

# The True Book of the Learned Synesius

by a Greek Abbot

Taken out of the  
Emperour's Library  
Concerning the  
Philosopher's Stone

Hac partim ipse tuo perpendens pectore tecum, Partim Divum aliquis tibi  
fuggerat. - Homer

To so great a Mystery who shall Aspire.  
London, Printed for Dorman Newman at the Kings Arms in the Poultry. 1678

With a Foreword by Frater Albertus  
and  
An Introduction by Israel Regardie  
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## FOREWORD - Frater Albertus

Considering the many books written on Alchemy that appeared during the last three centuries, one cannot help wondering why so much was written about what was so little understood. It is safe to say not much that found its way into print come from authentic sources. Most alchemical literature is of secondhand or even further handed-down origin and has proven in its final analysis spurious and very unreliable. In fact most books written on Alchemy are by alchemists who have taken refuge in other authors whom they quote, or rather, misquote. This is shown by the fact that what was given as personal

alchemical knowledge could not be substantiated. It is no wonder that alchemical books have fallen into such ill-repute, when from a scientific point no results were forthcoming, and when claims of alchemy are checked, where the transmutation of baser metals into gold seems to have been the primary objective.

A cursory paging through such literature certainly arouses much curiosity. Since some authors speak with so much authority and sincerity one cannot help wondering if there is some truth to be found in their statements. Adding to the romance of the prevailing times and due to insufficient scientific knowledge, when compared with our time, the whole picture becomes tinted with a charm all its own. As the reader pages through such books, the question of the authenticity of alchemy keeps creeping into his mind. Why should men of renown who certainly could not be classified as charlatans and mountbanks because of their standing in the scientific world spend their time and fortune on such elusive and unlikely investigations? This scientific investigation of alchemy was not confined only to the past. Our own times have also produced men of character and intellect who refused to cast aside ideas without due investigation that may seem contrary to established and accepted precepts. There is no need to emphasize the names of those persons who, for the sake of appearing knowledgeable, talk about alchemy as if they were experts in the field, but for some reason unknown even to themselves, cloak in mysterious silence everything that is even remotely attributed to Alchemy. These are the pseudo-chemists. They have existed in times past and are still with us today. About such we have little to say. Their attitude is self-explanatory and proves only a hinderance to the sincere investigator.

As long as there is something noteworthy to investigate the first objective should be to remove all that is irrelevant. This is no easy task. Much spurious information has been integrated into alchemical writings which the reader is often reluctant to delete, whether out of sheer veneration of the old alchemists or for some other reason. Contrary to the belief of many, religious scruples are not the only factor. Scientific scruples are at times overwhelmingly strong. Still there remains this intriguing question: "Is there really something to Alchemy"? And the more one reads about Alchemy, - especially the practical laboratory aspects - the more one becomes enthralled by its mystery. It is that which is unknown to us that keeps us spellbound. Not only the claims but the testimony of those, some of whom have paid with their lives because it was their most precious possession and they had refused to divulge their secret to those whom they believed to be unworthy of such knowledge, challenge the reader.

There is much omitted from the textbooks of the chemist and pharmacist which is to be found in the annals of the alchemists. Granted, much of such inherited literature with its sometimes weird and allegorical illustrations and archaic language is outmoded terminology, but this should not prove to be

an impossible obstacle. The mystery about alchemical results is still to be proven in our times, and its attached stigma of the mysterious to be removed. The controversy over alchemy is very unlikely to be satisfied until one of its main claims, i.e. the transmutation of the baser metals into gold, has been established once and for all. But will this prove to be the end of the controversy or just the beginning of another era of investigation of facets not formerly considered in the light of the knowledge brought forth? What about those who are at present investigating other aspects of laboratory alchemy-let us say even the medicinal field. Ecology may again take a turn for the better in the light of the knowledge revealed to us through alchemical investigation. But how can this be accomplished? What are the procedures to be followed? Who can tell us? Looking around we find few genuine alchemists who can show us any proof, be it ever so little, of the different approach alchemy requires to produce alchemical results. Most literature available on Alchemy refers to those who wrote centuries ago or at least in the past. One writer cites others to substantiate his own beliefs grown into inner convictions and a longing for that solitary moment of tangible manifestation. Let us suppose this outer manifestation has been accomplished. Then what? Would alchemy be proven per se? Not at all. Only one aspect would be revealed. Transmutation of a baser metal into gold would have been established as proof of the validity of Alchemy. If this was all that alchemy had to reveal it would be most disappointing. What could all the alchemically produced gold buy? Health and happiness? Certainly not. At most it could help in the removal of want and help to establish a higher standard of living among the peoples of our earth. It would appear most unlikely that the only purpose of alchemy is transmutation of baser metals into gold.

