


Rosicrucian Heritage



September 2015, Vol 22 No 2

Pictures Without Words



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ROSICRUCIAN WORLD CONVENTION



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Cover spread

A Place of Worship





Forgiveness and Karma

*by Christian Bernard
Imperator of AMORC*

IN MANY of my messages, and in what I have written in general, I like to refer to and emphasise the concept of responsibility. Free-will follows naturally on from responsibility, and this leads to the law of Karma. This is something you know about, you have read it, heard it, and most likely tested it out. But have you truly taken it on board?

There are times when I get the impression that this is not the case for some of you, given the conversations

we have. This could be due to an education that is often Christian, or at least religious, which, while preaching punishment and promising eternal damnation, also speaks of absolution.

Can we, with a wave of a magic wand or a few fine words, be absolved of everything? I do not think so myself, especially as the so-called repenting is hardly ever genuine, but is driven simply by fear or self-interest. As such it is not a true realisation. Faced with our mistakes and poor



choices, we are like a child doing something silly who, when caught out by its parents, vows never to do it again and begs for their forgiveness.

We do of course forgive children, and this is why, even as adults, we imagine that God, whom we affectionately call “our Father”, can erase everything and sort everything out. But it is not like this, if we consider the eternal and unchanging cosmic laws to be God in action. Can we demand of God that He renounce Himself, and think again about the cosmic laws? Miracles can occur, it is true, but they themselves are often the result of a law.

There are things in Nature that cannot be changed, words that cannot be taken back, things that have been written that cannot be erased. What is done is done, and our mistakes rear up in front of us like so many transgressions that we have to recognise and face the consequences of. Often it is not enough to mumble vague apologies, to plead for, or even demand, the forgiveness that we think it so clear the other person absolutely must grant us. When we have caused harm, we must not demand that our ‘victims’ cleanse our soul by forgiving us. That would amount to making them take on some of our responsibility, and turning them into the executioner not the victim, as if being forgiven was our right, and they were the sponge wiping out our karma. This is not how it is. We must not get forgiveness and apology mixed up. We must be able to apologise without asking the other person to forgive us. True enough, if the other person forgives us, it eases our conscience a little more, and can enable discussion where we thought it no longer possible.

It is often said that we must be able to forgive without forgetting. But is forgiving possible without forgetting, and is forgetting possible without forgiving? Someone I

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know, whom I consider exceptionally mystical, generous, kind, and altruistic, has a completely different reasoning to this, though, which is very interesting to observe. Once the impact, the emotions and the distress have passed, this is a person who is able to keep their feelings to themselves, so that things do not get worse. They try to make light of the wrong done to them, and carry on without getting dispirited, with increased belief, energy, and enthusiasm, for the good of all concerned. And when I see them helping the person who treated them badly or unfairly, it always surprises me, and I ask myself, and them as well,



We do of course forgive children.

“So have you forgiven them?”. Their response is always “No, I never do. It is not within my power to forgive. It is not up to me, it is not something I can do. Forgiving is the Cosmic’s business!” Therefore this person will not forgive, yet their whole attitude would suggest the reverse.

On the other hand, I know other people who say they forgive, but whose attitude is very unclear. No discussion is possible, relationships go cool or even break down for good, their thinking stays negative... And yet these people maintain that in absolute terms, on the divine plane, they have forgiven. In their own mind this illusion absolves them. They think they are displaying leniency and wisdom, and have thus found the key to paradise, but nothing in their attitude rings true; although it may be honey-coated, the tone is not right. The people who act like this the most often are those who went through a religious education.

But what good is it to forgive, if our actions do not reflect this? - if we continue to distrust, and our attitude does not mirror our so-called forgiveness? If this is how it is, perhaps it would be better not to insist that we have forgiven: then there are no gaps between all of our ‘selves’, between our mind and our heart. Our emotions will not be contradicting themselves, buffeted in all directions. It seems to me that the person I just referred to, who says they do not forgive, is more untroubled than others who maintain that they have forgiven.

I have thought about this difference, and tried to find a rational explanation for it. If we were talking about someone who was completely egoistic and self-centred, then I would simply think they did not have the level of consciousness required to care, but this is not the case, it is quite the opposite. I have come to believe that this person’s concept of forgiveness, or rather non-forgiveness, reflects an absolute confidence in the divine laws; they do





Norway remembers the summer of 2011.

not claim to be in charge of karma, and do not assume the right to decide on the putting into effect of its laws; they do not take themselves to be the channel or intermediary between the person who was malicious and God. In acting in this way, they display neither pretence nor conceit, the flaws usually connected with those who do not forgive.

In the same vein, I have also noticed that among those who speak of devotion and sacrifice even, and who sometimes think, in all modesty of course, that they are carrying the world and its troubles on their shoulders, their so-called sacrifice is very measured, selective even. There is more moaning and noise than action and results.

These thoughts on the concept of forgiveness came to me at a time when in the media much was being said again about terrorism and multiple killings, including at the trial of the perpetrator of the tragic events you will all no doubt remember, in Norway in the summer of 2011, when nearly eighty people lost their lives. This terrorist, who prepared his crimes methodically, was not sorry at all. He took full responsibility for what he did, and asked for no forgiveness. His attitude appeared to throw the whole court into turmoil.

At the risk of shocking you, his behaviour seemed to me to be in line with what he is, and with what he did. What seems more abnormal to me is that the TV and radio commentators, along with all the press, only seemed to be focusing on one point: an apology. They acted as though they were offended by this refusal to ask for forgiveness; as if this criminal, by publicly apologising, could ease the pain of the families and satisfy the wishes of the judicial apparatus; as if what he did, if he were sorry for

it in this way, would reduce the harm he did, and would lessen the immeasurable pain of those who lost one or more of their dear ones.

If he were sorry for the premeditated crimes that he carried out with great precision and calculation, fully aware of what he was doing, then it would make no sense at all. Quite the reverse, would not his request for forgiveness then be illogical and unacceptable, and yet another provocation? I personally would be much more shocked if he were to say sorry, as if he had done something that wasn't very polite.

In this case as in similar ones, you could say that the world was holding its breath waiting for this request for forgiveness, as an end in itself, an absolution. This would lead us into thinking that, at the end of the day, the action of a criminal is only some kind of accident, a mistake, a simple error. That would be reassuring for us, and mean we didn't have to think any more deeply. His apology and forgiveness would enable us to draw a line under this terrible story; our society could move on; and, with our eyes wide open, we could continue to produce over and over again those same mistakes that lead without fail to the horrors that we know about.

Why do we always have to remove our responsibility for what we do? Would his apology be reassuring for society? Would it ease everyone's conscience, and justify our way of life and our way of thinking? Well, alright then! The whole world is apparently satisfied if someone asks for forgiveness and it is given, as if that was the crux of the matter and the most important thing about these killings in Norway and elsewhere.



I know that this theme is as old as the world is, and everyone has their personal view. It is a concept that certainly makes us think and meditate on the meaning of life and our relationships with one another, and beyond that, even.

There is no religious person, no philosopher, no thinking person who is immune from thinking about this. Even those we call atheists have from their earliest days been faced with this concept of forgiveness, from one side of the line or the other. This is part of the human condition, part of our nature, and very often our convictions get mixed up and are interwoven with each other, and one leads on to the next.

We think like this: forgiveness - revenge; apology - resentment; going apart - coming together; failure to understand - communication; hate - love; and so on.

Perhaps we should be able to see the difference between things and see both sides of the matter, instead of using forgiveness to condense it all, even if this may turn out to be a medicine that is comforting. Are we unable to simply do no harm, even to someone who was or is our enemy, without involving forgiveness? Personally I believe we can be neutral, and let life and karma take care of things. This is what will happen in any case, whether or not we are using the word "forgiveness".

It seems to me that when we forgive - even if it is completely sincere and comes from deep within our inner being, from the most well-meaning part of ourselves - it erases practically nothing. If it is possible for a true realisation to change someone who has done something serious and malicious, then they continue alone on their new path - the path of redemption. What we must not do, for our own well-being and that of those around us, is to hold thoughts or utter words that are full of hate. In so doing, we ruin the lives of those we love as well as our own, by generating negative vibrations that contaminate the area around us. This mental poisoning is a further victory for the person who has done us harm.

It is said that we can tell a tree by its fruits, and this



is often true. Therefore the best response to insults, the best response to injustice - trust in my experience - is what may generally be called 'the strength of the soul'. Time passes and life's tests form us; and if we are able to face up, and continue with honour and courage, then the image we will be giving to our enemies will throw them into confusion just as much as any act of revenge, and will perhaps lead them to reflect on their own life, and even their own setbacks. Will they then perhaps forgive themselves for their wrongdoing, maliciousness, and their cruelty, even?

The example you will be setting around you - in terms of your general attitude, your expansiveness, and your success, even, in one or more areas - will be as witnesses testifying, should the need arise, on your behalf. The more well you are inside, the greater will be your victory over what is bad; and this without violence, shouting, or act of revenge.

Returning more directly to the subject of forgiveness - I think, therefore, that we are not under any obligation to forgive, as it is generally understood, but that our attitude should be as neutral as possible so that Cosmic Law may be fulfilled naturally. Then, if the person waiting for our forgiveness is still a little uneasy because they did not get it, it is perhaps just as well for the inner work they have to do. Difficulties and obstacles can make us look at things, and even help us.

I hope I have not shocked you with the above. It is only a personal view, the result of what I have observed, and is in no way forced on you as an absolute truth.

I know that this view of forgiveness - that ageless wisdom ever-present in the human mind in general and in the mystic's mind in particular - is quite unorthodox, and does not fit in with what you are used to hearing, or could have learnt, even, within our Order.

But I know you will not hold this 'nonconformity' against me, because you know how to forgive; and since this has to apply in all cases, I know that you will recall that I have always favoured sincerity and the sharing of my convictions, over and above coming across as wise and perfect.

As my message today is entitled "Forgiveness and Karma", I would now like to move on to Karmic Law, as this subject is indirectly connected to forgiveness. Originally and etymologically, the meaning of 'karma' in Sanskrit is: action or reaction. It represents the law of cause and effect that governs the whole universe, including humanity. This law is also known as the law of compensation.

In a nutshell, we reap what we sow. The fate of each individual is determined by the way in which they apply their free-will. The course of their life is usually





In a nutshell, we reap what we sow.

connected to the choices, good or bad, that they may make at any given moment. I therefore come back to the concept of responsibility that I brought up at the beginning of this message. Each act is followed by an effect, from the tiniest and most insignificant thing to the greatest and most important.

Karma is not necessarily negative. In what we do daily, it is pretty much neutral, or even positive. It is just a logical reaction, the obvious consequence of our actions, and also of our words and our thoughts. The Law of Karma does not conceive itself or measure itself as mankind sees and measures, but it is every bit as clear, unchanging, and real as all the other laws and principles that are easier for the human mind to conceive.

All of our actions register in the universal memory and, be it a good or a bad thing, this computer never gets a 'virus' and its hard-drive is indestructible, it only being possible for debts paid off and lessons learnt to be erased, with any luck! Karma is therefore an integral part of the Cosmic Consciousness and, whether instantly or at some future point, in one life or another, we will have to come to terms with what we have done. The more we do this with good grace, the easier it will be.

As soon as the idea of karma is mentioned, we have a tendency to associate it with the negative side of things, and with what we may have done that is bad. The law of karma, however, also applies to the positive aspect of our choices and actions, for it is the expression of divine justice.

At first glance, this is not obvious. How many times have we thought or said "It's not fair!" when we are faced with a problem, major or minor, either for ourselves or someone else. We have all known one or more people who conduct themselves excellently in all respects, yet who undergo great ordeals. Fate seems to be 'having a go at them', and we say that they have no luck at all. In spite of the difficulties and misfortunes they are

subjected to, they remain confident in life, kindly and pleasant. This seems puzzling and incomprehensible to many. These are people who are either erasing karmic debts they may have, or they are accepting the choice they made in incarnating, and thereby agreeing to perfect their evolution more quickly. And if this is not what it is, if it is some kind of putting to the test, then their positive attitude, of which pain and courage may be a part, will open up the gateway to bliss for them - if not in this world, then in another one to come.

Before continuing on with the subject-matter of this message, I would like to come back for a moment to what I just referred to:

that is, the pain and courage of people under duress, who are able to remain positive in their ordeal. They may display strength and dignity, and remain outwardly collected and good-natured; but their distress and their suffering are no easier to tolerate than that of those who, with a great deal of show - or grandstanding, even - broadcast their pain, whether it be physical or emotional. The misfortunes and ordeals inherent to the human condition have consequences and negative effects, no matter what the individual concerned may be - rich or poor, mystic or atheist, or whatever. As I often have the chance of pointing out, the difference lies in the ability, and more importantly in the will, to triumph over what is happening.

Returning to the Law of Karma, which is the expression of divine justice and the law of greatest importance and concern for our present and our future: it is vital to properly understand its functioning, which is constant and unstoppable. The moment that we accept the law of compensation and its consequences for the course of our life, we are obliged to, and are able to, have advance control over our destiny. Let us therefore be sure always to act constructively and well.

If mistakes are inevitable, and not only credited to youth, then we must admit them, in both senses of what that means. Firstly, to admit them means opening our eyes and therefore seeing them. And then secondly, to admit them also means being truly aware of our errors and our poor choices, and putting right whatever these may be, whilst at the same time expressing our regret and, it goes without saying, changing our course. This realisation, while it may not erase everything, helps to improve our likely chances. Whereas misfortune can result from what is called negative karma, then luck can be largely put down to the positive aspect of our karma.

