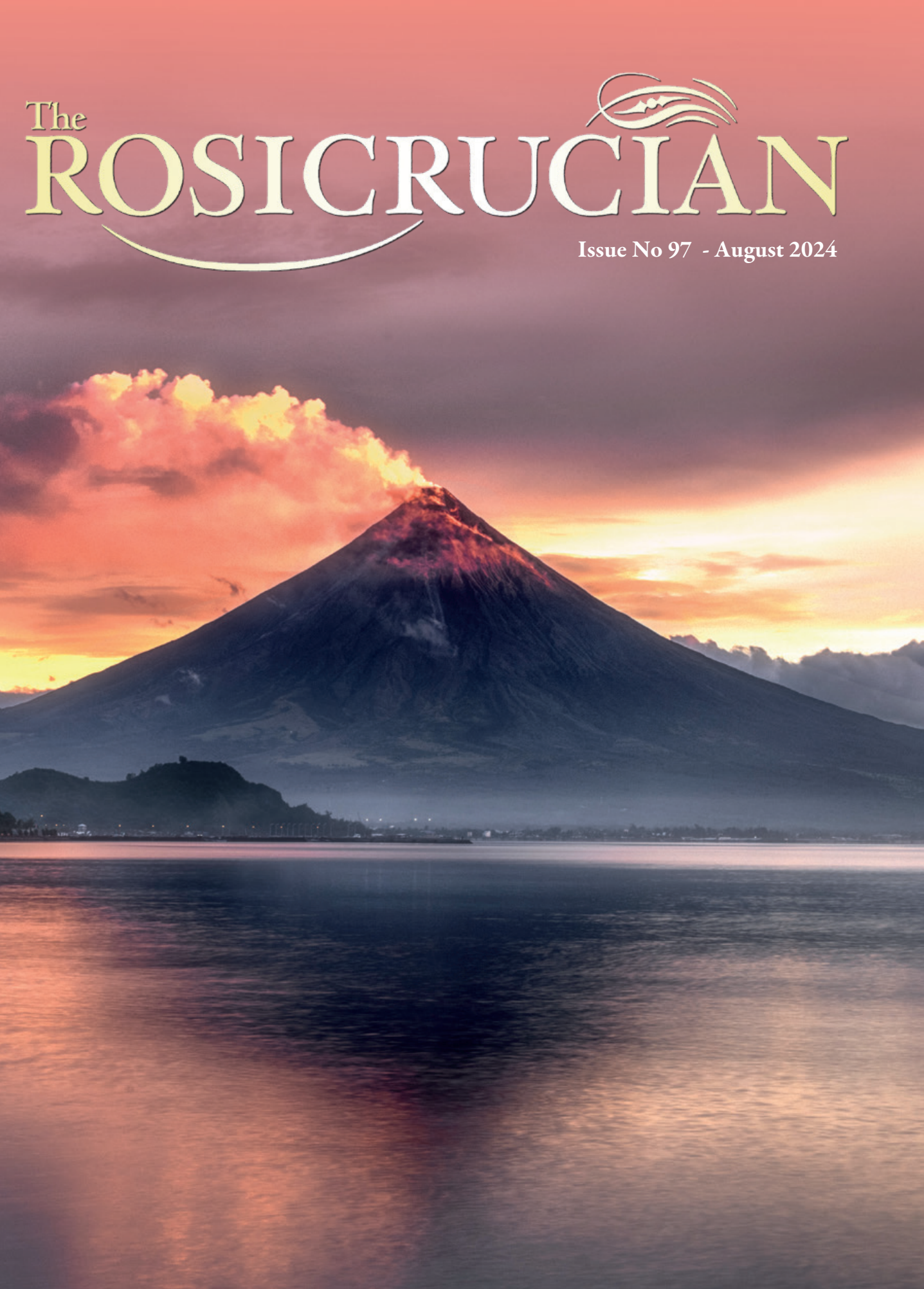
The ROSICRUCIAN

Issue No 97 - August 2024



Contribute to Peace



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When we survey the history of humanity from its very dawn to the modern day, we observe that it is littered with wars. Generally speaking, they are caused by vested economic, political or religious interests: for example, the goods belonging to one or another group of people are appropriated, a particular form of government is imposed, or people are forced to convert to a particular religion. Whatever the cause, the common factor is that the decision to conduct war and the waging thereof is people. People are responsible for the horrors they generate; it is not chance or fate, or even God. Throughout the ages, wars have caused the death of millions of men, women and children, plunging so many families into despair and chaos. Today, the situation is ever more disturbing now that humanity has the means to self-destruct on a planetary scale.

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My Contribution to Peace

I contribute to Peace when I strive to express the best of myself in my contacts with others.

I contribute to Peace when I use my intelligence and abilities to serve Good.

I contribute to Peace when I feel compassion toward all who suffer.

I contribute to Peace when I see all people as my brethren, regardless of race, culture or religion.

I contribute to Peace when I rejoice over the happiness of others and pray for their well-being.

I contribute to Peace when I listen with tolerance to opinions that differ from mine or even oppose them.

I contribute to Peace when I resort to dialogue rather than to force to settle any conflict.

I contribute to Peace when I respect nature and preserve it for generations to come.

I contribute to Peace when I do not seek to impose my conception of God upon others.

I contribute to Peace when I make Peace the foundation of my ideals and philosophy.

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Sunrise paints beautiful hues of rose gold light upon the flanks of the Mayon Volcano—rising in quiet perfection of symmetry above the calm waters of a lake next to Lagazpi city, Albay Province, Philippines.----

Credit: iStock.com / Preeyaporn Kaewsaard

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CONSCIOUSNESS
The Final Frontier

by **Bill Anderson**

At the beginning of each episode of Star Trek we heard the words: *Space, the Final Frontier!* While this may sound reasonable, in my lifetime we've landed on the Moon many times, sent probes to several planets and asteroids, obtained wonderfully detailed pictures of parts of Pluto and other planets in our solar system, and sent as well the two Voyager spacecraft way out through the Heliopause and on into interstellar space.

To my mind, space is looking less of a barrier, less of a final frontier nowadays, though I believe that for humankind there is indeed one final, fundamentally important frontier we must cross: ***Consciousness***. The study of consciousness offers us the chance to get to the core of what it means to be human and what our species is destined to accomplish. Once

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we enter that inner core of human accomplishment and fully understand our own inner workings, the whole universe will reveal itself to us, with former mysteries at last clearly understood.

Searching for Wisdom

When I did undergraduate studies in philosophy, the lecturers taught that there were only two approaches to consciousness: either you believe consciousness can be explained in conventional scientific terms, or you believe that consciousness is something magical and mysterious that science will never understand. I found neither view satisfactory, for they both smacked of an *'all or nothing'* approach, something that assiduously avoided a middle ground or the possibility that elements of the view on the extreme opposite of one's own, may have some valid points worth investigating.

I love the scientific approach to everything, but can't see that it has yet come close even to yielding a satisfactorily explanation for the phenomenon of consciousness. But I certainly look forward to the day when we'll be able to study consciousness just like any of the other sciences. The day will come, of that I am sure, but for now at least, I must have some believable concept of what it is that thinks within me, i.e. what is the thinking part of me?

Many Rosicrucians believe that every person possesses a soul which in some mysterious way causes consciousness to arise when a suitable brain, body and neurological system is ready to be the 'fired up' with Vital Life Force, and ending up with a conscious, living being, capable of thoughts and emotions, and bearing our name.

'The key to human progress lies in the evolution of consciousness.' This extract from the *'Rosicrucian Code of Life'* highlights the age-old search to understand what consciousness actually is and how it comes into being. The Rosicrucian teachings maintain that consciousness, all types of consciousness, is an attribute of the soul, calling it the mental aspect of life which includes sensation, realisation and reasoning of which the active principles are imagination, aspiration and inspiration. It is central to human life and open to the outer and inner worlds.



"In each of us there is another whom we do not know"

Carl Jung (1875-1961)

The teachings further relate that the expression of divine consciousness in humans has its own unique faculties, and perceives things within its own domain of functioning. The spiritual consciousness is the inner self whereas the physical consciousness only deals with the material world. Consciousness, life force and mind are therefore related, and enter and leave the body together.[1]

Ancient Greek Thought

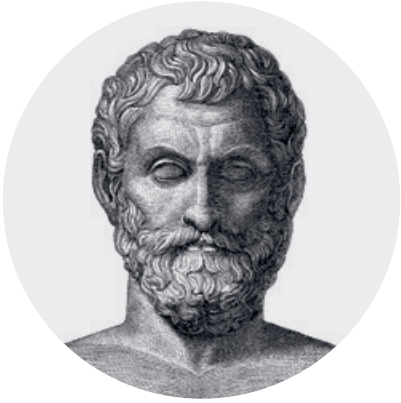
The earliest indication we have of an attempt to understand consciousness can be found in early ancient Greek thought, examples of which are presented in the 5th Degree of the Rosicrucian Order's study curriculum. These examples clearly point to doctrines which later became known as panpsychism, which begins its search for truth by asking *what exists*, what *causes existence* to appear, and what causes existence to appear in the form it does.

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The Greek philosophers asked *'What is being?'* and then went on to discuss what is and is not *'real'*. For the first time in history, people were asking themselves if what was real was in fact different, very different, from what humans perceive it to be. And that, to the best of our knowledge presaged the first beginnings of true scientific enquiry.

One of the first pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece, Thales of Miletus in modern-day Turkey (c. 624–545 BCE) argued for the attribution of mind that tends towards a universal mind. The argument depends on the idea that beings with minds are *self-movers*. Thales noted that magnets and, under certain circumstances, amber, can move themselves, and concludes that they therefore possessed minds and thus consciousness. Of course we know today that magnets and negatively charged pieces of amber possess nothing remotely similar to what we understand mind to be; but it marked the first time that such things were even thought of.

The pre-Socratic philosophers were struck by a dilemma: either mind is an elemental feature of the world, or mind can somehow be reduced to more fundamental elements. If they opted for the view that mind is an elemental feature of the world, then they had to account for the apparent lack of mental features at the fundamental level. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (c. 500–425 BCE)



Thales of Miletus



Anaxagoras of Clazomenae

flatly denied that elements can emerge from more basic features of reality and instead advanced the view that *'everything is in everything.'*

However, Anaxagoras's views on the mind are complex. He appeared to believe that everything has a portion of *mind* (the Divine Mind in modern terms) in it but did not go so far as to assert that everything had a mind. He envisioned the world as composed of a myriad of substances, but these were ordered and regulated by the single over-arching principle of *nous* (mind). Nous was a unifying, cosmic mental force that was interwoven with the movement and actions of different elements. The mind that is ubiquitous is not just some amorphous, abstract mind, but essentially like that of animals, that is, an animated soul or spirit. What was striking about these early attempts to formulate an integrated theory of reality is that the mind and particularly consciousness kept arising as special problems.

Mental Alchemy

Alchemy is not only the origin of systematic experimentation and chemistry but also the first attempt to create a cohesive science of consciousness. Those early philosophers of nature treated mental contents as objective phenomena, and they believed the universal operations used in their laboratories could transform a dark leaden mind into a shining golden one.

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The Hermetic philosophy behind alchemy taught that our thoughts and feelings are the thoughts and feelings of the whole universe, and that intrinsic perspective generated deep insight into the structure of mind. Alchemists viewed consciousness as a natural force that could be harnessed through a marriage of logic and intuition, a union of objective and subjective realities.

Like modern seekers of a unified field theory, alchemists sought one true philosophy of universal principles that were as valid in Nature as they were in their own minds and souls, and in the One Mind of the Cosmos. The resulting ideas on mind and matter leads to a truer understanding of the Philosopher's Stone – not as an object but a state of mind.[2]

Panpsychism

'What makes us human may not be uniquely human after all' – David Attenborough.

Panpsychism is the view that all things have a mind or a mind-like quality. The word itself was coined by the Italian philosopher Francesco Patrizi in the 16th century and derives from the two Greek words *pan* (all) and *psyche* (soul or mind).

The word *'panpsychism'* literally means that everything has a mind. However, nowadays it is generally understood as the view that mentality is fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world. As a concept it maintains that at least some kinds of micro-level entities such as cells have mentality, and that instances of those kinds are found in all things throughout the material universe.

