

# The Theatre of Terrestrial Astronomy

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**Edward Kelly**

## The Theatre of Terrestrial Astronomy

Many books have been written on the art of Alchemy, which, by the multiplicity of their allegories, riddles, and parables, bewilder and confound all earnest students; and the cause of this confusion is the vast number and variety of names, which all signify and do set forth one and the same thing. For this reason I have resolved in my own mind to loosen and untie all the difficult knots of the ancient Sages.

I will speak first of the inventors and restorers of the Art;

secondly, of the mutual conversion of elements, and how through the predominance of one element the substance of metals is generated;

thirdly, I will shew the affinity and homogeneity of metals, procreated in the bowels of the earth, their sympathies and antipathies, according to the purity and impurity of their Sulphur and Mercury; and that as metals consist of Sulphur and Mercury, they can furnish us with the first matter of the Elixir;

4thly, the preparation of Mercurial water;

5thly, the conversion of prepared Mercury into Mercurial earth;

6thly, the exaltation of Mercurial water;

7thly, the solution of gold by Mercurial water;

8thly, the preparation of the water or Moon of the Sages;

9thly, the conjunction of sun and moon;

10thly, the blackness, or Raven's Head, by means of which the solution and copulation of Sun and Moon do both take place;

11thly, the peacock's tail;

12thly, the white Tincture;

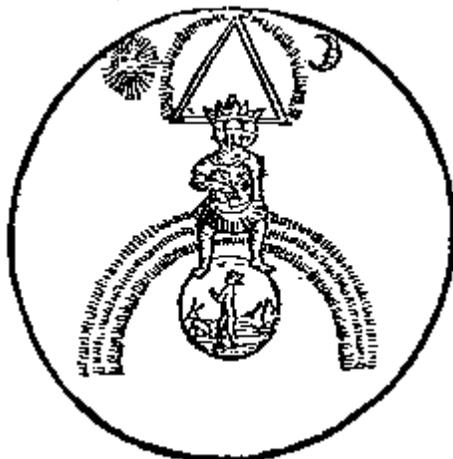
13thly, the perfect red Elixir.

This Art being given by Divine inspiration, and as a secret revealed from above, we implore God's help for every part of our work, the small as well as the great, for He alone hath the power to give or to withhold this knowledge from whomsoever He will. No one taketh this honour to himself, but God alone can enlighten the eyes and lift the cloud of natural mysteries, so that albeit you cannot understand the plainest things without Him, yet will you apprehend the most difficult arcana if He give you light. I will now speak of the illustrious men who, before and after the Flood, have discovered and established the chemical Art.

## Of the Inventors and Restorers of this Art

All Sages agree that the knowledge of this Art was first imparted to Adam by the Holy Spirit, and He prophesied, both before and after the Fall, that the world must be renewed, or, rather, purged with water. Therefore his successors erected two stone tables, on which they engraved a summary of all physical arts, in order that this arcanum might become known to posterity. After the Flood, Noah found one of these tables at the foot of Mount Ararat. Others say that the knowledge of the Art was restored by Hermes Trismegistus, whose mind was a treasury of all arts and sciences; and alchemists are still called sons of Hermes. Bernard of Trevisa states that the said Hermes came to the valley of Hebron, and there found seven stone tables, on which a summary of the seven liberal Arts had been inscribed before the Flood; for this same Hermes flourished both before and after the Flood, and is identified with Noah. Then this Art found its way into Persia, Egypt, and Chaldaea. The Hebrews called it the Cabbala, the Persians Magia, and the Egyptians Sophia, and it was taught in the schools together with Theology; it was known to Moses, Abraham, Solomon, and the Magi who came to Christ from the East. Magia derived its origin from the doctrine of the Divine Ternary and the Trinity of God. For God has stamped and sealed all created things with this

character of Trinity, as a kind of hieroglyphical writing, whereby His own nature might be known. For the number 3 and the magic number 4 make up the perfect number 7, the seat of many mysteries. And seeing that the Quaternary rests in the Ternary, it is a number which stands on the horizon of eternity, and doth exhibit everything bound with God in us, thus including God, men, and all created things, with all their mysterious powers. Adding three, you get ten, which marks the return to unity. In this arcanum is concluded all knowledge of hidden things which God, by His word, has made known to the men of His good pleasure, so that they might have a true conception of Him. And this is the figure which is called the sphere of Heaven. The said sphere consists of a circle, which circle represents the Trinity of the Deity in unity, God with three heads and one crown, surmounted by a triangle, encircled with a rainbow, and above the sun and moon.



