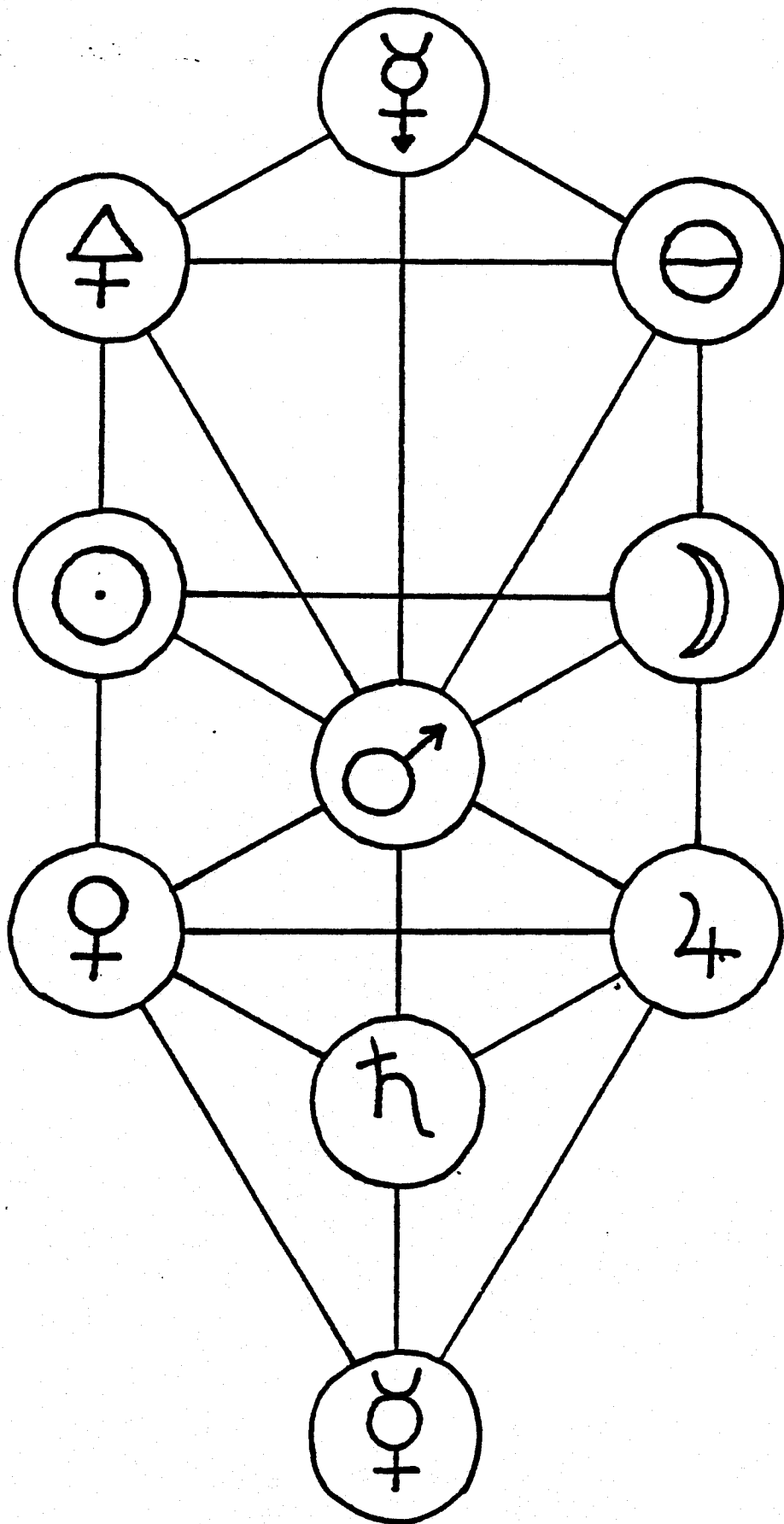


LESSON 132

TAROT AND ALCHEMY



LESSON 132

TAROT AND ALCHEMY

(Note: alchemical and astrological symbols are described in the 1st and 2nd knowledge lectures provided in "The Complete Golden Dawn" by I. Regardie, Volume 3, pages 63 to 65.)

