

Paracelsus :

(The "Swiss Hermes")

# ALCHEMY: THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION

Let it be for you a great and high mystery in the light of nature that a thing can completely lose and forfeit its form and shape, only to arise subsequently out of nothing and become something whose potency and virtue is far nobler than what it was in the beginning.

Nothing has been created as ultima materia--in its final state. Everything is first created in its prima materia--its original stuff; whereupon Vulcan [or transmuting fire] comes, and by the art of alchemy develops it in its final substance. . . . For alchemy means: to carry to its end something that has not yet been completed. To obtain the lead from the ore and to transform it into what it is made for. . . . Accordingly, you should understand that alchemy is nothing but the art which makes the impure into the pure through fire. . . . It can separate the useful from the useless, and transmute it into its final substance and its ultimate essence.

The transmutation of metals is a great mystery of nature. However laborious and difficult this task may be, whatever impediments and obstacles may lie in the way of its accomplishment, this transmutation does not go counter to nature, nor is it incompatible with the order of God, as is falsely asserted by many persons. But the base impure five metals--that is, copper [or Venus], tin [or Jupiter], lead [or Saturn], iron [or Mars], and quicksilver [or Mercury]--cannot be transmuted into nobler, pure, and perfect metals--namely, into gold [or the Sun] and silver [or the Moon]--without a tinctura, or without the philosopher's stone.

Since ancient times philosophy has striven to separate the good from the evil, and the pure from the impure; this is the same as saying that all things die and that only the soul [of them] lives eternal. The soul endures while the body decays, and you may recall that correspondingly a seed must rot away if it is to bear fruit. But what does it mean, to rot? It means only this--that the body decays while its essence, the good, the soul, subsists. This should be known about decaying. And once we have understood this, we possess the pearl which contains all the virtues.

Decay is the beginning of all birth. . . . It transforms shape and essence, the forces and virtues of nature. Just as the decay of all foods in the stomach transforms them and makes them into a pulp, so it happens outside the stomach. . . . Decay is the midwife of very great things! It causes many things to rot, that a noble fruit may be born; for it is the reversal, the death and destruction of the original essence of all natural things. It brings about the birth and rebirth of forms a thousand times improved. . . . And this is the highest and greatest mysterium of God, the deepest mystery and miracle that he has revealed to mortal man.

## THE HIDDEN SIDE OF REALITY

In nature we find a light that illumines us more than the sun and the moon. For it is so ordered that we see but half of man and all the other creatures, and therefore must explore them further . . . Nor should we become drowned in our daily work, for whosoever seeks . . . shall find . . .

And if we follow the light of nature, we learn that there exists another half of man, and that man does not consist of blood and flesh alone . . . but also of a body that cannot be discerned by our crude eyesight.

The moon emits light, yet by this light colors are not discernible; but as soon as the sun rises, all the colors can be distinguished. Similarly nature has a light that shines like the sun; and as the light of the sun exceeds the light of the moon, so the light of nature far exceeds the power of the eyes. In its light all things invisible become visible; remember always that the one light outshines the other.

Know that our world and everything we see in its compass and everything we can touch constitute only one half of the cosmos. The world we do not see is equal to ours in weight and measure, in nature and properties. From this it follows that there exists another half of man in which this invisible world operates. If we know of the two worlds, we realize that both halves are needed to constitute the whole man; for they are like two men united in one body.

The sun can shine through a glass, and fire can radiate warmth through the walls of the stove, although the sun does not pass through the glass and the fire does not go through the stove. In the same way, the human body can act at a distance while remaining at rest in one place, like the sun, which shines through the glass and yet does not pass through it. Hence nothing must be attributed to the body itself but only to the forces that flow from it--just as the smell of an animal is suffused while the animal's body may be at rest.

Nature emits a light, and by its radiance she can be known. But in man there is still another light apart from that which is innate in nature. It is the light through which man experiences, learns, and fathoms the supernatural. Those who seek in the light of nature speak from the knowledge of nature; but those who seek in the light of man speak from the knowledge of super-nature. For man is more than nature; he is nature, but he is also a spirit, he is also an angel, and he has the properties of all three. If he walks in nature, he serves nature; if he walks in the spirit, he serves the spirit; if he walks with the angel, he serves the angel. The first is given to the body, the others are given to the soul, and are its jewel.

