
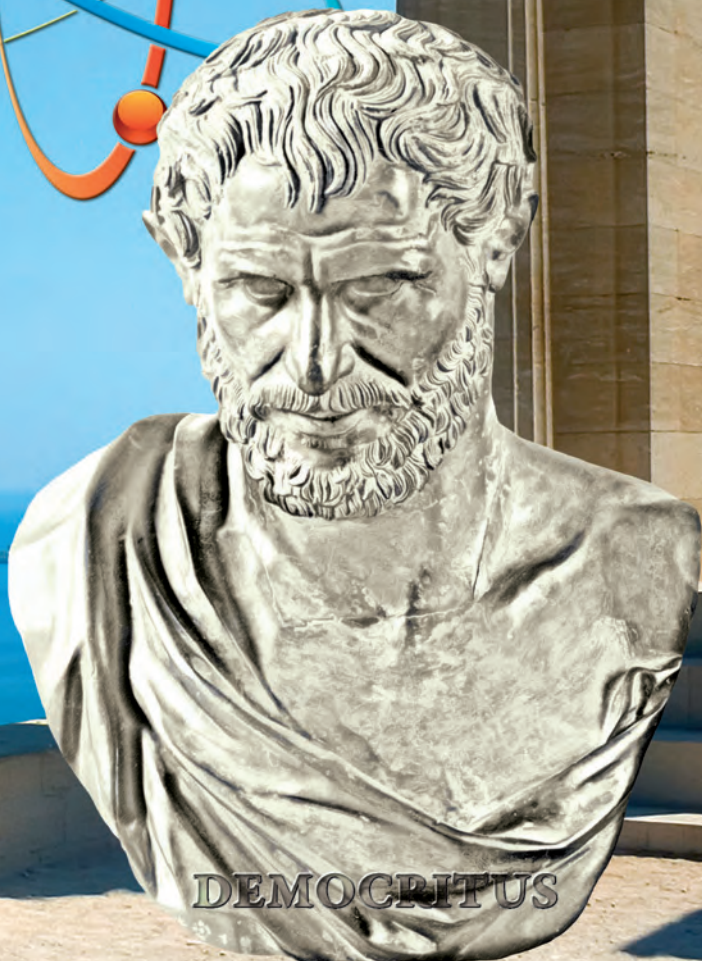


# BROSICRUCIAN BEACON



March 2012



DEMOCRITUS



# The wonder of Life

**T**hink for a moment that you were not here, not a living person on the sphere of life we call Earth. No breeze on your face, no warm sunshine to enjoy, no twitter of birds in the forest, no smell of salt spray by the seaside, no loving hand to hold, no beautiful music to hear, no exquisite words to read. All that we value, every single thing we care about is down there..., on our home planet, our beloved Earth. What intense longing we would feel if we were not there.

How little it takes to understand the privileged state of our existence on earth, and how precious our planet is to all its myriad forms of life. But how few take the time to do so.

If you seek a closer connection to all that surrounds

you..., if you seek a deeper appreciation of all things on earth..., if happiness, peace and justice for all is what you seek..., then learn to commune with your inner self, learn to find the deeper you, and through it find the Consciousness of the Cosmic itself.

By reading this magazine you have an open mind, and this message was meant for you! To find out more about the Rosicrucian Order, visit our website [www.amorc.org.uk](http://www.amorc.org.uk) or contact us for a free copy of our introductory booklet "The Mastery of Life."

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### COVER SPREAD

“Democritus and the Atom”







# Living the Rosicrucian Life

*by Dr. H. Spencer Lewis, FRC*

**T**HERE EXISTS a certain “*Rosicrucian Code of Living*” in which some 30 rules for living the Rosicrucian life are presented. Even when they are strictly followed, few people outside of our immediate family would notice anything distinctive about the circumstance, because the rules relate to private matters and not to demonstrable things.

It is easy to recognise those who belong to organisations such as the Salvation Army, the clergy and members of other religions by their distinctive clothing. Rosicrucians have none of these distinguishing marks. In fact, our rules prohibit the wearing of distinctive clothing except when officially conducting the work of the Order in public or private.

According to our Order’s teachings, we find that



the greatest good that any Rosicrucian can accomplish for humankind can generally be carried on in silence and secrecy from the home. In public, a Rosicrucian may perform seeming miracles without doing anything noticeable to others. So far as the obligations of the Order and the specific promises of its various degrees are concerned, there is none that calls upon the member to reveal their identity or to live in such a manner that distinguishes them either to the casual or careful observer.

### To Strive, To Seek, To Find.

In fact, everywhere in the work of the Order, the injunction to each of us is to strive to find our particular mission in life and to act accordingly. That doesn't mean that each of us must find some distinctive outward work to do which will make us a signpost of Rosicrucian philosophy. Nor does it mean that if we find our mission in life, from a Rosicrucian point of view, we must abandon or change our present work.

I know of a man who was building a successful business at the time he joined the Order; just as business problems and the rapid development of his interests threatened to tax his capabilities. It was more than he knew how to handle, and he was worried. After becoming a member of the Order he found himself meeting new conditions with a power and understanding that surprised many of his friends and family. When the Cosmic revealed his real mission in life, however, he was disconcerted since it wasn't the business he was trying to build up. Did it mean the abandoning of his new and growing business? Not at all, it merely meant that when he wasn't engaged in business in the material world there was work he could do in the psychic world. Known to the average member as a businessman he was nevertheless a great psychic healer as

well. Yet anyone who met him on the street or in business would not have suspected that he was doing other more important work.

How can we tell what is being done by the truly devout members of the Order who may consciously or unconsciously conceal what they are doing? It depends on what signs and standards we judge others by. We may know a member who seems to be living moderately, attempting to meet their worldly obligations as best they can, but in no way typical of someone we would consider a master of nature's principles. We may believe that he or

**As Rosicrucians we know that fame will be the least reward we should have in mind.**

she should want for nothing in the material world since they should be able to attract and secure all they require; after all the teachings help us there. They should have no worries, for some "magic" should solve all their problems.

### We Reap What We Sow

It won't be apparent that this member's greatest concern is some secret or private work that they pursue with success. Yet on the material plane they are struggling to overcome conditions that might destroy another who has no knowledge of cosmic laws.

Let's look at a couple of examples. There may be a doctor, who seems to be only partially successful in his practice, but is privately conducting certain biological experiments in his laboratory and devoting to this work more of his time than to his public practice. Or again, take a factory worker who, as an initiate, might be considered to be wasting his time in menial work, but who has for years been working at night on a device as a contribution to some future scientific achievement.

As Rosicrucians we know that fame will be the least or the last reward we should have in mind in considering our mission in life. We know that we must abide by certain decrees; that we must yield to certain urges from within. Whatever our struggles, weaknesses and problems may be in life, certain definite things must be attended to at the expense of worldly situations. We can choose to accept all or part of the opportunities opened to us. We must then expect to reap as we sow.

Living the life of a Rosicrucian means following the law as it applies to the



*Rosicrucians work in all walks of life, whether in a laboratory or factory, knowing that fame will be the least or the last reward in mind in considering their mission in life.*





individual. When religious institutions attempted to lay down a set of rules of conduct for all, a few adhered to them, even to the extent of martyrdom..., in some cases without any real benefit to themselves or anyone else. The majority wandered away from the rigid rules because they were not willing to submit to the required rigidity.

There is no such standard of living for the Rosicrucian student. As rapidly as we become familiar with the cosmic laws and our relation to them, as an individual expression of the whole, we ourselves are capable of determining what our obligation is. By our decisions, we determine our fate in this life and others to come.

We can never know to what extent someone may have changed the course of their life. We cannot know the extent of their suffering, struggling or battling against odds that we might consider insurmountable. We can never know what they may be sacrificing to maintain even a partial contact with the Order and its teachings. We cannot know what the Cosmic is directing them to do.

Let each of us make sure that we are doing what the Master within has pointed out for us to do. Let us live according to our own Light, doing what we feel the divine urge to do even though it might be what others consider as menial work, seemingly unimportant and unrelated to the work of the Order. Then we can be sure of truly living the Rosicrucian life.

*We are the music makers  
And we are the dreamers of dreams;  
Wandering by lone sea-breakers  
And sitting by desolate streams;  
World-losers and world-forsakers,  
On whom the pale moon gleams;  
Yet we are the movers and shakers  
Of the world forever, it seems.*

Arthur O'Shaughnessy (1844 – 1881) *Ode* from his book *Music and Moonlight* (1874)

## *Points in Thinking* by John Palazzotto, FRC

*You insult yourself when you harbour bad feelings.*

*In a long estrangement, an easy victory goes to  
the one who first breaks the ice.*

*Every failure brings you closer to success;  
persistent effort wins.*

*Silence does not necessarily imply ignorance.*

*It is impossible to appear sane before all.  
Be yourself. Follow your own inner promptings.*

*Greatness is to possess the child-mind.  
It is a calamity to lose it.*

*A questioning mind is the greatest detecting  
apparatus in existence.*

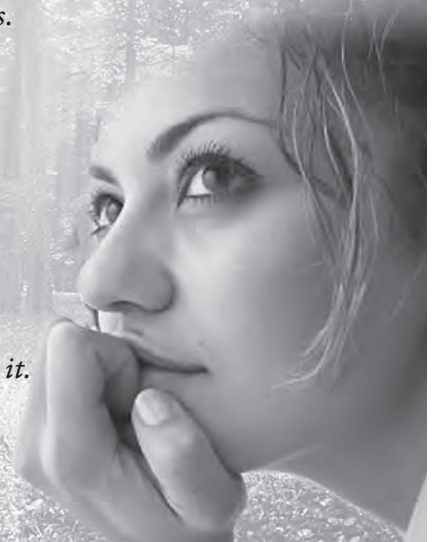
*An important part of growth is being jostled about.*

*Every kindness shown is a point for the human race.  
Run up your score in kindness.*

*With every temptation comes the power to overcome it.*

*No obstacles means no growth.*

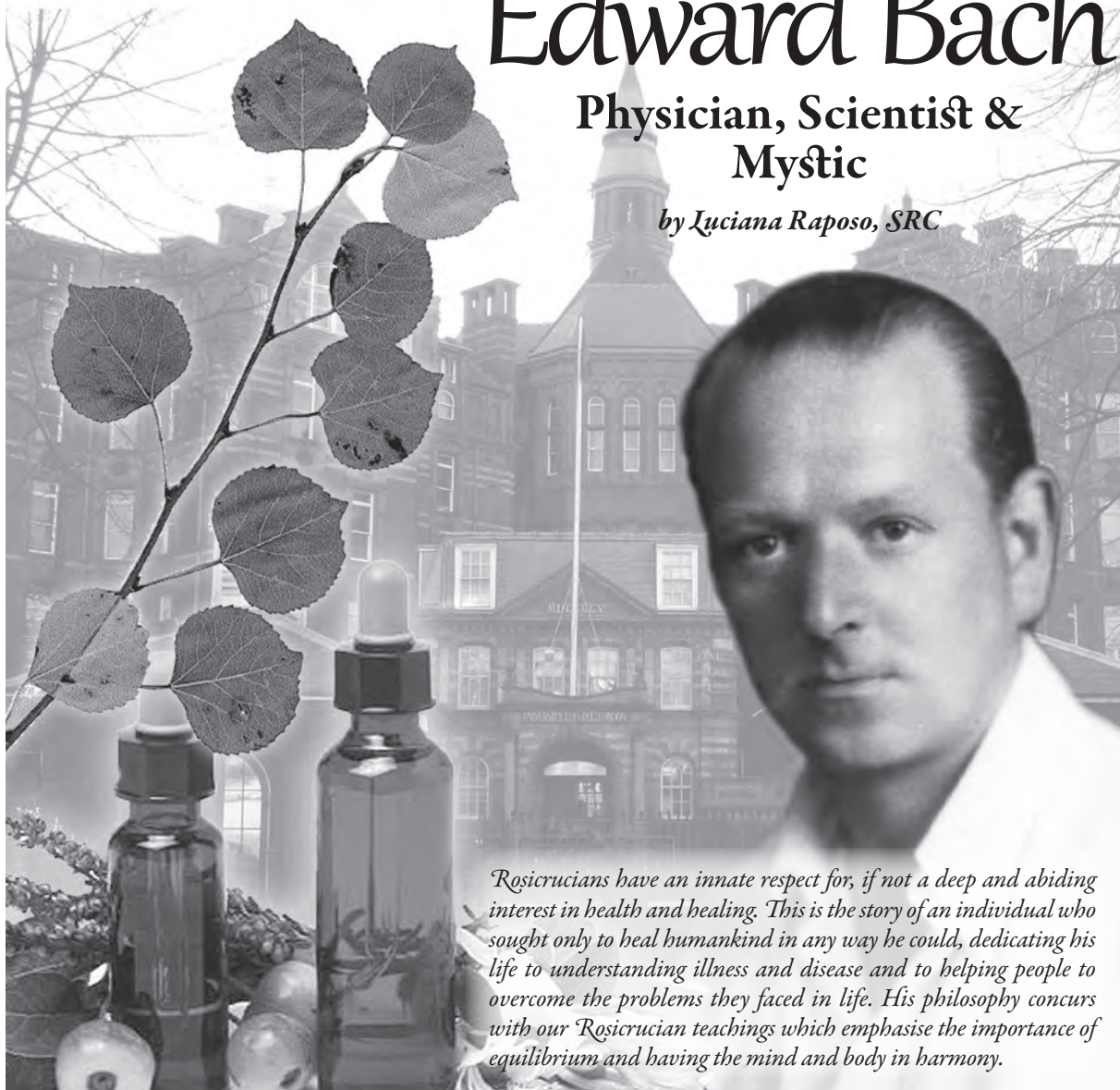
*You may close the ears of others,  
but truth will still speak to them.*



# Edward Bach

Physician, Scientist &  
Mystic

by Luciana Raposo, SRC



*Rosicrucians have an innate respect for, if not a deep and abiding interest in health and healing. This is the story of an individual who sought only to heal humankind in any way he could, dedicating his life to understanding illness and disease and to helping people to overcome the problems they faced in life. His philosophy concurs with our Rosicrucian teachings which emphasise the importance of equilibrium and having the mind and body in harmony.*

**E**DWARD BACH was born on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1886, in Moseley, a suburb of Birmingham in England. As a boy he is said to have shown a keen concern for human suffering. He worked in his father's brass foundry and observed the loneliness, alienation and apathy that appeared to affect the general health of many of his co-workers. With this very much in mind and with the financial support of his father, he decided to become a doctor.

He studied medicine at the University College Hospital in London, where he specialised in Bacteriology and Immunology, areas in which he was to concentrate later in life. According to his biographers he was a rather peculiar

medical student, because he soon revealed more interest for patients than for their illnesses. He sat at their bedside and let them talk, discovering that the real cause of illness was worry. One woman who suffered from acute asthma for instance, was a very frightened person, as he learnt when she told him that her only son had moved away three months previously for work reasons, and since then had been out of touch. The woman feared he had had an accident or that he was dead. But when her son one day came to visit her and told her he had found a new job near home, she started to get better and in the space of a few days recovered completely. He found other patients where *anxiety* or *fear* also played a contributory part in their illness.







*Bach had been working with bacteria, but he wanted to find remedies that would be purer and less reliant on the products of disease.*

## Emotional States

*“Disease, though apparently so cruel, is in itself beneficent and for our good and, if rightly interpreted, it will guide us to our essential faults.”*

Bach obtained a Diploma of Public Health at Cambridge and then in 1913, he took a post at University College Hospital in London as the casualty medical officer. In 1914, following the outbreak of World War I, he left the hospital and was put in charge of 400 war beds. It was here that he began to observe the effects of stress and trauma in relationship to the recovery potential of his patients. As many of the injured were in need of urgent medical treatment, he ordered his team to separate the patients according to their illnesses. They could therefore concentrate on specific ailments at a time. However, after a while he became aware that his strategy was not working for everyone; while some patients got better, other showed little or no sign of recovery.

Following an intuitive episode, he called his team together and told them he had decided to reconsider his initial idea of grouping the patients together by illnesses. This time he wanted them placed together according to their emotional state. In this way he applied the medication according to the mental health of each individual patient. The results were excellent. Bach concluded that *the emotional state of a person affected his or her physical health* and accordingly, from then on decided to *treat the cause of the mental condition rather than the symptoms* that the physical body presented.

In 1917 Bach was working on the wards tending to soldiers who had returned injured from France. One day he collapsed and was rushed into an operating theatre suffering from a severe haemorrhage. His colleagues operated to remove a malignant tumour from his spleen,

but the prognosis was poor. When he came round they told Bach that he had only three months left to live. As soon as he could get out of bed, he returned to his laboratory. He intended to advance his work as far as he could in the short time that remained. But as the weeks went by he began to get stronger. The three months came and went and found him in better health than ever. He was convinced that his sense of purpose was what saved him: he still had work to do. And work he did, day and night until he discovered a vaccine that would be a cure for chronic illnesses. When he was better, he returned to the hospital to tell them of his discovery.

## Internal War

*“Disease is in essence the result of conflict between Soul and Mind, and will never be eradicated except by spiritual and mental effort.... No effort directed to the body alone can do more than superficially repair damage.”*

Starting in 1919, he worked at the London Homeopathic Hospital, where he was heavily influenced by the work of Dr Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, who, some 130 years before, had proposed looking to Nature as the fount of all life and health and using Nature to cure any illness. It was at the Homeopathic hospital that he developed seven bacterial *nosodes*<sup>1</sup> known as the “seven Bach nosodes.” Their use has been mostly confined to British homeopathy practitioners.

Up to now Bach had been working with bacteria, but he wanted to find remedies that would be purer and less reliant on the products of disease. He began collecting plants and in particular flowers, the most highly-developed

**Collapsing in 1917, he was told he had only three months left to live.**

part of a plant, in the hope of replacing the nosodes with a series of gentler remedies.