Panpsychism is a modern term but which has a long and venerable history in philosophical traditions of both East and West and has recently enjoyed a revival in philosophy. For its supporters panpsychism offers an attractive middle way between physicalism on the one hand and dualism on the other. The worry with dualism, the view that mind and matter are fundamentally different kinds of thing, is that it leaves us with a radically disunified picture of nature, and the deep difficulty

"What makes us human may not be uniquely human after all"

David Attenborough.



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Some philosophers have argued that literally every object in the universe possesses some mind-like quality.

of understanding how mind and brain interact. And whilst physicalism offers a simple and unified vision of the world, this is arguably at the cost of being unable to give a satisfactory account of the emergence of human and animal consciousness. Panpsychism, strange as it may sound on first hearing, promises a satisfying account of the human mind within a unified conception of nature.

Some philosophers have argued that literally every object in the universe, every part of every object, and every system of objects possesses some mind-like quality. Other philosophers have been more restrictive, arguing that only certain broad classes of things possess mind, or that, at least, the smallest parts of things, such as atoms, possess mind.

Modern Considerations

Where does consciousness come from? What if consciousness is not something special that the brain does but is instead a quality inherent to all matter? Erwin Schrödinger (1887–1961), the first to discuss the concept of quantum entanglement the following about consciousness:

> Consciousness cannot be accounted for in physical terms. For consciousness is absolutely fundamental. It cannot be accounted for in terms of anything else.

Let's have a look at more modern views. In his book *Duration and Simultaneity*, the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) wrote:

> What we wish to establish is that we cannot speak of a reality that endures without inserting consciousness into it. ... It is impossible to imagine or conceive a connecting link between the before and after without an element of memory and, consequently, of consciousness.



Erwin Schrödinger



Henri Bergson

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Recent developments have gone some way to reversing the aversion to panpsychism that has dominated Western philosophy in recent times. From the 1970s onwards, hostility to metaphysics slowly withdrew, and many philosophers in the analytic tradition now accept the inevitability of metaphysics. And towards the end of the 20th century and into the 21st, the continuing failure of physicalists to come up with a satisfying account of consciousness has led many to look for alternatives. As a result of both of these things, a significant and growing minority of analytic philosophers have begun seriously to explore the potential of panpsychism, both to provide a satisfying account of the emergence of human consciousness and to give a positive account of the intrinsic nature of matter.

In the standard view of things, consciousness exists only in the brains of highly evolved organisms, and so consciousness exists only in a tiny part of the universe and only in very recent history. But according to panpsychism, consciousness pervades the universe and is a fundamental feature of it. This doesn't mean that everything is conscious. The basic commitment is that the fundamental constituents of reality, perhaps electrons and quarks have incredibly simple forms of experience. And the very complex experience of the human or animal brain is somehow derived from the experience of the brain's most basic parts.

Consciousness, for the panpsychist, is the intrinsic nature of matter. There is just matter, on this view, nothing supernatural or spiritual. But matter can be described from two perspectives. Physical science describes matter *'from the outside'*, in terms of its behaviour. But matter 'from the inside' is constituted of forms of consciousness.

What this offers us is a beautifully simple, elegant way of integrating consciousness into our scientific world view, of marrying what we know about ourselves from the inside and what science tells us about matter from the outside.

There is a profound difficulty at the heart of the science of consciousness, for consciousness is unobservable. You cannot look inside an electron to see whether or not it is conscious. But nor can you look inside someone's head and see their feelings and experiences. We know that consciousness exists not from observation and experiment but by being conscious. The only way we can find out about the consciousness of others is by asking them: I cannot directly perceive your experience, but I can ask you what you're feeling.

We should also consider that all living things may have a form of consciousness. It need not be the same as out own. As an example, it is known that plants will open and close their flowers in sunlight and close them in darkness. This may indicate a rudimentary form of consciousness. Likewise, trees are thought to communicate through their roots.

Humans can see beyond the restrictions of planet Earth to the stars and thus our consciousness grows. However, if we look at a colony of ants, each ant will have its own consciousness but simultaneously a group consciousness; bees likewise. Their consciousness is different from ours, you may even say more restrictive for what can they know of the rest of the world, never



Trees are thought to communicate through their roots.

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mind the universe. They operate and thus are conscious of their own sphere of activity.

In the oceans we find differing levels of consciousness, from the very basic, through species like the octopus which is said to be very intelligent, to dolphins and whales whose brain capacities we are just beginning to discover. They communicate with a language, but again what can they know of the land or the universe at large? How does consciousness expand?

Cosmic Consciousness

'We are the Cosmos made conscious, and life is the means by which the universe understands itself.'
–– Brian Cox ––

If we are willing to admit that consciousness pervades the universe wherever there is life, then the next step is the Rosicrucian concept of Cosmic Consciousness.[3] Christian Bernard, in his book *Rosicrucian Reflections* asks the question: *'What is Cosmic Consciousness?'* His answer is that it is an essence, an attribute of the Universal Soul which manifests in every living organism *'...from the tiniest living creature to the most developed human being.'*

It prompts living beings to evolve towards perfecting their own nature. We have to learn to know ourselves and to reach the deepest part of our beings. In his concluding remarks, the Imperator Emeritus states that when we have succeeded in experiencing Cosmic Consciousness, we will have fulfilled our consciousness of the Cosmic, of the Divine.

Scientific Revolution

In the *New Scientist* magazine of 2 May 2020 there

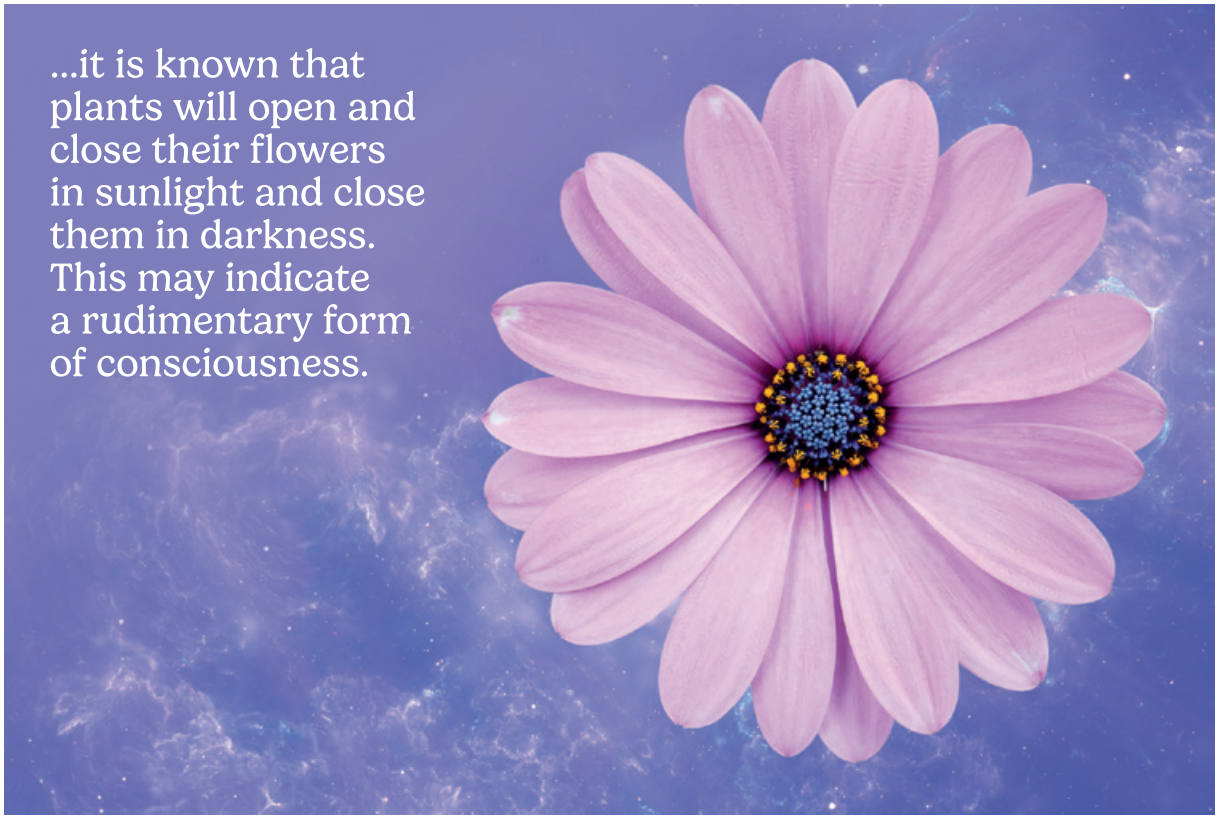


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was a feature article written by Michael Brooks. He discussed the mathematical model of consciousness, quoting *Johannes Kleiner* from the Munich Centre for Mathematical Philosophy who wrote: *'This could be the beginning of a scientific revolution.'* He was commenting on mathematicians who were working on consciousness and that what they are uncovering seems to suggest that if we are to achieve a precise description of consciousness, we may have to ditch our intuitions and accept that all kinds of inanimate matter could be conscious – maybe even the universe as a whole.[4]

This scientific revolution has been a long time coming. Philosophers have pondered over the nature of consciousness for a couple of thousand years, largely to no avail. Then, half a century ago, biologists got involved. They have discovered correlations between the activity of brain cells and individual instances of experience known as qualia.[5] They suggested that particles or other basic entities might have simple forms of consciousness that combine to make our own.

Are there different levels of consciousness? We are all aware that our level of consciousness differs between when we are awake and when we are asleep. We have seen previously how all living things on this planet have some form of consciousness, even if we are unable to understand it, just like the Europeans in the pre-Columbian Americas. Our brain contains some 90 billion neurons, at last count, and yet how it functions is still a mystery[6].

Unravelling the Mystery

'The earth is a very small stage in a great cosmic arena.'
–– Carl Sagan ––

We are wanderers through time and space. I've been fortunate to have travelled widely and found a few places on Earth that seemed 'special' to me. But what does that mean? What was there about those particular places that made me feel they were special as opposed to almost everywhere else. I would suggest that in these spots my own consciousness felt an affinity with the consciousness of that particular place.

The people of South American Andes believed that inanimate objects had a form of consciousness and they therefore treated them as almost godlike, including rocks, mountains, streams. Who are we to say that they were wrong and that they weren't in fact more spiritually aware than we are? When the conquistadores first arrived they simply did not understand; they were unable to attune or even comprehend the majesty of consciousness.

In my day-to-day life, whenever I first see the sun or the moon in the morning, I bow my head and welcome them into my consciousness each day. If I see a particularly beautiful vista in the countryside, I do the same. It is a way of showing reverence for the consciousness of the Cosmic, of which we are all a constituent part.

Since our Rosicrucian teachings tell us about Panentheism, where everything in the universe is contained within *'God'* or the *'Cosmic'*, it is not such a leap to believe that this whole is at least conscious as we are.

> Who can sing all songs, and speak all languages. Who can count all the stars and all the pebbles in the sea? Why, only a Latvian Daina!

Endnotes

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4. 'Here, There, Everywhere' in *New Scientist*, 20 May 2020, pp. 40–44
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6. *Your Conscious Mind,* ISBN: 978-1-47362-962-2.

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Spiritual Friends

by **José Botello**

One of my favorite hobbies is reading books or magazines and, when visiting bookstores and libraries, searching among different titles and authors. In one of these searches, I once read something by an author who wrote, 'Sometimes we ask the Divine for a miracle and It sends us a friend.'

The topic of friends is really nothing new—Greek philosophers were already discussing it more than 2,400 years ago. Aristotle himself declared, 'Without friends no-one would want to live.' He also added that friendship helps younger ones to not make mistakes and alleviates the vulnerability of older ones.

If we go back a little further in the ancient roots of human history, to the time of the artwork during the period of the Pharaoh Akhnaton, we discover that in those times there was no specific term for a friend: the term 'brother' was used instead. The depictions of Akhnaton with his family are a good example of this. The pharaoh embraces one of his daughters and 'gives her the breath, shares with her his air' and is thereby declaring that she is very important to him.

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Nowadays, one way to demonstrate an important relationship is through friendship, which in some ancient cultures was identified with brotherhood. In brotherhood there is reunion, touching and shaking hands. We see very ancient images where those who share brotherhood sit at the same table to partake of food and stories. This is something we have seen in many ancient cultures.

