intelligence, but not beyond the power of Nature."

The Archaeus is the Universal Agent, specialized in each individual thing, creature, and personality. By some it is understood to be identical with the *Anima Mundi*, or Soul of the World, and this *Anima Mundi*, which works at sub-conscious levels throughout Nature is that principle which maintains and directs the growth of living beings, sets all Nature in motion, and is especially active in the development, growth and reproduction of all living beings. In this connection it might be well to read carefully the writings of Judge Troward, particularly *The Creative Process in the Individual*, *The Hidden Power*, and *The Law and the Word*, for of all modern writers, this author sets forth most clearly the nature of the *Anima Mundi*, and indicates how, and for what reasons, it must be carefully distinguished from the higher spiritual soul. In a word, the *Anima Mundi*, which Paracelsus declares to be the Archaeus in the primal water, is none other than the Maya-Shakti of the Hindu philosophers. As the power which gives shape and form to all things it is clearly the same as the finitising principle of the Thomistic philosophy, mentioned in connection with the Sephirah

Binah in Lesson Four.

Binah is the Sphere of Saturn, and Saturn is the astrological correspondence to the finitising principle. Saturn condenses, fixes, materializes, restricts. Thus Saturn corresponds to the alchemical idea of saltiness associated with the Great Sea of Binah. But just as "finitising" and "finishing" both come from the same Latin root, so Saturn, as the representative of that which establishes definite form, is also representative of that which brings things to completion. This is one of the reasons why Saturn is so often symbolized as an old man with a scythe. In the Qabalah the same thought is intimated by the attribution of Sanctifying Intelligence to the third Sefirah, inasmuch as a saint is a "just man made perfect." Thus, when we learn that Qabalists also call Binah the "Root of Water," we see that to this Sefirah they impute the power which gives concrete form to the spiritual potencies of the Life-power. This is the finitising power, or Salt, which is definitely associated with what the Chaldean Oracles call "the lustral water of the loud-resounding Sea." For it must be remembered that even "fresh" water, like that in rivers and lakes, holds in solution minute quantities of salt, which are concentrated in sea-water by the process of evaporation. Thus by our study of the Sefirah which is called the Sphere of Saturn, the Mother, the Great Sea, and the Root of Water, (and is also related in the *Aesch Mezareph* to alchemical Salt) we find many indications that alchemical Water is that aspect of the Life-power from which all things derive their forms. It is the Life-power in its aspect of substance, the principle of

embodiment, as contrasted with the same Life-power in its aspect of energy, the principle of movement.

Now, in the alchemical system of the *Aesch Mezareph*, the element of water is also attributed to Chesed, the fourth Sephirah, and to Hod, the eighth Sephirah. The same system attributes Silver, or the Moon, to Chesed, and Copper, or Venus, to Hod. One has only to remember the connection of the Moon with the tides, and the astrological description of the Moon as cold and moist, to see how anything associated with Luna must be of the nature of water. Venus, too, is sea-born, and you have read (Lesson Two) that the First Matter is called Venus, and also that it is called water.

Here you must be on your guard. If you have read our other writings dealing with the Tree of Life, you know that Chesed is designated as the Sphere of Jupiter, and that Hod is called the Sphere of Mercury. You have also been warned not to confuse the *sphere* of a planet with the planet itself. Thus when you read that alchemical water and the Moon are assigned to Chesed, and that the same element and Venus are assigned to Hod, this is what you should understand:

Water is the *substance* aspect of the First Matter, having its *root* in that which is represented on the Qabalistic Tree of Life as Binah, to which is attributed alchemical Salt. This substance aspect also appears as the fourth Sephirah, hence in the Pattern on the Trestleboard we associate "Limitless Substance" with Chesed. In this particular manifestation of the Life-power, the

alchemical water takes the *form* of "Silver" or "Luna," but this metaphysical Moon is at the same time the field or sphere in which the operation of the power designated as Jupiter is at work. Similarly the substance aspect of the First Matter presents itself in the eighth Sephirah under the form of alchemical Copper or Venus, and the latter is the field or sphere for the operation of the power called Mercury. These details will require careful consideration, but they are valuable clues to the right understanding of the whole mystery of alchemy.

Use as your guide throughout your Qabalistic and alchemical studies the key-thought "All things are from One." That ONE presents itself under various aspects. The three primary aspects are: Mercury, corresponding to Kether, the Root of Air, and representing the *knowledge* aspect of the Life-power; Sulphur, corresponding to Chokmah, the Root of Fire, and representing the *activity* aspect of the Life-power; Salt, corresponding to Binah, the Root of Water, and representing the *substance* aspect of the Life-power. But these three are aspects of One Reality. They correspond to the omniscience (Mercury), omnipotence (Sulphur), and omnipresence (Salt) of the Universal Spirit.

Thus our quotation from the *Turba Philosophorum* says that the alchemical water owes its permanence to the fact that it is *united* to its Sulphur. The Sulphur is Chokmah, the Root of Fire, called Ab, the Father, in the Qabalah. Chokmah is the active Life-force, and without this active Life-force the substance aspect of the Life-

power cannot endure. The alchemical water is the vehicle of the alchemical fire. The fire is hidden within it, and thus it is also written that the philosophers "burn with water."

A quotation we have referenced calls it a "tortured water, that hath suffered some alteration obvious to all, but known to few." In the picture of the Hanged Man, the central figure is obviously undergoing a form of torture. Furthermore, the nature of that torture is suspension by a rope. You have read that the number of the letter Mem, 40, is the number of a Hebrew noun which means "rope" and also "pain, sorrow." But what is a rope, actually? A line composed of many twisted strands. And the verb "twist" is closely allied, by derivation, to the verb "torture." Modern science has shown definitely that the substance of all things is really a manifestation of electro-magnetic energy which is in a continual whirling, twisting motion. When this energy manifests as a flash of lightning, it assumes a spiral form, like an uncoiling rope. This fact was known to the ancients, for the Chaldean Oracles speak of the "spiral force" energized by the creative god. It was known, too, to the designers of the Tarot, and they selected the rope as part of the symbolism of the 12th Tarot Key in order to put that knowledge on record.

When it is said that the alchemical water has "suffered some alteration *obvious* to all, but known to few," the meaning is that this substance has assumed all the various forms, or embodiments, which are apparent even to the most ignorant of human kind. Thus the

alteration is obvious to all. It is "known to few," because only a minority of the human beings alive in any generation perceive the unity of substance behind the multiplicity of appearances.

The permanence of the alchemical water is also hinted at in the attribution of *Stable* Intelligence to the letter Mem. And this Stable Intelligence is said to be "the source of consistency among all the Sephiroth." Stability is immutability, soundness, vitality, coherence, solidity. All these qualities are directly associated with the ideas of substance and permanence which are represented by alchemical water. Furthermore, the Hanged Man represents the idea of suspension, the state of a solid when its particles are mixed with, but undissolved in, a fluid. Thus the alchemists tell us that their water holds all things, like seeds in a bag. And in some versions of the Hanged Man, there is a bag tied behind the arms of the suspended figure, from which coins are dropping. This is a direct reference to the alchemical idea just stated.

The alchemical water, however, like ordinary water, has the power of dissolving substances as well as the power of holding them in suspension. Solution is the act or process whereby a substance is absorbed into, and homogeneously mixed with a liquid substance. This is the meaning of the alchemical term "dissolution," but this term is closely related also to that use of the word "dissolution" which is synonymous with "death." It is this aspect of alchemical water which is represented by the 13th Tarot Key.

This Key corresponds to the letter Nun, and the root-idea of that letter is "to be full of seeds." This, of course, is in close correspondence to the alchemical teaching that the element of water is the "sperm of the world." Again, as an adjective, the word *Nun* means "permanence, or perpetuity," and this connects with the alchemical teaching that the element named water is a permanent fluid.

Dissolution is declared to be the great secret of the whole alchemical operation, and the 13th Key of the Tarot is symbolic of this arcanum. It is connected with the zodiacal sign Scorpio, a fixed sign of the watery quality, named OQRB, *Okareb*, in Hebrew. The number of this word is 372, and it is the number of the noun KShIM, *Keshim*, "young lambs;" of the noun OShB, "grass, herbage;" and of ShBO, which has various pointings and meanings, including: 1.) to be full, filled, satisfied; 2.) abundance, plenty; 3.) to swear; to bind with an oath; 4.) the numeral seven.

"Young lambs" is a direct reference to the fiery quality hidden in alchemical water, for the lamb is an immature ram, and is therefore a symbol of the alchemical fire connected with Aries, the Ram.

"Grass" or "herbage" refers to the embodiment of life in physical form, and because of the profusion of seed in such herbage, is connected with the reproductive force represented by Scorpio, and with the symbol of the seed in the upper corner of the 13th Tarot Key. In Hebrew symbolism human life is also represented by grass, as in

the phraso, "as for man, his days are as grass." Thus in the 13th Key, the skeleton reaper is mowing human hands, feet and heads. Furthermore, the seed-symbol in that Key is in the corner of the picture corresponding to that in which is placed the symbol of the sign Aquarius (a man's head) in Keys 10 and 21. The intimation here is that alchemical water, the "Sperm of the world," is the substance which, as Eliphas Levi says, man seems to multiply in the reproduction of his species.

ShBO, as meaning to be filled, to be satisfied, reminds us that this substance contains all that we can possibly desire for the satisfaction of every need, as meaning *to swear, to bind with an oath*, the same word hints that our use of this power entails certain definite obligations. Thus Eliphas Levi says of the Hanged Man, who represents another phase of the same alchemical water, "He is the adept, bound by his engagements." In every occult school the aspirant must take certain definite obligations, and the answer to the Masonic interrogation, "What makes you a Mason?" is, "My obligation." Finally, ShBO, as representing the number Seven, indicates a point definitely connected with the alchemical water, since the latter is said to be the "seed of the metals," which are seven in number.

In the Tarot the number Seven is also connected with the element of water, because it is the number of the Key called The Chariot, which corresponds to the watery sign Cancer. The idea of *fluidity* is also connected with the name of the Qabalistic path connected with this 7th Key, for that path is called "The

Intelligence of the House of *Influence*."

The letter corresponding to the sign Cancer is Cheth, the Enclosed Field. Note that the idea of enclosure harks back to that of limitation, associated with Saturn. The enclosed field is what Hindu philosophy calls the *Kshetra*, which is the name given in the Bhagavad-Gita to "this body." (B-G, chap. 13). "Kshetra" means literally "the perishable" and also "the field." The entire 13th chapter of the Gita is an exposition of the relation between the *Kshetra* (the Chariot) and the Kshetrajna, or consciousness (the Charioteer). All objects whatsoever are included in the Kshetra, which is the same as Prakriti, the "mysterious power," or the finitising principle.

In Hebrew, the sign Cancer is named SRTN =319= IShT, and the latter is a verb signifying, "to stretch out, to extend." Here is an intimation that the aspect of alchemical water presented by Cheth, the sign Cancer, and Key 7 is that of *expansion* or *extension*. The fundamental idea is that the alchemical water is that which forms itself into all manner of objects. It is the principle, too, of increase and augmentation. In physics, the term extension is defined as "that property of a body by which it occupies a portion of space." This connects directly, also, with astrological meanings of the sign Cancer, which is the natural fourth house sign in a horoscope, having to do with landed property, real estate, home, and the like. In horary astrology, moreover, this sign and its house represent the "end of the matter," or the completion of a cycle of

manifestation, which completion has to do with the notion of perfection, increase, and development. These, of course, are fundamental ideas represented by the number 7.

One other Hebrew letter corresponds to water, the letter Qoph, whose name means "back of the head." Here is a subtlety that escapes many. The "Head" is a technical term of Qabalah meaning the number 1, and Kether, which is the Sephirah corresponding to the beginning of manifestation, Qoph, the *back* of the head, stands for that which is *behind* this beginning. *Behind* it may be understood as meaning "prior to it," and also as signifying "underlying motivation." In our common speech we refer to our hidden motives when we say of a person whose intentions are not quite clear to us, 'I wish I knew what is in the back of his head.'

The Qabalah gives us a very definite clue as to this hidden motivation of the cosmic process of manifestation when it assigns the Corporeal Intelligence to the letter Qoph. Concerning this the *Book of Formation* says: "The twenty-ninth path is called the Corporeal Intelligence, so called because it forms every body which is formed in all the worlds, and the reproduction of them." In other words, the hidden motive for manifestation is the formation and reproduction of bodies which shall serve as adequate vehicles for expressing the inner potencies of the Life-power. Hermetic doctrine is the same, for it says that the One Force is "integrating, if it be turned into earth."

That this power of integration is directly associated with water may be seen in the Tarot Key corresponding to Qoph, Key 18, The Moon. For there the path of the Corporeal Intelligence begins in a pool of water, and ends on the snowy height occupied by the Hermit in Key 9. The snow and ice of the Hermit's environment are crystallized, or solidified water. Thus the path of Key 18 begins in *fluid* and *ends* in solid water. It is the path of the fixation of the volatile, as an alchemist would say.

Qoph corresponds to the water sign Pisces, named DGIM, *Dagim*, in Hebrew. DGIM=57, and this is the number of several Hebrew words that shed light on what the alchemists understood by water. First of all, it should be noted that 57 is one of the multiples of the very significant Qabalistic number, 19, which owes its importance to the fact that it is the value of the name ChVH Eve. As a verb, Chavah means "to manifest, to show forth," and thus refers to the power of manifestation associated with water in alchemy.

Frederick Bligh Bond has shown that 19 is also important in Greek Gematria. It is a factor in the values of the following words: HE GE, The Earth (1 x 19); , HE GAIA THEA, The Earth Goddess (2 x 19); ATHENE, Athene, the Virgin goddess (4 x 19); MARIA, Mary (8 x 19); HE MENE, The Moon (6 x 19).

The first word corresponding to 57 is ABDN, signifying "destruction." This corresponds to what is said of the First Matter, which, you will remember is identified

with water, in Lesson Two: "it is set up for the ruin of many and the salvation of some."

The participle, AVKL, eating, or consuming, also has the value 57. This relates to the idea that alchemical water has the power of apparently devouring form. The Scriptures tell us that God is a devouring or consuming fire, and you have learned that alchemists say that they *burn* with water.

Another correspondence to 57 is the word AVN, *On*. In one reading it means nothingness, vanity; falsehood; wickedness, injustice. Differently pointed it signifies strength, power; wealth, substance; but also, affliction, pain. These meanings would be very significant to any one well-versed in esoteric astrology, since they correspond to the positive and negative manifestations of the sign Pisces, and of the twelfth house in the horoscope, corresponding to that sign.

But 57 is also the number of the verb BNH, *Baneh*, to build, to form, to erect, to raise, to establish, to restore, and all these meanings are directly connected with what has been said concerning the Corporeal Intelligence associated with Qoph and the zodiacal sign Pisces.

Again, 57 is the number of MZBCh, altar. The suggestion here is that since what the alchemists mean by "water" is the source of form, or embodiment, it is also that in which inheres the principle of sacrifice. To this may be related the injunction of St. Paul, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." This is exactly what the

alchemical process amounts to. He who understands what is really accomplished by alchemy, or by its Oriental equivalent, yoga, realizes that the Great Work is the perfection of the human vehicle by the sacrifice of all that prevents it from being a completely transparent medium for the expression of the potencies of the Life-power.

Summing all this up, we may understand that alchemical fire and alchemical water are not two things, but one, manifest in opposite directions. Alchemical fire is the activity, or Sulphur, aspect of the One Reality. Alchemical water is the substance, or Salt, aspect of the same thing. The triangle representing fire points upward. That representing water points downward, to indicate the integrating, building, manifesting, or form-producing activity of the One Reality.

Alchemical water is that aspect of the One Thing which, as the Emerald Tablet says, "receives the power of the superiors and of the inferiors." It is the aspect of the Life-power upon which the One Conscious Energy broods, to bring forth forms. For us it is the substance of our bones, our flesh, our blood. It is the subtle fluid called electro-magnetism by modern physicists, and its most important manifestations are in our nerves, our veins, our arteries, and our lymphatic ducts. Its currents through our nervous system are directly influenced, shaped and formed by our mental imagery. Thus modified, these currents affect the vital secretions, and so change the chemistry of the blood and lymph.

Thus Mrs. Atwood says: "Alchemy is the universal art of vital chemistry, which by fermenting the human spirit, purifies, and, finally dissolving it, opens the elementary germ into new life and consciousness; and the Philosopher's Stone is the efflux of such a life, drawn to a focus and made manifest as a concrete Essence of Light, which Essence is the true Form or Idea of Gold. The process takes place in and through the human body in the blood, changing the relation of its component parts and principles."

The same idea is told in the Rosicrucian allegory of the *Fama Fraternitatis*. There we are told that Brother C.R. was initiated in the "Temple of Dam-Car," or "Temple of the Blood of the Lamb," after he had spent some time in Damascus, by reason of the infirmity of his body. "Damascus" means "work," and Brother C.R.'s sojourn there has to do with the work of purification made necessary by the physical imperfections which must be overcome by what alchemists call the "gross work." This must be undertaken before the "subtle work" may be attempted with any degree of safety.

It is because occult students are so often not properly instructed as to the necessity of this "gross work" that so many cranks are to be found amongst them. They attempt the subtle work with bodies unprepared. The inevitable consequence, even of such supposedly safe practices as meditation and other forms of Raja Yoga, is a subtle distribution of poisons throughout the body.

No error is more common than the supposition that it is

safe to undertake mental practice without preliminary physical preparation. This error is found in the writings of many teachers who, it would seem, ought to know better. Raja Yoga practice, meditation, visualization, and other forms of mental practice are just as physical as any other bodily activity. They involve the subtle currents of alchemical water in the brain and nervous system. Nothing is more dangerous, if begun before the organism has been purified. Of all the insidious efforts of what occultists know as the "black forces," none is more deadly than the well-meant attempts of many admirable persons to persuade their pupils to concentrate, meditate, visualize, and so on, without paying any attention to the preliminary "gross work." Some even go so far as to assert that the gross work was accomplished during our incarnation in earlier races, so that we need not attempt it now.

Tarot gives pertinent hints to the contrary. The 12th Key, representing alchemical water itself, emphasizes our personal dependence upon the cosmic tree of existence, upon the physical laws determining personality. Key 13 has to do with the functions of the reproductive and genito-urinary organs. Key 7 relates to the stomach. Key 18 is connected with the total body-consciousness. Thus all the emphasis of the Tarot Keys representing the element of water falls upon the physical embodiment of the Life-power in our organism, upon the need for right selection of food, upon the need of controlling and sublimating the force working through the genito-urinary organs, and finally, upon the need for a clear recognition of the truth that

the path into the region of the higher consciousness is a path of physiological transformation.

Alchemical water, then, is the cosmic fire, specialized in the nerve-currents and chemistry of the blood-stream. The purification of this water must be the first work of the alchemist. He must choose true foods, and regulate his habits of eating. He must control his sex-life, and see that kidney elimination is what it should be. Finally, he must learn, little by little, to rebuild his body, sacrificing everything that clouds or obscures its transparency to the Light of the Life-power, and imposing a pattern of the New Image upon its cells through the agency of the sub-conscious mind.

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice
THE ALCHEMICAL PROCESS

"Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, suavely, and with great ingenuity. It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends to earth again, and receives the strength of the superiors and of the inferiors,"

These words of the Emerald Tablet summarize the whole alchemical process. Up to this point, these lessons have given you some account of the forces and materials utilized in the Great Work. From this lesson up to the completion of the course we shall be concerned with the actual performance of the work.