Rather than recognising the role of germ theory of disease, defective organs and tissues, and other known and demonstrable sources of disease, *Bach thought of illness as the result of a conflict between the purposes of the soul and the personality's actions and outlooks.* This internal war, according to Bach, leads to negative moods and energy blocking, which causes a lack of “harmony,” thus leading to physical diseases. He believed in certain fundamental truths: that we each possess a soul; that we come to this world to obtain knowledge and experiences to aim for the perfection of our nature; that we are immortal; that when our soul and personality are in harmony, we find peace, joy,





happiness and good health; and that there is a unity behind all things.

## His Life's Work Begins

*"They are able, like beautiful music, or any gloriously uplifting thing which gives us inspiration, to raise our very natures, and bring us nearer to our Souls: and by that very act bring us peace and relieve our sufferings."*

Bach started up his lucrative Harley Street practice in 1922, but gave it up in 1930, by which time he was so enthused by his work that he left London to work in the English countryside, determined to devote the rest of his life to the new system of medicine that he was sure could be found in nature. He took with him, as his assistant, a radiographer called Nora Weeks.

Just as he had abandoned his old home, office and work, he abandoned the scientific methods he had used up until now. Instead he chose to rely on his natural gifts as a healer, and use his intuition to guide him. Over years of trial and error, which involved preparing and testing thousands of plants, one by one he found the remedies he wanted, each aimed at a particular mental state or emotion. His life followed a seasonal pattern: the spring and summer spent looking for and preparing the remedies, the winter spent giving help and advice to all who came looking for them. He found that when he treated the personalities and feelings of his patients their unhappiness and physical distress would be alleviated as the natural healing potential in their bodies was unblocked and allowed to work once more.

The winter months were usually spent treating patients who were charged no fees. By 1932 he had discovered the first of his 12 remedies and these he used on the many patients who came to him for treatment. Bach decided to spread his knowledge and advertised his herbal remedies in two of the daily newspapers. This brought him numerous inquiries from the public and also a letter from the General



*"Bach thought that the internal war between the purposes of the soul and the personality's actions and outlooks lead to negative moods and "energy blocking," which causes a lack of "harmony."*

Medical Council who disapproved strongly with his advertising.

In 1934, Bach and Nora Weeks moved to Mount Vernon in the village of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell in the Thames valley in the south of Oxfordshire. It was in the surrounding lanes and fields that he found the remaining 19 remedies that he needed to complete the series. He would suffer the emotional state that he needed to cure and then try various plants and flowers until he found the one single plant that could help him. In this way, through great personal suffering and sacrifice, he completed his life's work.

A year after announcing that his search for remedies was complete, Dr Bach passed through transition peacefully on the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1936, when he was only 50 years old, outliving his doctors' prognosis by nearly 20 years. He left behind him several lifetimes of experience and effort, and a system of medicine that is used all over the world.

## Bach Floral Applications

*"The action of the flower essences raises the vibration of the being... They cure by flooding the body with the beautiful vibrations of the highest nature - in whose presence there is the opportunity for disease to melt away like snow in sunshine."*

Bach remedies are dilutions of flowers. He believed that dew found on flower petals retains the healing properties of that plant. The remedies are intended primarily for emotional and spiritual conditions, including but not limited to depression, anxiety, insomnia and stress.

The remedies contain a very small amount of flower material in a 50:50 solution of brandy and water. Because the remedies are extremely diluted they do not have a characteristic scent or taste of the plant. It is claimed that the remedies contain "energetic" or "vibrational" nature of the flower and that this can be transmitted to the user. Bach flower remedies are considered vibrational medicines, and rely on a concept of water memory. They are often labelled as "homeopathic" because they are extremely diluted in water, but are not true homeopathy as they do not follow other homeopathic precepts such as the law of similars or the belief that curative powers are enhanced by shaking and repeated diluting.

*"Life, to him, was continuous: an unbroken stream, uninterrupted by what we call death, which merely heralded*



*"Bach's life followed a seasonal pattern: the spring and summer spent looking for and preparing the remedies, the winter spent giving help and advice to all who came looking for them."*



*a change of conditions; and he was convinced that some work could only be done under earthly conditions, while spiritual conditions were necessary for certain other work.”*  
 Nora Weeks from *The Medical Discoveries of Edward Bach, Physician.*

accordance with homeopathic guidelines. *Nosodes* therefore, are medicines produced from illness-related or intermediate catabolic products (metabolites) in humans, animals, micro-organisms or viruses according to the regulations of the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia [Homöopathischen Arzneibuches (HAB)].

## Endnotes

1. The word ‘nosode’ is derived from the Greek term *Nosos* (illness) and is used for medicines made from the body’s own substances in

## Bibliography

*Heal Thyself: Explanation of the Real Cause and Cure of Disease* by Edward Bach, ISBN: 0852073011. Also available as a Kindle download.

# Dr Bach: A Small List of Remedies



**Agrimony:** mental torture behind a cheerful face; you hide your troubles behind a smile.

**Aspen:** fear of unknown things; you are anxious but can't say why.

**Beech:** intolerance; you feel critical of or intolerant towards others.

**Centauray:** the inability to say no; you are weak-willed and easily led.

**Cerato:** lack of trust in your own decisions; you know what you want to do but doubt your judgement.

**Cherry Plum:** fear of the mind giving way; you fear you might lose control.

**Chestnut Bud:** failure to learn from mistakes; you find yourself making the same mistakes.

**Chicory:** selfish, possessive love; your love for your family makes it hard to let them go.

**Clematis:** dreaming of the future without working in the present; you are in a dream.

**Crab Apple:** the cleansing remedy, also for self-hatred; you dislike something about yourself.

**Elm:** overwhelmed by responsibility; you feel overwhelmed by your many responsibilities.

**Gentian:** discouragement after a setback; you feel a bit let down after a setback.

**Gorse:** hopelessness and despair; you give up when things go wrong.

**Heather:** self-centredness and self-concern; your talkativeness leads to loneliness.

**Holly:** hatred, envy and jealousy; you feel wounded, jealous, spiteful or want revenge.

**Honeysuckle:** living in the past; your mind is on the past instead of the present.

**Hornbeam:** procrastination, tiredness at the thought of doing something; you put things off.

**Impatiens:** impatience; you feel impatient with the slow pace of people or things.

**Larch:** lack of confidence; you expect to fail and lack confidence in your skills.

**Mimulus:** fear of known things; you are shy or you feel anxious about something specific.

**Mustard:** deep gloom for no reason; you feel down in the dumps and don't know why.

**Oak:** keep going past the point of exhaustion; you are a strong person who struggles on past the limits.

**Olive:** exhaustion following mental or physical effort; you feel tired after making an effort.

**Pine:** guilt; you feel guilty or blame yourself.

**Red Chestnut:** over-concern for the welfare of loved ones; you are anxious about someone else's safety.

**Rock Rose:** terror and fright; you feel an extreme terror about something.

**Rock Water:** self-denial, rigidity and self-repression; you drive yourself hard trying to set an example.

**Scleranthus:** inability to choose between alternatives; you can't make your mind up.

**Star of Bethlehem:** shock; you are suffering from the effects of a shock or from grief.

**Sweet Chestnut:** extreme mental anguish, when there is no light left; you feel despair.

**Vervain:** over-enthusiasm; your enthusiasm leads you to burn yourself out.

**Vine:** dominance and inflexibility; sometimes you are a tyrant when you want to lead.

**Walnut:** protection from change and unwanted influences; you are unsettled at times of change.

**Water Violet:** pride and aloofness; you like your own company but sometimes feel lonely.

**White Chestnut:** unwanted thoughts and mental arguments; your mind is running over the same thing.

**Wild Oat:** uncertainty over your direction in life; you can't find your vocation.

**Wild Rose:** drifting, resignation, apathy; you can't really be bothered.

**Willow:** self-pity and resentment; you feel resentful and sorry for yourself.







# God's Piano

by Barbara Wilson, SRC

*So we may send our little timid thought  
across the void, out to God's reaching hands,  
send out our love and faith to thread the deep...;*

*Thought after thought until the little cord has  
greetened to a chain no chance can break,  
and we are anchored to the Infinite!*

*-- Edwin Markham --*

**D**EARS BEFORE I read this poem or heard the words *visualisation* and *cosmic attunement*, an extraordinary event in my life crystallised their mystical meanings for me.

Much later as a Rosicrucian, when my vistas and vocabulary had expanded, the realisation of these terms was already a part of my consciousness.

At the beginning of the summer when I was "twelve-going-on-thirteen" I did not know that this brief transitional period between childhood and adolescence would culminate in a unique benediction from the Cosmic. In the years which followed, the most distinct image in my memory of that special season would be a sturdy, black upright piano.

During my childhood the word *imaging* might have puzzled me, but not the word *imagination*. I had a vivid, boundless and inexhaustible imagination. If I could not quite match the White Queen's ability to "believe six impossible things before breakfast," I could easily *imagine* six impossible things before breakfast.

Within the course of twenty-four hours I could become a dancing gypsy, a Tahitian princess, a missionary to China, a florist, a singing actress, a choir director, and a pianist. Although we did not own a piano I would sit down at any available table, curve my fingers in imitation of Miss Hartley, the music teacher for our town's elementary schools, then move my fingers up and down this invisible keyboard, producing melodies heard only by my inner ear.

I cannot remember when I first heard piano music and was lured to its vibrations as irresistibly as a moth drawn to the light. It was always so. At school I loved to watch Miss Hartley's agile fingers performing fantastic feats on the piano in her seemingly effortless fashion. Volition suspended, I became immersed in the vibrant music.

Several years before, when I was eight years old, we moved next door to a family who owned a piano. Joanne, only three grades ahead of me in school, was already an accomplished musician. That year was, one of painful,



pent-up yearning alternating with the transcendent joy of listening to the sublime music floating out from the open window of Joanne's music room. She usually practised after supper. At the first strains of her melodic chords I would run to the edge of our yard, about ten feet from Joanne's window, and sit down on the lush grass where its pungent scent mingled with the fragrance of the nearby lilac bushes.

Soon I would be transported to a realm of pure harmony. I did not know where I was or who I was. I was



conscious solely of pulsating cadences above me, below me, around me. I floated on a wave of rhapsodic sound.

When the last notes of this celestial concert ceased and the reverberations in my head subsided, I would open my eyes to find myself lying on the cool grass, the intoxicating scent of lilac swirling around me while overhead the phosphorescence of darting lightning bugs thrashed in twilight. The longing for a piano of my own throbbled in my heart, but I told no one.

As the third of five children (later six) I understood the economic situation of our family. My father, a machinist in a hosiery mill, worked long, hard hours to provide us with the necessities of life, and we had few of its luxuries. Housing, food and clothing were necessities. Book fees and school supplies were necessities. A piano was not a necessity. I could not, and did not, ask my parents for a piano.

One day Joanne's mother invited me over to "play" their piano. Perhaps she had seen the skinny, barefoot child sprawled on the ground during Joanne's practice periods, or perhaps she had heard me singing. At an early age I discovered my talent for making music with my voice, and singing was as natural to me as breathing. I did not question her motives but eagerly accepted and

hurried over for the first of many visits.

I would place my fingers on the keyboard as I had seen Miss Hartley and Joanne do, then press down one note, then another, and another, experimenting with various combinations to find harmonious chords. It was not as easy as it looked.

I would study the open book on the music rack where a congregation of black and white notes paraded across the page in an intricate procession, some of the notes carrying banners as they marched in peaks and valleys through the horizontal lines. If only I could decipher this musical code!

One day that winter, after a frustrating and futile attempt to produce harmonious sound on Joanne's piano, I removed my fingers from the keyboard and released the foot pedal, dismayed at the cacophony which resounded. It was decidedly not beautiful. How could Joanne's mother endure such clamour? I could not bear to hear it.

Turning around on the bench I stared into the fireplace as a blazing log shifted in the grate, sprinkling ashes down to the hearth. I might as well throw my dreams into the flames, I thought. Disheartened, I closed the piano lid and trudged down the hallway to the kitchen

to thank Joanne's mother. She smiled and repeated her offer to come again. I said nothing; I knew I would not return to flail away at the keys only to create a dissonance which added to the burden of my small heart.

Whether I could have resisted the enchanting magnetism of Joanne's piano I will never know. After the school term ended we moved two blocks down the street. Our next-door neighbours did not have a piano.

## Joys of Exploring

There were compensations in our new neighbourhood for the absence of Joanne's music. The dense woods behind the house served as our playground, museum, and jungle. We climbed trees, collected pine cones and autumn leaves, feasted on muscadines and scuppernongs, gathered persimmons and chinquapins, picked violets and pussy willows, and soared through the air on our thick vine swing. On the way to school we took the "short cut" through neighbours' backyards and fields of tall grass and goldenrod, jumping the brook and cautiously avoiding the nanny goat grazing nearby, then following the footpath through thickets of honeysuckle and morning-glory.





After school I spent many hours in the swing under the maple tree in the front yard. During the long warm summer evenings all the neighbourhood children frequently assembled for games: hide-and-seek, snatch club, kick-the-can, and roller bat. I discovered a secret hiding place on the slope of the garage roof which slanted away, from the house; I would take an old quilt and a book, scale the trunk of the dwarf peach tree beside the garage, and then settle down for long quiet afternoons.

However, I discovered that I had not really discarded my special desire in the fireplace that dismal winter day. The unquenchable hope for a piano burned steadily in my mind. I imagined having a piano and I pretended to play this phantom piano; I prayed for a piano; I even made a wish on the first evening star, finding this an ideal moment to let my private longing float out in free expression.

Do you remember making a wish on the first evening star? Then you know of course that you could not tell anyone, or your wish would not come true. It was a perfect situation for me, and my fervent desire remained a secret between the bright evening star and me.

I do not remember when I stopped believing in the magic of the first star, just as I do not remember when I first learned that Santa Claus was not an actual person, and that it was my parents, not the Easter Bunny, who left those cheery baskets on the front porch on Easter morning. As the truth about Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny did not prevent me from celebrating Christmas and Easter, so the knowledge that the first star wish was only a child's fantasy did not keep me from continuing the twilight ritual. I would gaze at the glistening star and chant:

*"Star Light, Star light,  
first star I've seen tonight;*

*I wish I may, I wish I might,  
have the wish I wish tonight."*

As I grew older that radiant star became a symbol to me of the vastness, beauty, and inexplicable wonder of the Infinite. Who but God could create such a magnificent universe in which the fires of distant suns beamed their brilliant splendour to shine in our sky at night? Talk about limitless imagination! Was anything

beyond the power of God? Sending me a piano was "small potatoes" compared to the incredible movements of galaxies.

What had once been a child's game thus evolved into a moment of solitude and reflection. Silently I would fling my prayer out to the blinking twilight star, and beyond, and beyond. Whether it was the pale golden star of summer glimmering in a blue-grey sky or the lustrous silver star of winter suspended over tall snow-dusted treetops, I cherished this time of tranquillity. I felt my closeness to the star, the sky, the woods, the hills, and the miles and miles of space above and around me in God's beautiful world.

Then the belief entrenched itself firmly in my mind that my wish would be granted. One day I knew. I cannot explain how I knew. God would find a way to bring me a piano.

## My Preparation

In the meantime we were learning to read music at school. Miss Hartley began our basic instruction, and in the intervals between her visits our homeroom teachers continued the lessons, patiently leading us through the



sight-reading of new music. We learned to identify the time signature and to clap out the correct rhythm. We would interpret the key signature, the teacher would blow the proper tone for Do on her pitchpipe, and we would sing, measure by measure: So-Fa-So-Do-Re-Mi. Finally we would add the words. It was a slow and painstaking process, but no mystery at all. I was jubilant; my teachers had given me the key, which unlocked the enigma of musical language. Now all I needed was a piano!



After I completed the seventh grade my mother told us that we were to move again, news which caused no stir in our household. We had lived in two other houses in this town and before that there had been two other towns; before that, another state. I felt a slight regret about leaving our congenial neighbourhood, but I knew that already I was moving away from childhood activities



and recreation. I sensed that I was now entering a new cycle of life. In the idiom of the times, I was “growing up.”

A short time later my mother informed us that she had rented another house, and my brothers and sisters bombarded with questions: Was it nearby? How big was the yard and did it have any trees in it? Who were her our neighbours and did they have any children? My mother explained that the house, six blocks away on another street, belonged to the Yates family. Mr. Yates had been transferred to another job location and the family had to move immediately.

My mother glanced at me and continued, “*As I was leaving, Mrs. Yates said to me, I want to ask a favour*

*of you. I hate to impose on you like this, but I don't know what else to do. You see, it's about the piano. It's so big and heavy, and would cost us so much to have it moved, and we can't afford it. I was wondering if you, that is, could you, do you think it would be in your way if I just left it ?”* I never heard the rest of my mother's statement.

During all the years of wanting a piano I had thought of the ways in which I would express my elation when the wish finally came true. I had seen myself jumping up and down, laughing, singing, cheering and even turning a somersault or attempting a handstand. Now that the great moment had finally arrived, I did none of these things. Instead, I sat motionless, feeling a serenity similar to all those twilight times when I had silently expressed my secret desire. A small voice within whispered, “*I knew it. I knew it. I always knew it would happen.*”

Later we would move into the white frame house with the big pear tree in the front yard and the sturdy, black upright piano in the living room, and my mother would arrange for me to take private

lessons. When the Yates family returned to reclaim their house and the piano, we would move again, but by then our lives had been changed irrevocably. The piano had become a part of our family, and now that we had to relinquish it, buying another one so that “the girls” could take lessons was no longer a luxury. It was a necessity.

On that warm summer day, however, I was not thinking of the future. My inner eye was focused on a dazzling evening star blazing in a darkening sky high above the pine trees. Words of gratitude welled within, surging to my throat. My thoughts radiated to that shimmering star, and beyond, and beyond.

## An Altar in every Dwelling

*When men do not love their hearth,  
nor reverence their thresholds,  
it is a sign that they have dishonoured  
both ... Our God is a house-hold God,  
as well as a heavenly one; He has an  
altar in every man's dwelling.*

-- John Ruskin (1819-1900),  
*The Seven Lamps of Architecture, 1908*





# Brethren of Purity

by Marc Cornwall, FRC

In  
the book  
Rosicrucian History  
and Mysteries, by  
Christian Rebisse, which is  
part of the Rosicrucian Collection  
series, mention is made of an enigmatic  
group of Islamic mystics called the  
“Brothers of Basra” or the “Brothers  
of the Pure Heart of Basra” in whom  
the French writer Henri Corbin  
detected similarities in aims with the  
“Brothers of the R.C.”

