

The Quest for the Quintessence: The Path of Alchemy and the Golden Dawn

A comparison between the alchemical processes used to create the Stone of the Philosophers and the initiatory processes of the Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn used to stimulate the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Included here is a suggestive inquiry into the use of alchemical principles, processes and philosophy to analyze the initiatory rituals of the O.S.O.G.D.

Abstract

Salt (\ominus), that which provides structure, form and stability; Mercury (☿), that which is cool, receptive and which joins all things; and Sulfur (♁), that which is hot, projective and which enlivens all things... these Three Alchemical Principles are said to underlie all manifest reality. Their interweaving creates the Four Elements, themselves the philosophical building blocks of matter and energy, form and force. Concealed within them is the Seed for the Quintessence, an emergent property which includes and transcends this First Matter, and which forms the goal of both alchemical philosophers and Initiates of the Golden Dawn.

This paper compares and contrasts the basic processes used by alchemists to “confect” the Stone of the Wise, the Quintessence, with the initiatory processes experienced by the Aspirant within the O.S.O.G.D. I will show that though their goals might be the same, the Path taken by each is often different. These differences serve to illuminate and clarify the meaning of each Path.

A Brief Description of Alchemy

The Great Work of alchemy lies chiefly in the quest for a mysterious substance known as the Quintessence (from the Medieval Latin *quinta essentia* or “fifth essence”). This substance is believed to possess many seemingly miraculous properties, being capable of granting longevity to the alchemist, transforming base metals to gold, and curing all diseases. Alchemists believe that the seed of this Quintessence may be found in all matter, but that it is more easily extracted from certain base substances. These substances, reduced to a primal form called “hyle” or the First Matter, are then subjected to gentle heating until the Stone emerges from this chaotic mass.

The Emerald Tablet of Hermes, a short text composed of a number of enigmatic verses ascribed to the God Hermes, is said to form the essential core of alchemical philosophy.¹ Through it we learn that the process of alchemy is essentially transformational. Furthermore, it states that there is a correspondence between that which is Above and that which is Below, which can be understood through a study of astrology and the processes of Nature, reflected in both the macrocosmic world and in the microcosm of the alchemist. The alchemist always works in partnership with Nature, to accelerate these processes which otherwise would take millennia to reach fruition, and draw those natural forces into the experiment through the principle of correspondence.

In laboratory alchemy, the experiments of transformation occur simultaneously in both the material being manipulated and in the alchemist's soul. In this way, alchemy prefigures the work of ceremonial initiation in the modern lodge system.²

While alchemy is tentatively considered to have its origins in Ancient Egypt, and later Greece, the study of alchemy as both a physical and spiritual science is best

1 See the Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald_Tablet

2 See Greer (1998), p. 5 et al

documented in China, India and Medieval Europe. This paper focuses on the Medieval lineage, which also pervades the forms of initiation within the Golden Dawn system.

Rosicrucian Alchemy

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded by members of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (S.R.I.A.), an appendant body to Freemasonry.³ One of the documents belonging to this organization, the “*Collectanea Chemica*”⁴, is a compilation of a number of Hermetic treatises assembled by W. Wynn Westcott which includes a description of the creation of the Stone of the Philosophers. Interestingly enough, it barely touches upon the processes used to derive the First Matter. These processes form the secret core of the alchemical tradition, and their manifestation in Plant Alchemy will be touched on in this paper.

The *Collectanea* starts with coagulated Matter, which is placed within the sealed vessel and subjected to heat.

- a) Starting with a gentle heat, called the “first degree”, the alchemist watches the Matter closely for signs of transmutation.
- b) Once the Matter has blackened (the “head of the Crow” or “Nigredo”), the heat is increased to the second degree.
- c) An iridescent phases, known as the Peacock's Tail or the Rainbow, signals the imminent transition toward the Whitening. The heat is raised to the third degree.
- d) The Matter assumes a green color, and then gradually whitens. At this point, the Matter has achieved the White Stone, a lunar phase of the Work. The White Stone possesses many curative and transformative properties, though it is considered to be less potent than the final, red stage. The heat is raised to the fourth degree.
- e) If all goes well, the Matter achieves a brilliant red hue, known as the Red Stone,

3 Id. at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermetic_Order_of_the_Golden_Dawn

4 See Philalethes, et al

the Stone of the Philosophers. It is allowed to cool, and the vessel is opened. The Stone is scraped out of the vessel, and re-heated to allow it to be cast in a useful form.

In both Mineral and Plant alchemy, the alchemist watches for the changes described above, and through trial and error (mostly error) gains the skill needed to produce the Stone, whether the Mineral (or Greater) Stone or the lesser Stone of the plant kingdom. The next section uses the alchemical work in the Plant kingdom to illustrate the fundamental principles of the Art.

Plant Alchemy

I have chosen to describe the processes of creating the vegetable Stone as shown by Junius⁵, as these are well documented (and are the only processes with which I am familiar!). They mirror and mimic the same processes used in mineral alchemy, so that once the vegetable Stone has been made, the alchemist is ready to tackle the Great Work.

The following table shows a brief description of the Three Principles as they are used in alchemical work. They are universal in scope and preformative in nature. The properties of these Principles are listed as they are generally understood by modern alchemists such as Junius, Albertus⁶ and Dubuis⁷.

5 See Junius (1979)

6 See Albertus (1974), p. 30

7 See Dubuis (1987), Lesson 3

Principle	Description
Sulfur (♁)	Sulfur is the Principle which determines the unique identity of the Matter. It is considered to be the “soul”, that which carries the consciousness. It possesses the quality of Heat and is considered to be the Masculine principle.
Salt (⊖)	Salt is the Principle which provides structure, the ability to distinguish the particular constituents of the Matter. Alchemists sometimes call this the “Secret Fire”, because although Salt appears to be static, it conceals a volatile, dynamic essence which, when released, causes the Three Principles to reunite in the creation of the Stone.
Mercury (☿)	Mercury is the Principle which connects everything, and which is receptive to the dynamic activity of Sulfur. It is considered to be anonymous, unlike the Sulfur, and is said to be the “same everywhere”, ubiquitous and undifferentiated. It has the property of Cold and is the Feminine principle in alchemy.

Table 1: The Three Principles

It is through the skillful separation and recombination of the Principles that the alchemist seeks to recreate the First Matter out of which the Stone may flower.

