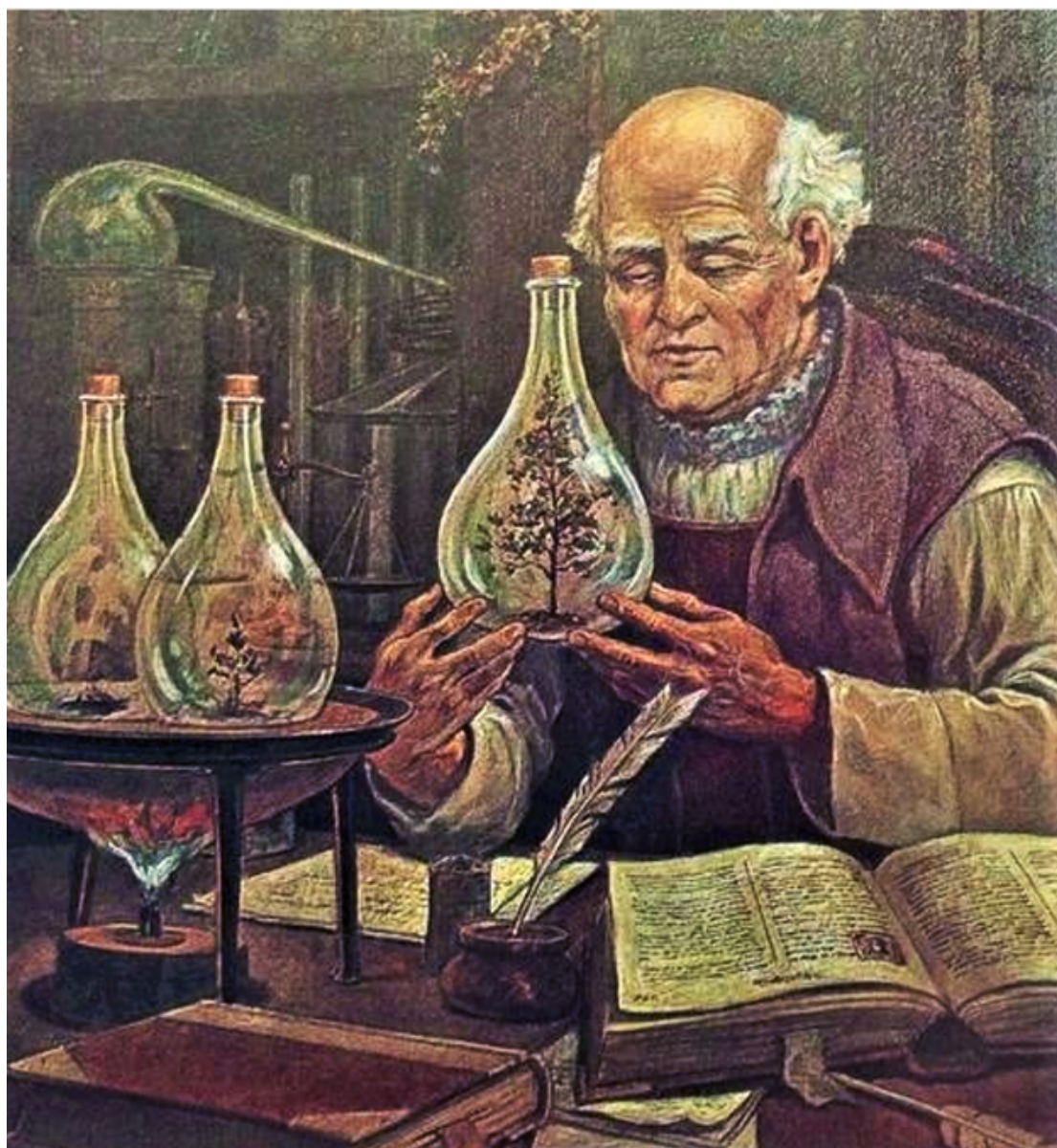




DELPHI
CLASSICS

Paracelsus
Collected Works

THE RENAISSANCE COLLECTION



The Collected Works of

PARACELSUS

(1493-1541)