The Pythagorean Triangle, shown on page 77, is an important alchemical symbol. It relates to the statement that the First Matter, and the work which modifies that Matter, is ONE, which is also THREE, FOUR and FIVE. The same idea is suggested in another form by the Great Pyramid, a UNITY which is also THREE, FOUR and FIVE because the Pyramid shows the number 3 by its triangular faces, the number 4 by its square base, and the number 5 by the four sides and base and also by the four corners of the base plus the single point at the apex. Note, in passing, that to gain the top of the Pyramid is to reach this single point, at which the sides and the sloping boundary lines converge, so that symbolically the ascent of the Pyramid, as a symbol of the Great Work represents the attainment of the UNITY which is the synthesis of the

powers represented by the four faces, which correspond to the four alchemical elements.

In the Pythagorean Triangle the number 3 is represented by the descending line attributed to Osiris the Father. The base line, that of Isis the Mother, represents the number 4. The ascending hypotenuse, dedicated, to Horus the son of Osiris and Isis, stands for the number 5. The sum of these three lines is twelve units of equal length, corresponding to the twelve equal sides of a dodecagon, which is the Geometrical figure symbolizing the twelve signs of the zodiac. To these twelve units must be added, the unity of the triangle itself, so that this Pythagorean figure really conceals the mystical number 13, the sum of 1, 3, 4, 5. So also the elements of the Pyramid, added to the ONE which is the Pyramid itself, give the number 13.

This is the number which represents the Sun and the twelve zodiacal signs through which the solar energy manifests. 13, too, is the number of the Self, expressing its One Life through the twelve areas of human personality corresponding to the twelve signs. Hence 13 is the number of Spiritual Israel, shadowed by the Biblical account of the physical Israel, expressing the life of the patriarch Jacob through that of the twelve tribes. Hercules and his twelve labors express the same idea. So do Jesus and his twelve disciples. So do the heavenly Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation, with its twelve gates and its twelve foundations, and with its walls each 12,000 furlongs in length. So, too, does the great Seal of the United States, which has at its center a

pentagram surrounded by twelve others, the thirteen stars arranged to form the macrocosmic star, or hexagram. The six pointed star, in turn, is the mathematical basis for the geometrical representation of the symbolic cube of space, to which are assigned the twenty-two Keys of Tarot. The number 13 is connected with this, too, because every cube has exactly thirteen axes of symmetry.

In Qabalah the number 13 means Unity and Love, as you have learned in other lessons. It is also the number of a verb meaning "to separate, to remove, to take away," HGH, hawgaw – which means also "to ponder, to imagine." Again, 13 is the number of IBA, *yaba*, "He shall come." This verb is associated with the noun SHILH, *Shiloh*, which adds up to 345, and refers to the Messiah.

The outcome of the alchemical process gives the alchemist a consciousness of the Oneness of All, from which there follows a development of that genuine love of his fellows which is rooted in his perception of the *fact* of human brotherhood. At the same time, the alchemical process requires analysis, or separation, and this analysis is an act of the mind. It is the work of alchemical Mercury, an indispensable preliminary to the synthesis which makes possible the manifestation of the New Man, of whom it is said, "He shall come."

Here Tarot students will remember that THE FOOL looks upward, toward the corner of the picture corresponding to that which in Keys 10 and 21 of this

part of the key is the location of the head of a man, representing the zodiacal sign Aquarius. Since Aquarius is the 11th sign, it corresponds to the 11th house of the horoscope, representing friends, hopes and wishes of the native. Furthermore, in some old versions of Tarot, the zero card is named THE ALCHEMIST to show that the goal of the Great Work is the full perfection of man himself, and also that it has a definite connection with the Aquarian Age.

Now, just as the ascending hypotenuse of a Pythagorean Triangle, united to the base line at its lowest point, separates itself more and more from that base line until at its upper end it joins the top point of the line which is attributed to Osiris, the Father, so in the alchemical process, though the work begins at the level of the physical universe, and is never disconnected from that firm foundation, the analytical operations remove us farther and farther from the *limitations* of the physical until, at last, we are united consciously with the generating POINT whence all forms originate.

The numbers representing the degrees of the angles of a Pythagorean Triangle correspond to Hebrew and Greek words connected with the Great Work. The line of three units meets that of four units to form a right angle of 90 degrees, and the number 90 is that of the word, Mem, "water," one of the commonest names for the First Matter. The same word is illustrated by the 12th Tarot Key, which Eliphas Levi explains as symbolizing the adept bound by his engagements. The number of this Key, 12, is connected with the alchemical process because the

Great Work has 12 stages. 90, furthermore, is the number of Tzaddi, corresponding to the sign Aquarius, which as we have just seen, is connected with the objective of the Great Work, described by Levi as "the full and complete conquest of man's faculties and of his future." This conquest is made possible by mental processes summed up in the symbolism of Key 17, which corresponds to the letter Tzaddi. Even in Christian Gnosticism we have a hint of the same notion, for Irenaeus tells us that 17 is the number of God's people, or Spiritual Israel; that is, perfected humanity.

In a Pythagorean Triangle, the line which has four units meets the line of five units to form an angle of 37 degrees. In Hebrew, the number 37 is that of the noun HBL, Abel, the proper name of Adam's second son, understood to be a type of the Messiah to whom the mystical name Shiloh is given elsewhere. The basic meanings of this word are breath and transitoriness. As a common noun, abel is that which echoes through the *Book Ecclesiastes* as "vanity." It refers to the embodiment of the Life-Breath in living forms, none of which is permanent until the final goal of the Great Work, signified by the upper end of the line of five units, has been reached.

In Greek, as Bond and Lea have shown in their studies of numbers in the New Testament, all names and epithets of Jesus are multiples of 37. Thus Jesus is 888, or 24×37 and "Iesous Christos", which has THIRTEEN letters in its Greek spelling, is 2368, or 64×37 . Futhermore, 64, the square of the Hermetic and

Dominical number 8, is also the number of the Green noun Alethia, Truth. In Hebrew, the number of the letter-name Aleph, ALP, is 111, or 3×37 ; so that 37 is directly related to the Qabalistic meaning of the Tarot Key which is sometimes named THE ALCHEMIST, and which portrays the forces used in the Great Work as well as its main objective.

Finally, where the hypotenuse of five units joins the vertical line of three units, the angle formed contains 53 degrees. We have already seen that this number is directly connected with alchemy. It represents the noun GN, Gan, signifying the "Garden," or the the state of Edenic freedom which typifies success in the Great Work. It is the number of noun ChMH, khammaw, Sun; and the Great Work is known as the Operation of the Sun in the Emerald Tablet. Futhermore, as has been shown in lesson 1, this word CHMH is a component part of the ancient Hebrew spelling of of alchemy, ALCHMH. And again, 53, as you will remember, is the number of the word ABN, ehben, Stone. Thus it represents the Philosopher's Stone, as the final attainment of the Great Work; and now this word ABN are conjoined the words AB, Ab, Father, referring to Osiris, and BN, Ben, Son, referring to Horus.

The Alchemical truth is truth about the Breath. It is truth learned by experimental work and the basis of this work is analysis, or the separation of earth from fire, of gross appearance from subtle energy. Thus the sages all tell that dissolution is the secret of the Great Work, and that secret is symbolized in Tarot by the Key named

Death, which bears the number 13. In our physical and mental analyses we discover, sooner or later, that the power in nature which is astrologically attributed to the sign Scorpio is what "ascends from earth to heaven and descends again to earth, and receives the strength of the superiors and of the inferiors." This, too, is shown in the symbolism of the first Tarot Key, for THE FOOL or THE ALCHEMIST is there shown with a phallic wand and wallet over his right shoulder, and in the version of this Key familiar to you the white sun in the upper right hand corner of the design occupies the position assigned to the Eagle of Scorpio on the 10th and 21st Keys.

The Scorpio force is the reproductive power, not by any means localized in the physical reproductive organs, as many persons foolishly suppose, but actually present throughout nature, so that "it swims with fishes in the sea, and flies with the birds in the air," as one alchemical writer puts it. This is the force described in a Rosicrucian text as being "set up for the ruin of many and the salvation of some." The same treatise says; "To the crowd this matter is vile." It is at once the Scorpion of death, the Serpent of wisdom, and the Eagle of aspiration.

The Life-Breath, which is both HBL, 37, and RVCH, Ruach, the pure Spirit, is not only creative and formative, but is also essentially reproductive. Even on the inorganic plane of physical manifestation we see at work the laws of chemical affinity and gender which are part of the expression of this reproductive power. From these lowest expressions, up to the very highest, the

same power is at work. Furthermore, "lowest" is only a relative term. It does not mean "less valuable" but should be understood in the same sense as when we speak of "low" notes in the musical scale. Our first concern is with these lower, or slower, rates of vibration.

Thus it is recorded of St. Germain that he had unusual gifts as a painter, and that his canvasses glowed with colors unknown to the palettes of other artists of the period. The same adept is reported to have possessed a secret for perfecting precious stones, so that he was able to remove flaws from diamonds, emeralds and rubies, thus greatly enhancing their value. Whatever we think of the literal truth of these stories, they do indicate a fact that unusual command of the forms of physical substance is among the powers of the perfected alchemist.

Such a man sees the physical universe with other eyes, with other brain-cells than the man who is still part of the crowd of the unknowing, ignorant misinterpreters of Mother Nature. He is functioning by the means of a different body-chemistry. He is, to be sure, still a member of *genus homo*, but he is truly of a different physical and mental *species* from the person who looks with aversion upon the physical plane because he regards it as his enemy. The alchemist is of a different species, also, from him who dreams vainly that the physical plane is a non-entity, and takes refuge from reality by asserting that he possesses powers which he cannot possibly exercise.

An alchemist knows that the states of physical existence are REAL. He knows them as beneficent expressions of a law he is glad to obey, as forms of a power he is free to utilize so long as he does obey. In the "kingdom of stone," he discerns "the marvelous seed of stars," and he effects whatever transmutations and transformations he decides upon – not by claiming omnipotence for himself, but by so adjusting himself that through his organism the One Power which IS omnipotence takes form according to mental patterns which he recognizes as being among that One Power's possibilities.

Human recognition of the way the One Power *can* work is an essential part of the process whereby the One Power *does* work. Such recognition is the expression of laws which are as truly in operation in the mineral kingdom as anywhere else. It is not that mind is made to "dominate matter." It is that the orderly process by which form is manifested is at work everywhere, and needs to be recognized and followed. And it is not too much to say that from the point-of-view of alchemy, human personality may justly be regarded as being an *invention* of the Life-Power brought into manifestation to the end that through its instrumentality effects may be produced in the world of relative manifestation which could not otherwise come into actual expression.

Obedience to chemical laws is therefore the prerequisite to success in alchemical works. This obedience is briefly summarized by the symbols of the four Tarot suits on the MAGICIAN'S table. The making of the New Man, of whom it is said, "He shall come," is the

real alchemical process, and it begins with right use of physical materials: Food (pentacles), Air (swords), Water (cups), and Light (wands). All these are forms of the ONE THING. All are physical presentations of the Quintessence, or Spirit. Unless your first experiments be with these materials, of which it is truly said that they are all veils of that First Matter "which all behold but few perceive," do not expect that you will be advanced to the higher grades of alchemical initiation.

Your success depends on your learning to separate the subtle, etherial forms of life-essence from the gross forms in which nature presents them to you. Your own body is the alchemical athanor or furnace. The Stone is represented by the Hebrew word ABN, so that in Tarot it is represented by the Keys named THE FOOL, THE MAGICIAN, and DEATH.

Dissolution is the secret of the work. Super-consciousness, typified by THE FOOL, is now and ever shall be an inseparable part of your make-up. Depend on it. The intellectual self-consciousness symbolized by THE MAGICIAN is yours wherewith to discriminate between those forms of physical manifestation which can be utilized for the Great Work and those which are relatively useless. The Imaginative Intelligence symbolized by Key 13 is yours also. By means of it, you may so modify your sub-consciousness that every cell in your body will thrill with the sense of its marvelous reproductive power, until you come to realize that within you is the potency which shall enable you to reproduce within the field of your personal

existence the Life-power's inherent command over physical forms.

"Suavely, and with great ingenuity," remember. Not in haste. Not with impatience. Calmly and sweetly, resting secure in the absolute certainty that, even here and now, on the physical plane, your every thought and action rests on the secure foundation of Eternal Being. Approach the Great Work in this spirit, and you shall inevitably attain to its perfection.

From what has been said thus far, it should be evident that the earlier stages of the alchemical work are directed toward a change in the alchemist's own organism. This should provide you with a standard of judgment to protect you against alchemical imposters, who assert that the Philosophers' Stone is a mere physical object which may be made by any person if only he knows the proper ingredients, and how to combine them. He who says this is either self-deceived, or else a wilful imposter. Genuine sages never make this claim. A careless reader of Sendivogius, or Paracelsus, or D'Espagnet, or Flamel might suppose these adepts were speaking of an actual objective stone. Closer examination of their writings dispels this error.

On the other hand, those who, like Ethan Allen Hitchcock, or Mrs. Atwood, maintain that alchemy is aimed only at the regeneration of human consciousness, are also missing the mark. When one is perfect in the alchemical work he can really make the Stone of the Wise, and, by means of it, he can change actual base

metals, or even the refuse of the earth, into gold (should there be any good reason for so doing.) By means of the Stone, moreover, a true alchemist is able to prolong the life of man's body far beyond the usual time allotted to our sojourn on this planet.

Perfect mastery of the alchemical process puts the successful artist in a position which enables him, at will, to alter the electronic structure of any portion of the physical universe. The process, nevertheless, has for its primary object the mental and physical transmutation of the alchemist himself. And the one laboratory in which the entire operation is performed is the human body.

The Great Work itself requires certain physical materials. These, as we have said, are light, air, water and food. It is to food that the books refer when they say the materials for the work are inexpensive, so that a sufficient supply may be bought for three florins (about \$1.50), or may even be secured for nothing if the artist is willing to soil his hands.

No book tells just what these materials are. No book can. Not only because the foodstuffs are such commonplace ones that nobody would believe them to be the true materials, but also because for every operator the formula varies. This variation depends basically on his physical condition at the time of beginning the work. It is also determined by his chemical type, by his particular constitution. This is shown in various ways, among others, by the planetary positions and aspects of his natal horoscope.

It is possible and permissible, however, to indicate why and how foodstuffs are the materials. What an alchemist has first of all to establish is a certain chemical balance in his physical body. This involves the supply of due proportions of 12 chemicals. These are: 1. fluoride of lime; 2. phosphate of magnesia; 3. sulphate of potash; 4. phosphate of soda; 5. sulphate of lime; 6. silica; 7. phosphate of lime; 8. sodium chloride; 9. phosphate of iron; 10. phosphate of potash; 11. sulphate of soda; 12. chloride of potash.

None of these materials are properly adapted to the uses of the physical body in their inorganic forms, but if they are taken into the system as organic compounds, in food, they are the precise materials required for the performance of the Great Work. Most of the foods rich in them are found in the vegetable kingdom. This explains the alchemical statement that you can get them for nothing if you are willing to soil your hands. They grow in the earth.

Remember, however, that you will be unable to recognize these materials until you have discovered the First Matter. This discovery is direct, first-hand perception of a fact in nature. The fact in question is that everything is made of fiery, scintillating points of electric energy.

For most persons who study these lessons it may be said that this is no more than theory. For the few scientists who are competent to conduct the difficult laboratory experiments on which is based the modern theory of the

electrical constitution of matter, it may be said to be an indirect experience. For an alchemical adept the First Matter is something directly perceived without the mediation of any instrument but the human body.

Thus the discovery follows a change in the alchemist's body, and it is with this change that the first stages of the alchemical process have to do. These we are now considering. The organic changes are brought about by psychological means. The immediate agent is the sub-consciousness, since sub-consciousness builds the body, maintains its functions, and determines its chemistry. Sub-consciousness built your baby body before you were born, and transformed it into the body you are using now. The same sub-consciousness, under the direction of alchemical Mercury, the Magician of Tarot, can change your present physical instrument into the kind of body which will enable you to perceive the First Matter.

Next, the first steps in your practical work will be explained.

Sub-consciousness works according to mental patterns impressed on it by the conscious mind. Hence the picture of THE FOOL is important to every would-be alchemist because it is a symbolic pattern of the type of expectancy which stimulates the response of sub-consciousness. Whatever you are in the habit of thinking is inevitably a suggestion to sub-consciousness. Whatever pictures frequently occupy your attention act as suggestions also. Thus even a person ignorant of the meaning of the details

of Tarot symbolism will undergo some change of consciousness if he looks at the pictures every day. And not only a change of consciousness, but also a change in the structure and chemistry of his body, too.

From now on, you will find it advantageous to look, every day, at the complete tableau of the twenty-two Keys, laid out in three rows of seven, from left to right, beginning with Key 1. The top row will contain the Keys 1 to 7, the second row Keys 8 to 14, and the bottom row Keys 15 to 21. Key 0 should be placed immediately above THE EMPEROR. The Tarot Tableau contains, among other things, symbolic summary of the alchemical process, and because it influences sub-consciousness directly, it may be utilized to modify the structure and chemistry of the body through the suggestive effect it has on this deeper level of mental activity.

Every day, too, you should work with the colors and sounds of the seven interior stars, or alchemical metals in the following order: Saturn, blue-violet, A; Sun, orange, D; Mars, red, C; Jupiter, violet, A-sharp; Venus, green, F-sharp; Moon, blue, G-sharp; Mercury, yellow, E. Intone the sounds three times each using the syllable AUM pronounced for this purpose Ah-oom. The intonations need not be loud.

We come now to the consideration of certain facts about the plant-world, because conscious knowledge of these facts will strengthen your sub-conscious recognition that all natural forces are at work according to certain specific numbers and rhythms. It is absolutely necessary to have

specific information of this kind. Knowledge precisely like this is the intellectual basis for the marvels accomplished by alchemists and magicians. For it should be apparent to all students of the Tarot that the first and most important teaching of this symbolic book is that the transforming agency is the self-conscious, intellectual mind, pictured as The MAGICIAN. The forces at work, to be sure, are sub-conscious, but the direction of these forces is from the self-conscious level, and necessitates conscious knowledge of certain definite laws of number and geometry.

In India, today, certain schools of occultists specialize in this phase of knowledge. Examples of their intricate geometrical diagrams, called Mandalas, occasionally find their way into the Western world, but most of them are jealously guarded. Ancient Egypt had the same secret, and it was used in building the pyramids and other sacred structures of that land. The Greeks possessed it also, and their most beautiful statues and buildings embody these rhythmic proportions which pervade nature. Western architecture, especially religious architecture, utilizes the same laws of number and proportion. Recently, through the work of such men as Samuel Coleman and Jay Hambidge, some of these ancient principles have been rediscovered and applied to various forms of design.

Vestiges of the same secret, naturally, are to be found in Freemasonry, some of them attributed to Pythagoras who required knowledge of geometry from all his pupils. Thus it is not surprising that the Great Seal of the United States, designed by men who had been strongly

influenced by Freemasonry, is actually a Hermetic document. For these principles of proportion are actually present on this symbolic statement of the hopes and aspirations of these revolutionists who thought of themselves as the founders of a new world order.

The Rosicrucian literature, ancient and modern, is full of diagrams exhibiting these proportions. Indeed, there are several Rosicrucian alchemical treatises in which almost nothing of value is to be gleaned from the words of the text, which are merely a blind or excuse for publishing the diagrams in which the real significance is to be found. Manly Hall, with fine discrimination has reproduced many of these diagrams in his *Encyclopaedia of Masonic and Hermetic Symbolism*.

The most important application of these numerals and geometrical proportions is not to lifeless statues, painted counterfeits of life, or buildings of wood and stone. The same laws govern the structure of the human organism, the relations of its parts, the very chemistry of the body. When a knowledge of these fundamental proportions is impressed on sub-consciousness through conscious recognition, this knowledge begins to modify the body-building processes.

