

Frans Vermeulen

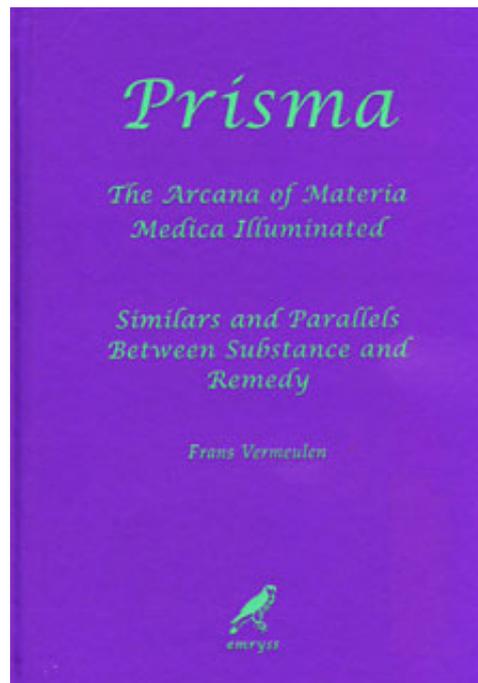
# Prisma - The Arcana of Materia Medica Illuminated

Reading excerpt

[Prisma - The Arcana of Materia Medica Illuminated](#)

of [Frans Vermeulen](#)

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her [2].

CHEST: Sensation of *emptiness* in heart region [1].

LIMBS: Wants hands and *feet fanned* [2/1].

SLEEP: *Position*, on back with hands over the head [1]; kneeling [2]; on knees with face forced into pillow [1]. *Waking*, as having slept one's fill, even after a short sleep [1]; from vertigo [2].

DREAMS: *Of pain* [2].

## FOOD

*Aversion*: [2]: Cold drinks; cold food; eggplant. [1]: Salt [\*]; slimy food; sweets.

*Desire*: [2]: Alcohol; ale; beer; eel; fat; fat + sweets; fish; green fruit; ice; lemons; salty things; salt + sweets; sour; sweets. [1].- Cheese; chocolate; fat + salt; juicy things; oranges; potatoes; raw onions; smoking; warm drinks. *Worse*: [1]: Brandy; meat; oranges; orange juice; sweets.

\* Repertory addition [Berridge].

## MERCURIUS

Merc.

*Man will always be mad and those who think they can cure them are the maddest of all.*  
[Voltaire]

## SIGNS

Mercury. Hydrargyrum. Quicksilver. Mercurius solubilis. Mercurius vivus.

**CLASSIFICATION** Placed in group 12 of the Periodic Table, with zinc and cadmium, mercury is the only common metal that is liquid at ordinary temperatures. As 'liquid silver' [hydrargyrum] it was known to ancient Chinese and Hindus; it has been found in Egyptian tombs of 1500 BC. Its chief ore is *cinnabar* [mercuric sulphide]. Cinnabar has been refined for its mercury content since the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century BC. Its health hazards have been known at least since the Roman conquest of Spain. Due to the toxicity of mercury in cinnabar, criminals sentenced to work in quicksilver mines by the Romans had a life expectancy of only 3 years. The Romans mined cinnabar at Almaden in Spain and transported 4.5 tons of mercury to Rome annually, using it in medicine, red dyes, cosmetics [rouge], and religious ceremonies. Mercury was one of the most highly prized of all trading commodities in the ancient world - today reflected in our modern words 'merchandise', 'merchant' and 'mercantile', which are all derived from it. Spain and Italy produce about half of the current world's supply of the metal. Native mercury contains seven isotopes. Thirty five other isotopes and isomers are known.

**FEATURES** Mercury is a heavy, mobile, silvery-white, liquid metal. When pure it does not tarnish on exposure to air at ordinary temperature, but when heated to near the boiling point it slowly oxidizes to form mercuric oxide. It is stable in air and water, and is unreactive towards acids [except concentrated nitric acid] and alkalis. It is a rather poor conductor of

heat, as compared with other metals, and a fair conductor of electricity. Solid mercury is a tin-white, ductile, malleable mass which may be cut with a knife. Mercury combines with sulphur at ordinary temperature and easily forms alloys with most metals [except iron], such as gold, silver, and tin, which are called *amalgams*. Its ease in amalgamating with gold is made use of in the recovery of gold from its ores. Mercury is the heaviest of all known liquids, weighing 13.6 times as much as an equal volume of water. Stone, iron, and even lead can float on its surface. If heated, it is a colourless, odourless gas. Inorganic mercury salts may be divalent [mercuric] or monovalent [mercurous]. "It is truly a bizarre substance: it is cold and elusive, always restless, but when it is quite still you can see yourself in it better than in a mirror. If you stir it around in a bowl it continues to twirl for almost half an hour."<sup>1</sup>

**USES** Widely used in laboratory work for making thermometers, barometers, diffusion pumps, and many other instruments; also in the manufacture of mercury-vapour lamps [producing ultraviolet rays], street lighting, and advertising signs; in electrical apparatus; in pesticides; in dental preparations; in catalysts and small batteries; in antifouling paints [marine bottom paints]; in mirrors. Mercury switches are used in automatic control and measuring equipment because they ensure instantaneous opening and closing of electrical circuits.

**PECULIARITIES** "Europe is far and away the richest continent in quicksilver, far surpassing all other deposits on the globe, such as those in Nevada, Texas, California, and Mexico. Thus the zone of greatest importance is in a central position between East and West, North and South. ... It is one of the great miracles of nature that quicksilver, although almost twice as dense as iron, fourteen times heavier than water, and having one of the highest atomic weights, is nevertheless liquid. This is the leading quality of quicksilver, from which much else will become comprehensible. At the slightest nudge it disperses into drops and tiny droplets. But then it comes together again just as easily. Its power of cohesion is extremely great. ... On the other hand, its adhesion to its surroundings is slight. It does not moisten what it touches but, after first scattering into countless little drops, immediately and completely returns into itself. It would, however, behave differently if its surroundings were composed of metals. It would moisten them, give itself over to them, develop powers of adhesion. Thus, in many respects, quicksilver is for the world of metals what water is for the earth. It dissolves metals as water dissolves salts. ... The fine glowing vapour in the mercury vapour lamp, radiates an intense greenish-blue light, which takes away all the effects of the 'warm' reddish colours. In this light the human skin assumes a grey and corpse-like pallor. This light, however, is rich in violet and ultraviolet rays, thus bearing a certain resemblance to the natural light of great altitudes, so that with its help the so-called 'alpine sun' lamp is produced. This light is cold, but chemically effective."<sup>2</sup> As a substance, mercury adheres only to a precious metal; metaphorically, Hermes can show the way to find spiritual gold, as the alchemists believed.

