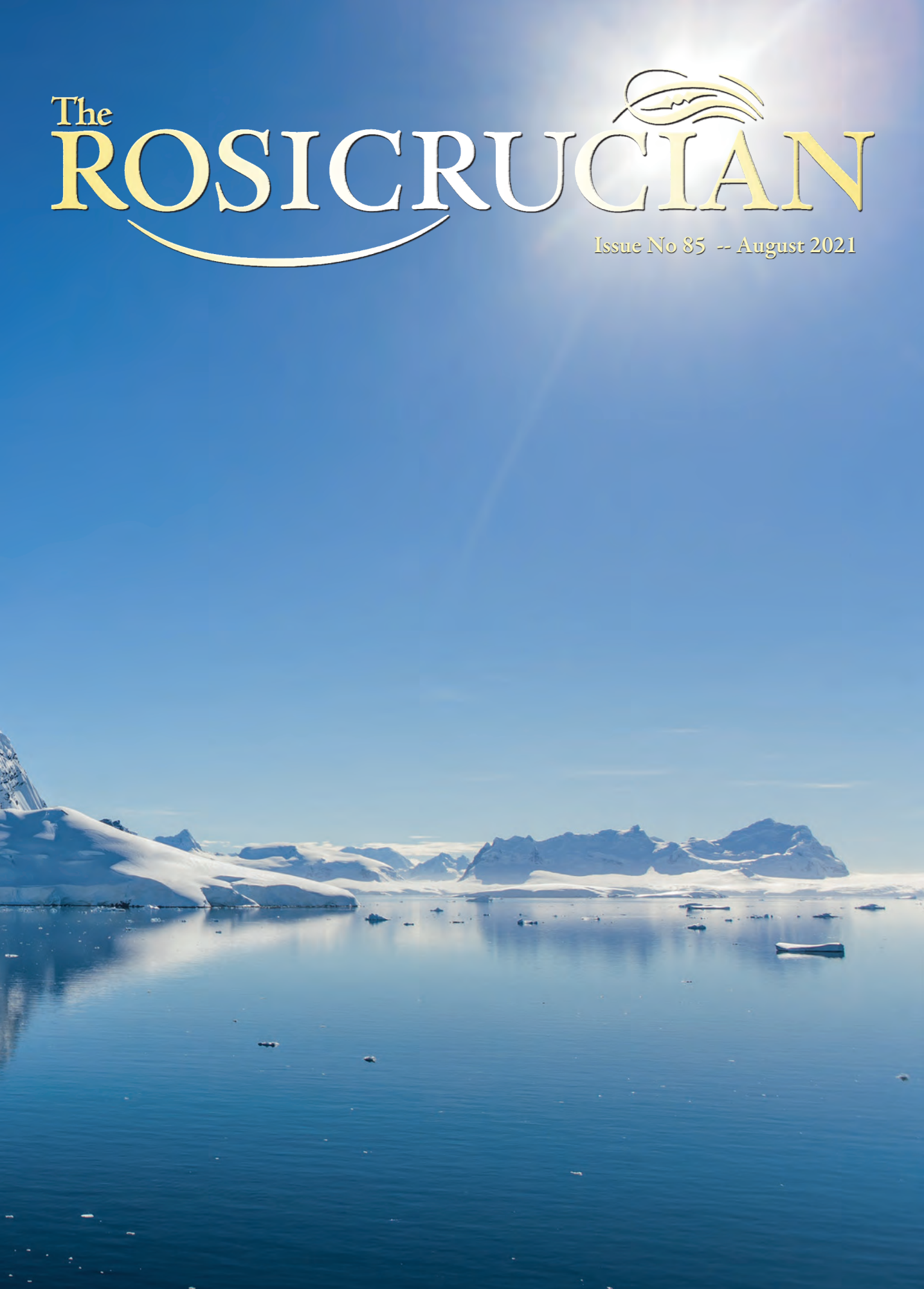
The ROSICRUCIAN

Issue No 85 -- August 2021



Find your Deeper Self

IN THE depths of your being resides your deeper Self, an aspect of your being which breathes, in calm reflection, the very rhythm of the universe. It is in touch with all things and communicates with all that matters for life on Earth. Its purpose is to instruct and guide you in learning how to live a good life, and it does so with great care for your wellbeing.

Your Self knows why you are here and what you are meant to accomplish. It knows what your chances are of attaining the goals you have set for yourself, and whether they are beyond your reach or are fully attainable. Your deeper Self is a veritable slumbering genius, eager to help you express your hidden talents with great refinement and sophistication. The most productive thing we can ever do is to find and communicate with this Self.

For millennia, seekers of universal truths have known of the existence of a kernel of perfection lying dormant in every person, manifesting supreme confidence, calmness, maturity and wisdom. This deeper Self is called by Rosicrucians the 'Inner Master', for it has in abundance, qualities of refinement, high purpose and spiritual maturity that we would expect only of the most accomplished of humans.

You can discover how to access this high level of achievement and embark on the definitive, true journey of your life simply by learning how to commune with your deeper Self. If you're searching for a way of accomplishing the most fulfilling and rewarding things in life, in a fair and ethical way, then learn from the wisdom of your own inner perfection.

To find out more about the Rosicrucian Order and how it can help you achieve your most treasured goals, find us at one of the following...

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On Ecology 2

A Path 8

The Foundations of Health - Part 4 11

Juan de la Cruz - Poet of God 16

Albert Schweitzer: Reverence for Life 19

Traits of Spiritually Motivated People 28

Spirituality and Mental Tranquillity 31

The Dark Valleys of Life 37

Healing: Allow the Cosmic to In-Form You 40

Choose this Day! 44

True Friends 47



ANTARCTICA - all land and ice shelves south of 60°S.

The *Antarctic Treaty* was signed on 1st December 1959 by the 12 countries then active in Antarctica. The treaty set aside Antarctica as a *scientific preserve*, establishes *freedom of scientific investigation*, and *bans military activity on the continent*. The treaty was the first arms control agreement established during the Cold War. Today there are 52 signatory countries. For several years, the negotiations progressed very slowly with competing military intentions being openly stated by several of the parties involved. To the relief of the world however, reason eventually prevailed and the treaty was signed.

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On Ecology

by **Claudio Mazzucco**
(Imperator of AMORC)

A few moments before starting to write this message, as I gazed out through the window of my office in the Italian Grand Lodge, here at Ornano Grande..., I saw the garden just prepared by one of our volunteer fratres. A simple hint from me on the advisability of having a small vegetable garden was enough for the frater and a soror, also always very present, to prepare the land, bring the small plants and arrange them in order on the small furrows. But what I want to talk about today, and reflect upon with you, is not the vegetable produce of the Grand Lodge, but how nature can reveal its intrinsic order to us; an order of which we are a part, and which we, as Rosicrucians, refer to as *"the Cosmic"*..., and how ignoring this order has generated, among other things, the environmental problems we are witnessing. It is interesting to note how the word *"Cosmic"* stems from the original Greek word *"Kosmos"* meaning not only *'order'* but a form of order that has a form of beauty in it too.

Looking out from above (my office is on the second floor;) I was able to clearly appreciate how the Vital Life Force impregnates the planet and feeds life. Those plants that I now see in the garden are the result of processes fundamentally linked to photosynthesis. It is a wonderful way, *created* by nature, to imprison and use the positive energy radiated by the sun on our planet in the plant world. But if we looked with a lens on that small piece of land, where the various vegetables will now grow, we could see a multitude of other living creatures, especially bacteria, but also insects and worms of various kinds. A living network with its own life processes..., interconnected

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in a harmonious whole. And, if I widen my gaze beyond our garden, towards the hills, the perception is clear: Life is spread over the entire surface of our planet, making it finally similar to a living being; a living planet or Gaia, as it was defined by the English chemist James Lovelock referring to the myth of Gaia. And as a *living being*, our planet has found its homeostatic equilibrium through an infinity of processes that are all interconnected.

> ...as a 'living being', our planet has found its homeostatic equilibrium through an infinity of processes that are all interconnected.

As an example of how the planet is made up of infinite processes that guarantee the maintenance of a balance such as, for example, the percentage of oxygen in the atmosphere or the average temperature, think of this cycle that I will now illustrate: siliceous rocks like granites and basalts, are decomposed by fungi, bacteria, and lichens, thus releasing the calcium and silicon of which they are composed. With the carbon dioxide (CO_2) present in the air, carbonates are formed, which are the main component of the structure of micro-algae and shells. When these algae and shells die, they fall to the bottom of the sea and form thick layers of carbonates. The tectonic plates then push these carbonates into the depths of the earth, where the temperature is very high. Finally, with this intense temperature, these carbonates decompose again, thereby producing the initial carbon dioxide expelled from the volcanoes. Having returned to the atmosphere from where it came, the whole cycle starts again.

Observing all this life and these processes impregnating the soil, air and water of our planet, we realise that we are one of the results of this process. The atoms of which we are composed were generated shortly after the first moments of the Big Bang, corresponding to thousands and thousands of years from the beginning of the universe. And after a long journey of billions of years, these atoms formed our Planet about 4½ billion years ago. Then, following infinite combinations still not completely scientifically clear, the first living forms appeared around 3.7 to 3.8 billion years ago. Then multicellular organisms surfaced around 700 million years ago. The story of the appearance of our species on the planet is still being written. There are still paleontological and archaeological researches in progress that find skeletons of those who



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were the progenitors of the human species. But for the moment, we can say that about 3.2 million years ago, with the skeleton of Lucy, there existed a female hominid which walked erect. Finally, present humans emerged roughly 200,000 years ago.

Regarding the appearance of life on the planet, the discussion is still very heated. There are biologists and chemists who claim that it is the result of random combinations, a thesis supported by the famous book (*Chance and Necessity*) of the 1960's by the French biologist Jacques Monod. There are other scientists who have a very different idea. British mathematician, physicist, and astronomer Fred Hoyle (1915-2001) used a brilliant and provocative analogy to explain that the mere probability of a chance meeting of molecules is not enough to explain life. He says such a chance encounter would be tantamount to a hurricane hitting an old iron landfill and producing a fully functional Boeing 747.

We are a bridge of passage of atoms that have belonged to comets, stars and nebulae, who knows...

We are formed from those same atoms born from the Big Bang and from others generated subsequently as a result of nuclear reactions in the various stars of the universe. These atoms are re-integrated into our body through nutrition and breathing because *"we lose atoms all the time."* We are a bridge of passage of atoms that have belonged to comets, stars and nebulae, who knows..., and which now form plants, like the ones I am looking at, and my own body with its brain that looks. Atoms looking at atoms! In the cells of my brain, which I now use to write this message, there are atoms that have belonged to the earth, to some bacterium, to some insect, or even animal, to the water that evaporated from the sea, has travelled thousands of kilometres in the clouds to then fall in the form of rain, in a vital circle that connects all living species to the planet. The writer Primo Levi wrote a beautiful text on the history of the Periodic Table of the elements and the carbon atom, one of the atoms at the basis of life, illustrating the saga of this atom in an almost poetic way.

Observing this vital process makes us perceive how we are the part of the planet that thinks, feels, imagines and dreams. We are the planet, and this is an indisputable truth, although we have, most of the time, the perception of being something different and separate from it. In fact, with a certain presumption, we also consider ourselves superior to the rest of living beings while, in reality, our life is intimately associated with that of all the other species of this planet and with the planet itself. Somehow, the Earth has generated us in the same way that our mother has generated us. This has caused many civilisations to refer to our planet as *"Mother Earth."*

The ecology discourse of today has become of great importance, practically an emergency, even if we know that there cannot be a true ecological thought without a corresponding expansion of consciousness. In other words, it is one thing to make an ecological discourse well-founded from a philosophical and scientific point of view; it is quite another to live and *feel* according to what one claims to know. And this is perhaps the drama of the



The ecology discourse of today has become of great importance, practically an emergency...

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human experience on our planet. Many now rationally understand our link with it and with the life it contains, but, from here, to develop a renewed ethics, there is an abyss that can only be overcome through the experience of a *'spiritual nature.'*

When I use the word *spiritual*, I mean an integral, complete, marking and transforming experience. An experience of such a scope that once a person has experienced it, they no longer return to being as they were before, and it shows from the way they live. The person continues to do the same things they did before, but not as they did before. It is not necessarily an experience of a religious nature in the common sense of the term, because the spiritual experience precedes the religious one. It can certainly also happen through religion, but it is not the prerogative of any religion to produce it. A deep immersion in an artistic work, or being absorbed by a scientific problem, can equally generate the conditions for having this experience.

Our teachings aim to expand human consciousness by expanding its vision to ever greater dimensions of reality.

Do you not find it extraordinary, or rather amazing, namely, something that arouses both a sense of wonder and amazement..., that we are this particular agglomeration of atoms, that in some way thinks, studies, experiments and experiences emotions; and that it now raises the matter of how all these atoms, in this arrangement that is us..., are capable of producing thought? But will an atom or a group of atoms ever produce thought alone, or will it be necessary to add some other non-material element for this purpose? Hermann Joseph Muller, 1946 Nobel Prize winner in Physiology, wrote:

> "To say that man is made up of certain elements is a satisfactory description only for those who intend to use him as fertiliser."

And what other human experience could ever connect the scientific knowledge we have now reached of this whole process to its deepest and most transcendent



meaning if not the *mystical experience?* It is an experience that by its nature produces a sense of wholeness, of belonging to a Reality that overwhelms, is beyond all who experience it, but at the same time feel that they belong. Called the *'Oceanic Sentiment'* by the 1915 Nobel Prize winner for literature Romain Rolland..., *'Cosmic Consciousness'* by the Canadian psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke..., the *'Tao* by the philosopher Lao Tsu..., and the *'Order of Nature'* by the 1932 Nobel Prize winning physicist Werner Heisenberg.

We Rosicrucians have in our heritage the commitment and tools needed to create the conditions necessary for people to experience moments of harmony that allow them to experience this *'mystical experience'* at different intensities. Our teachings aim to expand human consciousness by expanding its vision to ever greater dimensions of reality. They are not intended to prepare us merely to make *'good speeches.'* The time for speeches is now over. Furthermore, these teachings are obviously not a path for free hours or a system for obtaining powers of any kind. They are not an activity reserved for those who remain closed in their room and which ceases when they leave it to live their day. Rather, they are a new way of understanding life through various experiences, thereby developing new attitudes towards the events that compose it.

Let me recall in this reflection an important aspect of the mystical or spiritual experience relating to the *moral sense*. The word *moral* here should not be understood as a set of rules imposed perhaps by a religious culture or by

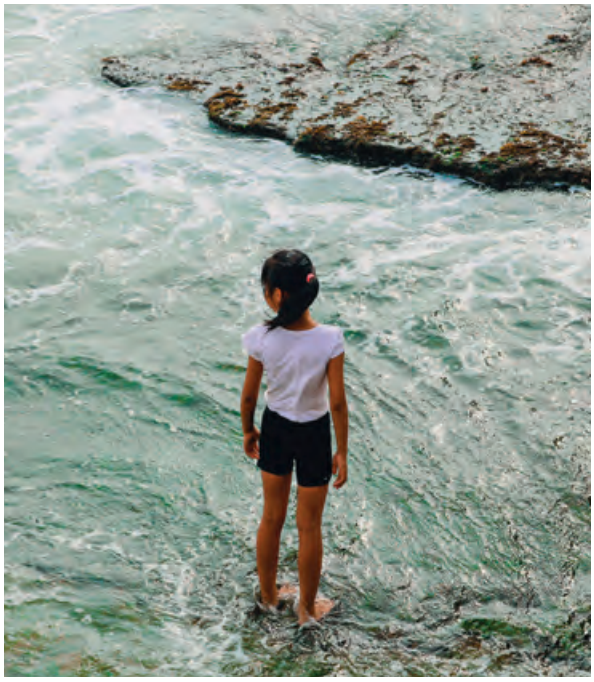
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social conventions. Rules which take no account of reality, and which are seldom respected by those who propose them, become more properly what we call *moralism.*

The moral sense here must be understood as the act of listening to the voice of conscience manifesting itself in the inner silence..., making us perceive, time after time, to do what is right, engaging in *'right action'* so our existence benefits not only us, but also the lives of all creatures who share the environment with us. Let me quote the Italian philosopher Vito Mancuso:

> "It feels like an indistinct but real call, and we are fascinated by it. And when we say yes to this mysterious call, we tend [to move] in its direction; and this sweet tension within us is called *ethics*."

