

These notes on Alchemy were liberally extracted and summarized from a brilliantly lucid work on Alchemy titled: The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation by Dennis Hauck

The One Thing;

The supreme force was called in the Emerald Tablet of Hermes, the One Thing which had no perceptible form until it was expressed in material reality. The expression of that force is guided by the One Mind, and is a process responsible for the creation of the Universe. This unseen force can be contacted and controlled by mankind through divine union.. merging with the One Mind in meditation and prayer. The only way to change our situation of death and rebirth is to identify with this immortal essence.

Alchemy is a process developed to purify the ego/personality so that one might develop gnosis or direct knowledge of divine truth. The elements are the beginning of this journey of purification. Earth. Air. Water. Fire. (and finally aether or the quintessence). Alchemists worked with the hidden qualities of the physical elements. They were the first four things that evolved out of chaos and it is their contrary action which kept up the harmony and equilibrium of the mechanisms of the Universe. Simply put, Fire represented the thinking function, Air the intuition function, Water the feeling function and Earth the sensation function. Fire and air were considered active masculine elements and Water and Earth passive and feminine elements. In short, on all levels of reality, physical, mental and spiritual everything is made up of a unique combination of the four elements and everything strives for a complete and balanced expression of these elements.

From the Above, there was thought to be a trinity of forces operating to shape physical reality. They called the Father or masculine principle Sulfur which was symbolically represented as the King or Lion; to the androgynous principle they gave the name Mercury which was symbolically represented as an upright stag and the Mother of feminine principle within matter which they called Salt which was symbolically represented as the Star of David uniting Fire and Water, Above and Below. Fire corresponds to sulfur; Water corresponds to mercury; Earth corresponds to Salt. These can be looked at in the most general way as the Universal forces of energy, consciousness and matter. The fusion of Sulfur and Mercury, will and imagination, is the key to the entire Work of alchemy.

Hermes says, "You are bound to earth because of the gravity of your soul. Once your thoughts are purified, ascent and descent are as natural as breathing since the Above is subtle and the Below is gross. The subtlest part of matter is soul; the subtlest part of soul is spirit and the subtlest part of spirit is God. To travel in these realms you only need change the density of your thoughts. First you must free yourself from the lead of denial and fear for they destroy all subtle things and make lead of gold! You cannot ascend and still have fear. Look in the deepest of your wounds, for there lies the gold of your being. Though it pains you, you must mine this lead from where it has accumulated. Release this treasure to the light of consciousness and follow it as it flies upward and merges with the greater Sun, to the place where fear cannot follow."

From out-of-body and near death experience accounts and psychedelic visions, description of the cosmic axis are remarkably similar. There is always a brilliant light above a watery darkness below. This primeval fluid can be shaped into anything. When acted on from Above, the One Thing is infused with the fire of consciousness and this union of Fire and Water is the ultimate act of creation.

As part of the doctrine of Correspondences expressed in the Emerald Tablet postulates that corresponding plane of creation exist in any given situation that mirror a higher source or explanation for things. The powers of the Above and Below continue to manifest themselves in ways we cannot comprehend until we access the levels from which they emanate. This is a perfect definition for the concept of archetypes, which are primordial ideal of independent forces that impose pre-existing patterns of organization of various levels of manifest reality. There are the basic four elements of matter fashioned out of the One Thing and there are Eight Heavenly Spheres contained within the One Mind itself. Though invisible, the One Thing can be thought of as a morphic field or interdimensional force that is part of the very fabric of space.

What is called Prima Materia or First Matter in alchemy is the common source of all things on all levels. It was the force that without accumulation, all experiments, physical, psychological or spiritual in nature, were doomed to failure. The alchemists saw the true imagination as the Star in Man, as that Prima Materia whose symbol was the Ouroboros or fire breathing dragons to emphasize the androgynous nature of this material. This serpent/dragon was devoured, melted, dissolved and transformed in the alchemical process. By imagination was meant a special kind of mental visualization or the fundamental morphable energy of pure consciousness that was directly connected to the ground of reality, rather than simply fantasy.

The First Operation in Alchemy is Calcination.

The alchemical operation corresponding to Fire is Calcination, the first process in transformation. Its metal is lead and its planet Saturn. Calcination is the reduction of a substances to ashes, and it requires an intense flame to succeed. Psychologically, Calcination represents the burning off of the dross of personality to reveal one's soul. This is often a very painful process in which the ego/mind and its attachments and defense mechanisms are eliminated to free us from self deception. This process involves breaking down crystallized thoughts and belief systems. A potent symbol for calcination is the salamander that lives in fire.

