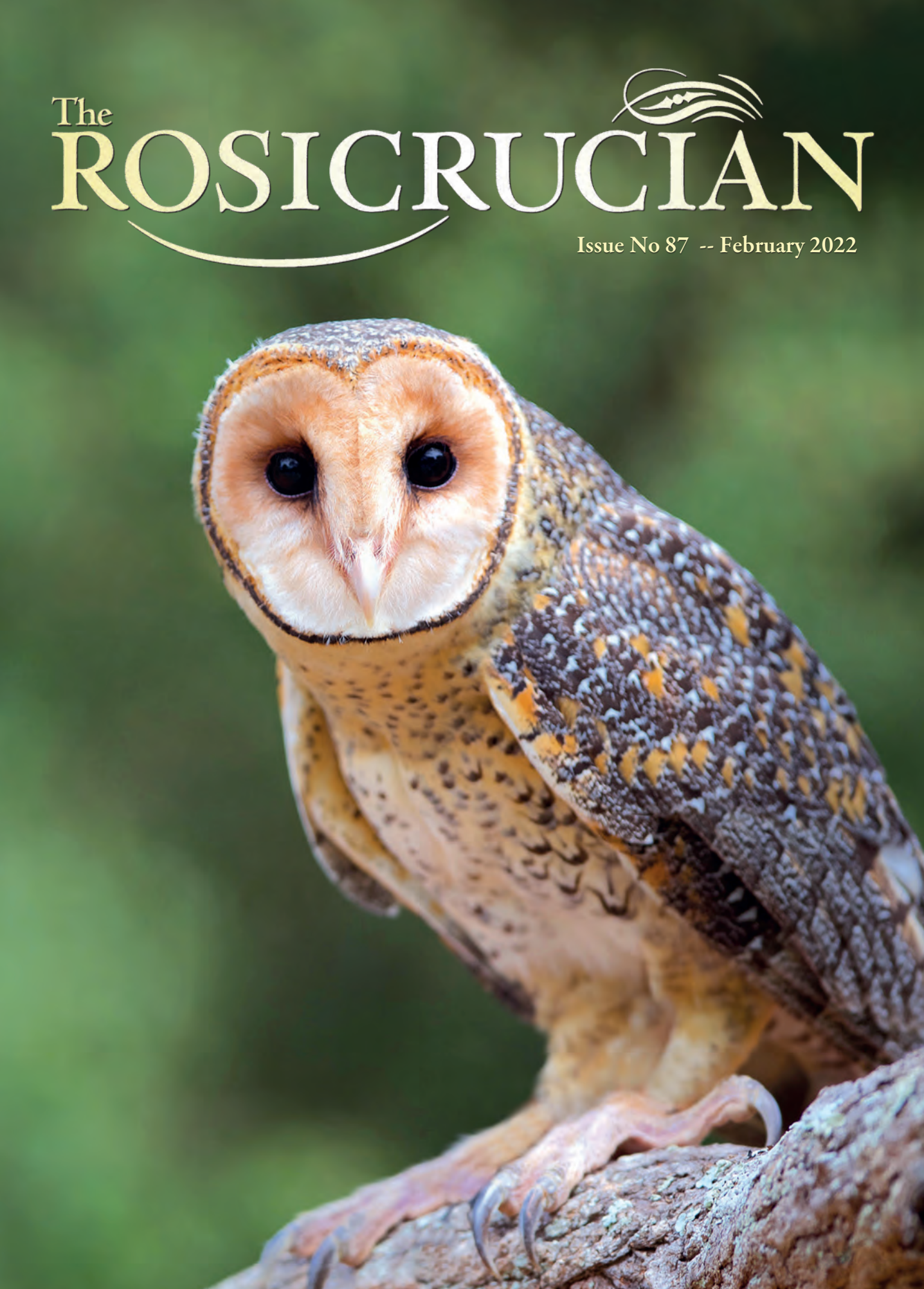
The ROSICRUCIAN

Issue No 87 -- February 2022





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. It seeks to instruct and guide its human ward how to live a good life and does so with care for its wellbeing; and above all, with love and compassion for all expressions of life.

Your Self knows why you are here and what you are meant to accomplish in this incarnation. It knows what your chances are of attaining the goals you have set for yourself, and whether they are beyond your reach or fully attainable. And it assists you to reach the attainable goals with care and attention to the minutest details.

Your deeper Self is a veritable slumbering genius, eager to help you express your hidden talents with greater refinement and sophistication than you have ever considered possible. 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 we would expect only of the most accomplished of humans.

You can discover how to access this high level of achievement and embark upon the definitive, true direction of your life simply by learning how to contact and regularly commune with your deeper Self. If you are searching for a way of accomplishing the most fulfilling and rewarding things in life, in a fair and ethical way, then learn from the ineffable wisdom of that inner perfection.

To find out more about the Rosicrucian Order and how it can help you achieve your most treasured goals, visit our website or contact us for a copy of our introductory booklet "The Mastery of Life."

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ANCIENT SPIRITUAL MESSENGER

The Australian Masked Owl, like so many other owl species, is highly intelligent. Whereas in some cultures, owls are considered as bad omens, in most cultures, they are instead revered as emissaries from the spiritual realm, possessing great wisdom. We cannot help but admire this refined survivor which so often chooses to live close to human habitation, providing us, through the evenings, with its soundless flight and hauntingly beautiful signature call.

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Mesocosm and the Wellness of the Earth

by **Lucy Crawford-Sandison**

Throughout history, humankind has had only one planet to call home..., the Earth. Setting sail on an uncharted sea of limitless mystery and unlimited potential, we are the sentinels who are guarding the Earth. From space, astronauts look down upon the Earth; they see a planet without borders, they see that we're all part of the same team: *Team Earth*. If we're going to move forward, the only way is to do it together.

2014 saw the publication of the Rosicrucian manifesto *Appellatio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*. The Appellatio is a call to humanity. It is an appeal to bring to worldwide attention three of the most urgent areas of consideration for the betterment and wellbeing of humanity and all life on Earth in the 21st century. This trinity is Spirituality, Humanism and Ecology.

We Rosicrucians tend to be very familiar with and good at navigating the language of spirituality and humanism, but what about the language of ecology, something so very relevant in these times? Some people have asked, *'What even is ecology?'* Technically, it is a form of natural science about the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings. However, ecology is more broadly thought of as the relationship between all living things. It has become synonymous with the preservation and wellbeing of all natural systems that support life on Earth.

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These systems, which unite the mineral, plant, animal and human kingdoms of life, are intelligent, complex and collaborative. If we liken each species to musical notes of the natural world, the ecologies are the melodies and the harmonies. In their natural state, there is a profound wisdom and beauty that plays out in their relationships, and we see this celebrated in the complex collaborations between different expressions of life.

If we liken each species to musical notes of the natural world, the ecologies are the melodies and the harmonies.

The relationships are so refined, so exquisitely balanced, that they form both the foundations and the details of that great symphony named *'the circle of life.'* In the outer, measurable 21st century world, these complex systems have been studied and analysed across many scientific fields, generating scientifically sound answers but also coming up with new questions. However, there are many areas in the immaterial and invisible realms that mystics can become more aware of as a counterpart to this enquiry, and that is an important area of research and a new language to develop.

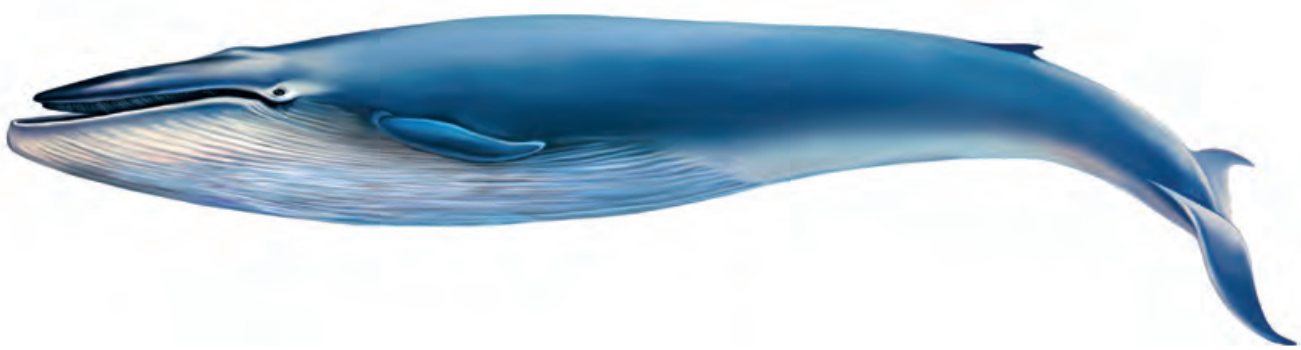
We can draw upon our mystical consciousness and, using our soul qualities, experience a sacred affiliation with all other life forms. We can tend that precious flame, our reverent thoughts, and develop a deeper bond with the mesocosm, the sanctuary of all life on Earth, the biosphere of life which lies between the macrocosm and the microcosm.



Biophilia

This is a calling to awaken to a language of spiritual ecology. Some mystics have even spoken of it as a *'transcendental ecology.'* Academics in the lecture halls of universities have even begun using the word *'biophilia'* as a philosophy, meaning the *'love of living things'*, or the inborn affinity that humans have for nature. It is likely that discovering a relevant inner language of *mystical consciousness of the natural world,* and how to speak of it outwardly, will be a significant part of the mystic's quest in the 21st century.

However, this is not a new endeavour. Mystics throughout the centuries have contributed their good thoughts, their reverent feelings and a helping hand behind the scenes towards the enhancement and preservation of nature. And Rosicrucians are never far away from a deep reverence for the natural world. Nature's pristine beauty, truth and goodness is an inspiration to them in their quest for perceiving the universal intelligence that pervades all. From the most exquisite tiny flower held in the palm of your hand to the hauntingly beautiful calls of a blue whale, there is Universal Soul at work trying to be expressed upon each and every inch of our Earth wherever it can.

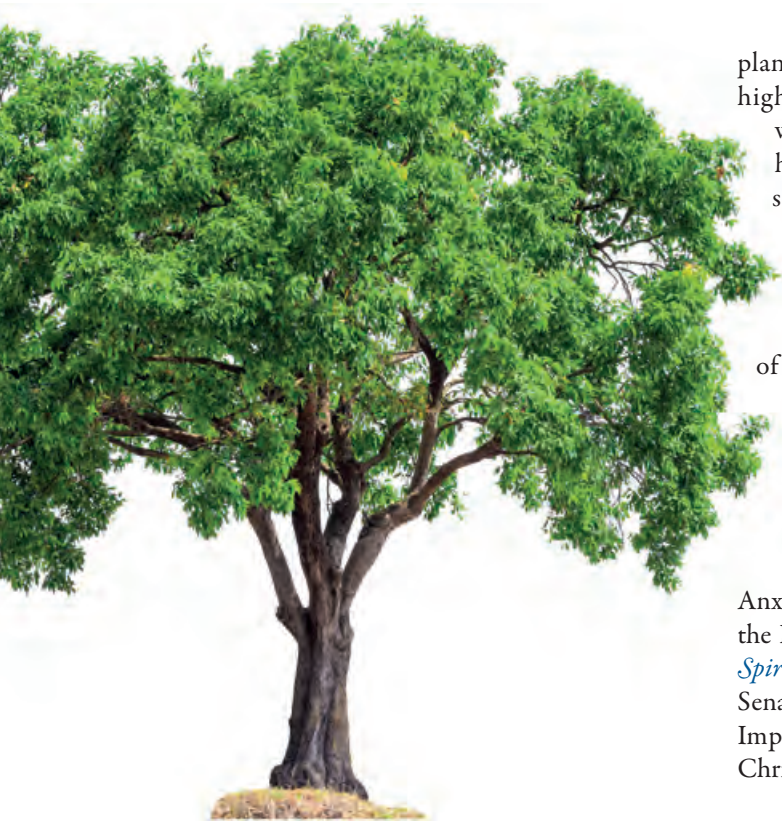


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When an ecology is well, it has the potential to express itself fully, to reach its full reflection of the divinity at work. Nature in its pristine state or in a beautifully cared-for garden reflects this full potential. Affiliating with nature helps us to connect with this wellness, with this love at work in all relationships. Therefore, the spiritual ecology we learn from nature teaches us how to fulfil collaborative, harmonious relationships between one another.

The natural world on Earth, as mesocosm, reflects a middle ground of a unity between humanity, nature and cosmos.

The natural world on Earth, as mesocosm, reflects a middle ground of a unity between humanity, nature and cosmos. The affinity and connectedness that we can develop with the natural world and all living beings, each and every day, is an intrinsic part of understanding nature's true purpose and the mysteries of life.



The renowned naturalist Sir David Attenborough suggests that the essential principle that nature teaches us is that a high level of refinement grows out of collaborative diversity and inclusive hierarchy.

In his recent statement, he says that the living Earth is a unique and spectacular marvel. Billions of life forms work together to form a unique, dazzling variety and richness of expression. They collaborate to benefit mutually from the energies of the sun, and the minerals of the Earth. Lives interlock in such a way that they sustain and benefit from each other. We, as humans, rely on this finely-tuned instrument of life, and it relies on its precious collaborative balance, diversity, complexity and inclusive hierarchy of all life forms.

Sir David Attenborough goes on to say that in the evolutionary history of the Earth, over billions of years, nature has carved miraculous forms, each more intricate and complex than the last. The magnificence that is our planet's biodiversity has developed over the last 65 million years, and the Holocene, the period of the last 10,000 years, is considered one of the most stable in constancy ever in the Earth's natural history. A rich, thriving world is a key to this stability.

More than ever, there is a rapidly growing planetary awareness, an ecological consciousness that highlights humanity's adverse impact upon Earth's wellness. Humans are naturally creative, and they have continually transformed nature's gifts to satisfy their needs. Whether from coal to warmth, or from trees to buildings, they have rearranged the natural world to suit their creative desires and uphold their paradigms. But how much of this creativity is really fulfilling its true purpose of reflecting the creativity of the cosmic mind if it is damaging complex, collaborative ecosystems and thus reducing the complexity of the expression of being?

The Rosicrucian View

Anxious to raise awareness on the subject of ecology, the Rosicrucian Order published in 2012 *A Plea for Spiritual Ecology*, which was read out at the Brazilian Senate during the *Earth Summit* in Rio. As the then Imperator and President of the Rosicrucian Order, Christian Bernard, so beautifully expressed it:

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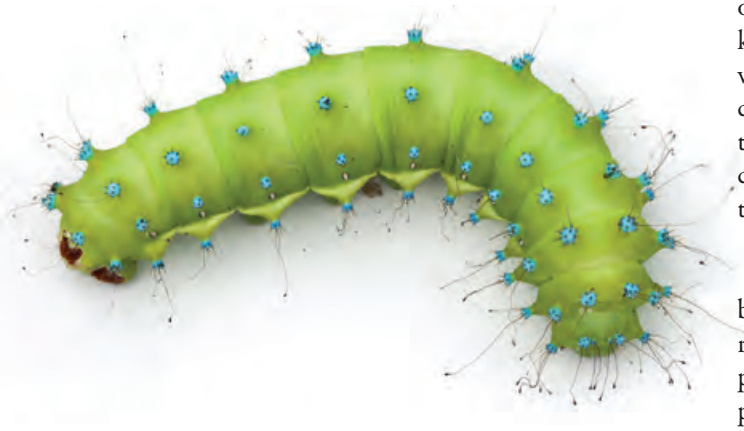
> The Earth is a jewel in the cosmos, a masterpiece of the divine, universal consciousness. It is a treasure of great inspiration to humanity and is respected by Rosicrucians as a special sanctuary upon which all life can evolve, physically, emotionally and spiritually.
>
> Ecology plays an integral part in mystical consciousness because we cannot become interested in the mysteries of life without also being concerned with what is to become of the Earth. From the moment we set out on a spiritual path, we cannot fail to be concerned with the future of our planet.

