

# 47 Michael Sendivogius

In the early 1600's there was one emperor, Rudolf II in Prague, who funded much alchemy.

The story starts with a Scottish alchemist named Alexander Seton, who bragged about his successful transmutations and was believed by Christian II of Saxony, who imprisoned Seton in 1603 until he would impart the secret of the transmuting powder. Torture didn't help, and Michael Sendivogius married Seton's widow in 1605 or so, and soon arrived in the court of Rudolf II. Sendivogius lived high in those days, but died in poverty in Warsaw, 1636 or 1646.



His reputation was built on his writings, one of which, his *Dialog between Mercury, the Alchymist and Nature*, became the source of Ben Johnson's masterful mockery of alchemy, *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists Court* (1616). Ben Johnson also wrote a comic play, *The Alchemist*, 1611.

This is the Dialog, plus *A New Light of Alchymie: Taken out of the fontaine of Nature, and Manuall Experience . . . Written by Micheel Sandivogius [sic] . . . All of which are faithfully translated out of the Latin into the English tongue. By J. F. M. D., London, 1650.*

“ From *A new light of alchymie*

## The First Treatise. Of Nature, what she is, and what her searchers ought to be..

Many wise and very learned men many ages since, yea (Hermes testifying the same) before the Floud wrote many things concerning the making the Philosophers Stone; and have bequeathed so many writings unto us, that unlesse Nature should daily worke things credible to us, scarce any one would beleeeve it as a truth that there were any Nature at all: because in former ages there were not so many devisers of things, neither did our ancestors regard any thing besides Nature it selfe, and the possibility of Nature. And although they were contented with the plaine way alone of Nature, yet they found out those things, which we now imployed about divers things could not with all our wits conceive. This is because Nature, and the generation of things in the world is esteemed of us meane and plaine. And therefore we bend our wits not to things knowne and familiar, but to such things, which not at all, or very hardly can be done. Wherefore it happens that we are more dexterous in devising curious

subtilties, and such which the Philosophers themselves did never thinke of, then to attain to the true processe of Nature, & the right meaning of Philosophers. And such is the disposition of mens natures, as to neglect those things they know, and to be alwaies seeking after other things; such also and much more is that of mens wits and fancies, to which their nature is subjected. As for example, you see any Artificer, when he hath attained to the highest perfection of his Art, either searcheth into other Arts, or abuseth the same, which he already hath, or else leaves it off quite. So also is generous Nature alwaies active and doing to its very Iliad<sup>2</sup> utmost period, and afterward ceaseth. For there is given to Nature from the beginning a certaine kinde of grant or permission still to attaine to things better and better through her whole progresse, and to come to her full rest, towards which she tends with all her might, and rejoyceth in her end, as a pismire doth in her old age, at which time Nature makes her wings. Even so our wits have proceeded so farre, especially in the Phylosophicall Art, or praxis of the stone, that now we are almost come to the Iliad it selfe. For the Art of Chymistry hath now found out such subtilties, that scarce greater can be invented, and differ as much from the Art of the Ancient Philosophers as a Clock-smith doth from a plaine Black-smith. And although both worke upon Iron, yet neither understands the others labours, although both are masters of their Art. If Hermes himselfe, the father of Philosophers, should now be alive, and subtil-witted Geber, together with most profound Raimundus Lullius, they would not be accounted by our Chymists for Philosophers, but rather for Schollars: they would be ignorant of those so many distillations, so many circulations, so many calcinations, and so many other innumerable operations of Artists now adayes used, which men of this age devised, and found out of their writings. There is one only thing wanting to us, that is, to know that which they effected, viz. the Philosophers Stone or Physicall Tincture, we whilst we seeke that, finde out other things: and unlesse the procreation of man were so usuall as it is, and Nature did in that thing still observe her owne law and rules, we should scarce but not erre. But to returne to which I intended: I promised in this first treatise to explaine Nature, lest every idle fancy should turne us aside from the true and plaine way. Therefore I say Nature is but one, true, plaine, perfect, and entire in its owne being, which God made from the beginning, placing his spirit in it: but know that the bounds of Nature is God himselfe, who also is the originall of Nature. For it is certaine that every thing that is begun, ends no where but in that in which it begins. I say it is that only alone by which God workes all things: not that God cannot worke without it (for truely he himselfe made Nature, and is omnipotent) but so it pleaseth him to doe. All things proceed from this very Nature alone; neither is there any thing in the world without Nature. And although it happens sometimes that there be abortives, this is not Natures fault, but of the Artist or place. This Nature is divided into foure places, in which she workes all these things which appeare to us under shadowes; for truely things may be said rather to be shadowed out to us, then really to appeare. She is changed in male and female, and is likened to Mercury, because she joynes her

selfe to various places; and according to the goodnesse or the badnesse of the place she brings forth things; although to us there seeme no bad places at all in the earth. Now for qualities there be only foure and these are in all things but agree not, for one alwaies exceeds another. Moreover, Nature is not visible although she acts visibly; for it is a volatile spirit which executes its office in bodies and is placed and seated in the will and minde of God. Nature in this place serves us for no other purpose but to understand her places, which are more sutable and of nearer affinity to her; that is, to understand how to joyne one thing to another according to Nature, that we mixe not wood and man together, or an oxe or any other living creature and metals together: but let every thing act upon its owne like: and then for certaine Nature shall performe her office. The place of Nature is no other then, as I said before, what is in the will of God.

The searchers of Nature ought to be such as Nature her selfe is: true, plaine, patient, constant, &c. and that which is chiefest of all, religious, fearing God, not injurious to their neighbour. Then let them diligently consider, whether their purpose be agreeable to Nature; whether it be possible, let them learne by cleare examples, *viz.* out of what things any thing may be made, how, and in what vessell Nature workes. For if thou wilt doe any thing plainly, as Nature her selfe doth doe it, follow Nature; but if thou wilt attempt to doe a thing better then Nature hath done it, consider well in what, and by what it is bettered, and let it alwaies be done in its owne like. As for example, if thou desirest to exalt a metall in vertue (which is our intention) further then Nature hath done, thou must take a metalline nature both in male and female, or else thou shalt effect nothing. For if thou dost purpose to make a metall out of hearbs, thou shalt labour in vaine, as also thou shalt not bring forth wood out of a dog, or any other beast.

