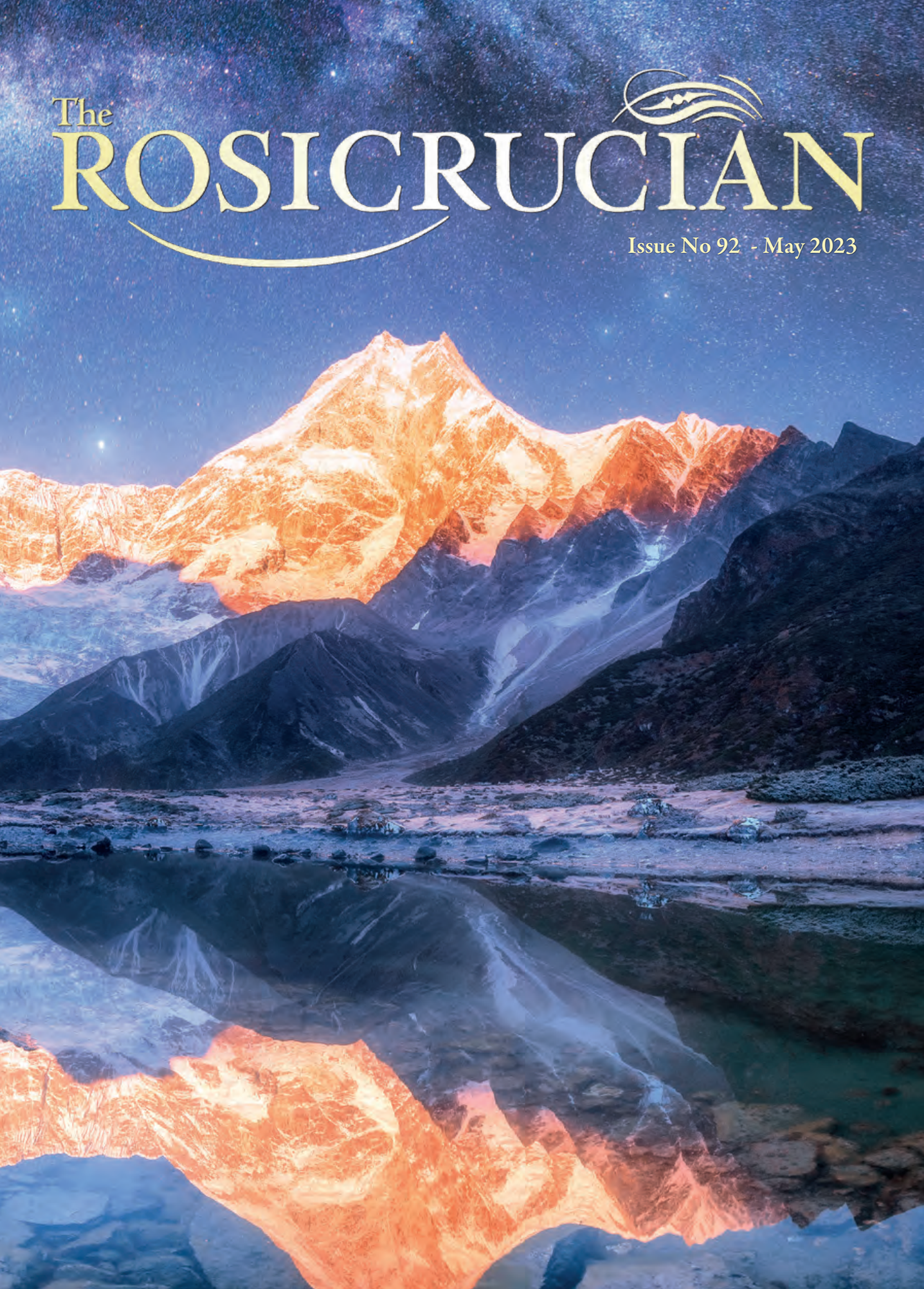
The ROSICRUCIAN

Issue No 92 - May 2023





Contribute to Peace

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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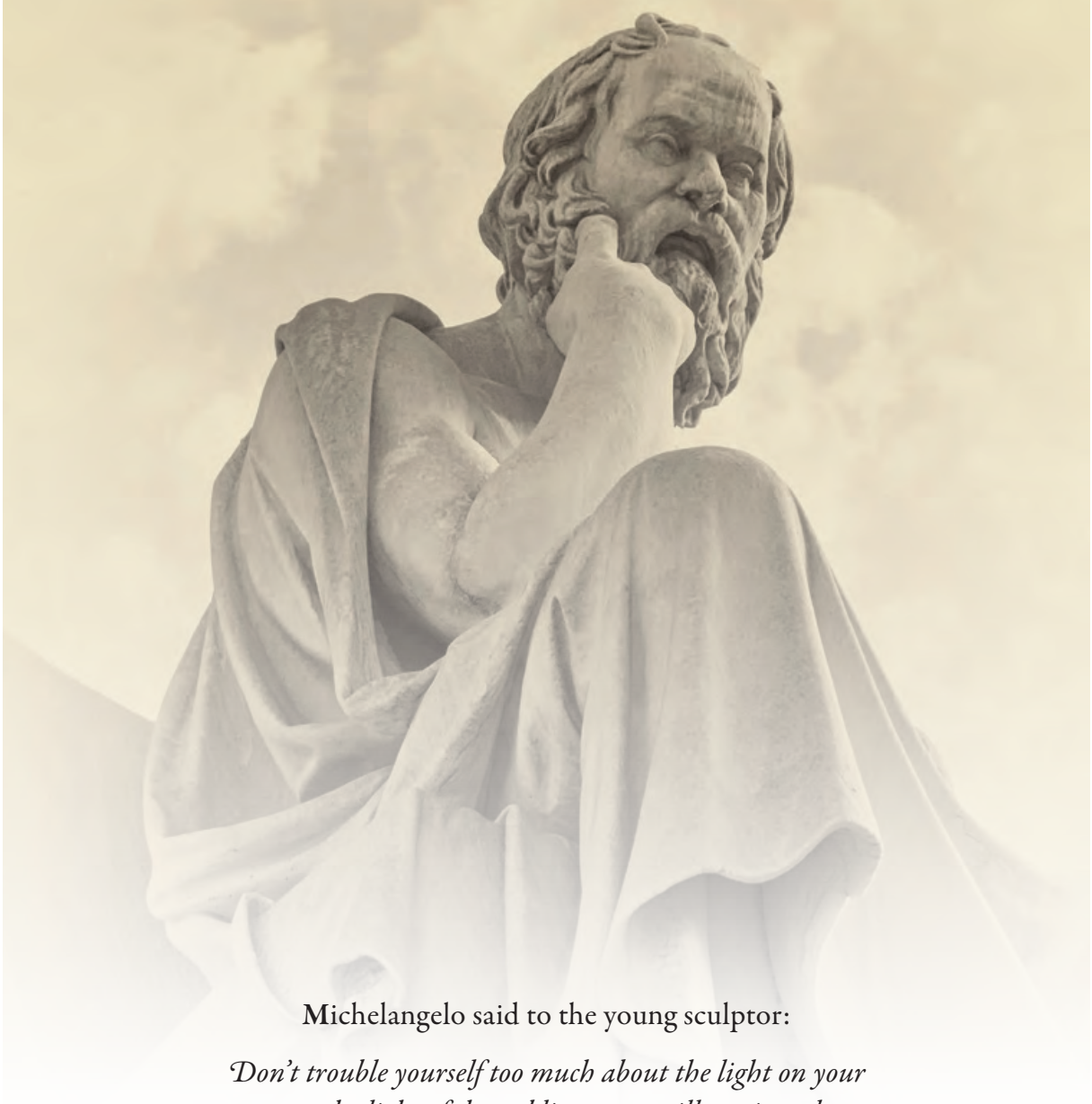


The golden light of the rising sun glows upon a majestic mountain in Nepal's high Himalaya and is reflected in the pristine water of a silent, serene lake. The Milky Way above is like a philosophical brow...contemplating the breathtaking immensity of the universe.

ID 217999025 © Denys Bilytskyi | Dreamstime.com

SOCRATES

by **Jean Ewing**



Michelangelo said to the young sculptor:

'Don't trouble yourself too much about the light on your statue; the light of the public square will test its value.

Truth comes forth to speak for herself. Finding no audience in the masses, she stands eternally, waiting to be recognised by the few. So it is with the truth of Socrates.

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Most of what we know about Socrates and his quotations that we read comes from the dialogues of Plato. These dialogues resemble plays, with Socrates featured as the main character. Through his conversations with others, Socrates comes to life, a mystic engaged in a mission given to him by the Greek god Apollo.

Socrates (Σωκράτης) (c.469–399 BCE) was a classical Greek philosopher who is credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy. He is an enigmatic figure, known not through his own writings but through those of his pupils *Plato* and *Xenophon*, and through Plato's pupil *Aristotle* but also through sideswipes from the comic dramatist *Aristophanes*. According to Plato, Socrates' father was *Sophroniskos* and his mother *Phainarete*. Though said to be unattractive in appearance and short in stature, Socrates married *Xanthippe*, who was much younger than he was. She bore him three sons, *Lamprokles*, *Sophroniskos* and *Menexenos*.

Socrates lived during a time of transition, from the height of the Athenian hegemony to its decline with the defeat by Sparta and its allies in the *Peloponnesian War* (431–404 BCE). At a time when Athens sought to stabilise and recover from its humiliating defeat, the Athenian public may have been entertaining doubts about democracy as an efficient form of government. Socrates appears to have been a critic of Athenian democracy, and some scholars interpret his trial as an expression of political infighting.

Dialectic

In the dialogue entitled *Apology* (Απολογία), Socrates tells the court that at first he was puzzled because the oracle of Apollo at Delphi had said that no one was wiser than he.

> What can the god mean, for I know I have no wisdom. Yet he is a god and cannot lie.

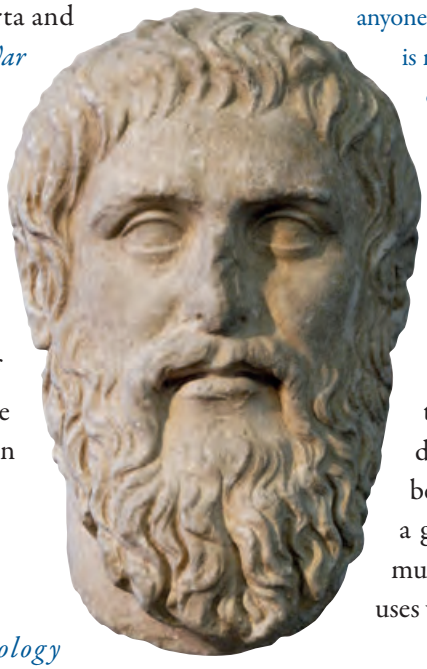
Socrates set out to find someone wiser than he but, finding none, concluded about each one he spoke with...

> I am better off than he is, for he knows nothing, yet he thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know.

The truth of the riddle is revealed in the following quote:

> Only the god is wise. The god is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, *"He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing."*

> And so I go about the world, obedient to the god, and search and make enquiry into the wisdom of anyone who appears to be wise. And if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him he is not wise.



Plato

Socrates demonstrated through his dialectic method of teaching that people were not wise. *Dialectic* is defined as the art or practice of examining statements logically, as by question and answer, to establish validity; but in the dialectic of Socrates much more can be seen. He comes across as a man with a good sense of humour who knows much, pretends to know nothing, and uses wit and irony to their fullest.

When someone enquires as to

the nature of something, Socrates pretends to know nothing about it; he replies with a question. Thus he continues until, with his clever enquiries, he has led the other person to answer his own question. When Socrates sees someone showing off, pretending wisdom, he points out the folly of his words, again using questions. He blatantly leads the pretender to what's true by showing him what's not true. He called himself an intellectual midwife and said that anxieties are labour pains. He didn't have the ideas, he said; he helped others have them or find them.

To Know Truth

Socrates believed absolute truth, knowledge, beauty and goodness exist eternally, and that we know and recognise these qualities on Earth because we remember them from a previous existence in which we dwelt with them. In another dialogue, *Phaedo* (Φαίδων), he says:

> After descent to earth, the soul has its reminders of the world of true being. Our learning is often remembering what we once knew in another life.

With his questions, Socrates helped the enquirer remember his answers. His two most famous quotes are probably *"Know thyself!"* and *"The unexamined life is not worth living."* His major concern was *'the good life.'* Before him, philosophers had been mainly concerned with the nature of the heavens and earth, but Socrates said he wasn't concerned with how or of what the universe was made but *why* it was made as it was. He focused his attention on the inner self and on the acquisition of happiness. Believing that true



Socrates said he wasn't concerned with how or of what the universe was made but why it was made as it was.