Again we will ask, "Why is so much emphasis placed on metallic transmutation?" A deeper insight will show that alchemy is a method whereby the inherent potencies in a substance can be freed and properly used for the betterment of external circumstances of mankind, and also for the inner unfoldment and progression to a higher level of awareness. When a lesser substance can be raised to a higher one, or better still, when an impure substance can be transmuted into a more refined or pure one-as in a coarse metal - it would prove that the potency found therein can also be applied to the mental elevation of man over his inherent lower animalistic tendencies. Looked upon in this way, alchemical literature can prove to be a valuable contribution to the evolvment of mankind by revealing a superior knowledge at present very little known and even less understood.

The following treatise by the learned Synesius, a Greek Abbot, is typical of such knowledge that even in his time was shrouded in obscure language. It is intriguing to find that even in early historical times profound chemical experiments took place requiring keen minds to investigate things in a light still unknown to us.

Among the many tracts available to us most date back only about three centuries. By contrast Synesius is said to have lived about four hundred years A.D. making him one of the earliest writers who's style is comparatively plain compared with Geber, the Arabian, as well as with other contemporaries. Some years ago Israel Regardie sent me a copy of "The True Book of the Learned Synesius, A Greek Abbot, taken out of the Emperors Library, concerning the Philosopher's Stone." He had written an introduction to the book. Had he not done so it is questionable whether I should have selected this treatise which first appeared in the English language in 1658 in London, England, for publication.

Israel Regardie's introduction gives a vivid picture of the prevailing times of our author, provided it is a genuine treatise of Synesius. Regardie states in a point-blank manner: "So far as I am concerned however, it does not matter a rap who really wrote the book. . . . What I am interested in however, is a purely practical consideration."

To which we add our stamp of approval. - Frater Albertus

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## INTRODUCTION by Israel Regardie

Synesius, the author of this text, was born during the fourth century A.D., at Cyrene, a Greek colony in Africa. His environment was the lurid world of Gnosticism and NeoPlatonism. Various forms of mystical thought, some outrageous in the fantastic proportions they reached, were openly flourishing in the intellectual center of the Western world of that day, Alexandria. It was about 311 B.C. that there Alexander the Great had founded his colony. Almost immediately the little community had established a Ptolemaic school of philosophy where the prevailing ideas, modified by later influences, were essentially Platonic and Aristotelian.

From her founding, the city had been the heir and protector of a stern philosophy. Gradually she had become rich and commercial, very worldly and very attractive. Because of her wisely chosen situation on the coast and because of the canal system by which the product of upper Egypt found an outlet to the sea, the city became very significant and important. That is, she developed into the port through which flowed the riches of the Mediterranean cities, of India, and of the fertile granary of the Nile Valley. Each consignment contributed its toil in commissions and duties to her merchant princes and to the city government. In consequence, wealth had so accumulated there that, within one or two hundred years after the date of her foundation, there had arisen already many famous buildings, including the celebrated library.

She was a cosmopolitan city. We would have found there many racial divisions,

with many and diverse interests. A large native population crowded certain districts-a native population which still held to the world of the ancient Egyptian gods and beliefs. In the northeast, another section was set off as the Jewish quarter, where we would have seen a motley crowd of Hebrew traders and merchants and scholars. An unyielding Jellovistic faith struggled with an advancing world for right of continuance. From the date of the martyrdom of St. Mark, the Christian infiltration had been making gradually increasing progress both from the numerical and social points of view. Greeks, Jews, Egyptians and the Christians - each perhaps differing from the other in many ways, with nevertheless an agreement in one particular at least. They agreed on the religious particular of the existence of God. Though here, even in this single agreement, were several important theological differences based on racial temperament and varying psychological needs.

The craze of the time, possibly a deep and urgent psychological necessity in view of the insecure nature of social and political life, comparable in many ways to the present day, was a syncretism. The Pauline attempt of some three hundred years earlier to wed Greek thought to Jewish messianism by means of an intellectual or spiritual vision is a particular instance of that tendency.

Everywhere, and on every hand, people were extravagantly undertaking synthetical combinations of all the existent religions, cults and philosophies. It was a mad, confused world this, just prior to the ultimate victory of Church authority over independent inspiration and religious experience, in anticipation of the complete extinction of intellectual effort and spirit initiative in the Dark Ages.

