

I originally worked on this series of Hermetic/alchemical meditation exercises about 20 years ago and they were originally published in the early issues of the Hermetic Journal 1978-81. They were the foundation for a elaborate system of meditative exercises, based on alchemical and hermetic ideas, which I was working on at that time. - Adam McLean

- [1. The Philosophic Egg or Retort](#)
- [2. Separatio and Coniunctio](#)
- [3. Solve et Coagula](#)
- [4. The Ouroboros](#)
- [5. The Hermaphrodite](#)
- [6. Mercurius or the Caduceus](#)
- [7. Sol and Luna](#)
- [8. The Heart Centre](#)
- [9. The Soul Bird](#)
- [10. The processes of Nature - four elements](#)
- [11. The processes of Nature - growth](#)
- [12. The processes of Nature - fruiting process](#)

Hermetic/alchemical meditation

1. The Philosophic Egg or Retort

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

The Philosophic Egg or Retort

In the first part of the meditation begin to explore the way in which one's inward being connects with the outward world. Follow out in consciousness, say, one's hearing of a slight sound, feel one's consciousness raying out towards the source of the sound, then return inwards. Allow oneself to become aware of one's body posture, a small discomfort perhaps, feel through one's sense of touch how one connects with the physical world, and then allow one's consciousness to withdraw and follow this back inwards. Continue this with all the senses using the impulses that come to one through the sense organs in a natural way; do not try to force or repress these realities, but follow these outward and allow oneself to return inward. One will begin to feel an awareness growing of the relationship between one's inner being and one's perception, and when this arises naturally in the meditation, begin to inwardly form a picture of this awareness, as an egg or flask-retort. Picture one's being as a flask. The outside world can only enter through the walls of the flask, the shell of the egg. Let one's consciousness look outwards through the walls of the flask into the sense world, and be able to return inward to one's soul egg.

As the meditation continues, one will find arising quite naturally, sudden images, jumbled thoughts, daily worries. In this exercise, do not try to repress these or avert one's consciousness from them, but allow each of them in turn to develop, grow to fruition, and then watch them dissolve and their energy dissipate. These images, emotional impulses, arise out of our unconscious, the raw energy of our inner life, the background of our being. Picture this in the meditation as the most inward content of the flask or egg, a deep interior darkness out of which these impulses unconsciously stir. Allow one's being to sink inwards, to immerse oneself in the inner contents of the flask, then return to the surface.

One must now begin to bring these two parts of the exercise together, picturing one's being as the egg or retort, a dynamic boundary between the multiplicity of outer perception, and inward streaming unconscious activity. In this meditative exercise, one's soul touches upon the two seas in which one's being has no firm foundation, and through

this inner touching, begins to contact that solid ground of the soul, which lies between those two realms. Thus one begins to grow a space within, a space in which one can work surely with the soul.

This is a very simple meditation, and to the intellect it may seem trivial, but exercises such as this are essential in developing a contact with the ground space of the soul, the Retort, or Philosophic Egg in which inner development can occur. If one will persevere with it, one can use this exercise as a method of opening and closing a more extended meditative working.

2. Separation and Conjunction

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

All these exercises begin with the Philosophic Egg or retort meditation, described in the first issue, which leads one into an inner meditative space. Within that space, we shall perform short exercises, and then close the meditation with the retort exercise reversed, that is leading one out of the inner space back to normal consciousness.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

Separation and Conjunction

Perform the Philosophic Egg until one is inwardly centred, and one feels one's being to be within the space of the retort. Now, become conscious of one's soul forces, begin to picture this as a kind of bubbling, seething, water at the bottom of the flask, full of life and ever changing raw energy. Allow this picture to form itself clearly, take on a definite structure, then quite deliberately separate oneself from it, feel one's inward being detaching from this seething water. It will help to picture one's being rising upwards in the flask away from the realm of the boiling living waters of the soul.