This lack of listening is the tragedy of our experience as humans. Our particular deafness is much more than a simple hearing loss, it is a generalised drying up of perception today is stimulated by such violent and aggressive impulses that it then tends to no longer be sensitive to that subtle *'still small voice'* speaking within us when the conditions are propitious. The moral sense is that inner voice dictating to us rules of behaviour we could never transgress even if we were alone and no one could see us. It is a sense that gives to the life of individuals a refined quality to the extent that it removes them from vile, vulgar, dishonest, selfish behaviours, and at the same time elevating them towards the perception of the harmony of nature and empathy towards living beings, inviting them to act with benevolence and justice. And this action is the foundation of true environmentalist thought.



...we might ask ourselves if the moral sense can be developed, or if it is innate in humans.

At this point, we might ask ourselves if the moral sense can be developed, or if it is innate in humans. This important question has accompanied many philosophers throughout the history of human thought, and today it is also a topic of study in neuroscience. This is because, on simple observation, we can conclude that some people appear to be totally lacking such a moral sense, while others manifest very high and refined degrees of it. From the Rosicrucian point of view, this meaning corresponds precisely to what we call *'spiritual evolution.'* Indeed, it is a condition not characterised by the presence of extraordinary powers in individuals (although some may exist), but by a capacity for profound discernment, a refined moral sense and a high degree of empathy. It is a condition that can be achieved progressively, but which often appears fragile and at risk of being lost under the influence of the ego. In fact, its absence is easily recognisable because, despite the possible economic success of certain people, their failure as a humans will always stand out.

According to Rosicrucian thought, this evolution is one of the potentialities of the human being. We have an unshakable trust in it and channel our energies to favour the creation of the conditions in which everyone can experience, even if for a few moments, this voice within themselves.

> "As we often say, civilisation is not a simple improvement of the environment in which humans live, or where they have easier access to material resources. It is also the perfecting of oneself, of the individual." -- Ralph Maxwell Lewis

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We are the sea, we merge with it, but we are also the blue sky above us and the sand below us.

In order not to remain on the theoretical level when we talk about a spiritual or mystical experience, I invite you to recall an experience that you will most likely have lived. You will certainly have tried, perhaps when you were a child, the experience of being carried away by the waves of the sea towards the beach. A bit like a surfer does, but without the surfboard, letting themselves be carried away by the flow of the wave. Or even just to be lulled by the waves before they break. In those precise moments in which we are *dragged* by the current, we experience a sensation of pleasure that cannot be described. There is no difference between us and the sea, and while we are being dragged, we only feel the desire, the deep desire, that the experience will not end, that the wave will drag us as much as possible.

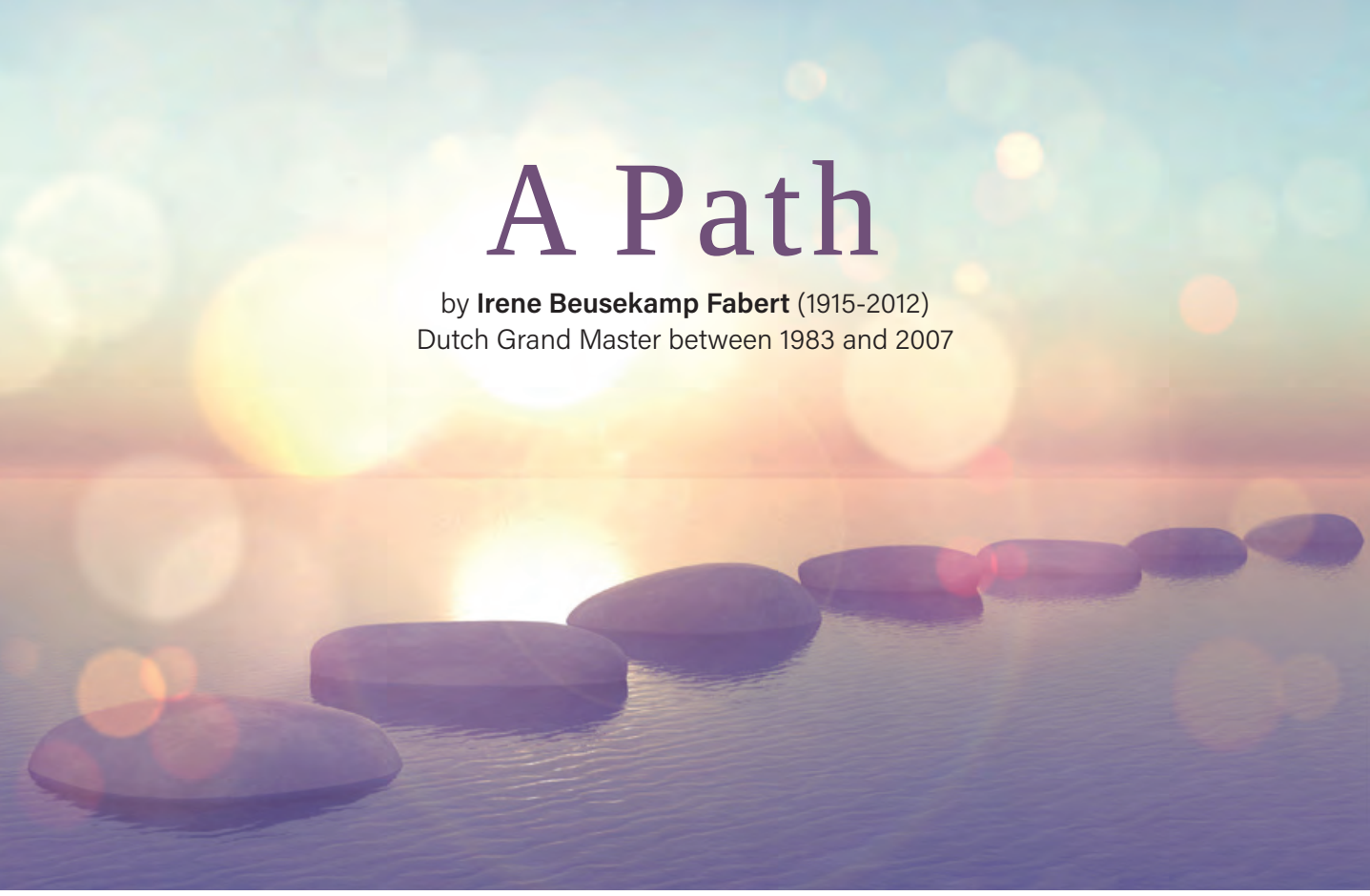
Experiencing the sea is too global, too mystical, to be reduced to an intersubjective interaction.

The water touches our whole body with gurgling caresses, and we have a feeling of being the sea itself, because we temporarily lose our perception of the physical limits of our body. We are the sea, we merge with it, but we are also the blue sky above us and the sand below us. It is a mixture of impressions that generates a perception of unity marked by a sense of happiness and a desire for it never to end, to last as long as possible.

Well, perhaps this is an experience that in its childlike simplicity can suggest what is described by mystics of all ages, and which constitutes the initiatory experience par excellence, our spiritual destiny: to experience Unity. And like the wave that arrives on the beach and then disappears and becomes the sea again..., perhaps we too, in this experience of union with the Whole, will feel that we have always been in the Cosmic, thereby rediscovering our own eternity.

> "Experiencing the sea is too global, too mystical, to be reduced to an intersubjective interaction. There is an essential difference between an intersubjective interaction, which takes place in a cultural space, and what one feels when one is alone at sea under a starry sky, moved by the splendour and immensity of the cosmos, with the feeling of being completely immersed in this global space, without being able to do anything but take part in it, without being able to find the words to describe it. At sea, I am no longer myself, I am the Cosmos." -- H. Laborit (Biologist)

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A Path

by **Irene Beusekamp Fabert** (1915-2012)
Dutch Grand Master between 1983 and 2007

Adepts on the Path, let me greet you with this eternal affirmation: *The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.*

These are long years that I have been in this world. I was five years old when I went to class for the first time. I learnt, studied, and studied more and more, and now I know so much that I no longer know what I know. And like the French writer Montaigne (1533-1592) I say: *Que sais-je?* What do I know?

The interpreters of Montaigne have for a long time thought that by voicing that rhetorical question he was expressing his scepticism and disillusionment. He was only a young child when he was speaking Latin fluently. Later he studied philosophy and law, travelled widely and carried out public duties. But it was the phenomenon of 'being human' which increasingly held his interest.

And so it was that he eventually retired to his château where he devoted himself to the study of mankind. Perhaps because he lived alone, he became the object of his own observations which he recorded in his *Essays*. It was in silence that he found that which, for him, was the most important: his Inner Self, which he called his 'back shop.' In the form of essays, he produced a large volume of writings about mankind, and yet he professed he never knew who or what it is. *"What do I know?"* he said. In spite of many years of study, mankind remained for him a mystery. As for possible spiritual experiences in the depths of himself, he always kept silent about them.

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Montaigne (1533-1592).

My Own Experiences

If you don't mind, I'm now going to revert to my own experiences. Of all that I've learnt, I've acquired a fairly extensive knowledge, but that which I really know doesn't come from what I accumulated in my brain, but from the most profound depths of myself, during the short or long moments of pure silence. Those moments where all is quiet in oneself, where it seems we're enveloped by an ethereal veil, and where all of a sudden our Inner Master manifests and confirms what the great Master said so long ago: *"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."* The Master, the Inner Master, God. A while back I wrote a meditation of words, of expressions, of phrases that I used to read or that I used to hear, and which became engraved in my heart. Here they are:

Adepts on the Path, let me greet you with this eternal affirmation: The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. The current illusion of mankind is the overestimation of the intellect which has brought so much to us and which has made possible, thanks to some miraculous techniques a total change of our conditions of life. Humanity is under the influence of a technological development which seems unable anymore to come to a standstill. New discoveries are being achieved in all fields. The universe is revealing its secrets to science and we're wearing out and using up all the treasures and resources of our Mother Earth.

The World is no longer in balance. While the western countries, greedy *To Have* (they no longer know how to conjugate the verb *To Be*) are pushed more and more to acquire totally useless products, the other part of the world suffers from hunger and remains deprived of what's most essential for life. Isn't it about time for us to realise the delusions of our intellectual evolution and commit ourselves to new ways, these ways which are emerging more and more and which, from all time, the wise men and women of all civilisations pointed out to be in the scope of one science, the *'science of the soul?'*

How odd that scholars know details about the tiniest of insects they can't see with the naked eye, yet don't even know the why and how of their own existence? Why do geneticists know so much about plants, animals and humans but don't look into the mystery of their own beings and into the characteristics of their own persona? How is it that mankind can cross the universe in all senses, even land on the Moon, but isn't able to find the path which leads us to ourselves?

"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Adepts of the path, permit me to repeat to you this age-old message. It's the message of the boundless smile of the Sphinx which rises up calm and serene on the sands of Egypt. It's the message formulated in different terms by the German mystic of the 13th and 14th centuries, Meister Eckhart: *"God is at the centre of Man."* St Thomas Aquinas and Jacob Boehme gave expression to the same thing in their copious writings which aren't always easy to read, but based on genuine experience, an experience which is also possible for mankind in this new age.

Our era is precisely the one where divine values are gaining clarity and where the spiritual life is becoming as significant and real as the material life, the one where the term *'initiation'* again finds its first significance: a beginning, a new beginning. And this is that which must be, since every creature is a part of the universal Spirit



The serene face of the Sphinx of Giza.

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Meister Eckhart

which is at the origin of our world, the Spirit where eternal Love, infinite Wisdom and indestructible Peace abides.

Initiation

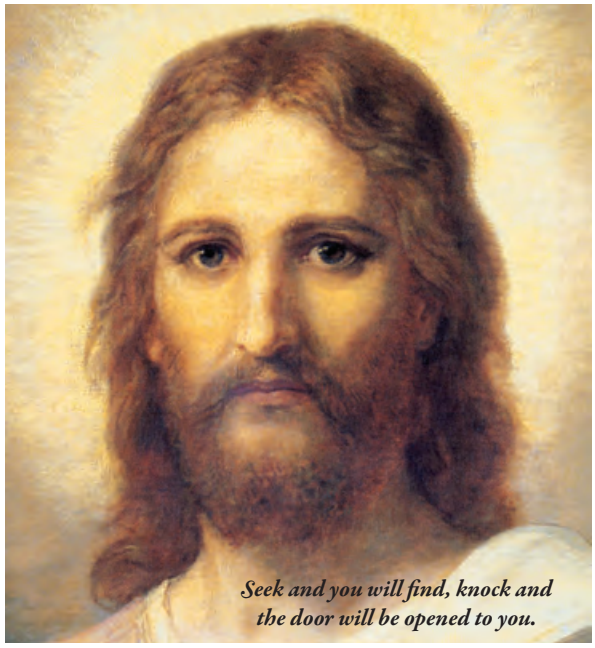
In the Mystery Schools of the pre-Christian civilisations, initiation was considered an extremely important act. At the end of the ceremonies of the Eleusinian mysteries in ancient Greece, the last words that initiates heard were: *"May Peace be in you"*, after which they resumed their respective paths, souls peaceful and hearts filled with joy. Initiation was for them a profound awakening into that which is genuine. It was the supreme accomplishment of their spiritual life and whoever didn't make it to that experience was not a complete being.

If this interior experience was possible two thousand years before the Common Era, it should be possible two thousand years into the Common Era too. During these four thousand years, the fundamental nature of mankind has not changed, nor their search for themselves..., Adepts of the Path who aspire to meeting the Divine. In their true reality, the one which was and will always be, men and women are spiritual beings even though they live in material bodies. Our senses, which play tricks of all sorts on us, are the reason why we confuse our true Self with our material body. The Divine doesn't surround us only during our earliest infancy, but all through life. We don't know it yet or don't know it any more.

Behind the person we think we are, there is a second person we don't see: our real Self, which existed already before thoughts and desires took possession of us. Behind our body of flesh and blood exists a radiant and sublime conscience. Our true life flows out in the depths of our heart and has no place in the superficial mask of the personality we show to the world. Adept of the Path, you are the heir of a hidden treasure in the deep recesses of your own nature. The Kingdom of heaven is within you. Those who, secluded in their own silence set out to find themselves, are not dreamers. They are only doing what each one must do at a certain phase of their evolution.