**B**ASRA IS IRAQ'S second largest city. One wouldn't call it a beautiful city, but it is a great port and industrial centre. Before the Iran-Iraq and two Gulf Wars, life here was good. After the first Gulf War, times were really hard for the people of Basra, as it was for people all over the country, but it gradually improved.

Now, in the aftermath of the second Gulf War, and Iraq taking control of its own affairs, times are sadly returning to the bad old days of armed gangs and militias. But there is hope for the future. Perhaps not immediately, but in the next few years, Basra may rise again and become the great city it once was when Sinbad the Sailor set off

from there on his voyages of discovery at a time when Basra was one of the great intellectual centres of the world.

## The Golden Age

During the Golden Age of Islamic civilisation, one of the most enthusiastic patrons of knowledge and enlightenment was the Caliph al-Ma'mun, who in 830 CE founded the famous *Bayt al-Hikma* in Baghdad. In this “House of Wisdom”<sup>1</sup> the Caliph was daring enough to separate scientific studies from traditional Islamic theology. He not only collected rare and valuable manuscripts from all over the known world, and attracted





*The modern Bayt al-Hikma or "House of Wisdom" originally founded in Baghdad in 830 CE by Caliph al-Ma'mun who did much to build Baghdad into a major centre of learning in the contemporary Muslim world.*

many teachers skilled in the arts of "ancient learning," but he himself regularly presided over their discussions. His dissertations, written down as treatises and aphorisms, reflect an open-mindedness and intellectual candour remarkably open and tolerant of the beliefs and opinions of others when compared to the appalling standards of today's Islamist resurgence.

Al-Ma'mun did much to build Baghdad into a major centre of learning in the Muslim world. Its prosperity and cultural influence attracted scholars from as far as China, India, Persia, Syria, Egypt and Greece. When these people, from such varied backgrounds mingled in the souks, the university or the Caliph's palace, trying to break through language barriers, they discovered exciting new facets of knowledge. Ideas sprang up in their minds like seedlings sprouting after a heavy rain. And from ideas came progress, especially in mathematics and astronomy. After the adoption of Indian ciphers, including zero, the decimal system and the subsequent simplification of the principles and calculations of Archimedes, Euclid and Ptolemy, their advances in algebra, geometry, plane and spherical trigonometry brought them wide acclaim.

The great Eurasian trade route network led to the intellectual advancement of cities in the Middle East such as Damascus, Antioch, Edessa, Harran and Jundishapur,<sup>2</sup> places where the influences of Greek culture had been felt since the time of Alexander the Great some 1,000 years earlier, and where now prosperous merchants and knowledge-hungry students bartered to possess precious manuscripts. In so doing they gathered those vital seeds of civilisation which they would not only nurture during Europe's long ages of darkness, but would cultivate and hand down to a knowledge-hungry Europe centuries in the future.

But even during this Golden Age there were fanatical fighters for the faith who sought to destroy all who, in their uncompromising views, were heretical. This was not just an Islamic phenomenon; witness the horror and savagery

visited on the peoples of the Levant by the Christian crusaders. We see this resurfacing today with al-Qaida in the Middle East, al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria. However, and more importantly, Islam also had its corps of intellectuals who quietly and persistently besieged the citadels of truth:

*"... their banners, emblems of benevolence; their scimitar, the pen. The ink of the scholars is more precious than the blood of martyrs."*

Were it not for their role in the recovery of ancient learning, its subsequent preservation and circulation throughout their empire and on to the eager scholars of Western Europe, our European Renaissance may never have happened and we would have lost our philosophical heritage. We owe this period in Islamic history a huge debt of gratitude for what was passed down to Western scholars.

In Baghdad, the exchange of information and ideas was electrifying. As scholars tried to give convincing arguments for their own beliefs, they discovered their own urgent need for knowledge. Questions followed questions, and the search for truth spread through all levels of society. Wealthy and influential families rivalled each other, and even vied with the Caliphs to hire wise and gifted men to instruct their children and themselves. As time went on the Muslim world was consumed by the Greek spirit of inquiry. Every field of human knowledge was examined with probing curiosity. To know things as they are became the aim of life.

The translator's skill also contributed to the broad curricula of Arabic medical academies which included Indian preventive medicine and hygiene, and Greek and Egyptian chemistry, Hermetic metaphysics and psychology, and descriptions of the practice and theory of the foremost



*As time went on, the Muslim world was consumed by the Greek spirit of enquiry. Every field of human knowledge was examined with probing curiosity. To know things as they are became the aim of life. (Image source: [http://abbasidbaghdad.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/330987926\\_ea7cd279a7.jpg](http://abbasidbaghdad.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/330987926_ea7cd279a7.jpg))*





Greek, Persian, Indian and Assyrian physicians. This knowledge, combined with their accuracy in observation and diagnosis, produced outstanding medical men whose medical tracts and compendiums were studied by doctors and pharmacists well beyond into the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The greatest demand, however, was for the works of Plato and Aristotle, for in them, Islamic students found insights into ambiguous passages in the Koran. Unlike earlier Muslims who had regarded the Koran as that part of an infinite wisdom which was put into words and to be accepted without question, these later scholars found that by using the scientific approach of interpreting the unknown in terms of the known, of leading the mind gradually into the profound and abstract, they could explain even the most puzzling of revelations.

The tremendous advance of knowledge made between 800 and 900 CE captured everyone's imagination. A few searched even deeper, seeking to understand their destiny and higher responsibility to the cosmos. Insight of this kind had been held sacred and entrusted only to the worthy and disciplined within the sanctuary of such Mystery centres such as those of Eleusis and Samothrace. But when the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I ordered the Mystery schools and schools of philosophy closed, their neophytes and hierophants, alarmed by public animosity fled their homeland to continue their studies privately in the safer climates of Persia and later in the domains of the Caliph.

Intriguing and recurrent references to the existence and teachings of these mysterious brotherhoods leave little doubt that they were heirs to an ancient wisdom, and that their contribution to the enlightenment of humankind was significant. For example, there is an almost identical pattern in the teachings, conduct and dedication of the Sufis, Druze, Sabaeans, Assassins and the Brethren of Purity. Of these, the Sufis have since earned the respect and admiration of all who find in the beauty and nobility of their mystical philosophy the same humility, devotion and lofty principles that characterise the words and examples of such illumined men as Lăozĭ, Plotinus and Jakob Boehme.

These were the qualities the earliest Sufis had adapted in part from the Greek, Buddhist and Egyptian Mystery teachings. Although Sufi philosophy contains doctrines of a cosmological world system, its ultimate goal is to attain union of the soul with God, by living a pure and devoted life.



*The remains of the ancient city of Harran in what is now southern Turkey; in its time it was an important commercial, cultural and religious centre.*

## From Harran

It is worthwhile looking at the part played by the Sabaeans in the transmission of Greek culture to the Western world. Before the rise of Islam there was located in the ancient northern Mesopotamian city of Harran, near the modern village of Altınbaşak in Turkey (24 miles or 44 kilometres southeast of Şanlıurfa), a Syrian fraternity that for hundreds

**The Brethren of Purity or Ikhwan as-Safa were a secret society of Muslim philosophers.**

of years had refused to submit to Christian authority. Despite persistent persecution their members maintained a religious philosophy that embodied Hermetic, Mithraic and Neoplatonic teachings. However, in the year 830 their very existence was threatened when the Caliph, with a formidable army, stopped at Harran for provisions during a campaign against the Byzantine Empire.

Accustomed to being met with some show of fear, Caliph al-Ma'mun was puzzled when he received a hospitable welcome. Questioning who these fearless and obviously scholarly people were, he is said to have asked if they were Muslims, Christians or Zoroastrians and if they had a holy book or a prophet recognised by the Koran. The answer they gave was no. However, the Caliph was so impressed with the scholars of Harran that he invited them to Baghdad.

When the Harranians arrived at Baghdad the question of their religion again arose and they were saved only by heeding the advice of a clever jurist: "Call yourselves Sabaeans (*as-Saba'iyyūn!*) The Koran mentions that ancient Roman cult, although now it is extinct." So it was



*The beauty and nobility of Sufi mystical philosophy with its humility, devotion and lofty principles can be identified in the words and examples of such illumined men as Lăozĭ, Plotinus and Jakob Boehme.*





Pages from *Kalila wa-Dimna*, (*Kalila and Dimna*), a book of fables much loved by the Brethren and thought to have derived from the Indian classic the *Panchatantra*.

that the scholarly infidels from Harran received official recognition in the Muslim capital. Before long, their knowledge of Greek science and culture so impressed the local intelligentsia that not only were they welcomed into the House of Wisdom, and invited to lecture and publish their writings, but were even encouraged to establish their own school of pagan Neoplatonism! The result was an academy, similar to the Greek mystery schools Justinian had closed 350 years earlier, and it contributed generously to Arabic erudition during the following centuries.

### Brethren of Purity

As the second city of Iraq, Basra lies in the extreme south of the country. It is Iraq's largest seaport and played an important role in early Islamic history. During the time of the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258), Basra became a great intellectual centre.

The Brethren of Purity or *Ikhwan as-Safa* were a secret society of Muslim philosophers who were the inheritors of the knowledge and accomplishments of the House of Wisdom, and flourished in Basra in the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE. One of the possible meanings for their name is: *Ikhwan as-Safa wa Khullan al-Wafa wa Ahl al-Hamd wa abna al-Majd*, or the "Brethren of Purity, Loyal Friends, People worthy of praise and Sons of Glory," glossed simply as either the "Brethren of Purity" or the "Brethren of Sincerity." Various scholars prefer "of Purity" because of the group's ascetic impulses towards purity and salvation.

There is also a suggestion that the name is taken from a story in a book much beloved by the Brethren

called *Kalila wa-Dimna*, (*Kalila and Dimna*), a book of fables thought to have derived from the Indian classic the *Panchatantra*. We may be more familiar with this literary genre in the fables of the French fabulist Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695). In the book, a group of animals, by acting as faithful friends (*ikhwan al-safa*), escapes the snares of a hunter. The story concerns a dove and its companions who get entangled in the net of a hunter. Together, they trust themselves and the ensnaring net to a nearby rat who was kind enough to gnaw the birds free from it. Impressed by the rat's altruistic deed, a crow becomes the rat's friend. Soon a tortoise and gazelle also join the company of animals. After some time, the gazelle is trapped by another net; with the aid of the others and the good rat, the gazelle is soon freed, but the tortoise fails to leave swiftly enough and is himself captured by the hunter. In the final turn of events, the gazelle repays the tortoise by serving as a decoy and distracting the hunter while the rat and the others free the tortoise. After this, the animals are designated as the "*Ikhwan as-Safa*," the faithful friends.

It would be wrong to consider these fables as nothing more than a collection of children's stories. They are allegories and illustrate all-too-human attitudes and situations that had long since become an accepted means of conveying a real educative message. This story described above is mentioned as an example when the Brethren spoke of mutual aid in one of their Epistles, where they illustrated an important part of their system of ethics that can be summarised as:

*"In this Brotherhood, self is forgotten; all act by the help of each, all rely upon each for help and advice, and if a Brother sees it will be good for another that he should sacrifice his life for him, he willingly gives it."*

### Who Were They?

The structure of this mysterious organisation and the identities of its members have never been clear. To them, *falsafa* (philosophy) meant philosophy in the Greek tradition. The esoteric teachings and philosophy of the learned adepts of this fraternity were produced in the form of Epistles in an encyclopaedia called the *Rasa'il Ikhwan as-Safa* or *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, a giant compendium of 52 treatises that would greatly influence later encyclopaedias. A good deal of Muslim and Western scholarship has been spent on trying to



*Rasa'il-e-Ikhwan-us Safa*  
(*Epistles of Brethren of Purity*).







Hermes Trismegistus and a page from the *Rasa'il* dealing with astronomy. In the Epistles we find explanations of the Hermetic and Platonic teachings of worlds within worlds, and how the sun is the centre of a moving family of planets, following the heliocentric model of the Greek philosopher and mathematician, Aristarchus of Samos (c. 310-230 BCE) some thirteen centuries before.

pin down the identities of the Brethren and the century in which they were active, but to little avail. According to *Rasa'il* 21:

*“Know, that among us there are kings, princes, caliphs, sultans, chiefs, ministers, administrators, tax agents, treasurers, officers, chamberlains, notables, nobles, servants of kings and their military supporters. Among us too there are merchants, artisans, agriculturists and stock breeders. There are builders, landowners, the worthy and wealthy, gentlefolk and possessors of many virtues. We also have persons of culture, of science, of piety and of virtue. We have orators, poets, eloquent persons, theologians, grammarians, tellers of tales and narrators of traditions, readers, scholars, jurists, judges, magistrates and ecstasies. Among us too there are philosophers, sages, astronomers, naturalists, physicians, diviners, soothsayers, casters of spells and enchantments, interpreters of dreams, alchemists, astrologers, and many other sorts, too many to mention.”*

... and extraordinarily we find this echoed centuries later in the 1614 *Fama Fraternitatis*, the first of the *Rosicrucian Manifestos*.

Both Persian and Indian philosophical traditions contributed greatly to their thought. The Brethren worked in Iraq, a region where Persian was at the time widely spoken and Persian culture was all-pervasive. They cite Persian poetry without even translating it, as if it was unnecessary, and the Persian language is not at all related to Arabic. They

used Persian technical terms in disciplines such as astrology, zoology and mineralogy. They had a fair knowledge of the basics of Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. The Indian contribution is also significant, though not perhaps as pervasive as the Persian. A good example of their open-mindedness is the following text:

*“The brethren’s ideal man is; a Persian in lineage, an Arab in his religion, a true believer in his doctrine, an Iraqi in his culture, a Hebrew in his experience, a Christian in his way of proceeding, a Syrian in his piety, a Greek in his science, an Indian in his discernment, a Sufi in his way of life, angelic in his morals, heavenly in his opinion, divine in his knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>*

### The *Rasa'il*

The Epistles were written in an eloquent classical Arabic and are comprised of 52 treatises on such varying subjects as mathematics, music, logic, astronomy, as well as the physical and natural sciences. They also explored the nature of the soul as well as ethics, revelation and spirituality. The corpus also included subjects like cosmology, ethics, aesthetics, revelation and metaphysics.<sup>4</sup>

The first part of the *Rasa'il*, which is on mathematics, groups 14 Epistles that include treatises in arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, geography and music, along with tracts in elementary logic. The second part, which is on natural sciences, gathers 17 Epistles on matter and form,

**The pages of these Epistles echo Stoic and Hermetic thought: that man is the microcosm, the epitome of the infinite universe.**

generation and corruption, metallurgy, meteorology, a study of the essence of nature, the classes of plants and animals, including a fable. The third part, which is on psychology, comprises 10 Epistles on the psychic and intellectual sciences, dealing with the nature of the intellect and the intelligible, the symbolism of temporal cycles, the mystical essence of love, resurrection, causes and effects, definitions and descriptions. The fourth part deals with theology in 11 Epistles, investigating the varieties of religious sects, the virtue of the companionship of the Brethren of Purity, the properties of genuine belief, the nature of the Divine Law, the species of politics and the essence of magic.

For example, in the Epistles on astronomy we find explanations of the Hermetic and Platonic teachings of worlds within worlds, visible and invisible, and how the







successive appearance of prophets on earth. A large part of the last epistle is devoted to a description of the Sabaeen initiation ritual. Their work was an important intellectual catalyst in the development of ideas and science in the Islamic world, and their original and sophisticated reflections on matters related to spirituality and revelation were erudite and popular adaptations of early scientific knowledge.

## Veiled With the Veil of Sincerity

*“I am going to burn paradise and douse hell-fire, so that both veils may be lifted from those on the quest and they will become sincere of purpose...”* (Rabi’a ad-Adawiyya or Rabi’a of Basra, the first known female Sufi mystic.) Their secret meetings were called the *“majalis al-ilm”* or sessions of science or knowledge, and the Epistles themselves are remarkably similar to modern Rosicrucian teachings.

The Brethren regularly met on a fixed schedule. The meetings (*Majlis*) apparently took place on three evenings of each month: once near the beginning, in which speeches were given, another towards the middle, apparently concerning astronomy and astrology, and the third around the end of the month. During the third *Majlis*, they recited hymns with philosophical content. During their meetings and possibly also during the three feasts they held, on the dates of the sun’s entry into the zodiacal signs of Aries, Cancer and Libra (the northern hemispheric Spring, Summer and Autumn equinoxes,) besides the usual lectures and discussions, they would engage in some manner of liturgy reminiscent of the Harranians.

Hierarchy was a major theme in their treatises, and the Brethren loosely divided themselves up into four ranks determined by age. The age guidelines were not however entirely tied to age. So, an example of the fourth rank is Jesus, although he would have been too young if the age guidelines were absolute and fixed. Compare the similar division of the *Rasa’il* encyclopaedia into four sections and the Jabirite symbolism of 4. The ranks were:

1. **Craftsmen:** a craftsman had to be at least 15 years of age; their honorific title was the “pious and compassionate” (*al-abrār wa l-ruhamā*).
2. **Political Leaders:** a political leader had to be at least 30 years of age; their honorific was the “good and excellent” (*al-akhyār wa l-fudalā*).
3. **Kings:** a king had to be at least 40 years of age; their honorific was the “excellent and noble” (*al-fudalā al-kirām*).
4. **Prophets and Philosophers:** the most aspired-to, the final and highest rank of the Brethren; to become a Prophet or Philosopher a man had to be at least 50 years old; their honorific compared them to historical



*It was the Ismailis, perhaps more than any other, who had the most profound effect on the structure and vocabulary of the Epistles. Pictured here are two mediaeval Qur'an manuscripts. (Background image source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/29625499@N04/3143306090>)*

luminaries such as Jesus, Socrates or Muhammad who were also classified as Kings. This rank was the “angelic rank” (*al-martabat al-malakiyya*).