Furthermore, our present Imperator and board President, Claudio Mazzucco, reflects upon this in his article *Rosicrucian Utopia*:

> Today nature is being exploited and denied its purpose. By considering it just a relaxing backdrop for our holidays, we neglect the only channel that has the power to bring us face to face with the fundamental questions of who we are and why we are here. As Rosicrucians, we need to reclaim this path to restore nature's true purpose, not as a means to an end but as an end in itself. We need to appreciate it not just as a resting place but rather as a language that points to the eternity within the smallest structure, inside and outside of ourselves.

The Rosicrucian manifesto *Appellatio Fraternitas Rosae Crucis*, issued in January 2014, declares:

> The Earth is the backdrop to our spiritual evolution and what allows us to become fulfilled as *'living souls.'* It has, therefore, both a terrestrial and a celestial vocation. We use the term *'health'* when speaking about our planet, for it is obvious that our world is a living and even conscious *'thing.'*





Sacred Relationship

If we agree that the Earth is a living, conscious *'something'*, or even an *'evolving conscious being'* of some sort, can we also say that the Earth and all life forms on it might highly value a sacred relationship with us for the purpose of a mutual opportunity to evolve? We know that many traditional peoples, living close to the land, honour a sacred relationship with nature through their rituals and feel an obligation to preserve it through their way of life.

Unfortunately, this relationship is being severely eroded as globalisation has imposed its presence upon them. Can Rosicrucians use a higher form of spiritual or mystical consciousness to help with the preservation of this sacred relationship, from a metaphysical point of view? To answer this question, it is helpful to get to know the Earth a little more deeply, to touch into its very origins and maybe even a meaningful purpose. The creation mythologies of ancient Egyptian and Hermetic traditions are, perhaps, a good place to begin, for in the creation teachings we know of, there is a common thread that can be synthesised as follows:

The divine mind, or the heart of the supreme divine being, activates creation out of an eternal, unchangeable realm and begins emanating harmonious laws and principles of cosmic order. Out of the darkness of the primordial cosmic waters, density and warmth arise

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Horus

first, then light, then life, gradually becoming more complex until consciousness arises in life forms. In the Egyptian Heliopolitan Ennead (group of nine gods), this is described as a series of divine pairs, polarities of dual emanations: light and air, sky and Earth, and ending with the most refined energies of love, represented in the relationship of Isis and Osiris, who create Horus, who symbolises the Supreme Good. Here we have light, life, love and the supreme good as progressive emanations out of the unity of an unchangeable, eternal realm.

A very special and symbolic event is mentioned in some of the most sacred of these teachings. This is the moment a sacred Bennu bird, the phoenix, thought to symbolise a *'divine fire'*, surveys the primordial cosmic waters. Where the phoenix lands, a mound arises as the sacred *Benben* stone. This was represented in the garden of *Iunu*, the enormous temple of Heliopolis, the city of the sun, or otherwise atop pyramids and obelisks.

Is it only one small step of imagination to think that the ancients could be referring to the beginnings of the appearance of our planet Earth, the point in creation of the appearance of matter? Is it just coincidence that the Great Pyramid of Giza is alleged to contain all the mathematical proportions representing the Earth's dimensions?

Whatever one's viewpoint on this, it is surely a heart-warming imagination to feel that our Earth, our jewel in the cosmos, is entirely woven out of the qualities of light, life and love, which have, for unknown aeons, emanated out of the eternal realm..., and that each and every part of our wonderful planet contains this eternity. Its very fabric is intrinsically infused with the highest good, if only our hearts could see it. Furthermore, think about what is at work here in the grand scheme of things that we, as humans, are granted the senses to witness all of this magnificence. And not just our five basic senses, but those refined spiritually perceptive senses that we learn so much about in Rosicrucian studies. By striving to use our more refined senses, we can attune with nature more deeply and open the doorways to nature's secrets to develop our mystical consciousness. Does this not also remind us of the biblical phrase from Genesis on the 6th day of creation...

> And God saw everything that was created, and behold, it was very good.

Or, in the words of the mystic-poet Coleridge...

> There is one Mind, one omnipresent mind,
> Omnific, whose most Holy name is Love.

Respect

One way to begin developing spiritual, mystical consciousness towards the Earth is by simply developing a heartfelt and sincere reverence for the natural world. Just being aware and connected with the seasons; walking in natural landscapes; attuning with the trees, the flowers, the birds; the mood of the landscape, and inwardly greeting them all with a heartfelt smile, as if reuniting



Giza Pyramids, Egypt.

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with old friends. Simply slowing down and breathing in the atmosphere, the scent of a flower, the light of the day. Just putting aside time amid the demands of life for contemplating nature's exquisite expressions of divinity.

Nature's moods and atmospheres reflect our own, and when we are trying to understand our emotions we can reflect upon the natural world to help picture our moods. Correspondingly, whatever occurs in nature is also being reflected in the inner life of humanity.

As I write this, we are just few days away from a hallmark in the sun cycle of the year, the solstice. The winter and summer solstices, being the longest and shortest nights respectively, or the shortest and longest day in each hemisphere, is an event of special significance for ancient peoples, as exemplified in the very large number of ancient sanctuaries, temples and henges orientated to either the winter or summer solstice. This was a moment for beholding, protecting and giving reverence to the triumph of light out of darkness, in outer nature and also in the inner life of people. They knew the importance of renewing, through rituals, a sacred affiliation between humanity, nature and cosmos.

Scientists are becoming aware that the Earth's atmosphere possess something akin to intelligence.

To draw this article to a close, I would like to bring your attention to two more areas concerning spiritual ecology. Firstly, the so-called *'earth mysteries.'* This ancient wisdom is about the Earth's subtle energy system; in other words, the Earth's unseen electro- and biomagnetic vibrational fields. It is created between the Earth's magnetic geology interacting with cosmic radiation from space. It is a part of a large legacy of knowledge handed down mainly through the intuitive sciences of esoteric geography, geomancy and vibroturgy.

The Earth's aura is produced through this interaction, but more than this, scientists are becoming aware that the Earth's atmosphere possess something akin to *'intelligence.'* It shifts and changes to protect life on Earth from solar flares. This recalls the words of the mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who is reputed to have celebrated a cosmic mass on the battlefields of World War I, dedicating uplifting ritual thoughts to the sphere of light around the Earth. He named this sphere of light the *'noosphere'* and proposed that it is affected by human thoughts, particularly reverent ritual thoughts.

All in all, what a joy it is to be journeying upon this most precious sanctuary of life, our planet Earth!

All in all, what a joy it is to be journeying upon this most precious sanctuary of life, our planet Earth! What a joy it is to be a living expression of the divinity we share with all life forms and to be a small part of the great symphony of life. When you're feeling down, when you're feeling lonely, this is the one and only planet we know for certain contains life in all its multitudinous glory. When everything is dark, we will be the light, the Pathfinders. We don't give up. We plan, we love, we share our concern for this planet and its continued existence. Its salvation is in our hands and we will always be there because we care.

As members of the worldwide Rosicrucian community, we are urged to have good thoughts, good words and good deeds. In our efforts to improve the world for all its people..., remember: *Think good thoughts! Say nice words! Do good for others!*



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THE LUMINOUS MOUNTAIN

by **James Wilson**

Dear friend, you came to me today because your heart is heavy and you feel a longing you can't easily satisfy. Indeed, you don't quite know what you're longing for; am I correct? See that Light on the horizon? What? You don't see it? Okay, try looking a bit further, in fact much, much further; further than you've ever looked before. Penetrate the mist that clouds your vision, look beyond the mist for this Light, and seek it with all your heart. Assuredly you can and indeed will find it, for you are ready.

Do you begin to see it? Yes, I see by the look on your face that you see it, though it's faint at the moment, isn't it? Continue looking, though, until the Light becomes brighter and disperses the mist. Good, this is a good start and a very important beginning.

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As you continue looking at the Light, you will see that it shines forth from the pinnacle of a great mountain. Desire it, truly want it in your being, and you will begin seeing its form, for it is your destiny to do so. So far, so good; you are beginning to develop your vision. But stop now and rest your eyes a while, for they are not used to looking at such a Light, and I will tell you about the great luminous mountain.

Light at the Summit

It is the brilliance of its luminescence that distinguishes this mountaintop from the peaks of all other mountains. It is not just the sunlight glistening off crystals of snow that gives it its radiance. Rather, the Light has a special quality that comes from another, otherworldly source.

This mountain's height is unknown. Some say it can never be known, but don't let that put you off. What is known is that it is higher than any of the other great rocks that stand tall and proud upon the landscapes of our planet. Its slopes are steeper, its faces craggier, and its summit more daunting than any other scaled by humankind. There are many hoary legends of valiant souls who have climbed it, and looking at it from a distance you are forgiven for thinking that no one could ever climb to such heights. Yet despite its great height and steep slopes, its peak is attainable by all. No need to look at me like that, for I speak the truth. Mark my words, you will begin climbing this mountain one day too, indeed everyone eventually will.

The luminous mysterious mountain, in spite of its size and grandeur, can't be seen if you look at it only casually. You must look at it in a thoroughly unfamiliar manner, as indeed you must have done already, for you have seen its Light have you not? Rejoice at that, for it is a real achievement. Where the mountain is located is an impenetrable mystery for, no matter where you live, if the heart is ready, you have but a short distance to travel to reach the rock-strewn slopes at its base. The luminous mountain is both everywhere and nowhere and seems to be wherever it is earnestly sought. It was shaped by forces beyond our understanding, constructive forces of a most refined power..., forces that labour eternally for you and I and flow from a fountain of the most profound and pure Love.

Soon you will begin your journey and my words will give you hope and comfort, so listen carefully. I



understand your apprehension for I have felt it too, many times. Don't despair, you must summon your courage and be calm. Now that you have rested your eyes a little, look up again. Do you feel the immensity of the luminous mountain? The altitude of its summit is extreme and as you begin to climb, your breathing will become laboured at times because of the effort you must apply. But you will never need to carry oxygen bottles during your ascent, even when you reach the highest levels for, paradoxically, the higher you get, the easier your breathing will be.

And what of specialist clothing and climbing aids? No doubt you'll be surprised to hear that the thinnest clothing will be adequate even if you wish to climb beyond the clouds. You will have no need of ice picks, crampons or ropes, for even when the going gets really tough, you are already equipped with all you need, though you may not know it yet. And when the temperature falls in the darkness of night, if you should feel cold, wrap yourself in a cloak of Love, for this will prove adequate for your needs.

The Journey

There is one item you must take with you however..., a large backpack. For when you begin your journey to the heights you will, through necessity, carry a load that will be heavy and burdensome. This is the weight of your past errors and misjudgements, and you must carefully

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pack them away and carry them on your back. I can hear you groaning but see for yourself, there is no other way.

Don't give me that pleading look; trust me, I've been there. There's no escaping it, you must prepare to carry your self-made burden. You are still strongly attached to your past, and although it may be a great weight to carry, take heart, for your burden may be lightened soon as you progress with this most adventurous undertaking.

Occasionally you will need to rest, and while you recover take out one of those onerous little packages and examine it carefully. It is at such moments that you may feel the Light penetrate your being as you realise that you no longer need that particular package. As you look at it, your desire to be rid of it will be great, and after careful examination you will understand its contents intimately and will know how its broken bits can be repaired. You will wish you could simply discard this small package in order to lighten your load a bit, but be careful not to carelessly cast it aside in its unsightly form. You don't want the beauty of the mountainside spoilt by leaving it around for others to find. Rather, you must repair it and, in so doing, it will be transformed into something of greater benefit to both yourself and others.





Turn it into something that will help you with your ascent, something that may become a source of inspiration to both yourself and others in times of need. It must become something that you would willingly and gratefully wish to give to someone else as your blessing on them. Then your package will shine with the Light of the mountaintop, it will be no burden at all and will take no space in your backpack. You will know what to do with it when the time is right, so don't be apprehensive.

From the start of your ascent, you will carry no provisions, for all things needed to sustain you are readily available at any point along your journey, no matter which path you take. You may not see it from this distance, but the luminous mountain has many faces and, as with any mountain, some routes are easier than others. The severity of your climb will therefore depend upon the choices you make, how well you observe the mountain ahead, how well you plan your journey. But do not worry, your inexperience is always taken into account and you will have guide books, maps and a compass with which to navigate your way. Use them well, lest you stray from your path, but take care not to put all your trust in them for, useful as they are, your inner compass is far more accurate and you must learn to use it well and rely on its infallible readings.

Climbing the Mountain

When you begin your climb, indeed at all stages of your ascent, travel slowly, deliberately and consciously, observing everything around you. Take great care for there are many hazards. Proceeding slowly and thoughtfully is the only safe way to ascend. The landscape can be treacherous, and though you will long

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to reach the Light as quickly as possible it would be dangerous to run towards it, even if you had the stamina to ascend the slope that fast.

Take heed of my words, for many have fallen and I have seen them dusting themselves off, dazed, hurt and confused, far below where they stumbled. Some will pick up their backpack and, joyful for the lesson learnt, retrace their steps up the slope and smile with happiness as they pass the place where they fell, being grateful that they are now more alert and more able to avoid the same mistake. Sadly though, others wallow in their hurt pride and turn away from the mountain, idly walking in the easiest direction for a while, and that inevitably is down, back to the shadows of the valley where they mistakenly believe they will find an easier life but find instead a harsh, untamed and inhospitable world.

Your journey to each important staging post on this mountain will take its time, maybe a very long time...

Your journey to each important staging post on this mountain will take its time, maybe a very long time, but don't be troubled by this, for others have travelled your path and they succeeded, so why shouldn't you? The mountain you are climbing is the greatest there is, so remember to pause occasionally when the weather permits, to enjoy the view; not only the vast vistas, but even the small, easily overlooked details always close to hand. There is always interesting detail right before you.

You will of course inevitably encounter some bad weather. The mist, seemingly harmless, will fall often, and your visibility will at those times be very poor. You will no longer see the Light and you may despair. But if you look carefully at the map that I will give you, you will find that there are refuges placed at just the right locations that offer shelter from the mist, strong winds, driving rain and snow storms. And don't forget the Light you carry with you in those little packages you transformed. Now they can be used as flashlights to light up your path. Use them wisely and be sure to help others when they need your assistance.

The awesome forces of the mountain may eventually weaken your spirit and strike fear and despondency into your heart. But your courage, determination and sincerity of purpose will always see you through the worst of these conditions. And should it become necessary to seek out one of these refuges, as it most certainly will at times, you will find there messages left by others who have gone before you..., messages of hope and encouragement. Such messages you too may leave for others to read in their times of need.

