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Cover spread

-- Nature's Altar of Life --
A Japanese Water Garden



Edith Piaf The Little Sparrow

by Nomis Rassac



EDITH PIAF was born Edith Giovanna Gassion in Paris on 19 December 1915 on the steps of a building in Belleville, a poor district of Paris. Her mother, a 17 year-old singer, soon abandoned her, and her father, a street acrobat, enlisted to fight in World War 1 and sent Edith to live with her paternal grandmother who happened to be the matron of a brothel. It was in this far-from-ideal environment that she was brought up.

Piaf became one of France's most famous and beloved singer-songwriters. As a singer, performer and actress, she was one France's most widely known international artists. She became famous for her ballads, many of them tragic and brooding, some of them reflecting the hard knocks she endured throughout her life. But what is seldom mentioned, is that she had a secret, "mon secret", which was her devotion to deep

spiritual and humanitarian ideals, a side of her that runs like a golden thread from beginning to end.

Due to *Keratitis*, an inflammation of the clear cornea in both her eyes, between three to seven, the vulnerable child Edith was almost totally blind. In desperation to help her, the prostitutes in her grandmother's salon pooled their savings and took her on a pilgrimage to the shrine of *Saint Therese of Lisieux*. It was here that her blindness was miraculously cured, and this was for her the deciding moment of change in her life. In 1928, at age 13, the diminutive Edith finally left the relative safety of the brothel and joined her father as a street performer, where she first began to sing in public. During this time, she met her half-sister, *Simone Bertheaut*, who became her constant companion for the rest of her life. In 1932 she fell in love with *Louis Dupont* and at the age of 17, gave birth to her only child, her daughter Marcelle, who





tragically died a few years later of meningitis, a loss that deeply affected Piaf.

Aged 19, in 1935 Piaf was 'discovered' singing in the Pigalle area of Paris by nightclub owner Louis Leplee. He persuaded her to sing in his club, and her diminutive size four foot eight inches (1.42 m) and her nervousness inspired him to affectionately call her "*La Môme Piaf*", "The Little Sparrow." Within a year, she met the songwriter *Margueurite Monnot* who wrote many of the songs that made Piaf famous. Her collaboration with Leplee and Monnot was a long and successful one. 1935 was the definitive start of Piaf's career.

Her raw, emotional singing drew crowds and soon she had a devoted following of admirers. During the occupation of France in World War II, she sang at some of Paris' top brothels which were reserved for German officials and high officials of the Vichy government. Turning down an order to entertain officers of an occupying force, was something very few people would dare to do, and so too it was for Edith. Because of this, some labelled her a collaborator, but she also sang at a few prisoner of war camps in Germany and was thought to have been instrumental in helping around 300 prisoners escape from one of them. Indeed, during her funeral, she received

the highest honour from the French government when the tricolour flag was draped over her coffin in recognition of her assistance to in enabling those prisoners to escape.

Paif's 'secret', her firmly held spiritual beliefs, stayed with her throughout her life. In 1955, in her fortieth year, she joined the Rosicrucian Order and remained devoted to its broad spiritual and humanistic ideals for the rest of her short life. In 1957, while in tour in San Francisco, she travelled to Rosicrucian Park in San Jose, where she was welcomed by her Rosicrucian brothers and sisters. The hardships of her life, the early loss of her daughter, addictions to drugs and alcohol, her many difficult relationships with men, were all made more bearable by allowing her spirituality to support and guide her through the difficult times.


On 10 October 1963, then in her 48th year, she passed away from liver failure. Her last words were: "*Every damn thing you do in life, you have to pay for*", perhaps indicating the karmic debt she had accrued by her lifestyle of drink and drugs. Her friend Jean Cocteau died the next day after hearing of her death. His last words here: "*Ah, Piaf is dead. Now I can die too.*" She was buried in Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, and tens of thousands followed her funeral procession, with more than 100,000 attending the ceremony at the cemetery. It was reportedly the only time since the end of the Second World War that Parisian traffic had come to a complete standstill as her coffin, draped in the French flag slowly made its way to the cemetery with crowds lining the streets in honour of their dear "*Môme Piaf*."



Edith Piaf (centre).

Letting Go

by Maria Daniels



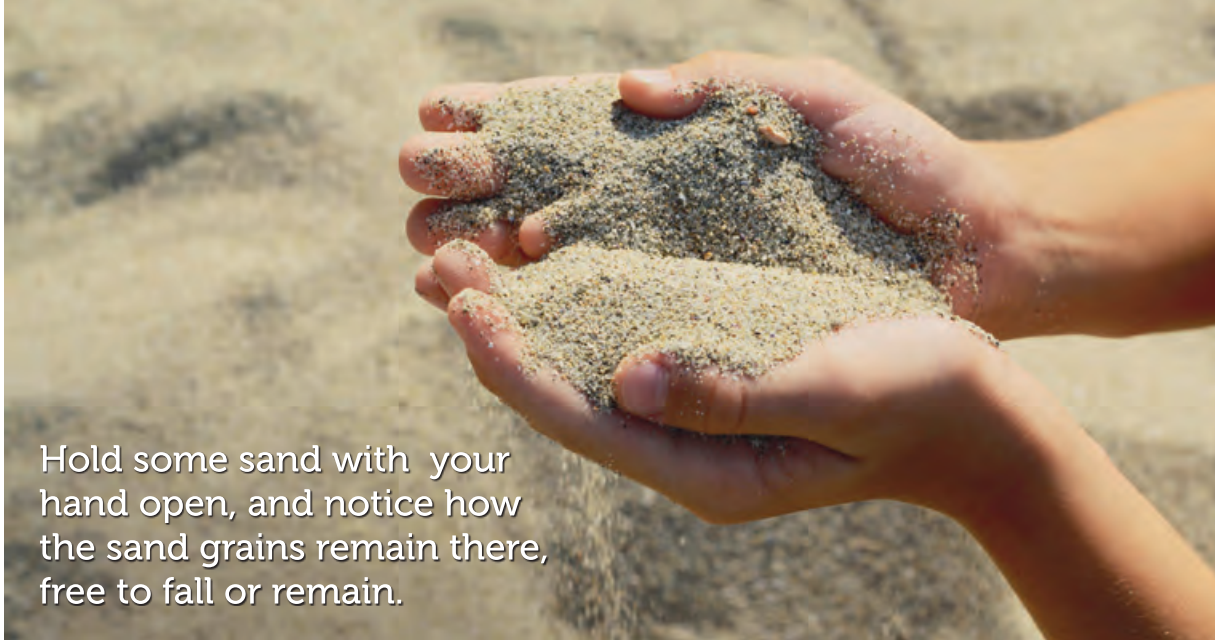
Nature knows when to let go. But we, in our presumption, want to hold on forever to things as they are, avoiding change at all cost. But, you know, in the process we can destroy both ourselves and the things we love most.

WHEN WE reach a point of self-destruction in situations or relationships, it's time to look at ourselves, at the relationship or at the situation in an honest, non-judgmental and loving way. If things have reached an impasse, we need to be courageous enough to look within and discover the cause. All too often we try to place blame on others or on outside influences in an effort to avoid facing the truth about ourselves. We allow the mind to fabricate lies to protect ourselves from the truth which, in fact, would free us if we accepted it. "*Know thyself!*" is a very old injunction, but it's the last thing our outer self wants us to do, for if we did, we would eventually realise the games it plays with

us. For us to know ourselves we need to have the proper space and time to unravel those questions and doubts. Sadly, even well meaning loved ones on occasion deny us this space and time to commune with our deeper Self.

Sometimes, after a lot of introspection and self-questioning, letting go of the relationship or situation is the only sensible answer. Letting-go however, doesn't mean turning off love or holding any blame or ill will towards the other person. It does mean however, loosening our grip on people and things, and allowing that divine intelligence within to guide us in discovering our true self. In essence, we allow our Inner Master to work through us and in so doing, bring us peace that would be lacking if we kept holding on to things as we want them or expect them to be. Life has its





Hold some sand with your hand open, and notice how the sand grains remain there, free to fall or remain.

ups and downs, and problems arise when we want life to be our way, when we want it to meet all of our expectations.

Picture yourself on a beautiful, sandy beach. The sand is warm and soft under your hand. Grab a handful of it and squeeze it tight. Notice what happens. It begins to slip through your clenched fist. The more you try to hold onto it, the faster it seeps through, until you're holding only a small fraction of what you once held. Then scoop up another handful of sand, but instead of making a tight fist, leave your hand open, and notice how the sand grains remain there, free to fall or remain. You find yourself holding the grains of sand in your hand much longer, with less effort, less expended energy, than if you had tried to possess them and hold them prisoner in your grasp.

However, has either way of being with the sand changed your feeling about it, or changed the sand? Obviously not. You still think of it as being worth having, worth experiencing. It's still just as beautiful and fulfilling to sit there and enjoy the peacefulness and softness of a hand full of sand. Best of all, it will still be there for you to enjoy, again and again, in times to come.

Life and Love

Life and love are much the same as those grains of sand. We want to possess forever the feelings that love arouses within us. We want to hold on to and recapture those moments of first excitement..., the feelings of happiness, exhilaration and completeness, by trying to cling to the loved one long after he or she has changed in ways we refuse to accept. Onto that loved one we have transferred feelings that are really ours, and which we experienced originally because that certain person put us in touch with the most lovable and most beautiful part of ourselves.

And it's often quite possible to recapture those

feelings, and we should make every attempt in an honest way to learn from the problems and build a deeper, more loving relationship than existed before. There are times however, when only one of the partners is willing to put in the effort to make this happen, to explore every possible alternative to make the relationship work..., perhaps even long after a 'goodbye' would have been more appropriate.

Letting-go means looking at ourselves honestly, learning to love others as they are, allowing them the freedom to be themselves, even though this may be different from what we would like them to be. It's having the courage to say...

I've changed, I've grown, I'm doing the best I know, even though I may not always be right. I'm offering you my hand. Come with me in my growth, come and be my equal. But it's also okay if you don't want to come with. I'll love you, accept and respect you anyway, because that way I maintain both my integrity and support you in yours.

After all, each one of us has our own path to travel, either together or separately; but we can still accept and love each other for sharing our lives and for giving us each the best we can.

In the book *A Miracle to Believe In*, there's the story of an autistic child who was brought back to 'life' through acceptance and unconditional love. It's a beautiful lesson in letting-go. The question the parents were continually being asked by the therapist was...

Why would it make you unhappy if your son never changed?

The real meaning to that question is...



Letting go frees you to love the past, to accept the present and to plan and create the future.



Why do you feel that only by following you into your world will the other person's very existence make you happy? Why can't you be happy, loving and accepting, no matter what that other person chooses to do with their life?

And, if it means letting go in order to allow that person to live life in their own way, then that's no reason to stop loving them or to continue to hold on to things as they were, or to visions of what they might be "*if only...*" The formula to remember is, "*What if, or 'what was,' is not the same as 'what is.'*"

The Freedom to be Yourself

How, then, do we know when to let go? If a relationship reaches a point where one of the people refuses to accept the other as they are, allowing them the freedom to be where they are, and what they are, then it's time to step back and take an honest look at what's happening. It's time for self-analysis and soul-searching. This can be an uncomfortable, painful and emotionally trying period, but one of tremendous growth and insight in personal and spiritual ways. In evaluating the relationship, we should consider the following questions:

- Why am I frustrated or unhappy in this relationship/situation?
- Is there anything I can do about it, i.e., share my concerns, ask for help, give the other person a chance to meet me halfway, expose my feelings, make space for myself while I sort out my thoughts and feelings?
- How strongly do I feel about my commitment to stay in the situation (personal convictions, societal norms or religious beliefs aside)? What can I contribute to the

relationship? Can I really feel comfortable and loving and happy within this relationship?

- Which values are important to me? Prioritise these values, such as honesty, willingness to grow, generosity, trust, peace of mind, risk taking, self-esteem, validation, openness, sharing, acceptance, truthfulness, freedom and maintaining appearances. Rate them, then see how they differ from those of your partner in the situation, if they're willing and open enough to discuss them honestly. Where do the areas of difference lie? Can they be ironed out? Are they worth ironing out, or is it better to go your separate ways? These are questions only you can answer.
- Is the relationship or situation going anywhere, or is it stagnant and stressful by the mere fact that it is in limbo? Can you resolve the issue through confrontation, by setting limits and guidelines as to what you will accept in the relationship, and truthfully keep your word as to what it is you are willing to accept?

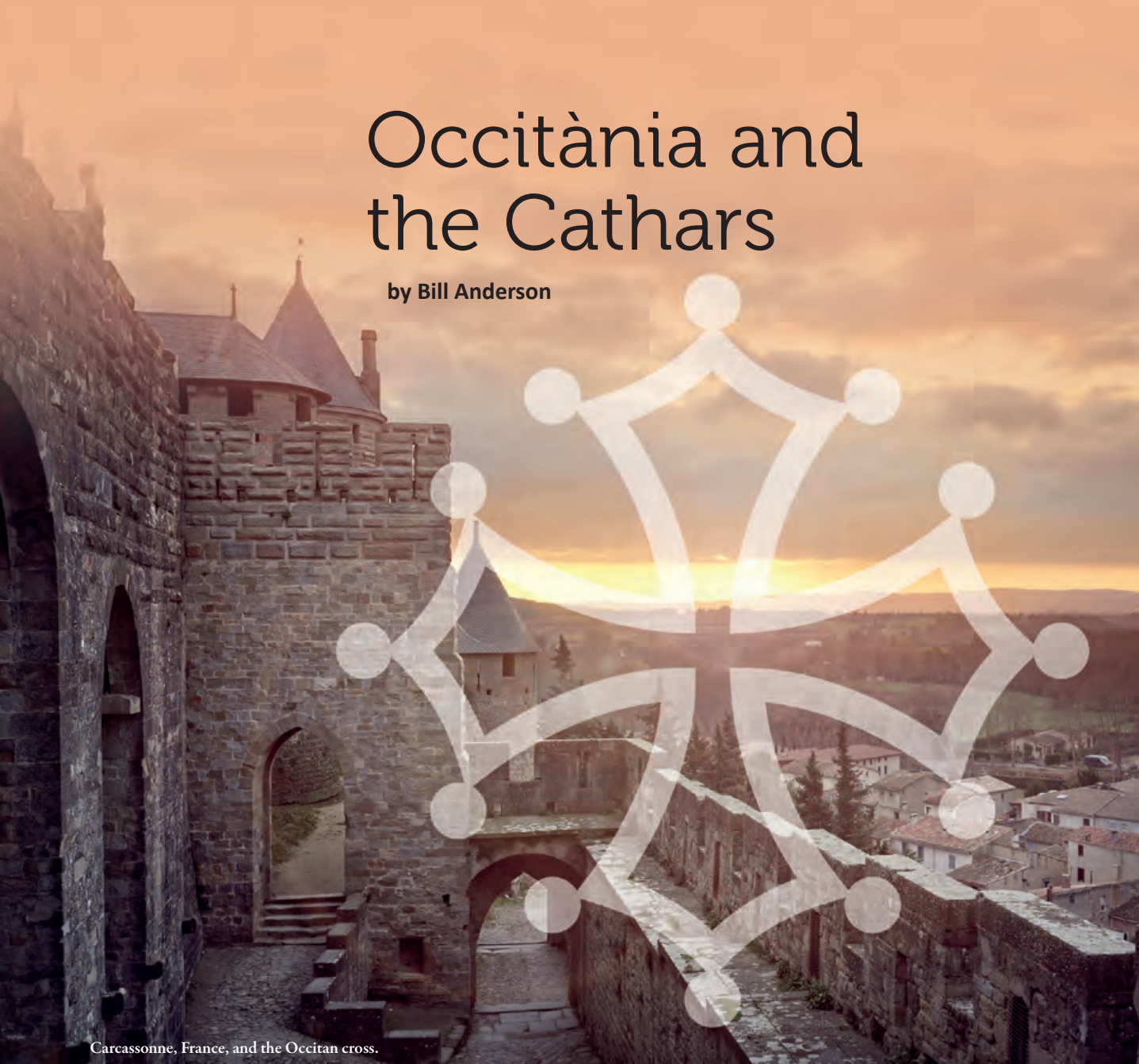
Have the courage to face the truth about yourself. Admit unpleasant truths about yourself and be willing to change your behaviour. Accept the idea that it's okay for you not to be perfect, not to have all the answers. Realise within yourself that you are worthy of love, acceptance and happiness just as you are now..., not as someone wants you to become. You are unique and special as you are, where you are, and you don't have to be or do anything else to become worthy.