Contents

The Books

Brief Introduction: Paracelsus

The Coelum Philosophorum

The Book Concerning the Tincture of the Philosophers

The Gradations of Metals

The Treasure of Treasures for Alchemists

Concerning the Transmutations of Metals and of Cements

The Aurora of the Philosophers

Concerning the Spirits of the Planets

The Economy of Minerals, elsewhere called the Genealogy of Minerals

The Composition of Metals

Concerning the Nature of Things

The Paracelsic Method of Extracting Mercury from all the Metals

The Sulphur of the Metals

The Crocus of the Metals, or the Tincture

The Philosophy of Theophrastus concerning the Generations of the Elements

The Archidoxies of Theophrastus Paracelsus

The Manual or Treatise Concerning the Medicinal Philosophic Stone

A Book Concerning Long Life

The Book Concerning Renovation and Restoration

A Little Book Concerning the Quintessence

Alchemy the Third Column of Medicine

The Labyrinthus Medicorum

Concerning the Degrees and Compositions of Recipes and of Natural Things in Alchemy

Concerning Preparations in Alchemical Medicine

The Alchemical Process and Preparation of the Spirit of Vitriol

The Alchemist of Nature

The Philosophy Addressed to the Athenians

Hermetic Astronomy

The Biographies

Paracelsus (1911)

Theophrastus Paracelsus (1913) by Leopold Senfelder

Paracelsus (1920) by Ralph Shirley

The Delphi Classics Catalogue



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Version 1

The Renaissance Collection

PARACELSUS



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Collected Works of Paracelsus



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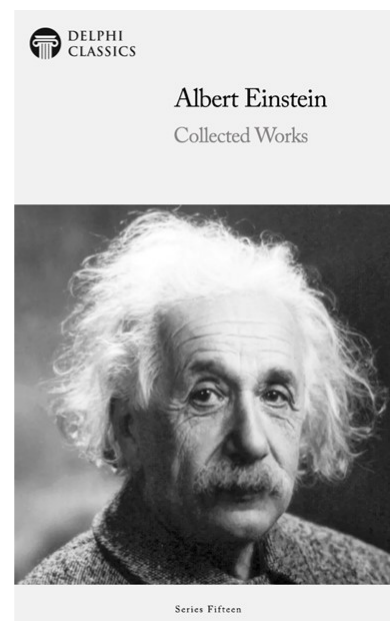
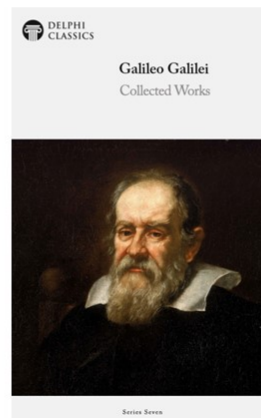
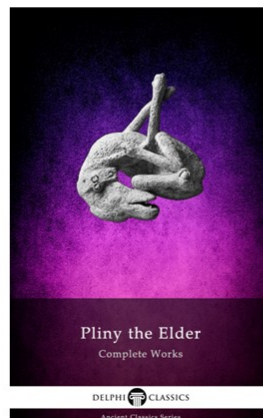
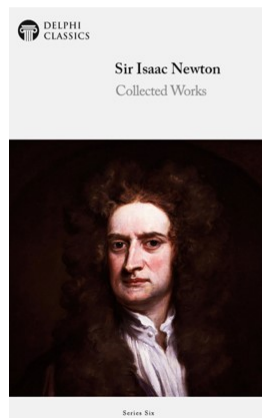
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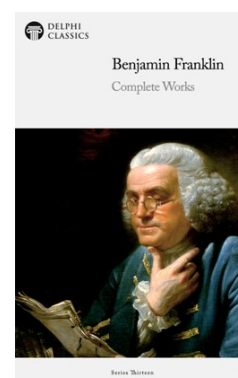
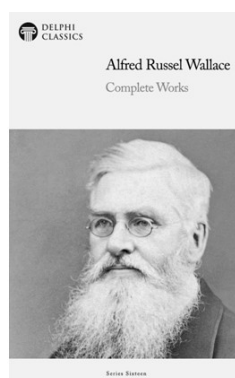
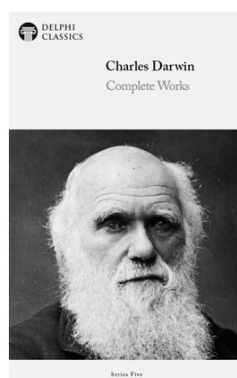
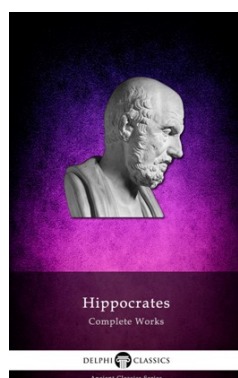


