

Rosicrucian Heritage



September 2018, Vol 25 No 2



Experience
Cosmic
Consciousness

The Rosicrucian Order

YOU ARE one with the universe, and share the beauty, harmony and symmetry of all things. The conscious purpose and direction of the Cosmic instructs and directs everything, and you can learn the direction and purpose of a life meant just for you.

The psychic self is an innate Cosmic faculty of conscious volition that all humans possess but few understand and can use. If you want more in life than just your daily hard work..., if you are seeking a way of accomplishing the most fulfilling you can for the rest of your life..., if happiness, peace and justice for all is what you seek..., then learn to attune with your deeper self, and experience the Cosmic Consciousness that you already possess deep in yourself.

If you enjoy this magazine, you have an open mind, and this message was meant for you! To find out more about the Rosicrucian Order, visit our website www.amorc.org or contact us for a free copy of our introductory booklet "*The Mastery of Life.*"

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Cover spread

Dawn: Re-discovering our true bearings.



SOLITUDE

*by Christian Bernard
Imperator of AMORC*



VERY OFTEN, people have confided in me, saying: “*I feel alone*”, “*I feel left out*”, “*I don’t fit in*”, “*I’ve been abandoned*”, and the like. Irrespective of whether we’re extroverted or introverted, we do not experience solitude in the same manner. Some say it does not exist, others that you



get used to it. For my own part, I experienced a form of solitude as an only child, and am rather introverted.

But things have been different for a long time, and I am delighted to have a large family nowadays, or rather two large families, for I am a child of the Rose-Croix and consequently have thousands of brothers and sisters, friends and fellow travellers. I am never alone. You can have this same feeling by being aware that you belong to the great family of humanity. The Latin origin of the word solitude is “*solitudo*” which is defined as: “...*situation of a person who is alone, momentarily or lastingly. Solitude is a state of abandonment, of separation, that a person feels in contrast to human consciousness or society.*”

In daily life, solitude can be very distressing, indeed more distressing than anything, resulting as it sometimes does from a tragedy, a handicap, a final or temporary separation from someone dear, or from being abandoned. The famous 19th Century French poet Alphonse de Lamartine wrote: “*You are missing one single person and the whole world is empty!*”

There are people who are genuinely isolated, and others who, despite meeting lots of people on a daily basis and having lots of contact at all times, feel terribly alone. This emotional isolation is therefore all in the mind, and it is vital not to get some sort of pleasure out of it, and not to build invisible walls that have no door or window, between us and others. People of course imagine that these walls protect, but this is not so, it is quite the contrary. With no exit to the outside, they suffocate us inwardly, prevent us from releasing our emotions, and confine us in an unhealthy atmosphere, noxious and harmful to our emotional and physical health.

Our language has wisely sensed the two sides of being alone. It has created the word ‘loneliness’ to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word ‘solitude’ to express the glory of being alone. -- Paul Tillich

We can see that those who wallow in deep solitude are seldom cheerful, communicative and responsive to others. You will tell me that they may of course simply be thoughtful and deeply meditative people. In their own way they may also be very happy, have great inner wealth, be content with their own company and so on. I have no doubt that this is possible, and I know people like this. However, this solitude may in some cases be masking a discontent, even a tendency to what we term depression, a permanent



We can see that those who seek deep solitude are seldom cheerful, communicative or responsive to others.

obscure night. If this solitude includes silence as well, it may be confirming what I said previously. This is by no means always the case though, and it is also true that an excess of chattering and expressiveness can be symptomatic of a huge feeling of solitude or of an inner emptiness.

When I said ‘solitude is holy,’ I did not mean by solitude a separating from or a complete forgetting of people and society, but a withdrawing where the soul may commune within itself. -- Alfred De Vigny

People of course imagine that these walls protect, but this is not so, it is quite the contrary.

It is well known that we have to be good company to ourselves, but this does not exclude being good company for others as well. Your response may be that generally people are far from pleasant and one cannot have too much to do with them, and that their all too obvious faults cause you more annoyance and distress than they do interest or pleasure.

What is the source of this feeling of solitude that we feel, that often leads us to say we are always alone? Is it because as we incarnate, we are leaving a family, the great Universal Soul, with regret? Is it because our biological mother, in ejecting us from her body, forces us to become an independent being within a few moments, alone from that point on, launched out to discover another universe? Or is it the weight of responsibilities and duties required of us as a single individual manifesting?

In solitude are we the least alone. -- Lord Byron



When we have overcome an obstacle and triumphed over an ordeal, we are proud to have done it on our own, with no-one else's help. A personal feat is often a better experience and feeling than a group success. From birth to death, there constantly recurs this basic principle: individuality, to which is added responsibility and often, guilt. The latter may of course be collective, and connected to a nation or a group, but most often it is our own.

Coming back to this feeling of solitude that we all experience to varying degrees, we can say that it arises most often at difficult times when we are sad or in pain. It is accompanied by a feeling that others do not understand us, by the notion of not being appreciated for the actions and work we have carried out, of struggling all alone, of being neither supported nor helped..., in short, of being alone, utterly alone, in carrying a heavy weight and bearing the woes of the world on our shoulders.

Feeling we are not understood by another person or by other people, or..., as the popular expressions go, 'preaching in the wilderness,' 'not getting heard even by shouting,' and so on..., leaves a profound feeling of solitude in the human heart. It will most probably be this way for a

long time to come yet, for this is part of our human nature, it is linked to our ego. Readers of these reflections..., remember that you are not alone!

I will take time to be alone today. I will take time to be quiet. In this silence I will listen..., and I will hear my answers. -- Ruth Fishel



Not being heard, even by shouting, leaves a profound feeling of solitude in the human heart.

Passing Time

Anonymous

THERE IS a soft sadness in passing time, a melancholy such as touches autumn days when leaves fall and nature is filled with winter's imminence. "Time's winged chariot" is ever at our backs and seems to hurry near. Not that one 'feels' older. Inside, the same ego looks out and ponders the world. But when old friends come by, the streaks of grey, the lines around the eyes and the stoop of a spine once erect, make plain that what has happened to them must be happening to us.

It is strange that we should all grow old and that time affects what we feel to be our inmost self. Maybe we judge too much by the grey and the lines and too little by the feeling.

After the first stab of realisation of passing time, we may observe that friends have not really changed; underneath, they are the same recognisable personalities

despite the repeating cycles of the years. Let the grey, the colours and the lines be forgotten. Let experience, patience, tolerance and peace be the intangible marks we recognise.

And if there be a soul, these things will surely be of it. If we take with us what we do *not* leave behind, then these things will march forward with us. Why go back a day? Why should the river not press to the sea? Why should spring not come again or the flower return to the seed; or the leaf to the branch; or the egg to the nest? Down the incarnations, greeting old friends, why should we not say:

*Why you are here, and you have not changed! The flower has left its seed and has returned. The intangible that ever **was** still **is**. Your beauty enhanced in repetition makes you lovelier than ever.*





by *Kenneth U Idiodi*

*Grand Administrator for English speaking West Africa
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Sanctum Musings



Safeguarding our Vitality

OUR VITALITY has no mass, no weight. It is non-material, yet it can be felt and is expressed within our material reality. To understand our vitality, we must consider it from both a non-material or spiritual perspective and also from a material point of view. The material world impacts very strongly on our five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling. For many people, the material world dominates their existence almost completely. In such people, their sense of spirituality is so greatly suppressed or subdued that they doubt or even outright reject the notion of having a spiritual nature. And such people we refer to as “materialists.”

If we take a really close look at the material world however, we see at a microscopic level that it is decidedly not as concrete as we would otherwise believe. When matter is broken down into atoms and their subatomic particles, we find that there is more space than ‘substance’ in it. What appears to us as solid is nothing more than the vibration of particles in space; particles so infinitesimally small that we don’t really know what their actual nature is. In fact, do they actually even exist?

The realisation of the ephemeral nature of the material world has made some to reject its existence and seek to establish their total reality in the spiritual realm.

Such people may withdraw from society and become recluses, some even committing suicide in a final and tragic rejection of their experience of corporality. A recluse, in totally denying the material world stands in polar opposition to the materialist who disbelieves the existence of the spiritual realm. Between these two polarities lies the Rosicrucian view which postulates that although we are indeed spiritual beings, we do have material experiences in a material world. Simply put, we are spiritual beings having a material experience, albeit a very temporary one. It is therefore necessary to work in harmony with the laws that govern both the material and spiritual worlds if we wish to have a fulfilling experience of life.

The Vital Life Force

Our physical body is the instrument through which we function in the material world. We should take care of the physical body because the better the condition of the body, the better our material and spiritual experience. From a Rosicrucian point of view, the physical body is in optimum condition when the Vital Life Force which animates it is in a state of perfect balance.

Rosicrucian teachings explain that the Vital Life Force





The Sun sends out a powerful solar wind of magnetic plasma which fills the vast space between and around the planets, holding them in a magnetic bubble that serves as a protective envelope against all external radiations from space.

has two phases; one of an active nature and the other of a passive nature. The balance of these two phases is required for a full expression of the life force and health. Breathing is necessary for sustaining life in the body. However, it is not just the air that we breathe with its material composition of nitrogen, oxygen, and other gasses that brings about life. These are inanimate gasses. Rosicrucian studies reveal that there is a mysterious element of life contained in the air that we breathe which comes from the Sun. This is the source of our vitality and much more.

To appreciate the importance of the Sun in our lives we just simply have to imagine what would happen if the Sun were to suddenly disappear. Life would not continue to thrive without the warmth, light, and other mysterious radiations that emanate from the Sun which is arguably the most profound symbol of divinity that can be found in nature. We see it every day and yet in many ways it remains an enigma. Scientists have observed that the Sun is far more than just a ball of fire in the sky. Several of its known characteristics have continued to baffle the scientific community.

For example it has been observed that the aura immediately surrounding the sun known as the corona

has a far higher temperature than its surface. This means, as you get into the Sun's atmosphere, the temperature decreases as you approach its surface. This is against the known laws of physics. Our planet Earth, along with the other planets of our Solar System, is protected by the Sun from the radiations that come from other stars. The Sun sends out a powerful solar wind of magnetic plasma which fills the vast space between and around the planets, holding them in a magnetic bubble that serves as a protective envelope against all external radiations from space. In other words, we are literally in the warm protective motherly embrace of the Sun which has remained surprisingly stable unlike majority of other stars which rather than remaining stable either rapidly expand or contract or behave erratically.

There is probably more to the Sun than we may ever be able to comprehend. The Sun is not only the source of our vitality; it is also the perfect symbol of vitality. When we are in excellent health, there is a certain radiance that emanates from us much like that from the Sun. However, to sustain the life force from the Sun and facilitate the expression of its various attributes it must be supported by other earthly energies.



The Human Body as an Energy System

The human body was created with the ability to draw upon earthly energies to support the life force in it and function on a daily basis. And it also efficiently distributes the energy within itself to its various organs and cells in order to effectively make use of the energy. The sources of energy that the human body draws upon include food, water, air and magnetism. When we become more conscious of our sources of energy, we develop more effective ways of absorbing our energy requirements from them.

As earlier stated, after absorption, the energy must be distributed. Energy absorbed by the human body without being effectively distributed, becomes available to foreign organisms in the body that prey on it. These organisms become strengthened at the expense of the body organs and processes which begin to malfunction under the pressure of the intruders. The energy distribution systems in the body include the bloodstream, the nervous system, and the endocrine system. These distribution systems must be maintained in an optimal condition of functionality. The human body is an energy system which in an optimum state absorbs energy, distributes it, and expends it with a high level of efficiency. This means a high output to input ratio with a minimum of waste.

Practices for Vitality

There are a few practices we can engage in and some that we should avoid to help us maintain a high level of vitality. To keep the physical body in good condition, it must be regularly exercised. There is a tendency in modern times for more and more people to have a sedentary life style. The problems of sitting for too many hours are well known to medical science and are becoming well known to the public. It has been medically observed that a sedentary lifestyle increases the risk of developing diabetes, hypertension, colon cancer, depression and anxiety, obesity, and weak muscles and bones.

To avoid this, we should take hourly breaks from the sitting position to get up and do some basic stretch exercises for about two minutes before we return to our seats. Exercises have a very positive impact on our blood circulation and nervous system which as earlier stated have important roles in energy distribution within the body. It is recommended that we do at least twenty minutes of exercise every day. Going on a brisk walk is one of the best all round exercises that we can do.

The food we eat also has much bearing on

our vitality. This is in terms of the quantity and quality of the food we eat as well as the time of the day that we feed. Eating a meal just before retiring to bed at night to sleep is not a good idea. The hours of night sleep are most effectively used by the body for self-healing and regeneration. To give the body an additional task of digesting food during the night hours would detract from the revitalisation that sleep offers us. We should eat the varieties of food that provide the body with all the nutrients needed to function especially fruits and vegetables but avoid overeating as this would lead to overweight problems. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of contracting many illnesses, including diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. Our feeding should be at appropriate times and limited to the quantities that the body requires and the types of food that support good health.

Our vitality and health are also influenced by our thoughts and emotions. If we attend a musical show, drama, or any form of entertainment that we thoroughly enjoy, or go on an exciting outing with good friends there is often a feeling of invigoration after such an experience. Sometimes we can literally feel a tingling sensation flushing through our nervous system. This is an indication that the nervous system has been stimulated in a way that enlivens it thereby improving its functionality. The adage that *"all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"* could be a direct reference to the sluggishness of a poorly functioning nervous system that has been denied regular stimulation. We should therefore regularly allot some of our time for our entertainment as this will keep our nerves invigorated and thereby aid our nervous system.



Spending time with good friends and eating a variety of quality food help us maintain a high level of vitality.





To keep the physical body in good condition, it must be regularly exercised.

Apart from having an effect on the nervous system, the emotions also have a very significant impact on the physical body through the endocrine system which is made up of glands that produce and secrete hormones which regulate growth, metabolism, and many important functions of the body. We must therefore direct our thoughts in a manner that will generate harmonious emotions as often as we can to facilitate the smooth functioning of the endocrine system. We can do this by engaging periodically in mental exercises during which we consciously direct our thoughts in mentally creating the most uplifting conditions we are capable of.