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goodness and happiness are one and the same, he believed that we can become rational and that through a process of *arete* (αρετή: moral excellence or virtue, or just becoming expert at something) we can find fulfilment. Everyone, he thought, should live up to his or her full innate potential.

Everyone, he thought, should live up to his or her full innate potential.

The *absolutes* spoken of by Socrates are essences, forms or ideas remaining after the thing that represents them has departed. He believed that we are able to partake of these absolutes because we remember them. An example is the idea of beauty that remains after the flower we thought beautiful has wilted. This idea of beauty is also the flower's true nature and, knowing its nature, one can also know its purpose. It is no accident that there is such variety in the universe, thought Socrates; everything has its purpose in relation to the whole. There is one function that each person or thing performs better than any other person or thing..., and that function is its purpose, its reason for being.

Socrates believed that knowledge breeds understanding,.. leading to goodness and a good life.

Knowledge is a Virtue

If we seek knowledge and learn what is truly good, we will act in our own best interest. Socrates believed that knowledge breeds understanding,.. leading to goodness and a good life. Mistakes are made because of a lack of information. If one knows what is best, one will do what is best. No person harms him or herself intentionally. Consider a woman who steals. She must believe that the acquisition of the thing she steals will bring her happiness. Does a man who kills not believe that either he or the world will somehow be better off without his victim? *"Knowledge is virtue"*, said Socrates.

Our true nature is good. We have a built-in safety mechanism that gets us back in the flow when we leave it. No person or group can continue indefinitely behaving in a manner that is harmful to his or her personal interests, or for that matter the interests of others. If one tries it, things do not turn out right. So, to find true happiness one must find true goodness.

So, to find true happiness one must find true goodness.

Trial by the People

As with many of the great teachers throughout history, Socrates was unpopular with the masses. His life ended in Athens in 399 BCE, the same place it had begun 70 years before. He was ordered by the court to drink the poison hemlock after being found guilty of not worshipping the state gods, of introducing new and unfamiliar religious practices, and of corrupting the youth of the city.

At his trial, he was given the opportunity of changing his ways, but he would not. He said he believed his trial and its results were in his best interests. Speaking of his δαίμων (daimon or inner companion), he says:

> This sign, which is a kind of voice, first came to me when I was a child; it always forbids but never commands me to do anything that I am going to do. Hitherto the divine faculty, of which the internal oracle is the source, has constantly been in the habit of opposing me, even about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or error in any matter; and now, as you see, there has come upon me that which may be thought and is generally believed to be the last and worst evil. But the oracle made no

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The Death of Socrates, by Jacques-Louis David (1787). Socrates was visited by friends in his last night at prison.

> sign of opposition. It is an intimation that what has happened to me is good, and that those of us who think death is an evil are in error. For the customary sign would surely have opposed me had I been going to evil and not to good.

Enter Plato

The concept that life necessarily follows death, because opposites spring from opposites, is believed to be that of Plato, although Plato attributes it to Socrates. Many believe it is impossible to truly separate Plato's philosophy from the philosophy of Socrates in the dialogues. In many instances it is believed that Plato used Socrates as a mouthpiece through which he expressed his own views. What does it matter? Is the message not the important thing? How often do you hear a quote that you think wise, and in time remember the quote but not who said it? *Truth does indeed speak for herself.*

Perhaps Plato had a purpose for mixing his ideas with those of Socrates so as to render them indistinguishable. Somehow this seems to reinforce the philosophy of Socrates, namely, that it is a waste of time arguing over things all wise people disagree about whilst searching for a knowledge that would do us no good if we had it. What good would it do us if we knew? It also protects us from the trap of respecting the teacher but not the message. After all, if Plato wanted the credit, all he had to do was claim it. Plato loved Socrates like a father who had been his teacher for twenty years. The dialogues were written after the death of Socrates.

Could it be that Plato merely recognised truth standing and wished to preserve her because Socrates, his beloved teacher, never wrote a line? Preserve her he did; she stands, still waiting. The light of the public square has not found her wanting.

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Life Lessons & Truisms

by **Will Hand**

All of us, at some stage in our lives, have come across a particular phrase or sentence that seems to carry more meaning than may be apparent on the first reading. In this article I will share some of the sayings and truisms that have been meaningful to me. I offer some of my interpretations of each saying but also suggest that each is worthy of a few moments' individual reflection and contemplation.

The best things in life are not things.

There is a sister saying to this: "The best things in life are free." Both are alluding to the same fact, that the acquisition of material goods by itself will not make you happy. This is not to say that desiring and acquiring a nice home, car or other consumer item is a bad thing; it is just that ultimately without your health, inner peace and the love of others you will probably end up unhappy and somewhat unfulfilled as a person.

Love begins when judgement ceases.

This is a favourite of mine. It is saying that as soon as we master the ego and take ourselves away from any value judgements then love can blossom. Mystics over the centuries have realised that one of the great obstacles to enlightenment is paying too much attention to the self, which is what judgement

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is about. So the love referred to here is a mystical love. You could also argue that, in affairs of the heart, you can never truly love a person if you are always judging them!

Don't anthropomorphise computers; they may not like it!

Computers are commonplace. Indeed you can't go to a bank, shop, airport, restaurant, etc., without coming into contact with a computer of some sort. Even most watches nowadays have computer circuitry in them. They can do marvellous things very quickly, but does a computer have a mind of its own? Can a computer make decisions and act like a human being? Well, they certainly seem to make decisions sometimes. *"Computer says no!"*

But can we really compare computers to human beings? Do they have feelings or emotions, for example, or other qualities that we call human, especially the awareness that they are aware? The accepted answer to this question by science is: no.

Having said that, perhaps in the future machines will be developed with as much or maybe more processing power than the human brain, and then, just possibly, that may attract Soul force and turn a machine into a living expression of Soul. We would then be able to genuinely ask them whether they like being anthropomorphised or not.

If you think training is expensive, try ignorance.

I came across this one over 20 years ago when I was teaching meteorology to graduates. It is one of those glaringly obvious truisms, yet how many companies have you come across where, through ignorance, staff have not coped and possibly lost customers? I bet at least one!

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Would you embark on a project, possibly investing a lot of time and money not knowing the first thing about it? Yes, we can all learn eventually by our mistakes, but sometimes those mistakes can be very costly. A little bit of training can go a long way. Actually, as Rosicrucians we already know this. Imagine how much harder our lives might have been had we not had the benefit of our Rosicrucian studies.

There are two ways to become rich: make more or desire less.

Many people in today's world want to be rich in a material sense. However, the only way they feel they can achieve this is to work harder and try to earn more money. This causes problems with stress, family break-ups, etc.

But there is another way and that is to take stock and really think about what you want and why you want it. By crossing non-essential items off the list and taking stock of what you already have, you quickly discover hidden riches in time, peace and money.

No rain, no rainbows.

This is a meteorological fact for sure. Everybody likes rainbows; they are beautiful objects but transitory in nature, and the opportunity to appreciate them must be seized quickly. However, according to the law of duality, before you can really appreciate a rainbow you must first experience some rain. Everything is dual in nature and all is relative.

Every silver lining has a cloud.

This saying is similar to the previous one and is usually quoted the other way round. By quoting it in this way, however, we can more easily see that to every action there is a re-action. What to one person may be a *'silver lining'* may to another person be *'a cloud.'* There is no absolute value in life, only relative values.

Man created God in his image.

A truism if there ever was one! The only way we can talk about God, endeavour to explain God and to glorify God is in human terms. Nobody knows the true nature of God, as God is beyond enquiry. We can *feel the presence* of God but we can never say we *understand* God.

Predicting is very difficult, especially when it concerns the future.

This is a rather witty saying but one that holds a note of seriousness. How many times do we come across people who claim to know the future, profess to know our individual fate or tell us that, unless we change our ways, something terrible will happen to us? Almost all predictions of such sort end in failure, as the predictions are more for the benefit of the predictor's ego than for



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the recipient. Indeed, the effect of false predictions can be upsetting for susceptible individuals. Life is continually evolving; there may be a master plan, but no individual can be aware of such a plan, in much the same way as a single letter on this page can ever be aware of the meaning and intent of this article.

Smile, it's the second best thing you can do with your lips.

A friendly smile goes a long way; try it and see the effect next time you want to do something with your lips!

The loudest voice in the room is not necessarily the clearest.

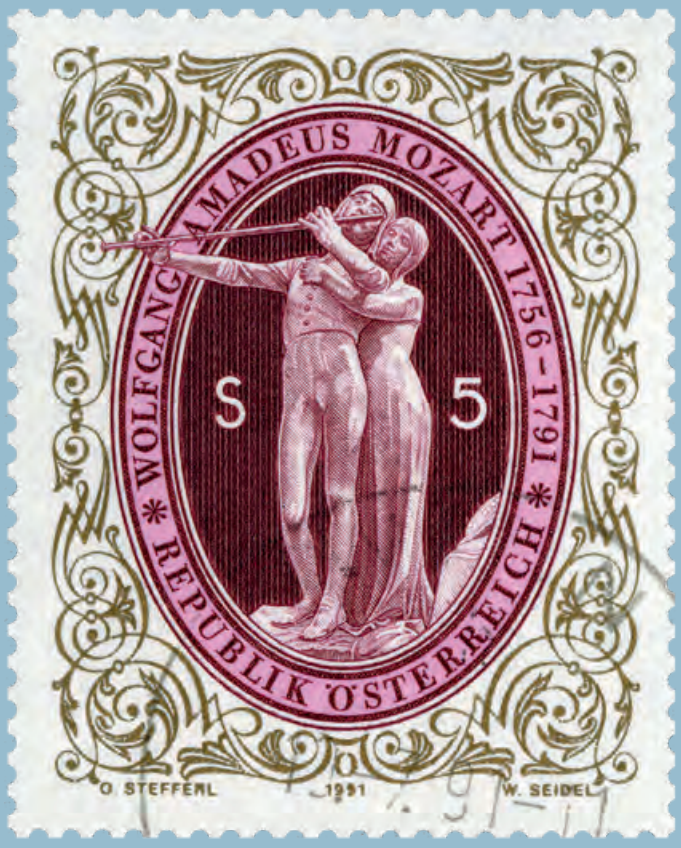
There is often strength in silence. Knowing when to stop talking and start listening is an art and of great benefit. People who like the sound of their own voice are often too busy talking and, in doing so, miss many learning opportunities. If they continue to go through life like this then their messages can become muddled with a lack of clarity as they will not have progressed.

Luck is the meeting place of preparation and opportunity.

I love this one because I always tell people that there is no such thing as luck. Or, if I wish to concede a point, that everyone makes their own luck. Throughout life, opportunities for advancement, wealth, peace and happiness will arise. If we are prepared, and the Rosicrucian studies prepare us admirably, then we will recognise and seize these opportunities. Others may think we are lucky. However, I'll tell you now: I'd rather be lucky than good any day!



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An Austrian stamp shows Magic Flute Fountain, Vienna, C. 1991

Of Master Kelpius & Mozart

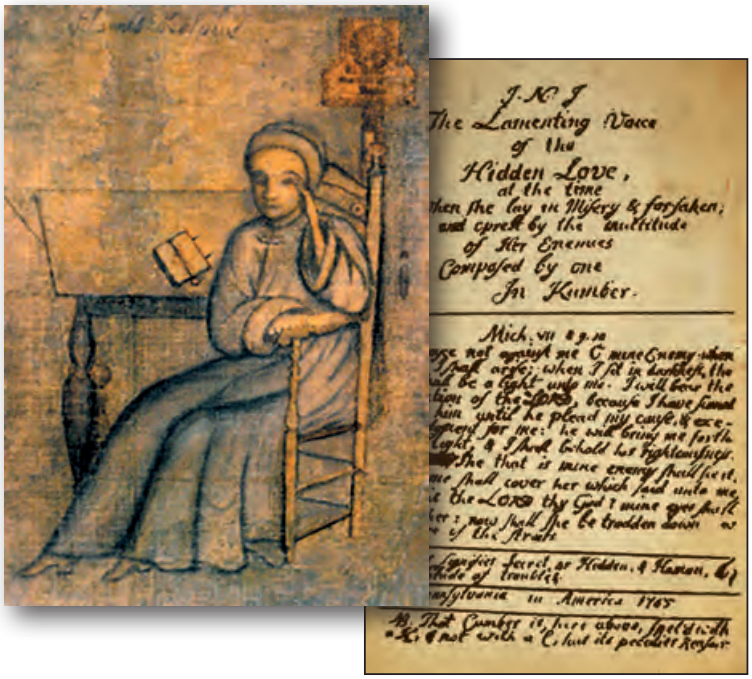
by **Lucy Carrol**

Johannes Kelpius was the leader of the first group of European Rosicrucians to have settled in America. The community he founded along the Wissahickon Creek, in what is today Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, was founded on principles and practices set forth in the incredible 1614 Rosicrucian document entitled *Fama Fraternitatis*. The community founded by Kelpius had a herb garden and a telescope for astronomical observations, and its communicants established a school, practised healing and held meetings open to the public as well as secret mystical rites.