Synesius was educated in all that characterized NeoPlatonism. It is evident that some of his writings, the essay *De Insomniis* for example, were profoundly influenced by Plotinus. Later however, he evolved to the viewpoint that his personal pagan philosophy was not necessarily incompatible with Christianity. He was a man of great determination and many talents, with a robust common sense. Synesius was not in reality a mystic, even although a strain of mysticism peers out here and there from his writing. Historically he appears to us rather as of a very positive extraverted character. The role of philosopher was one which, perhaps in moments of over-ambition and aspiration, he had imposed upon himself, guided more by personal predilection than by inherent capacity. It is difficult to imagine that it was one assigned to him by nature. Such a role, it is evident to us now, rested upon a very fragile and shallow foundation. As a bishop, he was militant, and a deep patriot. But he was neither a profound nor an original thinker, as is evidenced by his essays and letters. The volume *The Essays and Hymns of Synesius*, edited and introduced by A. Fitzgerald, and published by the Oxford University Press, is ample proof of this assumption. He was, in fact, something of a dilettante, a man moderately well-versed in the culture of his age. The charm of his writing rests in the intimate contact and sympathy that his writings establish with

the reader, rather than in any spontaneity or originality of thought or expression.

I have written thus far about Synesius and his milieu to convey some slight picture of the bishop of Ptolemais who is supposed to have been the author of this text. Quite apart from the intrinsic evidence of the writing which I propose to examine soon, it is more or less obvious that Synesius of Cyrene, a Christian abbot during the fourth century, could not have been its author. The nature of his very few extant writings as evidenced by the volumes I have cited above, depict him as of another nature than a writer on alchemy.

Scholarship maintains that whilst he occasionally wrote in a mystical vein he himself was no mystic. And this is not difficult to understand. A more or less educated man of today would unwittingly express himself, should he essay expression in writing, in the scientific and conventional clichés of our time. This would not necessarily indicate that this person was a scientist - a logical empiricist. In such of his literary output as we possess, we clearly may detect the strains of Platonism and NeoPlatonism in addition to the predominant Christian feeling. He was simply expressing himself in the ideology and intellectual clichés of his age. But that is to say quite another thing than that such a man could have been capable of writing alchemical obscurities.

Yet at the same time, another viewpoint is most certainly not impossible. I do not wish to be a partisan. A critic, above all, must be impartial, weighing such evidence, large or otherwise, as makes its way into his ken. We know that the jargon of alchemy is one that has persisted more or less in the same basic form throughout the centuries. Greek alchemy displays fairly much the same characteristics as later European alchemy. Chinese texts, *au fond*, are very similar to those of Byzantium and of India, of Persia and Arabia. It is not at all impossible that in Alexandria of Synesius' day were alchemists and alchemical writers. It is not even impossible, though this we do not definitely know, that he himself had met them and had been influenced by them. In fact, it is highly probable that he did. But speculation will tell us nothing of this, and I must not force the issue. It simply makes it very difficult to determine the author of the text, if such determination is considered important.

The entire evidence presented makes me feel dubious in accepting Synesius as the author of *The True Book*. Actually, the message conveyed by the title itself - that it is the true book of the abbot, having been taken or stolen out of the Emperor's library - by the mere fact of its insistence arouses suspicion that all is not well. The emphasis, it seems to me on psychological grounds, is slightly overdone. It is as though a psychotic with marked paranoid symptoms were to walk into a psychiatric consulting room and say, without prompting or justification "Oh no. I was not really being followed here. I don't actually believe I am being spied upon." Suspicion would

immediately be aroused by such spontaneous and uninvited denial. You would wonder why it was necessary to give assurance in advance of the absence of paranoid symptomatology. Likewise here. The title alone would have been enough - sufficiently interesting or convincing by itself - without having had to add that it had been taken from the Emperor's library.