Let this separation continue until one stands quite apart, high above, focussed to a point, sharp and withdrawn, but still aware of the bubbling seething below. A point will come quite naturally in this exercise when one feels the need to return downwards. Let this descent happen, and with this feel one's being spreading, opening out to meet the bubbling energy of the waters. Picture one's being dissolve in the seething liquid soul substance at the bottom of the retort. Then again separate and ascend on high, looking down on the process below, then descend and dissolve once more in the waters.

Repeat this a few times following one's own inner judgment as to how often but always finishing on the coniunctio phase. Then close the meditation by following the Retort exercise backwards, leading from the inner space back into the outward consciousness.

This separatio and coniunctio meditation inwardly prepares the soul for later exercises, when it will be important to have conscious control over one's immersion in or separation from an inward process. Performing the retort meditation regularly builds up an ability to step into the inner space consciously and at will. One has control over the inner/outer dimension of the soul. This second exercise helps to develop the inner flexibility needed to work with alchemical symbols in meditation. These are fundamental exercises and though seemingly simplistic, mastery of these is important for later work.

Those who have worked with substances and physical alchemical apparatus performing physical alchemy, will find this an invaluable source for inner pictures to build these meditations of soul alchemy.

3. Solve et coagula

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

All these exercises begin with the Philosophic Egg or retort meditation, described in the first issue, which leads one into an inner meditative space. Within that space, we shall perform short exercises, and then close the meditation with the retort exercise reversed, that is leading one out of the inner space back to normal consciousness.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

Solve et coagula

Perform as an opening the Retort meditation until one stands within the inner space of one's being. For this Solve et Coagula technique, one takes any symbol, to start with simple forms, (though this meditation can be applied to working with any symbol), for example the triangle of Salt-Sulphur-Mercury, the Three Principles.

One begins at the Coagula phase, constructing the symbol in a hardened, coagulated manner. One might, for example, picture the triangle being made out of wood, say, with the three symbols for Salt, Sulphur and Mercury, carved or painted at the vertices, or better still, with a pile of ashy salt, liquid mercury and glowing sulphur at these points. Allow one's inward imagination to construct the symbol as you will, but pictured in a hardened, solid form, rather than in an abstract way. One will find that one's ability to concentrate on constructing and perpetuating this image in imagination is limited, but as one feels this concentration relaxing, one begins the Solve phase.

This consists of raising the imagined solid symbol into a more abstract form, letting one's consciousness naturally flow towards the experience of the symbol in high abstraction. One could, for example, picture a series of triangles radiating out from the hardened solid original image, into the depths of cosmic space, carrying one's consciousness with them, until one stands in a threefoldness, within the triple space of the archetypal nature of the three principles. This Solve state cannot be held for long and one must descend from this world of pure form into the reconstruction of the symbol in solidity - coagulated. Allow one's being to repeat and recycle this process as often as one's inner resources permit, one can end on either phase but the after resonances in the soul will be very distinctive of this closing phase.

These two phases of the experience of a symbol in the inner world, begin to play into one another through the course of such meditative exercises, and one begins to build a bridge between form and substance in the creation of a symbol. The Solve phase extracts the essence, the inner life of the symbol, the Coagula phase provided a foundation for the form, keeping it true. This is a most important meditative technique and we shall use it often in future exercises where we shall use it to explore the nature of various alchemical symbols.

4. The Ouroboros

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

All these exercises begin with the Philosophic Egg or retort meditation, described in the first issue, which leads one into an inner meditative space. Within that space, we shall perform short exercises, and then close the meditation with the retort exercise reversed, that is leading one out of the inner space back to normal consciousness.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

The Ouroboros

Place oneself into one's own inner space by performing the retort exercise. Centre one's being to a point - one can visualise this either spatially in terms of the centre of the retort, or emotionally as a place of calmness. One can only hold this for a short time, so allow the natural forces of the soul, to play into the experience.

