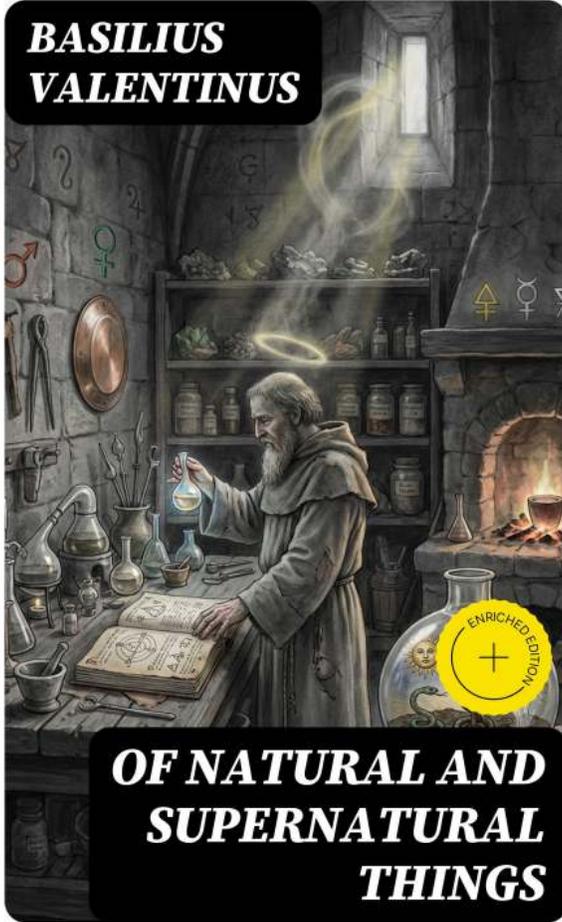


BASILIVS VALENTINVS



OF NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL THINGS

**BASILIVS
VALENTINVS**



**OF NATURAL AND
SUPERNATURAL
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Basilus Valentinus

Of Natural and Supernatural Things

Enriched edition. Also of the first Tincture, Root, and Spirit of Metals and Minerals, how the same are Conceived, Generated, Brought forth, Changed, and Augmented

*In this **enriched edition**, we have carefully created added value for your reading experience.*

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Colton Price

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Introduction

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This collection gathers writings that treat metals and minerals as living subjects of inquiry, at once natural in their generation and supernatural in their promise. Across Basilius Valentinus's *Natural and Supernatural Things*, Roger Bacon's discourse on the medicine or tincture of antimony, John Isaac Holland's *Work of Saturn*, and Alexander van Suchten's *Secrets of Antimony*, a shared aim emerges: to understand the first tincture, root, spirit, and soul by which bodies are conceived, brought forth, changed, and augmented. The unifying thread is a philosophy of transformation in which matter becomes a stage for health, purification, and perfected form.

Valentinus provides the central grammar of the volume by naming the terms through which the others speak: tincture, root, spirit, soul, and the ordered descent into particular metals. The sequence of spirits—Mercury, Copper, Mars, Gold, Tin, Saturn—implies a disciplined attention to distinct natures, each demanding its own manner of apprehension. This ordered survey frames a problem that returns throughout the collection: how a single art can remain faithful to the diversity of substances while still claiming a common origin. The collection's unity rests on this tension between universal principle and particular body.

The works converse most audibly around antimony, which appears as secret, medicine, and tincture. Van Suchten's *Secrets of Antimony* and Bacon's account of its

medicinal and transmutative powers present antimony as a hinge between care of the human body and the purification of metals. Within Valentinus's wider attention to spirits and tinctures, antimony functions as a focused case through which claims about preservation, diversion of desperate diseases, and the curing of the leprosy of metals can be tested. Thus the collection stages a recurring dilemma: whether remedy and refinement are two ends or one continuous operation.

A second motif is personification as method, the consistent attribution of interior principles to metallic bodies. Titles and chapter headings invoke spirit, soul, and tincture not as poetic ornaments but as explanatory instruments for generation and change. Mercury is approached as spirit; Saturn as tincture; Tin as soul; Gold as spirit; and the martial and coppery bodies are likewise given their own inner agencies. This shared vocabulary encourages comparison across authors: each work moves between observable mineral behavior and an inferred interior cause. The conversation turns on how far such interiority can guide practice without dissolving into mere allegory.

Productive contrasts arise from differences in genre and emphasis signaled by the titles themselves. Valentinus's work announces a systematic account of conception, generation, and augmentation, while Bacon's writing foregrounds application to health and the confrontation with incurable disease alongside metallurgical purification. Holland's *Work of Saturn* narrows the field to a single planetary metal, suggesting intensity over breadth, whereas

Van Suchten's *Secrets of Antimony* implies a selective unveiling of a specific substance's peculiar virtues. Taken together, these approaches create a dialogue between comprehensive doctrine and specialized mastery, between survey and monograph, between cosmological naming and therapeutic intent.

The collection also holds together by its sense of thresholds: between natural and supernatural, between mineral and medicine, between corruption and purity, and between base metal and best gold. The recurrence of words such as preserve, purify, transmute, and augment marks an ethics of making, in which technical aims are inseparable from ideals of restoration and perfection. Even where the tone shifts from encyclopedic description to confident promise, the shared concern remains the same: how transformation can be directed rather than merely endured. The texts collectively dramatize the desire to turn knowledge into a disciplined power over change.