This method is applied in a Rosicrucian meditation practice known as the *Celestial Sanctum Attunement*. In this attunement practice, the Celestial Sanctum is mentally created as the most sacred, serene, and beautiful place our imagination can conceive of. We then visualise ourselves rising into the Celestial Sanctum and resting there for a while. For the best results we prepare for the meditation by first purging our minds of all discordant thoughts as we drink a glass of water and wash our hands to symbolise our intent. We then sit down in a quiet place and begin with a non-sectarian prayer thus: *“May the divine essence of the Cosmic infuse my being and cleanse me of all impurities of mind and body so I may enter into the Celestial Sanctum and attune in pureness and worthiness, so mote it be.”* Then we commence with the exercise as previously described. When we feel inclined to end the exercise, it is brought to a conclusion also with a prayer thus: *“May the God of my heart sanctify this attunement of self with the Celestial Sanctum.”* The regular practice of the Celestial Sanctum Attunement has been found to be very beneficial in many areas of life including the maintenance of good health and vitality.

A curious aspect of our lives that affects

our vitality is that of interacting with other people. While some people have an energising effect on us when we interact with them, some others have quite the opposite effect; draining us of our vitality. These effects do not only occur when we are in the physical presence of others but also by psychic connection when on a distant phone conversation, or when engaged in chatting using, text messaging or other social media interactive platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc. Indeed, many have complained about the draining effect of social media on their vitality. This is because through social media, the number of persons that we psychically connect with is greatly multiplied increasing thereby the potential of experiencing a drain of vitality.

However, we must not regard those who drain us of our energy as “energy vampires” but rather realise that a natural process of energy equilibrium takes place as we connect with others in interaction. This may result in the flow of energy from one person to the other and back. Any outflow of energy will be regained in due course. However, energy outflows from the body can be reduced by bringing our hands together in interlaced fingers and placing them with the palms over the solar plexus while bringing the feet together. This can be done discreetly with a mental command to retain your vitality within your being. In the same vein, some environments energise us while some other environments drain us and the same principles apply as in that of interacting with other people.

It is important to always monitor our energy levels by making a mental note of our vitality in relation to our day to day activities. In this way, we can by association discover what to do, and what to avoid, for the maintenance of our vital strength. The internet is proliferated with websites that offer a variety of self-help practices that range from





psychological to spiritual practices. Some of these while promising to improve our lives, end up draining us of our vitality. Whenever we notice this, we must stop the practice immediately. The practice may be good for others, but if it drains your energy it is certainly not good for you.

If for example you are interested in metaphysical healing practices, you must monitor your energy levels and ensure you use a technique that does not compromise your vitality. In addition it would be worthwhile to build up your energy before and after your healing sessions. Our loss or gain of vitality is never a haphazard occurrence but rather occurs according to your activities in relation to the natural and spiritual laws governing the Universe.

Living Mindfully

The Rosicrucian student strives to live in harmony with the natural and spiritual laws of the Universe. Natural laws govern the works of Nature as it manifests around us and of which we are a part. Spiritual laws on the other hand govern the inner unseen dimension of our existence of which we are intimately aware of at all times even though we may not realise it.

These laws are established to maintain balance in the scheme of things and are totally impersonal. Within the laws are inherent provisions for every individual to attain self-fulfilment. To work in harmony with these laws simply means functioning in such a manner that takes advantage of these provisions. Clearly, it is essential that we know and understand these laws if we wish to work with them. And such knowledge and understanding comes to us through

personal experiences, research, study and our intuition.

When we realise that our thoughts, words, and deeds act as causes that set up a chain of effects that influence our experiences in life, we become very mindful of all we think, speak, and do. When as a result of our study of natural and spiritual laws, we are able to trace our present state to causes in the past we may then be able to project the likely outcomes of our present actions. The personal discipline of living a life of circumspection is achieved without much effort once we are convinced of the resultant effects of our lifestyle. It is not enough to be informed about the workings of a law; we must have its operation clearly demonstrated to us before we become convinced.

The demonstration of a law brings it to life in our consciousness which is why it is often stated that experience is the best teacher. However, it is fortunate that we can also learn from other peoples' experience so that we do not necessarily have to go through all experiences ourselves. To learn from other peoples experience we need to cultivate the virtue of compassion which is inherent in all human beings. The knowledge and understanding that we acquire ultimately leads us towards how to perfectly be ourselves.

Our vitality could be likened to our very existence; our very being. The more vital we are, the more our existence or being is expressed. For the fullest expression of our being at all levels of existence, it behoves us to take all necessary measures to safeguard our vitality. May our lives continue to evolve into the most vital expressions of the Light, Life and Love of the Cosmic within and around us.



Desiderata

by Susan Ayles

*Who was
Max Ehrmann?*



MANY READERS will be familiar with the thoughtful poem *Desiderata*, which is reproduced often on greeting cards, posters and in other contexts where a person might seek to send words of wisdom and comfort to another in need. For years the rumour has persisted that the words were penned in ancient times, hundreds of years ago. Indeed, they do have a timeless quality about them, with a quiet profundity seemingly as relevant now as in days of yore. But it was by error that they were attributed to an unknown author of, in or before the 1640s.

The oft-repeated gaff was the work, it seems, of one Rev Frederick Kates, a clergyman of St Paul's Church in the American town of Baltimore, Maryland. In 1956 the well-meaning rector included *Desiderata* in a collection of devotional material which he brought together for the use of his congregation. From Wikipedia we have:

The compilation included the church's foundation date: "Old Saint Paul's Church, Baltimore A.D. 1692." Consequently, the date of the text's

authorship was (and still is) widely mistaken as 1692, the year of the church's foundation."

The myth of its ancient date was born swiftly afterward, possibly because it lent an extra layer of charm and poignancy to the text to think of it written so long before. It then persisted to grow legs for the next few decades as more and more people became enchanted by *Desiderata*, Latin for "*things desired*", or "*to be desired*" or variations of like translation. The Rev is thought to have circulated only about 200 copies and yet it became one of the best known pieces to ordinary people who were not particularly literary, spiritual or mystical by nature.

In fact, the sage advice was penned in the 1920s by an American writer Max Ehrmann who was born the youngest of five children to Bavarian immigrant parents in Terre Haute, Indiana, on 16 September, 1872 and passed away in September 1945. Ehrmann's sensitive and sensible words give the lie to anyone believing that lawyers have no hearts, for a lawyer he was, setting up practice in his home town after gaining



an English degree from DePauw University, Indiana and then studying law and philosophy at Harvard University in the 1890s.

He spent two years as state's attorney in Vigo, Indiana, then worked in the family businesses of meat packing and overalls manufacture for 10 years, until he was 40. After that, he devoted himself full-time to writing and became prolific, acquiring the nickname Poet Laureate of Terre Haute. The website *desiderata.com* records...



Toward the end of his life, during an interview, he told a writer, "At DePauw, I contracted a disease which I have never shaken off. The disease was Idealism. I took it to Harvard with me where I studied philosophy. Because of it I did the thing in life I wanted to do..., writing."

During his life, Max Ehrmann contributed great thoughts to our literary lexicons, blending the magic of words and wisdom with his worthy observations. His deep and abiding concern over social issues are reflected throughout his many works. Such poems as "Complacent Women", written in 1918, and "Washington, DC!", written in 1924 about the oil scandals, are as relevant today as they were then. He searched endlessly for spiritual contentment, often turning to nature as in his poem, "The Noise of the City and Away." His philosophical writings are a search for social truth and peace, messages that never age.

He copyrighted *Desiderata* in 1927 under the opening line, "*Go placidly among the noise and haste*", which struck such a chord with the public that it has worked its way into being one of the best known phrases in the English language. The poem was recreated as an Athena poster, finding popularity with the thoughtful public. Later it became a favourite of the 1960s Flower Power generation which famously set itself in favour of love, not war. Singer Les Crane ran into a copyright hitch in 1971 when he set the words to music, winning a Grammy for *Best Spoken Word Record*.³ Having first read them on a poster he might have had a reasonable defence in assuming them to be in the public domain and not subject to copyright, but it seems he did have to

share the proceeds of his popular recording.⁴

Also in 1971 the poem was published without the Ehrmann family's permission resulting in court action against the publisher. The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in 1976 that copyright had been forfeited because the poem had been authorised for publication without a copyright notice in the 1940s and that the poem was therefore in the public domain. Fair game therefore to be

published and republished at will.⁴

Various famous people have been known to use the inspiring work for their own purposes. Actor Leonard Nimoy, Dr Spock in the hit sci-fi drama *Star Trek*, recited it on his 1968 album "*Two Sides of Leonard Nimoy*." Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau quoted it after losing his majority in a 1972 election, reassuring the nation that: "*The universe is unfolding as it should*." Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic hopeful for the American presidency, passed away in 1965 and was found to have earmarked *Desiderata* to be printed in his Christmas cards.⁵ US Army psychiatrist Merrill Moore wrote in 1942 to Ehrmann that he used the *Desiderata* poem in his therapy work, and also wrote to Ehrmann in 1944 suggesting that the poem should be bottled and sold as "*Dr Ehrmann's Magic Soul Medicine*."⁶

In 2010, Terre Haute honoured its literary giant with the unveiling of a life-sized bronze statue of him by artist Bill Wolfe, seated on a bench, notebook in hand. The sculpture is at the junction of Seventh Street and Wabash Avenue, a corner dubbed the "*Crossroads of America*" because it is the intersection of Highways 40 and 41, facing east-west and north-south respectively. At this spot, plaques carrying lines of the *Desiderata* are embedded in the footpath and the full poem is also displayed.⁷ So, that is the history set straight at last. Read now the text of Ehrmann's beautiful text, reprinted with all its quiet wisdom.

If only everyone were able to follow this humanist advice to accept themselves and others as they are, what peace they and the rest of the world would experience. As far as I know Max Ehrmann was not a Rosicrucian, but expressing sentiments such as these, I'm sure he would have been at home within the fraternity. Below then follows Max Ehrmann's famous poem "*Desiderata*", followed another equally edifying poem by him called "*A Prayer*."



Desiderata

by Max Ehrmann

Go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly, and listen to others, even the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble. It is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is. Many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love. For in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labours and aspirations in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world.

Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.



A Prayer

by Max Ehrmann

Let me do my work each day. And if the darkened hours of despair overcome me, may I not forget the strength that comforted me in the desolation of other times.

May I still remember the bright hours that found me walking over the silent hills of my childhood, or dreaming on the margin of a quiet river, when a light glowed within me, and I promised my early God to have courage amid the tempests of the changing years.

Spare me from bitterness and from the sharp passions of unguarded moments. May I not forget that poverty and riches are of the spirit.

Though the world knows me not, may my thoughts and actions be such as shall keep me friendly with myself.

Lift up my eyes from the earth, and let me not forget the uses of the stars. Forbid that I should judge others lest I condemn myself.

Let me not follow the clamour of the world, but walk calmly in my path.

Give me a few friends who will love me for what I am; and keep ever burning before my vagrant steps the kindly light of hope.

And though age and infirmity overtake me, and I come not within sight of the castle of my dreams, teach me still to be thankful for life, and for time's olden memories that are good and sweet. And may the evening's twilight find me gentle still.⁸

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Max Ehrmann





A Living Gift of Love

by Wim Barnard

MY WIFE has a certain 'weakness' for..., no, let me start again..., my wife has a great 'strength': she loves cats. In fact she adores all living creatures great and small, though especially cats. And they love her back with an intensity and devotion I can hardly begin to comprehend. In fact



life is fulfilled for her when her love and compassion is poured forth on disadvantaged animals of all kinds, and fortunately for me, she regards me as an 'honorary animal'.

One day she brought home a blind cat. It's the only one so far, but I'm sure there'll be more in due course. Her kindness towards animals has no limits, except occasionally when I point to the emaciated look on my wallet; for pets are by no means cheap to care for, and they are of course for life. Like our children, they grow up with us, mature with us, and share everything we possess. The children quickly came up with a name for him, Bumpy, no doubt because he bumped so often into the furniture.

I'm discovering that a blind cat offers an irresistible temptation for mischievous children. *"Let's see if he'll bump into the chair if we call him,"* cried my allegedly animal loving five year old son Dylan as he created an obstacle course. Screams of delight as Bumpy walked into several obstacles, shook himself, but good naturedly tried again and again to reach my calling son. Very cruel I thought and was about to issue a harsh admonition when Angela, my seven year old daughter lunged at Bumpy with pity, picked him up and sat down to have him all to herself. There he purred relentlessly as she stroked him into a curled up ball in her lap, and soon the two were sound asleep.

One particularly naughty friend just had to see whether the rule about cats always landing on their feet applied to Bumpy. So, holding him upside down over a bed, he let go. Why cats always seem to land on their feet I don't know, but before I could stop this next cruel experiment, we all learnt with a thump that blind cats do not land on their feet. They land on their backs or their sides, but never on their feet. Bumpy was not hurt for the bed was soft, but through repeated tries he never stopped purring for an instant! I suppose Bumpy might have the same sweet disposition if he could see, but our pets with

perfect vision have never been as good-natured as this wonderful little creature.

It's tempting to think that Bumpy may somehow be compensating for his disability by being extra good natured to ensure our favour, but that's absurd isn't it? I've seen in this small creature a soul as sophisticated in its catness as my soul could ever could be in its humanness.

Bumpy is a thing of beauty and love that has taught us all deep lessons in how to treat all animals, but for me at least, especially how to treat other humans too.

For any trouble Bumpy might be for us, his blindness simply caused him to try harder than the rest, and with the graciousness and good humour of a really 'old soul'.

It has never ceased to amaze me how beautifully he gets around despite his disability. His sense of hearing is acute and he pinpoints a flying moth with great accuracy before leaping into the air to catch it. I've never seen him succeed, but his playfulness as he springs happily and gracefully in the tall grass of the backyard makes me feel so small in comparison. Why can't I be so happy and grateful for life? After all, I can see. His patience and affection as he lovingly licks every speck of dirt from the paws of our messy Beagle is a thing of beauty and love that has taught us all deep lessons in how to treat all animals, but for me at least, especially how to treat other humans too. If Bumpy can be so good natured and forgiving, then we must rise to his level of evolution and do it too. Bumpy finds with ease the bedroom of whichever child he chooses to sleep with, and he can enter and exit through the kitchen catflap as though it weren't even there. Even when teased by naughty children, he remains composed, serene and patient, and never stops purring his love for them. He is a living gift of love, and to the fates that made this possible for me: thank you, thank you, thank you!

*Precious things always are hardest to find,
and valued things always are few.*

*Treasured things often are one of a kind,
and that's why there's only one you.*

Precious
Things



God of My Heart

by Ralph M Lewis
Imperator of AMORC
(1939 - 1987)



ARE THERE any people who do not have within them a concept similar to the Rosicrucian expression “God of My Heart?” Can any people conscientiously deny that there exists a Transcendancy or state of reality that is infinitely greater than themselves? Must they not admit that Being, the whole of reality, is infinite in relation to the human consciousness? Solipsists affirm that there is no reality beyond the human consciousness, that nothing exists other than the self. Yet, by the very fact of their personal existence, they refute their own



belief in this regard, for their very dependence upon externality for their existence is proof of their distinction from the self. No one thing is the whole; all things are part of it. However, is there just one “God of my Heart?” In other words, is there a *unity of understanding* of this Transcendancy, this Absolute, of which all things are said to consist?

