



Tarot and the Seven Stages of Alchemy

“The Seven Stages Mapped onto the Tableau and the Thema Mundi”

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Greater Seattle Tarot Meetup Online Workshop

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The Denver Tarot Geeks and the Greater Seattle Tarot Meetup join forces to bring you a transformational study of alchemy and tarot. We’ll explore the seven stages of alchemy through the lens of the seven levels of spiritual unfoldment outlined in the Major Arcana.

The seven alchemical operations list steps of transformation. The alchemical model of changing lead into gold was a lab experiment but simultaneously a metaphor for stages of healing and growth. Alchemists purified and refined their own nature through study and meditation as they worked to achieve the highest level of spiritual consciousness.

In a clear expression of the Hermetic principle -- as above, so below – through their own self re-creation the alchemists aligned their circumstances in the world with the highest level of Divine influence for a more successful and fulfilling life. In this series, we’ll explore these seven stages, discover how they are reflected in our own psyche, and create change in our lives by working the operations.

Tarot author Paul Foster Case outlined seven levels of spiritual unfoldment in a specialized tarot layout, called the tableau. In this layout, the Fool is centered above three rows of seven cards. The resulting seven columns define the levels of unfoldment. Each level of unfoldment mirrors an alchemical stage. By discussing the three cards of each level as an analogy for the matching alchemical operation, we’ll open a tarot-based ladder toward our golden nature.

Planets and Operations

1. Why Alchemy?

- a. While being the most difficult and comprehensive of the Hermetic fields of study, alchemy in many ways is also the most immediate. When something goes wrong in our lives and we try to fix it, we’re doing alchemy.
- b. We’ve had all these experiences to greater or lesser degrees. They are natural to human existence.

2. The Intention

- a. Ora et Labora
- b. Connecting Soul (Sulphur) to Body (Salt) via the agency of Spirit (Mercury)

- c. Doing practical external work (such as an herbal tincture or metallurgy) while connecting with Divine energy, at the same time visualizing the external work as a divinely guided, internal and personal experience
 - d. How can I connect to Divine energy and integrate it into my daily life?
3. The Map
- a. Order of the Stages
 - i. No strict order to the stages; it's a living process
 - ii. However, it's useful to choose a map in our studies to give order and context to the cycle
 - iii. The map we chose overlays a mindset which both concentrates and excludes
 - b. Lunar/Solar
 - i. (Basil Valentine) Lunar cycle followed by Solar cycle – ♃ ♋ ♌ ☽♂ ♀ ☼
 - c. The ladder of the planets - ♃ ♌♂♂ ☉♀ ♃ ♌
 - d. The Thema Munda - ♃ ♌♂♂ ♀ ♌ ☽☉
 - e. For this study cycle, we'll use the Thema Mundi map
4. The Age of Taurus
- a. Age of Pisces: 0 to 2160 CE
 - b. Age of Aries: 2160 BCE to 0
 - c. Age of Taurus: 4320 BCE to 2160 BCE
 - d. https://www.astro.com/astrology/aa_article160602_e.htm
5. BOTA Tableau



6. Table of Correspondences

Mineral	Thema Mundi	Age of Taurus	Level of Unfoldment	Cards	Alchemical Stage
Lead	Aquarius	Winter Solstice	Bondage	1 Magician, 8 Strength, 15 Devil	Calcination
Tin	Pisces		Awakening	2 High Priestess, 9 Hermit, 16 Tower	Dissolution
Iron	Aries		Revelation	3 Empress, 10 Wheel, 17 Star	Separation
Copper	Taurus	Spring Equinox	Organization	4 Emperor, 11 Justice, 18 Moon	Conjunction
Quicksilver	Gemini		Regeneration	5 Hierophant, 12 Hanged Man, 19 Sun	Fermentation
Silver	Cancer		Realization	6 Lovers, 13 Death, 20 Judgment	Distillation
Gold	Leo	Summer Solstice	Cosmic Consciousness	7 Chariot, 14 Temperance, 21 World	Coagulation