### THE MATRIX OR MOTHER-SPACE

When the world was still nothing but water, and the Spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters, the world emerged from the water; water was the matrix of the world and of all its creatures. And all this became the matrix of man; in it God created man in order to give His Spirit a dwelling place in flesh.

The matrix is invisible and no one can see its primal substance; for who can see that which was before him? All of us come from the matrix, but no one has ever seen it because it existed before man. And even though man comes from it, and men are born from it again and again, no one has seen it. The world was born from the matrix, as was man and all other living creatures: all this has come out of the matrix. . . . Before heaven and earth were created, the Spirit of God brooded upon the water and was carried by it. This water was the matrix; for it was in the water that heaven and earth were created, and in no other matrix. By it the Spirit of God was borne, that is to say, that Spirit which lives in man, and which is lacking in other creatures. For the sake of this Spirit man has been created; the Spirit of God lives in man so that God need not live alone. Therefore the Spirit of God comes to dwell in man, and is of God and returns to God.

The world is as God created it. In the beginning He made it into a body, which consists of four elements. He founded this primordial body on the trinity of mercury, sulfur and salt, and these are the three substances of which the complete body consists. For they form everything that

lies in the four elements, they bear in them all the forces and faculties of perishable things. In them there are day and night, warmth and coldness, stone and fruit, and everything else, still unformed. In a piece of wood . . . there lie concealed the forms of animals, the forms of plants of every description, the forms of all instruments; and he who can carve them out finds them. Accordingly, the first body, the Yliaster [Ylem or Hylem or Hyle is the initial substance of the universe-the first matter or Primum Materia], was nothing but a clod, which contained all the chaos, all the waters, all minerals, all herbs, all stones, all gems. Only the supreme Master could release them and form them with tender solicitude, so that other things could be created from the rest.

#### EVERYTHING THAT IS WITHIN CAN BE KNOWN BY WHAT IS WITHOUT

It is not God's will that all He has created for the benefit of man and has given him as his own should remain hidden. . . . And even if He did conceal some things, He left nothing unmarked, but provided all things with outward, visible marks, with special traits--just as a man who has buried a treasure marks the spot in order that he may find it again.

We men discover everything that lies hidden in the mountains by external signs and correspondences, and thus also do we find all the properties of herbs and everything that is in the stones. There is nothing in the depths of the seas, nothing on the heights of the firmament, that man is unable to discover. No mountain, no cliff, is so vast as to hide or conceal what is in it from the eyes of man; it is revealed to him by corresponding signs. . . . For each fruit is a sign, and through it we discover what is contained in that from which it stems. Similarly there is nothing in man that is not marked in his exterior, so that by the exterior one may discover what is in the individual who bears the sign. . . . There are four ways by which the nature of man and of all living things can be discovered. . . . First, chiromancy; it concerns the extreme parts of man's limbs, namely the hands and feet. . . . Second, physiognomics; it concerns the face and the whole head. . . . Third, the substantina, which refers to the whole shape of the body. . . . And fourth, the customs and usages, that is to say, manners and gestures in which man appears and shows himself. . . . These four belong together; they provide us with a complete knowledge of the hidden, inward man, and of all things that grow in nature. . . . Nature is the sculptor: she endows everything with the form which is also the essence, and thus the form reveals the essence.

There is nothing that nature has not signed in such a way that man may discover its essence. . . . The stars have their orbits by which they are known. The same is true of man. As you can see, each herb is given the form that befits its nature; similarly, man is endowed with a form corresponding to his inner nature. And just as the form shows what a given herb is, so the human shape is a sign which indicates what a given man is. This does not refer to the name, sex, or similar characteristics, but to the qualities inherent in the man. The art of signs teaches us to give each man his true name in accordance with his innate nature. A wolf must not be called a sheep, a dove must not be called a fox; each being should be given the name that belongs to its essence. . . . Since nothing is so secret or hidden that it cannot be revealed, everything depends on the discovery of those things which manifest the hidden. . . . The nature of each man's soul accords with the design of his lineaments and arteries. The same is true of the face, which is shaped and formed according to the content of his mind and soul, and the same is again true of the proportions of the human body. For the sculptor of Nature is so artful that he does not mold the soul to fit the form, but the form to fit the soul; in other words, the shape of a man is formed in accordance with the manner of his heart. . . . Artists who make sculptures proceed no differently. . . . And the more accomplished an artist would be, the more necessary it is that he master the art of signs. . . . No artist can paint or carve, no one can produce an accomplished work, without such knowledge . . . Only he who has some knowledge of this can be a finished artist.