The first colour of the rainbow, on which God sits, is black; with the sign of Saturn; the second, dark brown, with the sign of Jupiter; the third, red, with the sign of Mars; the fourth, green and yellow, with the Sign of the Sun; the fifth, green, with the sign of Venus; the sixth, yellow, green, white, and red, with the sign of Mercury; the seventh, a silver grey, with the sign of the Moon, and yellow beneath.

His feet are placed on the terrestrial globe, in which are animals and hills, with a white and brown man, whose eyes are bandaged, and an egg is between his feet.

### **Of the Mutual Conversion of Elements; How One Element Predominates Over Another; Whence the Substance of the Metals is Generated.**

Geber, Morienus, and other Sages have pronounced the conversion of one element into another a very necessary process in the composition of the Stone: convert the elements, and you have what you seek. There are four elements, air, water, fire, earth, with their four qualities, hot, cold, moist, dry. Two are active, air and fire, and two passive, water and earth. Two are light, and two heavy. Contradictory qualities are united only by means of a third. Hot and dry are not contradictory, and therefore form the element of air; cold and dry are not contradictory, and become earth; nor are cold and moist, which constitute water: but hot and cold are united only by means of a medium, viz., dry, as otherwise they would destroy each other. Hence hot and cold are united and separated by dissolving and coagulating the homogeneous quality. Moist and dry, on the other hand, are united and separated by constriction and humectation; simple generation and natural transmutation are by the operation of the elements. For those elements which conquer cold generate that which is hot. It is clear that all things are generated by heat and cold; and all elements must belong to the same genus, or else they could not act on each other. After creating the matter of the metals, namely, living Mercury, Nature added to it an active quality. For Mercury, the substance, could not of itself manifest its effects, and Nature wisely joined to it an active kind of mineral earth, unctuous and fat, thickened by long digestion in the mineral caverns of the earth, which is commonly called Sulphur. This Mercury is, however, not the common metal, but the principle and origin of metals. Mercury is the matter, Sulphur the form of metals, natural heat acting on the matter of Mercury, as upon a fit and well adapted subject.

The picture represents a black rock, on the summit of which stand black Saturn; Jupiter, the white kind; Mars, the red soldier; Sol, with a golden head and ruddy neck; Venus, in a green robe; Mercury, with helmet, and red, green,

purple, white, yellow, ochre, black gown, and yellow, red, blue wings; the Moon white and black.



On the black plain stands Mercury of many colours, the Moon with the sign [of the crescent] on her head, and Sulphur on both sides of Mercury is signified by the term Hermaphrodite; the four elements from the four corners blow upon the place where Mercury and the Moon are.

**Of the Homogeneous Affinity of Metals generated in the bowels of the Earth;  
Harmony and Antipathy of Metallic Qualities.**

**Metals consist of Mercury and Sulphur, and furnish us with the first substance of the  
Elixir.**

The various conversions of the elements which produce the first matter of metals have been now described. We must next treat of the nature of the said metals. It is clearer than daylight that there are seven planets, seven days, seven metals, and seven operations. The metals are called after the planets, because of their influence and their mutual relations. The mineral principles are living Mercury and Sulphur. From these are generated all metals and minerals, of which there are many species, possessing diverse natures, according to the purity and impurity of the Mercury and Sulphur, resulting in the purity or impurity of the generated metal. Gold is a perfect body, of pure, clear, red Mercury, and pure, fixed, red, incombustible Sulphur. Silver is a pure body, nearly approaching perfection, of pure, clear, fixed white Mercury, and Sulphur of the same kind; it is a little wanting in fixation, colour, and weight. Tin is a pure, imperfect body, of pure, fixed and unfixed, clear, white Mercury outside, and red Mercury inside, with Sulphur of the same kind. Lead is an impure, imperfect body, of impure, unfixed, earthy, white, fetid Mercury and Sulphur outside, and red Mercury inside, with Sulphur of the same quality. Copper is an impure and imperfect body, of impure, unfixed, dirty, combustible, red Sulphur and Mercury. It is deficient in fixation, purity, and weight, while it abounds in impure colour and combustible terrestreity. Iron is of impure, imperfect, excessively fixed, earthy, burning, white and red Sulphur and Mercury, is wanting in fusion, purity, and weight, abounding in fixed, impure Sulphur and combustible terrestreity. Nature transmutes the elements into Mercury, just as Sulphur transmutes the first matter. The nature of all metals must be the same, because their first substance is the same, and Nature cannot develop anything out of a substance that is not in it.