Friendship, later called 'fraternity' (inclusive of both men and women), from a philosophical point of view is a universal and transversal value, implying for all people the need to consider themselves as brothers and sisters. In this way the value of fraternity leads us to be supportive, respectful, and empathetic with each other. Already in the 18th century fraternity was linked to the ideals promoted by the 1789 French Revolution, that is, the quest for liberty, equality and fraternity.

Belonging to a community of like-minded people is a great help in difficult times.

A notable quote is by Raymond Andrea, in his book *The Technique of the Master*, in which he says: 'In fact, the more we advance in our spiritual/mystical work, the more it appears necessary and natural to evaluate the persons we meet according to this inner point of view, and the better we develop a completely new scale of values and thus move away from the judgment of being objective. Then we seek the certain intuition of the divine guide, whose voice is so clear and insistent that we recognise and trust it. This is how we learn to detect our true companions on the Path.'

There are different companions on the path. There are those with whom we shared a common history for many years, as well as those who accompany us in the search for wellbeing. We also have friends who are present in moments of fun and joy and those companions in the pursuit of excellence and professional or economic wellbeing. Additionally, no less important are those who accompany us on the spiritual path, whom I prefer to call 'spiritual friends', and I am referring here to my fratres and sorores (Rosicrucian brothers and sisters).

The year 1972 was a very important year in my life. On 1 February of that year I became a member of our Order. At the end of the previous year, at the age of 18, I had obtained my bachelor's degree in business and moved to my country's capital city to continue my higher studies in accounting. And then something interesting occurred to me.

For the first time I had moved away from my childhood friends and my school friends, and I was leaving behind my whole life of adventures and memories. Although it was only an 18-year-long story, I already missed it. Today I still have some of these friends, whom I call my 'joint history' friends, my life friends.

At the same time that I left behind many of those joint history friends, I met, thanks to my Rosicrucian affiliation in the same year, a group of friends whom I call my 'spiritual friends'. I quickly learned that the spiritual path requires spiritual friends. We always need allies, and although no-one can directly change another they can do a lot to support them. For instance, when you lose interest in participating in group activities, you can still join in just for the sake of feeling supported or not to disappoint them. Belonging to a community of like-minded people is a great help in difficult times.

This new group of friends I met was totally different from those I had met in the past. They were a group of seekers of excellence and wisdom through knowledge, and this filled me with satisfaction. It is a somewhat difficult group to belong to because it requires equal attention to the way you behave with others and to the way others behave with you. It was in this group that I discovered the true concept of humility.

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Of all the negative emotions we may see in another person, I think the one that bothers people the most is arrogance, which is the opposite of humility. We tend to get more upset with an arrogant person than with a violent person. For this reason, in our society, humility is defined as a noble and spiritual state, a state of equanimity that recognises equality in all relationships. In humility, everyone is given the same value and the same importance, so we all hold the same importance and the same value when we relate to each other. Human behavior in relation to humility clearly shows the level of consciousness of the individual—and mine was not very high, to say the least. Thus I feel indebted to my fratres and sorores on the mystical Path.

The relationship of friendship is somewhat demanding, due to the difficulty we have in feeling equality when we value ourselves and others. My group of friends required an investment of time and space in order to achieve its continuity, something that was not easy for me at age 19, with a new profession, a new city to discover and a university career degree to achieve. However, during the seven years that I spent with this first spiritual group I never stopped caring for it and nourishing it. It was through this group of fratres and sorores of the Lodge that I came to be acquainted with a second group of spiritual friends in my life.

...in our society, humility is defined as a noble and spiritual state, a state of equanimity that recognises equality in all relationships.

The year 1979 marked another important event on my path. That year I ceased to be an investigator of financial banking crimes, a job to which I had dedicated the previous seven years. I also left my colleagues, with whom I had already established an emotional connection. Just a few months earlier, in December 1978, I had got married (and since then 45 years have elapsed in my union—thank you, Lala!). I also had a new job as the deputy financial director for the national telephone company.

However, every time I went into my office and saw under my name the title 'Deputy Controller', I felt an emptiness in my heart, a void, which was the absence of my historical friends, the ones I mentioned earlier as being my first group of friends, and the absence of the colleagues whom I had been used to seeing. I realised that these relationships took a few years to build. The new job was a good position but very solitary. Besides that, the political situation of my country was deteriorating, and thus a change of environment was inevitable. It was in that year, just four days after my first wedding anniversary, that my wife and I decided to leave everything behind and emigrate to another country in search of new opportunities.

Thus, before the end of 1979, Lala resigned from her position as financial administrator of a prestigious airline company, and I resigned as deputy financial director of my country's national telephone company. Without much pondering, we emigrated to a strange country, with a strange language and a strange culture for us. I remember those first Christmas family dinners: how both Lala and I were in tears with every bite, eating something that we didn't know what it was and missing the food of our small town, the typical food of the end-of-the-year festivities to which we were so accustomed. I missed the friends of life.

Here in this new environment, however, I met my third group of friends: family friends whom I preferred to call emotional friends. Next to my father, mother and siblings, the first one that comes to my memory is my father-in-law—it was love at first sight. My father-in-law and I have been great friends. The interesting thing about this group of family friends was that their main objective was to have a good time. The truth is that at the time they were a very fun group, and today I miss them very

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much. I must speak in past tense because most of them have already passed away. There are still a few with us today, and when we get together we have a wonderful time, always spending unforgettable moments.

In addition to my other groups of friends, there is also the group of 'fun friends'. This is a very interesting group because it exclusively gathers members of all the previous groups. The difference between this group and the others is that their main objective is to have a good time, to have healthy fun. It is easily said, but in practice it is not so easy to find friends who can have a good time within the framework of respect for the ethical and moral values of the rest of the group. This is a very important group for my mental health: it is the group of travel, exotic restaurants, movies, theatre, weekend barbeques, etc., and is a very fun and tolerant group at the same time. There is never a problem in deciding where we go or what we eat or drink. We have been part of this group for more than forty uninterrupted years of shared celebrations and joys.

But the topic that is central to this article is that of spiritual friends. As I mentioned earlier, 1979 was a very important year for me, and this included my spiritual friends. Upon moving to a new city at the end of 1979, I visited a local affiliated body in search of spiritual friends. I knew beforehand that, in this group of friends, nationality, language, sex, gender, race, religion and politics would not be important because there is a common goal, a quest, that turns it into a fraternity.

Hundreds of years of study and research have repeatedly shown that the people who do best in life and achieve the greatest happiness are those who rely on relationships with their family, their life friends and their community, most especially with spiritual friends, some of whom we call Rosicrucian fratres and sorores, and others whom we call brothers and sisters.

We all seek happiness. We all want to be happy, and for many this becomes a philosophy of life, which implies, among other things, improving our way of

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thinking and knowing how to distinguish those things that benefit us or not. This also includes knowing what other people require from us in order to be happy and to feel good. Knowing how to provide others with their needs is a sign of wisdom and spiritual growth.

The norms of social behavior are different from the norms of behavior in the world of markets, whether labour or economic. In the labour market, when we provide a service we expect to be paid an equivalent amount, since this is the law. Social norms do not work this way, since they do not carry a compensation for goods or services. In the spiritual realm, especially, compensation may come in the form of a thank you, of friendship, perhaps of an apprenticeship, or simply the expectation of in the future receiving another favour in return. All of these rewards are more powerful than money.

Knowing how to provide others with their needs is a sign of wisdom and spiritual growth

The problem arises when we confuse market norms with social norms: this happens because social norms are more powerful than market norms. For example, compensating someone with money reduces their motivation—since the relationship is no longer voluntary, it becomes commercial. Worst of all, when this happens it is almost impossible to go back after the cessation of the service relationship. For this reason, on the Rosicrucian path spiritual conduct has its own conditions. It has been deeply helpful to be instructed through well-organised teachings, through Initiation and, not least, through spiritual friends.



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Know Thyself

by **Leonard Ziebel**



Ruins of Athina Pronaia temple in Ancient Delphi, Greece.

The view from the Delphic slopes was breath-taking. Cloud-capped Mt. Parnassos, with patches of snow still clinging to its highest peaks, towered over precipitous cliffs that ringed a natural amphitheatre on one side and dropped down to the seemingly bottomless *Pleistos* valley on the other side. Small rivulets of melted snow trickled down undulating terraces, creating the *Kastalian Spring* in a narrow crevice at the foot of the mountain.

Apollo consecrated *Kastalia* to the *Muses* and it was said that the spring could inspire the genius of poetry to those who drank her waters or listened to their quiet sound. An undisturbed view of the valley below offered an awe-inspiring spectacle that stretched

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'Lycurgus Consulting the Pythia' (the high priestess and oracle of Delphi), by Eugène Delacroix.



'Pallas Athene Visiting Apollo on the Parnassus', by Arnold Houbraken.

to the peacock-blue waters of the Gulf of Corinth, 15 kilometres away, where the ancient harbour of *Kirrha* was situated. It was here that supplicants landed on their journey to consult the Oracle.

The Joyous Journey: 206 BCE

The easiest access to Delphi was through the gorge leading from the port of *Itea* that bordered on the Gulf of Corinth. Gradually, as the multitudes of visitors groped their way over the rough terrain, a winding, tortuous path was cut through the mountain leading to the Oracle, which was set at the top. This became known as the *Sacred Way* and processions of pilgrims, chanting holy songs and playing sacred music, climbed over the sharp, projecting crags upon which *Aesop*, the fable writer, had met his death. Finally the visitors reached the sanctuary.

One group from the city of *Elea* in southern Italy, whose most famous citizen was the esoteric philosopher Parmenides, joined the throng of pilgrims at dawn on the 7th day of the month *Bysios* (February-March). *Phoibos Apollo*, the great god of light, had returned a few days earlier from *Hyperborea*, his winter quarters north of Thrace, and now, on his natal day, the first oracular session of the year was about to begin.

Once per month, the *Pythia*, who was the high priestess and oracle of Delphi, emerged with her retinue of assistants and priests and went through an intricate series of rituals to purify herself. First, she purified herself by bathing in the pure, sparkling waters of Kastalia This was the *outer purification*. Then the Pythia and her cortege walked ceremoniously up the hillside, through the sanctuary's terraced compound, drawing near to another spring called *Kassotis*, whose clear and cool waters she drank. This was the *inner purification*.



Zeus

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The melancholic beauty and distinctly spiritual atmosphere created by the stillness of the surroundings, make it easy to understand why Zeus, the father of the gods, placed the conical-shaped stone called the *omphalos*, denoting the *navel* [of the earth], at Delphi. According to legend, to find the exact centre of the earth, Zeus released two eagles simultaneously from either end of the world to determine where the centre lay: they met above Delphi! Already for hundreds of years, Mt. Parnassos had been considered sacred and here a new temple was dedicated to Zeus' favourite son, Apollo, the god of harmony, order, light, prophecy, medicine and healing. He was also the patron of youth, beauty, music and colonisation.

Delphi is not only a major Hellenic sanctuary, it also possesses gymnasia, athletic games, music festivals, merchant stalls, guides, food vendors, hawkers of religious souvenirs and even a theatre. So much to see and do here!

But Chrysanthios and I had a single purpose, and after purifying ourselves in the waters of Kastalia, we followed the retinue up the Sacred Way to the portal of the temple, past the elegant porticoes and official buildings, past the statues and votive offerings to the great edifice where we prepared for our entrance to the temple proper. We had come to consult the Oracle and were full of awe and excited anticipation.

Delphi: 2006 CE

Delphi, in the modern Greek prefecture of *Phokis*, was revered throughout the Greek world as the centre of the universe. The great Panhellenic sanctuary of Pythian Apollo lay in the ancient Greek territory or *koinon* of Phokis. The Phokians, not a city-state, rarely figured in the major events of Greek history and Delphi, although within their territory, was not considered a Phokian sanctuary and was administered by a coalition of states called the *Amphiktyony*.



Ruins of Athina Pronaia temple in Ancient Delphi, Greece

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The name *Delphoi* could refer to the *delph* (hollow) or *delphos* (womb) and may refer to an archaic veneration of Gaia, an ancient Earth goddess at the site. Apollo is connected with the site by his epithet *Delphinios*, the Delphinian, namely, either *"the one of Delphi"* or *"the one of the womb."* The epithet is also connected with dolphins in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (line 400), telling how Apollo first came to Delphi in the shape of a dolphin, carrying Cretan priests on his back.