## The Second Treatise. Of the operation of Nature in our intention, and in Sperme.

I said even now that Nature was true, but one, every where seene, constant, and is knowne by the things which are brought forth, as woods, hearbs, and the like. I said also that the searcher of Nature must be true, simple hearted, patient, constant, giving his minde but to one thing alone, &c. Now we must begin to treat of the acting of Nature. As Nature is the will of God and God created her, or put her upon every imagination, so Nature made her selfe a seed, her will and pleasure in the Elements. She indeed is but one and yet brings forth divers things but workes nothing without a sperme: Nature workes whatsoever the sperme pleaseth, for it is as it were an instrument of some Artificer. The sperme therefore of every thing is better and more advantagious to the Artificer, then Nature her selfe. For by Nature without seed, you shall doe as much as a Goldsmith shall without fire, gold, or silver, or a husbandman without corne or

seed. If thou hast the sperme, Nature is presently at hand, whether it be to bad or good. She workes in sperme as God doth in the free will of man: and that is a great mysterie, because Nature obeyes the sperme, not by compulsion but voluntarily; even as God suffers all things which man wills, not by constraint, but out of his owne free pleasure: Therefore he gave man free will whether to bad or to good. The sperme therefore is the Elixir of every thing or Quint-essence, or the most perfect decoction, or digestion of a thing, or the Balsome of Sulphur, which is the same as the Radical moisture in metallis. There might truly be made a large discourse of this sperme; but we shall onely keep to that which makes for our purpose in the Chymicall Art. Four elements beget a sperme through the will and pleasure of God, and imagination of Nature: for as the sperme of man hath its center or vessell of its seede in the kidnies; so the foure Elements by their never ceasing motion (every one according to its quality) cast forth a sperme into the Center of the earth, where it is digested and by motion sent abroad. Now the Center of the earth is a certaine empty place, where nothing can rest. The foure Elements send forth their qualities into excentrall parts of the earth or into the circumference of the Center. As a man sends forth his seed into the entrance of the wombe of the woman, in which place nothing of the seed remaines, but after the wombe hath received a due proportion, casts out the rest; so also it comes to passe in the Center of the earth, that the magnetick vertue of the part of any place drawes to itselfe any thing that is convenient for its selfe, for the bringing forth of any thing; the residue is cast forth into stones and other excrements. For all things have their originall from this fountaine, neither hath any thing in the world any beginning but by this fountaine. As for example, let there be set a vessell of water upon a smooth even table, and be placed in the middle thereof, and round about let there be laid divers things and divers colours, also salt, and every one apart: then let the water be powred forth into the middle, and you shall see that water to runne abroad here and there, and when one streame is come to the red colour, it is made red by it, if to the salt, it takes from it the taste of the salt, and so of the rest. For the water doth not change the place, but the diversity of the place changeth the water. In like manner the seed or sperme being by the foure Elements cast forth from the center into the circumference, passeth through divers places and according to the nature of the place, it makes things: if it comes to a pure place of earth and water, a pure thing is made. The seed and sperme of all things is but one, and yet it produceth divers things, as is evident by the following example. The seed of a man is a noble seed, and was created and ordained for the generation of man onely; yet nevertheless if a man doe abuse it, as is in his free will to doe, there is borne an abortive. For if a man contrary to Gods most expresse command should couple with a cow or any other beast, the beast would presently conceive the seed of the man, because Nature is but one; and then there would not be borne a man, but a beast and an Abortive; because the seed did not find a place sutable to it self. By such an inhumane & detestable copulation of men with beasts there would be brought forth divers beasts, like

unto men. For so it is, if the sperme goes into the center, there is made that which should be made there; but when it is come into any other place, and hath conceived, it changeth its forme no more. Now whilst the sperme is yet in the center, there may as easily be brought forth a tree as a metall from the sperme, and as soone an hearbe as a stone, and one more pretious then another, according to the purity of the place. But how the Elements beget a sperme is in the next place to be treated of, and it is done thus: the Elements are foure: two are heavy and two are light, two dry and two moist, but one which is most dry, and another which is most moist, are males, and females &c. Every one of these of it selfe is most apt to produce things like unto it selfe in its owne sphere, and so it pleased God it should be: These foure never are at rest but are alwaies acting one upon another; and every one by it selfe sendeth forth his owne thinness and subtlety, and they all meet in the center: now in the center is the Archeus,<sup>4</sup> the servant of Nature, which mixeth those spermes and sends them forth. And how that is done is to be seene more fully in the Epilogue of the 12 treatises.

### **The Third Treatise. Of the true first matter of Metalls.**

. . . . If thou hast eares or any sense, mark well what is here said, and thou shalt be safe, and out of the number not only of those who are ignorant of the place of the sperm, and endeavour to convert the whole corn into seed; but also of them all, who are employed in the fruitlesse dissolution of metalls, and are desirous to dissolve the whole of metalls, that afterwards by their mutuall commixtion they may make a new metall. But these men, if they considered the process of Nature, should see that the case is far otherwise; for there is no metall so pure, which hath not its impurities, yet one more or fewer then another. But thou, friendly Reader, shalt observe the first point of Nature, as is abovesaid, and thou hast enough: but take this caution along with thee; that thou dost not seek for this point in the metalls of the vulgar, in which it is not. For these metalls, especially the gold of the vulgar, are dead, but ours are living, full of spirit, and these wholly must be taken: for know, that the life of metalls is fire whilst they are yet in their mines; and their death is the fire, viz. of melting. Now the first matter of metals is a certaine humidity mixed with warm aire, and it resembles fat water, sticking to every thing pure or impure, but in one place more abundantly then in another, by reason the earth is more open and porous in one place then in another, having also an attractive power. It comes forth into the light sometimes by itself, with some kind of covering, especially in such places where there was nothing that it could well stick to; it is known thus, because every thing is compounded of 3 principles: but in reference to the matter of metalls is but one, without any conjunction to any thing, excepting to its covering or shadow, viz. sulphur, &c.