The picture represents a black rock, on which stand, hand in hand, the planets:

- 1, Black Saturn, falling down;
- 2, Jupiter;
- 3, Mars;
- 4, Mercury of many colours;
- 5, Venus, with green robe, and the Sun and Moon.

Lower down, on the black rock, stands an old man with a pick-axe, cutting a piece out of the rock, whence Saturn falls, and near him lie, as if dead, Jupiter and Saturn.

### **Of the Preparation of Mercurial Earth**

Know that out of all metals a perfect Medicine can be made, which can transmute the remaining metals into gold and silver; for out of the perfect metals you get, by proper separation of elements, the Salt of Nature, otherwise Ore of the Philosophers, by some called Philosophical Lili, without which the work of the Sages cannot be accomplished. For Art presupposes a substance created by Nature alone, in which Art assists Nature and Nature assists art.



A vessel like an urinal stands, encircled at its base by a ring of twisted straw; within it are Mercury, Mars, and Saturn, lying on their backs, and an old man is on the point of throwing in Venus and Jupiter. Behind the old man, on the black rock, stand the Sun and Moon.

### **Of the Conversion of Prepared Mercury into Mercurial earth**

Metals, as above stated, contain a salt, out of which fire and the sagacity of the artist can educe a water, which the Sages call Mercurial water, the Virgin's milk, Lunaria, May dew, the Green Lion, the Dragon, the Fire of the Sages. This Mercurial water they have compared to corrosive aqua fortis, because just as those waters which are composed out of atrament, alum, copperas, Armenian salt, etc., corrode metals, and break them up, so this Mercurial spirit, or water, dissolved its body, and separates from it the Tincture.



The picture represents a hill, on which stand many trees; at the foot of the hill is a yellow lion suckling a green lion. There is a furnace in which is a pumpkin-shaped vessel (cucurbit), from which blue serpents ascend into the alembic, and are collected into a receptacle by an old man who seems on the point of carrying it away.

### Of the Exaltation of Mercurial Water

The ancient Sages have spoken of the composition of the Green Lion or Dragon, emanating from the seven planets, in a style saturated with the darkness of night itself; but instead of vainly endeavouring to untie their Gordian knots, I will try to sketch its composition with a few strokes of my pen. It is generated by the subtle influences descending into the elements; then its substance is scattered abroad in the heavens, its workshop is in the clouds, and again it descends into its earth, with rain water and a white vapour, thus receiving the strength of things above and things below; it is nourished by its own body, eating its wings and tail with its teeth, the whole body being swallowed by the head, and remaining in it for ever. This is the hidden and incomparable treasure of all the Sages, which none can obtain except through the teaching of a Master, or by revelation of God, who, in His goodness makes it known to whom He will.



An old man stands near a vessel, like an urinal, in which a Green Dragon is devouring blue serpents. Above the Dragon is the yellow, green, blue, black, red sign of Mercury. Above the urinal is a Green Dragon biting its tail.

Wear the urinal a Green Lion bites a piece out of the back of a Red Lion, so that the blood flows down. In the background are forests and hills.

### **Of the Solution of the Sun with Mercurial Water**

It should be noted at this point that the Tincture is not found otherwise than in gold. This may be understood from the parable of Bernard, who says that the Sun, on entering the bath, first of all puts off his golden robe. For what the eagle is among birds, the lion among beasts, the salmon among fishes, the Sun among planets, such gold is among metals. In it are the red and white tincture, because it tinges, transforms, and illumines all bodies. For gold is made out of the substance of the most subtle living Mercury, and out of pure, red, fixed, self-cleansed Sulphur, which tinges, and contains in itself, the soul, which is called the form of gold, and by some Sages the Ferment of Philosophers. This soul of gold with its heat digests and tinges its substance, and imparts to it its form, so that through its mediation the day begins to dawn. To corrupt the gold, to dissolve and volatize it while still preserving its form is our great object, as it is also our grand labour.



The Sun, encircled by a red rainbow, shines among the clouds, and a Green Lion is biting the Sun in the face, so that the blood flows. An old man is holding in his hand an urinal, in which is red water; and in this water a winged man stands up to his navel. Out of the urinal is flying a Green Dragon, which bites the face of the Sun as he stands with the Moon on a rock, so that the blood flows under the dragon into the urinal. Under the black rock is a Green Dragon, whose tail is cut off, and the same is gnawing his wings.