Up to this point you will have been given alchemical descriptions for the meanings of all the Tarot Cards. The purpose of this lesson is to show how the alchemical descriptions of the card can be associated to the Tree of Life. Within the Outer Order of the Golden Dawn the alchemical associations it utilised in rituals and knowledge lectures, were taken from the Aesh Mezarpeh or 'Purifying Fire'. These were a series of alchemical texts taken from the Zohar and translated into Latin by Knorr von Rosenroth. In its original form the contents of this treatise were later placed in a single volume which was translated into English by Wynn Wescott.

When placing the trumps on the Tree of Life and tracing their alchemical patterns one must be aware that the actions of the trumps do not necessarily go in any one direction but can be manipulated along the Tree in almost any direction, whether this be vertical, horizontal or oblique. The particular patterns given in this lesson are not relative to other versions of the tarot but are peculiar to the Golden Dawn. To recap over previous lessons the following alchemical meanings are given to each of the twenty-two trumps:

0	Fool	Animated Mercury
1	Magician	Secret Fire
2	High Priestess	Azoth(Quintessence)
3	Empress	Mother of the Green Lion
4	Emperor	King of Metals
5	Hierophant	Sulphur of the Wise
6	Lovers	Conjunction
7	Chariot	Sublimation
8	Strength	Blood of the Green Lion
9	Hermit	Fermentation
10	Wheel of Fortune	Lapus
11	Justice	Measure of the Work
12	Hanged Man	Purification of the Matter
13	Death	Putrefication
14	Temperance	Distillation
15	Devil	Blackening
16	Tower	Albedo

17	Star	Condensation of the Spirit
18	Moon	Conception
19	Sun	Essence of Spirit
20	Judgement	Multiplication
21	World	Projection

It must also be pointed out that these names relate to the Paths and not the Sephiroth which is an entirely different matter. The diagram opposite, taken from the Golden Dawn rituals, shows the association taken from the Aesh Mezareph and relates to the metallic influence of alchemy. You will notice the association to the Supernal relates to the basic essences of alchemy, i.e. Sulphur, Salt and Mercury, while the paths show the various separations of this triad. The paths in fact show the many varying degrees or stages taken to produce and refine these three distinctive states. The Sephiroth below the Supernal are to a certain extent separated from it. The order of these Sephiroth actually start from Mercury in Malkuth, Saturn, Jupiter, Luna, Venus, Mars and the Sun which have been shown by some authors (such as G.O. Mebes) as the stages of the Magnum Opus. In short, the Paths only relate to the Supernal while the other Sephiroth are placed in an order good for obtaining certain metallic tinctures.

In Kether we have the four Aces showing the elements in their incorporeal state. From this Animated Mercury is extracted on the path of Aleph which then acts as a catalyst to produce Salt in Chokmah. From Kether we extract the Secret Fire or second stage Mercury which leads to Sulphur. Also from Kether, by different processes both Salt and Sulphur have been extracted -each an extreme. The path between them is Daleth and is represented by the Empress which is the middle aspect of both and is sometimes called Double Salt, though it signifies the hidden aspect of the Green Lion being present. If we study the triangle created by the Supernal, going clockwise, we have Animated Mercury being extracted from the Salt and Sulphur. Now we go to the path of the Secret Fire and we have the unification of the Second Stage Mercury, Kether, which is then converted to Azoth, shown by the High Priestess - the pure aspect of our search-but still hidden beneath the veil - unrevealed she goes down to her goal in Tiphareth as the Sun. Here we have used the standard alchemical association of the Sun to Tiphareth as we are not referring to specific tinctures, as given in the main diagram, but to the overall energies of the Tree itself.