## The Fourth Treatise. How metals are generated in the bowells of the earth.

Metalls are brought forth in this manner. After the foure Elements have sent forth their vertues into the center of the earth, the Archeus by way of distillation sends them up unto the superficies of the earth, by vertue of the heat of its perpetuall motion: for the earth is porous, and this wind, by distilling through the pores of the earth, is resolved into water, out of which all things are made. Therefore let the Sons of Wisdome know, that the sperm of metalls doth not differ from the sperm of all things, viz. the moist vapour: therefore in vain do Artists look after the reducing of metalls into their first matter, which is only a vapour. The Philosophers meant not such a first matter, but only the second matter, as Bernardus Trevisanus learnedly discusseth it, though not so cleerly, because hee speaks of the four Elements, but yet hee did say as much, but he spake only to the Sons of Art. But I, that I might the more cleerly open the Theorie, would have all be admonished here to take heed how they give way to so many solutions, so many circulations, so many calcinations, and reiterations of the same; for in vain is that sought for in a hard thing, when as the thing is soft of itself and every where to be had. Let not the first, but the second matter only be sought after, viz. that, which as soon as it is conceived, cannot be changed into another form. But if thou inquirest how a metall may bee reduced into such a matter, in that I keep close to the intention of the Philosophers: this thing only above all the rest I desire, that the Sons of Art would understand the sense and not the letter of writings, and where Nature doth end, viz. in metallick bodies, which in our eyes seem to be perfect, there must Art begin. But to return to my purpose (for my intention is not here to speak of the stone only), let us now treat of the matter of metalls. A little before I said, that all things were made of the liquid aire or the vapour, which the Elements by a perpetuall motion distill into the bowells of the earth; and then the Archeus of Nature takes and sublimes it through the pores, and according to its discretion distributes it to every place (as we have declared in the foregoing treatises) so from the variety of places proceeds the variety of things. There be some that suppose Saturne to have one kind of seed, and Gold another, and so all the rest of the metalls. But these are foolish fancies; there is but one only seed, the same is found in Saturne which is in Gold, the same in Silver which is in Iron; but the place of the earth is divers, if thou understandest me aright, although in Silver Nature sooner hath done its work, then in Gold, and so of the rest. For when that vapour is sublimed from the center of the earth, it passeth through places either cold or hot: if therefore it passeth through places that are hot and pure, where the fatness of Sulphur sticks to the walls; I say that vapour which the Philosophers have called the Mercury of Philosophers applies it self to, and is joined to that fatnesse, which then it sublimes with it self; and then becomes an unctuousity, and leaving the name of a Vapour, is called by the name of Fatnesse; which afterward coming by sublimation unto other places, which the fore-going vapour

hath cleansed, where the earth is subtile, pure, and moist, fills the pores thereof, and is joined to it, and so it is made Gold; but if that fatnesse come to impure and cold places, it is made Lead; but if the earth bee cold and pure and mixed with sulphur, it is made Copper, &c. For by how much more a place is depurated, or clensed, by so much the more excellent it makes the metall: for wee must know that that vapour goes out continually from the center to the superficies, and cleanseth those places through which it passeth. Thence it comes to passe, that now there may bee found Mines in those places where a thousand yeers agoe were none; for in its passage it alwaies subtilizeth that which is crude and impure, carrying it by degrees with it; and this is the reiteration and circulation of Nature; it is so long sublimed in producing new things, untill the place be very well purified; and by how much the more it is purified, by so much the nobler things it brings forth. Now in the winter when the air is cold, binding fast the earth, that unctuous vapour is congealed, which afterward when the spring returns, is mixed together with earth and water, and so becomes a Magnesia, drawing to it self the Mercury of air, like unto it selfe, and gives life to all things through the concurrence of the beams of the Sun, Moon and Stars, and so it brings forth grass, flowers, and such like things. For Nature is not one moment of time idle. Now Metalls are thus made, the earth by long distillation is puriefied, then they are generated by the accesse or coming thither of the fatnesse: they are brought forth no other way, as is the foolish opinion of some that misinterpret the writings of Philosophers.

## The Tenth Treatise. Of the Supernaturall Generation of the Son of the Sun.

We have treated of things which Nature makes and which God hath made, that the Searchers of Art might the more easily understand the possibility of Nature. But to delay no longer, I will now enter upon the Manner and Art how to make the Philosophers stone. The Philosophers stone or tincture is nothing else but Gold digested to the highest degree: for vulgar Gold is like an herb without seed, when it is ripe it brings forth seed; so Gold when it is ripe yeelds seed or tincture. But, will some ask, why doth not Gold or any other Metall bring forth seed? The reason given is this, because it cannot bee ripe, by reason of the crudity of the air, it hath not sufficient heat, and it happens that in some places there is found pure Gold, which Nature would have perfected, but was hindred by the crude aire . . . but if at any time Nature be sweetly and wittily helped, then Art may perfect that which Nature could not. The same happens in Metalls: Gold may yeeld fruit and seed, in which it multiplies it self by the industry of the skilfull Artificer, who knows how to exalt Nature, but if he will attempt to do it without Nature, he will be mistaken. For not only in this art, but also in every thing else, we can doe nothing but help Nature; and this by no other medium then fire or heat. But seeing this cannot be done, since in a congealed Metallick body there appear no spirits, it is necessary that the body be loosed or

