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# ROSICRUCIAN BEACON

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## COVER SPREAD

“Emptiness and Form”



# With A Clear Mind All Sorrow Can Be Tolerated

*Message by the Emperor*



**W**ITH A CLEAR MIND ALL SORROW can be tolerated. This sentence was spoken by the French woman politician Simone Veil, whose merit is acknowledged by all whatever their political views. I heard the expression gratefully just when I needed it one day in April 2004. It was like a sign, for I have always thought that it would be better to express sorrow that is being felt, even if I often find this too difficult to do. Is it not said that words heal pain?

*"With a clear mind all sorrow can be tolerated..."* this sentence has supported and instructed me, and continues to help me to overcome difficulties. It has given rise to many questions within me. One consideration gives rise to another, and our minds roam around, leading us either to our convictions or to even more questioning.

Should we tolerate sorrow or push it away? How can we tolerate the intolerable? What is this clear-mindedness which comes with our sorrow? Is it our inner flame, the divine light? Or does this



illumination simply represent a mask falling, a being revealing itself, or negative feelings finally being acknowledged?

Clear-mindedness can be hard to take in initially, for it leads to an awareness which is often

*When our soul, mind and heart are in harmony with divine laws things then appear to us with full clarity.*

painful, before it gives way to calm. But even if human beings by nature find it difficult to accept certain realities and truths, at some point or other, this clear-mindedness is inevitable.

Because of what is *not* said..., silences, discretion, respect for other people, shyness, fear or hypocrisy..., we can *put off* the moment of revelation. But without doubt, sooner or later the law will take effect. It is the same

for everyone, even if "everyone" is not aware of it. When we have a spiritual approach to life, and when our soul, mind and heart are in harmony with divine or, if you prefer, natural laws, we can receive clear sight, and things then appear to us with full clarity. It is this light



*When we have a spiritual approach to life we can receive clear sight, and things then appear to us with full clarity.*

alone which makes all things clear, both good and bad; it corresponds to knowledge.

Ignorance, the opposite of knowledge, seems in some respects easier to experience. Ignorance can be gentle and protective. It deludes us and saves us from hurt.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor of spirit" or "Blessed are the poor in spirit." This parable has for centuries stirred up many discussions and interpretations. Whether we go by the expression "poor of spirit" or "poor in spirit," it amounts to acknowledging that ignorance and, by inference, innocence, can protect us from unhappiness and bring us bliss. We might also say that engaging on the path of knowledge is not without its risks. But what does it matter, we have to take this path and accept that the light is guiding our steps and revealing the imperfection of our course.

Embarking on the path is not a choice, it is an *obligation*, and sooner or later we have to go forward and face it. "Walking forwards can lead far."

On the mystic plane, to tolerate does not mean to give up; quite the opposite. If it is hard for us on the path of knowledge or if the heart is being overwhelmed by sorrow when we are lit by the divine light which shines in and around us, and when we let in the love of the benevolent beings who are sustaining us in the test, then we will be able to declare: "With a clear mind all sorrow can be tolerated."

I will finish off this article with a poem by one of our brothers, George L Hendel, entitled *Those I Loved*. It may appear depressing to you, but for my part I find it calming and comforting. I think that it perfectly illustrates one aspect of this subject :

*Those I madly loved  
dealt me the hardest blows.  
They opened wounds in me  
which never healed.  
I hid them away  
in the depth of my sorrow,  
like the only treasure  
I was entitled to expect.  
But it was the most precious possession  
that on this earth in humility  
I received the welcome of a smile  
when my heart was battered.  
By its own torment  
pain consumes itself  
and consumes the hurt  
which overcame us for so long.  
And consumes the hurts  
which made us look empty  
which gave us weary feet  
and made us into specks of dust.  
Above the horizon  
there roams a bird which plays  
in the wind with a cloud.  
And my thoughts fly undisturbed,  
carrying a memory,  
an inexpressible happiness  
henceforth shining forth...,  
a love with no sorrow.*

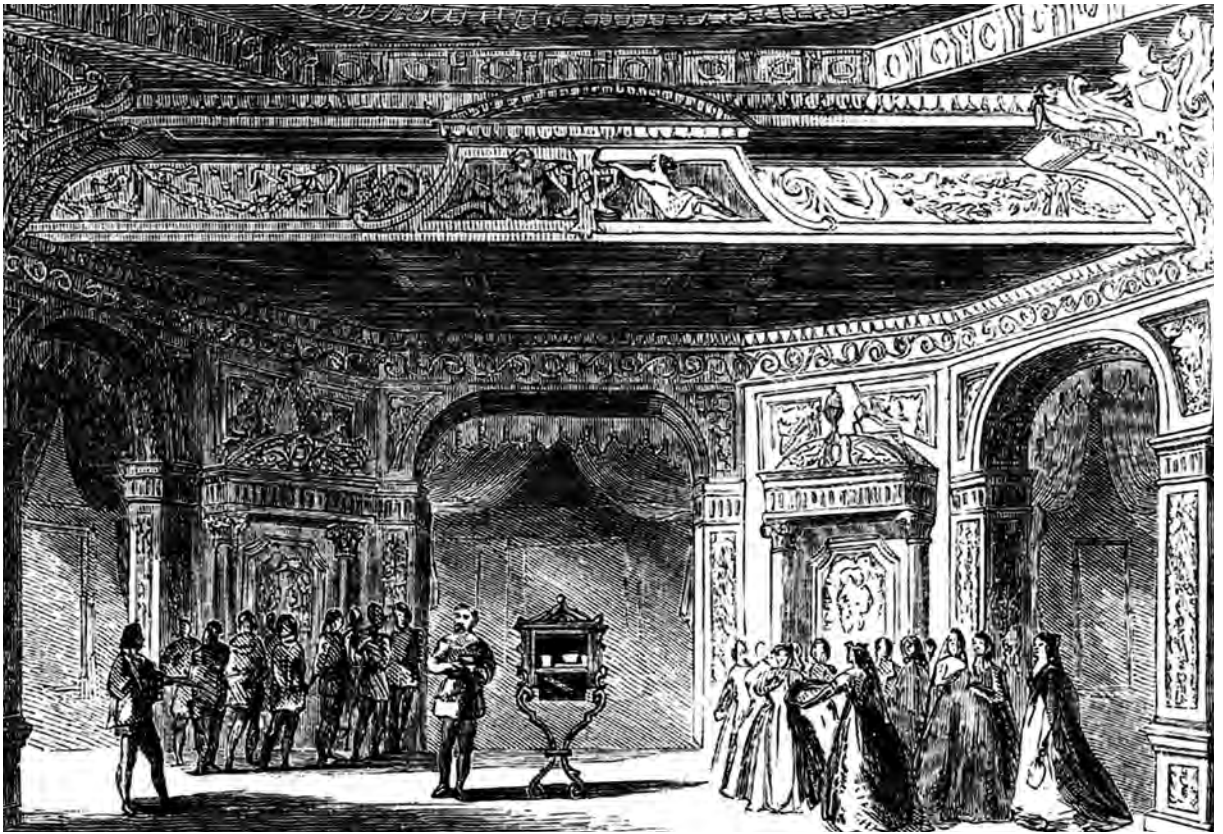
To you who read these lines, if your spirit is failing because your heart is in darkness, I hope you may have friendship to light them up. If your eyes are sad, may someone smile at you and a comforting hand be granted you when the path becomes even harder.

Your brother  
Christian Bernard



# Gold, Silver & Lead

by Joel Disher, FRC



Set design for Edwin Booth's *Merchant of Venice* at The Winter Garden Theatre, 1867, by Charles Witham.

**T**HINK IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT virtually anyone who knows Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, would say there is nothing alchemical about it. We might make a connection however, to what has become known as "the casket scene." This is the one in which the suitors for the hand of the

fair Portia come to match their wits against the curious stipulations of her father's will.

According to that will, which seems to be the final whim of an eccentric and doting father, the suitor who chooses a casket or jewel box, inside of which is hidden the portrait of his daughter, will be her bridegroom and inherit a fortune. There are three caskets: one of *gold*, one



of silver and one of lead. On the gold casket are the words, "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire" while on the silver, the words are "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves." The lead casket carries the warning "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he has."

So the would-be suitor has a single chance; if he chooses well, a bride and a fortune await him. If he chooses wrongly, he must leave immediately

*Is there any alchemical connection in this allegory?*

without revealing his choice to anyone. Many, we are led to believe in the narrative, have been unsuccessful and have disappeared from the play. But now, it seems, Shakespeare is about to relate a successful choice; here is how it comes about...

The first one, reading the words on the golden casket, thought he had worked out the father's subtlety: "What many men desire" was of course Portia. So he opened the casket only to find a scroll that read, "All that glitters is not gold" and a portrait, not of Portia but of a gaping skull.

The second suitor, perhaps more self-centred than the first, was unresponsive to the words on the casket of gold but very much taken with those on the silver one: "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves." Who more than I, he thought, am worthy of the hand of this fair maiden? He did not hesitate, and to his amazement and mortification he came upon a cartoon of an idiot and a message that called him an ass.

The third suitor, the poorest and having the most to lose since he had already become bankrupt, stood gravely before the caskets. His desire was not that of many men; he actually wanted more than he deserved. He could only "give and hazard" all he had, so he opened the casket of lead. There lay the treasured portrait along with this message:

*You that choose not by the view  
Chance as fair and choose as true:  
Since this fortune falls to you,  
Be content and seek no new.  
If you be well pleased with this,  
And hold your fortune for your bliss.  
Turn you where your lady is,  
And claim her with a loving kiss.*

This scene has captured the romantic hearts of theatre-goers the world over, but does it have a deep and philosophic message? Is there any alchemical connection? A closer look may provide an answer.

### An Allegory within the Play

Firstly, who could the author of so singular a Will be if not God whose ways are unknowable? Who could that daughter be other than that portion of the divine found in all of nature? In this, the father remains invisible, but the daughter is present in the sight of all men.

Francis Bacon has written that while nature is full of eternal laws and secrets and while we completely we depend upon her, we cannot yet measure that dependence. We cannot fathom nature's subtlety. It is threefold and can be likened to the three caskets in the play. The suitors for the hand of Portia may be thought of as the inhabitants of the world, responding to nature's challenge according to their own desires. They are



Portia waits in trepidation while Bassanio ponders the choice between the golden, silver and leaden caskets. (1892 lithographic print: "Portia and the Caskets." It is engraved after the artist A. Cabanel.)

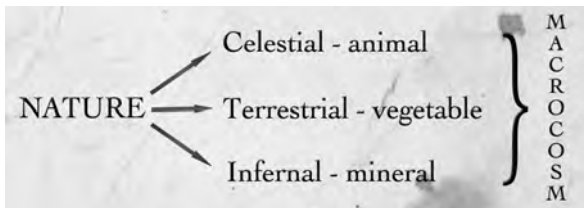


|                           |  |                  |
|---------------------------|--|------------------|
| The WILL of<br>the FATHER |  | = Invisible GOD  |
| PORTIA the<br>DAUGHTER    |  | = Visible NATURE |

*As an allegory the characters of the Father and Portia represent God and Nature.*

|        |  |                              |
|--------|--|------------------------------|
| GOLD   |  | = False glitter - immaturity |
| SILVER |  | = The Fool - outer show      |
| LEAD   |  | = Humility - maturity        |

*The three caskets.*



*The three aspects of Nature.*

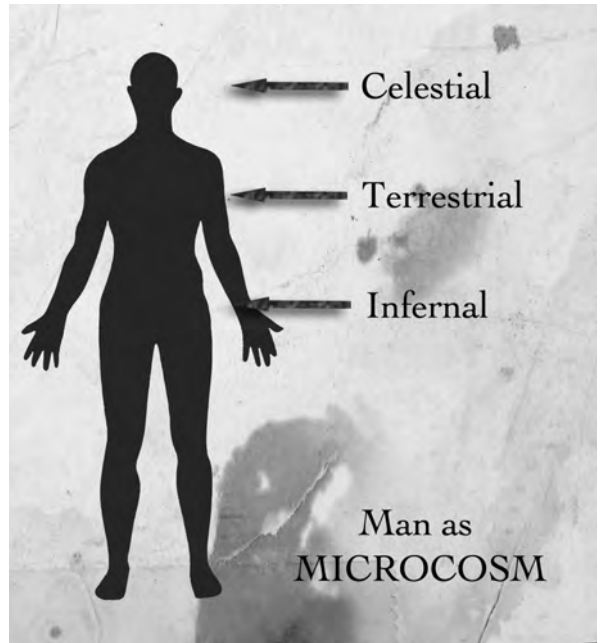
moved by their realisations, not by actuality.

Those whose desires are immature or undisciplined will be confused by life's false glitter and make their decisions on the basis of "what many men desire." This suggests the play's intent: "It is easier for a rope to be pulled through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into Heaven." Those who choose the golden casket must accept its reward..., death..., death of true aspiration, of real accomplishment, of lasting value. The casket of gold holds no portrait of the mystic's bride.

He who passes the casket of gold and chooses

*Finding God's image implanted in gross matter we understand the oneness of Divinity.*

the silver will get "as much as he deserves..." the portrait of an idiot. He presumes too much. He believes his worth is greater than it is, proclaims his own worthiness and demands nature to reward him on the basis of who he is. He is a real fool, for he thinks outer show is the same as inner merit.



*Man reflecting Nature.*

Only when he opens the casket and sees his own reflection does he realise the difference.

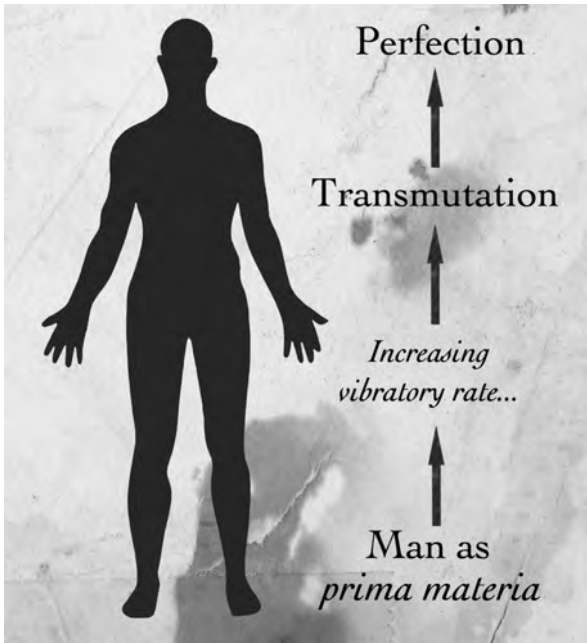
What of the suitor who is ready to "give and hazard all he has?" What does he find in the casket of lead? He finds the knowledge that the dullest aspect of nature bears the mark of divinity. The sombre stone yields evidence of eternal law as valid as that found in the most brilliant star. The slimy pool turns the sun's rays into colours as delicate as those on a butterfly's wings. Nature is God's laws made visible.

### God in Nature

Finding God's image implanted in gross matter we understand the oneness of Divinity and its all-pervading presence. It starts us on the path of discovery. That is the meaning, as I read it, of the beautifully conceived allegory of Portia and the three caskets. And, most certainly it is "a time-honoured dictum of Alchemy."

In justice to our theme, this much more should be noted: Nature is far more subtle than the threefold character represented here by the gold, silver and lead caskets. These are actually symbols of only one of the three larger divisions of nature, but here made to stand for all three. Those divisions are usually referred to as kingdoms: mineral, vegetable and animal. When spiritually interpreted, they become the infernal, the terrestrial and the celestial.





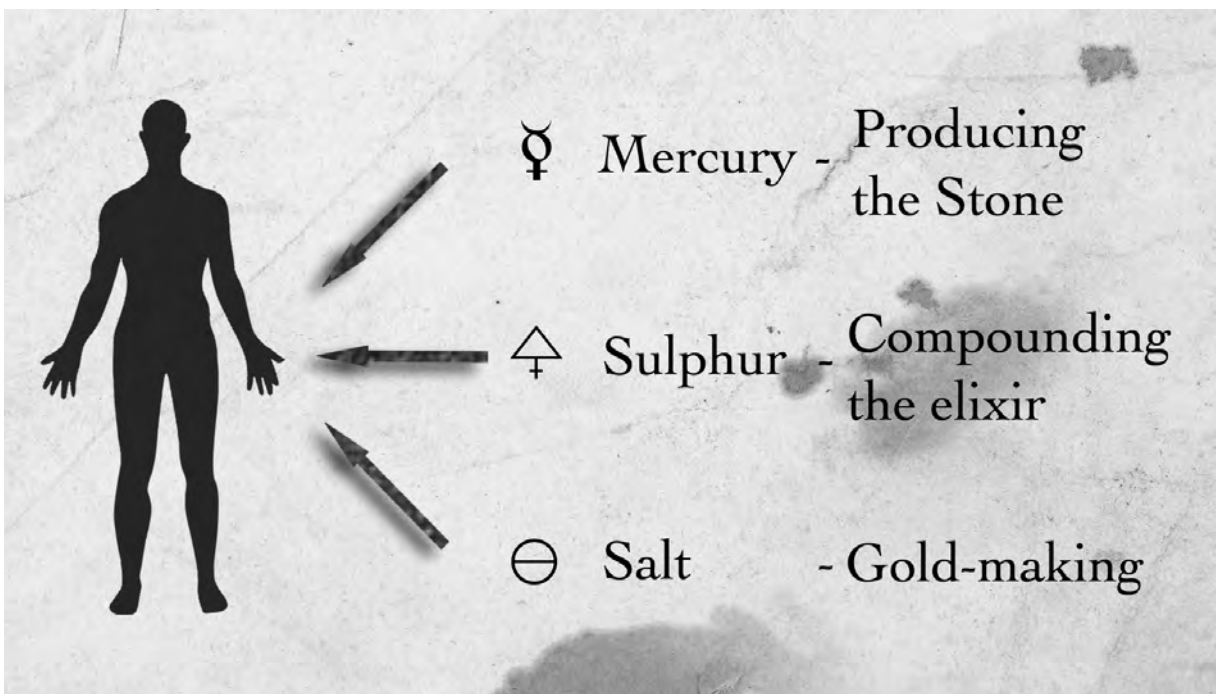
*The process of spiritual alchemy.*

### Spiritual Alchemy

Our body is thought of as symbolising these three kingdoms: the infernal (mineral) is indicated by the abdomen; the terrestrial (vegetable) by the chest; the celestial (animal) by the head. In each, the Alchemist works with equal skill. Starting

with the essence of divinity lowest in nature and increasing its vibratory rate, he raises it in the octaves of manifestation toward perfection by a process called *transmutation*. In explanation, the Alchemist points to gold as analogous in the mineral kingdom to the *perfection* sought in the celestial. The whole process therefore, has been historically spoken of as the transmutation of base metals into gold. And, let it be remembered that in Spiritual Alchemy the first matter is man.

