

7 Alchemical Steps

Calcination
Dissolution
Separation
Conjunction
Fermentation
Distillation
Coagulation

The 7 Sins

Lust
Gluttony
Greed
Sloth
Wrath
Envy
Pride

The 7 Virtues

Chastity
Temperance
Charity
Diligence
Forgiveness
Kindness
Humility



1. CALCINATION is the first of seven major operations in the alchemy of transformation.

Chemically, the Calcination process involves heating a substance in a crucible or over an open flame until it is reduced to ashes. In the Arcanum Experiment, Calcination is represented by sulfuric acid, which the alchemists made from a naturally occurring substance called Vitriol. Sulfuric acid is a powerful corrosive that eats away flesh and reacts with all metals except gold.

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.

Physiologically, the Fire of Calcination can be experienced as the metabolic discipline or aerobic activity that tunes the body, burning off excesses from overindulgence and producing a lean, mean, fighting machine. Calcination begins in the Base or Lead Chakra at the sacral cup at the base of the spine.

In **Society**, the Calcination is expressed in the lives of revolutionaries, conquerors, and other warriors who try to overthrow the status quo.

On the **Planetary** level, it is the Fire of creation, the formation of a livable environment from molten matter and volcanic ashes.

CORRESPONDENCES OF CALCINATIONL: According to the **Emerald Tablet**, "Its father is the Sun."
Element: Fire. **Color:** Magenta; Purple-Red (*color of this page*). **Planet:** Saturn. **Metal:** Lead.



2. DISSOLUTION is the second major operation in the alchemy of transformation.

Chemically, it is the dissolving the ashes from Calcination in water. In the Arcanum Experiment, Dissolution is represented by iron oxide or rust, which illustrated the potentially corrosive powers of Water on even the hardest of metals. When processed, Vitriol breaks down into sulfuric acid and iron oxide, which are the first two arcana or secret ingredients. The Egyptians smelted Iron as far back as 1500 BCE and used iron compounds in tonics and as disinfectants.

Psychologically, this represents a further breaking down of the artificial structures of the psyche by total immersion in the unconscious, non-rational, 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. Dissolution can be experienced as "flow," the bliss of being well-used and actively engaged in creative acts without traditional prejudices, personal hang-ups, or established hierarchy getting in the way.

Physiologically, Dissolution is the continuance of the *kundalini* experience, the opening-up of energy channels in the body to recharge and elevate every single cell. Dissolution takes place in the Genital or Tin Chakra and involves the lungs and spleen.

In **Society**, the process of steady growth through gradual Dissolution is exemplified by agrarian, monastic, or agriculture-based lifestyles.

On the **Planetary** level, Dissolution is the Great Flood, the cleansing of the earth of all that is inferior.

CORRESPONDENCES OF DISSOLUTION: According to the **Emerald Tablet**, "Its mother is the Moon." **Element:** Water. **Color:** Light Blue (*color of this page*). **Planet:** Jupiter. **Metal:** Tin.



3. SEPARATION is the third of the operations of transformation in alchemy.

Chemically, it is the isolation of the components of Dissolution by filtration and then discarding any ungentle or unworthy material. In the Arcanum Experiment, Separation is represented by the compound sodium carbonate, which separates out of water and appears as white soda ash on dry lakebeds. The oldest known deposits are in Egypt. The alchemists sometimes referred to this compound as Natron, which meant the common tendency in all salts to form solid bodies or precipitates.

Psychologically, this process is the rediscovery of our essence and the reclaiming of dream and visionary "gold" previously rejected by the masculine, rational part of our minds. 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 is things we are ashamed of or were taught to hide away by our parents, churches, and schooling. Separation is letting go of the self-inflicted restraints to our true nature, so we can shine through.

Physiologically, Separation is following and controlling the breath in the body as it works with the forces of Spirit and Soul to give birth to new energy and physical renewal. Separation begins in the Navel or Iron Chakra located at the level of the solar plexus.

In **Society**, Separation is expressed as the establishment of clans, cities, and nationalities.

Separation on the **Planetary** level is represented by the formation of landmasses and islands from the powerful forces of Air, Water, Earth, and Fire.

CORRESPONDENCES OF SEPARATION: According to the **Emerald Tablet**, "The Wind carries it in its belly." **Element:** Air. **Color:** Orange-Red (*color of this page*). **Planet:** Mars. **Metal:** Iron.



