



Lecture 06 Prima - fourth stage - cohobation

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Once the three principal elements are fully separated and purified it only remains for them to be reunited. In alchemy this final stage in the process is referred to usually as 'cohobation' - that is re-integration.

A suitable jar or bottle should be found that can hold the final 'tincture', air-tight, over a long period, in a warm place. For a 'simple' tincture the sal salis (salts obtained from the calcination of the extracted herb-body), the sal sulphuris (the salts obtained from the plant resins) and the mercury (the alcohol which also contains the plant's volatile sulphurs (oils)) are placed into the jar in the same proportions which they were obtained as products of the entire process. This means there will be relatively small amounts of the salts compared to the volume of liquid (alcohol.)

At this point many students of alchemy consider what is now in the jar to be a herbal-chemical-tincture (or simple.) In fact this is not true. What you have in the jar at this early stage is the three principals, still separate, but sharing the same space (in solution.) The 'chemical' nature of the tincture does not manifest until the three principals begin to re-integrate into an homogenous whole.

The best way to facilitate this re-integration of the principals is to warm the tincture. Warming the tincture causes the particles in the liqueur to move faster and to increase the number of times they collide at molecular level. After an extended period of time, as the liqueur 'digests', particles of sulphur (the resins, now re-liquified in the tincture) adhere to the sal salis particles. As the digestion advances these two principles merge closer and closer together slowly becoming inseparably united.

Under normal conditions the sal salis and the mercury cannot unite in this same manner, they having a strict chemical antipathy between them. But the mercury does have an intimate relationship with the sulphur and can easily unite with it. Since the sulphur (soul) is partly fixed (saline) and partly volatile (liquid) it

is in the special position of being a mediator between the sal salis (body) and the mercury (spirit.) Therefore alchemic sulphur, in this role, is what we sometimes refer to as a bridging substance. It unites opposites.

As the sulphur merges with the salt it, therefore, also allows the mercury to enter-in with it. Over time the three become one in separable unit, and thus a new element is formed, one which did not exist before, a 'fifth element' or quintessence. (Note: this fifth element is related to the original earth, but it is not the same, it exists on another level in the (al)chemical hierarchy.) It is the existence of this quintessence in your tincture (at first in trace amounts) that converts the tincture from a simple mixture of pure chemicals into a remedy, which had its origin in the vegetable kingdom, of al-chemical (or para-chemical) condition.

The important factor about this quintessence is that it possesses chemical and energetic properties that are not generally known by modern chemistry. Healing properties that existed in very small amounts in the natural herb, or its simple chemicals, or which only existed in potential, are now manifested through the quintessence in relative abundance.

--- herbal method principles in conclusion

The concepts, primarily, and the techniques, secondly, described and demonstrated in the herbal process are fundamental to the philosophy of alchemy. In general what is learned and understood in the prima can be applied in the animal and the mineral/metallic realms as well (with a little more complexity.)

(1) A natural substance (animal/vegetable/mineral) is first putrefied in a closed system. Putrefaction results in the SEPARATION of the substance's (alchemic) elements. Once the elements are disengaged they are completely separated by filtration and distillation.

(2) Once the (principal) elements are completely separated they must then undergo a PURIFICATION in order to remove the corruption of the element of earth which still adheres to them.

(3) Once the principal elements (the three principals) are purified, they are digested, together, until they unite under COHOBATION.

This three-fold formula is known as the SPAGYRIC formula. Spagyria is a term that was invented by Paracelsus and is constructed from the two Greek roots

"spao" (to divide or draw out) and "ageiro" (to gather together or bind.) (The term was coined by Paracelsus.)

"Therefore, learn Alchimiam, otherwise called Spagyria, which teaches you to separate the false from the true." (-Paracelsus)

While it might seem obvious, from the above explanation, that the word spagyric refers to proper alchemic methodology (the formula of the alchemical process) it will be noticed in popular alchemical forums that this word is increasingly being used as an appellation for students of alchemy who use untraditional, inferior, or technically incorrect methods to try to obtain alchemical results. A small example of the kind of erroneous teaching that constantly creep into the Hermetic Science.

(Note: The traditional term for an erroneous student is 'puffer' - inexperienced novice, or 'archemist' - a person who tries to attain alchemical results by conventional-chemical methods.)

An understanding of the all-important final phase of the spagyric formula, the COHOBATION is essential to a proper understanding of the higher arcana (the deeper secrets) of the alchemical science. The production of quintessences from various substances, and their uses in advanced alchemy, is the doorway into a larger world of curious knowledge about the secrets of (al)chemistry and hyper-physics.

It might even be accurate to say that lower alchemy concerns itself with the application of the basic spagyric formula to animal vegetable and mineral subjects. Higher alchemy, or 'adept' alchemy, leaps off the platform formed by knowledge and experience with production of quintessential preparations into the more secretive world of advanced esoteric physics and chemistry.

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