

Mercurius

In order to understand Mercurius the patient, one must understand Mercurius the element. Vermeulen gives an excellent historical account of the metal and explains its properties and essence in good detail. Scholten helps us see how Mercury fits into the periodic table of elements and how the patient and remedy can be viewed in relation to other elemental properties within the rows and columns of the table. Materia Medica is plentiful in provings and symptoms regardless of whose collection we read, and other sources really help to solidify the image Mercurius presents: its essence, or its 'soul' (Vithoukas, Sankaran) as well as its progression from health into pathology.

The metal is a liquid at room temperature, unlike any other metal, and is the densest liquid known (nearly fourteen times the density of water). At this density, its surface tension is so great Mercury has the ability to support the weight of wood, stone, and other metals (such as iron or lead) floating on its surface. In its pure form, it does not tarnish at room temperature, instead maintaining a brilliant, bright silvery-white surface unspoiled by blemish – so highly reflective it will provide a precise, vivid, intense image back. Mercury is an ingredient used to make the coating on glass to create mirrors (older mirrors actually provided a better or deeper image (but a very slightly tinted one) than newer manufacturing processes that use less or no mercury). Putting the coating of mercury oxide on the front of the glass makes fine, quite expensive mirrors, as the image is unspoiled by the layer of glass and any distortion it may cause (this type of mirror is used in hand-crafted kaleidoscopes and for other fine crafts because of its absolutely perfect image). Pure mercury does not adhere to other surfaces and even though it is a liquid, it does not 'wet' those things it contacts (with the exception of precious metals). Unlike water, which will splash, disperse, wet what it contacts, and remain dispersed, Mercury will disperse into tiny droplets when splashed about, but gather itself back into a 'whole' just as easily. Most metals can be molded, but Mercury is the exception. It will not be molded

nor is it easily handled or contained at room temperature. Attempting to pick up a droplet will simply disperse it into several droplets and it will escape grasp. Most contaminants will actually float on its surface and will not be absorbed. In solid form (frozen), it can be easily formed and even cut with a simple knife.

Mercury is very stable in water and air, and it does not react with alkalis or acids (with the exception of Nitric Acid in concentrated form). Compared to other metals, Mercury is not a good conductor of heat. It is, however, a great 'bridge' for electricity and is used in switches for thermostats because it will immediately open or close the circuit *without adhering to the electrical contacts, which are typically leaded*. Mercury expands readily with heat and as it heats up, will begin to oxidize (tarnish). As a vapor, it is in its most toxic form as an odorless, colorless gas. Mercury's obviously ready response to heat and cold makes it the perfect substance for use in thermometers and barometers (a small amount of metal will only be contained in a sealed tube of glass in temperate heat, however. If over-heated, it will expand and break the glass). Mercury will easily form alloys (amalgams) with metals, particularly precious metals, and is used in this way to mine for gold and silver. Mercury is also used for lighting (described as a "cold, but chemically affective" light, mercury vapor lamps give a greenish-blue hue void of warmth), batteries, dental preparations, anti-fouling paints (as a preservative. These paints will not readily mildew or easily decay), and to ignite explosives. Mercury in the form of Thimerosal is also used as a preservative in many serums used for immunizations (sometimes with devastating affects for those susceptible to this toxin.).

Vermeulen provides us with this unique but very telling description of the metal: "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 twirl it around in a bowl, it continues to twirl for almost half an hour." He also says of it, "It gives itself over to other metals" but otherwise "adheres to nothing in its surroundings." "Quicksilver is for the world of metal what water is for

the earth.” Scholten writes that its name, Hydragyum (watery silver, or quick silver), describes its tendency to scatter away in all directions. Romans gave the name ‘Mercury’ for its quickness (After the cunning and resourceful Mercury, god of merchants, travelers, and thieves, whose qualities are said to have been “Slippery, dazzling, totally uncontrollable,” but also “the divine inventor of magic, writing, and the spoken word.”). In other cultures, Hermes – messenger of the gods who led men astray, is said to have possessed the properties of this fluid metal. He was the “great transformer” – whatever he touched with his caduceus turned into gold. “Wily and charming, a thief, cattle-rustler, a bringer of dreams, a spy by night, a watcher at the door.” He was “the god who marked the boundary but who crossed all boundaries – the god of mystery as well as its unraveling.” These qualities of myth and metal will help us to understand Mercurius, the patient – the Hermes man as Vermeulen calls him, the constitutional type of the human thermometer.