### **Of the Preparation of the Earth, or Moon of the Sages**

When the soul of gold has been separated from its body, or when the body, in other words, has been dissolved, the body of the Moon should be watered with its proper menstruum, and reverberated, the operation being repeated as often as necessary, i.e., until the body becomes subtle, broken up, pure, dissolved, coagulated. This is done, not with common fire, but with that of the Sages, and at last you must see clearly that nothing remains undissolved. For unless the Moon or Earth is properly prepared and entirely emptied of its soul, it will not be fit to receive the Solar Seed; but the more thoroughly the earth is cleansed of its impurity and earthiness, the more vigorous it will be in the fixation of its ferment. This earth or Moon of the Sages is the trunk upon which the solar branch of the Sages is engrafted. This earth, with its water, putrefies and is cleansed; for heat, acting on a dry substance, causes whiteness. Azot and fire wash Laton, or earth, and remove its opacity.



A fire is laid under the Sun, which is burning, and much smoke is ascending. An old man has in his hands an urinal, in which is the Moon lying on her back in blackish water. Out of the vessel is flying a green Dragon, holding the Moon in its mouth by the navel, and placing its fore feet on a black rock. Beneath the rock a green Dragon lies dead on his back.

### **The Conjunction of Sun and Moon**

The ancient philosophers have enumerated several kinds of conjunction, but to avoid a vain prolixity I will affirm, upon the testimony of Marsilius Ficinus, that conjunction is union of separate qualities, or an equation of principles, viz., Mercury and Sulphur, Sun and Moon, agent and patient, matter and form. When the virgin or feminine, earth is thoroughly purified and purged from all superfluity, you must give it a husband meet for it; for when the male and the female are joined together by means of the sperm, a generation must take place in the menstruum. The substance of Mercury is known to the Sages as the earth and matter in which the Sulphur of Nature is sown, that it may thereby putrefy, the earth being its womb. Here the female seed awaits that of the male, by means of which they are inseparably united, the one being hot and dry, and the other cold and moist; the heat and dryness of the male are tempered with the cold and moisture of the female, and, in due time, the matter will assume a specific form. For all action tends to the production of a form, being, as it is, an efficient principle.

### **Opposition**

A very red Sun is pouring blood into an urinal. An old man is pouring blood out of another urinal, together with a winged child, into a third urinal, which stands on straw and contains the Moon lying on her back in blackish water. Near the Sun a jug is pouring white rays, or drops, into an urinal. On the hill stands a Phoenix, biting its breast, out of which drops blood, the same being drunk by its young. Beneath the rock a husbandman is scattering seed in his field.



### **Of the Blackness or Raven's Head by means of which the copulation of Sun and Moon takes place**

The second conjunction is of three, viz., body, soul, and spirit; and these three we must make one. For as the soul is the bond of the spirit, so the body must also join to itself the soul, which can only be after putrefaction; for nothing can be improved if its form has not previously been utterly destroyed. The signs of this are a black colour and a fetid smell. For heat, acting on moisture, produces blackness, which is the sign of the perfect mingling of the substance with a specific form. For solution and putrefaction begin with a fetid smell, and the process gradually develops, and therefore the Raven's Head is called a deadly poison. The odour is rather intellectually than sensuously perceptible. The blackness must precede whiteness. For putrefaction begins with solution, but does not end with it. The second solution of the more perfect stone is better than the first, because the more it develops, the more the stone is subtilized. Our whole magistry, then, is based on putrefaction; for it can come to nothing, unless it is putrefied.

### **Conjunction**



Black Sun Black Moon

An old man with a book in his hand stands by the furnace.  
 A black Sun in the vessel.  
 Behind the furnace is a field of green barley springing up out of the earth.  
 The Pavement, on which the furnace stands, is black.

## Of the Peacock's Tail

Our substance, according to the Sages, has a red head, white feet, and black eyes. The beginning of our work is the Black Raven, which, like all things that are to grow and receive life, must first putrefy. For putrefaction is a necessary condition of solution, as solution is of birth and regeneration. This putrefaction is not impure, but a commixtion, in their smallest parts, of earth with water, and water with earth, till the whole body becomes one. The red male must be digested in union with his white wife, till both become dry - for otherwise no colours will appear.