As I say these words to you, my heart is truly with you, for I know how hard the journey can become. You will often feel isolated and alone, especially when the mists have covered the slopes, and this can be the harshest of trials. But when the mists eventually clear and you look around you, you will see that you are not alone, for there are many others undergoing this difficult and demanding journey; you are but one of countless others who have taken up the challenge of scaling the luminous mountain and you are well on your way. Your fellow climbers are at various levels of advancement upon the cliffs and inclines, some above you, some below..., each grappling with their own fears and mastering their own chosen precipitous avenue.

Don't be afraid to call for guidance from those above, and be mindful of those below, for they may ask for guidance from you. We must all help each other ascend the slopes, and you will find great joy in doing so. And should you find you have strayed from the path a little and have wandered unseeingly into one of the many dark crevices where you cannot find comfort from



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your travelling companions, know that you are never alone..., even then, indeed, especially then. Look deep within your being and you will find that I am there, right at your side. My companionship is all you will desire during your entrapment, and there too will you find the strength you need to free yourself. Be calm, be still, for I am always with you, right at your side.

There's No Turning Back

I look upon you with much love and understanding, for I know your deepest fears and hopes. You may doubt you have the courage, strength and stamina to ascend to such daunting heights, but once your ascent has begun up those rocky inclines, there is no turning back..., your fate is sealed, and you will ever more feel compelled to move towards the Light.

...your fate is sealed, and you will ever more feel compelled to move towards the Light.

Even if you should fall, and this you will occasionally do, and find yourself back in the valley where you now stand, you will sooner or later feel compelled to return to resume the ascent..., if not in this life, then in another. You have your eye on the Light now and your heart will not allow you to relinquish your yearning for its embrace. I'm sure you already feel it. Why does the Light shine if it does not shine for you? And what is Light if not Illumination, knowledge and truth?

You know you will never be satisfied with anything less, and it is for this reason alone that you will begin your journey soon and leave behind this dark valley of sorrows. You may feel safe and secure in the obscurity of the shadows, but you can dwell in the valley of ignorance only so long before your heart yearns for something more, before your heart yearns for greater Light.

When your legs begin to tremble, when your hands are cut and bruised, when your eyes weep with painful effort and you think you can't go on..., know that there are still some who will come to your aid..., veteran climbers who have already touched the apex and have descended deliberately to help aspirant climbers such as you who need to be held just for a while and to be shown a better way. Allow them to help you, for that is their greatest wish. Open your heart to these Master Mountaineers and they will guide your movements towards every hand- and foot hold, every little niche that will serve to help you ever further upward. Remain sincere in your yearning for the Light, be pure of motive, have Love in your heart always, and they will respond to your cries for help. They are agents of Light and can guide you to it better than anyone else.

Last Words

There is one last word of guidance I wish to offer you, my friend. Should you ever falter, should your spirit begin to wear, do not look ahead and despair at how far you still have to go. Rather, look behind, and see how far you have already climbed. You will find no small comfort in viewing the path well taken and the heights you have already attained. Rest a while and then continue your ascent with your eye and heart once more upon the Light.

Go now and prepare yourself for your journey, for you know in your heart that the life you are so familiar with must now be left behind. Reflect on what I have told you about this great mountain and be of good cheer, for I will always be with you, even in your darkest hour. This ascent will not be the easiest of journeys, but it will be an adventurous and joyful one if you will but have the courage to let go.

If you truly aspire to reach towards the heavens, your efforts will be richly rewarded.

Take my blessing with you now as I surround you with my lesser Light. Once you have taken that first step upon your chosen path, know that you will also have the blessings of all who have gone before you. If you truly aspire to reach towards the heavens, your efforts will be richly rewarded. And remember that simple, obvious and wise old Tibetan saying: *"...many are the vistas that are revealed to one who has attained the mountaintop."* Go, seek the luminous mountain, scale its heights and one day return to help others do the same.

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by **Sven Johansson**

ASPECTS OF SILENCE

As a word, *'silence'*, has probably more subtleties and meanings than most of us are aware of. Of course we all know a few of the nuances of meaning of this and other related words, but usually we think of just one of them: *'no sound.'* Silence comes from the Latin root *silere*, meaning to be silent, quiet, noiseless, not speaking, being verbally inactive, vocally at rest, ceasing to speak, sing, etc. And from *silere* we get, via Old French, our familiar English word *silence*, though sadly devoid of much of the subtlety of meaning it originally possessed.

The concept of silence, and of course the word *silere*, far predates the language of the Romans, and can be traced to a word in ancient Phoenician, where it meant not only quietness but also things like stillness, tranquillity, serenity, peace, being content, reconciled and more, indeed much more than merely refraining from making sounds. From that ancient Northwest Semitic word it is believed a similar sounding word found its way into Aramaic, Hebrew and eventually Arabic, is today known as *Shalom* in Hebrew and *Salaam* in Arabic, meaning *'peace'* or, more specifically, the blessing: *'peace be upon you.'*

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Over the millennia, the original word has altered in pronunciation from language to language, and small nuances of meaning have been added and taken away from it. And by the time the word entered the English language, its meaning had already long ago changed from its original intended form to what we commonly attribute to it today, namely, the absence of sound. In the following article, I will discuss three types of silence and end off with a fourth type, seldom used but, more than the other three, can be perceived as silence in its ancient, original meaning of quietness, stillness, tranquillity, serenity, peace and even the very threshold of the Abyss of Eternity.

SILENCE OF THE TONGUE

I'll begin with verbal silence. Quite apart from trying to avoid loud, aggressive people and environments, some people wisely try to control their own input into those environments; and that includes restricting the amount of talking they do. That's not to say we need to be meek and mild in all circumstances, but it does mean it is good to remember that being verbally silent is often a wiser course of action than speaking. Of course we needn't avoid speaking altogether, merely exercise careful control over our words and speak only when the circumstances require it. Being able to speak well when necessary and to be silent when it is better to say nothing is the ideal way of conserving and even building up our precious reserves of Vital Life Force. But it is of course not the easiest of things to do, especially when issues we feel passionately about are at stake.

...being verbally silent is often a wiser course of action than speaking.

Knowing when not to speak is important and, if you think back a bit over your life, I'm sure you'll agree that speaking in anger and saying things you didn't really mean was one of the first issues you recognised as a stumbling block to your inner development. We all need to be inwardly restrained from speaking at times when nothing good can come from what we're so eager to say. It's a delicate and refined form of verbal control: knowing when to speak, how to say it best and for greatest benefit, and of course knowing when to be silent.

For some, especially the gregarious, friendly types, it is often hard to remain silent when silence would accomplish more than talking. No matter how good our verbal intentions are, there are still times when silence would accomplish more than talking. On the flip-side of the coin, though, how do we learn to say what needs to be said when just a few supportive words could be of immense, even life-altering benefit for someone? That is the delicate balance needed: knowing when to speak and how to say it for the greater good, and knowing when to remain silent.

Deliberate, well-thought-out control of our words and how we say them, combined with attunement with the wisdom and experience of our deeper self, are of course the only way forward. It is a true art that comes ultimately only from deep attunement with our soul. Proficiency does not come easily, and it demands we deliberately be aware at all times what we're doing and what we really wish the outcome to

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be, so we can exercise the required control the instant it is needed. Usually, there is no advance warning and our control has to be like a subconscious reflex action, fully automatic and under the direction of our deeper, more mature, more accomplished self.

A good place to begin is to resolve deliberately, though only after careful consideration, to do our best to be as alert as possible always. It is a deliberate, sensitive and refined form of manipulation of awareness, far superior to any of the extremely harmful drugs some people take nowadays to get a boost to their cognitive alertness. It goes much further than this, and ultimately remains under our full control. Being conscious of what we're doing or saying at the present moment, what led us to the present moment, and crucially, knowing what we're about to say, is paramount.

When fighter pilots train to become aerial masters of combat, an expression of overriding importance drummed into them is *'situational awareness.'* As mystics, we are training to enhance our situational awareness in the arena of our inner lives, and it behoves us therefore to train ourselves assiduously to be constantly alert to our own motivations, our own thoughts. And that of course spills over into control of our words, knowing when to be silent, when to speak, and what to say when we need to speak.

Saying Nothing vs Speaking Up

We can probably all recall instances when we babbled on when it would have been better to say nothing; and other times when it would have been far better to speak up but we remained silent. Most of us respect a person who always seems to say the right thing at just the right time and, furthermore, says it with precision and few words. The ability to speak one's mind intelligently when there is a need to, and remain silent when talking would be counter productive, is a trait most worthy of development.

...frequently we leave things unsaid simply because we're too afraid to hurt or offend someone

As with all valuable things in life, it is however a very difficult thing to accomplish, but one that most assuredly eventually has to be mastered. Most of the time, what we say or fail to say is affected more by how our egos have reacted to a situation than by pure reason or intuition. And frequently we leave things unsaid simply because we're too afraid to hurt or offend someone, even though we know it would be better for certain things to be said and for the person to be temporarily shocked at our frankness than to remain silent and for no possible good to come from our interaction with the person. The truth hurts at times, but in some cases that is not a good-enough reason to remain silent, especially when a few well-placed comments could have an enormous positive bearing on the lives of many.

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A fundamental rule relating to the question of whether or not to speak is to be intelligently informed about what we're about to say. Making our statements on matters with precision and clarity, and avoiding mere waffle and idle chit-chat, is fundamental to our decision whether to remain silent or to speak. Remember how harmful loose and uninformed talk can be because of the unquestioning nature in which so many individuals accept information. If inaccurate statements are made or, worse still, if deliberate lies are said, who among the many listeners would bother to investigate further? The sad fact is that very few would, and that is why we all, though especially the media, have such great responsibility to report accurately and without embellishment what we believe to be the truth. Sadly, the internet is awash with both deliberate and innocent though sloppy falsehoods, and many lives each year are harmed by this.

Summing up, it all comes down to a point of judgement in the use of our speech, thinking before expressing our opinions in words, and of always being *situationally aware* of what we've just said and what we feel right about saying next. Above all though, the one thing which will always cause us to say the right thing at the right time is to say what we have to say with *kindness*, always! It is an aspect of universal love, and is sure to bring out in us the most beautiful verbal expressions we are capable of.

SILENCE OF THE MIND

The second form of silence is more personal, for it involves silence, or rather stillness, of the mind, denoting a refined control of our mental faculties. Controlling our thoughts is not the same as suppressing them, but it does mean channelling them into the most important things we need to think about. Silence of the mind involves exercising a basic control over the idle wanderings of our thoughts. We've often heard the expression *'thoughts are things.'* It means that thoughts have certain potentialities and that *'wrong thinking'* and *'right thinking'* have definite effects upon our lives and immediate environment which in turn lead to physical consequences. That is not only a Rosicrucian principle; it is accepted by all serious systems of thought.

If thoughts really are *'things'*, then they are important primarily because they have value, just as rare metals and stones have value. Would it not be

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wise therefore to use our thoughts carefully and not waste them? After all, the number of thoughts we will have during our lifetime is limited, and idle thinking or daydreaming *without purpose* is an offence to the self and a failure to exercise silence of the mind. Daydreaming is fine, provided there is a clear purpose to it. But if we allow ourselves to do nothing but idly daydream without purpose and purely as a result of a lack of discipline, we are wasting the life force that animates us. And we are wasting our limited, precious time and efforts with thoughts that should, at the very least, be constructive, creative and possible of being brought to successful fruition of something good and beneficial for as many people as possible.

It may be enjoyable to idly daydream of how great it would be to be wealthy, or to accomplish great, important things in life; or worse still, how we could have altered history if we had lived in a different era with the knowledge we have today. However, merely daydreaming and doing nothing of a practical nature to implement our thoughts is not exercising good judgement. What is needed is a deliberate directing of our thoughts, throwing out idle speculation and daydreams about what could never happen in the real world, and replacing them with thoughts specifically intended to bring about a better state of being.

Clearly it would be far better for us in quiet moments to try and direct our thoughts towards such qualities and ideas as will bring us happiness and contentment, than to idly speculate upon how great life would be if we were suddenly to inherit a fortune. Having a lot of money suddenly thrust upon us would be no guarantee of gaining happiness or inner peace. But preparing ourselves for an elevated mode of existence through the disciplined and channelled form of thinking practised by mystics..., this brings us not only happiness but a supreme sense of fulfilment as well.

Let us therefore *control our speech* and accomplish it by first and foremost *controlling our thoughts*. Silence in both cases is often the preferred route, though such silence has meaning only if there is purpose and intent behind it.

SILENCE OF THE WILL

And then there is silence or stillness of the will. Society generally considers self-control and the development of will-power to be important personality traits, and certainly there is great merit in this. For only when intelligent people constructively exercise their will-power can society have well-planned and clearly defined directions to follow. One of the better by-products of silence of the will is the ability to direct oneself towards the development of a worthwhile moral character..., moral, that is, in the context of our societal and spiritual norms.

Silence of the will is the basis of all control of behaviour...

Silence of the will is the basis of all control of behaviour and comes before both control of our thoughts and control of our speech. So, while there may be short-term benefits to the wholesale gratification of our desires, the long-term consequences for society as a whole, and indeed ourselves in particular, are harmful. Without a healthy restraint of some of our deeper urges, we run the risk of impinging upon the freedoms of others and indeed of entirely halting our own evolution. Being ruled by an incessant need to gratify every urge we have, no matter how trivial, is an indication of how far we have to go in attaining mastery over our lives.

Physical desires or urges have their proper place in nature and the perpetuation of every species. But for creatures like humans, who generally have well-developed abilities to think, reason and plan for the future, the unthinking physical urges of the body should never become the dominant purpose of life itself. Silence of the will therefore implies control of the cravings of the physical senses and relegating them to their proper place in the overall scheme of our deeper evolution. Silence of the will is more than merely

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controlling our thoughts; it means, most importantly, controlling our emotions and the so-called *'natural inclinations.'* These all precede the intellect, which in turn precedes speech and action.

Food and drink are essential to the maintenance of life. But while most of us enjoy good food and drink when taken in moderation and at their proper time, devoting our attention and effort solely to the gratification of this one physical appetite has serious long-term consequences, not only because of the obesity it eventually causes but because of the damage it does to our ability to control our destiny. All urges are directly linked to chemical and hormonal secretions within the body. And while we accept that some of these imbalances are beyond our power to correct, we should do everything possible to employ *silence of the will* to affect our imbalances and to bring them under control. So, by silencing or at least muting the will in such cases, we are placing our physical desires in their proper perspective. Almost always, those inclinations are mere wants rather than true needs, and muting or silencing the will in such cases enables us to fully comprehend and accept that the excessive gratification of our wants and desires is not worthy of our mystical aspirations.

An important aspect of silence of the will is the development of *emotional control*. Absolute free reign of the emotions, namely, allowing ourselves to act and react purely as we feel and as our emotions happen to be at the moment, is harmful to our further ability to develop. Every time we allow ourselves to act in this way we make it just that bit harder to control our lives, and considerable effort becomes necessary to undo the inner damage which our unbridled emotional behaviour has caused.