The way may be long or short, but they keep their spiritual eyes wide open and listen to the voice which speaks within them. One day, their great Self will be revealed to them, and they will be on the verge of Eternity. If the door of our soul opens itself for one second, one minute or one hour, the revelation will be complete. Neither bitter suffering nor a heavy burden can destroy this knowledge, a knowledge which cannot be translated into words. Anyone who, at one time, has felt their innermost being to be dissolved and to be merged in the infinite, knows that this cannot be expressed. It's the illumination of the spirit and of the heart, that which is the most miraculous in the life of each man and woman.

Look for your Self, find your true Self and you will know the sense of life and the mystery of the universe will be revealed to you. Think about the words of the Master of Galilee: *"Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you."* Discover that you are one part of an infinite Life which expresses itself in Light and in Love. *"He who knows his own nature, knows Paradise"* said a pupil of Confucius. In other words: *"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."*



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by **Joe van Dalen**

The Foundations of Health



This is the fourth and final in a series of articles summarising a recently published book[1] of the same title by Dr Paul Dupont, a former head of a clinic and member of the Rose-Croix University International.

The Mental Foundations of Health

Mental health is more than healthy thinking. It includes the emotions. The word *'psyche'* covers it more clearly. Our personality includes both thought and emotion, and in the long term, they determine our habits, behaviour and choices in life. Let us look then at four basic conditions of our psyche that affect health: positive emotions influencing the endocrines glands, good thoughts acting on the nervous system, harmonious contact with nature and the four elements describing personality types. *'Psychosomatic'* is a term now frequently used but it usually has a rather negative connotation, describing the ill effects of problems affecting our body. Obviously, the reverse is also true: positive thinking has its beneficial effects.

Mental Outlook and the Endocrines Glands

Our thoughts and emotions, our character in effect, influence the secretion of hormones just as, conversely, a hormonal imbalance will affect our behaviour. For a long time, this fact was not known or overlooked, but today the interdependence between emotions and hormones can be illustrated. In a previous book by Dr

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Dupont, *The Endocrine Glands and Your Health*[2], direct links are well established between the thyroid and fear, between hypophysis and emotional outbursts, between the heart and anxiety, and between worries and pancreatic secretions.

Recent research has established how the vagus nerve acts on the brain. Prior to this, it was believed that the vagus nerve acted independently of the will, being autonomically controlled by various brain centres. Rosicrucians take great interest in the sympathetic or autonomous nervous system with its plexuses governing many organs and glands. Harmony between the two branches of this nervous system, the *sympathetic* and *parasympathetic* (vagus nerve), results in good digestion, breathing, blood circulation, and according to recent research, proper brain function. Scientists have been able to temporarily bring a patient out of a deep *areactive coma* by simply stimulating the vagus nerve. The person experienced an awakening of sensations after a long time not moving or showing any sensory perception at all.

The sympathetic system allows the body to adapt to changing external conditions, when running for example, increasing the heart rate, directing the blood to the main organs and muscles. Following intense physical exercise, the parasympathetic system returns the body to a more stable condition. The systems are a sort of unconscious intelligence that maintain life, whether we are aware of it or not. Breathing and certain exercises can have some influence on these systems.



Cardio-respiratory Coherence

When we go to the doctor, our blood pressure and heart rhythm and rate are measured. The breathing rate, pressure and rhythm are not and yet they are so important, it being quite evident that there is a strong connection between breathing and heart function. Breathing is affected by our emotional state; a feeling of shortness of breath can be oppressive, stifling in an emotional situation, as the blood is starved of the oxygen it needs.

It is possible to suppose that a prolonged lack of coordination between the heart and breathing could become chronic and a source of illness. Breathing can slow down the heart rate, calm the body, a technique used for centuries by mystics in preparation for meditation. A trained person can move from 30 to 40 breaths per minutes to only about six breaths. The practice allows for greater clarity and concentration of thought.

The Influence of Thought on Health

A positive and optimistic outlook, and from those in the close environment, clearly gives a patient a better chance of recovery. It has to be said that sometimes, it is even better the patient does not know a condition rather than brood negatively upon it. Hence the importance of how clinicians relate a diagnosis to the patient; sometimes there are cultural factors to consider. The placebo effect is familiar to most people today. Epigenetics would suggest that a positive outlook in life, regardless of the obstacles to be faced, will influence the genes as they are transmitted to the next generation.

Health, Nature, Temperaments and the Four Elements

Ancient Greek thinkers had observed the influence of the four elements on health. *Earth*, *Water*, *Air* and *Fire* influence our humours and determine the four temperaments: *sanguine*, *choleric*, *melancholic* and *phlegmatic*, describing not just physical types but also psychological and psychic temperaments.[3]

While not a predominant notion held today,

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Earth, Water, Air and Fire influence our humours and determine the four temperaments: sanguine, choleric, melancholic and phlegmatic...



there are nevertheless some connections between the psyche and these four temperaments: lymphatic types, corresponding to the brain, are the most sensitive and have more difficulty getting rid of problems, while bilious types, corresponding to the liver, are more inclined to be dominant and have episodes of anger.

The melancholic types, corresponding to the lymphatic system, tend to have a depressive and grumpy outlook. The heart correlates to the sanguine types. Relaxation techniques enable people to find a balance, including those suffering from pathological illnesses, coupled with auto-suggestion that utilises the forces of positive visualisation.

The Healing Power of Water

For a long time, Rosicrucians have practiced a technique of *'magnetising'* water to enhance its healing property, by using concentration and visualisation, as well as the body's radiant energy. Japanese studies have demonstrated in double blind experiments that thought can change the structure of water crystals, transmitting thought from Japan to California. While the experiments did not prove that water has a direct influence on health, it did show that concentration and projecting good thoughts of love, health, order, well-being etc on water seemed to organise its molecules into a more aesthetic and geometric manner, even at distance.[4] If thought can have this influence on water, then why not on our body which is predominantly water?

Conversely, negative thoughts disturb the equilibrium of the psyche and can pollute it in the same way chemicals may pollute water and air. Thoughts of envy, hate, jealousy, mischief are destructive and are a form of mental poisoning. The nocebo effect, the opposite to the placebo effect, can result in illness because it penetrates the subconscious areas of mind. Prolonged drug usage, and modern society is addicted to many strong forms of them, diminishes the nervous system that regulates the balance between thoughts and emotions, making people more vulnerable to negative suggestions. For some the outcomes are paranoia, schizophrenia, antisocial behaviour and general psychiatric problems.

The Spiritual Foundations of Health

The Universal Force

The faithful in many religious traditions throughout the world pray for many reasons and particularly to maintain their health and that of loved ones. It underscores a belief in the existence of an energy in the universe capable of doing so.

While scientific materialists may be sceptical about this, statements from many testify to its efficacy. Where does this force come from? Is it the Sun? But does not the Sun find its energy elsewhere? This universal force is the source of movement and manifests as growth of cells, as in all living matter, perhaps even in minerals. Forces manifest as those of attraction, repulsion, gravity and so

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on, but in our bodies and in all living things, it should be considered as a vital force.

Universal Love

It is not necessary to be a believer but simply comprehend the conception that within us is an invisible aspect of the universe, that upon death, returns to its source, the body having served as a temporary vehicle. Our material ego gives us the illusory perception that we are irrevocably separate from the rest of the universe and so to conceive of a consciousness or intelligence as part of a universal intelligence or consciousness, that some may call God, is a difficult thing for everyone to accept. Yet within this great universe, this intelligent macrocosm, there is an infinite consciousness called Universal Love. It is closest to the love our heart may express for others, nature, animals and even self in an impersonal and personal way.

Some people confuse love with passion, or the love of goods and temporary pleasures. Relaxation, fun, amusements and being happy are, of course, a form of love but with their limitations. The Love cultivated inwardly is the love that knows no limits for the reason that it is not motivated by materials desires, but by an altruism and impersonal communion with the whole of Creation.

The Love cultivated inwardly is the love that knows no limits for the reason that it is not motivated by materials desires...

Inspired by this Love, acts become altruistic, offering aid impersonally, with compassion, sharing, the gift of a smile to others and so on. According to an ancient law of compensation, we must be ready to receive the gift of universal love. The more we give the more we receive. It should also be noted that in the area of health, the true healers who have been able to render cures or aid others are those personalities who are filled with the love of their fellow human beings.

Spirituality is Firstly Turning Within

To perceive the spiritual, it is not necessary to escape the physical body. Spirituality lies in the capacity to experience who we are, to develop ourselves, and to realise we are not separated from the whole which is perfect. The key to healing is in our desire to be perfect and to become better.

When faced with illness, depression we often ask to be healed physically and spiritually. The force within only asks to be allowed to express itself. Is it sufficient to ask to not be ill? We may not intellectually understand what perfection is, or that the Whole is perfect, and that this lies within us. Nevertheless, we can sense the energy and intelligence within.

Methods for Realising Spiritual Health

True spirituality does not exclude any persons seeking to connect with ineffable principle within, regardless of background and belief. For health, acting spiritually consists of doing certain exercises based on *"Know Thyself."* The exercises prepare for the initiatic path using breathing, relaxation, concentration, meditation, communion, prayer, contemplation and union with the Divine. They enlarge the field of consciousness. They lead to the human virtues of patience, goodness, generosity and so on.

Recent studies suggest meditation has an influence on the aging process, preserving particular areas of cerebral activity, especially regarding the emotions and memory. Meditation protects the telomeres, the aging clock in every cell. Telomeres get shorter each time a cell copies itself, but the important DNA stays intact. Eventually, telomeres get too short to do their job, causing our cells to age and stop functioning properly.[5] There is a difference between relaxation and meditation; listening to relaxing music does not bring the same results as inwardly meditating with strong thoughts of altruism, well-being, harmony and so on, that can in fact repair and lengthen telomeres.

Imagery from magnetic resonance indicates that meditation can augment neuronal connections in the brain, functions located in the prefrontal cortex. This area is important for planning activities, long term memory, scaffolding strategies and finding solutions to complex problems. Meditation also affects the anterior cingulate cortex that influences functions like attention, motivation, regulating emotional responses.

Lastly, meditation affects the hippocampus, the

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Spirituality lies in the capacity to experience who we are, to develop ourselves, and to realise we are not separated from the whole which is perfect.

part of the brain that deals with memory, the perception of space and places. A particular form of meditation, mindfulness, in which distracting thoughts and memories are minimised, has shown an increased volume of the left hippocampus related to memory and its classification.[6] Studies have indicated a reinforcement of the inferior frontal gyrus that processes speech and language, and where the individual can inhibit certain impulses and improve intentional and emotional control.

It has been mentioned earlier in these articles that visualisation can maintain health and cause improvement in conditions. In medical circles this is also known as imagery rehearsal therapy. Rosicrucians have practised it for centuries although perhaps called by something else like *"imaginatio"* which had its application for spiritual work initially, along with prayer. These practices work on harmonics that attract higher forms of energy present within us and around us and are capable of acting on others independent of time and space.

While science will be able to replace many more parts of the body in the future, it may not be able to stop the aging process of cells. And why should it? Nor will it be able to necessarily balance the mind or prevent us from having experiences that test our mettle. Hopefully science will soon acknowledge the metaphysical aspect of life in the body and find ways of helping reach the summum bonum, the Supreme Good. In other words, for each individual to maintain health, scientific progress may help people in life through the art and metaphysical science of the God of its Heart.

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4. *"Double-blind test of the effects of distant intention on water crystal formation"* -- Radin D, Hayssen G, Emoto M, Kizu T., Explore (NY). 2006 Sep-Oct; 2(5): 408-11.

5. *"Effect of heartfulness meditation on burnout, emotional wellness, and telomere length in health care professionals"* 2017 – by Thimmapuram J, Pargament R, Sibliss K, Grim R, Risques R, Toorens E; J Community Hosp Intern Med Perspect. Mar 31, 2017; 7(1): 21-27.

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Juan de la Cruz
Poet of God

by **Simon Cassar**

Sometimes inspiration comes at our darkest hour. During our most challenging times, surrounded by the harsh realities of life, great beauty may suddenly be revealed to us. This flash of creative beauty, that flows throughout our being, comes from a place deep within. Such was the case with the 16th Century Spanish mystic poet *San Juan de la Cruz* (St. John of the Cross).

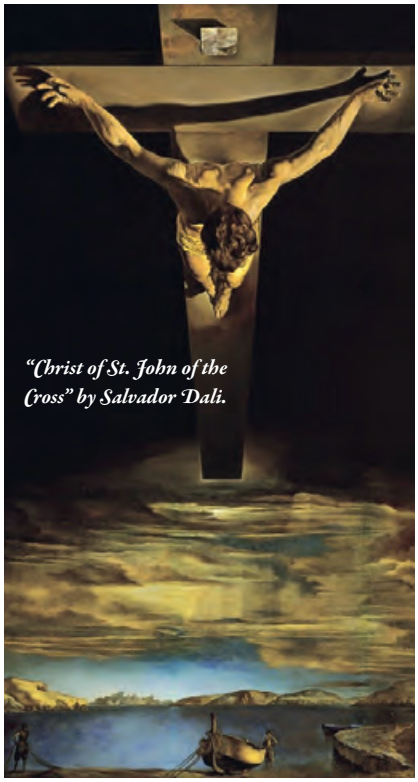
Confined in a stifling cabinet-sized cell, and ill from malnutrition and torture, San Juan composed some of his most beautiful verses, clearly expressing a positive message of love, beauty and personal union with God. San Juan is now considered one of the foremost poets in the Spanish language.

San Juan was born *Juan de Yepes y Alvarez* in 1542. His father died when he was three and he lived in poverty with his mother in Medina. He attended a school for poor children and while there he was chosen to serve as an acolyte at a nearby monastery. In 1563, he entered the Carmelite order and took the name John of St. Matthias. The following year he took his religious vows and travelled to Salamanca where he attended a prestigious university, studying theology and philosophy. However, life was soon to change for San Juan after a meeting in Medina with *Teresa de Jesus*, a Carmelite nun who was seeking to reform the Carmelite Order and restore it back to a state of purity. This reform involved austerity, fasting, abstinence from eating meat and long periods of prayer, contemplation and seeking mystical union with God. San Juan joined with Teresa de Jesus and in 1568 set up a small monastery for men and changed his name to Juan de la Cruz (John of the Cross).



San Juan de la Cruz

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"Christ of St. John of the Cross" by Salvador Dali.

He worked hard for the reformed Carmelite order, which was called the *Discalced Carmelites* (barefoot Carmelites), setting up communities, and eventually becoming the spiritual director and confessor for Teresa and the nuns in Avila. During this time, he had a vision of the crucified Christ which led him to create his drawing *"Christ from above"*, which many years later in 1951 inspired Salvador Dali's work *"Christ of Saint John of the Cross."*

However, the work of San Juan and Teresa created tensions within the Carmelite order as many were opposed to the reforms. On the 2nd December 1577, a group of Carmelites opposed to the reform took San Juan prisoner. He was accused of disobeying ordinances of the Order and tried by a court of friars, who sentenced him to imprisonment. He was jailed in a monastery in a tiny cell 3 x 2 metres in size, was lashed regularly, and kept in isolation in appalling conditions. He remained there for nine months and during this time managed to write some of his most beautiful poetry on scraps of paper given to him by one of his guards. He eventually escaped and was nursed back to health by Teresa's nuns in Toledo.

There was much contrast in San Juan's life. A deeply introspective mystic, he was also a practical reformer much acquainted with pain and suffering, as well as the great beauty, found in the world. He was well educated, though his keenest insights came not from any learned institutions, but from periods of deep introspection and meditation. He lived as a celibate monk, but his vision of joy and ecstasy went far beyond the narrow views of the Church. And these contrasts come through in his breathtakingly beautiful poetry.