dissolved, and the pores thereof opened, whereby Nature may work. But what that dissolution ought to be, here I would have the Reader take notice, that there is a twofold dissolution; although there be many other dissolutions, but to little purpose, there is onely one that is truely naturall, the other is violent, under which all the rest are comprehended. The naturall is this, that the pores of the body bee opened in our water, whereby the seed that is digested may bee sent forth, and put into its proper Matrix. Now our water is heavenly, not wetting the hands, not vulgar, but almost rain water:<sup>9</sup> The body is gold which yeelds seed; our Lune or Silver (not common Silver) is that which receives the seed of the gold: afterwards it is governed by our continual fire for seven months, and sometimes ten, untill our water consume three, and leave one; and that in duplo, or a double. Then it is nourished with the milk of the earth, or the fatnesse thereof, which is bred in the bowells of the earth and is governed or preserved from putrefaction by the salt of Nature. And thus the infant of the second generation is generated. Now let us passe from the Theorie to the Praxis.

## The Eleventh Treatise. Of the Praxis, and making of the Stone, or Tincture by Art.

Through all these foregoing Chapters, our discourse of things hath been scattered by way of examples, that the Praxis might be the more easily understood, which must be done by imitating Nature after this manner.

Take of our earth, through eleven degrees, eleven graines of our Gold, and not of the vulgar one grain; of our Lune, not the vulgar, two grains: but be thou well advised, that thou takest not common Gold and Silver, for these are dead, take ours which are living: then put them into our fire, and let there be made of them a dry liquor; first of all the earth will be resolved into water, which is called the Mercury of Philosophers; and that water shall resolve those bodies of Gold and Silver, and shal consume them so that there shall remain but the tenth part with one part; and this shall be the radical moisture of Metalls. Then take water of salt-nitre, which comes from our earth, in which there is a river of living water, if thou diggest the pit knee deep, therefore take water out of that, but take that which is cleer; upon this put that radical moisture; and set it over the fire of putrefaction and generation, not on such a one as thou didst in the first operation. Govern all things with a great deale of discretion, untill colours appear like a Peacocks tail; govern it by digesting it and be not weary, untill these colours be ended and there appear throughout the whole one green colour, and so of the rest; and when thou shalt see in the bottome ashes of a fiery colour and the water almost red, open the vessel, dip in a pen, and smea some Iron with it; if it tinge, have in readinesse that water, which afterwards I shall speak of, and put in so much of that water as the cold aire was which went in; boil it again with the former fire, untill it tinge again. So far reached my experience, I can doe no more, I found out no more. Now that water must be the

menstruum of the world, out of the sphere of the Moon, so often rectified, untill it can calcine Gold: I have been willing here to discover to thee all things; and if thou shalt understand my meaning sometimes and not the letter, I have revealed all things, especially in the first and second work.

Now it remains that we speak next of the fire. The first fire, or of the first operation, is a fire of one degree, continuall, which goes round the matter; the second is a naturall fire, which digests and fixeth the matter: I tell thee truly that I have opened to thee the governance or rules of the fire, if thou understandest Nature. The vessell remains yet to be spoken of. It must be the vessel of Nature, and two are sufficient; the vessel of the first work must be round; but in the second a glasse, a little lesse like unto a viall, or an egge. But in all these know that the fire of Nature is but one, and if it works variously, it is by reason of the difference of places. The vessell therefore of Nature is but one; but wee for brevities sake use a couple: the matter is one, but out of two substances. If therefore thou wilt give thy mind to make things, consider first things that are already made; if thou canst not reach or understand things presented to thy eyes, much lesse things that are to be made, and which thou desirest to make. For know that thou canst create nothing, for that is proper to God alone, but to make things that are not perceived, but lye hid in the shadow, to appear, and to take from them their vaile, is granted to an intelligent Philosopher by God through Nature . . . O wonderfull Nature, which knows how to produce wonderfull fruits out of Water in the earth, and from the Aire to give them life. All these are done, and the eyes of the vulgar doe not see them; but the eyes of the understanding and imagination perceive them, and that with a true sight. The eyes of the wise look upon Nature otherwise then the eyes of common men . . . [A]nd know that if thou dost not follow Nature all is in vain: and here I have spoken to thee through the help of God, what a father should speak to his son; Hee which hath ears let him heare, and he which hath his senses, let him set his mind upon what I say.

## The Twelfth Treatise. Of the Stone, and its vertue.

In the foregoing Treatises it hath been sufficiently spoken concerning the production of Naturall things, concerning the Elements, the First matter, and Second matter, Bodies, Seeds, and concerning the Use and Vertue of them: I wrote also the Praxis of making the Philosophers Stone. Now I will discover so much of the vertue of it, as Nature hath granted to me and experience taught me. But to comprehend the argument of all these Treatises briefly and in few words that the Reader which fears God may understand my mind and meaning, the thing is this. If any man doubt of the truth of the Art, let him read the voluminous writings of ancient Philosophers, verified by reason and experience; whom wee may deservedly give credit to in their own Art: but if any will not give credit to them, then we know not how to dispute with them, as denying principles: for deaf and dumbe men cannot speak. What prerogative should all

things in this world have before Metals? Why should these alone by having seed without cause denied to them, be excluded from Gods universall blessing of multiplication, which holy writ affirms was put in, and bestowed on all created things presently after the world was made? Now if they have Seed, who is so sottish to think that they cannot bee multiplied in their Seed? The Art of Alchymie in its kind is true, Nature also is true, but the Artificer is seldome true: there is one Nature, one Art, but many Artificers. Now what things Nature makes out of the Elements, she generates them by the will of God out of the first matter, which God onely knowes: Nature makes and multiplies those things of the second matter, which the Philosophers know. Nothing is done in the world without the pleasure of God and Nature. Every Element is in its own sphere; but one cannot be without the other; one lives by vertue of the other, and yet being joined together they doe not agree; but Water is of more worth then all the Elements because it is the mother of all things; upon this swims the spirit of Fire. By reason of Fire, Water is the first matter, viz. by the striving together of Fire and Water, and so are generated Winds, and Vapours apt, and easy to bee congealed with the earth by the help of the crude aire, which from the beginning was separated from it . . .

