

MOUNTAIN OF THE ADEPTS

Peter Bindon, FRC



In the following article, former Grand Master Peter Bindon helps us to ascend the “mountain of the adepts” and examines some of the symbolism of this drawing from Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries. The version of this image shown above was hand colored by H. Spencer Lewis.

Several illustrations that contain collections of symbols clustered around a mountain can be found in alchemical and Rosicrucian texts. The first thing that springs to one’s mind concerning the central dominant image is that mountains are symbolic of an ascent in which effort is needed to reach a particular goal. It is interesting that these symbolic diagrams never seem to have their summit in the clouds, indicating that the goal to be

reached is clear and can be distinctly seen or perceived. Such is the goal of the Rosicrucian adept.

The diagram comes from the *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer* (*Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*), first published in Altona, Germany, in 1785, so the ideas contained in the diagram are only about 240 years distant from our time. Despite the fact that we are far more advanced in material things, our spiritual and mystical

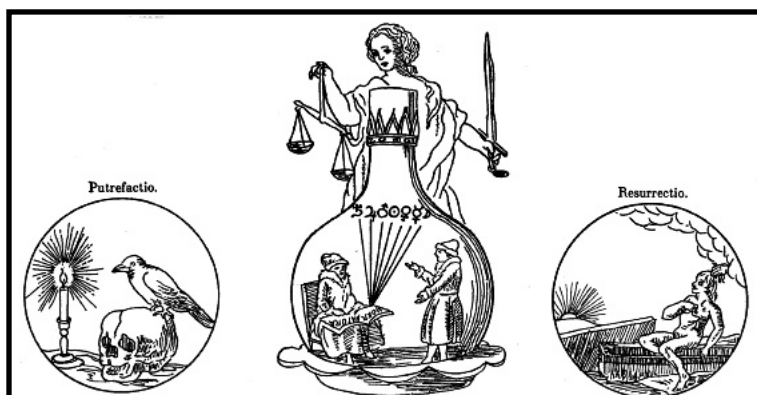


development may be lagging behind that of our ancestors. There are many reasons for this situation but for now, we return to the “mountain of the adepts” and our own quest for spiritual advancement. I am certain that you wish to follow your instincts in searching out the meaning of the symbolism in this diagram, just as the hoodwinked men searching “in the dark” and the hunter are doing at the foot of the mountain. We will examine only a few of the more obvious symbols.

Before one can even attempt to scale the mountain, the wall symbolic of false doctrines and beliefs must be overcome. Guarding the gateway through this wall is the alchemical protector, thought by the alchemists to be Boaz, the great-grandfather of the biblical David. While above an alchemist plants the tree of the sun and the moon (which bears the Philosopher’s Stone as its fruit) another tree has already borne its fruit, symbolized by the house built on strong rock foundations. Notice that each time the main celestial bodies, the sun and the moon appear, they are in pairs. What might this suggest, particularly when they are accompanied by the alchemical symbol for mercury? Of what is the rabbit rushing to its burrow symbolic? We could ask the individual meaning of each of the many symbols in the diagram in this way, but this quest would not bring us to the goal that the artist desired.

Let us assume that the ultimate goal of the Rosicrucian student using this diagram as a meditational mandala is union with the Cosmic. The goal appears as an orb, a symbol of the universe that is three-dimensional, has mass and can be defined by sensory perceptions. The orb is crowned by a symbol for the King of heaven, the Cosmic influence that is not materialistic and cannot be perceived in the same manner as the symbolic orb. To attain Cosmic Consciousness, the student treads a zigzag path that begins at the lower left with the hoodwinked seekers and proceeds through the hen, to the dragon, the house, the tree of potential, the fruitful tree, the house to the orb and beyond. On this journey, various other symbolic manifestations are encountered.

The lion, the eagle and the crow are most obvious, but why is there a second tower with a dark gateway? Can the seeker be assured that a Golden Dawn awaits the setting of the Silver Moon? I encourage you to take a few minutes on a few occasions to ponder the symbolic journey depicted in this diagram. As the well-worn cliché reminds us, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Alchemical and other mystical diagrams surely contain many more, as they generate different ideas for each individual that contemplates them. The encouraging aspect to such diagrams is that although the artist may have intended the viewer to understand a particular message, there are no wrong answers!



Another drawing from Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians, open to your interpretation.