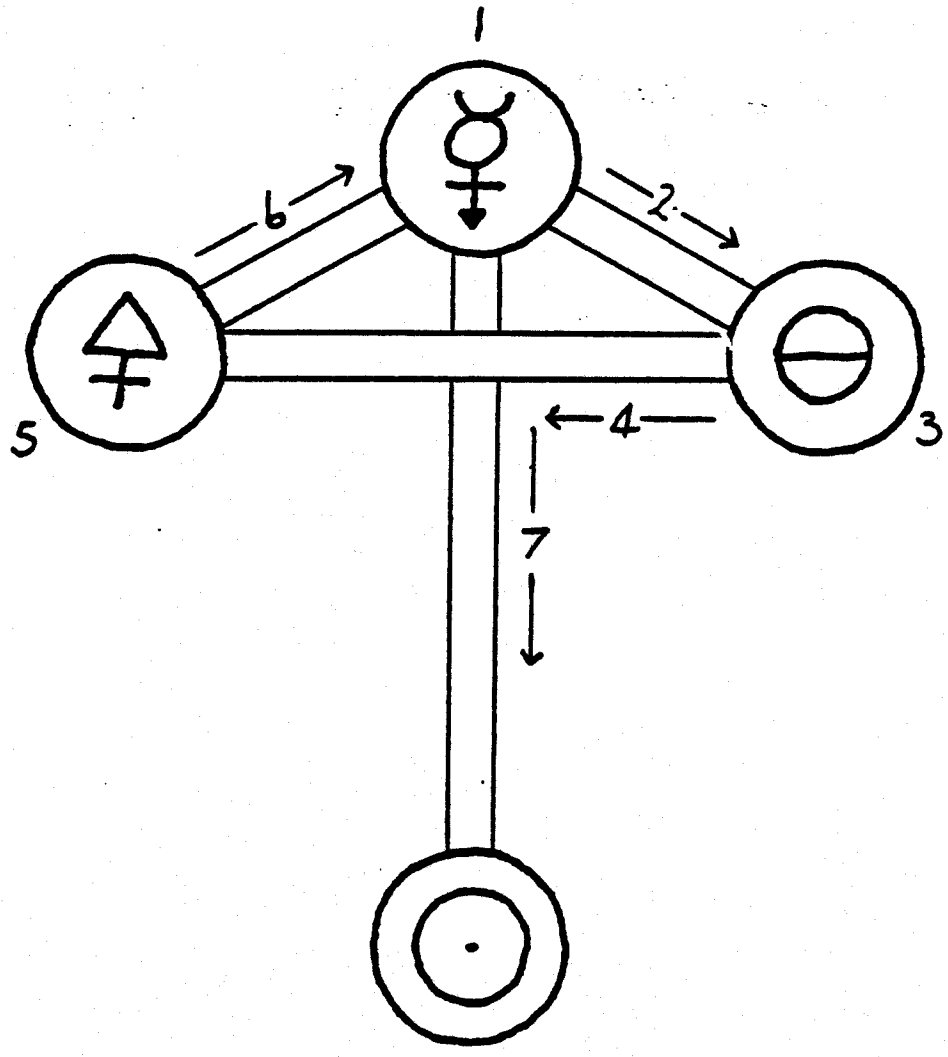


Diagram 2

In Wynn Westcotts Flying Roll lecture on Alchemy (for the published version of this see 'MacGregor Mathers, Alchemy and Astral Projection' by Francis King published by Neville Spearman) the manuscript of Zosimos is mentioned. Zosimos mentions in his alchemical texts both the descent and ascent. For a tarot association of the descent we will take the keys 0 to 15 which is a straight across the board tarot association. The actual descent starts at Mercury, then Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn with the ascent rising back along the same way. Now we apply this old manuscript to take in both the Sun and the Moon (16-21). The texts says that he descends 15 steps and mounts 7 steps. Applying this to the Trumps on the Tree of Life this shows descent from the Fool and finishing at the Devil. By going down the Tree from 16 to 21 we in fact do an alchemical ascent, reaching Malkuth which takes us back to Kether to begin again. Diagram 3 below of Basil Valentine shows the Tree of Metals and relates indirectly to the ascent and descent of the Tree as well as the Order diagram of the alchemical associations to the Tree of Life.