## The Ismaili Influence

The Brethren concealed their identity so skilfully that modern scholars have struggled in their attempts to track down specific members of the group. Using a vivid metaphor, the members referred to themselves as “*sleepers in the cave of our father Adam*” (Rasa’il, 4). In one place, they gave as their reason for hiding their secrets from the

**It was only by meeting in secret that the Brethren had been able to complete their monumental work.**

people, *not fear of earthly rulers, nor trouble from the common populace, but a desire to protect their God-given gifts* (Rasa’il, 4.) Yet they were well aware that their esoteric teachings might provoke unrest, and the calamities suffered by the successors of the Prophet Mohammed were a good reason to remain hidden until the right day came for them *to emerge from their cave and wake from their long sleep* (Rasa’il, 4.). To live safely, it was therefore necessary for their doctrines to be cloaked.

We can understand this in view of the prevailing conditions at the time of the first Rosicrucians and the religious upheavals in Europe. Professor Ian Netton, writes in *Muslim Neoplatonists* (1980) that, “*The Ikhwan’s [Brethrens’] concepts of exegesis of both Qur'an and Islamic tradition were tinged with the esotericism of the Ismailis.*” Strangely enough, in dealing with the doctrines of the Sabaeans of Harran, the Epistles do not mention the Ismailis. Yet it was the Ismailis, perhaps more than any other, who had the most profound effect on the structure and vocabulary of the Epistles. Scholars have attempted to show that the



Brethren were definitely Ismailis. “*The tracts are clearly of Ismaili origin; and all authorities, ancient and modern, are agreed that the Rāṣāʾil constitute the most authoritative exposition of the early form of the Ismaili religion.*”<sup>5</sup> According to Yves Marquet in *La philosophie des Ikhwan al-Safāʾ* (1975), “*It seems clear that the Epistles represent the state of Ismaili doctrine at the time of their compositions.*”

Among the Syrian Ismailis, the earliest reference of the Epistles and its relation with the Ismailis is given in *Kitāb Fusul waʾl Akbār* by Nurudin bin Ahmad (d. 849). “*These daʿīs, and other daʿīs with them, collaborated in composing long Epistles, fifty-two in number, on various branches of learning.*” It implies that the Epistles were the product of the joint efforts of the Ismaili *daʿīs* or missionaries.

### Resting in the Garden of Splendour

During the Golden Age of Islam, and the Abbasid dynasty, Basra became an intellectual centre, surpassed only by Baghdad. Here, the Brethren of Purity offered passers-by an initiation into their Garden of Splendour. “*Come, enter and enjoy rare and lovely flowers, rest beneath stately trees, taste the sweetest of fruit and drink refreshing, spring-fed water.*” If any held back, sceptical or afraid, the “*wise and generous owner*” gave samples of the garden’s bounty to whet their appetite and entice them to step within and partake of the rich and satisfying beneficence awaiting those who live a spiritual life.

The samples offered were not fruits or flowers of course, but choice essays from the Brethren’s Epistles, the scholarly compendium of scientific, philosophical and metaphysical information garnered from harvests of past and contemporary cultures. Issuing this work in the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when other theological sects were proclaiming their unquestionable monopoly of truth, was in itself miraculous. With it the Brethren of Purity bridged the isolation of human differences and demonstrated that truth cannot be fragmented by accidents of race, epoch or habitat, and that the many forms of religion are but various approaches to, or degrees of, spiritual enlightenment.

Discarding the ritual and dogma, their members dedicated themselves to shun no science, scorn no book, or to cling fanatically to any single creed..., for their own creed encompassed all the others and comprehended all the sciences generally. To this end they laboured...

*“... with painstaking care, to make complicated scientific teachings understandable, and to preserve, safeguarding without divulging, the original sanctity of occult and mystical knowledge that their own initiated members and those of other esoteric fraternities had attained through visual perception of the truth while ascending*

*into the Kingdom of Heaven and receiving the instruction of angels.”*

In their 52 Epistles we therefore find delineated or hinted at the same broad range of subjects that were studied by the Sufis, Sabaeans, Druze, Assassins and other fraternal orders of that period..., the same subjects in fact, that had been pondered upon and debated in public discussions among the groves and temple courts of Athens and Alexandria. But times had changed since those former “golden” days of ancient Greece. It was only by meeting in secret that the Brethren had been able to complete their monumental work. In doing this, they had set themselves a task destined to have wide significance, namely, transplanting and cultivating the vital seeds of civilisation, and then adding their own unique characteristics. In this manner, they sent their seeds out into the far reaches of the Islamic empire where later generations carried them on into the future, often oblivious of their true origins.

Behind the outer form, the student was advised to find larger concepts that unify and uplift their vision to behold luminous beings of loftier spheres, and Truth. This dedication, this lofty idealism, sustained and inspired initiated members of this mysterious medieval fraternity as well as those scholars whose writings led to the rise of Europe’s cultural renaissance. Al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), al-Ghazali, Maimonides, Averroes (Ibn Rushd), al-Andalusi, Meister Eckhart, Raimondo the Archbishop of Toledo, the Dominican friar Albertus Magnus of Padua, Thomas Aquinas of Naples, John of Salisbury, and many others, each in his way perpetuated those very ideas that Islamic intellectuals adopted from the Greeks, preserved and enriched, so that now we too may step across the ashes and splintered marble of the past into that Garden, whose bounty is everlasting.

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*"In the plausible intimacy of approaching evening, as I stand waiting for the stars to begin, at the window of this room that looks out on the infinite, my dreams move to the rhythm required by long journeys to countries yet unknown."* (From *"The Book of Disquiet"* by Fernando Pessoa)

**W**ELL, HERE WE are with the first edition of the *Rosicrucian Beacon*, the first in the year 2012, Rosicrucian Year 3365, Persian year 1391, Islamic year 1433-1434, Hebrew Year 5772-5773, and Chinese Year of the Dragon.

During this year, you will hear a lot about the 2012 phenomenon, the so-called Mayan Prophecy and the end

of the 13<sup>th</sup> Baktun. A *Baktun* was the name given by the Maya to a particular measurement of time: 144,000 days or 394.26 years, usually rounded up to 400 years for convenience. However, it's the number of days that are of crucial importance, not the number of years. This controversial theory has recently also been aired on TV and in newspaper and magazine articles; you may well decide to buy one of the many books or DVDs that are





*"We are finding out more about the universe now than we ever thought possible in the past. The 'Big Bang' has for decades been proposed as the beginning of all time-frames. But now some cosmologists are asking: what was it that "banged?"*

currently available, or research it online. One critical thing to keep in mind though, is that the Mayan concept of time was different from ours, and in this article I would like you to consider time in a different way too.

## Space-Time and Physicists

We are finding out more about the universe now than we ever thought possible in the past. The Big Bang has for decades been proposed as the beginning of time. But some cosmologists are asking: what exactly banged? "*Nothing cannot give rise to something,*" Rosicrucians are taught. So now the idea is gaining ground that, as Einstein believed, the Universe, or perhaps a Multiverse, is permanent. *It had no beginning and will have no end.* So, where does that leave time?

Two contrasting viewpoints on time divided many famous philosophers. One is that time is part of the fundamental structure of the universe. Sir Isaac Newton held this view. Time travel therefore becomes a possibility as other "times" persist like frames on a film strip, spread out across the timeline. The other view is that time doesn't refer to any kind of "container" that events and objects "move through," nor to any entity that "flows," but that it is instead part of a fundamental intellectual structure within which humans sequence and compare events. This second notion, in the tradition of Gottfried Leibniz and Immanuel Kant, holds that time is neither an event nor a thing, and is therefore not measurable, nor can it be travelled.

## The Mystery of Time

What then exactly is time? No-one fully understands what time is. We're told it's the "fourth dimension" in addition to the length, width and depth of the three-dimensional space we live in. Intuitively, we have been brought up to think of time as though it were an arrow, coming from the past and flying into the future; or more poetically, as a stream flowing down through the ages. And in physics it is indeed referred to as the "arrow of time."

The Mayas, as far as we can determine, in common with other Native American peoples, conceived time as something nonlinear, but also *cyclical*. In other words for them, the "arrow of time" eventually caught up with its "starting point" and proceeded to *play out the same scenarios as before*. Time was for them something living, dynamic, an activity of spirit, and of course an integral

part of their everyday lives. One way of gaining access to time was through ceremonies. In his book *Blackfoot Physics* (2008), F. David Peat (b. 1938) explains that the original people of North and Central America believed you can enter the flux of time and move within its vastness to a place where things can be renewed. The Native Americans believed that everything that comes

**The Maya believed they had a direct link to past events as they participated in their reconstruction.**

into existence is part of a cycle of time and will flower and grow. And unless it is periodically renewed, it will decay and die.

Due to the interaction of two Mesoamerican calendars, one a 365-day and the other a 260-day calendar, the same day would re-appear in both calendars after a certain interval. For example, in our Gregorian calendar, 1<sup>st</sup> January is always the New Year and our birthday is always celebrated on the same day in the 365¼ day year we use. But only at certain times does your birthday fall on the exact same day of the week that you were born. So, in a sense, we use two interlocking "calendars," the 365-day annual cycle and the 7-day weekly cycle.

In the minds of the Mayas, performing a ritual on a named day, emulating one that had been performed on the same named day hundreds of years before..., meant that they could participate in that self-same original event





that happened in the past, as though it were in the present. They believed they had a direct link to the event as they participated in its reconstruction. If for example some significant event took place on a Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September, then every other Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September in future years would hold a special connection to the original date, whereas a Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September would not.

## Echoes

We can find echoes of this in the modern Rosicrucian Order. We are encouraged give time to our study material on a Thursday night. The reason given is that it was on this day of the week in ancient Egypt that the members of the mystery schools came together to study. Now, the ancient Egyptian week was 10 days long, but the Thursday of our week was equivalent to the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the ancient Egyptian week. And in Roman Egypt there is evidence that this day was considered a day of rest in the courts.

Interestingly enough, even today, Thursday in many ancient languages includes the word for “five.” In Arabic it is *Yom al-Khamis*; in Greek it is *Pempti*; in Hebrew it is *Yom Khamishi*; in Persian it is *Panjshambe*; in Kurdish it is *Pencsemme*; in Armenian it is *Hingshapti*; in Georgian it is *Khutshabati*; in Aramaic it is *Khamshoshiba & Yawmo d-Hamsho*; And in modern Portuguese it is *quinta-feira* “fifth [feast] day,” unlike other Romance languages.

**So, what is time? Of course no one really knows, but we do know that it can exist only in the presence of physical extent or one spatial dimension at the least.**

So on a Thursday, according to Mayan thought, if we have a special form of devotion or study on that day, we connect with many other people, all the way back to ancient Egypt even, who may also have used that day to spend time in higher thought and special study. In life we constantly discover new things, but there are very few true “eureka” moments. So, studying is the main route to discovery, and studying is itself a process of coming-to-know. As we study things, we gradually come-to-know about life and the universe. We read, we contemplate and we come to understand.



*One way of gaining access to time was through ceremonies. The original people of North and Central America believed one can enter the flux of time and move within its vastness to a place where things can be renewed.*  
(Image source: <http://hayquaker1.blogspot.com/2010/11/quakers-and-native-americans-george-r.html>)

If we think like the Maya, then when we participate in religious or mystical ceremonies and rituals, for part of the time, we can participate in something eternal that is beyond our current understanding, something that connects us intimately with every other such ceremony and ritual that has ever taken place, and of course with the thoughts and intentions of those who participated in them. Similarly, when Rosicrucians solemnly enter mentally and spiritually the so-called “Celestial Sanctum,” they find themselves in a place that exists outside of time and space, communing with other Rosicrucians both in the present and from the past.

So, what is time? Of course no one really knows, but we do know that it can exist only in the presence of physical extent or one spatial dimension at the least. But if we accept the Mayan point of view, it opens up a vast ocean of opportunity for us, for time becomes not a fourth dimension but a means of arranging and ordering perception.

*Filatanaka kullakitanaka, Ma pita sartasiñani, Ma suma jach'a uru taki! -- Brothers and sisters, let us arise to a great new day!*

From the Bolivian Aymara folksong, *Kullakita*



# Werner Heisenberg

## Quantum Theory and the Ancient Roots of Atomic Science

by Douglas Lawson, FRC

*Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) was a German theoretical physicist and Nobel Prize winner who made foundational contributions to quantum mechanics and is best known for asserting the uncertainty principle of quantum theory. During the Nazi era in Germany, he came under the uncomfortable scrutiny of the S.S. and the enmity of a pro-Nazi group of physicists called the "Deutsche Physik." His alleged (though never fully proven) collaboration with the German Reich in their efforts to build an atomic bomb left a cloud of suspicion over him for the rest of his life. After World War II, he became Director of the renowned Max-Planck-Institut in Munich. In this article, Heisenberg takes a look at the ancient Greek philosophers and their theories in the light of modern Physics; you may be surprised at what he says.*



**T**HE CONCEPT of the atom goes back much further than the beginning of modern science in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It has its origins in ancient Greek philosophy and was in the last few centuries BCE the central concept of materialism as taught by Leucippus (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and Democritus (c. 460-370 BCE). In his book *Physics and Philosophy*<sup>1</sup> (first published in 1958), extracts from which you will find in this article, Werner Heisenberg wrote:

*events has very little resemblance to genuine materialistic philosophy. In fact we may say that atomic physics has turned science away from the materialistic trend it had during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is therefore interesting to compare the development of Greek philosophy toward the concept of the atom with the present position [1955] of this concept in modern physics."*

### The Milesians

*"On the other hand, the modern interpretation of atomic*

*Miletos was a celebrated ancient Greek coastal city in*





Ionia on the Aegean coast of present-day Turkey. It is not far south of the city of Ephesus. For reasons that are far from clear, there was an explosion of original thought among the inhabitants of this city, which led to the earliest foundations of modern philosophy and science.

*“The idea of the smallest, indivisible ultimate building blocks of matter first came up in connection with the elaboration of the concepts of Matter, Being and Becoming, which characterised the first epoch of Greek philosophy.”*

This period Heisenberg referred to started in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE with Thales, the founder of the Milesian school, to whom Aristotle ascribes the statement: *“Water is the material cause of all things.”* This statement, strange as it may seem to us, expresses, as Nietzsche pointed out, three fundamental ideas of philosophy:

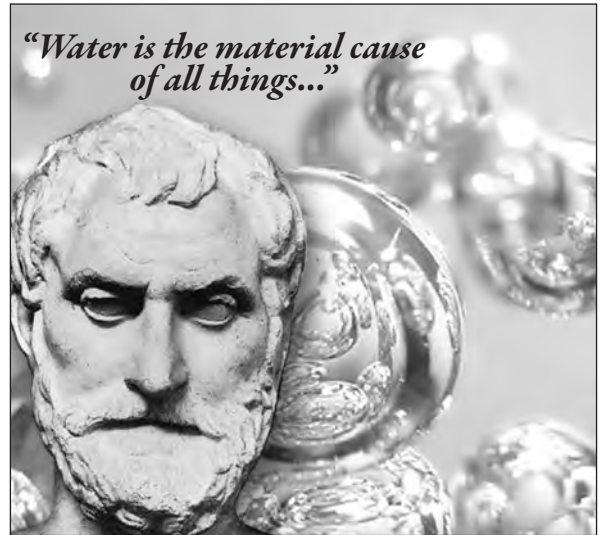
- *First, the question of the material cause of all things.*
- *Second, the demand that this question be answered in conformity with reason, without resort to myths.*
- *Third, the idea that ultimately it must be possible to reduce everything to one principle.*

Thales’ statement was the first expression of the idea of *one fundamental substance*, of which all other things were transient forms. Life was connected with this substance and Aristotle (384-322 BCE) also ascribes to Thales the statement: *“All things are full of gods.”* Still the question was asked: what is the material cause of all things? It is not difficult to imagine that Thales took his view primarily from observing Nature. Of all things we know, water can take the most varied shapes;

**Thales’ statement on water was the first expression of the idea of one fundamental substance.**

in the winter it can take the form of ice and snow; it can change into steam; and it can form clouds. It seems to turn into earth, mixed with sand and rock where the rivers form deltas, and it can spring from the earth. Water is the requisite for life. Therefore, if there was such a thing as a fundamental substance, it was natural to think of water first.

The idea of the fundamental substance was then carried further by Anaximander (610-564 BCE), who was a pupil of Thales and lived in the same city. Anaximander



*Thales, the founder of the Milesian school, to whom Aristotle ascribes the statement: “Water is the material cause of all things.”*

denied that the fundamental substance was water or any other known substances. He taught that the primary substance was infinite, eternal and ageless and that it encompassed the world. This primary substance is transformed into the various substances with which we are familiar. Theophrastus (c. 371-287 BCE), a Greek philosopher of the Peripatetic School, quotes from Anaximander:

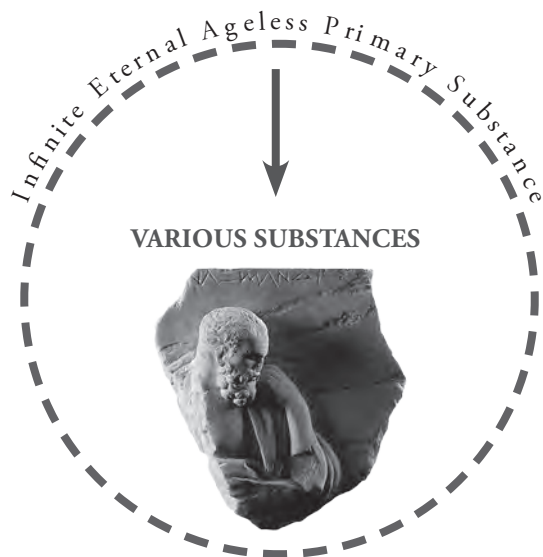
*“Into that from which things take their rise they pass away once more, as is ordained, for they make reparation and satisfaction to one another for their injustice according to the ordering of time. The primary substance, infinite and ageless, the undifferentiated Being, degenerates into the various forms which lead to endless struggles.”*

Interestingly, we find this concept later in Gnostic and Cathar thought. The process of “Becoming” is considered as a sort of debasement of the infinite Being; a disintegration into the struggle ultimately expiated by a return into that which is without shape or character, the search for Nirvana. The struggle which is meant here is the opposition between hot and cold, fire and water, wet and dry, etc. According to Anaximander, there is *“eternal motion,”* the creation and passing away of worlds from infinity to infinity.