The Second Operation in Alchemy is Dissolution

The alchemical operation corresponding to Water is Dissolution. Its metal is tin and its planet Jupiter. Water symbolizes the dissolving power of the liquid state as well as the property of cleansing. Water is symbolic of the freedom of matter to change. Just as Calcination works on the mind and ego to destroy deceptions and distorted thoughts, so does Dissolution work on the heart and subconscious to release buried emotions that conceal or distort our true nature. To expose the soul requires letting go of control and breaking habits. Any form of water or "breaking apart" symbolize Dissolution.

The Third Operation in Alchemy is Separation.

The alchemical operation corresponding to Air is Separation which is seen as the birth of the child from the Marriage of Sun and Moon. Its metal is iron and the planet Mars. Chemically it involves extraction of material from the alchemical solution through heating, filtration and sifting. Psychologically it is the development of an objective Witness that sees all the petty tricks the ego has used to maintain power. In the Great Work of Alchemy, Separation is the removal of the person from the concerns of ordinary reality, so they can discern what is actually of value in the “experiment” (of their lives). If we do not reject old habits and beliefs when confronted with the possibility of a better way, we end up imprisoned by a tyrannical ego that will perpetuate any illusion just to keep control. The goal of Separation is the letting go of the self-inflicted restraints to our true natures, unearthing hidden shadow material and saving the “gold” of our essence. A potent symbol for Separation is a black crow.

The Fourth Operation in Alchemy is Conjunction.

The alchemical operation corresponding to Earth is Conjunction, because all matter results from some sort of conjoining of the creative and receptive forces. Its metal is gold and its planet is the Sun. Psychologically Conjunction is the birth of a new reality through the grounded union of thought and action, male and female aspects of self. The full potential of archetypes can only be fully realized when they take physical form and thus Earth signifies that solidification of higher spiritual principles. The King is concerned with truth, beauty and other abstract concepts. The Queen finds food for the soul in everyday living, feeling burdened by mental disciplines. The Queen defies order and her language is images and feelings. The union of the King and Queen, thought and feeling is like a stone that you can carry anywhere, for this *intelligence of the heart* is everywhere just One Thing. Conjunction gives the equanimity necessary to carry on with the higher operations of Alchemy. A symbol for conjunction is the flaming heart.

The Fifth Operation in Alchemy is Fermentation:

Its metal is copper and its planet Venus. Wherein an outside life force is introduced which excites, agitates and transforms the original material (like the curdling of milk). The natural precursor to fermentation is the black stage of Putrefaction in which organic materials decompose through rotting. In spiritual terms this is the “Dark Night of the Soul”. In this process one reaches a point where one has had enough and must surrender to outside forces. It make come as a dark depression in which the ego identity or personality must die to make room for a higher identity. This process relies on the inspiration of spiritual power to reanimate or energize, but rather than the burning fire of Calcination which attacks the ego, this is a gentle warmth like a brooding hen sitting on its eggs. Symbols for Fermentation are a skeleton, a corpse or a scarab.

(The fifth element is Aether or the Quintessence. It follows Fermentation and is released in the rising vapors of Distillation from that process.)

### The Sixth Operation in Alchemy is Distillation

Its metal is mercury and its planet Mercury. Chemically distillation is the boiling and condensation of the fermented solution to increase its purity, which is why this is known as the White Stage of alchemy. Chemically this process heats the solidified substance causing it to pass directly into a vaporous state and ascend to the top of the retort where it cools as a highly purified form of the original substance. Psychologically this agitation is necessary to ensure that no impurities from the ego are incorporated into the next and final stage of the process. Distillation is a rejuvenating immersion in the womb of the primal forces of the Universe that marks the final death of the old ego and the rebirth of the transpersonal Self. Symbols for this process are rain, lotus flowers, Edelweiss flower, and other eight fold patterns, unicorns, a Green Lion eating the Sun.

### The Seventh Operation in Alchemy is Coagulation

Wherein the body is made spiritual and the spirit is made corporeal. Its metal is silver and its planet is the moon. Alchemist felt at this stage they were working with heavenly Salt. Psychologically, Coagulation is the result of the union of spirit and matter. A potent symbol that is used for this stage of the alchemical process is a purple moon which has fallen to earth with a single red bird ascending into the sky. Another is the Phoenix that makes its nest in fire and rises from the ashes renewed.

### The Eighth Operation in Alchemy

The eighth step is to return to where we started but now embodied as incorruptible higher consciousness. Solve et Coagula (Dissolve and Coagulate) summarizes the entire alchemical process. The crowning achievement of this alchemical process is the creation of the Philosopher's Stone (Lumen Novum). The Philosopher's Stone represents transcendence and direct knowledge, matter made completely aware and incarnated, the perfected human soul, the androgynous transpersonal Self. The coming together of divine revelation and human determination is called the Philosopher's Stone. It is an enlightened and enduring state of consciousness that can literally change reality. It is the perfected First Matter within us, the purification of the soul and its union with the spirit. It is the lump of coal that becomes the crystal clear diamond.