There are certain great numbers and rhythms in nature that affect you every moment of your life. By coming to recognize them as part of your make-up, you will subtly change the assimilative, eliminative, and other chemical functions of your body. Understand this well. You do not receive this knowledge simply as information. It is an

integral part of the alchemical process itself, which is performed, you will remember, by the aid of Mercury, that is, by the aid of self-conscious mental states. It will help to adjust your whole life to the harmonies of being.

Among the most primitive forms of plant-life are the diatoms, minute one-celled water-plants, of which thousands of species have been classified. In a single drop of fresh or salt water one may find diatoms which show all the characteristic number-rhythms of nature. Samuel Coleman, in *Natures Harmonic Unity*, gives numerous illustrations which he analyzes, showing that the triangle, the square, the pentagon and pentagram, the hexagon and hexagram, and the octagon are the determining geometrical elements of these tiny plants. He shows also that the angles and lines of these microscopic members of the vegetable kingdom are the precise angles and lines utilized in the planning of the Parthenon, in the construction of the Great Pyramid, and in the composition of innumerable works of the world's greatest artists.

In the higher orders of plant life it has been found that the buds appear in order, leaves follow in regular sequence, and flowers are put forth, not only at the appointed season, but at the appointed part of the plant. Not a leaf varies from its proper position, not a bud from its regular order, any more than a planet varies from its orbit. Leaves are arranged spirally round the stem in the same way that planets revolve round the sun.

In the blossoming of a flowering plant, each series or

whorl, which is just a complete spiral cycle, is arranged on the principle of alternation. If a flower has five sepals, or parts of the calyx, it has five petals of the corolla, alternating with the sepals. The same flower will have five, ten or twenty stamens, and five, or some multiple of five, in the pistils. This is the proportion found in all members of the rose family. In a similar way, arrangements of three or its multiples are seen in the flowers of endogens such as palms and lilies. Among flowerless plants, such as mosses, lichens, seaweeds and fungi, the parts of the fructification are in twos and fours or in multiples of these.

Thus the lowest order of plants corresponds to the number 4; the typical number of plants without branches, and with parallel leaf-veins, such as the grasses, the lily and the palm, is 3; and the highest class of plants, with two cotyledons, branches, and reticulated leaf-veins, such as the apple, rose, oak, and so on, has 5 for its number type. Therefore the lowest order of plants might be represented by the base of a Pythagorean triangle, or 4; the mediate order, which includes lilies, palms, and all kinds of grain, could be represented by the vertical line of 3 units. In this connection, observe that Osiris, the Egyptian deity assigned to this line of the triangle, is a corn-spirit, and note that almost all the plants which are in this classification have in symbolism a distinctly masculine significance. Finally, the highest orders of the plant-world are numerically related to the line attributed to Horus, that of five units, the ascending hypotenuse of five units.

The numerical arrangements which regulate the scales of every bud, the order of the bracts, and the place of every leaf on every plant have been found to bear a correspondence to the series of numbers: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, etc., in which any two numbers added together will give the succeeding number.

Botanists classify these different arrangements by using fractions, thus: $1/2$, $1/3$, $2/5$, $3/8$, $5/13$, $8/21$, $13/34$, $21/55$, and so on. The same fractions express the law which governs the comparative periods of revolution of the planets of our solar system by pairs. The revolution of Uranus is a close approximation to $1/2$ that of Neptune. That of Saturn is $1/3$ that of Uranus. Jupiter's revolution is $2/5$ of Saturn's. The revolution of the asteroids is $3/8$ that of Jupiter. Mars revolves in $5/13$ of the time taken by the asteroids. The same principle gives the fraction $8/13$ for the earth, the fraction $13/21$ for Venus, and $13/34$ for Mercury. One need not be a botanist or an astronomer to grasp the deeper significance of these correlations. They establish beyond question the fact that *one changeless law of proportion pervades the universe*.

When you have found the First Matter, say the alchemists, the Great Work is "woman's work, and child's play." Careless readers get the impression that the alchemical operation is easy after one discovers the First Matter. True, the work is neither difficult nor expensive. Yet these words of the sages have a more recondite meaning.

The alchemical Woman is what the ancient Egyptians

called Isis. She is represented by the base of a Pythagorean triangle. In Tarot She appears eleven times, in Keys 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20 and 21. In six Keys (2, 3, 8, 11, 17 and 21) she is the only human figure in the symbolism.

She is the recorder of the law, the form-giving mother, the tamer of the turbulent forces of the animal kingdom, the preserver of balance, the unveiler of truth and the unveiled truth itself, the eternal dancer partly hid by the cyclic forms of cosmic expression. Her vision of the higher levels of being is reflected into our human consciousness as a quiet pool reflects the sun. Long has she been held captive and under a curse so that she must die and be reborn before her powers may find complete expression. Because she has been subject to the Man, she has been brought lower than the animal by the Man's false knowledge. Because of that same erroneous knowledge she has been crowned with a false authority, not her own, and this must be destroyed before her real powers and real worth may be made manifest. Yet through her, and her activities, release shall come.

The Alchemical Child is what the Egyptians called Horus, represented by the five-unit hypotenuse of a Pythagorean triangle. He is asleep in the mineral kingdom. In the plant world he begins to dream. In the animal kingdom he dreams on, sometimes half awake. In man he awakens, and begins to realize the meaning of his life. Yet has he an even higher destiny to fulfill. For the alchemical Child is not merely man. He is Man-God, destined to attain to perfect union with his Father; and in

that union the alchemical work will be complete.

In Tarot, this Child is foreshadowed by Key 3, for it is he that the pregnant mother depicted there is already forming in the secret depths of her own body. He is promised again by the mountain behind the LOVERS. This is a symbol often employed to represent pregnancy, but it also indicates the idea of attainment, and the fact that the alchemical attainment is a physical work, perfected by the integration of the One Force, when it is turned into earth. The perfect manifestation of the alchemical Child is represented by Key 12, for when the Child is full-grown, he reverses the usual order of things and establishes his perfect mastery through his unwavering obedience to the ALL. In Key 19 you see him exercising his new powers, and in union with his liberated counterpart, the other half of himself, departing from the limitations of sense knowledge and dancing in the fairy ring of the truly magical life. Finally, in Key 20, he rises with his Father and Mother from the limitations of three-dimensional existence to share with them the freedom of the fourth dimension and the immortality of the Perpetual Intelligence.

The alchemical Woman is the One Worker. Through long aeons has she been at her endless labor, spinning, weaving, making the garments of form in which the One Life clothes itself. In her loom the tapestry of manifestation has been woven. She is the keeper of the patterns of all possible forms.

In this lesson, I have shown how simple are the elements

of these patterns. A cross, a triangle, a square, a pentagon, a hexagon and an octagon. These, and the circle, provide all the geometrical patterns for the manifold forms of the physical world.

By the proportions contained in these simple figures all force relations in the universe are determined. When the Cosmic Mother begins her work, nebulae form themselves into solar systems by an interplay of activities measurable by the lines and angles which these figures display. Gravitation, most mysterious of all, operates by a law patterned on these forms. Sound vibration, both in pitch and volume, is determined by the same principles. All the play of light and color follows the same laws of form. Atom mates with atom to build a universe, and wherever anything comes into physical manifestation, these same proportions are the basic patterns.

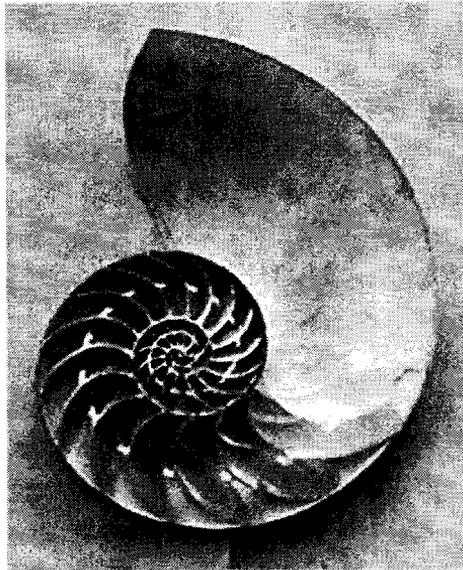
Through it all, the animating impulse in the play of the alchemical Child, always potentially one with his eternal Father. His Mother sets the patterns, but his is the life which flows into them and gives form and body to them in the mineral kingdom. In the plant world it is his life, now finding greater freedom of movement, greater variety of form and color, and even the beginnings of feeling and sensation.

Then comes the working of that same play of the One Life through the animal kingdom. Always the basic patterns are the same. Wherever your eyes rest on an animal, you are looking at a form which yields to the analyst the fundamental circle, with its two diameters

making the equal-armed cross shown on the breast of the HIGH PREISTESS. All the relations of that form are determined by combinations of the square, the pentagon, and the octagon.

Wherever you look, you will see forms in which the proportions of the figure Jay Hambidge called the Rectangle of the Whirling Square are the determining elements (please see the front piece of this book).

Here is an example from conchology showing the geometric construction of a large family of sea-shells. The spirals of this shell are exactly as pictured, and they are the logarithmic spirals which are the basis of all form, since such spirals are developed by the nebulae whence solar systems are evolved.



Throughout the animal kingdom proportions like these are to be found. Bees and wasps build their nests on strict geometric principles. Thus the naturalist, Reaumur, measuring the angles in the cells of a honeycomb, found, after submitting the problem to a geometer who had no clue as to the object Reaumur had in mind, that bees invariably builds their houses according to angles which give the greatest strength, involve the use of the least possible expenditure of time.

From the tiny diatom to the lordly lion, and thence up to man, the alchemical Woman works with the same patterns. Wherever there have been wise men, they have seen these patterns and have left records of what they saw, records in books, like the words of alchemists and magicians, and the mysterious diagrams with which they illustrate their writings; records in the pictorial symbolism of Tarot, which have power to initiate and keep going the formative process which carries these patterns into human embodiment, thus changing an ordinary human personality into an adept; records in stone like the pyramids and temples of the world.

Even the proportions of the Tarot pictures themselves are influenced by one of the basic cosmic patterns. Draw diagonals from corner to corner in the rectangular frame of any of these pictures, including the title in the rectangle. You will find that the diagonals make two equilateral triangles, point to point. The proportions of this rectangular frame are thus shown to be precisely the same as those of the rectangle formed on the Tree of Life by the paths connecting either the second, third, fourth

and fifth Sephiroth, or those connecting the fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth Sephiroth. On the Tree of Life the long sides of this rectangle cross the Tree horizontally, and the short sides are vertical, but the proportions are exactly the same.

This is not the place to discuss the intricacies of its occult meaning. We speak of it only to add weight to the other testimonies we have given you concerning the fundamental importance of number and geometry in alchemy and magic. These mathematical principles are those whereby the Life-power manifests itself in physical forms. Since magic and alchemy have for their objects the determination of form, these are the patterns which are the real keys to the alchemical process.

Recognize them at work in the world around you. Find them in the structure of your own body. From this recognition will come, as a result of its influence on sub-consciousness, the builder of all forms, an actual reconstruction of your physical vehicles, both gross and subtle. Then in you will the Child be born, the Child whose destiny is union with his Father, the Child who is Master of all things in heaven and on earth.

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice
THE ALCHEMICAL PROCESS
Calcination – Congelation – Fixation – Separation

The Great Work is in twelve stages corresponding to the twelve signs of the zodiac. The twelve stages are: **CALCINATION, CONGELATION, FIXATION, SEPARATION, DIGESTION, DISTILLATION, SUBLIMATION, PUTREFACTION, INCINERATION, FERMENTATION, DISSOLUTION** and **MULTIPLICATION**.

This lesson deals with the first four of these twelve stages of the Great Work. **CALCINATION** corresponds to Aries; **CONGELATION** is related to Taurus; **FIXATION** is assigned to Gemini; **SEPARATION** is represented by Cancer.

The first stage is **CALCINATION**. This is defined as the expulsion of the volatile substance from a matter by the action of heat. Through the correspondence of this stage of the Work to the sign Aries, it corresponds also to the Hebrew letter Heh, first of the twelve simple letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus **CALCINATION** is connected with the following attributions of the letter Heh:

The Constituting Intelligence; the function of Sight; the direction North-East; Tarot Key 4, **THE EMPEROR**.

Note, to begin with, that Aries is a **FIRE** sign, in which the two fiery, electric bodies, Mars and the Sun, are dominant. In the technical work of alchemy, then, the

first stage employs what a yogi would call Tejas or Agni, that is, the element of fire, and it makes particular use of the currents of energy which originate in the Mars center, just below the navel, and in the Sun center, above and behind the heart.

An old alchemical maxim says that to make gold one must have it. And many of the adepts in the Great Art assure us that the matter which is the subject of the operation is none other than what they call "*our gold*." It is the radiant energy, invisible to the ordinary physical eye, which produces all the manifestations of light on this planet. From that energy all forms are made manifest, for it is their substance.

This is the alchemical Sol, or Sun, that is exalted, or lifted up in the work of CALCINATION. That sublimation requires the action of fire, and the cooperation of Mars, the astrological ruler of Aries. And if you remember that Mars is represented by the 16th Key of Tarot, which has particular reference to the Great Work, you will understand the part that Mars plays in CALCINATION. There, in the symbolism of Key 16, you can see the fire at work on the matter. There, too, in the falling figures, you may see the expulsion of the volatile substance.

Psychologically, the process of CALCINATION is that which drives out from consciousness (the matter), the volatile, or changeable elements of emotion, personal bias, erroneous opinion, and so on.

This stage of the work, because it is associated with the direction North-East, is connected with that place in the Masonic lodge where the newly initiated candidate receives his white lambskin apron. Note that the material of the apron, lamb-skin, is a direct reference to the sign Aries. Note, too, that its color, white, is a reference to the purification of the matter effected by calcination. There is in the monitors, moreover, a direct allusion to the alchemical use of the apron, for it is called "more ancient than the Golden Fleece." The Golden Fleece is one of the many symbols of the Philosophers' Stone. The apron is said to be *more ancient*, because the process of CALCINATION it represents *precedes* the culmination of the Great Work in the making of the Stone. Furthermore, the monitors say that the Masonic use of the apron is to prevent daubing with untempered mortar, a reference to two passages in the prophecy of Ezekiel (13:10 - 16 and 22:28). Look up these passages in this connection.

The Hebrew word translated "untempered mortar" is *tawfale*, (ThPL). It is used in Job 6:6 as meaning "unsavory," and has this meaning from its root, which signifies "something slimy, viscous or unpleasant." The Masonic allusion points the way to the right solution, both physically and metaphysically, for the apron is directly connected with the Mars-force. Furthermore, the term *tawfale*, as used in Ezekiel 22:28, is associated with the mental condition of false prophets, who speak lies and *see vanity*. It is no figure of speech that the prophet uses here. This is what actually occurs. When the Mars-force is uncontrolled and un-tempered, one

cannot help "seeing vanity."

For even physical sight is affected by an impure desire-nature. This is hinted in the story of Moses, who died, we are told, at the age of 120 years. "And his eye was not dim, nor was his natural force abated." Bodily and mental purity is accomplished by the work of CALCINATION, and this enables one to see even the physical plane with vision of a clearer, better sort than that of most persons.

Seeing vanity, is literally seeing falsehood, or seeing that which is not. Millions of persons today are the victims of just this kind of false vision. Everything they look upon is colored by their false interpretations, and by the false interpretations which they have received from the race sub-consciousness. It is as if they looked at the world through colored glasses. Some look through dark glasses, some through spectacles of rose-tint. But here and there one finds a knower of Reality who sees the world as it really is, and rejoices in the vision. Such knowers are few, but they all know the significance of the lambskin apron, and they have performed carefully this first stage of the Great Work.

Calcination, moreover, is directly connected with the color white, for it is, in ordinary parlance, the process whereby marble, sea-shells, and similar substances are subjected to dry heat, so that they are reduced to *calx*, or quicklime – a dry, white, burning powder. This, when it is properly mixed with water becomes the lime used for making *tempered mortar* whereby stones truly cut and

shaped are cemented together in buildings. Similarly, in the alchemical sense, calcination is a purgation of the sub-conscious, resulting in a new consciousness which is like quicklime in its effect upon all the forms of error, and like the slaked lime produced by the mixture of quicklime and water, this new consciousness makes firm and stable the structure of new and true conceptions which is reared in place of the false Tower of Key 16.

Ripley, in his *Compound of Alchemy* corrects error that even so long ago as his day, had crept into the practice of the art concerning CALCINATION. Says he: "If, therefore, you intend to make gold and silver by craft of our philosophy, see that you do not take for this purpose either eggs or blood, but gold and silver, which, calcined wisely and not manually, will naturally bring forth a new generation, increasing their kind as does each thing." Notice that the proper calcination is not performed manually, but *wisely*, that is, through an operation of consciousness. The reference to eggs and blood is also important. Eggs are seed-forms, and are related to the functions controlled by the Mars center in the body. Blood is pumped through the body by the heart, regulated by the Sun center. Certain passages in the alchemical books have led some to conclude that the Great Work is a direct modification of the products of the gonads, and also a direct operation on the blood.

The "bellows-chemists" sometimes went to great lengths in their literal following of the directions left by some of the adepts. They worked with blood, eggs, hair,

urine, and wine – attempting in crude chemical laboratories what is only to be accomplished with "our secret vessels." But even those who are on the right track in alchemical interpretation sometimes go astray here. They try to modify the working of the special reproductive functions, and they also make the mistake of attempting direct change in the composition of the bloodstream. Thus Ripley tells us to take gold and silver only, meaning thereby the solar current which controls the heart and the lunar current which predominates in all functions under the immediate control of sub-consciousness.

The calcination is of these two currents, a gradual purgation which, Ripley tells us, takes a year or more. Here he speaks without the slightest concealment. It does take just about a full year, if one is diligent, to purge sub-consciousness of its inherited and acquired false knowledge.

Ripley tells us also: "Let the body be subtly filled with Mercury, rendered subtle." He then tells us to use the proportions of One for the Sun and Two for the Moon. The subtilized Mercury is the consciousness represented in Tarot by the Magician. The body filled by it is the alchemist's own personal vehicle. The numbers One and Two relate to Sun and Moon in Tarot, as in alchemy, for Key 19, THE SUN, bears a number which reduces to 1, and the Key representing the alchemical Moon, THE HIGH PRIESTESS, is numbered 2. What Ripley means is that sub-consciousness must be purified until it partakes wholly of the esoteric quality of the number 2.

Similarly the calcined sun must partake only of the quality of the number 1. Thus purified, they may be blended, and their consistency is said to be like wax, because it takes every impression.

None of this is in the least allegorical. The alchemist's body is his subject, or thing worked upon. The work is not directly on "eggs" and "blood," but upon the subtle energies which take form as "eggs" and "blood." These energies, being purged of their impurities, are then mixed, and the mixture is the regenerated consciousness of the adept. That consciousness is very properly compared to wax, not only because wax is so susceptible to impressions, but also because wax is a product of the industry of bees. The regenerated consciousness is not a product of nature. It is a work of art. It is an acquired characteristic, resulting from assiduous and prolonged practice. Thus the author of *The Sophie Hydrolith* writes:

"The numerous writers on our most noble Art have never wearied of singing its praises, and inventing for it new and glorious names. Its most precious object they have called the PHILOSOPHER'S STONE, or the most ancient, secret, natural, incomprehensible, heavenly, blessed, beatified, and triune universal Stone of the Sages. Their reason for naming it a stone, or likening it to a stone, was this! First because its original Matter is really a kind of stone, which, being hard and solid like a stone, may be pounded, reduced to powder, and resolved into its three elements (which Nature herself has joined together), and then may be re-combined into

a solid stone of the fusibility of wax by the skilled hand of the artist adjusting the law of Nature."