4. **CONJUNCTION** is the fourth of the seven operations of alchemy.

Chemically, it is the recombination of the saved elements from Separation into a new substance. In the Arcanum Experiment, Conjunction is symbolized by a nitrate compound known as cubic-saltpeper or potassium nitrate, which the alchemists called Natron or simply Salt. Blue-colored Natron acid (*aqua fortis*) was made by mixing potassium nitrate with sulfuric acid and was used to separate silver from gold. The inert residue precipitated from the acid during the reaction like a child being born.

Psychologically, 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, which is union with the Overself. Often, synchronicities begin to occur that confirm the alchemist is on the right track.

Physiologically, Conjunction is using the body's sexual energies for personal transformation. Conjunction takes place in the body at the level of the Heart or Copper Chakra.

In **Society**, it is the growth of crafts and technology to master the environment.

On the **Planetary** level, Conjunction occurs when primordial life forms are created from the energy of the Sun or lightning.

CORRESPONDENCES OF CONJUNCTION: According to the **Emerald Tablet**, "The Earth is its nurse."
Element: Earth. **Color:** Green (*color of this page*). **Planet:** Venus. **Metal:** Copper.



5. **FERMENTATION** is the fifth operation in the alchemy of transformation.

Fermentation is a two-stepped process that begins with the Putrefaction of the hermaphroditic "child" from the Conjunction resulting in its death and resurrection to a new level of being. The Fermentation phase then begins with the introduction of new life into the product of Conjunction to strengthen it and insure its survival.

Chemically, Fermentation is the growth of a ferment (bacteria) in organic solutions, such as occurs in the fermenting of milk to produce curds and cheese or in the fermenting of grapes to make wine. In the Arcanum Experiment, the process of Fermentation is represented by a compound called Liquor Hepatis, which is an oily, reddish-brown mixture of ammonia and the rotten-egg-smelling compound hydrogen sulfide. Egyptian alchemists made ammonia by heating camel dung in sealed containers and thought of it as a kind of refined Mercury that embodied the life force. Liquor Hepatis means "Liquor of the Liver," which they believed was the seat of the Soul, and the color they associated with the compound was green, the color of bile. Surprisingly, Liquor Hepatis exudes a wonderful fragrance, and the alchemists made a perfume of it called "Balsam of the Soul."

Psychologically, the Fermentation process starts with the inspiration of spiritual power from Above that reanimates, energizes, and enlightens the alchemist. Out of the blackness of his Putrefaction comes the yellow Ferment, which appears like a golden wax flowing out of the foul matter of the Soul. Its arrival is announced by a brilliant display of colors and meaningful visions called the "Peacock's Tail."

Fermentation can be achieved through various activities that include intense prayer, desire for mystical union, breakdown of the personality, transpersonal therapy, psychedelic drugs, and deep meditation. Fermentation is living inspiration from something totally beyond us.

Physiologically, Fermentation is the rousing of living energy (*chi* or *kundalini*) in the body to heal and vivify. It is expressed as vibratory tones and spoken truths emerging from the Throat or Mercury Chakra.

In **Society**, the Fermentation experience is the basis of religion and mystical awareness.

On the **Planetary** level, it is the evolution of life to produce higher consciousness.

CORRESPONDENCES OF FERMENTATION: According to the **Emerald Tablet**, during Fermentation, we raise consciousness from the darkness of the animal body through personal meditation and planetary evolution. "Separate the Earth from Fire," it tells us, "the subtle from the gross, gently and with great Ingenuity." **Substance:** Sulfur. **Color:** Turquoise (*color of this page*). **Planet:** Venus. **Metal:** Mercury.



6. **DISTILLATION** is the sixth major operation in the alchemy of transformation.

Chemically, it is the boiling and condensation of the fermented solution to increase its purity, such as takes place in the distilling of wine to make brandy. In the Arcanum Experiment, Distillation is represented by a compound known as Black Pulvis Solaris, which is made by mixing black antimony with purified sulfur. The two immediately clump together to make what the alchemists called a "bezoar," a kind of sublimated solid that forms in the intestines and brain.

Psychologically, Distillation is the 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. Personal Distillation consists of a variety of introspective 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.

