

Aurum

Argentum

Ferrum

Cuprum

Magnesium
carbonate

Phosphorus

Thuja

Lac caninum

In this new series of masterclasses, I will be considering eight major remedies from a symbolic, mythological and homeopathic perspective to better penetrate the unique genius of each substance and reveal its emotional, psychological and spiritual healing power. Studying homeopathic remedies in this way opens the mind and heart to the mysteries of life and the cosmos and imprints the healing images at the deepest level. The use of the words he or she in these articles refers to the male or female principles present in all of us and is not related to gender. Certain remedies are more conveniently spoken of as male, for example Aurum, and others as female, for example Cuprum, however, when their characteristics match the picture of the patient, they are suitable for the treatment of either gender.

by David Lilley

Argentum metallicum

SILVER – THE ELEMENT



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Silver symbolism

Just as gold is regarded as the metal of the sun, so silver is perceived as the metal of the moon. In this relationship it belongs to a symbolic sequence linking silver to the moon, to water and to the female principle. In consequence, silver became an attribute of moon-goddesses, particularly of Greek Artemis (Roman Diana), and of queens. Gold, the active, male, solar, diurnal, fiery, hot principle, is the contrasexual counterpart of silver, the passive, female, nocturnal, watery, cold principle. The energy of gold is yang, whilst that of silver is yin. Gold radiates, silver reflects. The Latin word for silver

– argentum – comes from a Sanskrit word meaning white and shining. The lustrous sheen and glistening brightness of silver may be likened to the sparkling of pure light through clear water, crystal, the flashing brilliance of a perfect diamond or the gleams and glints of dawn dancing on a dew drop. This imagery is consonant with unblemished purity, innocence and chastity in all its forms. Hence silver also symbolises a clear conscience, pure intent, sincerity, open-heartedness, honesty, lack of prejudice and loyalty. It possesses the hallmark of class, quality and nobility together with the dignity of queenship.



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Wisdom and intellect

In Christian symbolism silver represents an aspect of divine wisdom, the wisdom of reason, and is primarily, but not exclusively, related to the intellect and the mind and is cerebral and logical, whilst gold represents the wisdom of feeling and is primarily related to the emotions and the heart and is intuitive and inspirational. In both archetypes problems may develop due to lack of coincidence between heart and head and between feelings and thoughts, leading to loss of wisdom, confusion and stress, producing anxiety and phobia in silver and pessimism and despair in gold. Its lunar nature makes silver a symbol of reflected knowledge, which is acquired coldly and logically by patient, intellectual application over time, requiring focus, concentration and exercise of the memory – all of which fall under the positive influence of Argentum or Argentum nitricum (silver nitrate).

However, Taoism saw the moon as the eye of spiritual knowledge in the darkness of ignorance. The moon and silver are linked to occult knowledge, psychic powers, clairvoyance and prophetic dreams. Esoteric philosophy, mysticism and magic often fascinate the Argentum mind. However, naïve gullibility can cause them to be swayed by dubious doctrines. They need to keep their feet on the ground. The silver “etheric cord”, which during life connects the body and the soul, is visible to psychics. At the time of physical death this cord is severed, and the soul passes on to a subtler dimension. Argentum, like Phosphorus (the light-bearer), can ease the passage of the terminally ill; it can aid the birth of the soul from one dimension to another.

Shadow silver

Despite its gleaming exterior, silver has a dark side. In ancient times this precious metal was already treasured for the intrinsic value inherent in its beauty, malleability, comparative scarcity and resistance to corrosion. Used in the coinage of many cultures, it came to symbolise the object of all desires, “filthy lucre” and the progressive decay of conscience that these cause. Its most negative association is as the symbol of Christ’s betrayal by Judas for “thirty pieces of silver”. To “cross a person’s palm with silver” implies an act of bribery and corruption. Silver is thus emblematic of deception, guile, dishonesty and especially fallen innocence! Negative silver will sacrifice principles for a price. This aspect of the archetype, which is a perversion of its qualities, is two-faced, deceitful, slippery and elusive, sheds crocodile tears and cries “wolf”. It can be cold, indifferent and ruthless. This vulnerability to loss of scruples is metaphorically revealed in the properties of the metal. Although silver retains its white lustre for decades in pure, dry air, when exposed to air containing sulphur its surface blackens with a thin layer of silver sulphide. In the polluted atmosphere of great cities this tarnishing is inevitable. Here, sulphur embodies the ways of the world and their subversive influence upon the innocent and the unwary (silver); it also symbolises fire and brimstone – hell or Hades! The toxic action of silver reveals a similar, dark energy. Prolonged or repeated exposure to silver dust or fumes causes a blue-grey staining of the skin, mucous membranes, eyes and internal organs. This condition, known as “argyria”, develops slowly, over 20

years or more, but once present persists. It symbolises the tarnishing of the soul by materialism.