His poetry tells of the Soul's journey through the darkest night and into the light of higher understanding, and eventually to mystical union with Absolute Being. To express this journey of the Soul toward mystical union, San Juan used the allegory of physical love - the coming together of lovers. He spoke from the perspective of the female lover describing the ecstasy of union. As with any journey, the poems are filled with the energising excitement of the journey ahead and a longing for journey's end - the goal. This is how one of San Juan's most important poems *Noche Obscura del Alma* (Dark Night of the Soul) begins:

On a dark night, kindled in love with yearnings – oh, happy chance! I went forth without being observed, my house being now at rest.

In darkness and secure, by the secret ladder, disguised – oh, happy chance! In darkness and in concealment, my house being now at rest.

In the happy night, in secret, when none saw me, nor I beheld aught, without light or guide, save that which burned in my heart.

The poem goes on the describe in glowing terms the coming together of lovers in darkest night. Through his symbolic poetry San Juan presented a joyful and beautiful description of the Soul's journey into mystical union - the mystical marriage.

Have you ever awakened to the kind of morning when everything feels right? The sun is shining, birds are singing, flowers are opening to the sun, and colours across the landscape are bright. All nature around you seems to be celebrating the arrival of a new day. You breathe deeply and feel the energy pulsing through you, and through all nature. And you realise that it all makes sense. You feel whole and complete, and in union with all about you. And then you realise that love is the law,

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the geometry, at the base of all creation.

It was this feeling of the ineffable joy of union with all creation, with God, the Cosmic, that Juan de la Cruz was expressing through his mystical poetry. It was to the mystical mind that this great Spanish poet dedicated his verse - lines so alive with feeling, joy, and love of life, that critics have called these poems the most intense and luminous poetry in the Spanish language.

Strange, perhaps, that such lyrical poetry was composed by a priest in an age when orthodox religion was taken so seriously, and was in fact a matter of life and death. Strange, too, that although much of this poetry has such an earthy sensuality to it, it expresses an individual's highest feelings regarding beauty, love and union with Absolute Being. But this sensual love, enraptured by pure beauty, is the vehicle used by the poet to convey the soul's rapture with God. And there is suffering too, for the poet himself knew suffering and also the terrors of the obscure night before day's bright dawning.

Turning from a rigorous, cold, intellectual approach to theology, San Juan's poetry exhibits fire, energy, passion and profound yearning. His Spiritual Canticle, one of his most powerful poems written while in captivity, was based on the Old Testament Song of Songs, which in his day had just been directly translated from the original Hebrew (much to the chagrin of the Church) by the Spanish mystic and humanist *Fray Luis de Leon*, for which he was later imprisoned. The first two stanzas of this beautiful poem are below:

Where have You hidden Yourself, and abandoned me in my groaning, O my Beloved? You have fled like the hart, having wounded me. I ran after You, crying; but You were gone.

O shepherds, you who go through the sheepcots up the hill, if you shall see Him whom I love the most, tell Him I languish, suffer, and die.

The Spanish writer, poet, and dramatist, Garcia Lorca (1898 – 1936), praised Juan de la Cruz for his use and understanding of *duende* - the fiery, mysterious, sustaining creative power behind all great works of art. To the Andalusian mind, *duende* is



"Christ from above" - sketch by St. John of the Cross.

"profound, human, tender, the cry of communion with God through the medium of the five senses..." This is perhaps seen most clearly in his poem *Living Flame of Love* which is sometimes considered to be his best and most mystical poems:

Oh, living flame of love that tenderly wounds my soul In its deepest centre! Since you are not oppressive, perfect me now! If it be thy will, break the web of this sweet encounter.

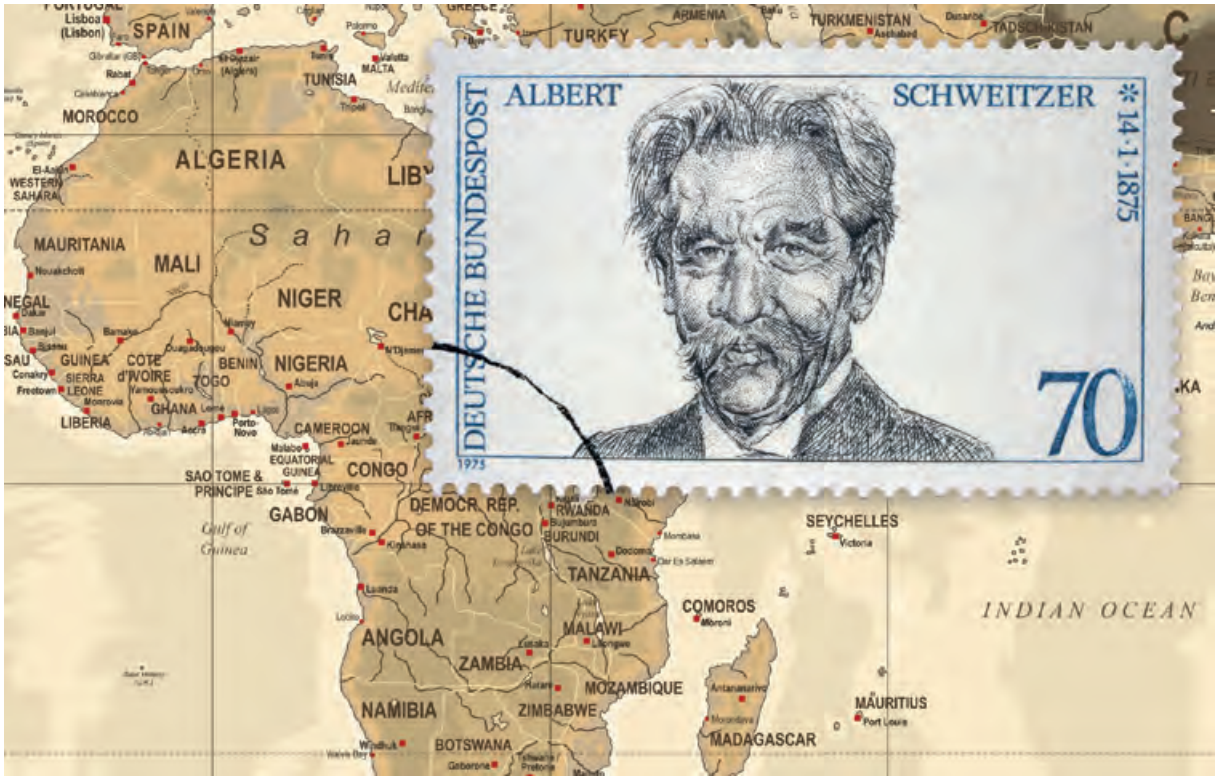
Oh, sweet burn; Oh, delectable wound; Oh, soft hand; Oh, delicate touch; That savours of eternal life and pays every debt; In slaying, thou hast changed death into life.

Oh, lamps of fire, in whose splendours the deep caverns of sense which were dark and blind with strange brightness, give heat and light together to their Beloved.

How gently and lovingly thou awakenest in my bosom, where thou dwellest secretly and alone! And in thy sweet breathing, full of blessing and glory, how delicately thou inspirest my love!

But, perhaps most important of all, Juan de la Cruz was a mystic - someone who saw beyond the structure, hierarchy and dogma of the Church into the core of what is Sacred. To the mystic the true spiritual union is a personal one between humanity and the Cosmic, Absolute Being, God. It is the intimate awareness of God through the domain of the subconscious. The mystic's ideal is the ultimate attainment of conscious union with the Absolute.

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Albert Schweitzer *Reverence for Life*

by **Bill Anderson**

The modern west-central African country of Gabon is little known outside the Francophone world. It is bordered by Equatorial Guinea to the northwest, Cameroon to the north, the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville) on the east and south, and the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. With its capital in Libreville, the country has nine provinces, and it is to one of the nine that we will turn our attention.

The longest river in Gabon is called the Ogooué, which gives its name to five of the country's provinces. The capital of the province of Moyen-Ogooué is called Lambaréné with a current population of over 25,000. What is so special about Lambaréné is that about 100 years ago a remarkable man built a hospital here and made it his home and life's work. His name: *Dr Albert Schweitzer*.

Oganga, the Giver and Taker of Life

In the late 1990s there was a TV series called *"The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones."* In the episode called *"Oganga, the Giver and Taker of Life"*, set in January 1917, Indy and company on their way from East Africa to Port Gentil on the Gulf of Guinea succumb to disease, and are

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picked up by Albert Schweitzer and the orderlies from his jungle hospital. At first, resistant to being treated by a German, Indy soon begins to realise that Schweitzer is not interested in war, and his only wish is to cure people against all odds.

At one point we find Indy and Schweitzer journeying by boat up-river to attend to a sick patient in one of the local tribes. They have a conversation about the breakdown of civilisation of which the First World War was just a symptom and not the cause. Schweitzer asks Indy if he would ever consider going into a stranger's home and slaughtering everyone he found there. Of course, Indy says no. To which Schweitzer replies:

> When governments do this in a war, millions of people, just as moral and ethical as us, flock to the colours to do their ruler's bidding without a second thought. Why?

Indy says it's not the same thing to which Schweitzer replies that that is what Indy was taught to believe and that society only wants people to follow and not to think for themselves. It wants servants who do as they are told. People prefer society to do their thinking for them because it's easier. It takes away the need to make moral judgements. He continues:

> Just imagine this world if no-one could rely on a country to justify its actions. And imagine if every person had to give a personal account for all they did. The hope for humanity lies not in nations, governments, religions or even the stars. It lies only in the human heart.

Imperial Background

The last decades of the 19th Century saw various European powers attempting to carve out empires on the African continent, the so-called 'Scramble for Africa.' We term this Imperialism and Britain, France, Belgium and Germany vied with each other to extend their spheres of influence and exploit the riches they found there at the expense of the local people.



Image: Mysid / Wikimedia

Relief Map of Gabon.

As Europe was engulfed in the First World War, the allies also attacked the German colonies in Africa: German East Africa (Now Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), German South West Africa (now Namibia), Kamerun and Neukamerun (now Cameroon, with parts of Chad, Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Gabon), Togoland (now Togo and part of Ghana). In this little-heard-of theatre of war many people died on behalf of their imperial masters.

Early Years

Ludwig Philipp Albert Schweitzer was born on 14 January 1875 in Kaysersberg, in Upper Alsace (at the time a part of Germany, but now in France) into a world long since lost. Compared to the rest of France, Alsace enjoyed a climate of religious tolerance. Alsace had been part of the Holy Roman Empire until 1639, when most of Alsace was conquered by France under Louis XIII. It returned to German rule after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. At the end of this war,

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the German states proclaimed their union as the German Empire under the Prussian king finally uniting Germany as a nation-state.

The son of Louis Schweitzer and Adèle Schillinger, six months after he was born, his father moved the family to his wife's village of Günsbach and there became the pastor of the small Protestant community. The medieval parish church was shared by the Protestant and Catholic congregations, who held their prayers in different areas at different times on Sundays. This compromise arose after the Protestant Reformation and the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Albert spent his childhood in the approximately 100-house Alsatian village with his three sisters and one brother, where his father taught him how to play music. This tiny village is home to the Association Internationale Albert Schweitzer (AIAS) or the International Albert Schweitzer Association. Albert grew up in this exceptional environment of religious tolerance and developed the belief that true Christianity should always work towards a unity of faith and purpose.

There is a 1956 film (nowadays available on DVD) about Albert Schweitzer shot in the homely 1950s-style of American films which is narrated by Schweitzer himself. It won an Oscar in 1957. His accent was so like Swiss that it was a bit strange to the ear, if you are used to modern German. He talks about his life in Günsbach where he had a happy childhood. Being rather frail at the time, the fresh air and exercise turned him into a strong boy. He was in Primary School from 1880 to 1884 and describes himself as a quiet and dreamy pupil who had to make an effort to learn to read and write. He felt he didn't fit in at school and that the other children thought he was better than them because his father was a pastor. They made him feel like an outsider.



Albert Schweitzer's house in Kaysersberg.

Before bed, he said, he prayed for all beings, human and animal, and ask for them to be kept from evil and left to sleep in peace

When nine years old his life changed, and from 1884 to 1885 he attended the Secondary School in Münster, further up the valley. He used to walk through the countryside alone, deep in his own thoughts and became acutely aware of the different seasons and their effect on Nature. He also became increasingly troubled by the amount of hardship and misery he saw around him: *"I never really knew the light-hearted youthful enjoyment of life."*

He was particularly saddened by the plight of animals who suffered so much pain because of human carelessness and cruelty. Before bed, he said, he prayed for all beings, human and animal, and ask for them to be kept from evil and left to sleep in peace. He recalled an incident one sunny summer's day when he and a friend went out with slings to hunt birds. Just as they were about to let fly, the church bells rang out and into Albert's mind came the words *"Thou shalt not kill!"* It made

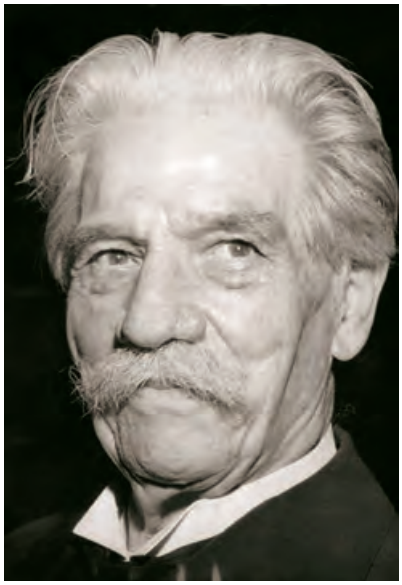


Image: Taxiarchos228 / Wikimedia

View of Kaysersberg today.

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Image: Bundesarchiv, Bild / Wikimedia



Albert Schweitzer

a deep impression on him, one he remembered for the rest of his life.

At the school in Mülhausen where he was between 1885 and 1893, he received his *'Abitur'*, the certificate at the end of secondary education. He studied the organ during this time with Eugène Munch, organist at the Protestant cathedral, who inspired Schweitzer with his great enthusiasm for the music of the German composer Richard Wagner. In 1893 Schweitzer played for the French organist Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937) in Paris, for whom J. S. Bach's organ music contained a mystic sense of the eternal. Deeply impressed, Widor agreed to teach Schweitzer without fee, and a great influential friendship began.

> "...I had found my way to the principle in which affirmation of the world and ethics are joined together!"

From 1893 Schweitzer studied theology and philosophy at the Kaiser Wilhelm University in Straßburg (later Strasbourg). There he also received instruction in piano and counterpoint from professor Gustav Jacobsthal and associated closely with Ernest Munch (the brother of his former teacher), organist of St William church, who was also a passionate admirer of J.S. Bach's music. Schweitzer served his one-year compulsory military service in 1894. He saw many operas of Richard Wagner in Strasbourg and in 1896, managed to visit the Bayreuth to see Wagner's *"Der Ring des Nibelungen"* and *"Parsifal"*, both of which deeply impressed him.

In 1898 he returned to Paris to write a PhD. dissertation at the Sorbonne on the religious philosophy of Kant, and to study in earnest with Widor. In 1899, he spent the spring and summer semesters at the University of Berlin where he met some outstanding representatives of the scientific and spiritual life of the time. At the turn-of-century celebrations in Berlin, he did not share in the general euphoria and optimism of the new century, but saw instead storm clouds on the horizon. He eventually received his PhD in theology from the University of Strasbourg and published his thesis at the University of Tübingen in 1899. Having decided to go to Africa as a medical missionary rather than as a pastor, Schweitzer began in 1905 to study medicine at the University of Strasbourg and received his MD from them in 1913.