The Plant Stone

This is a brief overview of the creation of the Plant Stone as described in Stavish⁸, analyzed from the viewpoint of each of the Principles, using colored markup to highlight the Principle being manipulated. This will allow a comparison with the OSOGD ritual processes later.

♁ *Solve: Separating the Sulfur*

The Sulfur of the plant is carried in its essential oils, which are highly volatile. Therefore, these oils are separated from the plant using steam distillation and kept aside. They will be rejoined to the other separated Principles later. This process also “opens up” the

⁸ See Stavish (2006), ch. 3

Sulfur, expanding it both physically and energetically in order that latent properties may have space to become manifest.

♀ **Solve: Fermenting the Mass**

The remainder of the plant, reduced to a watery mass by distillation, is now placed in a fermenting vessel in a warm, dark place. The goal here is to cause the plant Mercury, carried in the form of alcohol, to arise in the mass.

Unless a very great quantity of plant material is present, though, there will be very little plant sugar to feed the yeast that produces alcohol. Therefore, the alchemist will add raw sugar, as well as a quantity of brewer's yeast. This is allowed because, as stated above, the Mercury Principle is the “same everywhere”, and the sugar that is transformed into alcohol bears the seed of this Principle.

⊖ **Solve: Separating the Salts**

Once the fermentation is complete (the yeast stops bubbling), the solids are separated by filtration and set aside to dry. These will later yield mineral salts which carry the Salt Principle.

♀ **Solve: Distilling the Mercury**

The watery “soup” left behind by separation is then distilled, gently, extracting the alcohol. The alchemists say that the plant Mercury has been “determined” by the process of fermentation, meaning that its original anonymity (remember, Mercury is anonymous and the “same everywhere”) is replaced with specificity.

The distillation process also “opens up” the Mercury; during this process, the intent of the alchemist may be more easily impressed upon the determined Mercury.

♁ **Solve: Separating the Fixed Sulfur**

The remaining “soup” is then evaporated until it forms a viscous liquid. This is then

subjected to greater heat, resulting in a blackened, solid mass (note the parallel with the black phase or “Nigredo” mentioned earlier⁹). Further heating (“calcination”) causes it to gradually whiten. This is further divided into water soluble salts, called the “fixed Sulfur”, and insoluble salts, the *caput mortuum* or dead head of these salts.

⊖ **Solve: Reducing the Salts**

Next, the solids in the plant mass are roasted, calcined, and separated into soluble salts (the vegetable Salt) and insoluble *caput mortuum*. Typically, the insoluble salts are discarded.

Coagula: Confecting the Stone

Finally, the soluble salts are mixed together, and the essential oils and alcohol gently added to them (“imbibing”) until the salts can take up no more of the liquids. The resulting clay-like Matter is then placed in the crucible and heated gently until it turns bright red, signaling the creation of the Stone. This process is very similar to the one described in the “Collectanea”, and requires similar skills and sensitivity.

Inner Processes

Throughout the work, the alchemist must dwell on the materials and processes, until she is truly experiencing this transformation from plant to Stone. Without this inner involvement, the process will fail. Though in the above experiment, the “coagula” phase seems short, it is the most challenging and delicate, requiring great sensitivity of the alchemist to produce a “perfected” Stone.

The next section presents the thesis that alchemical processes and principles may be found within the rituals of the OSOGD.

OSOGD and the Quintessence

Each of the grade rituals of the First Order of the OSOGD can be analyzed in terms of

9 See p. 3

their effect on the alchemical principles within the Aspirant. In the grade rituals, the Aspirant is prepared by the Neophyte ritual through a process of excitation and initial differentiation, and in the subsequent Elemental grade rituals the elements of the Aspirant's soul are individuated and enhanced. Following the Portal rite, which prepares the Aspirant for initiation into the Second Order, this process is carried out again in private ritual in order to stimulate the arousal of the Quintessence, which, as the alchemists say, is not one of the Four (Elements) but is found to be one of the Three (Principles).

The Three Principles: A Philosophical Map

The intent of initiatory ritual is to cause change to occur in the Aspirant. In terms of alchemical philosophy, the Aspirant is the Matter in which the Three Principles may be found. In this section I propose to map the Principles to three categories of conscious experience as described in the philosophies of Wilber¹⁰ and Laszlo¹¹. These categories are the Interior Dimension (Wilber's "Left-hand Path"), Objective or Exterior Dimension ("Right-hand Path"), and Intersubjective Communication, which in this model is the only way for one Interior Dimension to know about another, as well as the vehicle for the exchange of that which is variously referred to as prana, chi or "energy".

In Table 2, the Principles are mapped to the categories mentioned above. While the Principles may also possess attributes which do not fit easily into this mapping, in this paper this will be taken as an axiom, in order to demonstrate the usefulness of the mapping in analyzing ritual magick.

10 Wilber, Ken, A Brief History of Everything

11 Laszlo, Ervin, The Connectivity Hypothesis

Principle	Category	Rationale
Sulfur (♁)	Interior Dimension	Sulfur is the “soul”, that which carries the consciousness. Those things which cannot be assigned a location in space or time may be found here, such as Truth, Beauty, Love, Fear, Jealousy, and so on.
Salt (⊖)	Exterior Dimension	Salt is “body”, and corresponds to the world of “things” with the properties of location and separateness.
Mercury (☿)	Intersubjective Communication	Mercury conveys meaning, whether that meaning is embodied in the essence of a plant elixir or in the symbolic realization of the ritual by a Aspirant . The vital principle is also considered as a facet of Mercury, and through it we establish a meaningful relationship between the world of “things” (⊖) and the contents of our consciousness (♁) with this menstruum.

Table 2: Mapping the Principles

Alchemical Processes Used in Ritual Analysis

In this section, I describe a method of organized ritual analysis which is patterned after the processes of laboratory alchemy. The rationale for this approach lies in a history of alchemical meditative practice, documented by such writers as Junius and Dubuis¹². This meditative practice uses laboratory methods to guide the mind of the meditator. For example, laboratory calcination involves the breaking down of a substance, so in alchemical meditation, one must systematically break down rigid patterns of thought, feeling and behavior.

In the analytic and meditative method presented here, the ritual being analyzed is the

¹² See Dubuis (1987)

Matter, and it is subjected to alchemy-like processes. As the ritual effects the Aspirant (the Matter), it is possible to isolate the Principles in the ritual which correspond to the Principles in the Aspirant that they affect. The procedures described in this section are designed to separate the Principles, exalt them, and recombine them in such a way that the quintessence (a summary analysis) appears.

