

THE COELUM PHILOSOPHORUM

By
PHILIPPUS THEOPHRASTUS PARACELSUS.

THE SCIENCE AND NATURE OF ALCHEMY, AND WHAT OPINION SHOULD BE FORMED THEREOF. Regulated by the Seven Rules or Fundamental Canons according to the seven commonly known Metals; and containing a Preface with certain Treatises and Appendices.

THE PREFACE of THEOPHRASTUS PARACELSUS TO ALL ALCHEMISTS AND READERS OF THIS BOOK.

You who are skilled in Alchemy, and as many others as promise yourselves great riches or chiefly desire to make gold and silver, which Alchemy in different ways promises and teaches, equally, too, you who willingly undergo toil and vexations, and wish not to be fed from them, until you have attained your rewards, and the fulfillment of the promises made to you; experience teaches this every day, that out of thousands of you not even one accomplishes his desire. Is this a failure of Nature or of Art? I say no; but it is rather the fault of fate, or of the unskilfulness of the operator.

Since, therefore, the characters of the signs, of the stars and planets of heaven, together with the other names, inverted words, receipts, materials, and instruments are thoroughly well known to such as are acquainted with this art, it would be altogether superfluous to recur to these same subjects in the present book, although the use of such signs, names, and characters at the proper time is by no means without advantage.

But herein will be noticed another way of treating Alchemy different from the previous method, and deduced by Seven Canons from the seven fold series of the metals. This, indeed, will not give scope for a pompous parade of words, but, nevertheless, in the consideration of those Canons everything which should be separated from Alchemy will be treated at sufficient length, and, moreover, many secrets of other things are herein contained. Hence, too, result certain marvelous speculations and new operations which frequently differ from the writings and opinions of ancient operators and natural philosophers, but have been discovered and confirmed by full proof and experimentation.

Moreover, in this Art nothing is more true than this, though it be little known and gains small confidence. All the fault and cause of difficulty in Alchemy, whereby very many persons are reduced to poverty, and others labour in vain, is wholly and solely lack of skill in the operator, and the defect or excess of materials, whether in quantity or quality, whence it ensues that, in the course of operation, things are wasted or reduced to nothing. If the true process shall have been found, the substance itself while transmuting approaches daily more and more towards perfection. The straight road is easy, but it is found by very few.

Sometimes it may happen that a speculative artist may, by his own eccentricity, think our for himself some new method in Alchemy, be the consequence anything or nothing, and again bring back something our of nothing. Yet this proverb of the incredulous is not wholly false. Destruction perfects that which is good; for the good cannot appear on account of that which conceals it. The good is least good while it is thus concealed. The concealment must be removed so that the good may be able freely to appear in its own brightness. For example, the mountain, the sand, the earth or the stone in which a metal has grown is such a concealment. Each one of the visible metals is a concealment of the other six metals.

By the element of fire all that is imperfect is destroyed and taken away, as, for instance, the five metals, Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Saturn. On the other hand, the perfect metals, So and Luna, are not consumed in that same fire. They remain in the fire: and at the same time, out of the other imperfect ones which are destroyed, they assume their own body and become visible to the

eyes. How, and by what method, this comes about can be gathered from the Seven Canons. Hence it may be learnt what are the nature and property of each metal, what it effects with the other metals, and what are its powers in commixture with them.

But this should be noted in the very first place: that these Seven Canons cannot be perfectly understood by every cursory reader at a first glance or a single reading. An inferior intelligence does not easily perceive occult and abstruse subjects. Each one of these Canons demands no slight discussion. Many persons, puffed up with pride, fancy they can easily comprehend all which this book comprises. Thus they set down its contents as useless and futile, thinking they have something far better of their own, and that therefore they can afford to despise what is here contained.

THE SEVEN CANONS OF THE METALS

THE FIRST CANON. CONCERNING THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF MERCURY

...By the mediation of Vulcan, or fire, any metal can be generated from Mercury. At the same time, Mercury is imperfect as a metal: it is semi-generated and wanting in coagulation, which is the end of all metals. Up to the half-way point of their generation all metals are Mercury. Gold, for example is Mercury; but it loses the Mercurial nature by coagulation, and although the properties of Mercury are present in it, they are dead, for their vitality is destroyed by coagulation...

