

Roger Bacon - Tract on the Tincture and Oil of Antimony

On the true and right Preparation of Stibium / to heal human weaknesses and illnesses therewith, and to improve the imperfect metals.

Translated by Kjell Hellesoe 1985.

From Friedrich Roth-Scholtz, *Deutsches theatrum chemicum*, Nürnberg: Adam Jonathan Felsecker, 1731.

Preface

Dear reader, at the end of his Tract on Vitriol, Roger Bacon mentions that because of the multiplication of the Tincture that is made from Vitriol, the lover of Art should acquaint himself with the Tract De Oleo Stibii. Therefore

I considered that it would be good and useful that the Tract De Oleo Stibii follows next. And if one thoroughly ponders and compares these tinctures with one another, then I have no doubt that one will not finish without exceptional profit. Yet, every lover of Art, should mind always to keep one eye on Nature and the other on Art and manual labour. For, when these two do not stand together, then it is a lame work, as when someone thinks he can walk a long path on one leg only, which is easily seen to be impossible,

Vale.

Joachim Tanckivs

De Oleo Antimonii Tractatus.

ROGERII BACONIS ANGLI

Summi Philosophi & Chemicum.

Stibium, as the Philosophers say, is composed from the noble mineral Sulphur, and they have praised it as the black lead of the Wise. The Arabs in their language, have called it Asinat vel Azinat, the alchemists retain the name Antimonium. It will however lead to the consideration of high Secrets, if we seek and recognize the nature in which the Sun is exalted, as the Magi found that this mineral was attributed by God to the Constellation Aries, which is the first heavenly sign in which the Sun takes its exaltation or elevation to itself. Although such things are thrown to the winds by common people, intelligent people ought to know and pay more attention to the fact that exactly at this point the infinitude of secrets may be partly contemplated with great profit and in part also explored. Many, but these are ignorant and unintelligent, are of the opinion that if they only had Stibium, they would get to it by Calcination, others by Sublimation, several by Reverberation and Extraction, and obtain its great Secret, Oil, and Perfectum Medicinam. But I tell you, that here in this place nothing will help, whether Calcination, Sublimation, Reverberation nor Extraction, so that subsequently a perfect Extraction of metallic virtue that translates the inferior into the superior, may profitably come to pass or be accomplished. For such shall be impossible for you. Do not let yourselves be confused by several of the philosophers who have written of such things, i.e., Geber, Albertus Magnus, Rhasis, Rupecilla, Aristoteles and many more of that kind. And this you should note. Yes, many say, that when one prepares Stibium to a glass, then the evil volatile Sulphur will be gone, and the Oil, which may be prepared from the glass, would be a very fixed oil, and would then truly give an ingress and Medicine of imperfect metals to perfection. These words and opinions are perhaps good and right, but that it should be thus in fact and prove itself, this will not be. For I say to you truly, without any hidden speech; if you were to lose some of the above mentioned Sulphur by the preparation and the burning, as a small fire may easily damage it, so that you have lost the right penetrating spirit, which should make our whole Antimonii corpus into a perfect red oil, so that it also can ascend over the helm with a sweet smell and very beautiful colors and the whole body of this mineral with all its members, without loss of any weight, except for the foecum, shall be an oil and go over the helm. And note also this: How would it be possible for the body to go into an oil, or give off its sweet oil, if it is put into the last essence and degree? For glass is in all things the outermost and least essence. For you shall know that all creatures at the end of the world, or on the last and coming judgement of the last day, shall become glass or a lovely amethyst and this according to the families of the twelve Patriarchs, as in the families of jewels which Hermes the Great describes in his book: As we have elaborately reported and taught in our book de Cabala.

You shall also know that you shall receive the perfect noble red oil, which serves for the translation of metals in vain, if you pour acetum correctum over the Antimonium and extract the redness. Yes not even by Reverberation, and even if its manifold Beautiful colors show themselves, this will not make any difference and is not the right way. You may indeed obtain and make an oil out of it, but it has no perfect force and virtue for transmutation or translation of the imperfect metals into perfection itself. This you must certainly know.

AND NOW WE PROCEED TO THE MANUAL LABOUR, AND THUS THE PRACTICA FOLLOWS.