Heisenberg noted that the problem of whether the primary substance can be one of the known substances or must be something essentially different occurs in a somewhat dissimilar form in the most modern part of atomic physics.



*“Physicists today are seeking a fundamental law of motion for matter from which all elementary particles can be derived mathematically. This may refer either to waves of a known type, or to waves of an essentially different character which have nothing to do with any of the known waves or elementary particles. In the first case it would mean that all other elementary particles can be reduced in some way to a few sorts of fundamental elementary particles. In the second case all different elementary particles could be reduced to some universal substance which we may call energy or matter, but none of the different particles could be preferred to the others as being more fundamental.”*



*Anaximander denied that the fundamental substance was water or any other known substances. He taught that the primary substance was infinite, eternal and ageless and that it encompassed the world, transforming into various substances.*

The latter view corresponds to the doctrine of Anaximander, and Heisenberg was convinced that in modern physics this view is the correct one.

The third of the Milesian philosophers, Anaximenes (585-528 BCE), an associate of Anaximander, taught that *air* was the primary substance: *“Just as the soul, being air, holds us together, so do breath and air encompass the whole world.”* Anaximenes introduced into Milesian philosophy the idea that the process of condensation or rarefaction causes the change of the primary substance into the other substances. The condensation of water vapour into clouds was an obvious example, but of course the difference between water vapour and air was not known at that time.

## The Concept of Becoming

In the philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 540-480 BCE), the concept of “Becoming” occupies centre stage. He regarded that which moves, namely *fire*, as the basic element. The difficulty of reconciling the idea of one fundamental principle with the infinite variety of phenomena is solved for him by recognising that the strife of the opposites is really a kind of harmony. Rosicrucians will recognise here what we refer to as “The Law of the Triangle,” where the coming together of two different things creates a new entity which results in harmony. For Heraclitus the world is at once, one and many; it is just the opposite tension of the opposites that constitutes the unity of the One. He says: *“We must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife.”* Heisenberg reflected on Heraclitus’ philosophy:

*“Looking back to the development of Greek philosophy up to this point we realise that it has been borne from the beginning to this stage by the tension between the One and the Many. For our senses the world consists of an infinite variety of things and events, colours and sounds. But in order to understand it we have to introduce some kind of order, and order means to recognise what is equal and implies some sort of unity. From this springs the belief that there is one fundamental principle. That there should be a material cause for all things was a natural starting point since the world consists of matter. But when you carry the idea of fundamental unity to the extreme you realise that it cannot explain the infinite variety of things.”*

This leads to the antithesis of “Being” and “Becoming” and finally to the solution of Heraclitus, that *the change*

**Heraclitus said the change itself is the fundamental principle, an important feature of Rosicrucianism.**

*itself is the fundamental principle*; again an important feature of Rosicrucian ontology and modern Physics. But the change in itself is not a material cause and therefore is represented in the philosophy of Heraclitus by Fire as the basic element, which is both matter and a moving force.

*“Modern physics is in some ways extremely close to the doctrines of Heraclitus. If we replace the word ‘fire’ by the word ‘energy’ we can almost repeat his statements word for word from our modern point of view. Energy is in fact the substance from which all*







*Anaximenes introduced into Milesian philosophy the idea that the process of condensation or rarefaction causes the change of the primary substance into the other substances. The condensation of water vapour into clouds was an obvious example, but of course the difference between water vapour and air was not known at that time.*

*elementary particles, all atoms and therefore all things are made, and energy is that which moves. Energy can be changed into motion, into heat, into light and into tension. Energy may be called the fundamental cause for all change in the world."*

But this comparison of Greek philosophy with the ideas of modern science will be discussed later.

### The Eleatics

Greek philosophy returned for some time to the concept of the One as found in the teachings of Parmenides (early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), who lived in the Greek city of Elea, near Salerno, in the south of Italy. His most important contribution to Greek thinking was perhaps that he introduced a purely logical argument into metaphysics:

*"One cannot know what is not, that is impossible, nor utter it; for it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be."*

Therefore, only the One exists, and there is no becoming or passing away. Parmenides denied the existence of empty space for logical reasons. Since all change requires empty space, as he assumed, he dismissed change as an illusion.

But philosophy couldn't rest for long on this paradox. Empedocles (c. 495-435 BCE), from Agrigento (Agrigutum) on the south coast of Sicily, one of the leading cities of Magna Graecia during the golden age of Ancient Greece, changed for the first time from monism

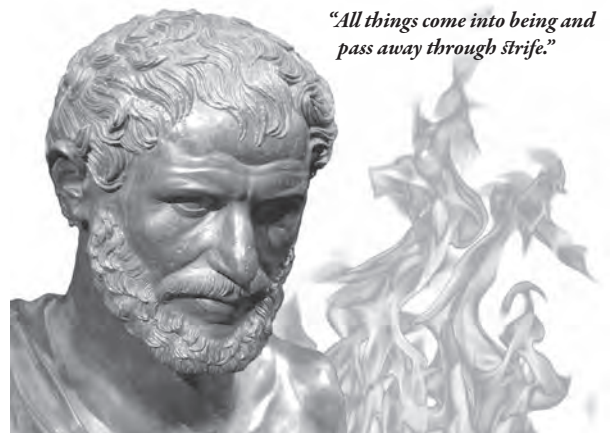
to a kind of pluralism. To avoid the difficulty that one primary substance cannot explain the variety of things and events, he assumed four basic elements, Earth, Water, Air and Fire. The elements are mixed together and separated by the action of Love and Strife (positive and negative.) Therefore these latter two, which are in many ways treated as corporeal like the other four elements, are responsible for the imperishable change. Empedocles describes the formation of the world in the following picture: First, there is the infinite Sphere of the One, as in the philosophy of Parmenides.

But in the primary substance, all the four roots are mixed together by Love. Then, when Love is passing out and Strife coming in, the elements are partially separated and partially combined. After that, the elements are completely separated and Love is outside the World. Finally, Love is bringing the elements together again and Strife is passing out so we return to the original Sphere. This doctrine of Empedocles represents a very definite turning toward a more materialistic view in Greek philosophy. The four elements are not so much fundamental principles as real material substances. Here

**The doctrine of Empedocles represents a very definite turning toward a more materialistic view in Greek philosophy.**

for the first time the idea is expressed that the mixture and separation of a few substances, which are fundamentally different, explains the infinite variety of things and events.

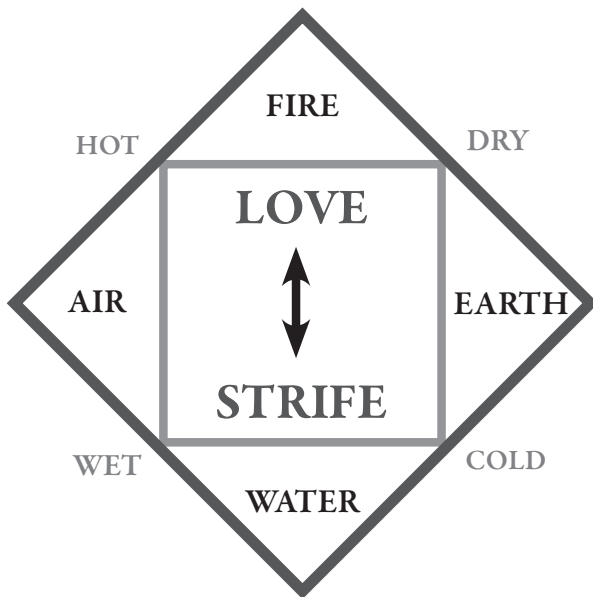
The next step toward the concept of the atom was made by Anaxagoras (born c. 500-480 BCE), who was a contemporary of Empedocles. He lived in Athens for about 30 years. Anaxagoras stressed the idea of the mixture, the assumption that all change is caused



*"All things come into being and pass away through strife."*

*Heraclitus regarded that which moves, namely fire, as the basic element.*





*Empedocles assumed four basic elements: Earth, Water, Air and Fire. In his view the elements are mixed together and separated by the action of Love and Strife (positive and negative).*

by *mixture* and *separation*. He assumes an infinite variety of infinitely small “seeds” of which all things are composed. These seeds do not refer to the four elements of Empedocles, for there are innumerable many different seeds. But the seeds are mixed together and separated again and in this way all change is brought about.

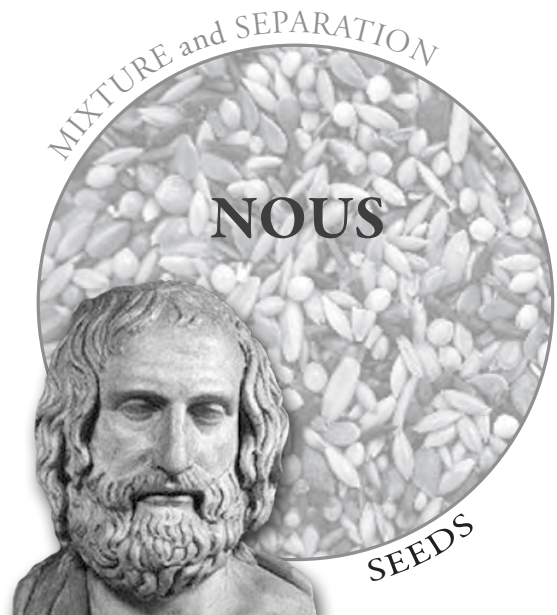
The doctrine of Anaxagoras allows for the first time a geometrical interpretation of the word *mixture*. As he speaks of the infinitely small seeds, their mixture can be pictured as the mixture between two kinds of sand of different colours. The seeds may change in number and in relative position. Anaxagoras assumes that all seeds are in everything, only the proportions differ from one substance to another. He says:

*“All things will be in everything; nor is it possible for them to be apart, but all things have a portion of everything.”*

The universe of Anaxagoras is set in motion not by Love and Strife like that of Empedocles, but by “Nous” which we may translate as “Mind.”

### The Atomists

*“From this philosophy it was only one more step to arrive at the concept of the atom,”* and this step occurred with Leucippus and Democritus of Abdera, a city-state in the modern-day north-eastern Greek province of Thrace.



*Anaxagoras stressed the idea of the mixture, the assumption that all change is caused by mixture and separation, set in motion not by Love and Strife, like that of Empedocles, but by “Nous” which we may translate as “Mind.”*

*“The antithesis of Being and Not-being in the philosophy of Parmenides is here secularised into the antithesis of the ‘Full’ and the ‘Void.’ Being is not only One, it can be repeated an infinite number of times. This is the atom, the indivisible smallest unit of matter. The atom is eternal and indestructible, but it has a finite size, it is not infinitely small. Motion is made possible through the empty space between the atoms. For the first time in history therefore, there was voiced the idea of the existence of a smallest of all particles, we would say of elementary particles, as the fundamental building blocks of matter.”*

According to this new concept of the atom, matter did not consist only of the “Full,” but also of the “Void,” of the empty space in which the atoms move. The logical objection of Parmenides against the Void, that *not-being* cannot exist, was simply ignored to comply with experience.

*“From our modern point of view we would say that the empty space between the atoms in the philosophy of Democritus was not nothing; it made possible the various arrangements and movements of atoms. In the theory of general relativity the answer is given that geometry is produced by matter, or matter by geometry. This answer corresponds more closely to the view held by many philosophers that space is defined by the extension of matter.”*





Although the atoms of Democritus were all of the same substance, which had the property of being, they had different sizes, different shapes, and could move and could occupy different positions in space. Other than that, they had no other physical properties. The atoms in the philosophy of Leucippus do not move merely by chance. Leucippus seems to have believed in complete determinism, since he is known to have said: *“Nothing happens for nothing, but everything from a ground and of necessity.”* The atomists did not give any reason for the original motion of the atoms. Causality can only explain later events by earlier events, but it can never explain the beginning, namely what caused the first event.

### Platonists and Pythagoreans

*“The basic ideas of atomic theory were taken over and modified in part by later Greek philosophers. For the sake of comparison with modern atomic physics [1955] it is important to mention the explanation of matter given by Plato in his dialogue Timaeus. Plato was not an atomist; on the contrary, Diogenes Laertius reported that Plato disliked Democritus so much that he wished all his books to be burned. But Plato combined ideas that were near to atomism*

*with the doctrines of the Pythagorean School and the teachings of Empedocles.”*

The Pythagorean School was an offshoot of Orphism, which goes back to the worship of Dionysus. Here has been established the connection between religion and mathematics which ever since has exerted the strongest influence on human thought.

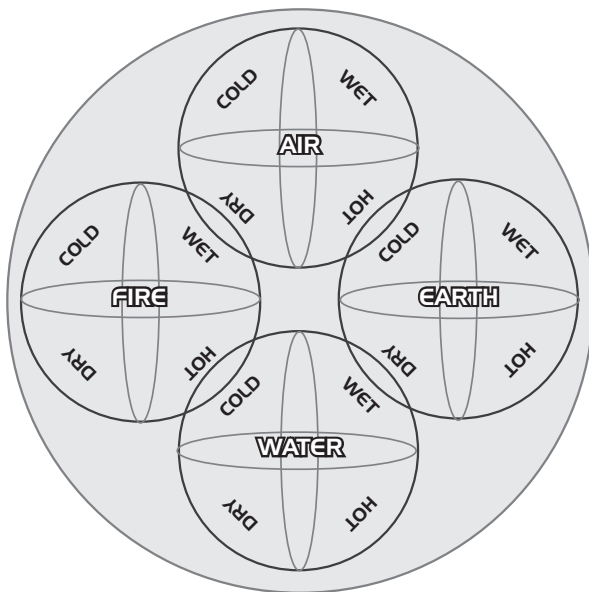
*“The Pythagoreans seem to have been the first to realise the creative force inherent in mathematical formulations. Their discovery that two strings sound in harmony if their lengths are in a simple ratio demonstrated how much mathematics can mean for the understanding of natural phenomena. For the Pythagoreans it was not so much a question of understanding; for them the simple mathematical ratio between the length of the strings created the harmony in sound. There was also much mysticism in the doctrines of the Pythagorean School.”*

**“The Pythagoreans seem to have been the first to realise the creative force inherent in mathematical formulations.”**

But by making mathematics a part of their religion, they touched an essential point in the development of human thought. The philosopher Bertrand Russell made the following statement about Pythagoras:

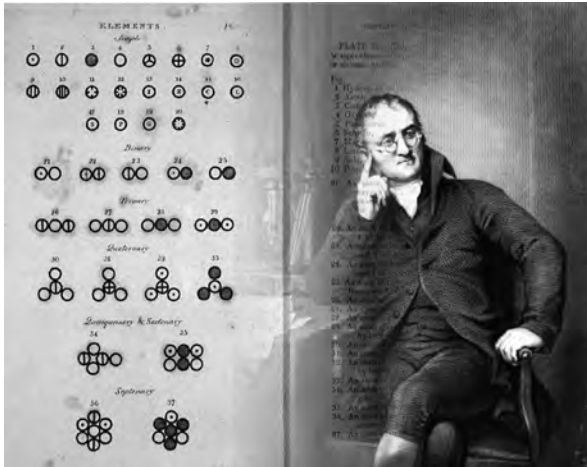
*“I do not know of any other man who has been as influential as he was in the sphere of thought. Plato knew of the discovery of the regular solids made by the Pythagoreans and of the possibility of combining them with the elements of Empedocles.”*

Following this short survey of Greek philosophy up to the formation of the concept of the atom, we may come back to modern physics and ask how our modern views on the atom and quantum theory compares with this ancient development. Historically the word “atom” in physics and chemistry referred to the wrong object, during the formative period of science in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, since the smallest particles belonging to what is called a chemical element are still rather complicated systems of units even smaller than atoms. These smaller units are nowadays called “elementary particles,” and it is obvious that if anything in modern physics should be compared with the atoms of Democritus it should be the elementary particles like a proton, neutron, electron or meson.



*The essential structural concept of the Greek atom: the atoms in Democritus theory themselves remain unchanged, but move about in space to combine in various ways to form all macroscopic objects. Early atomic theory stated that the characteristics of an object are determined by the shape of its atoms. So, for example, sweet things are made of smooth atoms, bitter things are made of sharp atoms. (Adapted from image source: <http://whs.wsd.wednet.edu/faculty/busse/mathhomepage/busseclasses/radiationphysics/lecturenotes/chapter2/chapter2.html>)*





John Dalton (1776-1884) pioneered early modern ideas on the nature of the atomic particle.

## Finally

*“The modern view of the elementary particle seems more consistent and more radical. In the philosophy of Democritus all atoms consist of the same substance if the word “substance” is to be applied here at all. The elementary particles in modern physics carry a mass in the same limited sense in which they have other properties. Since mass and energy are, according to the theory of relativity, essentially the same concepts, we may say that all elementary particles consist of energy.”*

This could be interpreted as defining *energy* as the primary substance of the world. It has been mentioned before that the views of modern physics are in this respect very close to those of Heraclitus if we interpret his element *fire* as meaning energy. Energy is in fact that which moves; it may be called the primary cause of all change, and energy can be transformed into matter or heat or light. The strife between opposites in the philosophy of Heraclitus can be found in the strife between two different forms of energy.