**TOXICOLOGY** Ingested elemental mercury is only 0.01% absorbed, but methylmercury is nearly 95% absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract; most of the elemental mercury is excreted in the faeces. Elemental mercury is most hazardous when inhaled. Only about 25% of an inhaled dose is exhaled. Air saturated with mercury vapour at 20° C contains a concentration that exceeds the toxic limit many times. The danger increases at higher temperatures. When inhaled, mercury passes quickly from the lungs into the blood. It acts as a cumulative poison and dangerous levels are readily attained in air. Mercury vapour has

a greater predilection for the central nervous system than do inorganic mercury salts, but less than organic forms of mercury. Organic mercury has the greatest affinity for the posterior cortex of the brain. Skin absorption of mercury vapour occurs, but at low levels [some 2% of total dose]. Dermal contact with liquid mercury can significantly increase biological levels. Elemental mercury is excreted from the body slowly. It has an elimination half-life of 40-60 days. Most elemental mercury is excreted in exhaled air, and small amounts in the faeces and urine. Very small amounts can be eliminated in sweat, saliva and milk. The mercury content of the edible portions of plants grown on mercury-contaminated sites ranges from 0.05 to 37 mg/kg. Mushrooms and lichens are highest, while grains and fruits are lowest. Mercury has no known essentiality for animals or plants. It has no known biological role in humans, although it is present in everything we eat. An average person [70 kg] contains 6 mg of mercury; brain, liver and muscle have the highest levels. Selenium is the key element in protecting the body from mercury toxicity.

**POLLUTION** Mercury is a common pollutant. Its main sources include fish, batteries, mercury vapour lamps, thermometers and barometers, pesticides, and fungistats [dusted on seeds to prevent moulds]. Scientists meeting in Sweden, in 1990, declared airborne mercury contamination to be the largest source of the mercury environmental pollution problem throughout the world. The major source of mercury is the natural degassing of the earth's crust, including land areas, rivers, and oceans. Fossil fuel may contain as much as 1 ppm of mercury and it is estimated that about 5000 tons of mercury per year may be emitted from burning coal, natural gas, and from the refining of petroleum products. Man-made airborne contamination occurs mainly from emissions from steel and iron plants, coal burning, crematoriums, and garbage incineration. [The south of Sweden has an annual mercury precipitation of 20 grams per km<sup>2</sup>, whereas in the north it is 7 gr/km<sup>2</sup>.] Lakes and oceans are polluted with methylmercury, a compound 50 times more toxic than pure mercury. Methylmercury is dumped into rivers and lakes by various industrial plants, such as paper pulp industries which use mercury as a mould protector.

**SYMPTOMS** *Ingested* mercury compounds accumulate in certain parts of the brain, eventually causing brain damage. Other affected organs include the colon and kidneys. Methylmercury causes nerve degeneration; birth defects; genetic defects; chromosome damage; excessive salivation; loss of teeth; gross muscle tremors. *In babies*, dusting of the skin with powders or application of ointments containing mercury causes pink disease or acrodynia. Characterized by lesions of the skin on the hands and feet; swelling of the extremities; digestive disturbances; itching of the hands and feet; pink coloration of hands, feet, cheeks and tip of nose; weakness of the muscles; arthritis. *Acute poisoning* by soluble mercury compounds causes metallic taste; thirst; severe abdominal pain, vomiting; ashy discolouration of the mouth and throat; diarrhoea contaminated with blood. Later ulceration, kidney disease and colitis with severe haemorrhage may develop. Mercury vapour when inhaled causes respiratory symptoms and kidney damage. *Chronic poisoning* by mercury vapour or by soluble mercury salts or by prolonged skin contact causes tremor; muscle instability; sensory disturbances; gastrointestinal symptoms, dermatitis; liver and kidney damage; anaemia; mental deterioration. A blue line on the gums may be indicative of chronic mercury poisoning."<sup>3</sup> Several case reports have described harmful nervous system effects following inhalation of high concentrations of mercury vapour [elemental mercury]. The

most prominent symptoms include tremors [initially affecting the hands and sometimes spreading to other parts of the body], emotional instability [including irritability, excessive shyness, a loss of confidence and nervousness], sleeplessness, memory loss, muscle weakness, headaches, enlargement of the thyroid, slow reflexes and a loss of feeling or numbness. A classic sign of mercury toxicity is a fine tremor, usually of the fingers, hands or arms and occasionally the eyelids, lips, tongue, and whole body. Another classic sign of exposure to high concentrations of mercury is stomatitis, sometimes with a metallic taste, excessive salivation and difficulty swallowing. Other digestive system effects include abdominal pains, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Grey hair can be an indication of mercury accumulation, more so in females than males. Milk causes an increase in the absorption of mercury.

