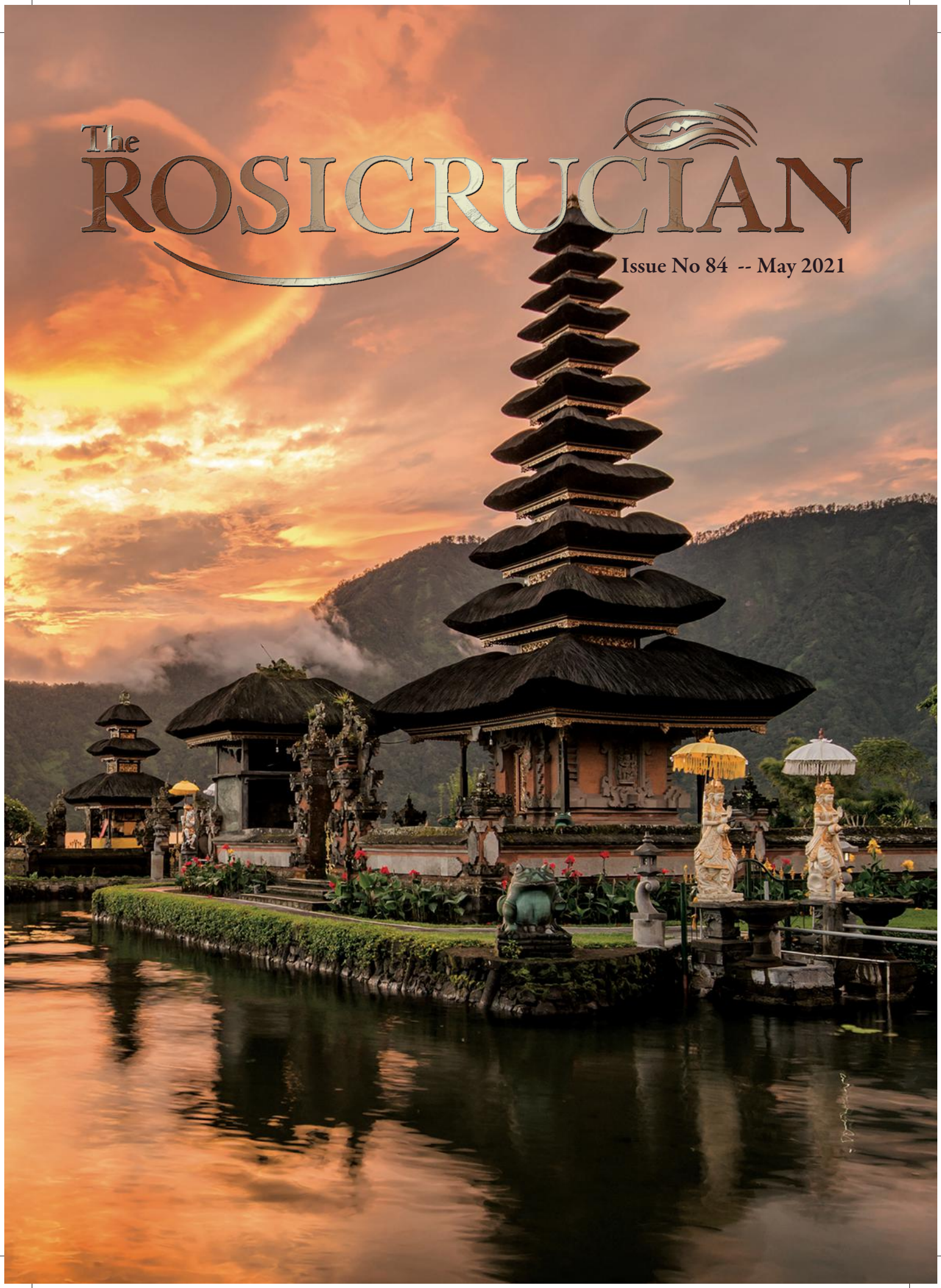


The ROSICRUCIAN

Issue No 84 -- May 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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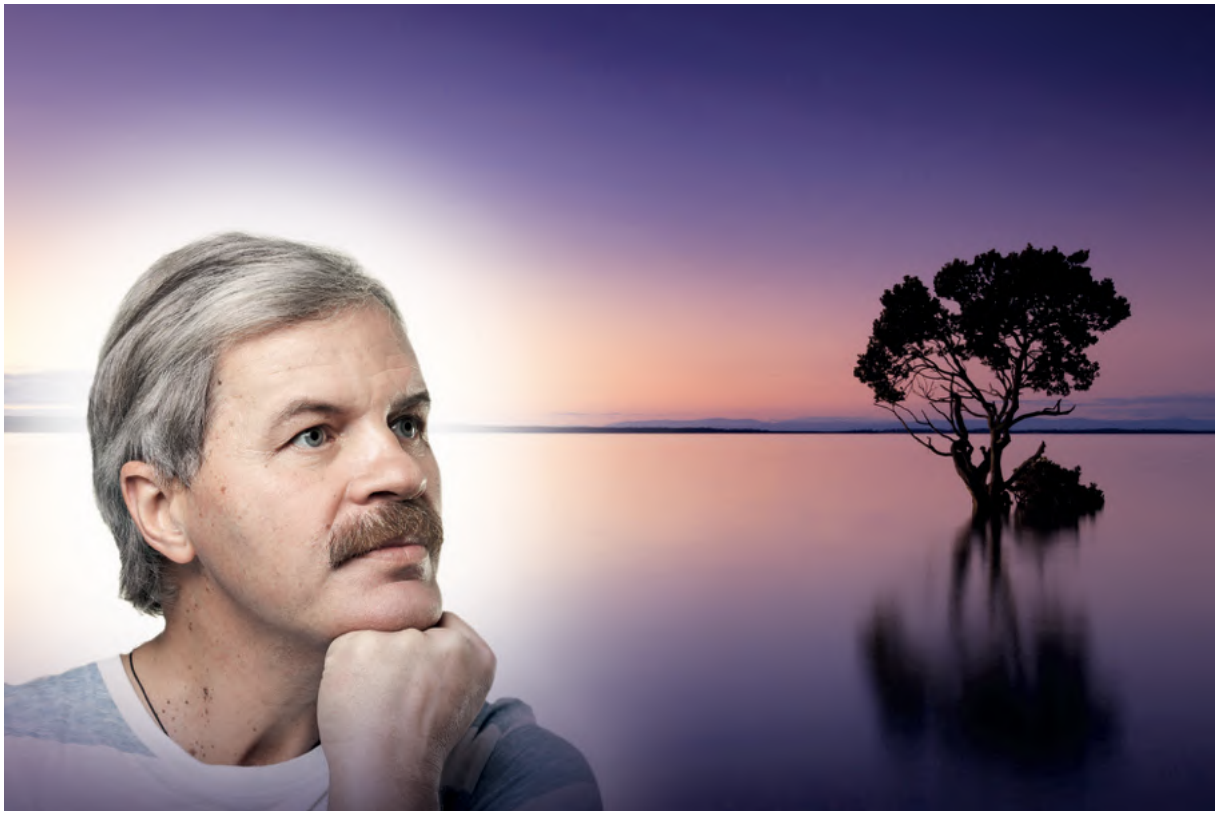
The Day (I thought) I Died 47



Pura Ulun Danu Bratan Hindu temple on Bratan lake Bali, Indonesia.

Hinduism is the oldest of the surviving religions in Indonesia, and is particularly well represented on Bali, a serene island, very special in the experience of millions of people who have visited it, beginning with the *flower-power* generation of the late 1960s and continuing with the week-long package holidays of the 21st Century. Written about in several 19th Century travelogues, the island and its people have, for centuries, exuded a calm spiritual maturity that many in our ailing world would do well to learn from.

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Reflections on Gratitude

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

Somewhere in the world, a man wakes up one morning; and as it has been for many years, he starts his day's activities. He checks his diary and thinks over all the events he will devote himself to in the next 12 to 14 hours. A busy schedule, with many commitments, programmes and meetings. He must remember to talk to the lawyer, have lunch with a client and meet with the Board of Directors for important company decisions.

Barely awake, he remembers even the small mishaps of the previous day, the moments of anger or frustration for a project not completed, the crisis in the relationship with his wife or children, and so on. A normal life we could say. Ah, he scrawled on his diary that he also had to see the doctor to collect the test results from a few weeks earlier following a minor ailment. Nothing to worry about, just routine checks.

But then the unexpected happens. He realises something's wrong from the doctor's expression as he starts to explain how medical science has developed, that there are many treatment options, and that statistics show survival is 'quite' high in these cases. And in an instant all the priorities and commitments of the day, all those thoughts and worries, all the family tensions that bothered him every day, suddenly take on a different dimension. Life itself takes on a different dimension. The scale changes abruptly and security is gone.

He is filled with a sense of loneliness because, for the first time, he realises that the life that animates him is the

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only thing that really counts, and that this experience is by its very nature, solitary. In an instant his understanding of life takes on a clarity it never had before, and he feels remorse that he had not noticed this before.

This story is at the same time both imaginary and real. It is repeated thousands of times a day around the world, and most of us will have known someone who has had a similar experience. Therefore, it is real. In a hypothetical exercise I put myself in the position of a man who lived this experience and the first thing that came to mind was a feeling of gratitude towards things we don't normally think of as important, the simplest of things. For me it is gratitude to the Rosicrucian Order which gave me the chance to see my life through a different lens, the same reality through renewed eyes, revealing a multitude of values otherwise obscured from my vision.

Whoever I am with, I feel truly privileged, but to go home and see my family, my grandson, this is a true gift.

Thinking that the days are always the same, that they do not bear within themselves the seeds of a new future, that every moment is not full of untapped potential that await our consciousness to become real, really impoverishes our lives. But being aware of the fragility of our material existence, fleeting and transient as it is, of our vulnerability and the fact that we will all leave one day unexpectedly..., such thoughts make us grateful for life, grateful for the people who are close to us, grateful for day and night, our friends, the spiritual values passed on to us, the things we have that bring us comfort, and the things we will never have..., grateful for the moments of happiness that make us like children again, and the moments of pain that lead us to draw on our hidden reserves of strength...; for all these things we feel such immense gratitude.

Thinking about death is not a neurotic act; not wanting to think about it rather constitutes a true neurosis for our society, and perhaps even the most important factor in the impoverishment and aridity of our time. Being thankful therefore is the necessary response, and rationally the most appropriate for each day that is given us to live in this world. Whoever I am with, I feel truly privileged, but to go home and see my family, my grandson, this is a true gift. Seeing friends and laughing and joking with them, is a real blessing. And extinguishing the candles after meditation in my private sanctum is a reminder of my true nature, so that I never forget that all this is given to me as a gift, and that the only feeling that I can possibly feel is precisely that of Gratitude.

The work we do in the Rosicrucian Order is noble, for it helps people become aware of the life that flows through them, thereby allowing them to achieve wider, clearer visions of the nature of their existence. The letters we receive from members of the Order and the meetings we are privileged to have with them, regularly attest to this. Please close your eyes now, and hold in your mind for a few minutes an intense feeling of gratitude..., and then ask the God of your understanding to help you to inspire others through your kindness, compassion and understanding to express the same gratitude you have been blessed to experience today.



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by **Amelia**

If you've ever visited London you'll no doubt remember the Underground rail network. At each station, before the doors close and the train moves on, a polite woman's voice asks you loudly to "PLEASE MIND THE GAP." Of course you'll remember what gap she's referring to. It's pretty specific, the gap between the train and the platform, and you don't want to get your foot in it ever. There exists another sort of gap though, one that isn't a *'something'* like the gaps under London, but the very opposite of everything we know.

Have you ever noticed those *gaps of silence* lying between the words we speak or hear? Or the blank spaces between the words we write or read? They're ever so brief, but they're there, and there are literally millions of them that we're completely unaware of. They're like... nothing! We may be subliminally aware of their existence but they're merely surplus to needs, a bit like ignoring negative numbers because they can't be seen in the same way that positive numbers can tangibly be *'seen'* through the physical objects we count or subconsciously associate with natural numbers.

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It wasn't until well into the Common Era that negative numbers gained any tangible meaning, and even now we can't easily visualise negative numbers in the same way we subconsciously associate positive numbers with the physical things we count. Well it's the same with the gaps between words, they're *'non-entities'* for most people, surplus to needs and therefore nothing to think about.

But I must tell you a little secret: the gaps between words are in fact very important, often more important than those *'wordy'* passages of information we hand out unasked for, or receive without being asked to receive. The true essence of spoken, written and thought words has to a large extent lost its original spiritual, almost 'magical' content; for our lives have become far too dominated by words, or more generally, information. We can view words, or information, as coming in three flavours...

(a) The *spoken* words we hear from friends, the TV, radio, podcasts, etc., and of course the words we use when addressing others.
(b) The *written* words we have on Facebook, Twitter, emails, browsing the web, etc., and of course the books, magazines and newspapers we read; yes paper is still important!
(c) And finally the words we *think*. Many would object to this, saying they don't think in terms of words. There's some truth in this of course, but not much, for all of us to one extent or another use mentally formed words, or more usually, symbols capable of being described by words, to form the thoughts we have.

A Case of the Mumbles

It's quite surprising how many people go about their daily tasks either mumbling to themselves some



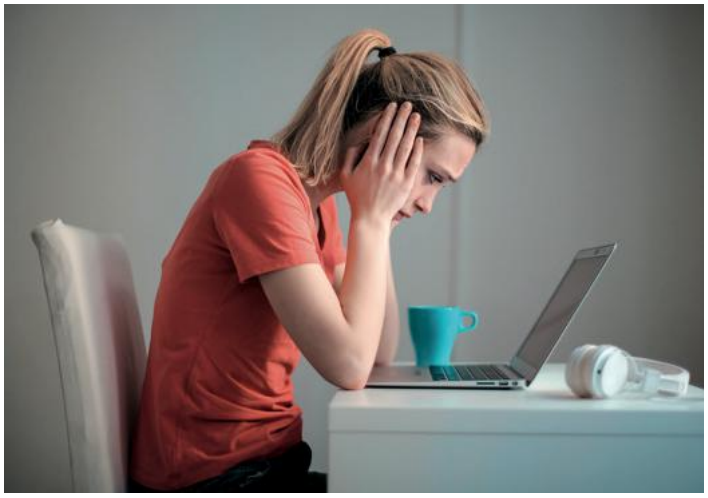


imaginary conversation they're having with someone or thinking the conversation through, blow by blow, and becoming quite emotionally agitated because of it. And so often it concerns an argument, how right one side is and how wrong the other is.

Such *'inner dialogue'* takes the form of actual words spoken silently in the mind or mumbled. And even when they aren't words, they're symbols, self-created symbols which represent whole sentences, paragraphs, maybe even whole volumes of information. When all is said and done though, all those symbols, sentences, paragraphs and volumes could conceivably be made up of sufficiently sophisticated words, every one of them. For they constitute information, and all types of information are at their most fundamental level purely mathematical in nature, and all languages at their most fundamental level are mathematical too.

We live in a predominantly information-driven, verbal society. Far greater amounts of information must be processed by us than our distant ancestors had to receive and make head or tail of. Go back just 200 years and imagine you're alone in a room. What do you do? Sit silently and hear your ears ring or feel your heart beat? More than likely when you're done with your usual tasks, your only option is to use words, either by listening to what others are saying in the street below, perhaps leaning out and talking to them, or reading a book, maybe making a few entries in your diary, writing a letter to someone, or maybe humming quietly a popular hymn, silently remembering the words that inspired and uplifted you some time in the past. There were lots

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'Because of the accelerating pace at which information comes at us, some of us are regularly overloaded.

of things to do back then, but frankly nowhere near as much as is available to choose from today.

Nowadays we regrettably reach over for the remote and switch on the TV to watch some rubbish, or with a push of a button fire up the PC to do a bit of catching up with emails or browse the web, perhaps listening to a few interesting though non-essential podcasts in the process. The possibilities are much wider, and the amount of information we have to process and make sense of is consequently hugely greater. Because of the accelerating pace at which information comes at us, some of us are regularly overloaded, regularly on the verge of desperation, just yearning to 'stop the world and get off.' Without a doubt it has become more and more difficult with each passing year to find that 'quiet space-within' where we can rejuvenate ourselves, sweep out our mental cobwebs, eliminate our mental addictions, and find the spiritual source of what we really are. That space-within, or what I prefer to call the 'inner silence' or the 'silence of the soul', is what I mean when I speak of the 'silent gaps between words'.

