

**THE GOLD WITHIN YOU:  
ALCHEMY AND SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**  
by  
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## **Introduction**

Alchemists put various base metals, such as lead, through a series of processes which refine them step by step until they become gold. Sound impossible? It's been done. My friend, Dennis William Hauck, author of a magnificent book on Alchemy and personal transformation, *The Emerald Tablet*, is a practicing alchemist and has done it. So have other alchemists through the ages. But the secret is that alchemical processes are merely symbols for the inner process of transforming our "lead" into our true state of being. By embracing the Gold within, we learn of our Soul and its purpose.

In Alchemy, there are seven basic stages:

### **Stage I: Calcination**

Calcination is a difficult stage that shocks and disillusion us, while it deflates the ego. We feel as if we were being thrown into an abyss of unknowing, being torn to shreds, and then being burned to ashes.

Suffice it to say, most people avoid this process.

Dennis Hauck describes this foundational stage as "beneficial because [it exposes] deeper layers of our essence while rubbing away the false person." This is certainly what most of us might think we want, but when we're face-to-face with the process, it is often a frightening thing.

As Calcination burns away the ego's influence by deflating it, we are without the ego's protection from the unknown. We may feel like all we hold dear is being threatened, we may be depressed or angry. It's a death-like experience. Even though this is painful and distressing, we may realize that we've outgrown the need to be protected. Calcination eliminates what is no longer needed, including cherished beliefs which limit us.

The essential task in Calcination is to surrender to it, learn from it and allow it to burn away the barriers and obstacles to our wholeness.

### **Stage II: Dissolution**

Just as Calcination represents fire, the second stage, Dissolution, engages the element of water to further the process of releasing unnecessary and outgrown habits and beliefs. Dissolution typically involves crying and feeling lost. After Calcination, the ego's rigid control is released *temporarily*, and we may become aware of underlying fears of the unknown, of feeling too much, or of expressing ourselves. We fear that no matter what we do, we will be harmed, rejected, denied, criticized, or annihilated.

The task in Dissolution is to actively accept and express our emotions so that we may access the essential emotional core within us. In Alchemy, the

ashes of Calcination are dissolved in water (emotion) to give us the opportunity to connect to our original feeling state before the ego's protections began.

In this stage, we bring back the emotions, while detaching from the experiences that triggered them in the past. Emotion connected to trauma or painful events get translated as just as bad as the event itself. So we repress them in order to protect ourselves from re-experiencing the original event. But our emotions are necessary and essential to the Soul's well-being. So they must be brought back if we are to grow and mature spiritually.

In research done on the between-lifetimes states of consciousness (I recommend books by Michael Newton, Ph.D. and Joel L. Whitton, Ph.D.), a majority of subjects reported feelings as essential in the learning experiences between lifetimes. The feelings a Soul has during the after-death "life review" guides that Soul into making changes that support evolvment. The Soul may see that the next lifetime must be dedicated to correcting and rebalancing any wrong that was done against others or itself.

Rejected and denied, emotions become heavy, dark and sometimes even dangerous. We numb ourselves by believing we don't have unacceptable feelings. But many people are amazed at how much time, effort, and energy they put into hiding an emotion, only to discover that when re-integrated, it makes them feel whole. The fear of being annihilated by an emotion is the fear of feeling alive.

### **Stage III: Separation**

Separation is the stage in which we learn to make wise decisions. This is a level of intellectual exploration, symbolized by the element of air. But it is not a hiding place by "going into our heads" when upsetting emotions arise. Rather, it is a place where we deepen our understanding and appreciation of our emotions and integrate them in the process of making decisions for our lives that are more closely aligned with the guidance of our emotions and therefore, with the Soul's purpose.

Misusing the intellect by rejecting emotion disconnects us from the Soul because the Soul and emotions are interconnected. Our Souls express through our emotions. Great artists, writers, musicians and other highly creative people could not do what they do if their emotions are shut down. Unfortunately, our society diminishes the value of emotion so those who express themselves passionately are often outcasts. We can perceive this rejection, however, as a confirmation that we *are* creative, inspired or unique, and we just don't fit the common mold.

By being in touch with our feelings and learning to make decisions that support our expression, we avoid blocking that expression. This takes courage. It is far easier to stay in a bad relationship or to keep working for the same abusive boss than it is to leave. Leaving means we're on our own and we won't be taken care of. Those beliefs depend upon an immature perception ourselves, built on the idea that we have a helpless little child within us, when the truth is that we are adults. So Separation helps us to update old ideas and make wise decisions that release stands in the way of our growth.

## Part IV: Conjunction

Alchemy's motto is "As Above, So Below," meaning that things of the earth are influenced by the heavens - and vice-versa. Alchemists and shamans seek the balance between the two and from that balance, they effect transformations and healings. The symbol of the World Tree, found in many mystical traditions such as the Kabbalah, teaches that to be whole, we must be connected to heavenly things as well as maintaining our roots in the earth, so the "trunk," or our life as we live it, becomes a highway flowing between the two.

