

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 congelated 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."

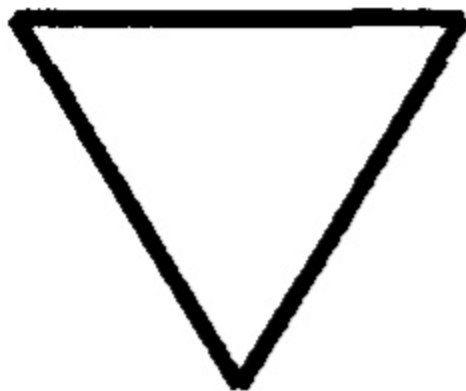
The chemical formula for ordinary water is H_2O , or two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. Recently it has been discovered that there are two kinds of hydrogen atoms, one heavier than the other, and by isolating the heavy atoms it has been possible to make a "heavy" water which differs from ordinary 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 H₂O 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 BRIAH, *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 BRIAH, *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 subconscious 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 Sephirah, 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 Sephirah 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 Sephirah 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 KBShIM, *Kebeshim*, '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.