As a medicinal substance, Mercury is among the oldest. It has been found in tombs that date back as far as 1500 BC. It was discovered to be effective in the treatment of syphilis, but its toxic side effects sometimes had drastic consequences. The saying “One night with Venus stood a lifetime with Mercury” comes from this period of time when syphilitic patients were treated with Mercury vapors to combat the disease.

Let us think about the Mercurius patient first “at room temperature” or as “normal” (in a balanced state). The Mercury child will be as bright and lively as the metal in its pure form. The child will walk early, talk early, and be on the move early – inquisitive, interested, curious, and more than likely just as difficult to contain! The child will be quite precocious, showing “a genuine interest in everything and everyone.” Chasing this child and keeping up with it may provoke a feeling like that of trying to nail Jello to a tree. Like the metal, the child will easily scatter and may be off in many different directions *without boundaries*. Vermeulen tells us the child may make up stories, invent excuses, cross the line into habitual lying, and may have

'sticky fingers' taking what attracts him (after Hermes – keep in the mind the picture of “slippery, dazzling, and totally uncontrollable,” the god of thieves, a cattle rustler). The child will not observe boundaries and needs to be taught and often reminded. The child may be more adult-like, perhaps appearing flirtatious, engaging, very intense, and sensitive. This type of child will have very deep feelings that will not show on the surface, and has an intrinsic caution and reserve about expressing deeper feelings.¹ On the surface, one may see quick excitability and irritability (scattering in many directions) followed by an ability to regain composure (returning to itself as easily).

As a teen, Mercury is more scattered, explosive, energetic, and rebellious (will not be contained, will not be molded) – all of the bright qualities of the metal with the additional excitability of hormonal changes (increasing beyond room temperature, perhaps!). The Hermes Man, in a state of health, keeps his quick, bright mind. This person readily grasps the significance of ideas and situations, and is very quick to act on intuition or his sense of things (as though getting “the temperature” of a situation is enough to move forward). This person is energetic and always on the go; “trying to pin him down is difficult” if not next to impossible (the image of quicksilver). This person will “succeed at his work because he is fascinated by it,” but the type is also an opportunist and does not necessarily play “by the book” (“the bringer of dreams,” and “the god who sets but crosses all boundaries.”). As an adult, this person may still be as scattered and again as composed as the metal is able to be. He (or she) will not attach well in relationships, instead preferring to be more fluid and on the move (with the winged feet of his Roman likeness; unless, perhaps, with an Aurum or Argentum – and in this case may be

¹ Imagine my complete delight and intrigue over discovering recently in reading [The Morning of the Magicians](#), that not only did the ancient Alchemist use Mercury often in his crucible, but he is said to have completely sealed his experiment in a box fashioned out of quartz at precisely the right reactionary moment (the moment it produces a miniature duplicate of the Universe in its luminescent vapors) – this seal, called a “Hermes” seal, was to have completely closed off the container, making it airtight and intrusion tight, and it is from this we get the term “Hermetic” sealing for modern manufacturing – a kind of packaging seal whose integrity permits dramatically extended shelf-life of beverages, including prepared milk. It is this kind of ‘seal’ that keep the feelings of the Mercurius patient hidden from view.

inclined to “give himself over” to create an alliance, similar to the alloys previously mentioned with precious metals – this would be very interesting to study!).