TREE OF METALS

AZOTH, OR THE METHOD OF MAKING PHILOSOPHERS' SECRET GOLD
by Basil Valentine

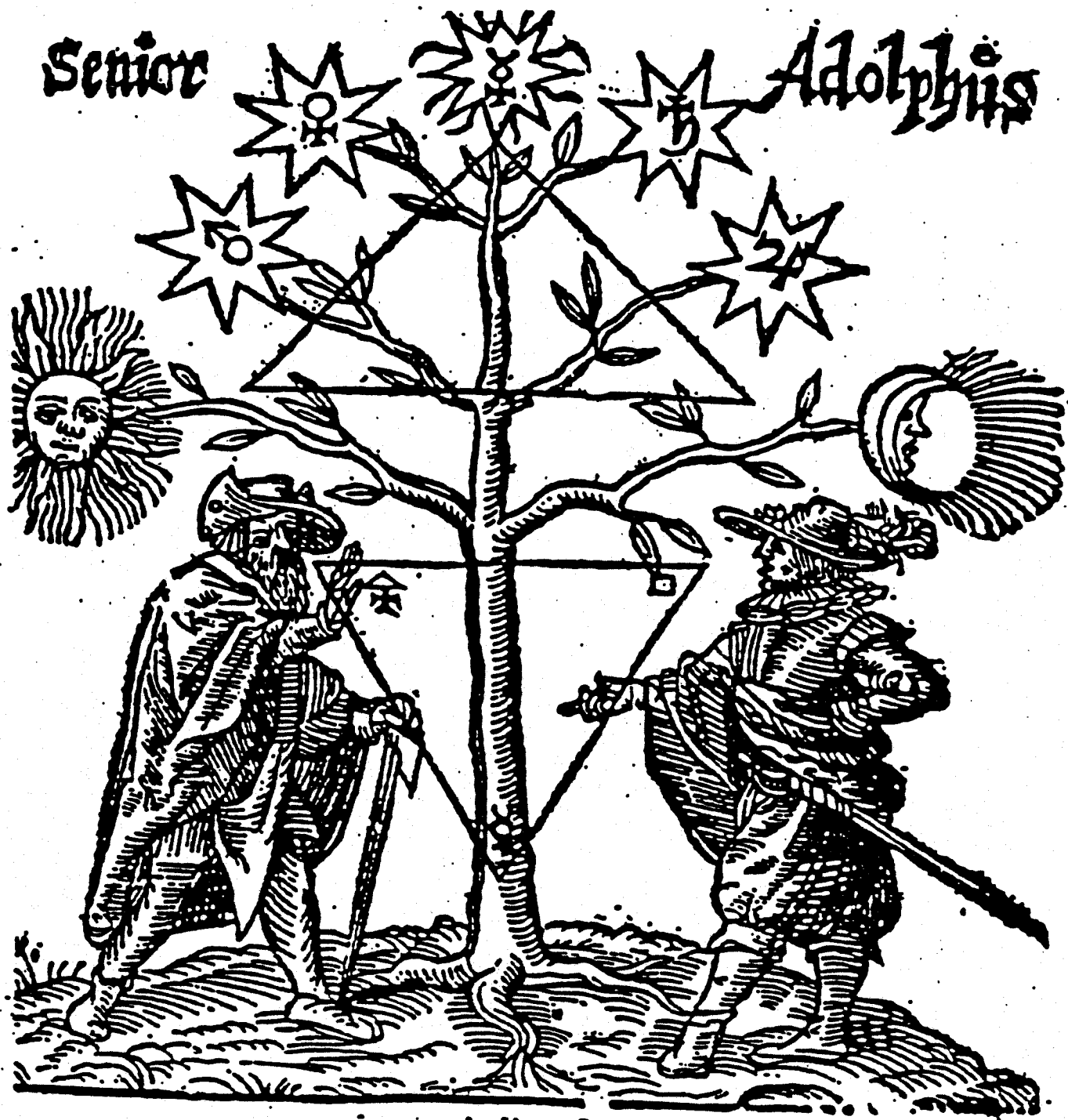


Diagram 3

If you notice the actions of the three standard colour changes within alchemy (forgetting the Yellowing in this instances) you have:

Nigredo- Blackening	Keys 13-15
Albedo - Whitening	Keys 16-18
Rubedo - Reddening	Keys 18-21

While the alchemical trees change constantly, according to the author and the particular experiment being worked on, the three Sephiroth of the Supernal (Salt, Sulphur and Mercury) always remain the same. The rather general descriptions below show tarot associations consistent with Order teachings.

If we observe the alchemical action of the Tree we will see that the right hand side of the Tree shows the dry, humid approach, the middle pillar is the watery or liquid aspect, while the left hand side of the Tree is the gaseous approach. Since we have explained the Supernal earlier, we will examine the cards descending from Salt and Sulphur, two opposite sides of the Tree.

From Salt in Chokmah we find that the extension to Sulphur in Binah goes by way of the humid approach. The extraction of Sulphur from Salt is shown in the Hierophant which goes through varying degrees of heat to produce the Lapis, shown in the Wheel of Fortune. The card the Emperor, from Salt to the Sun, is the essence of the Stone itself and shows the refining process, through heat, until the Sun (as the goal in Tiphareth) is reached.

On the other side of the Tree the card Lovers shows the unification of Fire and Water which is added at the Sun.

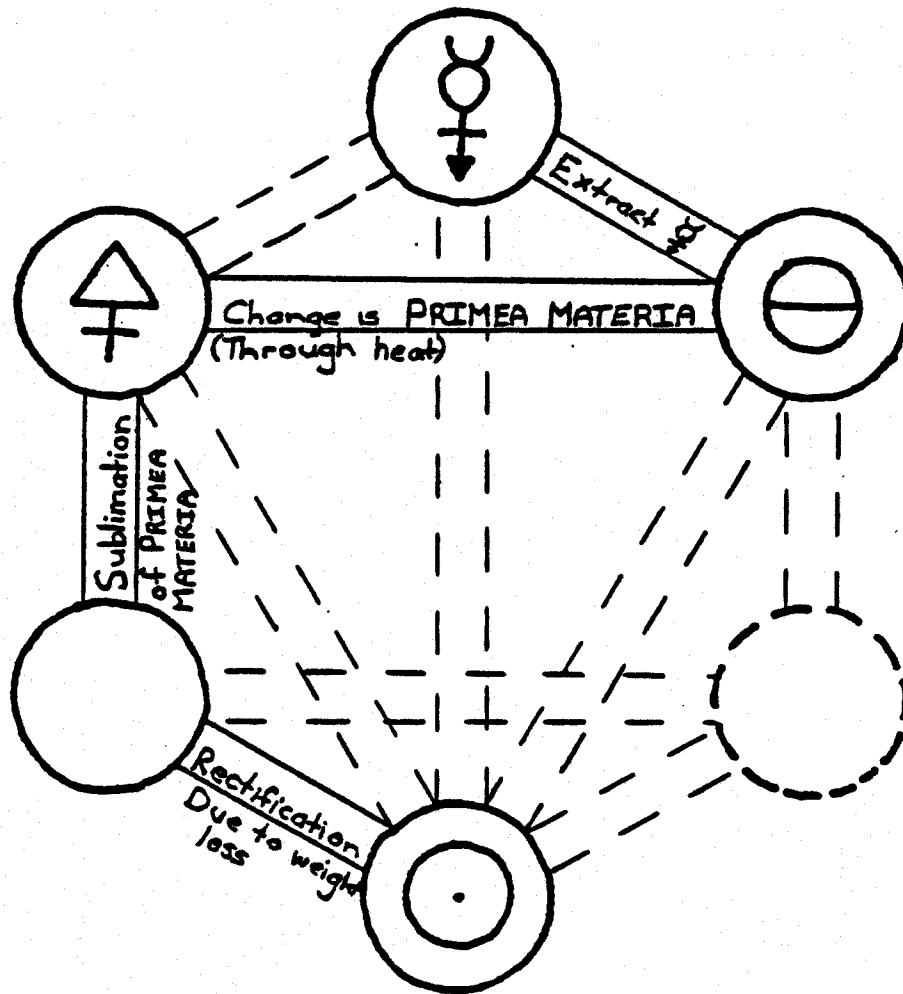
From Sulphur in Binah, the Mercury is sublimated in the Chariot and the watery aspect of the Stone is extracted in the Hanged Man, using a solvent to produce both gas and water. Going back to Netzach we then follow the alchemical stage of the Nigredo through to the card after which the Whitening (keys 16-18) then to the reddening keys 18-21. If keys 10 and 12, on both sides of the Tree, are studied, it is found that heat is needed to separate the impurities from the water in key 12 and the Lapis in Key 10.