Among people there is no universal concept or definition of the God of one’s Heart, that is, a common belief in a dynamic Supreme Power. We recognise instinctively, intuitively and rationally our subordination to the collectivity of all Being. However, we have always struggled to define it. What do we conceive its elements to be? Creativity, power, omniscience? A cosmic order, infinite and eternal? A Supreme Judge of all? Or perhaps all of these and more? Where do we derive these concepts that we attribute to this Transcendancy, the infinite reality in which we find ourselves? Is it not from within our own being? Have we not, through the ages, found in ourselves the qualities we attribute to this God of our Heart? Can we find other words or ideas to attribute to this Infinite All, other than the “human frames” or bodies that come with our mortal experience? Consequently, the God of our Heart and the concepts of that God held by all others, must be a construct of our minds; not the essential “essence” of it of course, but the mental image we make of that essence as we experience it.

All people therefore have a God of their Heart, though by definition it is not universally accepted by them. Different minds have come to agree on a definition

of this Infinite Transcendancy which they experience; it is intimate to them and their personal definitions therefore create a corresponding mental image. This concept then, appears so effective to them, emotionally and psychically, that they consider it an absolute truth. Consequently, they believe no other image can better portray the mystical experience which they have had and which is therefore to them God.

Different Conceptions of God

Yet there is a multitude of other individuals who have experienced this Supreme Essence as well, but mentally conceive it differently. To them, God is accepted with equal reverence and devotion, despite the fact that their individual concepts of this God may not have the same mental image as that held by others. Some feel that to

Yet there is a multitude of other individuals who have experienced this Supreme Essence as well, but mentally conceive it differently.

attribute human qualities to the God of their Heart is to demean God’s exalted nature. And there are others whom we recognise as being spiritually motivated, yet who believe that this Transcendancy lies beyond human comprehension, especially in its definition. In other words no mortal, finite mind can embrace fully the nature of the Infinite so as to declare it to exist in a specific form.

People who have a similar affinity of feeling and understanding have reduced their beliefs to sacred books which to them constitute the Divine Truth, born out of their personal enlightenment. But what of others who have the same elevation of spirituality, but whose construct and understanding of God differs? Are they wrong? Throughout history there have been, and still exist, many names for one’s personal God or Transcendancy that many have experienced: Zeus, Brahma, Logos, Apollo, Allah, Jehovah, Mithra and more. Is one person’s conception of God any less true or less in quality than another’s?

Admittedly, by certain relative standards, the teachings of one particular religion, which



Throughout history there have been, and still exist, many names for one’s personal God or Transcendancy.



are attributed to divine revelation from one god, may appear more morally exalted than those of another. But again, these varied moral standards are the products of human mind, inspired by mystical experience and a feeling of oneness with his or her God. There would seem to be a vast gap between, for example, the anthropomorphic concept of a God to whom humanlike qualities are attributed, and who may be accepted as a paternal being exhibiting such emotions as love and anger, a God who punishes and reproveth man, on the one hand...; and on the other hand, an equally spiritual concept of the Infinite had by those who consider God to be a Universal Consciousness far removed from the petty qualities and emotions had by humans.

This consciousness is presumed to permeate the whole of being, constituting a motivating power throughout the whole matrix of cosmic laws. If such people have reached this belief, this concept, through mystical experience, it is then to them the God of their Heart. Are we to condemn them as being wrong? Who can come forth and give evidence that one person's God is false? An individual's personal understanding and realisation of God may have the same effect upon that person, morally, as another individual's conception of God.

Ever Evolving God

Our culture has defined and redefined our image of the God of our Heart throughout the centuries. However, to deny any devout concept of a Transcendancy that was held throughout history because of its apparent primitive form is to fail to recognise the ever-evolving "God of the human Heart." To most people, the word God embraces the exalted qualities of the Absolute, for that is more easily understood. It should most certainly be used by all who find it to be the most intimate term for their comprehension of divine qualities.

Intolerance enters the picture when one set of believers think their definition of God is the sole truth and, in their fanatical zeal, persecute those whose spiritual image and experience of supreme Reality differs. The Rosicrucian Order is not a religion, but rather a cultural, mystical and philosophical Order. In its discourses and curriculum it has always used the term "God of our Heart" when the subjects of mysticism, ontology, Being, or the Absolute are discussed. And the term has always meant for each individual to accept as God the concept which is intimate to the spiritual feelings of the individual. Such is God to that individual, but by no means should this person's concept be the definition of God that all others must accept.

Sanctuary of Self

by *Ralph M Lewis*

Mystically, entering the silence often does not mean communing with the Cosmic or escaping in consciousness to another plane. It can and often does mean freeing oneself from all other realities except the paramount one with which one is concerned. It can mean intensive objective concentration on one important factor. In other words, it can consist of creating a mental world, perhaps for a few minutes, in which nothing exists but self and the problem at hand.

One can enter the silence so one is oblivious of one's surroundings and yet be using one's objective powers of reason, applying them to the matter at hand. True mystics feel unworthy of making appeals to the universal mind, of entering the silence of the Cosmic for the purpose of soliciting help, if they have first failed to exercise their Divine gifts of reason and the other mental faculties they were given at birth.

The occult principle of silence is to permit the soul to *hear without ears*. It is also to permit our soul to speak or commune with us by other means than that of the mouth. It consists of a complete submission of the will to the Cosmic mind, to hear that which the human ear cannot hear, and to speak through the soul rather than through the mortal self.



Mò Zǐ

FORGOTTEN TEACHER OF CHINA

by Allan Tullio

安居也，我無安心也。非無足財也，我
，眾人自易而難彼，君子進不敗其志，
彼有自信者也。是故為其所難者，必
其所惡者也。是故偏臣傷君，諂下傷上
之下。分議者延延，而支苟者諂諂，

NORTH CHINA 400 BCE, the gaunt, dusty man paused briefly and looked up at the royal palace looming before him. The finely dressed townspeople stared disdainfully at his tattered clothes and bloody, rag-wrapped feet. He pushed on, heedless of their stares, for now, after ten days and nights of walking, he had reached his destination. He

might yet stop the impending invasion, if only the king would listen to him. *"In war", he reflected "the calamity to the people and the world is tremendous. Yet the rulers enjoy doing it. This means they enjoy injuring and exterminating the people; is this not perversity?"*

His name was Mò Zǐ, and this was only one of many such missions of peace. In honour of his compassion,





The rough terrain of the state of Sòng.

wisdom and dedication to peace and service to all, he was known to his contemporaries as 'Master Mo.' His age was not unlike our own, a time of war and upheaval, a century that saw the map of China, a collection of warring states, redrawn many times as larger states swallowed up smaller ones. That period of China's long history was marked by political anarchy, constant warfare between competing states, and general social and moral degeneration.

MòZi's own birthplace, the small state of Sòng, was considered fair game by its larger neighbours, and the memories of a terrible time, centuries before, when the natives of the capital city were reduced to cannibalism by a long siege, lingered even into MòZi's day. Out of the strife and chaos of a dark night can arise an earnest desire for greater understanding, a desire to return to a constructive society based on the ideals of peace, justice, and harmony.

The great thinkers of that calamitous age sought answers to end China's long anguish. Amidst the violence and confusion of that paradoxical age there came into being the *"one hundred schools of philosophy"*, each one seeking answers to the burning questions of the time: *"How can incessant warfare be ended? How can lasting peace, happiness, and stability be achieved?"*

The Confucianist Answer

Confucius (551-479 BCE) was one of those thinkers who struggled with the great questions of how to reconstruct society. His answer was to convince the rulers of each state to emulate the wise and virtuous kings of China's deep and ancient past. The people would then emulate their own rulers and all would cultivate courtesy and kindness, respect for the elderly, veneration for the dead, and practise elaborate ceremonies and music.

The Confucianist system infused the political and social institutions of China with concepts of moral

order. Through a process called the *'rectification of names'* Confucius established a system of moral and ethical standards governing all actions in society. In the confusion of the 6th and 5th Centuries BCE in China, this new system of moral order was revolutionary, attempting to bring order out of chaos.

MòZi was born into the generation immediately following Confucius' death and was educated by disciples of that great teacher. As a child he learned by heart all the great books of China's rich intellectual past. He learned to deeply revere his parents and ancestors, to obey without question his superiors, to be courteous to all, but to love his own family more than anything else.

MòZi Questions the System

Even as a young student however, the inquiring mind of young MòZi began to reach out beyond Confucianism for answers to his many questions. While he revered Confucianism for its constructive qualities, he raised many questions regarding some of its particular concepts. He eventually came to the realisation that the Confucian ideal of 'partial' love, love of one's own family and country above all others, was part of the problem of interpersonal and international disharmony. *"All the calamities, strifes, complaints, and hatred in the world," he wrote, "have arisen out of want of mutual [universal] love."*²²

Thus universal love, love for all without distinction, became the heart of MòZi's message to humankind, the foundation upon which he hoped future generations would build an era of peace, security and happiness. Universal love was, simply put, the ability to *"regard the state of others as one's own, the houses of others as one's own,*



Confucius



*the persons of others as one's self.*³ MòZi became an itinerant preacher, travelling about the troubled countryside spreading his gospel of love. He attracted many followers like himself who were striving for peace and organised them into a closely knit, well-disciplined band, well versed in his teachings and prepared to follow him into danger, even at risk to their lives. And he did indeed put their lives and his own life at risk on many occasions.

On one occasion, MòZi learned that the large state of Chù was planning to invade his native state of Sòng. The king of Chù was urged on by an opportunistic court strategist who had designed a secret weapon called "*cloud ladders*." These, he was sure, would guarantee the invasion's success. MòZi summoned his courage and travelled to Chù, where he gained an audience with the king. The meeting was tense and the philosopher used all the arguments he knew in an attempt to dissuade the king from his plans: War is morally wrong, war is wasteful, war is destructive to both victor and vanquished, it is

War is morally wrong, war is wasteful, war is destructive to both victor and vanquished, it is against Heaven's will.

against Heaven's will. But all these arguments were to no avail, for the king was already convinced of the outcome of his aggression.

The Brave Philosopher

MòZi then changed his tactic. Taking off his belt, he laid it on a table and shaped the belt into a rough square, resembling the walls of a city. He then called upon the 'cloud ladder' strategist, Gongshu Ban, to attack his little 'city', while the philosopher would defend it against all the invader's stratagems, using a small stick as his only weapon. With the fate of his own state of Sòng hanging in the balance, MòZi skilfully turned back all attacks, completely frustrating his opponent.

Refusing to accept defeat, the embarrassed Gongshu Ban revealed: "*I know how you could be defeated, but I won't tell you.*" Master Mo said: "*I know what you have in mind, but I won't tell you either.*" The ruler of Chù asked what it was. Master Mo replied: "*Gongshu Ban thinks that if I were murdered, then there would be no one to defend Sòng... But in fact, three hundred of my disciples... supplied with all my implements of defence, are at this moment waiting on the walls of Sòng for bandits from Chù. You may murder me, but you can't get rid of them.*" The ruler of Chù said: "*Very well, let's give up this idea of attacking Sòng.*"⁴

And so it is said, Sòng was saved for the moment,

and the contingent of 300 of MòZi's followers waiting on the walls could be called back. However, it was their duty to remain ready to march at a moment's notice if war threatened. The brave philosopher's impartiality mandated that his disciples be ready to defend any state about to be unjustly attacked. If the king of Chù had called MòZi into service to prepare the defence of that state from aggression, he would have gone.

A Guiding Principle

Behind all of MòZi's actions was a single principle: *promote welfare; remove evil*. To do this he examined each situation with an eye for the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Today we would perhaps call this *utilitarianism*.

While MòZi's peace activism may seem contemporary enough for us, it was another of his ideas that startled later Christian missionaries arriving in China more than two thousand years after the philosopher's death. MòZi believed in a loving, universal god who watched over the world with great sorrow at his creation's unloving ways. This god, the foremost of the Chinese pantheon, was called *Heaven*, and Heaven he said, desires "*...people having energy to work for each other, those knowing the way to teach each other, and those possessing wealth to share with each other.*"⁵ In terms that seem to foreshadow the Christian message, MòZi concluded: "*Now Heaven loves the whole world universally. Everything is prepared for the good of man. Even the tip of a hair is the work of Heaven. Substantial may be said to be the benefits that are enjoyed by man. Yet there is no service in return. And they do not even know this to be unmagnanimous and unfortunate.*"⁶ MòZi urged that man return the service of his creator by following the *Will of Heaven* and loving all without distinction.

In MòZi's depiction of a loving creator god, he was unique in China's long roll of eminent thinkers. Indeed, he has been called China's first true 'religious' teacher, because he so closely approached what the western world recognised as religious thinking. But he was no monotheist. For MòZi and most other Chinese thinkers, the celestial realms were peopled by a vast assortment of deities and spirits worthy of respect, awe and sacrifice. Among his contemporaries, MòZi was more attentive to the invisible world than most others, though all agreed that pleasing and placating spirits was an important way of keeping one's life safe and the world in harmonious balance. Like the ancient Egyptian imperative to uphold at all costs the rule of Maat (truth, right order, right





Zhuāngzǐ

action), so too was there a Chinese imperative to keep the universe [the world] in a state of delicate harmony between opposites.

Despite the controversy his ideas created among China's intellectual community, MòZǐ's philosophy struck a responsive chord with many. During his lifetime, he gained thousands of followers, and his ideas continued to sway many more after his death. For perhaps a century his school rivalled that of Confucius in popularity. The 'Mohists' (followers of MòZǐ's teachings) lived simple, stoic lives, sacrificed to a loving Heaven, treated all people respectfully, and endeavoured to put the principle of universal love into practice. They read the great Chinese histories assiduously to learn of the *Will of Heaven* from the actions of the ancient emperors, and they learned all the skills of defence so carefully developed and taught by MòZǐ in order end all wars.

His critics argued that his lifestyle was unnatural and far too difficult for the average person to follow. In the words of another of China's great sages, Zhuāngzǐ, the Taoist mystic: *"Men want to sing but he [MòZǐ] condemns singing; men want to mourn but he condemns mourning; men want to enjoy music but he condemns music. Is this truly in accord with man's nature? Any teaching that would have men toil through life and be content with a bare funeral at death is too austere. It makes men sorrowful and dejected. Its practise would be difficult. It is contrary to human nature and few people can stand it."*

There may be much truth to Zhuāngzǐ's criticism as witnessed by the fate of Mohism in China. Although serious rivals of the Confucianists in the century after their master's death, the Mohists were completely eclipsed shortly thereafter. Their difficult path of love, simplicity and devotion to Heaven and man that MòZǐ had hoped would lead to a peaceful, prosperous, and populous China, was far too steep for most people to follow. Confucianism regained its prominence, and was only barely relinquishing

during the long and harsh rein of Chairman Mao after the conclusion of the Second World War.