**MEDICINE** Mercury is one of oldest remedies known to medicine. It was known to the physicians of ancient Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia. In first-century Rome it was used mixed with grease to make an ointment. Dioscorides and Galen noted the harmful effects of mercury and warned against its use. Mercuric chloride [mercurius corrosivus in homoeopathy] was the first man-made compound of mercury used in medicine. Leading to irreversible physical [and mental] damage, the results were often disastrous. A mercurial ointment termed *unguentum Saracenicum* was widely used in the treatment of skin diseases like scabies and leprosy, but many physicians discredited its use. When syphilis made its entrance into 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, it was soon claimed that the foul sores brought upon the body by the disease could be washed away only with quicksilver. With typical contempt for his fellow physicians and established doctrines - 'One hair on my neck knows more than all you authors, and my shoe-buckles contain more wisdom than both Galen and Avicenna' - it was the Swiss-born Paracelsus [c. 1493-1542] who vigorously announced the value of mercury, provided it was properly used. The correct treatment was not merely to administer it, but to administer it in the correct amount and chemical form. His doctrine that dosage had to be quantitative as well as qualitative was gradually accepted. There were three techniques for administering mercury. Oral administration was rare, whereas inunction [rubbing the skin with mercurial ointment] and fumigation ['tubbing'] were common. Fumigation amounted to patients sitting naked in large wooden tubs [referred to by Shakespeare as 'the powdering tub of infamy'], their skins well greased, above a heated tray spread with sulphide or other mercurial compound. The vapour condensed on the grease and some of the element passed through the skin. The treatment involved the isolation, tubbing and sweating of patients for up to one month, for it was generally agreed upon that copious sweating and drooling were necessary to expel the syphilitic poison. The side-effects were just as drastic, including gum ulcerations, tooth loss and bone deterioration. For 'one night with Venus' stood 'a lifetime with mercury.' Mercury was prescribed for so many illnesses that physicians became known as 'quicks'; from this the modern word 'quack' is derived [a quacksalver was a prescriber of quicksilver]. Mercury therapy persisted until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The English physician Thomas Dover [1662-1743], known as the Quicksilver Doctor, advocated the virtues of mercury, prescribing the metal, in doses of a pound or more, for asthma and intestinal obstruction. The founding father of American medicine, Benjamin Rush [1745-1813], considered mercury 'a safe and nearly a universal medicine' and recommended calomel purges. Calomel [mercurous chloride; mercurius dulcis in homoeopathy] appeared in every physician's bag throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was an active ingredient in the

'blue pills' prominent in 19<sup>th</sup>-century English therapeutics. The most notable usage of mercurous chloride has been a teething powder for children and is now known to be responsible for acrodynia or 'pink disease'. In 1929 a book of pharmaceutical formulas was published, including more than 100 mercurial preparations - 40 of them containing mercuric chloride - in gargles, eye drops, mouth wash, soap, ointment and a variety of pills. Among the milder remedies was the Army's legendary Number 9 pill - containing calomel and rhubarb.<sup>4,5</sup>

**MAD HATTER** The hazards of occupational exposure to mercury have been known for centuries, amongst them the danger of the use of mercuric nitrate in hatmaking, to convert animal fur into felt. The Mad Hatter in Alice in Wonderland was a victim of occupational exposure to mercury vapour, and so were the hatmakers in Danbury in Connecticut, USA, formerly an important centre of the industry. The intoxication was referred to as 'Mad Hatter's disease' or 'Danbury Shakes'. Clinical signs of mercury poisoning included personality changes and tremor, leading to the English expression 'mad as a hatter'. 'Mad Hatters' suffered from depression, lassitude, acute anxiety, and irrational fears. They also became nervous, timid, and shy. They blushed readily, were embarrassed in social situations, objected to being watched, and sought to avoid people. They felt a constant impulse to return home. They were easily upset, and were prone to agitation, irritability, anger, and aggressive behaviour. There were word retrieval and articulation difficulties.<sup>6</sup>

**PINK DISEASE** Pink disease, or acrodynia, is caused by a mercurial toxicity reaction to the use of mercurous chloride in teething powders and skin ointments. The disease was common during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in particular in children's clinics. In most cases the condition improved spontaneously, but was often regarded as chronic. Pink disease almost disappeared after 1954 when the mercury was withdrawn from teething powders. A survey on an Internet site of adult acrodynia victims, which compared the symptoms of 157 adults who suffered from acrodynia as children with controls, reported the following symptoms as seen to a greater degree in acrodynia sufferers than in controls. [Summary of symptoms present in 70% or more of pink disease sufferers.] *Symptoms suffered as a baby/toddler*: constant crying until completely exhausted [cf. Syphilinum!]; kept in dark room because of acute sensitivity to light; putrid body odour or discharges; lost appetite; lost weight; lost muscle tone; sucked or chewed fingers/hands. *Post pink disease symptoms*: excessive cavities in teeth; breathlessness from even minor exertion. Interesting to compare with the mental/generalities of Mercurius are survey questions answered with 'often' or 'always'. [Pink disease sufferers designated with P; controls with C.] Preference of salty foods to sweets [P 42%, C 20%]. Preference of sweet foods to salty foods [P 23%, C 26%]. More than average sensitivity to cold [P 48%, C 17%]. More than average sensitivity to heat [P 48%, C 38%]. Excessive sweating [P 35%, C 21%]. Excessive sweating on face [P 28%, C 16%]. Excessive pain when bumping legs or arms [P 32%, C 1%]. Sensitivity to sunlight [P 59%, C 26%]. Clenching or grinding of teeth in sleep [P 30%, C 8%]. Metallic taste in mouth [P 28%, C 2%]. Painful muscles and ligaments [P 45%, C 11%]. Arthritis like symptoms [P 54%, C 26%]. Loss of strength in arms [can't hold things above head] [P 42%, C 8%]. Problems with co-ordination when walking [P 31%, C 1%]. Stumbling when walking [P 22%, C 2%]. Poor hand/eye co-ordination [P 18%, C 1%]. Poor sense of distance [P 32%, C 8%]. Poor sense of direction [P 32%, 12%]. Need for excess sleep [P 38%, C 8%]. Lack of self-confidence [P 35%, C 10%]. Lack of attention in con-

versation [P 31%, C 2%]. Shyness [P 29%, C 8%]. Sensitivity to noise [P 48%, C 15%]. Difficulty communicating thoughts in words or writing [P 32%, C 4%]. Are you a 'loner' or do others think you are a loner? [P 44%, C 8%].<sup>7</sup>