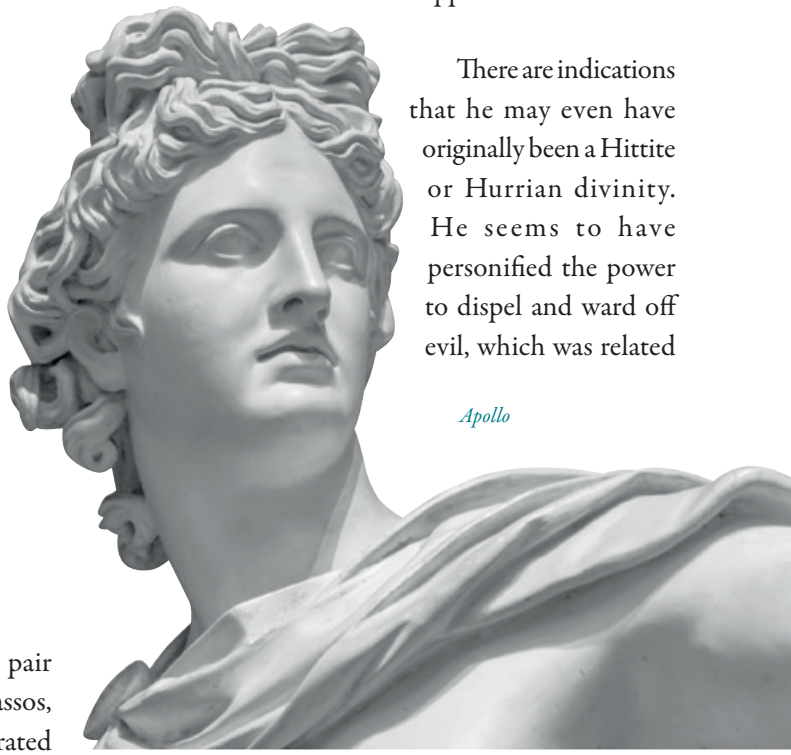
> Further yet you went, far-shooting Apollo, until you came to the town of the presumptuous Phlegyai who dwell on this earth in a lovely glade near the Kephisian lake, caring not for Zeus. And thence you went speeding swiftly to the mountain ridge, and came to Krisa beneath snowy Parnassos, a foothill turned towards the west: a cliff hangs over it from above, and a hollow, rugged glade runs under. There the lord Phoibos Apollo resolved to make his lovely temple, and thus he said...
>
> *In this place I am minded to build a glorious temple to be an oracle for men, and here they will always bring perfect hecatombs [sacrifices of cattle], both they who dwell in rich Peloponnesos and the men of Europe and from all the wave-washed isles, coming to question me. And I will deliver to them all counsel that cannot fail, answering them in my rich temple."*
>
> *When he had said this, Phoibos Apollo laid out all the foundations throughout, wide and very long; and upon these the sons of Erginos, Trophonios and Agamedes, dear to the deathless gods, laid a footing of stone. And the countless tribes of men built the whole temple of wrought stones, to be sung of for ever.*

The *Phaedriades* (Shining Ones) were the pair of cliffs on the lower southern slope of Mt. Parnassos, which enclose the sacred site of Delphi. The celebrated ancient writers *Strabo*, *Plutarch* and *Pausanias* all mentioned the Phaedriades when describing the site: a narrow valley of the Pleistos formed by mounts Parnassos and Kirphis. Between them rises the Kastalian Spring.

Even today, at noontime, the rock faces reflect a dazzling glare, while at sunset the sides of the cliffs glow red with the reflection of the sun's rays. And the whole ravine of the Pleistos and the steep terraced olive groves in the valley leading to the rocky pass of Arachova are bathed in a warm, deep purple light. These cliffs form the eastern gate of the site.

Apollo

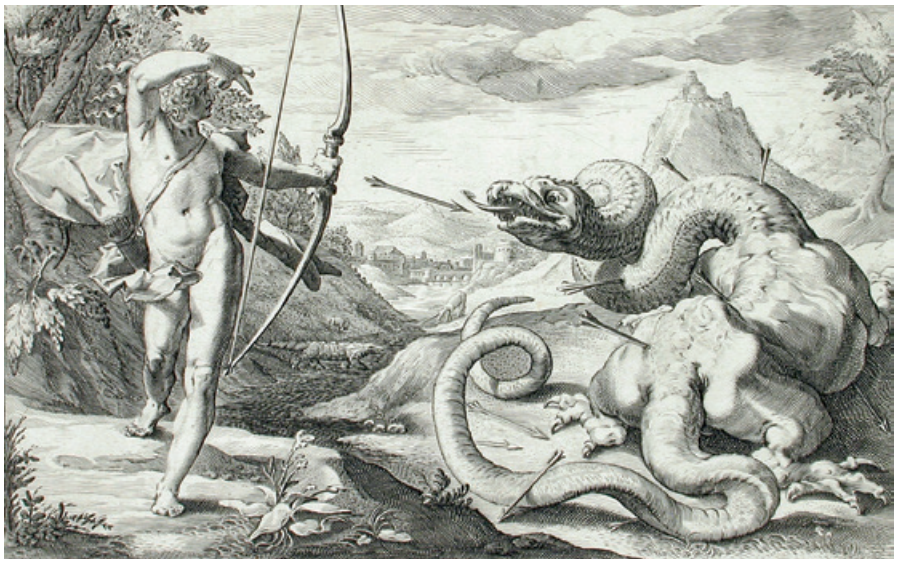
It is thought that the worship of Apollo, always depicted as an eternally handsome, beardless young man, came to the Aegean area from Anatolia (modern day Turkey) sometime between 1100 and 800 BCE. Homer mentions him as being on the side of the Trojans, not the Greeks, during the Trojan War, which may bear out this supposition.



Apollo

There are indications that he may even have originally been a Hittite or Hurrian divinity. He seems to have personified the power to dispel and ward off evil, which was related

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'Apollo Killing the Python', by Hendrik Goltzius.

to his association with the darkness-dispelling power of the morning sun and the conceived power of reason and prophecy to dispel doubt and ignorance.

Apollo is the light that illumines the arts of civilisation. He and his sister Artemis (Diana to the Romans) were born on the seventh day of the seventh month on a barren and inhospitable floating island that was incapable of sustaining life. At the very instant of Apollo's birth, a rooster crowed, heralding the dawn, and seven sacred swans circled the island seven times in waters that emitted a golden glow. At the same moment, a grove of golden olive trees representing the spiritual nature of the universe began to bloom, and the foundations of the island took root. Zeus was so proud of his son and of the events proclaiming his birth that he declared the island to be a sanctuary. He named it *Delos, 'the Brilliant.'* Birth and death were forbidden and those who were about to give birth or to die were rushed to another island in order to preserve the purity of Delos.

During his early years, Apollo dwelt in the mountainous valleys of *Pierra*, an area north of Mt. Olympus, where the nine Muses taught him the intellectual arts that give humanity an insight into the eternal truths and frees them from physical bondage. Apollo was such an adept pupil that he soon surpassed his teachers, and Hermes, the chief messenger of the gods, presented him with the seven-stringed lyre which became a symbol of the harmonious union of the cosmic forces that pervade heaven and earth. When Apollo left Pierra to live among the gods on Mt. Olympus, Zeus placed a golden crown on his head, thereby vesting him with divine authority.



'The Friendship of Apollo and Hermes', by Noël Coypel.

His skills and defence of human values made Apollo the most beloved of the Greek deities, and many legends were woven around him. It was told that after the death of his friend *Hyakinthos* through the jealous anger of *Zephyros*, god of the west wind, Apollo sought solace in the company of a beautiful mortal girl named *Marpessa*, who was in love with the courageous and handsome *Idas*. Realising that he could not compete with

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the god in any contest designed to win the girl, Idas abducted Marpessa and sped away in a winged chariot that the sea-god *Poseidon* had made for him. Apollo, who was still grieving over losing Hyakinthos, was not willing to give up Marpessa and set off in immediate pursuit. The winged chariot was no match for the swift steeds that pulled the sun through the heavens and Idas was soon overtaken.



Poseidon – National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, via Wikimedia

Poseidon

Knowing that his doom was certain, Idas nevertheless prepared to fight to the death for the girl whom he loved. As Apollo was about to strike, Marpessa threw herself between the two adversaries and declared her love for Idas. She pleaded with Apollo to spare Idas, reminding him that it was her right as a mortal to choose her own mate. Remembering the longing he felt for Hyakinthos, Apollo bowed his head in shame and asked to be forgiven for his selfishness. He wished the two lovers well and with a heavy heart, returned to his home in far-off Hyperborea.

Hyperborea was a paradisiacal island surrounded by the river *Okeanos* (from which we get our word *Ocean*). It enjoyed perpetual warmth and sunshine. Fruit grew so fast and so abundantly that they would be sown in the morning, reaped at midday, and consumed at sunset. Herds of graceful unicorns roamed the plains and many varieties of fish filled the waters. In the highlands, an assortment of unusual plant life covered the landscape, pollinated by swarms of various insects. Within Hyperborea's borders, sorrow was unknown, and its inhabitants chose the time of their death, which they celebrated by feasting and rejoicing, after which they were escorted in regal splendour to a high crag overlooking the river Okeanos and hurled into its frothy waters.

The river Okeanos was thought to be a limitless river encircling the world. Early Greek thought conceived this river as symbolising the current of energy that induced the dynamic forces and transitional states between solid matter and formless gas, and it was believed that all life germinated in these waters. From a metaphysical point of view, Okeanos can be regarded as the primordial sea containing within itself the seeds of all possible forms on one plane of existence, and Hyperborea personifies the ascent from exoteric darkness to esoteric light. The manner in which its inhabitants chose to leave the island is analogous to the descent of the soul from heaven to earth.



'View of Delphi with Sacrificial Procession', by Claude Lorrain.

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Python

After dwelling in Hyperborea for one year, Apollo returned to Greece only to learn that his mother *Leto* was being intimidated by the chthonic serpent *Python* which was terrorising the countryside around Mt. Parnassos at the place known as *Pytho*. Apollo rushed to her aid and a fierce battle took place, in which Python was mortally wounded by Apollo's arrows. Defeated, the serpent slithered to its lair, which lay beneath the mountain by the spring of Kastalia and died.

In this brief but significant allegory, the serpent represents the evil that humans must overcome, and Apollo's arrows are the shafts of light that, symbolical of human victory over the dark forces of the universe. In Greek, the word *pythein* means: *"to rot."* The defeat of Python came to symbolise Apollo's (Light's) victory over the powers of darkness.

Kastalian Spring

On a hot summer's day, the crystalline springs from which people and animals could refresh themselves, shimmer and pulsate luminously. Delphi's abundance of water in pools and springs, as well as quenching the thirst, was an inspiration for poetry and prophecy. The cliffs and surrounding mountains kept it secluded.

The Kastalian Spring in the ravine between the Phaedriades is where pilgrims and the priesthood, the contestants in the Pythian Games and especially suppliants who came to consult the Oracle, stopped to purify themselves in preparation for entering the great temple. Two fountains fed by the sacred spring survive. The archaic (early 6th century BCE) fountain house has a rectangular marble-lined basin surrounded by benches. There is also a Hellenistic or Roman fountain with niches hollowed in the rock to receive votive gifts to the nymph Kastalia. It was impossible to bathe in this spring as the water was covered and seven bronze spouts provided the water needed for the purifying rites.

After Python

Following the defeat of Python, Apollo challenged the god *Pan* to a musical contest in which the prize would be the gift of prophecy. Pan was defeated and Apollo tested his newly acquired powers on a shepherd who tended his flock of sheep in the shadow of the temple at Delphi. After Python had expired, vapours began to ooze out of the deep crevasses that were to be found on the hillside, and Apollo caused the shepherd to become enveloped in their fumes. The herdsman soon began to jump about and act irrationally, mumbling strange phrases which later proved to be prophetic revelations.

As more and more people flocked to Delphi to experience the ecstasy of the intoxicating subterranean gases, the priesthood erected a shrine over the exact spot whence the vapours issued and installed a priestess called the *Pythia* to act as a mediator between the gods and men. Inside the shrine stood a large bronze statue of Pythian Apollo, crowned



Oracle of Delphi: King Aigeus in front of the Pythia.