“ *A Dialogue between Mercury, the Alchemist and Nature*

Upon a time there were assembled divers Alchymists together, and held a counsel how they should make & prepare the Philosophers stone, and they concluded that every one should declare his opinion with a vow. And that meeting was in the open aire, in a certaine meadow, on a faire cleer day. And many agreed that Mercury was the first matter thereof, others that Sulphur was, and others other things. But the chieftest opinion was of Mercury, and that especially because of the sayings of Philosophers, because they hold that Mercury is the first true matter of the Stone, also of Metals: For Philosophers cry out and say, OUR MERCURY, &c. And so whilst they did contend amongst themselves for divers operations (every one gladly expecting a conclusion) there arose in the mean time a very great tempest, with stormes, showers of rain, and an unheard of wind, which dispersed that assembly into divers Provinces, every one apart without a conclusion. Yet every one of them fancied to himselfe what the conclusion of that dispute should have been. Every one therefore set upon his work as before, one in this thing, another in that thing seeking the Philosophers Stone, and this is done till this day without any giving over. Now one of them remembring the disputation that the Philosophers Stone is necessarily to be sought after in Mercury, said to himself: Although there was no conclusion made, yet I wil work in Mercury, and will make a conclusion my self in making the blessed Stone; for he was a man that was alwaies wont to talk to

himselfe, as indeed all Alchymists usually doe. Hee therefore began to read the books of Philosophers, and fell upon a booke of Alanus, which treats of Mercury; and so that Alchymist is made a Philosopher, but without any conclusion: And taking Mercury he began to work; hee put it into a glass and put fire to it, the Mercury as it is wont to do, vapoured away, the poor silly Alchymist not knowing the nature of it, beat his wife, saying: "No body could come hither besides thee, thou tookest the Mercury out of the glass." His wife crying excuseth her self and speaks softly to her husband: "Thou wilt make a sir-reverence<sup>13</sup> of these." The Alchymist tooke Mercury again, and put it again into his vessell, and lest his wife should take it away, watched it. But the Mercury, as its manner is, vapoured away again. The Alchymist, remembering that the first matter of the Philosophers Stone must be volatile, rejoiced exceedingly, altogether perswading himselfe that he could not now be deceived, having the first matter. Hee began now to work upon Mercury boldly; he learned afterwards to sublime it and to calcine it divers ways, as with Salt, Sulphur, and Metalls, Mineralls, Bloud, Haire, Corrosive waters, Herbs, Urine, Vineger, but could find nothing for his purpose; he left nothing unassayed in the whole world, with which hee did not work upon good Mercury withall. But when he could doe no good at all with this, hee fell upon this saying, that it is found in the dung-hill. He began to worke upon Mercury with divers sorts of dung, together and asunder: and when hee was weary and full of thoughts he fell into a sleep. And in his sleep there appeared to him a vision: there came to him an old man who saluted him, and said: "Friend, Why art thou sad?" Hee answered, "I would willingly make the Philosophers Stone." Then said he, "Friend, Of what wilt thou make the Philosophers Stone?"

ALCHYMISTA. "Of Mercury, Sir."

SENEX. "Of what Mercury?"

ALCH. "There is but one Mercury."

SEN. "It is true, there is but one Mercury, but altered variously, according to the variety of places; one is purer then another."

ALCH. "O Sir, I know how to purifie it very well with vinegar and salt, with nitre and vitriall."

SEN. "I tell thee this is not the true purifying of it; neither is this, thus purified, the true Mercury: Wise men have another Mercury and another manner of purifying it," and so he vanished away. The Alchymist being raised from sleep thought with himselfe what vision this should be, as also what this Mercury of Philosophers should be: hee could bethinke himselfe of no other but the vulgar Mercury. But yet hee desired much that hee might have had a longer discourse with the old man: but yet hee worked continually, sometimes in the dung of living creatures, as boyes dung, and sometimes in his own. And every day hee

went to the place where hee saw the vision, that he might speak with the old man again: sometimes hee counterfeited a sleep, and lay with his eyes shut expecting the old man. But when he would not come he thought he was afraid of him and would not beleve that he was asleep; he swore therefore saying, "My good old Master be not afraid, for truly I am asleep; look upon my eyes, see if I be not": And the poor Alchymist after so many labours and the spending of all his goods, now at last fell mad, by alwaies thinking of the old man. And when hee was in that strong imagination, there appeared to him in his sleep a false vision, in the likeness of the old man, and said to him, "Doe not despaire, my friend, thy Mercury is good, and thy matter, but if it will not obey thee, conjure it, that it bee not volatile; Serpents are used to be conjured, and then why not Mercury?" and so the old man would leave him. But the Alchymist asked of him, saying, "Sir, expect," &c. And by reason of a noise this poore Alchymist was raised from sleep, yet not without great comfort. He took then a vessell full of Mercury, and began to conjure it divers wayes, as his dream taught him. And hee remembered the words of the old man, in that hee said, Serpents are conjured, and Mercury is painted with Serpents;<sup>14</sup> hee thought, so it must bee conjured as the Serpents. And taking a vessell with Mercury hee began to say, Ux, Vx, Ostas, &c. And where the name of the Serpent should be put, he put the name of Mercury, saying: "And thou wicked beast Mercury," &c. At which words Mercury began to laugh and to speak unto him saying, "What wilt thou have, that thou thus troublest mee my Master Alchymist?"

ALCH. "O ho, now thou callest me Master, when I touch thee to the quick, now I have found where thy bridle is, wait a little, and by and by thou shalt sing my song," and he began to speak to him, as it were angerly, "Art thou that Mercury of Philosophers?"