Words: Bits of Information

I know, technically I should be saying instead those silent gaps between 'bits of information', but it doesn't quite carry the same understanding does it? I'm sure you know what I mean though..., you wouldn't be reading this magazine if you didn't..., but just to hammer the point home, the gaps of silence are not 'nothing'; they are like the negative numbers mentioned earlier, 'things' that we can't really visualise, even though we know they're there; 'things' that are useful, and yet completely and utterly different in nature to the 'words between the gaps', namely the information conveyed by the words. The gaps between bits of information are not like information itself. There is no quality in those gaps, those periods of 'inner silence' that even remotely resemble the information we receive through words. Yet the gaps are crucial to our well-being, indeed crucial at times even to our survival.

The gaps are in fact the very source of the words we use, or abuse, and hence the source of the information we receive or give out. In earlier times, when granddad's granddad was young, and much before that too, life was a lot more sedate. Fewer deadlines and distractions to bother with, more time to just 'sit and stare', allowing the mind to process things silently as time passed by; the sort of mental tidying up that we have to rely on more and more nowadays from our sleeping hours rather than our leisure time, because we have so much less leisure time than before. Although for our ancestors there were of course terrible things happening just as there are today, things like wars, pestilence, hunger, the usual, I'm sure it was nevertheless easier most of the time to find the human centre of silence, than it is in our current 24-hour nonstop society.

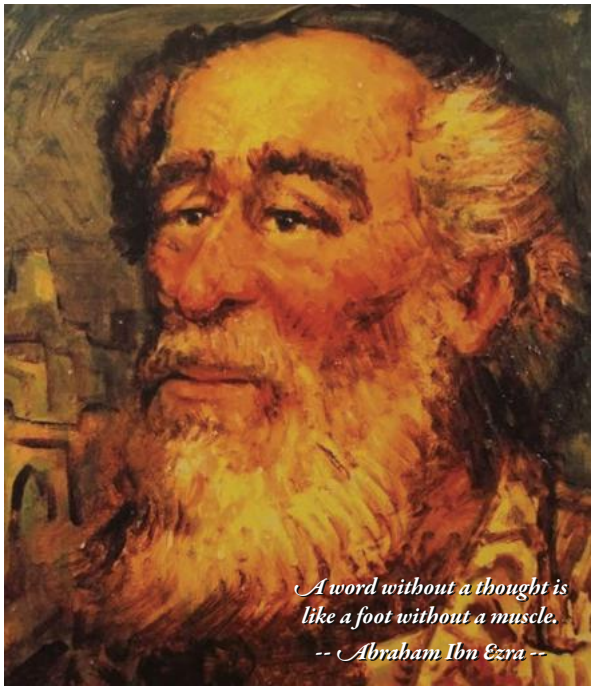
It's 2021 - Just Accept It!

But there I go again, complaining when I should be happy and grateful instead that it's 2021 at last and the awful Covid pandemic is at last beginning to subside. I have all the comforts and conveniences of living in an 'advanced' society, so why harp back to the 'good old days' when they're actually here in the present. Why should the distant past be viewed so positively and romantically and the present seem so bland and ordinary? Granddad's granddad, two hundred years ago may have had more opportunity and time to find those moments of inner silence, but it may not have been any easier for him to find them than it is for us today. Inner silence has undoubtedly in all eras been a vexing and difficult challenge, and maybe, just maybe, it is today precisely *because* of the buzzing, constant noise and activity we have to live with, that we really appreciate the rare moments we get to enter true inner silence.

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So granddad's granddad and his friends probably didn't even know what the lack of time to enter the silence meant, whereas we know it now, and it really pains us that we can't or don't do more about it. So, let's be grateful for the present noisy, busy, bustling, challenging world, and accept it as it is. Each period in history had its particular challenges, and ours is to learn to identify and productively use the gaps of silence between words. There are precious few other worthwhile 'gaps' are there? I would say there are none.

Most people have no idea how to find silence, silence of the inner sort of course, but they certainly instinctively know it's something desirable, and recognise its worth when they experience it. In this respect we're probably hardwired from birth to recognise the only thing that truly opens up spirituality for us. So many people are looking for a map of return to the quiet sanity of a life of harmony and true creativity, a return to the original way of balance in nature and balance within themselves. On the many happy occasions I've given lectures about the Rosicrucian Order over the years, and explained how its teachings can transform lives for the better, I've been moved almost to tears at times when I've seen deep sincerity and earnestness burning in the eyes of a few in my audience who yearn to find something more, something better than the noisy rat-race they're in. And every time I mention the inner silence, using the analogy of the gaps between words, it is as if a light is switched on, a new understanding enters the room and eager questions follow.



So Where Are The Gaps?

Okay, so how do we find those precious gaps, and more importantly, how do we start using them productively? Of course we need to begin by intellectually re-evaluating the manner in which we receive and process information, and one very good place to begin with is to use our words better. Do we say things just for the sake of conversation, trying to be sociable? If so, think about it: is it really necessary? If they're spoken, as opposed to written or thought words, then an added level of complexity and refinement needs to be addressed.

Walter de la Mare said: *"Until we learn the use of living words, we shall continue to be waxworks of words by gramophone."* Although the quote dates back to the days of wax covered gramophone cylinders, the principle is the same today as it was a hundred years ago: Words must be spoken clearly, simply, sincerely, and above all taking into account the audience and current circumstances. Only when we get that intangible psychic connection with our listeners do we get across the importance of our message. Far better a live rendition than a staged, pre-recorded message on a stuffy old wax covered gramophone cylinder. A recording can never equal the life, vibrancy and psychic connection of the actual real-time, spoken word. And nothing can prepare us for the 'dynamic' presence of those gaps in the information we encounter when we manage to *'enter the silence'*, even if for only the briefest of moments.

Words are the most tangible expression that exists for our thoughts. They're like little envelopes, each containing a certain intangible though still meaningful thought born in silence. And each carefully selected word, and especially when constructed into beautiful, meaningful sentences, in turn assists us in establishing order in our communication with others, with nature, and ultimately with our higher self. I'm sure you've heard the expression: *"...it literally took my breath away."* Well maybe you, like me, have had moments when the words of a person, whether spoken or written, were so profound and moving that it literally stopped you breathing. Such are truly precious moments, and prove to me that well spoken (or written) words can only come from those brief moments of inner silence, the 'silent gaps between words' when we instantly 'get the message', totally, in one great gulp of inspired infusion.

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We need to sensitise ourselves to the fact that gaps of silence exist in our lives, and we need to know that such interludes of complete inner silence are attainable.

Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1167 CE) wrote: *"A word without a thought is like a foot without a muscle."* It is limp, pointless, meaningless, devoid of life, and definitely does not come from the source of all spiritual revelation.

In general terms, finding the gaps entails, like so many other things in life, a bit of training. First of all we need to sensitise ourselves to the fact that gaps of silence actually exist in our lives. And we need to know that such interludes of complete inner silence are attainable. Once we know or accept this, we begin by attempting to enter moments of inner silence. The commonest technique is by learning to meditate, but it's not the only technique available, and spiritual teachers from all eras have found particular techniques that don't require sitting in the lotus position chanting mantras, but may for example require active, physical activity. The important thing is that you finally do enter the silence, no matter how you went about getting there. So go and find a way, and if it really proves impossible, learn how to meditate with one of the handful of proven techniques that are around, for entry to the silence of your being is guaranteed if you try long and hard enough. That then opens you up to experiencing the silent gaps between the bits of information that bombard you constantly; and what precious moments you will then have.

Word Environment

In the universe of verbal communication, so crucially important to us, we are literally bombarded almost constantly by a veritable deluge of words coming from all directions, all competing for our attention. The media, both printed and electronic, are a good example. The spoken word is currently being replaced by electronic communications on Twitter and Facebook for example where trivial one-liners *'shot from the hip'* so to speak are the rule rather than the exception; but also where one-liners of jaw-dropping beauty occasionally emerge. Words then, even in our computer dependant age with its spectacular visual animations, are still our primary source of communication and knowledge, and are, as with everything else, used for both good and ill. Some of those words and sentences come from the gaps, some don't.

We are bombarded almost constantly by a veritable deluge of words coming from all directions...

So with words, all we need do is ensure that they come from the gaps of silence as often as possible if we are to use them properly and maintain harmony in our lives. *Text-speak* from mobile phones has becoming an exceedingly popular form of communication, but one devoid of true human contact to such an extent that for some it has resulted in serious psychoses and deep loneliness. As one friend put it: *"paper spaghetti, not true spaghetti!"*

Whatever form your words take, spoken, hand-written, typed or texted, choose them carefully, find them from the silent gaps between words, and use as few words as you can to get your message across clearly and precisely. Words are the outer form of your inner experience, so if you're going to reveal something that's private and sacrosanct, express your thoughts through essential words only. You want the essential essence of your ideas to come across, so give people *'real spaghetti'*, not *'paper spaghetti!'* Make your transmission of ideas clear, simple and precise,

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and that, believe it or not, requires surprisingly few words. As a Kabbalistic sage once said: *"Say little, do more."*

We are what we think, we are what we speak, and our words reveal our inner selves. So let's not pollute our environment with unnecessary talk. Words subconsciously call upon the inner self to reveal itself to others, whether we know it or not. The quality of our thoughts translate into words and become the expression of our inner truth. Guard your thoughts therefore, they have a habit of slipping off the tongue, or keyboard, a lot faster than you think.

Hone your ability to use the silence between your outpourings of words to instantly find the true meaning of what your deeper self wishes you to say, and the precise words you should use in order to do so. The silent gaps between words are as important as the wordy parts, in fact more important at times. A heightened awareness of the potential power of silence is essential for good delivery of words. A carefully sculpted and attentive use of words assists us on many levels, not only by making us more productive, but by making us understand things more rationally, as they *actually* are..., rather than as we may formerly have *believed* them to be. Words delivered well, precisely, economically and only when necessary, conserves the mental effort involved in speech or writing. And through our periods of silence we increase our potential to live harmonious, useful lives. The power of silence permits us, when we must speak or write, to benefit both ourselves and many others who hear us or read our words. I would like to illustrate this with an event that the author of an article I once read revealed from his childhood, illustrating the necessity of conserving the energy of words:-

> My granddad's words have been of great significance throughout my life. *"Before you are born, you are given a certain amount of words to use in your lifetime, like a cosmic word bank, a word account. Be very careful therefore to use your words properly, in a measured tone, and expressing yourself correctly. Every word you use is out of your cosmic account. That is why you should turn your tongue seven times in your mouth before uttering a single word. Otherwise you may finish your quota early in life, and you'll be mute from then on!"*
>
> This statement had a great impression on me and probably affected me so much that I unconsciously chose my artistic lifework to be in the *'theatre of silence.'* It moulded my character, it calmed me down, it made me think before I spoke. And the knowledge imparted to me by the carefully chosen words of my grandfather is for me today an ancient knowledge, one found at the core of all worthwhile religions and philosophies.

Thoughts for Contemplation

From a number of sources, some contemporary, though most from old literature hoary with age, here are a few thoughts for you to contemplate:-

- *"Before choosing a word, ensure that it passes the three tests of truthfulness, necessity and kindness. If it doesn't portray facts truthfully, if it isn't necessary under the circumstances, and if it isn't uttered with kindness, don't use it!"*
- *"Your words must be like arrows, speeding to their target with precision."*
- *"One word can start a war. Another can end it."*
- *"Words are like a potent drug. Used sparingly they may heal. Used liberally they may poison the patient."*
- *"The learned conserve words. Fools waste them just as they waste their ill-gotten gains."*
- *"Guard your tongue as you treasure your wealth."*
- *"Words emerge from your whole being, not only your brain. Be guided therefore by the inner wisdom and silent murmurings of your soul. Allow your 'Inner Master' to lead you on to the true healing of others through your words. A conscious, deliberate attitude in the use of words, whether spoken or written, becomes a path towards Light, Life and Love from which all creatures within your karmic proximity will benefit."*
- *"Be genuinely aware of the good your words can bring into the lives of others; and use your words only to transmit good."*
- *"Words before realisation are empty. Words after realisation are powerful, potent and healing."*
- And finally, from Lao Tzu, the founder of the Tao Te Ching of China. *"Truthful words are not beautiful. Beautiful words are not truthful. Good men do not argue. Those who argue are not good. Those who know are not learned. The learned do not know."*

And so, after all these words, remember...,
don't just *mind the gap*,

FIND THE GAP !

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by **Joe van Dalen**

The Foundations of Health



Part 3

This series of articles is a summary of 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.

Physical Exercise Adapted to Our Needs

Physical exercise circulates and integrates energy, allowing us to get rid of mental problems. For maintaining good health, science has shown movement to be a must. This is not saying that physical activity must be intense but movement is nevertheless advised. Many believe that running or participating in sport is enough but in fact, walking or going for a swim are some of the most useful movements we can do on a regular basis. Being sedentary, sitting or lying down for too long, outside of sleep, is harmful. A study of 400,000 people has shown that 15 minutes of physical activity a day on average, or 92 minutes per week, will prolong life by 3 years as compared to sedentary people.[2]

Throwing yourself into rigorous sport, no matter what your age, is obviously a mistake, along with taking steroids or stimulants to withstand the strenuous effort. Not every physical body is suitable to take up running, or playing tennis, cycling, weight lifting, etc. The consequence could be a body that develops deficiencies and oxidises, leading to a lowering of immunity, not to speak of infections, muscular, skeletal or joint injuries.

Intensive sport requires careful preparation and training, and each person needs to listen to their body's capacities. It is now well established by science that movement or physical activity can reduce the many causes

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of death like an improvement of the cardio-vascular system, the risks of cancer, improved attitude, sleep and the quality of life generally. It can reduce weight and reduce the risk of falling among the elderly.

Classifying physical activities according to their intensity.

We can identify four levels of physical activity...

- Light physical activity like walking at about 4 km/h, for example. It does not lead to a shortage of breath or perspiration.
- Moderate physical activity can lead to some shortage of breath and perspiration. Swimming, dancing, gardening, bike riding, climbing stairs, a 5 to 6 kilometre walk, for example, come into this category.
- More intense physical activity like power walking at 6.5 km/h, quickly running upstairs, jogging, bike riding at 20 km/h. These produce significant shortages of breath and perspiration, and make conversation difficult.
- Very intense activity producing a lot of perspiration and gasping for air, making conversation difficult for up to 10 minutes.

Effectiveness of physical activity for health and the precautions to take.

Contrary to accepted thinking, the intensity of the sport or physical activity is not the most important factor. Moderation is, as well as good breathing, avoiding polluted air and taking adequate rest. Three hours per week over three or four session lessens the chances of cardio-vascular disease.

It can be built up to five hours; daily regularity is important and a long session once a week or the weekend is not as effective, particularly not intense activity likely to cause fatigue fractures or muscular injuries. Walking is beneficial no matter at what age. Generally, it is advised to take 10,000 steps daily or 3,000 at moderate intensity.

A medical examination is always desirable before embarking on prolonged physical activity to check blood pressure and cardiac rhythms in particular. A warm-up activity for 5-10 minutes, to assist the muscles become supple and prepare the body for physiological changes is also advisable. During prolonged activity, enough water should be consumed, and some calories in the form of a banana, for example, are beneficial.

After activity, there should be adequate deep breathing and rest to return the body to normal blood pressure and heart rate. Any signs of irregular heart-beats, or too fast a rhythm, shortness of breath during normal exercise should indicate you need to consult a doctor. Obviously smoking during physical activity is not recommended and has its cardiovascular risks.

Supplementary foods and physical activity.

Physical activity will increase the need for extra energy and supplements can be taken to avoid deficiencies. Without going into the practices used at high level sports, certain carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and anti-oxidants in particular are required. Free radicals and acidity in the body can induce cramps and fatigue.

Anti-oxidants like krill oil, vitamins C and C2, black and blue berries, rose hip are nutrients that fight off free radicals. Microalgae like spirulina, Klamath, chlorella and sea algae like ascophyllum nodosum rich in anti-oxidants are useful for those who participate in sport regularly. The consumption of water to compensate for the perspiration is important and as well as sea salt.

The brain needs glucose and foods rich in fructose rather than sugary drinks are preferred. How we use the brain is important, of course. Exercise allows for the growth and renewal of tissue and the elimination of waste.