Image: Wikipedia / Zde

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with a halo of laurel leaves that he fashioned to console himself after the nymph *Daphne* was spirited away from him by Gaia, the earth mother. Inscribed over the portico of the temple were the words *Gnothi Seauton*, *"Know Thyself"* commemorating the humble lesson Apollo had learned while serving King Admetos of Pherai in Thessaly.

In the temple at Delphi, aids to human life had been inscribed by the Seven Sages of ancient Greece. The Seven Sages visited Delphi and dedicated to Apollo the messages that have become proverbs, according to Pausanias in his *Description of Greece*. All the messages reflected a warning that worldly lies, passions and hypocrisy would not be tolerated within the shrine, and serious consequences would befall the individual who entered with unclean hands.

A typical example of how serious this warning was regarded is revealed when King Alyattes of Lydia fell ill after his army had destroyed a temple to Athena. He appealed to the Pythia for aid but was refused a reply until he built and dedicated a temple to Athena in place of the one his army had ravaged. So distraught was the king over the oracle's silence that he built two temples and sent an enormous amount of silver to Delphi.

The Oracle was consulted before cities sent out colonies to other parts of the world. Pythia was instrumental in the Greek colonisation of Asia Minor, Syracuse in Sicily and Marseille in France. As the overseas colonies prospered and the Oracle's fame grew at home and abroad, the Greeks increasingly viewed Delphi as central to their rebirth, not only spiritually but also physically. Delphi became the spiritual centre of the Greek world. It undoubtedly received its reputation as a religious haven because of its location. Situated as it is at the end of a formidable gorge and located in a cluster of rocky peaks sheltered by a circle of rugged mountains, it was difficult for enemy invasion forces to reach it.

As a sacred shrine where tribal leaders vied for the favours of the gods, Delphi became the centre of political intrigue and the Pythia, in her role as *'adviser'*, played an important part in shaping the destiny of Greece. The trust and respect that were generated by her prophecies impressed a modicum of unity and authority upon the Hellenic mind that moulded the independent city-states into one great nation. She also acted as mediator between the various Greek states during their wars.

Over a period of 250 years, four Sacred Wars were fought to safeguard the independence of Delphi and to give free access to the Oracle and its sacred precincts. In later years, Delphi came under the influence first of Macedonia, and then of the Aetolian League (290-190 BCE) before yielding to the Romans in 189 BCE. Although the Roman general Sulla plundered Delphi in 86 BCE, there were at least 500 bronze statues left over to be collected by the Emperor Nero in 66 CE, and the site was still full of fine works of art when Pausanias visited and described it a century later.



'The Priestess of Delphi', by John Collier.

Delphi became the setting for the grandest displays of wealth and status of both individuals and communities. Ironically, it was this accumulation of wealth that made the sanctuary a target. Along the wayside were treasuries in which

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The ancient stadium of Delphi.

the affluent would deposit gifts of gold or works of art. Those who had nothing to offer left two twisted fern stalks, as it was thought that the seed of this plant would enrich the possessor with an inexhaustible supply of gold. In one of these treasuries can even be found the first musical notes thought to have ever been written.

The temple proper consisted of three parts: the entrance hall or *Pronaos* was adorned with the maxims of the Seven Sages. Behind this was the *Naos*, the largest part of the temple, where was located the hearth of the goddess Hestia (Vesta to the Romans), the home of the eternal flame that burned in the name of all Greece. The rear portion, the *Adyton* or inner sanctum of the temple was on two levels, consisting of a ground floor with the gold cult statue of Apollo, and a lower ground floor which was divided by a thin partition into the *oikos* where the enquirer stood, and the *antron* to which only the Pythia had access.

The Oracle and the Pythia

The Oracle spoke only for nine months of the year. In wintertime, from November to February, Apollo left Delphi for the north, handing control over to his half-brother the god Dionysos and his mystical rites.

Before a petitioner was allowed to consult the Oracle for advice, a ritual cake was baked and eaten, after which the inquirer would drink from the Kastalian Spring to wash away all impurities staining their thoughts. Outside the temple the body of a goat was then sprinkled with holy water. If the goat reacted by shivering and trembling, the petitioner was admitted into the sanctuary after removing all rings, as it was believed that a ring was associated with the binding of a body and could therefore interfere with the reception of the Oracle's message. The petitioner's question was given to the officiating priest who, in turn, would consult with the Pythia. The answer given was always in enigmatic verse. For instance, the Roman emperor Nero (reigned 54-68 CE) after being warned to beware of the 73rd year, was deposed by the 73-year old Galba, governor of one of the Spanish provinces, Hispania Tarraconensis.

The Pythian priestess was merely the medium of Apollo; she was not herself consciously the Oracle. She had to be over 50 years old but dressed as a young girl in memory of the earliest Pythias. There was also an association with virgin purity. After she was appointed, she had to lead a blameless life. If married, she was required to leave her husband. She had a residence of

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her own in the sacred enclosure and her life was dedicated to Apollo from the moment she took up her post.



View from the town of Delphi, overlooking the town's rooftops.

She was not selected from any particular family, nor was she given any particular training. She was a very ordinary woman whose special gifts appeared only when she was inspired by Apollo. It is possible that she was selected from the female attendants of the temple whose duty it was to keep the eternal fire inside the temple lit with supplies of pine and laurel. There were a number of attendants working in shifts day and night. At the height of its power and influence, there were three Pythias, one of whom was always in reserve.



'Saint Ambrose Barring Theodosius from Milan Cathedral', by Anthony van Dyck, c. 1620.

On oracle day, the seventh of the month, the Pythia prepared herself by washing in the Kastalian spring and undergoing a purification involving barley smoke and laurel leaves. If the male priests of Apollo determined the day was propitious for prophesying, she entered the Adyton of the Temple of Apollo to sit on the tripod, where she chewed laurel leaves, gazed into a basin of Kastalia water and presumably sank into a trance. The enquirers had to think pure thoughts before consulting the Pythia. The questions presented to her received strange and garbled answers, which were then translated into hexameter verse by the priests. A number of the lead tablets on which questions were inscribed have been found, but the official answers to those questions were inscribed only in the memories of the questioners and priests.

A veil or curtain prevented the petitioners from seeing the Pythia. Her chamber was approximately square with the Pythia sitting on her tripod next to the sacred laurel tree in one corner. To her left was the grave of Dionysos and further to her left in another corner was a statue of Apollo. Between this statue and the curtain was the conical shaped stone of the *omphalos* with a golden eagle on either side. The omphalos was narrower at the top than the bottom and from here

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issued the fumes that filled the chamber and affected the Pythia. In the exact centre of the grotto, straddling a cleft from where the fumes also rose stood a tripod with a likeness of Apollo engraved upon it. At its base, a trio of coiled serpents writhed as a reminder of the source from where the maddening gas emanated.

Prophecies

Seated on the tripod, the Pythia soon succumbed to the fumes. Her body began to twitch in nervous convulsions, and she entered into a state of delirious incoherence, uttering words and phrases that only the *Prophetes*, the Chief Priest or the *Hosioi*, the holy men of the temple, could interpret.

The *Hosioi* were thought to be descendants of Deukalion, the king who was saved when the ark that he built came to rest on Mt Parnassos after the deluge that destroyed all mankind. It was the obligation of the *Hosioi* to translate and preserve the details of each prophecy uttered by the Pythia. Just what induced the Pythia's strange actions has never been determined but one conjecture is that the laurel leaf she chewed produced a post-narcotic effect upon her nervous system, while another theory claims that the vapours themselves affected the priestess, producing a kind of auto hypnotic trance.

Those who questioned the validity of the Pythia's prophecies were soon convinced of their authenticity.



Credit: Schenking van de heer G.J. Boekenoogen, Leiden

Preparation to consult the Oracle of Delphi

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Such a person was Croesus (560-546 BCE), the king of non-Greek Lydia in western Anatolia (modern Turkey). He tested the powers of the reigning oracle in many of the religious centres of Greece and Asia. He asked what he was doing on a certain day, and the only truthful reply came from Delphi. The answer so pleased the king that he presented the priesthood with two enormous wine bowls, one of gold weighing 500 pounds and one of silver with a capacity of 5,000 gallons.

In addition, he included golden vases, silver jars and a golden statue of a lion that was four and a half feet tall. Taking advantage, he asked if, having already allied himself with Egypt and Babylonia, the oracle felt it would be to his advantage to declare war on the emergent Persian Empire. The famous answer he received was: *"If Croesus crosses the Halys, a great empire shall be brought down."* The River Halys was the border between the two empires. Croesus was overjoyed and ordered his army to march. History has recorded that the great empire that was destroyed was his own. Pharaoh Amasis of 26th Dynasty also sent vast sums of money to Delphi.

The Pythian Games

Since a strong body and healthy mind was necessary for defence, the priesthood introduced the *Septeria*, which consisted of a series of musical contests and athletic games to celebrate Apollo's victory over the serpent Python. These events evolved into religious festivals and fairs during which concessionaires and carnival performers would set up booths and hawk their wares to noisy pilgrims wending their way to the sanctuary or plodding up the hillside to witness the games or gaze in awe at the breathtaking scenery.

The Pythian Games became so popular that all of the Greek states vied to participate, and they evolved into a regular event. Three months before the start of the games, envoys from Delphi went around



Apollo kills Python

Greece proclaiming a *"sacred armistice."* In each city they summoned people to take part in the games. These *theoroi* set off in a festive procession and were received everywhere with jubilation. During the trials, a truce between all warring states was proclaimed and serious consequences were meted out to any state that mistreated or molested a traveller to the games. Only freeborn Greeks were allowed to compete, and these were elected by tribal elimination. The winners of the games were awarded a laurel crown and the honour of having their name linked with the city of their origin. As a result, bribes and other irregularities were practically unknown.

The Games, which were instituted in 582 BCE, took place during the four-year cycle known as the Olympiad, which was one of the ways the Greeks measured time. The Olympic Games were used as a starting point, being year one of the cycle. The Nemean and Isthmian Games were both held (in different months) in year two, followed by the Pythian Games in year three, and then the Nemean and Isthmian Games again in year four. The cycle then repeated itself with the Olympic Games. They were structured this way so that individual athletes could participate in all of the games.

Nothing of importance was ever undertaken in ancient Greece unless the Pythia was first consulted, yet the Delphic priesthood made no attempt to impose Apollo as the supreme god over the Greek

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populace. They merely indicated that he was a manifestation of beauty, justice and divination. Their chief goal was to teach *Universal Oneness* and to emphasise moral and spiritual discipline, as well as to comfort those who were in need of solace.



The Falling Asleep of Delphi

> Descending toward Parnassos from the direction of the Stadium, you can see the wide-open wound that divides the two Phaedriades from top to bottom in Kastalia and, even lower, to the depths of the ravine of Pleistos. One feels the awe of a wounded life that struggles in order to breathe, as long as it still can, in the light and rejoices that it is dawn and the sun is rising. Or, again, as night falls, when the weary cicadas become silent, a whisper can remind one of the stammering voices of the prophetess Cassandra. It may be the only authentic sound that resembles the unknown to us—I mean 'unprocessed'—'clamour' of the Pythia. (George Seferis).

The Roman Emperor Hadrian restored many sanctuaries in Greece, including that of Delphi, but within two centuries at most, the oracle was silent. With the spread of Christianity, the ancient religion had no place in the new state. Christian attacks against pagan temples continued, reaching a head when the Emperor Theodosius the Great ordered all pagan temples to be shut. The oracle declared to the emperor in 393 CE:

> Tell the king: the fair wrought house has fallen.
> No shelter has Apollo, nor sacred laurel leaves;
> The fountains are now silent; the voice is stilled
> It is finished.

Within two years Theodosius was dead; the sanctuary lost its religious meaning and remained permanently closed. The oracle was abolished and a town was built over the ruins. Only in the late 19th century did French excavators begin to uncover the site of the temple of Apollo, moving the town to its present location. These days the hospitable people of modern Delphi take great pride in their town. They maintain a tradition of comfortable, small hotels. The modern town of Delphi has one main street, thick with restaurants and souvenir shops, with the entrance to ancient Delphi reached easily from almost any point in the town centre, at most a five to ten minute walk away.