Letting go frees you to love the past, to accept the present and to plan and create the future. It frees you to accept the Cosmic plan for you; the real, whole, beautiful you, which will continue to be, long after situations and events in your life have changed and disappeared.



Occitània and the Cathars

by Bill Anderson



Carcassonne, France, and the Occitan cross.

Origins of Catharism

Much has been written about these remarkable mystics, their probable origin, their history and their connections with other so-called “heretical” sects of the Middle Ages. Reliable information can be obtained from various historical reports and also from an intelligent and intuitive interpretation of the reports compiled by the Inquisition which eventually brought the Cathars to a cruel end. Naturally, discrimination must be used in analysing those reports, as they are bound to bear the mark of that institution, its partiality its fanatical spirit.

Cathar traditions can be traced back to the prophet Mani who lived in the Persian Empire in the 3rd Century CE. He was a student of Buddhism and Chaldean philosophy and delved into the mysterious knowledge of the Egyptians. Later on, he became a devout Christian, and from the vast knowledge he acquired from those diverse spiritual sources, he drew up a synthesis on which he based his teachings, trying through different paths to reach his “*Great Universal Truth*.” His disciples, known as *Manichaeans*, spread his doctrine which was based at one and the same time upon the spirit of renunciation of the eastern religions and upon the great law of love and compassion of Christian inspiration.



Some writings of Mani and his disciples were discovered shortly before World War I in Turkestan and China, as well as in the Fayum of Egypt. But it is likely that only a small percentage of the original trove of writings that once existed, escaped destruction at the hands of the persecutors of Manichaeism. From the East, Mani's followers migrated to Europe through the Byzantine Empire, and initially settled in the region of modern-day Bulgaria. According to some authors it was from there that their teachings penetrated into Italy via Bosnia, and later, in another movement westwards, to Spain and France where we find them towards the end of the 11th Century. It is believed that it is these descendants of the followers of Mani who came to be known as the *Cathars*, though the influences on their beliefs extended by then far beyond only Manichaeism.

The Middle Ages

In European history, the 11th Century is regarded as the beginning of the "*High Middle Ages*." Both the 11th and 12th Centuries in western and southern Europe witnessed a phenomenon referred to as the "*Medieval Warm Period*", a time of relatively warmer weather similar to what we are living through today. It was a time when grapes were grown in Europe as far north as southern Britain. Agriculture flourished and the surpluses, combined with the growth of population in towns, as well as the artisans and tradesmen who flocked to these ready markets, encouraged the growth of trade, merchants and what we would today refer to as the Middle Classes.



Cathar traditions can be traced back to the prophet Mani, who lived in the Persian Empire in the 3rd Century.



Catharism enjoyed its greatest success in Western Europe in the so-called 'independent towns', such as Béziers, France.

By the late 11th Century, there was a commercial renaissance that further stimulated the development of town life, resulting in an early form of capitalism and a more sophisticated commercialised culture. New sets of values arose, and notions of equality and citizenship began to appear. Long distance trading and travel, including pilgrimages to Rome, Constantinople, the Holy Land and Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, northern Spain, encouraged the free flow of peoples and ideas.

In the south of France and Catalonia, Catharism not only gained support from much of the rural aristocracy, but many of the great nobles too.

In the south of France and Catalonia, Catharism not only gained support from much of the rural aristocracy, but many of the great nobles too. Society here was markedly more tolerant and cosmopolitan and had attained a higher degree of prosperity than other areas of Western Europe. With its distinctive and diverse culture, Languedoc and Catalonia, whose languages Occitan and Catalan respectively, mutually intelligible, were prominent centres of the 12th Century renaissance and the cradle of troubadour lyric poetry, which flourished under the patronage of the noble courts. Here also the Jews enjoyed better treatment than in the rest of Christendom, and it was at this time too that the *Provençal Jews* were busy assimilating and adapting to a major cultural and religious renaissance, one of whose effects was the production of the first classic book on medieval Kabala, the *Sepher Bahir*.



Catharism enjoyed its greatest success in Western Europe in the so-called “*independent towns*”; towns like Toulouse, Carcassonne, Béziers and Narbonne in the Languedoc and cities such as Florence, Bologna, Cremona, Viterbo and Orvieto in Italy where the strictures of the papacy were not as overbearing as elsewhere in Europe. It was in Italy that the struggle between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, who supported respectively the Papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor and were active in the centre and north of the country during the 12th and 13th Centuries, provided a fertile ground for the propagation of new ideas.

In this era there was a struggle for power between the Popes and the Holy Roman Emperors who were usually of German ancestry. The Italian Cathars were generally linked by ties of family and profession or other networks of association. They were civic treasurers, guild priors, bankers and prosperous artisans, the sort of people who were at the forefront of political and economic change. And with their influence, they were able to build strong, independent communities, independent of the papacy that is, though in modern terms, a very mild form of independence. The political situation also encouraged the rising of burghers against their ecclesiastical and lay lords who tried to restrict and restrain their aspirations.

To discover why people turned away from organised religion, it is important to look at the times in which Catharism flourished. Particularly in northern Italy, southern France and Catalonia in north-eastern Spain, there was no large, centralised state to contend with and personal liberties were generally greater than in the rest of Europe, at least for the aristocracy. The lands were ruled by independent lords, namely lords who were only weakly aligned with the king or the pope. Or there were city states who played off their more powerful rivals against each other. In broader terms than mere city states, in Occitània the rivals were the kings of France themselves, and the monarchs of England and Aragón. And in Italy it was the Popes against the Holy Roman Emperors.

This age also saw the birth of the Knights Templar to whom the persecuted Cathars would turn for help in their



Jacques de Molay, Grand Master of the Knights Templar.

greatest hour of need. It also saw the beginning of the Crusades, an event that has soured Christian-Islamic relations ever since. On the other hand, the wealthy Norman Kingdom of Sicily was one state where Christians, Muslims and Jews lived and worked side by side in peace and harmony. Muslim Spain and Catalonia also enjoyed a similar state of affairs.

Catalonia and Aragón

By the 12th Century, Barcelona had developed in a way that was similar to the great mercantile towns of northern Italy. Catalonia shared a border with the Muslim Taifa kingdom of Zaragoza, one of the rival kingdoms that arose after the fall of the Umayyad caliphate of Córdoba in 1031.

The Banu Hud clan had seized control of Zaragoza from a rival clan. Their rulers were great patrons of culture and the arts. But the last king of Zaragoza, forced to abandon his capital, allied himself with the Christian Aragonese under Alifonso I d'Aragón lo Batallero who, in 1118, conquered Zaragoza for the Christians and made it the capital of the Kingdom of Aragón. This in turn became a cosmopolitan state where Christians and Muslims, for a while at least, lived peacefully side by side.

Especially following the fall of Montségur, though even before that time, there was a trail across the Pyrenees, which allowed Cathars and others fleeing the Crusaders or the Inquisition to cross from Occitània into Aragón and



Zaragoza.



Catalonia. It is now known as the *Camí dels Bons Homes* or “*The Road of Good Men*”, referring to the Cathars who used it to flee persecution as those “*good people*.” The trail is some 189 kilometres long, linking Montségur in the department of Ariège in France with the sanctuary of Queralt in Catalonia, Spain. The route wound its way through medieval villages, past templar churches and strategic castles and hermitages where the fleeing Cathars would find temporary sanctuary.

Many Cathars who tried to escape the troubles in the Languedoc also fled into the Roussillon, nowadays in southern France, but in those days belonging to the Counts of Barcelona, then to the kings of Aragón, so the Cathars were out of reach of the pursuing French armies and regional militias. These lands were fully integrated into the crown of Aragón. In fact the kingdom of Mallorca, which was a dependency of the crown of Aragón, had for a time its capital in the French city of Montpellier.

Catharism in Catalonia may not have been as intense as in the Languedoc but it certainly flourished there for many years. As in the Languedoc and Provence, in Catalonia, the noble families gave aid and support to the Cathars, and there were many Cathars in the region. There also seems to have been a Cathar bishop in the Valle de Aran, a small valley in the Pyrenees in the northwest of Catalonia. But by 1216 Cathar Catalonia seems to have been a dependency of the Bishop of Toulouse. Many Cathars settled in Principality of Andorra too, where Cathars, for a while, formed the backbone of the textile industry.

Following the troubles in Languedoc, Cathars fled either to Lombardy in Italy or Catalonia in Spain. Very few actual Cathar writings have survived, but we know of the following three treatises: *The Secret Supper*, *The Vision of Isaiah* and *The Book of the Two Principles*.



The troubadour Perdigon playing his fiddle.

Fin' Amors

In late Roman times, northern France was the land of the Franks, a Germanic warrior tribe. In contrast, southern France and Spain were the lands of the Visigoths, a different Germanic tribe, but they ruled over a local population that had been Romanised and civilised for centuries. The laws and customs of southern Europe were more favourable to women than lands further north where women were treated little better than chattels.

The Troubadours were serious court poets who only occasionally went from castle to castle.

The Troubadours were poet-singers. Most were not itinerants, in spite of what many people think, but serious court poets who only occasionally went from castle to castle. Troubadour means *inventor* or *composer* in Occitan. The elevation of the lady in the poetry of *amor cortés* or *courtly love* was a distinct reversal of the actual social status of women in the Middle Ages, a wholly new attitude towards women, started deliberately, and supported to popular acclaim.

The Troubadour tradition began in 11th Century Occitània, but subsequently spread into Provence, Italy and Spain. Under the influence of the Troubadours, related movements sprang up throughout Europe: the *Minnesänger* in Germany, and the *Trouvères* in northern France. The texts of Troubadour songs deal mainly with themes of chivalry and courtly love. They sang about what they termed *fin' amors*, literally, “*fine or refined love*.” Most of their songs were metaphysical, intellectual and formulaic. Many were also humorous or vulgar satires. It is thought that the concept of *fin' amors* came originally from the love poetry of al-Andalus, Muslim Spain, where Arab poets had been worshipping their high-born women in verse and song for over 200 years.

The classical period of Troubadour activity was relatively short and lasted from about 1170 until about 1220. The best-known Troubadours belong to this period. It was also during this period that the lyric art of the Troubadours reached the height of its popularity and the number of surviving poems is greatest from this period. In Occitània there were female Troubadours called *Trobairitz*. Their existence may have been a result of the power women held in southern France during the 12th and 13th Centuries. Women had far more control over land ownership, and Occitan society was far more accepting



of women than were other societies of the time. During the Crusades many men were away from home, which left women with more administrative responsibility and consequently more political power.

Being Cathar

The Cathars have fascinated people down the ages. What was it about them that attracted so many people in so many countries? Catharism, as a Christian religion with dualistic and Gnostic elements, had its roots in the Paulician movement in eastern Turkey and Bulgaria and the later movement known as the Bogomils, also from Bulgaria, which had ancient links to Manichaeism. Both were offspring of the original early Gnostic Christians and the Cathars belonged to this same lineage.

Fulk, the Catholic bishop of Toulouse (1206-31), once asked a knight why he did not expel “heretics” from his lands and received the following answer: “*We cannot. We have been reared in their midst. We have relatives among them and we see them living lives of perfection.*” Like many medieval movements, there were various schools of thought and practice amongst the Cathars, from Flanders and the Rhineland to Bosnia; but the dualist theology was the most prominent, being based on the irreconcilable incompatibility of love and power. As matter was seen as a manifestation of power, it was also incompatible with love. They did not believe in one all-encompassing god, but in two, both equal in status. They believed that the physical world was evil and created by the *Rex Mundi* (“*King of the World*”), who created all that was corporeal, chaotic and powerful.

The second god, the one whom the Cathars worshipped, was entirely disincarnate, a being or principle of pure spirit and completely unsullied by the taint of matter. He was the god of love, order and peace. According to some Cathars, the purpose of human life on Earth was to transcend matter, renouncing perpetually anything connected with the principle of power and thereby attain union with the principle of love. According to others, the individual’s purpose was to reclaim or redeem matter by spiritualising and transforming it.

This placed them at odds with the Catholic Church as regards material creation, on behalf of which Jesus had supposedly died. Intrinsically they believed that the material world was evil and therefore implied that the Catholic God, whose word had created the world in the beginning, was Satan. Furthermore, because the Cathars saw matter as intrinsically evil, they denied that Jesus could have become incarnate and still be the son of God. Cathars vehemently repudiated the significance of the Crucifixion and the Cross. In fact, to the Cathars, Rome’s opulent and



Cathars vehemently repudiated the significance of the Crucifixion and the Cross. Image - Christ at the Cross by Carl Bloch, painting c. 1870.

luxurious church seemed to them the embodiment and manifestation on Earth of the Rex Mundi’s sovereignty. Clearly there were ideological differences between Catharism and Catholicism that could not be bridged.

From the Cathar faith came practical injunctions that were considered destabilising to the morals of medieval society. For instance, Cathars rejected the giving of oaths as wrongful; they believed that an oath served to place you under the domination of the god of this world. But rejecting oaths in this manner was seen as anarchic in a society where illiteracy was wide-spread and almost all business transactions and pledges of allegiance were based on the giving of oaths. This action was revolutionary, as sworn fealty formed the bond of all feudal relations.

From the Cathar faith came practical injunctions that were considered destabilising to the morals of medieval society.