Take in the Name of God and the Holy Trinity, fine and well cleansed Antimonii ore, which looks nice, white, pure and internally full of yellow rivulets or veins. It may also be full of red and blue colors and veins, which will be the best. Pound and grind to a fine powder and dissolve in a water or Aqua Regis, which will be described below, finely so that the water may conquer it. And note that you should take it out quite soon after the solution so that the water may conquer it. And note that you should take it out quite soon after the solution so that the water will have no time to damage it, since it quickly dissolves the Antimonii Tincture. For in its nature our water is like the ostrich, which by its heat digests and consumes all iron; for given time, the water would consume it and burn it to naught, so that it would only remain as an idle yellow earth, and then it would be quite spoilt.

Consider by comparison Luna, beautiful clean and pure, dissolved in this our water. And let it remain therein for no more than a single night when the water is still strong and full of Spirit,

And I tell you, that your good Luna has then been fundamentally consumed and destroyed and brought to nought in this our water.

And if you want to reduce it to a pure corpus again, then you will not succeed, but it will remain for you as a pale yellow earth, and occasionally it may run together in the shape of a horn or white horseshoe, which may not be brought to a corpus by any art.

Therefore you must remember to take the Antimonium out as soon as possible after the Solution, and precipitate it and wash it after the custom of the alchemists, so that the matter with its perfect oil is not corroded and consumed by the water.

THE WATER; WHEREIN WE DISSOLVE THE ANTIMONIUM, IS MADE THUS:

Take Vitriol one and a half (alii 2. lb.) Sal armoniac one pound, Arinat (alii Alun) one half pound / Sal niter one and a half pound, Sal gemmae (alii Sal commune) one pound, Alumen crudum (alii Entali) one half pound. These are the species that belong to and should be taken for the Water to dissolve the Antimonium.

Take these Species and mix them well among each other, and distill from this a water, at first rather slowly. For the Spiritus go with great force,, more than in other strong waters. And beware of its spirits, for they are subtle and harmful in their penetration.

When you now have the dissolved Antimony, clean and well sweetened, and its sharp waters washed out, so that you do not notice any sharpness any more, then put into a clean vial and overpour it with a good distilled vinegar. Then put the vial in Fimum Equinum, or Balneum Mariae, to putrefy forty (al.i four) days and nights, and it will dissolve and be extracted red as blood. Then take it out and examine how much remains to be dissolved, and decant the clear and pure, which will have a red colour, very cautiously into a glass flask. Then pour fresh vinegar onto it, and put it into Digestion as before, so that that which may have remained with the faecibus, it should thus have ample time to become dissolved. Then the faeces may be discarded, for they are no longer useful, except for being scattered over the earth and thrown away. Afterwards pour all the solutions together into a glass retort, put into Balneum Mariae, and distill the sharp vinegar rather a fresh one, since the former would be too weak, and the matter will very quickly become dissolved by the vinegar. Distill it off again, so that the matter remains quite dry. Then take common distilled water and wash away all sharpness, which has remained with the matter from the vinegar, and then dry the matter in the sun, or otherwise by a gentle fire, so that it becomes well dried. It will then be fair to behold, and have a bright red color. The Philosophers, when they have thus prepared our Antimonium in secret, have remarked how its outermost nature and power has collapsed into its interior, and its interior thrown out and has now become an oil that lies hidden in its innermost and depth, well prepared and ready. And henceforth it cannot, unto the last judgement, be brought back to its first essence. And this is true, for it has become so subtle and volatile, that as soon as it senses the power of fire, it flies away as a smoke with all its parts because of its volatility.

Several poor and common Laborers, when they have prepared the Antimonium thus, have taken one part out, to take care of their expenses, so that they may more easily do the rest of the work and complete it, They then mixed it with one part Salmiac, one part Vitro (alii. Nitro, alii. Titro), one part Rebohat, to cleanse the Corpera, and then proceeded to project this mixture onto a pure Lunam. And if the Luna was one Mark, they found two and a half Loth good gold after separation; sometimes even more. And therewith they had accomplished a work providing for their expenses, so that they might even better expect to attain to the Great Work. And the foolish called this a bringing into the Lunam, but they are mistaken. For such gold is not brought in by the Spiritibus (alii. Speciebus), but any Luna contains two Mark gold to the Loth, some even more. But this gold is united to the Lunar nature to such a degree that it may not be separated from it, neither by Aquafort, nor by common Antimonium, as the goldsmiths know. When however the just mentioned mixture is thrown onto the Lunam in flux, then such a separation takes place that the Luna quite readily gives away her implanted gold either in Aquafort or in Regal, and lets herself separate from it, strikes it to the ground and precipitates it, which would or might otherwise not happen. Therefore it is not a bringing into the Lunam, but a bringing out of the Luna.