If we want to increase the chances of this, we have no alternative but to act well, and to put all our



force and abilities at the service of what is good. I know that for you, as Rosicrucians, this concept is not an abstract one, and that you know exactly what 'doing good' consists of. The choice is wide and the opportunities many. 'Doing good' consists especially of not harming either others or oneself; then - according to the opportunities we have, the country we are in, the society in which we are evolving, our work, our age, and so on - it consists of caring for and helping those around us, some cause, the planet, etc. Every single act of ours that is constructive and kind, however minor it may be, is important: from a word of politeness or comfort, right up to the giving of our talents, energy, time, and the sensible donating of money.

Doing good is also, and above all, the mystic work that you perform daily, or even occasionally. The expression of good is found, for example, in the system for spiritual aid that our Order offers, in the fraternity that we show among ourselves, in the echo that the word "peace" finds in our hearts, whether that be Peace Profound or inner peace, peace between nations and people, or that universal peace that we the members of A.M.O.R.C. celebrate each year at a special ceremony.

Each one of us knows how to do good and give it concrete expression. As we get older, and our strength diminishes and we have to give up certain things, we are usually left with our heart and our mind. We will reap the most wonderful fruits of all the good we have stored up, in this incarnation or later on. The question I am most often asked, along with our Officers and our Lecturers, is whether an ordeal, often a difficult and unhappy one, has to be the result of karma. The implementation of karmic law must not be felt and experienced as a divine punishment or reward, but as the logical outcome of our actions. It is therefore important not to confuse karma with ordeal. Whereas all negative karma generates an ordeal that could be described as things 'catching up', not every ordeal is karmic.

We can be the victim of an accident, get a serious illness, or find ourselves materially destitute without that being linked to the law of compensation. To state the opposite would amount to thinking that God favours suffering, just like certain religions state. We can be tested physically and spiritually, and come gloriously out of the experience exceeding ourselves or, if we cannot change things, at least accepting them philosophically. Generally, even if we are not immediately aware of it, we are good at overcoming the obstacle that stands before us.

Whilst not all the problems we encounter are the result of negative karma, some may be. But whichever way it is, we should go through this 'putting to the test' with courage, and win through. In all times, even the most wise and the greatest initiates have been tested during their lives, sometimes as far as torture and death. Often that was part of their mission. There are many examples you will know of.

Is it necessary to know whether the problems we currently have are of karmic origin, or are a lesson to be learnt? I do not know. But if the answer is important to you and will affect your reactions and your choices, then the only way of finding your answer is by means of what comes to you intuitively and then, if necessary, by meditating. Signs may also be given to you, for example in a dream or in something you read. But whether or not you are enlightened as to the source of the ordeal, in all cases you will have to face it.

If you think that the misfortune you are going through, large or small, is of karmic origin, you can humbly express your realisation to the God of your Heart, spiritually make amends, and ask, in so far as is possible, for your cosmic burden to be lightened. For this, we come back to the forgiveness and the leniency that we are seeking. If the request is genuine, and is accompanied by concrete action with the purpose of succeeding, then it is possible that mercy may be shown or help be given to you. "Help yourself, and heaven will help you!"

To conclude, the Law of Karma is a law of love which helps us to become aware, and to perfect our evolution. It compels us to put our free-will into action, to make preferably the right choices, and to take on board the saying "Know Yourself."

We will reap the most wonderful fruits of all the good we have stored up.





Sanctum Musings



by Kenneth U Idiodi, FRC

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Mastering Decisive Action

THERE IS A NIGERIAN proverb on decisiveness which says:

“A chicken running across a highway will rarely be hit by a moving vehicle because it will dart across without hesitation. On the contrary, a cat is often run over. Being a more sensitive animal, it more readily quivers, ducks and jumps with fear and indecision at the sound and sight of fast moving vehicles. Invariably it gets knocked down because its undue attentiveness to the dangers of highway makes it clumsy in its attempt to cross over.”

The daily life of an average person involves taking one decision after another. These decisions chart the path of our experiences. Our success or failure, our joy or sorrow, our health or sickness, and our peace of mind or agitation are all to a large extent determined by the decisions we make. The inability to take a decision sometimes arises when we have doubts concerning two or more possible alternatives or courses of action. The problem with indecision is that it paralyzes action even at a time when some form of action is desperately required. Not only will

an indecisive person be unable to achieve much in life, he will also be an easy target for the vicissitudes of life.

However, a decision hastily taken could have disastrous consequences. A period of reflection is necessary before arriving at a decision. A quotation from the 1751 English translation of the Tibetan book of wisdom “*Unto Thee I Grant*” says:

“As one who runneth in haste and leapeth over a fence may fall into a pit on the other side, which he doth not see; so is the man that plungeth suddenly into any action before he hath considered the consequences thereof, and the compensation which The Law will exact.”

But once a decision has been taken, action should follow immediately. Another quote from this book says:

“Whatever thou resolvest to do, do it quickly. Defer not till evening what the morning may accomplish.”

The application of this principle can have a tremendously positive impact on what we achieve on a



daily basis and should not be overlooked as a technique for attaining our desires. It is actually easy to apply even though there are a few human weaknesses that can stand in the way of its application. And the biggest obstacle in this regard is the fear of failure.

Courage and Humility

The irrational feeling of anxiety that arises from facing the unknown is called fear. Unlike caution which is based on a comprehensive knowledge of the danger being confronted, fear is based on ignorance. It takes only courage to confront and overcome fear. Without courage, Man would have remained a wild beast because man is born in ignorance and has had to contend with the unknown from inception. It is the fear of the unknown that forms the doubts that stand in the way of a well-made decision, causing hesitation. The limitations of the human being make his every endeavour fraught with some measure of risk. Every decision and act is in effect a calculated risk but act we must!

When the results of our actions fall below our expectations we naturally feel bothered. Unfortunately, some persons are greatly disturbed or even devastated by what they term to be failure. The mere thought of the word 'failure' can cause sleepless nights or nightmares to many who have been brought up to believe that it is the worst possible thing that could happen to anyone. A closer look into this will in most cases reveal a problem of the ego. The tormenting question "*what will people think of me now?*" has driven many to suicide after a perceived failure.

A large ego stands in the way of achievement by increasing the fear of failure and causing indecisiveness. If we play down on our ego, we will not see failure as the end

of the world but rather as a phase of learning. Humility has the power of transmuting failure into success; every failure being a stepping stone towards eventual success. With humility we can dare to take action immediately after we have arrived at a good decision. However, we must learn how to take good decisions. And this requires the application of sound reasoning guided by intuition and supported by the power of imagination.

Applying Reason

When we are in a challenging situation, it is necessary to understand exactly what we are facing. This understanding will help us in our attempt to find a solution. By using our reasoning power, we can mentally identify the underlying causes of a problem. There could be several factors which

when taken together will shed light on the situation.

If for example, an office worker has received a hint that he is at risk of losing his job he must try to find out how this has come about. If business is slow and the company has a policy of laying-off workers in periods of economic

downturn, this would give some explanation of the situation. If the company also has the policy of using the recommendations of supervisors when reducing staff strength, he will have a further explanation of why his job in particular is at risk if he has had several clashes with his supervisor. With this understanding, he would be better equipped to make appropriate decisions.

Inductive reasoning is a method of reasoning whereby an inference is made from a particular observation. In other words, from the careful observation of a particular incident, we can reason out the general principles at work. In another type of reasoning called deductive reasoning we start with a general principle in order to arrive at a particular conclusion or application. For example, a married woman who feels that her husband does not show enough love to her may consider the mystical principle of love which simply states that love begets love. Applying this principle to her particular situation would mean that she could get her husband to show more love to her by simply directing more love to him.

Clearly, our ability to make good decisions will be enhanced if we develop the habit of spending some time to think things over beforehand. However, some decisions that may have appeared very reasonable at the time they were taken could still end up being poor decisions. When we are using our powers of reasoning, we can judge a situation only by the facts known to us. We are bound to

“Our ability to make good decisions will be enhanced if we develop the habit of spending some time to think things over beforehand.”



misjudge a situation when there are too many relevant facts unknown to us. And since this is frequently true, reasoning on its own is not sufficient; we must also be guided by our intuition.

Relying on Intuition

In 1 Corinthians 1:25 of the Christian Bible we read:

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

The limitations of the conscious mind can be overcome by relying on the deeper powers and intelligence of the Cosmic which operate in man as the subconscious mind.

The powers available to man through the subconscious mind are yet to be fully understood or harnessed by the majority of men and women. The intelligence and power of the subconscious mind are better appreciated when a study is made of the internal functioning of the human body. The ingenious internal functioning that is necessary for simply taking a walk is such that scientists have been unable to build robots that can walk with the fluid grace of the human being. Each muscle has its own sensory organs that enable it to be conscious of its rate of stretching, contraction, length and delivery of force.

Neurons from these sensory organs feed this information into the process of muscle activation. As the limb is moved, more information such as mental anticipation and the momentum of the limb are also transmitted by neurons. This information is fed into the muscular effort in order to produce dynamic equilibrium and efficiency. This complex activity of neurons carrying signals between different groups of muscles and the brain is controlled by the subconscious mind and happens without our being aware of it. The involuntary and largely unconscious activities of body systems such as the Nervous System, the Circulatory System, the Immune System, the Digestive System, and the Endocrine System are of vital importance to the sustenance of life and are under the control of the subconscious intelligence.

This powerful Cosmic Intelligence also provides ideas to the conscious mind which come as self-evident flashes of intuition. Psychologically speaking, intuition may be

said to be the unconscious combining of ideas in the memory to produce a new thought which then passes unexpectedly into conscious awareness. From a mystical viewpoint, intuition is the extension of the Divine Mind which operates as Man's inner consciousness and is commonly experienced as a hunch. Intuition has served to protect many persons from unforeseen danger. In a typical example of this, a young man once avoided a fatal accident by heeding to an intuitive warning to postpone a particular journey. He had actually purchased a travel ticket and had boarded the ill-fated bus but chose to disembark being unable to rid himself of the ominous feeling gnawing his insides. A few minutes after the bus left the station, it was involved in a ghastly accident with no survivors.

Intuition can also provide solutions to problems we face in the present as well as reveal the possibilities of the future. On many occasions, intuition may urge us to act in a way that may go against our rational judgment. When this occurs, many persons make the mistake of ignoring their intuitive impulses, preferring instead to rely on what appears more rational only to later face regret. This may be especially true for individuals who have developed a powerful intellect that tends to dominate all

other mental powers. The power of intuition could however be leveraged or enhanced by the proper application of the power of imagination.

Using the Imagination

The intuition can come as a clear, unshakable, self-evident impression. However, it can also come as a subtle impression that is easily overlooked. When we put our imagination to work on the subtle impression, we can give it more force. Imagination is the conscious constructive process of the mind by which mental forms

are combined to form a new mental creation that is yet to exist in the outer world.

By forming the habit of contemplating on subtle impressions and turning them around in our minds, we can use our imagination to find a way of taking them into account in whatever we wish to do. For example, a business man listening to a business proposal that appears to meet all his standards and expectations may yet have a sense that something is missing. Turning these around in his mind may cause him to do further research and checks



that could lead him to discovering a major flaw in the deal.

Interestingly, as we do this regularly and consistently, we will find that our imagination is automatically triggered off whenever we receive these subtle intuitive impressions. And in due course, our intuition will always come as strong comprehensive messages heightened by the imagination. When we have gone through the three points of our triangle of reasoning, intuition and imagination, we will come to a clear resolution or decision. At this stage we must act immediately. This requires willpower.

Developing Willpower

The will to act is entirely dependent on the decision to act. Ideally, a resolution should flow seamlessly into its corresponding action such that there is little to distinguish between the decision and the action. Any delay or break in this natural flow can result in a total breakdown of the process. To hold back after a decision has been made is to become indecisive. The delay serves not only to negate the decision but also causes a general weakening of willpower. Our achievements in life are directly proportional to our willpower. Every great achievement in life is a testimony to an impressive application of willpower by at least one individual.


Many persons find that the strength of their willpower is affected by their state of mind and body. However, some persons appear to maintain a strong will regardless of

emotional or physical health constraints. The secret of a strong will lies in the habit of acting immediately once a decision has been made.

Habits are formed when an activity is repeated often enough to be taken as the norm by the subconscious intelligence. When this happens the subconscious anticipates the activity and proactively supports it and even takes away most of the effort of carrying it out from the conscious mind. So by practicing the art of immediate action, we form a habit that will lead to mastery over willpower aided by the cosmic powers resident in the subconscious mind.

The mastery of life begins with attaining mastery over willpower. All human potentials have to be awakened into outer expression by an application of effort and therefore the exercise of the will. This is the battle of life we all have engage in. As we awaken the powers of self, we must apply them towards making life a reflection of the noblest ideals we are capable of conceiving. This is the Great Work and acting quickly on our resolutions will greatly aid us in its accomplishment.

"I desire only to know the truth, and to live as well as I can... and, to the utmost of my power, I exhort all other men to do the same...I exhort you also to take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict."
-- SOCRATES --



True Knowledge

by Jacob Boehme (1574 – 1625)

The best treasure that a man can attain unto in this world is true knowledge, even the knowledge of himself: For man is the great mystery of God, the microcosm or complete abridgement of the whole universe. He is the mirandum Dei opus, God's masterpiece, a living emblem and hieroglyph of eternity and time. And therefore, to know whence he is and what his temporal and eternal being and well-being are, must needs be that one necessary thing, to which all our chief study should aim, and in comparison of which all the wealth of the world is but dross, and a loss to us.