Solve (Calcination/Putrefaction)

In order to transform the Matter, it must first be broken down into its constituent components. Various methods are used to accomplish this, including crushing, burning, and fermenting, depending on the nature of the Matter and the intended result. The Matter is thereby returned to a state of Chaos, from which the essentials are extracted in further procedures.

When analyzing a ritual, one may break it down into its component parts as well. One must decide to what level of granularity to achieve; that is, how far must the ritual be dissected. This depends on how the Aspirant is affected, so we shall divide the ritual according to each action taken on behalf of the Aspirant. For the purposes of this paper, we will use the commentaries as source text, as well as the ritual rubrics.

Each component part is labeled according to the Principle which it chiefly embodies. Of course, there is nothing which is purely of one Principle, so the analyst must exercise her judgment and intuition with meditative techniques as necessary.

It is important that the analyst avoid mixing the Principles if possible. That is, when analyzing the Salt of the ritual, only the structural elements, the “things” of the ritual, must be presented, devoid of the meaning or impact they represent to the Aspirant. Likewise, the Sulfur should not overtly refer to the objects of perception which give rise to changes in the inner state of the Aspirant. Note, however, that the Mercury is expressed through the meaningful exchanges experienced by the Aspirant. There will be references made to both the Salt and the Sulfur; this is unavoidable, but these references must be subordinate to the purpose of the analysis, which is to convey the narrative meaning of the ritual.

Distillatio

Distillation is used to extract the essence of one or more Principles, in order to prepare them for exaltation and recombination (*solve et coagula*). Various methods are used in laboratory work, but all of them require the application of heat.

In ritual analysis, the heat is supplied by the consciousness of the analyst, who creates a narrative summary of the ritual for each of the Principles as mapped in Table 2. The labeled components of the ritual are separated into three headings, one per Principle, in order to create this summary.

Cohobatio

An alchemist will frequently use this technique, also known as circulation, to cause the distillate to be recombined repeatedly with the base matter. The distillate rises, condenses, and falls back into the boiling flask, and this is done in order to cause more of the essence to be separated. In alchemical tincturing, cohobation is also used in order to further determine (imprint) the Sulfur onto the Mercury.

The analyst can reread the ritual rubric, having summarized it, in order to further extract any essentials, as many times as necessary. This process also may be used to refine the analysis and make minor corrections to the categorization of the elements of the ritual. In this paper, the stage of cohobation will not be given its own heading, as the realizations arising from it will most likely be added to the distillate or help guide the coagulation process.

Coagula

The final analysis is created by combining the separated Principles, or summaries. That is, the analysis of the Sulfur of the ritual (its effect on the inner state of the Aspirant) is combined with the Mercury (the narrative of symbolic exchange involving the Aspirant) and the Salt (the analysis of the mantras, mudras, implements, officers and so forth). If done correctly, this results in a thorough understanding of the ritual, as well as a critique which may help in improving its efficacy.

The Three Principles: Categories of Analysis

As an analysis tool, the Principles may be used to categorize the elements of a ritual, and thereby provide a notational method for describing the process of that ritual. In Golden Dawn ritual, the focus is on the Sulfur of the Aspirant, which is purified, separated into its constituent Elements, and recombined in such a way as to encourage the arousal of the Quintessence. In this discussion, I shall refer to the Aspirant, although by extension any other type of focus (e.g. a talisman, the Seal of a spirit) may be analyzed in a similar way.

Principle	Ritual Elements
Salt (⊖)	Structure of ritual, its symbolic content, the layout of the space, implements used, the pattern of openings and closings, the basic stages or phases, the movements of Aspirant and Officers
Sulfur (⚡)	Interior experience induced in Aspirant, including any emotional states or other non-localizable contents of consciousness (also, changes wrought in the fundamental essence of the talisman, instrument or Spirit). The sigil of Sulfur, a triangle over a cross, provides an interesting hint that the Three Principles may be recursively mapped to it, as well.
Mercury (☿)	The symbolic exchanges between Aspirant and Officers and the energetic flows which join all participants. Mercury both separates the Salt from the Sulfur through dissolution, engendering the feeling-tone of conscious awareness, and connects these Principles with meaningfulness.

Table 3: Three Categories in Ritual

Analysis of Individual Rituals

In the following sections, I will use the processes discussed above to analyze the Neophyte and Elemental grade rituals of the OSOGD, focusing on the viewpoint of the Aspirant. Each process will have its own section within the discussion of that ritual, and each Principle will be represented in color-coded commentary and marked by its

associated symbol. In the interest of brevity, I will choose a subset of the elements of each ritual and demonstrate this analysis technique thereby.

Following each ritual analysis, I provide a critique of Pat Zalewski's commentaries on the rituals, focusing on his use of alchemical terminology.

Neophyte

The cycle of initiation in the First Order of the OSOGD begins here, with the Neophyte ritual. The Aspirant is introduced to the Order and makes her commitment to her own Will, engaging in the purification of that Will from this point on.

Solve

From Darkness to Light

The Aspirant begins the ritual blindfolded. This induces feelings of uncertainty and dependence, and heightens the other senses somewhat. When the hoodwink is removed near the midpoint of the ritual, the Aspirant's dilated pupils are more sensitive to the light in the Temple, and the onslaught of visual impressions heightens the impact of the moment. This begins a process wherein the Sulfur of the Aspirant is separated from the Salt; that is, the attention of the Aspirant is turned toward enlightenment and away from confusion and ignorance. The Mercury Principle is evoked through the words and symbolic exchanges experienced by the Aspirant, and this acts as a menstruum, which both separates the Sulfur and connects it with the Salt of the ritual itself. Mercury carries the “meaning” of the ritual experience, as well as the projection of the Aspirant's energies onto the initiatory process in the OSOGD.

The Separation of the Sulfur

In the Neophyte ritual of the OSOGD, a portion of the “soul” (the Sulfur) of the Aspirant is dedicated, through separation, to the Great Work. This separation occurs when the Hierophant gives the new name to the Aspirant, and it is completed upon removal of the hoodwink. It also supposedly safeguards the Aspirant from adverse forces that may be

stirred by the rite. The inner instructions given for the Neophyte ritual describe a process in which an “astral form” of the Aspirant is placed between the pillars;¹³ this reinforces the notion of separation, though in the current context of this paper the separation is more comprehensive, pertaining to the entire cycle of initiations in the First Order of the OSOGD.