MERC. (as if he were afraid answered) "I am Mercury, my Master."

ALCH. "Why therefore wilt not thou obey mee? And why could not I fix thee?"

MERC. "O my noble Master, I beseech thee pardon mee, wretch that I am, I did not know that thou wast so great a Philosopher."

ALCH. "Didst not thou perceive this by my operations, seeing I proceeded so Philosophically with thee?"

MERC. "So it is, my noble Master, although I would hide my selfe, yet I see I cannot from so honourable a Master as thou art."

ALCH. "Now therefore dost thou know a Philosopher?"

MERC. "Yea, my Master, I see that your worship is a most excellent Philosopher."

ALCH. (being glad at his heart saith) "Truly now I have found what I sought for."  
(Again he spake to Mercury with a most terrible voice:) "Now go to, be now therefore obedient, or else it shall be the worse for thee."

MERC. "Willingly, my Master, if I am able, for now I am very weake."

ALCH. "Why dost thou now excuse thy selfe?"

MERC. "I doe not, my Master, but I am faint and feeble."

ALCH. "What hurts thee?"

MERC. "The Alchymist hurts mee."

ALCH. "What, dost thou still deride mee?"

MERC. "O Master, no, I speak of the Alchymist, but thou art a Philosopher."

ALCH. "O wel, well, that is true, but what hath the Alchymist done?"

MERC. "O my Master, hee hath done many evill things to mee, for hee hath mixed mee, poor wretch as I am, with things contrary to mee: from whence I shall never bee able to recover my strength and I am almost dead, for I am tormented almost unto death."

ALCH. "O thou deservest those things, for thou art disobedient."

MERC. "I was never disobedient to any Philosopher, but it is naturall to mee to deride fools."

ALCH. "And what dost thou think of mee?"

MERC. "O Sir, you are a great man, a very great Philosoph er, yea greater then Hermes himself."

ALCH. "Truly so it is, I am a learned man, but I will not commend my selfe, but my Wife also said to mee, that I am a very learned Philosopher, she knew so much by me."

MERC. "I am apt to beleeve thee, for Philosophers must be so, who by reason of too much wisdome and pains fall mad."

ALCH. "Goe to then, tell me therefore what I shall doe with thee; how I shall make the Philosophers Stone of thee."

MERC. "O my Master Philosopher, I know not, Thou art a Philosopher, I am a servant of the Philosophers, they make of me what they please, I obey them as

much as I am able.”

ALCH. “Thou must tell mee how I must proceed with thee, and how I may make of thee the Philosophers Stone.”

MERC. “If thou knowest, thou shalt make it, but if thou knowest not, thou shalt doe nothing, thou shalt know nothing by mee, if thou knowest not already my Master Philosopher.”

ALCH. “Thou speakest to mee as to some simple man, perhaps thou dost not know that I have worked with Princes, and was accounted a Philosopher with them.”

MERC. “I am apt to beleieve thee my Master, for I know all this very well, I am yet foul and unclean by reason of those mixtures that thou hast used.”

ALCH. “Therefore tell mee, art thou the Mercury of Philosophers?”

MERC. “I am Mercury, but whether or no the Philosophers, that belongs to thee to know.”

ALCH. “Do but tell me if thou art the true Mercury, or if there be another.”

MERC. “I am Mercury, but there is another,” and so he vanished away.

The Alchymist cries out and speaks, but no body answers him. And bethinking himself saith: “Surely I am an excellent man, Mercury hath been pleased to talke with mee, surely hee loves mee,” and then he began to sublime Mercury, distil, calcine, make Turbith of him, precipitate, and dissolve him divers wayes, and with divers waters, but as hee laboured in vain before, so now also he hath spent his time and costs to no purpose. Wherefore at last hee begins to curse Mercury and revile Nature because shee made him.

Now Nature when she heard these things called Mercury to her, and said to him: “What hast thou done to this man? Why doth he curse and revile me for thy sake? Why dost not thou doe what thou oughtest to doe?”

But Mercury modestly excuseth himself. Yet Nature commands him to be obedient to the Sons of Wisdome that seek after him. Mercury promiseth that he will and saith: “Mother Nature, but who can satisfie fools?”

Nature went away smiling: but Mercury being angry with the Alchymist goes also unto his own place. After a few days it came into the Alchymists mind, that he omitted something in his operations, and again hee hath recourse to Mercury, and now resolves to mix him with hogs dung; but Mercury being angry that he had falsely accused him before his mother Nature, saith to the Alchymist, “What

wilt thou have of me, thou foole? Why hast thou thus accused mee?"

ALCH. "Art thou he that I have longed to see?"

MERC. "I am, but no man that is blind can see mee."

ALCH. "I am not blind."

MERC. "Thou art very blind, for thou canst not see thy selfe, how then canst thou see mee?"

ALCH. "O now thou art proud, I speak civilly to thee, and thou contemnest mee: thou dost not know perhaps that I have worked with many Princes and was esteemed as a Philosopher amongst them."

MERC. "Fools flock to Princes Courts, for there they are honoured and fare better then others. Wast thou also at the Court?"

ALCH. "O thou art a devill, and not a good Mercury, if thou wilt speak thus to Philosophers: for before thou didst also seduce me thus." MERC. "Dost thou know Philosophers?"

ALCH. "I my self am a Philosopher."

MERC. "Behold our Philosopher" (smiling said: and began to talke further with him saying) "My Philosopher, tell mee therefore what thou seekest after, and what thou wilt have, what dost thou desire to make?"

ALCH. "The Philosophers stone."

MERC. "Out of what matter therefore wilt thou make it?"

ALCH. "Of our Mercury."

MERC. "O my Philosopher, now I wil leave you, for I am not yours."

ALCH. "O thou art but a devill, and wilt seduce mee."

MERC. "Truly my Philosopher thou art a devill to mee, not I to thee: for thou dost deale most sordidly with mee, after a devillish manner."

