

The Alchemical Process 4

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 subconscious 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 subconscious 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 DOTHQIN), "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 3, 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 3 of Tarot.

Psychologically, then, Incineration is the process which consumes the dross of erroneous thinking. It rids sub-consciousness 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, Fermentation 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 subconscious 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 awoken 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 selfconscious 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 Lifepower’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 tramcar without in any way changing its inherent nature. In this way we are brought to the conclusion that the Lifeprinciple 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 Lifeprinciple 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 selfconsciousness 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 Lifepower. 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 thinkers, 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 eight 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.