Having finally received his medical degree, he sailed for Africa where he lived until 1917. On 16 April, 1913, he arrived at Lambaréné in French Equitorial Africa (later the Gabon). However, when World War I broke out a year later, he was placed under house arrest as a German citizen in a French colony. With much time to spare, in 1915 he started work on his *"Philosophy of Civilisation"*, where his thoughts on *"Reverence for Life"* first appear. This phrase is a translation of the German phrase: *"Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben"*, words which came to Schweitzer during a boat trip on the Ogooué River while pondering a way forward for humankind and searching for a universal concept of ethics for his time. He explains:

> In that mental state, I had to take a long journey up river. Lost in thought, I sat on the deck of the barge, struggling to find the elementary and universal concept of the ethical that I had not discovered in any philosophy. I covered sheet after sheet with disconnected sentences merely to concentrate on the problem. Two days passed, and then late on the third day, at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase: *"Reverence for Life."* The iron door had yielded. The path in the thicket had become visible. Now I had found my way to the principle in which affirmation of the world and ethics are joined together!

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Schweitzer made this phrase the basic tenet of an ethical philosophy, which he developed and put into practice. He gave expression to its development in numerous books and publications during his life and also in manuscripts, some of which have only recently been published. The main work was his unfinished four-part *"Philosophy of Civilisation"* subtitled *"The World-view of Reverence for Life."* He also used his hospital in Lambaréné to demonstrate this philosophy in practice.

In 1917 Albert and his wife Helene were sent to a French internment camp as prisoners of war, first to Bordeaux, then to the Pyrenees and finally to Saint-Rémy de Provence. Released in 1918, Schweitzer spent the next six years in Europe, preaching in his old church, giving lectures and concerts, taking medical courses and writing *"On the Edge of the Primeval Forest"*, *"The Decay and Restoration of Civilisation"*, *"Civilisation and Ethics"*, and *"Christianity and the Religions of the World."*

He finally returned to Lambaréné in 1924 and except for relatively short periods of time, spent the rest of his life there. With the funds earned from royalties on his books, and personal appearance fees at lectures, and with funds donated from all parts of the world, he expanded the hospital to 70 buildings which by the early 1960's cared for over 500 patients in residence at any one time. The patients and their carers would come by canoe as the hospital was close to the river.



Image: Uknown/Oslo Museum / Wikimedia



At Lambaréné, Schweitzer was doctor and surgeon in the hospital and host to many visitors. The honours he received were numerous, including the Goethe Prize of Frankfurt and honorary doctorates from many universities emphasising one or other of his achievements. The Nobel Peace Prize for 1952 was awarded to him on 10 December 1953. He passed away peacefully on 4 September 1965 and was buried at Lambaréné.

Reverence for Life

Schweitzer believed that reverence for life is a concept that develops from close observation of the world around us. In his *"Civilisation and Ethics"* he expressed this in the following words:

> Ethics is nothing other than Reverence for Life. Reverence for Life affords me my fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, assisting and enhancing life, while evil destroys, harms or hinders life.

James Brabazon, who wrote a biography of Schweitzer defined Reverence for Life as follows:

> Reverence for Life says that the only thing we are really sure of is that *we live* and *want to go on living*. This is something that we share with everything else that lives, from elephants to blades of grass, and of course, every human being. So, we are brothers and

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The old Albert Schweitzer Hospital, Lambaréné, Gabon.

> sisters to all living things, and owe to all of them the same care and respect that we wish for ourselves.

Schweitzer hoped that the ethic of Reverence for Life would make its way in the world on the basis of his explanation of it in his books and talks, the example of his life and the force of its own argument based on its depth of fundamental thought.

He believed that ethical values, which could underpin the ideal of true civilisation, had to have their foundation in deep thought and be world- and life-affirming. He therefore embarked on a search for ethical values in the various major religions and world-views accessible to him, but found none that were able unequivocally to combine ethics with life-affirmation. It was not until two years after moving out to Gabon to establish the Albert Schweitzer Hospital that he finally found the simple statement which answered his quest.

In his autobiography *"Out of My Life and Thought"*, Schweitzer explains that at the beginning of the summer of 1915 he awoke from a sort of mental daze, asking himself why he was only *criticising* civilisation and not working on something *constructive*. He relates how he then asked himself what civilisation really is, and answered as follows:

> The essential element in civilisation is the ethical perfecting of the individual as well as society. At the same time, every spiritual and material step forward has significance for civilisation. The will to [advance to] civilisation is the universal will to progress, [one] that is conscious of the ethical as the highest value. In spite of the great importance we attach to the achievements of science and human prowess, it is obvious that only a humanity that is striving for ethical ends can benefit in full measure from material progress, and can overcome the dangers that accompany it.

Philosophy of Civilisation

The *"Philosophy of Civilisation"* is a philosophical work of impressive scope and depth. Originally published in 1923, it contains Schweitzer's most thorough and scholarly discussion of his ideas on ethics and the reverence for life. The term 'civilisation' referred to in the title refers not to mere political, artistic or religious structures, but to the entire *Weltanschauung*, or world-view, of society and individuals. Schweitzer first defends the idea that philosophy matters, and in fact defines the way people live and value their lives.

He explains why he feels modern philosophy, and therefore civilisation, is failing. He blames the lack of idealism and optimism in philosophy on the

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abandonment of Rationalism. If all that philosophy does is tell the world what people don't know, then what, he argues, are people to dream of, and why should they try and improve things for themselves? With thoroughness and amazing breadth typical of his scholarly works, he then reviews the major features of Western philosophy from Greece through to Rationalism, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche.

The last six chapters present Schweitzer's own philosophy. Based on the will to live of all creatures, it is a corpus of ethics which accept that, in the experience of each living creature, its life is fundamentally important to it, and we should therefore not treat other living species callously or thoughtlessly. Each species of life should be revered, indeed there should be gratitude by humans for its existence. But this is not a life- or world-denying philosophy, leading to asceticism and withdrawal. Rather, it is a call to be conscious and considerate of the right to life of all creatures, but especially to find some way to help others of our own human species.

Schweitzer knew from a very young age that his calling was to serve others in whatever way he could.



Some are called to a lifetime of service to humanity, others are not. Schweitzer knew from a very young age that his calling was to serve others in whatever way he could. Regardless of our circumstances, he argues, we are all called to some level of service to others and not merely to serve our own interests. All people are called to at least make conscious decisions about every one of their actions, thereby taking conscious responsibility for what they do.

All actions, he argues, are ethically dangerous, but he does not prescribe what people must do, for that is not his true interest. The key thing is that people must consciously make their own decisions in the full knowledge that every decision has consequences, both good and bad. All people then, armed with the knowledge that their decisions affect the lives of others, must and do the best they can not to harm other lives, but ideally preserve and even improve them. Schweitzer quoted the following from the Roman philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BCE – 65 CE):-

No man is nobler than his fellows, even if it happens that his spiritual nature is better constituted and he is more capable of higher learning. The

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> world is the one mother of us all, and the ultimate origin of each one of us can be traced back to her, whether the steps in the ladder of descent be noble or humble. To no one is virtue forbidden; she is accessible to all, she admits everyone, she invites everyone in: free men and freedmen, slaves, kings and exiles. She regards neither birth nor fortune; the man alone is all she wants. This, in fact, is the demand which is laid upon each man, namely that he works, when possible, for the welfare of many. If that is impracticable, then he works for the welfare of a few. Failing that, for the welfare of his neighbours, and if that is impossible, for his own.

Jain Thought

According to some authors, Schweitzer's thought, and specifically his development of the reverence for life theme, was influenced by Indian religious thought and in particular by the Jain principle of *Ahimsa* (non-violence). Indeed there was undoubtedly some influence and this is noted in his book *"Indian Thought and Its Development."*

> The laying down of the injunction not to kill and not to damage, is one of the greatest events in the spiritual history of humankind. Starting from its principle, founded on world and life denial, of abstention from action, ancient Indian thought -- and this is a period when in other respects ethics have not progressed very far -- reaches the tremendous discovery that ethics know no bounds. So far as we know, this is for the first time clearly expressed by Jainism.

Epilogue

When in his early teens, Schweitzer twice went fishing with friends *"because they asked me to."* But...

> This sport was soon made impossible for me by the treatment of the worms that were put on the hook, and the wrenching of the mouths of the fish that were caught, and I gave it up. From experiences like these, which moved my heart, there slowly grew up in me an unshakeable conviction that we have no right to inflict suffering and death on another living creature, and we ought, all of us, to feel what a horrible thing it is to cause suffering and death.

The concept of reverence for life was incipient in Schweitzer almost from birth, and this awareness affected him throughout his life, as when he would gently scoop a spider out of a hole it had fallen into before planting a seed there to feed his patients and their families who also worked on the hospital farm. He wrote that just as our existence is important to each of us, *"[a creature's] existence is significant to it. My relation to my own being and to the objective world is determined by reverence for life, a reverence given as an element of my will-to-live..."* And this will-to-live, he often stated, exists in all creatures and humans. As the highest and most intelligent of them all, humans should have no difficulty respecting the wishes of those less capable than them.

Dr Albert Schweitzer died on 4 September 1965 at his beloved hospital in Lambaréné. His grave, on the banks of the Ogooué River, was marked by a cross he made himself. The Albert Schweitzer hospital has been the primary source of healthcare for the surrounding region since it was founded in 1913 and remains so to the present. Its research laboratory is one of five leading facilities in Africa engaged in the scientific study of malaria. In 2017, it had 150 beds, an emergency room, a pharmacy, a laboratory and an X-ray unit, about 160 staff, 2 surgeons, 2 interns and 2 paediatricians, and around 50,000 people had benefited from its existence in that year alone. Diseases like AIDS and tuberculosis are also a major focus.



The Roman philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca.

Schweitzer, his wife and several collaborators are buried in a cemetery nestled among the old buildings which are today a museum and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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Those who thank God much are the truly wealthy. So, our inner happiness depends not on what we experience but on the degree of our gratitude, whatever the experience. Your life is something opaque, not transparent, as long as you look at it in an ordinary human way. But if you hold it up against the light of God's goodness, it shines and turns transparent, radiant and bright. And then you ask yourself in amazement: Is this really my own life I see before me? -- (from *"Reverence for Life"*)

"Your life is something opaque, not transparent, as long as you look at it in an ordinary human way."

Postcript

On 11 December 1959, Dr Henry Friedman a close confidant and co-worker with Albert Schweitzer was awarded the *Rosicrucian Humanitarian Award* by the Southern Cross Lodge of the Rosicrucian Order in Johannesburg, Union of South Africa.

References

A moving documentary on Schweitzer's life can be found at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf4B9v0s0CY*

Each of the following books was written by Schweitzer or is an edited collection of his letters:

- The Africa Sermons.
- African Notebook.
- The Albert Schweitzer-Helene Bresslau Letters 1902 – 1912.
- Albert Schweitzer and Alice Ehlers: A Friendship in Letters.
- Albert Schweitzer Letters 1905 – 1965.
- Brothers in Spirit: The Correspondence of Albert Schweitzer and William L Mellon, Jr.
- Christianity and the Religions of the World.
- Goethe: Four Studies by Albert Schweitzer.
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- The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity.
- Memoirs of Childhood and Youth.
- The Mystery of the Kingdom of God.
- The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle.
- On the Edge of the Primeval Forest and More from the Primeval Forest.
- Out of My Life and Thought.
- Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History.
- A Place for Revelation.
- Peace or Atomic War?
- The Philosophy of Civilisation.
- The Problem of the Lord's Supper.
- The Psychiatric Study of Jesus.
- The Quest of the Historical Jesus.
- Reverence for Life (Sermons).
- The Story of My Pelican.



A simple concrete gravestone today marks the resting place of Albert Schweitzer at his hospital in Lambaréné, Gabon.

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Traits of Spiritually Motivated People

by **Stuart Scott**



"For mystics, what determines the worth of a human being is the willingness to serve others with one's abilities, regardless of whether those abilities are intellectual or manual in nature. We all have talents and abilities that can contribute to the common good."

From "Rosicrucian Reflections" by Christian Bernard
available at www.amorc.org.uk.

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1. The Spiritually motivated value other people's time.

The interval between the beginning and end of time will for most people be no more than 80 to 90 years. The spiritually motivated know therefore that the time they have to live and learn on this lovely planet is limited, severely so! They therefore value their time and place the same value on the time that others experience. They know that all people have responsibilities, deadlines and commitments, and all of them are constrained by their allotted times. So, they go out of their way not to waste the times of others, they appreciate whatever time people spend with them, and they thank them for their time as well.

2. The Spiritually motivated give credit where it is due.

The Spiritually motivated don't take credit for things they didn't do, and always give credit to those who deserve it. This is not always easy in a competitive world, where the tendency can be to enhance or exaggerate one's contributions in order to improve one's reputation. However, spiritual motivated people are humble about their achievements, and always ready to praise others for the work they have done.

3. The Spiritually motivated are unique.

Those who tread a spiritual path become more aware of their inner world, and over time their self-awareness grows. With an enhanced self-awareness they become less entangled with the world and the group-thinking of the masses. They become closer to their authentic selves, and become unique in their thinking and way of being in the world.

4. The Spiritually motivated are always honest.

Walking a spiritual path means walking an ethical path. Bringing ethical thinking into everyday life is one of the characteristics of a spiritually motivated person. Honesty is a big part of that, and the person will endeavour to be honest at all times and in all situations. The more we meditate on honesty, the more we realise how difficult it is to be honest all the time. There is always the tendency to modify the truth, or to try to get out of a situation with a little bit of dishonesty. But facing the world with resolute honesty is a worthwhile and fruitful spiritual practice.



5. The Spiritually motivated never take advantage of others.

Along with honesty, not taking advantage of others is another key trait of the spiritually motivated; for such people love to build up others, help those in need and get them to where they need to be.

6. The Spiritually motivated do not argue over disagreements.

Disagreements and conflict are part of being human, and the way we deal with disagreements can say a lot about who we are inside. The spiritually motivated face disagreements and conflict with calm, respect and equanimity. They will not be drawn into arguments but rather will put their points across clearly and politely. This does not mean that they are push-overs who yield in any conflict. Instead, they are flexible in their approach to conflict resolution and seek solutions that work for the best for all involved.

7. The Spiritually motivated try to see the best in others.

Seeing the best in people means seeing them behind their outward appearances. While this can sometimes be hard to do, especially when we are presented with someone who

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displays unpleasant characteristics, when we look beneath the surface and make an empathic connection, we see a flawed and suffering person not too disimilar to ourselves. This does not mean excusing the behaviour of others if it is destructive, but rather that we suspend judgement and realise that the outward manifestation stems from an inner suffering that needs compassion, not condemnation.

8. The Spiritually motivated know when something is bothering someone.

Following a spiritual path and having a spiritual practice can develop and enhance your intuitive faculties. The spiritually motivated will intuitively know if someone is feeling down and be able to sense another person's moods. Taking an empathic and compassionate stance, they will do what they can to support someone who is struggling.

9. The Spiritually motivated believe in other people.

As well as seeing the best in other people, spiritually motivated people will believe you at your word and always give you the benefit of the doubt. This does not mean they are naïve or gullible, but rather that in striving for their own truth, they seek truth in you too. Of course, if your truth is disproven they won't hesitate to respectfully call you on it!