**AUTISM** The Merck Manual defines Infantile Autism, or Autistic Spectrum Disorder [ASD] as "a syndrome of early childhood characterized by [1] abnormal social relationships [extreme aloneness, lack of attachment, failure to cuddle, avoidance of eye gaze]; [2] language disorder with impaired understanding, echolalia, and pronominal reversal; [3] rituals and compulsive phenomena [insistence on sameness, resistance to change, rituals, morbid attachment to familiar objects, repetitive acts]; and [4] uneven intellectual development, in most cases." The onset is not later than age 36 months. There is growing evidence that many cases of autism meet the requirements for mercury poisoning. The latter include: [1] movement/motor disorder; [2] sensory abnormalities; [3] psychological and behavioural disturbances; [4] neurological and cognitive deficits; [5] impairment in language, hearing, and vision; and [6] miscellaneous physical presentations such as rashes or unusual reflexes. The link is reported to be an early childhood exposure to mercury, by means of thimerosal, which is 50% ethylmercury and which is a preservative used in many childhood vaccines. [Thimerosal is included in 50 vaccines in the US.] The introduction and use of thimerosal as a vaccine preservative in the 1930s coincides with the initial description of autism in the late 1930s by the child psychologist Leo Kanner. Since the 1930s the incidence of autism has increased dramatically, as has the vaccination rate, and hence the rate of mercury exposure via thimerosal. The fact that autism emerges during the same time period as infant and toddler thimerosal injections during vaccinations suggests that autism represents its own unique form of mercury poisoning, just like acrodynia and Mad Hatter's disease represent distinct yet closely related presentations of mercurialism. Mercury poisoning and ASD have the following symptoms in common: • Extreme shyness; social withdrawal; introversion. Mood swings; laughing or crying without reason; no facial expression. • Anxiety and nervousness. • Avoidance of conversation; gaze avoidance; lack of eye contact. • Increased restlessness. • Irritability and aggression. • Insomnia, difficulty falling asleep. • Anorexia. • Tendency to masturbation. • Self injurious behaviour, including head banging. • Grimacing. • Staring spells. • Articulation problems. • Speech comprehension deficits. • Sensitivity to sound. • Photophobia. • Aversion to touch; abnormal touch sensations. • Involuntary jerking movements [stereotyped movements in autism]. • Intention tremor [problems with intentional movements in autism]. • Clumsiness. • Toe walking. • Difficulty in chewing and swallowing. • Mental retardation. • Poor short term, verbal, and auditory memory. • Decreased muscle strength, especially upper body. • Excessive sweating [unusual sweating in autism].<sup>8</sup> In a joint statement of June 2000, the Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, and the Public Health Service, have recommended the continuation of the current policy of moving rapidly to vaccines that are free of thimerosal as a preservative. On July 18, 2000 the Committee on Government Reform conducted a hearing entitled, "Mercury in Medicine: Are We Taking Unnecessary Risks?" During the hearing, the FDA admitted that children are being exposed to unsafe levels of mercury through vaccines containing thimerosal. It was also determined that symptoms of mercury poisoning mimic symptoms of autism. In Scandinavia, the mercury compound thiomersal is used as a preservative in

influenza vaccines and in the vaccine against tick-borne encephalitis. According to Hugh Fudenberg, MD, the world's leading immunogeneticist, individuals who have had five consecutive flu shots between 1970 and 1980 [the years studied] have a ten times higher chance of getting Alzheimer's disease. Every flu shot contains mercury and aluminium and the gradual buildup of these elements in the brain causes cognitive dysfunction.

**TOLERANCE** A pertinent characteristic of mercury is the great variability in its effects by individual. At the same exposure level of mercury, some will be affected severely, while others will be asymptomatic or only mildly impaired. Mercury studies have consistently shown a greater effect on males than females, except in instances of kidney damage. At the highest doses, both sexes are affected equally, but at lower doses only males are affected. Thomas Dover, the Quicksilver Doctor, claimed to have taken mercury himself for 46 years and to have enjoyed 'a perfect state of health.' "These observations by Dover remind us of the great variation in tolerance to mercury. Some people appear to be able to absorb huge quantities without ill effects. Such indeed was the experience of Boerhaave [1668-1738], Professor of Medicine in Leiden. His interest in mercury arose from his respect for the alchemists. He did not spend his time in trying to make gold, but became adept at the distillation of mercury - a favourite activity of the alchemists - and distilled one sample more than 500 times. His devotion to this task was so conspicuous that he must have inhaled a great amount of mercury vapour, but he seems to have suffered no harm, nor did his colleagues find any evidence of relevant damage in *the post-mortem* examination which they conducted."<sup>9</sup>

The great scientist Sir Isaac Newton [1642-1727], on the other hand, is thought to have suffered much harm from mercury vapours. Newton experimented with sulphur, ammonium chloride, sulphuric and nitric acids, arsenic, copper, and lead, among which mercury was chief. During these experiments he was continually breathing in highly toxic mercury fumes, and in some experiments, he even tasted the heavy metals. "What is not widely known about Newton is that twice during his lifetime he went 'mad'. He suffered periods of prolonged abnormal, even bizarre behaviour. He experienced severe insomnia, extreme sensitivity in personal relations, loss of appetite, delusions of persecution, memory difficulties, and some overall decrease in mental acuity. Over the years biographers of Newton have proposed many theories to account for this two 'madness' periods. ... [They are] all interesting, but all incorrect. Instead, the best evidence indicates that the true reason for Newton's 'madness' was something far simpler - mercury poisoning. In the 1970s, an examination of Newton's records of his experiments revealed that he undertook many chemical experiments shortly before the first signs of his periods 'madness'."<sup>10</sup>

**DENTISTRY** Tooth fillings were introduced in 1818 with a first amalgam made from bismuth, tin, lead and mercury, followed in 1819 by a material composed of mercury and silver fillings. 'Plombere' [literally: plumbing], the Dutch word for filling, still reflects the original use of lead for the procedure. These crude amalgams were far from effective; teeth broke due to expanding of the mercury. The amalgam used commonly today is made from equal parts of mercury and an alloy containing silver [not less than 65%], tin [not less than 25%], copper [not more than 6%] and tin [not more than 2%]. High thermal and mechanical demands are placed on amalgam; it has to withstand exposure to hot liquids or iced drinks without causing discomfort, and must wear down at the same rate as the surrounding tooth. When amalgam first became available in the dentist's surgery it was widely proclaimed that

the new material was dangerous to patients. The Amalgam War divided the American dental profession and still seems unsettled. People have their fillings removed after complaining of headaches, behavioural changes, and other symptoms supposedly caused by fillings. Some dentists argue that decades of worldwide clinical experience and research show that side effects to dental material are rare. On the other hand, it remains a fact that dental amalgam is the single largest source of mercury for the general population without occupational exposure, so that the toxic potential of mercury vapour released from dental amalgam may be expected to cause various health effects.