ALCH. "O what doe I heare? This certainly is a devill indeed, for I do all things according to the writings of Philosophers and know very well how to work."

MERC. "Thou knowest very well, for thou dost more then thou knowest, or readst of: for the Philosophers said that Nature is to be mixed with Natures; and they command nothing to bee done without Nature; but thou dost mix mee with

almost all the sordid things that bee, as dung.”

ALCH. “I doe nothing besides Nature: but I sow seed into its own earth, as the Philosophers have said.”

MERC. “Thou sowest me in dung, and in time of harvest I do vanish away, and thou art wont to reap dung.”

ALCH. “Yet so the Philosophers have wrote, that in the dunghill their matter is to be sought for.”

MERC. “It is true what they have written; but thou understandest their letter and not their sense and meaning.”

ALCH. “Now happily I see that thou art Mercury; but thou wilt not obey mee.”

And he began to conjure him again, saying, Ux Vx. But Mercury laughing answered, “Thou shalt doe no good my friend.”

ALCH. “They do not speak without ground, when they say thou art of a strange nature, inconstant and volatile.”

MERC. “Dost thou say that I am inconstant, I resolve thee thus. I am constant unto a constant Artificer; fixed to him that is of a fixed mind, but thou, and such as thou art, are inconstant, running from one thing unto another, from one matter unto another.”

ALCH. “Tell me therefore if thou art that Mercury, which the Philosophers wrote of, which they said was, together with sulphur and salt, the principall of all things, or must I seek another?”

MERC. “Truly the fruit doth not fal far from the tree, but I seek not mine own praise, I am the same as I was, but my years are differing. From the beginning I was young, so long as I was alone, but now I am older, yet the same as I was before.”

ALCH. “Now thou pleasest me because now thou art older: for I alwaies sought after such a one that was more ripe and fixed, that I might so much the more easily accord with him.”

MERC. “Thou dost in vain look after mee in my old age, who didst not know mee in my youth.”

ALCH. “Did not I know thee, who have worked with thee divers wayes, as thou thy selfe hast said? And yet I will not leave off till I have made the Philosophers Stone.”

MERC. "O what a miserable case am I in? What shall I do? I must now be mixed again with dung and be tormented. O wretch that I am! I beseech thee good Master Philosopher, doe not mix me so much with hogs dung; for otherwise I shall be undone, for by reason of this stink I am constrained to change my shape. And what wilt thou have mee doe more? Am not I tormented sufficiently by thee? Doe not I obey thee? Doe not I mixe my self with those things thou wilt have me? Am I not sublimed? Am I not precipitated? Am I not made turbith? An Amalgama? A Past[e]? Now what canst thou desire more of me? My body is so scourged, so spit upon, that the very stone would pity me: By vertue of me thou hast milk, flesh, bloud, butter, oyl, water, and which of all the metallis or minerals can do that which I do alone? And is there no mercy to be had towards me? O what a wretch am I!"

ALCH. "O ho, it doth not hurt thee, thou art wicked, although thou turnest thy self inside out, yet thou dost not change thy selfe, thou dost but frame to thy selfe a new shape, thou dost alwaies return into thy first forme again."

MERC. "I doe as thou wilt have me, if thou wilt have me be a body, I am a body: if thou will have me be dust, I am dust, I know not how I should abase my self more, then when I am dust and a shadow."

ALCH. "Tell mee therefore what thou art in thy Center, and I will torment thee no more."

MERC. "Now I am constrained to tell from the very foundation. If thou wilt, thou maist understand mee: thou seest my shape, and of this thou needest know further. But because thou askest mee of the Center, my Center is the most fixed heart of all things, immortall and penetrating: in that my Master rests, but I my selfe am the way and the passenger; I am a stranger and yet live at home; I am most faithfull to all my companions; I leave not those that doe accompany mee; I abide with them, I perish with them. I am an immortall body: I die indeed when I am slaine, but I rise againe to judgement before a wise Judge."

ALCH. "Art thou therefore the Philosophers Stone?"

MERC. "My Mother is such a one, of her is born artificially one certain thing, but my brother who dwells in the fort, hath in his will what the Philosophers desire."

ALCH. "Art thou old?"

MERC. "My Mother begat mee, but I am older then my mother."

ALCH. "What devill can understand thee, when thou dost not answer to the purpose? thou alwaies speakest Riddles. Tell mee if thou art that fountain of which Bernard Lord Trevisan writ?"

MERC. "I am not the fountaine but I am the water, the fountaine compasseth mee about."

ALCH. "Is gold dissolved in thee, when thou art water?"

MERC. "Whatsoever is with mee I love as a friend; and whatsoever is brought forth with mee, to that I give nourishment, and whatsoever is naked, I cover with my wings."

ALCH. "I see it is to no purpose to speak to thee, I ask one thing and thou answerest another thing: if thou wilt not answer to my question, truly I will goe to work with thee again."

MERC. "O master, I beseech thee be good to me, now I will willingly doe what I know."

ALCH. "Tell me therefore if thou art afraid of the fire."

MERC. "I am fire my selfe."

ALCH. "And why then dost thou fly from the fire?"

MERC. "My spirit, and the spirit of the fire love one another, and whither one goes, the other goes if it can."

ALCH. "And whither dost thou goe, when thou ascendest with the fire?"

MERC. "Know that every stranger bends towards his own cuntry, and when he is returned from whence he came, hee is at rest and alwaies returnes wiser then he was when he came forth."

ALCH. "Dost thou come back again sometimes?"

MERC. "I doe, but in another forme."

ALCH. "I do not understand what this is, nor any thing of the fire."

MERC. "If any one knew the fire of my heart, hee hath seen that fire (a due heat) is my meat: and by how much the longer the spirit of my heart feeds upon fire, it will be so much the fatter, whose death is afterward the life of all things, whatsoever they bee in this Kingdome where I am."