7. Map of the Seven Stages

- a. Saturn – Lead – Aquarius – Bondage – Calcination
 - i. Calcination means to burn away to a fine white ash
 - ii. The first step is to find the bones (Calx) of the unredeemed matter, the one part of it that cannot be destroyed. But, the process of finding that indestructible material is an extraordinary sense of loss, loss of identity.
 1. Meditation: Who are you? Consider your identity, all the things that make you YOU. Now, slowly imagine taking away anything that your identify with that could be lost in your life. If your home is taken, your work, your family and friends, keep imagining anything that is important to you being taken away. Continue this process until you discover something that can never be taken from you.
 - iii. Spiritual Unfoldment: This is the level of bondage. Cards: Magician, Strength, Devil. We cling to what is perishable instead of what is eternal.
 - iv. Thema Mundi: Aquarius, the winter solstice in the Age of Taurus. I think of Aquarius as an ideal vision. But ruled by Saturn, Aquarius must first destroy everything in order to build from a completely new foundation. Like razing a piece of land before new construction. Aquarius is associated with the public or general populace, in contrast with Leo, the king or ruler. Without a ruler, the people become lawless and destructive. This is usually the cause of the flood in mythology, which is associated with the sign of Aquarius (see Deucalion and Pyrrha).
- b. Jupiter – Tin – Pisces – Awakening – Dissolution
 - i. Dissolution means to dissolve into liquid or to dissolve through the agency of liquid. The ashes of calcination are dissolved in a solvent.
 - ii. The second step is to take the remnants of the unredeemed matter and release even its bones. In a solution, two things become one, and the unredeemed matter melts into a boundless sea. Feelings of loss, drowning, complete loss of identity, no where to get your footing, swept up in an undesired current, complete loss of control.
 - iii. Spiritual Unfoldment: The level of Awakening. Cards: High Priestess, Hermit, Tower. This is Neo awakening in the pod in the real world. Complete loss of your sense of reality, and yet on your way to finding what is truly real.
 - iv. Thema Mundi: Pisces. The experience of gestation, totally dependent on another being, no awareness of self.
- c. Mars – Iron – Aries – Revelation – Separation
 - i. Dividing something into its component parts. Separation is done via filtration or distillation.
 - ii. The third step of the process is to establish the different parts – body, soul, and spirit, or, salt, sulfur, and mercury. Each part needs to be completely purified before being put together again. The experiences can include having a more

- genuine, pure, authentic sense of self, and yet realizing that something is missing.
- iii. Spiritual Unfoldment: Revelation. Cards: Empress, Wheel, Star. Our eyes are opened when we realize that we are part of a larger cycle. We are starseed, and yet we have completely lost that connection. Feeling of yearning.
 - iv. Thema Mundi: Aries. Being born into individuality. No long dependent on – or necessarily supported by – the other. Strong sense of independence, but lacking an awareness of a community or support system. Feeling of extraordinary vulnerability when trying to be yourself.
- d. Venus – Copper – Taurus – Organization – Conjunction
- i. Conjunction is the joining together of things. In this step, the purified components are recombined.
 - ii. The fourth step in the process is to bring the separated and purified parts back together. The experience is of finding a match or mate. The symbolism is typically sexual, but any strong feeling of “we go together!!” is included. Soul, sulfur, the flame of desire, is added; ideas of “soul mates” are common here.
 - iii. Spiritual Unfoldment: Organization. Cards: Emperor, Justice, Moon. The sense of connecting with the other drives us to organize, to put like things together. In each stage, the planet and one of its ruling signs are identified. But at this level, Justice (Libra) and the Moon (Pisces) join at the Venus/Taurus level. So both signs of Venus’ rulership as well as her sign of exaltation are represented. This clarifies that level of organization is about presidency and governance. Individuality is no longer lawless when it recognizes the rulership of an organizing principle; or perhaps another way, your freaky ways can be codified in a system of rules which makes it ok because everyone agrees to certain qualifications and limitations. Revisiting the level of Bondage, but now it is by choice.
 - iv. Thema Mundi: Taurus. Spring equinox in the Age of Taurus. Taurus is Gaia, the earth. At this level, we find our roots in a place, somewhere we feel like we belong. We feel it because the other people we match with are here, but more than that we feel the throbbing lines of earth energy magnetizing us to this place. We claim it as our own.
- e. Mercury – Quicksilver – Gemini – Regeneration – Fermentation
- i. Fermentation is transforming juice, or sugar and water, into alcohol. This is a natural process that happens spontaneously when something rots. But it can also be engineered. Fermentation releases bubbles, which are symbolic of Spirit, the breath of the Divine.
 - ii. The fifth stage finds Spirit in the solution. Fermentation is a more refined process of purification, a spiritualization of the matter. Sacrifice of the material for a new spiritual life. Experience of divine inebriation. The energy and excitement of discovery, the ferment of pure, focused, collegial minds coming together. The feeling of knowing your purpose.
 - iii. Spiritual Unfoldment: Regeneration. Cards: Hierophant, Hanged Man, Sun. Regeneration is a new lease on life, finding direction and intent. Divine inspiration. Under the guidance of the Hierophant/teacher, you descend like the Hanged Man into the deep unconscious and there redeem the lost spark, returning like a diver with the pearl of great price. The exultant child of the Sun card leads with a pure heart. The resurrected Christ absolves all sin.