The Importance of Sleep

In recent years, interest in sleep and its mystery have been rekindled. Sleep is not merely a period of rest but a time of regeneration on the physical and mental levels. It is also the moment when our spiritual part can influence the physical and mental sides of being. In other words, during sleep, order is restored in our principal vital functions. There are generally five stages of sleep recognised today.

The Transition Stage.

It is a short period when we recognise the need for sleep.

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We cannot know exactly when we will fall asleep, hence the danger when at the wheel of a vehicle. The urge comes in cycles and if we miss it then we have to wait for the cycle to come around again. For this reason, it is a good idea to go to bed daily at the same time. The phase also depends on the secretion of hormones from the pineal gland, notably melatonin.

A deficiency will result in a difficulty falling asleep and waking often during the night. It can be alleviated by eating foods containing tryptophan like eggs, peanuts, tofu, pumpkin seeds or roasted squash, and making sure you get enough sunlight during the day. It is also important to be aware of what we are thinking when we fall asleep, avoiding anxious and worrying thoughts. Have confidence in the Divine in this instance, a phase the Egyptians referred to as *"the little death"*, and upon waking, we may have clearer thoughts and even solutions to some problems.

Light Sleep.

This is the longest phase of sleep in which we are neither awake nor totally asleep. There is some slowing down of breathing and heart rate but muscles are not totally relaxed and one is easily awoken. If sleep does not go beyond this level, then it is possible wake up feeling tired the next day. Outside stimuli that may cause waking up may include a poorly aired room and too much carbon dioxide, or a temperature that is either too cold or too hot, as well as sudden noises.

Into Deep, Slow Sleep.

During this phase, the body is regenerated. The first phase produces irregular and discontinuous brainwaves, and the second a regularisation of neurotransmitter secretions *(delta sleep-inducing peptides)* with regular brainwave activity. The more profound this slow sleep, the greater the recuperation. The hormone secretion has been shown to be reduce stress and chances of cancer.

REM Sleep.

This phase is referred to as the Rapid Eye Movement stage in which relaxed muscles contract as if receiving a magnetic impulse to energise them in a rather random manner. It is a phase that can coincide with dreaming which can take up to a quarter of the sleeping period. The dreams increase as sleep progresses and close to the waking stage. We spend nearly a third of our lives asleep and so we should see to it that it is beneficial. Having a bowl of water near the bed is useful in humidifying the air thereby inducing a more profound sleep.

Paying Attention to Breathing

Breathing is an exchange of energy, passive in the sense that we don't have to consciously do it, in which the alveola in the lungs effortlessly relax within the protective thoracic cage. The lungs are like an inverse tree. Captured oxygen is transferred to our cells, where it meets hydrogen from our food (carbohydrates and lipids or fats) and the mitochondria of our cells frees this energy that maintains our life.

Rosicrucians have always maintained that there is an extra vital factor from the Sun that enters each breath. The oxidised residue in the process are then eliminated by the liver and lungs as carbon dioxide. Vitamin D is part of this cycle, that behaves like a hormone, a regularising energy for the whole body.[3]

It is important to breathe through the nose, which purifies the air to some extent of impurities and dust. The air is humidified as it passes through the upper nasal passage and the pharynx, taking on the temperature of the body, an important stabilising factor. Breathing exercises are familiar to Rosicrucian students to make the breathing process more effective. It is a bodily function over which we can have some control; deep breathing may calm the nervous system, provide extra energy, lower the blood pressure etc.

The Eastern tradition also speaks of breathing through the left or right nostril, these alternating according to natural cycles. The normal breathing cycle is around fifteen to twenty times per minute, that can vary according to the amount of physical activity undertaken. Proper breathing helps the organs to function correctly. The quality of the air we breathe is clearly important. In towns and cities, exhaust fumes are a major pollutant while in some country areas so are agricultural chemical sprays a hazard. More hidden pollutants exist inside motor vehicles, in the home where some furniture, carpets, paints contain toxic elements.

Scientific studies have also shown that, on occasions, certain winds can have an effect on the

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body and mind; hot dry air with many positively charge ions can cause problems in unbalancing those sensitive to them. Conversely, wind that is humid and has a predominately negative ionised charge, can be calming and even healing in effect. Most humans instinctively know that to immerse oneself in nature is highly beneficial, from walks in the woods, the seaside, mountains, attending natural thermal springs, or some sunbathing all have their cleansing and restorative effects. Recent studies have shown of the beneficial effects of the energy emanating from trees. Trees emit phytoncides that protect against harmful insects and germs. People walking in forests receive this substance to stimulate their immunity, particularly lymphocytes (natural killers) that destroy cancerous cells. The aromas have a calming effect on the brain and lessen the secretion of adrenalin and nor-adrenalin.

More and more people are showing hyper-sensitivity to chemicals and vibrations emitted by modern communication systems, mobile phones in particular. *Toxicant-Induced Loss of Tolerance* has been known since the 1950s and countries like the United States, Canada and Germany recognise these as true illnesses. Some cannot tolerate chemical odours like perfumes or touching some cleaning products; discomfort can result in the eyes, skin and breathing. Electro-magnetic radiation from telephone towers can induce headaches, a sensation of heat inside the head, muscle and joint pains, fatigue and trouble sleeping[4]. Home gadgets including computers also tend to emit either chemical or electro-magnetic radiation that can have a negative effect on the organism. Awareness of these is the key to enable life-style adjustments to be made.

--- to be continued ---

1. *"Les fondements physiques, psychiques & spirituels de la santé"* -- by Dr Paul Dupont, Diffusion Traditionelle, 2019

2. *"Minimum amount of physical activity for reduced mortality and extended life expectancy: a prospective cohort study"* 2011 – by Pang Wen, C., et al.; The Lancet, October 1, 2011; Volume 378: Issue 9798: 1244-1253.

3. *"Vitamine D, hormone solaire, source eternelle jeunesse"* -- by Dr Paul Dupont, Diffusion Traditionelle, 2011; Plaisance-du-Touch, Clara Fama, 2011.

4. The latest move to establish 5G communications technology is declared safe by the Australian Government but the European Parliament states that science has yet to confirm beyond doubt that it is safe, particularly for children.



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Loneliness

by **Robert Daniels**

There are times in life when friends and family may surround us and yet we still feel very much alone. And there are others whose lives are lonely because they live alone. One form of loneliness is mundane, in which, for a variety of reasons, many people are required to live by themselves. Another kind is quite different, for although we may be surrounded by others, we come to experience an interior loneliness.

This can occur when we, as aspiring mystics, have to take certain steps on the path entirely by ourselves, and cannot depend on friends or teachers for guidance and help. At stages such as these we need to become more attuned to our inner selves and thereby establish a divine companionship, which will always prove to be a source of inspiration and comfort for the long journey ahead.

In the early stages of mystical research, we often find that our new knowledge and experiences conflict with the orthodox views and opinions of friends and family. It is at this point that it must be decided whether to proceed along this path and risk widening these differences, to remain in limbo, constantly torn between two world views, or to retreat to the comfortable, mundane world from which we emerged. Should we have the inner strength and the determination to forge ahead, then we may evoke from within ourselves the companionship of something profoundly sacred which resides in varying measure in all living things, the so-called "divine light" which is ever ready to provide greater illumination on our path.

Forms of Loneliness

The loneliness we feel on the physical plane can be overcome by our association with others of like mind. But an effort must be made if we are to attract others to us, and it is our character that provides the attractive force that brings about harmony among friends.

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On the mental plane a sense of loneliness can be overcome through serious study of those subjects which the mind is consciously or unconsciously attracted to. Restlessness can be changed to a consuming interest once we have found that which we find intriguing and worthy of our investigation.



The loneliness of the soul is however, quite another experience and until we realise this deep inner call, which ultimately can lead to a union of the threefold nature of our being, there can be no real peace of mind for us. The experience of loneliness can be a blessing in disguise if it leads us to the true path of mystical attunement.

One who has left the mystical and spiritual nature of his or her being undeveloped is likely to feel a sense of inadequacy, to be a little uncertain, fearful, and lacking in confidence and self-esteem. However, those whose life experiences have made them reflect upon the more serious issues of life, and have awakened their mystical awareness, will inwardly sense greater peace and harmony in their beings, more confidence, and an inner assurance. Their sympathies and concern for others will be more prominent in their consciousness and they will have a love of life that comes only from a deep inner response to life's activities.

The centre of our attention should be to bring about and experience emotions of love, harmony, peace and a sense of kindliness towards others.

We cannot discard or negate our deep-seated feelings. Life has too much meaning that goes far beyond the intellect and the limitations of the mind. We are all familiar with the well-known quotation from Blaise Pascal: *"the heart has its reasons of which the reason knows nothing."* So often we try to ignore our deeper feelings about the issues of life, but these feelings are the responses to the soul life within, and its influence is all pervading and powerful. How often have you been deeply moved by your emotions? You know how difficult it is to control these feelings with rational thought alone, for the soul force within needs to express itself in ways that often cannot be intellectualised. We should not try to divert our minds from those experiences, but try to see what lessons we can learn from them.



The centre of our attention should be to bring about and experience emotions of love, harmony, peace and a sense of kindliness towards others. We need to exercise the will in order that the wisdom we have acquired through years of experience will be reflected in a deep love for all living things; for as we build this attitude to life and have it become the central motivation of our lives, we will feel and know a love, a spiritual power and spiritual companionship far beyond our present hopes which we must use for the good of others, and our lives will then become a great blessing to all humanity.

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When Death is Imminent

by **Ron Davis**



The single most important event of my life came as I lay at the point of death. Because of the decision I made during that brief period, the moment of dying became for me a rebirth, like a hinge between two lives. My new life is incomparably better than the old, and although I am physically still the same person, it is as if I have entered an entirely new dimension of living.

Of course, I'm not immune to the normal trials and tribulations of life and when a thundershower catches me in the open, I still get as wet as anyone else. I make mistakes as before, but not as often or as seriously as before. When I stub my toe, it hurts as before, but I don't curse some unknown fate for having caused it. And I have certainly not grown either heroic or saintly. It is just that life has for me acquired a whole new flavour and value, and my formerly insurmountable problems are no longer important.

The winter of 1997 was particularly cold and unpleasant. Everyone complained bitterly, and getting to and from work on the gridlocked rail network was a misery. Apart from the unpleasantness of constant cold, the cost of heating the house was beyond my meagre earnings, and I had to dig deeply into my savings. Just before Easter 1998 I contracted pneumonia. I couldn't understand how, in the prime of life, I could go down with a disease that we normally associate with old age. But there I was, desperately ill in hospital, only partly aware of the seriousness of my predicament. Doctors and nurses with concerned expressions came and went, and all sorts of pipes and tubes were attached to me, but I steadily weakened and got worse.

Finally one evening, a close friend of mine was told that everything possible had been done but my chances of surviving the night were slim. I don't recall him coming

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in to say a last goodbye, but he told me that after he got home, he sat up all that night waiting for the phone call that would tell him I had died. Some time in the wee hours before dawn I awoke, all alone in my hospital room. It was pitch dark outside, and the only sound I could hear was the faint back and forth sound of some machine doing its job of keeping me alive. I was weak and in considerable pain, but I did not stop to analyse the feeling. For the first time in a week, my mind was perfectly clear and rational. I was aware of myself and my surroundings and all my senses were operating normally. I knew that several days had passed, that it was night, and where I was and why. And I knew I had been bordering on a coma but that was no longer the case. When I say I *'awoke'*, it was like waking up into a reality that somehow surpassed my normal day-to-day awareness. Everything was so clear, rational and calm, and the options for continued life, or the end of my life, was crystal clear to me.

Every part of me knew I was at the point of something too awesome to comprehend.

I had a small electronic buzzer attached to my left hand and although I wanted to call a nurse, I could not muster the strength to depress the button. I tried again and again, but my hand simply would not move, I could not do it. In fact it was as if I had no longer any control over my body, any part of it. That is when I knew without any shadow of doubt that I was dying..., not tomorrow, not *'soon'*, not even in an hour or so, I was dying right then. There was no time for a few quick words to someone even if anyone had been present to listen, or to do or undo anything in life. It was utter finality, not later, it was now. This was the moment of truth.

How did I know? I can't answer that other than to say I simply knew with a certainty greater than anything I had been certain of before. Every part of me knew I was at the point of something too awesome to comprehend, but above all something that was absolutely final and entirely non-negotiable. When you reach this moment, you too will know. I did not doubt..., *I knew*!

I can remember thinking *"but I will never see the sun again"*, and had for the briefest of moments a sudden rush of panic which immediately dissipated in the face of the enormity of what was happening. This was the turning point. Up to that point, I had never been a particularly religious person. I had been brought up by loving and devoted parents who had tried their best to instil a sense of religious worship in me, but having felt the full force of priestly brutality and outright cruelty from some of the 'brothers' at the catholic college I attended as a schoolboy, I had from my mid-teens onwards had little regard for the bearers of the message of peace that came with the religion of my parents.

Complete Trust

The experiences of school had jolted me, but they had never entirely eliminated my belief in a Universal Mind or God of some sort that could be both impersonal and



I had no hesitation in giving myself up willingly and fully to my God.

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Be willing to trust your God as much as you trust the air you breathe or the ground on which you walk.



deeply intimate and personal at the same time. So, at the threshold of my final moments of life, I had no hesitation in giving myself up willingly and fully to my God. I put myself utterly and completely in His hands, without question or qualification. I asked only for the power to accept whatever His will for me might be.

It is very difficult to put this in words, for although it sounds very 'religious', it was far from that; it was an overwhelming feeling of trust in a force or power beyond my understanding, but which I could only describe as my understanding of God. I did not ask to be allowed to live, merely that I would accept His will whatever it was; and instantly I was overwhelmed with a love that nothing on earth can be compared to. It was the most gentle, refined, caring and compassionate feeling I have ever experienced, and as a faint echo I can still remember today.

I did not die of course and the pneumonia quickly went away following this experience. I returned to the normal activities of my day-to-day working life, and I remained as human as anyone else. I don't even lay claim to the title of a *'good'* man, and if to err is human, then I am eminently still a very ordinary person. Nevertheless, that night was assuredly a turning point. Nothing has been quite the same since. The moment that I gave myself up fully to my God, I learned once and for all what has become for me the secret of a happy and victorious life. It is a twofold secret:

First, be willing to accept life and any crisis of life on its own terms. Try to face the reality, whatever it may be, without the deadly errors of either false pride or that arrogance of spirit called self-pity. Second, be willing to trust your God as much as you trust the air you breathe or the ground on which you walk. Know that as long as you get yourself out of the way, your God will have already solved the problems you are concerned about.

Life is still to be led. I have not yet been fed to the ravens or tended by angels, and my new life is not fatalistic; I still make all the decisions. The difference though is that there is no longer either doubt or fear. I do not have to *'earn'* or *'deserve'* the love and mercy of my God; it is always there, waiting for me to help myself. I only have to be willing to allow the greater Self of my inner God to subsume and take over the far smaller self of my everyday life, for all things to work exactly as they should. With this knowledge it's impossible to feel lonely or afraid ever again, for I have the most wonderful companion and protector at my side all the time. Call it willingness or acceptance, it does not matter, but the reality of my life has changed completely.

There is nothing new or even special with what I've said, for so many in the past have had similar, and some had far deeper experiences than this. And all of them found the same truth in their own ways throughout humankind's long march through pre-history and history. The nearness of God, however you understand that word, can be found in myriad ways. In my case it was influenced by my religious upbringing, for others it will have no religious trappings at all, yet be one and the same attunement and experience.

The very fact that so many have experienced something very similar to what I experienced that night on my death bed, attests, I believe, to its truth. In any time of trial, just be willing to abandon all to the highest form of good you know. I call that ultimate good, the God of my Heart.

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Life Unfolding

by **Janice Munkton**

There are those who believe that everything in life is just as it should be. When we meet with this kind of idealism in daily life, we're likely to consider the person who thinks like this as an impractical dreamer, and perhaps a fool. Yet this attitude is just the thing necessary for our survival as a species; for if we cease to hope, to plan, to idealise, then we cease to be separated from the so-called lower animals.

Certainly, there are times when we come to think that life is not worth the struggle we put into it. We work constantly for achievement, but when our ambitions are fulfilled, we are rarely happy. And if we do find that haven of contentment, it is often an unstable thing, easily snatched away by envy or hatred from others.