Signaturum Rerum ('The Signature of all Things'), 1621



Al-Ghazali



11th Century Mystic

by *Connie James*

THE SUFI MYSTIC Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), stands out as a beacon among the world's most illustrious philosophers and mystics. He attained a thorough grasp of Neoplatonism, equalled its learned exponents and surpassed them by delving into the profundities which they neglected. His Sufi method of interpreting symbols was adopted by Sigmund Freud over 800 years later.

Considering the state the world finds itself in at the moment, it is interesting to read the thoughts of a Muslim mystic of the 11th Century from a time of great change in Eurasia when the old order was disintegrating. This led to many smaller states emerging, each of whom vied with the others in attracting men of letters and culture into their orbit.

In the Middle East, the Persian-speaking Seljuk Turkish Sultans ruled an empire and controlled the Sunni Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad as his 'protector', while from Egypt the Shi'ite Fatimid Imam-Caliphs controlled a large empire covering North Africa and the Levant. The Caliphs

in Baghdad had little effective authority beyond the city suburbs, though nominally they were the suzerains of the Seljuk Sultans.

This was a time of great transition, the Golden Age of Islam was long gone and the Crusades, which came as a complete shock to the sophisticated and cultured society that the Muslim world had settled into, began during al-Ghazali's lifetime. After being attacked from the West on one front, some 150 years after his death the Mongols swept down on Iraq from the east, destroyed Baghdad utterly and extinguished the Abbasid caliphate.

Al-Ghazali was born in 1085, in Tus, in the eastern Persian province of Khorasan. In his autobiography, he tells us that from his youth he thirsted after truth. The study of philosophy, *Kalam* or theology, and Ismaili (Fatimid) esoteric doctrine did not quench his thirst. After spending years in study and reflection, he was appointed professor at the prestigious Nizamiyya University in Baghdad by the Vizier Nizam al-Mulk, who was also from Tus.



His thoughts brought him to the conclusion that the Sufi adepts derive their insights ultimately from the niche of prophetic light. For him, the essence of mysticism was simply the confession of God's unity. This meant the recognition that God was the sole being and the sole light of the universe. God cannot be known through discourse or speculation or through union with him. Rather, he could be known through his self-unveiling in the wake of constant observation. According to al-Ghazali, the seers or knowers perceive God through a 'veil of light'. The highest class of knowers, called by him 'those who have arrived', are alone able to understand that the celestial world along with its intelligences, are all subject to the Creator.

Al-Ghazali's mystical experience stopped short of the claim of union with God; instead, the concept was replaced by that of 'confession of unity'. Philosophers had to be careful, as al-Hallaj had been convicted on a charge of blasphemy by a jury who considered his concept of union with god as self-deification that could not be tolerated. He tried to link the Sufi way and his own theory of knowledge, a gnosis, where intuitive ecstatic knowledge is attained through personal experience that conveys absolute certainty.

His Works

Of the scores of books he wrote, the *Ihya Ulum ad-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) is regarded as al-Ghazali's masterpiece; a monumental composition of forty books or tracts. One great Sufi master (Sheikh) remarked that if all the standard books on science, religion and the arts were destroyed and the *Ihya Ulum ad-Din* managed to survive, human knowledge could be restored on the basis of its contents.

Another Sheikh is said to have read the book twenty-five times and at each completion he feasted his disciples and the poor. The *Ihya* represents the standard exoteric lore of Sufism, the 'Science of Practical Religion', whose aim is the attainment of outward and inward piety achieved through learning, discipline and instruction; whereas the esoteric constitutes the 'Science of Revelation' from the *Ihya* we learn of...

"...a light that shines in the soul when it is cleansed and purified of its blameworthy qualities; through this light is revealed the truth of several things whose names have hitherto often been heard and to which ambiguous and obscure meanings have been attached. Through it, these truths are clarified until the true knowledge of the essence of God is attained..."

The first book of the Revival, the *Kitab al-Ilm* (Book of Knowledge) outlines some of al-Ghazali's ideas concerning the morality and duties of the mystic student on the Path. Below you will find the main ideas set out in these ten duties, as an insight into Islam and Islamic mysticism.

The First Duty

The student must purify his soul from impure traits and blameworthy characteristics, because knowledge is the worship of the heart, the prayer of his inner self, and the oblation of his inward being before God. It is more important to avoid the impurities of the heart than to avoid (exclusively) physical impurities, since, besides their abomination in this world, the impurities of the heart, anger, lust, rancour, envy and pride, are fatal in the world to come.

The Second Duty

The student must reduce to a minimum his ties with worldly affairs and leave his family and country because such ties occupy his time and divert his attention. Furthermore, as God has not given man two minds, the more the mind divides its attention among several things, the less capable it is to comprehend the truth. Such a mind is like a stream, the water of which flows in several directions only to be absorbed in part by the earth and in part by the air with the result that nothing is left for irrigation of planted fields.

The Third Duty

The student must not scorn knowledge nor exalt himself over the teacher, but rather, entrust to the teacher the conduct of his affairs and submit to his advice, just as



The location of Khorasan, where al-Ghazali was born.





A manuscript from the Mamluk period (1250-1517) in Egypt and Syria. This is Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali's al-Tabr al-Masbuk fi Nasihat al-Muluk wa al-Wuzara wa al-Wulat (MS:172.2:G41tbA) being a manual of advice composed for rulers, ministers and governors on how they should govern their realms. It was probably reproduced in Egypt at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

the patient would submit to a sympathetic and clever physician. He should humble himself before his teacher, and through service, seek reward and honour.

A manifestation of the student's pride is his reluctance to heed the advice of anyone except the popular and well-known teachers. Whatever the teacher should recommend to the pupil, the latter should follow, putting aside his own opinion, since his teacher's faults are more useful to him than his own right judgements and because experience would reveal details that might be strange but are nevertheless, very useful.

The Fourth Duty

The student must at first pay no attention to the numerous differences of opinion that exist among people, whether in the secular sciences or in the sciences of the hereafter, because they would confuse and perplex his mind, cool his enthusiasm and cause him to despair of ever learning anything. Rather, he should first master the one and only praiseworthy way satisfactorily to his teacher and then attend to the other schools of thought and questionable ideas.

He should be on the lookout to see whether his teacher is capable of reaching independent opinions or is in the habit of repeating those of the different schools and the comments that have been made concerning them, because the influence of such a teacher is more misleading than it is helpful.

The Fifth Duty

The student seeking knowledge must not allow any kind of praiseworthy knowledge to escape him without carefully examining it, in order to become familiar with its aims and purposes. Should time permit, he should take it up in detail. Otherwise, he should address himself to and master the most important while acquainting himself with the rest, because the different branches of knowledge are both

supplementary to one another and closely interrelated.

Besides, one of the immediate benefits of such acquaintance is that the student will no longer be hostile to branches of knowledge other than his own, a hostility born of ignorance because ordinarily, men are enemies to the things they do not know. Knowledge, whether higher or lower, either leads men to God or helps them a little on their way. In this respect, knowledge is classified in relation to its ability to draw them nearer to their goal, namely God, or how far it can send them away from that goal.

The Sixth Duty

The student must not study every branch of knowledge at the same time, but should observe some kind of order and begin with the most important. Life is ordinarily too short to enable a person to pursue all the branches of knowledge. It is therefore wise to acquire the best of everything, satisfying oneself, so to speak, with the mere tasting of it; at the same time directing whatever power one has left, after having obtained all available knowledge, towards mastering that noblest of all sciences, the science of the hereafter, including the science of practical religion as well as the science of revelation. The goal of the Science of Practical Religion is *revelation*, and the goal of revelation is to 'know' God.



A large stone placed in honour of al-Ghazali in Mashhad, the capital of the Khorasan province.



The Mausoleum (also known as haruniyah) of al-Ghazali in Tus, Khorasan. Haruniyah was renovated recently and a grave with epitaph ascribed to al-Ghazali is located on the entrance of the monument. The grave of Husayn Khedive Jam, the renowned scholar on the life and works of al-Ghazali is also located near this grave.



The student must work hard to possess that secret that is not found in the paraphernalia of the jurists and theologians, and which he cannot attain except through diligent search. In short, the noblest and highest of all sciences is to know God. This science is like a sea, the depth of which cannot be determined. In this science, the highest rank is that of the prophets, then that of the saints and finally those who follow.

The Seventh Duty

No one should study a branch of knowledge before he has mastered the branch that precedes it; for knowledge is of necessity so arranged that one branch prepares the student for the next. Whoever observes this rule will succeed. In every branch of knowledge to be pursued by the student, his aim should be to attain the one above it.

He should never declare a certain science useless because its protagonists disagree among themselves or because of the error of one or more of them, or because with their actions they violate the ordinances of their own science. Each case should be determined separately, as not every branch of knowledge can be independently mastered by every person.

The Eighth Duty

The student must know how to ascertain the noble nature of this science, the nobility of its fruit and the authenticity of its principles, as well as other sciences. Take, for example, the sciences of religion and medicine. The fruit of the first is eternal life, whereas the fruit of the latter is the physical life; consequently, the science of religion is nobler.

The fruit has priority over the principles. Similarly, it becomes evident that the noblest of all sciences is the science of knowing God, the angels, books and prophets, as well as that of knowing the path that leads to these sciences. Seek therefore nothing else and treasure nothing besides.

The Ninth Duty

The student's purpose must be the adornment and beautification of his inner self with virtue and at the end, nearness to God. His aim should not be the attainment of authority or influence, nor contention with foolish men and boasting before his elders. But if his aim was to draw near God, he would inevitably seek that which is closest to it, namely, the Science of the Hereafter. He must not however, think that whatever falls short of the highest rank is worthless. Whoever seeks God through knowledge, no matter what kind, is sure to profit and advance.

The Tenth Duty

The student must know the relation of the different sciences to the goal, so he does not attach more importance to nearby, inconsequential matters than to remote but important things. The word important signifies anything that is of import to him; and nothing is of real import save his fate in this world and the next. There is no goal except meeting God and, despite the fact that very few in this world realise its significance, in this achievement lies all bliss.

Epilogue

In later life al-Ghazali returned to Tus, where he remained until his death in December 1111. He was honoured with such distinguished titles as the 'Proof of Islam' and the 'Adornment of Religion'. While introducing many Greek philosophical concepts into Islamic thought, he also challenged various aspects of Greek thought and the Arab Neoplatonism of the Muslim philosophers Avicenna and al-Farabi.

In his writings he demonstrated a distrust of scholastic theology and intellectualism. Furthermore, he secured a



definite reconciliation of Islamic orthodoxy with Sufism. Not that the two were separate realities, but with his official promulgation, the clerics on the one hand, came to appreciate the endeavours of the Sufis, and the Sufi mystics themselves on the other hand, realised the importance of observing the revealed Law and maintaining a balance between the external and internal aspects of religion.

Like many other revivalists, he had sought refuge in mysticism as a means of ascertaining a better approach to experiencing truth and of obtaining a direct perception of reality; a conversion brought about by despair in a systematic doubt in intellectual veracity and by denial of naïve belief in matters of mere authority. In this respect, al-Ghazali anticipated René Descartes, the father of modern philosophy.

Moreover, his intuitive knowledge has been deeply absorbed into Western philosophy. In medieval times his writings were tossed into the flames by Muslim fanatics. Less radical, but perhaps more cynical, Christian thinkers employed particular ideas and dismissed the rest. Deservedly, al-Ghazali has been hailed in both East and West as the greatest religious authority on Islam after the Prophet. He was the leader in Islam's encounter with Greek philosophy, in which Islamic theology ultimately emerged victorious and enriched, and in which Islamic Neoplatonism received a blow from which it never recovered.

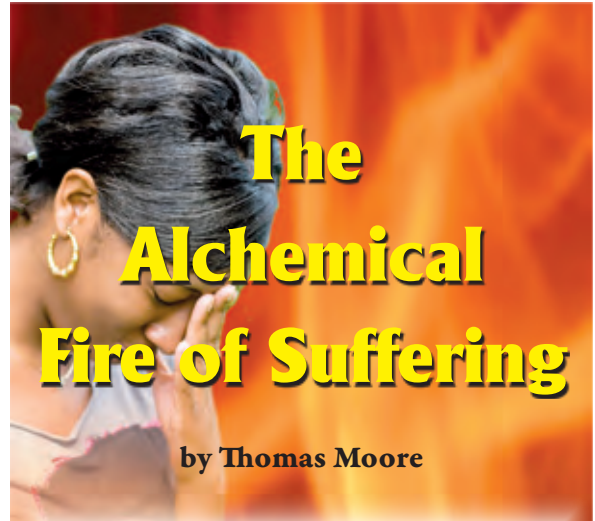
And finally, he managed to bring Islamic orthodoxy and mysticism into closer contact. With his passing, Islamic philosophy was immeasurably enriched and continued on the path that has led it down to the world we find ourselves in today.

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“Knowledge exists potentially in the human soul like the seed in the soil; by learning, the potential becomes actual.”

-- Abu Hamid al-Ghazali



AN ALCHEMICAL FIRE turns base metals into gold. But, allegorically, what is ‘the fire’, what is ‘the dross’ and what is ‘the gold?’ The answer is simple: fire represents suffering, dross represents bad habits and gold represents perfection. We should be thankful for the coming of fire, for without it, the purification process cannot proceed. Similarly, we should be thankful for the absence of fire, for without it, rest and peace can be found. We are not meant to undergo constant suffering, only experience it when necessary.