THE SECOND CANON. CONCERNING THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF JUPITER

In that which is manifest (that is to say, the body of Jupiter) the other six corporeal metals are spiritually concealed, but one more deeply and more tenaciously than another. Jupiter has nothing of a Quintessence in his composition, but is of the nature of the four elementaries. On this account his liquefaction is brought about by the application of a moderate fire, and, in like manner, he is coagulated by moderate cold. He has affinity with the liquefactions of all the other metals. For the more like he is to some nature, the more easily he is united thereto by conjunction. For the operation of those nearly allied is easier and more natural than of those which are remote.... The more remote, therefore, Jupiter is found to be from Mars and Venus, and the nearer Sol and Luna, the more "goldness" or "silveriness," if I may say so, it contains in his body, and the greater, stronger, more distinguished, and more true it is found than in some remote body... This, therefore, is a point which you, as an Alchemist, must seriously debate with yourself, how you can relegate Jupiter to a remote and abstruse place, which Sol and Luna occupy, and how, in turn, you can summon Sol and Luna from remote positions to a near place, where Jupiter is corporeally posited; so that, in the same way, Sol and Luna may also be present there corporeally before your eyes. For the transmutation of metals from imperfection to perfection there are several practical receipts. Mix the one with the other. Then again separate the one pure from the other. This is nothing else but the process of permutation, set in order by perfect alchemical labour. Note that Jupiter has much gold and not a little silver. Let Saturn and Luna be imposed on him, and of the rest Luna will be augmented.

THE THIRD CANON. CONCERNING MARS AND HIS PROPERTIES

The six occult metals have expelled the seventh from them, and have made it corporeal, leaving it little efficacy, and imposing on it great hardness and weight. This being the case, they have shaken off all their own strength of coagulation and hardness, which they manifest in this other body. On the contrary, they have retained in themselves their colour and liquefaction, together with their nobility. It is very difficult and laborious for a prince or a king to be produced out of an unfit and common man. But Mars acquires dominion with strong and pugnacious hand, and seizes on the position of king. He should, however, be on his guard against snares, that he be not led captive suddenly and unexpectedly. It must also be considered by what method Mars may be able to take the place of king, and Sol and Luna, with Saturn, hold the place of Mars.

THE FOURTH CANON. CONCERNING VENUS AND ITS PROPERTIES

The other six metals have rendered Venus an extrinsical body by means of all their colour and method of liquefaction. It may be necessary, in order to understand this, that we should show, by some examples, how a manifest thing may be rendered occult, and an occult thing rendered materially manifest by means of fire. Whatever is combustible can be naturally transmuted by fire from one form into another, namely, into lime, soot, ashes, glass, colours, stones, and earth. This last can again be reduced to many new metallic bodies. If a metal, too, be burnt, or rendered fragile by old rust, it can again acquire malleability by applications of fire.

THE FIFTH CANON. CONCERNING THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF SATURN.

Of his own nature Saturn speaks thus: the other six have cast me out as their examiner. They have thrust me forth from them and from a spiritual place. They have also added a corruptible body as a place of abode, so that I may be what they neither are nor desire to become. My six brothers are spiritual, and thence it ensues that so often as I am put in the fire they penetrate my body and, together with me, perish in the fire, Sol and Luna excepted...

THE SIXTH CANON. CONCERNING LUNA AND THE PROPERTIES THEREOF

The endeavour to make Saturn or Mars out of Luna involves no lighter or easier work than to make Luna, with great gain, out of Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, or Saturn. It is not useful to transmute what is perfect into what is imperfect, but the latter into the former. Nevertheless, it is well to know what is the material of Luna, or whence it proceeds. Who ever is not able to consider or find this out will neither be able to make Luna. It will be asked, What is Luna? It is among the seven metals which are spiritually concealed, itself the seventh, external, corporeal, and material. For this seventh always contains the six metals spiritually hidden in itself. And the six spiritual metals do not exist without one external and material metal. So also no corporeal metal can have place or essence without those six spiritual ones. The seven corporeal metals mix easily by means of liquefaction, but this mixture is not useful for making Sol or Luna. For in that mixture each metal remains in its own nature, or fixed in the fire, or flies from it. For example, mix, in any way you can, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, Venus, Sol, and Luna. It will not thence result that Sol and Luna will so change the other five that, by the agency of Sol and Luna, these will become Sol and Luna, For though all be liquefied into a single, mass, nevertheless each remains in its nature whatever it is. This is the judgement which must be passed on corporeal mixture...

A question may arise: If it be true that Luna and every metal derives its origin and is generated from the other six, what is then its property and its nature? To this we reply: From Saturn, Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Sol, nothing no other metal than Luna could be made. The cause is that each metal has two good virtues of the other six, of which altogether there are twelve. These are the spirit of Luna, which thus in a few words may be made known. Luna is composed of the six spiritual metals and their virtues, whereof each possesses two. Altogether, therefore, twelve are thus posited in one corporeal metal,... Luna has from the planet Mercury... its liquidity and bright white colour. So Luna has from Jupiter... its white colour and its great firmness in fire. Luna has from Mars...its hardness and its clear sound. Luna has from Venus ... its measure of coagulation and its malleability. From Saturn...its homogeneous body, with gravity. From Sol...its spotless purity and great constancy against the power of fire. Such is the knowledge of the natural exaltation and of the course of the spirit and body of Luna, with its composite nature and wisdom briefly summarised....