Catharism taught that sexual intercourse and reproduction propagated the slavery of spirit to flesh, so procreation was considered undesirable. Informal relationships were considered preferable to marriage among Cathar *Believers*. Good Christians or *Perfects*, as they were called by the Catholics, were supposed to observe complete celibacy, and separation from a wife or partner would be necessary for those who would become



Perfects. For the Believers however, sexual activity was not prohibited, though procreation was strongly discouraged, resulting in the charge by their opponents of sexual perversion.

Killing was abhorrent to the Cathars and the Perfects were vegetarians, avoided eating meat, cheese, eggs, milk and butter. War and capital punishment were also condemned, an incredible abnormality in the medieval age. Such teachings, both in theological intent and practical consequence, brought upon the Cathars condemnation from religious and secular authorities as being the enemies of Christian faith and of social order.

Consolamentum

The *Consolament* or *Consolamentum* was thought to purify the soul through the Holy Spirit before death to enable its ascent to Christ. This purification was done by book and words, not by water, as the Catholics taught, and it was considered to be a one-time sacrament. The ritual of the Consolamentum was said by the Cathars to be an apostolic ritual passed down by the laying on of hands, person to person, from Jesus and his disciples. It was believed to transmit the “*baptism by fire*” received by the apostles at Pentecost, which the Cathars believed supplanted the older Jewish ritual of water baptism.

The Good Christians were dedicated to enabling others to find the road that led from the dark land ruled by the “dark lord,” to the realm of light...

Those who had received the Consolamentum were automatically at the same time ordained as Good Men and Good Women (Perfects); they were expected to live ascetically, giving up meat and alcohol, and to maintain strict celibacy. When they travelled around the country they were accompanied at all times by a companion of the same sex, known as a *soci* (male) and a *sòcia* (female). In emulation of the Apostles, they were expected to give up their material goods and travel from town to town, ministering to Believers and healing the sick.

Upon reception of the Consolamentum, the new Perfect surrendered his or her worldly goods to the community, vested himself in a simple black or blue robe with cord belt, and undertook a life dedicated to following the example of Christ and his Apostles; an

often peripatetic life devoted to purity, prayer, preaching and charitable work. Above all, the Good Christians were dedicated to enabling others to find the road that led from the dark land ruled by the “dark lord,” to the realm of light which they believed to be humankind’s first source as well as its ultimate end.

Church Hierarchy

Nicetas, said to have been the Bogomil bishop of Constantinople in the 1160s, travelled to Lombardy in order to reinforce the dualist beliefs of the Cathars of that region of Italy. He then travelled on to the Languedoc. In 1167, in the presence of representatives of Cathar churches in Languedoc, France and Catalonia, Nicetas presided over the Council of Sant Felitz de Caraman (now called Saint-Félix-Lauragais) at which he renewed the Consolamenta and confirmed the episcopal office of six Cathar bishops, whose names are given as:

1. Robert d’Epernon, bishop of the French, i.e. of northern France.
2. Sicard Cellierier, bishop of Albi.
3. Mark, bishop of Lombardy, apparently synonymous with Italy.
4. Bernard Raimond, bishop of Toulouse.
5. Guirald Mercier, bishop of Carcassonne.
6. Raymond de Casals, bishop of Agen.

The Cathar church was organised hierarchically; at the top of the hierarchy was the *Evèsque* or Bishop, elected by the community. He was assisted by the *Filh Major* (Filius Major), who was destined to succeed the Bishop at his death, and also the *Filh Menor* (Filius Minor), who similarly would succeed the Filius Major. Below them came the deacons or deaconesses, the *Perfièches*, or Perfects, the *Bons Ômes* and *Bonas Femmas* or Good Men and Good Women, who had been consoled and were permitted to give the Consolamentum to others. Then came the *Cresents* (Believers), the vast majority who had not been consoled, but were Cathars, and then the *Auditores* or Listeners, who were sympathetic, but not yet ready to become Believers.

Good Men and Good Women

To the Cathars, the continuity of the Consolamentum from the time of the apostles, the laying on of hands from one generation to the next, was all that counted. Simply put, Cathars believed that Jesus had been a manifestation of spirit unbounded by the limitations of matter and not



Cathars believed that Jesus had been a manifestation of spirit unbounded by the limitations of matter and not a real human being.

a real human being. They believed that the cross was not something to be revered, but an instrument of torture. The Gospel of John was their most sacred text, and they completely rejected the Old Testament. Most of them proclaimed that the God of the Old Testament was, in reality, the devil, and proclaimed that there was a higher God, the True God, and that Jesus was his messenger.

The Perfects formed the core of the movement, though the actual number of Good Men and Good Women in Cathar society was always relatively small, numbering perhaps a few thousand at any one time. Regardless of their number, they represented the perpetuating heart of the Cathar tradition, the “*true Christian Church*” as they styled themselves.

These Cathar holy men and women or Perfects had to undergo a rigorous training of three years before being inducted as a member of the spiritual elite of the Cathar movement. This induction took place during a ceremony, in which various Scriptural extracts were quoted, including, most particularly, the opening verses of the Gospel of John. The ceremony was completed by a ritual laying-on of hands as the candidate vowed to abjure the world and accept the Holy Spirit. At this point, the Good Christians believed, the Holy Spirit was able to descend and dwell within the new Good Man or Good Woman; hence the austere lifestyle needed to provide a pure dwelling place for the Spirit. Once in this state of housing the Holy Spirit within themselves, the Good Christians were believed to have become semi-angelic, not yet released from the confines of the body but containing within them an enhanced spirituality which linked

them to God even in this world.

Although the Good Men and Good Women lived a simple life with few of the physical comforts enjoyed by the rich and powerful, they preserved a certain elegance in that simplicity. They were very close to nature, indeed closer to nature than those who called them Earth-hating. Like the Manichaeans and Buddhists, their attitude toward the world may be better described as that of compassion. They did not believe in accumulating hoards of wealth, yet they retained what was necessary to see after their own welfare and those of others. They believed that purgatory did not exist. You were saved only by perfect penance in life, and a spirit destined for salvation that failed to make perfect penance in one body would return in another. They denied the resurrection of the flesh and also denied damnation, as it implied a contaminated and treacherous God.

They were vegetarians or even vegans. The Good Men and Good Women stayed in modest hospices and travelled in pairs to preach and minister to the laity. Most Cathar Believers did not emulate these practices but lived ordinary lives. They heard the Perfects preach and took part in the rituals that included a formal bow of reverence to the Perfects and the Consolamentum, the laying on of hands that purified the soul, enabling its escape from the material world at death; the “good end” that all Cathars hoped for. The Cathar faith radically separated the life of the spirit from everyday life, but the austerity of the Perfects made them social models. People had enormous respect for those they considered genuinely saintly.

Being a Good Believer

Believers constituted the main part of the Cathar community in every region. Ordinary people believed that the Perfects were good men and women, that salvation lay in them and not in the priests of the Catholic Church. These Perfects represented in their persons an ideal purity, unsullied by material concerns.

While the Good Men and Women vowed themselves to ascetic lives of simplicity, frugality and purity, Cathar Believers were not expected to adopt the same stringent lifestyle. They were, however, expected to refrain from eating meat and dairy products, from killing and from swearing oaths. Catharism was above all a populist religion and the



Like the Manichaeans and Buddhists, their attitude toward the world may be described as that of compassion.





The Cathars built no churches or places of worship, preferring to hold their ceremonies in peoples' homes or natural places such as fields, caves or forests.

numbers of those who considered themselves Believers in the late 12th Century included a sizable portion of the population of Languedoc, counting among them many noble families and courts. The Believers often drank, ate meat and led relatively normal lives within medieval society; in contrast to the Good Men and Good Women, whom they honoured as exemplars. Though unable to embrace the life of chastity, the Believers looked toward an eventual time when this would be their calling and path.

Many Believers would also eventually receive the Consolamentum as they neared death. It was the equivalent of the Last Rites of the Cathar community, a ceremony of purification of sins which was intended to enable the soul to pass into death in a higher spiritual state, thereby enabling it to achieve a better incarnation in its next existence in this world or to return to God. Performing the ritual of freedom at a moment when the heavy obligations of purity required of the Perfects was expected to be short, some of those who received the sacrament of the Consolamentum upon their death-beds may then have stopped taking further food or drink in order to speed death. This act was known as the *Endura*. It was claimed by the opponents of Catharism that such self-imposed starvation amounted to suicide in order to escape this world. But that was not at all the reason behind it.

The Believers vied for the honour of housing the Good Men and Good Women on their travels, in the tradition described in the gospels of how the Apostles were to move among the wider community. As the Cathars built no churches or places of worship, preferring to hold their ceremonies in peoples' homes or natural places such as fields, caves or forests, it was a particular honour to have the sacraments performed in your home. When believers encountered Perfects they would perform the *Melioramentum* by bowing deeply and genuflecting to

them and they in turn uttered the *Convenanza*, a prayer as a form of greeting, acknowledging the Holy Spirit within them. It was a ritual salutation or adoration.

Whenever they celebrated a communal meal in a sacramental fashion, they recited the Lord's Prayer, though asking for "supersubstantial" bread rather than daily bread. Here is an extract from a 14th Century Occitan Cathar prayer, called the *Payre Sant* as recorded by the Inquisitors of the Languedoc:

O just God of all good souls, you who are never deceived, who never lie or doubt, we fear lest we meet death in this world foreign from God! for we are not of this world, and this world is not of us, and grant us to know what you know, to love what you love.

Cathars and Reincarnation

The Cathars believed in the doctrine of reincarnation, that the individual soul would be born into this world of suffering again and again until it had reached the state of inner purification which meant it could return. It was in this way that the Cathars interpreted the idea of Eternal Life in Jesus Christ. They argued for a return to the essence of Christ's teaching, an embracing of the Apostolic ideal of human behaviour and rejected the established Church as "*the Synagogue of Satan*" for having turned its back on Christ's message with its vast material power, wealth and corruption.

The Cathars, in accepting the idea of reincarnation, were cognisant of the grim existential reality of human existence (the prison of matter). The path to spiritual liberation became obvious: matter's enslaving bonds must be broken. This was a step-by-step process, accomplished in different measures by each individual. Those who were unable to achieve liberation during their current mortal journey would return another time to continue the struggle for perfection. Thus, it should be understood that reincarnation was neither a necessary nor a desirable event, but a result of the fact that not all humans could break the enthralling chains of matter within a single lifetime.

Their emphasis on liberation from earthly limitations grew from their insight that only freedom from these limitations could remedy the infirmities of the soul. By their acceptance of the limitations of earthly existence, the Cathars were actually far more understanding of the weaknesses of human nature than the forever condemning and punitive reaction of the mainstream Church. Their tolerance and reluctance to moralise human behaviour actually served to create less evil in their followers and those who had contact with them.



Working in Harmony with the Cosmic

by Simon Palmer



Being appreciative of our relationship
to the Cosmic and to all our friends
should be a daily practice for each of us.

WE NEED TO appreciate every element of our lives, even those things that are sometimes unpleasant. It's from the unpleasant things, our difficulties and problems, that we learn life's greatest lessons. It's through these trials and tribulations that our inner resources rise up and help us most. If we develop the inner right attitude, we will attract the Cosmic that is always there for us.

However, we can't expect good things from the unless we give our whole-hearted support to moral and ethical standards, especially to those obligations we have assumed. In other words, if we've created obligations towards others, we must uphold them, without complaining against 'our lot.' If we're married and have promised to honour and respect our children, spouse and family, we must live the ideal life that will bring love and



respect from those who depend on us. No matter what the laws of the land may be, we must not work just within the law, but always try and uphold the highest moral and ethical standards we know. For only this will advance civilisation and help us build a better world.

We should willingly spend a few moments as we fall asleep, allowing our consciousness to enter into the highest realms of spiritual achievement we can imagine. Then we should think of some of the problems that other people have, forgetting ourselves entirely and becoming a living, conscious soul in harmony with its Source. In this way we become a companion worker with all others seeking to assist a deteriorating, suffering world. At the same time, we should send out thoughts of love, health and harmony to all who are experiencing difficulties.

This is the work done by Rosicrucians and other seekers of spiritual self-realisation each day to bring about changes in the world for the good of all. We may think of some unfortunate persons in our lives. They may not be related to or even really well known by us. But as we become aware of others in need and send good thoughts to them, we will start setting in motion circumstances that could assist them a lot.

Reach for the Highest

We should try to emulate the highest ideals of spiritual thought and service to others, always saying something kind, thoughtful, pleasant and loving to others at every opportunity. We can't afford the degrading luxury of harbouring thoughts of jealousy, envy, hatred or even dislike or unpleasantness towards others. Our attitude should be of broadcasting kindness, thoughtfulness and consideration. But the best challenge is to always think of something useful and kind. Even sending good thoughts to people we pass on the street will help them considerably. A smile and courteous 'good morning' can go a long way to helping their day.

When we do such things, our relationship with our Inner Master is depend considerably, and we lift ourselves and expand our consciousness to higher levels of achievement. We can be serious students of mystical literature, and that will help us, but if that study doesn't result in elevated thoughts and acts in harmony with universal justice, then clearly we've not reached a higher level of consciousness. Raising our consciousness to a higher level assures us of a closer association with the Consciousness of the Cosmic and our life will become more aligned to the true purposes of the cosmic plan for humankind and the part we can play in the Great Work for the future.

So, it is important to give of ourselves and our



We should willingly spend a few moments as we fall asleep, allowing our consciousness to enter into the highest realms of spiritual achievement we can imagine.

thoughts, even for just a few minutes each day, working on behalf of the Cosmic for the benefit of all life on Mother Earth. By radiating appreciative, loving, kind thoughts to sundry and all, we become a channel to accomplish much good in the world, especially in our immediate community, in our place of work, or among the people we associate with. So much can be done with good, positive thoughts. Radiating constructive thoughts to other people assures us of a close and loving relationship with the Cosmic, and blessings and gifts will come to us automatically, without our asking for them, because of the relationship we have established with the Cosmic.

These are all things that the Rosicrucian teachings try to inculcate into our consciousness, so we become living examples of how the Cosmic works through us. It's not a matter of just drawing upon the Cosmic to let it manifest in our lives, but by daily entering into a relationship with it and allowing it to work through us. In other words, we become perfect agents of the Cosmic in allowing it to work through us each day. Then we will be assured that everything we do will be meaningful, helpful and successful. We will then experience the joy of living, and a more meaningful and successful life.

We don't have to change our job. We merely need to live in harmony with our Inner Self, and the opportunities available to us will place us in positions in our work, in our associations with other people, where we can do the greatest good. You've heard the old saying "*like attracts like...*", well, try it. For some, it may mean they take on important positions in society and may have important work to do; while for others it may mean humble work in the background not seeming to have any important function in the world, though in the end, having some deeper and very important purpose. All work in support in service to the highest good for all living creatures on Earth, no matter how mundane it may appear, is needed, and we all have a role to play in making the world better place for all.