How is this transmutation accomplished? By bringing to bear upon the first matter a trinity of elements for which salt, sulphur and mercury are the favourite cover words. From the mineral to the vegetable and so to the animal runs the process, with the steps being labelled "gold-making," "compounding the elixir" and "producing the stone." Dissolve the sensuous, says the Alchemist of old, and you have the medial life. Dissolve the medial and you reach the divine. There are many ways of setting forth the alchemical process, and alchemists of the past were often fanciful. But real alchemy..., alchemy of the body..., remains genuinely a part of mystical disciplines today. But it takes a true adept to understand and work that alchemy for the elevation of that earthly manifestation of the individual human soul, the soul personality.



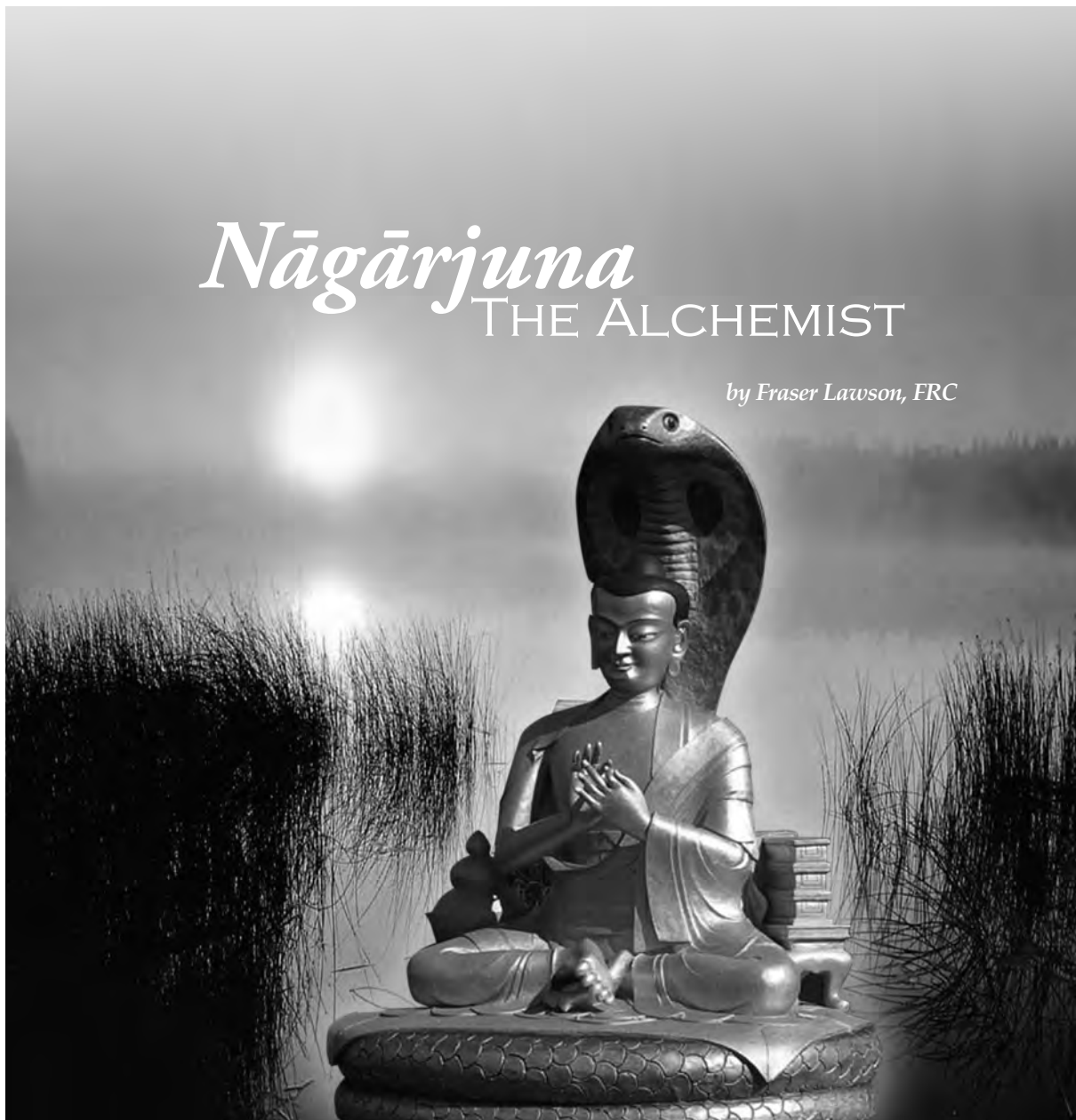
*How is this transmutation accomplished? By bringing to bear upon the first matter a trinity of elements for which salt, sulphur and mercury are the favourite cover words.*



# Nāgārjuna

## THE ALCHEMIST

*by Fraser Lawson, FRC*



**I**N THE WEST, NAMES LIKE Michael Maier and Paracelsus appear over and over in the history of alchemy whilst in India and Tibet however, the name Nāgārjuna is paramount. There, and even further east, his name inspires the same thoughts as do Aristotle, Galen and Aquinas in the West. Nāgārjuna is honoured as philosopher, mystic, physician, alchemist and saint.

He was born around the year 100 CE in southern India, in the Nalgonda district of the

modern state of Andhra Pradesh. Like many early saints and mystics, details of his life are sketchy, many of them surrounded by mystery and legend. He was born into an upper class Brahmin family, but later converted to Buddhism. Many aspects of his life are still hotly debated by scholars, but whether we believe in all the legends or not, we cannot doubt their impression on the minds of millions of people in Asia to this day.

The earliest datable biography of Nāgārjuna comes from Kumārajīva, a Buddhist missionary in China who lived in the fourth century CE.





He relates that as a youth, Nāgārjuna studied magic and became skilled in the art of invisibility. However, after a mishap involving the king's harem that resulted in a narrow escape, he decided it would be best to take the vows of a Buddhist monk.

Another story, the one most accepted by Tibetans, says that Nāgārjuna became a novice monk while a boy, a common practice in Asia. The story says that when Nāgārjuna was born, his parents took him to a seer who predicted that he would die in seven days. However, his death could be delayed for seven years if his parents would provide a banquet for a hundred monks. This was done and the baby survived. When the boy approached his seventh birthday, his parents sent him on a trip during which he met his future teacher, Saraha, who recommended that the child be trained as a monk. It was believed that the karma from such an act would help the child avoid death.

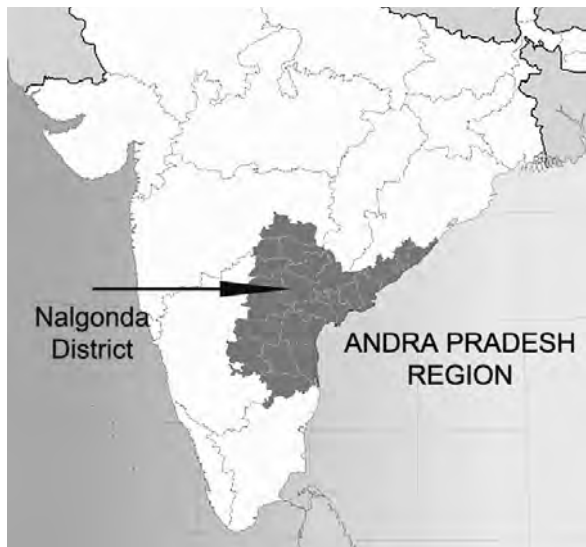
### Psychic Abilities

Under Saraha, Nāgārjuna became adept at both meditation and medicine, and also developed considerable psychic abilities. These abilities, coupled with his vast intellect, enabled him to make a great contributions to Buddhist thought. Today he ranks among the greatest of Buddhist thinkers.

Founding the Madhyamika (Middle Path) school of Mahayana Buddhism, his teachings focussed on the doctrine of the Middle Way, living a life between the two extremes of asceticism and indulgence and being a prolific writer.<sup>1</sup> There is

*Nāgārjuna ranks among the greatest of Buddhist thinkers.*

an interesting story behind his name, Nāgārjuna, which means "Conqueror of nagas." Nagas are a class of beings who are half-serpent and half-human. They are supposed to dwell in or near watery places. These beings are believed by some scholars to have been the original mermen and mermaids of later European myth. Legend states that the Buddha (563-483 BCE) hid a number of treatises among the nagas which were to be discovered at a time when people were ready to receive them. These treatises were collectively known as the Prajñāpāramitā, a Sanskrit name meaning "The Perfection of Wisdom." Once when



*Nāgārjuna was born around the year 100 CE in southern India, in the Nalgonda district of the modern state of Andhra Pradesh.*

the king of the nagas fell seriously ill, Nāgārjuna, who by this time was a famous physician, was sent for. He came and with his skill cured the king. In gratitude, the king let Nāgārjuna study the sacred texts. So the Prajñāpāramitā eventually came to the human world again, and Nāgārjuna acquired his name.

The texts discuss the path to enlightenment and in particular dwell on the concept of emptiness, becoming a cornerstone for Buddhist philosophy. Nāgārjuna spent many years interpreting these texts, and his work eventually became the basis for the most influential schools of metaphysics in Tibet. In other fields, Nāgārjuna also left his mark. As a physician, he is said to have been the chief redactor of the *Sushruta Samhita*. This book is still being widely printed in India and is considered one of the pillars of classical Indian Ayurvedic medicine. Its chapters range from surgical techniques to the diagnosis and treatment of varied diseases. Included are chapters on toxicology, paediatrics, mental disorders and theories on pharmacology.

### Nāgārjuna's Alchemical Work

Through his interest in medicine Nāgārjuna became involved in alchemy. Everywhere in the world alchemical traditions have seemingly had two concerns: changing base substances into noble ones and creating medicines that would promote youth and longevity. In different areas of the world one aspect may have been emphasised over the





*Stylised representation of Nāgārjuna.*

other, but both existed. In India, the emphasis was on finding an elixir of life. This aspect of alchemy was considered an important branch of Indian medicine, termed *rasayana*, a name that was applied to the transmutation of metals as well.

Nāgārjuna had become a master of the medical aspect of alchemy, but he wanted to learn about the transmutation of metals as well. The story of his search, like the one concerning his name, has its mystical elements. Nāgārjuna had heard about an alchemist named Vyali who lived on an island. Vyali had the reputation of being extremely secretive, so Nāgārjuna thought he might have some difficulty obtaining the alchemist's secrets. He therefore devised a plan which involved the use of two charms, which he prepared. He meditated and was led to the island where Vyali lived. Once on the island, Vyali wanted to know how

***Because of his mastery of alchemy, Nāgārjuna lived for many years.***

Nāgārjuna had got there. Nāgārjuna showed him one of the charms and implied that he had used it

to find his way. Vyali agreed to teach Nāgārjuna alchemy in return for the charm. Vyali took the charm, and believing that Nāgārjuna was now his prisoner, he felt free to reveal his mysterious art. After learning what he could, Nāgārjuna meditated, and using the second charm as an aid, returned to his home.

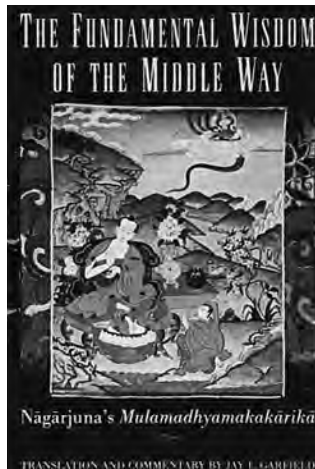
As a master of the art of gold-making, he is said to have used his knowledge to provide for the needs of fellow monks at his monastery during a time of economic depression when it became burdensome to the people to support the institution. Legend also states that he considered making enough gold for all people to be lifted from poverty. He was dissuaded from this idea however, by the argument that creating so much gold would serve only to create more strife.

Nāgārjuna had yet another contribution to make. He helped to develop the then nascent practice of *Tantra*. Tantra is a meditational exercise involving the transformation of the meditator into the deity being meditated upon. It also involved the transformation of ordinary surroundings into divine ones. There were different grades and classes of Tantra, all involving initiation and proper training. Because of the transformation of the ordinary into the divine, the practice has been referred to by some Tibetans as "inner alchemy."

### Long Life

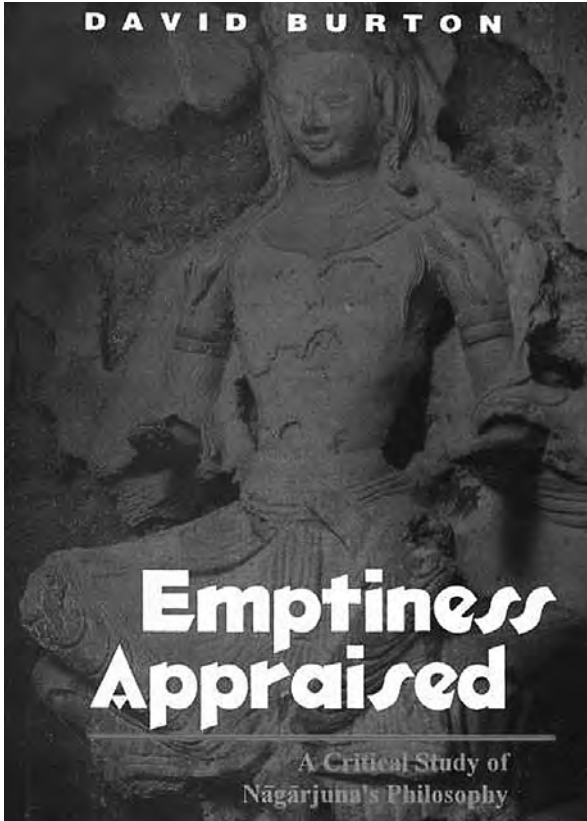
Because of his mastery of alchemy, Nāgārjuna lived for many years. The Chinese pilgrim Xuánzàng, who travelled in India in the first half of the seventh century, reported that Nāgārjuna's knowledge of elixirs enabled him to live several centuries. Claims such as this, plus the variety of work produced by Nāgārjuna, have led some scholars to believe that there were two or more Nāgārjunas, but this cannot of course be authenticated.

Despite the good he did, Nāgārjuna's life ended tragically. His friendship with the king of the region was as well known as his mastery of alchemy. Both the king and Nāgārjuna were long-lived and the rumour spread that somehow their lives were magically linked. It was whispered that if one died, so would the other. The crown prince, knowing that Nāgārjuna



*Nāgārjuna's  
Mūlamādhyamaka-kārikā  
translated into English.*





*The concept of "Emptiness" was part of Nāgārjuna's philosophy...*

was an alchemist, believed that Nāgārjuna and hence his father as well, would live forever. As a result, the prince would never become king. The prince then devised a plot to kill Nāgārjuna and although Nāgārjuna knew of the plot, out of compassion for all beings and his non-attachment to his own life, he did not interfere with the actions of his murderer.

Legend has it that when the great Nāgārjuna died, all the trees in the area withered. Legend also states that his body is still preserved, being guarded by eight protectors until the day the Buddha Maitreya will appear in the future. At that time, Nāgārjuna will return to once again to spread his light in the world.

#### Footnote

Among the texts definitely attributed to Nāgārjuna are:  
*Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* – Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way  
*Sūnyatāsaptati* – Seventy Verses on Emptiness  
*Vīgrahavyāvartanī* – The End of Disputes  
*Vaidalyaprakaraa* – Pulverising the Categories  
*Vyavahārasiddhi* – Proof of Convention  
*Yuktiāika* – Sixty Verses on Reasoning  
*Catustava* – Hymn to the Absolute Reality  
*Ratnāvalī* – Precious Garland

*Pratītyasamutpādayakārikā* – Constituents of Dependent Arising  
*Sūtrasamuccaya*  
*Bodhicittavivaraṇa* – Exposition of the Enlightened Mind  
*Suhlekhā* – To a Good Friend  
*Bodhisabhāra* – Requisites of Enlightenment  
*Sushruta Samhita* – Redactor of Compilation Treatise on Ayurvedic Medicine



*Nāgārjuna had become a master of the medical aspects of alchemy, but he wanted to learn about the transmutation of metals as well.*



*Thangka or banner of a Vajrasattva Mandala; Nagarjuna was said to have met Vajrasattva in an iron tower in South India, and was taught Tantra, thus transmitting the esoteric teachings to more historical figures. Vajrasattva practices are common to all of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism.*



# Cagliostro And the Magic Flute



*A survey of the alchemical and initiatory symbolism found in Mozart's fairy-tale opera, "The Magic Flute."*



*by Melanie Braum, SRC*

**O**PERA, FAMILIAR TO MOST OF US IN its 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian clothing (Verdi, Puccini), has a tradition dating back to just before the year 1600. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, several types of opera were popular, being generally divided into two groups: "serious" and "comic."

Comic opera, which was popular in 18<sup>th</sup> century France and Italy, also spread into the Germanic countries in the form of the *Singspiel*, a folk opera that involved both singing and spoken dialogue. One of the most famous *Singspiel* composers was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), whose output included several



operas of this genre, the best known being *The Magic Flute*. Mozart wanted to write a German magic opera, and *The Magic Flute* fulfilled this goal. It was completed in the last year of his life, 1791, when he was 35 years old.