SILENCE OF THE SELF

To sum up, I have mentioned three forms of silence: *Silence of the Tongue* which depends on *Silence of the Mind* which depends on *Silence of the Will*. All three are important, and many techniques for accomplishing them have been devised over the millennia, many times over, but especially by Rosicrucians. But above and far beyond all these stands *Silence of the Self*, the sort of silence we all strive for when we seek true meditation and attunement with the God of our understanding. Silence of the Self leads to an opening up of the main channel of communication between our outer, mundane self and the infinite sanctity of the Source of all that is. It is by far the hardest to accomplish, yet we can get there eventually if we accept that small steps must at times be taken in order to reach our final destination.

Begin, therefore, by regularly and deliberately *silencing the tongue* when there is no need to speak, *silencing the mind* when there is a need to control your thoughts, and *silencing the will* when there is a need to control your instinctual emotions and urges. Stepping up from the mundane level of these three areas of control to the level implicit in the final step of *Silence of the Self* is impossible to accomplish in a short time and probably impossible to accomplish even in a single lifetime. But the simple act of just thinking about *silence* as not merely being the property of *'no sound'* but, more importantly, conveying for us the qualities of *quietness, stillness, tranquillity, serenity* and *peace*, is a good first step to take. And thinking of silence in these terms is a sure way of leading us to the path upon which we will eventually arrive at *Silence of the Self*.

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THE BENEVOLENT DANDELION

by **Jack Coggins**

Nature in its wisdom made the dandelion one of the most abundant of all herbs. The temperate and cold regions of both hemispheres are its habitat: Europe, Central Asia, North America, the Arctic and southern temperate areas. We find them everywhere: in meadows, fields and lawns, along roadsides and pavements, and, almost any other place not shaded from the sun.

The dandelion is nearly impossible to eradicate. Anyone who has tried to remove a dandelion from their lawn must have thought that nature erred by allowing this 'nuisance weed' to overrun almost the entire populated world. Still, it exists, so there must be a special purpose for the lowly dandelion. In reality, it is a veritable ruler in the plant world, for it belongs to the composite family, the *Compositae* or *Asteraceae*, making up around 1,100 genera and more than 20,000 species, including the dandelion, daisy, lettuce and marigold, to name just the most well-known. Plants from the composite family are *Eudicots* and are considered to be the most highly evolved of all plants. I hope that this article will give you added respect for the humble dandelion.

As Food

In times of need, food is where you find it. Since the dandelion is found almost everywhere, it is one of Nature's means of assuring a constant food supply for humans, animals, birds and even bees. Actually, its scientific name, *Taraxacum*, is an Arabian version

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of the Greek word, *Trogemon*, meaning edible. Once, when insects destroyed the entire harvest on the island of Menorca, the inhabitants lived on dandelion roots instead of their customary bread. Still, as a nourishing food, in many countries it has for centuries been wisely employed as a food source.

Both wild and cultivated varieties are used. The young, tender leaves, abounding in vitamins and minerals, are excellent for making delicious green salads. Often they are cooked like spinach and served with butter or vinegar; mixed with other greens they are less bitter-tasting. Also, finely chopped dandelion leaves can be used in sandwiches. Here are some reasons why it might pay us nutrition-wise to include dandelion in our daily intake of food:

In an experiment for the *U.S. Department of Agriculture*, H. B. Stiebling discovered that, of those plants tested, the least iron was found in melons and apples. Dandelion, watercress and spinach contained the most. Iron helps ward off tiredness and breathlessness. It is an all-important factor in the manufacture of red blood cells, which carry oxygen to vitalise tissue and help carry off waste carbon dioxide. It is well known that iron deficiency is a major health problem throughout the world. It is estimated that between 10 and 25 percent of people in the West who are admitted into hospitals have insufficient amounts of this vital, vitalising mineral. And in poorer countries, where food is less abundant, the percentages are higher.

Simple anaemia is the medical term meaning inadequate amounts of iron in the body-system. Established cases should always be given medical treatment, of course. When we eat dandelion for a source of required iron, however, we are taking a definite step toward preventing the debilitating symptoms of anaemia. We are also enabling our bodies to make use of the wonderful energies we associate with oxygen, energies that keep us healthy, vibrant and active.



Iron is also directly related to the proper functioning of plant chlorophyll which, in conjunction with light, manufactures the plant's food supply. When a plant is deprived of adequate iron, its leaves turn abnormally yellow and its value as human food degenerates. It is logical, therefore, to believe that when iron content is high, as in the dandelion, there will be a superabundance of plant food that will become human nourishment when assimilated.

Dandelion, watercress and spinach contain high amounts of iron.

Another reason for the high vitamin and mineral content of dandelion may be its long, tapering taproot which often penetrates deeply into the earth. Experiments indicate that some plants absorb minerals from different soil levels. The peanut, for example, absorbs calcium near the surface; other minerals are taken in at deeper points. The dandelion's long taproot naturally gives it access to more elements and may very well enhance its absorption of them, especially those that can be obtained best from deeper levels.

The root itself is a unique form of food. Sliced, it is a tasty contribution to salad. It is also used to flavour soups and stews and to make broth. When fried like parsnips the roots should be young and succulent and gathered preferably in winter when their ordinarily bitter sap becomes thick and sweet. Other uses for the root include the making of a health drink and as an adulterant for coffee. For these purposes, the root is dried, ground and usually roasted. It affects the flavour of coffee much in the same way as chicory.

There are numerous reasons for the belief that dandelion roots are uncommonly nourishing to humans. For one thing, they are the storehouse for energy that enables the dandelion to make its early appearance each spring. This energy-material is manufactured during one growing season, saved

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throughout the winter, and then used the following spring for early flower-production. For this reason, it is generally believed that dandelion roots are a double-charged source of human nutrition. Greek mythology relates that Theseus, who had energy and strength to slay both the bull of Marathon and the monstrous Minotaur, was fed this food by Hecate, the moon-goddess.

Called by some modern scientists *"a weird substance"* this food is neither starch nor sugar. In many respects it is like both; for, although it possesses characteristics of starch, it is still soluble like sugar. It is readily transformed into fructose, a form of sugar. Actually, every part of the dandelion plant can be eaten for food and is considered a tonic as well as nutritious. Even the flowers are used to make wine, or they may be added to any salad to beautify and to increase food value.

Medicinal Qualities

Dandelion is also used in medicine as (1) a means to increase the secretion and discharge of urine from the body, (2) a strengthener of the stomach, (3) a promoter of the discharge of bile from the system. It is excellent for the prevention and cure of scurvy, which is caused essentially by a lack of vitamin C. Dandelion is considered one of the safest and most useful herbs for liver malfunctions. It is also thought to be valuable to the heart.

A Dutch physician and chemist, Hermann Boerhaave (1668-1738), claimed that daily eating of dandelion will remove the severest and most obstinate obstructions of the viscera. This is also a very old remedy for curing indigestion when caused by a torpid liver. In her book, *Green Medicine*, C. F. Leyel states that dandelion as part of the diet can dissolve chalky deposits symptomatic of rheumatoid arthritis.

According to the Macmillan Medical Encyclopaedia, the fresh milky substance in the flower stalks is used for the treatment of warts. Generally, the beneficial actions of dandelion are described as (1) alterative, changing for the better, (2) aperients, mildly laxative, (3) hepatic, increasing bile secretion, (4) stimulant, increasing organ activity, (5) diuretic, aiding in secretion of urine, (6) tonic, strengthener.

Naturally, the wisest way to use dandelion for medicine is preventatively, that is, by eating it in small amounts daily, for its valuable health factors, before we have any specific need.

Industrial Value

Acting as food and medicine does not end dandelion's valuable services to us. It has also met the needs of modern production. In Russia and Argentina, for example, dandelions of a particular variety were cultivated for their latex, which was made into rubber. In silk-producing countries, dandelion leaves are sometimes substituted for mulberry leaves as food for silkworms.

Probably one of the most important but little-known functions of the dandelion is that it supplies large amounts of nectar and pollen to bees during the crucial time when they are rearing their brood. For this reason, its appearance in early spring is of the greatest importance to beekeepers and the honey industry.

Above Duality

In a plant contributing so much to human welfare, yet appearing so unpromising, it is not surprising that we find a set of unique characteristics. For instance, the dandelion has given up sex altogether. Its ovaries are in no way fertilised; every fruit and every new generation

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are wholly products of virgin birth. Without sexual processes there can be, of course, no mixing of hereditary factors. Therefore, scientists tell us that in a hundred million years from now the dandelion will be very much the same as it is today. Nature has, in essence, said to the dandelion: *"You are fine as you are. There is no need for any change or improvement. I'm satisfied!"* She shows every evidence of seeing to it that her perfect plant survives too.

One of the most important functions of the dandelion is that it supplies large amounts of nectar and pollen to bees.

Many kinds of other plants, for example, would vanish if the wind or insects which carry fertilising pollen were suddenly not available. The dandelion, being sexless, requires neither one for reproducing itself. Slicing off the leaves just beneath the earth's surface in an attempt to destroy the plant merely encourages it to grow. Nature seems to have tried to make it as independent of outside factors as possible. Even its seed distribution is largely autonomous.

The flower, which is really not a single flower but many tiny flowers, develops into the commonly-known blow ball. These are very beautiful, but they serve a more practical purpose. If you take one apart carefully and examine it, you will observe that it is composed of many individual parachute-like parts. There is a sort of shaft with a tiny fruit at one end and tufts of hair at the other. Each fruit contains one seed which is sometimes carried for miles in the wind by its tiny, natural parachute. The slightest breeze gives it motive power. Most plant seeds simply drop to the ground, but the self-sufficient dandelion gets around on its own.

Even its long taproot seems intentionally designed to give it additional hold upon the earth. Many have despaired of ever completely removing it from their lawns. Even when the lawn fails, the dandelions continue and thrive. The truth is, this humble plant is better prepared to survive than we are! We may not have unravelled the whole mystery wound up in the common dandelion. One thing, however, is certain: this meek-looking citizen of the plant kingdom has truly inherited the earth!



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An Egyptian Ritual

by **Constance Dreyzel**

The following appeared in an issue of an old magazine devoted to archaeology 129 years ago. It is an observational account by the Rev. J Hunt Cooke, referring to the sarcophagus of the 19th Dynasty pharaoh, Seti I.

> It is covered with inscriptions. These have recently been deciphered. They give a highly imaginative account of the supposed journey of the sun through the nether world, from its setting in the west to its rising in the east. This appears to be a medium for religious ideas and teachings in regard to the unseen. There are extant other copies of the same work, which was in all probability a sacred classic of that age.
>
> Could we apprehend fully the meaning of the figurative language, it would doubtless be a storehouse of the spiritual thinking of ancient Egypt. Its significance may be gathered from the fact that the grand idea of celestial glory in those days was, or was figured by, a voyage across the sky in the glorious sun, which, like a ship, sailed through the heavens scattering light and blessings, in which the wicked were not permitted to take part. This honour was reserved for the elect.[1]

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Wikimedia - Jon Bodsworth/British Museum



Hieroglyphs from the tomb of Pharaoh Seti I.

I found the article very thought provoking, not least because I had already witnessed a presentation of an Egyptian ritual drama called the *'Book of the Gates* which resonated with Rev. Cooke's words. Many of us in the audience fell under its spell, feeling a cleansing renewal from its pageantry. Yet most of us, I believe, were less able to follow it with our heads as we could with our hearts. It is almost always so when we deal with Egypt; the *'dead'* past suddenly springs to life and sweeps us into its stately pattern, where we move trancelike in a reality that is more like a dream than anything we experience today. And we can never quite say why.

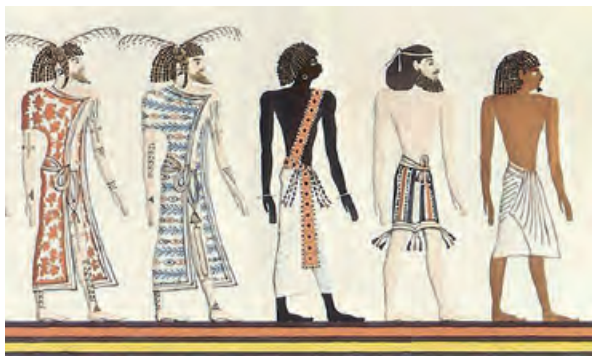
At a deep subliminal level we seem to know, even though consciously we remain puzzled, that we are partaking of something of deep relevance. Somewhere in the deepest recesses of our being something stirs to life, wakes from its slumber and whispers secrets only the heart can comprehend. If only we could recall what happened completely and clearly, and then translate it into words and mental images, everything would be plain. Our rational faculties struggle to arrange the symbols of this ancient form of mystical life into meaningful patterns, and we know, despite our failure to make intellectual head or tail of it all, that this was and still is important.

Our 21st century approach to life is so completely foreign to that held by the ancients that we can't accept it as they did, as a unified whole, a finished work. We have lost that ancient collective approach that once prevailed in humankind..., and our efforts to marry the subconscious and conscious impressions together acceptably are seldom successful. We know the subconscious and conscious elements should blend seamlessly by themselves, as they did when the objective and subjective faculties of humans once functioned as a unit. Now there is a partition wall between them, something that separates them utterly..., but also something that can be taken down without much difficulty as soon as we are serious about doing so.

The Mystery Schools reach backward into the abyss of time to draw from the primordial shadow the truths still pertinent to daily life. In many mystery schools, including the Rosicrucian Order, this corpus of wisdom is known as the *'Primordial Tradition'* and forms the primaeval core of all spiritual beliefs. Through ceremony and ritual, countless mystical schools of knowledge have for thousands of years kept before their initiates' eyes imperishable symbols which sometimes add relevance to the kaleidoscopic figures in the so-called *'dance of life.'*

The memories that Egypt awakens in us are for the most part so deeply hidden as to make their explanation impossible on an intellectual level, without thorough mystical instruction. Exoterically, Egypt is familiar enough to us, for archaeology has presented an overabundance of artefacts. But without something more, something deeper, archaeology cannot explain Egypt to us any more than on a very rudimentary level.

Referring to the article extract above, undoubtedly there are many whose knowledge of Egyptian thought penetrates much more deeply the meaning of this story from the tomb of Seti I than does that of the author quoted. Briefly, he is not too sure of the intent of the account, which he calls *"highly imaginative"*, of the sun's supposed journey to the netherworld. He naturally presumes it to have held significance for the Egyptians, to have been in fact a variant version of a classic tale, and to have served as a kind of medium for the expression



The four races of the world: Libyans ('Tjehenu'), a Nubian ('Nehesu'), an Asiatic ('Aamu'), and an Egyptian ('Rekhyt'). An artistic rendering, based on a mural from the tomb of Seti I.

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Detail from one of the many versions of the Egyptian Book of the Dead.'

of religious ideas. Indeed, he suggests that if it could be understood correctly it might furnish a key to the entire belief system of the ancient Egyptians.

A Book of Life

We now know that this story which he called an Egyptian classic is a variant of the *Book of the Dead*, hundreds of copies of which were scattered throughout Egypt at one time, and some of which have survived in Egyptian collections. The fact that this title has impressed itself upon our thought no doubt is responsible for our judging it to be altogether funereal in character. Found in mummy wrappings, on sarcophagi, and on the walls of tombs, the *Book of the Dead* is in fact a book of life rather than of death. Although in variant form it tells the story of the sun as the predominant god of ancient Egypt, in broad terms it also had a unique, individual meaning for every Egyptian. For Egyptians, Ra, the supreme solar deity, was the most dependable guide they could have for their respective journeys through life, for their journeys out of this life, and for their journeys back into it again.