The Zen in Japanese Gardening

by George Parulski

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

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

Ceremony." In the design of the gardens we can see the Zen philosophy of simplification raised to the heights of aesthetic principles.

What is Zen?

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

Zen is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word *Chán*, which is derived from the Sanskrit word *dhyāna* or the Pāli word *jhāna*, both meaning *meditation*. In other words, Zen is a mispronunciation of





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



In Japan, the emphasis in gardens falls on sand, stone lanterns and unusual rocks that have often been brought at great expense.

a mispronunciation! Zen was founded by Bodhidharma an Indian Buddhist, around 530 CE in Hénán province of China. It is considered a philosophy of life by its followers, and has no sacred scriptures, rituals or even methods. As Bodhidharma said:

No fixed doctrines,
Without words or letters,
Directing towards one's mind,
And the ultimate transformation
To Buddhahood.

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

Expression of Thought

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

A koan is not solvable by the intellect alone. Indeed, it is almost always quite a senseless statement or question to a rational mind. This is because Zen sees the mind as a barrier to true thought processes. If thoughts are understood only through the use of logic, they are limited and devoid of perception. Perception is achieved when

people have gained a level of unification between the mind and the body, where the being has become intuitively sensitive to its surroundings. The koan therefore, is a tool to help one break the logical barrier to true, fluid thought and assist us to act directly, without analysis, on every intuitive impression we receive. In terms of Western mysticism, Zen aims to unite the outer self of thought and reasoned action with the inner self of direct knowledge and experience.

**Zen is a ball afloat in a stream,
unsinkable, yet totally under
the control of the water.**

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

This is the philosophy that Zen uses with every act of culture it comes in contact with. Each activity it influences becomes a way of life, a method of achieving an inner





The stone garden at Ryōan-ji (Temple of the Peaceful Dragon, a Zen temple in Kyoto and the burial place of seven emperors) is an endless gathering of white sand with twisted swirls and 15 scattered rocks.

simplification and of bringing about greater and greater states of pure intuition. This applies very much therefore to the art of Zen gardening.

Associative Ideas

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

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

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

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



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





The clean expansion of white sand is similar to the white areas of sumi-e brush painting and calligraphy, the shōji sliding doors behind which you find floors laid with untouched, clean tatami mats, and the purity of Haiku poetry and music.

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

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

A Visual Koan

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

The most interesting and best known of the Japanese gardens are the stone gardens, which are said to represent

eternity itself. The best way of illustrating Zen in a stone garden is to take a particular example and show how it contains meaning not only in beauty but in philosophy. The stone garden at *Ryōan-ji* (Temple of the Peaceful Dragon, a Zen temple in Kyoto and the burial place of seven emperors) is an endless gathering of white sand with twisted swirls and 15 scattered rocks. It was laid down just after the Ōnin wars of the late 15th Century. Each part of this garden corresponds to another cultural activity. The clean expansion of white sand is similar to the white areas of *sumi-e* brush painting and calligraphy, the *shōji* sliding doors behind which you find floors laid with untouched, clean *tatami* mats, and the purity of Haiku poetry and music. There are no blossoms to fade and no leaves to wither and fall, for this garden is not dependent upon the impermanence of momentary beauty. Instead, it is endless, like Zen, and awe-inspiring.

Stones and Their Meaning

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

The rocks of Ryōan-ji are said to depict rocks in a river, or on another scale..., islands in a sea. Only 14 of the 15 rocks can actually be seen at any one time, suggesting perhaps that the senses cannot grasp all of reality from any one point of view. Other rocks in this spatial structure



are not free-standing but are buried substantially in the ground. Some smaller rocks are in fact almost completely submerged, with their top surfaces barely noticeable above ground level. The proper burial of rocks is given great consideration in Japanese gardening, so the effect is similar to icebergs in which the revealed portion implies greater force and mass than is apparent. This also strengthens the relationship of rock and sand. Thus, the observer grows in the knowledge that all is powerful, no matter what the visible size is.

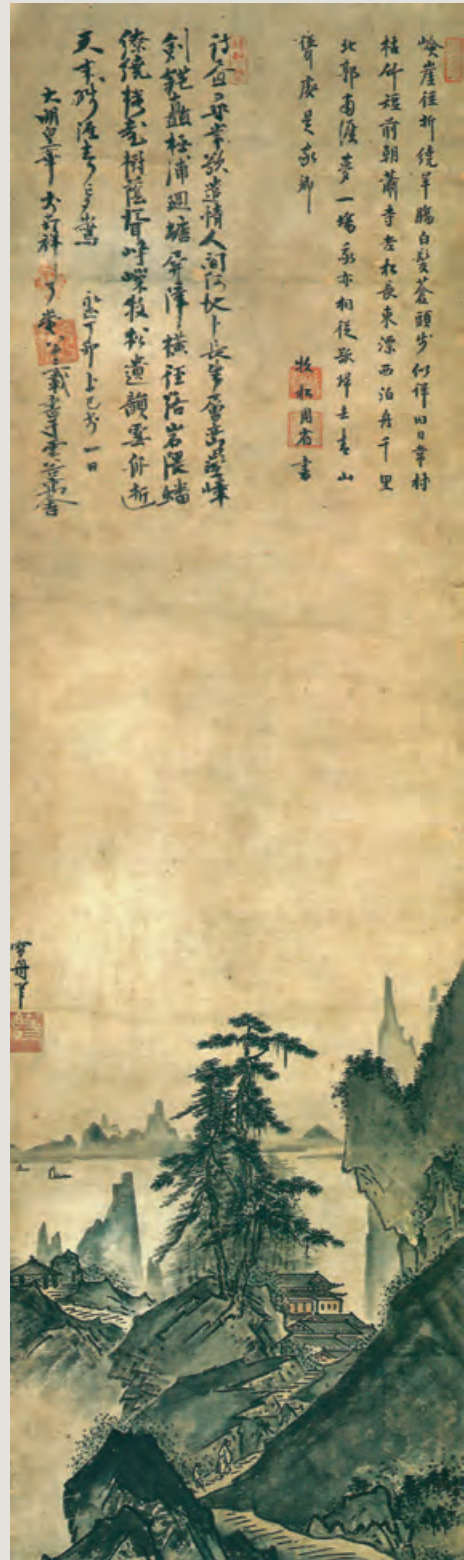
Emptiness and Form

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

Emptiness is the relation that the garden achieves through its coexistence with form.

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

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



Example of *sumi-e* painting and calligraphy. Landscape by Sesshu.





by Richard Rawson

Coping With Mental Illness



MENTAL ILLNESS is recognised as one of the most common afflictions affecting humanity. Indeed, mental health problems are one of the main causes of the worldwide overall disease burden and approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year. Depression and anxiety are the most frequent symptoms of conditions that may severely impair people's effectiveness and happiness. Around 8% of people in Britain meet the criteria for anxiety and depression and between 4-10% of people will experience depression in their lifetime. Excessive elation, impulsivity, hallucinations and delusions are other signs and symptoms of less frequent, but still common, conditions that stop us from achieving our fullest potential. So common are these conditions that all of us know at least one person who suffers from it.

Self-mastery is the single most important means for coping with mental illness in yourself and also for coping with mental illness in others.

Some of us may live with a family member or have relatives who suffer one form or other of mental illness, and some of us may be coping with certain of these symptoms ourselves. It has been said that the preliminary step to attaining self-mastery is learning the skill of coping with mental illness and coping usually entails understanding in two areas: the nature of mental illness, and what to do about it. Rosicrucian principles are central to both.

Most of the symptoms of mental illness are more severe or persistent extensions of natural sensations, emotions or thoughts. It is quite common for those without mental health problems to feel concern about these symptoms and to fear that they may be mentally ill and to be afraid of official opinion that might confirm their concern. On the other hand, it is also quite common for people who are mentally ill to minimise and deny their symptoms to avoid conscious confrontation with the fact of their condition.

The actual distinction between what is *normal* and what is *illness* is in fact vague. Mental illness is actually defined socially. It is said to exist when common sensations, emotions or thoughts are so intense or persistent that someone is unable to adequately function

in ordinary daily life activities. Coping with mental illness then, is really a matter of knowing how to deal with the symptoms, beliefs and behaviours of those who, for their own individual reasons, are burdened with an unusual intensity of 'normal' subjective experience.

Intense Subjective Experience

Most of us often desire an intense subjective experience... if it is pleasurable. Few of us would think of intense pleasure as being a 'burden.' Rather, it is a much sought-after goal of objective experience. Similarly, the avoidance of intense displeasure or pain is a universal attribute of the human personality. Both pleasure and pain are primarily subjective attributes of the mundane self, the objective individuality.

Excessive investment of personal time, energy and consciousness in the search for pleasure or to escape from pain can in fact become a major burden upon the resources of the objective individuality. When one is sufficiently burdened, objective individuality will fail to effectively address the needs of objective reality. To cope with mental illness, we must first understand the limitations of objective individuality which usually concerns itself exclusively with the world of ordinary emotional and physical experience. Without the awareness of something greater than our own ego, we will see the mundane world as a forceful, ever-present, hostile physical experience. The opportunity for pain will seem great and the opportunity for pleasure small. We will be motivated in virtually all of our activities to directing the physical experience away from pain and toward pleasure.

With consciousness of our greater self, the soul personality, an opportunity for peace, beauty and harmony becomes available, which is independent of the controlling forces of physical nature. Pain and pleasure are not denied; they are reduced in significance to their





Often the personal anguish felt is greatest when we first begin to awaken to our own higher self.

proper proportion to mere objective matters. *Self-mastery* is the single most important means for coping with mental illness in yourself and also for coping with mental illness in others.

Changing Someone Else

When faced with the emotional distress or inharmonious behaviour of others who have a mental illness, we are impelled to try to do something to the other person to make them change. It should not take more than one or two tries to realise that attempting to change others is *not* a very efficient approach. The basis for this becomes more apparent as we realise that each of us is really a subtle and yet very powerful expression of both a higher and a lower self. When trying to change someone else, our attention is principally on the lower self, the objective personality, which is responsible for the mental illness.

The next temptation is to attempt to cause a change in someone else but motivated from the perspective of our higher self. We hope to heal someone's mental illness either by compelling them to be aware of their own higher self or by absent-healing. But once again we are betrayed by our own attention to the lower self which, in judging it in need of healing, is only reinforced in its significance by our own attention.

At another level, coping with mental illness consists of a challenge to self-mastery. In this view, the attention is not upon changing someone else but upon the attainment of peace and harmony in the face of the most intense kinds of everyday experience. When fear, anger, hatred and despair lose their power to evoke their sympathetic counterpart and fail to diminish compassion, mental illness begins to wane. The innate attraction to peace,

beauty and harmony within each human being awakens and spurs self-motivation to healing. Each encounter with the distress of others lost in the intensity of mundane experience is an opportunity to recall our own attachment to illusion and insignificance, to dissolve that attachment, and reunite with the quality of awareness that knows only love.

If not mental illness itself, then its close cousins, greed, self-destruction, arrogance, self-depreciation, impatience, inaction and stubbornness, are ever-present reminders of our own task of self-mastery. The power of these reminders may be particularly pointed and devastating when they disrupt the caring relationships we have with others. Often the personal anguish felt is greatest when we first begin to awaken to our own higher self, for it is then that the contrast is greatest between what we know to be possible and what we now experience to be so. Coping with mental illness and its cousins may seem to be the most difficult at this time.

In response to the despair occasioned by the awakening, it is common to want to escape into the higher self; to disassociate from the everyday world and our vehicle in it, objective individuality. We may seek a spiritual devotion that denies the reality of the objective world and its many painful frustrations. However, this is not self-mastery, and it does not successfully cope with mental illness. Rather, excess investment in the transcendent can become a mental illness in its own right. Meditative techniques must be used then, not as an escape, but with a purpose of expanding the awakening within the objective world.

With full awareness and relevant participation in objective reality we may eventually dissolve the source of despair and mental illness with true understanding.





What is a Master?

by Pieter Wagener

THE CONCEPT of a cosmic master was popularised towards the end of the 19th Century by the Theosophical Society under H.P. Blavatsky. A book, *The Mahatma Letters* by A.P. Sinnett, also a member of the Society, created an image of superhuman beings in the minds of generations of members of the Society, and these perceptions have now become part of modern mystical lore.

A universal aphorism, “*When the student is ready, the Master will appear*”, became a beacon for many aspirants

on the mystical path. Another saying, “*Seek the Master within*”, is perhaps a more realistic and less frustrating instruction. However, what almost everyone agrees on is the role of a Master as a *teacher*, specifically teaching the path to cosmic enlightenment.

The term “*Master*” has a long history, dating back to the Egyptian dynasties through to the Essenes, the mystics of the Middle Ages, the esoteric societies of the 19th Century, up to the organisations of the present time. A Master was considered a worker of miracles:





The concept of a Cosmic Master was popularised in the 19th Century by the Theosophical Society under H. P. Blavatsky.

raising the dead, curing the sick, materialising objects and appearing in the spirit to disciples. Many of the descriptions appear fanciful, but their enduring lore, appearing in the legends of many diverse peoples, must lend some credibility to their claims. One must also wonder whether an unusual occurrence in the past was only considered as magical if there was no rational explanation for it at that time. Electrical

discharge from an ancient electrolytic cell, such as the Ark of the Covenant as some conspiracy theorists have claimed, must have been considered an act of God, if it indeed ever happened.

The 20th Century brought a significant change in our outlook on mystical matters: We now want to *understand* things in a scientific manner, and the god-like qualities of Masters of the past could perhaps now be seen as qualities explainable by modern science. But that would not detract from the stature of a Master. On the contrary, it would be a greater inspiration to know that their exalted state can be understood and attained in perfectly natural, scientific ways.

Modern science has given us two related disciplines to help us understand the nature of a Master. The first is the theory of evolution, and related to it, the principles of neuroscience. Most humans consider themselves separate from the universal evolution that permeates every aspect of nature; from primitive amoebas to *homo sapiens*, the ultimate in evolution. Or so we believe!

Levels of Consciousness

From our vantage point we can broadly discern four distinct levels of evolution, with some overlapping in between. Each one is characterised by a consciousness and a corresponding physical form. Modern science tells us that consciousness is related to some electromagnetic or neurological properties of an organism's nervous system.

Literally at the rock bottom on the evolutionary scale are the metals and crystals whose electrochemical qualities can be regarded as a primitive form of consciousness. Certain metals even exhibit rudimentary forms of memory. Reaching out from the soil is the next level, that of plants. Partly in the ground, partly rising to the sky,

modern science has revealed electrochemical processes in plants that can be regarded as a primitive, vegetative form of consciousness. Plants even have the ability to communicate with one another, especially if being attacked by predators.

Next is the animal kingdom. Freed from the soil, they are still constrained to move horizontally to the earth. Even the early ancestors of birds, in the form of lizards, were constrained to the surface of the earth. Here we have vastly increased neurological activity, heating the body and enhancing its consciousness.