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The Emperor & the Seed

by **Jenny Tsang**



The emperor's well-disguised illness was causing grave concern at court, for there was no heir to the throne and without a clearly-named successor, civil war would break out as soon as he died. Not knowing how he could, at such short notice, find a suitable heir, he did the unthinkable by ordering that 10 teenage boys from every medium sized town in the land be brought to him for a large gathering. And when, one day, several thousand young boys were assembled in the outer court of his palace, he addressed them thus:

> The time is approaching for me to pass through the lotus gates to take my place in eternal rest. It will therefore soon be time for me to choose my successor as emperor. According to the chronicles of all that has happened and will happen, my trusted seers have advised me in insistent terms that only one among you will be found worthy of receiving the blessings of the gods to rule the empire with courage and wisdom as befits an emperor. I will therefore be choosing one of you to take my place one day on the lotus throne.

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> I will give each one of you one seed today, one very special seed which you will take home and plant. You will water it and care and nurture it into a strong and healthy plant and return to me in exactly one year from this day to show me the plant you have grown from this seed. Judging by the plants that you bring, I will choose from among you the next emperor.

A boy named Ling was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly told his mother about the task that lay ahead of him. And so, she helped him to plant the seed and, together, they cared for the seed in every way they could. Every day, Ling would water the seed in its soil and watch to see if it had grown.

Within a fortnight, some of the other youths in town began telling their neighbours how well their seeds had sprouted and how strong and vigorous their plants were beginning to grow. This alarmed Ling, for despite his best efforts, his seed had not even sprouted yet. Three, four, five weeks passed but still nothing. By now, all the others were talking enthusiastically about their plants while Ling kept his sad secret to himself, for he did not have a plant at all and worried incessantly what would happen to him and his family if he returned to the emperor with a dead seed.

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Six months passed and still nothing had sprouted in Ling's pot, and he believed by then that he had not cared for the seed in the right way and it was probably dead. While all the other boys already had small trees and tall plants, Ling had nothing and he avoided meeting with his friends out of shame.

The full year finally came to pass and all the boys brought their plants to the emperor for inspection. Being fearful for his life, yet scrupulously honest, Ling took the empty pot to the palace. He was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other boys. They were beautiful and of many different shapes and sizes. Ling put his empty pot on the floor before him while many boys laughed and teased him.

When the emperor arrived, he walked up and down the large outer courtyard inspecting the plants that the boys has brought. He even made comments of admiration for some of the more beautiful plants. Passing by Ling, the emperor merely glanced at him and his empty pot and continued his inspection of all the others as though Ling had been invisible. Ling was now terrified of the consequences that he and his family would face at having offended the emperor. Finally, with the inspection complete, the emperor ascended the stairs to his throne, turned and said:

> Young boys, what beautiful plants, trees and flowers you have grown. It gladdens my heart that you have taken care of things of beauty possessing perfection that even the gods themselves cannot match. I see

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that you have learned too in this year how to care for the very things upon which all living things depend and you are now well qualified to toil in the fields for the rest of your days to feed your families and sell your produce on the market.

Much as this has gladdened my heart, I am even more gladdened that today the gods have revealed to me who, among you, will become my appointed successor. Guards..., bring into my presence the boy named Ling, and with him his empty pot.

Ling nearly fainted with fright when he heard the emperor's booming command. The guards roughly brought him and his empty pot to the emperor and threw them down at his feet. In a kind voice, the emperor ordered the guards to raise Ling and bring him and his pot up to the throne where he stood. Looking at Ling long and hard with affection radiating from his face, he eventually turned to the crowd and announced powerfully: *'Behold Ling, your new emperor!'* Ling was confused, for he believed he had been at the threshold of death for failing to care adequately for the living seed he had been given to nurture and usher into life.

Then the emperor addressed the boys one more time:

One year ago today, each of you was given a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. However, what I gave you all were boiled seeds, which could never grow. All of you, except Ling, have brought me trees, shrubs and flowers, but however beautiful they are, and however much you learned to nurture them, when you found that the seed I had given you would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I had given you. Ling was the only one among all you thousands of boys who had the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. He is therefore unique among all of you and shall rule over you and your families for the rest of his life as emperor of this great empire.



What have we learned?

- If you plant honesty, you will reap trust.
- If you plant goodness, you will reap friends.
- If you plant humility, you will reap greatness.
- If you plant perseverance, you will reap victory.
- If you plant consideration, you will reap harmony.
- If you plant hard work, you will reap success.
- If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation.
- If you plant openness, you will reap intimacy.
- If you plant patience, you will reap improvements.
- If you plant faith, you will reap miracles.
- If you plant dishonesty, you will reap distrust.
- If you plant selfishness, you will reap loneliness.
- If you plant pride, you will reap destruction.
- If you plant envy, you will reap trouble.
- If you plant laziness, you will reap stagnation.
- If you plant bitterness, you will reap isolation.
- If you plant greed, you will reap loss.
- If you plant gossip, you will reap enemies.
- If you plant worries, you will reap wrinkles.
- If you plant sin, you will reap guilt.

So, be careful what you plant, for it will determine what you will one day reap. The seeds you scatter will make life better or worse for you or the ones who come after you. Yes, one day, you will enjoy the fruits of your honesty and integrity, and they will bring you happiness. And yes, remember that your selfish acts will yield results too, but not the sort you will welcome.

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Theory & Practice in Rosicrucian Living

by **Sven Johansson**

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

Over many years of correspondence with Rosicrucians, I have come to realise that there exists a veritable multitude of ways or methods of living that bring people peace and happiness. In many cases, merely the act of making a firm well-considered decision and then sticking with it through thick and thin, is all that's

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needed to nudge a person a bit closer to his or her ideal of happiness and fulfilment. But while these different ways of living usually emerge from deep within the cultural diversity of our planet, what I have also noticed is that there are, despite many outward differences, a few specific things that are virtually guaranteed to bring into the lives of people some of the most sought-after qualities humans can possess; things like peace, harmony, health, happiness, tranquillity, kindness, compassion and suchlike.

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

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

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



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THEORY

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

The Law of Singularity, or the Monad

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

In most philosophies and religions of the world, it is postulated that there exists an ultimate actuality beyond which nothing else can exist.

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

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

The Law of Duality

The second principle is what I call the *Law of Duality*. Whatever we can conceive must have an equal though opposite mirror image of itself somewhere in the universe, either now, in the past or in the future. In the case of our existence, we are a duality, being composed of two infinite though seemingly opposed qualities of Nous, namely *Spirit* from which all matter and energy originate, infused with *Vital Life Force*, the 'carrier' of the individual soul that exists within every human being.

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

The Law of the Triangle

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

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

The Law of Compensation

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

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

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

Understanding just what the consequences of our actions are, and exactly how the collective consciousness of the universe presses back at us when

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we apply pressure to it, this is the heart of the matter, and what we are seeking to learn. For once we have mastered our understanding of the consequences of our actions, we will have begun the process of merging our outer self with the personality expression of our soul, and we will be well on our way to mastering our lives.

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

The Law of Reincarnation

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

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

Regrettably, even among the millions of people who claim to believe they have lived before and will live again, very few actually believe this; and their actions prove it! Not only does the law of compensation dictate that they have to pay for their actions, the law of reincarnation ensures that whatever is not paid for in this life, will be paid for in another. If such people fully understood and accepted deep down that these are not mere hypotheses, but actual laws of nature as inviolate as the law of gravity, they could not possibly engage in the thoughtless acts of brutality and selfishness that we see taking place in so many places throughout the world today.

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

The Law of Light

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

As an innate urge, this law ensures that all living creatures, and especially those with some form of self-awareness, will seek in their particular and peculiar

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ways, to dwell in the Light of spiritual awareness to the greatest extent of their understanding. Dwelling in Light is the ultimate goal of humanity, and to the extent that all people have within them a spark of Divinity, they are all to one extent or another, already dwelling in the Light of spiritual awareness.

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

PRACTICE

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

First of all, let me reiterate that I find it absolutely essential to have some theory of existence clearly available to me at all times. Without a purpose or reason, there is little point in following any system of thought and action. Even if personal theories aren't accurate in all details..., in fact, even if they're completely wrong, the only thing that ultimately matters is that they are theories which give us satisfaction and happiness, and are logical and just to our inner sensibilities.

It gives me great fulfilment in life to believe that I understand at least some of the inner workings of my



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being and that from this understanding have emerged several practical guideposts that I can use to ensure that my thoughts and actions lead me along my chosen path. I will mention four practical things that I do quite deliberately and as a personal strategy to keep myself upon my chosen path.

Reverence for the God of my Heart

The first practical thing I do is to revere above all else, the God of my Heart. If you are of a religious bent, in plain simple words this means:

> **Love your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your understanding.**

Love your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your understanding." If you are of a non-religious bent it could mean: "love the principle governing your life and everything in the universe, and do so with all your heart, all your mind, and all your understanding.

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

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

Gratitude for the Privilege of Life

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

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

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

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Never to Take Offence

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

We should do our best to analyse the motives for everything we think, say and do...

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

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

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

Every act must be at least partially for others

The last practical thing I wish to mention is that to the best of my ability, I let every significant act be at least partially for the benefit of others and not purely for myself. This may seem a bit idealistic, but do we not live in a society where cooperation and interaction with others is essential to our well-being? Yes, I believe we do. No person is an island, and no-one can indefinitely live only for him or her self. Eventually life will overtake that person and deliver the lesson that sharing with others of the abundance of blessings that we daily receive, is a *condition* for continuing to receive those blessings.

No person is an island, and no-one can indefinitely live only for him or her self.

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

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by **Roshan Ushah**

HYPERTENSION

The modern Rosicrucian Order is not a primarily healing institution. It is a point needing re-emphasis from time to time, for the first-generation Rosicrucians of early 17th century Europe did indeed consider healing as one of their primary duties, and to perform those duties free of charge. Considering the primitive nature of medicine at that time, good healthcare was a rare luxury available only to the privileged classes.

With the advent of modern medical science however, the emphasis of the Rosicrucian Order has moved away from healing as one of its primary goals, to providing education for people to discover, or re-discover, the innate spiritual nature which exists to varying extents in all people..., rich or poor, good or

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evil, well-educated or illiterate. While healing is a high and noble calling, it is today only one aspect of learning among a whole spectrum of subjects explored within the Rosicrucian teachings.

This article will however delve into the subject of *hypertension* (better known as *high blood pressure*) which is currently a growing scourge in most parts of the world. High blood pressure readings occur when the force of blood coursing through the body's arteries, veins and capillaries presses against the walls of our blood vessels with consistently higher pressure than it would be when in conditions of good health. This makes the heart work harder to pump the blood around the body and can contribute to hardening of the arteries, stroke, kidney disease or heart failure.

The Technical Part

Blood pressure readings are calculated using one number 'over' another: systolic blood pressure over diastolic pressure. The blood pressure monitor shows measurements in millimetres of mercury *'mmHg.'* Everyone's blood pressure will be slightly different, and you would need to discuss with a medical professional as to what is safe for you. A good blood pressure range for adults comes in between 90/60mmHg and 120/80mmHg and a reading of 140/90mmHg or above is classified as high blood pressure.

Knowing these numbers can help make you more aware of your health and may help you to stay on top of your blood pressure. Your blood pressure can rise and fall during the day depending on your circadian rhythms or even your mood. It seems to be highest in the morning and can even differ from one arm to another. Emotions like anxiety and stress can also affect the readings

High blood pressure can affect anyone at any age with the cause often unknown. You unfortunately cannot modify your age, genetics or family history, so it is important to ensure you appropriately manage your lifestyle.

In the worst-case scenarios and if high blood pressure symptoms are left untreated, serious conditions affecting both the heart and lungs can occur. High blood pressure is the largest single-known risk factor for cardiovascular disease and related health problems and can lead to:

- Heart failure
- Coronary artery failure
- Stroke
- Kidney disease
- Vascular dementia

What Causes High Blood Pressure?

Most people with high blood pressure are diagnosed with primary hypertension – a class of high blood pressure that doesn't have a known secondary cause. People who have an underlying medical condition are diagnosed with secondary hypertension. The causes of high blood pressure can be hard to pinpoint but there are lifestyle factors that can increase your risk, particularly the following:

- Drinking too much alcohol – regularly exceeding alcohol intake recommendations.

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- Eating too much salt – salt intake makes your body hold onto water, this extra water then increases your blood pressure.

- Being overweight or obese puts more strain on your heart as well as causing fatty deposits to line your arteries, increasing blood pressure.

- Not doing enough exercise – doing exercise increases your blood pressure for a short period but over time will give you a lower resting blood pressure.