The fourth stage of alchemical transformation, Conjunction, is related to the heart and to the earth, another symbol like the World Tree of the place where the spiritual meets the physical and the higher states of consciousness may be integrated.

Conjunction calls us to create a new attitude toward ourselves and others. If Separation set the stage for us to quit a meaningless job, for instance, we may be inspired to begin doing what we always wanted to do. In the conjunctive state of consciousness, there are fewer fears, so many of the old "shouldn'ts" are absent, or at least diminished.

We learn to perceive ourselves with more acceptance and love. We see our "mistakes" of the past as "grist for the mill" and necessary for the greater consciousness yet to come. Rather than a value judgment, our previous low self-regard might now be viewed as a self-regulating mechanism that prevented us from manifesting our potential until the time was right.

A conjoined consciousness takes us closer to being that person we always sensed we could be. However, the work doesn't stop there.

### Stage V-a: Putrefaction

Once again, we must face the ego's attempt at dominance, but in the fiery Putrefaction-Fermentation stage, the quality, intensity, and *source* of the experience is quite different from that in Calcination. There, we were alone in our battle with the ego. This time we sense another, higher force assisting us. And although Putrefaction can be very disturbing, and we may be thrown once again into a pit of depression or despair, we also feel supported, even encouraged, in the process. Most people in this stage report the ability to observe objectively even while feeling deep despair and fear.

Putrefaction proceeds until it has "cooked" us enough and we enter Fermentation, whose process is similar to how rotted grapes become fine wine. Putrefaction has leveled the ego so it supports and strengthens us now, rather than sabotaging us.

### Stage V-b: Fermentation

In Fermentation, a new wisdom may arise, founded upon the breaking down of former beliefs. In alchemy, the brew must be transferred to another container (the newly developing self), where a catalyst is added to produce the

final stages of fermentation (where a new identity and outlook is formed).

In this stage, we must maintain a state of egoless surrender so we can be empty and receptive vessels when the catalyst is added. The catalyst in personal transformation may take any form, but it always includes new insight and even an enlightened view of the self. We may suddenly become aware of *why* we act and feel as we do. Old ideas and habits may fall away, and we see how much of who we thought we were was based upon illusion.

## Part VI: Distillation

“Your feelings and thoughts are the feelings and thoughts of the Whole Universe,” says Dennis William Hauck in *The Emerald Tablet*. In Distillation, we become far more interested in the greater good than merely in our own. It is the transformational stage where we are spiritually and emotionally mature enough to merge with the collective conscious and unconscious without being overwhelmed. The ego no longer controls us and we can therefore experience and appreciate the mysteries of collective and personal material without the its intrusion.

Distillation creates authentic spiritual experience that embraces the light as well as the dark. (By *dark*, I mean the mysterious, unconscious, unexpressed - I am not referring to what we call “evil,” which is actually a *misuse* of the dark.) Many spiritual and religious philosophies teach that our task is to reject and avoid discomfort and seek only an idealistic realm of experience. These ideas only further the belief that when we experience darker aspects of life that we must be doing something wrong.

A distilled person has a mature perception of things. S/he does not expect life to meet egoistic expectations, nor does s/he view it as a devastating disappointment just because it doesn't meet those expectations. A distilled person works with the Soul, rather than the ego, to create her/his life. S/he surrenders to the higher forces while celebrating and honoring the existence of the lower ones.

A medieval alchemical drawing shows a well from which are emerging the masculine sun and the feminine moon. This depicts the process in distillation of arising from the depths of the lower work into a balanced relationship with both higher and lower aspects of being. Also in the picture is a pelican shown pecking at her breast until she draws blood that she then feeds to her young. This represents the wise choice we are asked to make if we are sincere in our intentions to become spiritually advanced. At some point we are required to make a sacrifice that benefits the greater good. This is not a melodramatic sacrifice for that is no sacrifice at all. It's just more ego drama. The true sacrifice is one based upon the origin of the word: making an act sacred rather than self-serving.

## Stage VII: Coagulation

In Alchemy, a whole person is one who has traveled through all the lower stages: calcination (burning out the ego's control), dissolution (redeeming the

emotions), separation (deciding what's important) - *many* times! - and has then moved into numerous explorations of the stage of conjunction to discover the heart. A whole person welcomes Putrefaction-Fermentation, Distillation, and Coagulation, which is where wholeness is confirmed. But even though Coagulation is the final stage, the end is just the beginning. This is no resting place, for it requires more responsiveness than ever before, more discomfort than when we were at varying degrees of unconsciousness, and more vision of how our moment to moment decisions can affect entire universes. It is also filled with ineffable experience that we may never have imagined possible.

Few people reach a point of *complete* Coagulation. Most of us must continue to go through all of the stages again and again, each time further refining the golden essence within us. Just as it takes miners effort, toil, and time to uncover riches within the earth, our struggles to find our inner Gold are ultimately worth it all.