ALCH. "Art thou great?"

MERC. "I am thus for example, of a thousand drops I shall be one, out of one I give many thousand drops: and as my body is in thy sight, if thou knowest how to sport with mee, thou maist divide me into as much as thou wilt, and I shall be

one again: What then is my spirit (my heart) intrinsecally, which alwaies can bring forth many thousands out of the least part?"

ALCH. "And how therefore must one deale with thee that thou maist be so?"

MERC. "I am fire within, fire is my meat, but the life of the fire is aire, without aire the fire is extinguished; the fire prevails over the aire, wherefore I am not at rest, neither can the crude aire constringe or bind mee: adde aire to aire, that both may be one and hold weight, join it to warm fire, and give it time."

ALCH. "What shall bee after that?"

MERC. "The superfluous shall be taken away, the residue thou shalt burn with fire, put it into water, boyl it, after it is boyled thou shalt give it to the sick by way of physick."

ALCH. "Thou saist nothing to my questions. I see that thou wilt only delude mee with Riddles. Wife, bring hither the hogs dung, I will handle that Mercury some new wayes, untill hee tell mee how the Philosophers Stone is to bee made of him." Mercury hearing this begins to lament over the Alchymist, and goes unto his mother Nature: accuseth the ungratefull operator. Nature beleeves her son Mercury, who tells true, and being moved with anger comes to the Alchymist and calls him: "Ho thou, Where art thou?"

ALCH. "Who is that, thus calls mee?"

NAT. "What dost thou with my son, thou fool thou? Why dost thou thus injure him? Why dost thou torment him? who is willing to doe thee any good, if thou couldst understand so much."

ALCH. "What devill reprehends me, so great a man, and Philosopher?"

NAT. "O fool ful of pride, the dung of Philosophers, I know all Philosophers and wise men, and I love them for they love me and doe all things for me at my pleasure, and whither I cannot goe they help me. But you Alchymists, of whose order thou also art one, without my knowledge and consent, doe all things contrary unto me; wherefore it falls out contrary to your expectation. You think that you deal with my sons rationally, but you perfect nothing; and if you will consider rightly, you do not handle them, but they handle you: for you can make nothing of them, neither know you how to do it, but they of you when they please, make fooles."

ALCH. "It is not true: I also am a Philosopher and know well how to worke. I have been with more then one Prince and was esteemed a Philosopher amongst them; my wife also knows the same, and now also I have a manuscript, which was hid some hundreds of years in an old wall, now I certainly know I shall make

the Philosophers Stone, as also within these few dayes it was revealed to mee in a dreame. O I am wont to have true dreams; Wife thou knowest it!"

NAT. "Thou shalt doe as the rest of thy fellowes have done, who in the beginning know all things, and thinke they are very knowing, but in conclusion know nothing."

ALCH. "Yet others have made it of thee (if thou art the true Nature.)"

NAT. "It is true, but only they that knew me, and they are very few. But hee which knowes mee doth not torment my Sons; nor disturbe mee, but doth to mee what hee pleaseth, and increaseth my goods, and heals the bodies of my sons."

ALCH. "Even so doe I."

NAT. "Thou dost all things contrary to mee, and dost proceed with my Sonnes contrary to my will: when thou shouldst revive, thou killest; when fix, thou sublimest; when calcine, thou distillest; especially my most observant Sonne Mercury, whom thou tormentest with so many corrosive waters and so many poisonous things."

ALCH. "Then I will proceed with him sweetly by digestion only."

NAT. "It is well if thou knowest how to doe it, but if not, thou shalt not hurt him but thy selfe, and expose thy selfe to charges, for it is all one with him, as with a gem which is mixed with dung, that is alwaies good, and the dung doth not diminish it although it be cast upon it, for when it is washed, it is the same gemme as it was before."

ALCH. "But I would willingly know how to make the Philosophers Stone."

NAT. "Therefore doe not handle my Son in that fashion: for know, that I have many Sonnes and many Daughters, and I am ready at hand to them that seek mee, if they bee worthy of mee."

ALCH. "Tell me therefore who that Mercury is?"

NAT. "Know that I have but one such Sonne, and hee is one of seven, and hee is the first; and hee is all things, who was but one; he is nothing, and his number is entire; in him are the foure Elements, and yet himselfe is no Element; he is a spirit, and yet hath a body; he is a man, and yet acts the part of a woman; hee is a child, and yet bears the armes of a man; hee is a beast, and yet hath the wings of a bird; hee is poison, yet cureth the leprosie; he is life, yet kills all things; hee is a King, yet another possesseth his Kingdome; hee flyeth from the fire, yet fire is made of him; he is water, yet wets not; hee is earth, yet hee is

sowed; hee is aire, yet lives in water.”

ALCH. “Now I see that I know nothing but I dare not say so, for then I should lose my reputation, and my neighbors will lay out no more money upon mee, if they should know that I know that I know nothing: yet I will say that I doe certainly know, or else no body will give mee so much as bread: for many of them hope for much good from mee.”

NAT. “Although thou shouldst put them off a great while, yet what will become of thee at last? and especially if thy neighbours should demand their charges of thee again?”

ALCH. “I will feed all of them with hope, as much as possibly I can.”

NAT. “And then what wilt thou doe at last?”

ALCH. “I will try many ways privately: if either of them succeed, I will pay them; if not, I will goe into some other far Country and doe the like there.”

NAT. “And what will become of thee afterward?”

ALCH. “Ha, ha, ha, there bee many countryes, also many covetous men, to whom I will promise great store of Gold, and that in a short time, and so the time shall passe away, till at last either I, or they must die Kings, or Asses.”

NAT. “Such Philosophers deserve the halter: fie upon thee, make haste and be hanged and put an end to thy self and thy Philosophy; for by this meanes thou shalt neither deceive mee, thy neighbour, or thy self.”

Ben Johnson's Masque is [here](#).

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