In alchemy, particularly plant alchemy, the Sulphur of the Matter (such as the plant's essential oils) is often separated from the plant body so that subsequent operations do not cause this precious volatile substance to “fly” and be lost. This operation also “opens up” the Sulfur, making it more receptive to subtle influences as well as allowing its latent potential to become manifest. In the 0=0 commentary, the ritual is said to open up the Aspirant's aura in a similar fashion.

♀ ***The Will of the Aspirant***

From the initial moment that the Aspirant is introduced into the ritual until the hoodwink is removed, the Aspirant is repeatedly asked to assert her Will. This process serves to involve the Aspirant in the ritual process, lessening the sense that events are sweeping her beyond her control. At the same time, this also intensifies the Aspirant's commitment to that process. Finally, as mentioned before, this serves as a menstruum within the ritual, helping to turn the awareness of the Aspirant toward the great Work as it separates the Sulfur, which is enmeshed with the Salt in an undifferentiated mass.

♀ ***Purification and Consecration***

The Aspirant is repeatedly subjected to purification with Water and consecration with Fire. During the opening, the Stolistes and Dadouchos are linked, respectively, with the Root Qualities of cool/moisture and heat/dryness. These qualities form the basis for the Four Elements, so we see that the process of the purification and consecration of the Elements of the Aspirant's soul (Sulfur) begins here.

¹³ See Webster, “0=0”, pp. 2-3

☉ *Circumambulation as Circulation*

The Mystic Circumambulation brings the Aspirant into contact with the forces of both Light and Darkness, which support the Aspirant in the path toward the Quintessence. In alchemy, the circulation of the Matter, accomplished through repeated distillation and cohobation, acts to open up the Matter to subtle influences and stimulates the “seed” of the Quintessence to grow.

♀ *The Color Red*

In the Neophyte ritual, the Aspirant must provide a red rose to be placed on the altar, and though this can be seen as a symbol of the Aspirant's dedication, in alchemy the color red maps onto Sulfur, the Soul and alchemical Gold. One may also connect this idea with the red color of the Hierophant's robe.

☉ *Division and Dissolution*

...THIS IS THE CREATION OF THE WORLD,
THAT THE PAIN OF DIVISION IS AS NOTHING,
AND THE JOY OF DISSOLUTION ALL.

In the quote from Liber AL, I:28-30, we find a statement which parallels the alchemical process of Solve et Coagula. In alchemy, we seek to separate various Principles, whether of the Three Principles or of the Four Elements, in order to then perfect the being of each individually before rejoining them as equals rather than as entangled sleeping entities.

Distillatio



The Aspirant begins in a state of uncertainty and ignorance, experiences moments of illumination in the midst of the “chaos”, and emerges into a brilliantly lit place of victory. The Sulfur of the Aspirant is separated for the first time and dedicated to the Great

Work. The sense of chaotic dissolution is reinforced when the Aspirant is required to affirm her Will repeatedly while blindfolded and bound. The dichotomy between the autonomy implied in these affirmations and the physical restriction is profound, and serves to emphasize that, though there is limitation in manifest reality, there is none in the realized Will.

⊖

The ritual is organized in two parts (from the viewpoint of the Aspirant): the first, carried out in Darkness, stimulates the Will of the Aspirant, while the second phase of Light provides the keys to the Grade. During the first phase, the experience of circumambulation provides a sense of journey and of cyclic generation. The Aspirant's journey is subjected to restriction here, though the “world of things” (the Salt) is made visible twice, once in the West and once in the East.

Once the Aspirant has been freed, another circumambulation is performed, providing a contrasting “journey”. Upon its completion, the Aspirant is charged with a task of study, hears the charge of Nuit, and participates in the closing of the Temple as well as the Mystic Repast wherein the rose contributed by the Aspirant forms an integral part of the ceremony.

☿

The Mercury of the Aspirant is stirred up by circulation and exposure to the powers of the ritual. The Aspirant learns to associate the initiatory experience with an exercise of Will, and receives purification and consecration.

Coagula

The Neophyte ritual links the dedication and separation of the Aspirant's Sulfur to the macrocosm and to the outer life of the Aspirant, and begins to expose the Mercury to the influences of the Golden Dawn.

Zalewski on the Neophyte Ritual (GDR)

Zalewski¹⁴ indicates that the Aspirant undergoes a process wherein four parts of her subtle anatomy are separated and purified, correlated with the four “Canopic” Gods. In alchemy, this would correspond to the initial setup of an experiment, wherein each Element is represented, so that for a distillation, Fire corresponds to the fire under the athanor, Water to the liquid being distilled, Air to the vapors arising from the Water, and Earth to that which is left behind, ready to be reunited with the distillate. The purification of the Elements comes about during the process of the experiment. Likewise, as the Aspirant advances through the Elemental grades and then to the Portal, the elements in her nature are individuated and strengthened, preparatory to the arousal of the quintessence.

Zelator

Solve

Placing the Aspirant in the Vessel

When the Aspirant is presented with the admission badge for this phase of the ritual, she is linked to the intent of the ritual and assents to its purpose. This is a clear indication of the transition from outer world to “other” world, and has its parallel in alchemical work when the Matter is placed within a vessel.

The First Vessel

The Elemental rites are characterized by having distinct phases, representing the Paths to the Sephirah of the rite as well as the Sephirah itself. These phases are analogous to the separate vessels used in alchemy to perform various operations such as distillation, cohobation and recirculation.

The Zelator ritual is unique in that the “first vessel” does not correspond to a Path on the

¹⁴ See Zalewski, vol. 2, p. 223

Tree of Life. Instead, it is a place of testing, in which the Aspirant is faced with three possible ways to enter the Mysteries, only one of which is available to her.

⊖ ***Preserving the Seed***

The value of organizing the rituals into phases or “vessels” lies in the fact that each phase maintains its own focus, its own purpose, maintaining and balancing the “heat” being applied to the Aspirant. This may help to preserve the secret life of the seed of the Quintessence, which will be nurtured into fruition as the Aspirant continues to advance.

♀ ***Testing the Aspirant***

This ritual, like all of the succeeding grade rites, tests the Aspirant by determining whether she has acquired the tokens of the previous grade. Besides demonstrating the sequentiality of the grade rituals, this also begins the process of immersing the Aspirant in the Mercury of the rite by requiring an interchange of symbols and, most likely, vital force between the Aspirant and the Officers.