Physiologically, Distillation is raising the life force repeatedly from the lower regions in the cauldron of the body to the brain (what Oriental alchemists called the Circulation of the Light), where it eventually becomes a wondrous solidifying light full of power. Distillation is said to culminate in the Third Eye area of the forehead, at the level of the pituitary and pineal glands, in the Brow or Silver Chakra.

In **Society**, the Distillation experience is expressed as science and objective experimentation.

On the **Planetary** level, Distillation is the realization of the power of higher love, as the life force on the entire planet gradually seeks to become one force in nature based on a shared vision of Truth.

CORRESPONDENCES OF DISTILLATION: According to the **Emerald Tablet**, during the Distillation process, "It rises from Earth to Heaven and descends again to Earth, thereby combining within Itself the powers of both the Above and the Below." **Substance:** Mercury. **Color:** Deep Blue (*color of this page*). **Planet:** Mercury. **Metal:** Silver.

7. COAGULATION is the seventh and final operation of alchemy.

Chemically, Coagulation is the precipitation or sublimation of the purified Ferment from Distillation. In the Arcanum Experiment, Coagulation is represented by a compound called Red Pulvis Solaris, which is a reddish-orange powder of pure sulfur mixed with the therapeutic mercury compound, red mercuric oxide. The name Pulvis Solaris means "Powder of the Sun" and the alchemists believed it could instantly perfect any substance to which it was added.

Psychologically, Coagulation is first sensed as a new confidence that is beyond all things, though many experience it as a Second Body of golden coalesced 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, the Astral Body, which the alchemists also referred to it as the Greater or Philosopher's Stone. Using this magical Stone, the alchemists believed they could exist on all levels of reality.

Physiologically, this stage is marked by the release of the Elixir in the blood that rejuvenates the body into a perfect vessel of health. A brain ambrosia is said to be released through the interaction of light from the phallic-shaped pineal gland and matter from the vulva of the pituitary. This heavenly food or *viaticum* both nourishes and energizes the cells without any waste products being produced. These physiological and psychological processes create the Second Body, a body of solid light that emerges through the Crown or Gold Chakra.

In **Society**, it is the living wisdom in which everyone exists within the same light of evolved consciousness and knowledge of Truth.

On the **Planetary** level, Coagulation is a return to the Garden of Eden, this time on a higher level in tune with the divine mind.

CORRESPONDENCES OF COAGULATION: According to the **Emerald Tablet**, "Thus will you obtain the Glory of the Whole Universe. All Obscurity will be clear to you. This is the greatest Force of all powers, because it overcomes every Subtle thing and penetrates every Solid thing." **Substance:** Salt. **Color:** Violet; Purple (*color of this page*). **Planet:** Sun. **Metal:** Gold.

Chart of Correspondences

Correspondences of Chemical References

Operation	Processes	Elements	Metals	Chemical Arcanum	Process Colors	Process Odors
Calcination	Roasting; Conflagration; Reduction; Trituration	Fire <i>(Solve)</i>	Lead	Sulfuric Acid (Vitriol)	Black; Magenta	Biting; Brimstone
Dissolution	Dissolving; Corrosion; Cibation; Bain Marie	Water <i>(Solve)</i>	Tin (Pewter)	Iron Oxide (rust:action of water on metal)	Light blue; White	Acrid; Vinegary
Separation	Sifting; Filtration; Fission; Cutting	Air <i>(Solve)</i>	Iron (Steel)	Sodium Carbonate (bubbling)	Red; Orange	Rotten Eggs
Conjunction	Fixation; Reunion; Amalgamation; Conglomeration	Earth <i>(et or conjunct)</i>	Copper; (Bronze; Brass; Gold)	Sodium Nitrate (union with Life Force)	Green	Chlorinic
Fermentation	Digestion; Putrefaction; Congelation; Ceration	Sulfur <i>(Coagula)</i>	Mercury (Copper)	Liquor Hepatis (Balsam of the Soul)	Blue-green; Turquoise	Putrid/ Perfumed at same time
Distillation	Potentizing; Exaltation; Cohobation; Multiplication	Mercury <i>(Coagula)</i>	Silver (Mercury; Antimony)	Black Pulvis Solaris	White; Rainbow	Fresh; After rain smell
Coagulation	Sublimation; Projection; Fusion	Salt <i>(Coagula)</i>	Gold (Silver)	Red Pulvis Solaris	Violet; Purple	Flowery; Heavenly scented