It is interesting to note that when we were younger, we didn't have concerns for the future; the present seems to be all that we lived for. And when we are older, we tend to rely on the past, seeking security in what we have achieved already. Our lives have been a patchwork of fleeting experiences that have come and gone far too quickly it seems.

And then there is a nagging discontent that haunts us because we know we are living a lie when we claim belief in things in which we have no belief; worry over things that barely concern us; and pay continuous lip service to those about us whom we feel merit our attention for one reason or another. It is indeed tragic how much of our lives we waste in imaginary battles with imaginary foes.

There are so many things we do not understand about life, with its complexities being only the smallest part of the total mystery. And, of course, life is full of questions which often torment the mind, but we can only hope to find answers if we will embrace the mysteries of life even though we may have to accept that no answer will necessarily be forthcoming.

We should then learn to be seekers, in the sense of Gibran's words, never stationary but always moving ahead, secure in the knowledge that life, like the rose, unfolds itself.

> We wanderers, ever seeking the lonelier way,
> begin no day where we have ended another day;
> and no sunrise finds us where sunset left us.
>
> *-- Kahlil Gibran, "The Prophet" --*

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Don't Short-change the Cosmic

by **Walter Albersheim**

It is common nowadays to hear people decrying the lack of moral fibre and integrity in society. Actually, I believe most people are honest in their personal dealings if given the chance to express the best in themselves. I've seen inadvertently dropped wallets handed back to their owners, and people giving back change at the supermarket when they've been given too much. Goodness is present everywhere in small though surprising ways.

Yet some of these same fair and honest people can be dishonest in other, seemingly small ways. For example, for some people it is an almost noble sport to try and evade paying their fair share of taxes. They don't see it as being dishonest; after all, *"everyone does it"* they say, so what's the big deal? It doesn't take much to persuade oneself that taxes are unfair or are used for unjustified military expenditures. But the deeper reasons for trying to slip by this universal obligation is the mistaken belief that an establishment as vast as a government can surely not be hurt by petty fraud. Oh what an error in that!

Democratic states amount (in theory at least) to the average will of its citizens. The tax or duty that one person *"gets away with"* by not paying his or her fair share, undoubtedly increases the burden of all others, even if only by a tiny amount. The same difference in attitude applies to some people with fiercely held religious beliefs. Many devout believers who obey all commandments referring to human relations, deal at the same time unfairly with their God.

They constantly beg for favours without giving anything in return, and pray that their enemies be vanquished when those same enemies may be praying to the same God for the same things. It's illogical isn't it, to expect something as great as a universal Creator of all things to stoop to such petty human selfishness? In primitive minds, God is depicted as an immensely wealthy and powerful personal ruler who answers prayers according to *"His"* whim or grace, and in turn demands not just cooperation in furthering His ends,

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but a cringing chorus of adoration through songs of praise *"Hallelujah in excelsis..."*, forever and ever ad nauseam!

To a mystic however, the Creator is nothing remotely like this. The *"God of my heart"*, the *"God of my understanding"*, or what to some is referred to simply as *"the Cosmic"*, is not an individual superman but the totality of all substance, energy, life force, mind power and whatever else exists in the universe, and yes..., everything that may exist beyond it too! One might think that this universal supply can't be diminished, even if everyone used it forever without giving anything in return. Science however teaches that in our universe at least, the sum total of matter, energy and even information is limited but constant, and furthermore, that this is a fundamental law of nature. Our universe is like an island bubble within which everything we know or can know, had its genesis and will ultimately have its end.

So even when we consider the vastness of our universe, we must acknowledge that a grain of sand taken *"here"* must be supplemented with a grain of sand replaced *"there."* The word *"Cosmic"* suggests not just the immensity of the universe, but the universality of the law, order and harmony that comes with it. If our personal demands create imbalance and disharmony, they run counter to Cosmic (natural) law, and we will eventually have to compensate (karmically) in order to restore the balance at our own expense. Personal favours from God do not feature as a goal in any way for any true mystic. His or her highest aspiration is simple..., oneness with the Cosmic..., no exceptions! Approaching the Cosmic like a beggar pleading for favours, sets up the "prince-and-pauper" relationship between an exalted "Lord" and a lowly "subject", and that surely isn't the highest and most noble we are capable of?

We become *"godlike"* only by exercising compassion in striving to give and create at least as much as we receive. We may rightly aspire to wealth, beauty and health, but they aren't our primary motivations. If we accumulate wealth, we must pay our helpers a fair wage that enables them as well to enjoy comfort and dignity. If we live in beautiful homes, we must be careful to protect and nurture our environment. This principle of give-and-take, fair play, or in mystical language, upholding the law of AMRA, is less obvious when we seek physical and mental health. Life force is not a material thing, although our health may need physical assistance through medication or surgery. But if we receive Cosmic help in health matters, we incur obligations both to ourselves and others. We really must try and live sensibly and not waste away the divine gift of vitality.

We must also try to make available to others the same kind of help we've received. What we received was in response to a need and we know intimately what that unsatisfied need was like. We are therefore eminently qualified to help others to have similar needs satisfied, over and over again. One may argue that health is on the borderline between material and mental conditions, but the principle of give-and-take applies equally to purely mental pursuits. In the field of science, this is illustrated by the well-known cases of Newton and Einstein. Newton discovered the principle of universal gravitation; Einstein, that of universal relativity. In both men, the discoveries were preceded by recognising inner contradictions that existed in assumptions and theories. In each case there followed a prolonged period of inner search for a unifying principle. And this long labour was their personal contribution. As true seekers, they did not leave to the Cosmic alone what they might achieve through their own efforts. Both sought inspiration but did so as workers, not parasites.

And both were finally rewarded by a sudden flash of genius or illumination. The inner eye of each saw a new approach and immediately recognised it as valid. The new vision however, did not end their labours and they both went on to leave priceless legacies for the world to benefit from. To outwardly express an inner vision in earthly, comprehensible terms may bring severe trials and ridicule. The first attempts at logical proof may be complex and seemingly abstruse, and it may take considerable time before the new mode of thought becomes so clear to the discoverer and their co-workers that they can make it intelligible to the majority of fellow scientists and even laypersons.

Finally, the new theory must be verified by application to specific practical cases. Thus, Newton showed that the same force that made an apple fall to the ground and a pendulum swing, also pulled the Moon through its orbit. Einstein proved that his refinement of Newton's law accounted for a slow rotation of the planet Mercury's orbital axis.

And through such arduous work before and after illumination, the creative scientist makes him or herself a partner of the Cosmic and helps to bring new light to humankind. The same interplay of human endeavour with

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cosmic inspiration applies in philosophy, statecraft and in the arts. In all these fields, even the greatest achievements are directed toward specific objectives.

Mysticism, however, knows of an even higher level, where illumination is sought *for its own sake*, not merely the utility it provides. At this level the mystic meditates, not to seek gifts or revelations but to find within a profound sense of oneness with the Cosmic. This goal is so exalted and its attainment so overwhelming that we may seem as though we can't give anything of equal value in return. But this is not true. In reaching oneness, the mystic transcends mere partnership, for the bliss of such a union is not a relation between distinguishable persons. In the language of Eastern wisdom: *Knower*, *Known* and *Knowledge* are *One*.

This fusion with the Cosmic takes place against the backdrop of eternity..., beyond time, space and individuality. Only after our descent to earthly life can we again feel a debt to the Cosmic and an urge to repay it through a life of service. We may become saints, lawgivers, philosophers, artists or scientists; or we may remain simple loving members of our family and community.

We may experience deep longing for a renewal of the supreme moment, or our experience may be just an abiding feeling of joy. Being transmuted, we will radiate light and inspiration by our mere existence. We cannot short-change the Cosmic, for our entire life is one continuous repayment.

A Smile



A smile costs nothing but gives much;
It enriches those who receive,
without making poorer those who give.
It takes but a moment, but the
memory can last forever.

None is so rich or mighty that
she can get along without it.
And none is so poor but that
she can be made rich by it.

A smile creates happiness in the home,
fosters goodwill in business, and
is the countersign of friendship.

It brings rest to the weary,
cheer to the discouraged,
sunshine to the sad, and it's
nature's best antidote for trouble.

Yet it can't be bought, begged, borrowed
or stolen, for it is of no value
to anyone until given.

Some people are too tired to give a smile,
so give them one of yours;
for no one needs a smile as much as
she who has no more to give.

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Miyamoto Musashi

Paradox of the Warrior Mystics

Part 2

by **Rick Cobban**

The *Paradox of the Warrior Mystics - Part 1* (*The Rosicrucian, Feb 2021*) introduced the paradox of the martial-arts violence of the Shaolin Monks, Knights Templar and Samurai with their aims, philosophy and ethics. Part 2 will explore another aspect of the paradox of the warrior mystics, namely, that the greatest among them aimed to attain mastery of the martial arts skills while at the same time cultivating to a deeper, more esoteric knowledge and psychology of how to live a more rewarding inner life in service of their beliefs, despite the inevitable conflict that they had to face from time to time. This article will also examine what life lessons may be learned from the greatest of the various warrior mystic lineages.

It is also important to remember that not all Samurai, Templars, Shaolin Monks, or other warrior traditions, were mystics. Many of them were warriors who followed the ethics and philosophy of their belief system according to the best of their abilities and understanding. Unfortunately, some did not live up to their supposed high ideals and debased them through their unchivalrous behaviour.

Spirituality of the Warrior Mystics

Being a warrior mystic involves great self-discipline as well as group-discipline while practising martial skills in mind and body. It entailed embodying and internalising knowledge of effective thought, actions and skills of the body and weapons of combat. With accomplished practitioners in these respective martial arts, the fighting skills of the body and the weapons and techniques it used, became one with the *Self*. And through these practices and the guidance received by Masters of these arts, accomplished warrior mystics became aware of, and subsequently learned to control, many different, hidden aspects of their deeper *Self* in ways that few in the West can fully comprehend today, or even recognised as universal traits of true spiritual mastership.

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The discovery of the physical, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual aspects of *Self* was life changing. The realisation of the true nature of their *'lived being'* expanded their reality far beyond their previous conditioned and accepted world-views. Inevitably for some warriors, this meant both the questioning of, and the progression into, far deeper aspects of their spiritual belief systems, leading them to become mystics in a truly universal sense. Indeed, the greatest spiritual acts of warrior mystics was to resolve personal interior conflicts or external battles *without the use of violence*. Their self-mastery, extraordinary exploits, abilities and wisdom became the stuff of legends which, though spoken of proudly in many modern martial arts gyms today, are seldom understood more than superficially.

The word *'archetype'* means *'original pattern'* in ancient Greek. Archetypes are symbolic images that we understand subconsciously but without any objective awareness. Carl Jung identified twelve universal, mythic character archetypes within our collective unconscious. Usually, an individual has one dominant archetype that dominates their personality at various times of life. Warrior mystics were different however, because of their integration of at least four of these universal, mythic archetypes.

The warrior or hero is an ancient archetype that lives on in many forms today, and we can learn a lot by contemplating the archetypes involved when considering the paradox of life-paths followed in the various warrior mystic disciplines. The Vedic and Classical Greek belief systems believed that a person's life consisted of living not just one, but a whole series of archetypal roles. In youth the boy was an athlete and learner. Subsequently, he progressed steadily into fatherhood and became a warrior in defence of his family and country. In later years he acquired the skills of a diplomat. And finally, in old age, he became a sage. Women lived their own corresponding archetypes of maiden, mother and chrone or wise woman. Importantly, we should remember the female warrior archetype of the Amazons, represented in contemporary popular culture by the DC Comics character *Wonder Woman*.

Another approach is expounded by the author Angel Millar: an Initiatic spirituality involving the archetypes of the *craftsman, warrior* and *magician*.



A studio photograph of a samurai, by Felice Beato, c. 1860

While my usage of the terms does not completely echo Miller's meaning, it is obvious that many violent and more peaceful emotional and psychological experiences of a warrior mystic would change their consciousness over time, thus making many of their experiences genuinely *Initiatic*. Apart from being the embodiment of the warrior mystic archetype, all warrior mystics actually embody these three archetypes...

- The archetype of the craftsman in *learning, crafting* and *mastering* their martial skills and philosophy.
- The archetype of the warrior in the *practice* of these martial skills and guiding philosophies.
- And the archetype of the magician in the *extraordinary abilities* these warrior mystics exhibited.

At a fundamental level within human consciousness, the warrior mystic speaks powerfully to us today because of the integration of the universal mythic Jungian archetypes of the *hero*, *caregiver*,

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sage, *ruler* and *magician* within the warrior mystic's personality. Each archetype could be drawn upon when needed by the warrior mystic. This unique ideal flows across many times and cultures.

Further, there were both overt ceremonies and secret Initiatory rites within the Samurai, Knights Templar and Shaolin Monks relating to these archetypes. Allegories and mythological teaching stories were used to impart the knowledge and wisdom required to master the martial, psychological and spiritual aspects necessary to become a Master of their warrior traditions.

For example, at a deeper level in East Asian martial arts traditions, the act of earning a black belt, it is said, indicates that one has mastered only the basics of one's art. That is why Joseph Cardillo relates that...

> ...students are told the story that in the most traditional martial arts there was only one belt: the white belt. As the story goes, the white belt, after much experience (naturally soiling and tattering), turned black, indicating the wearer had achieved a certain level of mastery. But as their experience continued, the student's black belt would continue tattering until it turned white again. And the circle continues: to black then white, over and over and over. Traditionally, the karate student sees the dojo as just a smaller representation of what happens in life.

So each of us must become aware of our spiritual development through the many changes in life and the lessons those changes bring to our consciousness.

Psychology of the Warrior Mystics

Reflecting upon the psychology of warrior mystics is fascinating, for they experience in extreme example, many of the same events or crises we all experience in our lives. We are the sum total of our choices and circumstances, and they too were conditioned by family, education, society and belief systems. The warrior training they received, usually under the guidance of a Master of their martial-arts discipline, whether a Shaolin Monk, Knights Templar or Samurai, would equip them to fulfil their chosen role in life. The practice of their spiritual belief system would create their reality but would also lead some of them to question that reality and their purpose as warriors.

The mystical and psychological aspects of warrior training was addressed primarily through the trust and respect they had for their Master's knowledge, skill and wisdom. That bond between Master and aspiring warrior mystic was the foundation and key to his inner development and life-long refinement of spirit. In popular culture this is well illustrated in the many discussions between Kwai Chang Caine and his Masters Po and Kan in the television series *Kung Fu*. The deep insights into human nature and wisdom imparted to the younger Caine, guided him throughout his later adventures. Insightful communication, wisdom and impersonal love, were used to avoid violence whenever possible, and Caine learned to face life with equanimity.

Warrior mystics learned how to overcome their fears of injury, death and the unknown. By facing and accepting their fears, they eventually assimilated and transcended them. Through meditation and other spiritual practices, they faced, integrated and healed their psychological shadow, which, without such practices would sometimes manifest as cruelty. Modern techniques, based in part on the inner disciplines of warrior mystics of past centuries,



Bodhidharma (above) was a Buddhist monk who lived during the 5th or 6th century. According to Chinese legend, he also began the physical training of the monks of Shaolin Monastery that led to the creation of Shaolin kungfu.

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Sasaki Kojiro (right) engages Miyamoto Musashi on the shores of Ganryū Island.

are used today to rehabilitate people suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder acquired in battle. There are many situations in ordinary life which reflect to a lesser extent the life crises that every warrior mystic had to face and overcome. We can learn much from some of the techniques and attitudes to life that they employed in their struggles to find inner peace in all situations.

A brief examination of the life of Miyamoto Musashi is especially instructive. He was born in 16th Century feudal Japan. His first fierce victory at age 13 marked the beginning of a violent but prosperous career, during which Musashi fought and won over 60 duels. He is generally regarded as Japan's greatest samurai. Later in life, he wrote *The Book of Five Rings*, a text that details his tactics, philosophy and strategies. Here follow five excerpts from his book. The 21st Century mind resonates with the decisive nature of these quotes:

- Nothing outside of yourself can ever enable you to get better, richer, stronger or smarter. Everything is within. Everything exists. Seek nothing outside of yourself.

- In battle, if you make your opponent flinch, you have already won.

- Do not regret what you have done.