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The Books



Einsiedeln, a town in the canton of Schwyz, Switzerland — Paracelsus' birthplace



Einsiedeln Abbey, as depicted in a sixteenth century woodcut



Memorial stone at Paracelsus' birthplace near Einsiedeln

Brief Introduction: Paracelsus



A German-Swiss physician and alchemist that famously established the role of chemistry in medicine, Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim (later known as Paracelsus) was born in Einsiedeln, a town in the canton of Schwyz, Switzerland, in 1493. He was the only son of an impoverished German doctor and chemist. His mother died when he was young and shortly after his father moved to Villach in southern Austria, where Theophrastus attended the Bergschule, founded by the wealthy Fugger family of merchant bankers of Augsburg. His father taught chemical theory and practice at the school. Its students were trained as overseers and analysts for mining operations in gold, tin and mercury, as well as in iron, alum and copper-sulfate ores. During his studies at Bergschule, Paracelsus learned of metals that “grow” in the earth. He also observed the transformations of metallic constituents in smelting vats and was first introduced to the concept of transmutating lead into gold — a conversion believed to be possible by the alchemists of the time. These experiences gave Paracelsus insight into metallurgy and chemistry, which laid the foundations of his later remarkable discoveries in the field of chemotherapy.

In 1507 Paracelsus joined the many wandering youths that traveled throughout Europe in the late Middle Ages, seeking famous teachers at one university after another. It is believed he attended the Universities of Basel, Tübingen, Vienna, Wittenberg, Leipzig, Heidelberg and Cologne during the next five years, but the studious youth was disappointed with them all. By all accounts, Paracelsus upset the traditional attitudes of his teachers. “The universities do not teach all things,” he complained, “so a doctor must seek out old wives, gipsies, sorcerers, wandering tribes, old robbers, and such outlaws and take lessons from them. A doctor must be a traveller. Knowledge is experience!” He argued that the crude language of the innkeeper, the barber and the teamster had more real dignity and common sense than the dry Scholasticism of Aristotle, Galen and Avicenna — the most recognised medical authorities of his time.

Paracelsus graduated from the University of Vienna with a baccalaureate in medicine in 1510. He then attended the University of Ferrara in northern Italy, where he was free to reject the prevailing view that the stars and the planets controlled all the parts of the human body. He received a doctoral degree from the University of Ferrara in 1516 and he is presumed to have begun using the name “para-Celsus” (above or beyond Celsus) at about this time. His new name revealed how he regarded himself as even greater than Aulus Cornelius Celsus, a renowned first century Roman medical writer.

After taking his degree, Paracelsus set out what would become many years of wandering through almost every country in Europe, visiting England, Ireland and Scotland. He was even involved in the “Netherlandish wars” as an army surgeon. Then, he journeyed to Russia, was held captive by the Tatars, escaped into Lithuania and went south into Hungary. His varied wanderings eventually took him to Egypt, Arabia, the Holy Land and Constantinople. Wherever he went, he sought out the most learned experts of practical alchemy, seeking to discover the most effective means of medical treatment and how to employ them.