But we are coming back to our Proposito and purpose of our work, for we wish to have the Oil, which has only been known and been acquainted with this magistry, and not by the foolish.

When you then have the Antimonium well rubified according to the above given teaching, then you shall take a well rectified Spiritum vini, and pour it over the red powder of Antimony, put it in a gentle Balneum Mariae to dissolve for four days and nights, so that everything becomes well dissolved. If however something should remain behind, you overpour the same with fresh Spiritu vini, and put it into the Balneum Mariae again, as said before, and everything should become well dissolved. And in case there are some more faeces there, but there should be very little, do them away, for they are not useful for anything. The Solutiones put into a glass retort, lute on a helm and connect it to a receiver, also well luted, to receive the Spiritus. Put it into Balneum Mariae. Thereafter you begin, in the Name of God, to distill very leisurely at a gentle heat, until all the Spiritus Vini has come over. You then pour the same Spiritum that you have drawn off, back onto the dry matter, and distill it over again as before. And this pouring on and distilling off again, you continue so often until you see the Spiritum vini ascend and go over the helm in all kinds of colours. Then it is time to follow up with a strong fire, and a noble blood red Oleum will ascend, go through the tube of the helm and drip into the recipient. Truly, this is the most secret way of the Wise to distill the very highly praised oil of Antimonii, and it is a noble, powerful, fragrant oil of great virtue, as you will hear below in the following. But here I wish to teach and instruct you who are poor and without means to expect the Great Work in another manner; not the way the ancients did it by separating the gold from the Luna. Therefore take this oil, one lot, [ancient weight unit used for the weighing of gold and silver coins - about 1/30 pound] eight lot of Saturn calcined according to art, and carefully imbibe the oil, drop by drop, while continuously stirring the calx Saturni. Then put it ten days and nights in the heat, in the furnace of secrets, and let the fire that this furnace contains, increase every other day by one degree. The first two days you give it the first degree of fire, the second two days you give it the second degree, and after four days and nights you put it into the third degree of fire and let it remain there for three days and nights. After these three days you open the window of the fourth degree, for which likewise three days and nights should be sufficient. Then take it out, and the top of the Saturnus becomes very beautiful and of a reddish yellow colour. This should be melted with Venetian Boreas. When this has been done, you will find that the power of our oil has changed it to good gold. Thus you will again have subsistence, so that you may better expect the Great Work. We now come back to our purpose where we left it earlier. Above you have heard, and have been told to distill the Spiritum vini with the Oleum Antimonii over the helm into the recipient as well as the work of changing the Saturnum into gold. But now we wish to make haste and report about the second tinctural work. Here it will be necessary to separate the Spiritum vini from the oil again, and you shall know that it is done thus:

Take the mixture of oil and wine spirit put it into a retort, put on a helm, connect a receiver and place it all together into the Balneum Mariae. Then distill all the Spiritum vini from the oil, at a very gentle heat, until you are certain that no more Spiritus vini is to be found within this very precious oil. And this will be easy to check; for when you see several drops of Spiritu vini ascend over the helm and fall into the recipient, this is the sign that the Spiritus vini has become separated from the oil. Then remove the fire from the Balneo, though it was very small, so that it may cool all the sooner. Now remove the recipient containing the Spiritu vini, and keep it in a safe place, for it is full of Spiritus which it has extracted from the oil and retained. It also contains admirable virtues, as you will hear hereafter.