The perfection of the Stone, furthermore, is thus indicated by the same writer: The substance should instantly *melt on red hot iron like wax*. Now, iron is the metal of Mars, and red hot iron is the active functioning of the Mars force. The substance becomes instantly fluid when it is brought into contact with such activity. This is an excellent, though analogical, description of the regenerated consciousness in its relation to personal activity, symbolized by red hot iron. When self-consciousness and sub-consciousness are perfectly purified and fused, they enter into action with perfect freedom. There is no fixity of form, either conscious or sub-conscious, to interfere with that free flow of the Life-power. Or, as a modern psychologist might put it, the consciousness of the adept is free from *fixations*.

The second stage of the Great Work is CONGELATION. In ordinary parlance this is the act of changing from a fluid to a solid state through cooling, coagulation, or the like. Through its correspondence to Taurus, CONGELATION is related to the Hebrew letter Vau, second of the twelve simple letter. Thus CONGELATION is connected with the following attributions of Vau:

The Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence; the function of Hearing; the direction South-East; Tarot Key 5, THE HIEROPHANT.

Taurus is an earth sign, and the nature of earth is cold and dry. In the sign Taurus the planet Venus is the ruler, and the Moon is exalted. Thus the second stage of the alchemical work employs what a yogi would term Prithivi, the element of earth, and in this stage the adept operates with currents of energy which originate in the throat center (Venus) and in the pituitary body (Moon). Thus the predominant forces in CONGELATION are those represented by Tarot Key 3, THE EMPRESS, and by Key 2, THE HIGH PRIESTESS. Observe that Venus, ruling this second stage of the work, is complementary to Mars, ruling the first stage; and that the Moon, exalted in this stage, is complementary to the Sun, exalted in the first stage.

Ripley gives a hint of this, for in his chapter on Congelation he says "Dame Venus can tell thee the truth of this." Venus rules in Congelation because after the substance has been purified by the fiery process of Calcination, and by the exercise of the Constituting Intelligence, the next stage of the work consists in the formation of a new series of images. Calcination breaks down form, and is predominantly analytical. Congelation builds up form, and is predominantly synthetical.

Consider carefully the EMPRESS in connection with this. See how everything in Key 3 suggests fertility, fecundity, and the development of form. Creative imagination is the active principle in alchemical congelation, and creative imagination is the embodiment of clearly conceived desires.

To congeal alchemically is to work out new patterns for the expression of the Life-power. But remember that these patterns must not be *fixations*. Hence Ripley says! "Do not congeal into a Stone as hard as glass or crystal, which melts only by fusion, but so that the substance will melt again like wax, without blast." What he warns his readers against is crystallization. And the warning needs emphasis. For there is danger of becoming too fixed, even after the process of calcination has been completed. Hence Ripley says "Such congealing belongeth not to our conclusion as will not flow and run to water again." In this connection, observe that in the background of Key 3 the active principle represented by the EMPRESS is shown to be the flow of the mental substance of sub-consciousness, which is raised to its highest manifestation in Congelation.

In studying the Tarot, you have learned that the HIEROPHANT represents Intuition. He stands for the messages of the Inner Voice, revealing truth. He is the Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence, which instructs us in the principles which enable us to bring into proper manifestation those forms which we desire.

In an old manuscript quoted by Eliphas Levi, the magical power assigned to the knower of the secret meaning of the letter Vau is "He knows the reason of the past, present, and future." The word "reason" here is to be understood as "cause." What is the cause of time? The eternal flow of the Life-power. Past, present and future are divisions made by the intellect when it considers what is actually an Eternal NOW. In the

expression of the Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence through a human mind that NOW is known. While the experience lasts, personal consciousness takes the impress of the perfect awareness of the Universal Mind. The fact of Eternal Being is then a direct perception, and that Being is known as the cause of the flow of expression which we interpret as past, present and future.

This union with the universal Knower is alchemical congelation. It is affected by the functions of three centers in the body. These are: 1. The auditory center in the brain; 2. the Moon center, or pituitary body; 3. The Venus center in the throat. Their combined activity results in a special function of the auditory center. Then one hears the "still, small voice." This is the same voice that spoke to Elijah, that called out to young Samuel, that Jesus mentioned when he said: "As I hear I judge, and my judgment is just."

The functioning of these three centers is brought about by deliberately adopting the receptive, devotional attitude shown by the two figures who kneel before the Hierophant. Hence Norton says, in his *Ordinal of Alchemy*: "The science of this Art has never been fully revealed to anyone who has not approved himself worthy by a good and noble life, and who has not shewn himself to be deserving of this gracious gift by his love of truth, virtue, and knowledge. From those who are otherwise minded this knowledge must ever remain concealed. Nor can anyone attain to this Art, unless God send a *Master* to teach him." The *Master* is what Tarot

pictures as the Hierophant.

Remember that another name for the Hierophant is "The Pope," which means not the head of the Roman Church, but the universal Wisdom (Chokmah), which is AB the Father of Lights. By recognizing the One Life, which is above, yet within, each human personality, as a limitless source of Wisdom, the Father of all that exists, we come into such relation with it that we are taught from above. And this inner instruction is alchemical congelation, which imprints upon the regenerated consciousness, as a stylus writes upon wax, the hidden secrets of the Great Art.

Imagination is the power that determines this part of the work. One must use it in every conceivable way that ingenuity can suggest, in order to make more vivid one's awareness that the Eternal Presence is the actual substance of every form we perceive. This use of imagination, related to Venus, effects a gradual change in our emotional reaction to experience, and this works through the Venus center in the throat. As a result of this change in emotional reaction, a change in the functions of the glands of the body, connected with the throat center, comes about. Thus, eventually, there is a change in the chemistry of the alchemist's blood. But observe carefully that the primary change, upon which the physiological transformation depends, is a change of *emotional* attitude toward the various forms of the One Life-power which are presented to us in the course of our daily experience. This gradual change in our emotions is the outcome of instruction from the Inner

Voice, which reveals to us, through intuition, the essential spiritual identity of all things, and thus releases us from both attachment and repulsion. This release is the change mentioned by Norton when he says that the Great Work changes filthy copper into purest gold. Most of us are dominated by filthy copper, that is, by impure imagination. But the Great Work transmutes this into the gold of absolute truth.

Memory, represented in Tarot by the High Priestess, is also called into play here. We employ memory to recall, again and again, the truth that the All Power is actually present everywhere. We use it also to remind ourselves time and time again that our senses report to us nothing whatsoever but the Eternal Presence of the One Reality. And memory (the Moon) reaches its highest manifestation (exaltation) in intuition (Taurus), because what we are taught by the Inner Voice is what the true Self has always known. That is to say, what we call intuition, is really participation in the perfect memory of the One Life-Power.

South, in the Hebrew alphabet, is represented by the letter Resh, corresponding to Key 19, THE SUN, and alchemical gold. East, in the same way, is related to the letter Daleth, Key 3, The EMPRESS, and alchemical copper. Tarot students may therefore gain further insight into the meaning of Key 5 by considering it as a blend of the meanings of Keys 5 and 19. Students of Hermetic practice will note that since Key 5 represents congelation, it must be understood that this stage of the work, in relation to South-East, represents not only the combination of Venus and the Moon, but also the

combination of Venus and the Sun (East and South.)

Do not be disturbed by the apparent complexity of these terms. Even a superficial acquaintance with alchemical writings will teach you that the study and practice of the Great Art are not for those lacking in patience. By bringing these ideas together in your mind, their meaning will sooner or later dawn upon you. Success in alchemy is not for those who are in a hurry.

More plainly than earlier writings on the subject, this course puts the essential knowledge within your mental reach, *but you must reach for it* by earnest consideration of the details of the text. Think well what are the meanings of the Sun and Venus, and understand that these two are blended in the stage of the work called Congelation, just as they are blended in South-East. Blended in your mind, and blended in your body.

Remember, too, that all reference to Tarot Keys in these pages is intended to get you to look at the Keys themselves, in the various combinations suggested. What you are receiving in this connection has until now been kept within the field of instruction reserved for solemnly obligated students. Do not pass it by. Seekers for light have made long journeys, undergone terrific hardships, expended all their wealth, to learn no more than what you receive here. Be careful that you do not undervalue it because it has come to you so easily.

The third stage of the Great Work is FIXATION, assigned to Gemini, and thus to the letter Zain, having

the following attributions:

The Disposing Intelligence, the function of Smell; the direction East-Above; Tarot Key 6, THE LOVERS.

FIXATION is the establishment of the due bounds of the three principles, the Mercury of super-consciousness, the Sulphur of self-consciousness, the Salt of sub-consciousness. It is the establishment in the alchemist's consciousness of a firm, immovable awareness of the true relations and functions of these three. Some interpreters have thought that FIXATION has to do with the fixing of the will, but this is not the view of those whose tradition is represented in these pages. FIXATION is the removal of confusion as to the proper functions of the three alchemical principles just mentioned. On the practical side of the Great Work it is the establishment of harmonious balance in the operation of the three principles. It is not the fixation of *will*, but the fixation of a relationship between consciousness and sub-consciousness, and between these two and super-consciousness. Key 6 of Tarot is a picture of that fixation, when it is properly established.

The element of Air predominates in Fixation, and this element is described alchemically as a middle nature between Fire, the element active in Calcination, and the element of Earth, which is active in Congelation.

The ruling planet in Gemini, the sign connected with Fixation, is Mercury. No planet is exalted in Gemini. For Fixation is that perfect balance of elements in which

nothing predominates over anything else. It is the stability, or fixity, of perfect balance. But it is governed by Mercury, the Magician of the Tarot, representing human self-consciousness.

That is to say, the situation depicted in Key 6, THE LOVERS, is the outcome of the initiative of the man shown in that Key. It is self-consciousness that emancipates sub-consciousness, and puts the woman in right relation to the angel. This is one interpretation of the symbols of Key 6.

In another interpretation, equally correct, the alchemical Man, or "our Sun," is represented by the male figure. Then the female figure is to be understood as the alchemical Woman, or "our Moon." The angel then becomes the representative of alchemical Mercury. Note well that this interpretation does in no way conflict with the other. "Our Sun," according to the alchemists, is identical with the pure principle of Sulphur. "Our Moon," again, is identified with Salt. "Our Mercury," too, is given the place of Kether, the Crown, in one of the attributions of the book *Aesch Mezareph*.

Concentration, represented by Key 1 and The Magician (Mercury), is essential to Fixation. Study Key 1 carefully in this connection. Note that the positive action depicted is the raising of the wand toward the super-conscious level. Remember, too, that the wand is a symbol of the secret force which is sublimated in the alchemical process. Observe, furthermore, that the Magician looks toward the garden, just as the man in

Key 6 looks toward the woman. The woman and the garden are two symbols for one thing – the sub-conscious level of the Life-power's operation.

Another point to be borne in mind is that the element of Air, predominant in Gemini, is closely related to concentration, and to the Disposing Intelligence, or discrimination, which results from concentration. The yogi philosophy makes this perfectly clear, for it shows the close connection between breathing and concentration. In active concentration, breathing becomes slower and more rhythmical. The deliberate practice of slow, rhythmic breathing makes concentration easier. Breath-control and mind-control go together. This shows a further correspondence between Fixation and the element of Air.

Another connection with the element of Air is shown in the explanation of the Disposing Intelligence, of which it is written: "it disposes the righteous to faithfulness, *and clothes them with the Holy Life-Breath.*" When the solar and lunar currents of the Life-power are rightly perceived, rightly discriminated, and when their operation is kept in proper order (that is, properly fixed), the personality of the man engaged in this practice is merged with the Life-power itself. This is what is meant by the statement that the Disposing Intelligence clothes the righteous with the Holy Life-Breath. When we are merged with the One, the delusion of separateness is at an end. We know that all our personal actions are really performed by the ONE IDENTITY. United with THAT, we share its

consciousness of an eternal NOW, and this is the state of alchemical Fixation.

As we have written elsewhere: "One of the Hindu books declares: 'To those men who practice, and thus always keep the sun and moon in proper order, knowledge of the past and future becomes as easy as if they were in their hand.' And again: 'The moon is checked by the sun, the sun by the moon; he who knows this practice strides in a moment over the three worlds.' What are the three worlds? The worlds of past, present, and future. The practical occultist – whether he be called yogi, alchemist, or magician – is enabled to cut the Gordian Knot of Time with the Sword of discrimination."

Concerning the sense of smell, Norton says, in his *Ordinal of Alchemy*: "The sense of smell will also furnish you with indications whereby you may recognize the predominant element; and, in conjunction with the indications afforded by color, it will teach you where to look for the principal agent... When the qualities of a substance harmonize with your nature, the odor will be pleasant; but if the substance be of a kind that does not sympathize with your nature, you will be disagreeably affected by the odor... The sense of smell will also enable you to distinguish between a subtle and a gross substance. You will also have knowledge of an intermediate substance which exhibits the corruption of natural heat, and of the difference between corrupted humor and corrupted substance. But our substance has been highly purified, and is conserved by the mean virtue; wherefore, you must not expect a fetid smell to

arise from it, though it putrefies after its own proper kind."

Observe that it is by *smell* that the alchemist carries out the injunction of the *Emerald Tablet* "Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross." In the Great Work the metaphysical correspondences of the physical senses are brought into play. As used here, the adjective "metaphysical" means, "beyond the range of the physical plane." It must not be confused with academic metaphysics, which is a branch of speculative philosophy concerned with reasoning about the nature, character, and causes of being and knowing, the existence of God, and so on. Neither do we mean by "metaphysical," in these pages, the various modern cults which have appropriated that name. For us, the term represents direct experience of rates and characters of vibration in octaves of manifestation beyond the range of the physical senses, or of instruments meant to extend the range of the physical senses. Man has an inner sensorium, which success in the Great Work gradually develops. He sees, hears, tastes, touches and smells with the metaphysical senses just as definitely as he does with his physical senses. Furthermore, the same centers in the brain which register the physical sense-impressions are those which register the metaphysical sense-impressions. The organs which receive the metaphysical sense-stimuli are not the same as those which receive the stimulation of physical vibrations – but the brain-centers which record and interpret the metaphysical sense-impressions are the same as those with which we exercise the physical

senses.

The alchemists, when they speak of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching are referring to the metaphysical senses. This is one reason why their books are so easily misunderstood. Those who have tested the practical doctrines of Ageless Wisdom know experimentally that the metaphysical senses are real, and know how to employ them. Thus we may understand what Norton says as having to do with the metaphysical sense of smell, which is awakened into activity by prolonged practice of acts of mental discrimination.

The direction East-Above, assigned to the letter Zain and Key 6, is a combination of Above, the direction represented by Beth and Key 1, The Magician, with East, the direction represented by Daleth and Key 5 The Empress. Thus it will be apparent that in the process of Fixation there is a combination of self-conscious and sub-conscious activities, working through the Mercury and Venus centers in the head and throat. Readers of these pages ought by now to be sufficiently familiar with the functions of these centers to work out for themselves the meaning of this combination, and its bearing on this stage of the Great Work.

The fourth stage of the Great Work is SEPARATION, corresponding to the sign Cancer. Cancer is attributed to the letter Cheth, which has the following attributions:

The Intelligence of the House of Influence; the function

of Speech; the direction East-Below; Tarot Key 7, THE CHARIOT.

SEPARATION is the formulation of the end, or objective, toward which the special work of the particular alchemist is directed. It is the establishment of the personal objective, the formulation of the particular definition. Thus it is connected with speech, the function assigned to Cheth. It is the utterance of the alchemist's own **MAGICAL WORD**. This magical word is identical with the "new name," written on a white pebble, spoken of in Revelation 2:17. Observe that this white stone is given to "him that overcometh," and that in the passage mentioned it is associated with eating the hidden manna.

This last is a correspondence with the sign Cancer, which rules the breast and stomach, and is predominantly the sign of nourishment.

The white pebble is a symbol of the Stone of the Sages, and in Key 7 of Tarot there is a direct reference to that same Stone, for the body of the chariot is a cubical stone. The new name is known to no one but him who receives it. It is a new definition, marking out a distinct phase of the Life-power's activity. For one of the cardinal teachings of the Ageless Wisdom which finds expression in alchemy is that the final victory does by no means result, as some have thought, in the destruction of distinct personality. Quite the contrary. It is the establishment of the purified personal consciousness as what the Apocalypse describes as "a

pillar in the house of God, which shall no more go out." Not absorption into what the old lady described as "One happy mass," but clear-cut realization of specific identity, is the objective of the Great Work.

For we must remember that the Life-power has an infinite treasure of possibilities for us to draw upon. The Author of the cosmic drama is the spiritual essence of all His characters, but the characters themselves are sharply and vividly defined. It is not personality that we are to escape from. The most highly illuminated sage lives in the illusion of distinct personality, just as truly as does the tyro. The sage, however, knows the illusion as illusion, and knows, too, how necessary, useful, and beneficent that illusion is.

Does this interfere with the doctrine of reincarnation? By no means. But reincarnation ceases for the overcomer. He who has attained to the perfection of the Great Work is at the end of the cycle of rebirths. Thenceforth his personality remains as a pillar in the house of God, established forever.

The letter Cheth, meaning a field, or fence, is typical of this alchemical separation. For one of the paradoxes of the true definition of personality is that this definition marks clearly the distinction between appearance and essence. Thus Ripley tells us that separation divides each part from the other, the subtle from the gross, the thin from the thick. And he warns his readers that this is not a manual work. He says also that by philosophers, separation is called definition of the fourfold dispersion

of the four elements.

In other words, to know the true significance of personality, one must carefully distinguish essence from appearance, spirit from body, the subtle from the gross, the I AM from its vehicle. And in Key 7 we have a clear symbolic presentation of this distinction, with great emphasis, in the composition of the chariot and its canopy, upon the definition of the fourfold dispersion of the elements.

Separation, then, as definition, is truly related to occult or magical speech. It is the formulation of a new language in the field of sub-consciousness. They who succeed in separating the subtle from the gross do truly "speak with new tongues."

Through its connection with the sign Cancer, alchemical Separation falls under the rulership of the Moon (the High Priestess and brings into its highest manifestation, or exaltation, Jupiter, (the Wheel of Fortune). Consider the picture of the High Priestess. Her scroll is the scroll of memory. It is like a palimpsest. What is written on its surface is but the total of the impressions of the personal life. Underneath that record, waiting to be brought into view again, is the cosmic record of the universal life. Without any metaphor whatever, it may

Be said that there is a universal magical language, older than any human speech. The analytical psychologist, Jung, has come close to recognizing this truth. The efficacy of the Tarot Keys depends on it. The universal magical speech is the language of pictorial symbolism,

in the main. But besides pictorial symbolism, of which the sub-consciousness is the storehouse, there is a true language heard by those who have opened their metaphysical hearing. This inner language is the true native tongue of every human being on this planet, and there are not a few among advanced initiates who have become proficient in it. It is in this language only that the spoken word has truly miraculous power, although there are ways of adapting the secret language to the tongues of men, so that certain phrases in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and even in English have what a yogi would call *mantric* power. EVERY WORD, IN EVERY LANGUAGE, HAS ITS OWN SPECIFIC RATE OF VIBRATION, AND ITS OWN SPECIFIC GEOMETRICAL FORM. Fix that in mind, and you will have a seed-thought that some day will bear rich fruit if you plant it in your mental garden.

Now, the sub-consciousness contains the record of the magical language, and the record is written in that part of the human organism which we call the Jupiter center. Upon the innumerable cells of this great ganglion of the sympathetic nervous system, which is sometimes called the abdominal brain is written the whole story of the development of organic life. Upon the subtler substance of the etheric center corresponding to the Jupiter center – the chakra of the yogis, which they name Manipura, "filled with jewels" – is written the whole story of the cycles of the Life-power's self-manifestation.

A digest of the essence of that story is given in the symbols of Key 10, THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE. If you

can read that Key, you have in your possession clues which will lead you, step by step, to right understanding of the whole creative order. Thus you will come to true comprehension, and your comprehension will be definite and clear. As a result of right definitions in your own consciousness, your use of words will change. It matters not what language you may speak or write. Your knowledge of the magical language will influence your style, your diction, your choice of phrase and synonym. It cannot be otherwise. Your words will have life in them. They will vibrate with hidden power.