10. The Spiritually motivated always apologise first.

Taking responsibility for their actions and admitting their mistakes is another characteristic that defines spiritually motivated people. They will be the first to apologise and will do what they can to make amends. This is both part of the ethical component of following a spiritual path, and an important spiritual practice that aids the diminishing of the ego and the enhancement of self-awareness.

11. The Spiritually motivated are humble.

Humility does not mean to lack self-worth or to be unaware of one's importance to others. Rather, it means to acknowledge who you are and your capabilities. Combined with this is a strong sense of self that does not need the ego to be bolstered up by proclaiming strengths and merits. A humble person does not diminish who they are, but never pretends to be more than they are, which in the final analysis is a small temporary being in the immense magnitude of the universe.

12. The Spiritually motivated do good when they can.

The spiritually motivated strive to do good in all situations. They examine their actions and place them on a measure of skilful and unskilful actions. The skilful ones lead to doing good in the world. The unskilful ones do less good or even harm. Unskilful actions need to be viewed with compassion and in context, so you can learn from them and next time ensure that you act in a more skilful manner.

13. The Spiritually motivated are always kind to those in need.

Kindness is a characteristic of people with true spirituality. They try to act like a beacon on earth and brighten the lives of other people whenever they can. Giving kindness can go a long way and is always given without the need for recognition or reward. Unconditional kindness spreads kindness throughout the world.

If you are someone who is truly spiritual, thank you for being who you are and thank you for all that you do. You really do make a difference in society; please keep up the good work. You are different from many others, so be proud of yourself. If you are among those who possess true spirituality, be thankful for this achievement.



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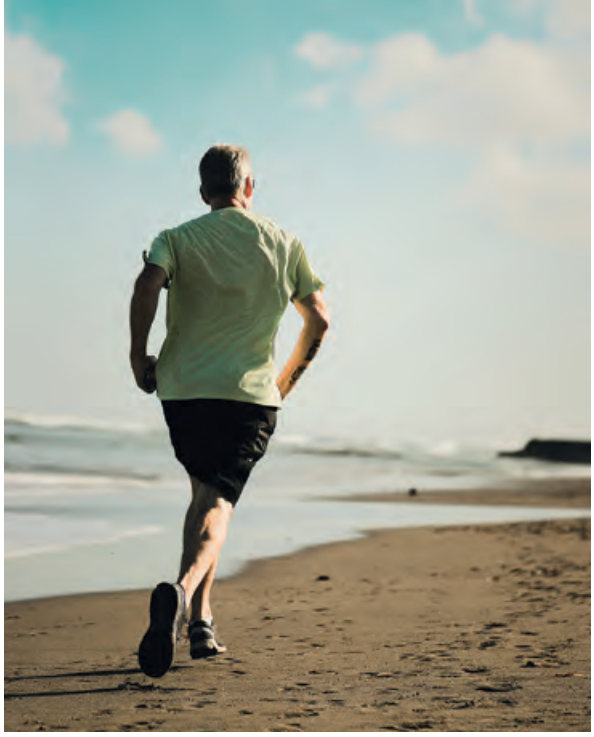
Spirituality & *Mental Tranquillity*

by **Joan Franklin**

All manifestations of life are governed by various forms of Isaac Newton's third law of motion: *"For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction."* In its most general form, we could call it the *"universal law of cause and effect"*, and it has a great bearing on how we find spiritual and mental tranquillity. As you sow, so you will reap. Or to put it another way, what you give to life is what you will receive from it. No one can escape the operation of this fundamental law, yet the sad fact is that very few appear to realise it.

We can't be healthy for any length of time if we transgress nature's laws. If we eat the wrong foods and fill our bodies with all sorts of the artificial things, we will suffer the consequences in the form of increasing waistlines, creaking joints, high levels of uric acid, cholesterol, gout, etc., and we won't be terribly happy for it. Similarly, when we allow our minds to be filled with senseless violence from television, movies and online blogs, can we reasonably believe we can avoid starting to behave like the fictional characters we see on the screen or read about in hateful tirades in chat groups? Of course we will be affected, and painfully so.

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We can't be healthy for any length of time if we transgress nature's laws.

We can't expect to be full of life if we don't exercise, if we don't have quiet moments to ourselves, if we never meditate, if we never indulge in creative things. And obvious as it may seem to us who are already on a path of inner spiritual development, it is not obvious to many billions on our planet that we can't manifest the joys of living if we allow ourselves to hate or intensely dislike others. Spiritual and mental tranquillity doesn't come for free, it takes effort and hard inner work to achieve such states of being, and here is how it can be done.

Forgiveness

Peace cannot enter the lives of people who are full of selfish motives, trying to 'get their own back' on others. We are all guilty of these negative emotions to some extent and need forgiveness, just as much as we need to forgive others. For we know that only when we have forgiven others, can we justifiably be forgiven ourselves. And furthermore, would it be reasonable to expect to be forgiven to a greater extent than we have forgiven others?

The great master Jesus often said to a sick person he was about to heal: *"Your sins are forgiven."* Why? What do sins have to do with being ill? Two thousand years ago in the Roman province of Judea, illness was believed to be the work of evil spirits, and if a person was possessed by such spirits it followed, by the logic of the day, that it was his or her own fault for letting them in. In the minds of primitive people, a sick person must have done something wrong to have become sick in the first place, to have allowed evil spirits in, and the first thing needed therefore was forgiveness for their perceived transgression.

Ridiculous as it may seem to us today, that a sick person could be perceived as being the guilty party, not only by society but by the sick person as well, Jesus' patient first had to be freed of all guilt before s/he could be healed. Let's face it, if a person is conscious of some personal guilt, s/he cannot find tranquillity until forgiveness has been fully and inwardly realised. And before personal forgiveness becomes possible, the sufferer must freely forgive others.

We are all blessed to some extent with an innate sense of natural justice, and that inner understanding mandates us to forgive others before we can expect to be forgiven by anyone. To live in a state of continual hatred or strife towards anyone or any circumstance is to be in perpetual misery, and it is surprising that so many hate-filled people manage to survive as long as they do.

Forgiving is a mental and emotional outpouring of benediction...

Moreover, we should not just forgive, but also give of ourselves as we do so. Forgiving is a mental and emotional outpouring of benediction, but giving of oneself in some material way is even more, and helps to cement the thoughts of forgiveness we hold. At the very least, we are able to prove to ourselves just how sincere or insincere our forgiveness is. A celebrated psychologist said that a well-adjusted person is one who has discovered that there is more happiness and fulfilment in the act of giving than in receiving. And what does that mean in practical terms? It means putting into practice the basic laws of your esoteric inner journey. Give and you will receive, forgive and you will be forgiven.

The golden rule of *"do to others as you would have them do to you"* will always hold good. Don't automatically blame others; do a little self-examination instead and you'll find that you also make mistakes and need the forgiveness of others. A person who never errs is no longer a mere person, and we hardly ever find such

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unique people. Be honest with yourself and remember that in the sight of your highest concept of goodness, we are all equal. It is easy to be a hypocrite and not be aware of it, but it is much harder to be inwardly alert to our thoughts and true motives, and to control them before they control us.

True Spirituality

Many seek peace and inner tranquillity in a place of worship, and to be honest, entering a church, mosque, temple or sacred grove with deep inner conviction still works for many of us. But more and more are becoming dissatisfied with the outer rigid forms of formal religions, and see them as poor substitutes for true spiritual food.

People asking for *'spiritual bread'*, receive *'spiritual stones'* in return..., hardly digestible *'spiritual food.'* They seek the counsel of priests, imams, rabbis and gurus who often have a form of godliness outwardly only, and purely because of the prestige of the high offices they bear. Seldom do such seekers of solace receive the inner relief they are looking for, and sadly, turn to cynicism of all religious beliefs instead. At their cores, all religions have precisely the deep spirituality that everyone innately seeks, though those centres are however hidden from view from all but the most determined and sincere seekers.

No wonder then that places of formal worship are so empty nowadays! Of course, bodies of people exist who show the fruits of true spirituality, namely, love, joy, peace, etc. But true spirituality is neither understood nor practised by the vast majority of religious adherents, for they do not understand what it means to 'be spiritual.' Spirituality is the practice of love towards all things in the universe, indeed love for the universe itself, and the holding of an inner attitude of confidence that love really does unite things that otherwise could never coexist.

To banish from the mind those things which are opposed to peace is to make an enormous stride towards true health and happiness, and most people need some help with this. What better way then to help them than to live your life in an attitude of peace and good will towards all creatures. The amazing thing is that with the correct inner motive, with the right blend of humility and positive action, help is always forthcoming if asked for with sincerity. Happy are those who have learned to let peace rule their hearts instead of allowing their thoughts to be dominated by the chaos of greed, revenge and selfishness. The American literary critic and biographer Van Wyck Brooks wrote:

> How delightful is the company of generous people, who overlook trifles and keep their minds instinctively fixed on whatever is good and positive in the world about them. People of small calibre are always carping. They are bent on showing their own superiority, their knowledge or prowess or good breeding. But magnanimous people have no vanity, they have no jealousy, they have no reserves, and they feed on the true and solid wherever they find it. And, what is more, they find it everywhere.

Little minds are wounded by hosts of little things that do not matter, while larger minds take it all in with welcoming arms, observing everything with impartiality and a sense of justice for all. And they are not injured or hurt by anything that life throws at them. On the contrary, they are grateful for the lessons they derive from all situations they find themselves in, whether pleasant or unpleasant.



Many seek peace and inner tranquillity in a place of worship, but more and more are becoming dissatisfied with the outer rigid forms of formal religions.

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Facing Adversity

Adversity is a great character builder. It is the abrasive that gives a sharp edge to courage. Pain and suffering have their virtues, for pain in the physical body is Nature's warning that something is wrong. By taking heed of the pain we may eliminate the cause which, if not removed, may result in more serious illness or even death.

Mental pain is also a warning that something is wrong with the way we are thinking. The remedy is to ascertain the cause of our inner pain and to remove it by the roots. In order to accomplish this, self-help and courage, together with self-honesty, are needed. And in accordance with a spiritualised version of Newton's third law of motion, we are always rewarded..., eventually..., for our sincere efforts. The process of betterment takes time and patience to manifest, but it surely does manifest in the end. The author of the following gem of wisdom is S.E. Kiser and is reproduced here with gratitude.

> I'll start anew this morning with a higher, fairer creed; I'll cease to stand complaining of my ruthless neighbour's greed.
>
> I'll cease to sit repining while my duty's call is clear; I'll waste no moment whining and my heart shall know no fear.
>
> I'll look sometimes about me for the things that merit praise; I'll search for hidden beauties that elude the grumbler's gaze.
>
> I'll try to find contentment in the paths that I must tread; I'll cease to have resentment when another moves ahead.
>
> I'll not be swayed by envy when my rival's strength is shown; I'll not deny his merit but strive to prove my own.
>
> I'll try to see the beauty spread before me, rain or shine; I'll cease to preach your duty and be more concerned with mine.

Humility

Many people long to be as good as, or even better than someone else they know. But few who say *"I am as good as you..."* really believe this in their heart. The claim to be as good as anyone else is made because in some way we feel ourselves to be inferior. Such a claim suggests a painful, smarting awareness of one's own inadequacies which one refuses to recognise.

To be hurt by an awareness of one's own inferiority engenders a dangerous state of mind both to the self and to others. We all have something in our nature that is inferior to the qualities in someone else. The cure is to be honest and to accept the facts without shame. It is hard to develop talents we do not possess, but we can all improve on what we already have. It is a satisfying course to find out what one's talents really are and to then concentrate upon them, thereby bringing out into the light of day, abilities we never thought we possessed.

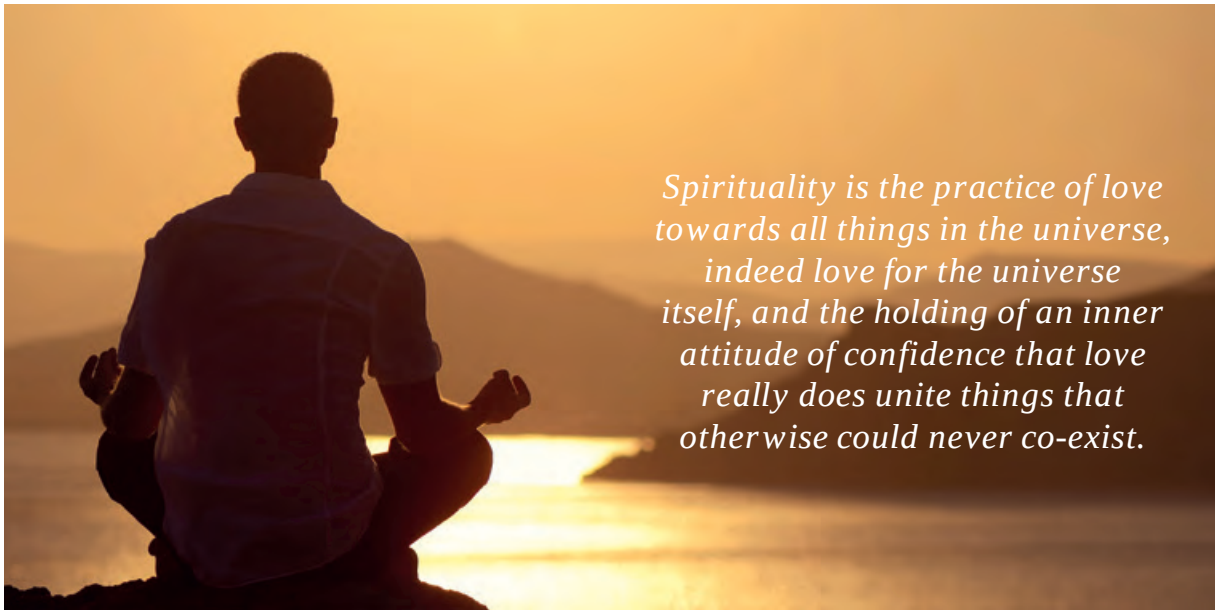


Adversity is a great character builder. It is the abrasive that gives a sharp edge to courage.

Possessions and some sort of attainment are the goals of most people, but possessions never bring true happiness; indeed they are often the cause of sorrow. The more we have, the more we want, and the more we have to lose! And the more we have, the more there is to worry about, the more responsibility we have to look after our possessions. The happiest people I have met have, with but few exceptions, been those who are poor in purse but rich in spirit.

On the other hand, seeking to attain something is good if what we aim for is high, noble and for the good of humanity and not only for the good of ourselves.

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We may fail over and over again, but there is virtue in rising up after every fall and going on living one day at a time. Living in the past is useless, for yesterday is dead unless we deliberately keep it alive in our minds. Worrying about tomorrow is equally foolish, for tomorrow has yet to come and we must surely love the present moment and not the past or the future? Tomorrow will take care of itself if we do our best today.

The hallmark of true mystics is that when they fall flat on their face in the proverbial mud of society, they do not wallow in self-pity, but get up forthwith, clean themselves thoroughly and continue on their chosen path, unhindered by the unpleasantness and nasty thoughts of others.

Good Thoughts

The human brain with its complex neurological tentacles spread throughout the body, is constantly changing. It doesn't really have a choice for it must either adapt or die; it cannot remain still.

That change can be for the better or for the worse according to how we think and live. In a famous parable, the master Jesus said that what comes out of the mouth contaminates us far more than what we put into it. In other words, what we utter are verbalised thoughts, and evil words have the unpleasant habit of feeding back through the ears to the mind from which they originated. And there they 'poison' the speaker's mind as much as they poison the minds of others..., no, even more!