One of the most remarkable aspects of that Rosicrucian community's legacy is a book, containing original text and music, entitled: *The Lamenting Voice of the Hidden Love at the Time When She Lay in Misery and Forsaken and Oprest [sic] by the Multitude of her Enemies.* It was erroneously labelled a *'hymn book'* by early scholars. The book does not contain hymns, however, but poems. While some of the poems concern sacred texts, most of them are philosophical and mystical studies. They are most probably a poetic form of Kelpius' teachings, written by a woman, Christiana Warmer, whose signature is on the title page. The original German text, accompanied by English translation on facing pages, is probably by Christopher Witt, another member of the community.[1]

These marvellous works are full of allegory, symbolism and mystical truths. The most remarkable

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Master Johannes Kelpius, from the original canvas by Dr Christopher Witt.

On the left is represented one of the few artifacts of Johannes Kelpius that has survived; it is a hymn book about 5in. x 7in., and likely bound by Kelpius' close friend, J.G. Seelig in 1705. About this unusual piece, Julius Sachse the historian wrote:

> "This unique volume of seventy pages contains twelve hymns and melodies. It is evidently a duplicate of a similar manuscript collection, or else it is a compilation from loose sheets upon which were originally written such hymns as were in common use in the services at the Tabernacle. The hymns are written in German on the left hand pages, while on the opposite pages is an attempt at a metrical translation in English. The musical score as well as the hymns are all in the peculiar handwriting of Kelpius, and, like his diary, the book affords us an insight into his religious fervour."

http://www.middletonbooks.com/html/witw/witw_hymn.html

is entry No. 8. Its English title is given as: *The Power of Love Which Conquers the World, Sin and Death, in a Pensive Poem Composed in 1705.*[2] There are 136 verses, with an involved story line, separate characters, different tunes and some sections where it is indicated that the lines are *'to be spoken'.* This is no hymn!

After fifteen years of intense research and study, I have reached the conclusion that *The Power of Love* was a mystical music drama. Once this is accepted, a remarkable fact becomes clear: the story bears striking similarities to the story used by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in his opera 'The Magic Flute' (*Die Zauberflöte*), composed 86 years later in 1791.

It is an allegorical epic, complete with a princess (a Soul, a feminine character) who undergoes trials, imprisonments, kidnapping, and finally meets and is united with her Lord. In the Kelpius story, religious symbolism intertwines with the mystical. The Lord is eventually revealed to be Christ on the Cross, and in both the Mozart opera and Kelpius' Rosicrucian music drama the powers of light and darkness loom large. In both we read of trial or purification by fire. In both there is a Princess (the Soul) who is taken from her Beloved. In both there is an evil character that kidnaps the princess. And as with Mozart's opera, the Rosicrucian drama mentions an *'inner temple'* and ritual robes.

There is no coincidence in the similarity of the stories. Rosicrucian tradition predates the establishment of Freemasonry. The story in *'The Magic Flute'* has always been labelled *'Masonic'* but is in fact a more polished retelling of this much older Rosicrucian drama.

The music in *'Power of Love'* is indeed hymn-like but cannot begin to approach the musical genius of Mozart's popular opera. Yet the story in the early version bears closer scrutiny, for the *'Power of Love'* can be read on many levels. There are themes of *Light* and *Dark*, *Good* and *Evil*, *Christ* and *Satan*, *Wisdom* and *Ignorance*. A recurring theme in the story is that of the duality of nature, a concept that hearkens back to Gnostic dogma, with such unusual references as *'Left side weakness.'*

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Another theme is that of cross preceding crown, or of suffering preceding reward. From verses 7 and 8:

> Her Lord did tell her there that in His Kingdom she in Hon'r and glory like unto Him should be.
>
> And tho He told her too of Crosses near attending, she took no notice on it, but of her joys was mending.
>
> She hoped hourly the outbreaking of His might, and for the chiefest seat of Honour asked quite.[3]

In the Mozart opera much is made of the trials the young lovers must undergo. In the Kelpius document there is a trial by separation and also by fire. The reward, however, is not earthly love but eternity. The Soul finds herself in prison, alone. She has with her a lantern (symbolising *wisdom*) and a hammer (symbolising *strength*). She uses the hammer to break her chains, then to strike a spark to light the lantern. From the manuscript, verses 84 and 85:

> Then straight way she did take and hammer with hands double confident. God saw her misery and trouble.
>
> She smote a hardy rock till flame came with a stroke; then lighted she her lamp until daylight broke.
>
> The fetters on her feet she smote them quite asunder; this indeed well strove, and rightly to a wonder.
>
> And then yet after this, with lamp in hand, she came and set her jail on fire and sped her through the flame.[4]

Notice that the text says *'through'* the flame. The fire is a purification ritual that the Soul must undergo



A poster advertising the first performance of The Magic Flute on 30th September 1791 at the Theater auf der Wieden in Vienna.

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as an initiatic rite. For us, the fire is symbolic. Throughout the story, the Princess or Soul is found to be at fault through her lack of preparedness and weakness. Yet verse 122 warns us:

> Judge not before the time, nor
> too soon the offender!
> O deal in mercy with and
> censure her but tender.
> O let but judge in you the love
> that's true and right.
> Or else your dear light will be
> turned to darkness quite.[5]

The beautiful concluding verses, full of imagery and wisdom offer an admonition and hope:

> Oh fear yourselves much more, while yet you soundly venture stand in the holy fear that you may safely enter.
>
> Like as a black night does the brightest day devour, so may your night also in darkness hide its power.
>
> And since we have the weight of the working days been bearing, so can we only be such exchange comparing.
>
> But when Love in death stands on the end of the earth, then will first of all in us the Lord's Sabbath day begin![6]

In the summer of 1986 a reconstruction of this magnificent work was performed in Philadelphia under the sponsorship of the Kelpius Society (now defunct) and the Benjamin Franklin Lodge of AMORC, with the author directing. It is hoped that this work will one day again be performed as an inspirational work. Meanwhile, the next time you hear the magnificent music of Mozart's *'The Magic Flute'*, remember that it may be an evolved form of a much earlier work, a version which evolved along the Wissahickon near Philadelphia in 1705 under the guidance of Master Johannes Kelpius and the Rosy Cross.



Arrival of Sarastro on a chariot pulled by lions, from a 1793 production of The Magic Flute.

Endnotes

1. See "Christopher Witt: Rosicrucian Wonder Worker of the Wissahickon," *Rosicrucian Digest*, Feb. 1986.
2. See "The Lamenting Voice", manuscript, pp. 34-56. Ms. Ac 189, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
3. From translation and edition copyright L.E. Carroll, 1986.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., verses 135 – 136.

Other Sources

Sachse, Julius Friedrich, *German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, Philadelphia: 1895.

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William Blake

by **William McKegg**

Christ refusing the banquet. William Blake.

Among the many famous painters and poets of Rosicrucian ancestry who flared across the artistic and literary horizons in the late 18th and 19th centuries, William Blake stands out as one of the most illuminated minds through whom Divine wisdom flowed. In his ability to symbolise great truths in art, Blake is without peer. His paintings and poems revealed to men and women of his time what the esoteric philosophy of Jacob Boehme had revealed to 17th century Europe. Like other great mystics who wrote inspiring works to assist a struggling humanity out of the dull rut of tradition and bigotry, Blake was little understood and never achieved the fame he deserved during his lifetime. But soon after his death he was recognised as a genius, and today he stands high among the list of England's immortal minds.

Born in London in 1757, he was the second of five children. His father was a hosier, and fairly prosperous. At the age of eight, young William had beautiful, strange visions. Nature appeared to him not in her usual guise but in the royal splendour of her true Self. He was sternly ridiculed by his elders and others when he related to them what he could see. And once, running

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in to his mother to tell her he had just seen a vision of the prophet Ezekiel standing under a tree, he received not her approbation for gaining such an honour but a sound thrashing for being too imaginative. However, his ardent desire to create finally caused his parents to permit him to take drawing lessons.

Later on he was apprenticed to James Basire, an engraver to the Society of Antiquaries. Basire sent young William to Westminster Abbey to sketch. There, in Edward the Confessor's Chapel in the Holy of Holies in Westminster, he copied the heads of deceased kings and queens of old. It was here too that he drew his first picture of importance, *'Joseph of Arimathea, Among the Rocks of Albion.'*

Establishing his Art

Blake was greatly attracted to the story of the Holy Grail, to the magician Merlin and to King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and between the ages of 12 and 20 he wrote his first poems concerning them. Eventually branching out as an artist, he was urged to paint in oils. He tried that for a while but soon discarded it as being inadequate to his style, saying that oil paintings *'sank'*, taking away the brilliance and colour he sought.

> Colouring [Blake declared] does not depend on where the colours are put, but on where the lights and darks are put. And all depends on form or outline, on where that is put. Where that is wrong, the colouring never can be right.

His bold assertions and odd views incited the antagonism of various established artists, but they had to admit that his creations possessed a profound beauty of colour and symbolic vision. Frederick Tatham, the friend of his later days and his biographer, said:

> Like his thoughts, his paintings seem to be inspired by fairies, and his colours look as if they were the bloom dropped from the brilliant wings of the spirits of the prism.



'Joseph of Arimathea, Among the Rocks of Albion'

At the age of 24, Blake fell in love with a young girl who did not, however, return his affections. Taken ill, he went into the country to regain his health and there stayed with the Boucher family. There he met their daughter Catherine, whose sympathy and care attracted him to her. A year later they were married, and a devoted union of ideal beauty existed between the two until Blake's death in his 70th year. Four years later his wife passed away.

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'Blake's portrayal of 'Jacob's Ladder', the dream that the biblical patriarch Jacob envisions during his flight from his brother Esau, as described in the 'Book of Genesis 28: 11-19.

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Imagination

Blake asserted to his friends, among whom were some of the most famous men of his time, that he had the power of bringing his imagination before his mind's eye so clearly that he could not go wrong in his designs. He also said that he was often the companion of spirits who taught and advised him. His exquisite, hauntingly beautiful painting *'The Vision of Jacob's Ladder'* reveals in an instant to every true mystic what Blake was referring to. He similarly declared that he had the power of calling upon the deceased from the past and of conversing with them about their painting methods. His own creations compared, strangely enough, with those of the Cinquecento (16th century) period. He held the works of Raphael and Michelangelo in deep veneration.

As a mystic, Blake had revealed to him the Divine Wonders of the Universe and the secrets of Nature. Once, when a prospective patron commented that his designs were a bit too unreal, Blake replied:

> The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing which stands in the way. Some see Nature all ridicule and deformity, and by these I shall not regulate my proportion: and some scarce see Nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees. To me this world is all one continued vision of fancy, or imagination, and I feel flattered when I am told so.

> Why [he later said] is the Bible more entertaining and instructive than any other book? Is it not because they are addressed to the imagination, which is spiritual sensation, and but immediately to the understanding or reason? Consider what Lord Bacon says: 'Sense sends over to imagination before reason has judged, and reason sends over to imagination before the decree can be acted.' I am happy to find a great majority of fellow mortals who can elucidate my visions, and particularly they have been elucidated by children who have taken a greater delight in contemplating my picture than I even hoped.

Indifference to Worldly Wealth

Blake had one horror in life..., the fear of wealth, which he habitually declared, *"destroys creative art."* He was neither rich nor poor, and those who were closest to him affirmed that he always appeared to have sufficient on which to live and make himself and his wife happy and contented. They were both known to be very charitable, never failing in kindness, and always having some money to spare for anyone greatly in need of it.

Blake had one horror in life, the fear of wealth...

Blake lived as many mystics before and since have lived..., with complete indifference to the glitter of material wealth. But he was never understood; many in fact regarded him as mad. A person prompted only by idle curiosity would get a bewildering reply to any question he put to him, which confirmed his suspicion that Blake was insane. But, to a soul eager for knowledge and enlightenment, Blake showed himself to be a font of profound wisdom. His life was lived in this world but he was not of it..., sharing his angelic visions on paper and in his written words, for the few during his lifetime who knew him for the great mystic he was.

Messengers from Heaven

When his youngest brother died, Blake declared that he had appeared to him one night and disclosed a method whereby he could invent and put to use what he later called *'Illuminated Printing.'*

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William Blake

> I am not ashamed, afraid or averse to tell you [he wrote to a friend] what ought to be told; that I am under the direction of messengers from heaven, daily and nightly.

All who aspire to a life of sanctity and closeness to God will at least once go through a period of despair..., a seventh period or dark night of the soul. Blake's mystical pictures and poetry met with ridicule from critics and those jealous of his prowess, and this rejection of his artistic efforts eventually led him to his darkest hour, and his world appeared to crumble about him. He left London and placed his talents at the disposal of a rather exacting friend who had an eye more on financial gain than artistic furtherance. Much against his grain, Blake made miniatures. He deserted *'imaginative'* art, which is ever the highest, for *'imitative'* art, which, though possibly more lucrative, carries with it no satisfaction, no worth.