The well-known 20th Century Chinese writer Lin Yutang conjectured on the disappearance of MòZǐ's teachings: *"Persecution could not do it, and there was no report of persecution. One explanation is the rise of Mencius, who powerfully combated its influence. Another explanation is that the Han Emperors made Confucianism into almost a state religion. A very possible explanation is that the warrior evangelists simply perished in the wars of the First Emperor of Qin. Which brings us to the truest explanation: Quixotic heroism and extreme altruism did not appeal to the native Chinese common sense."*⁷⁸

So complete was the Chinese rejection of MòZǐ that his book of teachings was neglected until the 20th Century and all of its ancient commentaries are lost. To gain an estimation of MòZǐ from a near contemporary, I turn again to the Taoist Zhuāngzǐ, who while rejecting MòZǐ's teachings, still had lavish praise for the man: *"Mo Tzu was a truly fine man, of whom only too few are to be found. Despite all personal hardships, he held fast to his ideal, a man of excellence indeed!"*⁷⁹

Footnotes

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Lin Yutang



The Human Égrégoire

Group
Consciousness
for Evolution



by Amelia

A QUESTION uppermost in the minds of many who deal with neural systems and artificial intelligence is what consciousness actually is. And it all boils down to a single question: *does consciousness depend exclusively on material reality?* Or put another way, could consciousness exist without a brain, in fact without anything material at all? Clearly this is not something science can answer, for no instruments have been devised yet that can

measure anything that may be occurring in the so-called ‘non-material’ or ‘psychic’ realm. And from a scientific standpoint, words such as ‘non-material’ or ‘psychic’ don’t have any strictly defined meanings. Yet, despite the fact that the very question is non-scientific, it is being asked with greater urgency each year by science itself.

The great psychiatrist and philosopher Carl Jung (1875–1961) believed that consciousness exists beyond the realm of matter when he said: *“I do not doubt the*





Carl Jung.

existence of mental states transcending consciousness.” His statement implies that the word ‘consciousness’ was for him a physical process associated with the brain, while ‘mental states’ were something beyond material reality. When speaking of ‘mental states’ was he referring to a sort of universal or cosmic consciousness common to all living creatures, something above and beyond ordinary material, neurological consciousness? Or was he referring specifically to their human analogies? It’s not clear, for he was a universalist in many ways. But in this instance it is quite likely that he was referring to humans consciousness only. With suitable changes to our definition of ‘mental states’ and ‘consciousness’, the essence of his beliefs could however easily be extrapolated to all living creatures, which would then give his words the more universal appeal that much of his writings contained.

The French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) made an extensive study of the relationship between the mind, the brain and consciousness, and concluded that mind and some forms of consciousness, are separate from the body and its brain. Of course he was not the first to come to this conclusion. For thousands of years, people have believed that some intangible or non-material substance ‘inhabits’ the human body and directs its actions at a deep level. It is this ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’, rather than the body itself, which possesses the traits and qualities we associate with human consciousness.

Of course neither Jung nor Bergson were neural scientists or investigators of artificial intelligence; for such fields, and in particular PET and MRI scanning, have only existed for a few decades. Great as they were in their time, neither person could have had the insight and knowledge that modern science has acquired only relatively recently regarding the strong correlation that exists between the brain and our thought processes. They could therefore not have been aware of the close link that is now believed to exist between some of our thoughts and emotions and specific areas of the brain. Had they known this, they may well have adopted a similar approach to that taken by many research workers dealing with cognition



Henri Bergson.

and the brain today, namely that our entire experience of consciousness is due to the electro-chemical activity of the brain alone, and ceases to exist when the brain dies.

That there exist strong correlations between certain thoughts and emotions and certain areas of the brain has been proven beyond doubt. I am aware of course of the strong arguments for the so-called ‘brain-only’ or ‘brain-first’ origin of both consciousness and simple awareness; yet, there is one part of me which, against my better judgement, simply refuses to accept that something as refined as human consciousness can have a source *exclusively* in the physical substance and structure of the brain. I do not doubt that the bulk of what we would call ‘objective consciousness’, including virtually everything we consider to be our identity, could not exist without the brain. But is that really all there is to consciousness...? here today, completely and forever gone tomorrow? It may be, but I doubt it very much.

The Guiding Power of Life

The deeper forms of consciousness that we, and no doubt most other animals possess..., things like the subconscious and unconscious states that do the main housekeeping work of keeping us alive..., are they also exclusively the result of neural activity within the brain? Certain aspects certainly are, and it may be my more unruly, less rational side that needs to be suppressed in the face of scientific facts. But try as I may, I can’t ignore the nagging feeling that this can’t



be the whole story. Something deep within either wants to believe a less material-only explanation, or simply cannot accept the crudeness of current models of consciousness.

There exists a type of fundamental reality pervading the entire universe, a vital part of the life force itself, which infuses and ‘inhabits’ all living creatures, from whales down to viruses. And if it does not possess objective consciousness, then certainly it possesses a more diffuse form of consciousness which for us would be analogous to the subconscious or the unconscious that all humans possess. This is no new theory of course; Plotinus (3rd Century CE) wrote often on matters closely related to consciousness though in modern terms we would be more inclined to dismiss his musing as mere belief unsupported by even the logic of his own day.

I can't shake off the feeling that there is something deeper and as yet undiscovered by science.

Consciousness at the level of the subconscious or the unconscious is, I believe, the guiding power of all life and the pattern or design through which life is expressed. It meshes with all other qualities, laws and forces of the universe under a single overarching intelligence which in esoteric circles, particularly in the Rosicrucian Order, is known simply as ‘the Cosmic’ or ‘the Divine Mind.’ Of course I’m speculating, I know this is merely a personal belief based on nothing more than an ‘inner feeling’ on the one hand, and reasoning based on inner assumptions on the other. But I’m fully aware of the risk I’m taking with my professional standing every time I air such matters. Yet, despite the fact that there is no scientific basis for believing any non-physical origin for consciousness, I can’t shake off the feeling that there is something deeper and as yet undiscovered by science. My experience of life and the beautiful thoughts my mind has obligingly conjured up for me over the years, makes the existence of a sentient sort of ‘Divine Mind’ an inner certainty, not merely a remote possibility.

A Collective Consciousness

Can we really envisage a universe as sophisticated as ours *not* possessing some form of universe-wide ‘collective consciousness,’ a sort of ‘sentient natural law’ which guides and cajoles all things to follow their particular ‘templates of ideal existence,’ thereby allowing them to achieve the highest possible states of fullness and excellence in their particular lives? I find it hard to accept that any universe can be purely mechanistic, like a great wind-up toy which slowly winds itself down, and

in the process causes all things to happen in a fully pre-determined manner. Once again this is a belief of course, but increasingly so one based on a firmer and firmer footing as the wonders of quantum physics unfold in the pages of respected scientific journals.

The manner in which the cooperative collection of cells which makes up our bodies and brains can give us the rich experience of human life, is a wonder to behold. And just as humans have an ideal state to which they are biologically driven to strive for, no doubt all creatures have their own ideal states, and all strive for those states without ever wondering why. The cooperative collection or group consciousness (and intent) of members of any living species creates a rich experience for individuals of the species to benefit from.

And group consciousness by definition must possess greater complexity, and therefore a higher form of intelligence than any individual member of the species. This ‘group intelligence,’ being of a higher, more refined sort than individual intelligence, is I believe the closest we can ever get to a sensible definition of a God. It is not the highest concept of God, but it is the highest form that any member of the group can ever become conscious of. God, as experienced by the individual, is therefore different for all creatures, and depends to a large extent on the égrégoré or group consciousness to which the species gravitates.

A Super-Égrégoré

With the human intellect though, because of its ability to reflect upon its own capacity to think, there is the possibility of a God higher than that perceived by all other creatures on Earth; one that not only incorporates the qualities, thoughts and hopes of all humans, but of all living creatures ‘below’ humans as well. And that ‘super-



Group consciousness possesses greater complexity, and therefore a higher form of intelligence than any individual member of the species.



égrégoire' or super collective consciousness can be assumed to be the highest form of God that humans can ever aspire to become conscious of. There are almost certainly elements of that super-consciousness which are at least partially separated from and entirely apart from the physical, neural systems of all creatures in the universe. And certainly, this group consciousness or super-égrégoire continues existing regardless of individual members of any species dying off.

The consciousness of any individual creature must therefore include within itself a focused and highly specific form of consciousness, but must also have access to a much more general and diffuse awareness of the collective consciousness of the species as a whole. In the Rosicrucian Order we use the coined term 'égrégoire', which it seems was first used by the French Poet Victor Hugo (1802–1885), though admittedly not with quite the same meaning as ascribed to it in esoteric circles today. In modern usage it refers to 'a field of collective consciousness', and it is this form of broad consciousness that I believe exists in all living creatures to some extent, and which powerfully binds together members of each species.

I'm not deluding myself, for I know perfectly well that there exists as yet no objective, factual evidence to support such speculations. But speculating is after all one of the primary tools-of-trade of all philosophy, and as an aspiring philosopher then, my temporal experience of life could amount to nothing more than a fleeting period of highly focused objectively conscious awareness of a very small portion of a much wider field of consciousness known as the 'human égrégoire'. And that égrégoire in its entirety, namely everything that a human can ever become, may well be part of an even broader collective consciousness called the 'Divine Mind', of which all other living creatures also happen to be a part. As the great sage of Nazareth is reported to have once said: *"...in my father's kingdom there are many mansions."* Maybe this refers to the many forms of 'collective consciousness' or égrégoires that exist, one for each species.

Life is Unique in Every Instance

As far as we know, each individual life experience, down to its most intimate details, can never be repeated. Each creature born into our world is unique in some way, and the consciousness associated with it ceases, according to science at least, at death. Taken to the limit then, the greatest manifestation of life may be the collective



Krishna and Arjuna.

consciousness of everything that has ever existed, rolled up with the collective consciousness of everything that ever could exist. Such consciousness would have no past or future, only a fixed, unchanging present. Everything that could ever happen, happens permanently in the present moment, in this 'life', and we could comfortably refer to it simply as the 'Divine Mind.'

This greatest of all actualities, this Divine Mind, would possess an intelligence that at one and the same time vastly lacks the focus and specificity of our objectively conscious experience of life in the microcosm, but also possesses in parts of it, the highly focused, objective awareness of individual humans for example. It could therefore operate both as an impartial natural law, and as a highly personal, loving, caring God. This God then may be the broad actuality that lies behind of all existence, human existence included; and to some extent at least, aspects of that both broad and specific consciousness may be the sort of consciousness we experience after death.

Even after your death, when you have no physical brain with which to pick and choose the parts of the 'Divine Mind' you wish to experience, the 'Universal Actuality' that existed before you died would continue to exist virtually unchanged. The experience of your life could conceivably then continue existing within the permissive bounds of that vast égrégoire. And it is perhaps from that égrégoire that 'something else' is able to take up the thread again in some form or other, and continue the life experience which was briefly interrupted between the moment of your death and the moment of the birth of another human in another era, perhaps in another part of our universe, perhaps even in another universe entirely.

Our dreams may be disconnected fragments of this form of consciousness..., a bubbling up from the subconscious of experiences that we can't have unless the will is quiet and a door to deeper, less objectified forms of consciousness has been opened. In the Bhagavad Gita,



Krishna says to Arjuna: “*You and I Arjuna, have lived many lives. I remember them all; you do not remember.*” Although any discussion of consciousness more or less assumes that we are referring primarily to the focused, objective type we associate with thinking, we must leave the door open for the possible existence of a host of other forms of consciousness, less focused, less specific and analytical than our ordinary thought processes. They may be forms of consciousness which exist in other life forms in the universe totally unknown to us, perhaps life forms that aren’t even carbon-based. And some of these may experience forms of consciousness similar to what we experience after death. Speculation it certainly is, but rich food for thought nevertheless.

Consciousness, Intelligence and Complexity

We must remember that consciousness and intelligence are not necessarily synonymous. The word ‘intelligence’ almost exclusively refers to a form of consciousness that ‘moves’, namely experiences things in a focused and purposeful manner linearly from past to present to future, using past experiences to project into the future possible scenarios of what may happen. Consciousness in a wider sense is therefore not synonymous with intelligence, but more akin to what we know as ‘intuition.’

Intelligence on the other hand can be closely associated with the concept of *complexity*; the greater the complexity of a system, the greater the intelligence the system can and probably *must* possess. So, consciousness pairs with intuition while complexity pairs with intelligence. Ultimately, the two pairs differ only in one respect, that of outward complexity. I use the word ‘outward’ deliberately, for there exists with intuition a far greater degree of *hidden complexity* and therefore *hidden intelligence* (also known as ‘inherited wisdom’) than the outward complexity that is associated with any intelligent creature.

In war, soldiers use their intellect and reasoning



powers to devise the best strategies of survival while trying to defeat their enemy. But in critical situations when there is ‘no time to think’, they throw caution to the wind and follow instead their intuition in an apparent override of the intellect. This is often the case where urgent life-or-death decisions have to be taken and the objective intellect can’t respond quickly enough on its own. By very definition, intuition must tap into some sort of ‘super intellect’ or knowledge-base far superior to the specific and highly focused type of intellect we use when applying our ‘intelligence.’ This well of knowledge is I believe none other than the collective consciousness or *égrégoire* of the human species, and exists independently of any individual. Whether we are alive or not, the human intuitive group consciousness continues to exist, and almost certainly can continue being drawn upon ‘beyond the veil.’

Only Human Consciousness?

Not only humans have consciousness of course. There exist forms of consciousness both broader and more all-inclusive than humans possess, and some creatures possess ‘packages of cognition’ much more focused and

Each form of consciousness in the universe has associated with it a ‘cluster’ of energies of which that consciousness is formed.

objective than anything we can experience. We therefore need to expand a bit upon what we mean by the word ‘consciousness’ when applied to non-human life forms.

Let’s begin with say minerals, and then move up the ladder of complexity to plants and animals, the latter of which we are a member species. I can hear you say “*but minerals have no life*”, and yes, in the normal sense of the word, this is true. But minerals do possess structure, organisation and specific rules by which they ‘self-assemble.’ For the purposes of the present discussion, I am therefore extending ‘life’ (temporarily) to include any form of self-organisation, and of course that would include even a computer.