There are, furthermore, several references to alchemical authorities of a much later age. A former colleague of mine, a scholar with a profound and unrivalled knowledge of alchemical literature and history, does not believe however that such references necessarily prove the spurious nature of the text. It is his contention that these alchemical manuscripts may have been privately distributed and circulated for generations. It may well have been that some overzealous owner of the text in, let us say, the fourteenth century, interpolated quotations from alchemical writings of his day in order to buttress up his own belief in the art. In so doing, he failed to recognize that he had almost completely ruined an authentic text of an earlier age. Be that as it may, the treatise mentions Geber twice, and Alphidius once. The date of Geber, the Arabian prince alchemist, is difficult to place. It ranges anywhere from the sixth to the tenth century. We may therefore hazard a safe guess in the assumption that he lived about the eighth century. Alphidius dates considerably later. If we accept the theory that there may have been an original Greek manuscript written by the abbot Synesius in which several centuries afterwards interpolations were inserted - and this of course may never be proved - then we are obliged to consider The True Book of the Learned Synesius as having an origin at the earliest in the thirteenth century, or it may be a little later. Some may feel inclined to posit the theory that Synesius was gifted with prevision.

Who the author of this was, we do not really know. His modesty in bestowing the fruits of his pen and the cloak of his erudition on a NeoPlatonic abbot defeats us in our search into origins. But whoever he was, he must have felt that the system he was attempting to delineate had certain points of contact with that espoused by Synesius. Otherwise, why should he have taken the trouble to mention Synesius by name? Why not Plotinus or Iamblichus - or any one of the host of celebrities who, so far as the authority of mere name values is concerned, might have answered to his purpose equally? Possibly his name was chosen to render the work more acceptable to those of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, when attempting to widen our understanding of this treatise, we must remember this allusion to the doctrines of NeoPlatonism, where we are confronted with fundamental religious doctrines.

So far as the actual text and its bibliography is concerned, there is little to say. In the year 1678, the first English edition was published in London, as may be seen by the imprint on the title page reproduced herein. The True Book of Synesius, in that edition, was inconspicuously tucked away at the back of a much larger and better known alchemical treatise by Basil Valentine, The

Triumphant Chariot of Antimony with annotations by Theodore Kerkringius, M.D. Prior to this, the most easily accessible copy of the text was a Latin version, one edition of which was published from Amsterdam in 1671. The French edition appeared in Paris in the year 1612, in a volume entitled *Traites de la Philosophie*, etc. Whether or not there was a Greek original from which the Latin and French editions were rendered is open to question. There is so little trustworthy evidence of any kind that one hesitates to express any opinion. For sooner or later, some of the larger libraries in Europe, in which ancient manuscripts have resided for long centuries without being poured over and distributed by inquisitive minds and roaming hands, may be opened to research and investigation, if they are not previously destroyed by vandals. Possibly then some sort of original text may come to light. Meanwhile I am inclined to doubt that there is an original Greek text, for the style and tenor betray quite a late period of expression.

So far as I personally am concerned however, it does not matter a rap who really wrote the book. This matter may be left to scholars of the future to decide. Why should we be bothered about abstract problems of this type? What I am interested in however, is a purely practical consideration. That is to say, is there anything in this text which is of any importance to us? I claim there is.

I may as well take my stand here at the outset, and express my fundamental platform. It is my contention that alchemical writing is of a peculiar type. It belongs to that vast realm of expression which has a close kinship with mythology, religion, poetry and dreams. In a word, it is material that has issued from the hidden depths of man's unconscious psyche. Not only so, but I believe that we can learn a very great deal from it. The alchemists have much to give us.. If we are humble and receptive, there is much that we may obtain - information by way of a psychological technique of psychic integration and illumination that make our modern therapeutic systems look like the dabbblings of triflers and dilettantes. So serious am I in this belief, and so convinced am I from prolonged investigation of this branch of knowledge and its application above all to my own psychological practice, that I propose to examine this text of Synesius in terms of the general principles underlying its assumptions. Whether Synesius wrote it or not, is unimportant. What Synesius or the real author has said, that for me is significant. It is this inner kernel of value that I have always sought irrespective of where it was that the search has led me. And here in *The True Book* there are discoveries to be made. I should like to share the book with other minds of equal eagerness and intentness and open earnest heart.

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THE TRUE BOOK  
OF THE LEARNED  
GREEK ABBOT  
SYNESIUS

TAKEN OUT OF THE  
EMPOROURS' LIBRARY

Though the Ancient Philosophers have written diversly of this science, concealing under a multitude of names the true principles of the Art; yet have they not done it but upon important considerations as we shall hereafter make appear. And though they are different in their expressions, yet are they not any way discordant one from another, but ayiming all at one end, and speaking of the same thing, they have thought fit (above all the rest) to name the proper Agent, by a term, strange, nay sometimes contrary to its nature and qualities.