> I say this much to you [he wrote to one of his most intimate friends], knowing that you will not make bad use of it. But it is a fact too true that, if I had only depended on mortal things, both myself and my wife must have been lost. I shall leave everyone in this country astonished at my patience and forbearance of injuries upon injuries; and I do assure you that, if I could have returned to London a month after my arrival here, I should have done so. But I was commanded by my spiritual friends to bear all and be silent, and to go through all without murmuring.

It would appear from Blake's inference that he was passing through a great test. Rosicrucians know this period as *'the dark night of the soul'*, a period through which he was passing and from which he emerged, shining with an inner light that burned all the more brilliantly after its temporary inactivity. Soon he was back in London where he renewed his former life and work.

The Wonders in Humanity

Blake was aware of the wonders within the human being. He was eager to enlighten others by revealing the powers they could attain from within themselves if they would but put to use various simple, natural laws.

> Oh! What wonders are the children of men! [he wrote] Would to God that they would consider it, that they would consider their spiritual life, regardless of that faint shadow called natural life, and that they would promote each other's spiritual labours, each according to its rank.... If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up till he sees all things through narrow clinks of his cavern.

The True Spiritual Life

Imagination was the word Blake used when alluding to true spiritual life.

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> I know of no other Christianity and of no Gospel than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination: Imagination, the real and eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow, and in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies, when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more.

While his mystic paintings may have appeared odd to the average person, they certainly appealed to those who sought spiritual Light, and were regarded with high esteem by some of the greatest artists of the time. Both Romney and Fuseli were ardent admirers of Blake's paintings, as Coleridge and Wordsworth were admirers of his poetry. He read books in their original languages, which he taught himself..., and when he was past 60 he read Dante, though before then he knew no Italian.

Transition

Shortly before his death, while in bed, he executed his most distinguished picture *'The Ancient of Days Striking the First Circle of the Earth.'* It was suggested to him by the lines in Book VII of *Paradise Lost* beginning with *"He took the golden Compasses...."*

Blake spoke calmly of the approach of his transition to a higher realm and did not consider it as a death in anything but name. We are told that the happiest and most joyous period of his life was the hour before he passed away. He sang in a manner so beautiful that those who heard it were held moved beyond words by its mystic import.

> His bursts of gladness made the room peal again. [Tatham relates] The walls rang and resounded with the beatific symphony. It was a prelude to the hymns of saints. It was an overture to the choir of heaven. It was a chant for the response of angels. Then his spirit departed like the sighing of a gentle breeze.



The Ancient of Days Striking the First Circle of the Earth.

Another friend wrote of him:

> He was more like the ancient pattern of virtue than I ever expected to see in this world; he feared nothing so much as being rich, lest he should lose his spiritual riches. He was at the same time the most sublime in his expressions, with the simplicity and gentleness of a child.

The predominant truth William Blake expounded throughout the nearly 70 years of his life may be summed up in one of his own lines:

> Nature has no Outline, but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune, but Imagination has. Nature has no Supernatural and dissolves: Imagination is Eternity.

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Tagore's Message

by **Vincent Edwards**

When India's great poet and philosopher *Rabindranath Tagore* (1861–1941) was still very young, his father insisted he drop his books and go up into the high Himalayas. He did so, and the sight of those lofty, snow-covered peaks gave the youth a new outlook on the world. He caught a vision that he cherished for the rest of his days. It was of a free world, where love and understanding counted for more than national boundaries. There, men and women would live like brothers and sisters, side by side, and scientists could pursue their studies in the service of people. There was no reason for distrust, since war had been outlawed by love and human fellowship.

Probably no-one loved peace and hated war more than Tagore. The time came when his name became a household word in his native country, and

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his poems were known to both rich and poor alike. His songs were sung in crowded city quarters as well as by travellers on far-off caravan trails. And tens of thousands were stirred by his dreams of world peace.

Nobel Peace Prize

In 1913 came Tagore's crowning honour with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in literature. It was the first time someone from Asia had been chosen, and the recognition of India's great genius brought praise from all sides.

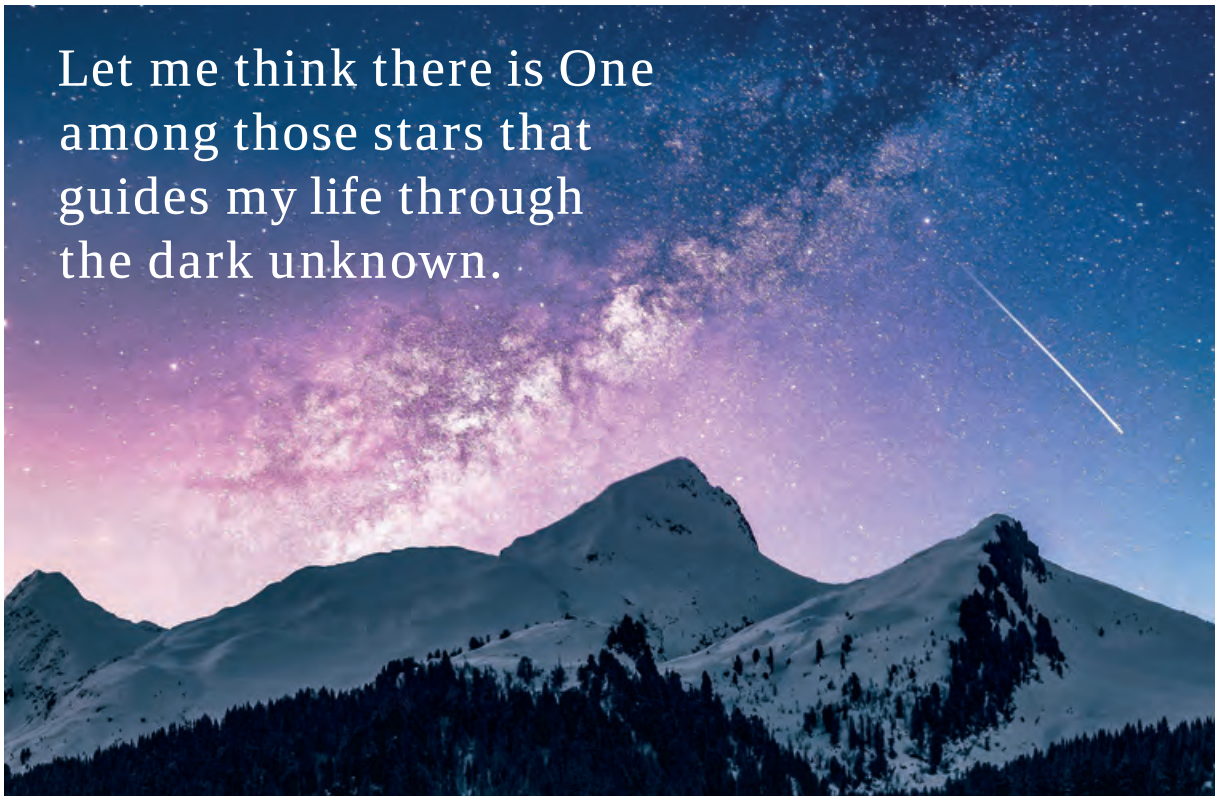
Among English-speaking readers, Tagore drew almost as enthusiastic a following as he did among his own people. The Irish poet William Butler Yeats wrote a preface to one of Tagore's works in which he told of how marvellous had been the shock of the discovery of the noted Indian. When Yeats related this to a Bengali physician, the latter did not seem the least surprised. The doctor answered:

> Every day I read Rabindranath. One of his verses makes me forget all the annoyances of the world.

In 1916, Tagore made a memorable visit to America. Everywhere he travelled, he attracted wide notice. People who saw him could not soon forget the man with the gentle eyes who went about in the attire of his native country. He was such an impressive figure in his long brown robes, his patriarchal beard, and his iron-grey hair. When he smiled, his whole countenance seemed illuminated with his deep love for humanity.

On a visit to Japan in 1916, he made just as profound an impression on the public. On one occasion he was invited to speak to a young people's group. The boys and girls were moved to admiration as they heard the courteous visitor make this delightful confession:

> Do not be frightened of me or think that I am going to give you a long lecture. I know I look rather formidable with my grey beard and white hair and



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flowing Indian robe, and people who know me by my exterior make the absurd mistake that I am an old man, and give me a higher seat, and pay me deference by keeping at a distance from me.

But if I show you my heart, you will find it green and young..., perhaps younger than some of you who are standing before me. And you would find also that I am childish enough to believe in things which the grown-up people of the modern age, with their superior wisdom, have been ashamed to own. That is to say, I believe in an ideal life. I believe that in a little flower there is a living power hidden in its beauty which is more potent than a Maxim gun. I believe that in the bird's notes Nature expresses herself with a force which is greater than that revealed in the deafening roar of the cannonade.

These are surprising and challenging words. Nothing could better reveal what sort of a thinker and poet Tagore really was. In an age when all the great nations were building up powerful armaments, he dared to dream of a world of human fraternity. Was it nothing but a poet's crazy dream? Perhaps there are high-up statesmen who would have us believe so, but thoughtful persons know better. If beauty and goodness are to last, the great Bengali poet's vision must come true. The walls that creeping suspicion have built between nations will have to come down.

Eighty-eight years have passed since Tagore passed away, but his voice is with us still in his beautiful poetry, reminding us of the special message of peace he carried with him throughout his life. With the awful rise in world tensions that is occurring today, it would be well for more world leaders to think less about hypersonic weapons and more about human kindness and tolerance for the ways and beliefs of people other than themselves.

Many of his verses prove that he identified



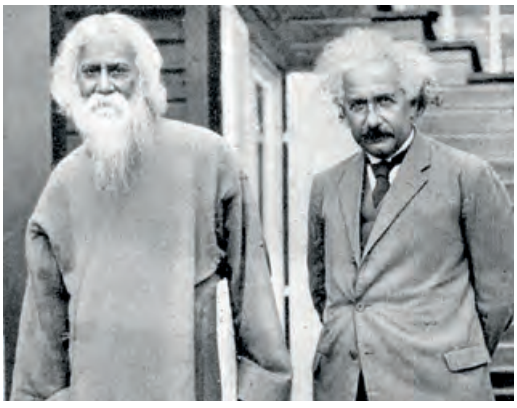
himself with the *'little people'* of the world. He frequently spoke of nature and of things of the soul. A flower, a mountain, a cloud—all suggest the Creator. It is doubtful if ever a poet told of the love of God with greater simplicity. Study these samples of his thought, and then judge for yourself:

- Let me think there is One among those stars that guides my life through the dark unknown.
- Wrong cannot afford defeat, but Right can.
- God waits for us to regain our childhood in wisdom.
- The noise of the moment scoffs at the music of the Eternal.
- Those who have everything but You, my God, laugh at those who have nothing but Your Self.
- God is ashamed when the prosperous boast of His special favour.
- God grows weary of great kingdoms but never of little flowers.

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Einstein & Tagore *Discuss Causality*

The Nobel Laureates Professors Albert Einstein (1921) and Sir Rabindranath Tagore (1913) met at Einstein's Berlin residence on 14 July 1930. The following conversation elegantly demonstrates how these two great men used the language of music as a metaphor to forge common ground between science and spirituality. Throughout this discussion Tagore's words are preceded with 'T:' and Einstein's with 'E:'.



T: I was discussing with Dr Mendel *[a mutual friend]* today the new mathematical discoveries which tell us that, in the realm of infinitesimal atoms, chance has its play; the drama of existence is not absolutely predestined in character.

E: Yes, I am well acquainted with this, but the facts that make science tend toward this view do not say goodbye to causality.

T: Maybe not, yet it appears that the idea of causality is not in the elements, but that some other force builds up with them an organised universe.

E: One tries to understand in the higher plane how the order is. The order is undoubtedly there where the big elements combine and guide existence, but in the minute elements this order is not perceptible.

T: Thus duality is in the depths of existence, the contradiction of free impulse and the directive will which works upon it and evolves an orderly scheme of things.

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E: Modern physics would not say they are contradictory. Clouds look as one from a distance, but if you see them nearby they show themselves as disorderly drops of water.

T: I find a parallel in human psychology. Our passions and desires are unruly, but our character subdues these elements into a harmonious whole. Does something similar to this happen in the physical world? Are the elements rebellious, dynamic with individual impulse? And is there a principle in the physical world which dominates them and puts them into an orderly organisation?

E: Even the elements are not without statistical order; elements of radium will always maintain their specific order, now and ever onward, just as they have done all along. There is then a statistical order in the elements.

T: Otherwise, the drama of existence would be too desultory. It is the constant harmony of chance and determination which makes it eternally new and living.