- All men are the same except for their belief in their own selves, regardless of what others may think of them.

- Do nothing which is of no use.

The values of self-improvement, independence, forward-thinking and productivity are all communicated through these passages, despite what appears as superficially ruthless to our modern minds. However, confidence and self-assurance undoubtedly stand out as Musashi's most prominent ideals. Indeed, many of the problems people face today may be traced back to a lack of belief in one's self. A study of Musashi's life and works will reward the reader many times over.

What Can We Learn from the Warrior Mystics?

In Part One of this article, we found that the preferred option of warriors who actively aspired to become mystics, was to make violence always a last resort in accordance with the principles they had learned.

The three groups of warrior mystics we examined had two things in common: a military or martial arts discipline, and a contemplative and meditative practice to develop a greater sense of what a person may become in the service of their ideals. An issue in modern

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societies is the lack of real initiations or landmarks to mark a person's passage through different stages of life, especially for young people. No longer do we mark the transitions of life as we did in the past, and this may be a role that holistic martial arts, in emulation of the best practices of the warrior mystics, could play in the much-needed development of personal spirituality and discipline in contemporary society.

In his book *"Discipleship on Trial"*, past Rosicrucian Grand Master Raymund Andrea points out that there are times when we must adopt a militant attitude in the *"spirit of the warrior"* to stand up for what we inwardly know to be right: to uphold human rights, defend nature and assist those in need to free themselves from need. Below follow a few simple lessons we can learn from warrior mystics of the past:

- Get to know yourself, appreciate your strengths and face your shadow. Face, embrace and transform the aspects you don't like about yourself.
- Develop self-discipline, will-power and flexibility.
- Shape and sharpen your mind.
- Live a joyful life.
- Concentrate, contemplate and meditate.
- Manage the energy in your life.
- Be aware of your mortality and live every moment to the full.
- Live a balanced life.
- Direct your awareness of mind, body and surroundings.

Many people today practise a form of martial arts for health, self-defence and spiritual discipline. Scott Farrell, researcher and author on chivalry, points out that *"...studying the arts of violence may diminish the urge to commit violent behaviour - a paradox that is at the heart of the code of chivalry."* All genuine warrior mystics adhered to their core codes of chivalry.

Professor Damon Young, honorary fellow in philosophy at the University of Melbourne, and co-editor of the book *"Martial Arts and Philosophy"* has explored the aggressive tendencies of youth. The question is how may these aggressive impulses be transformed into something less dangerous and more productive? There are many ways to do this constructively; the obvious one being to teach them martial arts. Research suggests that young men who learn to fight in a safe, structured, respectful martial arts school are less antisocial. How does this work? Professor Young suggests the following approach:



Miyamoto Musashi kills a shark fish (Yamazame) in the mountains across the border of Echizen Province, by Utagawa Kuniyoshi

First, the martial arts offer controlled catharsis. They get to fight, and fight hard, but against willing participants, under the eye of an experienced teacher, coach or trainer. They learn that they can be aggressive without being malicious.

Second, combat sports can increase self-esteem. Instead of needing to prove themselves in animalistic rites, practitioners of martial arts enjoy genuine achievements: gaining grades or belts, executing difficult techniques, winning competitions. They learn there are better ways to get respect.

Third, fighting offers discipline. You have to train regularly, eat well, keep your fitness up, and set realistic targets. Some young men may combine this with drunken thuggery but it won't pay off in the long run. Success demands commitment, and this means less late-night idiocy and more early morning jogs.

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Fourth, fighting can teach humility. Confidence can spill over into arrogance, which can lead to more infantile self-assertion. But there's nothing like losing a fight to teach you your limits. The young, especially boys, need to learn they're not invincible.

Finally, the martial arts demand trust. To train well, you need faith in your teacher and fellow students. You have to know they'll go light when you're a beginner, and they'll release their choke when you tap; and you'll do the same. In this way, young men learn to be less antisocial, and more gregarious; they learn trust in others, and self-restraint.

All of this echoes the approach used in previous feudal and pre-industrial societies for transforming the aggressive energies of youth into the necessary restraint and responsibilities of adult life.

We can analyse the knowledge, understanding and skills of the warrior mystics and appreciate that a similar synthesis was adopted and has emerged within the human potential movement since the late 19th Century. Miyamoto Musashi's teaching of the inner power that every person possesses to create their exterior world still resonates today. There are many levels and aspects of such practices in the physical, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual realms. It becomes obvious from a study of the warrior mystics of history that an individual is capable of developing abilities in each of those aspects that make up every person. One may move from the ordinary to the extraordinary!

The truth of the warrior mystics of the past has often been obscured by myth, legend, half-truths and deliberate lies perpetuated by both their admirers and detractors. Their quest was to develop both the martial and spiritual aspects of their Greater Self in the service of the ideals exemplified in their codes of conduct. Their ideals still inspire us to greater achievements in our quest for a better world, mystical attainment and mastery of life by practising the virtues and skills of the warrior mystics.

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Alcoholism: *Recovering from a Dark Night*

by **Amorifer**

I recovered from my alcoholism 20 years ago and have wanted to write about my experiences as a Rosicrucian and how my studies have helped me to work my programme of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous. My father was an alcoholic and my brother was a drug addict, so I believe I was perhaps genetically, or at the very least socially, predisposed to becoming an alcoholic too.

I came from a lower middle-class background and my parents divorced when I was nine. My mother worked three jobs to put food on the table and my brother and I went to boarding school. During the school holidays, the task of looking after my brother, who was five years younger than me, fell to me. I met my future husband when I was 15 and left home a year later to live in a boarding house. I am the product of a Catholic upbringing and was schooled by nuns, strict disciplinarians which made school life a burden rather than the intellectually liberating experience it should have been. I was always the *'goody-goody'*, believing that rules were meant to be kept, not broken, but I was also quite average in sports and academic subjects. Once my parents were divorced, I don't remember any alcohol in the home and I had my first drink only when I was about 18. Nothing earth-shattering and I only drank occasionally, never more than one drink.

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I married my husband when I reached 21 and needed to prove that I was better than any girl his family would have liked to choose for him. So I set out to be perfect! And I was: two wonderful children, a perfect home, a perfect wife and mother. My husband only started drinking at the age of 40. His father had been abusive toward him and was an alcoholic, but very few members of our family drank on a regular basis. After 30 years of marriage I was having about three drinks a day and realised that my focus on alcohol was starting to change. If we went away, the whiskey bottle would be the first thing to go into the suitcase. And when we went out to dinner with friends, I would watch the bottle of wine going around the table and worried in case there was nothing left by the time it came to me.

I embraced recovery from the first day and what a joy my life has been ever since.

When my husband and I argued, it was always when we had both had a drink or three! Our extended family was starting to talk and discuss us, and they were worried. None of them drank on a regular basis and some of them discussed the situation with my husband. He was angry with me mainly because of the embarrassment. I didn't know that you can be an alcoholic on just three drinks a day. In my mind alcoholics get drunk, disorderly, have accidents, get arrested, fall down and make fools of themselves. I did none of those things, so how could I have a problem?

The Rose and the Cross

My husband joined the Rosicrucian Order and because I wanted our lives to have common interests, I joined the following year. Having come from that strict religious background, the Rosicrucian philosophy was like a shining light for me. I could basically choose my own *'Higher Power'*, and for the first time, I learnt the difference between religion and spirituality, and discovered a new freedom of thought. We were both very involved in the Order and when my husband passed through transition he had a Rosicrucian funeral which was wonderful.

Four years before he passed away, things came to a head and I sought advice about Alcoholics Anonymous (more commonly known as *"the AA"*). I was getting panic attacks, shaking and every morning had to put in place the happenings of the previous evening before I opened my eyes. Did we argue, what had I said, and such like. It was frightening and I was full of fear and did not understand what was happening to me. I eventually went to a rehabilitation unit and what a revelation it was for me. These people understood exactly how I was feeling and what I was experiencing. I was not a bad person, I was a sick person with a chronic and progressive illness.

When I read one of the Grand Master's messages today several years ago, the penny dropped! I have never been able to express so eloquently what I went through before recovery and I firmly believe that my Rosicrucian studies had prepared me for the spirituality of the 12-Step Recovery Programme of Alcoholics Anonymous. I embraced recovery from the first day and what a joy my life has been ever since. I have been through devastatingly bad times, death of loved ones, crippling accidents of family, and such like. By the grace of my Higher Power, I have not felt the need to pick up a drink ever again.

I have learnt that it is not how much we drink but how much it affects of us. We share many of the same character defects but I have had a chance to change these because I work my 12-Step Programme every day. My AA teachings and my Rosicrucian teachings have combined and meshed together beautifully, but I firmly believe that my years as a Rosicrucian is what has enabled me, and prepared me to embrace my AA teachings so readily. It all makes such sense to me now.

By the grace of my Higher Power, I have not felt the need to pick up a drink ever again.

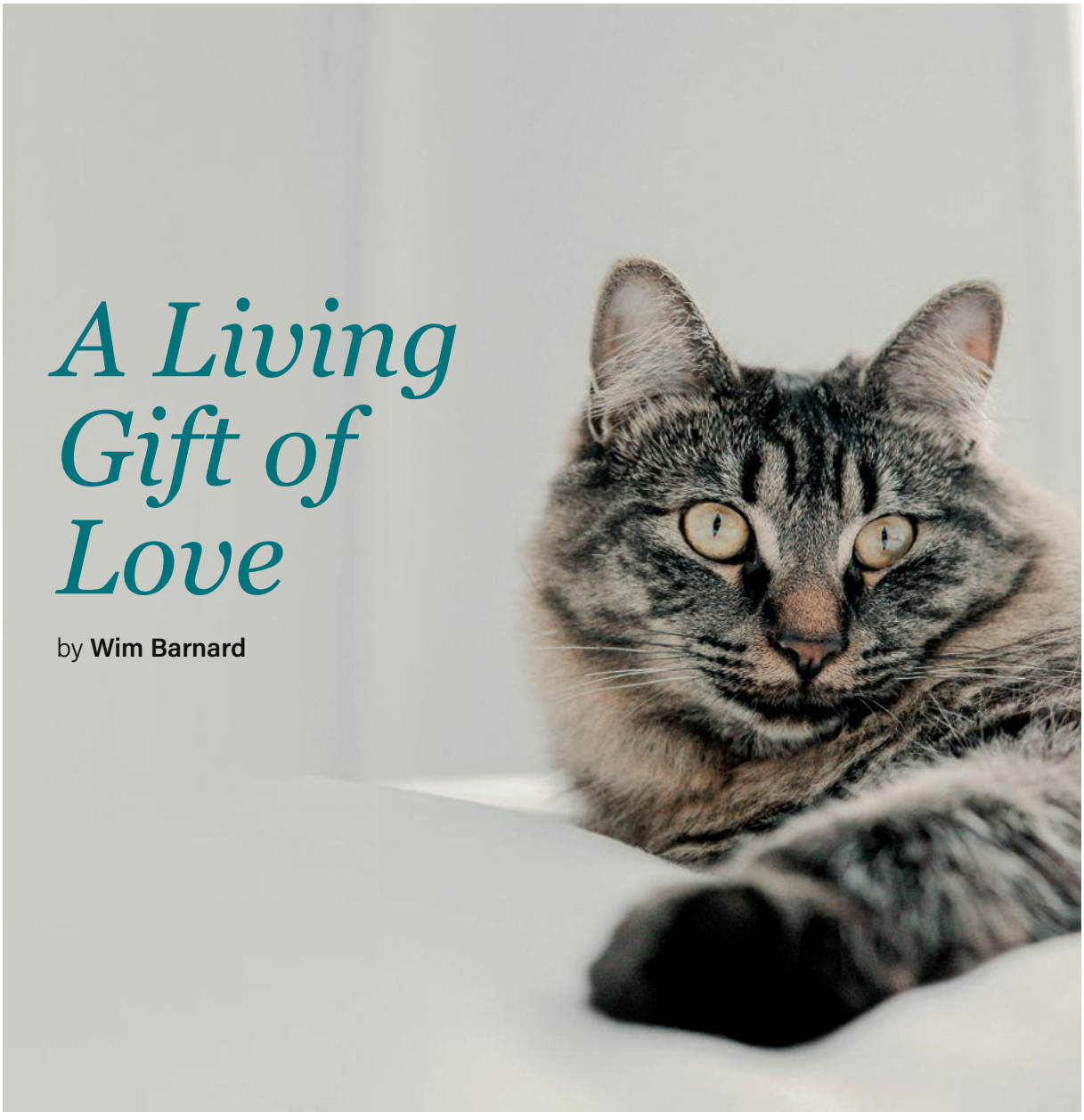
For those of you who are in Recovery, I wonder if you too have experienced the same thing? If you did not read the Grand Master's monthly bulletin message for June 2011 *"Our Darkest Hour"*, please do so, and share with me the wonder of life as an alcoholic in recovery and the joy of being a Rosicrucian.

ODAAT -- One Day At A Time.

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A Living Gift of Love

by **Wim Barnard**



My wife has a certain *'weakness'* for..., no, let me start again..., my wife has a great *'strength'*: she loves cats. In fact she adores all living creatures great and small, though especially cats. And they love her back with an intensity and devotion I can hardly begin to comprehend. In fact life is fulfilled for her when her love and compassion is poured forth on disadvantaged animals of all kinds, and fortunately for me, she regards me as an *'honorary animal.'*

One day she brought home a blind cat. It's the only one so far, but I'm sure there will be more in due course. Her kindness towards animals has no limits, except occasionally when I point to the emaciated look on my wallet; for pets are by no means cheap to care for, and they are of course for life. Like our children, they grow up with us, mature with us, and share everything we possess. The children quickly came up with a name for him, Bumpy, no doubt because he bumped so often into the furniture.

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I'm discovering that a blind cat offers an irresistible temptation for mischievous children. *"Let's see if he'll bump into the chair if we call him"*, cried my allegedly animal loving five year old son Dylan as he created an obstacle course. Screams of delight as Bumpy walked into several obstacles, shook himself, but good-naturedly tried again and again to reach my calling son. Very cruel I thought and was about to issue a harsh admonition when Angela, my seven year old daughter lunged at Bumpy with pity, picked him up and sat down to have him all to herself. There he purred relentlessly as she stroked him into a curled up ball in her lap, and soon the two were sound asleep.

One particularly naughty friend just had to see whether the rule about cats always landing on their feet applied to Bumpy. So, holding him upside down over a bed, he let go. Why cats always seem to land on their feet I don't know, but before I could stop this next cruel experiment, we all learnt with a thump that blind cats do not land on their feet. They land on their backs or their sides, but never on their feet. Bumpy was not hurt for the bed was soft, but through repeated tries he never stopped purring for an instant! I suppose Bumpy might have the same sweet disposition if he could see, but our pets with perfect vision have never been as good-natured as this wonderful little creature.



It's tempting to think that Bumpy may somehow be compensating for his disability by being extra good natured to ensure our favour, but that's absurd isn't it? I've seen in this small creature a soul as sophisticated in its catness as my soul could ever could be in its humanness. For any trouble Bumpy might be for us, his blindness simply caused him to try harder than the rest, and with the graciousness and good humour of a really 'old soul'.

I've seen in this small creature a soul as refined in its catness as my soul could ever be in its humanness.

It has never ceased to amazed me how beautifully he gets around despite his disability. His sense of hearing is acute and he pinpoints a flying moth with great accuracy before leaping into the air to catch it. I've never seen him succeed, but his playfulness as he springs happily and gracefully in the tall grass of the backyard makes me feel so small in comparison. Why can't I be so happy and grateful for life? After all, I can see. His patience and affection as he lovingly licks every speck of dirt from the paws of our messy Beagle is a thing of beauty and love that has taught us all deep lessons in how to treat all animals, but for me at least, especially how to treat other humans too.

If Bumpy can be so good natured and forgiving, then we must rise to his level of evolution and do it too. Bumpy finds with ease the bedroom of whichever child he chooses to sleep with, and he can enter and exit through the kitchen catflap as though it weren't even there. Even when teased by naughty children, he remains composed, serene and patient, and never stops purring his love for them. He is a living gift of love, and to the fates that made this possible for me: thank you, thank you, thank you!