### Freemasonry

One aspect of Mozart's life which is essential for an understanding of this opera is his affiliation with the Freemasons. Mozart was aware of Masonic orders early in his life. However, it was not until 1784 that he was initiated into the *Zur Wohltätigkeit* ("Charity") Lodge in Vienna. Although raised as a Catholic, Mozart seemed to be able to resolve any differences in thought, and wrote devout church music alongside various Masonic pieces that were played in several Lodges during his life. He was eventually initiated into the Masonic third degree of Master, a common point of attainment at the time.

Mozart was more inclined toward the mystical elements of Freemasonry rather than its

*Mozart was more inclined toward the mystical elements of Freemasonry rather than its ethical rationalism.*

ethical rationalism. Unfortunately it is difficult to trace Mozart's documented views as his widow and her second husband censored the composer's correspondence, removing all traces of his Masonic affiliation. But there is evidence that Mozart's music sought to reflect the mystical spirit, and the words in particular of some of his Masonic music are deeply moving, reflecting the deeper aspects of Masonry.

Much has been written about the character of Freemasonry, but one influence felt in the 18<sup>th</sup> century has a direct bearing on the subject at hand. During this period, there was a surge of interest in ancient Egyptian initiation rites and the introduction of Egyptian symbolism into some Masonic ritual. Mozart's lodge practised the "Strict Observance," a rite established in 1754 that hearkened



*Mozart was aware of Masonic Orders early in his life.*

back to Knights Templar influences. It has been described as a blend of "Masonic symbolism, alchemical practices and Rosicrucian traditions."<sup>1</sup>

### Enter Cagliostro

Why did this ancient Egyptian influence appear at this particular time? Careful study into esoteric sources reveals some interesting connections. Let us attempt to trace a line back from various events connected with the appearance of *The Magic Flute* to a figure of prominence and, unfortunately with some notoriety, the mystic known as Count Cagliostro. His life is shrouded in mystery and he has been much maligned because of his occult practices.

Much controversy surrounds Cagliostro's true identity, but what is known is that he was a contemporary of Mozart, probably a disciple of the alchemist Althotas, and was said to have been initiated by Saint-Germain, who in turn was a Rosicrucian mystic of great spiritual subtlety and intellectual clarity.<sup>2</sup> This tradition is important because it illustrates the connection of the Rosicrucian Order's influence, which then passed through Cagliostro and had some bearing on *The Magic Flute*.



*Cagliostro was said to have been initiated by Saint-Germain (represented here) who was himself a Rosicrucian and an accomplished mystic.*

Cagliostro created an "Egyptian Masonic Rite" that used ancient Egyptian initiatory symbolism, as well as some



existing Masonic forms. His great popularity as a healer and counsellor could not help but have an effect on other Masonic rituals of the time. There is an esoteric tradition that Mozart and Cagliostro were aware of each other. A brother Mason, who was also a musician, reported widely in the lodges of a healing he had experienced through Cagliostro, an event that most likely would reach Mozart's ears. Later, it was reported that Cagliostro had taken a house in Währing, an upmarket suburb of Vienna.<sup>3</sup> Such contacts may well have excited Mozart's curiosity to the point where he would want to meet Cagliostro or at least admire him from a distance.<sup>4</sup> This connection is not made directly in any of the exoteric sources that refer to *The Magic Flute*; it is in esoteric legend from which the possibility of their having met arises.



*Cagliostro created an "Egyptian Masonic Rite" that used ancient Egyptian initiatory symbolism, as well as some existing Masonic forms. The inset is a contemporary illustration of the symbolism of this Masonic rite.*

### The Opera's Composition

With this background in mind, let us turn to the opera itself. How do these facts and traditions relate to its composition? Mozart wanted to write a Masonic opera and fulfil his goal of composing a German magic opera at the same time. Although there were many fairy-tale operas extant in this period, featuring a variety of "magic" instruments, it seems that Mozart used this format only as a vehicle for the dissemination of deeper symbolism.

There are several levels to the perception of the meaning of the opera. The uninformed audience sees and hears a German Singspiel rescue-opera, replete with comic incidents, magnificent music and dramatic effects. The less-informed audience, knowing the obvious purpose of the opera, is aware that some initiatory symbolism, namely that of trials by fire and water, is included. Even the Masonic audience may perceive little more than this formal symbolism. But it is not until you reach the inner level of interpretation that you become aware of the multitude of symbolic acts and objects in each scene. The German philosopher and dramatist Goethe, who was

a Mason and a mystic, declared about *The Magic Flute*: "It is enough that the crowd should find pleasure in seeing the spectacle; at the same time, its high significance will not escape the initiates."<sup>5</sup>

The actual libretto (text) of the opera was written by Emanuel Schikaneder and possibly by another unknown contributor. The story itself is based on several sources of the period: a contemporary esoteric novel, *Sethos*, by Jean Terrason; earlier Egyptian operatic plots, e.g. Thamos, King of Egypt (to which Mozart wrote the incidental music) and German fairy-tales, themselves often containing initiatory symbolism. These all advocate and illustrate the pitting of dark forces against the Light and the eventual annihilation of the forces of evil, with a grand finale in the temple of the sun.

Cagliostro's symbolism as indicated in his Egyptian rite<sup>6</sup> included an opposition and eventual union of the sun and moon..., the goal of initiation. The sun is the positive element, the moon is the



*A rare etching of Cagliostro reading the cards from Julia Orsini's, *Le Grand Etteilla, ou l'art de tirer les cartes* (Paris, 1838).*



negative element. This is reflected in the union of heaven and earth, male and female, day and night and other polarities. Other symbols found in Cagliostro's rite were the serpent, which appeared on his crest; the acacia tree, a type of tree signifying the First Matter; the pentagram; and the Cabinet or Chamber of Reflection, a cave or box into which the candidate was led before the ritual. Often a pyramid was one of the symbols in this chamber. Colombes were also used in Cagliostro's ceremonies.

The opera symbolises a conflict between two worlds. This is not merely a conflict between good and evil, but involves many subtle references to other polarities. The characters in the opera each have a meaning that directly relates to the final outcome. It is suggested that the story of the opera be read from available sources in order that the following may be more clarified.

### The Principal Characters

The names of Tamino and Pamina, the principal characters, mean "consecrated to Min or God"



*The actual libretto (text) of the opera was written by Emanuel Schikaneder and possibly by another unknown contributor.*



*Goethe said that the complex symbolism in the Magic Flute would not escape the attention of initiates.*

in Egyptian. They are the two candidates for initiation who finally go through the trials by fire and water. The Queen of the Night represents the negative or evil side. She seeks to destroy the priest of the Light and sees in Tamino an agent to accomplish this. Her appearance is always at night and accompanied by darkness and thunder. Monostatos the Moor represents pure physical existence. His name in Greek means "isolated one." He kidnaps Pamina before her rescue and initiation.

Sarastro is represented as an evil magician at the beginning of the opera. Perhaps this character is the strongest evidence for a link to Cagliostro. First, Cagliostro's evil reputation was obtained from his so-called "magic" practices and many thought him dangerous.

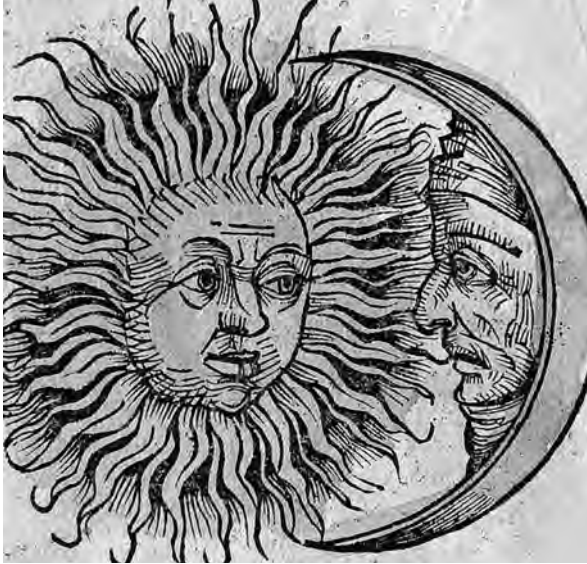
Although the name Sarastro is probably taken from Zoroaster, it sounds enough like Cagliostro to suggest him as a model. Many thought that Sarastro represented a famous Mason called Ignaz von Born; but Born was neither a magician nor a high priest. Cagliostro called himself the High Priest of Isis, and the whole initiation scene of The Magic Flute names Isis and Osiris as the gods to whom the initiates must appeal. Finally, Sarastro is proven to be the Priest of the Sun and not evil as believed, which again points to the truth regarding the person of Cagliostro. Cagliostro's wife, or the "Grand Mistress", was also known as the "Queen of Sheba." In the opera, Sarastro and the Queen of the Night seemed to have been married at one time.

Papageno (from the German word Papagei, meaning, parrot) resembles the fool of the Tarot cards. He adds comic relief to the opera. As the feathered creature, he also represents the air element. He signifies "ordinary" humanity, unworthy of initiation. He tries, but cannot go through with it. He wants, above all, to be a good husband and "regular" person.

### Symbolic Elements

It is impossible in an article of this length to detail all of the opera's symbolism and how it relates





*Cagliostro's symbolism as indicated in his Egyptian rite, included an opposition and eventual union of the sun and moon..., the goal of initiation.*

both to the story and to the possible Rosicrucian influences that are passed through Cagliostro to Mozart by way of Freemasonry; either directly or indirectly. Some of the most important symbols are still available, and further study of the opera by those interested will reveal a wealth of esoteric influences, as well as a constant reference to the four elements or principles: water, fire, earth and air.

The serpent, found on Cagliostro's crest as well as on the caduceus baton of Mercury/Hermes, has a history of initiatory symbolism, and is used in Egyptian rites and biblical stories. At the beginning of the opera, a huge serpent is killed by dividing it into three parts while Tamino is in a faint. This faint, and other swoons that happen throughout the opera to candidates for initiation, basically symbolises death to the old and rebirth into new life as a result of initiation.

The magic flute, symbolising the air element, is used only to surmount obstacles, not to destroy them. Its story, recounted later in the opera, claims that it was carved out of wood by Pamina's father on a stormy night (water and darkness) replete with the sound of thunder (earth) and lightning (fire). Thus the flute itself sums up the entire initiatory symbolism.

Before the actual initiation, the candidates are relieved of the magic flute and bells for the time being; as in Masonic ritual when the candidate is "stripped of his metals"<sup>7</sup> signifying profane things that are not to be brought into the temple. Tamino

*The magic flute, symbolising the air element, is used only to surmount obstacles, not to destroy them.*

and Papageno are then led into a subterranean cavern, which corresponds to the "Cabinet of



*An early performance of the Magic Flute.*







*It was carved out of wood by Pamina's father on a stormy night...*

Reflection," to meditate upon their ensuing initiation. They are enjoined to silence, and Tamino must reject Pamina when she appears by not speaking to her. In Cagliostro's ritual, silence is the first instruction in the Cabinet of Reflection, and the virtue of celibacy is praised.

The rose, as well as bearing Rosicrucian and other ancient meanings, is the symbol for feminine Masonic initiation. In the Egyptian rite, a recurring motto is "I believe in the rose." Pamina lies asleep in a garden of roses; this is her "swoon" before initiation, which she enacts in the earth element. It is also indicated that the three spirits who lead Tamino to the temple should ride in a basket decorated with roses.

### Union of Opposites

The trials by fire and water are graphically illustrated in the opera. Tamino and Pamina actually walk through a cave and overcome the elements. Afterwards, they stand in the Temple of the Sun in priestly vestments. Here, woman is equal to man: the sun (Sarastro's realm) and the moon (the Queen's realm) are united spiritually. Cagliostro's rite was the only Masonic ritual that admitted men and women equally. This union, through the initiation of male and female, was at the basis of the Egyptian rite's philosophy. Only through the marriage of the sun and the moon could true enlightenment be attained. The priestly vestments worn by both probably owe their appearance to Cagliostro's ritual.<sup>8</sup>

Mozart, in addition to supervising the libretto, provided music of inspired genius, which actually depicts the visual symbolism in sound. He also used musical numerology (through

key relationships and rhythmic patterns, e.g. in depicting the numbers 3 and 18), and illustrated the threefold knocking at the Lodge door by dynamic rhythmic chords appearing at key points in the opera.

The use of these symbols, when viewed within the story of the opera, bears a striking resemblance to initiation rituals influenced by Cagliostro's rite, the creation of these esoteric references makes *The Magic Flute* a work that deals with the inner part of humanity, as did the alchemical and allegorical symbols of the early Rosicrucians. The influence of the Egyptian rite, descended from Cagliostro and Saint-Germain, without question links Mozart's opera to the ancient mysteries as it speaks to us of a new life.

### Footnotes

1. Jacques Chailley, *The Magic Flute Unveiled* (1971), trans. by H. Weinstock (Inner Traditions, 1992), p. 63.
2. Manly P. Hall, ed., *The Most Holy Trinosophia of Saint-Germain* (Philosophical Research Society), Introduction.
3. Paul Nettl, *Mozart and Masonry* (New York, Da Capo, 1970), p. 42.
4. Other references to the tradition that Mozart and Cagliostro were acquainted are found in *The Soul of Lilith*, a novel by Marie Corelli; and in an article that appeared some years ago in *El Rosacruz*, the Spanish Rosicrucian magazine by H. Rios, entitled "Cagliostro, The Wind from the South."
5. Quoted in Chailley, op.cit., p. 7.
6. See Comte de Cagliostro, *Secret Ritual of Egyptian Rite Freemasonry* (reprint, Kessinger Publishing, 1992); also the AMORC series of supplementary monographs on Cagliostro. For other background information: article by Ralph M. Lewis entitled "Cagliostro, Man of Mystery", published in *Rosicrucian Digest* LXII, No. 3, (March, 1984), pp. 25ff.
7. Cagliostro ritual cited above, p. 166. Chailley, op. cit., p.77.
8. Chailley, op. cit., p.77.



*Pamina lies asleep in a garden of roses. The rose, as well as bearing Rosicrucian and other ancient meanings, is the symbol for feminine Masonic initiation.*



# Life, Lessons and Truisms

*by William Hand, FRC.*



**A**LL OF US AT SOME STAGE IN OUR lives have come across a particular phrase or sentence that seems to carry more meaning than may be apparent on the first reading. In this article I will share some of the sayings and truisms that have been meaningful to me. I offer some of my interpretations of each saying but also suggest that each is worthy of a few moments individual reflection and contemplation.

*The best things in life  
are not things.*

There is a sister saying to this: *"the best things in life are free."* Both are alluding to the same fact, that the acquisition of material goods by itself will not make you happy. This is not to say that desiring and acquiring a nice home, car or other consumer item is a bad thing; it is just that ultimately without your health, inner peace and the love of others,



you will probably end up unhappy and somewhat unfulfilled as a person.

***Love begins when judgement ceases.***

This is a personal favourite of mine. It is saying that as soon as we master the ego and take ourselves away from any value judgements, then love can blossom. Mystics over the centuries have realised that one of the great obstacles to enlightenment is paying too much attention to the self, which is what judgement is about. So the love referred to here is a mystical love. You could also argue that in affairs of the heart you can never truly love a person if you are always judging them!

***Don't anthropomorphise computers, they may not like it!***

Computers are commonplace. Indeed you can't go to a bank, shop, airport, restaurant etc., without coming into contact with a computer of some sort. Even most watches nowadays have computer circuitry in them. They can do marvellous things very quickly but does a computer have a mind of its own? Can a computer make decisions and act like a human being? Well they certainly seem to make decisions sometimes. "Computer says no!" But can we really compare computers to human beings? Do they have feelings or emotions for example, or other qualities that we call human, especially the awareness that they are aware? The accepted answer to this question by science is: no.

Having said that, perhaps in the future machines will be developed with as much or maybe more processing power than the human brain and then, just possibly, that may attract soul energy and turn a machine into a living expression of Soul. We would then be able to genuinely ask them whether they like being anthropomorphised or not.

***If you think training is expensive, try ignorance.***

I came across this one over 20 years ago when I was teaching meteorology to graduates. It is one of those glaringly obvious truisms, yet how many companies have you come across where (through ignorance) staff have not coped and possibly lost customers?

I bet at least one! Would you embark on a project, possibly investing a lot of time and money not knowing the first thing about it? Yes we can all learn eventually by our mistakes, but sometimes those mistakes can be very costly. A little bit of training can go a long way... Actually we, as Rosicrucian students, already know this. Imagine how much harder your lives might have been had you not had the benefit of our Rosicrucian studies.

***There are two ways to become rich, make more or desire less.***

Many people in today's world want to be rich in a material sense. However, the only way they feel they can achieve this goal is to work harder and try and earn more money. This causes problems with stress, family break-ups etc. But there is another way, and that is to take stock and really think about what you want and why you want it. By crossing non-essential items off the list and taking stock of what you have already, you quickly discover hidden riches in time, peace and money.

***No rain, no rainbows.***

This is a meteorological fact for sure. Everybody likes rainbows; they are beautiful objects but transitory in nature, and the opportunity to appreciate them must be seized quickly. However, according to the law of duality, before you can really appreciate a rainbow you must first experience some rain. Everything is dual in nature and all is relative.

***Every silver lining has a cloud.***

This saying is similar to the previous one and is usually quoted the other way round. By quoting it in this way however, we can more easily see that to every action there is a re-action. What to one person may be a "silver lining" is to another person "a cloud." There is no absolute value in life, only relative values.

***Man created God in his image.***

A truism if there ever was one! The only way we can talk about God, endeavour to explain God and to glorify God is in human terms. Nobody knows the true nature of God, as God is beyond enquiry. We



*Don't anthropomorphise computers.*



can feel the presence of God but we can never ever say we understand God.