So, what is this fire of suffering, what is its purpose? It takes many forms: physical pain, mental discomfort, economic hardship and social disability to name but a few. As we are reminded in the Tibetan manuscript *Unto Thee I Grant The Economy of Life*, the most severe physical suffering is the briefest, while the longer-lived variety is milder. Mental anguish is usually a sign we are out of tune with the Cosmic Mind in a physical or psychic manner. Economic hardship and social problems usually reflect the same conditions, and we are aware that something is amiss. The fire is there to remind us that we can act to alleviate our pain by removing the cause of our discomfort.

In short, the fire of suffering is Nature's way of reminding us about the laws of nature. We are violating some of these laws in some way, and the Universal Mind provides us with lessons, the purpose of which is to help us progress toward our goal of ultimate perfection.



The Importance of Being

by *Mary Sheriff*

HOW MANY OF US come across areas of our studies where we feel that the subject being discussed is beyond our comprehension? We cannot immediately grasp and retain the knowledge or information being fed to us. We listen to those who are highly educated in various subjects, and long to attain their standard.

Because we are seekers, we attempt to catch up and cover lost ground. Perhaps we have not in the past, for various reasons, had the opportunity to study, or perhaps we have been neglectful, even lazy. Whatever the reason, our instincts finally catch up with us and we set out anew on the path of knowledge.

For this reason alone, many of us became members of AMORC. A wise step, for there is much assistance on this path. Still, occasionally, one is overcome by this feeling of failure to grasp all that is being offered. It is for this reason that the teachings proceed in a slow and steady spiral.

On the other hand, there are those amongst us who are impatient, and feel that they could digest far more in less time. These comparisons highlight the fact that we are individuals, here to learn by our experiences, for the development of the Soul Personality.

Each individual is as important as the next. It is vital that we remember this. Those who have more knowledge on a specific subject should consider themselves well blessed, and always be willing to impart this knowledge to those who are anxious to acquire it. They should make the effort to become familiar with the needs of others.

On the other side of the coin, those who feel at times deficient in some areas, should persevere and remember one very important fact: that he or she always has a lot to offer. They are as valuable in many ways as the brilliant scholar, for they often possess more understanding of life and human nature. If they apply this in everyday life, they can do so much for the benefit of their fellow human beings. In this way, and by the application of the teachings



of the Rosicrucian Order, they will find that they attract the love and friendship of those who they felt were leaving them behind in the field of knowledge.

The advantage of knowledge is that it teaches us to select that which is beneficial, and to avoid that which is injurious to both our physical and mental welfare. The result is harmony and the discovery of the inner self.

Francis Bacon, when explaining the advantages of knowledge and its excellence in diffusing happiness states:

“Let us conclude with the dignity and excellency of knowledge and learning, in that whereunto man’s nature must aspire.”

So we, as members of the Rosicrucian Order, must aspire to our highest ideals. We can only reach these by example and by precept. We are free to choose our path in life. We have the knowledge of good and evil, with the power of choice determined by our actions, motives and intentions. As Maurice Maeterlinck wrote:

“It is not by renouncing the joys that are near us that we shall grow wise, but as we grow wise, we unconsciously abandon the joys that are now beneath us.”

May we continue on the path extending Light, Life and Love to those we meet, thus making others aware of the Rosicrucian way of life.





Theory and Practice of Rosicrucian Living

by *Grand Master*
Sven Johansson

WE ALL HAVE OUR personal ways of viewing life, its laws and how we interact with them. But we don't always agree on what we perceive to be reality. Indeed, how could it be different? The great diversity of life on our planet clearly implies there must exist a great diversity of personal realities. And with humans, virtually identical life situations sometimes lead to sharply different conclusions. In fact, apart from the obvious physiological similarities we humans share with each other, there are thoughts, attitudes and reactions to events that we never share with others, and which thankfully make us unique individuals. Fortunately, the greater part of that uniqueness of thought and living is good and beneficial, both for ourselves and for our wider community.

Over many years of correspondence with Rosicrucians, I have come to realise that there exists a veritable multitude of ways or methods of living that bring people peace and happiness. In many cases, merely the act of making a firm well-considered decision and then sticking with it through thick and thin, is all that is needed to nudge a person ever closer to his or her ideal of happiness and fulfilment. But while these different ways of living usually emerge from deep within the cultural diversity of our planet, what I have noticed is that there are, despite many outward differences, a few specific things that are virtually guaranteed to bring into the lives of people some of the

most sought-after qualities humans can possess; things like peace, harmony, health, happiness, tranquillity, kindness, compassion and suchlike.

In this article I will outline some of the theoretical and practical aspects of the Rosicrucian teachings that I have found particularly helpful in my life. I must stress from the outset that I am not presenting any new, radical theory, and certainly nothing new as far as Rosicrucians are concerned. I am merely outlining what I have personally found helpful over the years through emphasis on certain well-known Rosicrucian principles of living, and you are free to accept or reject any part of it.

Rosicrucians pride themselves in being 'walking question marks' and when better ways of viewing and understanding the mystery of their existence appear on their inner horizons, they avidly seek to unravel those new and potentially greater visions, in fact eagerly incorporate their new insights into their deepest thoughts and beliefs. To one extent or another, whether consciously or subconsciously, we all seek to better understand ourselves and those principles we should be using in guiding our daily living. One could even go so far as to say that this curiosity, this constant desire for 'improvement' and understanding is an innate biological mandate over which we have little control, and perhaps thankfully so!



Yet, although we may have developed ways of doing things that work for us more or less by rote or habit, would it not be so much more satisfying if we could always do these things with a clear and fully satisfying conscious understanding of the rationale or theory upon which our thoughts and actions are based? Of course it would, and I will now outline this theory and practice as applied to my personal life.

THEORY

Before mentioning some of the practical things I try and do deliberately as a personal strategy of evolvment, let me briefly outline the theory upon which I base my thoughts and actions. I will mention six basic principles of existence.

The Law of Singularity or the Monad

The first principle is what I call the *Law of Singularity* or simply the *Monad*. In most philosophies and religions of the world, it is postulated that there exists an ultimate actuality beyond which nothing else can exist. And that within this singularity or monad lies, if not the whole of creation, then at least the whole of creation that we could ever perceive.

The singularity is infinite in every way. It is 'the One', and outside it, nothing else can exist. It is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega of everything that exists, has existed and ever can exist. No thought or concept can ever span it in its entirety; and certainly nothing can go beyond it. From the time of Homer in ancient Greece, the word *Nous* has evolved and morphed and changed subtly in meaning, from 'personal intellect', to 'human intellect', to 'human experience' to 'human potential', to 'human égrégore' to 'world égrégore' or even 'universal égrégore'.

The great Muslim theologian Avicenna referred to it in one of its Classical Greek forms as the 'Active Intellect', analogous to the more modern philosophical expression the 'Mind of God'. However we understand this widely-used and interpreted concept, we are sure to have to acknowledge before long that only approximate agreement is likely ever to emerge over it for as long inflexible religious interpretations exist. But it is a good starting point and a word still used extensively in Rosicrucian writings, so I will refer to the Monad in its more familiar form as simply *Nous*.

The Law of Duality

The second principle is what I call the *Law of Duality*. Whatever we can conceive must have an equal though

opposite mirror image of itself somewhere in the universe, either now, in the past or in the future. In the case of our existence, we are a duality, being composed of two infinite though seemingly opposed qualities of *Nous*, namely *Spirit* from which all matter and energy originate, infused with *Vital Life Force*, the 'carrier' of the individual soul that exists within every human being.

We are matter animated by a soul. We sometimes loosely speak of both as though they were energies. But while this may assist us in intellectually dealing with them as concepts, they are perhaps better described merely as *principles* which transcend all understanding we could ever acquire in the human form.

The Law of the Triangle

The third principle is the well-known Rosicrucian *Law of the Triangle*. Every single thing that can clearly be identified, either physically or conceptually, is the result of the union of two other apparently separate and clearly identifiable things or properties. Every manifestation is the result of two simultaneous causes, in our case, *Spirit* and the *Vital Life Force* which 'carries' with it the unique soul we possess.

These two principles give rise to a third one, called *Consciousness*. And this consciousness manifests in its highest form as the *soul personality* with its tremendous refinement, filtering through like shaded moonlight to the outer personality, which in turn is the character by which we are known.

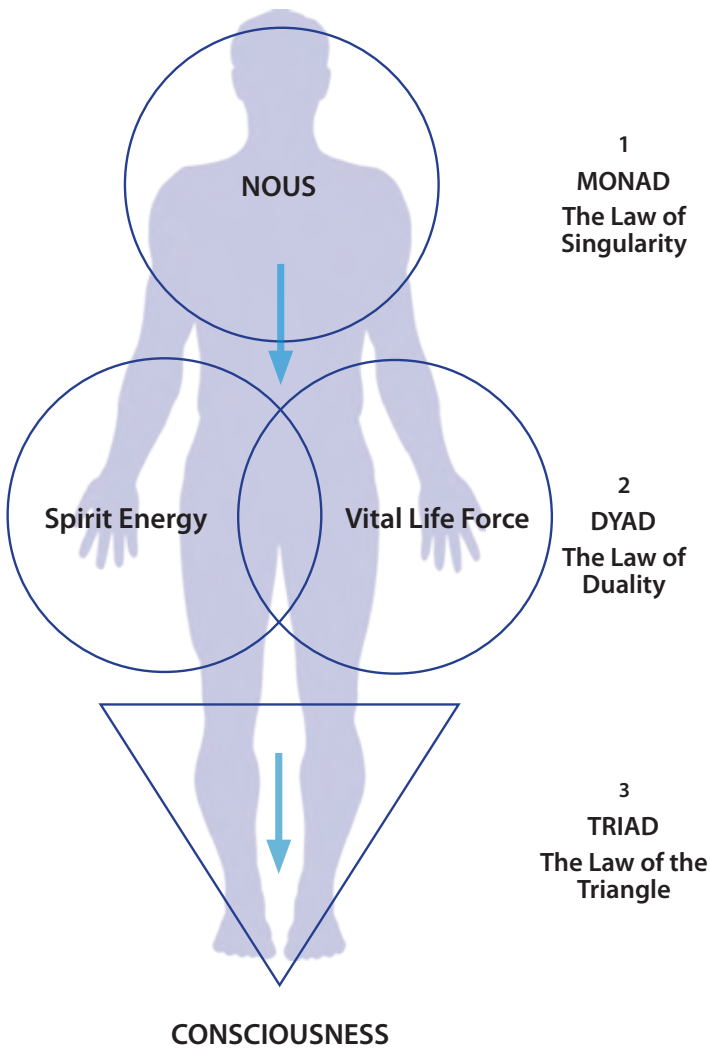
The Law of Compensation

The fourth principle is the equally well-known *Law of Compensation*. Everything we think, say or do has consequences which intimately involve us every step of the way. Simply put, if we do good, we can expect to receive good in return; and if we do bad, then we can expect to receive the same in return. That is the law, very crudely and bluntly stated; the old 'eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth' principle, though on a far more sophisticated level.

On the material plane, the law manifests as Isaac Newton's famous third law of motion: "*For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.*" On the mental, psychic and spiritual planes, it manifests as the famous injunction attributed to the master Jesus: "*Do to others as you would have them do to you.*" In other words, whatever you do, be fully prepared to have that same thing happen to you; otherwise don't do it.

In the realm of inner development, we refer to the law of compensation as the Law of Karma, the word 'karma' originating with the Sanskrit root *krm* which roughly





The first Three Basic Principles of Existence: the Monad, the Dyad and the Triad.

1
MONAD
The Law of Singularity

2
DYAD
The Law of Duality

3
TRIAD
The Law of the Triangle

the consequences of our actions, we will have begun the process of merging our outer self with the soul personality, and will be well on our way to mastering our lives.

Knowing in advance what our thoughts and actions will yield, are a great incentive to doing the 'right thing'. Unlike a physical law, which acts immediately, the law of karma is a law with immense patience and intelligence which metes out the consequences of our actions piecemeal, as and when we are best able to absorb the lessons waiting for us.

The Law of the Reincarnation

The fifth principle is the *Law of Reincarnation*. Whereas all living entities eventually die, are we to believe that their entire awareness simply disappears, completely and utterly, never ever again to reappear? Surely not, for what possible purpose could be served by consciousness being terminated permanently with every death? Whereas the species as a whole may continue, and through its genes even progress and evolve, this would not be the case for the individual member of that species.

No one can seriously claim to have scientific proof of the existence of reincarnation and, if we were perfectly honest with ourselves, we would freely admit that reincarnation can only be a belief, even though it is a belief based upon deep-seated inner certainties. Many Rosicrucians will agree from their personal experiences that although reincarnation may in fact only be a belief, it is one which is powerfully vouched for by the deepest recesses of our being; vouched for not only by the sheer logic and justice that the whole concept of reincarnation brings with it, but most importantly by far, vouched for by a few personal memories and experiences which simply cannot be explained in any other way than that they are distant memories from past lives.

Regrettably, even amongst the millions of people who claim to believe that they have lived before and will live again, very few actually believe this; and their actions prove it! Not only does the law of compensation dictate that they have to pay for their actions, the law of reincarnation ensures that whatever is not paid for in

translates as 'action'. For every act or thought we have, there are consequences, and those consequences we call 'karma in action' or simply compensation. The consequences are like ripples on a pond; they last through time, sometimes only briefly, sometimes much longer. The law says nothing about punishment, nor anything about reward for it is a totally impartial law, delivering like for like, just rewards for just actions. Our thoughts and actions, so to speak, 'press' against the awareness or consciousness of other living beings in the universe, and the pressure of those thoughts and actions have undeniable consequences because the collective consciousness of other living beings 'presses back' and thereby ensures that karma manifests in our lives.

