

# the A n d r o g y n e

The Androgyne is the visual representation of Primordial perfection; wholeness; the unconditioned state; autonomy; paradise regained; the reunion of the primordial male-female forces; the union of heaven and earth, king and queen, the two becoming ONE, the all-mother and the all-father. In its symmetrical simplicity, representing the joining of opposites, we find a very complex meaning beneath. Alchemists view the

"Great Work" as the producing of the perfect androgyne, where mankind is restored to wholeness.

This symbol never varies far from the male-female figure or the two-headed face of a crowned king and queen. Another visual incarnation shows a red man and his white wife.

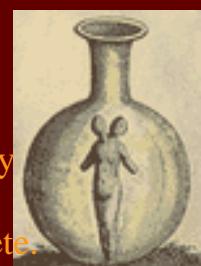
With this picture, one sees again the united male and female principles whose reunion was considered the purpose and end of



alchemy, and the pinnacle end of

Symbols representing this earthly unattainable unity among the gods are: the androgynous Zervain, Persian God of Limitless Time; Greek mythology has Chaos and Erebus as being neuter, Zeus and Heracles are often dressed as women; in Cyprus there is the bearded Aphrodite; Dionysos(Bacchus) has feminine features; the Chinese God of Night and Day is androgynous and the perfection of the androgyne is also represented in the well known symbol of the yin-yang (also in yin-yang "Spiritually Endowed Creatures"), the Dragon and Phoenix, which can all be yin or yang or both. Hinduism has the shakta-shakti and certain other divinities, most well known being Siva, who are depicted physically as being half-male, half-female.

Even in the act of love, the union created ultimately remains incomplete. The constraints of the human body stop us short of a full merging. Thus many major spiritual and



human achievement. This picture is from Mylius' 17th century alchemical treatise, *Philosophia Reformata*.

In Jungian

psychology, the androgyne makes use of the [animus](#) and [anima](#) archetypes.

In many

cultures these two appear as symbols of fertility, as well as being symbolic to endless life renewal. Taken separately on an esoteric level, man and woman symbolize incompleteness: each barren and unfruitful, one half

separated from a preexistant whole. One gets the thought that there once was a universal being, who at one time was cleaved in

two, and forever after was

doomed to suffer the pain of separation. Longing always to be reunited with the other half, this

being is never able to become whole in the pure definition of the self which was perfectly experienced before.

From the center picture, we see the androgyne represented as it relates to alchemy. Again we see that the union of opposites is the principle related here, and this is the purpose of alchemy and of human endeavour.

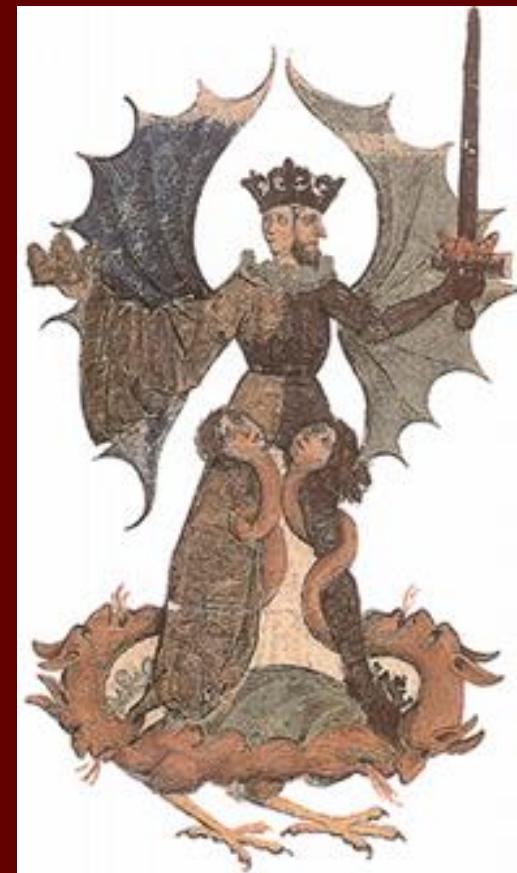
Some believe that life can not fruitfully exist without

adversity, and this human aspect is depicted in this symbol's composition. It stands atop a dragon - a serpent with bird's feet - symbolizing its dominion over the earthly elements (land, sea and air). The four heads of

the dragon entwining the legs of the hermaphrodite character represent these four elements, (fire, air, water, and earth).

The union of the opposite principles, male and female, create a visual connotation further emphasizing the hermaphrodite. Alchemists see as well the primal elements of sulphur and mercury, the former being known as, "that which burns," and the latter as,

"that which is volatile." Here again is the union of opposites, seen this time in alchemic notions. The androgyne is also wearing the crown of perfection.



occult traditions teach that the only way of approaching this type of purest wholeness is within the self. This is achieved by reconciling the male and female principles within us, which are the opposing forces of the active and passive. It is an interesting notion that even in Western tradition, Adam himself was at one time hermaphroditic until Eve was separated from him.

Other symbols which represent the androgyne(androgynous) are: the lotus, palm tree, cross, arrow, anchor, dot-in-circle, transvestism, serpent, scarabaeus, and even the bearded women. In the very beginning before the Great Mother, the Primordial Mother, there was the *Tellus Mater*, who was a-sexual or androgynous.