The Qabalists, speaking of the Intelligence of the House of Influence, says: "Out of the midst of its innermost secrets the arcana flow down, with the hidden meanings which are concealed in their shadow." Flowing motion having its origin in an inner source, which is also *superior* is suggested by this phrasing. The place whence this stream of influence flows is represented by the Holy of Holies, or the Adytum.

The power which flows from it is what alchemists call "our Water." In his chapter on Separation, Ripley tells us that the Water must be distilled until it is clean and thin as water should be. When the distillation is complete, the water is bright and shining as heaven. This distillation is absolutely necessary, for the alchemical Water, as it comes to us naturally, is, to use Ripley's term, filled with feculent sediment. The meaning is plain. The water is the stream of consciousness, pictured as a river in Key 7. It wells up into our personal field of awareness from sub-conscious

sources. At its *first* source, the ONE IDENTITY, it is perfectly pure, for it is the ice whereon the Hermit of Key 9 stands. But when it has passed into the region of sub-consciousness it becomes charged with the sediment of the race-errors as well as with our own misunderstandings. But distillation is possible. The water can be purified, and restored to its pristine purity. This is accomplished by concentration and meditation.

Ripley has an illuminating phrase in this connection. He says: Thou must oftentimes make Separation, dividing the Matter into two parts, so that you take the simple from the gross *until the earth beneath remains of a blue color*. Blue is the color of the sky, and blue is the color predominant in Key 2. What Ripley means is that in meditation one must separate form (the gross) from spirit (the simple) until we have established in ourselves the consciousness that that which is below (form) is truly as that which is above (spirit.) In other words, we must comprehend the truth that the body of the chariot, which appears to be stone, is essentially identical with its canopy, the sky. Thus we emancipate our minds from that hypnotic dominance exerted upon them by the weight, mass, form, and other properties of what is ordinarily understood as "matter." The magical control of appearances is impossible for any person who remains hypnotized by belief in the dominance and preponderant authority of the various *forms* of the physical plane. But when we can make the earth *blue*, that is, when the eye of the mind sees all things whatsoever as appearances of the one *sky-power*, then the work of Separation is complete.

This work is connected with the direction East-Below, the combination of East (Key 3, THE EMPRESS) and Below (Key 2, THE HIGH PRIESTESS.) For in this work two centers of the body are concerned, the Venus center in the throat, and the Moon-center, or pituitary body. AS I HAVE SO OFTEN SAID, THERE IS NO DIRECT CONCENTRATION UPON EITHER OF THESE PHYSICAL CENTERS. But the work of Separation calls them into activity.

Consider well what the work is, and you will see this must be so. Separation is the making of new definitions. It is the recovery of the magical language. It distills, or eliminates the sediment of error from, the water of conscious energy. This is the Water of the alchemists, identical with the First Matter. From it all forms derive their essence. This is what appears as every *thing* within the range of human experience, whether the plane of experience be physical or metaphysical.

The work of Separation demands stillness of body and is aimed at silencing the mind. Its technique is described in all the books of the wise. The essence of the practice is in the injunction: "BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD." Bodily stillness is essential. Mental stillness follows it.

Separation, however, is not mere quiescence. To achieve it there must go on, over and over again, the process which is described by Ripley as the distillation of the Water. This is begun by concentration on some particular fact of experience, with the distinct intention

of arriving eventually at an unbroken flow of knowledge in that particular object. Thus the process of Separation includes that of Dissolution, which is the eleventh major stage of the Great Work.

Dissolution is represented in Tarot by Key 17, and you will notice that the number 17 represents the expression of 7 through the agency of 1. In Tarot this means that Key 17 symbolizes an activity which utilizes self-conscious concentration (Key 1) As the agency whereby to put into operation what Key 7 represents.

In our Tarot studies we have found that Key 7 has for one of its key-words, "Receptivity." The whole meaning of the Key is that personality is the vehicle of the I AM. What the alchemist does in Separation is to make what has just been stated his own *direct experience*. Ordinary human beings may have a faint intellectual awareness of the significance of the second sentence in this paragraph. The alchemist works hard to make it a clear-cut realization.

Language is one of the chief means to this end. First of all, the practical occultist must use words carefully and correctly. He must be a student of words, in the most literal sense. No stranger to the dictionary can ever be a great practical occultist. The Sages are noteworthy for their exquisitely accurate discrimination of the subtleties of language.

Incidentally, if this one fact were better known among aspirants to occult knowledge, the number of occult

charlatans would be materially reduced. For one of the ear-marks of the occult pretender is that he almost always misuses words. Once in awhile there is an unlettered man, like Jacob Beilhart, the American mystic, who is not altogether sure of himself in matters of grammar and rhetoric. Yet even Beilhart knew enough about words to say clearly and accurately what he intended to express.

From now on, therefore, watch your words. Be sure that you say what you mean. Be sure that you mean what you say. The Great Work cannot be accomplished by persons who deceive themselves and others by intentional or unintentional misuse of speech. Watch your predicates. The simple words "I AM," do have mighty power, and whatever we put after them becomes manifest in our external circumstances.

Remember, this practice is not at all a dodging of the truth about life. Rather is it the substitution of truth in speech for the expression of hasty judgments based on experience. "Out of the mouth are the issues of life." Hence, until you become skilled in right speech, you will find it advantageous to practice silence. He who refuses to put anything into words until he knows just what to say will confer a blessing on his fellow-men. The whole world suffers from that unruly member, the human tongue. Learn to hold it, if you aspire to be a practical alchemist.

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice
THE ALCHEMICAL PROCESS
Digestion – Distillation – Sublimation – Putrefaction

This lesson deals with the second four of the twelve stages of the Great Work: DIGESTION, DISTILLATION, SUBLIMATION, and PUTREFACTION. DIGESTION corresponds to Leo; DISTILLATION to Virgo, SUBLIMATION to Libra, and PUTREFACTION to Scorpio.

The fifth stage of the work is DIGESTION. Since it corresponds to Leo, it corresponds to the letter Teth, and to these attributions:

The Intelligence of the Secret of all Spiritual Activities; the sense of Taste; the function of Digestion; the direction North-Above; Tarot Key 8, STRENGTH.

Chemically, digestion is the exposure of a substance to the action of a liquid with the aid of heat. By this means the soluble constituents are extracted from the substance. Thus digestion requires two elements, fire and water.

The water is the cosmic mental energy, called water because it flows in streams, has currents, vibrates like waves, has tides, and is like a mirror or reflector.

Alchemical fire is the electric, vital force which takes form as solar radiance and heat. It is the animating principle of all creatures. It is called fire because its action breaks down and consumes the forms through

which it becomes manifest.

On the Qabalistic Tree of Life, the letter Teth joins Chesed, to which water is attributed, to Geburah, which is of the fiery quality. Thus the "Intelligence of the Secret" is the secret of the combination of these two occult elements. Chesed is also known as the Sphere of Jupiter, or the field of the operation of that aspect of the Life-power which is centered in that part of the sympathetic nervous system known as the solar plexus, or Jupiter center. Geburah is called the Sphere of Mars, or the field of the operation of that aspect of the Life-power focused in the Mars center.

Thus we may expect to find that in digestion, as understood in alchemy, there is a blending of the forces of the Jupiter and Mars centers. The field of the operation of the Jupiter center is physiologically related to the stomach, which is the seat of the bodily function of digestion. The Mars force has control of the entire muscular structure of the body, and is active also in the brain. This force, too, is specialized in the reproductive functions, and as the serpent-power, is what the yogis raise, or sublime.

Now, the meaning of Teth is "serpent" and the Intelligence of the Secret has to do with the raising of the serpent-power, and its transformation into the white Eagle, as an alchemist would phrase it. Note here that the eagle is the bird of Jupiter, so that the essential nature of the alchemical work is seen to be the transformation of Mars into Jupiter. It is therefore the

transformation of that phase of activity represented by Key 16 in Tarot into what is represented by Key 10. What is this, if it be not the transformation of the destructive force which overthrows form into that perfect comprehension of Reality which is also the perfect fulfillment of our desires?

On this point Ripley, in the Epistle preceding his *Compound of Alchemy* says "Therefore work only kind with kind, and join all your elements so that they do not strive. Bear also in mind this point, that you turn passive natures into active. Make living substance of water, fire, air and earth; and of the quadrangle make you a round figure."

The quadrangle, or square, refers to the four elements. These are to be turned into living substance, sometimes called the quintessence. Now, the tower of Key 16 is built on a square base, and the number 16 is a square number. But note that 16 is the number of cells in the magic square of Jupiter, so that the number of the Key which refers to Mars is a number related to Jupiter. Furthermore, $16 = 1 + 6 = 7$, and the sum of the numbers from 0 to 7 is $28 = 2 + 8 = 10$, so that there is an occult mathematical correspondence between 16 and 10. Again, the sum of the numbers from 0 to 16 is 136, and $1 + 3 + 6 = 10$. Finally, 136 the extension of 16, is the number of the name CHSMAL, Hasmael, the Intelligence of Jupiter. So that all these points show you that the correspondence between Mars and Jupiter is plainly indicated in the Tarot.

On the title page of Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* is a symbolic engraving. It shows a star of twenty-two rays, with a glory behind it. On the three lower rays sits a toad, holding up a lunar crescent. Between the horns of the crescent is a solar disc, which a serpent, head downward, seems to be holding in his mouth. The serpent is coiled in a love-knot, suggesting the outline of a horizontal figure 8, and from the center of the love-knot an eagle rises. From the eagle sixty-five drops of dew descend. A Latin motto beneath reads "Serpens et Bufo gradiens sub terram, Aquila volans, est nostrum Magisterium." It means "a serpent and a toad coming up above the earth (literally "stepping up above") is our Magistry.

The toad is an animal under the rulership of Saturn, as one may read in Henry Cornelius Agrippa. The serpent, twisted in the form described above, is one of many symbols of the force used in the Great Work. The sublimation of the matter begins at the Saturn center, which is at the base of the spine, and thus corresponds to the position of the toad in this emblem. The twenty-two rays of the star correspond to the twenty-two letters and twenty-two Tarot Keys. The serpent is the Mars force. The flying eagle is the transmuted serpent, as we see in Keys 10 and 21 of the Tarot. The 65 drops of dew are the "dew of heaven", and their number, besides representing the word ADNI, Lord, is the number of HIKL, Temple, and of GM-ICHd, "Together in unity."

In his preface to this book, Ashmole says that by means of the Stone it is possible to discover any person in any

part of the world, though never so secretly hidden. "In a Word," he writes, "it fairely presents to your view even the *whole World*, wherein to *behold, heare, or see your Desire*. Nay more, It enables Man to understand the Language of the Creatures, as the Chirping of Birds, Lowing of Beasts, etc. To Convey a Spirit into an Image, which by observing the Influence of the Heavenly Bodies, shall become a true Oracle; and yet this, as E. A. assures you, is not any wayes Necromanticall, or Devilish; but easy, wondrous easy, Natural and Honest."

Compare this with the descriptions of the powers of the yogi in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. What is meant is that he who makes the Stone of the Wise can enter into the consciousness of any phase of nature, and project that consciousness into any part of the world. This consciousness, as Ashmole says, presents the whole world to our view, whereas our present state of consciousness shows us only a part.

Alchemical digestion, then, is a combination of fire and water which extracts the soluble elements from the matter. It is pictured by Key 8 of Tarot as the taming of a lion by a woman, who opens the lion's mouth. The woman, moreover, leads the lion by a chain of roses, fashioned like a horizontal figure 8, and the same horizontal 8 is shown over her head.

Ashmole tells us, furthermore, that the finest aspect of the Stone, which he terms the Angelical Stone, is so subtle that it can neither be seen, felt, or weighed; but tasted only. This is the "dew of heaven," the nectar of

which the yogis speak so often. Yet that nectar is made when the woman tames the lion, or when the serpent is transformed into the eagle. The sense of taste is a metaphysical sense, developed by continual practice.

Alchemical digestion is also connected with the direction North-Above, which combines North, represented in Tarot by Key 16, with Above, represented by Key 1. Thus it becomes evident that the work of digestion combines the functions of the Mercury center (the Magician) with those of the Mars center (The Tower.) Yet the self-consciousness focused in the Mercury center does not act directly upon the Mars force. It must have an agent, and that agent is the alchemical Woman, pictured in Key 8. To the Woman the qualities of the Man must be transferred. That is to say, the seed-ideas *selected* by self-consciousness must be implanted in sub-consciousness, through whose agency the subhuman forms of the Life-power are brought under control.

All this is related to the sign Leo, which rules the heart, and is thus connected with circulation. The red lion of Key 8 is sometimes interpreted as meaning sublimated Sulphur, combined with Mercury. This is quite true. But as a lion he represents the Sun, or alchemical gold; and his redness is from Mars. Note that the color of the lion is the color of the Magician's outer garment, and that this color means strength, courage, activity, and the like – all Martian qualities. What is meant is that the forces of Mars and the Sun have been combined.

In the technical alchemical sense, this is just what happens at this stage of the work. For the outcome of the process pictured in Key 8 is to blend the forces in the body which come from the Mars center and the Sun center respectively. The Sun, or heart, center is the point at which the undifferentiated cosmic radiance enters into the field of personality. The Mars center just below the navel is the most active of the lower centers of the serpent-power. When the currents from these two centers are combined, and directed by the alchemical Woman, as shown in Key 8, the result is the alchemical process of digestion, which releases certain subtle substances into the blood-stream, and thus provides the necessary energy for the subsequent stages of the work.

As I have written elsewhere "The outcome of this process (pictured in Key 8) is that one sees that his personality is a center of expression for the power which really controls everything. In consequence of this perception, the man who has it sees that there is nothing anywhere to fear. Then, since he has nothing to fear he sees that he has everything to love. Masters of life are invariably distinguished by their fearlessness, and by their unaffected love of all creatures and things. This is real love, without attachment. 'Love your enemies,' to the adept, is no mere counsel of perfection, no unattainable ideal. It sums up his daily practice of life. He is enemy to none, and neither picks nor chooses the objects of his all-embracing affection.

"Strife is at an end in the presence of such a man. Wild beasts will not harm him, nor each other, while he is

near. He has mastered the serpent in his own personality, and no external serpent will ever injure him. It is not that wild animals are cowed by him, as by a lion-tamer. It is because he inspires no fear in them that they offer him no harm. This is literally true, and the same law applies to the metaphorical wild beasts of passion and desire. "

The sixth stage of the work is DISTILLATION. It corresponds to the sign Virgo, and thus to the letter Yod, which has these attributions:

The Intelligence of Will; the sense of Touch; the function of Coition; the direction North-Below; Tarot Key 9, THE HERMIT.

Distillation is the process of separating volatile from less volatile compounds. Metaphysically it is sometimes interpreted as the release of the soul from the limitations of the body; but this is only a partial explanation of the meaning of alchemical distillation. Through its connection with the sign Virgo, this stage of the work is related primarily to the element of earth, and as a matter of fact the distillation is primarily a physiological process which occurs in that part of the human body ruled by Virgo.

Virgo governs the organs of the abdominal region, and particularly those which have to do with the process of assimilation. In a sense, what physiologists know as assimilation is the foundation of the alchemical distillation. Ripley, it will be remembered, tells the

would-be alchemist to make *living substance* of the four elements, and to make the quadrangular into a round figure. The four elements, outside our bodies, seem to be inert and lifeless. When we take them in the form of food, water, breath and light, and incorporate them into our organisms, they become living substance. Furthermore they are changed from the inorganic form, symbolized by the square or quadrangle into component parts of our interior *circulation*, symbolized by the wheel of Key 10.

In discussing the "Virgin's Milk" in an earlier lesson, I touched upon this whole matter, and showed that the actual substance worked upon in the alchemical operation is, at one stage of its manifestation, the chyle in the small intestine; It is the separation of the subtle essences from chyle, in this region ruled by Virgo, that we mean by alchemical Distillation.

The chyle itself is relatively gross. The essences extracted from it are volatile, moving rapidly from one part of the body to another part. The most important of these subtle essences have not yet been identified by physical science, but they have been known for centuries by yogis in the Orient and alchemists in the Occident. The alchemists call one of these subtle essences *Aurum potabile*, that is, "Gold which may be drunk," or "liquid gold."

What they mean by this is precisely what the yogis mean by the solar current of Prana. This subtle essence is released from chyle by the process of assimilation in

the small intestine. In ordinary human beings only a portion of the fluid gold is taken into the circulation. Yet all of us have some of it. If we did not, we should not be alive.

For this reason, all the alchemical Sages agree with Ripley, who writes: "Fowls and fishes bring it to us, every single man has it. It is everywhere, in you, in me, in every time and space."

But the alchemical adept, by Distillation, charges his blood-stream and his nervous system with a superabundance of this fluid gold. He is enabled to do this because of the fact veiled by the astrological dictum that Virgo is ruled by Mercury, which planet is also exalted in this sign. The practical meaning is that the process of assimilation is under the rulership of the conscious mind.

Primarily, this rule is exerted in the selection of what we eat and drink, and in breath-control. For mark this well, **IT IS THE BREATH WHICH MAKES ASSIMILATION COMPLETE.** Thus Ripley says: "Be moderate in eating and drinking. Do not soften your belly by drinking immoderately, lest you quench your natural heat too soon." This is something for the bellows-blowers to ponder. For if alchemy were performed in an external laboratory, what difference would the physical condition of the alchemist make in the outcome of the work?

Eat moderately. Eat what you like, and what agrees with

you. Find this out by experiment, and by reading sound, scientific explanations of the various food-values. For the alchemical work, eat foods rich in vitamins, especially those rich in Vitamin D. Do not be a faddist. The mental state of a diet-crank forbids his ever succeeding in the Great Work. But when you eat, remember that you are selecting the raw materials for transmutation into the Philosopher's Stone. As a general rule, so far as quantity of food goes, the old yogi rule, "Eat half what can be conveniently eaten," holds good. No general rule, however, applies to all persons.

If you are sick, do not attempt yoga practice or alchemy. Study the theory all you like, but attend to your health first. For the alchemical work demands strength of body, and normal function as its beginning. Remember, the alchemical state of consciousness is supernormal, and you cannot expect to enjoy supernormal states if you haven't normal ones to begin with.

Alchemical Distillation, however, utilizes the rulership of Mercury for more than the selection of food-stuffs. The conscious mind can, through its control of sub-consciousness, bring about tremendous improvement in the work of assimilation. ONE HAS TO KNOW ABOUT IT BEFORE HE CAN DO IT. Those who are in ignorance of the fundamental facts are in no position to do the work. But when one knows, he can make a specific demand upon his sub-consciousness that assimilation of the subtle essences shall be increased. 'This demand should be put in the form of positive affirmations, and if these affirmations are combined

with visual imagery, they will be more potent.

Before you sit down to a meal, tell your sub-consciousness that you are giving it materials for alchemical Distillation. With your mind's, eye see the electric constitution of all that you eat and drink. This is by no means difficult. Once you get the mental conception of the electronic constitution of every kind of physical matter, it will not be hard for you to see that you are eating cosmic electricity, drinking it, and breathing it. Think of it as light. Then think of your blood-stream and nerves as being charged with radiant energy.

In the Qabalah, the letter Yod, which corresponds to Virgo, is associated with the Intelligence of Will This mode of consciousness is "so called because it forms the patterns of all bodies; and by this intelligence, when it is perceived, the pre-existent Wisdom is discovered." Key 9 of Tarot is a commentary upon this. The pre-existent Wisdom is personified as the Hermit. The pattern-forming power is represented by the six-pointed star in the lantern, and the light streaming from the lantern is the Intelligence of Will.