E: I believe that whatever we do or live for has its causality; it is good however that we cannot see through to it.

T: There is, in human affairs, an element of elasticity also, some freedom within a small range which is for the expression of our personality. It is like the musical system in India, which is not so rigidly fixed as western music. Our composers give a certain definite outline, a system of melody and rhythmic arrangement and, within certain limits, the player can improvise upon it. He must be one with the law of that particular melody; and then he can give spontaneous expression to his musical feeling within the prescribed regulation.We praise the composer for his genius in creating a foundation along with a superstructure of melodies; but we expect from the player his own skill in the creation of variations of melodic flourish and ornamentation. In creation we follow the central law of existence, but if we do not cut ourselves adrift from it, we can have sufficient freedom within the limits of our personality for the fullest self-expression.

E: That is possible only when there is a strong artistic tradition in music to guide the people's mind. In Europe, music has strayed too far from popular art and popular feeling and has become something like a secret art with conventions and traditions of its own.

T: You have to be absolutely obedient to this too complicated music. In India, the measure of a singer's freedom is in his own creative personality. He can sing the composer's song as his own if he has the power creatively to assert himself in his interpretation of the general law of the melody which he is given to interpret.

E: It requires a very high standard of art to realise fully the great idea in the original music so that one can make variations upon it. In our country the variations are often prescribed.

T: If in our conduct we can follow the law of goodness, we can have real liberty of self-expression. The principle of conduct is there, but the character which makes it true and individual is our own creation. In our music there is a duality of freedom and prescribed order.

E: Are the words of a song also free? I mean to say, is the singer at liberty to add his own words to the song which he is singing?

T: Yes. In Bengal we have a kind of song, we call it kirtan, which gives freedom to the singer to introduce parenthetical comments, phrases not in the original song. This occasions great enthusiasm, since the audience is constantly thrilled by some

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beautiful, spontaneous sentiment added by the singer.

E: Is the metrical form quite severe?

T: Yes, quite. You cannot exceed the limits of versification; the singer in all his variations must keep the rhythm and the time, which is fixed. In European music you have a comparative liberty with time, but not with melody.

E: Can Indian music be sung without words? Can one understand a song without words?

T: Yes, we have songs with unmeaning words, sounds which just help to act as carriers of the notes. In North India, music is an independent art, not the interpretation of words and thoughts, as in Bengal. The music is very intricate and subtle and is a complete world of melody by itself.

E: Is it not polyphonic?

T: Instruments are used, not for harmony, but for keeping time and adding to the volume and depth. Has melody suffered in your music by the imposition of harmony?

E: Sometimes it does suffer very much. Sometimes the harmony swallows up the melody altogether.

T: Melody and harmony are like lines and colours in pictures. A simple linear picture may be completely beautiful; the introduction of colour may make it vague and insignificant. Yet colour may, by combination with lines, create great pictures, so long as it does not smother and destroy their value.

E: It is a beautiful comparison; line is also much older than colour. It seems that your melody is much richer in structure than ours. Japanese music also seems to be so.

T: It is difficult to analyse the effect of eastern and western music on our minds. I am deeply moved by the western music; I feel that it is great, that it is vast in its structure and grand in its composition. But our own music touches me more deeply by its fundamental lyrical appeal. European music is epic in character; it has a broad background and is Gothic in its structure.

E: This is a question we Europeans cannot properly answer; we are so used to our own music. We want to know whether our own music is a conventional or a fundamental human feeling, whether to feel consonance and dissonance is natural, or a convention which we accept.

T: Somehow the piano confounds me. The violin pleases me much more.

E: It would be interesting to study the effects of European music on an Indian who had never heard it when he was young.

T: Once I asked an English musician to analyse for me some classical music and to explain to me what elements make for the beauty of the piece.

E: The difficulty is that the really good music, whether of the East or of the West, cannot be analysed.

T: Yes, and what deeply affects the hearer is beyond himself.

E: The same uncertainty will always be there about everything fundamental in our experience, in our reaction to art, whether in Europe or in Asia. Even the red flower I see before me on your table may not be the same to you and me.

T: And yet there is always going on the process of reconciliation between them, the individual taste conforming to the universal standard.

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Out of this World

by **Divinator**

Little did I know what lay ahead when we started our friendly little group. It was towards the end of 1960, long before we had enough members in our area to start a formal Rosicrucian group, that a small band of Rosicrucians used to meet to meditate on profound subjects and discuss their individual results. We each took turns to lead the group and the subject of its meditation. It was our custom, before we meditated, to offer up a prayer for guidance and protection. It also helped to still the myriad active thoughts brought on by the day's activities. But the request for protection became very significant in the following *'thought experiment'.* The subject chosen was: *"What does one experience at death?"*

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Using the Rosicrucian technique of visualisation, I entered the silence along with my companions and imagined myself slowly drifting away from my body when, suddenly, everything changed and for a moment or two there was what I can only describe as a feeling of chaos, following which I found myself in a totally different state of enhanced being. I was filled with an extraordinary vitality and a raised consciousness with a new and higher set of values. I was heading for my true home, filled with a deep and joyous ecstasy; every fibre of my being vibrated with an intensity of feeling that, in the comparative light of this world, I can only describe as a divine and compassionate love.

I was aware that whatever question occurred to me, no matter the theme, the answer would be instantaneous. Even thinking of a person, living or dead, would give me complete knowledge of that person and the only limit would be my inability to think of a particular subject. However, I was no longer interested in the quest for knowledge. The person sitting in the chair that used to be me had been cast aside like a heavy raincoat on a hot summer's day. My one overwhelming desire was to become reunited with the Divine Source which I knew lay within a globe of light beckoning from afar. For one moment I could see myself as a translucent sphere of living colours, streaming with indescribable happiness to merge my identity within the all-embracing love of the Supreme Being.

As I drew near to my destination, it filled my vision, just as the moonscape must have seemed to the astronauts on their Lunar landing. Then suddenly everything changed. The joyous ecstasy was no more. I was again aware of my human limitations and conscious of two shadowy beings who now appeared close by. An object, the size of a clenched fist, was placed upon my chest and the next moment I was back in my material body, sitting in my chair and aware of the rest of our group. I had returned reluctantly, with mixed feelings of wonderment at being privileged to have had such a wondrous experience but disappointment as well at



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being sent back. It would seem that beings with a greater wisdom than mine had heard our opening prayer and had sent me back to complete my experience in this incarnation. But I had glimpsed something wonderful and out of this world, and never again would I view my life in quite the same way.

I was filled with an extraordinary vitality and a raised consciousness with a new and higher set of values.

Reflection

Many times since, I have recalled this experience and pondered on the lessons therein; for like most of us, I had struggled hard to develop and preserve my identity. I was in the armed forces throughout the Second World War and fought in many countries before competing in the world of commerce. I had always endeavoured to keep fit, physically and mentally, yet in that brief higher state I had discarded my body without a moment's hesitation and did not want it back. This was a great shock indeed. On reflection, my outlook in the higher state was certainly different from that in the present life, so perhaps it was the particular personality tied to this incarnation that I was trying to discard.

The next surprise was that knowledge of facts, such as we necessarily learn in this world, are not needed in the next. The main surprise, or should I call it a glorious reward, was the tremendous power of emotion that filled my being and compelled me to immerse myself in the Divine Source of all, like a small grain of steel drawn to a powerful magnet. It is very difficult to describe adequately, but it left a most vivid impression on me. But this I do know: this divine compassionate love is Cosmic Consciousness, it is the answer and reward to all of life's trials and to which we will all eventually return.

Do I sense you thinking *"Of what practical use is this?"* The answer is easy and needs only determination to put into effect. Dwell as long as you can on the beautiful moments of life, or whatever it is that lifts your emotions onto a higher plane. It may be the strains of a soul-moving melody, a magnificent picture or painting, a breath-taking view, the first heart-melting smile of a newborn baby or the deep feeling of spiritual peace that meditation brings. The more you experience this uplifting emotion, the more you will receive of the highest blessings of life. It is our salve in moments of stress, and is at the very heart of the Rosicrucian égrégore which we experience in the Celestial Sanctum. It is the strongest force in existence; indeed, it is the Great Creator itself. Albert Einstein referred to this path to spiritual awareness when he said:

> The most beautiful and the most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the power of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead.

When you are experiencing these moments of enchantment, alone or in a group of like-minded people, don't keep it to yourself; send it with the blessings of the God of your comprehension to those in stress or nations in conflict. You will be pleasantly surprised at the result. This is why, after all these years, I decided to share my experience with readers of this magazine. Although a great Master once said, *"Do not throw your seed onto stony ground"*, I can now sense that much mental ground of this world has become very fertile indeed and you; for have you not read this through to this last paragraph?

So, a spiritual seed is already stirring, indeed flourishing in you. Nourish it, therefore, and you will join that illustrious band of sowers. Illumination will surely be yours one day, and you will have learned the true meaning of..., Peace Profound!

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My Friend Win

by **Madeleine Cabuche**
(1922-2014)

For years I was privileged to have a very dear friend, let us call her Win, possessed of many virtues. Her almost regal appearance and often stern expression seemed at variance with the mischief and laughter sparkling in her blue eyes and the two dimples which came and went each side of her mouth. For me, she provided a mother/grandmother relationship I had never previously known.

Serious by nature, she was nevertheless a generator of laughter and joy. Whenever we got together, which was alas only once a year, laughter cascaded around us and we seemed to find some object of fun wherever we turned. Many were the midnights I would find her standing, serious and intent on her hot-water-bottle-filling routine, for it was very cold where she lived. Something would trigger us and we would collapse, speechless with laughter, across each other's shoulders. One thing would lead to another and an hour might pass before we finally subsided and she whispered a soft *"Goodnight, dear"* as she made her way down the long corridor.

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Of course, there had to be something about her which was not quite perfect and it was, from my point of view, a big something. She was an adamant atheist. Her only divinities were Lenin and Marx. Despite her great love of art, literature, scenery, animals and all things beautiful, nothing could break through her absolute conviction that it all led to nothing and death was a final and total extinction.

She would have been outraged had I tried to intervene in her stoical acceptance of the recent death of her favourite son. In her eighties, along with anything from Jane Austen to Salman Rushdie, she still found time to read diligently through immense tomes on early socialism. She was, I think, both saddened and irritated by my lack of fervour for such matters. She knew of course that I had beliefs, for which she could only feel a certain contempt, and steadfastly avoided any discussion of them until, miraculously one morning, there came a breakthrough.

For her, mealtimes were a social occasion meant as much for talking as for eating, and so we often talked during breakfast time, sitting one each end of the long table. Somehow, that morning, politics took a back seat and I found myself, for the first time, able to expound something of what I believed. This had to be done with a delicate precision and avoidance of any word holding the slightest religious connotation. Perhaps the fact that at long last I found this beloved person willing to listen inspired me to find the exact words, the exact analogies which she would be able to accept. Diagrams were drawn with index finger on the chequered tablecloth while, her head a little to one side, sky-blue eyes deeply concentrated, her formidable brain absorbing what was said, she let me talk on uninterrupted and without comment.

Although it would be too much to say she believed any of it, she obviously thought it worthy of her consideration, so much so that I felt unusually light and happy when I eventually went off on my much-delayed shopping errands. Just three months later she took her own exit, bravely and in her own way, as she had always declared she would when she felt it to be necessary. For two reasons: firstly, she had developed an incurable illness which she had kept secret from her family, having stated emphatically, many times, that she would never be a burden to anyone; secondly, the approach of her ninetieth birthday filled her with horror. She so detested *'old ladies'.*

When I learned what had happened, my grief was tempered by gratitude that we had had the chance for that talk because I knew that, even at that late stage, the knowledge she had absorbed might help her to adjust to her new state of consciousness. Just four days later, I had proof of that. Whilst spending the afternoon with a sick friend, I experienced a slow influx of peace in the hitherto troubled atmosphere, then a strong impression of Win, over in one corner of the room; just her head and shoulders, surrounded by a faint silvery light, looking down on us, radiating the love and compassion which were her trademark and telling me not to fret, that all was well as she had now discovered the truth of what I had told her.

This happened around mid-afternoon, and her presence lingered on throughout the evening. I remarked to my friend that I had sensed such a good, peaceful atmosphere around that day. She said that she had felt it too, adding after a while: *"Your friend Win was here, wasn't she?"*



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John Muir

Into the Universe Through a Forest

by **Grace Mabidikama**



The clearest way into the universe is through a forest wilderness. With these words, the naturalist and conservationist John Muir described his journey into a higher understanding of humanity's place within nature. A man of many talents, Muir was a writer, explorer and inventor who lived easily in the mountains and forests, treading lightly through the wilderness he loved so much. He was a naturalist who, throughout his life, explored and studied nature in depth. However, he went far beyond most naturalists of the time, for he glimpsed something spiritual and eternal, a cosmic message, glowing through the myriad shapes and forms found in nature. In this sense, Muir was a philosopher and mystic, a teacher with a crucial message for generations beyond his own.