Soon polarities will express themselves, and picture this inwardly as the point becoming a line. Try to keep one's consciousness as long as possible at the centre of this line of polarities. One will feel raying away from this centre on either side the polar forces of positive - negative, above - below, active - passive, etc. Let one's being run through as many possibilities as one feels comfortable with.

Then bring the picture into a definite focus, using the Solve et Coagula technique if necessary, and inwardly experience the line as a snake, with its head towards one's own head, tail at the base of the spine. Feel the polarities of this symbol, allow it's full form and forces to develop. This picture reflects the natural structure of one's inner being.

Now one must build the Ouroboros by uniting the two polarities. Picture the head and tail of the snake twisting around until the head grasps the tail forming the Ouroboros symbol, which one should centre around one's heart. Using Solve et Coagula one can allow this symbol to rise into the higher part of one's interior being. As the snake

grasps its own tail, so on the higher level one's own soul takes hold of itself, and begins to work upon its own substance, uniting the polarities, uniting conscious with unconscious, positive and negative, spirit and body, etc. One can use this exercise in a general way, or in order to work through particular polarities one has encountered in one's study, or through the experiences of life. One must not reverse the process in the case of the Ouroboros exercise. Once one has formed the symbol inwardly, do not take it to pieces, but finish at this point, letting the unity remain in one's being.

5. The Hermaphrodite

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

All these exercises begin with the Philosophic Egg or retort meditation, described in the first issue, which leads one into an inner meditative space. Within that space, we shall perform short exercises, and then close the meditation with the retort exercise reversed, that is leading one out of the inner space back to normal consciousness.

In the last exercise we experienced something of the vertical polarity of our being, in the head and tail of the Ouroboros which were united. In this meditation we shall work with the horizontal polarity of our beings.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

The Hermaphrodite

By performing the Retort meditation bring one's consciousness into the inner space. Allow this consciousness to become centred in a plane running down the mid line of one's body, and begin to explore the polarities of one's being that are expressed in the left and right. We must try in this exercise to experience the qualitative differences in our feeling of right and left. The comfortable way one's consciousness rests in the right side, the left whereas seeming more strange and unfamiliar (left handed people will have to reverse these directions).

Let one's consciousness stream into the right side of one's being - one can picture this perhaps quite physically as rays flowing out of the right side of the body particularly the right hand. Experience how the conscious will lives in this side of one's being. Centre again in consciousness, then picture the left side as a realm of one's being penetrated by forces outside one's consciousness. Experience the left side of the body as a kind of receptive organ for the unconscious forces that work into our beings. Centre again and alternate focussing one's consciousness in right and left.

Part of this exercise might concentrate on the fact that the physical organs asymmetrically disposed in the body - liver, heart, guts etc., are organs we can never consciously control. Many of the symmetrically disposed organs - brain, lungs, limbs, etc., can come into the realm of conscious will. Explore images such as this.

There should eventually arise a moment in the meditation, when quite naturally a kind of synthesis begins to come about. We picture the left side as female/receptive/intuitive, the right side as male/active/conscious, begin to come together in a synthesis, to meet in the hermaphrodite. Picture inner being quite definitely as this hermaphrodite, the two essential facets of conscious/unconscious, active/receptive, male/female, etc., united, fusing together. Do not attempt to reverse this process. Once this figure has formed inwardly, do not take it to pieces, but finish at this point, letting the unity remain in one's being.

(As a physical manifestation of the hermaphrodite, we need only note that the left hemisphere of the brain is connected with the right side of the body and vice versa.) This meditation is only one small part of what is spiritually contained in the hermaphrodite symbol.

6. Mercurius or the Caduceus

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

All these exercises begin with the Philosophic Egg or retort meditation, described in the first issue, which leads one into an inner meditative space. Within that space, we shall perform short exercises, and then close the meditation

with the retort exercise reversed, that is leading one out of the inner space back to normal consciousness.
[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

Mercurius or the Caduceus

When one is within the inner space of the retort exercise, begin to build a picture of the Caduceus within one's being. As in the Hermaphrodite exercise (Number 5), experience the left-right polarities of one's inner nature. Picture one's being in the pentagram gesture, and allow one's feelings of the left and right polarities to focus in the arms and hands and form an inner picture of the horns of the Caduceus.