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Mystical Tradition in Tibet

by **Bill Anderson**

Tibet, the very name conjures up visions of robe-clad monks going about their daily business, while in a chamber far in the distance can be heard the deep sonorous sounds of chanting. We see rows of monks of all ages seated in a dark, smoke-filled temple murmuring prayers as they progress through their prayer beads one by one, hoping to move inch by inch closer to their ultimate liberation.

But we also see a bustling little city like Lhasa with well stocked Chinese shops and Tibetan peasants in rags roaming the streets like so many third world scenes we have seen before. Does the Western image of a nation filled with robe-clad men of wisdom portray reality or wishful thinking? We can't be sure can we, for Tibet has been an occupied nation for much of its recent history, and very little verifiable information ever leaves this mountain land. It is almost certain though that most of what we in the West would consider the spiritual part of Tibet to be, is now sadly in the past.

Long isolated by the world's highest mountain ranges,

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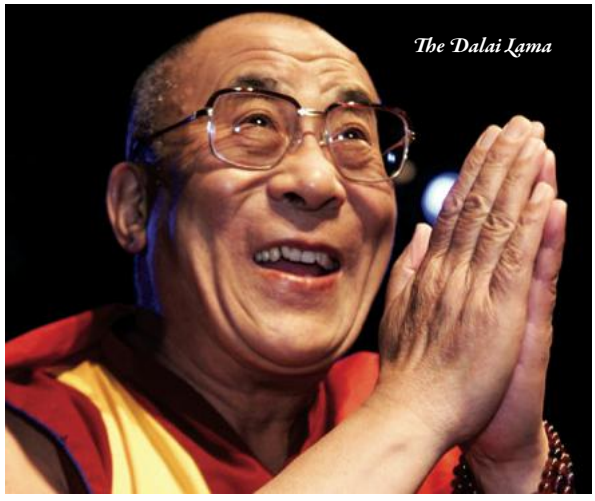


The Kunlun mountains.

a dominant feature of Tibet are the Kunlun, a wide range of mountain peaks stretching from West to East across the entire Tibetan plateau. This old theocracy has long been thought of as a land of mystery, and it remains so even today. Despite over half a century of brutal suppression and ethnic cleansing of its original inhabitants, the Tibetan religion and traditions still cling on in isolated communities, and the Tibetan sense of national identity runs as deep as ever in the hearts of Tibetans, whether in Tibet itself or in its worldwide diaspora. Having suffered the vicissitudes of several foreign invasions in the past, the most recent one beginning in the late 1940s, Tibet still remains in Western eyes a beacon of spiritual practise and attainment, harking back to a time of almost superhuman spiritual achievement.

Much of the moral rectitude and spiritual depth that people perceive Tibet to possess comes from early 20th Century authors who portrayed the country as one possessing the most refined spiritual theocracy in the world. The present Dalai Lama though, has undoubtedly done more than most people alive today, in bringing the plight of the Tibetan people to the eyes and moral conscience of the world. Through years of strict observance of non-violence and a deep love of the country of his birth, he shas hown how people can live lives of kindness and compassion despite generations of foreign occupation and state-sponsored vilification. How accurate the picture of the Tibet we have today has ever been is open to question of course; but what is certain is that this sparsely populated land has inspired in the minds of seekers the world over, spiritual quests that have brought untold happiness and serenity in this life, and hopes for a positive and beautiful future for all humankind.

The former country of Tibet now forms the Chinese autonomous region of Xīzàng Zìzhìqū, though Tibetans in small communities are also found in the neighbouring Chinese provinces of Qīnghâi, Gānsù, Sìchuān and Yúnnán, and in several fragile communities in northern



The Dalai Lama

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India, Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan. And that is not counting the western diaspora of exiled native Tibetans, and the large following of Tibetan Buddhism in the West which has emerged in recent decades.



A Tibetan 'Bon gathering taken in the early part of the 20th Century.

Tibetan Language

Modern humans have lived in Tibet as far back as the Neolithic period, and almost certainly, the first hominins out of Africa, some 1.7 million years ago, the long extinct Homo Erectus, would have called it home. We can't tell who the first modern humans were, but their deep ancient ancestors were almost certainly Neanderthals or the even more ancient Denovisans. But if we restrict ourselves to the era of modern human migrations out of Africa into Asia between 50 to 70 thousand years ago, there is little reason to doubt that modern day Tibetans are anything but the direct descendants of these early pioneers. If so, and considering the huge population changes that have taken place all over the world in recent millennia, then the Tibetans are among the most ancient of all human populations outside of Africa.

The Tibetans call themselves the *'Bod-pa*, meaning *'people living in the 'Bod [region]'*, and their language is of the Tibeto-Burman family. Burmese is believed to be the closest language to Tibetan, possibly, though not proven by any means, due to migrations of Tibetans into Southeast Asia around or before the time of the Buddha (6th to 5th Centuries BCE). Grouping these two languages together with other related languages spoken in the Himalayas, as well as in the highlands of Southeast Asia and the Sino-Tibetan frontier regions, linguists have concluded that all these languages originated from an ancient Tibeto-Burman language, possibly older even than the language group which arrived on the Indian sub-continent with the arrival of the Vedic tradition some four to five thousand years ago. Tibetan is also spoken in parts of Nepal, India and Bhutan and is also used by some Mongolians in order to study Buddhism.

There are several different Tibetan dialects, and due to differences in pronunciation and vocabulary it can be difficult for people from different regions to understand each other. However, greater social interaction among Tibetans from previous regions in recent times has led to the development of a modern standard Tibetan language, in contrast to various other traditional dialects which are much closer to classical Tibetan. Written Tibetan was devised in the 7th century CE by Thonmi Sambhota (or Thon-mi bsam-bho-ta), the senior minister of the famous Tibetan ruler King Songtsän Gampo or Srong-btsan sgam-po (c. 569-649).

It was believed that the king was a manifestation of the Buddhist Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, of whom the Dalai Lamas are similarly believed to have been manifestations. Thonmi Sambhota was one of 15 scholars sent to India by the king to compile Tibetan scripts so that Buddhist literature could be translated into Tibetan. He developed the Tibetan language based on the Sanskrit characters of the Devanagari script, which is used for many Indian languages. He also compiled grammar texts which are still the primary source for studies in Tibetan grammar.

Since its introduction, the writing system has barely changed, although the spoken language has evolved considerably. As a result, written and spoken Tibetan are quite different. Spoken Tibetan is tonal to an extent and also nasal, like French or Portuguese. More controversial, and considerably less popular, is the theory that the Tibeto-Burman family is itself part of a larger language family, called Sino-Tibetan, and that through it, the Tibetan and Burmese languages are distant cousins of Chinese.

Bon

As early as the 7th Century CE, some Tibetans were calling themselves *'Bod*, which is believed to be derived from the word *'Bon* or *'Bön*, which refers to a shamanistic or animist religion followed by many Tibetans at that time.

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Prior to the Tibetan diaspora, Bon existed within a web of ancient indigenous animism, Hinduism, sympathetic magic, Buddhism, folk religion, shamanism, Vajrayana, asceticism and mysticism complexes prevalent throughout the Himalaya, freely intermingling throughout the inner Asian region.

The scholarly history of Bon is difficult to clearly ascertain because the earliest surviving documents referring to the religion date to the 9th and 10th Centuries CE, well after Buddhists began the suppression of indigenous beliefs and practices. Moreover, the word Bon is used to describe three distinct traditions:

1. The pre-Buddhist religious practices of Tibetans and the Tibetic peoples of Nepal that are *"imperfectly reconstructed yet essentially different from Buddhism"* and were focused on the person of a divine king.

2. A syncretic religion that arose in Tibet and Nepal during the 10th and 11th Centuries, with strong shamanistic and animistic traditions. This shamanic indigenous religion is not Buddhism but is sometimes regarded by scholars as a substrate form of Buddhism.

3. A set of popular beliefs in which local shamans try to heal people using ideas sometimes ascribed to *Bon*. Shamans may divine deities' wishes, have supernatural struggles with deities, or become possessed by deities. These shamanic practices are common in the Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic groups.

Bon teachings feature *'Nine Vehicles'* which are pathway-teaching categories with the distinct characteristics of view, practice and result. Medicine, astrology and divination are in the lower vehicles, then follow sutra and tantra at a higher level, and finally *Dzogchen* or 'great perfection' being the highest level. Traditionally, the Nine Vehicles are taught in three versions known as the Central, Northern and Southern 'treasures'.

After the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet during the 7th century, there was often fierce competition between the two traditions. Over time, Bon lost influence and was marginalised by the Tibetan political elite. Among the important aims of *Bon* are cultivating the heart and mind



Tibetian Shaman.

with compassionate activity to benefit others. According to the Bonpas themselves, the Bon religion has gone through three distinct phases: Animistic Bon, Eternal Bon and New Bon.

The first phase was grounded in animistic and shamanistic practices and corresponds to the general characterisation of Bon as described by western scholars. Initiation rituals and rites closely correlate to the indigenous shamanic traditions of Siberia. Many Bonpo shamans were members of a clan-guild, and were both male and female. A shamanic aspirant was often visited and possessed by an ancestral shaman and/or one or more of any number of entities such as gods, elementals, demons, and spirits. The possession typically resulted in a divine madness and a temporary retreat into the wilderness, where the shaman lived like an animal and experienced visions of his own death at the hands of spirits. After recently possessed shamans returned from exile they were taught by senior practitioners and members of the clan-guild how to exert power over the spirits that visited them, as well as how properly to intone certain mantras which were believed to possess great power.

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5 Elements Godess.

In Bon, the five elemental processes of *earth, water, fire, air* and *space* are the essential elements of all phenomena, the most subtle manifestations of which are known as the 'five pure lights'. Physical properties are assigned to the elements: earth is solidity, water is cohesion, fire is temperature, air is motion, and space is the spatial dimension that accommodates the other four active elements. In addition, the elements are correlated to different emotions, temperaments, directions, colours, tastes, body types, illnesses, thinking styles and character.

From the five elements emerge the five faculties of sensory perception, the five fields of sensual experience, the five negative emotions, the five wisdoms, and the five extensions of the body. They are the five primary *pranas* or vital energies, and are the constituents of every physical, sensual, mental and spiritual phenomenon.

Buddhism

Especially interesting to seekers of spiritual insight is the knowledge that Tibet has guarded an ancient mystical tradition for hundreds of years, and that her four Tulkus or Great Lamas, each the leader of a particular sect or school, continue to guard it to this day. The mystical tradition per se does not belong exclusively to any one of these schools, but to those students or mystics of any of the schools who have themselves advanced on the spiritual Path.

Religion is extremely important to the Tibetans and has a strong influence over all aspects of their lives. Bon, the ancient religion of Tibet, has been almost entirely eclipsed by Tibetan Buddhism, a distinctive form of *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana*, which was introduced into Tibet from the Sanskrit Buddhist tradition of northern India. Tibetan Buddhism is practised not only in Tibet but also in Mongolia, parts of northern India, in the Russian Federation republics of Buryat, Tuva and Kalmykia, and in a few parts of China. During China's Cultural Revolution, nearly all of Tibet's monasteries were ransacked and destroyed by the Red Guards, and their lamas executed or marched off into *'re-education camps'* where many died. Under strict control by the Chinese government, a few of these old monasteries have been allowed to be rebuilt since the mid 1990s, and greater religious freedom has been granted, although severely limited in expression by Western standards. Although monks are returning to monasteries across Tibet, and monastic education has resumed, control over the number that are allowed to enter monastic life, as well as what may be taught, is an ever present restriction.

Tibetan Buddhism has four main traditions (the suffix *pa* is comparable to *"er"* in English):

1. ***Gelug(pa)**, Way of Virtue:* also known casually as Yellow Hat, whose spiritual head is the Ganden Tripa and whose temporal head is the Dalai Lama. Successive Dalai Lamas ruled Tibet from the mid-17th to mid-20th Centuries. This order was founded in the 14th to 15th Centuries by Je Tsongkhapa, based on the foundations of the Kadampa tradition. Tsongkhapa was renowned for both his scholasticism and his virtue. The Dalai Lama belongs to the Gelugpa school, and is regarded as the embodiment of the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

2. ***Kagyu(pa)**, Oral Lineage:* this contains one major subsect and one minor subsect. The first, the Dagpo Kagyu, encompasses those Kagyu schools that trace back to Gampopa. In turn, the Dagpo Kagyu consists of four major sub-sects: the Karma Kagyu,

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headed by a Karmapa, the Tsalpa Kagyu, the Barom Kagyu, and Pagtru Kagyu. The once-obscure Shangpa Kagyu, which was famously represented by the 20th century teacher Kalu Rinpoche, traces its history back to the Indian master Niguma, sister of Kagyu lineage holder Naropa. This is an oral tradition which is very much concerned with the experiential dimension of meditation. Its most famous exponent was Milarepa, an 11th Century mystic.

3. ***Nyingma(pa),*** *The Ancient Ones:* this is the oldest, the original order founded by Padmasambhava.

4. ***Sakya(pa),*** *Grey Earth:* headed by the Sakya Trizin, founded by Khon Konchog Gyalpo, a disciple of the great translator Drokmi Lotsawa. Sakya Pandita 1182–1251 CE was the great grandson of Khon Konchog Gyalpo. This school emphasises scholarship.

The Buddhist mystical tradition entered the Land of Tibet as early as 787 CE when the Indian master Padmasambhava introduced Buddhism into the country and, on invitation of the Tibetan king, performed the consecration ceremony for the first Buddhist monastery there. The 'Old Sect', or Nyingmapas, descends directly from the Nepalese monk Śāntarakṣita, who was the first abbot of that early monastery. He had been abbot of the famous Nalanda University in India. He founded the philosophical school known as *Yogacara-Svatantrika-Madhyamaka,* which united the *Madhyamaka* tradition of Nagarjuna,

Padmasambhava (lit. *"Lotus-Born"*), also known as the Second Buddha, was a sage guru from Oddiyana, in the modern-day Swat Valley of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. Padmasambhava is said to have transmitted *Vajrayana* Buddhism to Tibet, Bhutan and neighbouring countries. In those lands, he is better known as Guru Rinpoche (lit. *"Precious Guru"*). From his *Yoga of Knowing the Mind* comes the following:-

> In its true state, mind is naked, immaculate; not made of anything, being of the Voidness; clear, vacuous, without duality, transparent; timeless, uncompounded, unimpeded, colourless; not realisable as a separate thing, but as the unity of all things, yet not composed of them; homogeneous, and transcendent over differentiation.



The Indian master Padmasambhava.

But it was in the 11th Century, contemporary with the Norman conquest of England, that the Tibetan master Marpa (1012-1097) made a pilgrimage over the Himalayas and brought back with him the *'Secret Doctrine'* of the masters of India, which henceforth was to be preserved in Tibet.

Kagyupa

The ancient mystical fraternity which descends through Marpa is known as the *'School of the Oral Transmission'* because the secret or esoteric teachings of this school have always been passed down exclusively by word of mouth from master to initiate. The Master Marpa's chief successor was the renowned Tibetan mystic *Jetsun Milarepa*.

Milarepa (c.1052-1135) began his career by becoming engaged in the practice of sorcery, for Tibet in the old days was a haunt of so-called 'black magicians' or Bonpo shamen. Having committed innumerable acts of harm, one day Milarepa was overcome with a deep

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Shigatse

sense of remorse. Repenting of his evil deeds, he then set out in search of a spiritual master capable of guiding him on the path of redemption. So, at 38 years of age, he found Marpa and was accepted on probation. For six long years Marpa caused Milarepa to undergo rigorous acts of penance, and only after the successful completion of this probationary period, was Milarepa initiated by Marpa into the mystical path of Marpa's school. Milarepa became an adept in the control and application of psychic energy, which made it possible for him to live, clad only in a single white cotton robe, at high altitudes in the Himalayas, even during the freezing cold nights of the Tibetan winter.

Following Milarepa's spiritual enlightenment, people from all over the East, including Burma, Thailand, India and Tibet itself, made pilgrimages to listen to the mystic songs through which he expounded his teachings. He shied away however from public attention and refused to allow a personality cult to develop around him. Instead, the more Milarepa's fame spread throughout the East, the more he retreated into the isolation of the mountains, concentrating his efforts on teaching his 21 chief disciples. He explained the doctrine of reincarnation in this way:-

> From beginningless time in the past until now, we have all taken a myriad of bodily forms in our past incarnations, comparable only to the total sum of grains of sand in the great Universe. And so all the sentient beings in the Six Realms are either my mother or my father.