Each form of consciousness in the universe has associated with it a ‘cluster’ of energies of which that consciousness is formed. The energies in this cluster come from a wide range of frequencies, but they are not necessarily contiguous. This is not to say that consciousness itself *is* the energy, only that consciousness in some form, however primitive, is present wherever energy exists. One may postulate further that no energy can exist without some form of consciousness being associated with it. Rosicrucians refer on occasion to the



so-called 'law of the triangle' whereby all manifestations in nature have two causes or two inherent properties, not just one. In the present context then, we have energy plus consciousness being associated with every 'living creature' (I loosely include minerals here), just as we have space plus time being associated with the dynamics of all reality in the universe. And as space and time cannot be conceived each in isolation, energy and consciousness can also not be conceived each in isolation. The two come together always; without one, the other does not exist.

At the level of minerals, how can we speak of consciousness? Admittedly we do so only with some difficulty, for the concept is so far removed from the analytical form of consciousness we use, that most people would fail to see a link. But this is merely a problem of scale and complexity. The highly-focused form of consciousness humans possess is as a result of the complexity of the brain. The human brain has orders of magnitude greater complexity than what exists in the structure and self-organising process of say the crystals in a mineral. But just as various laws of nature ensure that certain crystals self-assemble in one way only, and others in other ways only, a wider set of natural laws ensure that humans too 'self-assemble' only in specific ways. I'm sure you're thinking of DNA by now, but more specifically I'm thinking of the self-assembly *coding* that causes DNA to

come into existence, not the self-assembly which is caused by the DNA structure once formed.

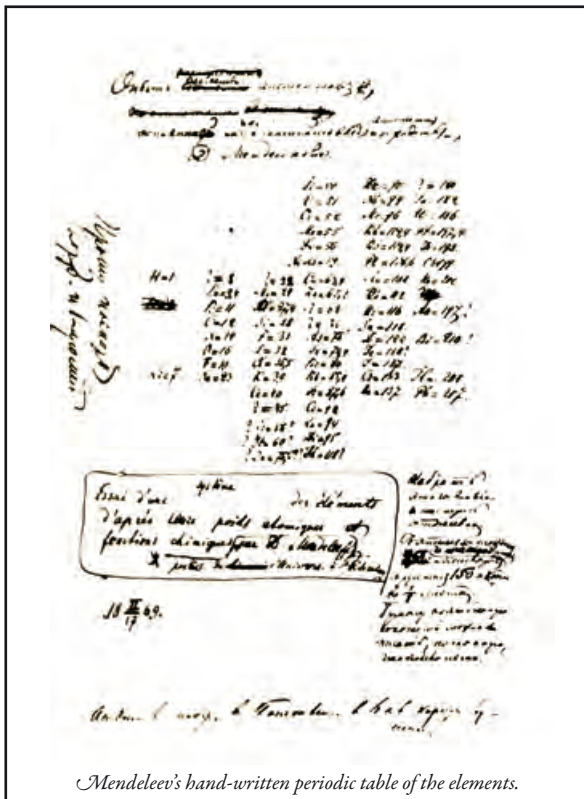
These ways of assembling an organism may give greater degrees of freedom to the human self-assembly process, thereby yielding people with red hair, others with black hair, some with freckles, some with white skin, others with brown skin, some with blue eyes, others with green eyes, etc., but all conforming to a basic body plan from which there is little deviation. And conformance to that body plan, and the intellect that comes with its brain, differs conceptually only in scale and complexity from the very simple laws governing the self-assembly of crystals. We are different to crystals in scale and complexity only. Crystals and humans could therefore both be governed by égrégores or islands of 'group consciousness' that define what they can and cannot accomplish and the extent to which their 'intellects' can grow.

Where 'Dead Matter' Becomes a Living Organism

Just as our thoughts manifest as energy which can at times be perceived by other humans, so too it can be said that the self-assembly of mineral crystals is caused by definite laws which provide the information necessary for the atoms and molecules to assemble themselves in the only way possible for that mineral. And this self-assembly process may, perhaps with a stretch of the imagination, be considered as a form of 'life' too, though of course nowhere near as complex and sophisticated as even the smallest bacteria. Self-organisation occurs at all levels in nature, and it is merely a matter of scale and complexity to decide at which point we agree that 'dead matter' ends and living organisms begin.

Arbitrary points on a scale are okay if we can all agree on them, but in absolute terms they aren't much use and the scale itself is all that should interest us. We may use inches or centimetres as our scale of length, but there is nothing universal or absolute about those units. So, the point at which life begins and ends is arbitrary, and precise agreement on where that point lies is not universally accepted. Therefore, putting arbitrary agreements aside, on the basis of this universal self-organising, self-assembly principle, we can say that even simple minerals possess 'life' too.

The laws governing the 'self-organisation' of simple elements are well known today, but thanks should go out to one man in particular, the 19th Century Russian scientist Mendeleev for his creation of the periodic table of the elements, a simple arrangement of the basic atomic elements which is still used in chemistry classes today. His table has of course been superseded by much more detailed and useful tables and the rules



governing the self-organisation of elements are much more complex than they were only 50 years ago. But in principle, we have at least a clear set of laws of nature that govern the manifestation of 'life' at these simple levels.

And this corpus of natural laws is under the overarching governance of an *égrégoire* or 'group consciousness' of sorts, something that science would call the laws of physics perhaps but that the brightest minds of societies of past centuries would have referred to as something like the 'Cosmic Mind' or 'Divine Intelligence', in the same way that the laws governing higher, more complex life forms are also placed under an umbrella of some sort of 'intelligent guidance.' In the plant kingdom, there are many plants that actively turn towards the sun as it moves across the sky. Some close their petals at nightfall, and others (like the Venus Flytrap) close their flowers quickly in order to capture and consume their prey. Awareness is certainly revealed in a plant capable of trapping a living insect, just as consciousness (or awareness at least) is of course present in a plant that actively tracks the motion of the sun.

Primitive Consciousness

An early experiment to try and demonstrate the presence of consciousness in plants was done by Satyendra Nath Bose, the great Indian mathematician and one of the co-founders of Quantum Mechanics. Born in Calcutta, unlike many scientists of his time, he had a deep and

The pattern of consciousness in all things becomes more apparent as we move up the ladder of complexity.

abiding love of all Creation, including things as simple as plants. Turning his mind to the possibility of plants possessing consciousness, he created an extremely sensitive instrument which could record the precise moment a stalk was cut, and he showed in this manner that plants were well aware of trauma to their physical integrity.

Much more delicate instruments have since then proven this beyond doubt, and many psychically sensitive people have reported perceiving the discomfort that a plant undergoes as its leaves or stems are cut. That is not equating that conscious response to what we know as pain; it is merely highlighting that the plant is at the very least aware, and to an extent possesses consciousness of a form that we humans undoubtedly also possess in the most primitive parts of our brain.



The pattern of consciousness in all things becomes more apparent as we move up the ladder of complexity. The greater the complexity of the organism, the more sophisticated are its faculties of perception, observation, knowledge and even memory. Migrating birds that fly thousands of miles across oceans and continents at fixed periods of the year are undoubtedly helped by the earth's magnetic field and the polarisation of sunlight entering their eyes. But they are almost certainly also influenced by a higher 'group awareness' or *égrégoire* that is linked to the Cosmic Mind of the universe. Border collies, the working dogs of many sheep farmers, learn quickly through observation, repetition, and a conscious understanding of the intent and purpose of the farmer's voice, what each instruction means. And for many, their intelligence is in some cases almost human-like.

In wild creatures, consciousness is closely influenced by instinct or intuition, much as a mother plover for example (a ground-nesting bird), becoming aware of an approaching potential predator (a human, dog or cat for example) deliberately leads the predator away from where the chicks or eggs are hidden, by deliberately behaving as though it were wounded and therefore a potential easy meal. They become aware of the danger, instinct or intuition warns them of the gravity of the situation, and their bird intellect causes them to act injured as they lead the predator away.

Karma and Reincarnation

With humans, as with animals, people have many levels of consciousness, though roughly conforming to what we easily recognise as being human. According to mystical lore, the exact nature of their consciousness is determined by their past thoughts, words and actions, in other words their karma (from the Sanskrit root *krm* meaning 'action'). Origen (185-254 CE) in his work *De Principiis*, says: "Every soul comes into this world strengthened by the



victories or weakened by the defeats of his previous life.” Clearly he believed that humans reincarnate and that their lives are influenced by what they have done in past lives.

Human consciousness is that ‘continuing essence’ within the person upon which is recorded these actions. Is that ‘continuing essence’ none other than the soul itself? Whatever we wish to call it, it is special, it is individual and unique to that person alone, though it also shares many of its qualities with the great human group consciousness known as the ‘human égrégoré.’ Like animals, primitive hominids were conscious at first only of the most basic of conditions, such as fear of lightning, floods, fires, etc., but also danger from

predators like lions and hyenas who undoubtedly ate them when they could.

Slowly, as challenges in their environment grew and they were forced to adapt to harsher conditions, their consciousness adapted to the greater and greater complexity of their brains and they became conscious of things such as devotion to one’s loved ones and the need to protect them from harm. Much later in evolutionary terms, they realised the many advantages that exist when living with inevitable compromises in larger social groups, such as a clan or tribe, and from this, social life as we know it finally started emerging.

At this level, early hominids knew of their world only by means of their five senses. They became aware of simple facts such as the similarity of some physical objects to deeper principles of life, and from this, symbolism as a pure artifice of the intellect was born. Much later of course, aspects of thinking such as reasoning and memory became the dominant feature differentiating hominids from all other creatures.

Inner Apprehension

As the complexity of human cognition increased neurally, so did the complexity and sophistication of interactions between people. Conscious of higher, less tangible qualities of life slowly emerged, and this led in due course to moral and spiritual philosophies and religions. It was the deep-rooted consciousness of something hidden, unknown and apart from the individual that led to the formation of all belief systems.

With the acquisition of a higher inner apprehension of greater forces in life than those they were aware of



The “Great Eagle” of Native American ancient religious belief, is ultimately what guides and directs all humans in their evolution.

through their senses, early humans began using faculties of the mind such as imagination, concentration and visualisation to plan their futures. And inevitably a time came when the first person experienced what we today refer to as an ‘afflatus of the soul’, from which true spirituality finally emerged.

Our early ancestors became conscious of a much more intricate world than that of previous times, and over tens of thousands of years, systems of governance, moral codes of conduct, and inner levels of personal discipline became the hallmarks of what was considered civilised or not. Eventually mathematics and science emerged and made human life far more pleasant and easier to bear.

Evolution had moved beyond mere random mutations of DNA, to deliberate choices made in the minds of humans who could see better ways of living and treating each other.

I have no doubt that this inner apprehension of ‘something better’, emerged not only through the labours of a few pioneering individuals, but was almost imposed upon them when they realised from communion with their inner self or their conception of a universal God, that there exists something far greater and more awesome than any human being. And it is this ‘great something’, this “Great Eagle” of Native American ancient religious belief, which ultimately guides and directs all people in their evolution.

We have come a long way from the first microbes to emerge on Earth billions of years ago, and we have a wonderful evolution of consciousness ahead of us if we can but survive our present world crisis. But one thing I believe is certain, the broader issues of our cognitive evolution, while governed certainly by physical laws of inheritance and random selection, are also governed by something more subtle, something I have referred to above as the human collective consciousness or ‘human égrégoré.’ And to drive the point home as far as it will go, this human égrégoré exists with or without us and will continue existing even when the last human has gone extinct.

The broader implications of such a belief are that consciousness, or some form of it at least, is not purely ‘physical’, not purely the result of electro-chemical signalling within a complex system such as the human brain, but exists as well entirely independently of the human form. It’s a belief of course, and you can take it or leave it; but I urge you to at least think about it.



Reflections on Gratitude

by Claudio Mazzucco
Italian Grand Master



A MAN, somewhere in the world, wakes up one morning; and as it has been for many years, he starts his day's activities. He checks his diary and thinks over all the events he will devote himself to in the next twelve to fourteen hours.

A busy schedule, with many commitments, programmes and meetings. He must remember to talk to the lawyer, have lunch with a client and meet with the Board of

Directors for important company decisions.

Barely awake, he remembers even the small mishaps of the previous day, the moments of anger or frustration for a project not completed, the crisis in the relationship with his wife or children, and so on. A normal life we could say. Ah, he scrawled on his diary that he also had to see the doctor to collect the test results from a few weeks earlier following a minor ailment. Nothing to worry about, just routine checks.



But then the unexpected happens. He realises something's wrong from the doctor's expression as he starts to explain how medical science has developed, that there are many treatment options, and that statistics show survival is 'quite' high in these cases. And in an instant all the priorities and commitments of the day,

When the end of life becomes a real prospect due to ill health, one realises for the first time that life is the only thing that really counts.

all those thoughts and worries, all the family tensions that bothered him every day, suddenly take on a different dimension. Life itself takes on a different dimension. The scale changes abruptly and security is gone.

He is filled with a sense of loneliness because for the first time he realises that the life that animates him is the only thing that really counts, and that this experience is by its very nature, solitary. In an instant his understanding of life takes on a clarity it never had before, and he feels remorse that he had not noticed this before.

This story is at the same time both imaginary and real. It is repeated thousands of times a day around the world, and most of us will have known someone who has had a similar experience. Therefore, it is real. In a hypothetical exercise I put myself in the position of a man who lived this experience and the first thing that came to mind was a feeling of gratitude towards things we don't normally think of as important, the simplest of things. For me it is gratitude to the Rosicrucian Order which gave me the chance to see my life through a different lens, the same reality through renewed eyes, revealing a multitude of values otherwise obscured from my vision.

Thinking that the days are always the same, that they do not bear within themselves the seeds of a new future, that every moment is not full of untapped potential that await our consciousness to become real, really impoverishes our lives. But being aware of the fragility of our material existence, fleeting and transient as it is, of our vulnerability and the fact that we will all leave one day unexpectedly..., such thoughts make us grateful for life, grateful for the people who are close to us, grateful for day and night, our friends, the spiritual values passed on to us, the things we have that bring us comfort, and the things we will never have..., grateful for the moments of happiness that make us like children again, and the moments of pain that lead us to draw on our hidden reserves of strength...; for all these things we

feel such immense gratitude.

Thinking about death is not a neurotic act; not wanting to think about it rather constitutes a true neurosis for our society, and perhaps even the most important factor in the impoverishment and aridity of our time. Being thankful therefore is the necessary response, and rationally the most appropriate for each day that is given us to live in this world. Whoever I am with, I feel truly privileged, but to go home and see my family, my grandson, this is a true gift. Seeing friends and laughing and joking with them, is a real blessing. And extinguishing the candles after meditation in my private sanctum is a reminder of my



true nature, so that I never forget that all this is given to me as a gift, and that the only feeling that I can possibly feel is precisely that of Gratitude.