Now, Will-power and Light-power are essentially the same. Furthermore, the universe is ONE, DYNAMIC, LIVING ORGANISM. Then it follows that no part of the universe is unrelated to any other part. The power which forms the patterns of bodies is a power of universal Wisdom, a power of the ONE IDENTITY. That power presents itself to us in the various forms constituting our environment. But the forms blind us,

until we are awakened, to the power itself. The truth is that we are in the presence of ONE, SINGLE REALITY, which *appears* as many things. THE ESSENCE OF THAT REALITY IS THE SELFHOOD OF MAN. A PRIMARY POWER OF THAT REALITY IS TO SHAPE ITS OWN ENERGY INTO FORMS – FORMS PHYSICAL AND FORMS METAPHYSICAL.

The direction assigned to Yod, and therefore related to Distillation, is North-Below. This is a combination of North (Key 16) with Below (Key 2). The centers of the body corresponding are the Mars center just below the navel, and the Moon center, or pituitary body. Psychologically, it is impossible to recognize the ONE IDENTITY represented by the Hermit until one has broken down the false structures of separateness, and united the personal field of sub-consciousness in some measure, at least, with the universal sub-consciousness typified by the High Priestess. Note that North and Below are represented by Keys in the Tarot tableau which stand in relation to Key 9. Key 16 is beneath Key 9, and Key 2 is above Key 9, in the vertical row corresponding to the second stage of spiritual unfoldment. Thus it may be added that alchemical distillation is the agency by which the principle represented by the High Priestess is made manifest in the activity pictured by Key 16.

The seventh stage of the Great Work is SUBLIMATION. It corresponds to the zodiacal sign Libra. Therefore it is connected with the Hebrew letter

Lamed, which has these meanings:

The Faithful Intelligence; the function of Work or Action; the direction North-West; Tarot Key 11, JUSTICE.

The strict definition of Sublimation, in chemistry, is the conversion of a solid by heat into vapor, which on cooling becomes solid again without assuming a liquid form. In modern psychology the same term is used to denote diversion of undesirable natural trends or impulses, by education or conscious effort, into some more desirable type of behavior or activity.

The alchemical term closely approximates the general sense of the modern psychological use, though retaining something of the chemical significance. Included in the alchemical meaning is also something of the now obsolete sense – "to elevate, to exalt."

In the *Book of Formation* we read: "The twenty-second path is called the Faithful Intelligence, because by it the powers of the Life-Breath are caused to multiply, and all dwellers on earth are merely under its shadow."

To be under the shadow of the Faithful Intelligence is to be bound by Karma, to be enslaved by the series of causes and effects. Yet when the text says that all "dwellers on earth" are in this situation, it does not mean what the words convey to a casual reader. There are two kinds of people in this world. By far the greater number do "dwell on earth." Their consciousness is limited to physical conditions, their judgment is based

upon physical sensation, their expectations are determined by past experiences. On the other hand, in every generation there have been a few, and in this age their number increases rapidly, who know that they live in "heaven" as well as on the earth. These few realize that the I AM at the heart of human personality is the Controlling Center of the world of causes, and not merely one of the phenomena of the world of effects.

They have absolute faith in the perfect law, and that faith is the Faithful Intelligence we are explaining. Today the knowledge is general that the various activities of nature are expressions of law. Most persons understand that even what seem to be accidents are really links in a chain of cause and effect. The marvels of this age of invention are based upon scientific recognition of the reign of law. Yet thousands fail to perceive the truth that the same reign of law governs the transformations of the Life-Breath within the field of human personality. Not the slightest film of fancy is without its definite cause. Not the least permanent of our modes of consciousness but has its place in the series of transformations constituting our mental life.

When some people hear this doctrine that the inner life is as much an expression of law as are the changes of man's environment, their first reaction is a terrified feeling that man is a mere puppet, in the grip of forces beyond his control.

Occult science assures us that there are no grounds for this fear. Every activity of *personality* is certainly a

mathematical consequence of pre-existing causes. But in man there is something higher than personality, something above the series of causes and effects. This is the I AM, the Controlling Center mentioned in an earlier paragraph.

The purpose of practical occultism is to teach the student how to become consciously aware of his identity with this One Law-maker. Thus he is released from the vicious circle of cause and consequence which the Orientals call Karma.

Yet even this release is a matter of law. The consciousness of the released adept cannot find expression through the organism of an unripe personality. The "green apples" on the Tree of Life are ripened by processes which are included in the reign of law. Even when the maturing process is hastened by occult practice, laws must be known and obeyed.

The faith of the occultist, then, is primarily faith in law. To build it up, the perception of the working of cause and effect in the inner life of man must be established, and it can be established by practice only. It takes just as much practice to think an unfamiliar thought as it does to perform an unfamiliar action.

Thinking, indeed, is really just as much bodily action as any other kind of work. The special kind of thinking which alchemists call Sublimation is actual physical labor, even if it does begin in our minds. This practice is facilitated by looking at Key 11, because the symbols of

that design have been arranged so that they impress upon the sub-consciousness of the observer certain seed-ideas which ultimately develop into active faith. You may have little faith now, but you will build faith if you use Key 11.

You will thus come to realize that your life is by no means that of a puppet. You will know, because you will have identified yourself with the Controlling Cause, that inner essence of perfect freedom, that for you the reign of law is no chain, binding you to the working out, on the "eye for eye" principle, of all your past mistakes.

Make no mistake. The "eye for eye" manifestation of the law is the one that is operative in the lives of the greater number of human beings. Nor does anyone escape from it by simply asserting that he is not affected by its operation. Neither can anyone find release from it by leaning on some supposedly higher personality. We have to pay every jot and tittle of our cosmic debts. Nothing is forgiven, for the law is perfect. But the "eye for eye" manifestation is not the highest manifestation of the law. Though we have to pay our debts, we can pay in another way, by bringing to bear a higher aspect of the law.

Just as men, chained to earth for milleniums by the law of gravitation, now fly faster than any bird by utilizing another aspect of the same law, so does the practical occultist pay his Karmic debts in another, more valuable kind of cosmic currency. For his work gives him access to that treasure of treasures which enables him to strike

the balance without pain.

This is what is accomplished in alchemical sublimation, which exalts Saturn, the alchemical lead, by the aid of Venus. For Venus rules, and Saturn is exalted in, Libra. The element involved in the work is Air, and this without symbol of metaphor. Breath-control is essential to the work of Sublimation.

This breath-control is not any dangerous practice, such as some that have been widely advocated. It is simply balanced, rhythmic breathing. A full, deep breath, followed by a period of retention, and then a slow, complete exhalation. Count four for inhalation, four for retention, and four for exhalation when you begin your practice. After awhile you may increase the count gradually, until you can make it ten, at the same tempo, for each part of a complete breath cycle. But go slow, and be sure not to subject yourself to strain. Watch the breathing, as you do this practice, to see that it is easy, regular, and noiseless. Do not practice over ten minutes at a time, and not more than three times daily. The best times are on rising, at noon, and at sunset. If it is difficult to observe the sunset hour, make your third practice on retiring.

Key 11 gives us a strong hint that Sublimation includes elimination. This is also suggested by the fact that Libra rules the kidneys, organs of elimination which maintain the chemical balance of the blood. The hint in the picture is the uplifted sword in the woman's right hand.

The psychological part of the process of sublimation consists in eliminating from our mental pictures of future activity every detail which we do not wish to see realized. This requires discrimination and imagination. It also requires *definition*, a phase of limitation, and limitation is the quality associated with Saturn. Thus you will notice that the handle of the sword is shaped like a T, and this letter corresponds to Saturn, because it is the Roman character derived from the Hebrew letter Tav, to which Saturn is attributed.

This elimination is by no means a negative process. It demands concentration on mental images (ruled by Venus) of the desired forms of manifestation. Concentration itself is a kind of elimination, because it is choice of a particular object. Thus in the mental work of sublimation we select a desirable form of personal activity as our goal, and then cut out everything which does not contribute in some way to that objective.

We cut away the weeds of fear, of doubt, of indecision, by engaging in types of action that nourish courage, confidence, and decision. Remember always, the modifications of the mind are to be overcome by their opposites. Active imagery, and clear verbal statement of the conditions one seeks to bring into manifestation, will eventually divert the energy formerly expressed in negative imagery and negative statement into these more desirable positive channels.

We eliminate whatever wastes power. Hence we cut out useless discussion of our hopes and aims with persons

who are not actually interested. We avoid argument on controversial topics, because we know that argument never settles any controversy. In a word, we avoid whatever diverts us from the path leading to our goal.

Does this mean that we have no amusement, no relaxation? Does it mean that we must always have our work on our minds? Certainly not. As Eliphas says, "The way to see is not to be always looking." But we must choose amusements that really refresh us. While we are engaged in them, moreover, we must wield the sword lustily to cut off thoughts of work or business which interfere with complete rest and relaxation.

All this may seem to be somewhat remote from ordinary conceptions of the alchemical process. The contrary is the truth. Such practical details as are give in the preceding paragraphs are by no means the whole of alchemical sublimation, but they are an indispensable part, and they come first.

For this work actually converts solids in the bloodstream into a vapor, through the functioning of the brain-cells involved in the work. And then the vapor condenses itself again as a solid – AS THE SOLID CONDITIONS OF EXTERNAL CIRCUM-STANCE. Here, in a phrase, is what really occurs. It is by no means "common" sense. It is nevertheless literal truth. One of the functions of the human brain is to make matrices for external conditions. The matrices are mental images. The energy expressed in creative imagination is real energy, derived from subtle, but

relatively solid, substances in the blood-stream. That energy is projected in thinking creatively, and ultimately it condenses, or is precipitated or solidified, in the actual forms that are imaged. Adepts at this can precipitate their mental images with great speed, and the results appear to be miracles. Beginners do not get their results so quickly, but as they gain skill, the work can be done more rapidly.

The eighth stage of the Great Work is PUTREFACTION. It corresponds to the zodiacal sign Scorpio, and to the letter Nun, which has the following attributions:

The Imaginative Intelligence; the direction South-West; the function of Locomotion; Tarot Key 13, DEATH.

Putrefaction is decomposition, the disintegration of a body into its elementary parts. Ripley tells us that without Putrefaction no seed may multiply. He says also: "It must be done only by continual action of moist heat in the body, *not manually*." And in his chapter on Putrefaction there is a long description of the false alchemists, "who work after their fantasy, in many subjects in which there be gay tinctures, both white and red, divided manually to sight." It would seem that no person acquainted with Ripley, and with his remarks on this point, would be of the opinion that the Great Work is an external chemical process. Yet in very recent times the claim has been advanced that the Red Powder has been made in a physical laboratory.

Now, heat is always associated with fire and the Mars force, and the particular "moist heat" which is operative in the work of Putrefaction is the moist heat of the watery sign Scorpio. This is most important to the whole alchemical undertaking. Ripley says: "Unless your Matter putrefies, it may in no wise be truly altered, nor may your element be divided kindly."

What is indicated here is the disintegration of that which is the real matter of the alchemical operation, that is, the alchemist's own personality. Primarily, the disintegration, of putrefaction, must be internal. This is what Eliphas Levi means when he says that a person who knows how to control the currents of the Astral Light "might throw the world into confusion." The world he speaks of is the microcosm, and its face cannot possibly be transformed until it is first reduced to its elemental chaos.

In Key 16, as we have seen before, we have a picture of the destruction of the microcosmic world. For when the Mars force is re-directed by the alchemical process, it breaks down the conception of personality which is held by the greater number of human beings. A new vision of the meaning of personality flashes like lightning upon us. It utterly disintegrates our former structure of false opinions, and this disintegration is the alchemical putrefaction.

This is the inner meaning of what Jesus taught his disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For

whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Self-denial does not mean the act of depriving oneself of something one enjoys, like an article of diet, or an amusement. It means the total repudiation of one's ignorant interpretation of self-hood. It is a reversal of the former point-of-view, and in the alchemical connection, it is noteworthy that this reversal is pictured in Tarot by Key 12, corresponding to the element of water. Thus Ripley's "moist heat" is seen to be the stabilizing of the new idea of the meaning of personality by a combination of what is pictured in Keys 16 and 12.

The Greek verb translated "take up" in the foregoing quotations means also, "to keep the mind in suspense." It is a technical mystery-term, as is the word "cross." In the Gospel of St. Luke there is an additional hint, for there we read that one must take up his cross daily. The "cross" is what is pictured in Key 12 as the gallows, and in the Hebrew alphabet it is the letter Tav, attributed to Saturn. To take up the cross is to raise the energy-concentrated in the Saturn center, and this is done by utter repudiation of personal origination for any state of consciousness, for any act of the body, for any word uttered, for any condition of external circumstance.

Ripley tells us that this part of the work takes ninety nights. Note that 90 is the number of the letter-name M I M, Mem, associated with Key 12, and that it is also the number of the letter Tzaddi, representing meditation. He says, too, that the result of putrefaction

is a powder black as a crow's bill. Also that one must come in by the gate of blackness if one seeks to win to the Paradise of Whiteness.

This reference to blackness is an exact description of the result of the work of putrefaction. For when one meditates, and denies himself, and disintegrates the entire notion that anything originates in personality, the outcome is the perception that all things, all actions, all thoughts, all words, are manifestations of ONE THING, which appears to the Intellectual mind as No Thing, or utter darkness. Yet this darkness is really the Limitless Light, and so Boehme calls it *Radiant Darkness*. That Light, moreover, is corpuscular. That is to say, it is actually composed of innumerable tiny points. Hence the work of Putrefaction is said to result in the production of a black *powder*.

The work of Putrefaction is associated with the Imaginative Intelligence, pictured by Key 13 in Tarot. The force directly employed is the nerve-force which is specialized in the Mars center below the navel. Mastery of the currents of this force is gained by mental imagery, but it needs to be said that the images employed have nothing to do with the sex-function. All magic is accomplished by the mind's power of generating mental images. The mental imagery required to deny the old conception of the self, and reduce it to the chaos of the Radiant Darkness, is thus properly represented by the number 13, since that number is the value of the Hebrew noun AChD, *Achad*, Unity.

This self-denial is the loss of the old life, that the new life may be found. It is the death of the old man, that the new man may be born. And note that in Key 13 the reaper is a skeleton, and that in astrology Saturn rules the skeleton. Thus it will be evident that the active principle in Putrefaction is the Saturn force, corresponding to the letter Tav and the cross.

But have we not just said that the Mars force is active in this work? Yes, but the Mars force cannot be lifted up unless it is stirred into activity by an impulse originating in the Saturn center at the base of the spine. When the coiled-up Kundalini, as the yogis call it, is released by right concentration and meditation, it rises upward, and, so to say, impels the Mars force upward, too. Mars cannot become active unless stirred into motion by Saturn. Thus in Key 13 a skeleton, symbolizing Saturn, is the reaper, but the scythe which does the actual reaping has a blade of steel, the metal of Mars. And to emphasize this, the handle of the scythe, which gives the necessary impetus to make the blade cut, is shaped like a letter T, or Tav.

The letter Nun is properly assigned to the direction South-West. (In some of our earlier lessons, and in the *Analysis of the Tarot*, the direction assigned to Nun is North-West, and that given to Libra is South-West. This, however, is an error, due to our transcription of a "blind" to be found in several versions of the *Book of Formation*. Knut Stenring gives the correct arrangement for these two letters, and we have received recently additional light on the matter which confirms his

findings.) South corresponds to the letter Resh, the Sun, and Key 19. West corresponds to the letter Kaph, Jupiter, and Key 10. The bodily centers involved are the Sun center at the heart and the Jupiter center, or solar plexus. In Putrefaction, these centers are indirectly affected by the work of self-denial and taking up the cross daily. Psychologically, too, alchemical Putrefaction involves a combination of the ideas symbolized by Keys 19 and 10. For when the old false conception of personality is repudiated, the new and true one, symbolized by Key 19 is automatically developed as a consequence. This new conception is an elaboration of the idea typified by Key 10, which idea may be put into the following words: Any particular event is really a manifestation of the cyclic transformation or rotation of the One Thing through the various phases of its self-expression. Every event is like a point on the circumference of a circle, or like a point on the rim of a turning wheel. It is continuous with all preceding events, and continuous with all succeeding events. For there is no break anywhere in the continuity of the Life-power's self-manifestation. As the *Fama Fraternitatis* puts it, "Nowhere a vacuum." The conception of *empty* space is a fallacy, a misinterpretation of appearances. All space is full of the presence of the ONE THING. Thus, since every particular event is continuous with all other events, such an event as the performance of a given action by a human body, or the utterance of a word, or the formation of a mental image, is really a particular expression of the power of the ONE THING at that particular time and place.

Clear perception that this is true destroys all sense of personal separateness. Hence the lightning-flash of Key 16 and the turning wheel of Key 10 are two symbols for one reality, and a third symbol for the same reality is the skeleton reaper of Key 13. Note that the numbers of these three Keys are related. The sum of the numbers from 0 to 10 is $55 = 5 + 5 = 10 = 1 + 0 = 1$. The sum of the numbers from 0 to 13 is $91 = 9 + 1 = 10 = 1 + 0 = 1$. The sum of the numbers from 0 to 16 is $136 = 1 + 3 + 6 = 10 = 1 + 0 = 1$. In fact all numbers in the series 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, and 19 are aspects of the number 1, and thus the Tarot Keys bearing these numbers all represent a single reality under various aspects. The key to them all is the Key numbered 1, The Magician, which stands for the Intelligence of Transparency – for the idea that all personal activity whatsoever is the result of the working of a super-conscious Life-power, through the functioning of a conscious instrument, whence its activity passes into the sub-conscious level, from which it ascends again to the super-conscious, returning on its upward journey *through self-consciousness* again.

Putrefaction is therefore the loss of the false interpretation of life, and this loss is absolutely necessary in order that the true interpretation may be found. What is lost is false, is a counterfeit, is the cause of all our miseries. By utterly destroying this error the truth becomes evident. We exchange our limited, and really non-existent, personal powers for the limitless, and truly existent, Life-power of the ONE IDENTITY.

All the while, remember, the power at work in all our

thinking, speech, and action has been the one Life-power. We do not change the reality in the least by our change of consciousness. We do not make anything so which was not so before. But we know the truth of the matter, and the truth makes us free.

It is because of this that Ripley speaks of Putrefaction as being "the rotting of gold." Gold, as we have seen elsewhere, is in spiritual alchemy a symbol of absolute truth. Furthermore, though the alchemists declare that the First Matter is Water, and call it by all manner of names, they agree, too, that the thing the alchemist must work upon is gold, or the alchemical Sun, pictured in Key 19.

Thus it follows that the substance which is reduced to black powder by Putrefaction is none other than gold. Physically this is true, as well as metaphysically, for what the alchemist works upon is the material of his own flesh-and-blood body, together with its finer etheric and astral counterparts. By setting up a new conception of personality, as the transparent vehicle of the One Reality, he actually changes the chemical and molecular structure of the physical vehicle. And that physical vehicle is really made out of the radiant energy of the physical sun. Even when we are mistaken about personality, and our errors result in a poisoned and pain-wracked physical body, the fundamental substance of that body is nevertheless the alchemical gold, or universal radiant energy. The pain, misery and limitation we experience are due to the forms, or appearances, taken by this universal radiance under the influence of

mental imagery. When the images are changed, the forms change, too.

Yes, it is as simple as that. Simple to say, and easy to grasp intellectually. Harder to do, at first, though practice makes it easier and easier, until it becomes second nature. The whole work of Putrefaction can be summed up in Jesus' admonition: "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Every day the work must be done. Every day the "cross" of the Saturn force must be lifted up. Every day, until the process becomes automatic, so that no trace of the former interpretation dims the transparency of the regenerated self-consciousness, one must deny the appearances of separate personal origination for any activity whatsoever. Here, in brief, is the practical method of Patanjali, of Buddha, of Jesus, of all the alchemists and of all Masters of Compassion. They who go this way reach the same goal that was reached by the Great Companions whose names have come down to us as the Illuminators, Regenerators and Saviors of humanity. This was their Way, whereby they set themselves free from illusion. It must become your Way, if you would share their freedom.