Know then, my Son, that almighty God together with this Universe, created two Stones, that is to say, the White and the Red, both which are under one and the same subject, and afterwards multiplied in such abundance, that everyone may take as much as he please thereof. The matter of them is of such a kind, that it seems to be a mean between Metal and Mercury, and is partly fixed and partly not fixed, otherwise is could not be a mean betwixt Metals and Mercury.; and this matter is the instrument whereby our desire is accomplished, if we do but prepare it. Hence it comes that those who bestow their endeavors in this Art without the said medium, lose their labour, but if they are acquainted with the Medium, they shall find all things feasible and fortunate. Know then that this Medium, being aerial, is found among the celestial Bodies, and that it is onely there are found the Masculine and Feminine Gender, (to speak properly) having a constant, strong, fixed and permanent Virtue, of the essence whereof (as I have told thee) Philosophers have expressed themselves only by Similitudes and Figures. This they did, that the science might not be discovered by the Ignorant, which if it should once happen, all were lost: but that it might be comprehended only by those patient souls, and subtilized understandings, which being sequestred from the soyliness of this world, are cleansed from the filth of that terrene dunghil of Avarice, whereby the ignorant are chained to the earthiness of this World, which is (without this admirable quintessence) the receptacle of poverty; it being certain, that those divine souls, when they have div'd into Democritus's Fountain, that is to say, into the truth of Nature, would soon discover what confusion might happen in all estates and conditions, if everyone could make as much Gold as he would himself \* Upon this ground was it that they were pleased to speak by figures, types, and analogies, that so they might not be understood but by such as are discreet, religious, and enlightened by (divine)

Wisdom. All which notwithstanding, they have left in their writings a certain method, way and rule, by the assistance whereof the wise man may comprehend whatever they have written most obscurely, and in time arrive at the knowledge of it, though haply wading through some error, as I have done, praised be God for it. And whereas the Vulgar ignorant person ought to submit to these reasons, and consequently adore, what is too great, to enter into his Brain, he on the contrary accuses the Philosophers of imposture and impiety, by which means, and the scarcity of wise men, the Art falls into contempt.

But for my part, I tell thee, they have always expressed themselves according to certain Truth, though very obscurely, and sometimes fabulously, all which I have decipher'd in this little Treatise, and after such a manner that the earnest desirer of Science shall understand what hath been mystically delivered by the Philosophers. And yet if he pretend to understand me and know not the nature of the Elements and things created, as also our rich Metal, he doth but lose his Labour: but if he understand the Concord and Discord of Natures, he will by God's assistance arrive to the rest? It is therefore my suit to God, that he who shall understand the present Secret may work to the glory and praise of the sacred Divinity.

Know then my dear Son, that the ignorant man cannot comprehend the secret of the Art, because it depends upon the Knowledge of the true Body, which is hidden from him. Know then, my Son, pure and impure, the clean and unclean Natures, for there cannot come from any thing that which it hath not. For things, that are not or have not, cannot give but their own Nature. make use then of that which is most perfect and nearest in kind, thou shalt meet with, and it shall suffice. Avoid then that which is mixt, and take the simple, for that proceeds from the Quintessence. Note that we have two bodies of very great perfection, full of Mercury: Out of these extract thy Mercury, and of that thou shalt make the Medicine, called by some Quintessence, which is a Vertue or Power that is imperishable, permanent, and perpetually victorious, nay it is a clear Light, which sheds true goodness into every Soul that hath once tasted of it. It is the knot and link of all the Elements, which it contains in itself, as being also the Spirit which nourisheth all things, and by the assistance whereof Nature works in the Universe. It is the force, the beginning and end of the whole work, and to lay all open to thee in a word, know, that the Quintessence and the hidden things of our Stone is nothing else than our viscous, celestial and glorious Soul drawn by our Magistry out of its Mine, which engenders itself, and that it is not possible for us to make that water by Art, but Nature alone begets it, and that water is the most sharp Vinegar, which makes Gold to be a pure spirit, nay it is that blessed Nature which engenders all things, which through its putrefaction is become a Triunity, and by reason of its Viridity causes an appearance of diverse colours. And I advise thee, my Son, make no account of any other things, (as being vain,) labour only for that water, which burns to blackness, whitens,