***Predicting is very difficult, especially when it concerns the future.***

This is a rather witty saying but one that holds a note of seriousness. How many times do we come across people who claim to know the future? Profess to know our individual fate or tell us that unless we change our ways then something terrible will happen to us? Almost all predictions of such sort end in failure as the predictions are more for the benefit of the predictor's ego than for the recipient. Indeed, the effect of false predictions can be upsetting for susceptible individuals. Life is continually evolving, there may be a master plan, but no individual can be aware of such a plan in much the same way as a single letter on this page can ever be aware of the meaning and intent of this article.



*A friendly smile goes a long way.*

***Smile, it's the second best thing you can do with your lips.***

A friendly smile goes a long way, try it and see next time you want to do something with your lips!

***The loudest voice in the room is not necessarily the clearest.***

There is often strength in silence. Knowing when to stop talking and listen is an art and of great benefit. People who like the sound of their own voice are often too busy talking, and in doing so miss many learning opportunities.

If they continue to go through life like this then their messages can become muddled with a lack of clarity as they will not have progressed.

***Luck is the meeting place of preparation and opportunity.***

I love this one because I always tell people that there is no such thing as luck. Or, if I wish to concede a point, that everybody makes their own luck. Throughout life opportunities for advancement, wealth, peace and happiness will arise. If we are prepared, and the

Rosicrucian studies prepare us admirably, then we will recognise and seize these opportunities. Others may think we are lucky. However, I'll tell you now, I'd rather be lucky than good any day!

## He Who Does Not Learn Is Not Wise

**W**e have made inquiries about the rules of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire and the Indian states. We have never rejected anybody because of their different religion or origin. We have not jealously kept away from them what we affirm. And at the same time we have not disdained to learn what they stand for. We should not forget the fact that to acquire

knowledge of the truth and sciences are the most important aspects of life by which a king can adorn himself. And the most disgraceful thing for kings is to disdain learning and be ashamed of exploring the sciences. He who does not learn is not wise!

*Khusro I, Anushiravān.  
Shah of Persia (531-579 CE)*



# The Zen in Japanese Gardening

by George Parulski



**J**APANESE GARDENS, INFLUENCED like all the arts by the Zen aesthetic, differ radically from Western gardens with their profusion of flowers and their interest in colour. In Japan, the emphasis falls on other elements: sand, moss, stone lanterns; above all on unusual rocks that have often been brought at great expense from enormous distances, even as far away as Korea,

for transplanting in private and public gardens

Japan is the only country in the world where certain rocks have attained the status of “natural treasures,” being admired, we might even say worshipped, for their special forms or their associative historic or cultural values. Subtle suggestiveness and understanding pervade the landscaping of Japan, as do poetry, painting and *Chanoyu*, the “Tea Ceremony.” In the design of the gardens we can see





*In Japanese Zen gardens the aesthetic emphasis falls particularly on unusually shaped rocks.*

the Zen philosophy of simplification raised to the heights of aesthetic principles.

### What is Zen?

To understand why some Japanese “worship” a stone garden or why they consider gardening a “way of life,” we need to look at the nature of the concept of Zen, followed by a look at how it combines with gardening.

Zen is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word: *Chán*, which is derived from the Sanskrit word: *dhyāna* or the Pāli word: *jhāna*, both meaning “meditation.” In other words, Zen is a mispronunciation of another mispronunciation! Zen was founded by Bodhidharma (see *June 2009 Rosicrucian Beacon*), an Indian Buddhist, around 530 CE in Hénán province of China. Although considered a philosophy by its followers, it has no sacred scriptures, ritual or even method. As Bodhidharma said:

*No fixed doctrines,  
Without words or letters,  
Directing towards one’s mind,  
And the ultimate transformation  
To Buddha-hood.*

The question therefore arises..., if Zen is without words and methods, what is it? A certain Zen master by the name of Hakuin once said: “Zen is a ball afloat in a stream, unsinkable, yet totally under the control of the water.” And another master said: “Zen is nothing but he who asks what Zen is.” These seem like foolish musings to many who do not understand Zen, but they are in fact deep, indeed truly profound statements which can take years to fully appreciate.

### Expression of Thought

The form of asking a seemingly illogical question in Zen or answering a perfectly valid question with that seem to be a mere semantic riddle, is referred to as a *koan*. Zen masters gave these koans as problems to their students, in order to lead them to specific conclusions in their philosophising. Each contains *seed words* or phrases that hold the ultimate truth of Zen.

A koan is not solvable by the intellect alone. Indeed it is almost always quite a senseless statement or question to a rational mind. This is because Zen sees the mind as a barrier to our true thought processes. If thoughts are understood only through the use of logic, they are limited and devoid of perception. Perception is achieved when people have gained a level of unification between the mind and the body, where the being has become intuitively



*Zen was founded by Bodhidharma, an Indian Buddhist, around 530 CE in the Hénán province of China.*



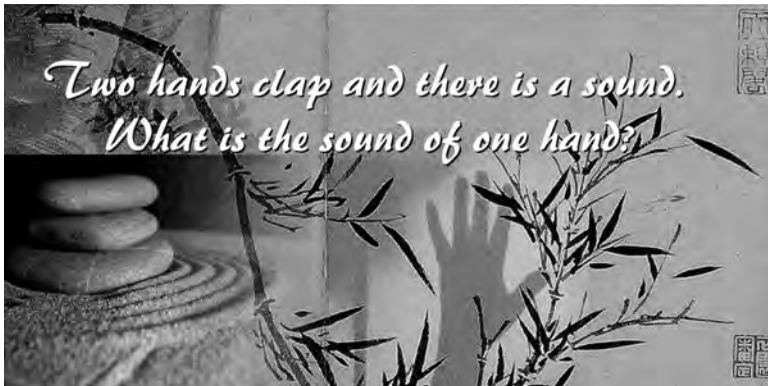
sensitive to its surroundings. The koan therefore, is a tool to help one break the logical barrier to true, fluid thought and assist us to act directly, without analysis, on every intuitive impression we receive. In terms of Western mysticism, Zen aims to unite the outer self of thought and reasoned action with the inner self of direct knowledge and experience.

Perhaps the following example will clear up the concept. Once upon a time Doshin asked Sosan: "What is the method of liberation?" The master replied, "Who binds you?" "No one binds me." "Why then," said the master, "should you seek liberation?" Replies in this way tend to throw attention back upon the state of mind from which the question arises. If you say to someone, "...if your feelings are troubling you, find out who or what it is that is being troubled..." the psychological response is to try and feel what it is that is feeling and to know what it is that is knowing. It is like an eye that sees but cannot see itself. All these riddles are only used to shock students back to the states of thinking they had in childhood: the perceptiveness and anticipation toward life itself. And this, it is said, fills life with happiness and peace of mind.

This is the philosophy that Zen uses with every act of culture it comes in contact with. Each activity it influences becomes a way of life, a method of achieving an inner simplification and of bringing about greater and greater states of pure intuition. This applies very much therefore to the art of Zen gardening.

### Associative Ideas

The fundamental thing about a Japanese garden which sets it apart from all other garden forms, is that it is used specifically to express the highest truths of religion and philosophy. In the same way, other civilisations use literature, painting, dance and music to accomplish this same expression of universal truths. The Japanese tell us that the art of gardening was developed as a means of communicating high philosophical truths. And judging from the many



*Zen masters gave these koans as problems to their students, in order to lead them to specific conclusions in their philosophising.*

surviving ancient paintings of Japanese gardens, it certainly seems to have done so.

The mind of a Zen practitioner, filled with thoughts of poems and paintings, evokes garden

***The Japanese garden used to specifically express the highest truths of religion and philosophy.***

surroundings to uphold the principle of Yin and Yang (female-male, dark-light, weak-strong). This Yin-Yang principle is a pre-Confucian principle that tells us that all life is made up of opposites. One cannot have one thing without its polar opposite, either at the same time or at a later date. Within every pair of opposites there is a point of tension which causes the person to grow. From this point it is the person's decision which way to go, namely, to follow good or to follow bad. Yet, whatever way they go, there will always be a part of the good in evil, or a part of the evil in good.

Through association, if suggested by not too far-fetched likeness, a group of rocks can be recognised as a dragon and her young where they sport in the spray of a cataract. And from this you are led to profitable thoughts on the forces of nature, benign or dreadful, and on the origin of all things in mist and water. Certain gardens have been designed primarily to conjure such ideas, whereas others try to copy Nature's way of working. Some gardens miniaturise



*The mind of a Zen practitioner, filled with thoughts of poems and paintings, evokes garden surroundings to uphold the principle of Yin and Yang...*

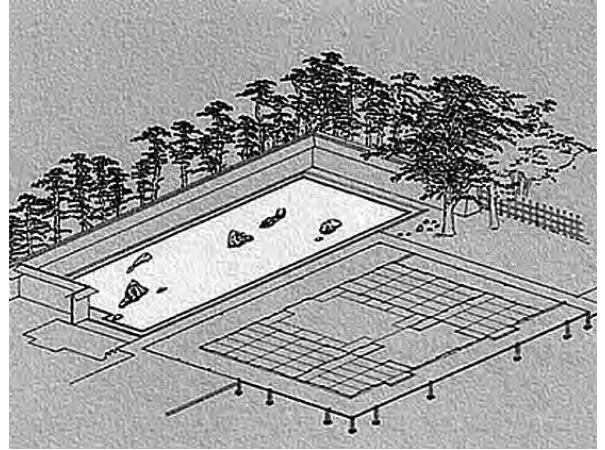




*The Zen practice is realised in the teasing charm of incompleteness, the suggestion that the onlooker finishes their own idea according to their own inner creativity.*

a complete forest, not by using small trees but by the simplification of Nature's workings. In simple terms the garden says "by this, the water flows and the plants grow." When the stream bed is done, its angles and curves are those of nature, and the beaches are placed in those coves where running water would drop its load of gravel and sand. The Zen gardener copies Nature's workings in creating a representation of the stream, the spray, the dragons and cataract, indeed as much as the landscape painter sets down on his canvas.

When ordinary people look at a river, they see water glinting. But what happens to the stream further on, they do not know. The suggestion is that the stream flows on through pleasant countryside to an ocean far away. The stepping stones that cross its narrowest place lead to a dip on the further bank beyond which the path climbs up to and then hides itself in a thicket to come into view again further downstream where it skirts a little beach. Thus, the Zen practice is realised in the teasing charm of incompleteness, the suggestion that the onlooker finishes their own idea according to their own inner creativity.



*Drawing of the layout of the Ryōan-ji stone garden; Ryōan-ji is known as one of the masterpieces of the Japanese garden, but its author is unknown.*

### A Visual Koan

For exactly that purpose, no Zen garden is complete. In this way, people must use their imaginations, and like the koan, the logic of the mind has no place in the process of imagination. Only intuition will find its mark in this domain. The garden in its incompleteness can be therefore be considered as a visual koan.

The most interesting and best known of the Japanese gardens are the stone gardens, which are said to represent eternity itself. The best way of illustrating Zen in a stone garden is to take a particular example and show how it contains meaning not only in beauty but in philosophy. The stone garden at Ryōan-ji (Temple of the Peaceful Dragon, a Zen temple in Kyoto and the burial place of seven emperors) is an endless gathering of white sand with twisted swirls and 15 scattered rocks. It

*Zen practice is realised in the teasing charm of incompleteness; the onlooker finishes their own ideas.*

was laid down just after the Ōnin wars of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Each part of this garden corresponds to another cultural activity. The clean expansion of white sand is similar to the white areas of *sumi-e* brush painting and calligraphy, the *shōji* sliding doors behind which you find floors laid with untouched, clean *tatami* mats, and the purity of Haiku poetry and music. There are no blossoms to fade and no leaves to wither and fall, for this garden is not dependant upon the impermanence of momentary beauty. Instead, it is endless, like Zen, and awe-inspiring.





## Stones and Their Meaning

Besides the sand, each individual stone has a meaning. It is customary to name stones after religious figures for example, and to place them in specific locations. Quite often they are arranged in groups of three, though they always in some way comply with the principle of Yin and Yang in that there is also an assorted collection of flat and round rocks.

The rocks of Ryōan-ji are said to depict rocks in a river, or on another scale..., islands in a sea. Only 14 of the 15 rocks can actually be seen at any one time, suggesting perhaps that the senses cannot grasp all of reality from any one point of view. Other rocks in this spatial structure are not free-standing, but are buried substantially in the ground. Some smaller rocks are in fact almost completely submerged, with their top surfaces barely noticeable above ground level. The proper burial of rocks is given great consideration in Japanese gardening, so the effect is similar to icebergs in which the revealed portion implies greater force and mass than is apparent. This also strengthens the relationship of rock and sand. Thus the observer grows in the knowledge that all is powerful, no matter what the visible size is.



*The rocks of Ryōan-ji are said to depict rocks in a river, or on another scale..., islands in a sea.*

## Emptiness and Form

Let us now look at the garden as a whole. It is at this point that we come to one of the basic paradoxes of Zen philosophy: *Only through form can we realise emptiness.* Emptiness is therefore considered not as a concept reached by the analytical process of reasoning, but as a statement of intuition and perception.

From this “fact of experience” is derived the principle of *sumi-e* painting. The blank sheet of paper

is perceived only as a piece of paper, and remains a piece of paper. Only by filling the paper does it become empty in much the same way as the sand becomes empty as the stones are placed. There is therefore a mutual perfection shared by the sand and the stone. As the rock, when it is buried, becomes one with the sand, so too do people become empty of themselves when they are one with the All. There is no stillness, no hesitation at one point..., all is flowing. Because there is no duality between stone and sand, it is said they have achieved a “perfect mutual solution” of form and vacant space. When observing the sand and stone, the mind does not dwell on either, but flows freely between both, and includes both.

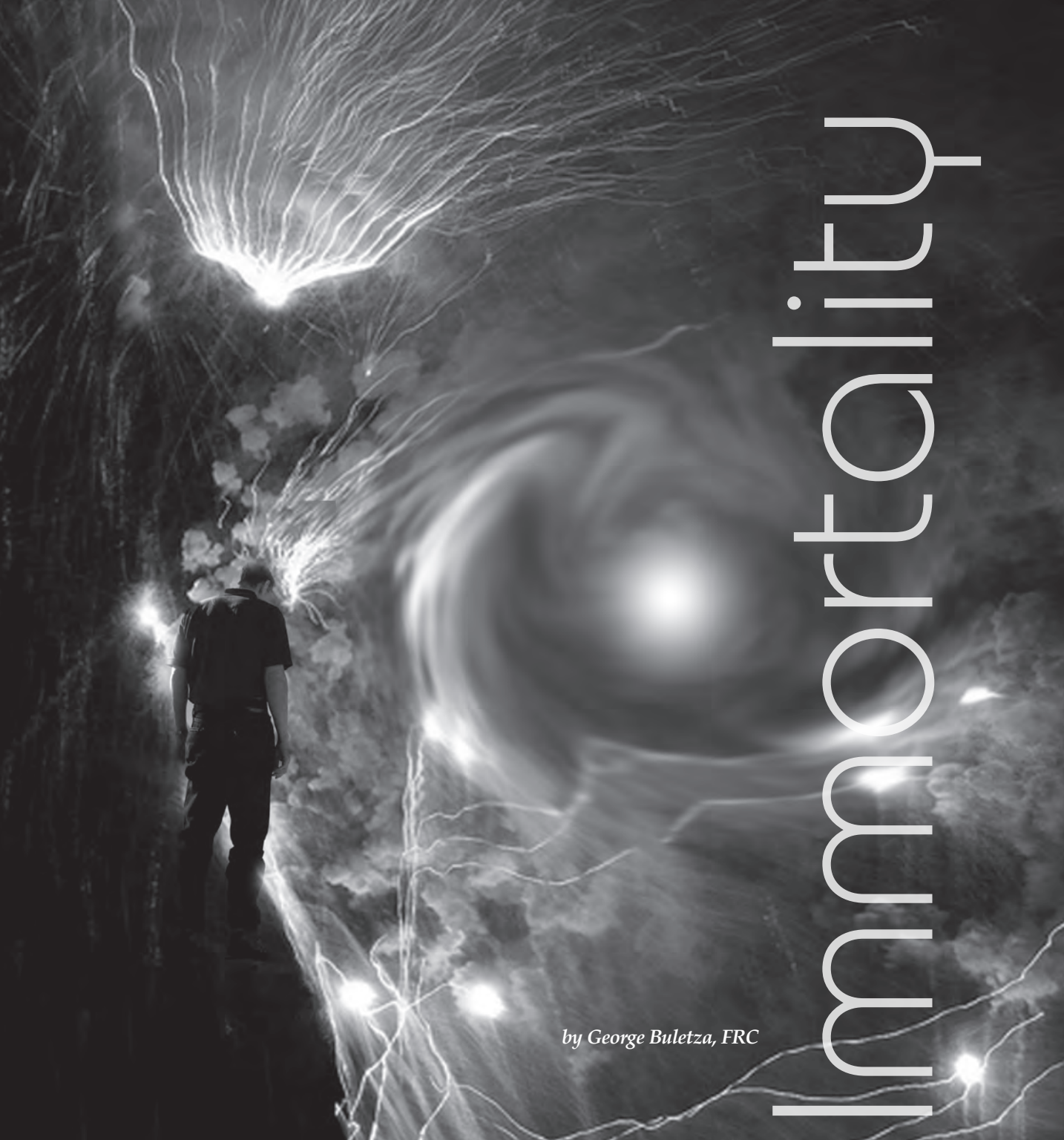
Emptiness therefore, is not the emptiness of absence but the relation that the garden achieves through its coexistence with form. Where there is no form there is no emptiness, for form is emptiness and emptiness is form. We can therefore see now that the garden is in all reality a picture telling us the story of Zen philosophy. It is not a simple placing of flowers or throwing of stones, but the telling of a story of the relation of humanity to itself. It can safely be said then that Zen, as applied to gardening, is more than an activity..., it is a way of life!