Then begin to work with the other polarity experienced in the Ouroboros meditation (Number 4), the head-body-limbs. Form inwardly the rounded solar part of the Mercurius symbol, and superimpose it upon the trunk of one's body experienced inwardly.

One should then begin to experience a kind of current flowing into the left hand, (the passive side of our being) from the Cosmos-outside, and round the circle of the Caduceus to the right side of the body, then round up the left side and across to the right hand, from which one should experience the flow of energy leaving. (Some purely left handed people may need to reverse these directions.) Do not allow this inner experience of flowing energy too develop too powerfully, and dominate the meditation. It should be just a gentle flow. We are not here concerned with dynamics but with the balancing of energies within one's interior space.

At the lowest point of the solar facet of the Caduceus, one should form the image of a cross, and this cross is the earthing point of the symbol. If one finds the energetics of the Lunar-Solar flow becoming too strong, one needs only withdraw into the cross form, and allow the upper open lemniscate of the Caduceus to fade.

In performing this Mercurius exercise one aims to balance the various forces and facets of the symbol. The Lunar crescent or open part of the lemniscate - against the closed Solar part. The whole upper part -against the lower cross form. The left passive side - against the right active side. In the upper lunar part one opens one's being to the Spiritual-cosmic forces, the closed Solar part allows one to experience the enclosed forces of the soul, while the cross is the solid part of incarnation, experienced through the feet in the contact with the earth realm.

The three meditative exercises of the Ouroboros, Hermaphrodite and the Caduceus form an inter-related group, and they can and should be practised together as an organic whole, integrating the various polarities of our beings.

7. Sol and Luna

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

All these exercises begin with the Philosophic Egg or retort meditation, described in the first issue, which leads one into an inner meditative space. Within that space, we shall perform short exercises, and then close the meditation with the retort exercise reversed, that is leading one out of the inner space back to normal consciousness.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

Sol and Luna

For this meditation we shall be doing an exercise which although simple touches upon archetypal realms. True success with this meditation will only be found if the form of the exercise is used on various levels of one's being - physical, etheric, astral, spiritual.

The basic meditative forms we use are the archetypes of the Sun and Moon. One must try to inwardly experience these archetypes, to find in one's own being the Solar and Lunar forces in their various manifestations.

One can initially picture the Sun archetype as an expansive, warm, outpouring, a radiation from centre to periphery, a dissolving of matter into energy, of formal pattern into dynamic forces. At the beginning of the exercise one can relate this to the physical level of one's being, through the outbreath or the outward pulsing of the blood from the heart out to the periphery of one's body.

The Lunar archetype can be experienced as a contractive, cold, inflowing, a movement towards the centre, a fixing or hardening of energies into form. One relates this initially to the retentive inbreathing, and the formed organs in

the periphery of one's being, the brain or the limb system, receiving the energies of the blood stream, fixing them, and giving form to one's being.

One can then experience how one's physical being arises as a point of balance between the outflowing Solar forces that would dissolve one into the cosmos and the hardening Lunar forces that give one form and solidity. Try to carry this into the realm of the soul, to experience in the flow of the emotions, a solar element that presses outwards, that provides the energy behind the emotion, but also try to experience how this is met inwardly by a lunar element in the emotions, that acts as a kind of dark boundary within an emotion and gives it shape. (In most people there is only a consciousness of the solar element, the energetics, in emotions; the lunar element is more unconscious and obscure, but it must be brought into consciousness in order to achieve a more balanced being). Try through extending this exercise into the soul to inwardly feel the balance of lunar and solar forces that work in the emotions.

This exercise can also be used to work with the etheric forces of one's being, experiencing their receptive and active aspects which relate to sun and moon within, and it can also be used on the more spiritual plane, to work through to an awareness of the more cosmic dimension of these forces.