The purifier

By contrast, in its undivided state, the pure metal is not toxic to highly organised life forms. Silver jewellery may be worn next to the skin with impunity. Silver wires, plates and pins can be inserted into the body without fear of toxic reaction or rejection. Colloidal silver has healing properties. It is hostile to the lowest, most primitive, parasitic and pathogenic organisms that flourish in the dark; it prevents their reproduction. The ancients would plunge white-hot silver into water to purify it. As an emblem of purity and unsullied virtue, the collective unconscious vested silver with power against the forces of evil. It was believed that, apart from a stake through the heart, only weapons forged from pure silver could destroy creatures of the night, such as vampires and werewolves, which paradoxically were empowered at the full moon, the time when silver is most powerful. The noble metal reputedly possessed such antipathy to these malevolent beings that a silver mirror would fail to reflect their image.

Art

The greatest amount of silver on the planet occurs in the waters of the ocean, although in highly diluted solution. This is curious when we consider that the ancients associated the metal with the moon, water and the tides. Silver is rarely found in pure native state, unmixed with other substances, and even pure silver ores are extremely rare. When virgin silver does occur, it prefers to manifest itself in plant-like rather than mineral-like crystalline forms: wondrously delicate and dainty shapes, resembling fern-fronds or moss; wire-like threads, or round lumps gathered together like bunches of grapes. Viewing these exquisite art forms of nature, we cannot doubt the powerful feminine energy residing within this lustrous moonbeam metal. Taking their cue from nature, artists through the ages have fashioned silver into some of the most beautiful and valuable objects in the world. The silver-being is aesthetically attuned, highly artistic and possesses a passionate urge to create or to perform and to be praised for their creations and their performances. They bring to their work an exacting perfectionism that aspires to excel and to be appreciated and admired as exceptional, unique and the very best. Their creative spirit can

express itself through any of the art forms – through literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, dance, oratory, fashion, photography, theatre and architecture. Some are conservative and adhere to formal and classical forms of artistic expression; others are avant-garde, adventurous, innovative and different, often at the cutting edge of new developments in style and mode.

Moon metal

Apart from its shining brilliance, silver possesses remarkable physical properties which are reflected in the characteristics of its archetype. Silver is the most malleable and ductile of all metals other than gold. Due to this extraordinary pliancy and plasticity, a mere gram of the pure metal can be drawn into a wire well over a kilometre in length, and it can be beaten into silver-leaf more tenuous than the finest tissue. Its acquiescent suppleness invites the skill of the silversmith lovingly to shape it into works of art. Within its metallic hardness it harbours a hidden, fluid state, which renders it susceptible to lunar forces. Patterns of silver salts on filter paper are markedly changed during eclipses of the moon. Silver stimulates the generative capacity of higher plants, especially at the full moon.

Understandably, the light of the “silvery moon” exerts an irresistible pull and influence upon the Argentum individual, particularly the female, and never more so than when shimmering upon the waters of lake or sea. It touches them spiritually, sentimentally and romantically and arouses feelings of reverence, nostalgia or longing. Consciously or unconsciously, the moon is their celestial partner; hence it is rare for an Argentum to feel immune to its silent, persuasive eloquence – its call to transform, even as it does through its phases, and to transcend the limitations and rigidity of the mind and the ego. They, who feel this resonance, are uplifted, illuminated and yearn for the spiritual harmony and tranquillity it symbolises. Others, living in conflict, are at odds with its serenity, uneasy beneath the scrutiny of its penetrating gaze, and experience it as malevolent – “she robs the stars of their silver and hoards it for herself like a giant cretin hoarding treasure in her mouth. She sits there like a mindless ‘O’, a scream without sound ... she sucks up the darkness too, so that even the night cannot rest.” These are the poetic, yet anguished, words of a young woman cellist whose emotional distress yielded to the heal-

ing power of Argentum. Silver calms the nerves and restores equilibrium, its liquid energy diluting fear, grief, anger and humiliation and resolving stuck emotions and prejudices by bringing about a fluid state of the consciousness. Silver quells the emotions – it is the great tranquilliser!