Then, according to conventional science, we reach the pinnacle of evolution: humankind. Its outer form has become vertical and with its brain it has become dominant in the evolutionary chain. Its brain has also given it a special form of consciousness, that of self. This self-consciousness, however, has separated us in our minds from the universal consciousness that permeates all of creation. We are not even aware of the myriads of little bundles of consciousness that keep the body going.

Do these steps of evolution not remind us of the outer coverings of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? Firstly, they were created from the soil; then covered in leaves and finally animal skin. And after attaining self-consciousness by eating from the Tree of Knowledge, they



Do these steps of evolution not remind us of the outer coverings of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? (Image: The Fall of Man By P. Rubens)





We are not aware of the will that makes trees, insects and grass grow and which makes them compete with other entities on the evolutionary battleground, sometimes we refer to this will as instinct.

left the Garden of Eden, thereby losing their realisation of the universal consciousness. Only by again reaching that universal consciousness will they return to the Garden, but now with a conscious realisation of God.

How does all this fit in with our modern concept of evolution? Evolution is a process whereby an organism adapts to a hostile environment. Conventional wisdom states that this occurs by mutation of cells, the robust surviving the perils of their environment. However, could organisms not also by some primitive will select, or direct, their evolution? This, the Lamarckian viewpoint, is unpopular with mainstream science, but studies during the 1980's of the *Escherichia coli* bacterium have shown that this could be possible.

Cosmic Consciousness

But are we still subject to some hostile environment to which we need to adapt in order to survive? Our brain, after all, has given us dominance over the physical world. But has this same brain not become our greatest liability? Is *anxiety* not a greater threat to humans now and in recent history than any other pathological cause? Stress impairs the immune system and makes the body vulnerable to infections and other ailments such as cancer. And do not many people seek refuge in a "Garden of Eden" induced artificially by medication and drugs?

The control of anxiety lies at the root of many religions. Have the great Teachers of these religions not shown us how to reach serenity by a development and control of our consciousness, to re-enter the Garden of

Eden and commune with God, and reach this God-like consciousness amidst the demands of our human society?

This state of consciousness has become well-known through its popularisation during the past century. Its originator, the distinguished psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke (1837-1902), identifies in his book *Cosmic Consciousness* (1901) levels of consciousness, culminating in what he describes as "*cosmic consciousness.*" This consciousness, experienced momentarily, brings an exalted sense of union with all of creation, serenity and a feeling of eternity. At the same time a brilliant light is experienced internally. Its result is a heightened level of creativity, making these '*enlightened*' ones very practical, self-assured people in everyday, mundane life.

There is, however, another aspect to this experience that is rarely mentioned, namely, the aspect of *Will*. Our everyday life is governed by the will of our self-consciousness. We are not aware of the will that keeps our heart beating or those of the white blood cells that rush to combat foreign intrusions into our body. Neither are we aware of the will that makes trees, insects and grass grow and which makes them compete with other entities on the evolutionary battleground. We sometimes refer to this will as *instinct*.

One of the realisations of cosmic consciousness is a momentary attunement with this universal, subconscious will, or so to say, with the will of God. This realisation never leaves the memory of the those that experiencing it. They remain assured that the will of God will henceforth guide their mundane will and shall, when needed, protect them.



In mystical lore it is claimed that the experience of cosmic consciousness is the ultimate aim on the mystical path. It is however, just the beginning on another scale of consciousness.

Development of the Cosmic Master

In this new environment, newly enlightened people face similar difficulties to those of the first amphibians that struggled onto land. Having tasted union with the consciousness of creation and its will, the enlightened ones now face the task of reaching this union voluntarily and on a continual basis; not as a hermit, but immersed in the rigours of daily life. In this striving they become more aware and attuned to the will of creation and move delicately balanced between the will of the self and the universal will. Gradually they find themselves in partnership with God, creating apparent miracles by blending their human will with that of God.

In mystical lore it is claimed that the experience of cosmic consciousness is the ultimate aim on the mystical path.

These miracles follow natural law, albeit mysterious to us. The true Cosmic Masters are in development. After long effort, they are able to voluntarily raise their consciousness to a cosmic level and, tuning to the power of the cosmic will, they take direct part in the processes of creation. It is this ability on the cosmic threshold that makes humanity unique on the evolutionary scale.

The union with our God brings inescapable responsibilities. Although they are raised above the norms and human-made laws of society, and have earned the right to “*do what thou wilt*”, they are now constrained by universal law. However, on this borderline they are still influenced by the will of the self in order to survive the rigours of daily, earthly life. Knowing now what is good (the absence of which is evil), the penalty for disobedience of the cosmic ordinances is hardly imaginable.

The Cosmic Masters have survived those tests. Their actions are in accordance with the will of God. But by inhabiting a human body they still remain frail to the imperfections of its consciousness and its will. It is the realisation of this duality that engenders the sympathy, if not pity, for struggling humanity.

Our Cosmic Masters are part of nature and achieve all according to natural law. They will in all likelihood appear more normal, mundane and boring than most other people. They have no need for worldly excitement. We may only faintly discern such people. A deeper recognition, however, is only attained if our own consciousness is attuned towards theirs. But often their consciousness merely rubs off on us in passing, leaving puzzlement, but also a strange, ethereal joy.

The fanciful beliefs in the power of a Master will disappear in the coming years. These enlightened beings, acting in accordance with the Will of the Cosmic, still remain hampered by their physical bodies. Although this body, a part of nature, is in a better condition than most, it still remains subject to the inevitable laws of growth and decay. But the Cosmic Masters, as *Magister Templi*, have such control of their physical body, particularly of its nervous system, that its conservation beyond the average life-span appears miraculous to others. The Master’s body survives as long as the Cosmic intended it to, and its function is not curtailed by the abuses of ordinary humankind.

Cosmic Brotherhood

No reference to Masters can be made without mentioning the *Great White Brotherhood*, or GWB. This body is held in awe as the Elders of humankind, omniscient and omnipotent. Like all other creatures, the members of this body do not have a separate existence from us. On the contrary, attaining Cosmic Consciousness has made them more part of nature than anything else. The instinct that pervades all creatures has merged into a conscious realisation in their minds. In the same way that animals (us included) have a communal instinct, their enlightened, or awakened, instinct has become the *égrégoire* of the GWB, causing them to remain in communion with one another at all times and to act accordingly. Acting against this communal Will results in an automatic severance of the cosmic bond and be “*cast from heaven.*”

Some mystery remains, however. By what mechanism does the soul personality of a Master survive the demise of its earthly vehicle? And how does a Master have access to the impressions of the ancient past, not only of itself, but also of others? One can only surmise that some future science of genetics will answer those questions.

A future science will also give a neurological explanation for the inner light experienced with cosmic consciousness and its transformation of the nervous system to accommodate a higher level of consciousness. The faith in such a science brings an assurance of eternal life and consciousness, and a hope for embattled humanity.





The Breath

by Margaret Hargas

WE ALL know that breathing is vital to maintaining life in our body, for quite apart from the vital chemical composition of air that the body needs, the act of breathing air brings into our body a very special and precious form of energy, the so-called *“life essence”* which we use, quite unconsciously, to sustain ourselves and grow within our physical and psychic environments.

Breathing provides the cells with oxygen and permits the cells’ waste products, primarily carbon dioxide, to be eliminated. In fact, the lungs actually expel 25% of all bodily waste, which is a very high percentage when you consider that we don’t usually think of the lungs as an excretory organ. Breathing also affects our immune function, mental clarity, vitality and the general tone and energy level of our body.





Pranayama is a system of breathing techniques used in many yoga disciplines.



The deep, prolonged inhalation of a yawn is the automatic response of the body to the build-up of carbon dioxide waste in the bloodstream, caused by shallow breathing.

Defining Breathing

For obvious reasons, the breath has long been associated in the human mind as the life-essence which is drawn into us with our first breath and departing from us when we die. Indeed, the classics of Eastern medicine describe the vital life force as being taken into the body with the breath, followed by the lungs' extracting this vital substance from the air, thereby making it available for use by the body.

The ancient Chinese were not the only civilisation to associate the breath with the vital life force. In ancient Greece we have the word *pneuma*, meaning both *spirit* and *breath*. In English we borrow this word intact and define it as the vital life force. From Latin comes the word *spiritus*. This one word was used to express breathing, the breath of life, soul, mind, spirit and (the association here is quite interesting) courage. From *spiritus* we have the words inspire, aspire and expire; words not only relating to physical processes but also to the human heart and soul.

“The classics of Eastern medicine describe the vital life force as being taken into the body with the breath...”

The early dynasties of ancient Egyptian, predating both the Greek and Roman civilisations, referred to the breath as *sahu*. This word was variously used to denote the breath, the soul or the higher self. *Sa* was the term for the “*divine fluid*”, the substance which gives life to humankind. The Vedic tradition of ancient India,

flourishing at roughly the same time as the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms of Egypt, refers to *atma*, meaning both the breath and the soul. This ancient word, related to the ancient Greek word *atmos* (breath), survives virtually intact in the modern German language as the verb *atmen*, meaning “*to breathe*.”

Also, from the Sanskrit comes the word *prana*, meaning both the breath and the life force which is common to all living things. Pranayama is a system of breathing techniques used in many yoga disciplines. The practice of pranayama is also used to awaken kundalini, the divine fire and feminine aspect of the divine principle. Kundalini is usually represented as a coiled snake, residing at the base of the human spine.

Rhythm of Breathing

Of course, breathing techniques are used in many disciplines for healing work and even for projection of the psychic body. It is therefore interesting to note that there is a mechanism in the skeletal system of the body called the “*cranial-sacral pump*.”

Cranial, of course, refers to the bones that make up the skull, and *sacral* refers to the sacrum, the triangular bone at the base of the spinal column. The word sacrum, incidentally, comes from the Latin *sacer*, meaning *sacred*, which is an intriguing cross reference to the seat of the kundalini energy. This pump mechanism creates the circulation of the cerebral spinal fluid which bathes the nervous system structures with nourishment, carries away waste and provides a cushion for these precious organs.

It is none other than the steady rhythm of inhalation and exhalation that causes the pumping of the cerebral spinal fluid to occur. The subtle motion of the breath rocks the sacrum and the temples of the skull gently





and minutely, causing the flow to occur. The temples are actually two sides of the same bone which passes through the entire width of the skull.

The Huna tradition, which is preserved in Polynesian culture and is familiar to us as the doctrine of the Kahuna, the legendary masters of the elements, uses the breath to accomplish miracles and to move creation. The drawing in of the breath and thereby the vital life force, is known to them as *mana*, a word which means *to sacrifice, to empower, revere, love or greatly desire*. It also refers to *authority, skill and capability*. And it is the root for words such as *truth, worship, ideas, meditation, confidence and time*. It is *mana* which opens communication between, and then integrates, the emotions, the intellect and the higher self. And it is then, through the act of breathing, that the expression of life is begun, sustained and refined.

Our emotional state has an impact on our breathing rate and volume.

Breathing More Efficiently

Approaching breathing from a more practical and physical point of view, we find that our breathing habits are generally far from the ideal of perfect efficiency. Usually, the physical act of breathing is taken completely for granted. It is assumed that by virtue of the action of the inhalation and exhalation of air, breathing is being done correctly. Unfortunately, with time, tension, poor postural habits and restrictive clothing, we lose the

natural breathing patterns that are spontaneous during early childhood.

The breath should be taken in and let out efficiently, and to do this, we must use each lung entirely. The lungs are fairly large and fill the chest all the way from the collarbone down to the bottom of the rib cage. If you place your hands over your chest and breathe normally, you should feel the rise and fall of the chest. Usually however, only the upper chest and shoulders move your breathing. You should in fact feel this expansion and contraction over your entire chest, along the sides, and over a portion of the back. The fuller the expansion of the lungs, the correspondingly greater the amount of vital oxygen is taken in, and the greater the amount of debris is removed from the lungs with the exhalation. The deep, prolonged inhalation of a yawn is the automatic response of the body to the build-up of carbon dioxide waste in the bloodstream, caused by shallow breathing.

Breathing also affects our visual acuity, as anyone holding the breath until he or she sees spots can testify! It is also related to our emotional well-being. Our emotional state has an impact on our breathing rate and volume. Imagine for a moment the quick, ragged breathing of anger, and it is clear that emotion affects breathing. Conversely, if you mimic this or any other emotion's breathing pattern, you can begin to create the physical and psychological changes that occur with that emotion.

Breathing in a natural unrestricted manner is an important and easy means to improve many facets of the physical, psychological and spiritual makeup of the human being. It is our choice to use this understanding to our fullest capacity to improve our health, increase our mental clarity, and structure our physical and emotional well-being. First comes breathing, then comes life. Without breathing, we have no life. Therefore, take care with your breathing, and do all you can to do this correctly.



The Spiritual Will

by Robert Daniels



WE ARE all aware that we are living in particularly difficult times. Global communications today make us swiftly aware of the turmoil and strife which exist in many parts of the world, and it is natural that we, as Rosicrucians who strive for a better society, one where people can live in peace and harmony, should be deeply concerned with the present problems of humanity and the obvious drift and decline of our present, much valued way of life.

Many people question whether or not society is moving in the right direction. Although there is a growing

interest in esotericism on the part of an increasing number of people, the world still regards those who are interested in mysticism and the occult as dreamers with an unrealistic outlook on life. It's part of the price we must pay for our ideals, to be criticised by those who have little or no understanding of our studies or philosophy.

To many misinformed or uninformed people, we are dreamers, seeking an escape from the normal responsibilities of life. But the study of mysticism is not an escape from life. Rather, we, as Rosicrucian students, are confronted with many obstacles which stand in the way of reaching our ideals. But by meeting these obstacles



head on, which in the main are our own shortcomings and deficiencies, we will have the opportunity to ascend the spiral of our own personal development.

We strive unsuccessfully to find more than a handful of leaders of character who can show the way to greater and more meaningful values. There are very few men and women today that can be justifiably called great. Paging through history however, we see how at various times men and women of remarkable insight and genius emerged and brought long-lasting inspiration to humanity. They were writers, artists, philosophers and of course mystics of the highest calibre. They taught the world how to think and have moved human hearts and minds by the unselfish power and compassion they demonstrated.

The world regards those who are interested in mysticism and the occult as dreamers with an unrealistic outlook on life.

The Highest Ideals

If there is anything that we need today to give us a proper perspective of the mystical life, it is the inspiration of those whose lives exemplified the highest ideals of human attainment. There is nothing so helpful for acquiring a true perspective of life and of our place in it than the study and review of the works of the great thinkers of the past. Knowledge and experience alone lead to a proper perspective of life, and knowledge and experience alone will bring that peace of mind which is so necessary in these conflicting and disturbing times.