When a carpenter builds a house, it first lives in him as an idea; and the house is built according to this idea. Therefore, from the form of the house, one can make inferences about the carpenter's ideas and images. What Nature has in mind . . . no one can know until it has acquired form and shape. . . . Now note well that virtue forms the shape of a man, just as the carpenter's ideas become visible in his house; and a man's body takes shape in accordance with the nature of his soul. . . . Nature acts no differently. She gives man an outward appearance that is in keeping with his inner constitution. . . . And each man's soul can be recognized, just as the carpenter can be known by his house.

### THE GREATER WORLD AND THE LESSER WORLD

The world is as God created it. In the beginning he made it into a body, which consists of four elements. He founded this primordial body on the trinity of mercury, sulfur, and salt, and these are the three substances of which the complete body consists. For they form everything that lies in the four elements, they bear in them all the forces and faculties of perishable things. In them there are day and night, warmth and coldness, stone and fruit, and everything else, still unformed. In a piece of wood . . . there lie concealed the forms of animals, the forms of plants of every description, the forms of all instruments; and he who can carve them out finds them. Accordingly, the first body, the Yliaster, was nothing but a clod, which contained all the chaos, all the waters, all minerals, all herbs, all stones, all gems. Only the supreme Master could release them and form them with tender solicitude, so that other things could be created from the rest.

. . . Matter was at the beginning of all things, and only after it had been created was it endowed with the spirit of life so that this spirit might unfold in and through the bodies as God had willed. And thus the days of the creation and the order of all creatures were fulfilled. Only then was man created in the likeness of God, and endowed with His spirit.

Man was not born out of a nothingness, but was made from a substance. . . . The Scriptures state that God took the limus terrae, the primordial stuff of the earth, and formed man out of this mass. Furthermore they state that man is ashes and powder, dust and earth; and this proves sufficiently that he is made of this primordial substance. . . . But limus terrae is also the Great World, and thus man was created from heaven and earth. Limus terrae is an extract of the firmament, of the universe of stars, and at the same time of all the elements. . . .

The limbus is the primordial stuff of man. . . . What the limbus is the man is too. He who knows the nature of the limbus knows also what man is. . . . Now, the limbus is heaven and earth, the upper and lower sphere of the cosmos, the four elements, and everything they comprise; therefore it is just to identify it with the microcosm, for it too is the whole world.

Heaven encompasses both spheres--the upper and the lower--to the end that nothing mortal and nothing transient may reach beyond them into that realm which lies outside the heaven that we see. . . . For mortal and immortal things must not touch each other, and must not dwell together. Therefore, the Great World, the macrocosm, is closed in itself in such a way that nothing can leave it, but that everything that is of it and within it remains complete and undivided. Such is the Great World. Next to it subsists the Little World, that is to say, man. He is enclosed in a skin, to the end that his blood, his flesh, and everything he is as a man may not become mixed with that Great World. . . . For one would destroy the other. Therefore man has a skin; it delimits the shape of the human body, and through it he can distinguish the two worlds from each other--the Great World and the Little World, the macrocosm and man--and can keep separate that which must not mingle. Thus the Great World remains completely undisturbed in its husk. . . and similarly man in his house, that is to say, his skin. Nothing can penetrate into him, and nothing that is in him can issue outside of him, but everything remains in its place.

## THE TWO HEAVENS IN MAN

There are two heavens in men; the one is Luna Cebrum, but in the heart of man is the true Microcosmic heaven. Yea, the heart of man is the true heaven of an immortal being, out of which the soul has never yet come, which new Olympus and heaven the Christ Spirit has chosen for His dwelling place in man.