*“In the philosophy of Democritus the atoms are eternal and indestructible units of matter, they can never be transformed into each other. With regard to this question, modern physics takes a definite stand against the materialism of Democritus and for Plato and the Pythagoreans. The elementary particles are certainly not eternal and indestructible units of matter, and they can actually be transformed into each other.*

*“As a matter of fact if two such particles moving through space with a very high kinetic energy collide, many new elementary particles are created from the available energy and the old particles may have*

*disappeared in the collision. Such events have been frequently observed and offer the best proof that all particles are made of the same substance: energy. But the resemblance of the modern views to those of Plato and the Pythagoreans can be carried somewhat further. The elementary particles in Plato’s Timaeus are finally not substance but mathematical forms.*

*“If we follow the Pythagorean line of thought, we may hope that the fundamental law of motion will turn out as a mathematically simple law. It is difficult to give any good argument for this hope for simplicity, except the fact that it has hitherto always been possible to write the fundamental equations in physics in simple mathematical forms. This fact fits in with the Pythagorean religion, and many physicists share their belief in this respect.”*

After this comparison of Heisenberg’s views on atomic physics [1955] with Greek philosophy [c. 400 BCE], it may seem at first sight that the Greek philosophers have, by some kind of ingenious intuition, come to the same or very similar conclusions as we have in modern times, though in our case only after several centuries of hard labour with experiments and mathematics. This interpretation would however be a complete misunderstanding.

There is an enormous difference between modern science and Greek philosophy, and that is just the empirical attitude of modern science. Since the time of Galileo and Newton, modern science has been based on a detailed study of nature and upon the postulate that only such statements should be made as have been verified or at least can be verified by experiment.

The idea that you could single out some events from nature by an experiment, in order to study the details and to find out what the constant law is in the continuous “change” did not occur to the ancient Greek philosophers. Modern science has therefore from its beginning stood upon a much more modest, but at the same time much firmer, basis than ancient philosophy.

*“All the same, some statements of ancient philosophy are rather close to those of modern science. This simply shows how far you can get by combining the ordinary experience of nature that we have without doing experiments with the untiring effort to get some logical order into this experience to understand it from general principles.”*

1 *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (1958). ISBN: 0141182156.





# Tagore's Message

by Vincent Edwards

*The poems and sayings of India's  
great philosopher still kindle minds.*



**W**HEN INDIA'S great poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was still very young his father insisted he drop his books and go up among the high Himalayas. Somehow the sight of those lofty, snow-covered peaks gave the youth a new outlook on the world.

He caught a vision that he cherished for the rest of his days. It was of a free world, where love and understanding counted for more than national boundaries. There, men and women would live like

brothers and sisters, side by side, and scientists could pursue their studies in the service of people. There was no reason for distrust, since war had been outlawed by love and human fellowship.

Probably no-one loved peace and hated war more than Rabindranath Tagore. The time came when his name became a household word in his native country, and his poems were known to both the rich and the very poor. His songs were sung in crowded city quarters as well as by travellers on the far-off caravan trails. Tens of thousands were stirred by his dreams of world peace.



## Nobel Peace Prize

In 1913 came Tagore's crowning honour with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in literature. It was the first time that someone from Asia had ever been chosen, and the recognition of India's great genius brought praise from all sides.

Among English-speaking readers, Rabindranath drew almost as enthusiastic a following as he did among his own people. The Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, wrote a preface to one of the Indian poet's works in which he told of how marvellous had been the shock of the discovery of the noted Indian.

When Yeats related this to a Bengal physician, the latter did not seem the least surprised. The doctor answered, "*Every day I read Rabindranath. One of his verses makes me forget all the annoyances of the world.*"

In 1916, Tagore made a memorable visit to America. Everywhere he travelled, he attracted wide notice. People



*Rabindranath Tagore as a young man.*

*the modern age, with their superior wisdom, have been ashamed to own. That is to say, I believe in an ideal life. I believe that in a little flower there is a living power hidden in its beauty which is more potent than a Maxim gun. I believe that in the bird's notes Nature expresses herself with a force which is greater than that revealed in the deafening roar of the cannonade."*

These are surprising and challenging words. Nothing could better reveal what sort of a thinker and poet Rabindranath Tagore really was. And, yet, in an age when all the great nations were building up powerful armaments, he dared to dream of a world of human brotherhood.

Was it nothing but a poet's crazy dream? Perhaps there are high-up statesmen who would have us believe so, but thoughtful persons know better. If beauty and goodness are to last, the great Bengali poet's vision must come true. The walls that creeping suspicion have built between nations will have to come down.

More than seventy years have passed since Rabindranath's death was publicised in the press, but his voice is now coming back to us, stronger than ever. It is as if he carried a special message to this new age of international tensions.

Many of his verses prove that he identified himself with the "little people" of the world. Always he spoke of nature and of things of the soul. A flower, a mountain, a cloud, all suggests the Creator. It is doubtful if ever a poet told of the love of God with greater simplicity. Study these samples of his thought, and then judge for yourself:

*Let me think there is One among  
those stars that guides my life  
through the dark unknown.*

*Wrong cannot afford defeat, but Right can.  
God waits for man to regain his  
childhood in wisdom.*

*The noise of the moment scoffs at the  
music of the Eternal.*

*Those who have everything but Thee,  
my God, laugh at those who have  
nothing but Thyself.*

*God is ashamed when the prosperous  
boasts of His special favour.*

*God grows weary of great kingdoms,  
but never of little flowers.*

**In an age when all the great nations were building up powerful armaments, he dared to dream of a world of human brotherhood.**

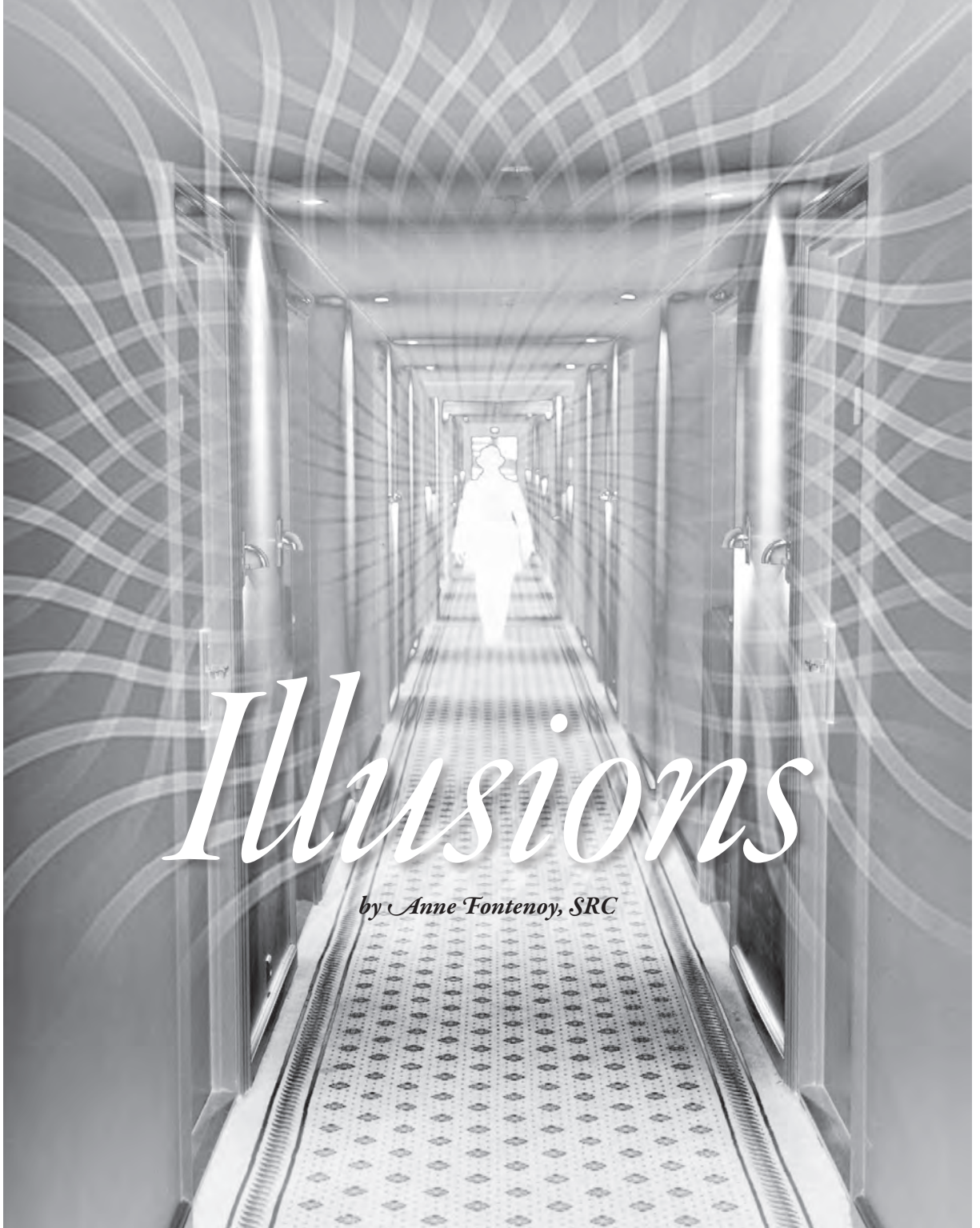
who saw him could not soon forget the man with the gentle eyes who went about in the attire of his native country. He was such an impressive figure in his long brown robes, his patriarchal beard, and his iron-grey hair. When he smiled, his whole countenance seemed illuminated with his deep love for humanity.

On a visit to Japan in 1916, he made just as profound an impression on the public. On one occasion Rabindranath was invited to speak to a young people's group. Those boys and girls were moved to admiration as they heard the courteous visitor make this delightful confession: "*Do not be frightened of me or think that I am going to give you a long lecture. I know I look rather formidable with my grey beard and white hair and flowing Indian robe, and people who know me by my exterior make the absurd mistake that I am an old man, and give me a higher seat, and pay me deference by keeping at a distance from me.*"

*"But if I show you my heart, you will find it green and young... perhaps younger than some of you who are standing before me. And you would find also that I am childish enough to believe in things which the grown-up people of*







# Illusions

by Anne Fontenoy, SRC

**I**N THE BOOK *Sanctuary of Self* written by Ralph M Lewis, past Imperator of AMORC, there is a section entitled *The Pitfalls*. In one chapter in particular in this section called *Illusions of the Psychic*, Mr Lewis explores the experience of a member who thought her body was being “charged with a Cosmic or Divine energy of some sort”<sup>1</sup> when in fact after investigation it was discovered that the

cause of her experience was nothing more mysterious than an static electrical build-up of charge in her body as she walked over a particular carpet.

This example highlights the fact that our individual subjective interpretation of an experience may not always be quite what we first thought it to be. Although there are many examples of illusions in the mundane world, such as parallel lines meeting in the distance when viewed



in perspective, the discussion which follows serves to highlight a few of the pitfalls that might be experienced when trying to make sense of psychic experiences, and some of the reasons why such pitfalls may occur at all.

## Psychic Impressions

To begin with, let us agree on a definition of the expression “psychic experience.” I favour the one that was published a few decades back now in a booklet called the *Rosicrucian Glossary*:<sup>2</sup>

**Psychic Experience:** *A phenomenon related to the higher levels of consciousness, beyond or behind those levels that respond to the physical world only. It may originate as a transmission from other minds or from attunement with Cosmic forces and intelligences outside the individual organic being, or from a realisation of Cosmic Consciousness. To realise a psychic experience, the phenomenon has to be translated into terms of our sense faculties and associated ideas.*

The Rosicrucian Order teaches that all people have a hidden layer of psychic sense faculties which complement the normal five physical senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch in such a way that a person can to some extent see psychically, hear psychically, smell psychically, taste psychically and even touch psychically. If this seems incredible, it has been borne out by countless thousands of individuals in the past who have succeeded in connecting with one or more of these psychic counterparts of the normal senses faculties. Some people seem to be “born psychic;” they naturally come into life with an elevated sense of awareness that makes them more sensitive to psychic impressions than most others. For the majority of people though, this aspect of their consciousness remains almost completely dormant throughout life.

**Some people seem to be “born psychic;” they naturally come into life with an elevated sense of awareness.**

The Rosicrucian Order offers methods to its students whereby they may learn how to attune with these inner sense faculties and to overlay them on their normal five sense faculties, thereby opening themselves up to a veritable “parallel universe” of experience. In this article, I would like to investigate some of the pitfalls we may encounter if psychic phenomena are misinterpreted. The key to understanding why some psychic impressions are misinterpreted has already been given in the definition “*To realise a psychic experience, the phenomenon has to be translated into terms of our sense faculties and associated ideas.*”



*The Rosicrucian Order teaches that all people have a hidden layer of psychic sense faculties which complement the normal five physical senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.*

The example of a pitfall given in *The Sanctuary of Self* stands as a warning that we not only need to be careful of how we interpret psychic impressions, but we also need to establish whether the phenomenon is of psychic origin at all. This caution is not intended to dampen any enthusiasm for the exploration of consciousness extending beyond the physical world; but it is meant to serve as a guide to those who wish to chart territories of the mind that are not always recognised in the mundane world.

## Interpretation

It's possible to see, hear, smell, taste and experience a sense of touch through our psychic senses. But remember, the psychic “faculties” are merely the channels by which subliminal phenomena are made known to our consciousness *through* our normal five senses. The Order speaks of the existence of an underlying “actuality of being,” something that most people never come to experience, and for good reason. No sensory creatures, humans included, ever experience “actuality” itself. In humans this is due to the limitations of the interpretive abilities of the body due to our limited brain and neurological capacity and sophistication. Whether on the physical or psychic levels of our being, “actuality” can never be more than an *interpreted actuality*, in other words “our reality,” our interpretation of the underlying actuality behind our experience. So, our reality is nothing more than an illusion of something far deeper, but a very rich and rewarding experience nevertheless. This illusion may be very far from the mark, or it may be quite close to the actuality of the experience. When it's far from the mark, which it often is





with psychic impressions, we will grossly misinterpret the phenomena before us. Our realisation of the underlying process is, therefore, far from accurate at times, which is why so many psychic impressions, though accurately received by our senses, are completely misinterpreted. Not only may the overlay of the psychic sensory faculties occasionally not match up well with the physical senses, the greatest reason for this misinterpretation lies in our minds and the manner in which we interpret what we experience.

We are all hampered by various idiosyncrasies such as ideology, social background, upbringing, education, present mood, etc., and these have a direct bearing on how we understand our psychic experiences. This relates to the part of the definition of psychic experience which says: *“To realise a psychic experience, the phenomenon has to be translated into terms of our sense faculties and associated ideas.”* And our translation is sometimes not that accurate.

Possibly, you're aware of some illustrations of illusions which initially were thought to be of a psychic origin and were interpreted as such, but were of a purely mundane origin which would have resulted in an entirely different interpretation if this had been understood from the start. Most of us agree that it's possible to see things psychically. But is it possible to misinterpret psychic impressions? Psychic impressions are just that – impressions. It's how we interpret them that is crucial; you may have come across misinterpretations of types of psychic experiences, but there is another point for consideration aside from the misinterpretation of what was happening.

These illusionary misinterpretations which may result from psychic experiences are due to the realisation of the person experiencing them. In my opinion, this does not mean that all interpretations of experiences concerning the psychic realm are subject to error, but that we should have open minds about how to interpret them and to consider if it's appropriate to be watching or listening to every psychic impression which is experienced.

With this in mind, we can then open ourselves to watching or listening out for those psychic impressions which may be useful and helpful, such as telepathic messages about important matters when it's not possible to get through by other means of communication as well

### How we interpret psychic impressions is crucial.

as opening our self to the riches of the world within so that we may be receptive to those experiences which *“may originate as a transmission from other minds or from attunement with Cosmic forces and intelligences outside the individual organic being, or from a realisation of Cosmic Consciousness.”*

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1. Lewis, Ralph M., *The Sanctuary of Self*, 1978, San Jose, Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, Inc. ISBN: 091205753X.
2. Phelps, Ruth, *Rosicrucian Glossary: A Key to Word Meanings*, 1961, San Jose, Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, Inc.

**FREEDOM**  
by Jose Coelho, FRC

One day a boy asked his teacher: *Why will truth set me free? I go to school, play and go home whenever I like. How would truth free me anymore than I already am?*

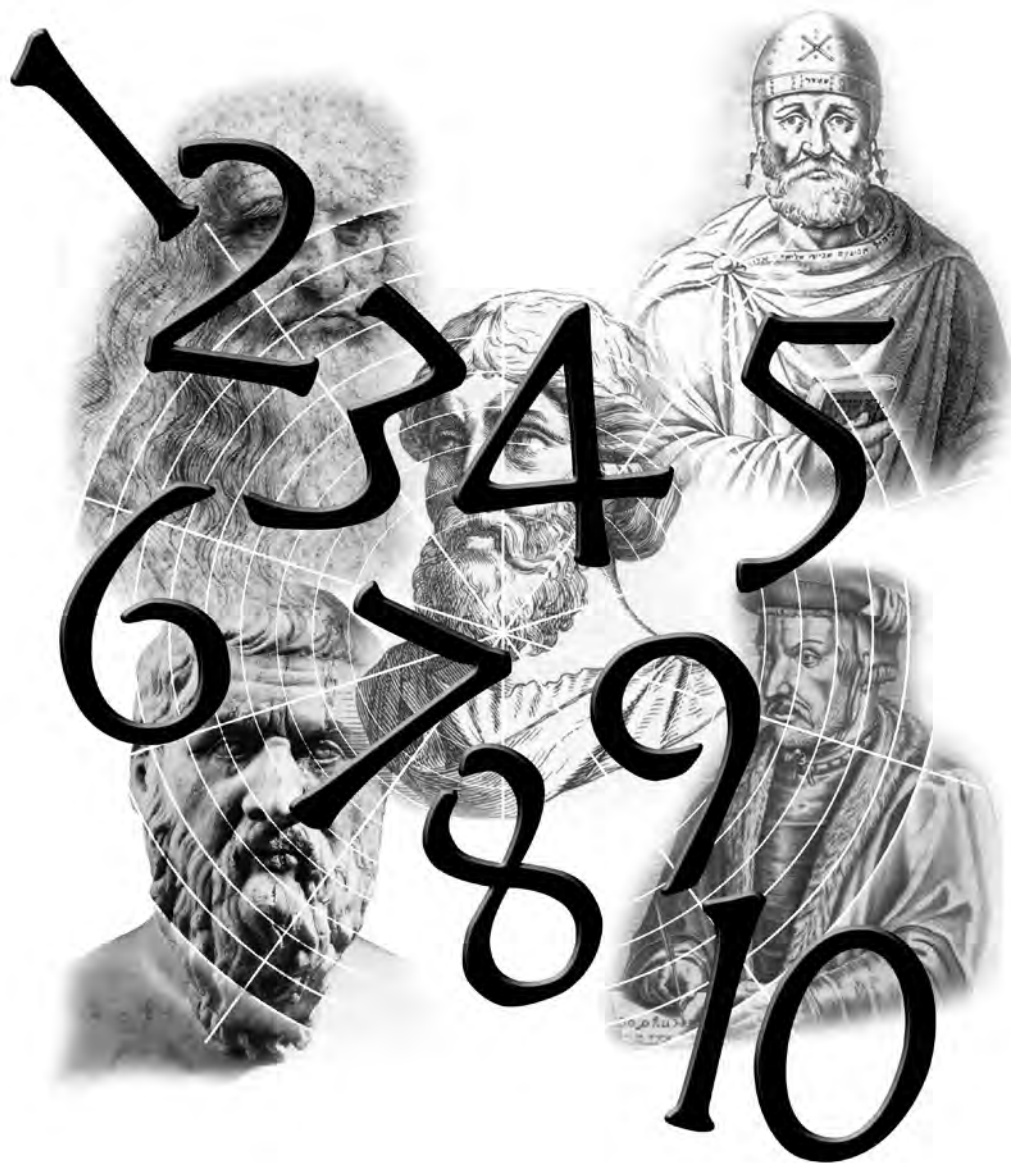
The teacher answered: *Truth is that enigma which overcomes all. To know truth is to know that at school you play..., at play you learn..., and at home you commune with your loved ones; you also commune with yourself and there you discover, in the silence of your mind, that truth is that great flight from the subordination of conformity, of ignorance and of superstition.*

**Truth is indeed Freedom!**



# The Symbolism of Numbers

by Peter Bindon, FRC



**H**ISTORICALLY, the symbolism derived from numbers and which is now common to Pythagoreans, Kabalists and Gnostics and descending through all these to the Rosicrucians is the oldest and the most generally diffused set of symbols still believed to have some relevance in the modern world.