When we are dedicated to our best conduct and when we strive to achieve a greater degree of mystical development, we come into harmony and cooperation on the psychic plane with many others of like thoughts and interests. There is a companionship on the higher planes of consciousness that we are not always aware of. Another thought we should consider is that when we study the works of these great luminaries of the past, whether they were mystics or not, by our own devotion to their work, a bond is formed between us, which leads to much insight and inspiration. The works of many writers and artists reveal this fact. By devoting ourselves to the inspired works of these great thinkers and innovators, we can experience an intuitive understanding of their thoughts and ideals.

It is only natural that, under the pressures of modern daily living, we sometimes feel out of harmony with our present way of life. There is a conflict between the ideal path envisaged by our studies and the environment in which we live. Our lesson here is to adjust to all the circumstances which confront us. We must not avoid but penetrate these problems more deeply and endeavour to view them from an impersonal point of view. We thereby gain insight and strength from such experiences, for this is the way of advancement. We so often cut off the very experiences or opportunities for advancement, under the misconception that these antagonisms have nothing to do with mystical or spiritual evolution. The truth is however, that from such experiences our character is developed, resulting in a greater understanding of life and its broader purpose.

Our association with others creates many of our difficulties. But these problems can teach us much. By standing detached and apart from others periodically, we can come to understand what these obstacles really mean, and we *must* learn to adjust to them. For in our service to others, it is imperative that we understand the problems of life before we attempt to serve the needs of others.

Using Knowledge

When one first enters on the path of spiritual enlightenment, there is usually no great difficulty in accumulating a great deal of knowledge about mystical principles and beliefs. The assimilation of facts usually proceeds at a fairly rapid pace. But there comes a time in the mystical and spiritual development of each of us, when we have to reflect upon what such knowledge can do for us and how it can be *used* in our daily affairs for the benefit of ourselves and others.

This is where we meet an important test, because our consciousness has begun to expand and attune itself with the higher levels of inner consciousness. It is at this time that we begin to feel the need to exercise the spiritual will and to find the best method to express all we know in achieving some really useful purpose. At this stage of our development we really begin to think and act for ourselves. Up to this time, we have been privileged to receive guidance and instruction from others in a purely intellectual sense, but the use of that knowledge now becomes our own responsibility.

Through this knowledge that we have gained, we begin to realise that there is a deeper fount of knowledge which lies within the inner self. We discover that knowledge and truth are always present in the higher reaches of consciousness and that all we need do is become aware of it. This is where our greatest difficulty





Paging through history, we see how at various times individuals of remarkable insight and genius emerged and brought long-lasting inspiration to humanity.

From Left: Carl Jung, Shakespeare, Dalai Lama, Leonardo da Vinci, J.S. Bach.

lies, for one of the most important laws we have to realise is that the light and life of the soul within us will only reveal itself through a concentrated and determined effort. We have to learn to acquire relentlessness in the will and compassion in the heart in order to draw forth from within ourselves the greater light of truth which we desire.

Learning from Others

Those whose hearts and minds are set upon the highest accomplishments of the mystical life will accept the condition that frustration and strife are necessary elements for the most rapid development and highest mystical attainment. Most of our difficulties and the problems of the world at the present time are not problems of the mind, but of the emotional nature of humankind. The spiritual suffering of the world has not decreased with the advent of science, quite the opposite. It is more prevalent today than ever before; all the more reason for us to gain knowledge and understanding so that we may render practical *service* for the benefit of humanity. We need practical and inspired thinking to carry us through life so that we may attain the lofty ideals which we have envisaged. That is why we should seek knowledge and experience which will give us a deeper understanding of the meaning of life. Life is a test and a challenge and we have to meet that challenge with all the insight we have gained.

Within each one of us there is a great source of wisdom and knowledge, but we have to draw upon this source with persistent effort in all our endeavours. If we

demand little from ourselves, little will be given. This is only saying that we should try to rise to the occasion when we are faced with problems and difficulties and we can often be surprised at what we can accomplish by a little more effort on our part. It should be a constant practice of ours to demand more from ourselves and a little less from others, for in this lies one of the secrets of our advancement. By interrogating ourselves as to what we know and what we believe, we will reveal the extent of our knowledge and understanding in all aspects of life. By seeking the guidance of the inner self and applying ourselves to study and meditation on the important issues of life with a relentlessness of will, the way will be revealed as to how, with a compassionate heart, we may best serve the cosmic powers to which we have pledged our hearts and minds.

When we study the lives and works of the great thinkers of the past, we see in their works the inspiration for the gradual enlightenment of humankind. It is with pride that we see how many notable Rosicrucians are to be found in the ranks of these great men and women who pledged themselves to seek the truth, and found inspiration by undertaking a voyage of discovery into the realms of the inner spiritual self. Humanity today awaits the guidance of those who, with vision and understanding for the real needs of humankind, will come to the fore and lead the way to the accomplishments of our innermost ideals. This is what we are pledged to. By the light of our own understanding, we will work with others to help guide humanity to a sane, practical, and more spiritual way of life that is in harmony with the Cosmic and which will prove to be a blessing to all humankind.



Every Step of the Way

by Verne Johnson



HAVE YOU ever worked on a big project or task, whether at home, on the job, or at play; a project that was completely absorbing and constantly on your mind, a project that was your striving, your fulfillment, your reason for getting up each morning? Then, when the project was complete, the goal accomplished, you found yourself feeling empty or dissatisfied. Remember? You found

yourself asking in disbelief: *“Is that it, is that all there is?”*

During the time of your work the goal was to accomplish the task, to reach the end, at which time you expected to feel an overwhelming sense of relief and accomplishment. Instead, you felt disappointed, disillusioned, and well..., maybe a bit cheated. And now you wonder whether it was really worth all the time and effort. What went wrong?





A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

It is possible that we are confusing the journey with the destination, the striving with the end result, the process with the final product. In placing so much emphasis on the destination we tend to forget or overlook the intrinsic value of the *journey itself*. As a result, we find ourselves wondering if success is a grand illusion, and the goal an elusive prize.

How often have you said, “*When I get that job I’ll be happy...*”, or “*When I’ve got my degree...*”, or “*When I’ve managed to buy that house...?*” When you received that promotion, earned that degree or built that house, were you content, were you satisfied? Chances are you weren’t.

The Value of the Journey

Preoccupation with the destination causes us to diminish the value of the journey and its capacity for character building. There is great value to any journey, for that is where the victory is earned. The journey itself determines whether the venture is won or lost. It is in prospecting that we find the nuggets of reward.

What do you find at the summit of a mountain that you can’t find in the valley? What’s at the top that isn’t found every step of the way? A quote comes to mind by the mountaineer Arlene Blum: “*You never conquer a*

mountain. You stand on the summit a few moments, then the wind blows your footprints away.” If the possession of the summit is transient, a passing moment of elation, then there must surely be great value in the journey to the summit. The finale is only a small part of a piece of music, the epilogue only a fraction of a book, the destination only a step in the journey.

First Steps

An old Chinese proverb begins: “*A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*” The journey begins with the first step, and the first step is every step along the way. It is easy to quit when the destination is all we are striving for and the goal seems so far away. The journey begins, progresses and ends with each small step. We don’t fail; rather, we stop trying! And we stop trying when we have nothing more interesting to strive for than a distant, barely seen, goal.

Preoccupation with the end causes us to overlook the thrill, challenge, and importance of the first step, the first question, the first discovery. It is the thrill of possibility that stirs the human spirit, and the thrill is sparked by the power of the journey. We can’t get on with it until we get it started.



“I’m an idealist”, wrote the poet Carl Sandburg, *“I don’t know where I’m going but I’m on my way.”* Sometimes you just have to get moving, even when the way is not clear. There is a need to do something..., anything, just to get started! Anticipation and the excitement of progress will keep you going and refine your goal, but it takes a spark to light that flame. In the words of the philosopher Krishnamurti: *“The first step is the only step.”*

**You never conquer a mountain.
You stand on the summit a few
moments, then the wind blows
your footprints away.**

The Journey Toward Self-Realisation

Former Secretary-General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld once wrote: *“The longest journey is the journey inwards of him who has chosen his destiny, who has started upon his quest for the source of his being.”* The journey, any journey, any project, is a journey toward self-realisation. And such a journey is strewn with pitfalls, obstacles and resistance. The search for self-worth and self-understanding is painful but necessary. It is a part of the process of becoming a whole, integrated person.

Every project, every process, every striving is a step inward, a plunge into the depths of individual personality, a thread woven into the fabric of a human being. When a particular journey ends, we know just that much more about our possibilities and limitations, our abilities and inabilities, and we are eager to press on further and further, to know more, to see more, to experience more.

The late Peter Boardman, an outstanding British mountaineer, wrote in his book, *The Shining Mountain*: *“Today’s frontiers are not of promised lands, of uncrossed passes and mysterious valleys beyond. Only the mountaineer’s inner self remains uncharted.”* The journey is an attempt to scale the spirit of the mountaineer, to ascend the summit of inner knowledge, and that can be a lonely trip. People are often insensitive and intolerant of those who follow a path away from the crowd, who travel a path that veers from the common thoroughfare. The question they commonly ask is: *“Where can that path possibly lead? It seems to go nowhere.”* What they fail to understand is that every step is going somewhere, every movement is a part of getting there. Once the journey is underway, the immediate goal is to press on though the final goal often only emerges with time.

A Way of Life

Like the protagonist in Hermann Hesse’s novel, *The Journey to the East*, most of us come to realise that the journey is never-ending; it is a *way of life*. The journey is a process of becoming, not a single assault on a single goal or mountain. Though the journey never really ends, it sometimes brings us back to the place where we began with a new appreciation or a deeper understanding, causing us *“To know the place for the first time.”* You never conquer a mountain. You never conquer the Inner Self. You seek it afresh every day, every step of the way towards perfection.

Tomorrow there will be another summit, another ridge, another journey. The next one may be a little steeper, a little farther away, somewhat less accessible. But the true seeker knows it will be assaulted, knows the road will be travelled. And every destination is a starting point for another journey. Every chapter completed means a new chapter or a new book must begin. We can’t be content with the destination alone. We cannot rest forever on the results of that one big project. The process of getting there, the journey, is the key to reaching our goals, and often far more important even than those goals.

**The journey is a process of
becoming, not a single assault
on a single goal or mountain.**

None of this is to say that goals and destinations are unimportant. The summit is one of the reasons for climbing the mountain. It provides us with another view, another perspective. If our intent is not the top, we will not progress very far along the way. The destination is the culmination of the adventure, the pinnacle of triumph, the final and sometimes most difficult step along the way. We needn’t feel that sense of emptiness, disappointment or disillusionment when the present project or journey ends; not if we have worked hard along the way and learned the lessons of the journey.

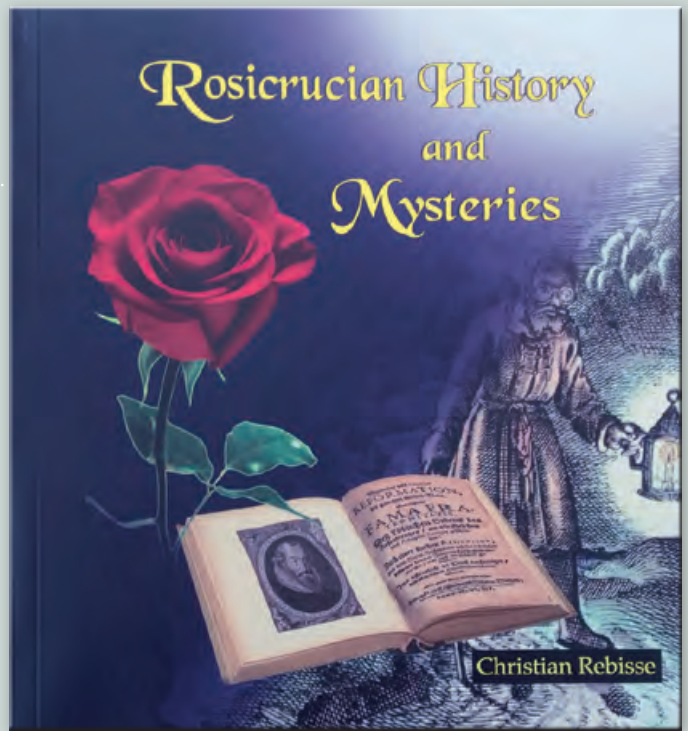
The destination can be sweet, the accomplishment pure, and the spirit of the mountaineer challenged if we understand the purpose of the *journey* and the purpose of the *destination*. It is a part of the reward for coming this far. We can climb the mountain and peer over the ridge with a sense of satisfaction. We can take time to reflect and determine the course of the next chapter because the destination has been gained, every step of the way, and we know we will journey again.



Book Review

Rosicrucian History and Mysteries

By Christian
Rebisse



Available at <https://amorc.org.uk/collection>

THIS RICHLY illustrated book is an English translation of a book by the French Rosicrucian author Christian Rebisse. Published by *The Rosicrucian Collection*, the publishing arm of the Rosicrucian Order in Britain, it is a deep analysis of the so-called “*Western Mystery Tradition*” upon which so many mystical and spiritual organisations lying on the fringes of the great Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious base have evolved their unique sets of teachings and techniques of spiritual discovery. In this detailed account of the evolvement of mystical and spiritual knowledge and experience within Western culture, we find people of good will who ardently sought answers to their deepest questions about life and their place in it..., and in some cases, found deep and satisfying answers.

This tradition has its roots in the mystery schools of the New Kingdom of ancient Egypt, and was added to throughout its history, adapting to changed circumstances and adopting ideas from many different lands through which it passed and which served to bring into human experience ever greater insights into the mysteries of existence. It's not a history of world religions, for many excellent academic studies of world religions already exist. But it is a history of the search for knowledge of perceived realities lying above and beyond the current state of science, and a deep desire to understand the universe from a perceptual point of view in the broadest human terms possible.

What's It About?

The book provides a source of detailed information for everyone seeking information about the so-called *Perennial* or *Primordial Tradition* and locates Rosicrucianism within the history of western esotericism, ultimately linking it to the creation of the *Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis*, known throughout the world by the acronym AMORC. You will find no dry, scholarly historical accounts. Instead you will find many new and interesting perspectives from unique seekers of spiritual revelation within the various spiritual traditions covered. As the author says: “*I tried to take the middle ground between legend and history, between facts and mysteries.*”

The central thrust of the book concerns the linear, historical route of esoteric ideas and mystical practices from the ancient past that finally coalesced in the early Renaissance to form the core of a philosophical system termed “*hermetic*” after the legendary Hermes Trismegistus, from whom much of it was said to have derived. Coinciding with the publication of the first of the Rosicrucian manifestos in 1614; the *Fama Fraternitatis*, from this point on, it was noticeable that the figure of the allegorical Christian Rosenkreuz, the central character in the Fama, takes on the mantle previously held by *Hermes the Thrice Great*. Although the ancient Egyptian lineage upon which the



Hermetic teachings were based had by this time largely disappeared, it returned more powerfully in later years, and especially so in the Rosicrucian Order.