Eventually, in 1524, Paracelsus returned to his home in Villach to find that his fame for many miraculous cures had preceded him. He was subsequently appointed town physician and lecturer in medicine at the University of Basel. Students from all

parts of Europe journeyed to the city to attend his lectures. He pinned a bold program of his lectures to the notice board of the university in June 1527, inviting not only students but everyone to attend. The authorities were furious with his open invitation. Three weeks later, in front of the university, Paracelsus reportedly burned the books of Avicenna, the Muslim “Prince of Physicians,” and those of Greek physician Galen.

Paracelsus reached the peak of his career during his time at Basel. While delivering lectures, he stressed the healing power of nature and denounced the use of methods of treating wounds, such as padding with moss or dried dung, which prevented natural draining. He insisted that wounds must drain, for “if you prevent infection, Nature will heal the wound all by herself.” He also attacked many medical malpractices of his time, including the use of worthless pills, salves, infusions, balsams, electuaries, drenches and fumigants.

In spite of these successes, by the spring of 1528 Paracelsus had fallen into disrepute with local doctors, apothecaries and magistrates. He left Basel and continued to travel for the next eight years. During this period, he revised old manuscripts and wrote new treatises. With the publication of *Der grossen Wundartzney* (Great Surgery Book) in 1536 he restored, and even extended, the revered reputation that he had earned at Basel, becoming wealthy and he was even sought after by royalty.

In May 1538, at the zenith of a second period of renown, Paracelsus returned to Villach again to find that his father had died four years before. Three years later, Paracelsus himself died (aged forty-seven) in mysterious circumstances at the White Horse Inn, Salzburg, where he had taken up an appointment under the prince-archbishop, Duke Ernst of Bavaria. The celebrity physician was buried in St. Sebastian’s cemetery in Salzburg and his remains were relocated inside St. Sebastian’s church almost two-hundred years later. After his death, the movement of Paracelsianism was seized upon by many wishing to subvert the traditional Galenic physics and his therapies became more widely known and used. The late sixteenth century saw substantial production of Pseudo-Paracelsian writing, especially letters attributed to Paracelsus, to the point where biographers find it almost impossible to draw a clear line between genuine tradition and legend.

Paracelsus was the first to connect goitre with minerals, especially lead, in drinking water. He prepared and used new chemical remedies, including those containing mercury, sulphur, iron, and copper sulphate, therefore uniting medicine with chemistry. In fact, he contributed substantially to the rise of modern medicine, including psychiatric treatment. As a physician of the early sixteenth century, he held a natural affinity with the Hermetic, Neoplatonic and Pythagorean philosophies central to the Renaissance — a world-view exemplified by Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. Astrology was an important part of his medicine and he was a practising astrologer, as were many of the university-trained physicians working at that time in Europe. He devoted several sections in his writings to the construction of astrological talismans for curing disease.

Paracelsus’ approach to science was heavily influenced by his religious beliefs. He upheld that science and religion were inseparable and scientific discoveries were direct messages from God. Consequently, he believed it was mankind’s divine duty to uncover and understand the entire divine message. He also believed that the virtues that make up natural objects were not natural, but supernatural and existed in God before the creation of the universe. Due to this, when the Earth and the Heavens eventually dissipate, he believed that the virtues of all natural objects would continue to exist and simply return to God. His philosophy about the true nature of the virtues

is reminiscent of Aristotle's concept of the natural place of elements. To Paracelsus, the purpose of science is not only to learn more about the world around us, but also to search for divine signs and potentially understand the true nature of God. He regarded medicine as more than just a perfunctory practice. To him, medicine was a divine mission, and good character combined with devotion to God was more important than personal skill. Therefore, Paracelsus encouraged physicians to practice self-improvement and humility along with studying philosophy to gain new experiences.

Paracelsus revolutionised medicine and science by bridging alchemy with therapeutics, rejecting ancient medical dogma and pioneering the use of chemical and mineral remedies. He established core toxicology principles, famously stating that the dose determines whether a substance is a poison or a cure (the dose makes the poison).