Good thoughts promote good deeds; they cleanse the mind and invigorate the body. It is quite easy to demonstrate the effects of misery and morbidity of mind on the physical body. For example, stand before a mirror and deliberately look miserable. Can you possibly imagine the face you observe in the mirror inviting peace and happiness? Maintain an expression of misery for any length of time and it is guaranteed that you will begin feeling exactly as you appear.

Good thoughts promote good deeds; they cleanse the mind and invigorate the body.

Smile before the mirror, spruce yourself up and look your best without being ostentatious. What a difference! Surely not the same person? Maintain that smile and continue looking your best, and if you are honest with yourself, you will become conscious of better feelings in both mind and body. Being a mystic means controlling how you feel about yourself. Mystics, above all else, make things happen; they don't simply wait for some unknown fate to make them happen. And that is what we must do with our lives.

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The happiest people I have met have, with but few exceptions, been those who are poor in purse but rich in spirit.

Living in the Present

The pioneering psychologist William Marston (1893-1947) in a landmark study asked 3,000 people what they had to live for. He was shocked and astonished to hear that 94% were simply enduring the present while they waited for something better to happen in the future. They never realised that all that matters is what is with them today, and contentment and tranquillity can't come about until we have learned to accept life as we find it! We must stop blaming others or *'fate'* for our misfortunes.

Why allow the bad conduct of someone to determine whether we are sad or happy? Self-possession is the best possession, for the self-possessed individual is in command of his or her life, and is *"greater than the one who takes a city."* All around there is fear, discontentment, rudeness, anger, greed, pessimism, lies and deceit, and by far the majority of fast paced action films are filled to overflowing with this negativity. But here and there one encounters a person who is above it all, and who possesses the quality of radiating the peace and contentment s/he has acquired through personal effort. Such is a happy person, a person at peace. Imitate that individual and do not allow yourself to be contaminated..., yes, *'contaminated'* is the word..., by the negative and destructive words of others. As the old nursery rhyme goes: *"Sticks and stone can break my bones, but words can never hurt me!"* and make that a daily affirmation.

A person I once knew, after many years of self-inflicted illness, finally reached the stage where she gave up the struggle. An amazing thing then happened..., her health started improving! Why? I can't be sure of course, but I suspect it was that she stopped fighting both herself and others. By *'giving up'*, namely, by releasing everything and allowing the inner spiritual forces to take charge, her mind became quiet and at rest, and her body, for the first time in years, had a chance to adjust itself to a reality she had fought against for so long.

It is the same with unquiet mental states: cease fighting, struggling, moaning and complaining and the mind will relax, things will start sorting themselves out and you'll find that all things are working together for the greater good. Remember the master Jesus' parable *"... consider the lilies how they grow. They toil not..."* The lily grows because it is not suppressed by having a negative, disease-producing mind. It grows because it obeys instinctively the laws of nature. It is up to us then to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. And the power and ability to do this resides in every cell of the brain and body if we will only allow this power to become active again.

In conclusion, it may be said that tranquillity is a most desirable state of both mind and body. But if mental and physical peace are desirable, we must be prepared to do something about it ourselves. To take medicines is not enough, for to obtain real and lasting tranquillity we must learn to dwell on thoughts that are true, honest, good and beautiful. Mystics, and Rosicrucians in particular, are alchemist of the mind – they make good things happen, and they don't wait until it is too late. And most important of all, they govern their minds and regulate the intensity and quality of all thoughts emanating from themselves.

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The Dark Valleys of Life

by **Mary Wilson**



My little boy contracted meningitis a few days before his third birthday. It was a terrible time, watching him scream with pain. After two days in intensive care, he seemed to stabilise but then suddenly relapsed. My husband and I were beside ourselves with fear and grief: fear for what the specialist had gently warned us could happen, and grief over the possible brain damage that we thought may already have occurred.

And while this was happening, I still had to attend to work dealing with important briefs as part of my legal career, while my husband had to be on-site dealing with problems at the refinery where he was the chemical engineer in charge. Two fast-paced careers and a seriously ill child does not a happy family make.

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Several other issues had occurred in short succession in the months leading up to the illness, all of them severe knocks to my confidence. Although competent and hard working as a lawyer, I had come up against a block in my professional career. I was dealing with far more cases than I should have, and the results were at times at best mediocre, no matter how hard I tried to improve. I was facing impending failure in my career, and even old friends seemed puzzled and even a bit offended by the stressed out person I had become.

It was one of those times when everything seems to go wrong, when an ugly, unyielding fate seems to be guiding us to destruction. I recall I didn't even like looking at myself in the mirror, and though often I wondered how others could stand my presence. Just about everything I encountered seemed to be conspiring to bring frustration and defeat to my doorstep. I was seriously out of tune with the rest of the world!

Out of Tune

At such moments, one feels disconnected, disassociated and disoriented..., out of tune with the rhythm of life. The orderly symphony of the spheres is replaced by a jarring, discordant cacophony. Everything we embark upon goes awry or is more complicated than need be. We experience a sense separation from family, friends and associates..., and the worst is that we feel such low self-worth that we don't even feel like correcting the situation. I was the one out of tune with everyone else, and it was clear that everything, apart from me, was going about its business as normal. Somehow I had fallen out of orbit, and was floundering helplessly in a disorganised vacuum.

When we are a properly functioning whole, we can cope with almost any problem..., but when not, how does one survive the lonely, isolated hours of this alienation and futility? Pity poor Job as he cried out: *"Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea...; ...for the arrows of the Almighty are within me, their poison drowns my spirit...."* I wasn't quite the modern equivalent of Job, but it doesn't take much for us to feel an equal sense of helplessness and disorientation. Yet, the problems will eventually be resolved for better or for worse, with or without us. Sooner or later, either we or others will have the strength to sweep them away. When times have been hardest of all, I have often been comforted by words spoken out in my mind: *"this too shall pass away."*

Our son's illness broke through a barrier a few hours after he had entered a coma; he simply awoke, his face had new freshness about it, and he soon returned to vibrant



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good health. And all my problems and worries dissipated to nothing in but a few months, leaving room for new challenges. But regaining my balance after having lost my footing so badly, took nearly a year to accomplish. I had been sorely shaken by the rapid sequence of events that had pulled me down so hard and fast.

If we have fallen off the path of serenity and orderly growth, we must get back on it again before we can function as vital, useful beings. It is not so much the severity of our problems that unsettle us so much; it is the disjointed, dislocated state of being into which we have fallen. How can we at such times realign ourselves with life? Never give up, always have fortitude in the face of adversity, and never, ever give in to self pity.

Often it is enough simply to be patient, to believe that if we have not found the way, then the way will surely find us..., eventually. Having this confidence is enough for path and pilgrim to find each other again. One day, we will find ourselves at one again with the world. The friendly songs of birds and whisper of leaves will begin to hum in our ears and become a prologue to the gentle melody of contentment. The path we were on will appear once more beneath our feet and all be ours to enjoy again if we but stick it out without compromising our principles. And at that time, when the veil of disorder is lifted from our eyes, perhaps we will perceive that even these low points were necessary parts of life..., for we grew in ways that only those unhappy circumstances could have guaranteed.

Just as all things in the universe ebb and flow according to hidden rhythms, so too must our lives sometimes contract and turn inward before expanding again. It may be essential to endure extremes of despair in order to experience subsequent periods of growth and productivity. No life can follow the path of a straight, unbroken plateau. Nothing in the universe has such a flat, sterile form. Everything ebbs and flows, rises and falls, expands and contracts. There must be valleys in order to have hills. The dark valleys of life are a prelude to growth and understanding. Experience leads to knowledge and increased awareness even if the experiences are difficult at times to endure.

Our down periods are not punishments or ordeals that must be borne without reason. They are lessons in how to live a life of goodness, which in turn leads to spiritual growth and an expansion of consciousness and both mental and emotional maturity. If we are perceptive enough, if we observe carefully enough, we can't fail to hear the message. It is then up to us to utilise these teachings in the direction of wisdom and perception.

Job cried out in his pain, not merely for relief, but for guidance and understanding of the meaning of existence. We too can use our times of travail for creative meditation and progress in our individual search for meaning and direction. The universe is never disordered, and our own occasional periods of disorientation can be a vehicle for our greater comprehension of the wonder and beauty of life.

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by **Adelle Maybank**

HEALING

Allow the Cosmic to In-Form You

The Neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus (3rd Century CE) said in regard to faith: *"Unless you believe, you will not understand."* This seems like a vicious cycle until we realise that there is inherent in every person a pre-existing revelation from the Cosmic, something which came with us into life at birth. This 'light' from within becomes the very first step in the mystical process and is revealed to all seekers through thought and contemplation.

Self-healing is necessarily a healing of the *'self.'* But it is the product of a collective human consciousness which loves itself with great intensity and sincerity. The healing phenomenon in the individual is the result of a transcending compassion purposefully extended from many to one through the psychic matrix of a shared humanity. Every human act performed with charity, especially deeply selfless acts, become mystically amplified by the Cosmic to the psychic, mental, emotional and physical benefits of those in need. Of course, there must be a subjective acceptance or openness to the healing process, and those who are healed in turn incur an obligation of becoming healers themselves as best they can, and transmitters of the vital force of life itself.

What do we mean by healing oneself, as opposed to healing another person or animal? Healing oneself means that an injured part of one's body is spontaneously repaired in ways we don't understand, but of course take fully for granted. The usual sort of healing we know of, the sort that the body does automatically in the background all the time, is not what is meant by healing oneself or engaging in self-healing. *'Normal'* healing is the body just getting on with the business of doing what it does

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best, namely healing itself. A cut on the skin is repaired by the body without fanfare; *"just leave it to nature"* as one so often hears. And certain animals like salamanders for example do a lot more than just heal scratches; they can grow entire limbs as easily as our scratches are automatically healed.

Scientists are of course assiduously seeking an answer to how such feats of nature can be accomplished, how stem cells can somehow be coaxed into being produced at precisely the places where they are needed to cause the limb to re-grow. No doubt it is an ability which will come to humans too one day through the marvels of medical science. But is there not perhaps some sort of cosmically induced multidimensional life-force permeating all nature and directing how each individual creature should physically be constructed? In other words, quite apart from the DNA and gene expressions in living creatures doing all they can to keep the body sound and healthy, is there not perhaps some force field which ultimately sets the parameters as to what can be healed and how fast and to what perfection this can be accomplished? Or is it all merely encoded in our DNA and genes, and therefore an entirely physical phenomenon? I would suggest a bit of both.

As the complexity and sophistication of an organism rises, more and more things can go wrong. With the emergence of our species, homo sapiens, some hundred to two hundred thousand years ago, complexity, and in particular, neural complexity, has become the key feature distinguishing us from all other creatures, even our closest ape relatives. Complexity is crucial to the formation of consciousness, and especially important in the emergence of our awareness of our own thought processes, an ability no other creature is believed to possess.

The dual nature of our being is equipped to repair itself from a set of blueprint of sorts, like a stamp or die from which all humans are made. Some would say this is the DNA, and this is undoubtedly a major part of the story. But for some investigators, there seems as well to be something less tangible at work, something which may well be termed the *"in-forming"* of the DNA and genes that do the grunge work of actually accomplishing the healing.

It is postulated that there exists a *'non-physical'* force field which is ultimately the reason that the body regenerates itself the way it does. In other words it is a field which causes the body to heal itself, like the growth of a new limb, in only one way, a way that is defined by the unique field applicable for that particular person, and of course the unique DNA structure and genes that accompany the individual throughout life. Although the bulk of this in-forming process took place before birth, some of it still occurs throughout life, and most of us have yet to learn that we already possess the power to attract ever more perfect ways of Cosmically in-forming our lives when we seek a healing that can come about through no other means. We have within us unique healing powers that far exceed what medical science currently understands, and it is *merely* a matter of learning how to unlock that immense potential.

To Be Human

The word *human* comes originally from an Indo-European root meaning *earth*, and latinised into the word *humus*. The ancient Vedic expression *"as above, so below"* found its way both into Hermeticism and the Kabala, and is expressed in only slightly altered form in the words of Jesus in the Lord's Prayer: *"...on earth as in Heaven."* This leads us to a greater understanding of the microcosm in which we live and how it relates to the macrocosm of which we know so little, but which, we are told, is like the microcosm, and can be drawn upon for wisdom and assistance as easily as



Certain animals like salamanders for example, do a lot more than just heal scratches; they can grow entire limbs as easily as our scratches are automatically healed.

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With love and compassion for all people and creatures, we enter states of harmony.

from our resources in the microcosm of Earth. The infinite unites with the finite, thereby producing humankind. And from the infinite the Cosmic Mind *'in-forms'* all creatures able to perceive it's 'voice', how to heal themselves.

What is the future of spiritual or psychic healing for us? Taking humankind as a whole, healing is the sum total of all human efforts directed at accomplishing good health. Our modern technical marvels need to be harmoniously married with an enlightened and highly refined system of self-control in order to accomplish true healing. Above all, when helping not only ourselves, but especially others, we need to use our inherent ability love with great intensty, for it is precisely this impersonal love and caring which allows the Cosmic in-forming process to begin.

Diseases can be controlled and sometimes entirely eliminated through this Cosmic stamp of the perfect human being in-forming us how to go about healing ourselves. Of course aging must be accepted as a natural process of maturation which prepares us for the next phase of development. And the usual illnesses of old age are part and parcel of the Cosmic stamp from which we came about. In other words, the Cosmic in-forming process takes this into account, and no amount of wishing or praying will avoid death in the end. Death is often viewed by mystics merely as a transition from one state of being to another; and even in that other state, is it not reasonable to assume that the in-forming process will continue?

On the individual level, we can draw from the collective energies and experiences of humankind by thinking of ourselves as being merged with others, and them being merged with us. With finely focussed attunement, this synthesis can produce near miraculous healing results, or reintegration in ourselves of the vital principle of our humanness, namely the stamp or mould or field from which we all came about.

Transmutation of Self

As humans, we all share an often unrealised mission, the transmutation of ourselves and of our planet into something a great deal more than a mere collection of individual living 'parts'. The first step in accomplishing this must be the sublimation of self in preparation for the in-forming process. Each act of transformation, each invitation to the Cosmic to in-form us fully in the correct way of living, must be done in a spirit of abandonment to one's ultimate destiny, and it must above all be done in a profoundly selfless manner.

Among the powers that we derive from the sacred nature of our humanness is the power of precognition and the formation of new realities which alter the paths we were 'destined' to follow. We have ingrained within us the ability to see our future potentials and pitfalls, and to fulfil our own 'prophecies' by actively making them happen through creative visualisation, followed by the bringing into manifestation of the realities we seek. But just as we can visualise and bring about highly positive and beneficial results, we can also bring our lives to the brink of ruin through wrong thoughts and ways of living.

When our visualisations, whether intentional or not, involve negative aspects such as hatred, malice, illness or feelings of inadequacy, our lives attract those conditions to it. In other words, we in effect shut out the Cosmic in-forming process dead in its tracks, and

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the consequences can be severe indeed. But when we approach our lives in a positive way, deliberately attuning ourselves to feelings of transpersonal identity, deliberately infusing ourselves with love and compassion for all people and creatures, we enter states of harmony with all those people and creatures, and are freed from the ravages of envy, hatred and greed. Our creative powers become fully *'in-formed'* by the Cosmic, and our lives are *'stamped'* by the perfect mould of our species. In other words, we manifest health, happiness and success in abundance, and satisfy our deepest longings.