*The “Sumi-e” style of Japanese painting is characterized by a few quick brush strokes using black ink and water. The minimalist style attempts to capture the chi or life spirit of an object.*

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# Immortality

*by George Buletza, FRC*

**F**OR MILLENNIA THE MORTALITY of the human body has raised questions that have troubled the minds of many people, threatening their sense of well-being. In recent decades theories of immortality have received support by accounts of near-death experiences, by hypnotic regressions, spontaneous past-life recalls

and spiritualistic experiences. These accounts are seen by some as a substantiation of their belief in immortality. But these subjective accounts are discounted by others. Concepts of immortality may be attractive, but as long as we live on a mundane plane, exoteric evidence remains inconclusive. So, as we don't really know the answer, we must approach this question with an open mind.



Rosicrucian investigations neither confirm nor deny the idea of immortality. On the other hand, these studies do tell us much about ourselves, our desires and our perceived "need" for immortality. For example, many of those taking part in these investigations discover that beneath their fears of rejection, loneliness and separation is a fundamental fear of death..., a fear of losing identity, of losing the special qualities that make us unique. Without these special qualities we may fear that we are nothing at all.

If we believe that all we have is our uniqueness, our separateness and our fears, when we release them, we may fear that there will be nothing left..., a complete void. This is the ultimate terror, and we avoid approaching the abyss at all costs. If we have sufficient courage and purpose to meet this terror and pass through the void, then we may discover the mystical gifts we seek. To acquire sufficient courage and purpose requires the kind of inner preparation we gain through the Rosicrucian teachings.

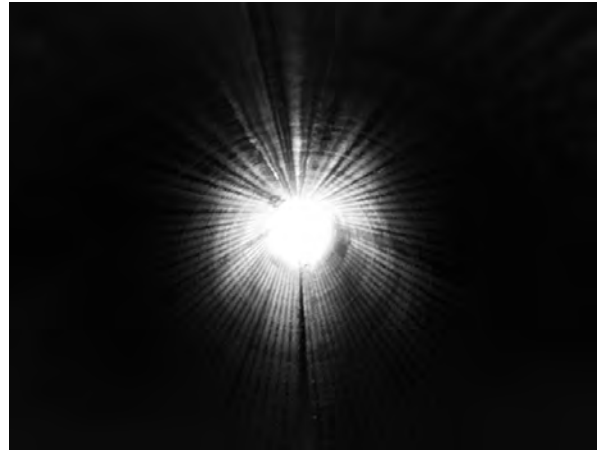
*If we have sufficient courage and purpose to meet this terror, then we may discover the mystical gifts we seek.*

In the laboratory, when subjects approach the so-called "Terror" at the edge of the abyss of nothingness, their *previous preparation* can enable them to discover peace, new life and a love that connects them with all they perceive. We have found that the experience of *connection* is both spatial and temporal. In other words, those taking part *subjectively* experience immortality.

### Two Different Realities

The subjective nature of this result does not fulfil objective criteria for proof. The participants may be satisfied with their experience, but what happened to them may not be satisfactory proof to others who have not had the same experience..., nor should it be. However, what these studies do demonstrate is the presence of two different realities: one of *connection* and another of *separation*.

Connection is accompanied by experiences of love, peace and joy, while separation is associated with fear, anxiety, loneliness and limitation. We do not perceive both realities at the same time. Hence, the reality by which we live is our choice. Whichever reality we choose is



*Accounts of so-called near death experiences are seen by some people as a substantiation of their belief in immortality.*

just that..., a choice rather than a proof. Whether or not death or immortality ever enters the realm of mundane science, the judgments and realities about them seem consistent with results from the Rosicrucian Order's laboratory subjects. Views of death and immortality are also remarkably stable with time. For example, the Roman philosopher Cicero wrote two millennia ago, "*There is in the minds of men, I know not how, a certain presage of a future existence; and this takes deepest root in the greatest geniuses and most exalted souls.*"

### Death and Immortality

Other great people from the past have made comments consistent with this reality. For example, the American author Helen Keller "saw" death as illusory. She thought she saw more clearly by being both blind and deaf: "*I know my friends not by their physical appearance but by their spirit. Consequently death does not separate me from my loved ones. At any moment I can bring them around me to cheer my loneliness. Therefore, to me, there is no such thing as death in the sense that life has ceased... The inner or 'mystic' sense, if you will, gives me vision of the unseen. Here, in the midst of everyday air, I sense the rush of ethereal rains. I am conscious of the splendour that binds all things of earth to all things of heaven. Immured by silence and darkness, I possess the light which shall give me vision a thousandfold when death sets me free.*"

Even a man like the philosopher Bertrand Russell, who did not believe in personal survival, strongly felt the abstract relation between an individual and his world. He wrote: "...an

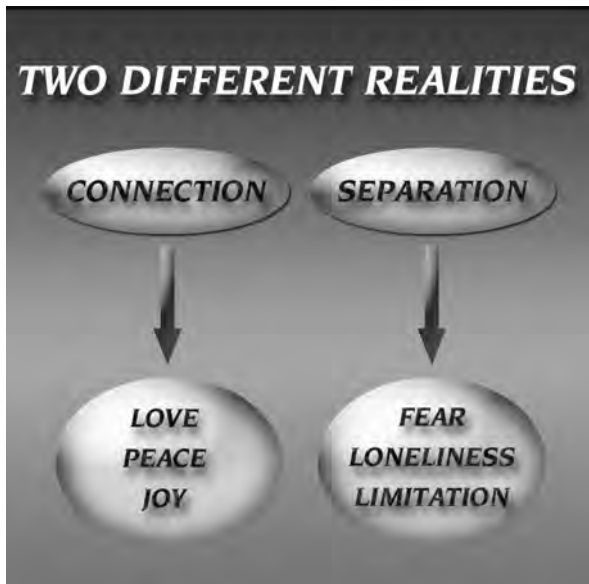


*individual human existence should be like a river..., small at first, narrowly contained within its banks and rushing passionately past boulders and over waterfalls. But gradually the river grows wider, the banks recede, the water flows more quietly, and in the end, without any visible break, they become merged in the sea and painlessly lose their individual being."*

### Speculations

Some Rosicrucian laboratory subjects find they can go from there to a realisation that the "outer self" is *illusory in nature*, temporary from our present limited viewpoint, a merely elementary, finite tool for learning. The British philosopher and writer Alan Watts also seems to have thought so: "...there is no separate 'you' to get something out of the universe..., we do not come into the world; we come out of it, as leaves from a tree."

He explained that "...as the ocean 'waves,'



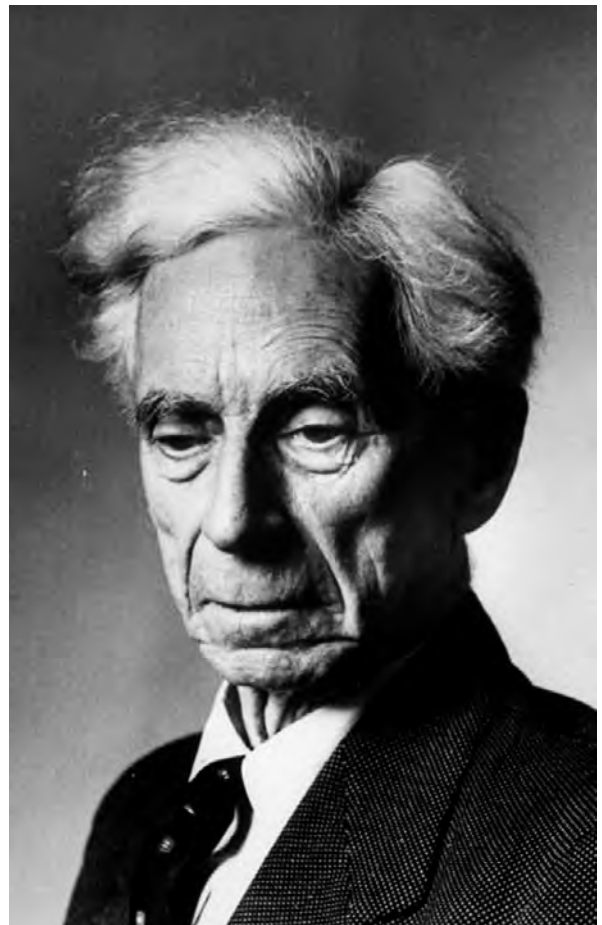
*so the universe 'peoples.' What we therefore see as death, empty space or nothingness, is only the trough between the crests of this endless waving ocean of life. The corpse is like a footprint or echo; the dissolving trace of something you have ceased to do. When the line between yourself and what happens to you is dissolved, you find yourself not in the world, but as the world. There is a feeling of hills lifting you as you climb them, of air breathing yourself in and out of your lungs. All space becomes your mind."*

While speculations about immortality may aid the mind in its task of building a reality, it still remains *speculation and assumption*, not a

proven fact. If doubt about immortality is one of our greatest burdens, at least the inevitability of dying can be said to be merciful. Just think what a scramble life would be if it were an accepted fact that each of us had only a fifty-fifty chance of permanently avoiding death, or even one in a billion chances. Our doubts about immortality however, are far from an unmitigated liability. In fact, there appears a spiritual bounty in this ultimate mystery of mysteries.

***Immortality remains speculation and assumption; not a proven fact.***

Knowing the body inevitably will die allows us the privilege to trust in life. If science had given us the answer to immortality, we would not have this privilege. We would have been denied the special exaltation that comes with reliance on the Inner Self alone.



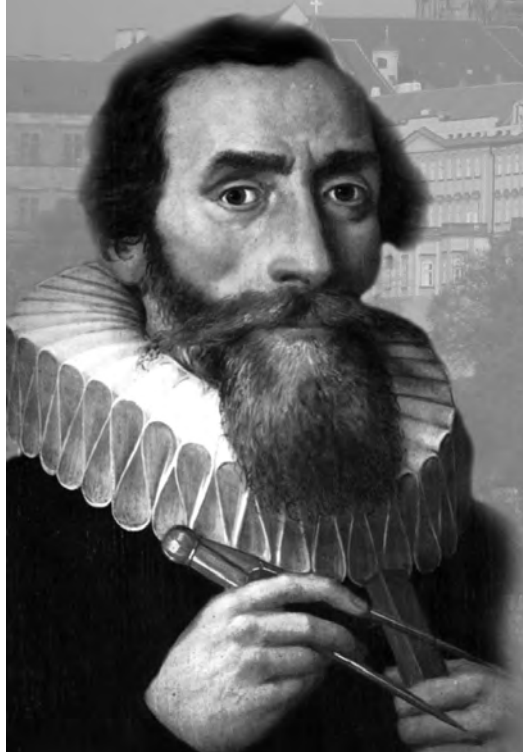
*The philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), who did not believe in personal survival, strongly felt the abstract relation between an individual and his world.*



# From Bohemia

## Prague, Rudolf II and the Genesis of the Rosy Cross

by Bill Anderson, FRC



**R**OSICRUCIAN HISTORY AND Mysteries (Ch.9 "The Rose in Bloom") by Christian Rebisse<sup>1</sup> tells of the celebrated scientists and esotericists who gravitated to the imperial court of the Holy Roman Emperor in Prague around the time of the first Rosicrucian Manifestos. What follows is a brief survey of that sphere of esoteric and Rosicrucian influence generated around the figure of Rudolf II.

It is worthwhile to understand the background to the institution known as the Holy Roman Empire or *Das Heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation* in German, as that entity no longer exists. On Christmas Day 800 CE, the King of the Franks, Charlemagne, was crowned by Pope Leo III in Rome as the first Holy Roman Emperor in a political act of opposition to the Roman (Byzantine) Emperor in Constantinople. The empire managed





*Area controlled by the Holy Roman Empire around 1630 with the visible outlines of modern countries.*

to survive until Napoleon Bonaparte forced the last Holy Roman Emperor, Franz II, whose daughter Napoleon married, to dissolve the Empire in 1806, thus ending the original “thousand-year Reich.”

The Habsburg dynasty had ruled the empire since 1438. This empire was a strange medieval entity: a federation of states in Central Europe, mainly in what we now call Germany. It was never governed by an absolute ruler like Russia; instead the emperor was elected by a small electoral college, but since one of them was the King of Bohemia, the Habsburgs had an inbuilt advantage. However there was a mystique attached to the empire and to the imperial idea itself. It was envisaged as an earthly image: with God and his angels in Heaven, and on Earth the Emperor and his household: *As above, so below*. The empire had a mission: to create peace, peace in the empire and peace because of the empire, with the emperor as a shepherd-king. It was this “Great Peace” that was the goal of all the emperors, kings, imperial princes and bishops, and of all the ecclesiastical and secular lords, whether in the Imperial Diet (parliament) or fighting their wars. Many great thinkers of the past also supported this ideal, men such as Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Leibnitz and Goethe.

## Prague

Prague, the capital of the modern Czech Republic, with its medieval architecture, is a popular tourist

destination. The city though, is much more than that. It played an important role in the history of Rosicrucianism in Europe.

Prague was not only the ancient capital of the kingdom of Bohemia, but twice in its history, both referred to as a golden age, it became the capital city of the Holy Roman Empire. The first time was under Charles IV (reigned 1355–1378) who was the successor of Ludwig IV, the builder of the Monastery of Ettal.<sup>2</sup> The second occurred when Rudolf II moved his court to Prague from Vienna.

Listening to the Czech composer Smetana’s beautiful tone poem “Vltava” you can transport yourself mentally to the Old Town. Looking across the Charles Bridge with its statues of saints on either parapet, the stately river Vltava flows beneath you. In front are two hills upon the right of which, towering above the city, is the imposing Prague Castle, the setting for much of this story.

## The Marvellous 16<sup>th</sup> Century

Throughout the world, the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a vigorous, creative and productive age of great strides in the field of architecture, literature, culture and education.

We are all familiar with the Elizabethan age in England and the English Renaissance with such great figures as Sir Francis Bacon, William Shakespeare and Thomas Tallis coming readily to mind. It is even said that we can detect the beginnings of Rosicrucianism here in England, though the Rosicrucian Manifestos appeared in Germany at a later date.

Looking around the rest of the world, in Central and South America, the Aztecs and Incas had reached the apex of sophistication and culture before it was all destroyed during the European



*Prague was not only the ancient capital of the kingdom of Bohemia; twice in its history it became the capital city of the Holy Roman Empire.*





*Most visitors to Prague cross the famous Charles Bridge over the river Vltava and wind their way up the hill to the castle.*

conquests. In China, the Ming dynasty under the Emperor Wanli saw the social and economic transformation of the country into a modern state. Population doubled, new food crops were introduced. There was an economic boom and cities like Běijīng, Nánjīng, Sūzhōu and Hángzhōu, with their elaborate mansions and gardens became great centres of intellectual activity.

In Turkey, the Ottoman Empire under Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent reached its zenith. He also presided over a renaissance. During his reign the master architect Sinan erected his incomparable buildings. The fine arts flourished, with an important school of miniature painters, half of them European, creating a new aesthetic direction. It was a golden age for poetry, not least of which was that of the Sultan. The sciences, theology and the judicial system flourished. Süleyman is still revered to this day in Turkey as *Kanûnî* "the Lawgiver."

In Persia, Shāh Abbās the Great of the Safavid dynasty turned his country once again into a centre of trade and business for the Middle East. He moved his capital to Esfahān (Isfahan), making it one of the most beautiful cities in the world at that time. He was also a great patron of arts, sciences and architecture. Although he made Shi'a Islam the religion of his country, he even used to attend church with his Christian subjects at Christmas. He also supported miniature painting. It was said that in his reign, Iranian art revived after a thousand years of decline. Great philosophers and scientists were attracted to his court.

In India, the Mughal Emperor Akbar prized learning and culture. He not only collected books but actively created libraries, having books



*Lifelike wax figure of Rudolf II; he was not only Holy Roman Emperor (1576-1612), but also Archduke of Austria (1576-1608), King of Bohemia (1575-1611), King of Hungary (1576-1608) and King of Croatia and Slavonia (1576-1608).*

translated from Persian, Sanskrit and even Latin. He was interested in mysticism and, unusually in that age, tolerated other religions. Under him, the Mughal tradition of painting began, which was a mixture of Persian and Hindu. Architecture flourished too. Under him the empire was stable and at peace.

### **At the Castle Gate**

Prague is a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century city at the heart of Europe. As well as its outer, visible appearance, Prague also possesses an inner aspect, epitomised by the royal castle on the hill overlooking the river and the old city.

Most visitors to Prague cross the famous Charles Bridge over the river Vltava and wind their way up the hill to the castle. But when I visited this city I decided to journey on the road less well travelled! I took the metro to Malostranská station in the Malá Strana or Lesser Town and made my way up the hill towards the castle. It was a hot and sunny day and took quite an effort to climb up the steps, but near the top of





Prague Castle, or Hradčany Castle, is part of a vast complex that includes St. Vitus Cathedral, the Romanesque Basilica of St. George, the Renaissance Archbishop's Palace, a monastery, defence towers, and other structures. The royal complex, called the Hradčany, perches on a hill overlooking the River Vltava.

the hill, just outside the castle's East Gate, there is a place where I was rewarded with magnificent views over the city, with its red-tiled roofs and many church spires. Such was the scene that would have greeted Rudolf as he looked out of the windows of his apartments.

After passing through the gate, I first passed the yellow Lobkowitz palace and, next to it, the light green Rožmberk or Rosenberg palace, named after a Bohemian magnate family who also played a part in this story. I walked into the courtyard of the newly refurbished palace and sat in the café to soak in some of the atmosphere. Afterwards, I made my way past the Golden Lane or Alchemists' Lane, as it is better known (though there is some doubt as to whether any alchemists actually lived there) to St George's Square where I sat down in the warmth of the afternoon sun. Beyond that, in the Third Courtyard is the statue of St. George vanquishing the dragon, a statue full of esoteric meaning. My thoughts turned to the man most associated with Prague castle. This was Rudolf II. Why had his reign as emperor been so important in the birth of Rosicrucianism and why Prague? Sitting there, in the middle of the home he loved so much, I contemplated this remarkable time in European history.