On the alchemical journey one can start at either Salt or Sulphur and follow the 'U' shape of the Tree which includes the horizontal cards of the Strength and the Tower. The first approach of 'A' goes from Salt, applying heat then going through the dry humid method (after passing through the Tower), and then it is found that the water of the Hanged Man is added (then ascending) and sublimated in the Chariot to reach the Sulphur in Binah (this journey is from the Hierophant, Wheel of Fortune, Blasted Tower, Hanged Man and the Chariot).

Going the other direction of 'B' (this is another level of the experiment) and starting at Sulphur in Binah, to extract the Salt one finds, after the Tower, the dry powder or metal is left undergoing a change in the Wheel of Fortune and Hierophant to extract Salt in Chokmah.

In fact the Supernal (keys 0-2) shows the process of extraction of Mercury in a general way, then going from Salt or Sulphur we find the extraction process is then viewed more fully with the Tower at the base of the 'U'. A shorter method is to cut across Strength.

To recap, we find using trumps 0-2 we have in fact extracted Salt and Sulphur plus Mercury. This can go straight to the Sun, in Tiphareth through the hidden watery principle in Azoth (High Priestess). Diagram 4 below shows the basic application of how to reach the goal in a general way. The other trumps merely show an amplification of different stages of the above.



Goal of Experiment

Diagram 4

The next step is to view what happens when Sulphur is extracted from Salt, a different (dry, humid) method which is shown in the card Emperor. As this goes to Tiphareth (as Sol) and produces a combustible oil it shows movement from base to liquid.

From Sulphur we can see the card Lovers (the Conjunction of Fire and Water) going to Sol. When water and fire unite, mist, gas or vapour is formed which is generally condensed in liquid form. Hence the movement of gas to water (in Sol). From Justice the sublimation process moves to the condensation of gas. The diagram above explains this action.

Tiphareth here is the alchemical goal of the experiment but it can be also, by using the Tree as an intermediate stage of the experiment. Now if we wish to carry on further from the above Diagram 5 shows a continuation.

The rectification of Justice is then united with the hidden essence of the Moon in Gimel and ferments. It is then at its last stage before the unification with Salt. Going further we find that through Justice to the Sun in Tiphareth, instead of fermenting, may use heat again to produce different effects. The difference here to fermentation is that Azoth is not added - just applied heat to a certain stage to produce the Lapis through Sulphur and then to Mercury or Salt (whichever is the goal). Also after the stage of Putrification (through heat) one begins the blackening through the Albedo then down the path of Shin where the essence of Mercury is liberated at Malkuth (first stage transmutation), one goes up to Mercury in Kether and the whole process begins again at a different level, (see Diagram 6).

Note: Also from Sol, we can undergo another change through Temperance to form the base material we are after, shown in the World or as the Stone. The journey through the paths of Resh and Tzaddi show varying degrees of spiritual refinement, which both show different stages one reaches before the Stone in Tau.

