

Operations of Alchemy

∇ **CALCINATION** is the heating of a substance in a crucible or over an open flame until it is reduced to ashes. Psychologically, this is the destruction of ego and our attachments to material possessions. Calcination is usually a natural humbling process as we are gradually assaulted and overcome by the trials and tribulations of life, though it can be a deliberate surrender of our inherent *hubris* gained through a variety of spiritual disciplines that ignite the fire of introspection and self-evaluation. Calcination is the sometimes painful and always revolutionary first step of transformation. It gives us freedom to change, and creates a free-flowing feeling that is the beginning of Dissolution.

∪ **DISSOLUTION** is dissolving the ashes from Calcination in water. This is a further breaking down of the artificial structures of the psyche by total immersion in the unconscious, irrational, feminine or rejected part of our minds. It is, for the most part, an unconscious process in which our conscious minds *let go* of control to allow the surfacing of buried material. It is opening the floodgates and generating new energy from the waters held back. During personal Dissolution, the feeling is of things surfacing that were previously ignored or rejected. There is also a feeling of connection to deeper energies and the recognition of real things within.

◇ **SEPARATION** is the isolation of the components of Dissolution by filtration and then discarding any ungentle or unworthy material. This is the rediscovery of our essence and the reclaiming of dream and visionary “gold” previously rejected by our social or rational mind. It is, for the most part, a conscious process in which we review formerly hidden material and decide what to discard and what to reintegrate into our refined personality. Much of this shadowy material are things we are ashamed of or were taught to hide away by our parents, churches, or schooling. Separation is letting go of self-inflicted restraints to our true nature, so we can shine through. In Separation, the feeling is one of knowing what is true and real and wanting to fight for it. We want to eliminate anything that is not part of the essential material. Separation is the development of personal will and independence.

‡ **CONJUNCTION** is the recombination of the saved elements from Separation into a new substance. It is empowerment of our true selves, the union of both the masculine and feminine sides of our personalities into a new belief system or an intuitive state of consciousness. The alchemists referred to it as the Lesser Stone, and after it is achieved, the adept is able to clearly discern what needs to be done to achieve lasting enlightenment. The goal is union with the Overself. Often, synchronicities begin to occur that confirm the alchemist is on the right track. During Conjunction, the feeling is one of coming together and satisfaction from the union of formerly opposing and divisive forces within.

✦ **FERMENTATION** is the introduction of new life into the product of Conjunction to strengthen it and insure its survival. This stage begins with the Putrefaction of the “child” from the Conjunction resulting in its death and resurrection to a new level of being. Out of the blackness of Putrefaction comes the yellow Ferment, which appears like a golden wax flowing out of the foul matter in the experiment. Its arrival is announced by a brilliant display of colors and meaningful visions called the “Peacock’s Tail.” Fermentation is achieved through various activities that include intense prayer, desire for mystical union, breakdown of the personality, transpersonal therapy, deep meditation, and shamanistic drugs. During Fermentation, the feeling is of becoming an empty vessel for something totally beyond us.

△ **DISTILLATION** is the boiling and condensation of the Fermented solution to increase its purity. This agitation and sublimation of psychic forces is necessary to ensure that no impurities from the inflated ego or deeply submerged id are incorporated into the next and final stage. It consists of a variety of objectifying techniques that raise the content of the psyche to the highest level possible, free from sentimentality and emotions, cut off even from one’s personal identity. Distillation is the purification of the unborn Self — all that we truly are and can be. During Distillation, the feeling is one of actually working with universal forces you know to be real. It is selfless action in service to a higher source through the development of an unconditional will.

∞ **COAGULATION** is the precipitation of the purified Ferment from Distillation. It is first sensed as a new confidence that is beyond all things, though many experience it as a Second Body of golden light, a permanent vehicle of consciousness that embodies the highest aspirations and evolution of mind. Coagulation incarnates and releases the *Ultima Materia* of the soul, which the alchemists also referred to it as the Greater or Philosopher’s Stone. Using this magical Stone, the alchemists believed they could create an Elixir that would cure all diseases and heal all wounds on all levels. In Coagulation, the feeling is one of completion and actualization of one’s true Self.