♀ ***The Pledge***

The Aspirant then is asked to pledge her aspiration to undergo the 1=10 rite. This must occur before the hoodwink is removed, and it allows the Aspirant to commit herself to its accomplishment. This pattern of hoodwinking and pledging is repeated throughout the Elemental cycle of rituals, and reaffirms the original pattern established in the Neophyte ritual.

♁ ***Committing Sulfur to the Work***

The hoodwink is removed, and the Aspirant completes the pledge. This commitment represents the further dedication of Sulfur to the process of the Quintessence. The Zelator ritual focuses upon the Earth aspect of the Aspirant's consciousness, and through the principle of correspondence it acts upon all aspects of Earth in the Aspirant's life.

♀ **Purification and Consecration**

In this rite, the Dadouchos purifies with Fire and the Stolistes consecrates with Water, reversing the use of these elements in the Neophyte ritual.¹⁵ The Zelator ritual of Earth is distinguished in that none of the other elemental rites performs purification or consecration in this same way.

In alchemy, the Earth part of the Matter is subjected to great heat and subsequent dissolution in order to separate the *caput mortuum* or “dead head”, as it is considered to be part of the prison into which the Quintessence has descended. While some alchemists discard this substance, others consider it to be a vital part of the final product and rejoin it with the Matter near the end of its transformation into the Stone. This emphasis on the purification of Earth may help explain this difference in the Zelator ritual.

♁ **Let There Be Constriction**

The first phase of this ritual presents the Aspirant with a single Way forward within the Order, and culminates in a clarification of the Aspirant's intent. This serves to simulate the action of the True Will of the Aspirant, and thus stimulate the arousal of that Will, which is the individuated action of the Quintessence.

☾ **The Second Vessel**

The second phase of this ritual receives the Aspirant and consolidates her initiation into the Sephirah of Malkuth. Whereas the first phase partook of the nature of challenge and response, this one exposes the Aspirant to the symbols of this Sephirah.

♀ **Increasing Heat**

This exposure to the symbols of the admission badge and the diagrams is akin to an increase of heat, stirring the unconscious mind to greater activity.

¹⁵ See Webster for explanation, “1=10”, p. 3

☉ *The Rainbow*

The Hierophant alludes to the rainbow (Qesheth) when describing the Paths confronting the Aspirant. In alchemy, a key signicator that progress is made is the appearance of iridescent colors in the Matter. This phenomenon is known as the Peacock's Tail or the Rainbow, and signals a change in the "heat" applied to the Matter.

Distillatio



The Sulfur of the Aspirant is led to Earth through one Path. Through this restriction of choice, the Aspirant learns that the True Will is focused on one purpose.



This is a two-phase ritual, showing both constriction and arrival at the 10th Sephirah. This mimics the journey of the Aspirant to the portal of the OSOGD.



The Aspirant experiences a challenge, a restriction of choice, and then a period of waiting. This is followed by admittance to the 1=10 Temple and exposure to the symbols that evoke the Earthly nature of the Aspirant.

Coagula

The Zelator ritual is an introduction to the path of Restriction and Earth, and stimulates the expansion of the Earth nature in the Aspirant.

Paradoxically, we seem to become more creative when there are limits placed on our creative expression. The nature of the True Will is a reflection of this observation.

Zalewski on Zelator (GDR)

Zalewski indicates that some authors describe the Aspirant as in a state of dissolution following the 0=0. Dissolution in alchemy is not a state of the breakdown of forms, but is instead the state wherein the substances broken down become separated within a

menstruum. The menstruum, the waters of life and death, dissolves the broken pieces of the Matter so that later they may be retrieved from those waters in a process of separation. It may be more accurate to say that the Aspirant is in a state of primal Chaos, in which the Elements are all present but are uncoordinated.

He further states that the result of this initiation is to cause latent Earth-related problems to arise, likening this to the effects of a homeopathic remedy. While every grade ritual in the OSOGD has the effect of stirring the deeper consciousness of the Aspirant, the particular symbols in each grade will tend to accentuate the areas related to that grade.

In all the Elemental grades, the initial darkness experienced by the Aspirant resembles the process known in alchemy as putrefaction. This process represents a state of original Chaos, in which the four Elements are present in a confused state, engaged in permanent internal conflict, and in which there is no light. It is hoped that putrefaction will be followed by fermentation, in which new life arises from the state of chaos. This life is carefully preserved during successive operations of separation, purification, and reunification, so that it will be able to occupy a perfected vessel.

Theoricus

Solve

Testing and Commitment

The pattern of testing and commitment, established in the Zelator ritual, repeats here as well as in the upcoming Practicus and Philosophus rites. This pattern serves to introduce the Aspirant to the initial vessel of the ritual.

The First Vessel

This is the path of TOV (Tau), leading from the Hall of the Zelatori to that of the Theorici. As in the other Paths, this part of the ritual is characterized by a circumambulation of the Hall and challenges to the Aspirant.

♀ ***The Four Elements***

In this vessel, the Aspirant is introduced to the four Elements, in the form of the fixed signs of the Zodiac, emblems of the Four Holy Creatures or Kerubim of Yesod as well as of the Tarot Key associated with this Path. Some alchemists believe that while plant alchemy concentrates on the separation and recombination of the Three Essentials, mineral alchemy is focused on these operations on the Four Elements. Beginning with Earth, then Water, then Air and finally Fire, these Elements are exposed during an experiment, purified, and then rejoined.

♀ ***Symbols on the Path***

As in all of the Elemental grade rituals, a series of symbolic diagrams, including that of the admission badge, are presented to the Aspirant. These symbols act as seed forms within the consciousness (Sulfur) of the Aspirant, constellating to themselves all the myriad associations built up around them and conditioning the Sulfur.

⊖ ***The Second Vessel***

This is the Sefirah of Yesod. Note the challenge given to the Aspirant, which links this vessel to the previous one, much as a condenser links the alembic to the precipitating flask.

♀ ***Symbols in Yesod***

Symbols pertaining to the Sefirah are presented to the Aspirant.

⊖ ***The Special Practice***

The Middle Pillar exercise, presented to the Zelator in this ritual, is a technique which serves to further stimulate the Mercury of the Aspirant. In this, it bears a strong similarity to the Circulation of the Light in Chinese inner alchemy. By performing this exercise, the

newly initiated Zelator strengthens her connection to the 1=10 ritual and to the OSOGD.

♀ **Shu**

The Hierophant performs the gesture of Shu, which is indicative of the act of separating Heaven and Earth (Nuit and Geb); this separation is akin to alchemical separation of the essence from the body. Separation, individuation, and reunion are the cycles of alchemical perfection, as well as similar to the stages of conscious evolution according to Wilber (identification, differentiation and integration)¹⁶.