Among the Greeks and the Romans there seems to have been veneration for certain numbers. A similar idea is

found among Eastern nations. This notion, in one form or another, entered most ancient systems of philosophy. Many of the old religions arranged their festivals and celebrations around numerical formulae and used numbers as symbols for gods and spirits. A theory of numbers constituted an important part of the Kabala and was adopted by the Gnostics, the Rosicrucians and mediaeval mystical societies. The early Christian Fathers were not averse to using numbers to help them explain creation.





The doctrine of numbers and their symbolism contributed to many of the fundamental ideas in the philosophy of Pythagoras. However, it probably did not originate with him, since his theories had their origins in Egypt and the East, where numerical symbolism had long been known. Apparently Pythagoras himself admitted that he had received the doctrine of numbers from Orpheus, who taught that numbers were the most prophetic matters in heaven, earth and the intermediate space, and the source of the perpetuity of divinity, of the gods and of demons. All these and more could be understood by those with knowledge of mathematical relationships and, by extension, of numerical symbols. The disciples of Pythagoras tell us (he adhered to an oral tradition of teaching and left no writings himself), that his theory was that numbers contained the essence of all extant things.

There are those who feel that numbers can be used to define the primary causes upon which the whole system of the universe rests. They believe that anyone who knows and understands how these numbers combine knows the very laws through which nature exists. Aristotle claimed that the Pythagoreans derived all things from numbers, although other writers say that this was not what Pythagoras meant, and that this interpretation is a corruption introduced by some of his pupils. Nevertheless, we do know that the symbolism of numbers was the basis of what is called the "Pythagorean philosophy." However, it is wrong to



*The doctrine of numbers as symbols contributed to many of the fundamental ideas in the philosophy of Pythagoras who apparently admitted that he had received the doctrine of numbers from Orpheus.*

**There are those who feel that numbers can be used to define the primary causes upon which the whole system of the universe rests.**

think that the Rosicrucian application of significance to certain numbers and combinations of numbers is derived from the theories of Pythagoras. Rosicrucians think that the number *Nine* is of special significance and worthy of contemplation, but the Pythagoreans thought it detestable. In the Pythagorean system the number *Ten* was considered the most perfect of all numbers because it symbolised the completion of things, but Rosicrucians see that the number *Three* is of more relevance in this field.

Plato also established a theory of number symbolism that sought to explain their influence on worldly occurrences. The idea of a "cosmic keyboard" representing all possible frequencies of vibration and their relevant material manifestations used by Rosicrucians originates with Plato. According to the latter, numerical

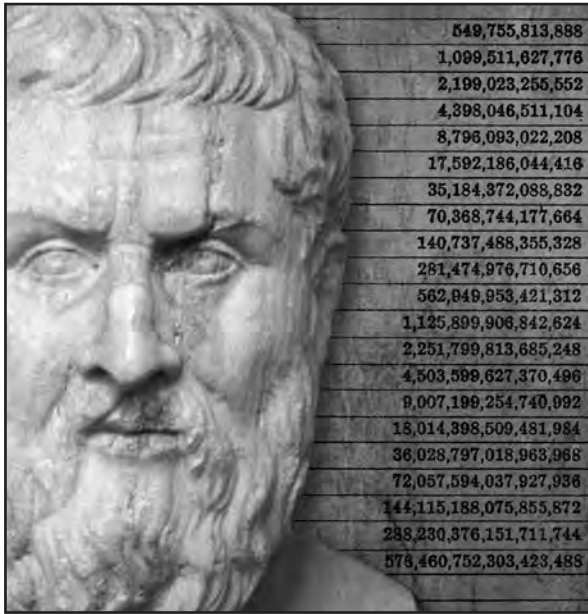
relationships are the cause of the manifestation of all things and of universal harmonies and disharmonies. The Neoplatonists extended this idea. It passed into Gnostic teaching and was ultimately adopted by Rosicrucians and also by the Hermetic philosophers.

In his work, *De occulta philosophia* (On Occult Philosophy), Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) discusses numbers at great length. "There lies," he says, "wonderful efficacy and virtue in numbers, as well for good as for evil, not only the most eminent philosophers teach, but also the Catholic Doctors." Agrippa quotes St Hilary as saying that the 70 elders arranged the previously scattered and unconnected ideas in the Psalms into order by using numerical symbolism.

It is interesting to note that in the Bible specific numbers are constantly associated with certain kinds of ideas so that we naturally associate one with the other. Certain trials, whether of humanity in general or of individuals, are associated with the number 40. The *Apocalypse of John* is filled with these kinds of associations and is worthy of studying for anyone interested in this way of thinking.

The interest that Rosicrucians have in numbers has nothing to do with a superstitious attribution of any magical virtue to them, but arises from the concept that they might represent certain *ideas*. In other words, to Rosicrucians a number is a *symbol*, and nothing else. Unlike the Pythagoreans who thought they had





The idea of a cosmic keyboard representing all possible vibratory frequencies and their relevant material manifestations, is used by Rosicrucians but originates with Plato.

an inherent supernatural efficacy, Rosicrucians study and contemplate numbers because of the allusions to spiritual ideas and principles that they exemplify and symbolise. A Rosicrucian understanding of numbers should not be confused with other ideas about them such as those expounded by numerology and other doctrines of numbers which give them inherent powers and characteristics.

## One

The number *One* is the symbol of completeness and perfected existence as well as being a symbolic beginning and end of all things, the cosmic and ontological centre that is the foundation and point of departure for all existence. It is most often labelled as the “First Cause” (but not necessarily an intentional Creator) and is that part of Cosmic expression from which all manifestation of originates. It is also considered as a representation of the mystic centre from which radiates sustaining energy, as light radiates from the Sun. Some believe that once a fleeting earthly life is exhausted, the animating spirit of all living things returns to the First Cause. Rosicrucians consider that “One” is also symbolic of the alchemical expression and concept of the “Philosopher’s Stone,” that understanding which, through knowledge or Gnosis, raises humanity to a higher plane of existence.



Number ONE: “Oneness” is an expression usually reserved for a spiritual state of interconnectedness with an absolute, incalculable, transcendent and all-embracing First Cause.

Although the first of the following concepts leads on to the second, Rosicrucians make a distinction between “one” and “oneness.” The latter is an expression usually reserved for a spiritual state of interconnectedness with an absolute, incalculable, transcendent and all-embracing First Cause that is separated from any influence by humanity. In contrast, the former expression being the first in a series of numbers, can be manipulated, reproduced and reduced in a myriad of patterns that usually follow humanly generated laws and expressions.

## Two

The number *Two* is considered the symbol of cosmic balance and harmony. It is often interpreted as a symbol of confrontation and conflict, and opinion derived from its position in the regular series of whole numbers, where it is the first number that can be split. This division of one into two parts may create radically *opposed pairs* like that of creator and creature, good and evil, life and death, black and white, male and female, matter and spirit and so on.

Considered more broadly, these kinds of pairs often have *complementary attributes* rather than conflicting ones. Left and right, high and low, mother and father,

**The division of One into Two parts create opposed and complementary attributes.**

day and night, positive and negative are examples of such complementary pairings. In Celtic mythology, the basic duality between warrior and Druid often comes together into one single divine entity. In fact, all of these sets of





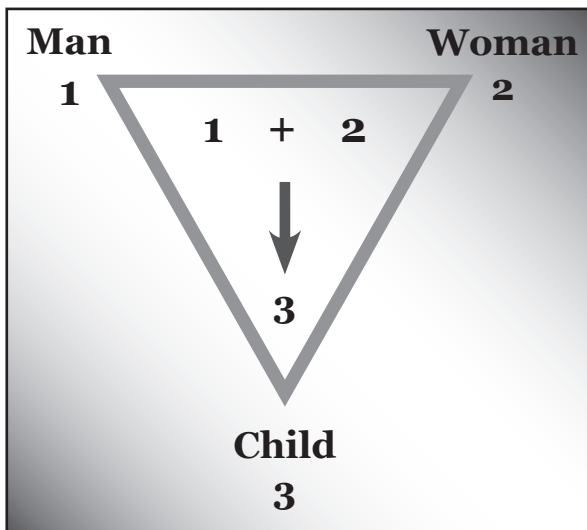
ideas can generally be considered as a reminder of the twofold nature of all creation.

This ancient concept of duality has once more become fashionable. It is commonplace to hear discussions of the feminine aspect contained within the male and vice versa. This concept was and is of great interest to alchemists and many alchemical illustrations exhibit an understanding of this natural law of existence.

Mystically and metaphysically, the number “two” gives rise to all other possible existences through a mechanism that Rosicrucians label the “Law of the Triangle.” In this concept the addition of One and Two creates Three. In antiquity the number Two was attributed to the Mother or female principle because of its capacity to reproduce itself in this way; and so the even numbers came to be considered as feminine while the odd numbers were thought of as masculine.

### Three

In ancient times, the number *Three* was universally deemed the most sacred of numbers. For example, a reverence for its mystical virtues is to be found among the Chinese, who say that numbers begin at one and are made perfect at three, and hence they denote the multiplicity of any object by repeating the character which represents it three times. In the philosophy of Plato, “three” was the image of the Supreme Being, because it includes in itself the properties of the two first numbers, and because, as Aristotle says, it contains within itself a beginning, middle and an end. The Druids must have thought well



*Numbers TWO and THREE: With the addition of the primal “one,” the numeral “two” becomes “three.” Two was given the attribute of the Mother or female principle in antiquity because of its capacity to reproduce itself in this way.*

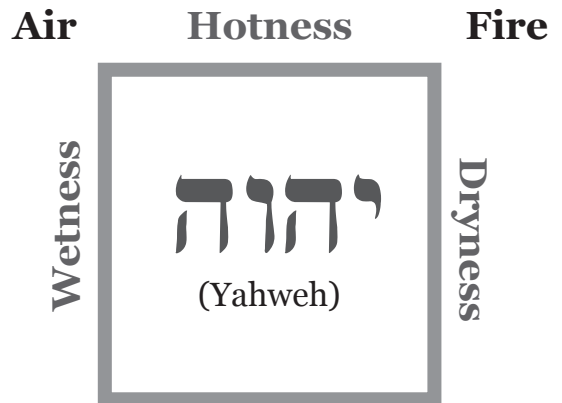
of the number three for their sacred poetry is composed in triads. The Pythagoreans called it “perfect harmony.”

So sacred was this number deemed in ancient cultures that we find it intertwined with some of the attributes of many of the gods. The thunderbolt of Jove, for example, was three-forked; the sceptre of Neptune was a trident; Cerberus, the dog of Pluto, was three-headed; there were three Fates and three Furies; the Sun had three names, Apollo, Sol and Liber; as did the moon, Diana, Luna and Hecate. In all incantations the number “three” was a favourite, for, as Virgil says, “*Numero Deus impari gaudet*” (“God delights in an odd number”). A small image of the subject of the charm was suspended on a cord composed of three different colours, white, red and black; and was carried thrice around the altar, as we see in Virgil’s Eighth *Eclogue*: “*First I bind thee with these three cords and I carry thy image three times round the altars.*”

Amongst Rosicrucians, the *ternary* is the most sacred of all the mystical numbers. In all their rites, whatever may be the number of superimposed grades, there lie at the basis the three early degrees, which establish the foundation of further advancement into the realms of the allegorical tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz. However, the primary significance of the number Three lies in the Rosicrucian Law of the Triangle as previously explained.

### Four

*Four*, is the *tetrad* or *quaternary* of the Pythagoreans, and is often considered as a sacred number, an interpretation derived from Jewish mysticism in which the four letters denoting Yahweh (YHVH or יהוה) were given a sacredness that precluded their use except in special circumstances. Perhaps it is just coincidence, but in



**Water Coldness Earth**

*Number FOUR: The Pythagoras square with the four classical elements assigned to each side. The four-lettered Tetragrammaton is also depicted.*



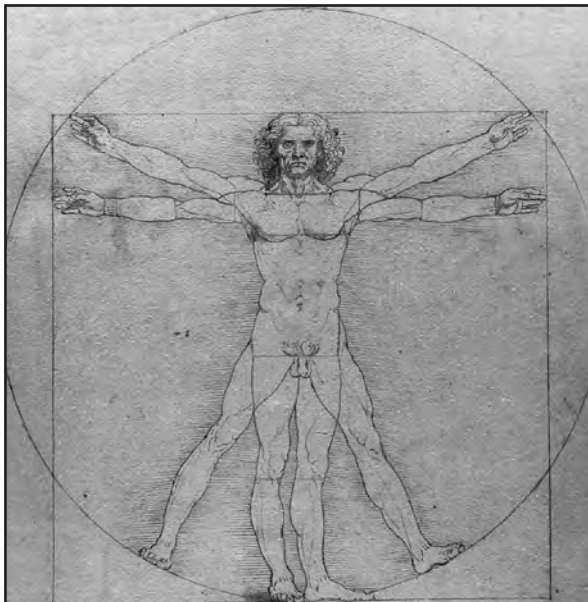
many languages, the name of God can be rendered with just four letters of the Roman alphabet; *Adad* of the Syrians, *Amun* of Egypt, the *Dios* of the Greeks, *Deus* of the Romans, but pre-eminently the *Tetragrammaton* or four lettered name used by the Jews which we render as “Yahweh.”

Pythagoras derived the importance of “four” from observing the perfection of a regular square, each of its four sides of exactly the same length and with one pair erected perpendicularly to two others. Attached to this idea of perfection were the four alchemical elements, Air, Earth, Fire and Water, each one being assigned to a specific side of the square.

## Five

For centuries the power to protect against evil has been attributed to the pentagram or five-pointed star. This notion of inherent protection is reflected, for example, in the mediaeval tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. In this mystical poem the pentagram symbol on Gawain’s shield represents, some say, the five wounds inflicted on Christ, signifying triumph over evil. In an extension of this religious symbolism five grains of incense are inserted into the Paschal Candle during Christian Easter rituals to symbolise those fleshly wounds.

The number *Five* derives its symbolism firstly from the fact that it is the sum of the first even and odd



*Number FIVE: In mediaeval miniatures microcosmic man is often depicted with legs and arms outstretched the better to display the five points of the pentagram. Five therefore controls human bodily structure and is symbolic of humanity in its full maturity of spiritual and physical development.*

number (i.e. 2+3) after unity and secondly because it is at the centre of the spread of the first nine numbers (i.e. four numbers either side). Thus it is symbolic of the centre and of harmony, balance and of the marriage of pairs of opposites.

The notion of five successive races of human beings, our own being the fifth, recurs in the works of Hesiod (c. 700 BCE). This cosmological poet separated human history into the Five Ages of Man: the *Golden Age*, the *Silver Age*; the *Bronze Age*; the *Heroic Age*, followed by the *Iron Age*. In the Golden Age, Hesiod tells the reader that “people lived among the Gods and freely mingled with them.” Unfortunately, in this Age, humans didn’t receive the same transcendent qualities of their neighbours. Finally, erring in beliefs and succumbing to temptations far too human for their

**Four, is the tetrad or quaternary of the Pythagoreans, and is often considered as a sacred number.**

gods to countenance, they were inundated by a flood that consumed them such as happened in Plato’s account of Atlantis. Hesiod lives in the Iron Age, an epoch of moral decline where the Gods have forsaken humanity.

Although she was not alone in this quest, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) evolved a complex theory of the number five as the symbol of man. “*Man’s height from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet may be divided into five equal parts,*” she writes. Again, “*his breadth from the fingertips of each hand when they are outstretched may also be divided into five equal parts.*” Reckoning five equal measurements both of length and breadth, man can be depicted within a perfect square. Most famously depicted, perhaps, by artists like Leonardo da Vinci and William Blake, with arms outstretched in the form of a cross, the human person does consist of five parts, two arms, two legs, a head and trunk, the latter sheltering the heart; the rose hidden in the five squares of the cross. It was Hermetic symbolism that first set a five-petalled rose on the intersecting arms of a cross. The flower represented the quintessence or ether manifesting at the point of conjunction of the four alchemical elements.