## THE ARCANA

Only what is incorporeal and immortal, what is endowed with eternal life, what stands above all natural things and remains unfathomable to man, can rightly be called an arcanum. . . . Like the divine curative powers, it has power to change us, to renew us, and to restore us. . . . And although the arcana are not external and although they do not constitute a symphony to the divine essence, they must be considered heavenly as compared with us mortals, for they can preserve our bodies and by their influences achieve marvels in us that reason cannot fathom. . . . The arcanum is the entire virtue of a thing, multiplied a thousandfold. . . . Up until the present epoch, which is still young, only four arcana have come to our knowledge. . . . The first arcanum is the prima materia, the second the lapis philosophorum, the third the mercurius vitae, and the last the tinctura. . . . The prima materia can consume a man's old age and confer a new youth upon him--thus a young herb from a new seed grows in a new summer and a new year. . . . The second arcanum, the lapis philosophorum, purifies the whole body and cleanses it of all its filth by developing fresh young energies. . . . Mercurius vitae, the third arcanum, has a purifying action; like a halcyon, which puts on new feathers after molting, it can remove the impurities from man--down to the nails and the skin--and make him grow anew. Thus it renovates the old body. . . . Tinctura, the last arcanum, is like the rebis--the bisexual creature--which transmutes silver and the other metals into gold; it "tinges," i.e., it transforms the body, removing its harmful parts, its crudity, its incompleteness, and transforms everything into a pure, noble, and indestructible being.

Here on earth the celestial fire is a cold, rigid, and frozen fire. And this fire is the body of gold. Therefore all we can do with it by means of our own fire is to dissolve it and make it fluid, just as the sun thaws snow and ice and makes them liquid. In other words, fire has not the power to burn fire, for gold itself is nothing but fire. In heaven it is dissolved, but on earth it is solidified. . . . God and nature do nothing in vain, or without a purpose. The place of all things indestructible is not subject to time, it has no beginning or end, it is everywhere. Those things are efficacious when all hope has been given up, and they may accomplish miraculously what is considered impossible, what looks hopeless, absurd, or even desperate.

But to write more about this mystery is forbidden and further revelation is the prerogative of the divine power. For this art is truly a gift of God. Wherefore not everyone can understand it. For this reason God bestows it upon whom He pleases, and it cannot be wrested from Him by force; for it is His will that He alone shall be honored in it and that through it His name be praised for ever and ever.

## MAN: THE DIVINE BOOK

The book in which the letters of the mysteries are written visibly, discernibly, tangibly, and legibly, so that everything one desires to know can best be found in this self-same book, inscribed by the finger of God; the book compared with which, if it is properly read, all other books are nothing but dead letters--know that this book is the book of man, and should not be sought anywhere but in man alone. Man is the book in which all the mysteries are recorded; but this book is interpreted by God.

If you would gain understanding of the whole treasury that the letters enclose, possess, and

encompass, you must gain it from far off, namely, from Him who taught man how to compose the letters. . . . For it is not on paper that you will find the power to understand, but in Him who put the words on paper.

Man is born of the earth, therefore he also has in him the nature of the earth. But later, in his new birth, he is of God and in this form receives divine nature. Just as man in nature is illumined by the sidereal light that he may know nature, so he is illumined by the Holy Ghost that he may know God in His essence. For no one can know God unless he is of divine nature, and no one can know nature unless he is of nature. Everyone is bound to that in which he originates and to which he must at some time return.

The light of nature is a steward of the Holy Light. What harm comes to the natural tongue because the fiery tongue has spoken? Or how does the fiery tongue offend against the natural one? It is the same as with a man and a woman, who both give birth to a child; without both this could not be. Similarly, both lights were given man, to dwell within him.

How marvelously man is made and formed if one penetrates into his true nature . . . and it is a great thing--consider for once, that there is nothing in heaven or in earth that is not also in man. . . . In him is God who is also in Heaven; and all the forces of Heaven operate likewise in man. Where else can Heaven be rediscovered if not in man? Since it acts from us, it must also be in us. Therefore it knows our prayer even before we have uttered it, for it is closer to our hearts than to our words. . . . God made his Heaven in man beautiful and great, noble and good; for God is in His Heaven, i.e., in man. For He Himself says that He is in us, and that we are His temple.

