

Keys to the Stone

Some Common Symbols in Alchemical Texts and Images

baths: cleansing; dissolving a solid in a liquid

black cow: black or purifying matter

black raven/blackbird: a black mixture

bone of whale: a white mixture

child: offspring of the king and queen, the result of their marriage or union; a naked child symbolizes the innocent soul; a child crowned or clothed in purple robes signifies salt or the Philosopher's Stone



crown: completion; perfection of a metal

dragon/serpent: fire; the dragon in flames is a symbol of fire and calcination (breaking down a substance by heating or burning it); dragons with wings represent the volatile principle (mercury); dragons without wings represent the fixed principle (sulfur); a dragon biting its own tail is the ouroboros and signifies the fundamental unity of all things



eagle: volatilization and air

egg: the sealed vessel of creation

hermaphrodite (half man/half woman): conjunction; the union of two opposites

king: man, solar consciousness, and gold; the red king is sophic sulfur (considered the seed of gold); the king united with the queen symbolizes conjunction (the joining of two opposite natures)

lion: raw matter and acid; red lion is the red acetate of lead in crystalline form; green lion is the green acetate of lead in liquid or crystal form; black lion represents carbon; the winged lion is mercury or sophic salt



ouroboros (a serpent biting its tail): completion

queen: woman, lunar consciousness, and silver; the white queen is sophic mercury (considered the quintessence of metals); the queen united with the king is the operation of conjunction (the joining of two opposite natures)

stag: the soul

trees: the process of transformation

whale: water

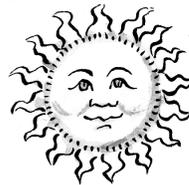
wolf, grey wolf: stibnite, an ore of antimony

Metals Used by Alchemists

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antimony: wolf, grey wolf

gold: sun, king, perfect sphere, Leo the Lion, Sunday



silver: moon, queen, white rose, crescent, rain cup, Cancer the Crab, Monday

iron: Mars, shield and spear, Scorpio the Scorpion and Aries the Ram, Tuesday

mercury: Mercury or Hermes, caduceus (twined serpents on a staff), Virgo the Virgin and Gemini the Twins, Wednesday

tin: Jupiter, lightning, Pisces the Fish and Sagittarius the Archer, Thursday

copper: Venus, hand mirror, Taurus the Bull and Libra the Scales, Friday

lead: Saturn, old man carrying a scythe or hourglass, Capricorn the Goat and Aquarius the Water Carrier, Saturday

Properties of the Alchemical Principles

sophic sulfur: symbolized by the red king or red rose

sophic mercury: symbolized by the white queen or white rose

sophic salt: symbolized by the ouroboros, the stone, and the astral body

Alchemical Elements

air: spirit into the manifested world; hot and wet; sanguine

earth: manifestation, birth, and material creation; cold and dry; melancholy

fire: activity and transformation; hot and dry; choleric



water: cleansing and purification; cold and wet; phlegmatic