That is to say that, out of a representation of the daily departure of the sun in the west and its process through the measured hours of darkness to its reappearance as a new sun on the eastern horizon, there grew the belief that as with the solar deity so it was with humans too. The Egyptians imagined that as the individual passes from life through the door of death, and thereafter through the dark regions of the western *Amenti* (the place of testing), there was a subsequent resurrection into life on the eastern horizon. A representation of a natural fact of life, namely sunset, the dark hours of the night, sunrise and the light hours of day..., was therefore given a spiritual or eschatological relevance.

Familiarity with the sun's experience in the netherworld and the means by which it triumphed over the powers of darkness gave humanity the supreme assurance it needed to succeed in its own journey through birth, life, death and the afterlife. Gerald Massey in his old treatise *Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World* (1907) has painstakingly pointed this out:

> The so-called Book of the Dead is the Egyptian book of life: life now, life hereafter, life everlasting. It was indeed the book of life and salvation, because it contained the things to be done in this life and hereafter to ensure eternal continuity. The departing soul, when passing away in death..., or as the truer phrase is, when setting forth into the land of life, clasps and clings to his scroll for very life. As the book of life, or word of salvation, it was buried in the coffin with the dead when done with on earth. It showed the way to heaven objectively as well as subjectively, as heaven was mapped out in the astral myths. [2]



Imentet and Ra from the tomb of Nefertari, 13th Century BCE.

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The departing soul then, was depicted with a scroll similar to the one placed within the folds of the mummy windings. This scroll had clear directions for the deceased: how to move forward into the underworld with confidence, what words of truth were needed to break the spells of various hindering powers, and what power the individual had at his or her disposal from a life lived according to Maat (truth). When the deceased arrived at the judgment hall in *Amenti*, the scrolls, the material one from the mummy windings and the immaterial one written into the character of the real self, would be brought together for comparison, so the judge might decide how far the word of Maat had been fulfilled in the life of the deceased, and whether the gift of life had been sufficiently earned.

As in the material world so in the nether regions, the Egyptians argued, no one can travel without knowing the way. According to Gerald Massey:

> The way in Amenta [sic] was indicated [...] topographically very much in keeping with the ways in Egypt, chief of which was the waterway of the great river [Nile]. Directions, names and passwords were furnished in writing, to be placed with the mummy of the deceased. Better still, if these instructions and divine teachings were learned by heart, had been enacted and made into a living truth in life, then the Book of the Dead in life became the book of life in death. The word was given that it might be made truth by doing it as the means of learning the way by knowing the word. The way of life in three worlds, those of earth, Amenta and heaven, was by knowing the word of God and making it true in defiance of all the powers of evil. [3]

The Living Memorial

The beauty of the ritual is now manifest..., a living classic, not a dead memorial. It serves humanity in the light of life as well as in the darkness of death. It gives humanity knowledge of universal laws always in operation and assurance that knowledge gained from it is our safeguard at all times, a key to accomplishment, a pass to power.

The sun is after all but a prototype of the saviour of each individual person. It is used to illustrate the operation of beneficent, universal laws. The sun's daily progress through the heavens is to be read as symbolic of our daily progress through the circle of life. It expresses the continuity of life and the inevitability of final triumph.



Head of the God Osiris, ca. 595-525 BCE.

In the Ritual, the sun, entering the cleft in the Western Hills, is the mummified Osiris. It is symbolised by the scarab beetle enclosed in a disk of light. The solar deity's companions in the *"Sektet"* boat (the evening solar barque)[4] are *Sa* and *Heka*. Sa represents *foreknowledge or intelligence*, while Heka represents the *power of the Word*. Who could ever be fearful with such powerful companions? The conflicts in life and in Amenti are a reflection of the eternal conflict of daylight and darkness, a divine warfare in which the god Horus represents light and his uncle Set represents darkness.

Shorn of all elaboration then, the ritual called the *Book of the Dead*, *Book of Hades* or *Book of the Gates* is a cosmic drama. Universal forces and operations are given personalities and names and made the actors. We witness it as a moving show in which we are both spectator and participant. Eternal lessons are set out for our instruction and use; eternal truths unfold as we act them out. We know the beginning and the end, for knowledge of one

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Detail from one of the many versions of the 'Egyptian 'Book of the 'Dead' (1070 BCE).

begets knowledge of the other. *'Death and Life...*, *'Darkness and Light...*, what are they but changing aspects of the same thing, pictures in a cosmic kaleidoscope? To die is to live, and for those dying within the law, the *'second death'* has no power.

Final Triumph

In a word, the theme is a universally familiar one, that of the final triumph of light over darkness and, finally, resurrection and reincarnation. Its elements, the book of life whose perfect precepts must be transformed into living character, are those which have gone into parables since time immemorial. Its pattern and phraseology are such as have been repeated by teachers, seers and sages from Egyptian times to our own.

We cannot fail to respond, for these lessons have been before us for at least five thousand years and are a part of the unconscious heritage of humanity. They may appeal first to our emotional, subjective side, but later they capture our rational, objective selves too. In time, every sincere mystic penetrates the meaning of the symbols which surround them, and they encounter the unity of all as it rests serenely in its centre. When that attunement with the universe is perfect, union with the Divine will have been accomplished.



Wikimedia - Cagarcia.s

Ancient Egyptian jewellery depicting winged scarab beetle.

Endnotes

1. Cooke, Rev. J. Hunt, *'The Book of Hades'* in Biblia, Vol.VI, No.8, 1893
2. Massey, Vol.1, p.195
3. Ibid., p.196
4. The *Matet* boat was the morning barque used by Ra to travel across the sky from the eastern horizon by day in comparison to the *Sektet* boat for his descent to the west or Amenti. *"May he set out with thee in the Matet Boat, may he come into port in the Sektet Boat, and may he cleave his path among the stars of heaven which never rest."* Extract from *'A Hymn of Praise to Ra'* in the Book of the Dead.

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– THE CATHARS –
Massacre at Montsegur

by **Ailsa de Motte**

In the year 1244, the citadel-mountain of Montsegur, in the Languedoc of southern France, was the site where 225 Christian *'heretics'* were sentenced to death after a ten-month siege by an army of 10,000 men. These were *Cathar Perfecti* (the *Parfaits* or the *Elect*) who were accused of heresy against the doctrines of the Christian Church. The burning of these dissidents took place below the fortress in what seems like a peaceful meadow today but which was called the *'Field of the Burned'* for centuries.

Montsegur (*Mountain of Security*) has become an historic site for thousands of people over the centuries, for the flames of the execution pile cast their light not only into the countryside of Languedoc but still burn with injustice in our consciousness to this day. This Crusade against the Cathars was an example of intolerance at its worst, fanaticism and the injustice perpetrated by a few powerful people against people whose religious beliefs spoke only of peace.

The Montsegur fortress came into prominence in the 1930s when a Nazi archaeological expedition, led by Otto Rahn, carried out some excavations at the site, allegedly searching for the Holy Grail or some other

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Cite de Carcassonne, medieval walled fortress city in the Languedoc region of France.

treasure. Whatever they were seeking, it was not found. But there is a carving of a Chalice on the walls of a cave beneath the ruins of Montsegur!

The siege and outcome of the Massacre draws interest to the whole Cathar movement and the conditions that led to the planned extermination of these people and their beliefs. The southern provinces of France, especially Languedoc, had become, during the late Middle Ages, an area where the ruling princes and lords showed great tolerance towards the ideas and practices of the people they ruled. This was occurring at a time when the Christian Church had established one set of doctrines for the whole of Europe. But it was also a time of much decadence and immorality among many churchmen, from the humble village priest to bishops and even archbishops and cardinals.

The Christian Cathars, known as the *'les bonshommes'* (the *'good men'*) went against this trend. In time, the things happening in this region made it a hotbed of heretical thought. Languedoc was more closely aligned to Aragon in Spain than to the more distant northern regions of France; and it was a far more open, free and cultured society..., in fact, the most cultured in Europe at the time. As one historian reports...

> There is evidence of a deep connection with Muslim Sufi communities in Spain and the Middle East, and with Jewish Kabbalistic scholars living in the surrounding cities. The Grail legends, the Courts of Love, the Troubadours and the Gnostic Cathars all blossomed under the rule of the tolerant Count of Toulouse and other rulers.

In 1198, Pope Innocent III, disturbed by this *'cancer of heresy'*, called for sterner measures against the Cathars, after attempts by many Papal legates, including Bernard of Clairvaux and Dominic Guzman, had failed to convert them. However, when Dominic (later St. Dominic) became head of a new Order – the Dominicans – the *'Holy Inquisition'* was set up with the express purpose of rooting out all Cathars, with a mandate for the use of the most repressive measures available, if necessary. Hundreds were burnt at the stake and the heresy was finally crushed in the 13th and early 14th centuries. Its sympathisers went underground and hid their faith.

Cathar Beliefs

Cathar beliefs reflected a Gnostic influence, and appear to have been very similar to Manichaeism. They were dualists: there were two principles, one good and one evil, in this universe; the material world was evil and the immaterial world was perfect. Dr. Malcolm Barber in his book *'The Cathars'*, made this observation: The world creator...

> ...was either a being fallen from the perfection of Heaven who had seduced a proportion of the angelic souls there, and then entrapped them in matter..., or he was a co-eternal power, quite independent of the good God of the Spirit.

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They called this evil creator of the material world the *'Demiurge'*, or the *'Rex Mundi'*, the *'King of the World'* or, in more direct terms, the *'Medieval Satan.'* Cathars believed that the God of the Old Testament was what the Roman Church recognised as *'the Devil'*, for it was this entity that had created the world. Because of this, they disregarded the Old Testament entirely and, claiming to be the inheritors of the true Christian faith, lived like the apostles and early Christian believers and acknowledged the New Testament as the final Truth.

The nature of the human being in this dualistic universe of deities in conflict was enunciated in the following terms:

1. Humans were alien dwellers in an essentially evil world. The main aim of each person was to free his or her spirit - which was in its nature good - and restore it with God.

2. Souls would continue to be re-born until they escaped the material world and succeeded to the immaterial heaven. The souls would reincarnate into successive bodies over many lifetimes before their final release.

3. The idea that humans were trapped in tunics of material flesh had a number of logical consequences:

    * Procreative sex was bad, since conception would result in another soul being trapped. For this reason, normal sexual relations between man and wife were as bad as any other procreative sex. So marriage was worthless (there was no marriage rite), while contraception was regarded with approval. As well, there was no reason to condemn non-procreative sex.

    * The less one had to do with evil (i.e. material things), the better. Eating animal products was abhorred. Fish were allowed as they could reproduce asexually and therefore would not be able to imprison another soul.

    * As the body was simply a material envelope to house the soul, suicide was not regarded as a crime. While some Cathars died after a forty-day fast, known as the *'Endura'*, ending life in this way was not encouraged by the Perfecti, for they practised as healers with the intention of maintaining and not shortening the life of the body.

    * There was no reason to regard men as better than women, as the important part, the soul, was the same in both sexes. Only the material body was different, and so the physical form was irrelevant. Women, therefore, enjoyed equal rights and freedom. Some women of Languedoc, the most famous being Esclarmonde de Foix, had attained the spiritual title of Perfectae.

    * Since material things (including jewels, money, relics, the Eucharist, reproductions of the cross and church buildings) were creations of a bad God, they had no virtue. The body could not resurrect into a pure, immaterial heaven. A good God would not send anyone from his realm (e.g. Jesus) into the material world of a bad God, a world which was tainted by sin.

It was asserted that Jesus must have been some sort of phantom or image, looking like a man but in fact immaterial, and therefore could not have died on the cross, which was regarded as an instrument of torture.



Pope Innocent III.



Left: Pope Innocent III excommunicating the Albigensians,
Right: Massacre of the Albigensians by the crusaders.

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Pietro Perugino's depiction of the Crucifixion

The way to escape was to live an ascetic life and not be corrupted by the world. This was the way of the Perfecti, the Parfaits, or Elect. As Gnostics, these Perfecti believed that divine knowledge is granted only to an inner elite. They were the *'Pure Ones'*, rejecting graven images, lying, swearing oaths and attachment to the world and practising poverty and pacifism. The Perfecti had the power to wipe away a person's sins and connections to the material world through administering the Consolamentum Rite. Anyone nearing death could have this rite, as there was little chance of the person losing his/her spirituality before death had occurred.

Cathar Doctrines as Grounds for Heresy

The Cathars vehemently opposed some basic doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, in particular that of the Eucharist, which implied that Christ actually lived on Earth in the flesh and was crucified. The idea filled them with revulsion, as they could not conceive of a divine being, living in heaven, descending to reside in human flesh.

They held the view that the Sacrament, allegedly miraculous, took away the need for goodness. Other Church sacraments such as Infant Baptism, Marriage and Confession, were also considered worthless. Worst of all, many of the clergy set a bad example – they committed excesses and lived in pomp and splendour. Furthermore, the Pope was regarded by them as the Anti-Christ, the arch-enemy of God. The doctrine of the Last Judgment was denied: for them, the material world would end only when the last of the angelic souls had been released from it. As universalists, Cathars believed in the ultimate salvation of all people.

Cathar Rites

There is some evidence that Cathar rites appeared to have a Mystery School character. Spiritual progress was in stages: the first was the neophyte's initiation into the Tradition. This was intended to prepare and sustain the Credentes or Believers. They lived the faith as best they could in anticipation of advancement, or as simple, contented devotees. As Credentes, they could marry, bear children and live a life without the asceticism of the Perfecti. The Perfecti participated in the Consolamentum Rite, which prepared them for the sacrifices they had to make and consoled them for the trials they had to face in accepting their new status.

The Consolamentum was their most sacred rite and was conferred only after a lengthy probation, evidence of a worthy life and the approval of the Perfecti. They believed that this solemn but simple ceremony of the laying on of hands caused the Holy Spirit to descend from heaven and enter the aspirant seeking perfection, who would henceforth hold the title of Perfectus. Because of this power, Perfecti were revered greatly by the the Credentes, who would prostrate themselves three times before them in adoration. This acceptance of two degrees of Cathars, Perfecti and Credentes, depending on the rigour or looseness of discipline, suggests an outer congregation and an inner sanctum membership.

Cathars also practised a rite called the *'Manisola.'* This was a sacramental meal linked to the orientation of the sun. It is thought that the fortress of Montsegur was built with this in mind. The word Manisola appears to reflect its Manichaean connection: *Mani* indicating a reference to *Manes*, and *Sola* denoting the *sun* and therefore the *Light of Truth*. Some speculate that the Holy Grail may have been a sacred object used by the Cathars at Montsegur as part of their Initiations. There are extensive references to the Grail Legend in the south of France. Against this notion it may be argued that the Cathars were against collecting relics of Christ and therefore the

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Painting by Pedro Berruguete portraying the story of a disputation between Saint Dominic and the Cathars (Albigensians), in which the books of both were thrown on a fire and Dominic's books were miraculously preserved from the flames.



The burning of the Cathar heretics.



Cathars being expelled from Carcassonne in 1209.

Grail as a chalice (presumably the chalice that may have been brought to France by Mary Magdalene) was of no interest to them.