8. The Heart Centre

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

All these exercises begin with the Philosophic Egg or retort meditation, described in the first issue, which leads one into an inner meditative space. Within that space, we shall perform short exercises, and then close the meditation with the retort exercise reversed, that is leading one out of the inner space back to normal consciousness.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

The Heart Centre

In some of these meditative exercises we have worked with the soul counterparts of physical organs in the body. For this meditation we will relate to the heart.

Place oneself in the retort of one's being through our basic meditational exercise. When one is within the inner space become conscious of the rhythmic beating of the heart. Allow this perception to grow until the heart is at the centre of the retort experience. Then using the Separatio-Conjunctio technique, try to become detached from the physical perception of the heart's beating and instead to touch inwardly on the spiritual essence of the heart.

As this experience develops, begin to picture the heart as at the centre of a lemniscate, a figure of eight, and having four divisions at the meeting point of the four arms of the lemniscate. Feel how a current flows out and upwards from the heart centre reaching out spiritually to the heights of the Cosmos, and how it turns around and returns to the centre bringing an essence of the cosmic realm with it. Let this sense of a cycle of cosmic nourishment form itself into various pictures - streams of light, or flowing of energies.

Now picture the lower part of the lemniscate, how it reaches down deep into one's being and carries this Cosmic nourishment into the depths of one's soul, into the realm of one's will, one's actions in the world. The lower limb of the lemniscate turns at the periphery of one's being and returns to the centre carrying with it, as a feedback, an essence, the fruit of one's actions.

Then unify the whole picture and experience the heart as this fourfold centre of one's being within the lemniscate.

To conclude this exercise allow oneself to slip back into physical perception of the heart's beating, and at the same time realise that the physical heart is the physical body of the soul heart, the heart centre which one touches upon in performing this meditation.

9. The The Soul Bird

In this series of elementary meditative exercises, no special postures are required but that in which one is most comfortable, nor are any special breathing rhythms used. Meditation should be undertaken when one is not too tired, and the best situation is probably lying down in a quiet, nearly dark, room, and it is essential to have privacy and no possibility of being disturbed.

All these exercises begin with the Philosophic Egg or retort meditation, described in the first issue, which leads one

into an inner meditative space. Within that space, we shall perform short exercises, and then close the meditation with the retort exercise reversed, that is leading one out of the inner space back to normal consciousness.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

The Soul Bird

Centre oneself in one's inner space through performing the retort exercise, and this time focus on the relationship of the soul to the senses. Once centred begin to feel the soul and how it is bound up with the sense perceptive aspect of one's being, tied to the processes of the brain. Allow this feeling to grow and form itself into a structured awareness. Then turn one's awareness outwards and sense the vast space around and above the soul, the heights to which it also belongs. Allow this feeling to develop and pictures to form reflecting that the heights of one's being is also a realm for the soul.

One experiences the soul being tied and bound to the sense perception aspect of one's being, but part of the soul has an upward aspiration. Picture this part inwardly as the Soul Bird, a part of the soul substance that is free of the chains of perception. (This bird can be pictured in various ways - form one suited to your own experience) . The essence of the Soul Bird is that one experiences it as a part of the soul forces of one's being that is free and able to rise upwards away from the outer realm of perception.

At this stage one should not identify with the bird, but remain outside the experience and watch it rise and soar into the space of spirit above the soul. (Like a lark ascending perhaps, or an eagle soaring). Let the Soul Bird ascend out of view, then wait till it descends again and re-unites with the lower soul forces. Allow this cycle of ascent and descent to occur as many times as one wishes.

This Soul Bird is the inner vehicle for relating to the spirit through the soul. The bird returns bearing an essence from the spiritual world to nourish the forces of the soul that are tied to the physical senses bound up with the brain. Initially this essence will be perceived only unconsciously.

Only when one's spiritual awareness has developed through more meditative exercises is one able in a profitable way to identify with the Soul Bird itself. At this stage one should remain on the outside within the realm of the lower soul forces.