- Not eating a nutritious diet of fruits and vegetables – consuming saturated fats and cholesterol increase blood pressure, swapping these for fruit, vegetables and low-fat dairy products can help avoid high blood pressure.

- Smoking – narrows and hardens your arteries, making blood clots more likely to occur.

The causes of high blood pressure can be wide and varied. If you're worried that any of the above factors are causing direct damage to your body, you should visit your doctor. Similarly, if you're concerned about low blood pressure symptoms, make sure you seek medical guidance.

Ways to Help Lower Blood Pressure

Fortunately there are several modern drugs that are highly effective at reducing blood pressure, and there are of course the most obvious lifestyle changes that can ease the pressure on your heart and body as well.[1]

- **Exercise:** Do some if you don't already! Many more jobs are being done from home (home working) that will encourage you to sit in front of a screen all day. You need to make the effort to get up and exercise – and I don't mean to the fridge and back! Exercise will increase the blood flow in your arteries and make you feel better. Any kind of aerobic exercise will do you good. If jogging or running doesn't appeal, go out for walks and do your breathing exercises at the same time.

- **Salt:** Eating too much salt is bad for you. Remember the Rosicrucian injunction to be moderate in everything. Salt raises the blood pressure by making your body retain water. Avoid as many pre-prepared foods as you can, as they often contain concealed salt. It's better to eat fresh food whenever possible. The potassium in fresh fruit and vegetables helps your body excrete sodium in your urine.



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- **Drink:** Caffeine and alcoholic drinks can increase blood pressure temporarily but as I've said before – moderate yourself! Heavy drinking can raise your blood pressure over time, but research has revealed that cutting back can reverse this. Needless to say, this does not include drinking water. One thing that strikes me at all Rosicrucian meetings and conventions is how much we love to drink water. Drink as much as you can as it cleans the body from impurities and not drinking enough water can lead to other avoidable problems.

- **Go Green:** Vegetarians and vegans tend to have lower blood pressure than meat eaters. Now, that may be due to the saturated fats in meat and dairy products which are linked to high blood pressure. In general, we are advised to cut down on our intake of meat and dairy and eat plenty of wholegrains, fruit and vegetables. Oily fish contains blood-pressure-reducing omega-3 oils too.

- **Relaxation:** Here, I am probably preaching to the converted but when we feel stressed, we produce more adrenaline, which increases our heart rate and blood pressure. Relaxation and meditation can reduce stress in many people, so keep doing it. Take time out from your busy life to meditate and de-stress. A good sleep is also a factor in reducing stress and if you fall asleep while meditating so much the better – you obviously needed sleep more than you needed to meditate and you will be more relaxed.

Final Thoughts

Whether in the medical or any other field, we should stay as close to nature as possible. As soon as we stray from it, we are breaking ties with natural laws and running counter to our own well-being. Through ignorance, pride or greed, people have spent too long trying to dominate nature, when they should instead have been seeking ways of cooperating with it.[2]

High blood pressure is a symptom of our modern way of life. Processed foods and a sedentary lifestyle can all add up to an unhealthy blood pressure reading. But this can often be resolved by judicious diet and exercise. As a final thought I would like to leave you with a quote from that wonderful mid-18th century book, *Unto Thee I Grant the Economy of Life*, Book 12, Chapter 2: *'Sickness of the body affects even the spirit. One cannot be in health without the other.'*

References

1. 'Everyday ways to lower blood pressure', *New Scientist* magazine, 16 May 2020.
2. *Appellatio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis,* 1614–2014.



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by **Amelia**

The Language of Music



The following article is in memory of the Italian-American Rosicrucian composer Paul Creston (1906-1985) who wrote over 100 major works, some of which were conducted by such luminaries as Stokowski, Toscanini and Szell. He once wrote an article for a Rosicrucian audience about the universality of music as a language, and this article ends with a brief excerpt of his thoughts on this.

What is meant by the word *'language'* is something we all think we know; and up to a point, we do, at least the verbal part. We know it involves the vocal use of different sounds that carry specific meanings, such as the sound *'mama'* which may be one of the very first sounds with meaning that our human species used. How old is language use, the verbal sort? We may never be certain about this of course, but a minority consensus among anthropologists is that as far as our species, *homo sapiens*, is concerned, verbal expressions of communication, using specific words, is likely to pre-date our emergence as a distinct hominid species.

In modern times, with the verbal or written use of words and sentences forming small packages of meaningful information, and steadily larger and larger assemblages of words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, books, volumes of books, etc., we acquire ever more complex and useful forms of information that assist us in uncountable ways to navigate our way safely through life.

Apart from our verbal and written expressions of meaning, are there other means of transmitting information that do not involve verbal or written forms of information exchange? Well, where do we start? If we consider information exchange between animals, as well as humans, then there is a very wide range of *'languages'* available and, by far the majority of these, we know virtually nothing about.

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In the case of humans, take for example the art of *'correctly'* looking at people in order to convey accurate though subtle messages to them. Then there are hand gestures that convey meaning too, almost without our knowing it, often combined with our verbal expressions to enhance the meanings behind the gestures. And then there are olfactory *'words'* and even whole *'sentences'* that give us indications about the state of health of a person, even without looking at them or even hearing them speak. Many animal species are expert at this and get to know the nature of their neighbours simply by smelling the scent markings they left behind. Can these scent markings be viewed as forms of language? Yes, they can, for they convey information to specific target audiences and, not only a word or two, the markings provide vital information about each creature that left a scent marking, information such as the sex of the depositor, its health, how long ago the scent was deposited, etc.

When it comes to hand gestures, these were long-ago formalised into sign-languages which are essential for deaf people when communicating with the world. And even the manner in which we walk also conveys meaning, even if we are not objectively conscious of that meaning. An arrogant swagger, indicates a difficult person to deal with. The dainty skip and hop of a child conveys carefree, happy, innocence. A hobbling gait tells us of a person who has a mobility disability and tells us as well of the strength of character of the person to continue through life on equal terms with all others.

But for us humans, the most important language, from an emotional and spiritual standpoint, is the *'language'* of music. It is, without doubt, close to the top of all the more subtle means of conveying emotional and spiritual meaning between people that humans have devised over the hundreds of millennia we have been part of the species homo sapiens.

The literature on music is massive, especially as an art form, though also as a thoroughly intellectual and decidedly dry scientific and mathematical enquiry into its many other forms of symmetry formation and breaking. The actual *'language'* of music is something we are seldom directly aware of, even though it transmits information to us in the form of heightened intellectual, emotional and elevated synchronisation between our outer, conscious self and our inner, spiritual self. But when referring to literature about music, the



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...we humans, before we had gained the ability speak, were once powerfully dependent upon sign language too.

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communication of information about it is still shared through words, sentences, paragraphs, etc., which describe the music for us in intellectual terms. But that is not what is meant by the *'language of music.'* So, let us forget, for now, any written or spoken information transmission in music, for the *'language'*, if we can call it that, is subtle in the extreme and far from similar to what we ordinarily understand as information exchange.



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Hands as Communicators of Information

As referred to above, sign language is crucial in modern society, for without it, there would be no way for hearing-impaired people to communicate with the world outside themselves. Rudimentary forms of sign language can be seen in active use in all the higher primates, particularly in our closest primate relative, those endearing and highly intelligent creatures, chimpanzees. It is profoundly touching to watch documentaries on chimp interactions with each other and to realise that we humans, before we had gained the ability speak, were once powerfully dependent upon sign language too.

And even more touching is the realisation that simple things like holding hands, as expressions of affection or loyalty towards each other, as chimpanzees and other primates do among themselves, have come down to us, almost entirely unchanged, into the modern era as things that humans still do with each other every day. Just imagine if we could somehow be transported for a few minutes back 200,000 years ago to see an early homo sapiens mother walking through the savannah of Africa, hand-in-hand with her child. Or even further back, to the early emergence of *Homo Erectus*, some 1.9 million years ago, and witness the same scene of a mother walking upright, hand-in-hand, with her much loved, vulnerable child.

That unique use of a primate's hand must be one of the most endearing, beautiful expressions of love that we have inherited. Hand use, for humans, is almost always done automatically, without deliberate thought, yet with meaning. And it is a powerful extension today of our verbal and written expressions of information exchange, even though those primaeval hand motions almost certainly far preceded our ability to communicate through speech.

Music as a Language

And now, back to the main theme, namely, music as a language, as a communicator of deep emotional and spiritual content between the inner, subconscious mind and the outer subjective and even objective consciousness. Like hand movements with sign language or hand use, when caressing the hair of a deeply-loved life partner, for example, there is no objective thought process involved in those automatic expressions of meaning. We do not think in an objective manner what we are doing when we casually touch someone we love. But when it is done, it is often done with a great deal of entirely subconscious, emotional outpouring of love and affection. That expression of love is indeed information of a very high, extremely complex sort, the sort of *'language'* that only the deepest parts of our being can appreciate, understand and delight in.

Music is much like this. We listen to it, conscious, alert attention, or more often, as pleasing background sounds entering our subconscious mind without our

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knowing specifically what the information is that is being transmitted to us. That information, that message we are receiving, is through a sort of language in its own right, just as sign language is a true language and even eye movement and the manner in which we look at each other, or the manner in which we walk or act in the presence of others, transmits information and are therefore languages in their own right.


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As long as information is transmitted from one creature to another, we have language; and with music, that language is one which affects us at a very deep, though primarily subconscious, level. For thousands of years, music has been played by composers with the specific purpose of transmitting information of a very rare, special, even spiritual sort. Music is pre-eminently one of the very few genuine languages of the emotions. A tender glance at one whom we love, or a gentle hand placed on the shoulder of an old person whose welfare we care for; these are languages too, though only occasionally are they as overwhelmingly powerful in the transmission of information and emotions as music can be at its best.

Pure music, without the verbal parts of operas or songs, tell no stories; there are no pictures to paint, no visual images, no poetry, no tales to tell, except in very rare instances where such things are conjured up without even trying, and purely as a result of the exquisite beauty of what is being heard. What music is so overwhelmingly good at, is allowing the emotions to express themselves in fluid, wholly subconscious ways that both heal us and bring peace, happiness and harmony into our being. This it does especially for those who understand the language of music more precisely and convincingly than anything spoken that they hear; for music begins where all other languages end. As the revered French poet and novelist Victor Hugo put it:

> Music expresses that which cannot be put into words and that which cannot remain silent.

Of course music alone is not always the peak, for that requires words as well. Words, expressed as song, are a fusion of two extremely powerful language forms which, on rare occasions, take us to the deepest and most sublime fusion of emotions and information that we can experience in human form. But even when there are no words, no singing, no story-line, when music is expressed purely as a non-verbal art form, it is a language almost exclusively of the emotions, devoid of all intellectual analysis and, in many cases, existing primarily to heal. Pure music without a story-line, without words, is one of the greatest human-created transmission forms of emotions and often self-generated information between the soul and the deepest recesses of our earthly being. With pure music comes, not only *inspiration*, but subliminal *meaning* and *purpose* as well. Almost always though, it is so deeply embedded within the chords, rhythms and instruments that no intellectual analysis can fully do justice to what is being experienced.

Summarising

In summary, I see the sharing of information of all sorts as coming to us through just a few essential *'languages'*, only a tiny fraction of which we understand. Although

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they differ from each other, and are often entirely overlooked, they all operate through one or more of our five primary senses: sight, sound, touch, taste and smell.

Sound is perhaps the most dominant and expressive one. But remember always that we are multi-layered beings ranging from our outermost frivolity to the greatest depths of meaning and purpose residing in the heart of our being. The languages of smell and taste are more than likely the most primaeval of all our senses; any dog or cat can tell you that! And our tactile sense, the ability to touch something and gain information about the object we are holding or stroking, that too is from our deepest, most ancient past. And finally, as for the things we can see, what an extraordinarily complex and massive amount of information comes to us through that language too. It is probably the most wide-ranging and useful of all our senses, and possessing languages as well, a multitude of them, all adapted and suited to our vision of life and how we believe it should unfold.

The audible and visual languages, those involving sounds and visual representations of sounds, these are the most vital of all languages we use daily, almost constantly, without any objectively conscious direction, and with only the slightest of effort. If we could not, so effortlessly, communicate with each other through written words, spoken words, or though words expressed through sign languages, or words set to beautiful music, we would be massively disadvantaged and certainly, we would, in evolutionary terms, be far below the levels of our closest primate relatives.