An etching of Paracelsus, 1538



Paracelsus received a profound humanistic and theological education from local clerics and the convent school of St. Paul's Abbey in the Lavanttal, southern Austria.



In c. 1515 Paracelsus gained his medical doctorate from the University of Ferrara, in the Emilia-Romagna region of northern Italy.



The Louvre copy of the lost portrait of Paracelsus by Quentin Matsys

The Coelum Philosophorum



OR, BOOK OF VEXATIONS

Translated by Arthur Edward Waite, 1894

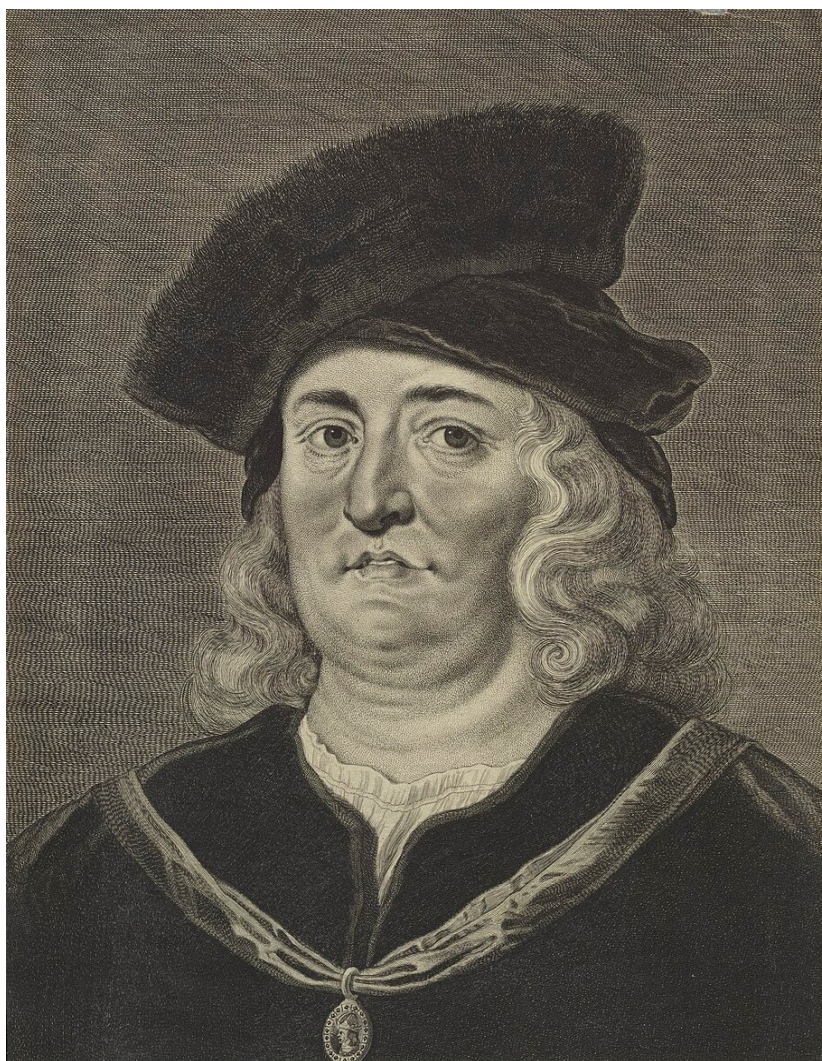
CONTENTS

THE COELUM PHILOSOPHORUM

THE PREFACE. OF THEOPHRASTUS PARACELSUS TO ALL ALCHEMISTS
AND READERS OF THIS BOOK.

PART I. THE SEVEN CANONS OF THE METALS.

PART II. CERTAIN TREATISES AND APPENDICES ARISING OUT OF
ENDNOTES



Engraving of Paracelsus by Pieter Van Sompel, c. 1640



End of Sample