- iv. Thema Mundi: Gemini, the twins. One mortal, one divine. We discover our immortal self. Gemini is a social sign, connecting with others, inspired by ideas, reveling in communication, exalting in the human experience. Our self and our match, having found our place in the world, now connect with neighbors and friends. These fraters and sorors in spirit confirm our own sense of our self and our purpose, the things we already share with our mate, but expand on it, magnifying our ideas exponentially. We revel in how aligned we are and explode in realizing how vast we are.
- f. Moon – Silver – Cancer – Realization – Distillation
 - i. Distillation is the separation of a component by heat, and its subsequent condensation in a cool part of the apparatus, where it is funneled off into a separate container.
 - ii. The sixth stage is distillation. The heat of ferment during the day elevates moisture to heaven, and overnight that moisture, purified, appears as dew in the hours before dawn, under the watchful care of the moon. The feeling of a spiritual rain. A blessing from heaven. Sprinkled with fairy dust. A gentle and loving feeling of little bursts of energy all over and through you. Like a child taking your hand or someone writing letters on your back.
 - iii. Spiritual Unfoldment: Realization. Cards: Lovers, Death, Judgment. To realize is to make real. The joyous explosions of ideas from the previous level now unite with the person who can make them happen. What was impossible or only imagined becomes tangible and present in the world. We become present and tangible in the world. We achieve our soul purpose. *“The Japanese term for birth is U-MU, consisting of the kototama U, “Being” and MU, “Nothingness.” That is, life springs forth when Form and Emptiness are in perfect balance. — Morihei Ueshiba, Aikido Founder*
 - iv. Thema Mundi: Cancer. The sign of Cancer is the sign of the home, of comfort, caring, and nurturing. The individual, having found a mate, a place, and a community, now builds a home, starts a family (real or metaphorical). The heart that makes it a home. The unseen emotion that vivifies anything and everything.
- g. Sun – Gold – Leo – Cosmic Consciousness – Coagulation
 - i. Coagulation is the process of liquid solidifying.
 - ii. The seventh stage is coagulation. All three parts, body, soul, and spirit, or, salt, sulfur, and mercury, after being recombined, solidify into a new and perfect body, the philosopher’s stone. Union of spirit and matter, above and below. The previously unredeemed matter is now resurrected in perfection.
 - iii. Spiritual Unfoldment: Cosmic Consciousness. Cards: Chariot, Temperance, World. Complete awareness and use of the sub-, self-, and super-conscious levels, the combination of which is a sum greater than the parts: Cosmic Consciousness. Joyfully aware of all that is without restraint or judgment, without confusion, without a sense of lack or separation.
 - iv. Thema Mundi: Leo. Summer Solstice in the Age of Taurus. The sign of Leo is the sign of the king, fully realized leadership, expressed first and foremost in the self. Only through self-perfection and complete self-direction in alignment with Divine inspiration, can leadership of others happen. Like the yin-yang symbol, perfection holds the seed of its opposite, which is why experience of cosmic consciousness is a prerequisite. Leadership can become tyranny, just as the complete autonomy of Aquarius in its shadow expression became lawlessness.

When each individual wears his own crown of rays of Divine light, then the promised utopia of Aquarius can be realized. Achieving perfection of the self in Leo divinizes and perfects the entire cycle.

8. Tarot Card Exercise

- a. Exercise with two cards (each person chooses whether to do a random or analytical draw)
 - i. What do you want to change?
 - ii. How do you want to be?