Understanding just what the consequences of our actions are, and exactly how the collective consciousness of the universe presses back at us when we apply pressure to it, this is the heart of the matter, and what we are seeking to learn; for once we have mastered our understanding of



this life, will be paid for in another. If such people fully understood and accepted deep down that these are not mere hypotheses, but actual laws of nature as inviolate as the law of gravity, they could not possibly engage in the thoughtless acts of brutality and selfishness that we see taking place in so many places throughout the world today.

If everyone fully understood that karma is a fact of life, and that reincarnation is a fact of their existence from which they cannot escape, they would be a whole lot more careful about how they governed their thoughts and actions.

The Law of Light

The sixth and final principle is what I call the *Law of Light*. We allude to our spirituality as a flame of Divinity burning within the deepest recesses of our consciousness; something which constantly eggs us on to seek the Light of spiritual awareness. The Law of Light dictates that all sentient beings, no matter what their form, have no option but to seek out the highest form of spiritual awareness they are capable of perceiving.

As an innate urge, this law ensures that all living creatures, and especially those with some form of self-awareness, will seek in their particular and peculiar ways, to dwell in the Light of spiritual awareness to the greatest extent of their understanding. Dwelling in Light is the ultimate goal of humanity, and to the extent that all human beings have within them a spark of Divinity, they are all to one extent or another, already dwelling in the Light of spiritual awareness.

Truly dwelling in this Light, and being fully aware of its presence in our lives every moment of every day, is our final destination and marks the culmination of our journey; the achievement of perfection on earth and full mastery of life. Our every thought and action is inherently geared to reach this exalted state of being and, fortunately, the Light of spirituality is no stranger to us. With perseverance we know we will one day in this life or another, reach an awareness of the goodness and sanctity of Divinity to such an extent that we will from then on truly be dwelling in Light.

PRACTICE

That then summarises the theory. But how do I use these theoretical principles in my daily life? What are the practical consequences of the principles I attempt to apply each day?

First of all, let me reiterate that I find it absolutely essential to have some theory of existence clearly available to me at all times. Without a purpose or reason, there is

“Truly dwelling in this Light, and being fully aware of its presence in our lives every moment of every day, is our final destination and marks the culmination of our journey.”



little point in following any system of thought and action. Even if personal theories are not accurate in all details, in fact, even if they are completely wrong, the only thing that ultimately matters is that they are theories which give us satisfaction and happiness, and are logical and just to our inner sensibilities.

It gives me great fulfilment in life to believe that I understand at least some of the inner workings of my being and that from this understanding have generated several practical guideposts that I can use to ensure that my thoughts and actions lead me along my chosen path. I will mention four practical things that I do quite deliberately and as a personal strategy to keep myself upon my chosen path.

Reverence for the God of my Heart

The first practical thing I do is to revere above all else, the God of my Heart. If you are of a religious bent, in plain simple words this means: *“love God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your understanding.”* If you are of a non-religious bent it means: *“love the principle governing your life and everything in the universe, and do so with all your heart, all your mind, and all your understanding.”*

In my case, I had a strict religious upbringing and can unashamedly say that I take a religious approach to this



and love the God I have come to know with an intensity that surpasses all else. Having this love first and foremost means that the very principle behind my existence is way and above the most important thing there is. Loving the God of our Understanding unreservedly, means that we are constantly maintaining an attraction between our mundane outer self and the most sublime we can ever hope to know.

This is the most important of all principles by which I live, and gives me the very real sensation that through every happy and unhappy moment, in success and in failure, I have beside me the constant presence of the God of my Heart. Because of this I can truly say that I experience God as a being of immense refinement walking with me wherever I go, constantly at my side and ready to help if I will but allow it to do so.

Gratitude for the Privilege of Life

The second practical thing I do is to adopt a deliberate inner attitude of gratitude for life; and by that I mean gratitude for everything that befalls me, be it good, bad, pleasant or unpleasant; for every experience I have is meant specifically for me, and has specific lessons to impart. It is such an honour to have life and to be allowed to experience it on such a beautiful planet. The more we good-naturedly accept our lessons as given factors from which we cannot escape, no matter how painful they may be, the faster and more thoroughly we progress in our inner evolution.

“Adopt a deliberate inner attitude of gratitude for life and everything that befalls oneself, however unpleasant that might be.”

Although I may cringe and complain about the most painful experiences I have, and sometimes in despair may be heard to mumble “*why me?*” I do so only tongue-in-cheek and still feel great pride and happiness when I manage to overcome hardships, or learn to live with hardship with dignity and full acceptance that this lesson was meant for me and I must do all I can to glean the greatest amount of instruction from it.

Reverence for life and for the privilege I have to be able to experience life in material form here and now, in this solid world, this is a fundamental tenet of my personal philosophy. I understand full well that it is very easy to be this grateful for I have no great aches and pains, and no great physical disabilities or financial hardships to torment me. But it is also my ardent hope and secret prayer that I will, even in suffering, be able to maintain an inner attitude of equanimity, gratitude and reverence for the life I have been given, the only life I know.

Never to Take Offence

The third practical thing I do is to deliberately avoid taking offence for anything, no matter what the circumstances. We have all been offended or felt hurt by what others or even general events in life have done to us. If we would be perfectly honest with ourselves we would soon realise that the root cause of almost every worrying and unhappy thought we ever have, lies precisely in the conscious or unconscious act of feeling hurt or offended for one thing or another.

We have all heard ourselves say many times over things like: “*How dare she say that?*” or “*I think I deserve better treatment than this.*” or “*Who do you think you are to speak to me like that?*” To be sure, I have said it many times, and regretted it every time, even though this regret may not have fully taken hold until well after the adrenaline flow had subsided and my better self had taken control.

We should do our best to analyse the motives for everything we think, say and do, and in this way we will soon see that those motives are not always as pure as the driven snow. Personally I fully realise that without this alertness, this constant self-examination, I could never be fully aware of just when it is that I have taken offence, and it would therefore be impossible to undo the damage that this distorted inner attitude has caused. Once we have taken offence, there is only one ‘right action’ available to us, namely to back out of the situation as quietly and humbly as we can and fully make amends for whatever

“Avoid taking offence for anything.”



damage our offence may have caused, even if that damage was only to our pride.

This is not to say that I accept any and every insult sitting down, nor that I allow myself to be bullied and pushed around. It is simply that the inner attitude I adopt dictates that no matter how I behave outwardly for the moment, I remain at peace as far as possible, and never ever hold a grudge against anyone for what they have done. This at least, is the ideal, and is akin to forgiving always, forgiving without ever being asked to do so, and forgiving for all time. Forgiveness must be instantaneous and leave no residue of bad feeling. It must be done automatically and with good cheer. It must truly come from the heart.

Every act must be at least partially for others

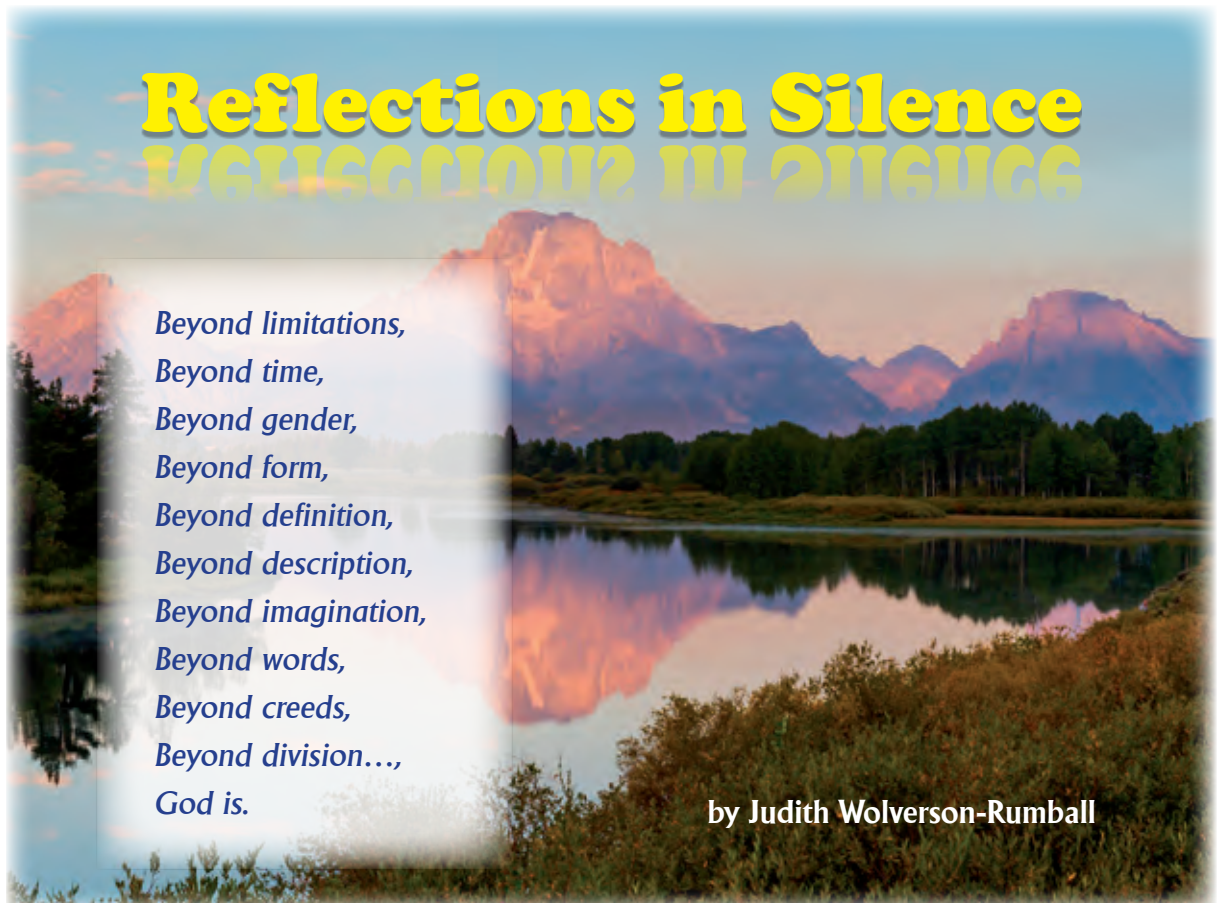
The last practical thing that I wish to mention is that to the best of my ability, I let every significant act be at least partially for the benefit of others and not purely for myself. This may seem a bit idealistic, but do we not live in a society where cooperation and interaction with

others is essential to our well-being? Yes, I believe we do. No person is an island, and no-one can indefinitely live only for him or her self. Eventually life will overtake that person and deliver the lesson that sharing with others of the abundance of blessings that we daily receive, is a condition for continuing to receive those blessings.

Rosicrucians know the law of AMRA whereby they pass on at least part of every blessing they receive, unconditionally, with good cheer and without any expectation of reward. This law operates in our lives as surely as the law of gravity. Watch it work, watch it unfold and manifest in your life the minute you begin co-operating with it, and do so consciously with all the goodness of your heart. Give of your blessings and you will be assured of more. Keep them to yourself and they will assuredly one day end.

*No act of kindness, however small,
is ever wasted...*

ÆSOP (c.620-564 BCE)



Reflections in Silence

*Beyond limitations,
Beyond time,
Beyond gender,
Beyond form,
Beyond definition,
Beyond description,
Beyond imagination,
Beyond words,
Beyond creeds,
Beyond division...,
God is.*

by Judith Wolverson-Rumball



The Rosicrucian Centennial

29 July to 2 August

100 Years of
AMORC

A HUNDRED years of devotion to spiritual, moral and ethical goals of a transcendent nature is bound to leave something good for the world to enjoy. The service that AMORC has rendered to several million people who joyously found and subsequently became part of this august body of seekers of Light, is something to both celebrate and confidently commit to future generations of seekers of spiritual illumination.



The celebrations to mark the centenary of the founding of AMORC were held at Rosicrucian Park in San Jose, California, and at the nearby downtown Fairmont Hotel. Wherever Rosicrucians gathered during those sunny days between 29th July and 2nd August, there were smiles, laughter and good will in abundance.

Over 2,200 members from over 70 countries attended this Rosicrucian Centennial, and the talks, presentations, discourses and group attunements were intellectually stimulating but also, and especially, deeply inspiring.

It would be wonderful to share in the pages of this magazine all of the talks, discourses and presentations that were given, for they were all excellent and brought out the very best of Rosicrucian ideals. But as they are being published in the Rosicrucian Digest later this year, it may be easiest to download a copy from their website www.rosicrucian.org, and get the material there.

For the present issue of the Rosicrucian Beacon therefore, rather than give a detailed diary of the events, a brief pictorial outline of those happy days will follow over the next few pages.

Late on Wednesday afternoon before the fountain at Rosicrucian Park, Emperor Christian Bernard gave a moving address to members assembled in the Peace Garden and around the fountain, after which he removed from one of the sphinxes looking out upon Rosicrucian Park, a metal time capsule which former Emperor and founder of AMORC, Harvey Spencer Lewis, had placed there in 1934. This capsule contained documents that were relevant to the Order in 1934, and assisted by Grand Master Julie Scott, he then placed in the sphinx a new time capsule containing documents relevant to the Order today. This capsule is guaranteed to last at least 100 years without degradation, and we hope that some of our great grand children will one day witness the re-opening of this sphinx again.

Address by the Emperor before the opening of the sphinx.