When the dry principle acts on the moist, flowers of all the colours of a Peacock's Tail begin to spring up in the Sage's vessel. Sometimes the vessel will seem inwardly covered with gold, which is a sign of the action of the male seed, of Sulphur, on the female menstruum, or Mercury, one mingling with the other as the result of their conflict.

As the moisture is gradually dried up, these shifting colours give place to a settled whiteness.



An old man stands near the furnace, both towers are open, the urinal constantly changes its colour; behind the furnace is barley producing ears.

## Of the White Tincture

Having treated of the matter, the mode of procedure, and of the regimen of the fire, I proceed now to the description of the composition of the white and the red Stone. The blackness becomes whiteness very slowly; the operation must be gradual, as a fierce fire would burst the vessel, and mar our work. As the Mercury becomes white, our white Sulphur becomes incombustible, containing the poison, whose whiteness is like the whiteness of alabaster. The whole magistery takes place in one vessel, and with one fire, viz., the dry and moist elementary fire of the matter, till it is all dissolved again and again, and conagulated and thickened into a mass of a clear snow-white colour, which, when cool, becomes like a hard gum. The decoction, however, must be continued till the Eagle is revived (or vitrified), and becomes a crystalline stone which melts, tinges, and coagulates Mercury and other imperfect metals into pure silver. This white tincture, or elixir, is also called the Virgin's milk, the everlasting water, and water of life, because it is as brilliant as white marble; it is also called the White Queen, who by increasing the fire becomes the Mighty King, the white transforming into yellow and saffron, and at last into a deep ruby colour.



A white King sits on the throne, having at his feet the Moon, and the five Planets on their knees. Near at hand is a field, with yellow, ripening ears of barley. Behind the furnace is an old man inspecting the coals, and in the urinal is the full Moon.

### Of the Perfect Red Elixir

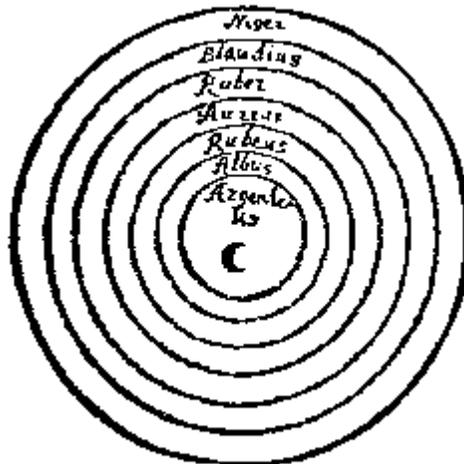
Xiphilinus and the rest of the philosophers agree in this, that the white colour must precede the red. As you can have no red colour where the substance has not first been white, so the black cannot become orange unless it first become white. In like manner, the Rosary says that nothing can become gold that has not first been silver. He who knows how to convert gold into silver, also knows how to convert silver into gold. Gold, to become silver, must first be corrupted and made black, and there is no method of becoming yellow except by way of white; in the same way the white must become red by way of yellow. Heat, acting on moisture, causes blackness; acting on dryness, especially if it be continued carefully and unceasingly, there is developed true whiteness; out of white comes yellow, and out of yellow a permanent and tinging ruby colour.



An old man in a tunic stands by a furnace, one tower of which is open, and in the urinal of the other is a purple Sun.

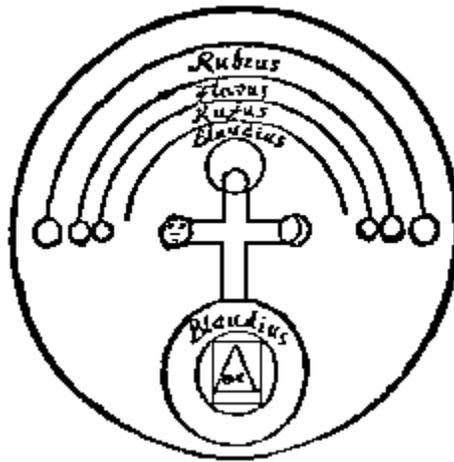


A King, like a Pontiff, in a purple robe, sits on the throne, and at his feet kneel the Sun and Moon, with the five planets; behind the King stands an old man with uncovered head.



The Circles are:

1. Black,
2. Blue,
3. Red,
4. Golden,
5. Ruddy,
6. White,
7. Argentine, with the sign of the Moon.



The Circle is black, white, blue, red, yellow, tawny, blue; in the Cross are the Sun and Moon. The lower Circle is blue, and contains a quadrangle of red, blue, black, and white. The triangle is black, blue and red, and in its centre are the Sun and Moon.