dissolves and congeals. It is that which putrifies, and causes germination, and therefore I advise thee, that thou wholly employ thyself in the decoction of this water, and quarrel not at the expence of time, otherwise thou shalt have no advantage. Decoct it, gently by little and little, until it have changed its false colour into a perfect, and have a great care at the beginning that thou burn not its Flowers and its vivacity, and make not too much hast to come to an end of thy work. Shut thy Vessel well, that what is within may not breathe out, and so thou mayst bring it to some effect. And note, that to dissolve, to calcine, to tinge, to whiten, to renew, to bath, to wash, to coagulate, to imbibe, to decoct, to fix, to grind, to dry, and to distil, are all one, and signify no more than to concoct Nature, until such time as it be perfect. Note further that to extract the soul, or the spirit, or the body, is nothing else than the above said Calcinations, in regard they signify the operation of Venus. It is therefore through the fire of the extraction of the soul that the spirit comes forth gently, understand me. The same may also be said of the extraction of the soul out of the Body, and the reduction of it afterwards upon the same Body, until the whole be drawn to a commixtion of all the four Elements. And so that which is below, is like that which is above, and consequently there are made therein two luminaries, the one fixt the other not, whereof the fix'd remains below, and the volatile above, moving it self perpetually, until that which is below, which is the male, get upon the female, and all be fixed, and then issues out an incomparable Luminary. And as in the beginning, there was onely one, so in this Matter, all proceeds from one and returns to one, which is called a conversion of the Elements, and to convert the Elements, is as much as to make the humiddy, and the volatile fixed, that so that which is thick may be made thin, and weaken the thing that fixeth the rest, the fixative part of the thing remaining entire. Thus happens the life and death of the Elements, which composed, germinate and produce, and so one thing perfects another, and assists it to oppose the Fire.

## The True Book

### THE PRACTICE

My Son it is necessary that thou work with the Mercury of the Philosophers and the wise, which is not the Vulgar, nor bath anything of the Vulgar, but, according to them, is the first Matter, the Soul of the World, the cold Element, the blessed Water, the Water of the Wise, the Venemous Water, the most sharp Vinegar, the Mineral Water, the Water of celestial grace, the Virgin Milk, our Mineral and corporeal Mercury. For this alone perfects both

the stones, the White and the Red. Consider what Geber says, that our Art consists not in the multitude of several things, because the Mercury is but one only thing, that is to say, one only Stone wherein consists the whole Magistry; to which thou shalt not add any strange thing, save that in the preparation thereof thou shalt take away from it whatsoever is superfluous, by reason that in this matter, all things requisite to this Art are contained. And therefore it is very observable that he saies, we must add nothing that is strange, save the Sun and Moon for the red and white Tincture, which are not strange (to it) but are its Ferment. by which the work is accomplished. Lastly, mark my Son, that these Suns and Moons are not the same with the Vulgar Gold and Silver, for that our Suns and Moons are better in their nature than the Vulgar Suns and Moons. For our Suns and Moons are in their nature living, and those of the Vulgar are dead in comparison of ours, which are existent and permanent in our Stone. Whence thou mayest observe that the Mercury drawn out of our Bodies, is like the aqueous and common Mercury, and for that reason enjoys itself and takes pleasure in its like, and is more glad of its company, as it happens in the simple and compound, which thing hath not been discovered by the Philosophers in their Books. And the advantage therefore which is in this Art, lies in the Mercury, Sun and Moon. Diomedes saith, make use of such a matter as to which thou must not introduce any strange thing, neither powder nor water, for that several things do not improve our Stone, and thereby he sufficiently instructs him, who understands him, that the tincture of our Stone is not drawn from any thing but the Mercury of the Philosophers; which is their principle, their root, and their great Tree, sprouting forth into boughs and branches.

The First Operation

## SUBLIMATION

It is not Vulgar but Philosophical whereby we take away from the Stone whatever is superfluous, which, in effect is nothing else, but the elevation of the not-fixed part by fume and vapor, for the fixed part should remain in the bottom, nor would we that one should be separated from the other, but that they remain and be fixed together. Know also that he, who shall sublime our Philosophical Mercury (wherein is all the vertue of our Stone) as it ought to be done, shall perfect the Magistry. This gave Geber reason to say that all perfection consists in Sublimation, and in this Sublimation all other operations, that is to say, Distillation, Assation, Destruction, Coagulation, Putrefaction, Calcination, Fixation, Reduction of the White and Red Tinctures, procreated and engendered in one furnace and in one Vessel, and this is the ready way to the final Consummation, whereof the Philosophers have made divers chapters, purposely to amuse the Ignorant.

