

Hermetic Alchemy in the Qabalah and the Golden Dawn

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Among the few qabalistic treatises addressing the question of hermetic alchemy and correspondences to the Tree of Life, one must point to a book titled the Aesch Mezareph or Purifying Fire. It is a chymico-qabalistic treatise collected from the Qabala Denudata of Knorr von Rosenroth, originally composed in Latin. Circa 1714 it was translated into English by a “Lover of Phalelethes”. It is allegedly taken from a portion of the Zohar itself, composed in Aramaic. The latter collection was attributed by the Zohar itself to Simeon ben Yochai, who is said to have revealed the greatest secrets of the Qabala to his disciples while hiding from the Romans in a cave known as the Idra, in present times located near the town of Tzfat, or Sefed, in modern Israel. The latter town is considered by many to be the greatest center of Qabalistic learning in the world.

My edition of the Aesch Mezareph stems from the *Collectanea Hermetica*, edited by W. Wynn Westcott, who was the supreme magus of the SRIA for a number of years, as well as the co-founder of an occult society known as the Order of the Golden Dawn. This edition was published by the Occult Research Press located in New York City.

As we shall see, the Aesch Mezareph sets forth teachings of hermetic alchemy in correspondence with the Tree of Life which can also be found in the Order of the Golden Dawn. We may assume that Wynn Westcott derived these Golden Dawn teachings through consulting the Aesch Mezareph, since the teachings are identical. In order to demonstrate this fact, I shall quote directly from the Aesch Mezareph and also display photographed images from original documents of the Golden Dawn in my possession.

By the time the Golden Dawn reached New York City, the use of the name Golden Dawn itself had been abandoned, and the Order instead had adopted the name Rosicrucian Order of AO, also known in the U.S. as the Hermetic Order of AO. Thus, Temple number IX of the Rosicrucian Order of AO became active in New York City by circa 1904. Here I shall display documents coming from Thoth Hermes IX dealing with the question at hand.

The main components of alchemical theory consist of three principles of mercury, sulphur, and salt, as well as seven metals lead, tin, iron, gold, mercury,

and silver. The objects of alchemy consisted in making the Philosophoher's Stone which could be used for transmutation, and the medicine of metals, which could be used to heal diseases and extend life span.

The Aesch Mezareph provides a correspondence between these components of alchemical theory and the Sephiroth on the Tree of Life. The Order of the Golden Dawn taught exactly the same correspondences. In Thoth Hermes Temple, the correspondences where set forth in the Theoricus Grade, or 2=9, during the second point of the Ritual.

The cover sheet of the Ritual from Thoth Hermes is displayed in the following image:

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RITUAL

$$2^{\circ} = 9^{\circ}$$

THEORICUS

HEBREW NAME -

BAL HA DAATH

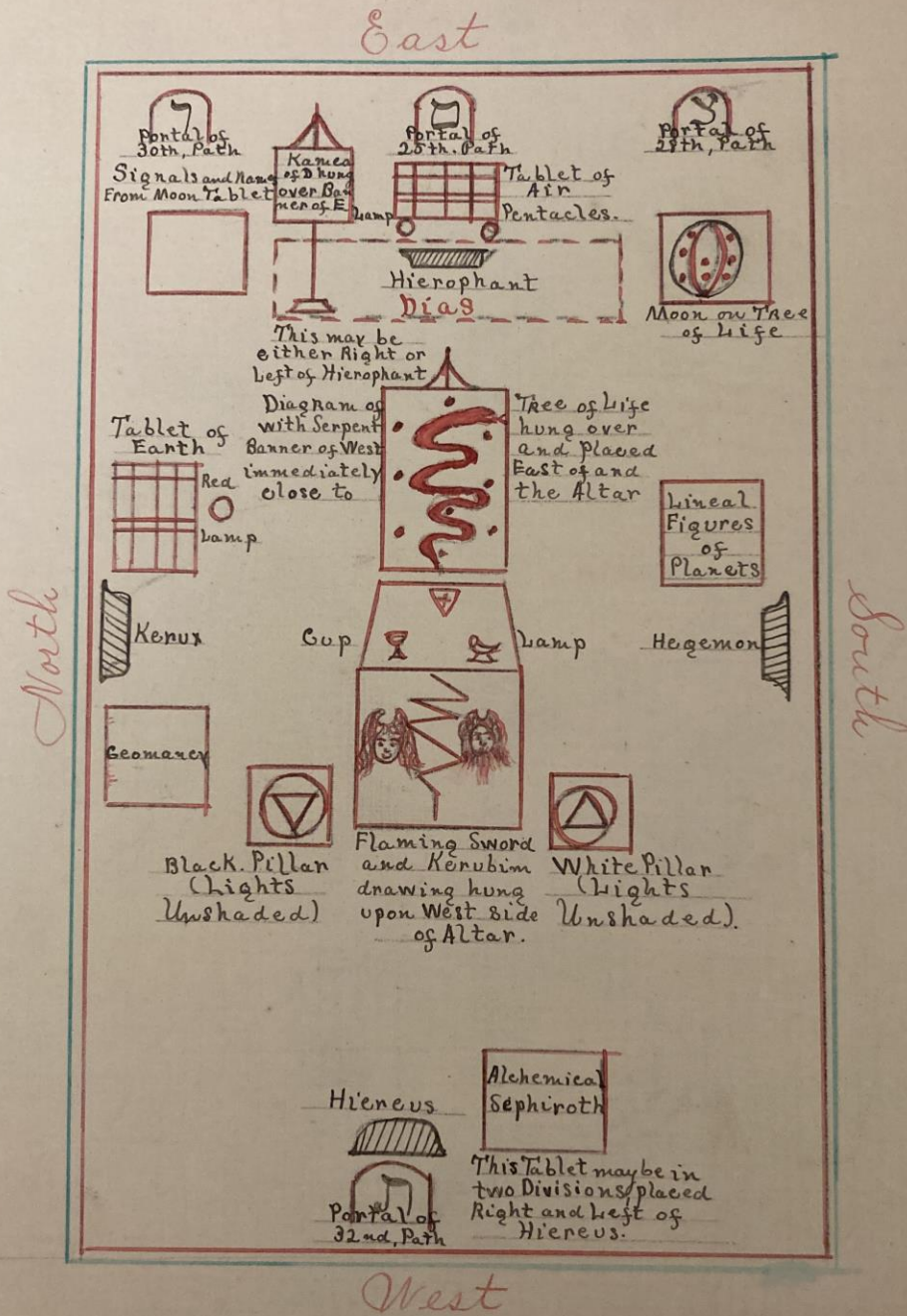
בעל הדעת

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In the Order of the Golden Dawn, the grade of Theoricus had the Hebrew name Bal ha Daath, meaning Master of Knowledge.

The floor plan for the grade of Theoricus shows a pair of diagrams on the western side of the Temple addressing the question of the tree of life attributions of the principles of alchemical theory, setting forth two different attributions, and called the Alchemical Sephiroth:

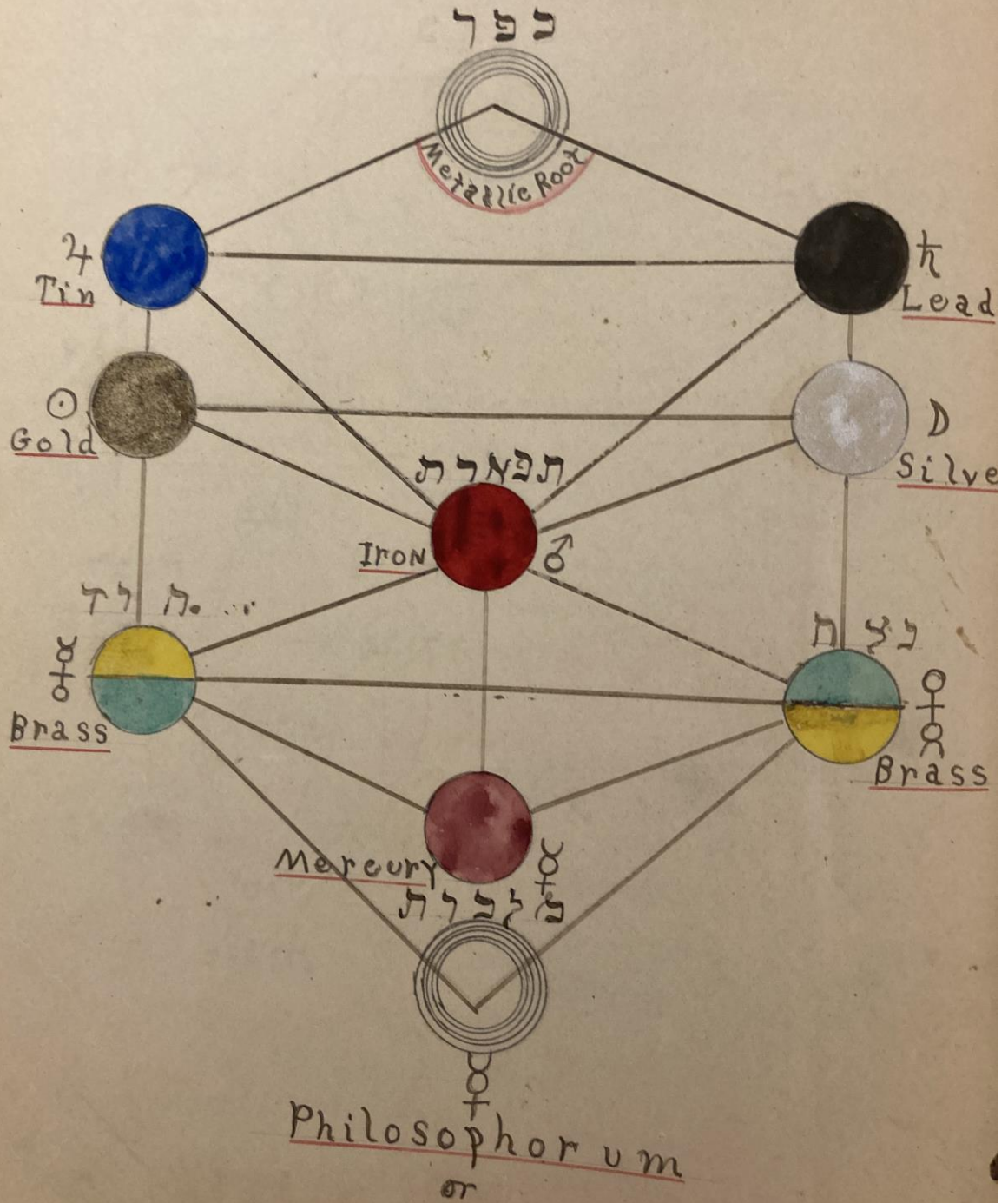
Arrangement of Temple in 2-9: Also in "Second Step": Theophrastus



The first of the two diagrams as displayed in Thoth Hermes IX is depicted as follows:

The Alchemical Sephiroth

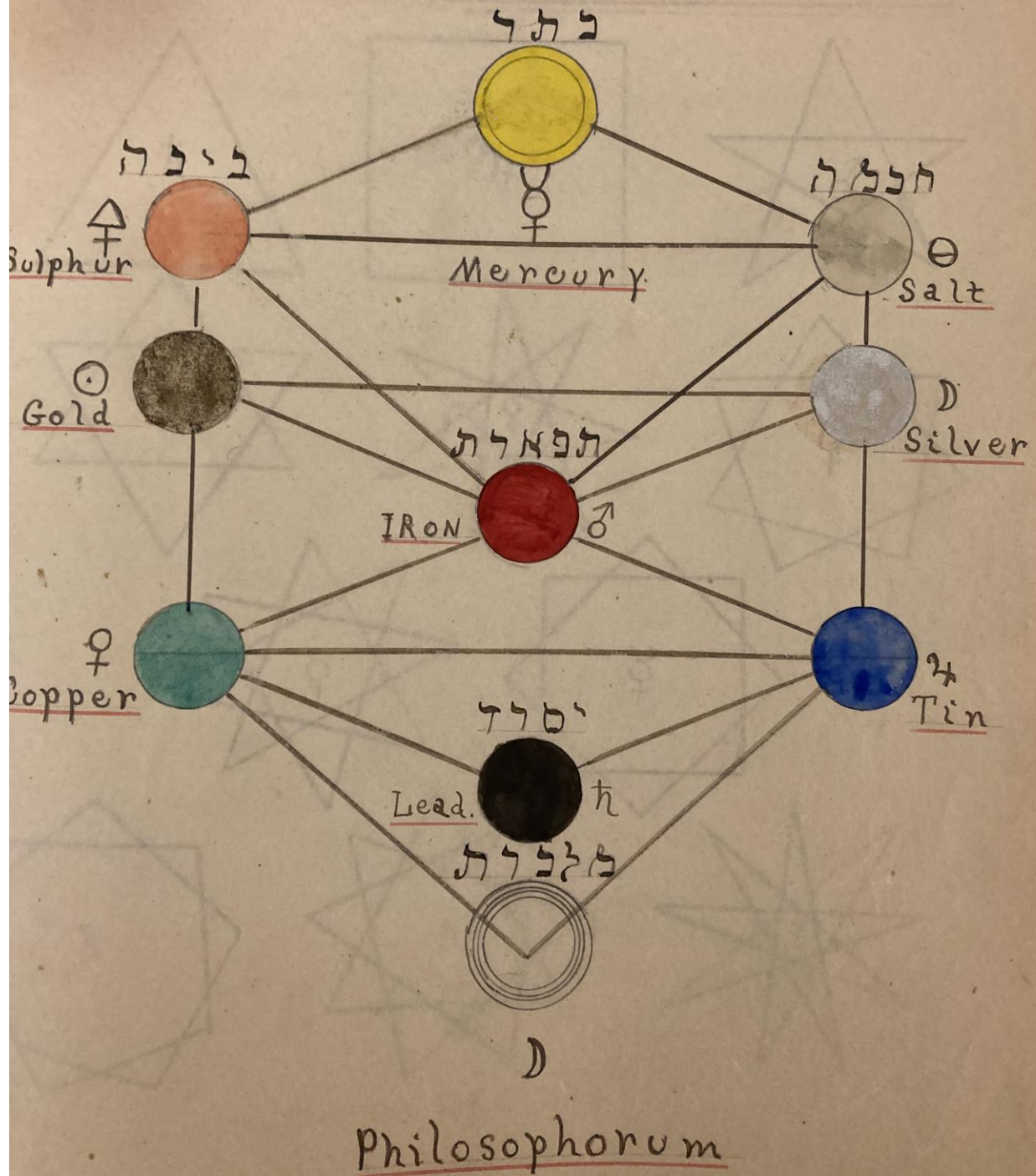
First Form



Medicina of Metals

The second of the two diagrams of alchemical sephiroth as shown in Thoth
Hermes IX is depicted as follows:

The Alchemical Sephiroth.
Second Form.



The teachings of the Golden Dawn on the alchemical sephiroth are set forth in the ritual, and describing the tablets:

The other names are those of the ruling planets
Tablet (showing it) are shown the meanings of the Luna Symbols, when
on the Tree of Life. thus its Crescent in increase represents the side of
its Crescent in decrease the side of Severity : while at the fall it re-
turn of Tipareth.