See Diagrams 5 and 6 over page:

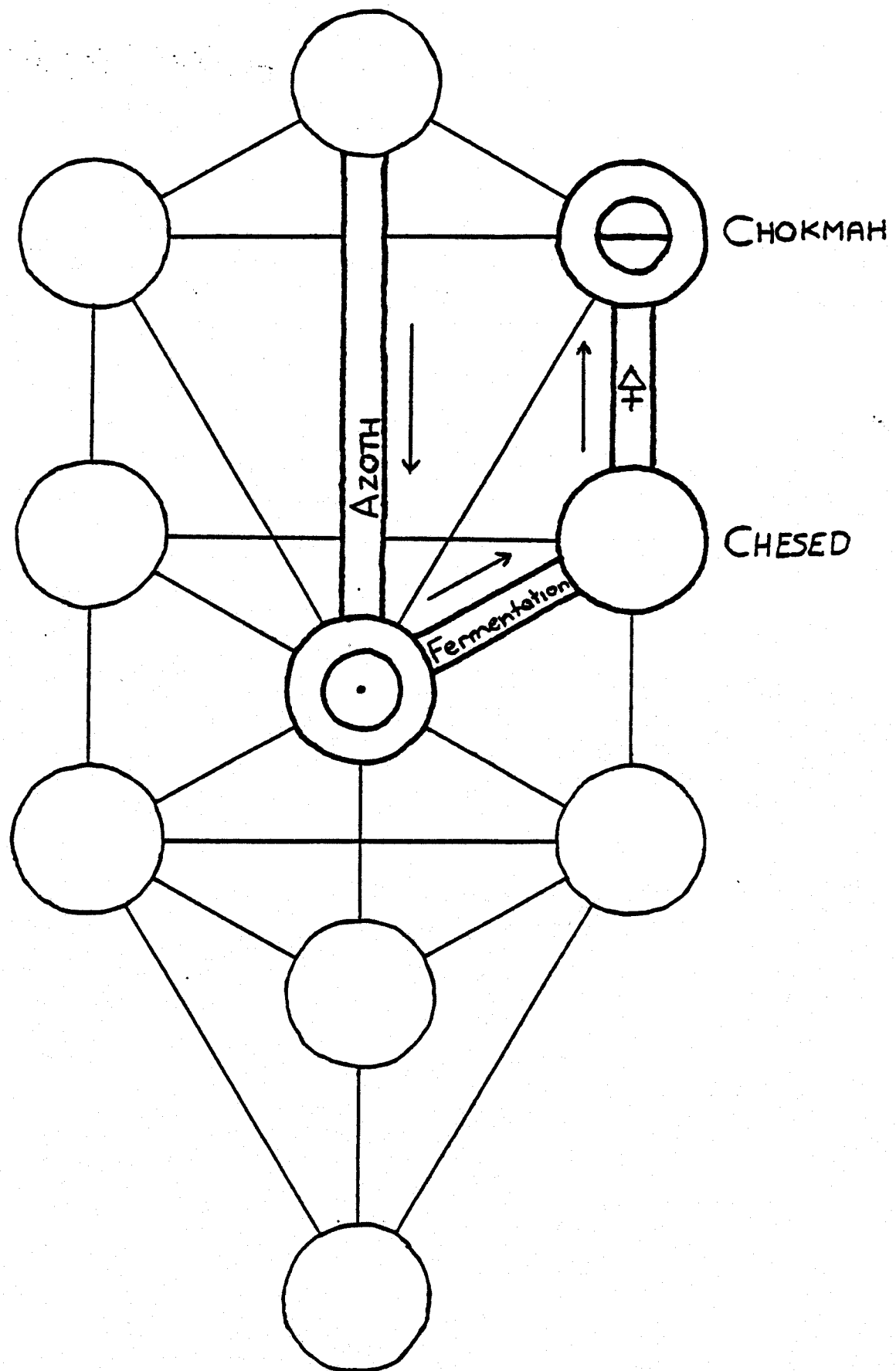