Sensitivity

It has the highest thermal and electrical conductivity of all metals. Heat imparted to the end of a silver rod is immediately diffused throughout its length. By contrast, one may comfortably grasp one end of a lead pipe whilst the other end melts away. This responsiveness and lack of resistance to heat and electrical stimulation reveal an extraordinary vulnerability and sensitivity to external impressions; and so it is with the Argentum being. They are conduits for the feelings, emotions, joys and sufferings of the world. They have no boundaries, no defences to repel the swell and surge of energies about them. They are oversensitive to all external impressions. They often possess psychic awareness, fathom other dimensions and anticipate forthcoming events. They are acutely aware of ambience and atmosphere and intuitively pick up the “vibes” of people and places. These cues from their sixth sense are seldom wrong, warning them of insincerity and guile but unfortunately due to their impressionability, innocence and gullibility (soft, malleable, ductile), they may ignore these internal promptings and, like Pulsatilla, are susceptible to seduction by wishful thinking, persuasion and pretence. Equally, they are often indecisive, timid and yielding, not knowing whether they are coming or going, waxing and waning like the moon and just as changeable. They are very romantic, easily infatuated and like a “star-struck” lover may “moon” over some idyllic being – real or imaginary – often a star of the “silver screen”. Negative silver loves to wallow in emotion.

Dreams, phobias and fantasy

Silver, like the moon, presides over dreams, imagination and the fantasy life which in Argentum are rich and creative or fraught with dangers that terrify. The pale moonlight of their consciousness only half-illuminates their reality, causing shadows to loom large and menacing, drawing them to fearful, fanciful conclusions. Their phobias are many: heights, narrow places, crowds, anticipatory fears, the anxiety of public performance, social fears and dread of disease (especially cardiac) – any of

which may produce panic attacks, with anxiety felt in the pit of the stomach, palpitations, insomnia, and an intolerable, constrictive feeling, as if their clothes were too tight, intensified while walking in the open air, causing them to walk ever faster. High, perilous places may exert a frightening, lunar-like pull, drawing them towards the brink and causing an awful impulse to jump. They even dream of heights and of falling, and also of being pursued by enemies and being at the mercy of evil beings: devils and powerful, “raging fiends” (vampires and werewolves). So vivid are these dream events that, no matter how bizarre, they waken with the feeling that they actually happened and the impression of reality persists.

The flute

Although so soft a metal, silver’s inward nobility is attested by its pure ring – purer than any other metal. Silver flutes, bells and triangles produce tones of particular clarity, purity and resonance. This is unusual, for soft metals, such as lead, generally lack tone and sound dull and muffled when struck; they greedily absorb and impede sound. A silver instrument permits the sound to go forth freely and unchanged, keeping nothing for itself, imparting only its own perfection. Likewise, the positive archetype is generous, sincere and innocently open. The silver flute embodies much of the nature of Argentum. A flautist explained to me how sensitive, “aware”, responsive and temperamental a flute is. It must be cherished and made love to. It requires tender foreplay to bring it to performance pitch and even then the quality of response is empathetically attuned to the mood and soundness of its lover. To reach the heights of tonal expression –



Photo: istockphoto.com/Adele de Witte

all must be well. In the embrace of the untalented, she becomes recalcitrant and for a time afterwards petulantly resistant to the coaxing of her beloved.