In the years following the publication of the Fama, a new era opened up in secret European Rosicrucian circles where great emphasis was placed on utopian ideas of reform in politics, religion and especially in education. And in the latter, we owe a debt of gratitude to the great Moravian philosopher *Jan Amos Komenský*, better known as Comenius, whose work, much of it done in the Netherlands, had a profound effect on the education of future generations within all disciplines.

In the 17th Century, thanks to Sir Francis Bacon, we can see a path leading from the first "*Brethren of the Rose Cross*" on the European mainland, to the establishment several decades later of the Royal Society in Britain, followed by the rapid expansion of knowledge during the Enlightenment, the contribution of Freemasonry, and contributions of many other groups, culminating in the early 20th Century revival of the Rosicrucian Order as the primary bearer of the tradition upon which virtually all mystery traditions within Europe, North Africa and the Middle East were based.

Summary of Chapters

- Egypt and the Primordial Tradition: The beginnings of the Primordial Tradition, the Corpus Hermeticum, Alexandria, the Emerald Tablet and Neoplatonism.
- Hermeticism and the Perennial Philosophy: Muslim Spain, the Kabala, the Florentine Academy, Giordano Bruno & Paracelsus.
- Crisis of European Conscience: The Reformation, Counter-Reformation and the Wars of Religion.
- The Naometria and the Age of the Holy Spirit: Simon Studion, the Crucifera Militiae Evangelica & the Lion of the Septentrion.
- Echoes of the Rose Croix: The Fama Fraternitatis and the Tomb of Christian Rosenkreuz.
- The Confessio Fraternitatis: Learning about the sources of the Fama and Confessio, Pseudo-Alchemy and Johann Valentin Andreae.
- The Emerald Land: Initiatic Narratives & Spiritual Knighthood.
- The Chymical Wedding: More about Andreae, Inner Alchemy and the Story of the Wedding.
- The Rose in Bloom: Michael Maier, Robert Fludd and Johannes Kepler.
- The Philosophers and the Rose Croix: Various movements in France, the Netherlands and England, Sir Francis Bacon and the New Atlantis, the Royal Society and the Enlightenment.
- Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry: Various Initiatic Orders that came into being.
- Magnetism and Egyptosophy: Magnetism, Cagliostro, Napoleon in Egypt, and the Rosetta Stone.
- In Search of the Psyche: Spiritualism, the Rosicrucian novel *Zanoni*, and Helena Blavatsky.
- The Rose Garden of the Magi: Various Hermetic Orders, Joséphin Péladin and the Salons of the Rose Croix.
- The First Rosicrucians in America: Pietism and bringing Rosicrucianism to the New World.
- Harvey Spencer Lewis: The story of the remarkable man who formalised the Rosicrucian teachings and made them fit for the modern world.
- May Banks-Stacey and Journey to the East: Lewis' Journey to France and his Initiation in Toulouse.
- The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis: The Birth of AMORC and the Martinist Project.
- International Alliances: Events in France, Nicholas Roerich and the FUDOSI.
- The Contemporary Period: AMORC's place in the World and the Modern manifestos.

When I translated the text, I became aware that there were many aspects of this story which would be readily understood on the European mainland, but less so in the English speaking world. So, I added a lot by way of explanation to make the original text more accessible to English readers and to show the inter-connectedness of all people on this "*pale blue dot*" we call home, immerse in a sea of cosmic vastness.

This book is about a movement, referred to



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let this book open a portal in your mind to the marvellous journey
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erroneously at times as a 'secret society.' Far from secret, the Rosicrucian Order is today one of the most enigmatic of initiatory movements in existence. Recounting the mysteries of its origins, the book attempts to place Rosicrucianism in its historical context by recalling the origins of Western esotericism in general and elaborating on the numerous currents to which it has given birth.

Towards the end, the focus moves to the major Rosicrucian organisation of our time: *The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis*. Beyond its historical aspects, this work, featuring a wealth of illustrations, invites us to discover the ways in which Rosicrucians of the past and present have tried, through the mysterious Primordial Tradition, to rediscover the vital thread connecting them to the Divine.

In this book, you can learn about Rosicrucian philosophy, both in its 21st Century form, and the ancient sources upon which the Rosicrucian Order

is based. This will give you a sense of the Rosicrucian approach to spirituality. If you have an open mind and a thirst for knowledge, let this book open a portal in your mind to the marvellous journey that humans have made in their quest for the stars and beyond. Without these, our ancestors, the world would have been a far less-welcoming place where we would all have languished under social conditions that are the very antithesis of enlightenment.

To the great regret of millions on our planet, who are facing the rise of harsh social conditions that are the very opposite of what the original Rosicrucian enlightenment brought about, our deepest thoughts of peace, serenity and strength in the face of adversity go out. And we hope and pray with all our might that the world will be overtaken by a new renaissance in which freedoms of speech and thought will return to our beleaguered world and steadily degrading life experience that so many must endure. In short we seek with all our heart for a new Fama.

We have made inquiries about the rules of the inhabitants of
the Roman Empire and the Indian states and have never
rejected anyone because of their origins or beliefs.

Nor have we jealously kept away from them what we affirm,
and we have not disdained to learn what they stand for.

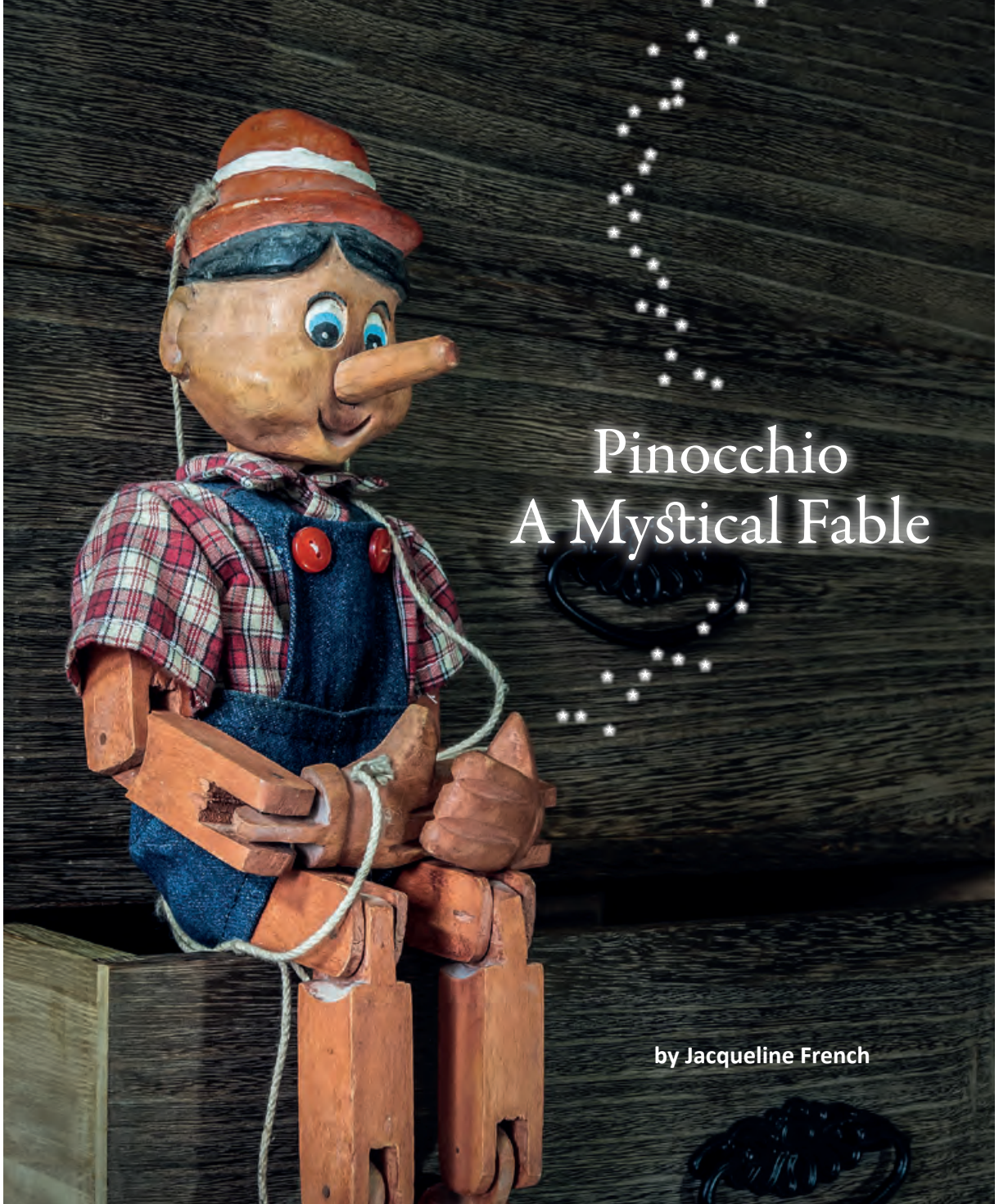
We should not forget that to acquire knowledge of truth and the
sciences are the most important aspects of life by which
a king can adorn himself.

And the most disgraceful thing for a king is to disdain learning
and be ashamed of exploring the sciences.

He who does not learn is not wise!

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





Pinocchio A Mystical Fable

by Jacqueline French

DURING the Rosicrucian World Convention in Rome in August 2019, an intriguing remark from one of the speakers encouraged me to investigate further. It was a short comment about the mystical aspects of Pinocchio. I had read the book as a child and forgotten most of it. But then there was the Disney film and I don't recall ever being struck by anything mystical or spiritual about the story.

Pinocchio is a fictional and eponymous character of

the children's novel *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1883) by the Italian writer Carlo Lorenzini, who wrote under the name of Carlo Collodi. Born in Florence in 1826, Lorenzini, it is said, discovered a cruel and terrible truth: that humans are like marionettes and humanity is made up of millions of puppets hanging from invisible threads. This brings to mind the Rosicrucian illustration of humanity as a set of lightbulbs all connected by a wire, through which courses an electrical current. Turned on, the light bulbs



shine and bring light to the world. Turned off, darkness prevails, with all the agony and ills that symbolically accompanies this state.

Lorenzini took the *nom de plume* of Collodi from the small town of Collodi near Lucca in northwest Tuscany, not far from the little town of Vinci. His uncle was the custodian of the Villa Garzoni in Collodi, and Carlo often stayed there as a child. It obviously made a great impression upon him. These days, the town has repaid the compliment by setting up a theme park consisting of gardens featuring mosaics and sculptured tableaux based on the adventures of the this famous puppet.

In Italy, the Adventures of Pinocchio is considered the supreme example of Italian children's literature; and its author is an innovator and stylist of genius. To recap the story: Pinocchio was carved by a woodcarver named *Master Geppetto* in a Tuscan village. Although created as a wooden puppet, he dreamt of becoming a real boy. As we know from the story, Pinocchio had a frequent tendency to lie, which caused his nose to grow and grow with each lie.

An Illustration of Human Destiny?

This wooden boy is still one of the most widely read books in the world and has been translated into many languages. The reason is that hidden beneath the surface of a simple nursery story lies a deep mystical allegory disguised as a fairytale or fable. Behind its ironic and easy-going text, the puppet is actually a dark and pitiless parable of humanity's initiatory trip from a puppet preyed upon by its baser instincts, to a creature of full human-hood endowed with

will. Pinocchio is the ironic caricature of an untruthful and deluded humanity, forcefully governed by negative emotions and the unhappiness of an inescapable fate.

Pinocchio's adventures belong to the art of the ancient mystery schools, namely, *the art of revealing through concealment*. For 137 years, the secret allegory has been there in plain sight for all to see and understand if they simply choose to look with the eyes of an initiate. Pinocchio eventually became a true human at the end of his journey to redemption. Often reluctant to recognise ourselves in the grotesque image of Collodi's character, we loathe the idea of identifying ourselves with a talking bit of wood, apparently alive and endowed with free will, but actually driven by unknown external forces through terrible invisible strings.

There's an air of mystery about the story, a riddle we'd like to solve. Why did a writer such as Carlo Collodi, who throughout his career never rose above a level of an ordinary writer, suddenly produce an immortal story, an objective tale and world-class masterpiece? How is it possible that this fairytale has become the vehicle of a universal message which can be considered the mirror of all humankind? Well there is an explanation, or better still a hypothesis, that the text is both inspired and the result of a brainwave. The Adventures of Pinocchio conceals a daring, deep and mystical text of true world stature.

There are other elements in the story that draw a parallel, an analogical connection between Pinocchio's adventures and our lives. Pinocchio is constantly filled with good intentions, set out with a kind of touching naivety. But then as clockwork, he is diverted from his course and takes the easiest route, namely, to lie while



Italian author Carlo Lorenzini, who wrote under the name of Carlo Collodi.



Pinocchio by Enrico Mazzanti - the first illustrator (1883) of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*.



hoping not to be found out. He gets so used to lying that he's no longer able to see the difference between truth and falsehood, right and wrong. Doesn't that sound a bit like some politicians you know?

At heart, we're actually all like this. Official reports and media news are full of good intentions and are as unreal as Pinocchio's intentions were. Decade after decade, we've heard world leaders making false plans, promising great things and voicing concerns for the unfortunate, poor, starving and oppressed of the world. They're like Pinocchio on his first day at school.

Pinocchio's Journey to Life

Viewed as an allegory, our little wooden boy describes the various situations encountered during our Inner Journey. Jungian as well as Sufi psychology would agree that some parts of the Pinocchio saga resemble an initiation ritual: the collapse and disintegration of the former self, prior to rebirth as a new self. It is Pinocchio's self-sacrifice and 'death' in order to save his father that enables his rebirth as a real boy.

In the beginning, giving life to Pinocchio seems analogous to the biblical story of the creation of Adam out of clay. It reminds us that humans are endowed with some attributes that belong to the infinite source of all, such as life, knowledge, speech, free will, sight and hearing, many of which presuppose consciousness. This is where consciousness, our consciousness, comes from. And it is also what is meant by the 'divine spark.' So, there is a path within us leading to our God; a path we've temporarily lost sight of, but instinctively yearn for.

Pinocchio's story reveals human weakness and frequent hypocrisy.

One of Pinocchio's mistakes is to befriend a cunning fox and his sidekick the cat, both dishonest and scheming creatures. While the fox pretends to be lame while and the cat to be blind, the pair lead Pinocchio astray, rob him and eventually try to hang him. The fox does everything to lure Pinocchio off the tried-and-trusted path. He is sly, sneaky, clever and deceiving, and will do anything for money, including throwing 'friends' like Pinocchio into situations of mortal danger. So, in the course of your life, be careful about who you befriend, or who you allow to befriend you.

Pinocchio's story reveals human weakness and frequent hypocrisy. We're so used to the dynamics of



Pinocchio from the Disney film Pinocchio.

falsehood that we're totally blind to the great dangers we face. We lie to everyone around us, but even worse than that, we lie to ourselves, every minute of every hour of every day of life, climbing up mountains of prejudices and illusions. Collodi's invention of Pinocchio's nose, brings an embarrassing discovery, he reveals our most disturbing psychological feature: the tendency to lie, first to ourselves, and then to others. The more we do it, the easier it is to forget we're just common liars.