Take then in the name of the great God, the venerable matter of the

Philosophers, called the first Hyle of the Sages, which contains the above named Philosophical Mercury, termed, the first matter of the perfect Body, put it into its Vessel, which must be clear, diaphanous and round, and closely stopped by the Seal of Seals, and make it hot in its place, well-prepared, with temperate heat, for the space of a Philosophical Month, keeping it six weeks and two days in the sweat of Sublimation until it begins to be putrefyed, to ferment, to be coloured and to be congealed with its metallick humidity, and be fixed so far, that it do no more ascend in aiery fumous substance, but remain fixed in the bottom, turned from what it was, and divested of all viscous humidity, putrefyed and black, which is called the sable Robe, Night, or the Croweshead. Thus when our stone is in the vessel, and that it mounts up on high in fume, this is called Sublimation, and when it falls down from on high, Distillation, and Descension. When it begins to participate of the fumous substance, and to be putrefyed, and that by reason of the frequent ascent and descent it begins to coagulate, then it is Putrefaction and devouring Sulphur, and lastly through the want or privation of the humidity of the radical water is wrought Calcination and Fixation both at the same time, by decoction alone, in one onely Vessel, as I have already said. Moreover in this sublimation is wrought the true separation of the Elements, for in our Sublimation the Elixir is turned from Water into a terrestrial Element dry and hot, by which operation it is manifest, that the separation of the four Elements in our Stone is not Vulgar but Philosophical. Hence also is it, that in our Stone there are but two formal Elements, that is to say, Earth and Water; but the Earth hath in its grossness, the virtue and drought of Fire; and the Water contains in it self the air with its humidity. Thus we have in our Stone visibly but two elements, but effectually there are four. And by this thou maist judge, that the separation of the four Elements is absolutely physical not vulgar and real, such as the ignorant daily employ themselves in. Continue therefore its decoction with a gentle fire, until all the black matter appearing in the superficies be quite dissipated by the Magistery, which blackness is by the Philosophers called the dark mantle of the Stone, which afterwards becoming clear is termed the cleansing water of the earth, or rather the Elixir. And note, that the blackness which appears is a sign of putrefaction. And the beginning of the dissolution is a sign of the conjunction of both Natures. And this blackness appears sometimes in forty dayes, more or less, according to the quantity of the matter, and the industry of the Operator, which contributes much to the separation of the said Blackness. Now my Son, by the grace of God thou art acquainted with one Element of our Stone, which is the black earth, the Raven's head, by some called the obscure shadow, upon which earth as upon a base all the rest is grounded. This terrestrial and dry Element, is called, Laton, the Bull, black Dreggs, our Metall, our Mercury. And thus by the privation of the adust humidity, which is taken away by Philosophical sublimation, the volatile is

fixed, and the moist is made dry and earth; nay, according to Geber, there is wrought a change of the complexion, as of a cold and humid Nature, into dry choler; and according to Alphidius, of a liquid into a thick. Whence is apprehended what the Philosophers mean when they say, that the operation of our Stone is only a transmutation of Nature and a revolution of Elements. Thou seest then how that by this incorporation the humid becomes dry, the volatile fixed, the Spiritual corporeal, the liquid thick, water fire, air earth, and that there happens an infallible change in their true nature, and a certain circulation of the four Elements.

### The Second Operation

DEALBATION: To make White.

It converts our Mercury into the white Stone, and that by decoction only. When the earth is separated from its water, then must the Vessel be set on the Ashes, as is usual in a distilling furnace, and the water be distilled by a gentle fire at the beginning, so that the water come so gently that thou mayst distinctly number as far as forty names, or pronounce fifty six words, and let this order be observed in all the distillations of the black earth, and that which is in the bottom of the Vessel, that is, the Feces remaining to be imbibed, with the new water, will be dissolved, which water will contain three or four parts more than those Feces, that so all may be dissolved and converted into Mercury and Argent vive. I tell thee that this must be done so often, that there shall remain nothing but the Murc. For this distillation there is no time limited, but it is done sooner or later according to the greater or lesser quantity of the water, proportionably to the quantity of the fire. Then take the earth which thou shalt have reserved in a Vessel of Glass, with its distilled water, and with a soft and gentle fire, such as was that of Distillation, or purification, or rather one somewhat stronger, continue it, till such time as the earth be dry and white, and by reason of its drought, drunk up all its water. This done, put to it some of the abovesaid water, and so, as at the beginning, continue on the same decoction, until that earth is become absolutely white, cleansed and clear, and have drunk all its water. And note that the said earth will be washed from its blackness by the decoction, as I have said, because it is easily putrefyed by its own water, and is cleansed, which is the end of the Magistery, and then be sure to keep that white earth very carefully. For that is the White Mercury, White Magnesia, Foliated earth. Then take this white earth rectified as abovesaid, and put it into its vessel upon the ashes, to a fire of Sublimation, and let it have a very strong fire until all the coagulated water, which is within, come into the Alembick, and the earth remain in the bottom well calcined: then hast thou the earth, the water, and the air, and though the earth have in it the nature of the fire, yet is it not apparent in effect, as thou shalt see, when by a greater decoction thou shalt make it become red; so that then thou shalt