WE HAVE now, at long last, arrived at the solemn moment that all of us have been waiting for. Welcome to you, and may I express appreciation for your energy in giving your all on the mystical, human, and material planes in order to be here at this World Convention, which I declare officially open.

I am very moved by being here, in Rosicrucian Park. I was fourteen years old when I visited this remarkable place for the first time. Since then, I have come back for different events on many occasions. What moves me all the more is that I know this is the last time I shall preside over a World Convention in San Jose as Emperor. If, in years to come, an international Convention comes to be organised here again, and if my age and my health permit it, I shall be taking part as just a member of AMORC. But in the meanwhile, other Grand Lodges will be having the honour of organising this wonderful fraternal gathering.

Members of AMORC, friends and guests, I now

invite you all to be witness to the solemn act that I am going to carry out, just as did Harvey Spencer Lewis in his time. On 11th July 1934, our Emperor placed in this Sphinx some documents - not secret or mysterious ones - but ones bearing witness to the Rosicrucian principles. Frequently in recent years, I have thought about these records and wondered what they contained, and also whether they had come down through the years in good condition. I had no idea what these documents were, as we have found no trace of a list in the archives of the Supreme Grand Lodge. Such questions resulted in my supporting the proposal made by Grand Master soror Julie Scott, to open up the Sphinx at our World Convention.

I had concerns, however, about what we were going to find, and for this reason I asked our soror to carry out a check on the contents in advance. In accordance with my instructions, and with great care and discretion, this was done. My intuition had been right, because unfortunately it was very difficult to draw up an inventory. The writings had not withstood



the passage of time and the climate. Having been examined, they have been put back in their original place, and are awaiting my symbolic opening of the Sphinx's repository. From what we have found and been able to work out, there were some monographs on the basic Rosicrucian principles, and a Rosicrucian Digest from 1934.

In a few moments, I am going to remove the capsule and give it to the Colombe standing by me. Then at the end of our Ceremony it will be passed on to the Grand Master, whose task it will be to officially place the capsule containing the documents on display in the Rosicrucian Museum, so that you can view it over the next few days. I shall then be putting in new documents, contained in a special capsule designed to last at least 100 years, as follows:

A copy of the Mastery of Life.

The Rosicrucian Code of Life

The two Rosicrucian Manifestos, the *Positio* and the *Appellatio*, and the sealed monograph of the first mailing.

In addition, there will be a certificate signed by all the Grand Masters and Administrators at the most recent meeting of the Supreme Grand Lodge in October 2014.



I shall then be calling forward each Grand Master and Administrator, and giving them a capsule already containing some documents, but with the task of adding texts in their own respective languages to these; they are then to place these documents somewhere within their Grand Lodge or Administration, just as I am now going to do here; I am entrusting them with choosing the most suitable place for Rosicrucians of the future to be able to find them.





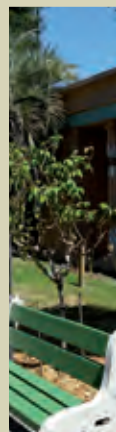
Pictures Without Words

The AMORC Centennial Convention
San Jose, California - 26 July to 2 August

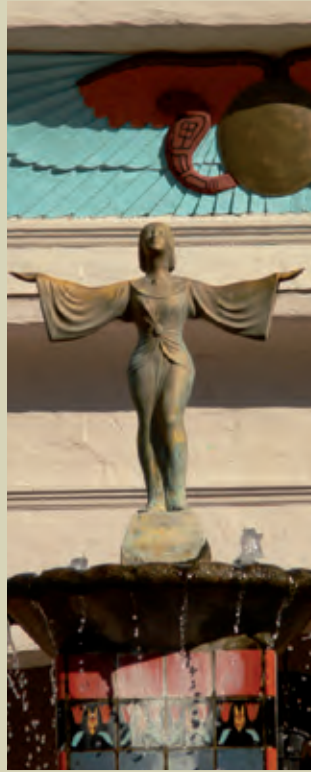


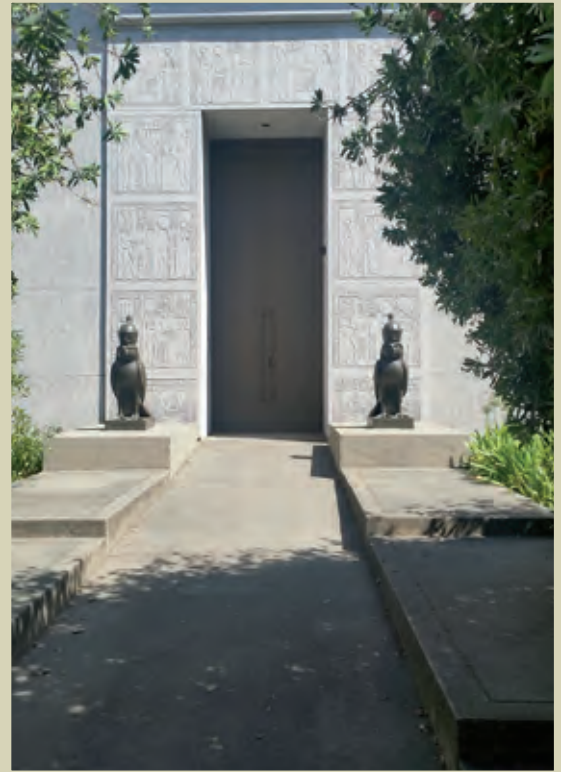
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San Jose, California - 26 July to 2 August

















MICHAEL SENDIVOGIUS

Citizen of the World

The Life of an Alchemist

by Paul Goodall



IN 1617 AT FRANKFURT, the Rosicrucian apologist Michael Maier (c.1568-1622) published his *Symbolae Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum* ('Symbols of the Golden Table of Twelve Nations'). The title page bears the engraved portraits of the twelve great adepts of twelve nations beginning with 'Hermes the Egyptian' and ending with the intriguing 'Anonymous the Sarmatian'. 'Sarmata' was a contemporary 17th century name for a Polish nobleman, as these were believed to have descended from the ancient Sarmatian tribes. Maier gives a clue to the identity of this figure on page 555 by the use of a caption to accompany an illustration of the adept; he is named as *Heliocantharus Borealis* ('Glorifier of the Northern Sun').¹ Moreover, there is a veiled remark in the margin that links this name with the initials M.S.²

Oswald Croll (c.1560-1609) was the first to use this particular name to refer to Michael Sendivogius in his *Basilica Chemica* (1609). Croll was a prominent Rosicrucian³ and physician to Christian of Anhalt (1568-1630), the main architect of the political aspect of Rosicrucianism.⁴ He did this in a cryptic fashion by the use of capital letters within words which when read in sequence, spelled out Sendivogius' real name. Another catalogue of adepts and alchemical authors was produced by Johann Daniel Mylius in his *Opus medico-chymicum* of 1618, which incorporates Maier's list. In his *Viridarium Chymicum* (1624), Daniel Stolcius also refers to Michael Sendivogius as one of the twelve great natural philosophers fully revealing him as 'Michael Sendivogius Polonus'.⁵

He is also mentioned in the writings of other alchemical authors of the early 17th century as an 'unknown philosopher' but as this century wore on, his actual name became more widely known. This obsession with secrecy on the part of Sendivogius in hiding his real name in his writings has led to the vilification of his character by historians and the loss of his correct place in alchemical history until recently.

Beginnings

Michał Sędzimir was born in 1566 in Poland at Lukowica between Kraków and the Tatra mountains. At this time the kingdom of Poland was one of the most powerful countries in Europe, controlling the modern Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia. His father was Jakub Sędzimir and his mother, Katarzyna Pielsz. They were both of noble descent and owned a small estate near Nowy Sacz in the Kraków district. Later, Sendivogius changed his name to 'Sędziwój' after consulting the genealogist Bartłomiej Paprocki.⁶ Sendivogius is the Latinised version of 'Sędziwój'.

Around 1582 he entered the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, one of the great centres of learning in Europe of the Renaissance period. Several of his contemporaries there had formed a group with an interest centred on the



philosophy and teachings of Paracelsus. Polish interest in alchemy was derived largely from the dissemination of the iatrochemistry (the use of medicines, tinctures and the extract of plants) of Paracelsus but also the hermetic philosophy coming out of Florentine Italy following Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Another factor that may be taken into consideration was the extensive mineral and rock salt deposits throughout the country resulting in the expansion of metallurgical and mining activities.

The clergy, however, did not countenance the practice of alchemy, particularly since there were many pseudo-chemists making money by deceit. A short work by Father Stanislaw Poklatecki (1554-1591), *Pogrom Czarnoksiężskie Błędy* ('Rout of the Magicians' Errors, Kraków') of 1595, condemned alchemy as having no value within the human sphere. The group at the university were thus fortunate in having a sympathetic protector in the shape of one Albrecht Laski (1536–1603) who was a powerful personality in society and well known as a pretender to the Polish throne.⁷ He was also instrumental in bringing John Dee and Edward Kelley to visit Poland and Bohemia in 1583.

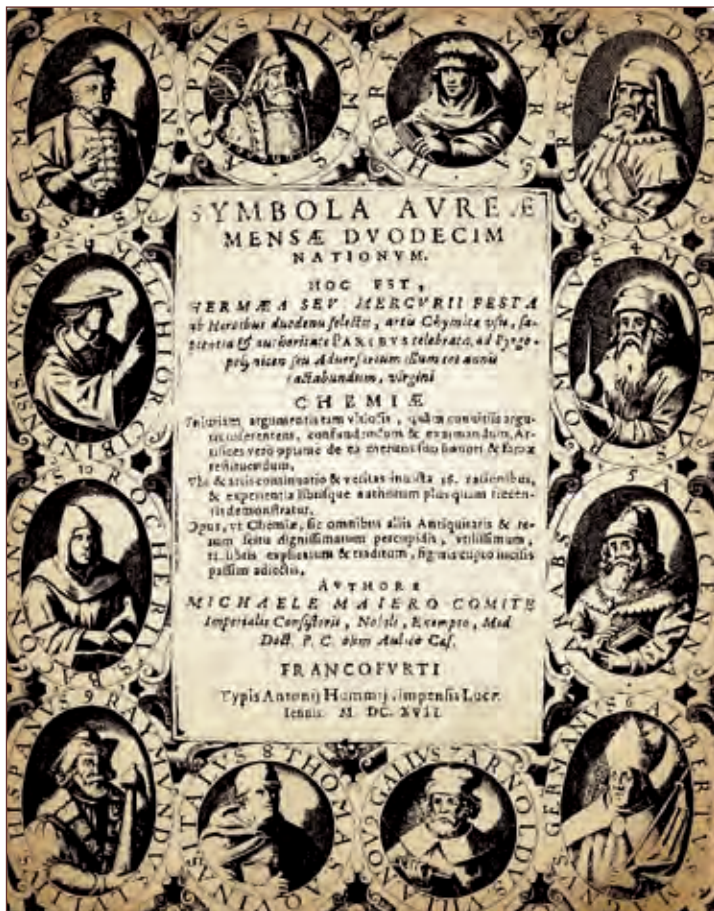
Another figure making his appearance in Sendivogius' life at this time was Mikołaj Wolski (1553-1630), a very influential man who had been brought up at the imperial court and had a great interest in alchemy. He had been educated at several European universities and was employed at the court of Rudolf II (Emperor of the so-called Holy Roman Empire) in Prague.

As was the custom of learned men of the Renaissance, Sendivogius took to travelling over the next few years to widen his knowledge and horizons. A little before 1588 he was journeying to Constantinople via Greece where, it is rumoured, a patriarch of the Greek Church gave him some instruction in the alchemical process. At Constantinople, he says in his 'Philosophical Letters' (c.1616), he copied two rare treatises by Hermes while elsewhere in his writings he mentions at this time a strange figure, which he calls his 'praeceptor' from Egypt who, apparently, gave him the 'white tincture' to effect the transmutation of metals.⁸

He continued his Renaissance education by visiting several major universities throughout the continent: Rome, Padua, Naples, Venice and less certainly, Frankfurt, Rostock, Wittenberg and Cambridge. He eventually

entered the University of Leipzig in 1590 for the winter term and matriculated from Vienna the following year. It was while studying at Leipzig that he became friends with Joachim Tancke, physician and alchemist, and Johann Thölde, the editor and possible author of the works attributed to Basilius Valentine.⁹

Michael Maier is known to have been a student at Altdorf in 1589 or 1590 and, since Sendivogius was living in the area of Nuremberg, it is quite possible that the two met during this period. In 1594 he was at Altdorf, either as a student or an official, where he became acquainted with the Scottish alchemist, Alexander Seton, who was studying here too. An unusual relationship, while at Altdorf, between Sendivogius and a 'certain Armenian' is mentioned by Andreas Goldmayer in his *Harmonia chymica* (Onoltzbach, 1655). He had apparently helped this figure financially and in return had received a tincture for transmuting base metals.¹⁰



Title page of Michael Maier's Symbolae Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum of 1617, depicting Michael Sendivogius at the top left as Anonymous the Sarmatian.



Symbolic engraving depicting 'Anonymus Sarmata' and his teachings from Michael Maier's Symbola aureae mensae.