**MERCURY** The ancient Romans named the metal 'mercury' because the quick movements of mercury droplets on a smooth surface reminded them of the cunning and resourceful Mercury, the god of merchants, travellers, and thieves. The planet Mercury probably received this name because it moves so quickly across the sky and is elusive to observe. To the Romans, mercury was the conductor of lost souls to the underworld and the messenger of the gods. In other cultures, mercury was personified as Thoth, Hermes, or Odin - slippery, dazzling, and totally uncontrollable, but also the divine inventor of magic, of writing and of the spoken word. In Greek mythology, Hermes was the messenger of the gods who often led men astray. As soon as he was born, he ventured boldly out of his cradle, quick to act on an idea and ready for mischief. He is represented as a young man with winged hat and winged sandals, bearing a caduceus and sometimes a purse. He was the great transformer; his caduceus could transform whatever it touched into gold. The 'Homeric Hymn to Hermes' describes him as a god who is 'wily and charming, a thief, a cattle-rustler, a bringer of dreams, a spy by night, a watcher at the door.' His feminine wisdom credited Hermes with the invention of civilized arts usually attributed to the Goddess: measuring and weighing, astronomy and astrology, music. He helped the three Fates compose the alphabet. He epitomizes the power of the spoken word, the emblem of the word; for the Gnostics he was the *logos spermatikos* scattered about the universe, an idea which was taken up by the alchemists who equated Mercury with related concepts of fluency and transmutation. [It is still common belief that the mercurial finger, the little finger, denotes eloquence if pointed, and sound judgement if square.] Seen as of the god of roads [that is, of potentialities], posts with his head in marble ['herms'] used to be erected where two or more roads met, to point out the way. A pile of stones would also serve as a herm. Herms marked crossroads, but also property boundaries, graves, and the entrance to homes. Thus Hermes was the god who marked the boundary as well as the god that crossed all boundaries. A lucky find, a wind-fall, was known as a *hermaion*, a 'gift of Hermes'. He is the god of the mystery as well as of its unravelling. One of his many sons, Hermaphroditus, reflects Hermes' androgynous and bisexual nature and bore the names of both his parents, Hermes and Aphrodite. In astrology he is defined as *intellectual energy*, befitting 'subtle men, ingenious, inconstant; rhymers, poets, advocates, orators, philosophers, arithmeticians, and busy fellows.'

**PSYCHOLOGY** "The Hermes man has a quick mind. He grasps the significance of an idea or a situation and is quick to act on his intuitions. He often has an 'always on the move' physical quality as well, as he gracefully and actively makes shifts from one person to another, from one place to another, or from one idea to another. Trying to pin him down can be as difficult as trying to grasp quicksilver. ... The young Hermes child often talks early, \ walks early, and is into things early. He is inquisitive and friendly, and has a genuine interest

in everything and everyone. ... He may make up stories, and invent excuses, and cross the line into habitual lying, even when the truth would be acceptable. He may not learn about 'other people's property', have 'sticky fingers', and take what attracts him. ... He needs to be caught in the lie or the act and taught the difference between truth and make believe [because he can move from reality to imagination readily, not examining the boundaries]. ... A Hermes man doesn't usually work for grades or the approval of others; when he succeeds, it's because the work itself fascinates him and draws out his inventiveness. ... In contrast to the commercial or criminal bent that a Hermes man might take in his young adult years, some Hermes men delve into spiritual, philosophical, or psychological interests during this time. ... A Hermes man doesn't like doing anything 'by the book.' He's an opportunist, in the most neutral meaning of the word: a person who is able to grasp the significance of a person or an idea and seize the opportunity that the moment presents. ... Without a thought for how it affects her, a Hermes man wants to come and go in a woman's life, without being responsible for her feelings, and without being faithful to her. ... Hermes is at heart a gregarious loner. ... The sociopathic Hermes, the Trickster, doesn't use force or violence; he takes what doesn't belong to him, often in a clever way. As a trickster, he is a 'con artist' who gains the confidence of his victim and then fleeces them, or a selective and imaginative thief, or the imposter. ... The Eternal Youth, the Hermes man who never grows up, finds new grass always greener, which invites him to flit from one situation or person to another. He is 'Jack of all trades, master of none.'... Hermes men seem more immune than most men to intense infatuations. They avoid emotional commitment and intimacy. ... A Hermes man often takes on different guises as he embellishes a part of himself and doesn't touch on others - which makes him seem chameleon-like. ... Hermes has an innate potential to become a guide of souls and a seeker of meaning. The man [or woman] who is in touch with this aspect of Hermes is drawn to what is sacred, to the mysteries of death and the afterlife, and is not content to follow only one path."<sup>11</sup>

**PROVINGS** •• [1] Hahnemann - 9 provers; method: unknown. Hahnemann conducted the proving with Mercurius solubilis - prepared by precipitating mercury from its solution in nitric acid by means of caustic ammonia — but he sets its actions equal to those of pure triturated mercury [= Mercurius vivus]. The proving provided the symptoms of the solubilis, to which are added the effects of pure metallic mercury [vivus] gathered from toxicological reports and from clinical cases treated with the crude drug.