Thoughts are free and subject to no rule. On them rests the freedom of man, and they tower above the light of nature. For thoughts give birth to a creative force that is neither elemental or sidereal. . . . Thoughts create a new heaven, a new firmament, and a new source of energy, from which new arts flow. . . . When a man undertakes to create something, he establishes a new heaven, as it were, and from it the work that he desires to create flows into him. . . . For such is the immensity of man that he is greater than heaven and earth.

## THE BOOK OF NATURE

He who would read and understand the Book of Nature must walk its pages with his feet.

## THE INNER STARS OF MAN

The inner stars of man are, in their properties, kind, and in nature, by their course and position, like his outer stars, and different only in form and in material. For as regards their nature, it is the same in the ether and in the microcosm, man. . . . Just as the sun shines through a glass--as though divested of body and substance--so the stars penetrate one another in the body. . . . For the sun and the moon and all planets, as well as all the stars and the whole chaos, are in man. . . . The body attracts heaven . . . and this takes place in accordance with the great divine order. Man consists of the four elements, not only--as some hold--because he has four tempers, but also because he partakes of the nature, essence, and properties of these elements. In him there lies the "young heaven," that is to say, all the planets are part of man's structure and they are the children of the "great heaven" which is their father. For man was created from heaven and earth, and is therefore like them!

Consider how great and noble man was created, and what greatness must be attributed to his structure! No brain can fully encompass the structure of man's body and the extent of his virtues; he can be understood only as an image of the macrocosm, of the Great Creature. Only then does it become manifest what is in him. For what is outside is also inside; and what is not

outside man is not inside. The outer and the inner are one thing, one constellation, one influence, one concordance, one duration . . . one fruit. For this is the limbus, the primordial matter which contains all creatures in germ, just as man is contained in the limbus of his parents. The limbus of Adam was heaven and earth, water and air; and thus man remains like the limbus, he too contains heaven and earth, water and air; indeed, he is nothing but these.

### THE PRESERVATION OF A THING

In order that a thing may be preserved and defended from injury, it is necessary that first of all its enemy should be known, so that it may be shielded therefrom, and that it may not be hurt and corrupted by it, in its substance, virtue, force, or in any other way suffer loss. A good deal depends upon this, then, that the enemy of all natural things be recognized; for who can guard himself against loss and adverse chance if he is ignorant of his enemy? Surely, no one. It is therefore necessary that such enemy should be known. There are many enemies; and it is just as necessary to know the bad as the good. Who, in fact, can know the good without a knowledge of the evil? No one. No one who has never been sick knows how great a treasure health is. Who knows what joy is, that was never sad or sorrowful? And who knows rightly about what God is, who knows nothing about the devil? Wherefore since God has made known to us the enemy of our soul, that is, the devil, He also points out to us the enemy of our life, that is, death, which is the enemy of our body, of our health, the enemy of medicine, and of all natural things. He has made known this enemy to us and also how and by what means we must escape him. For as there is no disease against which there has not been created and discovered a medicine which cures and drives it away, so there is always one thing placed over against another--one water over against another, one stone over against another, one mineral over against another, one poison over against another, one metal over against another--and the same in many other matters, all of which it is not necessary to recount here.

The difference between the two medical arts--the heavenly and the worldly--consists in this: the adepts and non-adepts of worldly medicine are subject to the order and forces of nature, while those of heavenly medicine can dispense with herbs and the stars. . . . All active virtues come from the word of God, and His words have such power that all nature with its forces cannot accomplish as much as a single one of His words. This divine power is the heavenly medicine; it accomplishes what no natural force can accomplish. . . . There is no field on earth in which heavenly medicine grows or lies hidden, other than the resurrected flesh or the "new body" of man; only in the "new body" have all its words force and efficacy here on earth. This heavenly medicine works according to the will of the man of the "new birth"; in him lie all the active virtues. For it does not operate in the mortal body, but only in the eternal body.

### DEATH AND THE ESSENCE OF ALCHEMY

The office of Vulcan is the separation of the good from the bad. So the Art of Vulcan, which is Alchemy, is like unto death, by which the eternal and the temporal are divided one from another. So this art may be called the death of things.