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Born in Scotland in 1838, the young John Muir emigrated with his family to America when he was 11 years old. His early years were difficult, a strict Calvinist upbringing and long hours of hard work on a cold and impoverished Wisconsin farm. Although he was diligent in his work and studied the Bible regularly, he could not bring himself to agree with his parents' bleak and gloomy view of the world. He knew about a different world. Despite repeated beatings and tongue-lashings about hell-fire and brimstone, he escaped whenever he could to the beauty and solace of the surrounding wilderness, the woods and marshes near the small farm.



John Muir, c.1902.

To Muir, the nearby wilderness was a joyous and exciting world of bright beauty changing with each season, a world of death and rebirth, of constant renewal. Even in the still of winter, when everything was snow-covered, he could sense an underlying energy and the eventual renewal of life from under the ice. In the wilderness he saw myriad shapes and forms of creation, each separate and yet related to everything else. And there were life processes to explore and contemplate. For young Muir, the nearby woods and marshes were living laboratories, alive with lessons and surprises and a message for humankind. Many years later he wrote of this message:

> When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.

Eventually Muir decided to devote his life to an in-depth study of nature. Tramping through farmlands and the wilderness, down through the middle of the United States, he set out for California, where further realisations lay ahead.

In 1868, when he was thirty years old, he saw California's magnificent Yosemite Valley for the first time. Having decided to devote his life to the exploration and study of nature, he had taken off for the American West. Disembarking from a sailing ship in San Francisco Bay, Muir hiked across mountains and valleys into the Sierra Nevada, to the special valley known as Yosemite. He was immediately awed by its bright beauty.

For the next few years he lived in Yosemite, studying this special place in every detail. For the rest of his life he considered Yosemite his spiritual home, returning there often. Through his writings he championed Yosemite's preservation as a National Park, awakening political leaders and philosophers alike to the necessity of preserving the wilderness.

Fascinated by the process of ongoing creation so visible in Yosemite, Muir eagerly studied its rock-faced walls, the waterfalls and streams, the action of ice-crystals in shaping the rocky landscape, and the storms which blow rain and snow across Yosemite's landscape. In the physical shapes and forms found in this beautiful area, the shining rocks, dashing waterfalls, trees, animal life, snow-crystals, and wildflowers in the open meadows, Muir sensed a message of light and beauty for humanity, something appealing to the higher emotions and desires of all people.

Muir's descriptions of the transcendent beauty of nature helped further the cause of wilderness preservation. In one of his books *'The Yosemite'*, he wrote:

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John Muir with President Theodore Roosevelt.

> But no temple made with hands can compare with Yosemite. Every rock in its walls seems to glow with life.

This valley was for Muir a great natural temple, beckoning people to explore their higher self. He was fascinated with light, and further along in the same book, he wrote:

> One of the finest effects of sunlight falling on water I ever saw in Yosemite or elsewhere I found on the brow of this beautiful fall, (Illilouette Fall). Nothing in clouds or flowers, on bird-wings or the lips of shells, could rival it in fineness. It was the most divinely beautiful mass of rejoicing yellow light I ever beheld, one of Nature's precious gifts that perchance may come to us but once in a lifetime.

And from sunlight to moonlight, further along in the book we have:

> Lunar rainbows or spray-bows also abound in the glorious affluence of dashing, rejoicing, hurrahing, enthusiastic spring floods, their colours as distinct as those of the sun and regularly and obviously banded, though less vivid. Fine specimens may be found any night at the foot of the Upper Yosemite Fall, glowing gloriously amid the gloomy shadows and thundering waters, whenever there is plenty of moonlight and spray.
>
> Light, I know not a single word fine enough for Light.... holy, beamless, bodiless, inaudible floods of Light.

With these words he expressed his lifelong fascination with Light. He was perpetually awed and excited by the ever-changing play of light across

JOHN MUIR (1838-1914)



Whether climbing Alaskan glaciers or guiding Teddy Roosevelt through Yosemite National Park, Scottish-born John Muir saw wilderness as something quasi-spiritual, where "tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people" could find renewal. As a nature writer and the Sierra Club's founding president, he argued eloquently for preservation, as when he battled to save Yosemite's beautiful Hetch Hetchy Valley: you might "...as well dam for water tanks the people's cathedrals and churches", he fumed. Muir lost, yet his words still echo with each new threat to wild places.

> How hard to realise that every camp of men or beast has this glorious starry firmament for a roof! In such places, standing alone on the mountaintop, it is easy to realise that whatever special nests we make – leaves and moss like to marmots and birds, or tents or piled stone – we all dwell in a house of one roof, and are sailing the celestial spaces without leaving any track.
>
> *-- JOHN MUIR --*

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the face of nature, be it light refracted through a rainbow, sunlight playing across mountain peaks, or more subtle moonlight, caught for seconds in the dashing spray and ripples of mountain waterfalls. Sunlight playing through wind-driven clouds quickly changes the colours in a landscape, emphasising particular hues and bringing them to the surface, while toning down and softening other colours. And, with clouds scudding across the sky, in mere moments the colours change again. Across the landscape, flowers reflect back all of this light, opening their beautiful blossoms to the Sun.

Through all this beauty, and through keeping in touch with his intuitive self and his high values, Muir came to a higher understanding of the place of humans within nature. He understood the vital link between wilderness preservation and the future of humankind. And this, for him, was much more than a physical link; it was spiritual. Wilderness is a vital part of ourselves and has much to teach us. Its beauty touches us deep within, touches our soul, and in so doing appeals to the higher aspects of human nature.

John Muir spent much of his life tramping through the American wilderness. He also spent much of his time and energy awakening the American public to the rampant destruction of that wilderness. Through speaking and writing he made the public more aware of what was going on and of the wilderness beauty they were about to lose forever if action was not taken soon. He spearheaded the conservationist movement and, in 1903, when his beloved Yosemite was threatened with logging and further development, he went camping in this beautiful area with President Theodore Roosevelt, personally guiding him through the beauty of Yosemite's mountains, domes, waterfalls, meadows and giant sequoia trees. Among Roosevelt's comments:

> Yesterday I saw for the first time a grove of your great trees, a grove which it has taken the ages several thousands of years to build up; and I feel most emphatically that we should not turn into shingles a tree that was old when the first Egyptian conqueror penetrated to the valley of the Euphrates. That, you may say, is not looking at the matter from a practical standpoint; but there is nothing more practical, in the end, than the preservation of beauty, than the preservation of anything that appeals to the higher emotions in humankind.



President Roosevelt was impressed and later designated over one million acres of wilderness as national parks and forests. John Muir's good work lives on, perhaps best exemplified today in the increased spirit of conservation and ecological awareness throughout the world.

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Tai Chi

by **Charles Tease**

Tàijíquán, also known as *'Tai Chi Chuan'*, is not historically of great age although its origins lie in concepts, movements and exercises which have a written history of almost 5,000 years. Two texts of the *Nèijīng* survive, the earliest extant works of Chinese health and medicine, credited to the reign of the Yellow Emperor, Huángdì, said to have lived in 2697–2597 BCE, and who said:

> The means whereby man is created, the means whereby diseases occur, the means whereby man is cured: the twelve meridians are the basis for all theory and treatment. The meridian is that which decides over life and death.

Philosophers practising meditation and natural living created systems of exercises which linked to their understanding of health maintenance and medical treatments. That such systems have survived millennia suggests they have value in our modern age.

The Yellow Emperor is also given credit for establishing martial arts, which follow similar principles. At its most basic, *Tàijíquán* means Tai Chi boxing and is a form of martial art, although mostly performed for health and exercise. In the present age Tai Chi is also promoted as a method for the elderly and infirm to reclaim the natural vigour of youth.

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Qì

Although literally meaning air or breath, *Qì* or 'Chi' is the vital energy which we breathe in. *Qìgōng*, working with *Qì*, is a 3,000-year old system of exercises, proper breathing and awareness of power points on meridians. Through specific movements, the flow of energy is directed around the body, ensuring that blockages are freed. Flow, no pain: Pain, no flow!

Tàijíquán utilises *Qìgōng* exercises for the same purpose, and positive results are felt fairly quickly. At this stage, *Tàijíquán* means working with the universal energy. There is a Daoist practice expressed as *Jīng Qì Shén Wú Dào*.

Jīng is the life force which gives rise to *Qì*.
Qì is vital energy which leads to *Shén*.
Shén is spirit which achieves *Wú*.
Wú is emptiness which leads to *Dào*.
Dào is the root of all things.

These statements may seem empty and circular, but they allude to deep, indeed profound, concepts.



Chinese woodcut, The Yellow Emperor by Gan Bozong (Tang period, 618-907)

Image: Wellcome Images, a website operated by Wellcome Trust, a global charitable foundation based in the United Kingdom.



Lǎozǐ riding an ox through the Han Valley Pass, as he wrote down his famous Tao Te Ching

Dàodéjīng

One of the greatest and best known of ancient Chinese texts is the *Dàodéjīng* or *'Tao Te Ching'*, the book of *Dào*, said to have been written by *Lǎozǐ* (Lao Tze), whose date of birth is traditionally given as 604 BCE. This sage concluded that behind all the many workings of nature there exists an Ultimate Reality which is unknowable but which manifests in perpetual laws such as those which cause the sun to rise and set, those that allow human beings to live and die, etc. Having no name for it, he called it the *Dào*.

There is a view that the *Dàodéjīng* was written as a handbook for initiates. The Chinese character for *Dào* (Tao) translates as *'Way'* or *'Path'* and seems to carry the same meaning as *'Dharma'* in Buddhism..., the Path of Awakening or Ultimate Truth beyond worldly things. This would make sense, given that a Chinese legend states that *Lǎozǐ*, as an old man, travelled to India where he became a teacher of Gautama who, on enlightenment, became the Buddha. *Dé* (Te) is a fascinating word with at least

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twenty meanings. But in this context it seems to refer to the force which maintains what Tao has created. *Jīng* (Ching) in this context refers to a classic work or, as was adumbrated above, the life force leading through *Qì* to *Shén* or spirit..., also meaning mind, consciousness or concentrated attention.

Wújí

The practitioner of Tai Chi commences in the position known as *Wújí* (Wu Chi), the empty circle. He then moves to Tai Chi, the circle with a dot in it, or, more commonly, the Yin–Yang shape. Teachers say frequently that all one ever needs to know about Tai Chi is contained in that one movement. Philosophically speaking, this is correct, as it contains the great mystery of the move from *'No Thing'* to *'All Things Possible'.* The Limitless (*Wújí*) produces the Delimited or Absolute (*Tai Chi*), which in its turn produces Yin and Yang, and so on to *bā guà*, the eight trigrams, and thence to the 64 hexagrams of the *Yì Jīng* (I Ching).

Wújí also means the primordial universe prior to Tai Chi, the Absolute or the Supreme Ultimate. Thus *Tàijíquán* also comes to mean the search for the Supreme Ultimate, perhaps the aim of all meditation. It is interesting to compare this with the Rosicrucian definition of Cosmic Consciousness, which is the ability to have an awareness of the whole of reality; to be One with the Absolute, to achieve union with the essence out of which the multitude of forms arise. Taoists maintain there is a major difference between the eastern Supreme Ultimate and the western notion of a Supreme Being. But this may depend on one's definition of what *Being* is.

Pursuit of Wisdom

For those of us not brought up in Chinese culture, it is necessary to spend some time studying unfamiliar concepts, though without losing sight of a key teaching of the *Dàodéjīng*:

> In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired. In the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped. Less and less is done until non-action is achieved. – *Tao Te Ching XL VIII*

The final stage of the Taoist system is the awakening of the inner eye when the practitioner becomes *Xiān* (Hsien), a wise and immortal person, *"one who knows the secrets of the universe by being in complete union with the Tao, or God."*[1]

In the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped. Less and less is done until non-action is achieved.

Tai Chi meditation is often performed standing in *Wújí* position with the hands addressing one of the three *Dāntián* (Tan Tien) centres. The lower point, at the solar plexus area, is said to be the physical centre of gravity and the seat of internal energy. The middle point by the heart corresponds to the thymus gland, and the upper point at forehead level, the third eye, corresponds to the pituitary gland. These are important points for internal meditative techniques.

There are many texts written by Tai Chi masters over the last three centuries that aid inspiration. One which is well suited to meditation is by *Wang Zongyue*, who lived in the 18th century:

> In the practice of Tàijíquán, Yin and Yang must be understood. To know Yin and Yang you must know Tai Chi. To know Tai Chi, you need to comprehend the Tao.