•• [2] Wesselhoeft - 20 provers; "Dr. C. Wesselhoeft made 20 provings on students, male and female, with M. solubilis in various potencies. As in several the results were negative, and in the remainder were either incongruous one with another, or were nothing more than appeared when the provers were taking saccharum lactis only, Dr. Wesselhoeft does not consider that they ought to appear in textbooks of Materia Medica." [Hughes]

[1] Levi, The Periodic Table. [2] Pelikan, The Secrets of Metals. [3] Mervyn, Vitamins & Minerals. [4] Lenihan, The Crumbs of Creation. [5] Porter, The Greatest Benefit to Mankind. [6] O'Carroll et al, The neuropsychiatric sequelae of mercury poisoning: The Mad Hatter's disease revisited, British Journal of Psychiatry 167[1]:95-98 [1995]. [7] website Pink Disease Support Group, Australia. [8] Bernard et al, Autism: A Unique Type of Mercury Poisoning; ARC Research; website. [9] Lenihan, *ibid.* [10] Juan, The Odd Brain. [11] Bolen, Gods in Everyman.

in everything and everyone. ... He may make up stories, and invent excuses, and cross the line into habitual lying, even when the truth would be acceptable. He may not learn about 'other people's property', have 'sticky fingers', and take what attracts him. ... He needs to be caught in the lie or the act and taught the difference between truth and make believe [because he can move from reality to imagination readily, not examining the boundaries]. ... A Hermes man doesn't usually work for grades or the approval of others; when he succeeds, it's because the work itself fascinates him and draws out his inventiveness. ... In contrast to the commercial or criminal bent that a Hermes man might take in his young adult years, some Hermes men delve into spiritual, philosophical, or psychological interests during this time. ... A Hermes man doesn't like doing anything 'by the book.' He's an opportunist, in the most neutral meaning of the word: a person who is able to grasp the significance of a person or an idea and seize the opportunity that the moment presents. ... Without a thought for how it affects her, a Hermes man wants to come and go in a woman's life, without being responsible for her feelings, and without being faithful to her. ... Hermes is at heart a gregarious loner. ... The sociopathic Hermes, the Trickster, doesn't use force or violence; he takes what doesn't belong to him, often in a clever way. As a trickster, he is a 'con artist' who gains the confidence of his victim and then fleeces them, or a selective and imaginative thief, or the imposter. ... The Eternal Youth, the Hermes man who never grows up, finds new grass always greener, which invites him to flit from one situation or person to another. He is 'Jack of all trades, master of none.' ... Hermes men seem more immune than most men to intense infatuations. They avoid emotional commitment and intimacy. ... A Hermes man often takes on different guises as he embellishes a part of himself and doesn't touch on others - which makes him seem chameleon-like. ... Hermes has an innate potential to become a guide of souls and a seeker of meaning. The man [or woman] who is in touch with this aspect of Hermes is drawn to what is sacred, to the mysteries of death and the afterlife, and is not content to follow only one path."<sup>11</sup>

PROVINGS •• [1] Hahnemann - 9 provers; method: unknown. Hahnemann conducted the proving with *Mercurius solubilis* - prepared by precipitating mercury from its solution in nitric acid by means of caustic ammonia - but he sets its actions equal to those of pure triturated mercury [= *Mercurius vivus*]. The proving provided the symptoms of the *solubilis*, to which are added the effects of pure metallic mercury [*vivus*] gathered from toxicological reports and from clinical cases treated with the crude drug.

•• [2] Wesselhoeft - 20 provers; "Dr. C. Wesselhoeft made 20 provings on students, male and female, with *M. solubilis* in various potencies. As in several the results were negative, and in the remainder were either incongruous one with another, or were nothing more than appeared when the provers were taking *saccharum lactis* only, Dr. Wesselhoeft does not consider that they ought to appear in textbooks of *Materia Medica*." [Hughes]

[1] Levi, *The Periodic Table*. [2] Pelikan, *The Secrets of Metals*. [3] Mervyn, *Vitamins & Minerals*. [4] Lenihan, *The Crumbs of Creation*. [5] Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*. [6] O'Carroll et al, *The neuropsychiatric sequelae of mercury poisoning: The Mad Hatter's disease revisited*, *British Journal of Psychiatry* 167[1]:95-98 [1995]. [7] website Pink Disease Support Group, Australia. [8] Bernard et al, *Autism: A Unique Type of Mercury Poisoning*; ARC Research; website. [9] Lenihan, *ibid*. [10] Juan, *The Odd Brain*. [11] Bolen, *Gods in Everyman*.

## **AFFINITY**

BLOOD. *Mucous membranes*. GLANDS [buccal; SALIVARY; TONSILS; THROAT; LYMPHATICS; MUCOUS; liver; kidneys]. GENITALS. *Cellular tissues*. Joints. Bones. Skin. \* *Left side. Right side.*

## **MODALITIES**

*Worse:* NIGHT. Night air. SWEATING. LYING ON RIGHT SIDE. IF HEATED; bed or fire; warm room. SENSITIVE TO [DRAFTS, to *head; changing, cloudy or cold damp weather; taking cold; heat and cold*]. Wet feet. Firelight. Artificial light. During stool. While urinating. Blowing the nose. *Better:* Moderate temperature. Rest. Morning. Scratching.

## **MAIN SYMPTOMS**

### **M SECLUSION.**

Nervous, timid, and shy.

Embarrassed in social situations; blushing easily.

Aversion to being approached, looked at or touched.

Avoiding people.

- "Often there is a psychical irritability, which makes people not usually shy confused on being looked at; sometimes very skilful workmen cannot go on with their work when looked at. Ill-humour, easily angered, rapid transition from passionate outburst to pusillanimity. ... The psychical irritability and tendency to start increase with the weakness. Their movements become hurried, every little trifle, even being looked at or the dread of being observed, makes them excited and confused, and robs them of the use of their muscles. ... The facial muscles twitch, they are unable to do their work or even to write if others are observing them, the fingers and hands tremble. Their speech becomes trembling, confused, or fails them altogether, like that of a criminal detected in his crime. ... Vertigo is very frequent, it comes on very suddenly or with prodromata such as tinnitus aurium, vision of sparks or colours, dimness of sight, nausea and even vomiting."<sup>1</sup>

### **M INSTABILITY on all levels.**

[Erethismus mercurialis.]