Hermetic Alchemy – Science and Practice
THE ALCHEMICAL PROCESS
Incineration – Fermentation – Dissolution - Multiplication

This lesson deals with the last four stages of the Great Work: INCINERATION, FERMENTATION, DISSOLUTION and MULTIPLICATION. INCINERATION corresponds to Sagittarius, FERMENTATION to Capricorn, DISSOLUTION to Aquarius, and MULTIPLICATION to Pisces.

The ninth stage of the Great Work is INCINERATION. To incinerate is to consume by fire, and the alchemical process of Incineration is accomplished by what the Bible calls a "refiner's fire." This stage of the work is connected also with the element of fire through the sign Sagittarius. Through Sagittarius, too, it is connected with the letter Samekh, which has these attributions:

The Intelligence of Probation or Trial; the mental state of Zeal or Wrath; the direction West-Above; Tarot Key 14, TEMPERANCE.

A careful study of Key 14 is requisite to proper understanding of this stage of the Great Work. And it must be remembered, too, that Incineration follows Putrefaction. Putrefaction is negative. It is the denial of the false origination of activity. Incineration goes further, and affirms the true origination of all that is accomplished through the personality.

Incineration burns to ashes the dross and refuse of the old ways of thinking. It consumes all the residue of our

erroneous interpretations of experience. This residue remains in sub-consciousness even after Putrefaction is complete. That is to say, even when we consciously attribute all action to the One Reality, and deny the personal origination of anything whatever, latent tendencies remain which must be purged out.

We ourselves cannot purge them out, because self-consciousness cannot penetrate into the depths of sub-consciousness. Hence the work of Putrefaction must precede that of Incineration, because something has to be brought to bear in the process of Incineration which cannot be done by the alchemist himself. A higher power has to be invoked. This is one of the reasons that all the Sages are agreed that they owe their success in the work to the Grace of God.

In the work of Incineration, then, a higher power takes the place of the alchemist. Recognition of this higher power is given in the Rosicrucian vow connected with Key 14 "I will look upon every circumstance of my life as a particular dealing of God with my soul." Understand by "soul" the whole psychic nature.

In magical texts this stage of Incineration is often called "The knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel." Thus in the various versions of Key 14, the angel is always shown as performing the alchemical work. In some versions the angel looks like a winged woman, pouring water from cup to cup. In others she stands before a moon-shaped cauldron of silver, from which the smoke of incense rises, and pours from her

right hand the flame of a torch upon an eagle, while from her left hand she pours water from a cornucopia upon a lion. In our version, taken from one of the most ancient esoteric designs, the sex of the angel appears to be male, and he wears the solar disc on his forehead. Hence the vase of water is in his right hand, and the torch in his left. But the water falls on the lion, and the fire on the eagle.

The Intelligence of Probation or Trial, assigned to Samekh, is said to be the first test by which the Creator tries the devout. The devout are those who are wholly devoted to realizing their identity with the One Reality. The technical Qabalistic term is Chasidim, (ChSDIM), "The merciful or beneficent ones." That is, Chasidim are persons who partake of the quality of Jupiter, for Chesed is the Sphere of Jupiter.

Now, Jupiter rules Sagittarius, and this indicates that the dominant influence operative in Incineration exerts its power through the Jupiter center in the body. For the Jupiter center is the great sub-conscious reservoir of impressions, and the process of Incineration clears that reservoir of all the refuse of past false interpretations of experience. The result is that one's consciousness becomes more and more identified with the cosmic cycles of the Life-power's activity, represented by Key 10.

Wrath, or Zeal, is the mental state attributed to the letter Samekh. The root-meaning of the Hebrew word so translated is "agitation, trembling," and thus the

fundamental significance is closely connected with vibration. The word is RVGZ, in which the first letter represents the Sun, the second corresponds to the earthy sign Taurus, the third is attributed to the Moon, and the last is assigned to Gemini, the Twins, ruled by Mercury. Often the word is spelt, RGZ, when it is a plain Qabalistic formula for Sun (R), Moon (G), and Mercury as ruler of Gemini (Z). This here is the intimation of something which uses the solar and lunar currents, in combination with Mercury. But on the very surface the idea of zeal or wrath is closely connected with what yogis call Rajas, the desire nature. This is akin to the *thumos* of the Platonic philosophy, and is related to the Red Dragon of the Book of Revelation, which symbolic beast is closely related to the dragon thus described in *The Book of Lambspring*:

“A savage Dragon lives in the forest,
Most venomous he is, yet lacking nothing:
When he sees the rays of the Sun and its bright
fire,
He scatters abroad his poison,
And flies upward so fiercely
That no living creature can stand before him,
Nor is even the Basilisk equal to him.
He who hath skill to slay him, wisely
Hath escaped from all dangers.
Yet all venom, and colors, are multiplied
In the hour of his death.
His venom becomes the great Medicine.
He quickly consumes his venom,
For he devours his poisonous tail.

And this is performed on his own body,
From which flows forth glorious Balm,
With all its miraculous virtues.
Hereat all the Sages do loudly rejoice.”

The illustration accompanying this description of the Dragon shows him biting his tail, so that his body forms itself into the very shape of the letter Samekh. The forest, of course, is the body itself.

Incineration, therefore, is the purging and refining of the desire-nature, which, when it is thoroughly purged and purified, having passed through the death of its old forms, becomes the Great Medicine. Our own personal consciousness, as has been said, is inadequate for the performance of this part of the work. Yet the work itself proceeds from the level of self-consciousness into the sub-conscious field where the actual incineration occurs.

This is indicated by the direction West-Above, assigned to Samekh. West relates to Jupiter and thus to the solar plexus, and what Tarot symbolizes by Key 10. Above relates to Mercury, and thus to the upper brain and pineal gland, and what Tarot symbolizes by Key 1. The point to be remembered is that the Magician does absolutely nothing but *watch*. The power which flows down through him is what accomplishes the Incineration, and that power is the Angel of Key 14. In Key 1 the Great Medicine is represented by the roses and lilies in the garden. These represent the purified generative activity of sub-consciousness (for flowers are

the reproductive organs of the vegetable kingdom.) The roses represent the Red stage of the alchemical work, which relates to alchemical gold, and the lilies represent the White work, or alchemical silver.

Now, roses represent the number 5, and lilies represent the number 6. In the Magician's garden there are 5 roses, so that their total number indicates $5 \times 5 = 25$. There are 4 lilies, so that their number indicates $4 \times 6 = 24$. The sum of 25 and 24 is 49, which refers to the Forty-nine Fires of the alchemical and yoga teaching. Forty-nine is also the square of Seven, and relates to the magic square of Venus, which has 49 cells, numbered from 1 to 9, in such a way that the constant summation of all the horizontal, vertical and diagonal rows is 175, which is the number of Kadmael (QDMAL), Spirit of Venus. The total value of the numbers in a magic square of Venus is the sum of the numbers from 1 to 49, or the extension of 49, which is 1225. 1225 is the number of Authiqa De-Authiqin (OThIQA DOTHIQIN), "The Ancient of the Ancient Ones," one of the titles of Kether, the Crown. (Note that Kether is represented by the crown above the end of the path in Key 14.)

All of these technical details refer to the garden of the Magician. That garden, as we see in Tarot Key 5, is The Empress, or the generative activity of sub-consciousness. This is related to the letter Daleth, assigned to Venus, and we are told that among the meanings of Daleth is womb, or matrix. The alchemical point here is that both gold and silver are brought forth from the womb of alchemical copper. Hence Norton

says, in his *Ordinal*: "It is a divine labour and work to change vile copper into the finest silver and gold." Note that he says it is a *divine* work. And Sendivogius writes, in his *New Chemical Light*: "As a woman is generated in the same womb, and out of the same seed as a man, and the only difference is in the degree of digestion, and the purity of the blood and salts, so silver is produced from the same seed, and in the same womb as gold." Alchemically speaking, this womb, as has been said, is copper, represented by Key 5 of Tarot.

Psychologically, then, Incineration is the process which consumes the dross of erroneous thinking. It rids subconsciousness of what Oriental sages call Samskaras, the subtle residue of the thoughts, feelings and actions of former lives. Putrefaction reduces the Matter to blackness, and then Incineration gradually changes it from blackness to whiteness and then from whiteness to redness. This figurative language refers to the reduction of the sense of separate personality to absolute nothingness, or blackness. Following this, Incineration first substitutes for the sense of separate personal origination of thought and action the idea that whatever goes on in the field of personal expression is really the reflection of the One Reality. This is the white stage of the work, or alchemical Silver. It is followed by the red stage, in which the various events in the field of personal experience are found to be, not only reflections of the One Identity, but the operation of that One Identity itself. Plainer than this I do not know how to speak.

Note the order of the stages. Black, White, Red; and

note that in Key 1, the Magician wears his red mantle *over* his white undergarment, so that he puts the white garment on first, and after it the red mantle.

But, above all, remember these words from *The Glory of the World*: "For it is Nature alone that accomplishes the various processes of our Art, and a right understanding of Nature will furnish you with eyes wherewith to perceive the secrets thereof." Alchemical Incineration is the process which establishes this knowledge firmly in the alchemist's consciousness. Whether we represent Nature, as more commonly, and as in some old Tarot Keys, by a feminine figure, or whether by a figure, as in our version of Key 14, which seems to be predominantly male, One Reality is meant. The great lesson is that we do not really do any part of the work ourselves. Our personal activities are simply transformations of the One Energy. In the recesses of our bodies are the "secret vessels."

Thus the book we have just quoted says, in another place:

"When God had created the world, and adorned it with all manner of green things, herbs, roots, leaves, flowers, grass, and also with animals and minerals, he blessed them, and appointed that everything should bring forth fruit and seed after its kind. Only Adam (who is our Matter) was not yet in a position to produce any fruit out of himself. Before he could propagate his species, it was necessary that a part of him should be taken away, and again joined to him, *i.e.*, his wife Eve. Hereunto we

must understand that so long as our substance is still gross and undivided, it can produce no fruit. It must first be divided, the subtle from the gross, or the water from the earth. The water is Eve, or the spirit; the earth Adam, or the body.”

Our author here uses the term "spirit" as representing the moving principle, whereas we use the same word to designate a yet higher principle, and would say that Eve is the soul, or psychic nature. Otherwise what is said by him is just what has been said throughout this course, and in the various lessons on Tarot. Eve is the High Priestess, and Adam is the Magician. Eve is the inner consciousness which may be so controlled that it becomes the pure mirror of Universal Spirit. Adam is the self-consciousness, founded upon the experiences we receive through bodily sensation. And here it should be noted that Key 14 belongs to the series 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 20. This series has to do with powers which are predominantly sub-conscious, and in all but one of these seven Keys, the central figure, in the older exoteric Tarot, is feminine. The exception is the Hierophant, Key 5, but it is to be noted that he wears feminine garments, because the super-conscious instruction of Intuition is clothed in imagery provided by sub-consciousness, and sub-consciousness is the channel through which we receive Intuition.

The tenth stage of the Great Work is FERMENTATION. To ferment is, in the older sense of the word, to leaven. We know now that fermentation is decomposition produced in an organic substance by

living organisms. Whether this was equally well known to the ancients may be questioned, but it is certain that the secret schools have always understood the process of fermentation to be analogous to something higher. Thus Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. Incidentally, this parable of Jesus is a perfect summary of the tenth stage of the Great Work.

Through its connection with the sign Capricorn, Fermentaion is in correspondence with the letter Ayin, which has these attributions: The Renewing Intelligence; the mental state of Mirth; the direction West-Below; Tarot Key 15, THE DEVIL.

The letter-name Ayin means "the eye, as the organ of sight," but the word signifies also "the visible part of an object, the surface, the appearance." Even in ordinary Hebrew usage, therefore, Ayin is associated with the phenomenal as opposed to the real; with that which is given in sensation or impression as opposed to that which is subject to rational verification. The eye is the natural symbol of the external shows which conceal Reality. It is the sign of man's finite experience of "things as they seem," as opposed to things as they really are. It is through the function of the eye that we become aware of the phantasmagoria of the phenomenal world, which Shakespeare called "this insubstantial pageant." The natural, untrained eye is a great deceiver. Hence in Tarot the letter named "eye" is represented by Key 15, whose title, "THE DEVIL," means "The

Slanderer."

Diabolos, the greek original of "Devil," means, by its derivations, "He who throws across," that is to say, one who throws obstacles in the way of another's progress. Just as a slanderer's aim is to blacken the reputation of the person he lies about, and hinder him in the execution of his plans, so that which is personified in Tarot as THE DEVIL is what tells man falsehoods about his nature, and concerning his rightful place in the scheme of things.

This being so, it may seem difficult to understand how Key 15 is the representative of the Renewing Intelligence, which is said to be so called "because by it the Holy God renews all that is begun afresh in the creation of the world." What connection can there be between the false shows of the surface appearance of things and the consciousness which makes all things new? The answer to this question brings us close to the inner secrets of Ageless Wisdom.

The Sages declare that the world of appearances is not in itself a world of deception. The delusions arise from our tendency to take things at their face value. The world of appearances excites our attention. However much we may misunderstand it, it piques our interest. We wonder about it. We are made curious by what we see. Wherever we look there is something to challenge us, something to puzzle us, some riddle to read, some problem to solve.

In normally constituted minds, wonder is the beginning

of growth, and what most thoroughly excites our wonder is the discovery that things are by no means what they seem. This discovery is the seed of science, or better, the leaven which transforms our consciousness. Thus it is written, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge." (Prov. 1:7) To the untrained eye, to the undisciplined mind, the marvels of the world strike terror; but in every generation there are a few persons whom wonder prods into investigating something that simply scare most of their contemporaries.

Thus what we fear is what really instructs us, and sets our feet upon the Path of Liberation. On this account Ageless Wisdom says, "The Devil is God as He is misunderstood by the wicked," and Eliphaz Levi tells us that the Devil of exoteric dogmatism is the First Matter of the alchemist.

It is easy to see why this teaching has always been carefully hidden by a veil of words and symbols. Even today, numbers of persons who can read, "The Devil is God as He is misunderstood by the wicked," might have great difficulty if they came upon the bold, unqualified statement, "The Devil is God."

Yet the sacred books of all religions are filled with hints to the same effect. Theological hocus-pocus has artfully turned the attention of church-goers away from these hard sayings, but they abound, even in the Bible. Thus, in the 45th chapter of Isaiah, Jehovah is made to say, "I create evil." And in the 3rd chapter of Amos is equally

explicit: "Shall there be evil in a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?" In both these instances the word for "evil" means just what it says, and the original Hebrew includes all manner of moral evil and human wickedness. Similarly, the Book of Job calls Satan one of the Sons of God, a technical name for a certain order of angels. Critics of the Bible have collected many instances of the same sort, which show beyond question that God is regarded by the writers of these books as being the author of the ills which beset us, as well as the source of the experiences we call good.

The solution of the difficulty is in the statement: "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the perverse thou wilt show thyself perverse." This occurs twice, in exactly the same words, in 2 Samuel, 22:27, and in Psalms 18:26. THE LIFE-POWER PRESENTS ITSELF TO US AS WE CONCEIVE IT. The human conception of a Prince of Darkness is only an ignorant misunderstanding of the working of the Power of Light. Paradoxically, there is nothing whatever like the malignant demon pictured in Key 15, yet at the same time that unlovely figure represents an Eternal Reality.

It is in those manifestations of the Life-power which ignorance ascribes to a malignant personal enemy of mankind that the Sages find the true power of renewal. It is in the apparent exceptions to the formulated laws of nature that the wise find clues to higher laws. It is in puzzles and paradoxes, difficulties and problems that Those Who Know find cause for rejoicing and mirth. Hence, in all messages which have been received from

Those who are regarded as Masters of the Wisdom we find the idea reiterated that They have great problems, to which, as yet, they have found no answers. "We have solved the problems that seem so difficult to you. We know the Way which leads to freedom from bondage to circumstances, from sickness, from the dread of death, from the semblance of poverty and other forms of inadequate supply, they tell us. "But we have problems, too, only we know how to go about solving them, *because we possess the Universal Solvent*. You possess it, too, or the materials from which it is made by alchemical Art. Let us show you how to make the STONE, and then you may join that mirthful company of Great Companions, who laugh at fear, and dissolve the terrors of the Unknown with a smile."

Remember that in Jesus' parable, a Woman took the leaven. Up to this tenth stage of the alchemical process you have been preparing the leaven. Now the Woman (sub-consciousness) must take it, and mix it with the seemingly chaotic, lawless mass of sense-experiences typified by the Devil.

Consequently we find that Fermentation is connected with the direction West-Below. West corresponds to the solar plexus, or Jupiter center. Below corresponds to the Moon center, the pituitary body, symbolized in Tarot by the High Priestess. The Tarot Key numbered 12 is the summary of the Keys corresponding to these two directions, for West is assigned to Key 10 and Below to Key 2. Thus Fermentation is represented by the Hanged Man as well as by The Devil. That is to say, when the leaven of super-consciousness has been received,

through the suspension of personal identification with event and actions which occur *through*, rather than by, the personal vehicle (Hanged Man), this leaven begins to operate in the sub-conscious region.

Going back to the sign Capricorn, we find that all over the world this is the sign of the zodiac associated with the birth of World-Saviors. For it is in Capricorn that the Sun, in northern latitudes, begins to move northward, and awakes from its seeming death. Again, in Capricorn the planet Mars is said to be exalted. Now, remember that Mars rules Aries, associated through the letter Heh with Sight. Remember, too, that it rules Scorpio, associated with sex, and with alchemical Putrefaction. And, if you have had our lessons on Tarot Interpretation remember, too, that Mars itself is connected with "The Exciting or Active Intelligence."

Then turn to your dictionary, and you will find that, as a figure of speech, Fermentation signifies agitation, excitement, so that when one is "all in a ferment" we know he is stirred up to a high pitch of emotional activity. Alchemical fermentation is just that, and in it the Matter bubbles and boils with the energy which is transforming it from the chaotic state of putrefaction into that which the Sages call "our Medicine."

Saturn rules Capricorn, and this should show you that the active center in this part of the work is the center at the base of the spine, whose energy is combined in Fermentation with the force of the Mars center.

Note that in Key 15 the alchemical Man and Woman are

chained, and that they have horns and hoofs. The animal nature is intensified at this stage, and nowhere else in the Great Work is it so evident to the operator that the lower elements of personality are of like nature with the beasts. Yet the chaining is necessary, and partakes of the limiting nature of Saturn, the ruler of Capricorn. The same idea is thus expressed by Ripley: "Fix Water and Earth together, and when the Medicine flows like wax, then throw it upon amalgams. And when all this is mixed together, seal your Glass tightly, and make a fire above it, and so continue until all be fixed."

The "amalgams" are the mixtures of appearances, seemingly unrelated, of which the composite figure of the Devil is a type. The Water is the Woman. The Earth is the Man. The Glass must be sealed tightly, or Hermetically sealed. This last refers to the field of observation wherein the work is carried on. The Glass is analogous, in other words, to the Table of the Magician, shown in Key 1. It is the field of attention, in one sense, but it is really more than this, in the actual practical work. It is the "One Vessel" *into* which the alchemist puts the materials upon which he works and into which he looks, to watch the progress of the operation.

Truly it is a Magic Glass, and I doubt if any reader of these pages will fail to identify it correctly when I say that the Sages recommend that it be oval in shape, and fashioned to resist fire. I cannot speak more plainly at this point. As Sendivogius says to his readers, "Let me therefore admonish the gentle reader that my meaning is to be apprehended not so much from the outer husk of

my words, as from the inward spirit of Nature." (The italics are mine.)