Later Life

Around 1590 Sendivogius married Veronica Stieber. The Stiebers were from the Franconian nobility and held estates in the area of Nuremberg, which included at least three castles.¹¹ By 1594 they had had two sons and two daughters. It was in this year that Sendivogius and his family arrived in Prague. At first they stayed in lodgings where Sendivogius became friendly with Nicholas Lev of Lövenstein, a pharmacist and physician, who was so impressed by Sendivogius' knowledge of alchemy and medicine that he brought the whole family to live at his own house. Through Lev he made a number of acquaintances leading eventually to one Ludvik Korálek, a rich merchant with a great interest in alchemy. He had a large library and laboratory, where he and his friends worked at alchemical experiments. Among these, was a doctor of law and councillor to Rudolf II, Jan Kapr. Sendivogius was invited to participate in their work, eventually becoming their teacher. While here he performed several transmutations of base metals into silver. It is through Lev that we learn of Sendivogius' encounter with his 'praeceptor' from Egypt and the gift of the white powder. According to Lev, he was using red and white tinctures in his alchemical experiments.¹² During

this time he also met and worked with the great Czech alchemist, Bavor Rodovsky of Hustiøan.¹³

Probably, as a result of the influence of Mikołaj Wolski and other contacts he had made in Prague, Sendivogius eventually found himself at the imperial court. An indication of his increasing stature can be found on documents from 1595 naming him as the personal secretary to the king of Poland, Sigismund III Vasa. It is likely that Sigismund employed him in a diplomatic role, as it is known that there was a clandestine relationship between the Polish and Habsburg courts.¹⁴ His fame as an alchemist would not have escaped the notice of Rudolf II. The Emperor had more than a passing interest in hermetic philosophy and supported many alchemists that came to his court. As a measure of his ability, Sendivogius performed a transmutation of a base metal into gold in front of the Emperor and a large number of witnesses. Rudolf was so impressed that he ordered a marble tablet to be built into the palace wall to commemorate the event with the Latin inscription: *'Faciatur hoc quispiam alius quod fecit Sendivogius Polonus'* meaning 'Let anyone else do what Sendivogius the Pole has done'.¹⁵ Sometime later he demonstrated a similar transmutation before Sigismund III Vasa.

In 1597 Sendivogius was invited to the court of Elector Christian II of Saxony at Dresden, no doubt by dint of the fame that he was now attracting, but he may also have been used by the Emperor in a diplomatic role. The next year he was made privy councillor by Rudolf II whilst still retaining the position of secretary to the king of Poland. The reputation and respect accorded to him is further reflected in the publications dedicated to him and his family. Carolides of Karlsperk, the imperial court poet, published in 1598 a number of poems in praise of the family and dedicated it to Sendivogius' son Michael Christopher. Others appeared by Bartłomiej Paprocki, a Polish and Bohemian herald and poet and genealogist, in the same year. When Sendivogius' wife died along with two of his children of the plague that swept Prague in 1599, Joannes Chorinsky, a Moravian nobleman and poet, wrote an elegy for Veronica Stieber.

The popularity of Sendivogius had made him enemies too. Ludvik Korálek had fallen ill through alcoholism and after his untimely death in 1599 his family accused Sendivogius of poisoning him by the administration



The Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II





Michael Sendivogius' coat-of-arms (from Ogród królewski by Bartosz Paprocki).

of a medicine. Sendivogius by now was well known as a healer. Apart from this, they also made accusations of extortion against him, which caused Korálek's bankruptcy. A brief summary of events leading up to these circumstances is required here.

Before Sendivogius and his family had come to Prague they had stayed at a house in Jílové in Bohemia owned by Edward Kelley, the one time companion of John Dee. Kelley had been ennobled by the Emperor in 1588 shortly after Dee's departure for England and in 1590 granted substantial land near Jílové by his patron, Vilém of Rozmberk (1535-1592). He later purchased the Fumberk estate consisting of a number of buildings in Jílové and a town dwelling in Prague. Kelley and Sendivogius had apparently met during 1590 while both on their travels and Kelley had invited Sendivogius to stay in Jílové. After Kelley's death in 1597, Sendivogius bought the Fumberk estate from Kelley's widow. In order to do this he borrowed 5,695 Meissen marks, a large sum of money, from Ludvik Korálek.

The court case began on 28th July 1599 and lasted three months. Sendivogius pleaded innocent to the charges against him and told the court that the loan had been

a perfectly legitimate one. He was eventually acquitted and ordered to repay the loan in six weeks. As to the allegation of poisoning, the evidence was circumstantial and unproven. During the trial Oswald Croll was called as a witness and spoke in Sendivogius' defence. Croll was not only a Rosicrucian, but also a fellow physician who shared Korálek's patronage with Sendivogius.¹⁶

Although he was spending most of his time in Poland between 1600 and 1604, Sendivogius still continued with his diplomatic activities for Rudolf II and Sigismund III. A letter from the Polish king to the Emperor of 13th June, 1600, refers to the despatching of Sendivogius to 'solve the problems of Moldavia'.¹⁷ There was a dispute between Poland and the Habsburgs over rights of access to the Black Sea. He was also employed, among others, on missions to Moscow and Constantinople.

The year following publication of his influential 'Twelve Treatises on the Philosopher's Stone' (1604), Sendivogius received an invitation from Duke Frederick of Württemberg¹⁸ to visit Stuttgart. It is possible that Sendivogius had been here before in 1593. The Duke received him with great hospitality and after many discussions, asked to see a transmutation. Frederick probably had information already on the ability of Sendivogius as an alchemist. Sendivogius swore him to secrecy and performed two transmutations of mercury into gold. After this the court alchemist, Hans Heinrich Mühlentfels, hatched a scheme to keep Sendivogius a prisoner until he disclosed his secrets to him. Such was Sendivogius' importance to Rudolf II and Sigismund III that they demanded his release and Mühlentfels was hanged in June 1607. It is not known for certain whether Frederick was implicated in this plot, but the affair became widely known throughout Europe.

During the period of 1607 to 1616, Sendivogius lived in Poland. His long-term patron Mikołaj Wolski became the Marshall of Poland from 1613 and was at the same time responsible for the development of the metallurgical industry. Sendivogius worked with Wolski and lived at his castle in Krzepice conducting experiments in the laboratory there. In 1616 he went to Marburg in Germany at the invitation of Landgrave Moritz of Hesse who had a keen interest in alchemy. While there he visited the university and the

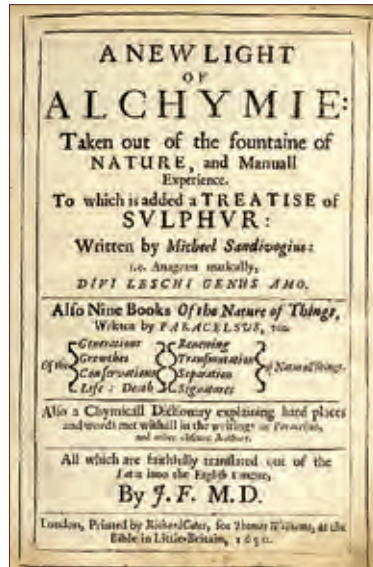
iatrochemical laboratory of Johann Hartmann where he subsequently worked preparing a number of Paracelsian medicaments. While here, Sendivogius renewed his friendship with Michael Maier who was currently serving as court physician. In his *Symbolae Aureae Mensae*,

“The court alchemist, Hans Heinrich Mühlentfels, hatched a scheme to keep Sendivogius a prisoner until he disclosed his secrets to him.”





Title page of the first edition of *De Lapide Philosophorum Tractatus duodecim*, 1604, in Latin.



Title page of the English edition of *Novum Lumen Chymicum*, 1650, (*A New Light of Alchymie*).

Maier wrote that he had seen a transmutation performed by Sendivogius which made a lasting impression on him.¹⁹ It is likely that he was referring to Sendivogius' visit to the Landgrave's court at Kassel. Another important figure residing here was Johann Daniel Mylius who was a creator of alchemical emblems. He also happened to be the son-in-law of Hartmann.

Rudolf II died in 1612 and was succeeded firstly by his brother Matthias (as king of Bohemia and Emperor) until 1619, when the Emperor Ferdinand II transferred the imperial court from Prague to Vienna, and then Sendivogius continued his employment as a diplomat between Vienna and the Polish court at Kraków. It seems that he was also given a well-paid appointment by Ferdinand, supervising the construction of a new lead mine in Silesia on the Polish border. The Emperor could not pay him regularly, however, since political and religious strife had caused the Thirty Years War to break out in 1618. After repeated appeals over many years to be paid, Sendivogius was eventually offered two large villages in 1630 and a substantial sum of money. Unfortunately, the previous owner's debts came with the estates and although he later freed himself from these obligations they continued to be such a problem that he decided to sell them in 1636. They were still unsold when he died later in the same year.²⁰

His Works

Sendivogius is known to have produced at least ten works.²¹ His most influential and frequently published book was *De Lapide Philosophorum Tractatus duodecim* ('Twelve Treatises on the Philosopher's Stone'), published in Prague and Frankfurt simultaneously in 1604. This

ran to 56 editions up to 1787 in Latin, German, French, English, Russian and Dutch. Sir Isaac Newton owned a copy, which is presently housed in the British Library and has marginal notes in his handwriting and corners of pages turned down to mark particular passages. The French chemist, Lavoisier, also had a copy.²² *De Lapide Philosophorum* is made up of twelve short chapters followed by an epilogue and ending with a 'Parable or Enigma of the Sages'.

Sendivogius advocates a new approach to alchemy, and this is reflected in the change of title in later editions to *Novum Lumen Chymicum* ('A New Light of Alchemy'). He wrote this with the benefit of many years of practical experience and experimentation. In the preface and epilogue, he explains his reasons for producing the work. He wants the adept to understand how change occurs

Greeting to my most honoured Friend and a most worthy Companion of the Society of Unknown Philosophers. M.S.

"I shall not be wanting to intimate to you the rocks which may stand in your way and to direct your deviating conceits, as often as you will take occasion to consult me about what you are reading or doing. And I protest to you that I will hide nothing from you except those things which you cannot learn but by ocular demonstrations and manual operations. For every art hath its own way and manner of operating and above all, ours which cannot be expressed so well in words but that a particular demonstration and an experimental disquisition be also necessary, which for the most part answers but slowly, the hopes and expectations of philosophers."

Extract from Letters of Michael Sendivogius to the Roseycrusian Society, Epistle 1, 1646.

(Source: <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/send10.html>)





The Alchemik Michał Sędziwój by Jan Matejko (1867) depicting Sendivogius demonstrating his alchemical skills to Emperor Rudolf II of the Habsburg Empire.

in nature and not be led astray by fraudsters, but also to familiarise the reader with his own experimental findings.

This work has been linked by Rafał T. Prinke to the *Consideratio Brevis* (Brief Consideration) by Phillipus à Gaballa that prefaces the second Rosicrucian Manifesto, *Confessio Fraternitatis*, of 1615. Prinke sees similarities between the general style and phrasing in the first Rosicrucian publications and the statements made in the prefaces and epilogues of Sendivogius' treatises. He goes on to say that the purely alchemical references in the *Consideratio* are clearly based on *De Lapide Philosophorum*.²³ Allied to this premise is the fact that while Sendivogius was visiting Stuttgart at the invitation of the Duke of Württemberg in 1605, he may have had contact with the members of Johann Valentin Andreae's circle at Tübingen. They would certainly have heard of him, since the Mühlentfels incident was widely known. The importance of Andreae in producing the Manifestos needs no qualification, since he was the author of the allegorical *Die Chymische Hochzeit des Christiani Rosenkreutz anno 1459* ('The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz'), the third Rosicrucian tract.

Of the other nine works by Sendivogius, there was 'Dialogue of Mercury, the Alchemist and Nature', 1607, a satire. In 1616, 'Treatise on Sulphur' dealt with the four

elements of Aristotle, the three principles of Paracelsus, and included a dialogue, 'On Sulphur'. The year 1618 saw the publication of his most extensive work, 'Harmony'. This concentrated on the relationship between the elements, principles and planets. It particularly dealt with the part played by air and the 'universal spirit' within air. Its second section paid attention to the principle of the philosophical salt.

The rest of his works were published posthumously. 'Treatise on Salt' in 1656, 'A Philosophical Letter', 1659, and in 1671, 'Fifty-Five Philosophical Letters' which clarify further the ideas brought out in his main works. This was in the form of an address to a new member of the Cabalistic Society of Unknown Philosophers. It was translated into English by Ebenezer Sibly in 1791 and retitled: *Letters of Michael Sendivogius to the Rosey Crucian Society*. This was followed by 'Process on the Central Salt' in 1682, describing the preparation of the Philosopher's Stone. As Dr Zbigniew Szdło tells us:

*[This] work is interesting from the standpoint of practical chemistry and demonstrates Sendivogius' excellent command of the subject.*²⁴

'Statutes of the Unknown Philosophers' published in 1691 in French, is a set of rules in the form of a handbook for the Cabalistic Society of Unknown Philosophers. It is in effect a manifesto, on similar lines to the Rosicrucians, for the formation of a new Philosophical Society. Whilst



in the preface he states that the ‘gift’ of knowledge can do so much to help the ‘poor and miserable’, he goes on to say that the ‘malice of men’ would manipulate the fruits of any labour and effectively prevent these ideals from being carried out. He speaks of the danger to his life that has occurred on many occasions; a direct reference to the Mühlenfels episode among others to reinforce the covetousness of men. He proposes then, to form a Society of members whose true identity will be concealed, although the Society will become generally known.