Diagram 5

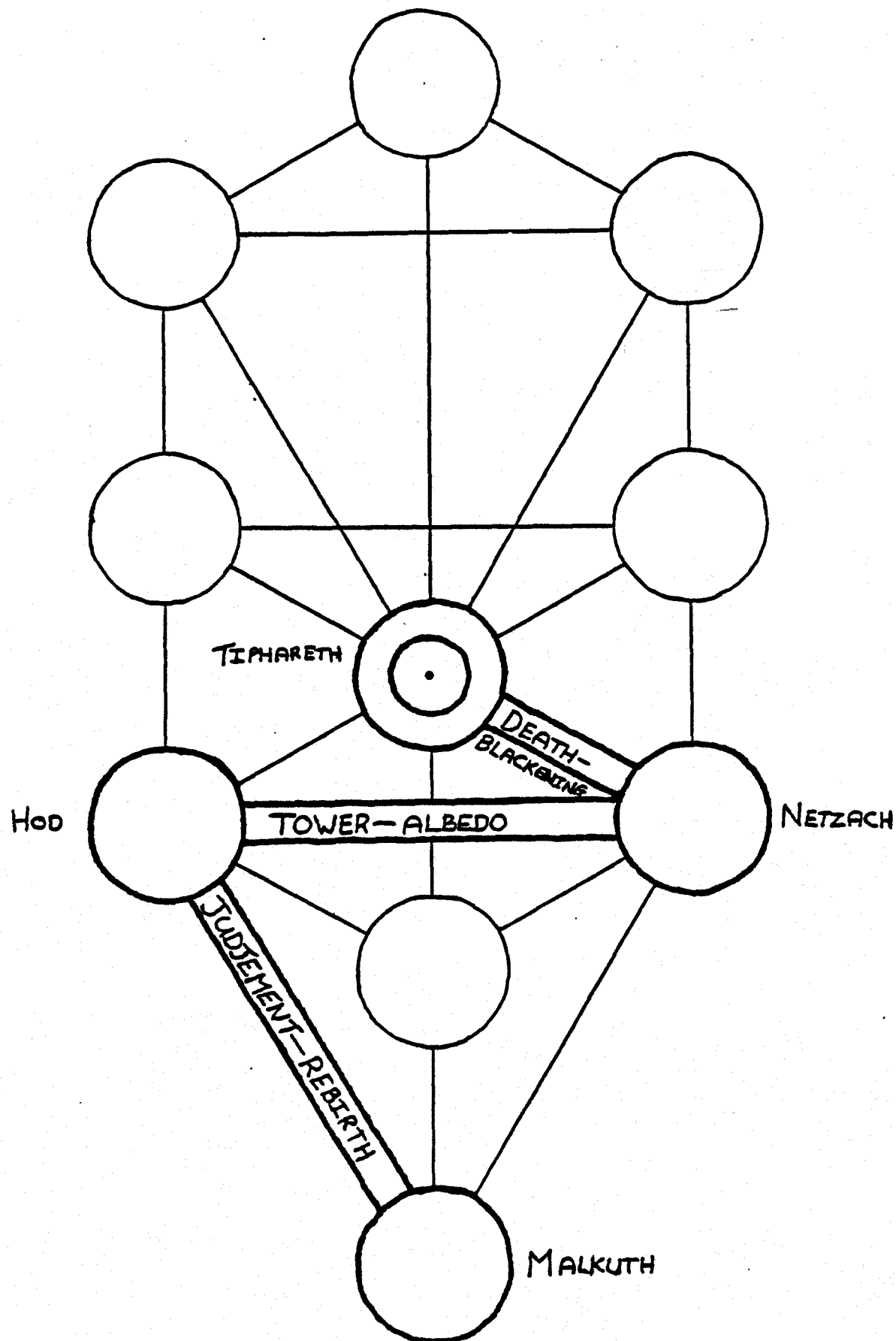


Diagram 6