But in the Balneo you will find the blessed bloodred Oleum Antimonii in the retort, which should be taken out very carefully. The helm must be very slowly removed, taking care to soften and wash off the Lute, so that no dirt falls down into the beautiful red oil and makes it turbid. This oil you must store with all possible precaution so that it receives no damage. For you now have a Heavenly Oil that shines on a dark night and emits light as from a glowing coal. And the reason for this is that its innermost power and soul has become thrown out unto the outermost, and the hidden soul is now revealed and shines through the pure body as a light through a lantern: Just as on Judgement Day our present invisible and internal souls will manifest through our clarified bodies, that in this life are impure and dark, but the soul will then be revealed and seen unto the outermost of the body, and will shine as the bright sun. Thus you now have two separate things: Both the Spirit of Wine full of force and wonder in the arts of the human body: And then the blessed red, noble, heavenly Oleum Antimonii, to translate all diseases of the imperfect metals to the Perfection of gold. And the power of the Spiritual Wine reaches very far and to great heights. For when it is rightly used according to the Art of Medicine: I tell you, you have a heavenly medicine to prevent and to cure all kinds of diseases and ailments of the human body. And its uses are thus, as follows:

AGAINST PODAGRA or GOUT

In the case of gout one should let three drops of this Spiritu vini, that has received the power of the Antimony, fall into a small glass of wine. This has to be taken by the patient on an empty stomach at the very moment in time when he sense the beginning or arrival of his trouble, bodily ailment and pain. On the next day and afterwards on the third

day it should also be taken and used in the same way. On the first day it takes away all pain, however great it may be, and prevents swelling. On the second day it causes a sweat that is very inconstant, viscous and thick, that smells and tastes quite sour and offensive, and occurs mostly where the joints and limbs are attached. On the third day, regardless of whether any medicine has been taken, a purging takes place of the veins into the bowels, without any inconvenience, pain or grief. And this demonstrates a great power of Nature.

AGAINST LEPROSY

To begin with the patient is given six drops on an empty stomach. And arrange it so that the unclean person is alone without the company of any healthy people, in a separate and convenient place. For his whole body will soon begin to smoke and steam with a stinking mist or vapor. And on the second day his skin will start to flake and much uncleanness will detach itself from his body. He should then have three more drops of the medicine ready, which he should take and use in solitude on the fourth day. Then on the eighth or ninth day, by means of this medicine and through the bestowal of Divine mercy and blessing, he will be completely cleansed and his health restored.

AGAINST APOPLEXIA OR STROKE

In the case of stroke, let a drop of the unadmixed tincture fall onto the tongue of the person in need. At once it will raise itself and distribute itself like a mist or smoke, and rectify and dissolve the struck part. But if the stroke has hit the body or other members, he should be given three drops at the same time in a glass of good wine, as previously taught in the case of Podagra.

AGAINST HYDROPE OR DROPSY

In the case of dropsy give one drop each day for six days in a row, in Aqua Melissa^e or Valeriana^e. On the seventh day give three drops in good wine. Then it is enough.

AGAINST EPILEPSIA, CATALEPSIA, & ANALEPSIA.

In case of the falling sickness, give him two drops at the beginning of the Paroxismi in Aqua Salvia^e, and after three hours again two drops. This will suffice. But if further symptoms should occur, then give him two more drops as above.

AGAINST HECTIC

In case of consumption and dehydration, give him two drops in Aqua Viola^{rum} the first day. On the second day, give him two more drops in good wine.

AGAINST FEVER

In cases of all kinds of hot fevers, give him three drops in a well distilled St. Johnswort water or Cichorii at the beginning of the Paroxismi. Early in the morning on the following day, again give him three drops in good wine on an empty stomach.

AGAINST PEST

In the case of pestilence give the patient seven drops in a good wine, and see to it that the infected person is all by himself, and caused to sweat. Then this poison will, with Divine assistance, do him no harm.

FOR THE PROLONGATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A HEALTHY LIFE.

Take and give at the beginning and entry of spring, when the sun has entered the sign of Aries, two drops; and at the beginning with God's help, be safe and protected against bad health and poisoned air, unless the incurred disease was predestined and fatally imposed upon man by the Almighty God.