## Rudolf II

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1552 in Vienna, into a world of reformation and renaissance

was born Rudolf, the eldest son of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II. Maximilian was a humanist who wanted to learn as much as possible about the world he lived in. He had a sharp intellect and refined artistic tastes. His belief in mutual tolerance in religious matters attracted mystics, Neoplatonists and Kabalists, amongst others, to his court. Maximilian was a patron of the arts and a great linguist. It was his love for Prague, and all his other qualities that he passed on to his son Rudolf, in spite of the latter's upbringing in Madrid at the rigid and intolerant court of his uncle Philip II, the head of the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs.

Rudolf II was not only Holy Roman Emperor (1576-1612), but also Archduke of Austria (1576-1608), King of Bohemia (1575-1611), King of Hungary (1576-1608) and King of Croatia and Slavonia (1576-1608.) His grandfather was

*His was an age of great learning and accomplishment.*

the Emperor Charles V who, as king of Spain, lamented the building of a church inside the amazing Great Mosque of Córdoba.<sup>3</sup> Rudolf's great, great grandparents were the Spanish king and queen Ferdinand and Isabella, the conquerors of Granada, and the sponsors of Christopher Columbus in his search for the new world.

Rudolf's Austrian Habsburg realms spread over a great deal of Central and Western Europe but Austria remained the heart of the *Erblande* or hereditary lands. From 1526 the Habsburgs also became kings of Bohemia (part of the current Czech Republic) and Hungary. Some Habsburg domains even lay outside the empire. The Austrian Habsburgs' interests were closely linked to the senior Spanish branch of the dynasty and during the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was the custom for the Austrian Habsburgs to receive an education in Spain; and this is what happened to Rudolf and his younger brother Ernst.

Rudolf's period in history, the 16<sup>th</sup> century, came between the Renaissance and Reformation on one hand, and the Thirty Years' War on



Rudolf was certainly interested in spirituality and the mysteries of the universe. It is known that his library contained copies of the *Pymander*, *Asclepius* and the *Picatrix*. This is an early Italian edition of the *Pymander*, a treatise on one of the central books of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.





the other. The first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a disastrous period of death and destruction throughout Europe. But it was as well an age of great learning and accomplishment, an age of exploration in every sense, the age when Rosicrucianism in its modern form came to the notice of an eagerly anticipating Europe. Rudolf had an amazing set of contemporaries: Elizabeth I of England, Philip II of Spain, Henry IV of France and Ivan the Terrible of Russia.

Prague Castle in the Hradčany district was more than comparable to the Hofburg palace in Vienna, from where he had moved his court. Rudolf moved there in the 1580s when the castle was further expanded and embellished. It was the home for his numerous collections of all kinds of art, which he housed in the so-called *Kunstkammer* (Chamber of Art) as well as his illustrious scholarly guests.

Rudolf may have believed in *Gottes gnadentum* or "The Divine Right of Kings," as did so many other rulers of the time, but no matter what we may think of him as a ruler, he was hungry for knowledge and was a magnificent collector. His court in Prague became a pan-European centre for the arts and sciences.

With Flanders also under Habsburg rule, many of the most talented Flemish painters were drawn to the imperial court or Hofstaat. This included not just the courtiers but the many artists and fortune-seekers that gravitated to the court offering their services and vying for the emperor's patronage. Artists such as Hans Vredeman de Vries, Aegidius Sadeler and Bartholomeus Spranger



The German astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler worked in Prague on the movements of the planets and produced the Rudolphine Tables based on Brahe's observations. The frontispiece celebrates the great astronomers of the past: Hipparchus, Ptolemy, Copernicus, and most prominently, Tycho Brahe.



The Rosenbergs possessed various residences including the castle at Český Krumlov in the south of Bohemia.

amongst many others flocked to Prague. Rudolf's famous picture collection in the *Kunstkammer*, included works by Dürer, Brueghel, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Correggio, Parmigianino, Veronese and Tintoretto.

### Protector of Arts and Sciences

Despite the Vatican and his strict Catholic upbringing in Spain, Rudolf made no distinction between Catholic, Protestant (which most of his Czech subjects were), Jew or Muslim. During his reign, Prague was tolerant and a great centre of learning. He allowed his subjects to follow their intellectual and spiritual investigations wherever they might lead them and welcomed anyone who could push forward the frontiers of knowledge. Rudolf's artists and scientists, partly because it was the spirit of the time and partly because they were encouraged by their patron, all strove to transcend the everyday world with its constant change and infinite variety to perceive a universal and eternal Unity.

Rudolf was certainly interested in spirituality and the mysteries of the universe. It is known that his library contained copies of the *Pymander*, *Asclepius* and the *Picatrix*. His interest in occultism resulted in his sponsorship of many alchemists, whether real or fraudulent, who flocked to Prague. He set aside a group of houses inside the castle, next to St. Vitus' Cathedral to house them. These alchemists sought not only the transmutation of metals and compounds through the Philosophers' Stone, but also the moral and spiritual rebirth of mankind. In this, they were very close to the Rosicrucian writings and to those of Jacob Boehme and Dr. John Dee.

The craving for universal knowledge found expression in the hermetic doctrines made accessible by Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico



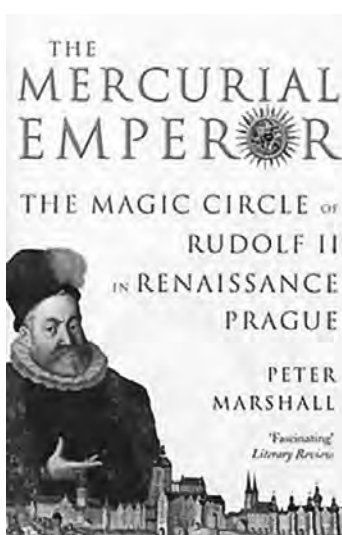
della Mirandola, with their stress on the unity of mankind. It was also found in the study of the Kabala which took place in the Jewish Josefov district of Prague. It was also to be found in the "art" of Ramon Llull and in the occultism of the Paracelsians and the alchemists.

Late Renaissance Prague was a centre of research into the wonders of nature. Famous scholars, alchemists and philosophers flocked to Prague to partake in the ambience of the place, protected by the emperor and his court. Neoplatonism, Hermeticism and Kabala studies found favour at Rudolf's court. So it was not unusual to find a host of the most famous and greatest thinkers and scientists of the day

visiting Prague. This included people such as the German alchemist and physician Oswald Croll, Rabbi Judah Loew, the Chief Rabbi of Bohemia, a renowned scholar and Kabbalist, the Polish alchemist Michał Sędziwój better known as Michael Sendivogius,<sup>4</sup> the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno, the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe as well as the German astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler. Kepler worked in Prague on the movements of the planets and produced the *Tabulae Rudolphinae*, detailed astronomical tables based on Brahe's observations. He dedicated them to Rudolf II.

Tycho Brahe, who died after dining in the Rosenberg palace in the castle, is currently interred in a tomb in the Church of Our Lady before Týn, in the Old Town Square near the famous Prague Astronomical Clock. Johannes Kepler came to Prague to work for the emperor. The first cosmological publication of the young Johannes Kepler, his *Mysterium Cosmographicum* of 1597 was intended as a new justification of the principles of Pythagorean harmony.

As the essayist J B Bamborough stated in his *The Little World of Man* (1972): "*The cosmology of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a tightly-knit coherent system of aphoristic correspondences. The study of nature and man which followed from it must be set against a background where all science, despite its compartments of psychology, medicine, botany, metallurgy and the rest, was intimately linked with the whole cosmic*



*Through his patronage of the arts and sciences Rudolf II helped to change the perspectives of humanity at a crucial stage in their history.*

*hierarchy. Psychology studied the soul and the body, and the effects of the one on the other; the soul, with its division into vegetable, sensible and rational, paralleled in microcosm the division of the macrocosm into mineral, animal and spiritual. The body was a little world made cunningly of the same elements which formed the world beyond it."*

## Rožmberk

After Rudolf's Prague the most famous centre for the study of alchemy was the court of Wilhelm von Rosenberg. The Rosenbergs ranked among the most important, oldest and most noble and influential Czech aristocratic magnate families. I use the German form of the name, instead of the

Czech *Rožmberk*, as German was the language of the court and of many people in Prague generally. Rosenberg housed alchemists at his palace in Prague Castle, next to the royal palace, as well as his estates in southern Bohemia, especially at Krummau, now Český Krumlov. The family's crest: a five-petalled red rose can still be found all over southern Bohemia. Amongst other famous guests was the famous Hermetic philosopher and alchemist Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605) who became Wilhelm's court physician.

The brothers Wilhelm and Peter Vok von Rosenberg, were both highly cultured men and patrons of the arts. The latter even owned two giant manuscripts of the theological writings of Paracelsus. The Rosenbergs kept themselves very well-informed and had a special service of newsletters, copies of the most topical reports from all over Europe and beyond. They possessed various residences apart from the palace inside Prague Castle; most notable of these were at Třeboň and especially the castle at Český Krumlov in the south of Bohemia, which, with 300 rooms, was the largest in the country after Prague castle. In 1602 it was bought by Rudolf II.

The brothers had a passion for collecting books and documents that amounted to some 10,000 volumes. The Rosenberg library, famous in its day, has been dispersed. After the death of Peter Vok von Rosenberg, his library was acquired by the crown and moved to Prague Castle. We



know that both brothers were interested in the Kabala and alchemy. They kept in close contact with many of those active in alchemical and esoteric circles.

Rudolf was interested in the bizarre, erotic, esoteric and the occult, and the environment he produced in Prague proved highly fertile. Dr. John Dee (1527-1608,) the famous English mathematician, astronomer and astrologer turned up in Prague in 1586 and stayed for about six years. He was one of the most learned men in Europe who

*The Rosicrucian Manifestos expressed the strongly Hermetic and alchemical ideas that had circulated in RudolFINE Prague.*

was steeped in the Kabala and Neoplatonic and Hermetic traditions. Like the early Rosicrucians, he believed in cosmic harmony and hoped for the moral and spiritual reform of the world through the spreading of ancient wisdom. He was accompanied by another alchemist Edward Kelley, altogether more notorious. In 1586 both of them were allowed to continue their studies at the Rosenberg castle at Wittingau, now Třeboň in southern Bohemia.

### Unfolding of the Rose

Under Rudolf II, Prague became the glittering hub of European and intellectual life. His patronage had given considerable impetus to the Rosicrucian movement which emerged shortly after his death. The three Rosicrucian Manifestos expressed the strongly Hermetic and alchemical ideas that had circulated in RudolFINE Prague. The Manifestos called for all men of learning to join in the moral and spiritual regeneration of society. The ideas and language echoed those of the Hermetic reformers who had gathered at Rudolf's court: Khunrath, Maier, Dee and Bruno. Even the great Silesian mystic Jacob Boehme was attracted to the lingering ambience of Prague and lived there between 1619 and 1620.

It was into this era that the Rosicrucian Manifestos appeared. Here was what appeared to be a group calling for a universal reform of society. This call was couched in the language of alchemical transmutation or rebirth. The most imaginative of the Rosicrucian Manifestos was *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, which was composed by Johann Valentin Andreae, whose circle of friends at Tübingen

included many Kabalists and Hermeticists. A leading defender of the Rosicrucians was Count Michael Maier who was prominent at the court in Prague. There were also the Bohemian and Silesian circles. Rosicrucian beliefs as put forward in the Manifestos were close in spirit to Bruno, Dee, Khunrath, Boehme and Robert Fludd, all of whom worked at some time in RudolFINE Prague.

As Peter Marshall pointed out in his book *The Mercurial Emperor*, "it was through his patronage of the arts and sciences that Rudolf had helped to change the perspectives of humanity at a crucial stage in their history. As a Christian, he advocated religious tolerance, and as a seeker after truth, he defended freedom of enquiry and expression. His greatest achievement was to have created a positive and tolerant environment and then to have had the wisdom to let things happen. He provided just the catalyst required to fixate the boiling crucible of ideas that was lighting up Europe. Under his patronage, he turned Prague into the principal cultural and intellectual centre of the West."

### Epilogue

It was time for me to leave. I walked past the houses where Rudolf allowed the alchemists to live and work, passed the Cathedral of St. Vitus, with its marvellous rose window, past Rudolf's *Kunstkammer*, through the three courtyards and out of the Giants' Gate into the massive Hradčanské Square in front of the castle. From here the road wound down to the river and the Charles Bridge. I walked across the bridge, as so many generations had done before me, and disappeared into the maze of the Old Town.

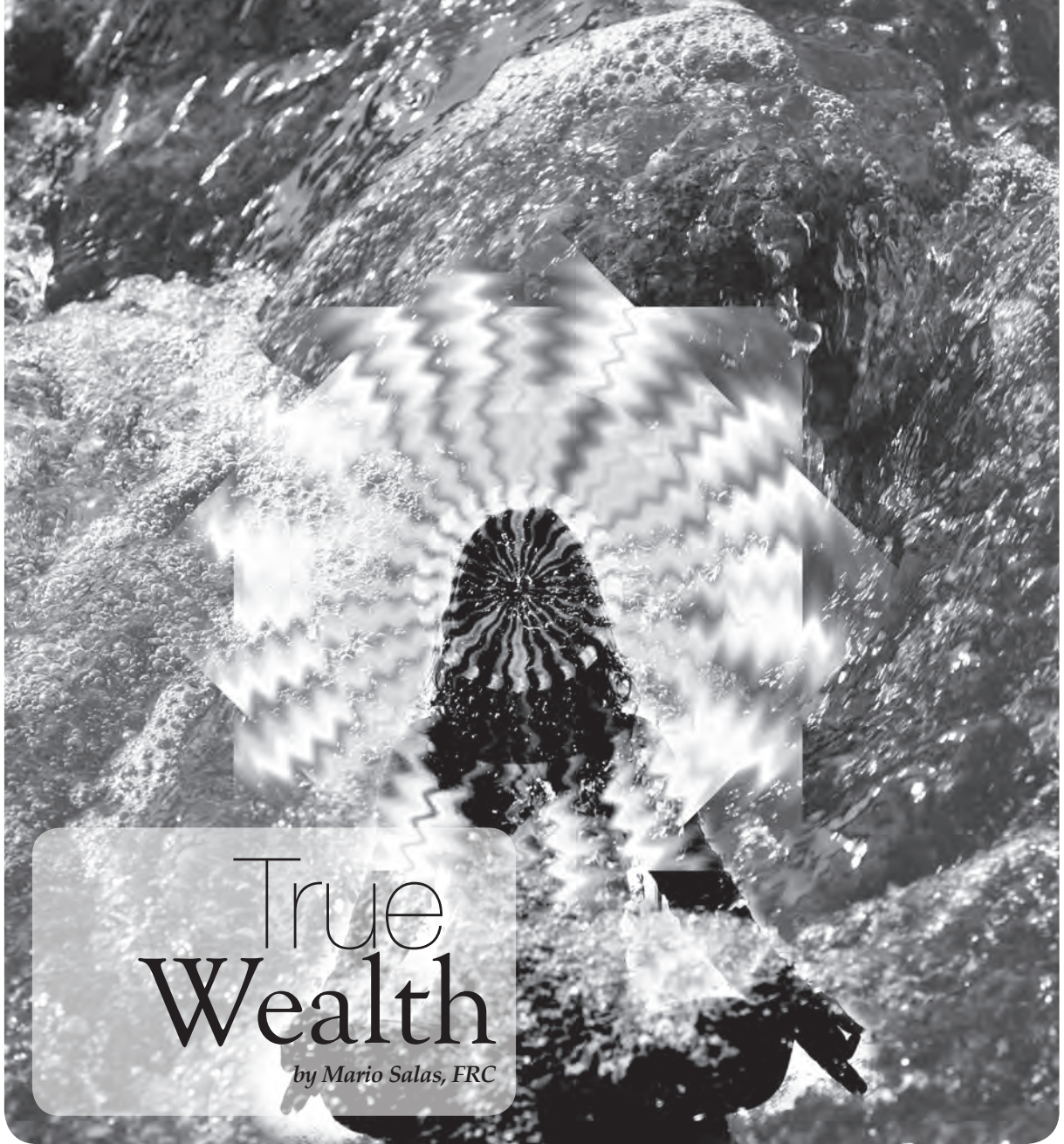
### Endnotes

1. Published by *The Rosicrucian Collection* series.
2. See "The Monastery of Ettal" in the *Rosicrucian Beacon*, December 2000.
3. See *Rosicrucian Beacon*, September 1999.
4. See *Rosicrucian Beacon* March & June 2001.

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*Rudolf II and his World* by R.J.W. Evans, ISBN: 0-500-27986-1  
*The Golden Builders* by Tobias Churton, ISBN: 1-57863-329-X  
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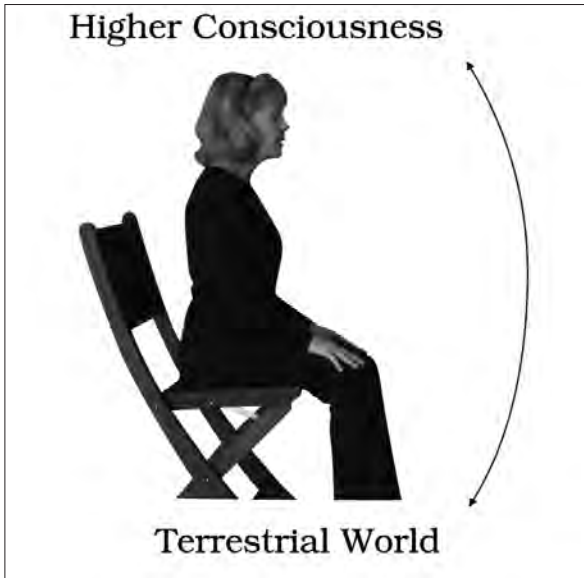
# True Wealth

*by Mario Salas, FRC*

**W**HAT DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT recognising true wealth? The facts that are parts of this knowledge are most truly beautiful, but how can we acquire that richness of life? It would not be difficult if we were to open our hearts and minds to the divine dream that only awaits that moment when our doors are widely open, much as water runs through the fields when it is released from the reservoir. Water, by virtue of its nature, flows and moistens the soil once the gates are open. The same happens as a result of our union with the Cosmic. Its vibrations flow through our bodies when we open our minds and hearts with sincere aspiration to be one with it.