Many people permanently look forward to something better about to happen, not now, but some time in the *future*. Something is always about to happen, but it never actually arrives. Nirvana for example is so often erroneously considered as a future state, when it is in its very nature a state of the present. And of course there are the many sorts of awaited apocalyptical events that have existed over the centuries; and particularly relevant for us, is the recent end-of-the-world scenario that many believed would unfold rapidly at the end of the Maya calendar in 2012. Such things involve a future state, not the present, and they are usually founded on absurd suppositions.

With spiritual healing, the space-time continuum is transcended, and the being enters a timeless, spaceless state where the Cosmic in-forming process is allowed to do its work in the *'Eternal Now.'* Bathed in the creative forces of the past, present and future available to the particular person, uncountable generations of living beings just like us unite with us in an intense bond of love, thereby transforming the very substance of our physical bodies and bringing about the self-healing we seek.

But to be frank, self-healing of this sort is rare, for so few of us possess the level of abandon to the Cosmic Will that it requires. The amputee, unlike the salamander, does not grow a new finger; not because it is impossible, but because of the great devotion and abandon it requires to accomplish such a feat. Miraculous remissions from terminal cancer have occurred without doubt, and they are medically documented, but they are rare, and for the same reason as just given.

Where then, does spiritual healing fit into our limited time frame if our ability to transcend ourselves is so imperfect? Well, if we can't move mountains or transform matter, we can at least move our wills and command ourselves to love others several orders of magnitude more than before. If we don't know what love is, and have not yet experienced the impersonal love of the Divine, we can at the very least begin by treating each individual we wish to assist by mentally, and through the use of visualisation, entering their body and mind and feeling how they feel, suffering for a while what they suffer, experiencing their weaknesses, and transferring to them, mentally, emotionally and with deep compassion, whatever strengths we have that could assist them to accomplish their own self-healing.

Every person is Cosmically empowered to act as a physician in transmitting the healing power of Cosmic love...

For a brief moment we can transcend our being, and become briefly no longer merely our old *'self'*, but intensely the *'Self'* of our deepest and most spiritual nature. This is how we discover that we are not only the individual who formerly lacked health, but the individual who has unexpectedly accomplished a miraculous episode of healing by allowing the Cosmic to in-form the body to heal itself. And greatest of all, we will have seen by then a glimmer of the greatest love there is in the universe, the love of the Cosmic itself for its Creation.

I am a surgeon in normal life, but I know I can only perform through my discipline technical and artistic feats of healing. I take tissue apart and lay it back together. Some power beyond me however accomplishes the healing itself. As a doctor I am keenly aware of the material processes involved; but I am also aware of some other power working through me as I try as compassionately as I can to do the best for my patients. I know this power, whatever we may call it, tries incessantly to work through all people; and it becomes most effective when we care and love the people and animals within our karmic radius with great intensity and sensitivity to their needs. This is how we really heal.

Every person is Cosmically empowered to act as a physician in transmitting the healing power of Cosmic love, thereby allowing the in-forming power of the Cosmic to guide and direct those who seek to be healed. Don't forget then: nothing is accomplished without Love.

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Choose This Day

by **Paul Layton**



Have you read the words of Robert Frost, in the last verse of *The Road Not Taken*? *"I shall be telling this with a sigh, somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference."*

It deals with my favourite philosophical question: Choice. What choices do we have and what do we do with those choices? We can ponder endlessly how much of life is predetermined, how we are limited by heredity, intellect, social status, environment or economics. That's not the issue here; nor do I believe that it's important. However limited our choices may be, what matters is what we accomplish through the choices we make.

Victor Frankl survived the death camps of World War II, and wrote in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*:

> We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms: to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

I believe we have a great deal of choice; that most of us do not make the most of these choices and that we tend to live our lives based on other people's decisions and expectations. I believe that, too often, we lack the courage to act on our decisions. Not to decide is to decide. I believe this freedom to choose is one of the most important aspects of our lives, and that to act responsibly on those choices determines the success or failure of our lives.

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It's important to differentiate between freedom and license. Make no mistake, this is not the concept of *"if it feels good, do it."* All choice combines freedom *with* responsibility; they are inseparable. We pay a price for all our decisions and our indecisions, but we've the individual freedom to determine for ourselves when that price is too high.

Each day brings new choices and multiple decisions have to be made. All choices matter and the potential for a better life is all around us. No matter how trivial our choices may seem to be, the decisions we make determine who we become and what the quality of our lives will be. We become in a very real sense the consequences of our choices, or rather our decisions to those choices. So, let me present some areas in which we can exercise our freedom to choose.

We can choose to make time for the people and animals we love

We can choose whether or not we believe that all people can develop within themselves an inner core of good and sanctity. All living things seek light and through it life; neither plants nor animals can survive long without the beneficial effects of light from our resident star, whether they receive it directly and visually, or indirectly through the energy it provides. And beyond the physical light that we humans absolutely must have in order to survive, lies the *'inner light'* which is equally essential for our survival. That magnificent inner partner to light that we commonly know as *'life'*, and specifically the special form known to mystics as the *Vital Life Force*, this is the ultimate source of our existence, and we must seek it and nurture it wherever it exists.

Of course we can choose to move into the shadows, away from light and life; but we will in that case eventually die a lonely and unhappy death. Denial of the inner light does not diminish its existence in the warm glow of actuality, and choosing to avoid it, and thereby avoiding life itself, merely changes us for the worse. Better then to choose light and thereby life, and to do so positively, enthusiastically and above all willingly.

We can also choose love. We can choose which people and what creatures matter to us, and then nurture our relationship with them tenderly as treasured parts of our own being. We can choose to make time for the people and animals we love; and where we initially have none to love, we can choose to go out and seek people and animals to care about. Good, lasting relationships require willing commitments by all involved; but we have the upper hand as we know this and must therefore lead the way by bringing love into the lives of all within reach.

We can also choose health, both mental and physical. Again, we choose not from our limitations, but from the freedom we have to dream of a better self. And where we have health conditions that simply cannot be resolved, we focus all our energy on at least maintaining the status quo, and better still, improving our health in those areas that have not been damaged beyond repair. This positive approach of holding on to and treasuring the areas of health we have, is crucial to our wider wellbeing. We can choose not to abuse our bodies through overwork, through alcohol or drug abuse, through overeating, through not exercising, etc., the choice is of course ours. And for those of us who have generally good health already, we can choose not to whine about the inevitable age-related aches and pains that we know will eventually enter our lives. Choose a positive, can-do attitude therefore towards maintaining your mind and body in as healthy a state as you can.

Remember too that we can choose to surround ourselves with beauty. We can dream of better places, more



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beautiful surroundings, and then go about creating our little corners of paradise. Even a plant on a windowsill can bring beauty and grace into an otherwise drab existence. For me, each day includes simple pleasures: a walk around the block, a few coins for the beggar on the corner, fresh flowers on the mantelpiece, light streaming through the stained glass windows of my local church, music, candlelight, poetry. So many small things are there just for the taking, even if our circumstances are humble. Seek out therefore the beauty that brings you refinement and happiness.

The easiest way of achieving happiness is to choose to be grateful even for the small things in life.

And finally, we can choose happiness. I know..., how can one be happy if one is daily faced with frustrations and unpleasantness. It isn't easy to be happy, but it is possible. The easiest way of achieving happiness is to choose to be grateful even for the small things in life. Even if you have to pretend to be grateful, do so; for that pretence will, when sincerity is added, turn into genuine gratitude.

This may seem like cold comfort, but please believe me: choosing to experience gratitude, and doing so with sincerity, is one of the most important choices you will ever make. For from that gratitude, no matter how small it is at first, a whole universe of happiness will open up. If someone makes you unhappy, remember that you can choose the opposite state merely by counting your meagre blessings one by one, and amplifying them to the point where happiness returns. So, choose to be happy, and begin the process of by choosing to be grateful.

Each Day, a Choice

We can choose to have fun, to be spontaneous. I have a small magnetic plaque on my fridge which reads: *"Life is not a dress rehearsal."* I take that as meaning that life is serious, it's for real. Yes, I know life is also like a big classroom, and yes we are here to learn our lessons; but we mustn't treat life as though we can repeatedly do an *'undo'* as we do on our computer when we've made a mistake. Taking life seriously, even if it's a school in the broader scheme of things, means that we make better choices, and live with the consequences of our choices without a whimper.

In other words, choose to succeed and don't make your choices on the basis that you just want to see how thing will pan out. Don't treat life as a mere dress rehearsal, an experiment. Life's for real, so make proper choices and live with the consequences. We can choose to dream, and those dreams must surely be pleasant and bring happiness to us. Create your own ideals, make your own dreams, and then make it come true.

The crucial thing is to actually make choices, and never sit of the fence more than a brief moment as you decide. Have the courage to choose and to live with your choices, no matter how they turn out. You are the 'pilot in command' and there is ultimately no one else who can take responsibility for your life. Remember that proper choosing means selecting the best parts of life and leaving behind the rest. Delete from your life all things that hold you back or keep you in a state of weakness. If someone consistently makes you uncomfortable or unhappy, why are they a part of your life? If the food in a restaurant is poor, or the service slovenly, what so you care what a surly person thinks of you when you leave without tipping? You don't have to answer the phone every time just because it's ringing, and if you don't like your life, look for honourable ways of making it better.

Where unhappiness exists, choose a strategy to change things. The most important step is simply to choose to take that first step out of your dungeon, even if you can't see immediately how to escape. Choose to change things, and accept nothing less than a complete transformation. Make a list of the things that bring you comfort and support, and those that detract you from peace of mind and happiness. I've made some deletions in my life. I no longer make room for plastic flowers in the home, wine in paper cups, chronically negative people bothering me, restaurant meals that cost more than I earn in a day. They're all gone and I haven't missed any of them. Their deletion leaves more time for the things that matter to me, and I pursue happiness without hurting other in the process.

All choices involve consequences, and responsibility for those choices. We have to pay our dues, but what a small price there is for true freedom! We are the sum total of our choices, and our lives are lived out living with the consequences of what we have chosen. Choose life therefore, and make it a happy one!

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True Friendship

by **Doreen Eustice**



True friendships are wonderful treasures to be found on Life's highways and byways, nuggets to be nurtured and valued for the richness they bring to our souls. Unfortunately, few of us are perfect at tending them properly and giving them the time they need to flourish and thrive. They frequently wither from neglect as we set them aside to shoulder the sundry responsibilities and pressures which beset people of all generations, especially family commitments and careers.

One of the chief reasons many good friendships wilt is the appearance of a *'life partner'*, possibly a *'soul mate'* but definitely a distraction. When that happens, many of us succumb to the charms and put them first, last and throughout the middle of who we want to spend time with. And those who have been faithful companions, the ones we can gossip to on the phone or book a three coffee lunch, are abandoned to the new 'Great One' in our lives. It was a great piece of advice from the author of a book on Celtic Runes, Ralph Blum, to *"let the winds of heaven dance between you."* Unfortunately the newly besotted rarely do!

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A while ago an old friend I had long since shelved came to my door with a covered bowl and announced she was presenting me with a friendship cake; a German friendship cake who goes by the name of Herman and has been circling the globe much like a chain letter since..., probably not long after time began. The bowl contained a hunk of dough and a handwritten list of instructions for Herman's future welfare, to be carried out over the ensuing 10 days.

We giggled as I read out the sheet beginning with the warning: *"My name is Herman. I am a sour dough cake and I need to be kept on your worktop for 10 days without a lid on. I will die if you put me in the fridge! I will die if I stop bubbling."* The rules demand Herman should be placed in a two litre bowl and covered with a tea towel. He needs stirring well on days two and three, and must be fed specific amounts of flour, sugar and milk before being stirred senseless and put back to sleep again under his tea towel blanket.

Days five, six, seven and eight requires more vigorous mixing to keep the dough alive and sticking. On day nine he gets hungry again and requires more flour, sugar and milk to curb his appetite. At this point you divide the goo into four equal portions, give three away to friends with copies of the instructions and add to the portion you keep an array of cake contents including eggs, spices, oil, chopped apples, nuts and raisins before baking him out of his old life and serving him up in the new, adorned with fresh cream.



For the first two days I was charmed, but on day three I forgot him entirely and on the fourth day found myself rescuing him from a dying breath at the 11th hour, literally 11pm, with the top up ingredients. Cutting a 10-day story by half, I decided I didn't like Herman much at all. It was like being in charge of a tyrannical virtual pet, like a Tamagotchi of the sort that were frequently banned from 1990s British classrooms because frustrated teachers were having their lessons disrupted by students feeding and exercising their electronic wards. I didn't like the responsibility of looking after him, pandering to his needs or the space that he was taking up in my modest kitchen.

I might have wanted to hang him – out for the birds, possibly – but did I really want to draw and quarter Herman and distribute him to my friends? And did I later want to add a tenner's worth of ingredients to his slobby, mish-mash, squish-squash body for a dish days hence, marginally less appealing than tripe with custard? Before you answer, bear in mind that the last time I cooked a cake I had pigtails and a school uniform and I'm now drawing a pension.

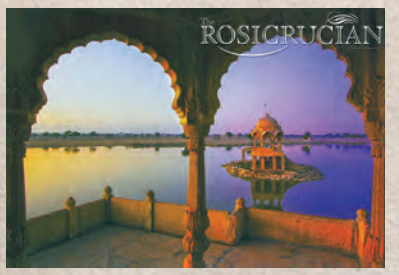
In a heartless moment of resolute decision I tossed Herman mercilessly into the bin along with the contents of the vacuum cleaner. Herman bit the dust, his final bubbles were burst. But Herman lives on in the kitchens of countless victims of unfulfilled friendship, and online too at the touch of a search engine. Look him up if you'd like to make his acquaintance. I won't be responsible for his actions by giving you the recipe.

Friends, readers, I can tell you from experience: if you like someone and value them, then give what really shows what they bring to your life. Give them time, a conversation, a listening ear or a gift that comes with no responsibilities and no guilt trip attached. Give them a call, write them a letter, send a card. Ask them out to lunch. Invite them to share a convivial bottle of wine, and debate enthusiastically the things that matter in life, or the things that don't, particularly! Share an outing, share a meditation journey, share whatever you've got in your pantry that cooks in 20 minutes and disappears with the washing up. But whatever you decide to do to foster this amazing faculty we call friendship, don't give them a *Friendship Cake!*

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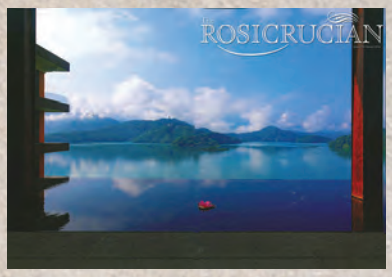
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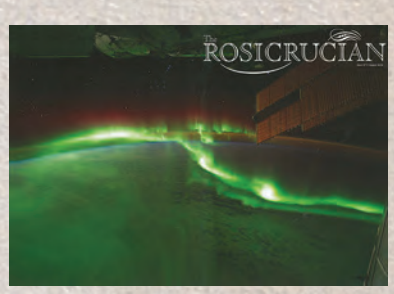
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In the calm of an Antarctic midsummer night's dream, I see a bright distant future of great human kindness and caring for life. But what deep regret I feel at the harm humans once did to their beloved planet during those dark adolescent years of wanton disregard for the environmental welfare of all life expressions on Earth. And without control, my eyes well up and my heart breaks in the knowledge that the greatest harm is yet to come!