- Resumes his seat. Hegemon leads Zelator to Hierus.

- The Tablet before you represents the duplicated form of the Alchem-
ical Sephiroth. In the First Form the Metallic Root is in Kether,
Lead in Chokmah, Tin in Binah, Silver in Chesed, Gold in Geburah,
Iron in Tipareth, Netzach and Hod are the places of the Hermaphro-
ditical Brass; Yesod of Mercury and Malkuth the Medicine of Metals.

In the Second Form, Mercury, Sulphur, and Salt are referred to
the Three Supernal Sephiroth, and the Metals of the Seven Lower, but
in a rather Different manner - For, as in All Things Supernal, so
in Terrestrial, is the Tree of Life to be found : whether it be in
Animal or in Vegetable or in Mineral, matter.

:- Leads Zelator to his own place in the South.

:- This Tablet (Showing it) shows you the Geometrical Lineal Figures
attributed to the Planets. They are thus referred : -

Next, I shall quote from the Aesch Mezareph itself in order to locate precisely the same teachings. They are found right away in the first chapter of the Aesch Mezareph, and like the Golden Dawn, also set forth two different sets of attributions of the alchemical principles to the sephiroth of the Tree of Life:

“But know, that the Mysteries of this Wisdom, differ not from the superior Mysteries of the Kabbalah . . . Therefore the Metallic Root here possesseth the place of Kether, which hath an occult Nature, involved in great obscurity ...”

“Lead hath the place of Chokmah, because Chokmah immediately proceeds from Kether, as it immediately comes from the Metallic Root, and in Enigmatic similes, it is called the “Father” ...

“Tin possesseth the place of Binah, showing Age, by its grayness, and shadowing forth Severity and and Judicial Rigor, by its Crackling . . .”

“Silver is placed under the class of Chesed, by all the Masters of the Kabbalah, chiefly for its Color and Use . . .”

“Thus far the White Natures. Now follow the Red . . . Gold is placed under Geburah, according to the most common opinion of the Kabbalists; Job 37:22 also tells us that gold cometh from the north, not only for its color, but for the sake of its heat and Sulphur ...”

“Iron is referred to Tiphareth, for he is like a Man of War according to Exodus 15:2, ...”

“Netzach and Hod are the two Median places of the body, ... and refer to the Hermaphroditic Brass ...”

“Yesod is Argent vive (mercury). For to this, the name Living is characteristically given; and this living water is in every case the Foundation of all Nature and of the Metallic Art ...”

“But the true Medicine of Metals is referred to Malkuth, for many reasons, because it represents the rest of nature under the metamorphoses of gold and silver, right and left, judgement and mercy, ...”

Thus, this portion of the Aesch Mezareph has set forth precisely the same attributions to the Tree of Life as that shown in the first to the two diagrams. Chapter one of the Aesch Mezareph then proceeds to set forth the attributions of the second of the two diagrams:

“...But if anyone hath placed these things in another order, I shall not contend with him, inasmuch as all systems tend to the one truth ...”

“For it may be said, the three Supernals are the three fountains of metallic things. The thick water is Kether, Salt is Chokmah, and Sulphur is Binah ...And so, the seven inferior will represent the seven metals, viz., Gedulah and Geburah, Silver and Gold; Tiphareth, iron; Netzach and Hod, tin and copper, Yesod Lead; and Malkuth will be the metallic woman, and the luna of the wise men, and the field into which the seeds of secret minerals ought to be cast, that is the Water of Gold, as this name occurs, Genesis 36:39.

In this way, we see that the remainder of chapter one of the Aesch Mezareph sets forth essentially the same attributions which are shown in the second of the two diagrams.

Thus we have shown by consulting original documents of the Golden Dawn, and the Aesch Mezareph itself, how Wynn Westcott as a co-founder of the Order of the Golden Dawn, derived its original teachings by consulting such qabalistic treatises as the Aesch Mezareph.