The next head of the Kagyupa fraternity was Master Gampopa Sonam Rinchen (1079-1153), otherwise known as Dagpo Lhaje or Om-Rah-Mah[1], who was believed to be a reincarnation of an earlier Indian mystic. Gampopa devoted his energies to building the monastic and academic establishments of the fraternity and his four main disciples in turn founded the four chief branches of the Kagyupa which survive to this day.

The Mystic Tradition

During the 11th and 12th centuries the Kagyupa (Marpa's 'school of oral transmission') became *the* official Tibetan exponent of the Tibetan mystical tradition, and was known as the 'White School' or 'White Tradition' in Tibet. The Master Kunzi Choskyi Nangwa enlarged upon the significance of the word *'oral'* in the name of the Kagyupa school by relating it to a similar sounding Tibetan word meaning *'white'*, and the Kagyupa has since then been known as the 'White School of Tibet', or dKar-lugs.

But dKar-lugs (the White Tradition) is not related exclusively to the Kagyupa school. In 1400 CE the great Lama Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) of Koko Nor, the reformer of esoteric as well as exoteric Buddhism, founded a new religious order, the Gelugpa or *'Virtuous Ones'*, which with time began to displace in part all the earlier

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sects and schools of Tibet, including the Kagyupa and dKar-lugs. He once told a story:

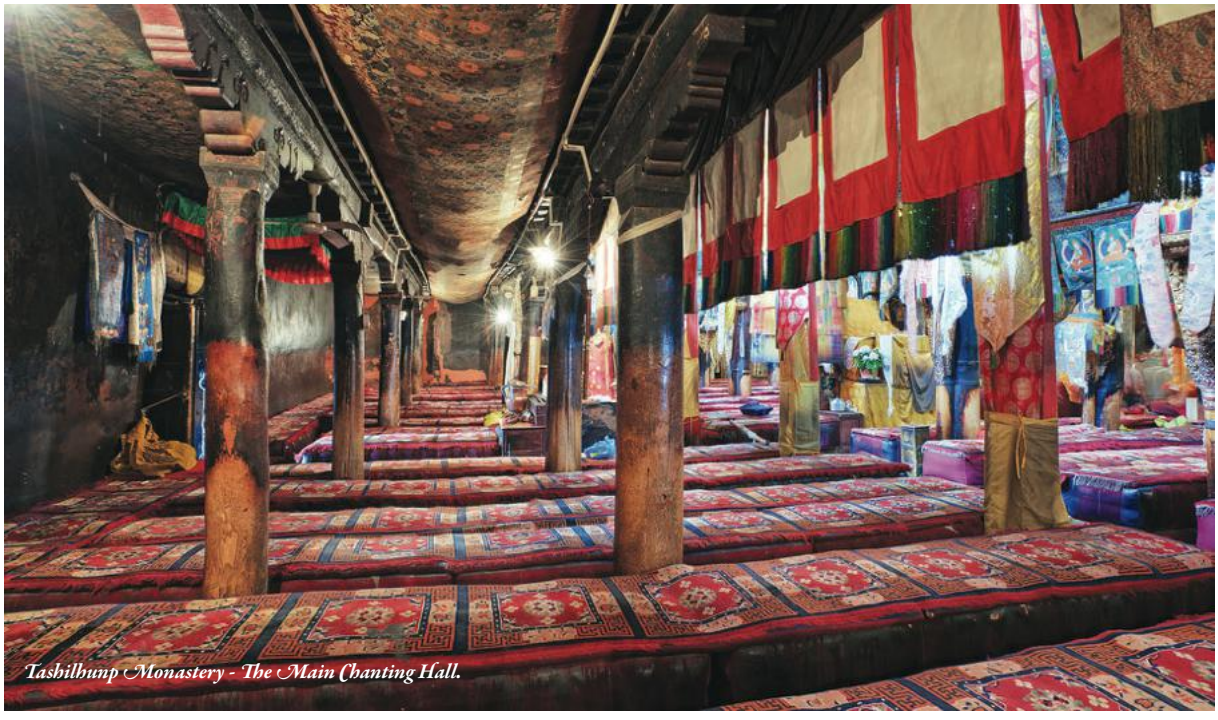
> A certain merchant had an only son. One day while playing, the boy fell into a cesspit. The boy's mother and kinsfolk were deeply distressed and cried out with grief, but none of them entered the cesspit to help rescue the boy. Upon learning of his son's predicament, the boy's father climbed into the cesspit and brought him out.

The boy is a metaphor for all sentient beings. The boy's mother and kinsfolk are those who, upon seeing sentient beings falling into the cyclical flow, are distressed and cry out with grief, but are incapable of bringing the beings out. And the merchant father is a metaphor for the Bodhisattva[2].Je Tsongkhapa's nephew, Gyalwa Gendün Drup (1391–1474) was installed in 1439 as the first Dalai Lama of the new order, and in 1445 he founded the great monastery of Tashilhunpo at Shigatse, which later became the seat of the Panchen Lamas. Under the fourth of these Dalai Lamas, the Gelugpa vigorously struggled for political and religious supremacy in Tibet. Patronised by a powerful Mongolian minister, several of the older establishments throughout the land were forcibly incorporated into the reform movement.

The Dalai Lamas

There was at this time an exceptionally enlightened sage in the Gelugpa Order whose name was Lozang Chöskyi Gyaltsan (1570-1662). In recognition of his great learning and saintly manner of life, Lozang Chöskyi Gyaltsan was elected in his 31st year to the Grand Abbotship of Tashilhunpo Monastery. In 1622 he initiated the young Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso as the fifth Dalai Lama who in 1640 steered the Gelugpa Order into a position of supreme temporal power throughout Tibet. All Dalai Lamas since then have been the spiritual heads of the Tibetan government.

The saintly Gyaltsan did not, like his protégé, concern himself with temporal affairs. Instead he devoted his life to uniting and reforming the ancient Tibetan mystical tradition in line with the principles of the great Je Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelugpa Order, the 'Virtuous Ones'. When the ninth Karmapa Lama, Wangchuk Dorje, died in 1603, many great masters and adepts of the East turned to Gyaltsan for guidance. The following year he was officially given the title of 'Precious Lord Protector' (Gyalgän Rinpoche) for both the Buddhist faith in Tibet, and the much older ancient mystical (Bon) tradition of Tibet. He also received the name 'Precious Gem of Learning' or Panchen Rimpoche, the name by which he is most commonly remembered.



Tashilhunp Monastery - The Main Chanting Hall.

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Root Text

The newly enthroned Panchen Rinpoche then issued his famous 'Root Text' bringing into harmony the ancient Kagyupa mystical tradition with the Gelugpa reform. This text, the Precious Gelug/Kagyu Mahamudra Root Text, is still used as the chief guideline among students of the Tibetan mystical tradition.

From that time forth, successive reincarnations of the Panchen Lama of Tashilhunpo Monastery near Shigatse have been viewed by the Tibetan people as the highest embodiments of saintliness in the Land of Snow. The Panchen Lama is to this day referred to as the chief official (Maha-chöhan) of the brotherhood of mystic adepts. In fact there is a written prophecy, acknowledged by all the schools of Tibet, that a future incarnation of the Panchen Rinpoche will appear as the Kalki Avatara, (the *'White-Horse Saviour'*) at the end of the present age. In a much earlier incarnation, it is said, he was Manjusrikirti, the mystic king of the ancient land of Shamballa, and consequently he is at the present time the Grand Master of the esoteric initiatory school of the 'Great Wheel of Time', a doctrine said to have originally derived from Shamballa.

The eighth Panchen Rinpoche is reportedly the Grand Lama who oversaw the religious training of the remarkable Russian woman Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891). The ninth died while in China, and it is not surprising therefore that the tenth, born in 1938 but forced to take up residence in Beijing following the Chinese invasion of Tibet, held the nominal role of spiritual head of all Buddhists throughout Tibet. There is currently discord over who exactly is the eleventh.



Interior of a Tibetan Monastery.

Subsequent to the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959, necessitating the flight of the Dalai Lama's government to India, the people and religious leaders of Tibet suffered a long period of intense persecution, mass killings and forced labour in so-called *'re-education camps'* in China. Not only was the Panchen Rinpoche imprisoned for many years under the most appalling conditions imaginable, but virtually all of the leading masters and officials were brutally executed. In recent years however, the Chinese government's attitude has mellowed from its former harsh and inflexible standards, and several monasteries have been rebuilt, and Tibetan religious expression is again tolerated, though not encouraged.

The Tibetan mystical tradition has survived for 1,200 years. A vigorous and ancient people, the Tibetans are more determined than ever to see that this tradition and their religion continue to survive. What the future holds for Tibet is of course not known, but one can only hope that the deep spiritual tradition of this ancient land will one day blossom forth again in full glory, and bring to its people the practical and theoretical teachings of Tibetan Buddhism back into mainstream use.

Footnotes

1. *Om-Rah-Mah*, one of the names of the Tibetan Master *Gampopa Sonam Rinchen* (1079-1153), forms part of one of the group of mantras or vowel sounds still used by members of the Rosicrucian Order.

2. A *Bodhisattva* in Tibetan Buddhism is an 'enlightened being', one of the four 'sublime states' a human can achieve.

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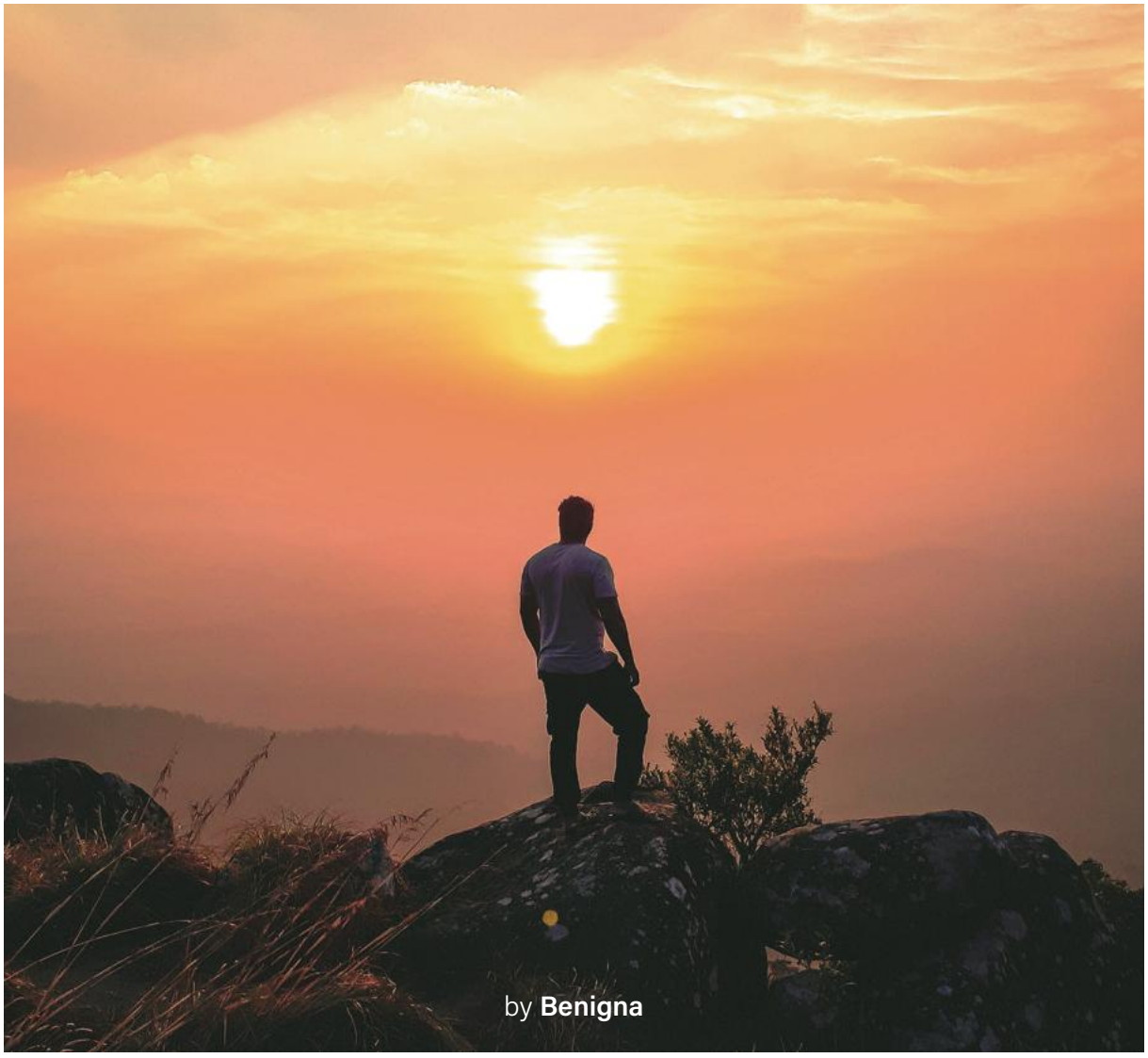
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Freedom, *Give or Take*

Freedom is one of the most valuable qualities people can have in their lives, but too often they don't realise how important it is to them until they lose it, or give it away. A few people, although a worryingly substantial few, hurl it away by leading criminal lives and literally getting locked up in prison, where even choices like bedtimes, clothing and things to eat, which are present in even humble homes are no longer theirs to decide.

Frequently people give away their freedom by making poor choices about their spending, building up debt, perhaps slowly at first, but then alarmingly, until the credit bubble bursts and they find they are forced into unpleasant limitations about what they can and cannot do or have, where they can go and the kind of lifestyles they can lead. Yet others give away their freedom by entering into unwise relationships, which again take a downturn and leave them trapped in all manner of negative consequences.

People give away freedom by taking jobs which give money but little satisfaction; by giving away their honesty so no-one trusts them; by speaking and judging harshly so they lose friendship and support; or perhaps by putting the needs of others far above their own, so their inner being suffers constant subjugation. Sometimes it seems people lose freedom by the seeming 'hand of fate' (good excuse that), suffering illnesses which take their mobility, energy

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or thinking faculties. They may even be hospitalised.

Other times, a person or group or people will take freedom from others either by force, as in times of war or strife, and in some circumstances even here in Britain, people may be born and raised without a taste of what freedom really is about. Some people have guilty secrets and lose their freedom to blackmail. And in other cases the taking freedom occurs in less obviously brutal ways, like employers changing work conditions unfairly, demanding more effort for less return, or lenders raise interest rates on loans at the worst possible times in order to force foreclosure and a windfall return.

But the one freedom that is open to everyone with their faculties intact is however the freedom to think. In a quite remarkable 1959 book *"Man's Search for Meaning"*, psychiatrist and author Victor Frankl tells how he managed to stay alive in the death camps of the Nazi holocaust, quoting Friedrich Nietzsche as saying: *"He who has a* why *to live can bear with almost any* how*."* The preface to his book explains that moments of comfort do not establish a prisoner's will to live unless they help make sense out of suffering.

> In the concentration camp every circumstance conspires to make the prisoner lose his hold," he says. "All the familiar goals in life are snatched away. What alone remains is the last of human freedoms, the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances.

This ultimate freedom, recognised by the ancient Stoics as well as by modern existentialists, takes on vivid significance in Frankl's story. The prisoners were only average men, but some at least, by choosing to be *"worthy of their suffering"* proved the human capacity to *"rise above one's outward fate."*

People need meaning in their lives and they need freedom to spend their lives doing what gives them meaning, a sense of purpose bigger than themselves. So, with that introduction to freedom over, read now the following fairy tale that was fashioned after contemplation one evening on the profound value that freedom should have in the heart of every living person.

Freedom Genie

A girl found a bottle on the beach, stoppered by a cork. In it a genie hammered on the glass, shouting: *"Let me out! I'll grant you three wishes if only you'll let me out!"* Without hesitation the girl tugged out the stopper, and the genie, now released, slithered free and stretched himself luxuriously.

> "Thank you so much" he said to the girl. "I've been in there for 100 years. I was tricked inside before I could gather the magic around me after I refused to work the wishes of an evil tyrant. Being unable to breathe freely I was unable to regain my usual power but now I have my breath back again I can feel that my potency is quite restored. By the law of my kind I am now compelled to repay the debt by working your will three times. So please tell me, what is your first wish?"