The work we do in the Rosicrucian Order is noble, for it helps people become aware of the life that flows through them, thereby allowing them to achieve wider, clearer visions of the nature of their existence. The letters

I never forget that all this is given to me as a gift, and that the only feeling that I can possibly feel is precisely that of Gratitude.

we receive from members of the Order and the meetings we are privileged to have with them, regularly attest to this. Please close your eyes now, and hold in your mind for a few minutes an intense feeling of gratitude..., and then ask the God of your understanding to help you to inspire others through your kindness, compassion and understanding to express the same gratitude you have been blessed to experience today.





When Death is Imminent

by Ron Davies

THE SINGLE MOST important event of my life came as I lay at the point of death. Because of the decision I made during that brief period, the moment of dying became for me a rebirth, like a hinge between two lives. My new life is incomparably better than the old, and although I am physically still the same person, it is as if I have entered an entirely new dimension of living.

Of course I'm not immune to the normal trials and tribulations of life and when a thundershower catches me in the open, I still get as wet as anyone else. I make mistakes as before, but not as often or as seriously as before. When I stub my toe, it hurts as before, but I don't curse some unknown fate for having caused it. And I have certainly not grown either heroic or saintly. It is just that life has for me acquired



a whole new flavour and value, and my formerly insurmountable problems are no longer important.

The winter of 1997 was particularly cold and unpleasant. Everyone complained bitterly, and getting to and from work on the gridlocked rail network was a misery. Apart from the unpleasantness of constant cold, the cost of heating the house was beyond my meagre earnings, and I had to dig deeply into my savings. Just before Easter 1998 I contracted pneumonia. I couldn't understand how in the prime of life I could go down with a disease that we normally associate with old age. But there I was, desperately ill in hospital, only partly aware of the seriousness of my predicament. Doctors and nurses with concerned expressions came and went, and all sorts of pipes and tubes were attached to me, but I steadily weakened and got worse.

Finally one evening a close friend of mine was told that everything possible had been done but my chances of surviving the night were slim. I don't recall him coming in to say a last goodbye, but he told me that after he got home, he sat up all that night waiting for the phone call that would tell him I had died. Some time in the wee hours before dawn I awoke, all alone in my hospital room. It was pitch dark outside, and the only sound that I could hear was the faint back and forth sound of some machine doing its job of keeping me alive. I was weak and in considerable pain, but did not stop to analyse the feeling. For the first time in a week my mind was perfectly clear and rational; I was aware of myself and my surroundings and all my senses

When I say I 'awoke', it was like waking up into a reality that somehow surpassed my normal day-to-day awareness.

were operating normally. I knew that several days had passed, that it was night, and where I was and why. And I knew I had been bordering on a coma but that was no longer the case. When I say I 'awoke', it was like waking up into a reality that somehow surpassed my normal day-to-day awareness. Everything was so clear, rational and calm, and the options for continued life, or the end of my life, was crystal clear to me.

I had a small electronic buzzer attached to my left hand and although I wanted to call a nurse, I could not muster the strength to depress the button. I tried again and again, but my hand simply would not move, I could not do it. In fact it was as if I had no longer any control over my body, any part of it. That is when I knew without any shadow of doubt that I

were dying..., not tomorrow, not 'soon', not even in an hour or so; I was dying right then. There was no time for a few quick words to someone even if anyone had been present to listen, or to do or undo anything in life. It was utter finality; not later..., now. This was the moment of truth.

How did I know? I can't answer that other than to say I simply knew with a certainty greater than anything I had been certain of before. Every part of me knew I was at the point of something too awesome to comprehend, but above all something that was absolutely final and totally non-negotiable. When you reach this moment, you too will know. I did not doubt, I knew.

I can remember thinking "*but I will never see the sun again,*" and had for the briefest of moments a sudden rush of panic which immediately dissipated in the face of the enormity of what was happening. This was the turning point. Up to that point, I had never been a particularly religious person. I had been brought up by loving and devoted parents who had tried their best to instil a sense of religious worship in me. But having felt the full force of priestly brutality and outright cruelty from some of the 'brothers' at the catholic college I attended as a schoolboy, I had from my mid teens onwards had little regard for the bearers of the message of peace that came with the religion of my parents.

Complete Trust

The experiences of school had jolted me, but they had never entirely eliminated my belief in a Universal Mind or God of some sort that could be both impersonal and deeply intimate and personal at the same time. So, at the threshold of my final moments of life,

I had no hesitation in giving myself up willingly and fully to my God. I put myself utterly and completely in His hands, without question or qualification. I asked only for the power to accept whatever His will for me might be.

It is very difficult to put this in words, for although it sounds very 'religious', it was far from that; it was an overwhelming feeling of trust in a force or power beyond my understanding, but which I could only describe as my understanding of God. I did not ask to be allowed to live, merely that I would accept His will whatever it was; and instantly I was overwhelmed with a love that nothing on earth can be compared to. It was the most gentle, refined, caring and compassionate feeling I have ever experienced,



and as a faint echo can still be remembered today.

I did not die of course and the pneumonia quickly went away following this experience. I returned to the normal activities of my day-to-day working life, and I remained as human as anyone else. I do not even lay claim to the title of a 'good' man, and if to err is human, then I am eminently still and very ordinary person. Nevertheless, that night was assuredly a turning point. Nothing has been quite the same since. The moment that I gave myself up fully to my God, I learned once and for all what has become for me the secret of a happy and victorious life. It is a twofold secret:

First, be willing to accept life and any crisis of life on its own terms. Try to face the reality, whatever it may be, without the deadly errors of either false pride or that arrogance of spirit called self-pity. Second, be willing to trust your God as much as you trust the air you breathe or the ground on which you walk. Know that as long as you get yourself out of the way, your God will have already solved the problems you are concerned about.

Life is still to be led. I have not yet been fed to the ravens or tended by angels, and my new life is not fatalistic; I still make all the decisions. The difference though is that there is no longer either doubt or fear. I do not have to 'earn' or 'deserve' the love and mercy

of my God; it is always there, waiting for me to help myself. I only have to be willing to allow the greater Self of my inner God to subsume and take over the far smaller self of my everyday life, for all things to work exactly as they should. With this knowledge it's impossible to feel lonely or afraid ever again, for I have the most wonderful companion and protector at my side all the time. Call it willingness or acceptance, it does not matter, but the reality of my life has changed completely.

There is nothing new or even special with what I've said, for so many in the past have had similar, and some had far deeper experiences than this. And all of them found the same truth in their own ways throughout humankind's long march through pre-history and history. The nearness of God, however you understand that word, can be found in myriad ways. In my case it was influenced by my religious upbringing, for others it will have no religious trappings at all, yet be one and the same attunement and experience.

The very fact that so many have experienced something very similar to what I experienced that night on my death bed, attests I believe to its truth. In any time of trial, just be willing to abandon all to the highest form of good you know. I call that ultimate good, the *God of my Heart*.

A Bit of Eternity

by *Blanche Jefferson*

AS I WALK along the edge of the sea, a wave moves forward and washes over my feet. I feel its cooling balm and wonder where this life-giving water has been before it came to me. How many thousands upon thousands of miles has it travelled? How many turbulences has it been a part of and why now so serene and demure?

I think about the people on other shores in faraway places and try to imagine how many generations, dynasties, through how many civilisations this water has continued the sequences planned for it..., and wonder also how lives have been affected by its coming and going. I realise how eternal this water is, changing forms, leaving its ancient and final home in the moving oceans to rise slowly, lightly, invisibly toward the Sun..., then rolling, floating there in clouds, forming small drops, masses

of them, that fall to the earth, cleansing, moistening, refreshing.

Shyly finding its way over the earth it joins small rivulets, then larger and still larger waters until finally and eagerly it rushes toward home: home to the sea from whence it came to again and yet again begin its small wispy life, again growing and returning to the sea.

Here now with me this caressing water that brushes over my tired feet is soon gone, snatched back into the deep. I watch it go, knowing full well that it will come back again in quiet patience or in turbulent storm to repeat its cycle and wear away the rocks I pass along the beach, erode the very beach itself, and carry the sands to other places, living its life, doing its work, and changing eventually the very shape of the lands themselves..., this gentle water washing over my feet.





Ginseng and the Snow Goddess

by Linda Quan

MANY YEARS ago an old and particularly wise man travelled throughout China healing people from all levels of society. He asked for no payment, and became renowned for his empathy and extensive knowledge of herbs and medications useful in returning the sick to equilibrium and good health.

One cold and stormy day in the mountains of Manchuria, the doctor came upon a young emaciated woman freezing to death near an old deserted roadside temple dedicated to the Snow Goddess. Being of great compassion, he brought the girl into the temple and bundled her in his only coat. Then out into the storm

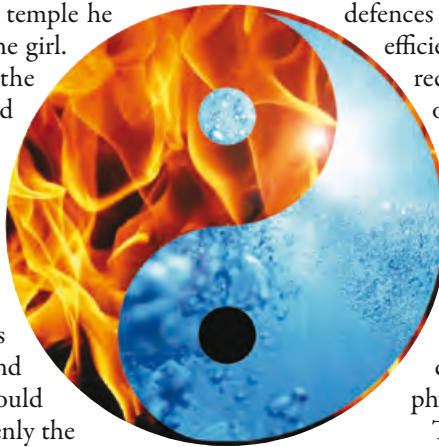




Mountains of Manchuria.

he went to find dry wood to build a fire to prepare food and herbal tea. The old man grew cold and tired in his search, but continued until he found enough wood to last the night. On returning to the temple he built a fire and prepared food for the girl. She regained consciousness, took the food and medications he gave her and started regaining her strength. But despite repeated gentle requests by the healer, she would not say how she came to be outside the temple in the state he had found her.

As the girl regained her strength, the healer started losing his strength; inexorably, he grew colder and colder and finally became so ill he could no longer tend to his patient. Suddenly the girl arose in a bright light and prepared a herbal tea using a 'man-like' root that she gave to the healer. He was very surprised, as he had never seen such a root, nor felt such warmth or strength from a medication. Soon he fell into a deep sleep, and when he awoke many hours later, the girl had gone, the storm had passed, and he stood up feeling as strong as he had been at 20. In the temple lay



In the temple lay a bush having the man-like root he had been given and he knew he had found a wonderful new herb.

a bush having the man-like root he had been given and he knew he had found a wonderful new herb. The healer, now no longer an old man, travelled far and wide for many more years, helping people and teaching them of this new

medicine which we today know as ginseng, a gift from the Snow Goddess.

Ginseng

This charming tale was the Chinese explanation of the discovery of the wonderful properties of this plant. Ginseng, the 'man-like' root used in Chinese medicine for millennia, remains today the key element in the pharmacopoeia of traditional Chinese medicine. The word 'traditional' is used to distinguish the medical practices of the modern mainstream Chinese medical establishment from the much old 'folk remedies' which are still widely used even in mainstream medical practice.

According to this traditional and very old Chinese approach to healing, ginseng promotes the *yin* element of the life force, while at the same time removing any the excess *yang* element, thereby bringing about a calming of the body and enabling the body's own defences to start working on a higher level of efficiency. Western medical science does not recognise the existence of yin and yang or of a 'life force', so it is not surprising therefore that Western studies of the effects of ginseng on the human body have not been conducted with much enthusiasm. In recent years however there has been a resurgence of scientific interest in ginseng, and some studies claim to have found demonstrably beneficial effects on the physiology of the body. More of this later.

The English word ginseng derives from the Mandarin Chinese term *rénshēn*. *Rén* means 'man' and *shēn* means 'plant root', referring to the root's characteristic forked shape, which resembles the legs of a man. The English pronunciation derives from the Cantonese *yun sum* and the Hokkien pronunciation "*jín-sim*". The plant comes from 11 related species of slow-growing perennial plants with fleshy roots, belonging to the genus *Panax* of the family *Araliaceae*. It is found only in the Northern Hemisphere, in North America and in eastern Asia (mostly Korea, northeastern China (Manchuria), Bhutan, and eastern Siberia), typically in cooler climates. *Panax vietnamensis*, discovered in Vietnam, is the southernmost ginseng known.

Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) is in the same family, but as a genus is not considered as true ginseng. Like ginseng, it is considered to be an





Illustration of Panax Quinquefolium (Ginseng).

adaptogenic herb. The active compounds in Siberian ginseng are eleutherosides, not ginsenosides, and instead of a fleshy root, Siberian ginseng has a woody root.

A testimonial to the belief that people have over the centuries placed in the wonders of ginseng is the fact that Chinese doctors employing traditional healing techniques, believe that ginseng can cure the sick, strengthen the weak, rejuvenate the aged and revitalise the dying. As a result, it is probably the most widely used plant in Oriental medicine. Traditional Chinese medicine attributes various benefits including roles as an aphrodisiac, stimulant, type II diabetes treatment or a cure for sexual dysfunction in men.

This aromatic root resembles a small parsnip that forks as it matures. Above ground, the plant grows to a height of 18 inches, usually bearing three leaves, each with three to five leaflets two to five inches long. Usually the root is usually available in dried form, either whole, sliced or as a powder. Ginseng leaf, although not as highly-prized, is also used on occasion, and as with the root, it is usually available in dried form

Ginseng has undoubtedly been

used in China for thousands of years as a herbal remedy to treat ailments of the digestive and respiratory systems, nervous disorders, diabetes, to keep the elderly warm in winter, and to increase energy and improve memory. To ‘outsiders’ that seems a rather tall order, but the essential principle behind the healing properties of the root is that it vitalises the body’s own defence mechanisms, thereby allowing the body to heal itself or whatever ailments afflict the patient. Not surprisingly, early Chinese manuscripts listing curative foods also claimed that ginseng enlightened the mind and increased wisdom. The earliest written records of the life-prolonging effects of ginseng date to the Liáng Dynasty (220–589 CE).

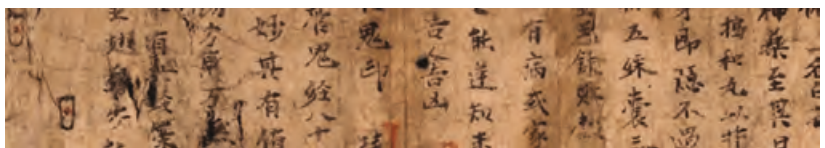
Research

Although the pharmacological properties of ginseng have been studied on and off for several decades, it was only by the 1990s that big-pharma started committing large resources to identifying the active ingredients of ginseng, but sadly with no outstanding discoveries yet. Research does suggest however that ginseng, apart from its effects on the immune system, has certain anti-fatigue properties, a transient regulatory action on carbohydrate metabolism and blood pressure, increased survival rates in animals exposed to physical and biological stresses, and increases in adrenal cortical capacity and the body’s ability to respond to stress.