Endnote

1. Stephen Chang, *Chinese Yoga* (1983).

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THE CREATIVE PROCESS

by **Elizabeth Beniades**

The creative process within us goes on from moment to moment. It is a process where we lift the veil to the Garden of Eden, the fruitful garden existing beyond our finite self-concept. This process prepares the way for a blending of our consciousness with the subtler vibrations from above.

To be creative, it is necessary to commit the mind, heart and whole being to this process. And in so doing, it is possible to expand reality from the finite to the infinite. The first step in this creative process can be summarised by the word *'light'*, meaning the focusing of consciousness. The second step is encapsulated in the word *'life'*, meaning that which initiates action. And the third step can be summarised by the word *'love'*, the most beautiful and harmonising experience we can have.

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Light

This first finite step, the step of consciousness or light, manipulates consciousness to deliberately focus our attention on something. We receptively centre our attention on the information at hand. Our full awareness is gathered together and concentrated as if it were crowded into a thimble. We almost forget or lose sight of the physical being, for by choice (indeed necessity) we release awareness of our physical senses and our material selves in order to be open and receptive to cosmic vibrations.

By being subjectively open and receptive we are letting our objective selves go and preparing for a journey in a swiftly moving stream of consciousness, flowing from mountain to valley and eventually to the ocean that surrounds us. The stream of human consciousness is flowing from the Cosmic to the individual, the individual to the Cosmic, perpetually uplifting and renewing.

This step of light infuses us with the broadening vista of ever greater knowledge and freedom. This is the light that brings us out of the shadows of the finite mind, the light that creates a glow in our individual aura and a lightness in our step, the light that vibrates through every fibre of our being to raise and uplift consciousness into the realms of the Cosmic; more specifically, into the realms of *life*, the second step.



Life

In this, the step of action, or life, the indefinite second step, we put into action what we received in the first step. The phase of life is a gratifying, emotional experience based on our receptivity in the first step. We are not always aware just how gratifying this action will be and sometimes are easily distracted, discouraged and afraid. At this point, it is very important that we become courageous and steadfast in our original goal, keeping in mind the ultimate aim in order to overcome our particular obstacles.

We have received willingly and therefore need to willingly put into use in our lives what we have accepted. By this very action of receiving, we expand consciousness beyond ourselves, becoming free and flexible. And by acting willingly we receive life, we receive the rewards of our efforts, and we become blessed. We become labourers in the vineyard of the Cosmos, willing to aid our fellow men and women, attuned with the finer and more subtle forces of nature.

Though not always apparent, action and change are constant processes in nature. Even in an apparently dormant scene, changes are taking place from moment to moment. Just as a seed needs to shed its outer shell, becoming more exposed to the elements surrounding it and bringing about new life, so we must peel back the skin of our objective reasoning, becoming more receptive to our surrounding elements bringing us new life. A flow of energy surrounds us and engulfs us and life springs forth. Although manifesting our basic nature and essence, we allow the beauty of life and its energy to bathe and refresh us with vitality and love. This flow of energy is constantly waiting to burst forth as part of the evolution and upliftment of all humanity.

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The foundation of our being, having been established on these two processes of consciousness and action, is now ready to receive the infusion of love from the Cosmic, that all-embracing divine force that holds the fabric of reality together. We have transcended the finite and the indefinite and are ready to become transmuted in God's infinite light. Almost before we realise it, we pass into the third step, allowing the power and vitality of cosmic love to manifest through us.

Love

With the harmonising experience of love, we are prepared to receive impersonal, universal love, a love that cleanses and refreshes us in its wisdom, strength and beauty. This is the cosmic love that supports and adorns our inner temple. We have been receptive and active and are therefore prepared for the step of experience.

Through awareness of the true essence of love our inner nature is re-established on firm ground. By using the tools of consciousness, action and experience, we are able to manifest *light*, *life* and *love*, relearning that which we have forgotten in the physical world. The distinctive identity we cling to, the individual 'I', has expanded to become a glow of warmth that evaporates shadows and radiates light into our being; a glow as if from a star, an impersonal glow of love.

Our purpose now is to be a tool of the Cosmic, a link in the cosmic scheme. Releasing what we are and letting go of stagnant concepts, we grow, giving and receiving love in its purest form. Responding to universal love leads to a newer, fuller reality, a more completely vibrant life. We become one with cosmic reality, which manifests more clearly as we allow universal love to manifest through us. It is truly an expression of our love for Creation and of Creation's love for us.

And we are participants in that Creation too, by allowing the Cosmic to work through us, thereby making us creators in our own right. We do this firstly by being receptive, secondly by initiating action, and thirdly through experience. We have always had *free will* and will always be able to freely make the choice of serving humanity and the greater Good.

Infinite wisdom, beauty and strength will be in abundance in life if we choose to create, moment by moment, in accordance with our highest concept of goodness, peace and universal harmony. The first step is up to us.

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Immortality & the Afterlife

by **Paul Goodall**

If there is one question that dominates our thinking over all others, it is that of our own mortality. It always seems to be there, at the back of our mind, ready to announce itself at any time. Although the self-awareness of our physical being is so deep-seated that it allows us much of the time to ignore the eventual demise of our physical body, it is only when we are reminded of it through a life-threatening experience – the death of a loved one or through social media, television and books – that it asserts itself once more. We simply cannot escape its insistence and are drawn to ponder the mystery of life and death, whether for a fleeting moment or by prolonged personal research and contemplation.

The first known written record of the human discovery of death is contained within the *'Epic of Gilgamesh'*, the earliest known literary work from Babylon (c.2500 BCE), where its general themes are the same as now, following the idea that we must continue existing in some form after we die. Indeed, so strong are we attached to living that the idea of a continuation of life after death is an agreeable proposition and has been so for millennia. Given the particularly difficult day-to-day living of those in the past and the fear that such suffering might continue after death, the speculations of ancient philosophers concerning the soul's ultimate blissful immortality would have been very comforting.

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Fear of Death

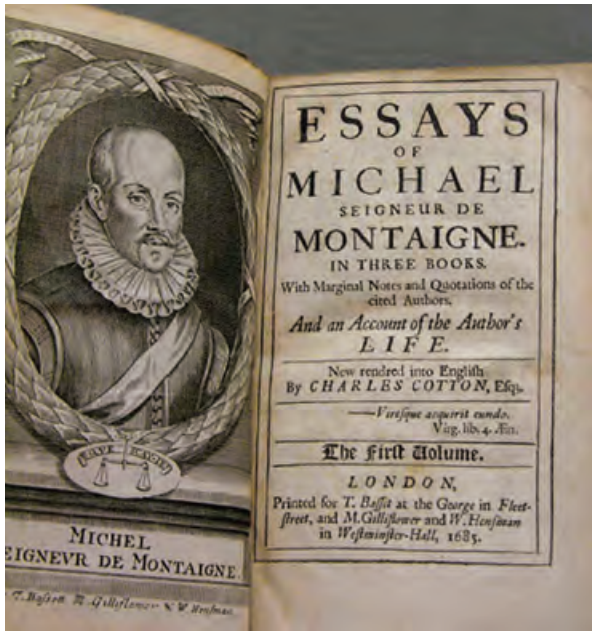
A pessimistic outlook on life can be seen as one remedy to conquer the fear of death, although Seneca (c. 4–65 CE), the Roman philosopher and statesman, advocated taking one's place, wherever it is assigned by nature or God, and exiting quietly and gracefully. Seneca's demise was not particularly graceful, however; he was ordered by Nero to take his own life after being implicated in a plot to assassinate the emperor, and it appears that his suicide was a rather botched affair resulting in a painful end, according to the historian Tacitus (c.56–117 CE) in his *'Annals of Imperial Rome.'*

The French essayist Michel de Montaigne in his *'Essays'* (1580) says that *"...if we have known how to live properly and calmly, we will know how to die in the same manner"*, which reflects the attitude of those who were in a position to appreciate the Renaissance spirit and the world of which they were a part. The idea that life could be enjoyed was a far cry from the Christian custom of living in the fear of death.



Image: Wikimedia - Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg)

Tablet V of the Epic of Gilgamesh



The French essayist Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592).

Immortality and the Soul

An effective defence against the fear of death was the idea of some kind of immortality after one's life was over. Having the belief that we are reunited with our loved ones who have already died adds a personal dimension to an afterlife, and one that is also pleasant. Given this, it becomes important to find arguments that will support the notion of immortality; this has been one of the most discussed subjects in philosophy. It is quite naturally centred on the nature and function of the soul since the physical body cannot survive once the vital life force has left it. Past Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, Ralph M. Lewis, describes it as follows:

> The decay and dissolution of the material body were evident even to the people of early cultures. Consequently, survival was attributed to the intangible realities of our being. That which was thought to keep on living was the spirit or energy that animates the body.
>
> It was reasonable to believe that that which

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Past Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, Ralph M. Lewis.

> appeared to enter the body and to depart from it at will was not destroyed with it. The spirit, then, was conceived to be as indestructible as the air breathed by the living. Thus the continuity of life after death was assumed. That which cannot be destroyed is manifestly assumed to have a continuation of existence.[1]

Plato (c.428–348 BCE) advanced a number of arguments to support the possibility of an immortal soul, such as...

- Our intuitive knowledge of certain a-priori truths implying that the soul exists before the body is formed.
- The soul is the principle of life, bearing within it the life essence and is therefore eternal.
- The soul is self-moving and, being always in motion and being the source of that movement and of life itself, it can have no beginning or end and must therefore be immortal.
- Since the soul is of an incorporeal substance, it must be incorruptible and incapable of dissolution.[2]

Aristotle, on the other hand, proposed that the *'active intellect'* or mind, which he considered of divine origin, was the eternal part of man's nature, denying that the whole soul was indestructible, with certain parts of it being inseparable from its body.[3] Since the foundation of Western learning (scholasticism) relied on Aristotelian principles, the universally accepted Platonic ideas of immortality were undermined, and it wasn't until the Renaissance and the resurrection of hermetic texts that the idea of an immortal soul was extant again.

The French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) writes in his *'Discourse on Method - Part 5'* (1637):

> Next to the error of those who deny God..., there is none which is more effectual in leading feeble minds from the straight path of virtue than to imagine that..., after this life we have nothing to fear or to hope for, any more than the flies or the ants.

Descartes further asserted that our soul is quite naturally independent of our body and therefore not liable to die with it. The very fact that humans can think



René Descartes (1596–1650).

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Plato with his finger pointing upwards and Aristotle holding his palm downward, depicting the differences in thought of these two philosophers. -- from 'The School of Athens' by Raphael, 1509.

sets us apart from machines and the rest of the animal kingdom. He concludes from his argument *'cogito, ergo sum'* (I think, therefore I am [I exist]) that it is the soul that by nature thinks, and that this essence of ourselves actually requires no physical body in which to exist since the soul is incorporeal and entirely distinct from the body.

Resurrection

Arguments and religious doctrines that define or explore the possibility of immortality abound. One that is professed by Christianity is that of resurrection. This follows the idea that there will be a universal reappearance of the dead (both the *just* and the *unjust*, so called) in physical form at the *'end of time.'* This does not follow the Platonic view on the immortality of the soul which, as we have discussed, sees it as leaving the physical body behind.

But the idea of resurrection is not unique to Christianity. It is also an inherent part of the Zoroastrian philosophy, and Muslims and Jews also share similar beliefs. The Jewish belief in bodily resurrection is enshrined in the last of the 13 principles of faith proposed by Maimonides (1135–1204 CE), the Jewish rabbi, physician and philosopher:

> I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator.

It has to be said, though, that there is division between Orthodox and Conservative Judaism concerning the nature of resurrection.

Reincarnation

Acceptance of the idea of *reincarnation*, particularly as opposed to *resurrection*, has in modern society been gaining ground over the last one hundred years or so. This has been mainly due to closer contact with other cultures around the world as horizons have expanded. But perhaps in today's world it has gained more credence because of the modern media of television and the internet. The appeal of reincarnation (in theory, at least) to a modern, hedonistic and largely atheistic society can probably be linked to the fact that most would prefer to keep coming back to this earthly existence rather than spending an eternity waiting for a final resurrection.

The Greeks gained their ideas about reincarnation from the Egyptians, according to the Greek historian Herodotus (c.484–425 BCE). It appears that Pythagoras (c.570–490 BCE) was the first to teach the doctrine of reincarnation to the West, although his ideas were further refined by later Greek philosophers. A famous fragment by the contemporary philosopher and poet Xenophanes (c.570–475 BCE) provides some insight into what Pythagoras thought happened to the soul after death.

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Image: Wellcome Images, a website operated by Wellcome Trust, a global charitable foundation based in the United Kingdom.

Maimonides (1135–1204 CE), the Jewish rabbi, physician and philosopher

> Once, when he [Pythagoras] was present at the beating of a puppy, he pitied it and said: *"Stop! Don't keep hitting him, for it is the soul of a man who is dear to me, which I recognised when I heard it yelping."*[4]

If one thing was consistent in his thinking, it was the idea of the immortality of the soul.