10. The processes of Nature - four elements

We have now worked through a series of ten meditative exercises that used certain techniques for experiencing one's inner being in particular ways or through the use of special symbols. That particular work can be extended indefinitely and hopefully enough indications have been given to enable readers to construct exercises for themselves. But here we change direction somewhat in our meditative work. The alchemists meditated upon processes in their retorts, and also worked to inwardly harmonise their being with outer processes in nature. They meditated upon processes in the natural world, bearing this into the substance of their souls. Thus they read the book of Nature.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

The processes of Nature - four elements

Our first meditation in this series involves working with the four elements. The technique given here is a development of the Solve et Coagula. It should be performed in the retort of Nature, in contemplation of the natural world, and involves bearing the essence of the outer spiritual forces across the threshold into the inner realm.

Seek out some phenomenon of Nature that reflects the nature of the element one is to contemplate, For Air, perhaps the rising of smoke from a fire, a mist slowly forming, or those processes of cloud formation that occur at a discernable rate. For Water, the seashore, waves beating on rocks, or perhaps find a little stream or waterfall. For Earth, sit beside a rock face, or a quarry, or some particular feature of landscape. Fire is more subtle, although in outer nature there are currents of warmth flowing through phenomena, through plants, gathering a certain parts of the landscape, perhaps it would be best at first to meditate before a real fire.

Find oneself a spot to sit or otherwise be comfortable and be able to observe the phenomenon one has chosen. This meditation has two parts, two cycles, an outward and an inward phase. These should be repeated alternately until one's inner soul feels filled. (One cannot really overdo such an exercise for one's concentration will fail once one is inwardly filled).

During the outer Solve phase, with open eyes dissolve one's conscious outward into the phenomenon, feel as if one is touching, merging with the sounds of the stream, the bright flashing of the waters, allow oneself to almost flow into the outer phenomenon. Then once one begins to reach a point of outward saturation, withdraw this experience inwards, closing the eyes, separating from the other senses, descending into the inner soul depths, bearing the essence of the outer phenomenon one has chosen, say Water, and touch this inwardly with one's inner vision of the Water element. This is the Coagulation phase. Then once one reaches a certain satiation allow one's consciousness to turn again outwards in the Solve phase. One will find that through this exercise one bears across the threshold of one's consciousness a spiritual essence of the phenomenon, and one will inwardly come to feel a living connection with the elements. One can of course work through all four elements in sequence, and one will through this exercise very rapidly become aware of the gradations within the elements and the terms Earth of Fire, Water of Air, etc, will no longer be merely intellectual abstractions, but will be living realities.

Please resist the temptaion to perform these exercises outside of Nature. It is essential to work with Nature, and enter into a relationship with her through this working. It cannot be done in one's own head.

11. The processes of Nature - growth

Continuing the direction initiated in Hermetic Meditation No 10, we will work with a meditation on processes - in the natural world, and be concerned here with exploring growth.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

The processes of Nature - growth

The meditative technique used here is the same as with number 10, that is, the meditation is divided into two phases, a period when one focusses one's attention outwardly upon some phenomenon, letting one's consciousness fully immerse itself in the phenomenon through the senses, then this is followed by a period, when closing the eyes and withdrawing inward, one bears the essence of the outer experience into the inner world as a subject for meditation. The period of inner digestion through meditation on the outer experience should be followed by a further out-turning of the consciousness into the outer world, and this cycle should be repeated a number of times.

Around us in the summer are many examples of growth and readers should explore those which particularly interest them, but we might just draw attention, as one example, say, to the opening of tree buds. It is not too difficult to find buds at various stages of development in close proximity on the same tree and thus one can explore the cycle of unfolding of the bud. During the inner phase of the meditation, try to grasp in inner picturing the form through which the bud grows, the space into which the substance flows. In some cases this will not be very difficult and after a few cyclings of the exercise, this form will inwardly arise in one's consciousness. As one works with this exercise in this way, eventually one will find that during the outer phase of experiencing the buds, a perception will ultimately arise of the archetypal bud form of the particular species, which will be perceived in consciousness as surrounding the actual physically perceptible bud. This is the beginning of the experience of the etheric form of the bud.