Perhaps the so-called *'Cathar Treasure'*, supposedly saved on the last night before the Perfecti met their death at the foot of Montsegur, may thus have been their sacred books or some ancient manuscripts? Who knows? There are many caves in the region of Languedoc that could be places of concealment.

The events of Cathar suppression in Languedoc, culminating in the final defeat at Montsegur, followed the failure of the attempts made by the Medieval Church to return the Cathars to orthodoxy. It is ironical to note that the Church and its heretical opposition were both basically dualist in their world view, yet each had to draw a line in the sand in affirming their own way to the Good Life. The Cathars' hope for salvation was not written in terms of reform of the one *'true'* Church but in their right to express Christianity in Gnostic terms. The Church, on the other hand, could not see its foundations threatened by what it thought was a stubborn heresy.

Through the Inquisition that was the product of this failure to bring the Cathars to heel and the subsequent Albigensian Crusade that was launched against the Cathars, thousands of lives were lost and many hundreds of Cathars were burnt at the stake. It was a black mark in the historical record of intolerance when two sides were locked in religious conflict. Such conflicts have occurred before, but have we learnt from the lessons of history? Or will mankind have to repeat its mistakes of the past?

We have witnessed in the Cathar episode the passing of the 'Good Ones' in the social and spiritual evolution of humankind. Surely their love, goodness and loving kindness to others must be a reminder to us that even in a materialistic and, as it often appears, an evil world, the souls of those who sincerely seek the Truth, the Source, and the Cosmic Soul can attain a gnosis that can in some way, change the world for the better.

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The site of the Taliban-destroyed monumental Buddha statues of Bamyan.

Ancient Afghanistan

by **Bill Anderson**

An article in *The Times* of London 20 years ago described a country where warlords roamed the land. In that country, some of them obeyed the bizarre commands of an elusive foreign spiritual leader, while others killed and robbed for their own selfish ends. They seldom took prisoners, while those who survived were forced into slavery. Women were treated as chattels and not allowed out on their own, unless closely chaperoned and veiled. Men applied literal interpretations to the taboos and laws of a supposedly sacred though evidently savage text about what they should eat and wear and every other aspect of their lives.

It was a land of no arts, no letters, no refinement, no society, where innocent people lived in continual fear and danger of violent death. In Thomas Hobbes' words, human life was *"solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short"* and their language was coarse by the standards of what had come before it. But by now, I'm sure you know that the article was about *Dark Age Britain*.

The article went on to relate how *Dari* (Persian) and *Pashtu*, the official languages of Afghanistan, are far older than English and have almost as long a history as Greek, a language stemming from Proto-Indo European, just as Dari and Pashtu are. The article ended by stating that, during the Dark Age of Britain, Afghan scholars and poets were speaking those two sophisticated languages when our illiterate ancestors were grunting with their pigs.

My work brings me into daily contact with people

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Afghanistan, Bamyan province, Band-e Amir, Band-e Panir lake.

from all over the world. It was in this way that I first met some people from Afghanistan, who had come to the UK in search of refuge. I will be the first to admit that my knowledge of Afghanistan was a bit hazy, though I knew it was a very beautiful country, with mountains, deserts and plains. I had heard of the statues of the Buddha at *Bamyan* and the turquoise lakes of *Band-e Amir*.

Unfortunately, the recent TV pictures from Afghanistan have made us all the more aware of the troubles afflicting it and other parts of the world with similar ills. The pictures we see on television give little hint of the glories of the past and of the importance of this country to the cultural and mystical life of the world. This article then is an attempt to redress the balance from the perspective of *'deep'*, as opposed to *'recent'* history.





The statues of the Buddha at Bamyan. Images from 'The Illustrated London News', 1886. The statues were destroyed in 2001.

Apart from the capital Kābul, the other main towns are *Kandahār* in the south, *Jelālābād* in the east, *Herāt* in the west and *Mazār-e Sharif* in the north, with the *Hindu Kush* mountains in the centre and northeast. *Nuristān*, *'the Land of Light'*, northeast of Kābul is an unusual region of the country, set in a striking mountain region near the Indian border. It has forests where the Greek god Dionysus features in local legends. Here the people are said to be descended from the ancient Greeks and still look very European with their green eyes.

> *"I will never forget your beautiful gardens. When I remember the summits of your beautiful mountains, I forget the greatness of the Delhi throne."* Ahmad Shāh Durrāni (1747-1773), founder of the Afghan Empire, is considered by many Afghan historians to be the true founder of modern Afghanistan.

Dawn of History

History places the first people in Afghanistan about 30,000 years ago. By the Bronze Age, in the 3rd to 2nd millennia BCE, part of the great Indo-European family, the Indo-Iranians, entered the region and split into three branches. One continued south into India, one turned west and became the Medes and Persians, while the third group, the Eastern Iranian-speaking peoples, stayed in Central Asia and called their land *Aryana*. Their language was and still is distantly related to our own.

This region is mentioned in the *Avesta*, where it is described as a beautiful country full of warlike and brave people. The inhabitants of Afghanistan traded with the Indus Valley civilisation, as well as with Mesopotamia and

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Lapis lazuli.

Egypt. Their main export was lapis lazuli. With its unique intense blue colour, lapis lazuli can be seen in the funerary mask of Tutankhamun, for example, and for over 6,000 years it has been exported from the mines in *Badakhshān* province in the north of Afghanistan. Apart from Sumer and Egypt, it was, in later times, traded throughout the East and into Europe. Although nowadays also mined in Siberia and Chile, the best is still produced in Afghanistan.

Legacy of Zoroaster

The prophet Zoroaster, the founder of the Persian Zoroastrian religion, one of the great religions of the world, lived and preached in Afghanistan. In the 6th century BCE, the Persians, who had been converted to Zoroastrianism, conquered Afghanistan, dividing it into five satrapies. The satrapy of *Bactria* had been a powerful kingdom before the Persians, under Cyrus the Great, conquered it. It was so important during the Achaemenid period that it was always governed by a member of the royal family. And it was the Bactrian satrap *Bessus* who murdered the last Persian King of Kings, Darius III, in 331 BCE. Bessus was pursued by Alexander the Great into what is today, modern Afghanistan; and he proceeded to subdue, through fire and sword, all who dared cross his path.



Farvahar on the Zoroastrian temple.



Alexander the Great.

Afghanistan and the Greek Colonies

Another great culture and philosophy came to Afghanistan when Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire and became the first western tourist. On his way he founded many Greek colonies, fortified cities, fortresses and towns on earlier native cities; most of them he called *Alexandria*: *Alexandria Areion*, the modern *Herāt*; *Alexandria Prophthasia*, the modern *Farāh*; *Alexandria Arachoton*, the modern *Kandahār*. He also visited *Bactra*, the ancient city of *Balkh*, where he married his wife Roxane before continuing to *Zaranj*, *Ghazni*, *Kābul* and *Jelālābād* near the entrance to the Khyber Pass. He attempted to Hellenise the whole country. After his death in 323 BCE, Alexander's empire was divided between his generals: Egypt went to the Ptolemies, and Afghanistan became part of the Greek Seleucid Empire ruled from Babylon.

In about 304 BCE, most of present-day Afghanistan was ceded to the *Maurya* dynasty that ruled northern India. *Ashoka*, its most famous monarch, was famously converted to Buddhism. In 250 BCE, the Greek satraps of Bactria, rulers of the north of Afghanistan, conquered Kābul and the east as far as the Punjab. Their capital was at *Bactra* (or Balkh), and thus began the Greco-Bactrian period, when the Afghans were ruled by kings with names like *Diodotos*, *Euthydemos* and *Demetrios*. The ruling class was descended from the colonists settled by Alexander the Great, as well as subsequent settlers from other parts of the Greek world.

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Image: Wikimedia / World Imaging

Map of the Greco-Bactrian at its maximum extent, circa 180 BCE.

Among the greatest kings of this period were *Eucratides I Megas (the Great)* and *Menander I Soter (the Saviour)*. Afghanistan was infused by the material and spiritual culture of Hellenism. Plato and the Greek philosophers were being discussed far from their original home. It is still possible to visit the ruins of a typical ancient Greek city now called *Ay Khanum*, near Balkh. If it was not for the magnificent coins they left behind, and their subtle influence upon ancient India, they would have disappeared into oblivion.

Demetrios I, one of their greatest kings, rebuilt *Taxila*, the future capital of *Gandhara* and the *Kushans*, which had been destroyed by *Ashoka*, and tried to make his kingdom a union of Greeks, Bactrians and Indians. He even went so far as to mint bilingual Greek-Sanskrit coins. He expanded deeper into India and welcomed Buddhists into his kingdom. *Taxila*, his capital, became a centre of Buddhism for centuries to come, and the resulting merger of Hellenism and Buddhism gave rise to the distinctive and beautiful Gandharan school of art and architecture, which was the first to portray the Buddha in human form. *Menander I Soter*, the son-in-law of *Demetrios I*, seems to have undergone some sort of religious enlightenment similar to Ashoka's. In an ancient Indian Buddhist text, the *Milinda-pañho*, *Milinda (Menander)* is said to have been converted to Buddhism. This seems unlikely, however, though he may have come to hold certain Buddhist sentiments, and his coins do contain both Greek and Buddhist imagery.



Image: Wikimedia / PHGCOM

Kushan territories (full line) and maximum extent of Kushan control under Kanishka the Great.

The Gandharan Experience

Around 135 BCE, five Central Asian nomadic tribes, known as the *Yuèzhī* to the Chinese, conquered the Greco-Bactrian kingdom and founded what has become known as the *Kushan Empire*. It was a multi-lingual and multi-racial empire every bit as powerful as its contemporaries in Rome, Persia and China, but today it is largely anonymous. Its most famous ruler was



Image (coin): Wikimedia / Mdiamanre

Demetrios I portrayed on a tetradrachm coin.



Gold coin of Kanishka I with a representation of the Buddha.

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An illustration in a manuscript of the Astasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra from Nalanda, depicting the bodhisattva Maitreya, an important figure in Mahāyāna.

king *Kanishka* (78-144 CE), the great patron of Mahayana Buddhism. His empire stretched from *Bukhara* in Uzbekistan through northern India to *Patna* on the Ganges and through Central Asia into part of present-day *Xinjiang* province in western China, with his capital at modern day Peshawar in Pakistan.

He was said to have been a Zoroastrian before he became a Buddhist, of which he was a great patron, spending his resources on helping to spread Buddhism in the new form known as *Mahayana*, a more humanistic form than the simpler *Hinayana*. Here devotees would look towards an evolving cosmology of Bodhisattvas. Central to this new cosmology was the Buddha, who originally was a revered human being but ultimately, in Mahayana, became a saviour and a god.

It was during Kanishka's reign that Buddha emerged as a god for the first time. As a patron of Buddhism, he is noted for having convoked the fourth and final great Buddhist council in Kashmir that marked the beginnings of Mahayana Buddhism. At the council, authorised commentaries of the Buddhist canon were made. Huge shrines and monastic complexes were built near every major town. He was a tolerant king who honoured Zoroastrian, Greek and Indian deities as well as the Buddha. During his reign, there was a significant increase of trade with the Roman Empire. The Kushans were also great patrons of the arts and literature. Kushan merchants became immensely rich, and much of their wealth was spent on art to adorn Buddhist shrines and monasteries.

In the 1970s, golden treasures were found in Kushan graves and taken to the museum in Kābul. Unfortunately, during the civil war of the early 1990s, like so many other treasures, they disappeared. It was during Kushan times that the two great Buddha statues were built at Bamyan, though sadly, in 2001, these statues were blown up on the orders of the Taliban authorities. Buddhist pilgrims came from China and Khotan to visit the holy places of Afghanistan. Under Kanishka, a new form of art was produced, known as Gandharan, and the age of the imperial Kushans is considered one of the most creative periods in Asian history.

> If you would become a pilgrim on the path of love, the first condition is that you become as humble as dust and ashes. — Ansāri of Herāt

Gandhara lay in the northwest of present-day Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan. Its style of art developed between the 1st century BCE and the 7th century CE. This region had long been a crossroads of cultural influences. The Gandhara School which came into being here drew upon the anthropomorphic traditions of Greece and Rome, incorporating in its interpretations of Buddhist legends many motifs from Roman art, such as vine-scrolls, cherubs bearing garlands, tritons and centaurs. We have to remember that there were still Greek traditions from their colony-cities. These represented the Buddha with a youthful Apollo-like face, dressed in garments resembling togas.

The sculptures were originally painted and gilded. Their craftsmen made a lasting contribution to Buddhist art where beautiful images of Buddha were developed in a Greco-Roman style, with graceful bodies and curly hair, reminiscent of Hellenistic sculpture, but also with Indian influences. Iconographic features of the Buddha, such as the monastic robe and *usnisha* on his head, the *uma* or third eye and the halo made their appearance at this time. Much of their vanished architecture, with its accompanying sculpture and painting, was intended to produce a distinctive atmosphere of mystery and transcendent



Greco-Buddhist statue of a standing Buddha, Gandhara. -- 1st to 2nd century CE --

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Mystic of Afghanistan

As long as you are busy with your own self,
You will not be admitted to the way to God.
Once you are free of your own self,
You will not be deprived of his regard.

— Abdullāh Ansāri of Herāt —

The mystic, Khwāja (Master) Abdullāh Ansāri of Herāt 1006-1089, was one of the greatest Sufi mystics of Afghanistan. He was a poet, philosopher and mystic whose poems are an intimate dialogue between the soul and God. He wrote poetry and books in Dari-Persian and Arabic. They include titles such as *The Hundred Grounds, The Stations of the Wayfarers* and *The Intimate Invocations*. His fame was so great that he was honoured by the Caliph himself in distant Baghdad. Ansāri's burial place in Herāt is still a place of pilgrimage to this day.

opulence. Many scholars such as *Ashvaghosha*, a great poet and master of music who wrote a biography of the Buddha, adorned Kanishka's court. Also at the court was *Charaka*, a great physician who wrote a book on Ayurvedic medicine.

A major branch of the Silk Road passed through Afghanistan, passing luxury goods and ideas between Rome, India and China. The ancient city of Balkh was at the crossroads of this route. Indian pilgrims travelling the Silk Road introduced Buddhism to China via Afghanistan. At the Kushan summer capital at *Bagram*, now a huge airbase to the north of Kābul, excavations found painted glass from Alexandria; bronzes, porphyries and alabasters from Rome; ivories from India and lacquers from China. Buddhist Gandharan art provided the basis for the Buddhist art of China, Korea and Japan. The world's largest figures of the Buddha, 175 and 120 feet tall, were carved into the mountainside at Bamyan in the central mountains during the 3rd and 4th centuries CE and stood until destroyed by the Tālibān in 2001.

In 241 CE, Afghanistan was conquered once again by the Persian Sassanid dynasty who, like their forebears, were Zoroastrians. Again, the satrapy was considered so important that members of the royal family were sent as governors. In the meantime, Hindu kingdoms were established at Kābul and Ghazni in the east.