⊖ **Alchemical Trees**

The alchemical Trees seem odd because each depicts a morphed version of the planetary progression described by many alchemists: lead, tin, iron, copper, mercury, silver and gold. In each, Iron takes the place of Tiphareth. The Regulus¹⁷ of Iron (“Mars”) is considered by some schools of alchemy (including the Philosophers of Nature) to be crucial to the creation of the Stone, as it conceals the Sulfur principle in a very useful form. So each tree is more of a cipher than an explanatory diagram. Also, iron is the only metal which cannot be amalgamated by the metal mercury. The implication here is that the metal of the Sun requires extraordinary means in order for it to be dissolved and reconstituted in a higher form.

Distillatio



The Aspirant is presented with choices amongst the Paths on the Tree, and with the barriers raised against her progress along any but the 32nd Path. The Aspirant commits her Sulfur to the Work once again. The Aspirant is exposed to the Four Elements in the first “vessel”, and to the symbols of the Hall of the Theorici in the second.

¹⁶ See Wilber, p. 131

¹⁷ Translated from the Latin as “prince” or “little king”.



This ritual is divided into two phases, like that of the Zelator. However, these two phases partake of a Path and a Sephirah on the Tree, whereas the 1=10 ritual only involves the tenth Sephirah. The progression of the Pythagorean tetractys may be found in the sequence of Zelator through Philosophus with the increasing number of Paths and Sephiroth in each.



The Aspirant is exposed to symbols of the Four Elements in the first phase, and symbols pertaining to Yesod in the second. In addition, the Sign of the Theoricus, resembling the gesture of Shu in separating the Earth from the Sky, places special emphasis on the dividing nature of the Element of Air.

Coagula

In this two-part ritual, the Aspirant receives influences from the 32nd Path and the 9th Sephirah to stimulate the powers of Air. The special practice of the Middle Pillar will further stir up the Mercury, as well. There is a strong symbolic connection between the Element of Air and the Principle of Mercury in alchemy, so this is especially appropriate.

Practicus

Solve

The First Vessel

This is the Path of Shin, Fire. The western alchemical tradition considers fire in all its manifestations to be instrumental in transformation, but two of the major paths in alchemy emphasize different kinds of heat. The Wet Way, which relies on multiple distillations and cohobations to arrive at the Stone, is a slow process that uses gentle heat, while the Dry Way is a quicker, more violent process requiring intense heat.

Elements of both Ways may be found in the symbolism of the OSOGD rituals, but there

is a distinct predominance of Dry Way references.

♀ ***The Path of Fire***

The Aspirant traverses the Path of Fire, and encounters the Kabiri who represent three kinds of fire, on the way to the Sephirah of Hod, symbolized by Water. This interplay of these two elements conceals the interplay between Sulfur and Mercury. Within this ritual, the action of this symbolic “menstruum” serves to stimulate the Watery nature of the Aspirant and reveal its relationship with the Secret Fire, which is encountered in greater strength in the next grade ritual.

⊖ ***Three Kinds of Fire***

Solar Fire provides the gentlest heat in alchemy, and requires the presence of moisture to effect the transformation of the Matter. This is therefore emblematic of the Wet Way.

Volcanic Fire is violent, and destroys as well as transforms; it is encountered in the Dry Way. Interestingly enough, plant alchemy provides an opportunity to see the Volcanic Fire in operation when the Salts of Sulfur are calcined following the extraction of the Sulfur of Sulfur, the soul of the plant. The alchemist observes that the wet mass begins to dry to a black tarry matter, bubbling violently and expelling noxious fumes, before it becomes quiescent and gradually whitens to ash.

Finally, the Astral Fire, also called the Secret Fire, is that which is enlivened by the alchemical process in order to generate the Quintessence. In alchemy, the Secret Fire is found in the Salt, which must be made volatile through distillation and cohobation.

♀ ***The Solid Tetrahedron***

The tetrahedron is an apt illustration of the relationship between the Four Elements and the Three Principles, concealing this relationship within the visible symbol of Fire through its four sides of three vertices each.

☉ *The Second Vessel*

This is the Path of Resh or the Sun.

☿ *The Path of the Sun*

The Aspirant encounters symbols representing three “phases” of the Sun. This reinforces the notion of three-fold fire first presented in the preceding Path, but subsumed under the symbol of the life-giving Solar force. In alchemy, the Sun is considered to be one of the two best sources of “heat”, the other being the Moon. Many alchemical experiments use solar heat in slow transformative processes.

☿ *Planetary Symbols*

In the description of the basis for all planetary astrological symbols, the Sun symbolizes the Red or Sulfur principle, while the Moon represents the White or Mercury principle. Through the cross which represents the corrosion of the metals, transformation is able to occur as the Mercury is separated from the Sulfur and each is strengthened.

☉ *The Third Vessel*

This is the Sephirah of Hod, which houses many symbols, including Mercury and Elemental Water.

☿ *The Special Practice*

The Dissolution into Shunyata provides a powerful way for the Aspirant to begin to reunite her Sulfur with its cosmic origins. In alchemy, Dissolution is used to prepare a substance to be reduced to its primal form and thus make the First Matter available to the alchemist.

☿ *The Tetraktys*

Students in the Pythagorean schools swore by the Tetraktys, considering it to be a Holy

symbol. Although encountered here, there seems to be a hidden connection between the numeric progression of this symbol and the completion of the four Elemental Grades in the OSOGD.

♀ ***The Vessel of Mercury***

This phase of the ritual serves to emphasize the watery, receptive nature of alchemical Mercury, just as Netzach in the next grade demonstrates that the Secret Fire is found within the Sulfur of Nature.

♀ ***The Cup of the Stolistes***

In the description of the Cup, mention is made of the Celestial Fire above and the Consuming Fire below. Alchemically, these two forms of Fire are facets of one Secret Fire, manifesting above and below, between which the First Matter (the “One Thing”) circulates in unceasing cycles.

♀ ***Alchemical Mercury on the Tree of Life***

The symbol of Mercury reveals that the Conjunction in alchemy is not itself the summit of attainment. Rather, it is what makes the Work receptive to noetic inspiration; the alchemist and the perfected materials are able to act as vessels for that which is symbolized by Kether. Note also that the alchemists collect the Celestial Fire during the season of the sign of Aries, capturing it in the nightly dew (Fire in Water) using the “magnet”, a highly hygroscopic form of oak wood ash. The resulting substance, called “angel water”, is capable of creating the initiatic Ens in plant alchemy, as well as extracting the Sulfur of the metals.