The growth processes we choose for these exercises should be intense with inner growth, budding, germinating seeds, flower forms opening (rather than established leaves or slow growing subjects, we seek the intense presence of etheric force). We should try in the meditative phase to picture the space into which the physical substance of the plant grows, the archetypal form of the flower, or leaf, or bud. It is excellent if one can inwardly experience this as a dynamic process in movement, rather than as static frozen stages of the growth process.

In order to perform this exercise properly, as little time as possible should separate the phases (though in time with practice one will be able to allow some time between the outer perception and the inner absorption). It may not be possible in all circumstances to undertake both the outer phase and the inner phase comfortably in the same position, and it might be best to experience the outer process and then quickly find close by a place to relax and undertake the inner phase. It is, however, essential to this exercise that both phases are experienced. There is no point is just working theoretically, one must unite the outer and the inner, and not work purely in the psyche.

12. The processes of Nature - fruiting

This meditation exercise follows on the work with the processes of Nature, and is concerned with an inner encounter with the fruiting process, which is in harmony with the late summer and beginning of the autumn months.

[Back to alchemical meditation page.](#)

The processes of Nature - fruiting

The meditative technique used here is the same as the previous two exercises, that is, the meditation is divided into two phases, a period when one focusses one's attention outwardly upon some phenomenon, letting one's consciousness fully immerse itself in the phenomenon through the senses, then this is followed by a period, when closing the eyes and withdrawing inward, one bears the essence of the outer experience into the inner world as a subject for meditation. The period of inner digestion through meditation on the outer experience should be followed by a further out-turning of the consciousness into the outer world, and this cycle should be repeated a number of times.

We should seek some phenomenon of the fruiting process easily accessible in the world around us, and which attracts us and holds our interest. We will not directly be concerned with the form or colour of fruits but will try to empathise in our meditation with the essence of the fruiting process.

When we have found the phenomenon, the particular tree, bush or plant, that we wish to work with, we begin by contemplating the whole plant on which the fruit is found. Meditate on the forces that work through that plant. Once one has a clear outer picture of the plant, its form, the shape of its leaves, the nature of the stem, its habits of growth, try to bear this inwardly through the meditation and build an inner picture of the essence, the being of the plant.

When this has been achieved, even to a small degree, begin to examine the fruit, first outwardly, in the first phase of the meditation, examining its form, and then in the inner phase of the exercise trying to relate it to its parent plant. If one continues to work with this phenomenon of fruiting, one will begin to feel that the fruit is no longer a part of the plant forces, not like a leaf or stem. The fruit has an inner essence of its own independent of the parent plane, and if we pursue this inner picture further, we should begin to experience the fruiting process, seeing how the forces of the plant, that we meditated on firstly, have become pressed out from its centre and taken on an independent life in the fruit. This can be seen physically in the formation of the fruit, but it also has an inner etheric counterpart, which is more important for our work. Through meditating upon this process of making an independent fruit body, we should touch upon the experience of the etheric essence of the fruit, the separation of etheric energies. If we remove the fruit from the tree or bush, we can meditate further upon this independence of inner forces.

Inwardly we should also try to encounter the fruiting process in the soul, which we experience when we nourish and develop some facet of our soul, an impulse or interest which we enliven with our inner energies, and eventually see this fruit and become separate and independent from our inner centre of being. Indeed, one of the important results of these exercises should be in experiencing the soul life as being like to a plant - the inner energies of the soul, live grow and develop like the plant in Nature.

We are only dealing here with the formation of fruits, and not their subsequent decay and the germination of new growth. What we are trying to grasp in this meditation is the archetypal fruiting process, the separation and making independent of currents of life forces, both in the soul and in a physically incarnated form in nature.