Russian research dating to the mid Cold War era, suggested what research in the West discovered several decades later, namely that ginseng (used by humans) boosts physical stamina, promotes optimism psychologically and sharpens the wits of people having to do complicated assembly line work. These were useful traits during the Soviet era when human labour under harsh working conditions was an ever present fact of life.

More recent research has been assessing the usefulness of ginseng as an ‘adaptogen’, allowing mammals to respond more quickly to stressful situation, and adapt to and recover from challenging circumstances with far less onerous after-event consequences. And more recent studies have shown that humans react in much the same way, possibly even more positively.

Of course there is no such thing as a true ‘wonder drug’, and ginseng has been found to have some decidedly negative side effects too. Ginseng should never be used



Fragment of a Chinese manuscript prescription for a herbal remedy containing Ginseng root. Ginseng in Chinese is called “human spirit.” The forked root is said to resemble the legs of a person.





as a 'cool-aid'. It is not meant to be consumed in large quantities on the basis that 'more is better', for this is not the case, and too much ginseng, like too much of any substance, will harm one. Some of the conditions produced by ginseng when used to excess can be potentially serious, and whenever in doubt, a qualified doctor should be consulted. On many websites, anecdotal information is available about ginseng, most of it positive, but some of it more objective and highlighting some of the problems associated with high usage of ginseng. The following health problems were treated with ginseng and these comments were made:

- **Heart conditions:** Ginseng appears to have antioxidant effects that may benefit patients with heart disorders. Some studies suggest that ginseng also reduces oxidation of low-density lipoprotein (the LDL or 'bad' cholesterol) and brain tissue.
- **High blood sugar/glucose intolerance:** Several studies suggest ginseng may lower blood sugar levels in patients with type 2 diabetes before and after meals. These results are promising, especially because ginseng does not seem to lower blood sugar to dangerous levels.
- **Immune system enhancement:** Several studies report that ginseng boosts the immune system, improves the effectiveness of antibiotics in people with acute bronchitis, and enhances the body's response to flu vaccines.
- **Type 2 diabetes (adult-onset):** Several human studies report that ginseng lowers blood sugar levels in patients with type 2 diabetes, though not to dangerous levels. Long-term effects are not clear, and it is not known what doses are safe or effective, but it appears that a malfunctioning pancreas is stimulated to begin working better than before, though only temporarily.
- **Bronchodilator:** Limited research suggests that ginseng has positive effects on breathing.
- **Cancer chemotherapy:** Early studies suggest that injections of ginseng concentrate may help patients undergoing chemotherapy for various types of cancer. Ginseng may improve body weight, quality of life, and especially the immune response. Although the evidence is promising, it is not a cure and the effects of ginseng alone are not clear.
- **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD):** Ginseng is reported to improve lung function and exercise capacity in patients with COPD.
- **Exercise performance:** Athletes commonly use ginseng as a potential way of improving stamina. However, it remains unclear if taken orally, the body's uptake is sufficient to produce the performance results needed. Studies with intravenous administration have been done, but even here, the results are not sufficiently clear.



- **Fatigue:** A few studies using ginseng extract (with or without multivitamins) report improvements in patients with fatigue of various causes.
- **High blood pressure:** Early research suggests that ginseng lowers blood pressure (systolic and diastolic), but what dosages are safe and what could be dangerous, are not yet clear.
- **Liver protection:** Early studies suggest that ginseng may have protective effects on the liver, even to the extent of halting or even reversing certain liver diseases.
- **Lung conditions:** Several studies have looked at the effects of ginseng in a variety of lung conditions. Early results are promising, but most studies have used combination products, therefore making it difficult to isolate the effect of ginseng on its own.
- **Male infertility:** Early evidence suggests that ginseng may improve male fertility by increasing the number and movement of sperm.
- **Mental performance:** Several studies report that ginseng may modestly improve cognition and the uptake and retention of new information. Benefits have been seen in both healthy young people and in older ill patients. Effects have also been reported with a combination of ginseng and Ginkgo Biloba.
- **Mood and cognition in post-menopausal women:** A review of several studies suggest that ginseng may improve mood and lower anxiety in postmenopausal women.
- **Quality of life:** There is early evidence that ginseng may help improve the general 'quality of life' in both

healthy and ill patients. This may be due primarily to the optimism and positive psychological effects of ginseng, but long-term effectiveness is not known.

- **Respiratory infections:** Ginseng appears to be a safe, well tolerated and potentially effective remedy for some forms of respiratory illnesses caused by the flu virus.
- **Well-being:** More generally, studies have examined the effects of ginseng for up to 12 weeks (both with and without vitamin supplements) on overall well-being in both healthy and ill patients. The majority of these studies have been anecdotal only and not to laboratory standards, so the reviews by pharma, though positive, are not conclusive. While ginseng appears to be positive in the vast majority of cases, it is, as with all other drugs, almost certain that it is not beneficial for everyone.

There is still a preponderance of evidence to prove that in most cases even a mild or limited course of ginseng has positive effects.

At the very least, the work that has been done on the moderating effects of ginseng on the stress response, prove that there is a measurable effect. How reliable that effect is though, varies according to each person's specific physiological issues, what other medications they are taking, or their lifestyle preferences, such as smoking, drinking or living with long periods of sleep deprivation through overwork.

Although there is insufficient data to say what concentrations of ginseng cause the beneficial responses to stress levels, there is still a preponderance of evidence to prove that in most cases even a mild or limited course of ginseng has positive effects. And it is unlikely that the potentially harmful effects of ginseng, considering several millennia of use by the Chinese, should be any cause for concern. The only way forward is to conduct controlled, double-blind human experiments, and some long-term studies are now nearing completion.

Epilogue

Due to the purported nature of the ginseng's action, namely the boosting of *yin* and the suppression of *yang*, the two polar opposites of the so-called 'life force', studies have often been ambiguous in both their methodology and their aims. Results have as a consequence been contradictory and where purely objective criteria have



Athletes commonly use ginseng as a potential way of improving stamina.





Traditional Chinese practitioner measuring out herbs.

been used, studies have still been contradictory, finding in some cases elevated blood pressure while in other cases a lowering of blood pressure.

In some circumstances ginsenosides appear to act as stimulants, while in others they work as sedatives, and the only conclusions that can be reached with any certainty is that there remains a deep mystery about this ‘wonder plant’, one that may have more to do with the life force of the plant itself than with any inherent chemical actions.

Objectively viewed, ginseng is generally considered to be a safe tonic and pick-me-up when taken in moderate doses. But taken in large doses, there are some possible side effects which may include increased heart rate, nausea, headaches, sleeping disorder, and restlessness. But on the plus side, apart from its rejuvenating effects, ginseng has the effect of lowering blood sugar levels, something that could be of particular importance to people taking requiring medication for diabetes.

Because ginseng may have a steroid hormone-like effect on some women who have had breast or endometrial cancer, some doctors caution against its use for such women. Not enough study has been done though to show whether it is safe for women who are pregnant or breast-feeding, and doctors generally would advise against its use during such periods. Women who fall into these groups should speak to their doctors before taking ginseng.

So, with this ancient and revered herb, the best advice is to proceed with caution and in moderate doses to begin with; and only increase dosages as the body adjusts and only if beneficial results are clear to see. Don’t overdo it and consult your doctor if you have any concerns. In the end, its true power may lie not so much in its pharmaceutical qualities as in its ability to control the two aspects of the life force, *yin* and *yang*, something that modern science can of course not deal with.

In the end, a proper application may require the psychic abilities of a true traditional Chinese healer, a person with the training to perceive the vitality and qualities of the root directly, and the ability and experience to apply those ‘psychic’ qualities to best effect in the patient. That is after all the manner of all ancient healing systems, even though probably all herbs used by traditional practitioners have to some extent had definite active ingredients known at least partially today to pharmacology.

The molecular chemistry of ancient herbal remedies has undoubtedly had physical effects on patients who have used those herbs. But the greatest effects may yet have been the psychological effects, or more importantly the psychic effects that the healers administering herbal remedies had on their patients. As with everything in life, there must have been fakes and charlatans in the healing profession in ancient times, just as there are today. But there were then, and no doubt exist even today, a few accomplished healers

In the end, its true power may lie not so much in its pharmaceutical qualities as in its ability to control the two aspects of the life force, *yin* and *yang*.

who work wonders through their ability to manipulate the *yin* and *yang* of the great Life Force that infuses all living creatures from birth till death. And this ability, more than any beneficial chemical properties in the ginseng, may be the true origins of the great respect that traditional healers still have for it.





MINOS AND THE CRETAN ODYSSEY

by Jan Bloem

WE ALL KNOW Egypt, at least from TV documentaries. But also from the huge collections of ancient Egyptian artefacts in museums throughout the world, and the eager accounts of millions of visitors who until recently visited Egypt each year. Spectacular and detailed archaeological finds have been reported from time to time, and the predominance in some minds

of ancient Egypt as the premier source of western civilisation has remained unchallenged for centuries, until fairly recently. So much for the great and mighty Egypt, but how many know about the history of Crete? And how many of those few who do know about it, fully understand the pivotal role this small island once played in the genesis of western culture and civilisation?

Greek mythology records that Zeus one fair day



looked down on the world from his palace on the heights of Mount Olympus and saw the beautiful Europa playing by the seaside. He was instantly smitten, for no maiden had ever possessed such beauty and grace. Crafty old god that he was, he disguised himself in the form of a bull, and won her affections through his gentleness and good manners. Little did Europa know that as soon as she climbed onto his back for but a short promised ride, Zeus the bull would jump into the sea and take her to a far off emerald isle called Scheria.

There he courted her, and they had a son who they named Minos, who it was prophesied would rule all people of the earth. Zeus apparently loses interest here and leaves King Asterius, the ruler of Scheria to raise Minos as his own son. Asterius



day Greece, Crete was from the earliest times of recorded history a veritable hub of seafaring and thrived on its trade with all lands bordering the Mediterranean. There is no doubt that she was a veritable melting-pot of cross-fertilisation between tribes and nations of the Greek mainland and other parts of the Balkans, and of course the emerging stable power of Egypt.

Situated in Homer's 'wine-dark' Aegean Sea, its location offered the best of many worlds, and standards of living with technology that rivalled the best of any nation. By 1650 BCE, during the decline of Egypt's Middle Kingdom, Crete, with its rich cities and huge palaces, was the commercial hub of the western world. Her navy dominated the seas, guarding her outposts; and her merchant ships regularly visited

every country bordering the Mediterranean, as far afield even as the coast of Portugal. Travellers journeying to or from Asia Minor paused at Crete to rest, admire her natural beauty, and partake of the cultural activities of the locals.

Evidence of hominid existence in Crete date back to around 130,000 BP; a bit late for Homo Erectus perhaps, and probably too early for Homo Sapiens..., but hominids nevertheless they were, using

fairly primitive Acheulean type quartz hand axes. And they could only have arrived there if they crossed the seas. It is incredible to imagine seafaring, deliberately or by accident, from such remote antiquity, but it must without doubt have occurred for hominids to have reached Crete.

Although the island has been inhabited since 9000 BCE or a bit earlier by a Neolithic culture, the Cretan saga that interests historians and archaeologists the most did not begin in earnest until around 4000 BCE when the first wave of Paleolithic settlers arrived by boat from Europe. From detailed DNA analysis of ancient Minoan remains, it was established by May 2013 with a high level of confidence, that the earliest settlers and most of those that followed after them in later millennia, came from western and northern Europe. The ancient

Forget about *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or other films of that genre, they're tame in comparison to the jaw-dropping suspense of Homer's epics.

marries Europa and creates a whole continent for her as a gift. And in return, as a token of her love for him, Europa bore him a daughter who they named Crete.

Greek mythology is incredibly rich with mystery, romance, infidelity, intrigue, betrayal and adventure in abundance. Forget about *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or other films of that genre, they're tame in comparison to the jaw-dropping suspense of Homer's epics. The Greeks certainly knew how to hold the attention of an audience, and all this because of the high culture and civilisation which emerged on Crete well over a thousand years before Greece came onto the stage of European civilisation in the 8th Century BCE.

Crete is the earliest cradle of European civilisation by far and preceded the classical period of Greece by well over a thousand years. The precursors of the Minoan civilisation existed already in the 27th Century BCE, roughly at the same time as the Egyptians were building their first pyramids. Situated in the Mediterranean due south of modern



Snake Goddess - Crete 1600 BCE.





Minoan Crete.

Egyptians referred to the ancient Cretans as Keftiu, roughly translated as ‘Sea People.’ But modern historians call them Minoans, after their legendary and brutal king, Minos.

There is a land in the wine-dark sea, a fair land with many inhabitants and ninety cities, among them the mighty Knossos where Minos established his rule. The Minoans loved nature and worshipped her in the form of a chthonian Snake Goddess, signifying her bond with the underworld. She is portrayed wearing the fashionable flounced skirt and tight bare breasted bodice of the royal court. In her hands she holds one or several golden serpents, symbols of wisdom and immortality. Governed by monarchs who were both supreme rulers and high priests, the Cretans developed a flourishing civilisation lasting well into the Bronze Age.

Eruption of Thera

The island of Thera (70 miles north of Crete) erupted in a gigantic volcanic explosion some time between 1630 and 1570 BCE. This may have been only one of several violent explosions, and the one which finally devastated the Cretan civilisation may have occurred up to a 100 years later. At one point however, there is evidence of a monumental tsunami smashing into Cretan shores from the north, causing the demolition of all of Crete’s great seafaring cities, as well as open countryside up to 250



Pithoi storage jars.

metres above sea level. Despite the utter devastation, there is still some archaeological evidence of dwellings on both Thera and Crete from before that final catastrophic eruption. Some believe the catastrophe formed the basis of Plato’s much later account of the sinking of Atlantis.

Then listen Socrates to a strange tale, which is however certainly true. Histories tell of a mighty power, an island situated in front of the straits which you call the Columns of Heracles.

Now in the island there was a great and wonderful empire which had rule over the whole island and several others, as well as over parts of the continent. But there occurred violent earthquakes and floods, and in a single day and night of rain, the island disappeared, sunk beneath the sea.