Another alchemical experiment involving the Celestial Fire results in the creation of the Celestial “Gur”, a substance which is believed to contain the seed of all Metals, and the Archaeus (or enlivening principle) of Water.

Distillatio



The Sulfur of the Candidate continues to evolve through its commitment to the Work.



There are now three vessels in which initiatory experience occurs: the Path of Fire, the Path of the Sun, and the Sephirah of Mercury.



As Zalewski says (see p. 24), this Grade is rich with alchemical symbolism. However, the focus of the rite is on the Element Water within the Aspirant. The special practice serves to emphasize the power that Water has to dissolve substances in order to re-order them in a new form.

Coagula

The Aspirant arrives in the Hall of Mercury and of Water through two fiery Paths. There is a distinct resonance here with the purifications of the Candidate by Water and Fire, as well as to the two Pillars and to the Sulfur and Mercury Principles. These dualities serve to reinforce the notion that the Aspirant must strive to balance the opposites within her nature so that the Quintessence may arise.

Zalewski on the Practicus Ritual (GDR)

According to Zalewski, Jack Taylor explained that this grade ritual is rich with alchemical symbolism. He stated that the First Matter is “being heated by fire through the timing of the planets and transmuting up through the framework of the four planes on the Tree of Life.” While it is tempting to correlate the four degrees of heat with the Qabalistic framework, in practice there is no significant relationship between the two. The four “planes” or “worlds”, Assiah, Yetzirah, Briah and Atziluth, pertain to a specific hierarchical system described in the Zohar which describes successively more concrete levels of manifestation. The four degrees of heat, on the other hand, provide a

quantitative system of classification, and may originate in medieval ideas which applied these degrees to the qualities of heat, cold, moisture and dryness.¹⁸

He also states that the Black and White Pillars represent, respectively, the Dry Way and Wet Way of alchemy. It is true that the Black Pillar of Severity reflects the harsh, rapid path of great heat, and the White Pillar of Mildness seems to pertain to the gentler, slower path of moist heat, but this correlation is otherwise relatively weak.

Finally, he states that “ At the Tiphareth point, the Airy nature is transmuted into the watery solvent which produces the Garden of Eden or the ultimate utopia, the Holy elixir which transmutes man into his original state, shown by Kether.” This is probably a reference to a condensate which is captured after distillation on the Dry Path, and which is considered by alchemists to be the alkahest, capable of separating the Principles of the Matter instantly so that they may be exalted and used to confection the Stone.

Of course, symbolic correlations are generally useful as ways to gain deeper understanding of a system. As long as these caveats are understood, one may gain insight when meditating on Taylor's statements.

Philosophus

Solve

☾ *The First Vessel*

This is the Path of Qoph or the Moon, joining the 10th Sephirah with the 7th.

♀ *Notes on the Admission Badge to the 29th Path*

The Latin cross of twelve squares shows all zodiacal signs save the fixed signs in the vertical bar, which is crossed by the four fixed signs. This could signify that the Aspirant must “fix the volatile.”

18 The Alchemy Web Site, [Adam McLean's Research Notes](#)

In alchemy, in fact, the Stone arises when one has fixed the volatile and volatilized the fixed. The “volatile” refers to the First Matter, which first appears as a vaporous substance which must be gently condensed and then sealed hermetically, before being conjoined to the Salt and thus “fixed”. The “fixed” refers to the Salt which yields up the Secret Fire when it has been volatilized by repeated distillations and cohobations.

☿ Symbols of the Path

Just as the first Path to Water in 3=8 referred to three kinds of Fire, this Path to Fire presents the Aspirant with three-fold symbols of Water. The admission badge is, as usual, described herein, as is the Tarot Key.

☿ The Southern Hexagram

To reinforce the notion of Fire, Water, and that which reconciles them, the Aspirant is shown the diagram of the hexagram of Tiphareth in the South.

☾ The Second Vessel

This is the Path of Tzaddi or Aquarius, linking Yesod (2=9) with Netzach (4=7).

☿ Notes on the Admission Badge to the 28th Path

Webster notes that the solid pyramid alludes to the emergence of the Quintessence. This is a central teaching in the alchemical tradition as well, in which it is believed that all things contain the seed of their own Quintessence.

☿ Symbols of the Path

Here, again, there are three kinds of Water, as in the previous Path, but manifest in a different way. The echoes and correspondences between these Paths, and between the Paths of this Grade and that of the previous Grade of Water, both bind and distinguish

these rituals, as the Principle of Mercury both binds and separates the Sulfur and Salt. This energetic web acts to “determine” the Mercury of the Aspirant, imprinting it with the inner structures of the Golden Dawn system and potentiating the process which can give rise to the Quintessence.

Other symbols related to this Path include the admission badge, the Tarot Keys, lineal figures, geomantic figures and the secret Names of the Four Worlds.

☉ *The Third Vessel*

This is the Path of Peh or Mars, linking Hod with Netzach.

♀ *Symbols of the Path*

A cacophonous circumambulation characterizes this Path. There is a correlation here with the jarring discord found in the everyday world, as well as with the chaotic ferment of the coagulated mass in alchemy which gives rise to new life. Unlike other Paths, this challenge is not intellectual in nature, but largely emotional. The Aspirant must cultivate steadfast will in preparation for the arousal of the True Will, which is seated upon the throne of the conscious ego of the Aspirant.

♁ *Discomfort*

The cacophony raised by the imps, as well as the confusing verbal interchange amongst the Officers, can cause discomfort in the Aspirant. There is great value in this, insofar as it can induce an altered state, make the Aspirant more receptive to the influences of the ritual, and thus liberate more of her Mercury.

☉ *The Fourth Vessel*

This is the Sephirah of Netzach and the Hall of Fire.

♁ ***Alchemical Conjunction***

The alchemical emblem “Conjunction” portrays the entire process of the creation of the Stone in symbolic form, albeit with various deliberate obfuscations. In this case, “conjunction” occurs following the “coagulation” of the First Matter and the subsequent application of heat to confect the Stone.

