

The Alchemical Process 2

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 co-operation 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 subconscious, 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 recombined 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 subconscious, 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 self-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 subconscious 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 subconscious 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.