As a daily practice we should begin with meditation and a period of silence. This will make the subconscious mind vibrate with the part of our self in which the Inner Master dwells. There, in the most intimate part of our being, and while in a quiet and peaceful attitude, we may receive an influx of the most divine vibrations. The manifestation of this communion, felt in the mind and the body, helps us to reach a state of harmony with the whole universe. At this moment the Self can have a realisation of what is correct and moral, a knowledge that ultimately contributes to peace in the world in contrast to a thorough scientific knowledge of physical phenomena which does not necessarily do so.





*The meditative state links the terrestrial world with the higher realms of consciousness.*

In this ideal state where the terrestrial world links with the higher realms of consciousness, the energies filling the greater world or macrocosm, work with the same force in the microcosm of humanity. As aspiring mystics we know we are part of an infinite universe and cannot escape its laws. We also understand that true virtue is knowledge of the highest sort, yet something that cannot be learnt through academia, but must be found through experience. No matter how immersed we are in our daily occupations or in the distractions of the world, we can always remove ourselves and turn our attention within, thereby experiencing the guidance and protection of the inner world..., the unity of three fundamental qualities of human existence: Light, Life and Love.

### Quest for Harmony

There is no greater wealth than our quest for the kingdom of harmony..., the actual source of all harmony that exists. This is the kingdom of the God of our understanding and realisation, or as Rosicrucians often refer to it, the "God of our Hearts." Once we adopt a harmonious way of living, our lives are dramatically changed for the better. I have personally witnessed quite a transformation in people who have come to understand this true wealth. To put it simply, they have found happiness beyond measure, beyond their greatest expectations.

Through their actions, they have suited

themselves to this guidance, not only in a general way but in every aspect of existence, for they live in unity with the Infinite Power. Their lives are fulfilled and they seldom fail. Whatever they ask for, they ask only in the name of universal justice..., and they receive from life in abundance and visibly in accordance with that justice. And on the few occasions that they do fail, they humbly learn from their lessons, adjust their lives accordingly and resolve to do better. Freed from all worries, they have confidence that the providence of the Great Power will one day relieve them of such burdens.

If we analyse in detail the lives of some of these people we find that for some, certain events have taken place that can be interpreted as incredible or miraculous. The natural law guiding the lives of those people who attain such supreme understanding and who work in harmony with the higher laws is simple: Allow yourself be carried in the divine stream that moves the universe, the same force that makes the seas flow in rhythmic waves, the planets move in their orbits and the seasons pass one after the other.

Uncertainty, illness, suffering, fear, doubt and ingratitude assault our lives because we are not in harmony with the divine order of things. We will remain victims for as long as we do not harmonise ourselves with the divine order. To move against the stream is hard and insecure, but it is easy and sweet to follow it and take advantage of its powerful natural force if we know what to do. To follow the divine stream is to attain a conscious and vital unity with God.

### Living in Harmony



*Uncertainty, illness, suffering, fear, doubt and ingratitude assault our lives because we are not in harmony with the divine order of things.*



Dwelling in constant cosmic harmony makes us harmonious with everything around and within us, as well as with the whole universe. This order and harmony from above will give us peace with ourselves, making our lives full by the perfect harmonisation of body, mind and soul.

No longer will we be slaves to the physical senses, for they will be subordinated and ruled by the intellect. What is intellectual will be infused by the spiritual, and life will no longer seem unpleasant, but rather, will be full of unfolding power, beauty and happiness. The Rosicrucian philosophy brings us gradually to a sense of equilibrium and to a discovery of the best solutions available to us. Without the need to become ascetics, we can enjoy the gifts of life. The only requisite is that we live with moderation and prudence, and above all, in accordance with our understanding of justice for all creatures great and small..., especially justice for our fellow human beings.

This superior realisation gives us greater and greater focus on the perfection that is already resident within us in the soul that animates us, makes us live, and manifests itself to us in the form of an individual being of resplendent perfection, known to Rosicrucians as the *soul personality* or the *Master Within*. We are led along perfect and natural paths to the realms of the super-conscious wherein the revelation of the universal spiritual laws and truths take place. And at the moment of our entrance into this "kingdom" we recognise the ones who have real power and knowledge as opposed to those who speak only empty words. We are raised above those who only teach what they partially understand from the lips of others, because we are able to draw upon our own authoritative experience and knowledge.



*People will welcome you because you bring peace and happiness into their homes. Wherever you go, people will feel better because of your harmonious vibrations.*

The great philosopher Plotinus once said: "A man will know the doctrine if he follows the will of God." He further stated that "the intelligence that wishes to see God must unite with him." When we allow ourselves to become receptive to the superior laws and truths of the universe, we will become dedicated beings, channels through which the truth will be revealed to humanity.

## Awakening the Soul

This deep awakening of the soul will communicate to others the life of inspiration, and will raise in them a similar capacity. The influences of your life emanate from you just as the flower gives off its scent. The rose releases to the air its fragrance and impregnates everything around it with its emanations. And the same occurs with your aura when it is felt by those who come in contact with it.

Arab mariners sailing on the Indian Ocean in their *dhow*s, said they knew they were close to their destination when they faintly smelled the wonderful aroma of pieces of sandalwood drifting

*The Rosicrucian philosophy brings us gradually to a sense of equilibrium.*

in coastal waters off the Somali coast. Similarly, the soul allows the soft influence of its presence to emanate from itself for the benefit of those who seek its sanctity and perfection. People will welcome you because you bring peace and happiness into their homes. Wherever you go, people will feel better because of your harmonious vibrations. They feel inspired simply to be in your presence, and by the fullness of life you so manifestly give out. Even animals turn their heads to you with a nearly human gesture in loving thanks for what you give them. These are the subtle potencies of your soul as it expresses through your outer self the divine influences of its goodness.

The one who finally reaches and lives continuously in unity with the God of his or her realisation, is the one who possesses true spiritual peace and wealth. The most fantastic treasures in this brief lifespan are gained by the transmutation of weakness into strength, anguish into happiness and peace, fear and uncertainty into hope and the acquisition of confidence in your own ability to live in accordance with Divine Law. A true mystic lives in peace, power and abundance, and in the face of destructive criticism, is like a bird flying above a fetid swamp with its pure white plumage unstained.



# Peace Profound

## The Challenge of Finding Your Soul

by *Amelia*



**C**HALLENGE IS NECESSARY FOR growth and evolution in life. Without challenge, life becomes stale and stagnant. But which challenges will we choose to meet..., those offered by society, or those offered by the “still small voice within?” From within? How absurd, you might think. Peace Profound may come from within, but challenge, tension and conflict are surely traits of the outer, not the inner world?

Peace, or rather the deep, all-encompassing type of peace known to mystics as “Peace Profound,” is found in the wisdom of the soul. But gaining access to that wisdom and thereby experiencing the peace that comes with it, can only come about by facing up to the challenges that come from within oneself. We need to meet the tension, stress and conflict “internally,” face it, and successfully deal with it in the intellect and emotions first, before we

can deal with those same issues externally. We can only truly achieve Peace Profound by first meeting the storm and turmoil of the unknown internally. In other words we must learn to bravely face the so-called “Terror of the Threshold.”

Metaphorically speaking, if the inspiration that comes from the soul does not create a veritable inner battleground, if there be no wounds struck there by love and compassion, if there be no shattered bones brought about by the strong desire to forge ahead on the Path..., to be one with the God of one’s understanding and greatest yearning..., then the knowledge of the soul is no home or haven. It is only a temporary shelter, a flimsy tent with gaping holes through which the stormy north wind passes.

For attunement with the soul to become a reality, the soul must be understood. It must be fought and struggled for and our best must be given to it. Attunement with the soul is not a shelter we



casually seek once a week or in times of extreme distress. We do not go to church, temple or mosque once a week, in the belief that this is enough to enable us to find the soul. If we are to allow the soul to merge with our outer daily living, and indeed to take over our volition and control, our attunement with it must be our constant guiding light. Nothing else can compare to the importance of this. Energy should be flowing through us at all times, as though we were a sun beaming its light and energy to all the universe. And this is possible only when we have reached at least a modicum of attunement with our own individual soul.

### Benefits of Attunement

With the inspiration we receive from the soul, definite challenges quickly manifest, and they are almost all to do with ourselves; the manner we conduct our outer lives, the people we hurt, the small liberties and lies we engage in, the less than honest appraisals we

*Attunement with the soul, along with its attendant knowledge and inspiration, has always been available to each us.*

have of ourselves..., the list is endless!

The ideas we receive from the soul are not simply idle thoughts, mere fantasies to mull about at the seaside on lazy days with a can of bear in hand. The impressions that percolate up from the soul are full of energy, dynamism and potential, and compel us to move forward with a sense of urgency to the crucial and most important things we should be accomplishing in life. The soul is the forge from which we receive the force, power and energy that makes each of us move forward on the inner plane of awareness. And that "inner motion" inevitably translates in due course into outer motion as well, for we end up materially making great and important changes for the better to our lives in so many varied ways.

The inspiration and energy necessary to succeed in our work,



*We can only truly achieve Peace Profound by first meeting the storm and turmoil of the unknown internally.*

our lives?

In answer to these questions, we simply decide when, and to what degree, we will follow the course outlined and inspired by the soul. Attunement with the soul, along with its attendant knowledge and inspiration, has always been available to us, if we would but stop and listen properly for a moment.

We are always given the opportunity to follow the guidance of the soul, but the real question is: when will we implement the guidance, the urgings, and the whisperings of the soul in the way it has been given to us and in the spirit and with the intent with which it was delivered?

The answer is simple. First come to the realisation that the promptings of the soul are always good for you, are for your personal good, and for the good of those nearest and dearest to you. You do this by following those promptings a few times



*At times when your attunement flags and you are overly pulled away from attention to the needs of the soul, there will be periods of deep loneliness and indeed of fear.*

achieve harmony in personal relationships, and reach inner peace, are all found in the gentle percolation of wisdom and inspiration that we receive from our own soul. In very mundane terms, answers to questions ranging from the simple "what will I have for dinner tonight?" to the complex "what is the most important goal in my life?" are found by listening to this inner voice of the soul. The true answers are there, and they can collectively serve as the guiding light of your life. So how do we work with this inspiration? What is the key to achieving this attunement with the soul? How do we make this knowledge a part of

our lives? In answer to these questions, we simply decide when, and to what degree, we will follow the course outlined and inspired by the soul. Attunement with the soul, along with its attendant knowledge and inspiration, has always been available to us, if we would but stop and listen properly for a moment.

We are always given the opportunity to follow the guidance of the soul, but the real question is: when will we implement the guidance, the urgings, and the whisperings of the soul in the way it has been given to us and in the spirit and with the intent with which it was delivered?

The answer is simple. First come to the realisation that the promptings of the soul are always good for you, are for your personal good, and for the good of those nearest and dearest to you. You do this by following those promptings a few times

to the letter of the law and observing for yourself what wonderful results manifest. Secondly, once you have built up confidence in the advice and guidance you receive from the "still small voice within," stop trying to analyse every impression you get from your soul; accept and follow the advice precisely as given. In accepting the advice of your soul, you are also accepting yourself as the new master of your destiny. Still hampered by your frailties and inadequacies, you will however have the accurate guidance of the most capable and wonderful master guide you can ever know: the





unlimited potential of your own soul. By the time you have reached this blessed state, you will have accepted that you are destined to become the shining reflection of your soul one day.

Be in no doubt that there still remains for you challenges piled upon challenges remaining for you to master as you struggle to retain the attunement with your soul. There will be tension, stress and inner turmoil; and at times when your attunement flags and you are overly pulled away from attention to the needs of the soul, there will be periods of deep loneliness and indeed of fear. But for as long as the connection with your soul remains, as long as you heed the voice of your inner master, you will have periods of intense happiness, great tranquillity, and Peace Profound even under the most trying of outer conditions. You will experience clarity of mind and of purpose, an inner radiance that makes you understand that you are on the right path without the slightest shadow of a doubt. And you will be in complete harmony with the wishes of your soul, your inner master. These are things worth striving for: peace, love, understanding, compassion, achievement and power on a scale that only your inner master, the personality of your own soul, the God of your realisation, can ever know.

### The Eternal Quest

Mystics are veritable knights in shining armour, fighting inner battles in the cause of good. The knight therefore, who would come to know the safety of the soul, must also experience the dangers of straying away from it. If you, the seeker, would explore with care and understanding the great wisdom of the soul, know that there will be periods of great fear and loneliness as well, as you approach the soul, become dependent on its wisdom and its kind and loving ways, yet still manage to stray away from its presence. Just as if you would know the love and compassion of another person, you must extend your hand in faith, truth and sincerity to your own soul and keep it there, outstretched, regardless of your fear of rejection and failure.

The depths of the soul are discovered through the intensity of your desire to know it. And you receive in accordance with universal law, namely

in accordance to your willingness to give first and to patiently wait for your just rewards, even if that wait takes more than one lifetime to come to fruition. Through your growing intimacy with the soul, you learn many new lessons. You come to know the

*The depths of the soul are discovered through the intensity of our desire to know it.*

Oneness, *your oneness* with all nature and living creatures, indeed with all things. Even seemingly inanimate things like streams, rocks, mountains, the sea, the stars and planets all have their special place in the reality of our existence, that incredible universe wrapped around you specifically for the benefit of your evolving self.

When your consciousness extends to all of this, you are one with God, with the part of God that you can perceive in this life..., what Rosicrucians



*As our growing intimacy with our soul strengthens, we come closer to what Rosicrucians call "The God of my Heart."*

refer to as the "God of my Heart." The sun knows you as do the stars, for there is really only one corpus of knowledge, one final way of "knowing." Subscribe to this knowledge with all your being..., your total being..., for in doing so you will come to know the challenge of attaining the soul..., the pain, the tension, and the stress of facing the seemingly unknown. Yet, you will come to know something greater and more everlasting than anything else you have ever encountered... Love. The harmony of all consciousness is

precisely this..., Love. It is a requirement of and a condition that must be met before any person can fully experience Peace Profound.

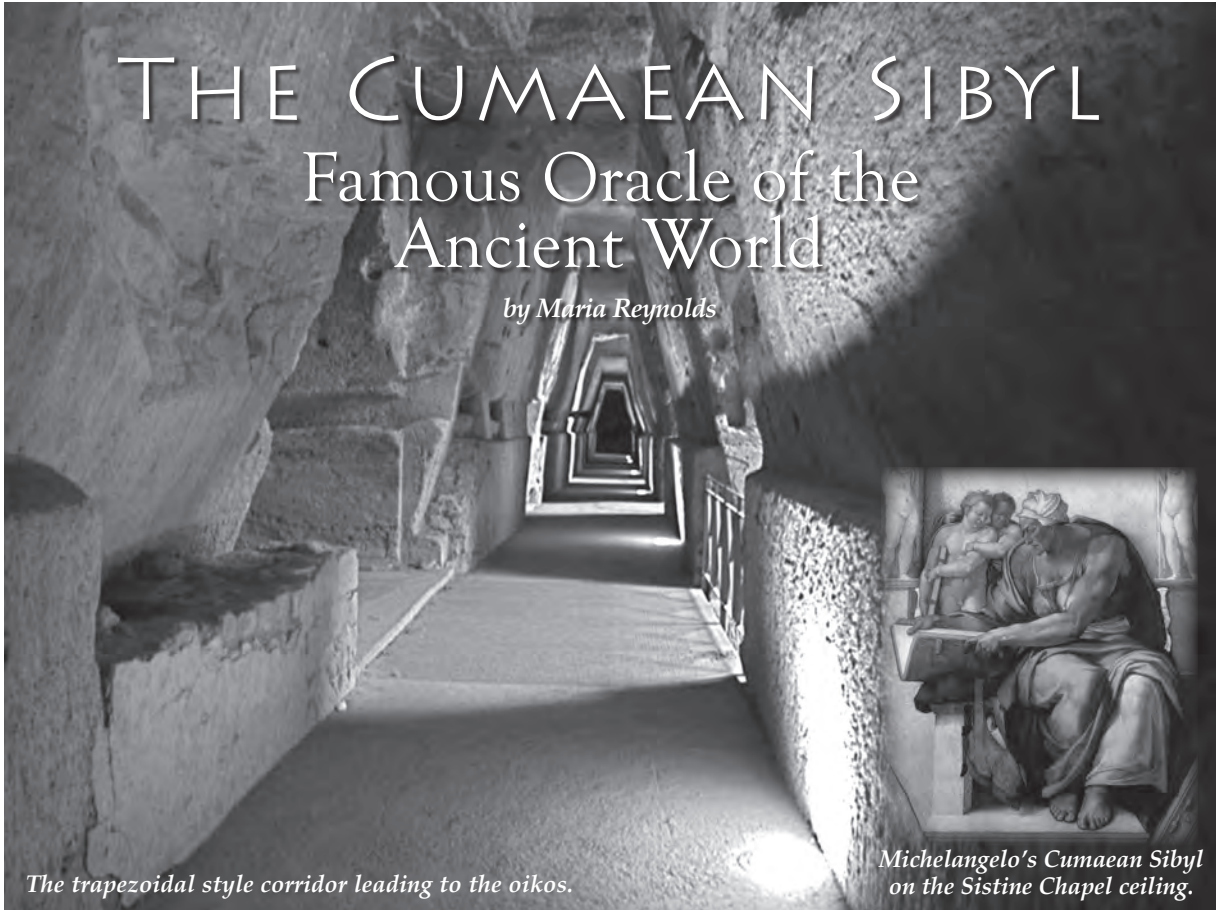
At this point on the Path, you will reach a new, higher realisation of the nature of yourself, those about you, the ground on which you stand, and the stars in the sky. You are one in nature, harmony, peace and strength, and will remain there for as long as you retain that open channel of communication with your soul. The challenge has brought tension and inner turmoil in its wake, but you have overcome these and now know total peace, Peace Profound, harmony in its most beautiful and profound understanding. That is the nature of the soul..., your heritage, your birthright..