In mediaeval miniatures microcosmic man is often depicted with legs and arms outstretched the better to display the five points of the pentagram. “Five” therefore controls human bodily structure and is symbolic of humanity in its full maturity of spiritual and physical development. It also stands for the five senses and the forms of matter discernible by sense perception and by extension, the entire phenomenal world.





## Six

The number *Six* is symbolised either by the hexagon, or more obviously the six-pointed star formed by a pair of overlapping triangles, one inverted, usually known as the hexagram. The triangle with its apex upwards is regarded as an expression of the Cosmic nature in humanity (macrocosm,) the inverted triangle represents a baser human nature (microcosm) and the hexagram as a whole symbolises the union of the two natures in one existence. This marriage of two opposites, alchemical fire and water, or in terms of gender, male and female, can be referred back to the brief discussion of duality given under the number “two.” The aphorism “as above so below” paraphrased from the *Emerald Tablet* attributed to Hermes Trismegistus gives Rosicrucians another insight into the symbolism of six. The expression of opposites, that is of a Cosmic principle and its reversed image mirrored in Earthly waters, can be interpreted as an illustration of this aphorism.

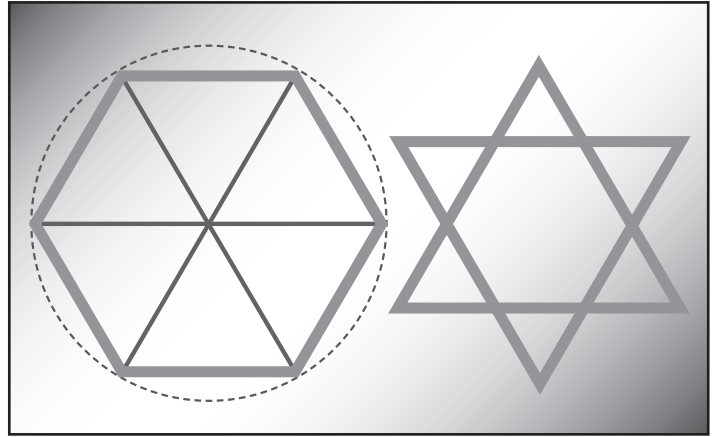
Mystics consider that after some time dwelling in the light, their spirit crosses into the dark side of existence, where having departed from the body, it lives

**The triangle with its apex upwards symbolises the Cosmic nature in humanity while the inverted triangle represents a baser human nature.**

in a constant state of darkness (night.) This condition may be what we normally call “death” but there are other dark nights the spirit may have to endure. Although there are also other moral and physical boundaries better left uncrossed, the ultimate boundary, the boundary between life and death and a subsequent journey through the underworld is symbolised by the number “six,” and is commonly represented as an owl in alchemical illustrations. These ideas derive from Biblical symbolism where “six” is symbolic of completion, God having created the universe in six days.

Despite the fact that “six” embraces a network of actions embodied in two groups of three, a seemingly very positive grouping, and the symbols of perfection resulting from geometrically manipulating a circle using its radius, the number “six” seems to be aligned as much with evil as it is with good.

The opposing equilateral triangles, drawn by connecting every second point on the circumference of a circle divided up into six parts by using the radius, forms the “Star of David” or hexagram referred to earlier.



*Number SIX: This is symbolised either by the hexagon, or more obviously the six-pointed star formed by a pair of overlapping triangles, one inverted, usually known as the hexagram.*

This symbol is seen in religious terms as symbolic of the counterpoise between the earthly human being and a heavenly deity. Some interpret this symbol as indicating a confrontation between these two existences, but others see it simply as a difference, and not as a conflict. However, these interpretations give rise to the possibility that rebellion against the deity may be just as likely as a desire for union with the godhead. When the circumference of a circle is divided by its radius, six

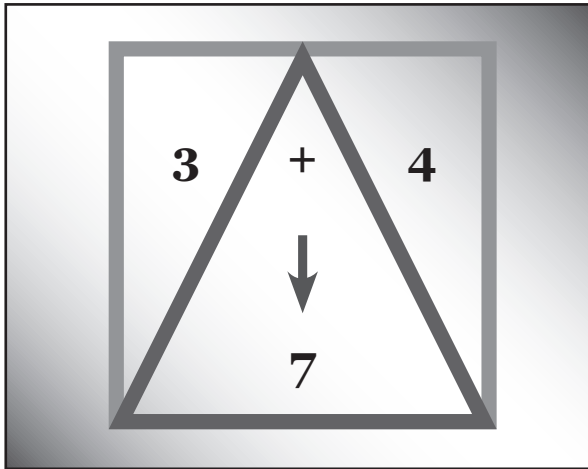
equilateral triangles can be constructed in its interior. Through inaccuracy in this operation (speaking metaphorically), this potential symbol of perfection may come to grief, and this danger makes “six” the number of the trial between good and evil. The world was created in six days,

according to the Bible, and, as Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) observes, it was created in the six orientations of space, that is, the four points of the compass, the nadir (below) and the zenith (above) so that creation and its existence correspond both in space and in time. Jewish tradition holds that it went on for 6,000 years but the Old Testament *Hexameron* (the six days of Creation) is simply the number of days of creation and the number which is intermediate between the divine creative impulse and completed manifestation. Some Islamic writers consider “six” the perfect number because it was the interval of time chosen by God in which to manifest his creation.

## Seven

In every numerical system of antiquity there is a frequent reference to the number *Seven*, showing that its veneration proceeded from some common cause. It is a sacred number amongst many religions in which it includes the somewhat contested day of the Sabbath. Did this sanctity derive from the number of days in the week?





*Number SEVEN: The Pythagoreans called it a perfect number, because it was made up of three and four, the triangle and the square, which are the two perfect figures.*

Possibly, but “seven” is considered a special number even by those whose calendars differ from that of Pope Gregory XIII. The Pythagoreans called it a perfect number, because it was made up of three and four, the triangle and the square, which are the two perfect figures. They also called it a virgin number, and without mother, comparing it to Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, who was a motherless virgin, because it cannot be produced by the multiplication of any two whole numbers.

The number Seven occupied an important place in many ancient systems. There were, seven ancient planets emblematic of seven spheres of existence, seven Pleiades and seven Hyades; seven altars burned continually before the god Mithras; the Arabians had seven holy temples; the Hindus supposed the world to be enclosed within the compass of seven peninsulas. The Goths had seven deities: the Sun, the Moon, Tuisco, Woden, Thor, Priga and Seatur, from whose names are derived our days of the week; and in the Gothic mysteries the candidate met with seven obstructions as he travelled the “road of the seven stages”; in the Persian mysteries were seven spacious

**The number Seven occupied an important place in many ancient systems.**

caravans through which the aspirant had to pass; and, finally, even Biblical sacrifices were always considered as most efficacious when the victims were seven in number. Numerous other references to seven can be found in any Biblical concordance, probably deriving from Egypt and Assyria where the movements of the seven known planets were continuously studied.

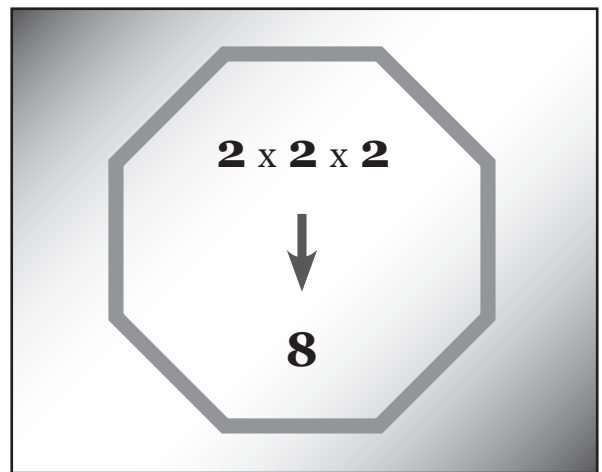
“Seven” has always been a special number in

Rosicrucian symbolism where seven officers conduct the ceremonial occasions within a Temple and the seven walls composing the tomb of the allegorical founder Christian Rosenkreutz gave rise to seven ceremonials.

## Eight

Among the Pythagoreans the number *Eight* was esteemed as the first cubic number, being formed by the tripled multiplication of two, and as the cube of the first even number it was considered to indicate a primitive law of nature, which supposes all humanity to be equal.

Christians have called it the symbol of the “Resurrection” because Jesus rose on the eighth day, which is the day after the seventh day of the week. In terms of the Resurrection the name of Jesus, when written in Greek characters (*Ἰησοῦς*), have a numerical



*Number EIGHT: Esteemed as the first cubic number, being formed by the tripled multiplication of two, and as the cube of the first even number, it was considered to indicate a primitive law of nature, which supposes all humanity to be equal.*

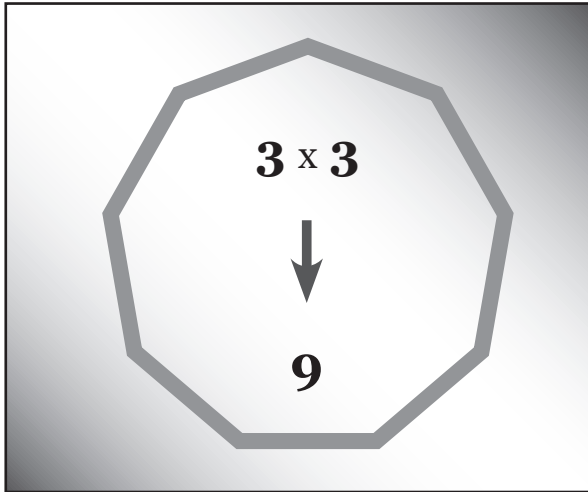
correspondence of 10, 8, 200, 70, 400, and 200, which added together produce 888. As eight people were saved in a Biblical ark, “eight” denotes perfection and completion. An octagonal shape was considered especially appropriate for a church baptistery or for the font, on the grounds that this initiation into the supernatural order of religious grace completed the work of creation of an individual.

## Nine

The number *Nine* is the first square of uneven numbers. According to the ancient sages, each of the three elements which constitute our bodies is *ternary*, each embodying three items, they are: the *water* containing earth and fire, the *earth* containing igneous and aqueous







*Number NINE: The first square of uneven numbers leading to it becoming the symbol of all formations of living things.*

particles and the *fire* being tempered by water globules and terrestrial corpuscles which serve to feed it. Into this material form was breathed the breath of life at creation thus bringing all four elements into a manifested whole. Still, the visible three elements could never be entirely separated from the others without destroying the whole so nine, or three times three has become the symbol of all formations of living things.

**The Pythagoreans observed the property this number possesses of reproducing itself incessantly.**

The Pythagoreans, who observed the property this number possesses of reproducing itself incessantly and entirely in every multiplication, considered it a very striking emblem of matter, which is incessantly composed before our eyes, having undergone a thousand decompositions. Readers are probably aware of the singular properties of the number “nine,” which, multiplied by itself or any other number whatever, gives a result whose final sum is always nine, or always divisible by nine. When multiplied by each of the ordinary numbers, “nine” produces an arithmetical progression, in which each number is composed of two figures, and presenting a remarkable phenomenon (see table illustrated).

**Ten**

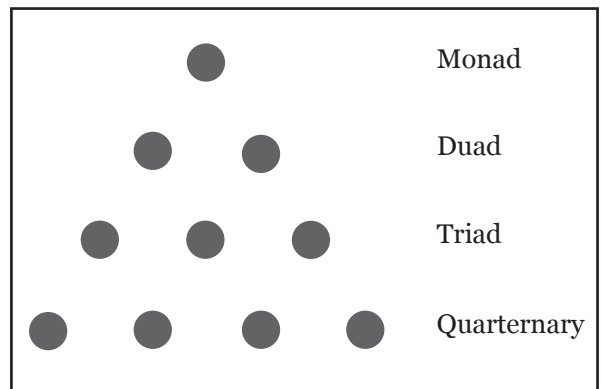
This numeral cannot be considered a sacred number but the Pythagoreans honoured it as a symbol of perfection and consummation of all things. Being made up of the sum of the monad and duality, the active and passive principles, the triad the result of

|   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 9 | 18 | 27 | 36 | 45 | 54 | 63 | 72 | 81 | 90 |

The first line of figures gives the regular series from 1 to 10, each of which when multiplied by nine produces the numeral in the box below it. The second line presents the result of the calculation above and also presents us with a new series of nines, ascending from the single numeral and proceeding through 18, composed of 1 and 8 which added together produce nine and so on.

the addition of the former pair, and the quaternary or First Square, “ten” was said to contain all the relationships of numbers and harmony. The Pythagoreans set out this idea in a symbol composed of ten dots arranged in a triangular form of four rows that they called the *tetraktys*. This figure was itself emblematic of the Tetragrammaton or sacred name of God composed of four letters, undoubtedly encountered by Pythagoras during his visit to Babylon.

However, the parts of which it’s composed were also considered to be meaningful symbols as pointed out earlier. Thus the one point was a symbol of the active principle or creator, the two points of the passive principle or matter, the three of the world proceeding from their union, and the four perfection of a union of the four alchemical elements making up that world.



*Number TEN: Embodied in the Pythagorean tetraktys and honoured as a symbol of perfection and consummation of all things, being made up of the sum of the Monad, Duad (the active and passive principles), the Triad (the result of the addition of the former pair), and the Quaternary (the 'First Square).*





# A Fleeting Moment

by *Harold Kriegsman*

**W**HEN I MOVED into my new home I came across an old, musty cupboard full of dust and cobwebs standing neglected in the corner of a room. Lonely and forlorn, I repossessed it after a house clearance. I dusted the cobwebs away and gave it a good cleaning, airing and polishing. The project concluded, a new-looking cupboard was brought to light and made useful again.

During my next meditation, an image of the cupboard came into my mind. I realised a similarity between this old cupboard and human life. When life is wasted it stands in the corner of passiveness. Just as this cupboard in its old condition had insects as its companions, human beings, when neglected, fall into their own vices. The fustiness of the cupboard in its unclean condition could be likened to the illnesses of a wasted life. To stretch the analogy, we could equate my actions of cleaning and reinvigorating the cupboard, to the call and voice of awareness.

In our present-day 24/7 lifestyle, most people fail to notice the sheer abundance of goodness all around them and lack the true vision to even glimpse nature in its wonderful ways. Our modern mode of living has

reduced us to a state of near automation, and our reliance on modern technology has prevented us from searching outside its comforting embrace. Artificiality, sad to say, seems to be the dominating influence today.

A glimpse beyond the modern veil of mundane life, which seemed like a revelation at the time, appeared to me one day when I was out and about running some errands and taking a shortcut through a park. It happened in a flash when I caught sight of a little child's happy, sparkling smile beaming at me from a pushchair as I walked by on the path. I don't know what prompted it, but all of a sudden, nature's wonderful ways seemed to appear in abundance and colours to my inner eye. The sensations that welled up, the gentle breeze, the warm sunshine, the clouds and the blue waters combined with green foliage, surprisingly soothed my nerves and my body felt alive and vibrant again.

And in that same moment it dawned on me that my body had received a spring-cleaning, just like that old cupboard. The cobwebs had been removed through the joy and love that beamed from the face of the innocent, smiling child. I felt at that moment that goodness is everywhere, and it is only for us to awaken, appreciate, grasp and continue in being fully aware of its presence.





# Iakovos Giannakopoulos

August 2011 - installed as General Administrator for Greece  
by the Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order

Iakovos Giannakopoulos was born on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1963 at Thessaloniki in Greece. Upon leaving school, he worked for 13 years as a sales inspector for a multi-national tyre company, and since 1996 has run his own jewellery shops in Thessaloniki. The leading lights of his life are his beloved wife, young son and baby daughter.

Iakovos joined the Rosicrucian Order in 1985 and has served in numerous capacities in both ritualistic and administrative roles. In 2002 he was appointed Regional Monitor for the northern part of Greece. He has been an active member of the Traditional Martinist Order since 1986.

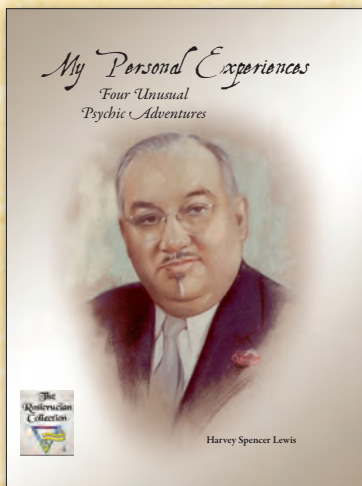
In October 2010, he was unanimously appointed by the Supreme Board as General Administrator of AMORC for Greece, and during the Rosicrucian World Convention in Curitiba, Brazil in August 2011, he was ritualistically installed into his Office by the Imperator before 2300 members who acted as witnesses on this solemn and happy occasion. His interests include travelling, reading, swimming and sailing.



## *My Personal Experiences : Four Unusual Psychic Adventures*

by H Spencer Lewis, FRC

76 pages / softback -- Code: 1037 -- £6.95



Before discovering the teachings and philosophy of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Rosicrucians, the author gained valuable experience as a psychic investigator while President of the *New York Institution for Psychological Research*. In these "true ghost stories," which he wrote many years after assuming office as Imperator, the author narrates and attempts to explain the phenomena he psychically witnessed, in a calm, logical manner consistent with the Rosicrucian world view.

This book gives a rational approach to interpreting the sometimes strange and mystical experiences that eventually come to those who follow a path of mystical development. Some people go on to develop powers of psychic perception, as Dr Lewis already had, and realise that such events are ultimately quite harmless, despite their sometimes scary beginnings. All however contain valuable lessons for those experiencing them, as well as a release for the psychic being involved.



The Rosicrucian Collection is a growing catalogue of books devoted to Rosicrucian spiritual enquiry. All books in the collection focus on metaphysical, spiritual and philosophical topics aimed at serious students of spiritual enlightenment. The above book is one of the many titles either in print or about to be published. If you wish to purchase any of them, contact us using the address details to the right, or purchase online at [www.amorc.org.uk](http://www.amorc.org.uk).

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*The first principles of the universe are atoms and empty space. Everything else is merely thought to exist. The worlds are unlimited. They come into being and perish. Nothing can come into being from that which is not, nor pass away into that which is not.*

Democritus of Abdera  
(c. 460 - 370 BCE)