The voice

Often silver-beings have a passion for music, song, dance, drama and the use of words. The orator is “silver-tongued”. This describes the eloquence, persuasiveness, fluency and expressiveness of a gifted speaker. The voice is often the instrument vital to Argentum’s performance and artistry – as singer, orator, actor, preacher, lawyer, teacher or politician. Many are highly talented and like the brilliant, gleaming metal, shine and entrance. But there is often self-doubt: can they live up to their own previous high standards? Their strength becomes their weakness; they place themselves under ever-increasing pressure and eventually their emotions, intellectual ability and voice may give in. Argentum is a wonderful remedy for the exhausted, burnt-out performer, whose confidence fails, and for a voice injured through excessive use. Apart from using their voices professionally, Argentum individuals, like Lachesis, usually love talking and indulge this inclination at every opportunity. They are intelligent, interesting and astute, quick and clever with words and skilled in either argument or debate. When discussing art or some other creative activity or interest, they tend to get carried away by their passion for the subject and are forgetful of their audience. The more excited they become the more rapidly they speak. When highly emotional and distraught, the mind becomes erratic, jumping rapidly from one subject to another in a random and haphazard way. Argentum suits those who are ever in a hurry and driven by time. They are scrupulously punctual and often arrive unnecessarily early for an appointment.

Maiden of the silver bow

The goddesses of the moon are three-fold, personifying the three phases of the lunar cycle – the waxing, full and waning moons. Their attributes are inter-linked and mystically associated with silver (Argentum). Artemis, the virgin maiden, is the youngest element, represented by the crescent moon and the delicate fronds and threads of virgin silver; Selene is the mature aspect, imaged in the full moon and the grape-like pat-



Photo: Peter Willibrigden Art Library

Artemis the Huntress, known as the “Diana of Versailles”, Roman copy of a 2nd century BC adaptation of a 4th century BC original attributed to Leochares (marble), Louvre, Paris, France

terns of silver crystals; Hecate is the crone, symbolised in the moon’s waning and dark phase and the darkness of silver. Artemis was the twin sister of Apollo. He was the Greek Sun God and as such related to gold (Aurum), the metal of the sun. They were the divine children of Zeus, the Sky God, and Leto, a titan goddess. Leto’s pregnancy was harrowing. She was relentlessly pursued by the savage, she-serpent Python, which Hera, the jealous consort of Zeus, had set upon her. Finally, brought prematurely to labour through her distress, she gave birth to Artemis, who, as is the way with goddesses, rapidly grew to womanhood and was able to act as midwife to her mother through the prolonged and agonising birth of her brother.

Divine midwife

It is said that her mother’s agony made Artemis personally averse to sex, men, marriage, pregnancy and childbirth but filled her with a desire to help women in all forms of distress and travail. She became a birth-goddess and bringer of fertility to man and beast and a protector of all young creatures. She, like Apollo, was an unerring archer and carried a silver bow, symbol of the crescent moon. Her silver arrows were thought to bestow health, ease birth pains and assist delivery, or bring a speedy and painless death. Her healing power, hence that of silver, is linked to the moon, which through its influence upon the watery realm exercises control over the

rhythms and phases of plant and animal life in general and of women in particular, balancing the hormonal control of the menstrual cycle, enhancing fertility and facilitating labour (Caulophyllum). Argentum is of particular value at times of transition – at puberty and menopause (onset and loss of fertility) and at birth and death (the coming and passing of the soul).

Militant feminist

Artemis is depicted as a tall, lithe, young woman, with lovely, strong, almost manly features, clad in the short tunic of an athlete or hunter and accompanied by a band of nymphs and a pack of hounds. She is elusive and unapproachable, ever disappearing into the wilderness of forest and mountain, which she loves to roam. Hers is the spirit of the wild horse: proud, free, defiant and untamed. Her virginity represents the active, achievement-conscious, talented and competitive female energy that exists wholly independent of and untouched by the need for a man’s support, approval or permission. As an archer she is decisive, poised, focused and intent on her goals. One day, Actaeon, a young hunter, came upon the goddess and her attendant nymphs bathing naked in a mountain stream. Thinking himself unobserved, he tarried to watch. Artemis divined his presence and instantly transformed him into a stag which, attempting to flee, was dragged down and torn to pieces by his own hounds. The myth allegorically reveals how the goddess’s anger is aroused by and demands retribution for the transgressions of the male against the inviolability of nature and the sacred feminine.

Amazon woman

The spirit of Artemis, Goddess of the Wilderness and Lady of the Wild Things, permeates the heart of Argentum. She has an intense love of nature, the planet, infants, children and wild animals. A girl who is passionate about horses is often an Argentum. She and her band of like-minded women are active in organisations created to promote women’s rights, to protect animals and children, to support the victims of abuse and to bring the perpetrators to justice. It is she, Amazon-Maid of the Moon and Goddess of the Hunt, whose silver energy to this day fights against the skulking predators of the night.

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