manifestly see the fire in appearance, and such must be the proceeding in order to Fermentation of the white earth, that the dead body may be animated and enlivened, and its vertue be multiplyed to infinity. But note, that the Ferment cannot enter into the dead body, but by the means of the water, which hath made a contract and a marriage between the Ferment and the white earth. And know that in all Fermentation the weight is to be considered.) that so the quantity of the volatile exceed not the fixed, and that the marriage pass away in fume. For, as Senior sayes, if thou convert not the earth into water, and the water into fire, there cannot be a conjunction of the spirit and body. To do this take a Lamén or plate red hot and cast on it a drop of our Medicine, which penetrating, it shall be of a perfect colour, and will be a sign of perfection. If it happen it do not tinge, reiterate the dissolution and coagulation, until it do tinge and penetrate. And note, that seven imbibitions, at the most, are sufficient, and five at the least, that so the matter may be liquified, and without smok, and then the matter is perfect as to whiteness, for as much as the matter sometimes requires a longer time to be fixed, and sometimes is done in a shorter, according to the quantity of the Medicine. And note that our Medicine from the creation of our Mercury requires the term of seven months to compass the whiteness, and, to arrive at the redness, five; which put together make twelve. Of the Third Operation

#### RUBIFICATION

Take of the white Medicine, as much as thou wilt, and put it with its Glass upon the hot ashes, till it becomes as dry as the ashes. Then put to it some water of the Sun, which thou hast kept purposely for that end, and continue the fire to the second degree, until it become dry, then put to it again some of the abovesaid water, and so successively imbibe and dry, until the matter be rubified, and fluxible as wax, and cover with it the red Lamén, as hath been said, and the matter shall be perfect as to redness. But note that at every time, thou needst put no more of the water of the Sun than is barely necessary to cover the body, and this is done that the Elixir sink not and be drowned, and so the fire must be continued unto dessication, and then must there be made a second imbibition, and so proceed in order to the perfection of the Medicine., that is to say, until the force of the digestion of the fire convert it into a very red powder, which is the true Hyle of the Philosophers, the bloody Stone, the purple red Coral, the precious Ruby, red Mercury and the red Tincture.

#### PROJECTION

The oftner thou shalt dissolve and coagulate it, the more will the Vertue of it be multiplied to infinity. But note that the medicine is multiplied later by Solution, then by Fermentation. Wherefore the thing dissolved operates not well, if it be not before fixed in its ferment. Nevertheless the multiplication of the Medicine by solution is more abundant than that of the Ferment, by reason there is more subtilization. Yet I advise thee that in the

multiplication thou put one part of the work upon four of the other, and in a short time there will be made a powder, all Ferment.

#### THE EPILOGUE ACCORDING TO HERMES

Thus art thou to separate the earth from the fire, the gross from the subtil gently, with great Judgment, that is to say, separate the parts that are united to the Furnace, by the dissolution and separation of the parts, as the earth from the fire, the subtile from the gross &c., that is to say, the more pure substance of the Stone, until thou hast got it clean, and free from all spots or filth. And when he saith, it ascends from the earth up into Heaven and returns again into the earth, there is no more to, be understood by it than the Sublimation of the Bodies. Further, to explain what distillation is, he sayes the Wind carryes it in its belly, that is, when the water is distilled by the Alembick, where it first ascends by a wind full of Fume and Vapour, and afterwards returns to the bottom of the Vessel in water again. When he would also express the congelation of the matter, he says, Its force is absolute, if it be turned into earth, that is to say, be converted by decoction. And to make a general demonstration of all halt been said, he sayes, It shall receive both the inferior and Superior force, that is to say that of the Elements, for as much as, if the Medicine receive the force of the lighter parts, that is to say, air and fire, it shall also receive that of the more grave and weighty parts, changing itself into water and earth, to the end, that the Matters being thus perpetually joined together, may have permanence, durance, constancy, and stability. Glory be to God.

FINIS.

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