According to Vithoukas, the course of disease with the Mercurius patient is from the skin, to mucous membranes and eyes, to spinal column (and thus the nervous system), and finally overtaking the brain. This would suggest that the patient, at some point in his life, might experience the characteristic skin lesions and/or infections of the mucous membranes of the type notable in Mercury poisoning. Suppression of skin and other infections begins the slow process of driving deeper pathology in a Mercury patient. This is very gradual and the progression of pathology can take place over many years, which can make Mercurius difficult to identify unless the general theme is understood well. Once “the thread” is understood, however, there can be no mistaking the need for this remedy.

Vithoukas suggests that the key to this remedy is a “lack of reactive power coupled with an instability or inefficiency of function.” In Mercury, the defense mechanism is weakened to the point that the organism becomes *unstable and wavering in all its functions*. This patient is sensitive to everything (a human thermometer) and is aggravated by nearly everything. The system cannot adjust and cannot regulate itself – in other words, it has lost its thermostatic control! As the mind becomes affected, the patient may complain of a “noticeable slowness of mind, a kind of stupidity.” No longer the quick comprehension – there is now a sluggishness (no longer quicksilver). The patient may be “slow to answer questions; slow to comprehend” yet also experience a hurriedness and restlessness that is inefficient and unproductive (moves about much but accomplishes nothing).

Then develops a scattered impulsiveness, with an inability to keep the mind together to concentrate in a single direction. There is no longer strength for concentration – there is scattered action, the patient tries to respond to everything, and is therefore inefficient and

incapable of completing anything. Gibson describes this as “instability on all levels” and states the patient has “no fixed reference point” (is scattered in all directions like the little droplets.).

Eventually, there is a susceptibility to every kind of impulse – to kill, to commit suicide, to strike, smash things, even to kill a loved one. But this is not easy to detect, as the patient is able to control the urges. In this state, the patient is also very closed, withdrawn, and cannot share the internal information. Accompanying this is a fear of making the information known, and the patient becomes very paranoid – everyone is viewed as an enemy. The harder the patient tries to control this (a form of suppression), the weaker the patient becomes until the brain “goes soft.” This is described more as imbecility than insanity due to the total lack of reaction (completely disengaged and unreactive). “Its weakness is of an unstable type, not of a prostrating kind.” The term “Mad as a Hatter” came from the occupational hazards of hat-making, which used a chemical process involving mercury for turning animal fur into felt, and a good picture of this can be seen in the “Mad Hatter” character in Alice in Wonderland (who is a slurring, spitting, salivating, scattered, certifiable nut-case in the story – truly a mad man who acts foolishly, irrationally, is easily incited to offense and anger, etc.).

From Morrison we learn the Mercurius type in illness will be withdrawn and introverted, with very strong internal emotions seldom shown on the surface. This patient “feels different than others” and has an instinctive reserve about expressing himself. Strong internal emotions may take the form of impulses, so strong as to have an impulsive desire to strike or even to kill an offending person, including loved ones – but that these intense feelings almost never revealed to others. And from several sources there is noted a tendency to “adapt to surroundings as a chameleon.” It is important to note that this does not indicate “adaptability” in a Mercurius type (as they are most unable to adapt to changes, whether in temperature or environment), but this is more indicative of the “reflective” properties of Mercury, in that the

patient will reveal to his audience a simple reflection of themselves (or what they want to hear or see), thus keeping the private truth and image of themselves hidden away.

As Vitthoukas indicates (and can be seen from the seemingly endless list of symptoms), there is an “overwhelming mass of data – myriad symptoms.” The key to recognizing Mercurius is in the main themes of the metal:

- A lack of reaction with almost all other substances.
- Mechanical instability – a human thermometer, may run “hot” and “cold” and can “flip like a switch” and is quite sensitive to change. Cannot find balance (no reference point). Weakness and debility is associated with reactivity to changes.
- Many things aggravate.
- Not much ameliorates (sixty-two references in Kent’s Repertory that aggravate, and only 8 that ameliorate (and 5 of these have to do with rest or lying down!) (Morrison).