Finally, in 1968, *Operations on the Philosophical Elixir* describe Sendivogius’ first attempts to prepare the Philosopher’s Stone. This work was unknown until some fifty years ago, when it was discovered by Roman Bugaj, a Polish academic who has been one of the principle biographers and researchers into Sendivogius. He found it in the archives of Count Wiktor Baworowski in Lwów (now L’viv, Ukraine). It is dated 1586, when Sendivogius was just twenty years old.²⁵

Sendivogius, Nitre, and the Discovery of Oxygen

In 1621 an altogether extraordinary event took place in London. The Dutch inventor and alchemist, Cornelius Drebbel (1572-1633), had constructed a wooden submarine that was propelled by twelve oarsmen. Witnessed by James I and a large audience of Londoners, this vessel made the journey from Westminster to Greenwich, reportedly remaining underwater for some three hours. Diving bells of various designs were not uncommon at this time, but a craft that could stay underwater for a considerable period was quite spectacular.²⁶ Drebbel must have been using some type of



A diagram of a retort-flask being heated on its own appeared in several editions of ‘Drebbel’s Treatise on the Elements of Nature’. Was this a depiction of the early production of Oxygen?²⁷

In his ‘Treatise on the Elements of Nature’ (1608), Drebbel gives a clue to how he might have manufactured oxygen. In a passage on the origin of thunder, he writes: ‘Thus is the body of the saltpetre broken up and decomposed by the power of the fire and so changed in the nature of the air’. This suggests he was aware that heating saltpetre causes it to give off a gas – and realised that this gas was the same substance that allows humans to breathe.²⁸

air freshening technique to sustain the rowers and himself. But for one reason or another he kept his technique to himself and it remained a secret. The only feasible explanation was that he had, somehow, utilised oxygen, which today is the method by which humans can remain in sealed vessels like submarines and aircraft. Although many versions of this feat gained widespread circulation in Europe, oxygen was not officially discovered until 1774. The question arises how (firstly) this discovery of oxygen



A depiction of Cornelius Drebbel’s submarine event which took place under the waters of the Thames in 1621. From a painting by G. H. Tweedale in the Royal Submarine Museum, Gosport.

Source: <http://www.drebbel.net/Database/Drebbel%20submarine.jpg>



The Hieroglyphical Seal of the Society of Unknown Philosophers.

Let no man judge this present Character to be invented and erected for us for nothing. For the Trident is the Neptune of our Parable which comprehends the whole hermetical Science hieroglyphically and compendiously, as well the Theory as the Practice. But that these Mysteries may be well understood we shall proceed in twofold Order geometrical namely by resolution and Composition or analysis and synthesis.

By way of Analysis first the Maxus is to be considered or the Total Unity of the Figure.

- 2. The Duality, or that Part of Conus or that of the right Pyramids.*
- 3. The Trias, or Triplicity of the sines, or that of the angles, and*
- 4. The Quaternarium of the Lines, and last of all the utmost Points, the Dimension of the whole figure and the Breadth of the Lines.*

Each of them have their cabalistic Significations.

But the way of Synthesis or Composition, the Reversion of the Quaternarius of the Line, to a Trias takes Place.

Then of the Trias into a Binary of the Cones.

- 3. That of the Binary into a Monas.*

(Source: <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/sendseal.html>)

came about and (secondly) how its preparation took 150 years or so to become public knowledge?

The answer to the second part of this question is to be found in the way that alchemists communicated in their writings. The style of their writing and use of language was complex and characteristic of the time, employing alchemical allegory in its literature, the cornerstone of which was the hermetic philosophy espoused in the Emerald Tablet of Hermes. The reasoning behind this apparent obscurity was to prevent their knowledge from being understood by the unworthy and put to misuse by evil men.



Hieroglyphic seal of the 'Society of Unknown Philosophers', bringing together the teachings of John Dee's Monas Hieroglyphica and Michael Sendivogius' Parabola seu aenigma philosophicum.

The key to answering the first part is in the role of a substance called *nitre*. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, nitre, often referred to as *saltpetre* (potassium nitrate), figured prominently in the philosophy of alchemy. It had a number of properties and applications and was the principle component of cooling mixtures, medicines and gunpowder, and was used as a liquid for dissolving metals. The manufacture of saltpetre was in fact a large industry during this period.



A typical nitrary (Germany, c.1580) with leaching deposits (C) filled with decaying vegetable material mixed with manure. A worker collects effloresced saltpetre from deposits, transporting it then to be concentrated in the factory (B) boilers. (Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nitrary#/media/File:Salmitrera.jpg>)



Paracelsus (1493-1541), wrote extensively on the function and use of nitre. He elevated it from a substance into something much more significant from a mystical point of view and saw it as having a vital role as a salt in living organisms. He also brought about the concept of 'aerial nitre', reasoning that since it (nitre) was the agent that produced the explosive effect of gunpowder, then it followed that it had to be responsible for thunder and lightning in the air. By the middle of the 16th century, alchemists were writing of a 'universal spirit' pervading all matter.

Sendivogius (among others), who had a grounding in the teachings of Paracelsus, developed these ideas concerning nitre and its link to living processes on earth. He observed over a period of time the main source of saltpetre, namely farmyard soils, and concluded that the 'food of life' was condensing out of the air. The life-giving power of nitre was visibly seen in the enhanced growth of plants when fertilisers were applied to them. We find written in a later edition of *A New Light of Alchymie* (London, 1650 edition, p.44):

"Our water that wets not our hands [i.e. nitre], without which no mortall can live, and without which nothing grows, or is generated in the world!"

Sendivogius' work was always in accordance with hermetic principles as expressed in the text of the *Tabula Smaragdina* (the Emerald Tablet). Its fourth precept reads:

"Its father is the Sun, its mother the Moon; the wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the earth."

Here we can discern the one invisible substance that exists everywhere, is necessary for life, and which forms the key for Sendivogius' theory. It is 'aerial nitre' (oxygen), the 'secret food of life' within the air. Several principles of the Rosicrucian teachings are embodied within this concept.

He wrote extensively on this subject in his first publication, *Novum Chymicum Lumen* (1604), and also throughout his other works, but always in the language of alchemy. He had discovered that by heating a vessel full of liquid nitre, he could separate off a gaseous product that is known today as oxygen. Cornelius Drebbel, who knew Sendivogius from his visits to Prague, and who also must have read or been acquainted with his works, could understand the terminology used and duplicated Sendivogius' experiments. Sendivogius' theory described a 'secret food of life which is concealed in air', while Drebbel used, in his own words, 'aerial food of life' in

his submarine. This method of producing oxygen could have been employed to sustain everyone in the wooden submarine that made that underwater passage in 1621.

Conclusion

Michael Sendivogius suffered much at the hands of his biographers whose derogatory and erroneous accounts of his life originate ultimately from a poorly researched publication by a Frenchman named Pierre Des Noyer (d. 1693). Des Noyer's chronology of Sendivogius' life written many years after the latter's death, was appended to several editions of Sendivogius' works and displayed a certain antipathy toward Poles and Poland.²⁹ Subsequent biographies state that Sendivogius had stolen the secret of the manufacture of the Philosopher's Stone from the Scottish alchemist, Alexander Seton, after his death. Some even go on to say that *A New Light of Alchymie* was written by Seton. However, over the last forty years, a number of scholars have compiled a much more accurate and truthful history, working from contemporary documents and primary evidence. In reality there is nothing to substantiate these aspersions on his character.

Sendivogius was, however, obsessed with secrecy, as stated at the beginning of this article, and this may go a long way to explain his legendary and celebrity status. There was an element of danger in being known as an alchemist of some stature, and he had to be on his guard against unscrupulous and greedy men who would even go to the lengths of imprisoning him to extract his secrets. One aspect of this secrecy was in the way that he used pseudonyms to hide the authorship of his works. Examples of these are: 'Divi Genus Leschi Amo', 'Angelus Doce Mihi Ius', and 'Cosmopolite'. The first is an anagram of his Latinised name 'Michael Sendivogius' and is translated as 'I love the divine race of the Lechites (Poles)'. The second is also an anagram and means 'Angel, teach me justice'.



An example of Sendivogius' use of a pseudonym to hide his authorship. The title page to his Dialogus Mercurii, Alchymistae et Naturae (Dialogue concerning Mercury, Alchemy and Nature), 1607, shows an anagram of his name.



The third translates as ‘Citizen of the World’. It can be appreciated how confusing it has been in identifying Sendivogius’ works.

Another factor here concerns the custom in this period of dedicating one’s work to persons of note, such as rulers. Sendivogius never followed this practice, which reflects his humility on the one hand and his desire to remain anonymous on the other. It may well be that the ‘praeceptor’ from Egypt that he met during his early travels who gave him the white tincture, and the strange Armenian while at Altdorf university who also gave him a tincture, were fictional characters used to hide his own ability to manufacture these.³⁰

If Sendivogius was not a Rosicrucian, then he at least had a close association with members of the Rosy Cross. He was certainly highly respected by his contemporary adepts, as was shown by Michael Maier in his *Symbolae aureae mensae* of 1617 where Maier reiterates the name ‘Heliocantharus Borealis’ given to him by Oswald Croll. A telling extract from a poem by John Gadbury in the preface to an English edition of Sendivogius’ ‘Harmony’, which was entitled *Sal lumen & Spiritus Mundi Philosophici* (1657), shows another connection to the Rosicrucians and his stature as an adept:

*Not dare I without Sendivogius’ Torch,
approximate you nearer then the Porch,
lest I (presumptuous) should be gaz’d upon
by those that have their Wedding-Garments on.*³¹

This is a clear reference to *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1616). It infers that unless you know the teachings of Sendivogius, you must stay in the porch of the church and not be allowed to witness the ceremony inside.

Endnotes

1. A name of some significance that is related to the ‘Fourth Monarchy’ or *Quarta Monarchia*; an important political concept of the Rosicrucian *Fama Fraternitatis* that espouses a utopian vision of a perfect society. Sendivogius refers to a ‘Fourth’ or ‘Northern Monarchy’ being established in his *Treatise on Sulphur*, Cologne, 1613. In February of this same year Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine married Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of James I of Britain; a marriage that was meant to fulfil the aspirations for a Protestant League in central Europe. Discussed in Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1998 edition).
2. Rafał T. Prinke, ‘The Twelfth Adept’ in *The*

Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited, Lindisfarne, 1999, pp. 146-147.

3. Croll was the main character to be attacked by Andreas Libavius (c.1560-1616), an early chemist, who was a well-known critic of the Rosicrucian Manifestos. Frances Yates, op.cit. p. 51.
4. See Yates for more on this aspect of 17th century Rosicrucianism.
5. Rafał T. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz: The Unexpected Possibilities’ in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1990, p. 91.
6. His coat of arms of the Ostoja clan has been traced back to the 14th century by Rafał T. Prinke in his article ‘Hermetic Heraldry’ in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1989, pp. 62-78.
7. Prinke, op.cit., ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz’, p. 74. The nature of the Polish monarchy was elective rather than hereditary (see John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, TSP, 1993, p. 24.)
8. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius – Adept or Impostor?’ in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1982, Vol. 15, p. 19.
9. See Stillman, John Maxson (Prof.), ‘Basil Valentine: A Seventeenth Century Hoax’ in *The Popular Science Monthly*, 1912, pp. 591-600 where the author provides a convincing argument identifying Valentine with Johann Thölde.
10. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz’, p. 76.
11. Prinke, ‘The Twelfth Adept’, p. 171.
12. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz’, p. 77.
13. Prinke, ‘The Twelfth Adept’, p. 176.
14. Zbigniew Szydło, *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands: The Alchemy of Michael Sendivogius*, Warsaw, 1994, p. 36.
15. Prinke, ‘The Twelfth Adept’, op. cit., p. 178.
16. Prinke, *ibid.* pp. 172-178.
17. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz’. op. cit., p. 79.
18. The political and ideological relationship of Duke Frederick of Württemberg to the Rosicrucians of this period is important and is discussed in detail by Frances Yates in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.
19. Szydło, op.cit. p. 38.
20. *Ibid.* p.41. Sendivogius’ daughter, Maria Veronica von Eisendorf, eventually inherited all of his worldly goods.
21. See Szydło, ‘The Written Works of Michael Sendivogius’ in *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands*, pp. 43-66.
22. Zbigniew Szydło and Richard Brzezinski, ‘Alchemy:



New Light on a Dark Art' in *History Today*, Vol. 47, Jan. 1997.

23. Rafał T. Prinke, 'Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz: The Unexpected Possibilities', op. cit., p. 84.
24. Szydło, pp. 58-59.
25. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
26. See Szydło, 'The Mystery of Cornelius Drebbel and his Wooden Submarine' in *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands*, op. cit., pp. 1-4. See further a detailed account in Rebecca Stefoff, *Submarines*, Marshall Cavendish, 2006, pp. 22-23.
27. Szydło, p. 83.
28. Zbigniew Szydło and Richard Brzezinski, op. cit., 'Alchemy: New Light on a Dark Art'.
29. Rafał T. Prinke, 'Michael Sendivogius - Adept or Imposter?' in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1982, Vol.15, p. 19.
30. Prinke, 'The Twelfth Adept', op.cit., p. 174.
31. Quoted in Szydło, op.cit. p. 121.



Michael Sendivogius

Great Soul of the Universe

by Ailema

*You are life and existence
oh great Soul of the Universe,
wind that moves trees,
the energy of the sun.*

*You are the power of the seas,
the source of quietness and peace,
the mystery of creation,
the unknown Spirit of Life.*

*You are hidden in the intricacies of matter,
the complexity and depth of mind,
beyond silence and strength,
beyond the edge of time.*

*You exist forever, boundless and free,
infinite, unseen, eternally without frame.
Oh great Soul of the Universe,
why do we give you a name?*



Pictures Without Words





Like a sculptor, if necessary,
carve a friend out of stone.
Realise that your inner sight
is blind. Try to see a treasure
in everyone.

-- Rumi (1207-1273) Sufi Mystic --