With the destruction of the Minoan civilisation, Crete was left desolate, its accomplishments lost to the world. As Crete’s ancient written language is still indecipherable today, only legends carried to the Greek mainland by survivors remained to tell posterity of Crete’s past glory and greatness. In 1900, the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans began his excavations at the mound of Kephala, situated in a narrow valley near Knossos, the heart of the Cretan civilisation and the capital city of King Minos.

Six years prior to this, while exploring the cave of Psychro on Mount Dicte, 35 miles to the east, Evans had found some small polished stones with strange hieroglyphic markings cut into them. Upon close examination they proved to be ancient signature seals. Coupled with an earlier find of huge pithoi storage jars for olive oil or wine near the port of Herakleion, these stones furnished unmistakable evidence that the mythological stories of a vanished Cretan civilisation were based on prehistoric fact.

Evans recalled that having been wounded by Eros’ arrows, the legendary Aphrodite hastened to these sacred slopes to gather the medicinal healing herb, *dictamnus*. Here too, on the altar at the cave’s entrance, King Minos made sacrificial offerings every nine years, in conformance to the laws. And it was here that the great god Zeus in remote antiquity had been born.

Ancient Creation Myth

Soon after the formation of the world, Gaia (mother-earth) gave birth to the twelve Titans (nature’s furies). With their father, Uranus (the overhanging heavens),



they ruled the universe. One of them, Cronus (infinite time), married his sister, Rhea (mother-nature), and seized control of the world by murdering Uranus, whose blood fell to earth and mixed with the blood of humans. Fearing he would suffer a similar fate, Cronus swallowed each of his children as they were born. However, Rhea secretly hid their sixth child Zeus in the Dictaeon Cave overlooking the Plain of Messara on the Island of Crete. When Cronus demanded the child, Rhea shrewdly concealed a rock in swaddling clothes and handed it to him. He immediately swallowed it: Zeus was saved, Cronus was satisfied.

Upon reaching manhood, Zeus persuaded Gaia to give Cronus a mustard-and-salt potion that made him disgorge his five children, as well as the rock he had mistaken for Zeus as an infant. With the aid of his freed brothers and sisters, Zeus overthrew Cronus and the rest of the Titans in a fierce battle that made the earth tremble and the rivers boil. Following their defeat, the Titans were banished to Tartarus, the Greek underworld, and Zeus, now king of the gods, established his sanctuary on Mount Olympus. The rock which Cronus had mistaken for the infant Zeus fell on the high slopes of Mount Parnassus in Greece, marking the centre of the earth. This spot Zeus named Delphi and appointed a priest called Python to guard it.

In this creation story, the Titans personify the chaotic forces that shaped the earth, and Uranus, Cronus and Rhea typify the life sustaining elements of the universe. The swallowing up of the children by Cronus and the rock which Cronus ate, believing it to be the infant Zeus, may signify the disappearance of the various



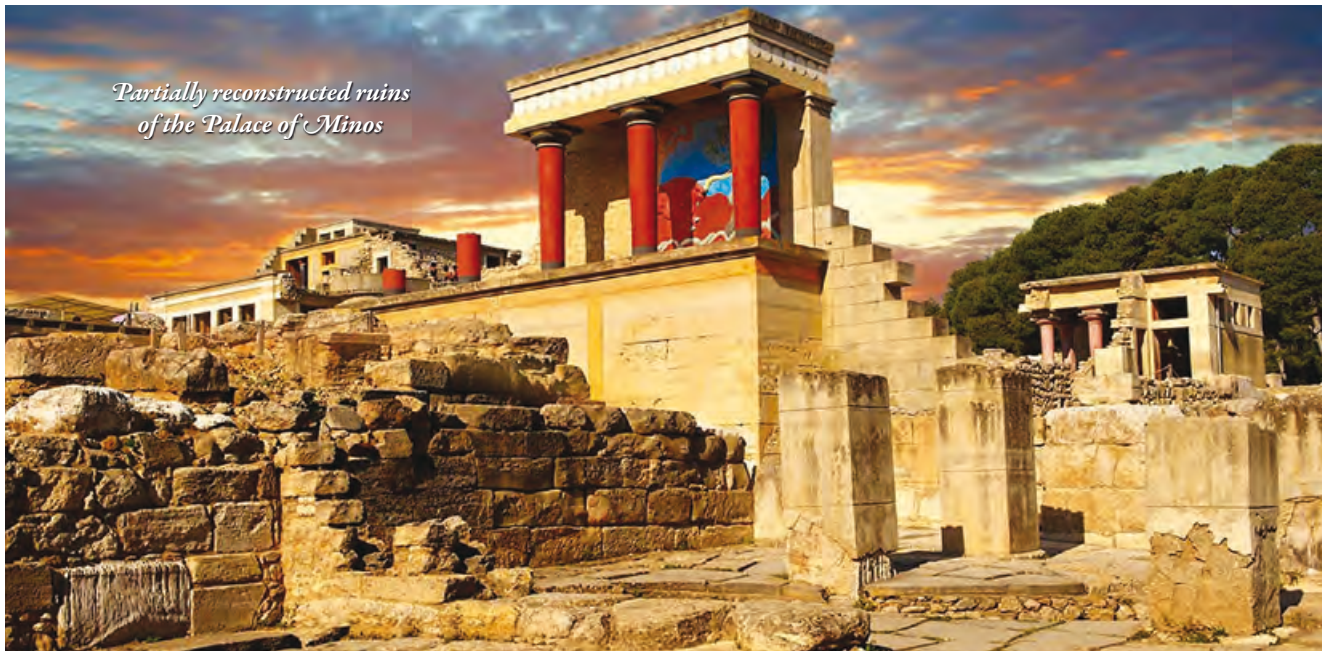
Minoan Copper Ingot.

Stone Age cultures, while the birth of Zeus signals the appearance on Crete of the first Greek settlers. The Greek underworld of Tartarus perhaps symbolises the buried cities of Crete, buried by the great tsunami of Thera.

The battle of the gods represents the end of nature worship, and the establishment of Zeus on Mount Olympus symbolises the lofty ambitions of an evolving people. The setting up of the rock or *omphalion* (little navel) at Delphi suggests an umbilical link between Crete and Greece. This rock may still be seen by anyone who is fortunate enough to visit the sacred slopes upon which it rests.

A Lost Civilisation

After the accumulated mass of rubble from the site at Knossos was cleared, an immense multistoried complex of buildings, containing over 1,000 rooms joined by corridors, passages, staircases, arcades, and wide courts, emerged from the depths of the earth. Evans gazed in awe



*Partially reconstructed ruins
of the Palace of Minos*





*Knossos Throne Room
of King Minos.*

upon spacious storehouses, workshops, huge drainage conduits, and walls decorated with multicoloured frescoes. He was positive that this maze of rooms and passages in which anyone could get lost, was the mysterious Labyrinth of the Minotaur that was built under the king's palace.

To ensure a successful harvest, Minos appealed to Poseidon (god of the sea) to send him a bull he could sacrifice. The animal sent by Poseidon was so handsome that Minos kept it in his herd and sacrificed another in its place. The wrathful Poseidon caused Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, to bear a son who was half-bull and half-man. And so was born the monstrous Minotaur. The sorrowful Minos and Daedalus, a skilled architect and inventor, constructed an underground maze of dark rooms and inescapable passages into which he confined the perfidious queen and her unnatural offspring.

Two Different Languages

During his excavations, Evans' first major discovery was a wooden box containing a number of clay tablets bearing pictographic characters. Eventually he realised that there were two different alphabets. One, which archaeologists have designated 'Linear B' and which contains 187 different characters, is regarded as a form of early Mycenaean Greek from the 15th Century BCE, and is known to be an early form of Ancient Greek. Linear B was finally deciphered towards the end of the Second World War.

The other alphabet is much older, and clearly belongs to Cretans of a much older era, possibly as far back as archaeological digs have taken us to date, around the 27th Century BCE. It is known as 'Linear A' and remains undeciphered. This, it is believed, is the original language of the legendary king Minos himself, the first Minoan.

It is not known how the Linear B tablets arrived

at Knossos, but it is likely they came with the Mycenaean from mainland Greece when they occupied Crete in the 15th Century BCE and presumably dethroned the Minoan king, replacing him with their own ruler. As the new king and his native subjects from Crete spoke different languages, it was perhaps decided to abandon the old Linear A alphabet in favour of the Mycenaean Linear B, though continue writing in the Minoan language but using Linear B. In the process, the original Linear A script was forgotten or deemed dispensable. This situation is understandable when we remember that although the Roman alphabet is common to many countries, the manner in which the letters are grouped comes from many different languages.

The Argonauts

Jason and his band of Argonauts sailed in search of the Golden Fleece. After many adventures they reached the land of Crete. Daedalus had built a giant bronze humanoid

The wrathful Poseidon caused Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, to bear a son who was half-bull and half-man. And so was born the monstrous Minotaur.

or robot called Talos who circled Crete thrice per day in search of pirates and invaders, spouting fire and hurling huge boulders at approaching ships, sinking them before they could reach the shore. His sole purpose was to protect Europa and her island Crete. The reference to fire and boulders hurling through the sky no doubt came from



Fresco from the Queen's Room.



the various volcanoes that the ancient Cretans were aware of from parts of the Mediterranean, not least of all being perhaps Thera, a mere 70 miles away, and certainly within clear sight during an angry eruption.

Through the use of guile, a small detachment of Jason's followers were permitted to land safely on Crete. They offered Talos a drink from the cup that contained the *Wine of Immortality*. As Talos threw back his head to drain the cup, *Poeas*, the smallest of the Argonauts, pulled a bronze pin from the metal man's heel and released the *ichor* or immortal body fluid that animated him; for self-respecting robots of the broad screen we'd probably call it oil nowadays! As his life-force gushed forth, Talos toppled over and fell into the sea. Jason and his Argonauts swarmed ashore and were lavishly entertained at the court of king Minos.

Of all the chambers that Evans uncovered, the most intriguing was the Throne Room. Set in the centre of a long russet, beige and green wall, stands a curlicue high-backed alabaster chair with a hollowed-out seat shaped to fit the body of presumably a king, maybe king Minos himself. Flanking it on either side is a long row of alabaster benches. Decorating the wall above the throne are brightly painted red and blue frescoes depicting wingless griffins, mythical creatures with bodies of lions and heads of eagles, symbolising political authority. The eagle's head symbolised spiritual authority, and the long serpentine tail represented power over the subterranean world. Evans was



Fresco from the Queen's Room.

elated by this discovery, for he had unearthed the oldest European throne known to history.

A stone-lined pit below the Throne Room was dubbed the *lustral basin* by Evans, as he believed it was

The eagle's head symbolised spiritual authority, and the long serpentine tail represented power over the subterranean world.

used for religious purposes, a prototype of the much later rite which came to be known as baptism. Broken oil jars, overturned ceremonial vessels, and other disturbances in the room suggested that at the time the palace was destroyed, a purification ceremony was interrupted by a brutal catastrophe. Throughout the palace, brilliantly hued frescoes decorate almost every chamber, emphasising a civilisation at the peak of its power and sophistication.

On a column in the so-called 'Queen's apartments', curly-haired, long-skirted dancing girls entertain, while schools of dolphins leap gracefully along walls highlighted by light blue ornamentation. On the staircase leading to the southwest portico, slim-waisted youths, with long curling side-locks hanging over their shoulders (reminiscent of the much later Hebrew tradition of wearing side locks), pour sweet nectar from slender triangular-shaped jars. Nearby, a tall, slim, muscular priest-king, wearing a swallow-tail loincloth, a *fleur-de-lis* necklace, and a crown topped with blue and gold peacock plumes, demands obeisance. Other frescoed scenes depict the lively gaiety of family and social life: colourful birds, flowers, fish and beautiful women in charming poses. Not one fresco depicts war, bloodshed or prisoners, as is so predominant in Egypt or Assyria.



Death of Talos - 4th Century BCE.





Fresco, found near the Throne Room, shows two maidens and a youth engaged in the sport of bull-leaping.

The Earth-Shaker

The 'cult of the bull', symbolising strength and fertility, flourished in Crete. Adorning one wall of the ceremonial gateway is a bas-relief of the head of a raging, snorting bull, and Evans found numerous statues and relics relating to this animal. Regarded as the 'earth-shaker' because it was believed earthquakes were caused by a huge bull that shook the earth on its horns, the bull was included among the underground deities. Homer alludes to this in the Iliad with the statement: "*In Bulls does the Earth Shaker delight.*"

Once each year, a festival was held in the royal arena to select the strongest and most virile bull to serve as the legendary Minotaur. A fascinating fresco, found near the Throne Room, shows two maidens and a youth engaged in the sport of bull-leaping, a favourite Minoan spectacle in which teams of youths and maidens competed against each other in feats of acrobatic skill. One girl is grasping the horns of an infuriated charging bull, forcing its head down as the youth somersaults over its back. Behind the animal, the other girl stands poised, ready to catch the leaper as he lands. Although no harm ever came to the bulls that took part in the contest, there is no doubt that the contestants must have suffered many casualties and fatalities from the sharp horns of the raging animals.

Anxious to prove his manliness, Androgeus, son of Minos, entered the games at Athens. He was victorious in every event and earned the envy of his Greek hosts. Minos was proud of him. Then, tragedy struck! In the company of several Greek noblemen, Androgeus was slain by the white bull of Marathon. "An accident" claimed the Greek King Aegeus. "Treachery" charged

Minos, who then besieged the city of Athens and demanded a tribute of seven youths and seven maidens to be sacrificed to the Minotaur every nine years.

Theseus, son of Aegeus, offered himself as a martyr. He entered the labyrinth and encountered the Minotaur. At the sight of so fearsome a beast, with a dull-yellow leathery human body and the neck and head of a bull, he shrank back. The bellowing creature charged. Theseus sprang aside. The maddened monster charged again and again, until at last it began to weaken. Theseus seized it by the horns and agilely leaped upon its shoulders. Using the Minotaur's horns for leverage, he forced the bullish head back until, with a sharp crack, the neck snapped. Then Theseus found his way out of the labyrinth by means of a magic string which he had obtained from Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, who had fallen in love with him.

As more and more structural remnants emerged from the sands of antiquity, Evans realised that it was not just a palace he had discovered, but the marvels of a lost civilisation. Buried just a few feet under the earth was the ghost of an ancient culture that included townhouse architecture, terracotta plumbing, water-fed toilets, registered trademarks, written archives, and a calendar based on astronomical observations.

Evans knew that a tremendous task lay ahead, but he never realised that he would be digging on the same site for over 25 years. In his enthusiasm he restored many deteriorating structures and frescoes to their original grandeur, something modern archaeologists would cringe at today. But it brought to light a mighty civilisation that shaped the destiny of the western world more than any other influence, including I believe, that of Egypt.





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our true bearings, and resolve to lead
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