O Lord, other men are afraid of thee
But I, I am afraid of myself.
From thee flows good alone,
From me flows evil.
Others fear what the morrow may bring;
I am afraid of what happened yesterday.
— Ansāri of Herāt

The Changing Face of Spirituality

Islamic armies defeated the Sassanid Persians in 642 CE and then passed on to Afghanistan. By the mid-7th century, the Kushan Empire was in decline and had split into 27 feuding principalities collectively known as Tokharistan. Although Muslims conquered the land and it became part of the great eastern region known as Khorāsān, they found it difficult to hold on to, as the Afghan cities often rose in revolt. Buddhism, which had such a strong hold on the country, subsequently influenced mystical sects and Islamic scholars in Afghanistan. For a long time after the advent of Islam, cities such as Balkh, Kandahar and Kābul itself still had



A 19th century artwork showing Ghazni's citadel and two minarets.

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Mystic of Afghanistan

From the un-manifest I came and pitched my tent in the forest of material existence, where I passed through mineral and vegetable kingdoms. Then my mental equipment carried me into the animal kingdom.

Having reached there I crossed beyond it. Then in the crystal clear shell of the human heart, I nursed the drop of self in a Pearl. And in association with good men, I wandered around the Prayer House.

And having experienced that, I crossed beyond it, and took the road that leads to Him. And I became a slave at His gate. Then the duality disappeared and I became absorbed in Him.

— Hakim Jāmi of Herāt —

Hakim Jāmi of Herāt (1414-92) was from childhood considered a genius, and he knew it. This made the clergy and literati of his time uncomfortable. His writings and teachings made him so famous that many rulers sent him invitations to their courts. He was born in Herāt and, as a Sufi, cited as teachers in Sufi transmission such westerners as Plato, Hippocrates, Pythagoras and Hermes Trismegistus. The extract on th eleft is from his poem *Unity.*

large Buddhist populations. Local Muslim dynasties became the norm, but early on they had rejected the rule of the Caliphs in far-away Baghdad.

Afghanistan entered a Golden Age, firstly under the Persian Sāmānid dynasty that ruled from Bukhara, then under the rule of one of the most brilliant generals of the Islamic world, Sultan Mahmud Ghaznawi (Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni), who ruled from 998-1030 CE. His huge Ghaznavid Empire's capital was at Ghazni, 100 miles south of Kābul. Arab historians likened the city to paradise, and it is still regarded as one of the two principal cultural centres, together with Herāt.

From here he conquered Afghanistan, Kashmir, the Punjab, Gujarat, and most of Iran. He looted Indian cities of their enormous wealth, which he used to turn Ghazni into one of the great centres of Islamic culture. It remained a splendid city for over 200 years, rivalling Baghdad itself. He patronised scholars, founded colleges, laid out gardens and built mosques, palaces and caravanserais. For all his destructiveness, he financed a court of a sophistication that is surprising in one whose father had been a pagan Turkish nomad. He set up a university and, it is said, employed 1,000 scholars and 400 poets, rewarding them with *'elephant-loads'* of gold.



Ferdowsi

Image (Ferdowsi) *adapted from:* Wikimedia / Tasnim News Agency

Mahmud's example was followed by his nobles and courtiers, soon transforming the city into the most brilliant cultural centre in Central Asia. The famous medieval Persian poet Ferdowsi (935-1020) completed his epic *Shāhnāme* (Book of Kings) at Mahmud's court. This book is twice as long as the *Iliad* and is still regarded by Persians as their national epic. Also taken captive and brought to the court was the astronomer, historian, poet, geographer and walking encyclopaedia al-Biruni (973-1048), the friend of Avicenna. He knew the Earth was round 500 years before Columbus did and estimated the radius of the Earth correct to within 12 miles.

Then the greatest misfortune of the medieval world descended on Afghanistan. The Mongol armies of Genghis Khan swept through the country. They destroyed not only the towns but also the underground irrigation channels called *qanats*, upon which the prosperity of the country depended. After Genghis Khan's death in 1227, his empire collapsed and Afghanistan was divided into several small principalities. At the end of the 14th century, *Timur* (known as *Tamburlane* in the West), whom many considered worse than Genghis Khan, conquered the country. But his

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Timurid conqueror Bābur at Ghazni.

successors, the Timurids, were great patrons of learning and the arts and enriched their capital city of Herāt. Under their rule, from 1404-1507, the country enjoyed peace and prosperity. Herāt blossomed and became the political and cultural centre of the sub-continent.

In the 16th century the Turkish-speaking Uzbeks invaded Afghanistan, and the city of Herāt became the real centre of Timurid culture, where they could indulge their love of painting, poetry, architecture and gardens. Bābur (1483-1530), the great, great grandfather of Shah Jahān who built the Taj Mahal, was a descendant of Timur on his father's side and Genghis Khan on his mother's. He lost his own kingdom in Ferghana and Samarkand, and as the kingdom of Kābul became *'vacant'* he moved there, and this city remained his base for the rest of his life. Kābul stands on a plain surrounded by rocky ridges, and here Bābur found pleasant gardens, well-watered by springs and canals. It was an international world in one city. You could hear as many as 12 languages on its streets and it was an important trading post on the routes from India to Persia, Iraq and Turkey in the west.



Genghis Khan



Bābur

From his capital at Kābul, he marched into India and became the founder of the magnificent Mughal Empire. He preferred his connection to the highly cultured courts of Timur and his successors. Bābur had a considerable talent for poetry, which he wrote in Turkish. His court at Kābul was outmatched only by the Timurid court at Herāt, which reached its peak of achievement at this time and which was the home of Bihzād, the incomparable painter of miniatures. During his reign Bābur was presented with the famous Koh-e Nur *'Mountain of Light'* diamond that is now to be found on the crown of the late Queen Mother, amongst the British crown jewels in the Tower of London.

He would have been horrified if he had known that the dynasty he founded in India would become known by a Persian term for *Mongol*, a name synonymous, even in his time, with barbarity. He cherished loyalty and excellence in any activity, but disliked excess, meanness, vanity, rudeness and narrowness of learning. His remarkable autobiography, the *Bāburnama*, still exists. After Bābur's death, his body was taken back to Kābul, the city he loved, for burial in a mausoleum in the famous Bāgh-e Bābur Shāh gardens, overlooking the city.

For the next 200 years Afghanistan was parcelled between the Persians and the Mughals. In 1747, at the very first *Loya Jirga*, when the various tribes united, they chose Ahmad Shāh Durrāni as the first Afghan king. He was the founder of the last great Afghan Empire. The most famous modern Afghan philosopher was Jamāluddin Afghāni from Asadabad. This famous intellectual and political activist was born in 1839. During his lifetime he travelled to Iran, Iraq, India,

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Egypt, Turkey, Russia, France and Britain. He died in 1897 in Istanbul, where the Sultan had received him. He dwelt on the positive role that religion has played in the moral and spiritual progress of humankind. The Durrāni dynasty lasted until 1973. For most of this time Afghanistan found itself at the centre of the Great Game between the British and Russian Empires.

Balkh

If there is one special place that exemplifies Afghanistan, it must be the ancient city of Balkh. Although now only a small provincial town, it has a glorious past. As the most ancient city of Afghanistan, it is known as the *mādar-e shahrhā* (mother of cities). Lying 20 kilometres northwest of Mazār-e Sharif, the reputed burial place of Ali, the fourth Caliph, who is regarded as the founder of Shi'ite Islam, Balkh was also the birthplace of Zoroastrianism, the place where Zoroaster first started to preach. And it was here, too, that he died.

In this ancient city there was originally a great shrine to Anāhitā, the water goddess, with her crown of stars, who was accepted into the Zoroastrian universe and was equated with the Roman goddess Venus. Her temple was a place of pilgrimage, attracting thousands of devotees at a time. Once considered the most important city in Central Asia, its resplendence and fame were held in high esteem, its riches always attracting the attention of numerous conquerors. At one time it stood on the banks of the great river Oxus (the modern Amu Darya), but now the river has retreated several miles to the north. In ancient times it was a well-watered land famous for its gold, rubies and lapis lazuli. Alexander the Great chose it as his base in Bactria and married Roxane there. The Greek satraps of Bactria (the Greco-Bactrians) became independent as the Seleucid Empire weakened and they made Balkh their capital. Under the Kushans, when Buddhism was practised throughout Afghanistan, many holy Buddhist temples graced the city.

Zoroaster was not the only great mystic to have lived here. The city was also home to *Rabi'a Balkhi* (Rabia of Balkh), a beautiful princess who lived at the court of the Sāmānids. She was Afghanistan's earliest and first female Sufi mystic poet, and very talented she



Depiction of Zoroaster in an alchemy manuscript published in Germany in the late 17th / early 18th century.

Mystic of Afghanistan

Love becomes perfect only when it transcends itself, becoming One with its object, producing Unity of Being.
— Hakim Sanāi of Ghazni —

Hakim Sanāi of Ghazni, (died 1131) another Sufi master, whom Rumi acknowledged as an inspirating author, was one of the most significant poets in the history of Islamic mysticism. He was one of the three great mystical mathnawi writers in Persian, the others being Attār and Rumi (Mevlana). Sanāi was the earliest Afghan teacher to use the love motif in Sufism. He wrote *"The Walled Garden of Truth"* and *"The Parliament of Birds"* which is an allegory of the human quest for higher enlightenment.

"Knowledge is good, it leads towards God. A learned person is considered God's chosen one; yet over-intellectualism is bad. To acquire knowledge for the sake of dignity and power is a waste of time and labour."

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Rumi gathers Sufi mystics.

was. Her poems are about nature, love and beauty. In a story similar to that of *Romeo and Juliet*, it is said that after the murder of the man she loved, she committed suicide and, as the story goes, wrote her final poem in her own blood as she lay dying. Balkh was the home of the famous Persian noble Barmakid family, hereditary custodians of the magnificent Nobahār (New Monastery, the famous Buddhist shrine there), which was a position of great prestige. Pilgrims flocked to this temple from the Iranian lands and beyond. During the early Islamic period, the Barmakids became Muslims and joined the Abbasid revolution against the Umayyad Caliphs in Damascus.

Later descendants of the family symbolised the opulence and culture of the Golden Age of Baghdad, and its members play a colourful role in the stories of the *Arabian Nights*. They were renowned for their fairness and generosity, and science and literature flourished under their policy of honouring, praising and rewarding scholars, writers and poets. The father of the Persian philosopher Avicenna came from Balkh before moving to Bukhara. Balkh was also the birthplace of Maulana Jalāluddin Balkhi (1207-1273), better known as Rumi or Mevlana, the great mystic who later fled to Turkey before the advancing Mongol hordes. He wrote...

> The intellectual quest though fine as pearl or coral, is not the spiritual search. That spiritual search is on another level. Spiritual wine is a different substance.

In 1220, the Mongols devastated Balkh, though later, under the Timurids, it flowered again. After that it fell into gradual decline, and today it has been eclipsed by the nearby provincial capital of Mazār-e Sharif. Somehow, the story of this city is a perfect illustration of the country's history and impact on the world.

AFGHANISTAN
Enchantment of the World

At his inauguration as Interim President in Kābul on 22nd December 2001, Hamid Karzai spoke the following words:

> In this critical time, when our country is watching our actions, let us come together and be brothers and sisters. Let us be good to each other and be compassionate and share our grief. Let us forget the sad past.

He was of course referring to the recent past of his country, and then times changed. Education and culture flourished again in that ancient country. But once again the Tālibān have returned to power and the country is again in a precarious position. But Afghans

"Let us be good to each other and be compassionate and share our grief. Let us forget the sad past."

are survivors they will re-build, as they have done so often in their past. Time is not linear, it is cyclical, and I hope their time of greatness will one day return.

They are a people inaccurately portrayed as savage, religious zealots. Instead, I have seen members of the Afghan diaspora as a people of prototypical human dignity. In their adversity, they remain stoic, restrained and dignified. They are friendly and hospitable, their hospitality is legendary, and they would do anything for a guest. If they are poor, they will still give you the best they have. They remind me so much of the Scots
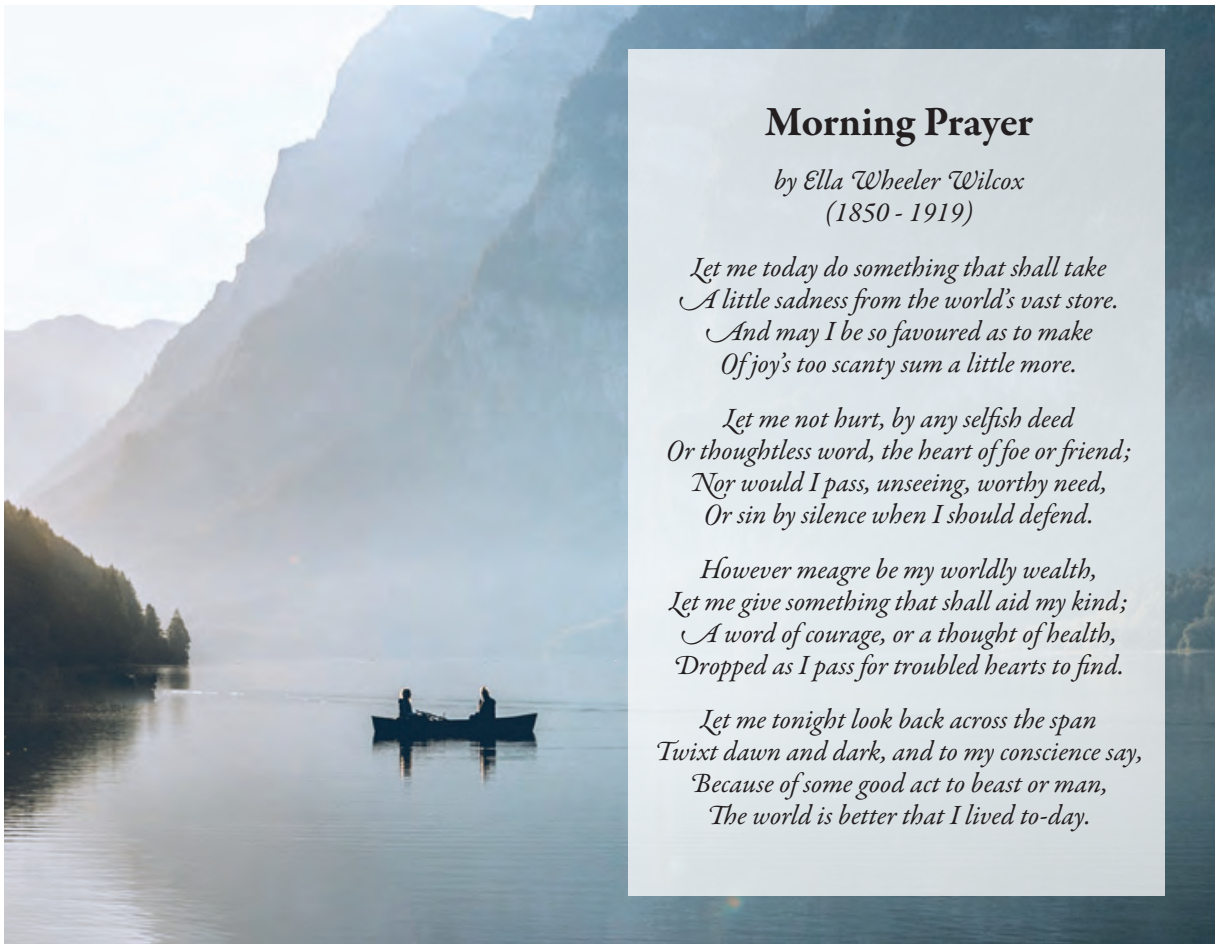
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in that regard. Both are highland peoples and they are distantly related to each other.