# THE CUMAEAN SIBYL

## Famous Oracle of the Ancient World

by Maria Reynolds



The trapezoidal style corridor leading to the oikos.

Michelangelo's Cumaean Sibyl on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

**T**HOSE INTERESTED IN THE mystical aspects of ancient Greek and Roman history invariably become fascinated with accounts of the oracles. The most famous of these was the Pythoness in Delphi, Greece, who presided there for a thousand years. The oldest oracle of Greece was at Dodona in Epirus, where priests read the future by examining the entrails of sheep. The priestesses of the oracle of Demeter, lowered a mirror into a well and informed the sick of their outcome. At Telmessos, the oracles interpreted dreams. At Aegria, the oracle of Hercules, supplicants threw dice and priests interpreted the meaning. Then, of course, there was the oracle of Zeus-Amun at Siwa in the Libyan desert of Egypt, who was consulted by Alexander the Great before leading his armies through Persia and on to India.

But of all the famous oracles, it is the Cumaean Sibyl who provides one of the most intriguing accounts of an oracle that has come down to us from the mists of antiquity. The word *sibyl* probably comes (via Latin) from the Greek

word *sibylla*, meaning prophetess. The colony of Cumae, in southern Italy, was founded about 750 BCE by Greeks from the city state of Chalcis, and became so prosperous that it soon established its own colonies, including nearby Neapolis (modern Naples). But old though Cumae was, the grotto of the Cumaean Sibyl already existed close to what was to become the acropolis of Cumae. Indeed, this oracle is probably the oldest we know of.

Archaeologists rediscovered the grotto in 1932. The cave we can see today consists of a *dromos*, or corridor, 144 feet long, nearly 8 feet wide and 16 feet high, ending in a rectangular chamber (the *oikos endótatos*) all hewn out of solid tufa rock. The stone chair of the Sibyl can still be seen in the *oikos*. Since few tourists come to the grotto, which is only a few miles from the city of Naples, visitors will usually find themselves alone on their visit. It is an awe-inspiring feeling to realise that you are sitting in the chair of a Sibyl, who was the most famous oracle in this part of the world for hundreds of years, satisfying her supplicants for at least that length of time.





The oldest oracle of Greece was at Dodona in Epirus.

The architecture is also remarkable in that it is Creto-Mycenaean, rather than Greek or Roman, and the size of the grotto surpasses anything known today in the trapezoidal style. There is nothing to equal it in either Cretan or Etruscan building. In short, the grotto of the Cumaean Sibyl goes back to at least the days of the Trojan War (c.1200 BCE). Indeed, Virgil, in his *Aeneid*, has Aeneas consult the Sibyl before going on to found Rome. The Cumaean Sibyl was therefore originally under the aegis of the Mother Goddess who presided over much of the eastern Mediterranean long before the genesis of the Greek Olympian male gods.

Later, as at Delphi, the priests of Apollo were to take over, and the ruins of the temple from which they dominated the grotto can still be seen at the top of the acropolis a few hundred feet from the entrance to the *dromos*. The temple still exists, though only because it was transformed into a Christian church in the sixth or seventh century CE.

### The Mysterious Sibyl

When each Sibyl in turn passed away, a new Sibyl was found and the former oracle was mummified and placed in a chair in the *oikos endótatos*. She was always present when the living Sibyl made her prophecies. The Roman Emperor Claudius (10 BCE to 54 CE) reported that when he consulted Amalthea, the reigning Sibyl, her predecessor was seated on a chair in an iron cage. Various accounts, including that of Claudius describing the rituals of the Cumaean Sibyl, have come down to us.

A supplicant first approached the priests of Apollo with suitable gifts. They were then taken to the

*dromos* and began the long walk to the *oikos endótatos* or *adyton*, the secret chamber at the end. The *dromos* was lit by six galleries opening to the west. On the opposite side were three chambers, probably utilised for lustral waters and perhaps as living quarters. In more modern times Christians used them as burial chambers. Before receiving the supplicant, the Sibyl had bathed in lustral waters and had taken a quantity of *numen*, a drug which historians have been unable to identify but which was undoubtedly a narcotic and acted in much the same manner as the laurel leaves eaten by the Pythoness at Delphi. In this drugged state therefore, the oracle uttered her prophecies.

Supplicants posed their questions and in a trance, the Sibyl answered in incoherent gibberish, very similar to the procedure in Delphi. The priests took due note of this and returned with the seeker of advice to the Temple of Apollo. Here they disappeared for a while to interpret among themselves the meaning of the pronouncement, finally to return with the answers written in Greek hexameter verse.

It might be pointed out that these priests of Apollo were not ignorant charlatans but among the most intelligent men of their time. Aside from the ability to write in one of the most difficult of Greek verse forms, they had to be thoroughly familiar with the politics and intrigues of their time, on a worldwide basis. This was absolutely necessary, as an oracle did not remain an oracle for long if the prophecies did not have a high degree of validity.

### The Sibylline Books

The ancient historians Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Varro recorded the momentous encounter between the Cumaean Sibyl and Tarquinius Superbus, the last of the Etruscan kings to rule Rome. Herophile,

the incumbent Sibyl, came up from Cumae in 511 BCE and demanded an audience with him. Her fame of course, had preceded her and she was immediately ushered into the presence of the king.

Two priests who accompanied Herophile bore nine books which she called the *Libri Fatales*. History now calls them the "Sibylline Books." They were very crude in appearance with numerous verses in Greek hexameter written on palm leaves and then awkwardly sewn together.



The colony of Cumae, in southern Italy, was founded about 750 BCE by Greeks from the city state of Chalcis, and became so prosperous that it soon established its own colonies, including nearby Neapolis (modern Naples).



Herophile was described as wild-eyed and frantic in appearance. She informed the sceptical king of Rome that the nine books not only foretold the future of the city but also in what manner to meet each crisis that developed. Tarquinius Superbus asked what the Sibyl wanted in return. She demanded a talent of gold, which would have stripped the Roman treasury, and the king refused her. It must also be realised that Tarquinius Superbus, as an Etruscan, did not worship the gods of his Roman subjects, such as Jupiter, Mars and Apollo. The Roman populace however, were avid followers of Apollo, the god of oracles, and subsequently were up in arms over the failure to buy the books. Herophile returned with her books to Cumae.



Representation of the Cumaean Sibyl by the Florentine artist Andrea del Castagno (1421-1457).

The next year, the Sibyl came again, this time with only six of the books. Asked what she had done with the other three, she replied that she had burnt them. When the king inquired what she wanted for the remaining six, Herophile again demanded a full talent of gold. Enraged, Tarquinius Superbus turned her away and she returned to Cumae. And again the following year, the Sibyl appeared with but three remaining books, having burnt the rest, and demanded the same price. Public opinion grew so heated that Tarquinius Superbus finally relented. The books were placed in the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill and a commission of 15 men, the *Quindecimviri Sacris Faciundis*, was named to administer them. Included among them were two Greek interpreters, since the *Libri Fatales* were written in Greek.



She demanded a talent of gold, which would have stripped the Roman treasury, and the king refused her.

For centuries the Romans abided by the dictates of the Sibylline Books. When a crisis involving the state developed, they were consulted. For instance, when the Carthaginian, Hannibal, crossed the Alps with his North African army in 218 BCE, he swept everything before him and in despair, the Romans consulted

the Sibylline Books. The consul Fabius, inspired by the books, devised a strategy of resistance to the brilliant Hannibal. The Roman legions fought a delaying action, refusing, with their new Fabian tactics, to come face to face with the enemy. Eventually, after ten years, the forces of Hannibal were so eroded in strength that the Carthaginians retreated to North Africa. Still following the dictates of the books, the Romans advanced and defeated the Carthaginian army.

### Fate of the Books

The temple in which the Sibylline Books were stored was destroyed by fire in 83 BCE. But by that time many of the verses had been copied and distributed around the Mediterranean. The Roman priests went about the task of reconstructing them, using verses found in Egypt, Phrygia, Delphi and elsewhere.

Sometimes these verses were suspect as to authenticity, and by the time Augustus became emperor he named a committee to authenticate those that Rome was to abide by. The new collection lasted until 405 CE when they were burned by the Roman General and Patrician Flavius Stilicho who was a Christian and regarded the books as pagan and therefore evil. It should be noted that they were still consulted a full century into the era when Christianity was the legal religion of Rome.

Even today, some fragments of the verses exist. Robert Graves devoted two of his best known books, *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God*, to several of the verses that have come down to us. They foretold accurately the reigns of the first six Caesars: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero.



Asked what she had done with the other three, she replied that she had burnt them.



# Creating Our Environment

by *Ralph M Lewis, FRC*



OUR ENVIRONMENT IS A COMPLEX state. In part it consists of the geographical area in which we are located, which includes such physical conditions as altitude, climate and a plenteousness or lack of natural resources. There are also other factors which though not directly a result of the physical environment, do have an equal effect upon and influence the individual. These are family relationship, association with other persons and society, namely, customs and traditions, and religious and political doctrines.

Environment can be either involuntary or voluntary in the influence it exerts, and most often it is a combination of both. For example, we do not choose the physical environment in which we are born, nor do we select our family association. We may however, of our own volition, later move to another geographical area. We may also select the persons we desire to associate with when we mature and form preferences.

In most every individual's life there are certain environmental factors that are inescapable and to which it seems one is subject. We may





*In most every individual's life there are certain environmental factors that are inescapable and to which it seems one is subject.*

use the analogy of the coal miners of a century or more ago in Europe. It was the custom that a son should follow the trade of his father. As a young child the boy was made aware of this social obligation and expected it to be his lifework. Before enlightened government and labour regulations emerged, these mining towns were deplorable. The homes were often nothing more than hovels where filth abounded and proper hygienic facilities were nonexistent. The mines themselves were poorly ventilated, and boys had to enter an apprenticeship early and therefore had little or no opportunity for education. Here then were unfortunate people truly trapped in their environment.

Many people today for various reasons believe they can neither transcend nor transform their environment and therefore submissively submit to it. Such people often have some kind of moral obligation to their family or to others which they do not want to violate by any change. Many young women and men have foregone marriage because of a doting and often selfish parent not wanting to let go of his or her now adult "child." This environment is however one that such adult "children" have created themselves because of their misplaced moral sense. They may not actually have established the unfortunate circumstances in which they continue to live, but they perpetuate them by refusing to change or avoid them.



*There are many whose ideal of life is living in an urban area...*

## What are the Ideals?

The element of idealism enters into the subject of creating environment. What are the conditions, the factors of life in which the individual wants to enter or be surround by? For analogy, let us consider the physical environment. If they had their choice and the opportunity to do so, some people would live in a coastal area. Still others would prefer the mountains or a fertile valley. There are many other people whose ideal of life is living in an urban area, as a great metropolitan city with its so-called sophistication, technical conveniences, and facilities. So far as creating environment is concerned, it is therefore related to one's personal idealism. There is no criterion for environment that would win the approval or acceptance of all individuals.

## Defining the Concept

In creating our environment, it is an essential first step to arrive at a concept of just what we want. For example, is the basic desire a change of living area? Is it association, employment opportunity, social and political customs? It is very seldom that one's environment in all its elements is undesirable. The average person who would like a transformation of environment can reduce it to one primary thing which would stand out and which, if changed, would satisfy.

## Ability and Resources

The next consideration is whether one possesses the personal power, that is, the ability and resources, to create the change desired. Some circumstances are indigenous, namely, they are long-established customs and traditions of a place which have the acceptance of the majority of people there. One may not approve of them, and in one's own opinion the people may be bigoted, intolerant, or pursuing obsolete ends. This then engenders a soul-searching question: Has one the right to impose one's personal views and concepts upon others? Has one the right to so change them to the dislike of the majority of other people?

## Responsibilities

Simply, if you wish to be a crusader and deal with what you think needs to



be changed, you then assume a great responsibility for your acts. Great reformations have been made by the radically minded. Such persons often acted altruistically in endeavouring to create a new physical or psychological environment. They did so with the intent of enlightening people, leading them from a darkness in which it was thought they dwelt. History is replete with such successful reformations in which humanity benefited by those who defied a static traditional environment. However, there are also examples of fanaticism when transformation was made to gratify a personal concept regardless of the consequences to contemporary humanity.

It must be presumed that the average individual who wishes to create an environment is not aspiring to be either a crusader or a messiah. Take the following example: A man has a wife and three small children. He lives in a large city in a section that is physically deteriorating.

*When meditating upon creating an environmental change, one eventually comes to a frank realisation of oneself.*

Many families have moved out to new locations and he considers the new residents entering as undesirable. Perhaps they are unclean in their habits, their children are unruly, and the parents are of low moral and ethical standards. This then is reflected in the vile language and offensive habits of their children and the man in our example notices the detrimental effects of such association upon his children.

But as a team, the husband and wife can visualise an ideal location. In their shared mental image they see an attractive home on a clean street with a bower of beautiful trees. They also visualise well-mannered children as playmates for their children. However, this visualisation is only a contributing factor to the ideal, the better environment desired. In itself it is quite incomplete psychologically, mystically and practically. In fact, it is nothing more than a mental state having no bridge with reality. What is the individual going to bring to bear on reality, on the actual conditions as they exist? What influence or thing is he going to exert, to create, that is, to make the transformation happen?



*Visualising a better environment is nothing more than a mental state until something is done to make it happen.*

## Self-Appraisal

Self-analysis or rather self-appraisal should be the next step. To move to a location in accord with the visualised ideal and to acquire the home desired is an economic matter. Has he the means? Obviously he has not or he would not have remained where he is. It is necessary then to find a way to increase his economic status. Is there any way that his existing employment can result in an increased income? If not, is there a possibility of retraining for another occupation or an advance in the present one?

The point being established here is that if the ideal is not to have a nugatory value, it must be related to the actual potentials of the individual himself. He is to be the active factor in bringing about the preferred state. What of himself then, can he apply? Actually, in such creating we see that the ideal must be subdivided into progressive stages by which the ultimate is to be attained.

## Intuition

Does intuition help? It certainly does, and in a very practical way. If one does not know how to approach the ideal, namely the creation of one's environment, one should in reflection and meditation seek to see its components. In other words, one should hold in mind the wish to learn what the initial act should be, that is, just how to start. The whole process should be a nexus, a linking chain of thought and action.

Suppose one can see no possibility of an increased income through promotion to another position or further training for greater opportunity. This can of course happen, especially in times of



*Does one possess the personal power and ability to create the change required?*



recession. There may be a number of prevailing circumstances that constitute a present obstacle to all of these conditions. Rarely however, is one permanently destitute of some improvement in one's affairs. If one is sincerely convinced that one is destitute of all opportunities, then at least for the time being one's ideal of creating a preferred environment should be postponed. To harbour an ideal without recourse to the means of manifesting it will merely result in an aggravating sense of frustration and hopelessness.

*Creating the right environment does not necessarily imply the dynamic alteration of existing conditions.*

In a sincere contemplation and meditation upon creating an environmental change, one eventually comes to a frank realisation of oneself. One knows quite soon the vital points of one's personal knowledge. First, one will know whether one has the training, knowledge, experience and material means to create what one wishes. Second, one may know that one does not have them but does have the determination, the will to strive, to sacrifice and to persist in gaining the personal ability and qualities needed. If one can't come to one of these two conclusions, then one's ideal is nothing more than fantasy. Consequently, one may need a new orientation of thought, namely the formation of a lesser though more attainable creative ideal.

### Handling Failure

The failure of an individual to realise a personal ideal for the creation of a new environment is not always his or her personal fault. There are often insurmountable obstacles regardless of the strength of character and intellectual potential of the individual. For further example, in a country where the populace is politically oppressed as under a tyrannical dictator, personal initiative is also suppressed. In such a state a lofty ideal of the individual may run counter to the overwhelming political force. It is exceedingly difficult then, if not impossible, to exert sufficient personal power to

create any change. However, the ideal need not be abandoned. It can be sustained with hope, and the individual may find the moral and actual support of others in such a united way as to create the change.

### Working with Conditions

Creating the right environment does not necessarily imply the dynamic alteration of existing conditions. Sometimes it is not worth the effort required to move what is inert. The obstacle may be so great in an existing environment in which one lives that the hope to bring about change through one's personal efforts would be futile; or it would require more time than one has in one's remaining years of life. If such is the case, it is wiser to retreat from the circumstances and to begin anew elsewhere. After all, what is being sought is not just a flush of victory or conquest but rather a new series of conditions or different elements of living.

An obstinate refusal to accept a greater opportunity to realise what is desired, because one is determined to remain and defeat an existing set of conditions, is poor judgment. Such is the crusader attitude, which is not incumbent upon one who desires to create another personal environment.

Envy may cause the establishment of a defective or unjust ideal. One may assume that the life, environment or possessions with which one surrounds oneself are *ne plus ultra*, namely, the highest and most excellent one can aspire to, but in striving to attain this, one's personal resources, energy, health and peace of mind may be dissipated only to find that one has been chasing after an illusory goal, one that simply cannot happen in real life.

There is nothing wrong in forming a personal ideal based on the life of another, but one must always subject it first to a rigorous and honest appraisal. One should determine just how effective it was in providing for one's greatest cosmic reward, namely, peace of mind. Without this quality, no ideal can be perfect and no environment should be created in which personal peace, and especially inner peace, is not the prime motive, objective and essence of what one is attempting to create.



*The crusader attitude is counter productive and amounts to poor judgement when trying to create an ideal environment.*