The girl was amazed and fascinated to meet a real genie face to face, and deeply compassionate about him having been robbed of his freedom for so long. She was touched by his explanation and his gratitude at being released. She was also heartily pleased at being able to make such a difference in his life.

"I have only one wish I want you to enact. I wish you to take your freedom and enjoy it." The genie was astonished. *"You..., you don't want anything for yourself?"* he asked. *"It is my great pleasure and good fortune to set you free"*, said the girl with a broad smile, meaning it with all her heart. She had rarely felt so splendid inside. The genie smiled and disappeared in a conventional puff of smoke.

Being redundant and full of magical power, the genie had no need ever to work again. But it's in a genie's nature to grant wishes and so, even though he appeared to go away and was never seen again by the girl, he became her devoted full-time servant, gently smoothing her generous path through the world and materialising not only three times but every time he discerned her to have a wish. Many commented that the girl, who became a woman of great influence and integrity, appeared to live a charmed life, and so she did, without even knowing it.

The genie too lived a remarkable life, helping the girl become the best she could be, for by doing so he was working his own purpose and enjoying every moment of his freely made decision to serve the girl who became a woman, and by that means to play a part in the greater good.

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by **Susan Ayles**

Take Peace!

Giovanni Giocondo's Letter to a Friend

A talented wordsmith can surpass the mundane combination of syllables and sentences and produce text that is truly sublime..., words that touch the heart, reach the soul and lifts one's spirit. A letter ascribed to the Franciscan friar *Giovanni Giocondo* (c. 1433 - 1515) is one such text that has apparently survived down the ages and made its way into numerous august publications of the modern age including now, into the Rosicrucian Beacon.

Take Peace! as I call it here, was reputedly written on Christmas Eve 1513 by the elderly friar to one *Contessina Allagia dela Aldobrandeschi*, an Italian countess whom he counted as a friend and addressed as 'most illustrious.' Her family's once extensive lands were divided between two counties in 1265 and ruled by different branches of the family, with one side dying off without heirs and the heiress to the other branch marrying into the Sforza family.[1] A prolonged though not entirely exhaustive internet search suggests that being the recipient of Fra Giocondo's letter was the Contessina's chief and perhaps only claim to fame.

Yet the old friar's words are so wise and comforting that they are enough for us to keep the Contessina's memory alive 502 years later. Before continuing with my investigations though, please read now the friar's letter.

Fra Giocondo was certainly an important person in his time, one of those rare enigmas able to transfer his skills across a many fields of endeavour, gathering under his brow the understanding of diverse and complex disciplines and, through hard work and ingenuity alone, advancing the global knowledge of humankind.

Born in the city of Verona (at that time ruled by Venice) in 1435, Giovanni became at the age of 18 a friar of the Dominican order, which, after the close of the 15th Century, became known as the *Ordo Praedicatorum* the

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There is nothing I can give you which you have not got. But there is much, very much, that, while I cannot give it, you can take [it].

No Heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it to-day. Take Heaven!

No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instant. Take Peace!

The gloom of the world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within our reach, is joy.

There is radiance and glory in the darkness, if we could but see. And to see, we have only to look. Contessina I beseech you, Look!

Life is so generous a giver, but we, judging its gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard.

Remove the covering and you will find beneath it a living splendour, woven of love, by wisdom, with power.

Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the Angel's hand that brings it to you. Everything we call a trial, a sorrow, or a duty: believe me, that angel's hand is there; the gift is there, and the wonder of an overshadowing Presence.

Our joys, too: be not content with them as joys; [for] they too conceal diviner gifts.

Life is so full of meaning and of purpose, so full of beauty beneath its covering, that you will find that earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage, then to claim it: that is all!

But courage you have; and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending through unknown country, home.

And so, at this Christmas time, I greet you; not quite as the world sends greetings, but with profound esteem, and with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away.[1]

"Order of Preachers." Later he switched to the Franciscans and became a teacher of Latin and Greek.[2] He was noted at the time for his great learning in philosophy, theology and classical literature. But it was his accomplishments as an architect, archaeologist and engineer that sealed admiration of him forever in the minds of his peers. Wikipedia records:

> He designed a drainage system for the lagoons of Venice, built the fortifications of Treviso, and is universally credited with the design of the Palazzo del Consiglio (1476) at Verona, an elegant, arcaded monument of the early Renaissance. He accompanied Charles VIII to France in 1495 as court architect.[3]

Another online encyclopedia records:

> The young priest, a learned archaeologist and a superb draughtsman, visited Rome, sketched its ancient buildings, wrote the story of its great monuments, and completed and explained many defaced inscriptions. He stimulated the revival of classical learning by making collections of ancient manuscripts, one of which, completed in 1492, he presented to Lorenzo de Medici. Giocondo soon returned to his native town where he built bridges and planned fortifications for Treviso, acting as architect, engineer and even head builder during the construction.[4]

Evidently there was no discernible limit to Giovanni's talents, from scholarly theology to maths, nor his contribution to Italian culture and through that to all of us who have been privileged as tourists to explore the Venetian lagoons and the lovely city with waterways instead of roads. He's even credited with bolstering the foundations of the great Basilica of St Peter in Rome, at the request of the Vatican.[5]

On top of all that, it seems he brought some of the influential works of the past into his modern era by means of the printed word. He published Pliny's *Epistles* in 1498 and again in 1508, wrote four dissertations on the waterways of Venice and produced a corrected edition of *De Architectura* by the Roman writer Vitruvius, a significant influence on the architecture of the Renaissance, among various other volumes.

With all that to his credit it doesn't seem at all far fetched to assume he could probably write a bit, too. The letter to the countess has been widely attributed to him. Yet, the British Museum pronounced in 1970 that it had proved impossible to identify Fra Giovanni as the author of this letter.[2] It is not known either, how it made its way from the countess to us, the general public, or indeed if the countess existed under that title; for while one branch of the Aldobrandeschi family died out without heirs in Sovana, the heiress of the family's other line, in Santa Fiora, Cecilia

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Aldobrandeschi, married into the Sforzas family in 1439.

Certainly the museum is aware of many texts by Giovanni, but not the famous letter. Whoever it was written for, and whenever it was written, it is usually believed that it made its first appearance in print for public consumption in the 1930s, published by one Greville MacDonald, son of one of the most famous fantasy novelists of the day, Scot George MacDonald and his wife Mary.

Greville was himself a man of talent and influence. Born in Manchester in 1856, he was a Harley Street specialist in ear, nose and throat medicine, but also an enthusiastic and influential member of the Peasant Arts movement which emerged in Haslemere, Surrey in the early 1900s, promoting the enjoyment of home-made crafts of all kinds.[7] The Peasant-Arts Blogspot records that Greville bought The Museum of Peasant Arts for a knock-down price from a clergyman in 1908 and handed control to the Founders of the Peasant Art Guild, for its protection and public benefit, so it would not be swamped in the great halls of the big city museums.

Greville was himself a writer of note, producing many and various titles including a biography of his parents, a learned work called *"The Sanity of William Blake"*, various works of fiction and his own biography, *"Reminiscences of A Specialist."* The Peasant-Arts Blogspot also finds from Greville's own writings that it was he who launched *The Vineyard Magazine* as the organ of the Peasant Arts Movement in 1910. By reputation Greville published the famous letter, attributing it to Giovanni, in the 1930s, with 'Christmas greetings' from himself.

I have been unable to pin the piece down further but a preacher from Lincoln, Massachusetts, the Rev Claire Phillips-Thoryn, used it in a sermon she gave in the approach to Christmas 2007. Calling it *Take Heaven!* she said:

> It was published in the 1930s by Greville MacDonald. MacDonald probably wrote the piece himself as a Christmas greeting, but perhaps to give his Christmas wishes more historical gravitas, he attributed it to the ancient Franciscan monk Fra Giovanni. Whether it was written 500 years ago or 80 years ago it is still a beautiful and true reflection on the season of Advent."[8]

One internet source reports that it was reproduced earlier than Greville's publication, in the Theosophical Quarterly, Volume 8 of 1910, again ascribed to Fra Giovanni. This source, says:

> You may be asked if it is a genuine antique, or a modern composition cast in antique form; and I, for one, cannot tell you. Nor do I see that it matters. The only important question is whether its message is true or not; and I think it is profoundly true.[9]

I entirely agree. Sometimes the true authorship of work is hidden for the sake of the art, sometimes for the protection of the author and often for reasons not made known to anyone save the writers and publishers themselves. Giovanni had a great deal of work published by his own intention but a letter would not normally be written to be publicised at all, however fine the prose. Its purpose would be merely to be shared with the person it was written to..., in this case, apparently, to give comfort in the lady's dark hour. Who knows the circumstances by which it came to light in 20th Century Britain, if indeed it had its origins in the deep past, passed on by a descendant to a relative to a friend to a stranger.

It is rare but by no means impossible that it could survive 502 years, especially as aristocratic families tend to protect their belongings as part of their heritage. Equally it could be the work of a professional writer, one of those who produce work for all manner of purposes as Greville MacDonald evidently did. It may be a relatively modern interpretation of a document which, if Giovanni had written it, would presumably have been written in archaic Italian and would undoubtedly have been couched in less secular language.

I have found myself unequal to the task of bettering the British Museum's attempts to identify the author, but no matter: Now at least you have the letter with its gentle wisdom, surely as true now as 500 years ago, and every bit as valuable as a resource whether the work of a Franciscan friar or a journalist.

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ORDO ROSAE CRUCIS



by **Barry Hill**

The Day (I thought) I Died

In the early summer of 2007, I was not feeling well for weeks on end. It started off as a cough and soon the usual flu symptoms arrived. I was in my mid forties and health-wise there were no issues I knew of, and I hadn't had flu in years. In fact I was in peak condition, so it was an annoyance not to be able to do my usual weekend cycling. I felt like a rag doll, hardly strong enough to make it up the stairs.

Thankfully the flu passed within a few days and I was well on my way to a full recovery when I accepted with pleasure an invitation to meet up with my sister and her children at a local coffee shop. I love the innocence and spontaneity of children and had a special bond of affection for her twins of three years of age, one a boy, the other a girl, both very different personalities but bright, active, full of life and above all caring and affectionate towards each other.

The queue to place the order for the coffee and buns was long and my sister patiently took her place in it as her children met up with other children their age in the shop. The two with the family next to me were complete strangers to them at first, but with shy, friendly faces and actions to begin with, within minutes they were all best friends for life. It was a wonderful scene. Why couldn't adults be the same? All those wars, arguments and misery among adults when little children could meet up so easily and become friends almost immediately, how easy it would be to banish conflicts for good if we could just become as little children again.

The shop was full of people, lots of talking and laughter. The ambience was relaxed and pleasant, good music was playing and I was overcome with a sudden feeling of gratitude to be able to experience life at its best again and especially now that I was feeling so much

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better. As I sat there in a comfortable sofa absorbing the scene, I put my head back briefly and closed my eyes. That must have been when I lost consciousness and everything suddenly ceased. I don't remember what happened, nor do I remember the way in which I lost consciousness, but I do remember suddenly being aware of silence.

I was calm and under no discomfort except the disorientating view of concurrently seeing everyone in the shop as though from a great height above them, as though I were a thousand feet up in the clear blue sky and could see all that was going on in the shop, yet at the same time at ground level looking at people continuing their normal conversations. In an instant things changed again, and this time all was clear. I was no longer in two places at once. I was looking down on everyone in the shop from what I estimate must have been close to the ceiling. I saw everyone as though I were before them, everyone and everything simultaneously, including myself slumped to one side on the sofa. The silence remained as I watched with great clarity everyone continuing as normal.

I have no idea how long this lasted as I had no sensation of time and had no concept that I was somehow 'gone' or that anything was different. It was only long afterwards that I was told I had been clinically dead from cardiac arrest for at least six minutes. At one point I saw myself in great detail slumped to one side on the couch, with my head at an impossible angle and people standing around looking down at me. And then everything went blank until I awoke three days later in the intensive care unit of a hospital only a block away.

Initially I had no memory of anything that had happened and was repeatedly restrained from trying to get up. When I was told I had suffered a heart attack and been clinically dead for over six minutes, I knew there was a good chance I had suffered permanent brain damage. But none of that mattered; I was just grateful I was still alive and could see and speak and even move a bit. Life is at its most desirable when it has nearly ended, and for me, it was so good still to be here.

Under strong sedation, I fell asleep again, and in the early hours of the next morning I awoke again with the same clarity as before. The memory of what had happened in the coffee shop returned in full, graphic detail. I remembered it all as far as the point where everything had ceased. I knew however that this time, this silent early hour, was altogether different and it was destined to be my last goodbye. From a point somewhere high in the room I saw two nurses rush into the room, lights going on and very quickly after them a doctor arrived and I was rapidly wheeled out of the room. That is when everything ceased again.

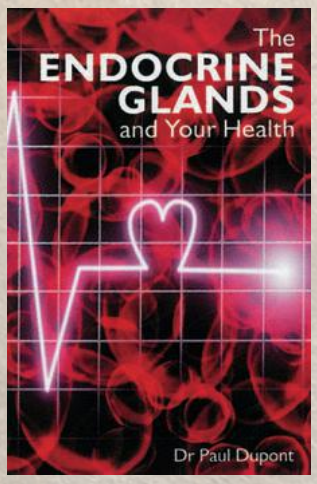
I had suffered another heart attack, this one more serious than the last and it was only due to the hard efforts of the doctor and nurses that I regained my life and am able to write these lines today. The memory of everything was clear when I finally awoke 12 hours later, after having undergone a bypass operation. And the memory is clear even today.

Did I die? Twice? I don't know, but the doctors were adamant I did and that I was fortunate to have survived both heart attacks. I certainly experienced something I've never experienced before or after, the sensation of being out of my body and seeing things perhaps as other dying people have seen billions of times in the past. The feeling I had in that intermediate state was one of complete calm, no fuss, no bother, no hurry, just an acceptance that things would unfold as they were meant to and that there was a *'place'* somewhere, some time, where dear people from my past patiently await my eventual arrival.

However we understand the expression 'was meant to', for me, every second of these events was meant to happen to me, for it has left me a changed and I believe much better person because of them. Every day since then has been a precious gift, and the change for the better in my mind and heart that the experience brought about has been an immense blessing and release. Seeing myself slumped on the couch in the coffee shop, and again seeing myself and hospital staff when I was technically already clinically dead, and the supreme calmness and silence that accompanied both visions, has convinced me that there is a life beyond death.

Being rational and a scientist by profession, I know this is only a belief. But it is one powerfully vouchsafed for by two experiences of such great clarity and serenity I cannot dismiss them as mere fantasy. They have drawn me closer with each passing year to an acceptance that when I finally leave for good, it will be to a place I was meant to go..., and it will, I am sure, be of the very essence of all that I love, cherish and know is good. When my time is up, it will be with much gratitude for the experiences life has afforded me, but especially for having been given a preview of what that passing may be like.

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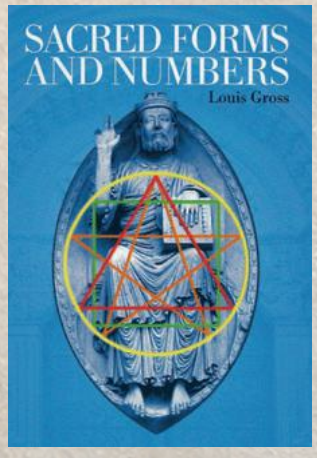
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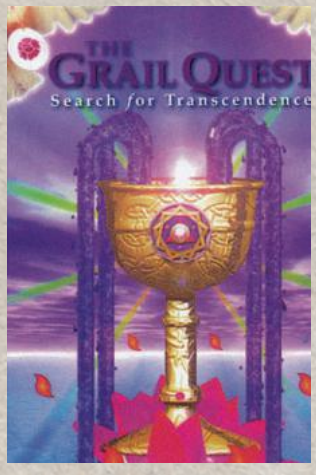


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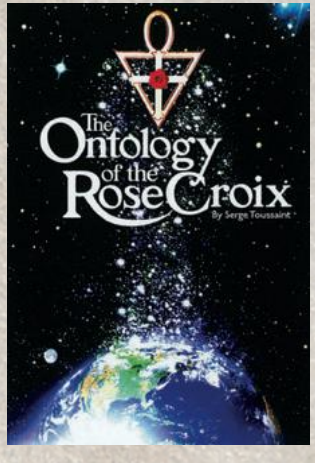
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