Thus let me conclude this section on Fermentation by saying that it is all summarized in Key 15 of Tarot. Study that Key well, and if you have any access to the inward spirit of Nature, you will learn the whole mystery of Fermentation. For here you have been put on the right track, and that far more explicitly than in the writings of the earlier adepts of Hermetic Science.

The eleventh stage of the Great work is DISSOLUTION, or SOLUTION. Solution is the process by which two or more substances are combined to form a single homogeneous mixture, usually a liquid, sometimes a solid. That is the meaning in ordinary chemistry, and it has a bearing upon the alchemical significance of the term, as has the mathematical definition of Solution: "The act or method of determining the answer to a problem."

DISSOLUTION is in correspondence with the zodiacal sign Aquarius. This sign corresponds to the letter Tzaddi, which has the following meanings:

Natural Intelligence; the function of Meditation; the direction South-Above; Tarot Key 17, THE STAR.

Says Ripley: "We dissolve into water which does not wet the hand." And he tells us, too, that solution is the cause of congelation. Now, to congeal is to freeze, or to render solid by the lowering of temperature. All solids

are congealed fluids. Thus Walter Russell, who has had independent insight into the alchemical work, says:

"Man's dependable realities are but the 'ices' of substances. And so are all things which man knows and sees and feels and stands upon and builds upon, and upon which he relies as true and staunch and real and everlasting. All are but as ice, and, at their respective melting points, as reliable as ice. If this planet did not know a temperature above that which keeps ice solid, man's concept of ice would have as much stability as his concept of granite..."

"All solids have their several melting points or points of liquefaction. All solids are liquefied gases and frozen liquids which have their varying liquefaction and freezing points. Freezing points are points of crystallization and vary with the complexity of the elements. All frozen solids can be liquefied by heat. All liquids can be broken into gases by still more heat... All gases can be liquefied by cold, and solidified by greater cold... Man's concept of solids is born out of his experiences at the degree of temperature to which he is daily accustomed... Man's concept of gold is that of a solid, for man is accustomed to seeing gold at a temperature below its point of crystallization. Man's concept of mercury is that of a liquid, because man is accustomed to seeing it above its point of crystallization."

– Walter Russell, *The Universal One*, pp. 60, 61.

Alchemical Solution is the cause of alchemical

congelation, since it is the process which reduces all solid bodies in man's experience into their elemental "water." This process is the process of meditation, which enables one proficient in it to change his consciousness of any solid into direct metaphysical awareness of that solid's essential spiritual substance, the alchemical water, or First Matter. Solution therefore enables the alchemist to perceive the true fluidic *substance* of the forms reported to him by his physical senses. And when that substance is perceived directly, as a consequence of meditation, the alchemist learns at first hand that *it is a substance which can be molded by mental imagery*. Then, if the matrix be kept intact, that is, if the mental image remain unbroken, the invisible fluidic substance can be "cooled" until it becomes an actual physical object in the personal environment of the alchemist. This "cooling" is the congelation which is caused by alchemical solution.

Great adepts in this work are able, therefore, to alter the forms of solids, so that they actually transmute metals by means of the "Stone." Lesser adepts, however, work by the same principle, although the changes which they effect in their environment by the power of mental imagery are less rapid, and often seem to come about by "natural" means. Ability to transform and transmute objects of the physical plane by forming matrices of mental imagery varies among the adepts. The earlier stages of this work are those whereby the alchemist alters the functioning, chemistry and structure of his own body. Having done this, he progresses to control of the forms of the animal kingdom. Then he exerts a

similar control over the vegetable kingdom. And last of all comes the mineral work, represented by the mountain in the background of Keys 17, 8 and 6.

Meditation is the basis of alchemical Solution, and meditation begins at the self-conscious level of human mentality, with the act of concentration upon some particular object. Any object will do, for the inner essence of all things is identical. Patanjali, whose yoga aphorisms should be studied in this connection, defines meditation as an unbroken flow of knowledge in a particular object. He gives specific directions for progress from simple concentration on, step by step, to the "seedless Samadhi." Study his instruction if you wish to gain a clear understanding of alchemical Solution.

In Tarot Key 17, however, there is one point made very clear by the symbolism. **MEDITATION IS A COSMIC PROCESS.** Therefore, when we meditate, we simply enter into a stream of activity which is always continuing. By this I mean that the whole technique of meditation consists in getting personality out of the picture. It is not we who unveil Nature, as Key 17 intimates. Nature unveils herself to us.

Talbot Mundy has a story in which he describes an airship whose motive power is the electric and magnetic currents of the earth. The apparatus consists simply in a mechanism which brings the airship into the sweep of those currents, as a cable-car is set in motion when its mechanism grips the cable. Meditation is like that. It is

not we who meditated. Rather are we swept by the preliminary practices into the stream of the cosmic meditation.

Thus Key 17 is related to the direction South-Above, because it symbolizes a process which begins in the field of Mercury, or the Magician (Above). Hence, in the picture, an ibis, the bird of Mercury, perches in the tree behind the kneeling woman. The result of the work of meditation is the state of mind depicted in Key 19, corresponding to the direction South. Note that this direction combines Mercury (Above) with the Sun (South), so that two interior stars are indicated – the Mercury center in the upper brain, and the Sun center near the heart. Success in meditation does actually establish a current of subtle energy which flows between these two centers.

Aquarius, the sign corresponding to alchemical Solution, is represented in the Tarot Keys, not only by Key 17, but also by the head of a man, shown on Keys 10 and 21. Note that it is to this corner of the design that the Fool looks, in Key 0, and remember that in some old versions of Tarot the Fool is named the Alchemist. Meditation reveals to man the secret of his own essential nature, and reveals also the truth that this essential nature is the innermost essence of all things whatsoever. Man himself is the object of all occult study, and man himself is the First Matter and the Philosopher's Stone. Through alchemical Solution, then, we find not only the inner essence of the object meditated upon, discovering it to be the "water which

will not wet the hand," but we learn also the absolute identity of that "water" with the essence of our own being.

Ripley says: "Here I will disclose to you a secret, which is the ground of all our secrets; and if you do not know it, you shall lose all your labor and expense, both great and small. Take heed, therefore, that you do not fall into error. **THE MORE EARTH YOU HAVE, AND THE LESS WATER, THE BETTER YOUR SOLUTION.** Consider how ice is turned to water, as it must, because it was water before. Just so our earth is transformed into water, and water is congealed by earth. For all the sages tell us that every metal was once mineral water, and thus they turn all to water with water."

The alchemical water, remember, is the fluid substance we know as mind-stuff. It is the water of life. It is the astral fluid. It is the living, conscious, electro-magnetic energy that is the true substance of all things. Its currents flow through our brains, and meditation, or alchemical Solution, is simply the right direction of those currents. Or, as has been said before, it is an entrance into the *cosmic* flux and reflux of those currents. Hence all the alchemists agree that the Great Work cannot be understood or performed unless the alchemist find a Master. Who is the Master? Tarot represents him as the Hierophant and the Hermit. Need I say more?

Meditation reduces the appearances of the outer world to their inner essence. Thus it agrees with the chemical definition of solution given in the first paragraph of this

section on solution. Meditation is said, therefore, to be the means whereby we overcome the influence of the pairs of opposites. Our senses report to us a heterogeneous collection of separate objects. Meditation makes us perceive that every single thing is not only related to all other things, but that every single thing is also made of the same stuff from which all other forms are built up. This, remember, is not conviction or belief. It is direct metaphysical perception, for meditation opens the inner sensorium. Thus meditation transforms theory into experience, and when one has had the experience his whole interpretation of Nature changes. Nature unveils herself to him, as we see in Key 17. And when she does he learns, so that he never forgets, that never for one single instant is Nature his adversary. Thus meditation transforms the appearance of Nature from the grisly terror of Key 15, and from the cataclysmic disaster of Key 16, into the peaceful, beneficent Mother of us all, shown in Key 17. This, incidentally, is the transmutation of copper into gold, in the spiritual sense, for the kneeling woman in Key 17 is the same as the Empress of Key 3, and as the woman taming the Red Lion in Key 8. She is Venus-Urania, the heavenly Venus.

Alchemical Dissolution or Solution, then, is primarily a psychological process. It lifts up (see Key 17) the energy stored in the reservoirs of sub-consciousness into the field of conscious awareness. It unfolds the metaphysical sensorium, and gives us direct experience of the inner and true nature of all things. It also effects changes in the physical and subtler bodies of the

alchemist, so that his personality becomes a better vehicle of expression for the Life-power. These physiological changes are the inevitable consequence of meditation, or alchemical Solution, and they lead to the last stage of the Great Work.

This is called MULTIPLICATION, and through its association with the zodiacal sign Pisces, it is linked with the occult meanings of the letter Qoph, which are:

The Corporeal Intelligence; the function of Sleep; the direction South-Below; Tarot Key 18, THE MOON.

Multiplication is the act or process of increasing in number or quantity. It is the process by which the alchemist who has succeeded in Solution, and the stages of the work preceding it, augments the Elixir. Hence Ripley compares it to fire, from which many other fires may be kindled.

The whole idea behind multiplication is the idea in the parable of the leaven. Hence Ripley, in his chapter on Multiplication, says that Multiplication is accomplished by repeated, or iterated, Fermentation. He compares it to the action of saffron, which, when it is pulverized, tinges a large quantity of fluid with its yellow color. He also says:

"Keep your fire morning and night, so that you do not need to run from house to house to borrow fire from your neighbors." The better you tend the fire, the more good you will win, multiplying more and more

continually within your Glass, by feeding it with Mercury as long as you live. Then you will have more than you need to spend."

The fire is, of course, the alchemical fire of the regenerated consciousness. To run from house to house may be a reference to reincarnation, but it also refers to the inner enthusiasm which requires no outward stimulus. The Glass in which the "One Vessel" of the alchemist, the oval glass which has been mentioned earlier in these lessons. The Mercury with which the Elixir is fed is self-conscious attention, alert awareness of all the details of daily experience.

Multiplication, in brief, is the tingeing of the whole body with the consciousness which is first experienced when the Stone is actually made within the pineal gland. Hence it is associated with the Corporeal Intelligence.

Corporeal Intelligence, say the Qabalists, is so called because "it forms every body which is formed in all the worlds, and the reproduction of them." This statement applies to the four worlds of the Qabalistic (which is also the alchemical) philosophy. It implies that there is a body, or vehicle, appropriate to every world.

The Corporeal Intelligence builds a body suitable to the Life-power's expression in any environment. It builds the bodies of all the four kingdoms whose activity constitutes the life of this planet. The same consciousness builds bodies (archetypal, mental, astral and physical) everywhere else in the universe. Thus

Judge Troward writes:

"Manifestation is the growth proceeding *from* the Principle, that is to say, some Form in which the Principle becomes active. At the same time we must recollect that, though *a* form is necessary for manifestation, *the* form is not essential, for the same Principle may manifest through various forms, just as electricity may work either through a lamp or a tram-car without in any way changing its inherent nature. In this way we are brought to the conclusion that the Life-principle must always provide itself with a body in which to function, though it does not follow that this body must always be of the same chemical constitution as the one we now possess. We might well imagine some distant planet where the chemical combinations with which we are familiar on earth did not obtain; but if the essential Life-principle of any individual were transported thither, then by the Law of the Creative Process it would proceed to clothe itself with a material body drawn from the atmosphere and substance of that planet; and the personality thus produced would be quite at home there, for all his surroundings would be perfectly natural to him, however different the laws of nature might be there from what we know here." – *The Creative Process in the Individual*, page 46.

Sub-consciousness is the Corporeal Intelligence. We have no self-consciousness which tells us anything directly concerning the complex processes whereby bodies are built, maintained, and reproduced. All these processes are below the threshold of our waking

awareness.

Thus in Tarot and the Qabalah they are associated with sleep. During sleep sub-consciousness repairs the waste of the body, and it is during sleep that multiplication, in alchemy, goes on. Sub-consciousness has built, repaired, reproduced and transformed all the vehicles of the Life-power. Beginning with atoms, it has developed all the mineral, vegetable and animal bodies on this planet, and wherever else life is manifest.

In the process of alchemical multiplication the Corporeal Intelligence tinges every one of the thirty trillion cells of the physical body with the illuminated consciousness of the adept. The result is a subtle change in the physical vehicle, and in the alchemist's finer bodies. The principal chemical changes are in the blood stream, and recent developments in biology make it probable that these changes have to do with the functioning of the ductless glands, which are undoubtedly connected with the great nerve-centers which alchemists call Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, etc., and which yogis term "chakras".

When the process of multiplication is perfected, the whole organism of the alchemist is so charged that many extraordinary phenomena are observed in its presence. All the stories of miracles may be accounted for in this way. That is to say, the transformed vehicle of an adept can interrupt and transform rates of the Life-power's electromagnetic vibration which have no effect on the body of the ordinary human being. The adept in

alchemy can utilize directly with no other instrument than his own body, currents of the universal energy whereby every form in his physical environment may be changed, if there be any good reason for effecting such a transformation. Such an adept truly possesses the universal medicine, and he can heal all diseases and even raise the dead.

Understand that here not the least tinge of metaphor is to be understood. We mean exactly what we say, and there is abundant evidence available for personas who are properly qualified to receive it. Even to the transmutation of physical metals, the claims of alchemy are to be understood literally. The transmutation instrument is the body of the alchemist himself, subtly changed by the Great Work, so that by mental imagery alone he can make matrices into which the universal substance will flow *and take those forms*.

In the space which remains we wish to speak first of projection, which is sometimes included among the 12 stages of the Great Work, but which does not really belong to the Work itself. For projection is impossible until the Great Work is completed.

In the physical sense, projection is the transmutation of the base metals, or even the refuse of the earth into pure gold and silver. Let me repeat that this is perfectly possible when the body of the alchemist has been made anew, as heretofore described.

But even more wonderful is the metaphysical aspect of Projection. This, first of all, is able to change human

personality, not only physically, but also mentally and morally. The physical transmutation may range all the way from merely establishing normal function in a diseased body to the entire regeneration of the personality, so that all the stages of the Great Work may be rapidly accomplished by the person who has the good fortune to be in contact with a true Master of the Great Work.

The disciples of Jesus enjoyed such an experience. It was their contact with the master Alchemist which so transformed their lives that unlettered fisherman became subtle exponents of Ageless Wisdom. More recently, the Hindu sage, Ramakrishna, exerted a similar influence although he was not so completely perfected a Master as Jesus. And there are other Masters of the Great Work have had tremendous influence, though they are not so well known.

I know of one who was able, not so many years ago, to transmit to one of his pupils, chosen by him for this purpose, the entire content of a recondite system of instruction embodying the principles of Ageless Wisdom. This was accomplished in less than three weeks, and the whole body of knowledge which that pupil could not have gained in many years of study, was indelibly impressed on his sub-consciousness, together with the means of recovering it.

Do not misunderstand me. The pupil did not *understand* what had been projected on his brain-cells. He simply *received* it, and was enabled to grasp certain

fundamental principles by reason of his contact with the illuminated Teacher. In the years which have passed since then, he has entered gradually into a better understanding of some of the instruction and will go on doing so the rest of his life. Yet the instruction itself was impressed on him as a whole and all of it can be reproduced, word for word, at any time.

This is an unusual, but by no means unique, instance of *mental* application of the principle of alchemical projection. There are many persons who are more or less unconscious vehicles for some alchemist's mental projection. Thus Patanjali says one of the results of success in yoga is that the yogi can enter the bodies of others. By this, he does not mean that the yogi ousts the original occupant of that body, or even that he overshadows that other's personality to the extent of obsessing it. But Masters of Insight know what personalities may be suitable vehicles for the higher knowledge. Thus it often occurs that a person who supposes himself to be a discoverer, or an original thinker, is really only a relay station, so to say, for the consciousness of an adept.

In this connection, Ripley warns against making projection upon uncleansed metals. Understand here that metals represent not only the seven great centers of the human body, but also human personalities, whose functions are directed through the activity of these centers. To the extent that your consciousness is enlightened, to that extent are you already an alchemist. Beware how you attempt to transfer your enlightenment

to unprepared persons. "Cast not your pearls before swine" is another version of the same meaning.

Neither be hasty to communicate your knowledge to many. On this point Ripley says we should first make projection on ten, and then through the action of these upon a hundred, and so on. Tyros are always in a hurry to convert the world. Wise men know this is a gradual process. Thus THE FAMA FRATERNITATIS relates that our Father and Brother C.R. called unto himself at first only three persons, and then four more, and that by these 8 the whole Invisible Rosicrucian Order was established.

Finally, now that we have finished our survey of the stages of the Great Work, let us remind you that the order in which they are given here is not the only order. There are various slight differences, in terminology and arrangement.

Consider this well, for it is very much to the point. Too much emphasis is laid by some on exact and restricted definition and procedure. Keep in mind the fundamental principle: The sages never lie, for a sage cannot; but they are never so much to be suspected as when they seem to speak most openly. Whether we like it or not, the sages remain true to their obligations of secrecy. This is as true now as ever it was, and as we review the pages of this course, we find that there is many a passage in which we have done our best to be explicit, and in which we have actually succeeded in being perfectly clear, which will seem involved and difficult

to many a reader. For the nature of the central secret of alchemy is such that it can be stated clearly to none but those who already know it. If you have the experience, you understand the language. When you, who read this, share our knowledge, you will know our words are plain and true.

ROSICRUCIAN ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DAWN

The Rosicrucian Order of the Golden Dawn operates as an outer expression of the philosophy, objective, and practical work found in the public declarations of the Rosicrucians in the *Fama* and *Confessio*, which were published in Germany in 1610 and 1615, respectively. In these documents, the authors declare a method and society involved in the transformation of man into a compassionate, socially aware individual, committed to the service of the Brotherhood of Humanity, and the extension of the true gifts of Mankind. Compassion (R.C., “roke”, Hebrew for “tenderness”) is the true mark of a Rosicrucian and the motivation of our Work.

In 1888, three high ranking Adepts of the Western Mystery Tradition formed the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (H.O.G.D.). Around the turn of the century, a series of events culminated in the revolt of the Adepts of the H.O.G.D. and the consequent expulsion of MacGregor Mathers who at this time was the only remaining founder. The remaining Adepts continued the Order as the “Stella Matutina” (with the support of one of the founders, William Wynn Wescott) and MacGregor Mathers went on to reformulate the Order as the “Rosicrucian Order of the Alpha et Omega”. Much of this has been documented by R.A. Gilbert and Darcy Kuntz and we direct those interested in such to the published works of these gentlemen.

It is sufficient to state for the purpose of this introduction, the original stream of the H.O.G.D. and its

two branches have continued to this day. The Founders of the Rosicrucian Order of the Golden Dawn (R.O.G.D.), have been personally trained by the leaders of each in fully operating Esoteric Orders. The Work of the R.O.G.D. includes and expands upon the work of the three encompassing the highest grades of the Golden Dawn and Rosicrucian Tradition. The R.O.G.D. acknowledges Apostolic Succession and strongly endorses the value of Lineage and its importance within our Tradition. Each grade of the R.O.G.D. has been received in proper form by those who have received such all the way to the original Founders of the H.O.G.D. and beyond.

All candidates for Initiation into the R.O.G.D. must complete a six-month Probationary Membership. The R.O.G.D., as a vehicle for the True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order, offers this service “gratis”, that is, we offer it as a genuine gift and we do not ask anything in return, monetary or otherwise. The only condition is to turn in each month’s record before we send out the next lesson.

Currently we offer Initiation at our Mother Temple located in Southern California. Membership requires a monthly attendance and a few additional times a year for grade work. The astral component of our rituals is a critical aspect, but the candidate must be physically present at our Initiation and Grade Rituals.

Please visit our web site at www.rogd.org