THE SEVENTH CANON. CONCERNING THE NATURE OF SOL AND ITS PROPERTIES

The seventh after the six spiritual metals is corporeally Sol, which in itself is nothing but pure fire. What in our outward appearance is more beautiful, more brilliant, more clear and perceptible, a heavier, colder, or more homogeneous body to see? And it is easy to perceive the cause of this, namely, that it contains in itself the congelations of the other six metals, out of which it is made externally into one most compact body...The fire of Sol is of itself pure, not indeed alive, but hard, and so far shews the

colour of sulphur in that yellow and red are mixed therein in due proportion. The five cold metals are Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Venus, and Luna, which assign to Sol their virtues; according to cold, the body itself; according to fire, colour; according to dryness, solidity; according to humidity, weight; and out of brightness, sound. But that god is not burned in the element of terrestrial fire, nor is even corrupted, is effected by the firmness of Sol. For one fire cannot burn another, or even consume it; but rather if fire be added to fire it is increased, and becomes more powerful in its operations. The celestial fire which flows to us on the earth from the Sun is not such a fire as there is in heaven, neither is it like that which exists upon the earth, but that celestial fire with us is cold and congealed, and it is the body of the Sun. Wherefore the Sun can no way be overcome by our fire. This only happens, that it is liquefied, like snow or ice, by that same celestial Sun. Fire, therefore, has not the power of burning fire, because the Sun is fire, which, dissolved in heaven, is coagulated with us.

The End of the Seven Canons

CERTAIN TREATISES AND APPENDICES ARISING OUT OF THE SEVEN CANONS

WHAT IS TO BE THOUGHT CONCERNING THE CONGELATION OF MERCURY

To mortify or congeal Mercury, and afterwards seek to turn it into Luna, and to sublimate it with great labour, is labour in vain, since it involves a dissipation of Sol and Luna existing therein. There is another method, far different and much more concise, whereby, with little waste of Mercury and less expenditure of toil, it is transmuted into Luna without congelation. Any one can at pleasure learn this art in Alchemy, since it is so simple and easy; and by it, in a short time, he could make any quantity of silver and gold. It is tedious to read long descriptions, and everybody wishes to be advised in straightforward words. Do this, then; proceed as follows, and you will have man. Wait awhile, I beg, while this process is described to you in a few words, and keep these words well digested, so that out of Saturn, Mercury, and Jupiter you may make Sol and Luna. There is not, nor ever will be, any art so easy to find out and practise, and so effective in itself. The method of making Sol and Luna by Alchemy is so prompt that there is no more need of books, or of elaborate instruction, than there would be if one wished to write about last year's snow.

CONCERNING THE RECEIPTS OF ALCHEMY

What, then, shall we say about the receipts of Alchemy, and about the diversity of its vessels and instruments? These are furnaces, glasses, jars, waters, oils, limes, sulphurs, salts, salt-petres, alums, vitriols, chrysocollae, copper-greens, atraments, auri-pigments, fel vitri, ceruse, red earth, thucia, wax, lutum sapientiae, pounded glass, verdigris, soot, crocus of Mars, soap, crystal, arsenic, antimony, minium, elixir, lazarium, gold-leaf, salt-nitre, sal ammoniac, calamine stone, magnesia, bolus armenus, and many other things. Moreover, concerning preparations, putrefactions, digestions, probations, solutions, cementings, filtrations, reverberations, calcinations, graduations, rectifications, amalgamations, purgations, etc., with these alchemical books are crammed. Then, again, concerning herbs, roots, seeds, woods, stones, animals, worms, bone dust, snail shells, other shells, and pitch. These and the like, where of there are work; since even if Sol and Luna could be made by them they rather hinder and delay than further one's purpose. But it is not from these-- to say the truth---that the Art of making Sol and Luna is to be learnt. So, then, all these things should be passed by, because they have no effect with the five metals, so far as Sol and Luna are concerned. Someone may ask, What, then, is this short and easy way, which involves no difficulty, and yet whereby Sol and Luna can be made? Our answer is, this has been fully and openly explained in the Seven Canons. It would be lost labour should one seek further to instruct one who does not understand these. It would be impossible to convince such a person that these matters could be so easily understood, but in an occult rather than in an open sense.

The art is this; After you have made heaven, or the sphere of Saturn, with its life to run over the earth, place it on all the planets, or such, one or more, as you wish, so that the portion of Luna may be the smallest. Let all run, until heaven, or Saturn, has entirely disappeared. Then all those planets will

remain dead with their old corruptible bodies, having meanwhile obtained another new, perfect and incorruptible body.

That body is the spirit of heaven. From it these planets again receive a body and life, and live as before. Take this body from the life and the earth. Keep it. It is Sol and Luna. Here you have the Art altogether, clear and entire. If you do not yet understand it, or are not practised therein, it is well. It is better that it should be kept concealed, and not made public.

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