Every time Pinocchio lies, his nose grows a bit longer, clearly alerting everyone to his dishonesty. It symbolises that one lie paves the way for the next one, until you're left with a whole chain of untruths and don't know the way out of the mess you're in. You wouldn't lie if you didn't do things that need to be lied about. As the Prophet Mohammed said: *"Be truthful. Truthfulness leads to virtue, and virtue draws you to heaven. Beware of lies. Lies lead to immorality, and immorality leads to hell."*

Falsehood is a permanent state of being in which we've all been 'educated' throughout life. People in general lie, and above all, they lie to themselves. Poverty, war and disease, all part of the sad mis-governance by people of themselves, are the consequence of an inner struggle created by the lying that has enveloped us since childhood. At one point in the story, Pinocchio is swallowed by a giant shark, a mile-long, five-story-high fish. Leaving aside meanings beyond our comprehension, let's rather focus on one we can fathom. In the Bible, Jonah's emergence from the giant fish is a symbol of rebirth. And Pinocchio, too, 'dies' as a result of his encounter with the shark and is later reborn as a real boy.

In another sense, he emerges from the dark belly of the shark into daylight, from darkness into light; namely, he attains Illumination. It's almost like escaping from a buried coffin, which has echoes in a similar initiation experience in Hermeticism. To an intelligent





What we see in Pinocchio are the wood shavings of our 'lost soul.'

and deeper reading, Pinocchio's story reveals itself to be the intensely ironic caricature of an untruthful humankind, tyrannically moved by strings of negative emotions and the unhappiness of an inescapable fate. And this is the point: most people may not know we're untruthful, but we'll never avoid the penetrating gaze of our own conscience and the karmic burden we pile upon ourselves when we lie. For our conscience arises from the deepest part of our eternal being and knows us intimately. And when we lie, we are aware of it, and there can be no peace, no rest, just endless torment until justice has been served and we have paid our debt to those we have deceived.

Actually, what we see in Pinocchio are the wood shavings of our 'lost soul.' Pinocchio is after all just another piece of wood on a pile of other pieces of wood, all of them destined to be destroyed and burnt to warm the home of a human. But the Pinocchio piece of wood is special, for it longs to live and enter the path of human spiritual evolution. In this transformation, the antagonists represented by the fox and cat have a providential, religious, ideological and theological nature.

The world is a mirror. Through its events and in its symbolic language, made up of circumstances and meetings, it constantly gives out signals, clues and indications. If Pinocchio (the ordinary human being) could read them, he would not be so busy sabotaging his own being; he would not make the wrong choice at the crossroads of life and neither would he reject experience in spurious collaboration with error and misunderstanding.

Epilogue

As a universal icon and metaphor of the human condition, this lovely book is considered a canonical piece of children's literature but has also had a great impact on adult world culture. Pinocchio is a puppet who gains

wisdom through a series of misadventures which lead him to be granted human life as a reward for his good deeds. The main imperatives demanded of Pinocchio are to work, be good and study; and in the end his willingness to provide for his father and devote himself to these things, transforms him into a real son.

In the beginning, Collodi gave his story a tragic ending by having Pinocchio hanged from a tree by the

**Live by the golden rule –
treat others as you would
have them treat you.**

fox and cat. However, his publisher rightly discerned that the public would not like the story to end in such a stark and unjust manner, so he changed it by having the puppet become transformed into a boy. With any other kind of ending, Pinocchio would not have had the popularity it enjoys today, and the story would have been unfinished and dark. So what is the moral lesson of Pinocchio? The most obvious one is don't lie, ever! There's nothing more beautiful and holy to you than to be truthful to all, and especially truthful to yourself. Could you ever conceive of a heaven where lies exist? Not likely! There's perhaps a better moral from this story though and it's this: *"Live by the golden rule – treat others as you would have them treat you."*

The fox and cat hung Pinocchio from a tree and left him to die, but in rewriting of the ending, Collodi revealed that Pinocchio had not really died after all and got his wish to become a real, living boy. The wooden boy was in the end merely wood destined for the fireplace, but the newly transformed human boy became a devoted son and received an eternal soul.



Dante Alighieri : *A Divine Comedy*

by Mary Jones



A painted fresco by Philipp Veit depicting The Divine Comedy - Paradiso, Canto III.

ON A RECENT trip to Florence, one of the main sights I wanted to see was the *Casa di Dante* or House of Dante; but it was far from easy. Although clearly marked on my map, the centre of the old town with its narrow, winding streets made it really difficult to make out any landmarks to guide me to it. When I eventually found it, I spent some time standing in the small square outside the 3-storey house, trying to take in the atmosphere of what must have been a very different world during Dante's time.

After the visit, I slowly walked through narrow streets and up and down many narrow staircases. Clearly the streets were meant only for walking and preferably not

very far, for before I knew it, I was back at Dante's house. The 'street staircases' were apparently built to frustrate bands of armed men being able to get around quickly without being seriously fit. Such was life in those days I thought, not always calm and peaceful. Eventually I sat down in a lovely little piazza to the side of the house. It was quiet and the atmosphere was for me steeped with the faint sights, sounds and emotions of a truly bygone age; one so different from what we're used to in our modern world that it may as well have been in a storybook with a story made just for me, a figment of my imagination, not of the present world, but certainly a world that existed over 700 years ago. In the 13th Century, who knows how





A detail from one of Sandro Botticelli's illustrations for Inferno.



The Casa di Dante, Florence.



Gustave Doré's engravings illustrated Dante's Divine Comedy.

it really was in those narrow streets, what humble people walked up and down them day in and day out, never going further than the city limits ever, throughout a life that seldom reached 60 for the average person.

Dante was an Italian poet, humanist and moral philosopher best known for his epic poem *Divina Commedia*, The Divine Comedy, which is a three-tiered journey beginning in a dark wood and ending with a vision of God, representing the three tiers of the Christian afterlife: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory) and *Paradiso* (Paradise). It is a phenomenal work of medieval literature and considered the greatest literary work composed in Italian, a philosophical Christian vision of the eternal fate of every human, whether Christian or not. Dante is also seen as one of the fathers of the modern Italian language together with his friends Petrarch and Boccaccio. It is humbling to see how, over the vast sweep of time, the pen truly is mightier than the sword.

Early Years

Dante Alighieri was born in 1265 to a noble family with a history of involvement in the complex Florentine political scene whose setting would appear in his poem years later. According to his friend Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), he was always dressed in good clothes. His face was long, his nose aquiline and his eyes seemed larger than usual, maybe just a manifestation of the power that radiated from them, making them appear different and maybe larger than those of 'normal' people. He had a large jaw and his lower lip protruded beyond the upper. His complexion was dark, his hair and beard were thick, black and curly, and his expression was melancholy and thoughtful.

His mother had died only a few years after he was born and around age 12 it was arranged that he would marry the daughter of a family friend. At the age of 20 or 21, the pair married, though by that time, Dante was in love with another woman..., Beatrice Portinari, who would be a huge influence on him and whose character would form the backbone of the Divine Comedy. He met Beatrice when they were both nine years old, and had fallen in love with her at first sight, a "spiritual obsession" he said! Although the pair were acquainted for years, his love for Beatrice was 'courtly' which could be called an expression of love and admiration, usually from afar, and unrequited.

In 1290, Beatrice died unexpectedly, and five years later, Dante published *Vita Nuova* (New Life) which details his tragic love for Beatrice. It is quite noticeable that Dante's wife and children pale into anonymity compared to the immortality he conferred on Beatrice. Beyond being Dante's first book of poetry, New Life was written in Italian, whereas most other works of the time appeared in Latin. Around the time of her death, Dante began to immerse himself in the study of philosophy at the Franciscan church of Santa Maria Novella and the Dominican church of Santa Croce, outside of which stands a famous statue of him, as well as the Florentine political scene. Florence was then a tumultuous city, being part of the Holy Roman Empire, with factions representing the Papacy and the Empire continually fighting each other in the city. Dante held a number of important public posts in the city, giving us a clue as to the diplomacy he must have exercised in catering for the whims of both sides of the divide.

In 1302, however, he fell out of favour and was exiled



for life by the leaders of the Black Guelphs, the political faction in power at the time and who were in league with Pope Boniface VIII. The pope, as well as countless other figures from Florentine politics, found himself in an extremely unpleasant place in the immensely graphic account of hell that Dante created in the Divine Comedy. He may have been driven out of his beloved Florence, but this was to be the beginning of his most productive artistic period.

In his exile, he travelled and wrote while withdrawing from all political activities. In 1304 at age 39, he appears to have been in Bologna, where he started his Latin treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (On the Eloquent Vernacular), in which he urged that courtly Italian be enriched with aspects of everyday spoken dialect in order to establish Italian as a serious literary language. This 'new' language would be a way of helping to unify the divided Italian territories. Virtually all literature at the time was in Latin, a language understood only by the well educated and the clergy. But in March 1306, he was expelled from Bologna and by August, he ended up in Padua. But from this point onwards, his whereabouts are not known for sure for several years. Reports place him in Paris at times between 1307 and 1309, but his visit/s to the city can't be verified.

In 1308, Henry, Count of Luxemburg was elected Holy Roman Emperor as Henry VII. Full of optimism about the changes this election could bring to Italy, Dante wrote his famous work on the monarchy, *De Monarchia*, in three books, in which he claims that the authority of the emperor is not dependent on the pope but descends upon him directly from God. This idea was adopted from the Byzantine Empire, which, in turn, adopted it from the later Christian Roman Empire. However, Henry VII's popularity quickly faded, and his enemies had gathered strength, threatening his ascension to the throne. These enemies, as Dante saw it, were members of the Florentine power elite, so Dante wrote a diatribe against them and was promptly included on a list of those permanently banned from the city. Around this time, he began writing his most famous work, the Divine Comedy. It truly is the opus magnum of his life and the main reason we still remember him.

The Divine Comedy

In the spring of 1312, Dante appears to have gone, with the other exiles, to meet the new Holy Roman Emperor at Pisa, but again, his exact whereabouts during this period

are uncertain. By 1314 at age 49, Dante had however completed the *Inferno*, the segment of the Divine Comedy set in hell, and in 1317 he settled at Ravenna and there completed the rest of his opus soon before his death (possibly of malaria) in 1321, aged 56.

The Divine Comedy is a kind of autobiography, in that Dante himself is always centre stage. It is an allegory of human life presented as a visionary trip through the Christian afterlife, written as a warning to a corrupt society to steer itself to the path of righteousness: *"to remove those living in this life from the state of misery, and lead them to the state of felicity."* The poem is written in the first person, from Dante's perspective as an observer, and follows his journey through the three Christian realms of the dead: hell, purgatory and finally heaven. The ancient Roman poet Virgil guides Dante through hell and purgatory, while Beatrice guides him through heaven. The journey lasts from the night before Good Friday to the Wednesday after Easter in the spring of 1300. Allegorically the poem represents the soul's journey towards God. *Virgil* is presented as *human reason* and *Beatrice* as *divine knowledge*.

The structure of the three realms of the afterlife follows a common pattern of nine stages plus an additional, and paramount, tenth: nine circles of hell, followed by Lucifer's level at the bottom; nine rings of purgatory, with the Garden of Eden at its peak; and the nine celestial bodies of heaven, followed by the highest stage of heaven, where God resides.

Virgil guides Dante through *Inferno* (hell) and sees a phenomenal array of sinners in their various states. Dante and Virgil stop along the way to speak with various



Dante shown holding a copy of the Divine Comedy, next to the entrance to Hell, the seven terraces of Mount Purgatory and the city of Florence, with the spheres of Heaven above, in Michelino's fresco.



characters to hear their stories. Each circle of hell is reserved for those who have committed specific sins, and Dante spares no artistic expense at creating the punishing landscape. For instance, in the ninth circle (reserved for those guilty of treachery), occupants are buried in ice up to their chins, chew on each other and are beyond redemption, damned eternally to their new fate. In the final circle, there is no one left to talk to as Satan is buried to the waist in ice, weeping from his six eyes and chewing Judas, Cassius and Brutus, the three greatest traitors in history, by Dante's accounting.

In the *Purgatorio*, Virgil leads Dante on a long climb up the Mountain of Purgatory, through seven levels of suffering and spiritual growth, an allegory for the seven deadly sins, before reaching the earthly paradise at the top. The poet's journey here represents the Christian life, in which Dante must learn to reject the earthly paradise he sees for the heavenly one that awaits.

Beatrice, representing divine enlightenment, leads Dante through the *Paradiso*, up through the nine levels of the heavens, represented as various celestial spheres, to true paradise where God resides. Along the way, Dante encounters those who on earth were giants of intellectualism, faith, justice and love, such as Thomas Aquinas, King Solomon and Dante's own great-great-grandfather. In the final sphere, Dante comes face to face with God himself, who is represented as three concentric circles, which in turn represent the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We find that he frequently refers to things in threes and nines.

He believed that the individual soul is part of the collective whole but retains its individuality.

Humanity

While Dante incorporated many theological themes and beliefs into his works, his ultimate doctrine was far different and humanistic in nature. He did not believe that this life is merely a necessary burden in preparation for eternal life, as the church taught, but that individuals should try to be happy on earth.

He believed that the individual soul is part of the collective whole but retains its individuality. His focus on the individual was part of his larger scheme and is evident in the numerous distinct personalities he meets

in the Divine Comedy. His design for a world order incorporates his belief in the dual nature of humanity. In this view, humans are composed of two parts: earthly (temporary) and spiritual (eternal). Their duty is to attempt to achieve both earthly happiness and everlasting life by living a devout life.

This view of humanity's nature and duties was an integral part of Dante's political beliefs and reinforced his view that church and state must be separate. Indicative of the emergence of humanism was the larger role that Dante provided for the humane arts in ordering earthly and spiritual matters. In this, he ushered in a new era of intellectual endeavour.

(<https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/dante-alighieri-1265-1321>)

After his death, Dante elicited in his critics and supporters violently differing views. As far as the papacy was concerned, he was a dangerous heretic whose ideas were dependent on the philosophical ideas of the Muslim philosopher Averroes. This is an interesting view for Tuscany in general supported the Holy Roman Emperor and had close ties to Sicily where the patronage of the imperial court included Jews and Muslims as well as Christians. Jacob Burckhardt (1818 - 1897) wrote on this centuries after Dante's death:

Dante, who even in his own lifetime was called by some a poet, by others a philosopher, by others a theologian..., pours forth in all his writings a stream of personal force by which the reader, apart from the interest of the subject, feels himself carried away. What power of will must the steady, unbroken elaboration of the Divine Comedy have acquired! And if we look at the matter of the poem, we find that in the whole spiritual or physical world there is hardly an important subject that the poet has not fathomed.

Reference

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