- "Mercurius tends to be fascinated with himself, and hence is usually selfish, although he is quite capable of being loving and friendly as well. He is an unstable character, whose mood changes as quickly as he changes his mind, a person who thrives on change, and cannot bear predictability and routine. Mercurius' ability to reflect and adapt to his environment [like a chameleon] is unique and due to the relative absence of personal identity. His rapid changeability is accompanied by a love of illusion, and of magic and the supernatural. Mercurius can be so impersonal that he feels very lonely, and his impersonality results in a love of city life, of anonymity, and of semi-intelligent machines. ... Many Mercurius individuals appear androgenous, since they are so neutral. ... Mercurius is very quick, and also very adaptable. His mind will effortlessly embrace any experience and any concept, because it has no fixed reference point. ... Attracted to electronic gadgets, getting

bored with people. ... Extreme sensitivity to discomfort. ... The majority of stand-up comedians belong to this type; they need to have a very quick wit, and especially a plastic persona that can imitate different characters. ... 'Motormouths' who can speak extraordinarily quickly in a wide variety of accents. ... So clever with words that he almost convinces himself that it is the truth." [Bailey] M RESTLESSNESS.

- "Anxiety and apprehension in the blood, he knew not how to compose himself; he felt as if he had committed a crime, without heat, also at the same time as if he was not quite master of his senses, all day."
- "Extreme restlessness at night, beginning about 8 p.m. and lasting till morning; he sometimes rose up because he had no rest when lying, sometimes he lay down again, because walking was intolerable to him, nowhere had he rest."
- "Anxiety that could drive him far away."
- "An almost irresistible desire to travel away to a distance." [Hahnemann]
- "It is interesting to note that many of the symptoms of the Mercury proving were brought out by Friedrich Hahnemann, the master's extremely restless son, who was always on the move, finally travelled to the United States, where he again moved further and disappeared without trace."<sup>2</sup>

M Lack of SELF-CONFIDENCE [trembling inside]; easily embarrassed.

M Internal HURRIEDNESS with SLOWNESS in acting [as if everything is seriously considered].

*Or the reverse:*

Hurried and impulsive without thinking, without considering consequences or the effect on others.

*Inconsiderate; detached.*

- "All day long great seriousness with much indifference; he got angry when others laughed at a trifle, and at the same time was extremely indifferent to all about him."
- "He is indifferent to everything in the world."
- "He cares for nothing and is indifferent to everything." [Hahnemann]

^ Compare: "Mercury's adhesion to its surroundings is slight. It does not moisten what it touches but, after first scattering into countless little drops, immediately and completely returns into itself." [Pelikan] M EXTREMELY CLOSED.

- "Feels like you're not really making contact with patient; suspicious; cautious; vulnerable." [Morrison]

Stammering.

- "He may be stupid and slow to answer, or over bright without character." [Wright Hubbard]

M Fear being ATTACKED FROM BEHIND [being stabbed in the back].

Delusion EVERYONE IS AN ENEMY. M

Need to create ORDER in a chaotic world.

Want everybody to know and KEEP their place.

Very CONSERVATIVE.

Cannot bear that the public peace is broken: very sensitive to injustice

Need a steady life and a stable society to counterbalance their inner instability.

- compare: "Every organ, every part of an organism, must be attuned to the totality, It must have a life of its own, but this must not be a *self-willed* life. ... The single cell must never have too much life; there must be no super-life. A process must be active in the organism that continually deprives the cell of this super-life, seeing to it that the part remains integrated into the whole and that the whole maintains its government over all the parts. ... Quicksilver opposes any declaration of independence by the cells. Its tendency to reintegrate any separatist existence into the whole applies to *all* processes that try to set up their own shops within the organism, Quicksilver brings these detached forces back into resorption. Wherever isolating processes arise in the organism, Mercury leads them back into the fold."<sup>2</sup>

*Or the opposite:*

Cannot bear predictability and routine.

ALWAYS discontented, discontented with everything.

All or nothing attitude; become revolutionary anarchists [from sheer necessity or impulsively].

- "Dreams of getting up a revolution." [Hahnemann]

M Inner conflict between desire for law and order and violent impulses.

Restraining themselves requires a lot of energy, = forgetfulness. Very sensitive to criticism and contradiction.

M

May become violent. [Wants to kill the person that contradicts her, hatred of persons who had offended him], M Difficult remedy to spot; *reflects what it thinks you want to see*. Patient puts up a front; doesn't want to be seen. Tabloid journalists; method actors [never see who the person is]; clowns.<sup>3</sup>

Has been called the monkey [Voegeli], parrot [Bailey] or chameleon [Clarke] of the materia medica. [Mercury has been used in the manufacture of mirrors.] G INSTABILITY.

[Mentioned in 55 general rubrics of aggravation and only in 7 of amelioration!]

[In regard to toxic effects of metals, "no other metal better illustrates the diversity of effects caused by different chemical species than does mercury." - Casarett & Doull's Toxicology.]

G Sensitive to HEAT AND COLD; extremes of temperature.

As easily CHILLED as OVERHEATED.

*Chilliness often felt in single parts* [might be any part].

G PERSPIRATION all over the body; WITHOUT relief.

Sweat oily, foul, stains the linen yellow.

EASY perspiration. G

< NIGHT.

> After sleep. G

Swollen GLANDS. G

FREE SECRETIONS.

Thin, slimy, acrid, burning, foul or thick, green-yellow.

P STOOL: never done sensation, esp. with diarrhoea.

Tenesmus before, during and after stool.  
Changeable stool.

[1] Observations in 110 cases of constitutional mercurialism in workers in mercury, cited in Hughes. [2] Peiikan, The Secrets of Metals. [3] Wallace, Remedy Notes.

## RUBRICS

**MIND:** *Alcoholism* resulting in timidity [1; Med.]. *Anarchist* [1], revolutionary [3/1]. *Anxiety*, about health of relatives [1], with suicidal disposition [2]. Aversion to *company*, cannot bear anybody [1], wants to get into the country away from people [1]. *Courageous*, alternating with discouragement [1]. Has no sense of *danger* [1], *Deceitful* [1]. *Delusions*, animals jumping at her [2], everyone is an enemy [2], surrounded by enemies [1], living things are creeping into his mouth at night [1/1]. *Estranged*, ignores his friends and relatives [1]. *Fear*, of insanity at night [2], of robbers on waking [1]. *Impolite* [2]. *Impulse* to catch strangers by the nose, when walking on street [1\*]. *Indifference* to all reprimands [2/1]. Desire to *kill*, beloved ones [1], own child [1], the person that contradicts her [2/1], at the sight of a knife [2], during menses [2]. *Precocity* [2]. *Sadness*, in sunshine [2]. Impelled to *touching* everything [2].