In contemporary terms, these writings resonate as documents of a culture seeking unity across domains that later became more separate: medicine and metallurgy, spiritual language and material investigation, secrecy and instruction, cosmology and craft. Their sustained attention to processes—conception, generation, purification, transmutation—continues to inspire artistic and intellectual reflection on metamorphosis, embodiment, and the meanings assigned to substances. Without relying on modern categories, the collection offers a repertoire of images and arguments for thinking about how matter acquires value, how remedies are imagined, and how

transformation becomes a model for self-understanding as well as for work upon the world.

Historical Context

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Socio-Political Landscape

The anthology's voices speak from a Europe where ecclesiastical institutions regulated learning and public medicine, yet courts and cities demanded practical results from "secrets" of metal and health. Basilius Valentinus, styled a Benedictine monk, frames metallurgical generation and transmutation as lawful knowledge under monastic discipline, aligning craft with spiritual authority. Roger Bacon's antimony medicine likewise presumes a culture of contested expertise, where bold remedies could promise preservation of bodies and correction of metals. Translation "out of High Dutch" by Daniel Cable signals cross-regional circulation amid rival polities and confessional tensions.

Metals here are not merely substances but sites of power: coinage, armament, and mining revenues underwrote princely and civic strength. The repeated attention to Saturn, Mars, and Mercury evokes an order where planetary correspondences naturalize hierarchy, while also legitimating intervention in matter. John Isaac Holland's *Work of Saturn*, with its preface and procedural emphasis, reflects workshop knowledge seeking stable patronage and protection. Van Suchten's *Secrets of Antimony* points to guarded technical lore in an economy of competition. Even when couched in piety, these treatises mirror debates over who may claim authority to refine, heal, and enrich.

The works also register anxieties about fraud, monopoly, and social disruption that surrounded claims to gold-making or universal medicine. By insisting on “first tincture, root, and spirit,” Valentinus presents a disciplined account of generation and augmentation, countering suspicion with systematic explanation. Bacon’s promise to divert “desperate, and incurable diseases” and to cure the “leprosie of metals” implies public stakes: failed cures could threaten reputations and governance, while successful metallurgical practice could destabilize markets. Cable’s English rendering suggests demand among readers navigating regulation, curiosity, and the hope that nature’s hidden order could be made politically serviceable.

Intellectual & Aesthetic Currents

Across the anthology, matter is interpreted through a hybrid of Aristotelian causes, artisanal observation, and the spiritually charged language of tinctures, souls, and spirits. Valentinus organizes metals by “spirit” and “tincture,” moving from Mercury and Copper to Mars, Gold, Tin, and Saturn, and thereby renders metallurgy a moralized cosmology as well as a technical field. This mode of exposition treats generation and change as readable processes, inviting the reader to contemplate how concealed principles become visible through operations. The aesthetic is didactic and emblematic, favoring ordered chapters that mimic natural order.

Antimony serves as a focal innovation: at once a medicinal agent and a metallurgical instrument. Bacon’s tract on the medicine or tincture of antimony exemplifies a

therapeutic ambition that merges bodily preservation with chemical preparation, presuming that proper separation and purification can restore health. Van Suchten's secrets further situate antimony as a privileged gateway into metallic transformations, while Holland's Saturnian work emphasizes lead's role within a broader alchemical grammar. Together they display a culture of experiment expressed through allegorical terminology, where procedural specificity is balanced by metaphysical claims about roots, spirits, and the animation of matter.

The anthology's intellectual texture is also shaped by translation and compilation as creative acts. Cable's movement from High Dutch into English is not neutral transmission; it re-situates monastic and learned discourse within an English-reading milieu eager for practical recipes and philosophical warrant. The repeated authorial poses—monk, noble philosopher, and "Mr."—signal a spectrum of authority, from cloistered contemplation to gentlemanly expertise and workshop know-how. The prose tends toward compressed instruction, but its recurring planetary and spiritual vocabulary gives it an aesthetic of correspondences, where metals are characters in a providential drama of purification, augmentation, and cure.

Legacy & Reassessment Across Time

Over time, these texts became touchstones in debates about the boundaries between legitimate chymistry and discredited gold-making. Valentinus's *Natural and Supernatural Things*, with its systematic chaptered treatment of metallic spirits, invited readers to treat

alchemical language as a disciplined science of principles rather than mere marvel. Bacon's antimony treatise was repeatedly read for its bold therapeutic scope, alternately admired as visionary and questioned as hazardous. Holland and Van Suchten, focused on Saturn and antimony, contributed to a genre of specialist manuals that later scholars mined for evidence of evolving laboratory practice, even when rejecting their cosmological premises.

The compilation itself shaped reception by placing distinct authorities in a single argumentative space. Readers could compare Valentinus's broad theory of roots and tinctures with Bacon's medical imperative and Van Suchten's narrower "secrets," and thereby reassess whether transmutation and therapy were parallel projects or one unified art. Cable's translation further ensured that interpretive disputes traveled with the text: terms like "spirit," "soul," and "tincture" could be taken as metaphors, substances, or procedures depending on the reader's commitments. This ambiguity fueled later scholarly disagreement over whether the anthology preserves practical metallurgical knowledge, devotional allegory, or both.

In reassessment, the anthology is often valued less for literal promises than for what it reveals about early modern epistemology: how claims were warranted, how expertise was staged, and how nature's hiddenness was negotiated. Valentinus's insistence on conceived and generated metals provides a framework that historians read as an attempt to naturalize transformation, while Bacon's sweeping medical claims illustrate an ethic of radical remedy. Holland's

prefatory framing and Van Suchten's guarded tone foreground the economy of secrecy. The enduring interest lies in their shared effort to reconcile craft, philosophy, and moral order under the sign of "natural and supernatural" explanation.