♁ ***Sulfur on the Tree of Life***

The mapping of the symbol of Sulfur to the upper Sephiroth alludes to the fiery nature of this Principle, and makes the statement that Sulfur partakes of more abstract ideas than the other Principles. While Mercury is often considered to be the mediator between Sulfur and Salt, in pre-Paracelsian alchemy there were but two Principles, Sulfur and Mercury. Mercury was feminine and receptive, and Sulfur was masculine and projective. Salt was conceived by Paracelsus as a unifying factor, and in laboratory alchemy the production of the Stone required the volatilization of Salt by marrying it to Sulfur. Within the mapping proposed in this paper, this appears to signify that the alchemist achieves the Stone by unifying her awareness with her body in its entirety, after expanding that awareness and imbuing it with the Mercurial life force.

♁ ***The Special Practice***

The practice of the “four immeasurables” serves to “open up” the Aspirant, helping her expand her awareness of all living beings.

Distillatio



A key characteristic of this ritual is that it challenges the balance of the Aspirant in a different way, during the circumambulation of the Path of Peh.



This ritual is organized in four parts, thus completing the sequence started in 1=10. The whole system of four Elements contains the key to the Quintessence, the “one other” that offers a new dimension of awareness.



Here we find Water and Fire again, reflecting and expanding upon the theme of the previous Grade. We also see the seed ideas concerning the Quintessence and the completion of the Elemental cycle.

Coagula

The Grade of Fire carries great potential for transformation, as it challenges the Aspirant in new ways and plants the seed for the generation of Wholeness. By completing this cycle, the Aspirant gains the tools within the OSOGD system to stimulate the arousal of the Quintessence, the “fifth Element” that is no Element.

Portal

Solve

Two “Vessels”

The pattern of Paths and Sephiroth is not found in this ritual. Instead, it is divided into two parts, “The Ritual of the Cross and Four Elements” and the “Rite of the Pentagram and the Five Paths”. The ritual of the Portal is designed to be a higher echo of the Neophyte ritual, bringing together the completed Elements. This cycle of Balance (Neophyte), Imbalance (the Elemental Grades) and Rebalance (Portal) is repeated in the subsequent 6-month Elemental invocations performed by the Aspirant in preparation for the 5=6 ritual.

The First Vessel

In this portion of the ritual, the Aspirant demonstrates her command of the Elements

through invocation of each (following the order of the Elemental Grades), as well as presentation of the Grade Signs, Grips and Passwords.

Challenge

The key feature of this portion of the ritual is the challenge presented to the Aspirant, in which she must demonstrate her knowledge.

Challenge and Pledge

The Will of the Aspirant is challenged in a four-fold pledge. This echoes a similar four-fold statement made in the Neophyte ritual.

The Cross of Corrosion

This portion of the ritual is organized in the form of a four-fold Cross, referred to as the Cross of Corrosion in the opening and symbolized by the admission badge. In alchemy, the process of corrosion or putrefaction is essential in order to make way for fermentation, in which the 'corrupted' or chaotic material is impregnated with new life. Many alchemical processes can result in the destruction of the material, requiring that the alchemist start over. The goal of transmutation always risks this kind of failure, but it is necessary to persist until success is achieved. Then the destroyer indeed becomes the transformer.

The Sevenfold Arcanum

The diagram portraying the Great Hermetic Arcanum is found in the 17th-century book *Musaeum Hermeticum*. It shows the seven stages of alchemical transformation, along with the associated planetary symbols, as well as the Three Principles and the Four Elements. It therefore subsumes the most important symbolic whole systems in alchemy.

♀ **V.I.T.R.I.O.L.**

Alchemical Vitriol is the Universal Solvent, which “overcomes every subtle thing and penetrates every solid thing”, as stated in the Emerald Tablet. This solvent carries the power of the One Thing as it transmutes all Matter, whether subtle or manifest.

⊖ ***The Second Vessel***

This phase of the ritual is organized by the Pentagram. In it, the Aspirant is shown five Paths toward further progress on the Tree. Two of these are barred, two are partially open, and one, the Middle Path, is open for advancement, to be completed at the ritual of 5=6.

♀ ***A Mutual Pledge***

Just as the Aspirant pledges in this ritual to offer herself at the Altar of Spirit, Spirit (through the Chief Adept) pledges to open the Way to the Aspirant.

♁ ***Aspiration***

This portion of the ritual is characterized by Aspiration.

Distillatio



Challenge and Aspiration are two of the key elements repeated throughout the Golden Dawn rituals. They serve to delineate the dedication of the Aspirant and reinforce her commitment of Sulfur to the Quintessence.



The Portal ritual portrays the movement from Four to Five in its overall structure.



This ritual conveys a great deal of alchemical symbolism, both overt and implied. It also requires that the Aspirant expend greater energy (Mercury), in the form of invocations

and responses to challenge, than any of the preceding rites. This higher degree of participation is reflected in the more intense practices undertaken by the Portal initiate, including the 6-month Elemental invocation and the INRI formula.

Coagula

This rite connects the four-fold Elemental cycle with the emergence of the Fifth, the Quintessence. It demands a higher degree of commitment from the Aspirant, and represents a tremendous surge of effort which culminates in the 5=6 rite.

Summary

The Golden Dawn system commits Sulfur to the process of transformation, similar to the way that alchemy sets aside the Sulfur in preparation for coagulation. The Golden Dawn then stimulates each Element of the Aspirant, rather than merely sealing it and setting it aside. The practices of each Grade serve to bring the Sulfur activated by the rite in contact with the Salt of everyday experience, commingled through the Mercury of the symbols and energetic experiences of the rituals and the practices.

The most significant difference between the initiatory process and the alchemical one is that alchemy focuses on separating the Principles, while OSOGD initiation focuses on purifying and strengthening the Elements. There is no obvious stage when the First Matter or “hyle” is produced. Instead, through the balance/imbalance/rebalance invocations, the Aspirant is brought to a heightened state, exciting the Elements and, hopefully, stimulating the growth of the Quintessence through the experience of the 5=6 initiation into the Grade of Adeptus Minor.

While the 5=6 ritual itself may not produce an experience of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, it is designed to produce the Stone within the Aspirant which will facilitate that heightened conscious connection with Spirit. The KCHGA follows the production of the Quintessence.

Alchemy can support the initiatory process of the OSOGD. In particular, the Aspirant

may make and use alchemical tinctures to support and further purify her Elements, and the process of the creation of the plant Stone may reinforce the coagulation of the Elements during the Aspirant's stay in the Portal. I will use the findings presented in this thesis to formulate a study curriculum that could be used to effectively integrate alchemical practice with the OSOGD First Order work.

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