**HEAD:** *Pain*, as if top of head would come off at every jar [1]. *Perspiration* of scalp, fetid [2], during menses [1], oily [2], sour [2].

**EYE:** Sensation as if eyes were *drawn* together [1]. *Lachrymation*, when looking at fire [2]. *Photophobia*, light, of fire [3; Euphr.]. **VISION:** *Dim*, from light of fire [2; Nat-s.], < sunlight [2]. **EAR:** *Noises*, reverberating, every sound, with difficult hearing [1]. **FACE:** *Swelling*, after eating [1/1], before menses [2].

**MOUTH:** *Odour*, offensive during menses [2]. *Salivation* during menses [2]. *Speech*, stammering and quick [2/1]. *Taste* like manure [2]. **STOMACH:** *Emptiness*, from pressure [3/1]. *Nausea* after meat [1]. **ABDOMEN:** Sensation as if intestines were *falling* from side to side on turning in bed [2], *Flatulence* after milk [1]. **RECTUM:** *Diarrhoea*, after sugar [2]. **URINE:** *Odour*, strong before menses [1/1].

**FEMALE:** *Prolapsus*, uterus, > coition [1/1]. *Swollen*, during pregnancy [2].

**LIMBS:** *Swelling*, hands, during menses [2]; feet, during menses [2]. *Trembling*, hands, on taking hold of objects [3], when raising them high [3]. **SLEEP:** *Sleeplessness*, unless he drinks coffee [1/1].

**DREAMS:** Someone is *calling* [1]. Being bitten by *dogs* [1]. Difficulties with *journeys* [1]. *Revolution* [1]. *Of shooting* [2]. **CHILL:** *Internal*, coldness as if in the bones [1]. **SKIN:** *Eruptions*, burning, < touch [2]. *Itching*, < perspiration [2]. **GENERALS:** Desire for *walking*, at night [1]. \*Repertory addition [Hahnemann].

## FOOD

*Aversion:* [2]: Brandy; butter; cheese, strong; coffee; fat; meat; salt; sweets; wine. [1]: Alcohol; beef; cooked food; drinks; dry food; mother's milk; solid food; warm food.

*Desire:* [3]: Bread and butter; cold drinks. [2]: Beer; lemons; liquid food; milk. [1]: Alcohol; bread; butter; fat; meat; milk, at night; salt; sweets; whisky.

*Worse:*[2]: Coffee; cold food; hot food; plums; sugar; sweets; wine, sulphuretted. [1]: Bread; cold drinks; fat; fruit; meat; milk; potatoes. *Better:* [2]: Cold food; sour. [1]: Milk.

## MEZEREUM

**Mez**

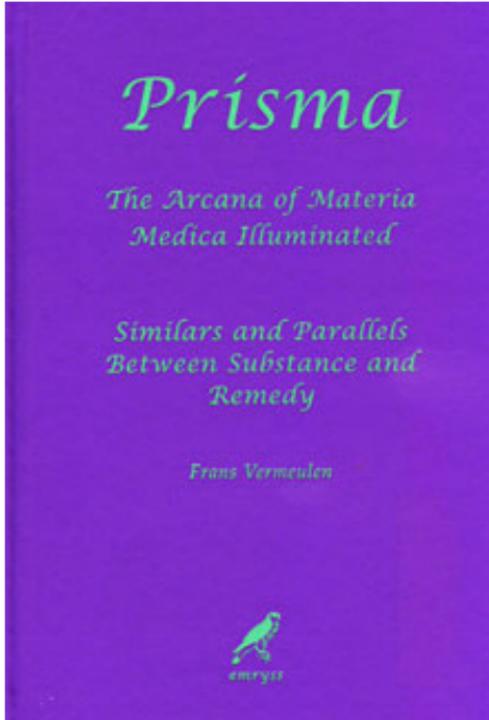
*Odours of spring, my sense ye charm  
With fragrance premature,  
And mid these days of dark alarm,  
Almost to hope allure.*  
[Mrs Tighe]

## SIGNS

Daphne mezereum. Mezereon. February Daphne. N.O. Thymelaeaceae.

**CLASSIFICATION** Daphne mezereum is placed in the medium-sized family Thymelaeaceae, which comprises mainly shrubs as well as some trees, lianas and herbs. The family is found in both temperate and tropical regions, but more diverse in the Southern Hemisphere and especially well represented in Africa. Many genera are found in the Pacific Islands. There are four subfamilies. Most genera belong to the subfamily Thymelaeoideae, including the Australasian genus *Wikstroemia* and the genus *Daphne* with 70 species in Australasia extending across Asia to Europe and North Africa.

**ECONOMIC USES** Cultivated ornamental shrubs from *Daphne*, *Dirca* [leatherwood], and *Pimelea* [rice flower]; incense from *Wikstroemia*; bark fibre for paper from *Daphne*, *Thymelaea*, and *Wikstroemia*; ornamental lace bark from *Lagetto lintearia*. In some Mediterranean countries the bark of *Daphne* species is used to stupefy fish. **DAPHNE** Many Daphne species come from Europe and various cool parts of Asia which makes them suitable candidates for temperate gardens, particularly when afforded a sheltered situation. Most species have fragrant flowers. Daphne mezereum is the European Mezereon, a deciduous shrub of 1.5 metres with clusters of pinkish to deep-purple red, fragrant flowers on slender, leafless branches in early spring. The flowers are succeeded by poisonous bright red berries, which are eaten with impunity by birds. The shrub thrives in deciduous forests in chalky humous soils and can be found in mountainous regions up to 2,500 metres. According to Linnaeus the berries were at one time used in Sweden to poison wolves and foxes. The whole plant is a powerful irritant to skin and gastrointestinal tract and has caused numerous fatal accidents. The sap affords a yellow dye. Like all Daphnes,



Frans Vermeulen

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