These, our distant cousins who have fled to our shores, have so much to offer their new homes, and we are forunate to have them among us. Religion is an intimate part of their life, not just something to do on a Sunday or a Friday. And in this we can see the ideals of the Rosicrucian. They are proud of their country, having never been colonised by any European power, and have a profound attachment to freedom. Respect is very important to them, as can be seen when they shake your hand with both of theirs and place their right hand over their heart.

If there is one thing we are taught, it is not to judge by appearances. In the past, seekers of wisdom turned to Afghanistan which has been a natural crossroads for as long as history itself. And they turned to the councils of its Sufi mystics. Afghanistan was several times the spiritual heartland of Asia, the nexus of converging streams of mystical knowledge: Zoroastrian, Greek, Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic. As the circle turns again, who knows what the future may hold for this beautiful though brutalised country?

> I walked to the edge of the plateau and looked down over the plain that stretched from its base, across an expanse of mud-coloured land sweltering beneath bands of summer haze. The light, too, had been purified by the height. Just then, the sun breached the east and the light poured like a liquid flame over the slope. I watched it creep up the hillside on my right and saw the grey rock turn to purple and the plain beyond it transformed from the colour of dust to gold, and the air was suddenly fragrant with the energy of the new day, as if the earth itself were drawing a life-giving breath. I had never known a sunrise quite so beautiful. [From *An Unexpected Light - Travels in Afghanistan* by Jason Elliot.]



Morning Prayer

by Ella Wheeler Wilcox
(1850 - 1919)

Let me today do something that shall take
A little sadness from the world's vast store.
And may I be so favoured as to make
Of joy's too scanty sum a little more.

Let me not hurt, by any selfish deed
Or thoughtless word, the heart of foe or friend;
Nor would I pass, unseeing, worthy need,
Or sin by silence when I should defend.

However meagre be my worldly wealth,
Let me give something that shall aid my kind;
A word of courage, or a thought of health,
Dropped as I pass for troubled hearts to find.

Let me tonight look back across the span
Twixt dawn and dark, and to my conscience say,
Because of some good act to beast or man,
The world is better that I lived to-day.

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by **Jesus Bonilla**

The Three Gunas



Esoteric traditions the world over, including the Kabala, Tarot and Yìjīng (I-Ching), have their own elementary principles or archetypes which function on every level. The sages of ancient India also sensed this subtle natural order and left us with a corpus of great knowledge about its operation, a knowledge which has brought depth and meaning to many of the very principles which Rosicrucians cherish most. These ancient sages incorporated their knowledge and experience into a yogic philosophy under the name of *'The Three Gunas'*, depending on the context meaning *'string, thread or strand'*, or *'virtue, merit, excellence'*, which is the subject of this article. According to the Bhagavad-Gītā or *'Song of God'* these are the three basic characteristics or attributes that exist in all things, including your body and mind

Nature, in its constant struggle to achieve balance, manifests three archetypes (or Gunas) called *Sattva*, Rayas and Tamas. These three archetypes are held responsible for moving the so-called *"Wheel of Life"* in its continual and gradual evolution. At the end of each great cycle, the universe returns to a state of non-manifestation, known as *'The Night of Brahma'*, where nature appears without its illusory planes. The Law of Compensation (or Karma) then disrupts this balance, thus starting a new operational cycle of the Gunas, resulting in the return to manifestation of the material universe, known as the *'Day of Brahma.'* Tamas represents destruction in humanity; Rayas represents our mundane ties, attachments and habits; and Sattva represents the transcendent path towards liberation. In the whole universe nothing can escape the influence of these three powers of nature; only illumination allows us to rise above them.

The Gunas in Humanity

The Gunas in humanity manifest in the following three aspects. Sattva is purity and wisdom, movement towards the light. Rayas is activity and continuous change, while

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Tamas is inertia, laziness, emptiness and darkness. Rayas and Tamas are two opposite points of a triangle searching for the third point, Sattva. Every human being manifests one of these three forces in his or her character, one predominating while the other two act only as secondary elements. Sattva ties us to happiness, Rayas to activity and Tamas to despair. Only Brahma is able to rise above them and Maya, the ancient Vedic word for illusion.



The Gunas in Mysticism

Sattvic students live in such a state of purity that contemplation of the *'Path of Discipleship'* ignites them like fire to gunpowder. Rayasic students resemble dried wood, needing the tutelage of an initiatic Order, discipline or tradition to arouse their inner fire. Tamasic students are those who have not yet attained that degree of inner evolution to feel attracted towards the transcendent. Like green wood, which when alight produces only smoke, they need time to dry out in order to release the heat that manifests light. These three states co-exist in every man and woman to differing degrees, though one always predominates over the other two.

We may regard Sattvic teachings as those taught by initiatic Orders such as AMORC or the Traditional Martinist Order. The Rayasic teachings are those with deep and devout religious overtones, but void of true depth and mystical unfoldment. The Tamasic teachings are distinguished by superstition, deceit, negative habits, darkness and all that contributes to the degradation of humanity due to the absence of light.

The Gunas in the Diet

The Sattvic diet consists of fruits, vegetables, beans, cereals, dairy-products, seeds, nuts and unrefined oils. Eating slowly and chewing well is Sattvic. The Rayasic diet consists of stimulants such as coffee, hot spices, eggs, chocolate, soft drinks and salt. Eating fast is Rayasic. The Tamasic diet is the most harmful to the body and mind. It stimulates the lower passions, and consists of rancid and fermented foods, vinegar, alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Tamasic eaters are compulsive eaters and also over-eat.

The Three Gunas and the Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad-Gītā refers to the three Gunas as the three forces of nature: light, fire and darkness. Their power is that which encloses in finite bodies the inextinguishable freedom of the infinite spirit. Sattva, being purity, is the intelligence which leads humanity towards a pure life via material welfare, and to intellectual knowledge and philosophy in order to obtain happiness on the material plane. Rayas, with its passionate nature, creates anxiety in humanity in order to pursue goals and attachments. It drives us to action, uniting us with the outcome. Tamas, born of ignorance, weakens the soul, submerging it in darkness and confusion. In humanity it induces a feeling of apathy, lack of willpower and lack of initiative.

In Yogic systems, Krishna taught the way to channel and transcend these three powers of nature. Those who detach themselves from the intellect, searching for the Light, detach themselves from ignorance. Those who remain calm before the constant upheavals of the world, maintaining their stance as the perfect observer while thinking for themselves, show the activity of the three powers of nature. They submerge their consciousness in the inner peace that lives in their spirit, being unmoved either by pleasure or sorrow, their sense of peace remaining unchanged when faced with either the pleasant or the unpleasant.

They are unaffected by flattery or suffering, and their minds are firm in their purpose, always remaining calm and fixed on their goal. They accept honour and misfortune with equanimity, bestowing upon their foes the same love as they have for their friends. This is those who have transcended the influence of the three Gunas. They are Illumined and life in this world is no longer painful and subject to constant changes, anxieties and tendencies. They have risen above the Gunas and reached full and final Mastery of Life on Earth.

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by **Harry Allsworth**



Interconnectedness

Have you ever had one of those days where nothing seems to be going right, where deadlines mysteriously converge, traffic lights are always red and lift doors close as you approach them? I'm sure you have and you'll understand how I felt as I found myself sitting alone in my cubicle late one summer afternoon in the large open-plan office where I earn my daily bread. Long after everyone had gone home I sat there, feeling decidedly sorry for myself and more than a bit angry that I hadn't completed the things I should easily have done that day.

In my negative self-reflection I felt that every effort I made to move things forward was being frustrated by delays and unnecessary obstructions. My mind rushed from one memory of disappointment to another in what seemed an endless cycle of unforeseen problems, unhelpful people and coincidences that seemed to have made a mockery of my plans. *"Why me!"* was the sorry-for-myself cry.

Most people have such moments from time to time, sometimes during the day but also late at night when the mind can't settle and keeps us awake with self-tormenting reflections about every trivial thing in God's creation. And when we're deep in such gloom it's easy to become caught in a whirlpool of negativity that can overwhelm our normal critical abilities and make us unable to break the cycle of negative thoughts, self-criticism and self-doubt.

If you recognise some of this, take heart, you're not alone, for many well-known people have, through the ages, been known to have been plagued at times with self-doubt and negative thoughts: William Blake, Buzz Aldrin, Hans Christian Andersen, Winston Churchill, Charles Darwin, Abraham Lincoln, Michelangelo, Isaac Newton, and many more. However, they all achieved great things in spite of, or maybe even because of, such negative moments, and that should give us hope when we face similar circumstances. If others fall face in the mud

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and manage to pull themselves up and continue as though nothing untoward has happened, then we can too. But how do we accomplish this? How should we react when we find ourselves falling into that negative state of mind that brings on all the 'demons of the mind?' Is there an emergency procedure we can follow when we're at our lowest ebb? Happily there is!

Pull Yourself Together

When we're down and at our whiniest about our circumstances, some well-intentioned people will gruffly say *'pull yourself together!'* as though a few kind words wouldn't have been better under the circumstances. Such advice so often ignores the basic mechanisms of our brains that have evolved over millions of years to recognise patterns in the world around us. So, when, through our own careless thinking, our minds have been given the task of finding every negative thing in sight, it does an extraordinarily good job of it. It can even create negative outcomes that don't even exist yet! So how can we free ourselves from this state of mind? Especially, how do we stop having negative thoughts when we know perfectly well they will merely spawn more of the same?

I find the most critical step in escaping such a mental state is one of self-recognition...

I find the most critical step in escaping such a mental state is one of self-recognition, namely recognising and becoming aware that my mind is actually actively seeking negativity around me, when it could just as easily be actively seeking positive situations instead. Then, rather than encouraging the mind to continue its self-defeating task of finding more and more negativity, I try to enter a state of neutrality, so-to-speak put the mind in neutral and allow life to coast along a while *'without me.'* As I do this, I naturally gravitate to a state of less and less obsessive thinking, less and less harsh judgement being delivered by my chattering brain about the rights and wrongs of whatever bothers me so much. Eventually I try to enter a state of no-thought, where my mind enters the closest I can to a state of true nothingness. I try, metaphorically, to *'step off the world'* a while as I blank my mind and give up everything to a *'higher power.'* That's the start of my emergency procedure; that's how I begin when I wish to stop the destructive cycle.

It's like a resetting of the mind, you know..., pressing and holding one of those buttons on your electronic watch until it's ready to have the time reset. The inner silence that accompanies a blanking of the mind is precisely what we need in order to re-sensitise ourselves to the presence of our deeper self and, through that awakening, to start looking in a different, more positive direction. Of course, thinking of nothing is, on the surface, quite a difficult task as it entails not thinking at all; and how do you do that? Well, even if you can't fully accomplish it, the mere act of trying will, at least partially, assist in resetting your mind and making it *available* to think about better things.

Illumination

Nevertheless, returning to my cubicle in the office, sitting there dejectedly on that clear summer's evening, I started trying to think of nothing just as the fading sunlight started to reflect from a window in a tall office building behind me and illuminated parts of the large open-plan room in a seemingly random manner. It was a surreal experience, as though time were slowing down just for me. It truly felt as though something were happening just for my benefit, and I was astounded at the sudden clarity and beauty of everything.

As I looked more closely at the light and dark patches in the large room, the areas being exposed by the light were anything but random for me; there was purpose and beauty everywhere. The photographs of families on the desks of my work colleagues were brightly illuminated, showing the smiles and love within each frame. I began to follow the light beams as they slowly moved around the room, and, noticed how each item touched by the sun's rays seemed to be linked in some way with the previous item and led on to the next one as if they were related to each other, one giving birth to the next, each one connected to its predecessor and its successor in a long line of cause and effect.

Following the light in this silent manner, I could see how people in the office shared many things. More than just trivial tasks, they shared aspirations and, above all, they shared the many small islands of love they had experienced. I forgot time, forgot where I was, as I began to feel linked by deeper shared values that made

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all of us more like a big loving family than a random group of people sharing a miserable and stressful work environment.

As I wondered what would be illuminated next, I suddenly felt a warmth on my back and knew that I was now the focus of the light. At that moment I realised that, instead of being held back, I was simply a part of a much larger pattern where, even if I didn't appreciate it at the time, I was an essential cog in a big and wondrous machine, a much greater whole than I had ever dared believe possible. And the best thing about this was that I felt a deep purpose behind that *'whole'*, even though I couldn't understand what it was. All seemed so clear at the time, though I can't today explain what it was other than the profound sense of connectedness that so utterly consumed me.

That annoying red traffic light that delayed me from getting to work on time that morning, the old man driving erratically at a snail's pace which made my two-minute delay to my desk turn into 10 minutes..., all that and much more had a purpose, and I saw that the purpose was good and in fact was precisely as it should be; no faster, no slower, no need to change anything one way or the other, all was working to perfection just the way it was meant to happen. The only thing that was missing that hectic morning was my trust in allowing a greater plan to unfold. Truly there is a greater purpose behind everything, even when we can't see it, but maybe *especially* when we can't see it.

I felt a deep purpose behind that 'whole', even though I couldn't understand what it was.

So the next time you're confronted by a *'bad day'*, take time to relax a while, step off the world and blank your mind with a feeling of gratitude and wonder for just a few minutes. There's a whole universe out there working for you, making things happen just the way they were meant to. Our thoughts and experiences are all interconnected and we can, and should, design our lives to seek the positive and creative, and shun and discard the negative and destructive..., always!



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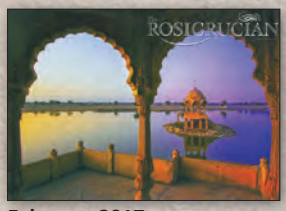
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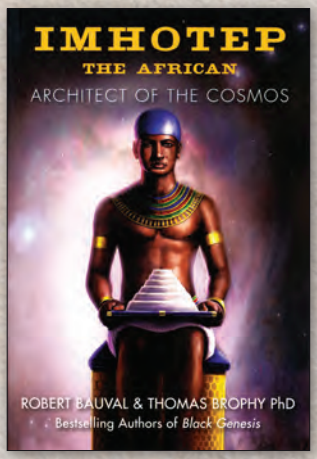


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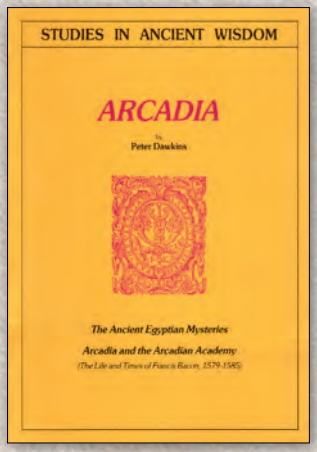
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The home we seek is in eternity, the Truth we seek is like a shoreless sea of which your paradise is but a drop. This ocean can be yours.

Why should you stop, beguiled by dreams of evanescent dew? The secrets of the sun are yours, but you content yourself with motes trapped in its beams.

Turn to what truly lives, reject what seems. Which matters more, the body or the soul? Be whole: desire and journey to the Whole.

Attār of Nishapur (1145-1221)
(from *'Conference of the Birds'*)