But we now wish to proceed to the Oleum Antimonii and its Power, and show how this oil may also help the diseased and imperfect metallic bodies. Take in the Name of God, very pure refined gold, as much as you want and think will suffice. Dissolve it in a rectified Wine, prepared the way one usually makes Aquam Vitae. And after the gold has become dissolved, let it digest for a month. Then put it into a Balneum, and distill off the spiritum vini very slowly and gently. Repeat this several times, as long and as often until you see that your gold remains behind in fundo as a sap. And such is the manner and opinion of several of the ancients on how this oil may also help the diseased and imperfect metallic bodies.

Take, in the Name of God, very pure refined gold, as much as you want and think will suffice. Dissolve it in a rectified Wine, prepared the way one usually makes Aquam Vitae. And after the gold has become dissolved, let it digest for a month. Then put it into a Balneum, and distill off the spiritum vini very slowly and gently. Repeat this several times, as long and as often until you see that your gold remains behind in fundo as a sap. And such is the manner and opinion of several of the ancients on how to prepare the gold. But I will show and teach you a much shorter, better and more useful way. Viz. that you instead of such prepared gold take one part Mercurii Solis, the preparation of which I have already taught in another place by its proper process. Draw off its airy water so that it becomes a subtle dust and calx. Then take two parts of our blessed oil, and pour the oil very slowly, drop by drop onto the dust of the Mercurii Solis, until everything has become absorbed. Put it in a vial, well sealed, into a heat of the first degree of the oven of secrets, and let it remain there for ten days and nights. You will then see your powder and oil quite dry, such that it has become a single piece of dust of a blackish grey colour. After ten days give it the

second degree of heat, and the grey and black colour will slowly change into a whiteness so that it becomes more or less white. And at the end of these ten days, the matter will take on a beautiful rose white. But this may be ignored. For this colour is only due to the Mercurio Solis, that has swallowed up our blessed oil, and now covers it with the innermost part of its body. But by the power of the fire, our oil will again subdue such Mercurium Solis, and throw it into its innermost. And the oil with its very bright red colour will rule over it and remain on the outside. Therefore it is time, when twenty years (sic) have passed, that you open the window of the third degree [The alchemical ovens had small openings at different heights, by means of which the heat was regulated.] The external white colour and force will then completely recede inwardly, and the internal red colour will, by the force of the fire, become external. Keep also this degree of fire for ten days, without increase or decrease. You will then see your powder, that was previously white, now become very red. But for the time being this redness may be ignored (is of no consequence), for it is still unfixed and volatile; and at the end of these ten days, when the thirtieth day has passed, you should open the last window of the fourth degree of fire, Let it stay in this degree for another ten days, and this very bright red powder will begin to melt. Let it stay in flux for these ten days. And when you take it out you will find on the bottom a very bright red and transparent stone, ruby colored, melted into the shape of the vial. This stone may be used for Projection, as has been taught in the tract on Vitriol. Praise God in Eternity for this His high revelation, and thank Him in Eternity. Amen.

ON THE MULTIPLICATION LAPIDIS STIBII.

The ancient sages, after they had discovered this stone and prepared it to perfect power and translation of the imperfect metals to gold, long sought to discover a way to increase the power and efficiency of this stone. And they found two ways to multiply it: One is a multiplication of its power, such that the stone may be brought much further in its power of Transmutation. And this multiplication is very subtle, the description of which may be found in the Tract on Gold. The second multiplication is an Augmentum quantitatis of the stone with its former power, in such a way that it neither loses any of its power, nor gains any, but in such a manner that its weight increases and keeps on increasing ever more, so that a single ounce grows and increases to many ounces. To achieve this increase or Multiplication one has to proceed in the following manner: Take in the Name of God, your stone, and grind it to a subtle powder, and add as much Mercurii Solis as was taught before. Put these together into a round vial, seal with sigillo Hermetis, and put it into the former oven exactly as taught, except that the time has to be shorter and less now. For where you previously used ten (alii thirty) days, you may now not use more than four (alii ten) days. In other respects the work is exactly the same as before. Praise and thank God the Almighty for His high revelation, and diligently continue your prayers fir His Almighty Mercy and Divine blessings of this Work and Art as well as His granting you a good health and fortuitous welfare. And moreover, take care always to help and counsel the poor.

LAVS DEO OMNIPOTENTI

NOTA.

He who wishes to know more about Antiomonio may consult Fr. Basilii Valentini, Triumphal Chariot of Antimonii with comments by Theodor Kerckring, p. 15.