And finally, within those audible languages, and quite specifically and to the point, the languages of music and their ability to communicate with us through our emotions and our deepest spiritual yearnings, that language group, those languages of music, are, in a spiritual sense, of as great importance for our survival as balanced emotional, spiritual beings as are the languages of our other physical senses.

Written and spoken languages are the most useful of all languages when dealing with information of historical importance. Whereas they enable us to remember our past in this life, they also, through written literature, enable us to *'pseudo-remember'* multiple pasts that far pre-date our present lifespan on earth. They are the most dominant, logical and clear methods of sharing the sort of information that is of immediate, practical benefit on a day-to-day basis, and are the essential bread-and-butter nourishment we constantly need in order to live as the successful species we are.

I am sure you know, and maybe daily experience, the subtle healing that music brings into our lives through the highly refined, subtle *'Language of Music.'* Before I end though, I will present a short excerpt from an article written by the Rosicrucian composer Paul Creston (1906-1985). His approach is very much that of a composer with mastery of the technical intricacies of music.

Spoken Language

Interestingly, a careful analysis of the elements of spoken language has revealed historical, structural and functional parallels in the language of music. I shall touch briefly upon the historical parallels. There are seven principal theories of the origins of language, and there are seven as well for the origins of music. The changes in semantics, the meaning of words, are paralleled in the changes in the use of chords.

The evolution of verbal language from simple to complex, from monosyllabic to polysyllabic words; these are analogous in music to the use of triads (three note structures) to complex chords, and from complex chords to polychords. We must consider at length, however, the structural and functional parallels between verbal or written languages and the language of music. As an

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introduction, I quote a passage from the *'Voices of Man'* by the great linguist, Mario Pei:

> All *[verbal]* languages, without exception, have a set of phonemes or sounds, which are distinctively significant to the speakers. They have a set of words which betoken actions and concepts; a set of grammatical forms which may be chiefly morphological *[consisting of endings or changes within the words to convey modifications of basic meanings]* or chiefly syntactical *[based on the order in which the words are uttered]*.

Language and Music

To juxtapose the structural parallels of language to music:

1. In language, we have letters and symbols for sounds; in music, we have notes and symbols for tones or musical sounds.

2. In language, we have etymology, the origin of words; in music, we have the origin of chords.

3. In language, we have words, diction *[choice of words]*, and syntax *[order of words]*; in music, we have chords, harmonic progression *[choice of chords]* and order of chords.

4. Grammar is the part of language which deals with the principles governing the correct use of language; the theory of music is analogous to grammar.

5. With language, a sentence is a related group of words expressing a complete thought; a musical phrase is a natural division of the melodic line comparable to a sentence of speech.

6. Tone of voice and inflection govern, to a great extent, semantics or meaning; similarly, dynamics, nuances and inflection govern expression in music.

7. Finally, we can juxtapose language dialects with folk songs and popular ballads, and written and extemporaneous speech with composed and improvised music.

As with verbal language, the function of musical language is to communicate. Verbal language can express and communicate ideas, describe scenes, relate stories, discuss philosophical theories, and also engender emotions. Music, without the benefit of text, can express and communicate only emotions or moods. That is the only difference between verbal language and music.

It is commonly believed that music is a vague, esoteric language. On the contrary, the meaning of a well wrought significant piece of music is so precise that there is not one word that can fully express a particular emotion. As Mendelssohn so aptly put it:

> The thoughts which are expressed to me by a piece of music which I love are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary, too definite.

———————

Musical language begins where verbal language ends. It is vaster by far, and a single chord can engender a feeling which no word or synonym can effectively describe.

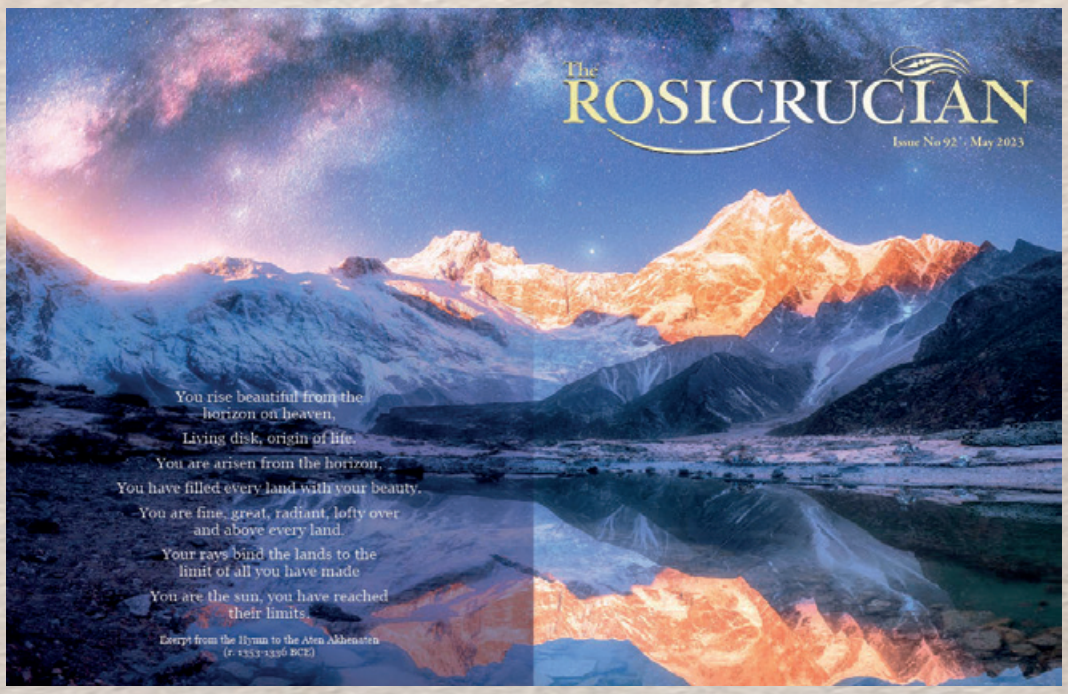
That is the spiritual quality that even the most humble of humans instantly recognise. Without thought, and swept up to great heights of attunement with the source of all existence, the deep emotion of the moment is often one remembered for life.

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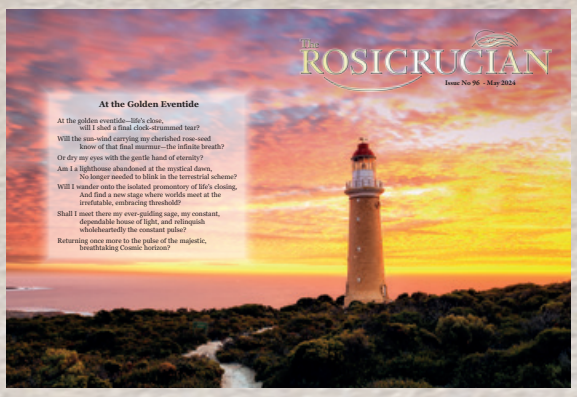
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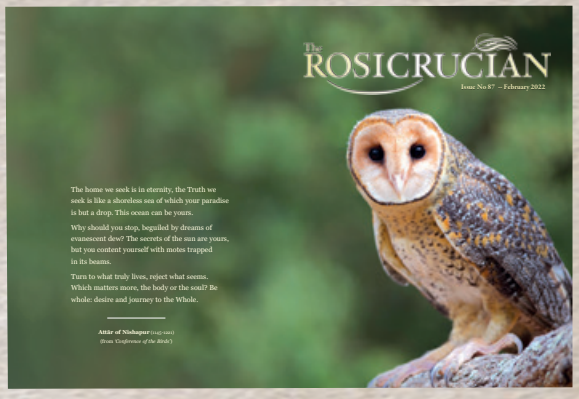
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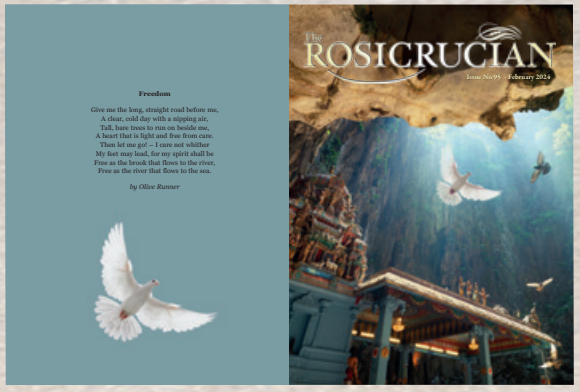


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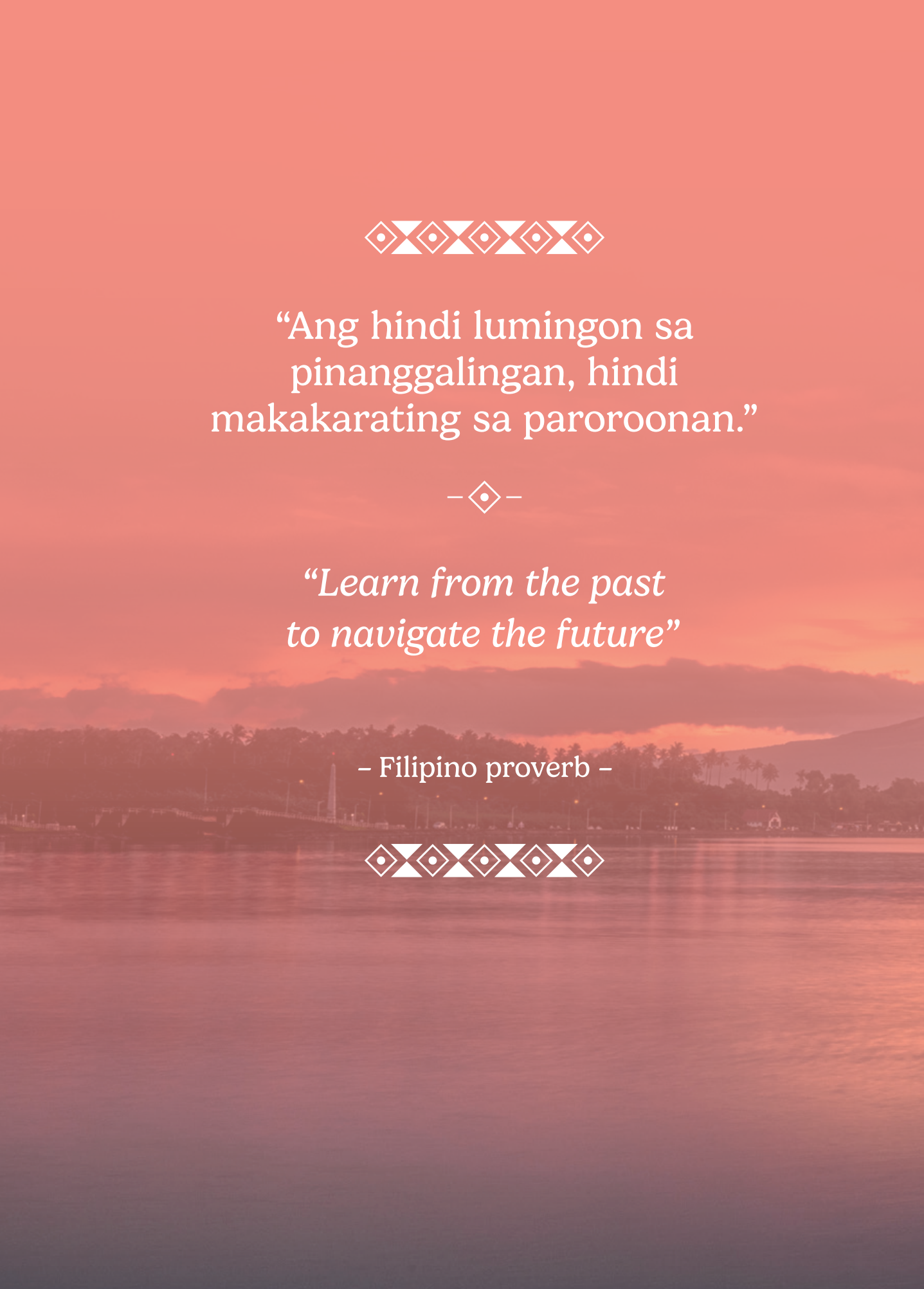








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“Ang hindi lumingon sa
pinanggalingan, hindi
makakarating sa paroroonan.”

“Learn from the past
to navigate the future”

– Filipino proverb –