What may appear to be conflicting themes are opposite ends of the “thermometer” and manifestations of the various properties of this elusive, “bizarre” metal. When the essence is understood, it is easy to see how the rubrics “mind, coward” (the cold, contracted, withdrawn end of the thermometer) and “mind, revolutionary” (the hot, explosive, scattered, expansive end of the thermometer) can both describe states of Mercurius.

Following is a sample list of the many symptoms that may (or may not) be present for this patient. If the simple principles above are kept in mind, it is not too difficult to see how they fit the Mercury picture:

- Reflect and adapt environment (like a chameleon)
- Difficult remedy to spot – reflects what it thinks you want to see
- Internally hurried, slowness in acting; or hurried and impulsive without thinking; has an all or nothing mentality – a revolutionary.
- Extremely closed; fear being attacked from behind; everyone is an enemy
- Needs to create order (because internally very disordered).
- Wants everyone to know and keep his or her place
- Seclusion
- Emotional instability
- Memory loss
- Sleeplessness
- Restlessness
- Anxiety that could drive him far away
- Almost irresistible desire to travel away to a distance

- Lack of self-confidence
- Easily embarrassed
- Inconsiderate, detached
- Prone to agitation, irritability, anger, and aggressive behavior
- Impulsive insanity but more imbecility
- Personality changes
- Memory and speech problem (word articulation and retrieval)
- Irrational fears
- Suppression of any type of discharge will serve only to aggravate further
- High perspiration to little exertion (large response to little stimulus)
- Great aggravation from suppression of discharges of any kind
- Tendency to chronic suppuration
- A stalemate with infection – which allopathic means drives to a deeper level
- Ulcerations that the body does not have the energy or power to heal
- Gums break down, loss of teeth, offensive pockets of pus
- Stomach is upset by much; even the slightest disturbance provokes salivation
- Excessive salivation and difficulty swallowing
- Steadily weakened – once attacking the nervous system, there is an instability in hands – like a Parkinson's tremor, where the hands seek stability but cannot find it
- Tremors are prominent
- Fine tremors of fingers, hands, arms, occasionally eyelids, lips, tongue, or whole body
- Muscle weakness
- Chronic otitis media, pharyngitis, and stomatitis.
- Stomatitis
- Metallic taste in mouth; foul, putrid, offensive smell of discharges; sweetish and penetrating; permeates the whole room. Once smelled, cannot forget this odor.
- Pink Disease (Acrodynia) in babies - lesions of the skin on hands and feet, swelling of extremities, pink coloration of hands, feet, cheeks, tip of nose
- Severe abdominal pains
- Suffers with poor resistance to infection
- Great anxiety in deeper cases of breakdown
- Patient will become hurried to get task accomplished for fear of losing mental ability
- Introverted, closed, emotionally intense and suspicious
- General aggravation at night
- Aggravation with both heat and cold; exquisitely sensitive to heat and cold.
- Night sweats
- Serious, pale appearance with blotchiness and translucence, like marble
- Tongue imprinted with teeth; metallic or putrid taste in mouth, offensive breath, excessive salivation; gingivitis
- Acute or chronic pharyngitis
- Craves bread and butter; aversion to butter, meat, fat.
- Aversion to sweets
- Worse for changes in temperature and environment
- Never done sensation with stool, particularly diarrhea
- Glands swollen, induration; hardness of inflamed areas
- Tendency to ulcerate – particularly throat, nose, mouth, and lower limbs
- Tendency to formation of chancres, pus; abscesses burn and sting; yellow-green discharge

“Every organ and tissue of the body is more or less affected by this powerful drug; it transforms healthy cells into decrepit, inflamed, and necrotic wrecks; decomposes the blood, producing a profound anemia.” --Boericke

“In pathology – he will be a trickster, a con artist, a shyster, imposter, a creative thief. May be drawn to what is sacred, mysterious, afterlife, divine; potential to become a guide of the souls, a seeker of meaning.” --Vermeulen

“It is worth exploring the subtle differences between the mercury compounds, even though early Materia Medica indicates little difference. They are subtle, but different.” --Scholten

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