Popular ideas about reincarnation in the West stem primarily from Hinduism, as a result of being frequently exposed to this religion. The Hindus believe that at the heart of every person is the divine soul, which they call the *'Atman'* and which also experiences multiple incarnations. The contemporary Indian philosopher S. Radhakrishnan gives the following argument in support of it:

> Since souls are eternal, and since their normal condition is to be associated with a body which is perishable, it is plausible to assume that, in order for the soul to remain in its normal condition, it must inhabit an unending succession of bodies.[5]

Immortality: The Mystical Viewpoint

As a mystical organisation with a long lineage and legacy of knowledge from the past, the Rosicrucian Order has its own teachings regarding immortality and the nature of the soul. With the increasing public interest in subjects such as this and the proliferation of media material advertising the same, it can be difficult for the earnest seeker to arrive at a satisfactory philosophical outlook without being swayed this way and that.

To the Rosicrucian, life is a manifestation of *energy*. Although we can't define in objective terms the origin of this energy or its eventual culmination, we do receive intimations in other areas that this energy is infinite. Even in the field of physics, the law of conservation of mass and energy has long been an accepted premise. This law states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed. In a chemical process matter may change its appearance, but the total energy and mass content will remain the same. The sum total of mass and energy in the universe must therefore



Pythagoras – from 'The School of Athens' by Raphael, 1509.

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remain constant. Mass can be converted into energy and energy can be converted into mass, but the loss of one will be exactly balanced by the creation of the other.

In other words, matter, regardless of how it may be changed or modified by heat, pressure or some other force exerted upon it, still exists in gaseous or other forms. It might be reasonable to accept that this attribute of permanency of matter and energy must also exist in the nonphysical world with different nonphysical characteristics.[6]

So, immortality then is the concept of the continuance of the manifestation of a force of which we are now consciously aware. This force pulsates through us in the form of life and expresses itself in physical existence, mental activity and a degree of adaptation to the environment. That these forces will continue is hard to doubt, but in order to support and perhaps illustrate the foregoing, here is an analogy of that permanency:

Immortality is no more than the state of total existence. We are immortal in that we live.

We know that life can be contained in a very small area. Imagine a tiny seed waiting for the right conditions to prevail in order to begin its growth. It is known that seeds have often lain under conditions unfavourable for growth for years and even centuries. When exposed to soil and moisture, however, they have successfully germinated and life in the form of a plant began again. Surely then we can make the assumption that if a seed having lain for long dormant periods can preserve the essence of life, then the life or soul that is within the human body will also survive and manifest in some form when our physical bodies can no longer serve life's purpose.

Immortality is no more than the state of total existence. We are immortal in that we live. Immortality is not ahead; it is here and now. Life is an energy that sweeps on through all time and space. As matter and energy are modified in their use, so life may be modified in its cosmic use. But that it will continue to endure, that is an obvious conclusion from the fact of its existence.

With this in mind, it is appropriate that we end with the words of Ralph M. Lewis:

> The word *'transition'*, as used by Rosicrucians, alludes to death not as a cessation of the human self but rather as a change to another transcendent existence.[7]

Endnotes

1. Lewis, Ralph M., *The Conscious Interlude*, AMORC, 1982, pp. 228–229.
2. Plato, *Phaedrus*, c.370 BCE. This work was set as a dialogue between the characters of Socrates and Phaedrus, through which Plato presents his philosophy.
3. Aristotle, *On the Soul* I 1, II 1, being a treatise outlining his philosophical views on the nature of living things.
4. Quoted in Huffman, Carl, 'Pythagoras', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/pythagoras/*.
5. Quote from Choron, Jacques, 'Death and Immortality', in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*: *Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, edited by Philip P. Wiener, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1973–74, Vol.1, p. 646. (Online edition)
6. See also William Hand's series of articles in nine parts, entitled 'Scientific Mysticism', that appeared in the *Rosicrucian Beacon*, spanning a period from 2004–2008, which have some relevance to the subject of this article.
7. Lewis, Ralph M., *Mental Alchemy*, AMORC, 1979, p. 258.

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Tears of Ra

The Sacred Bee

by **Pensatrix**

This article was inspired by an article written by *Sr Theresa Lydon* of Dublin, whose original article appeared in the *'Newsletter of the Egyptological Society of Ireland'.*



Fossil bees have been found in rocks and amber millions of years old. Palaeolithic man in the Old Stone Age collected honey long before the domestication of animals and the practice of agriculture. In ancient times, people believed that any important event should be told to the bees, and so great was their fear that they felt that if they did not tell the bees of, for instance, the birth of a baby, disaster would follow.

Bee honey was the main source of sweetness in the diets of hunter-gathers, and they would go to great lengths to obtain it from wild beehives. Painted some 10,000 years ago, rock paintings of bees and hunters climbing up the side of a cliff to a hive of wild bees have been discovered in the *Cuevas de la Araña* or *'Spider Cave'* near Valencia in eastern Spain. In an article published in a newsletter of the *Egyptological Society of Ireland*, Theresa Lydon of Dublin, a long-serving member of the Rosicrucian Order, explained her love of bees as follows:

The bee is a skilled navigator, botanist and engineer. Its hives of wax are wonders of strength and lightness. The comb, with cell walls often only about 1/80th of an inch thick *[less than one third of a millimetre]*, can support 30 times its own weight. Returning home from the fields after foraging, with a load of nectar often equal to half its own weight, it performs a dance on the honeycomb, circling first in one direction and then in the other, and making a straight run across the comb where the circles meet,

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its tail wagging vigorously. Other bees crowd around the dancing bee, smelling with their antennae the perfume of the particular flower it has visited. Then they leave the hive, fly in the direction indicated by the tail-wagging run, and thus, without wasted time, find the flowers rich in nectar.

As many as 37,000 loads of nectar go into making a single pound of honey. Even where flowers abound, this requires a combined flying distance of more than twice the equator's circumference, giving a flying distance of 48,000 miles *[80,000 kilometres]*; and all for just one pound of honey. The great compound eyes of the honeybee, formed of thousands of six-sided lenses, are colour blind to red but can see blue, yellow and ultraviolet light that is blackness to us. They can also analyse polarised light coming from the sky.

To the bee, each section of the sky has its characteristic pattern, depending upon the position of the Sun. The bee sees patterns where we see only blue, and these patterns provide it with a compass in the sky. Once the bee arrives above the flowers it is seeking, the floral perfume leads it to the flowers that have available nectar.

Bees transform the nectar into honey. Enzymes within the bee's body start the change. At the hive, it passes the sweet fluid to other bees which, in turn, add other enzymes before storing the fluid in open cells where excess moisture evaporates and the nectar becomes honey. About 400 pounds of this concentrated sweet represents nearly 15 million return flights by the nectar-gatherers and are needed to keep the colony alive during the course of the year.

There are three categories of honeybees in the hive: workers, drones and the queen. The majority of bees are worker-females, smaller than the queen and unable to reproduce. The workers carry on the vast job of keeping the bee colony alive by gathering food, nursing the young, cleaning the hive and providing protection. Male bees, called drones, develop from unfertilised eggs and are a bit larger than the workers. Their sole function in the colony is mating with the new queen.

The queen is the force which holds the colony together. New queens are developed from larvae placed in special cells and fed by workers on a special diet of royal jelly, which is a gland extract produced by worker bees that is rich in vitamins and proteins. Following her mating flight, the new queen settles down within the hive to lay thousands of eggs. Fed on royal jelly produced by her attendants, the queen can deposit as much as her own weight in eggs in a single day.

Each egg hatches into a white, blind, legless grub that eats, in the case of the worker, as many as 1,300 meals a day and increases its size nearly 1,600 times in less than six days. Then the grub stops eating, spins a thin cocoon about itself, and the nurse bees cover the cell with a porous wax cap. Hidden from sight, the grub develops and, at the end of three weeks, bites its way to freedom. In a large colony, 1,000 new bees per day make their appearance from a comb that may contain as much as 40,000 cells.



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Example of a bee fossil.



Honey bees and the honeycomb.

Inside the Hive

In the hive, every worker bee busies herself with some task contributing to the general welfare of the colony. Some make wax, while others store honey, care for the queen or guard the entrance to the hive. Meanwhile, other workers fan their wings to send currents of fresh air through the interior of the hive. For about two weeks, each new bee labours in the hive, its tasks dictated by the sequence of glands developing within its body. At the end of that time, it leaves the interior of the hive to fly out and search for nectar. The rest of its life is spent ranging the fields for nectar and pollen.

Within the hive, as cold weather arrives, the colony forms a loosely knit ball which expands or contracts as the temperature rises or falls. Inside the ball, some of the insects begin a dance. They dance from side to side, step forward and backward; and by keeping up this continual motion they heat up their bodies through exercise, thereby raising the temperature of the hive. The massed bees outside form an insulating shell that keeps the heat from dissipating. From time to time, the outer bees trade places with the dancers. This is the way bees regulate temperature in their hive, transforming honey through physical exercise into heat and cooling the hive down through the generation of air currents.



Hunter climbing up a cliff to collect wild bee honey from the Spider Cave.

Ancient Egypt

According to ancient Egyptian mythology, when the sun god Ra wept his tears turned into honey bees upon touching the ground.[1]

Honey has been known and enjoyed by hunter-gatherers throughout the world for thousands of years, though particularly in Africa. There are written and carved accounts of honey gathering and the importance of the bee, especially from ancient Egypt, particularly for medicinal use. About 3500 BCE, a few hundred years before Upper and Lower Egypt were united into a single kingdom, the bee was a hieroglyphic representation of Lower Egypt (mainly the Nile Delta), while the reed hieroglyph

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represented Upper Egypt. Combined, both hieroglyphs connoted the title *'King of Upper and Lower Egypt'.*

In the Kahun papyrus, dated to circa 1825 BCE in the reign of the 12th Dynasty Pharaoh Amenemhat III of the Middle Kingdom, we find the sentence: *"He has united the two lands. He has joined the Reed to the Bee."* In the 3rd century BCE, hives were put onto flat boats and moved to different locations, or loaded onto donkeys, to benefit from the different flowering seasons of plants. Thus bees travelled the whole of Egypt.

In Roman times the beekeeper had a hieroglyph and was called the sealer of the honey. The hives were made in the form of pipes of burnt clay, tapering at one end, just as they are today. A wall relief from the 5th Dynasty solar temple of Pharaoh Niuserre Ini at Abusir shows the pressing, smoking, filling and sealing of honey. To remove the honey from the wax comb, special clay pots with holes were used. The honey flowed out onto a large bowl and the wax was retained mostly for temple ritual. We don't know how beekeepers were organised in ancient Egypt, but we do know that they were organised, some attached to a locality, others attached to temples to provide them with honey for their rituals and healing practices, a testament to the importance of bees and honey to ancient Egyptian life.

Although a luxury item, some honey was found in most households. It was believed that honey had healing properties – such as we know *propolis*, for example, has – and was used by the Keri-hebs in the magical and healing rituals. The knowledge was handed down from generation to generation. The wax was used to make figurines, and there is a tale from the Westcar papyrus, dating from the 13th Dynasty, that takes place during the Old Kingdom of Egypt (c.2686–2181 BCE), when the Chief Lector Priest of Pharaoh Nebka at the end of the 3rd Dynasty, upon discovering that his wife had a lover, went to a priest for help.



Gathering Honey, Tomb of Rekhmire, by Nina de Garis Davies



Ra, the sun god.

The priest made a figure of a crocodile in beeswax and put it in the pool where the wife's lover bathed. As soon as the lover entered the pool, the wax figurine turned into a living, full-sized crocodile and no doubt had every intention of having a good meal. Having second thoughts, the Pharaoh asked the priest to save the lover and, magically, the crocodile shrank back to the figurine of wax once more. However, no sooner had this happened than the man regretted his good action and demanded the return of the crocodile. Again, the wax figurine became a full-sized living animal and seized the lover in his jaws and dragged him to the bottom of the pool!

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Detail from Book of the Dead, showing the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony



Stele of Lady Taperet standing before Ra, who is emanating lotus flowers (Louvre Museum, Paris).

Wax and honey were also used in the embalming of humans and animals. Taxes were paid in honey to temples and to the Pharaoh. Messengers and standard bearers had their rations supplemented with it. The sacred animals, the Apis bull at Memphis; the Mnevis bull at Heliopolis; Banebdjedet, the ram of Mendes; Maahes, the Lion of Leontopolis; and Sobek Shedety, the Crocodile of Crocodilopolis were fed on fine flour, milk and cakes made with honey.

Honey was an important sweetener for food and wine, though its most important use was in medicine. There are many medical papyri extolling the virtues of honey and beeswax, and medical training using honey and beeswax seems to have centred on the temples.

In one ceremony of *'the opening of the mouth'* of the deceased Pharaoh, it is written: *"...the bees give him protection to exist."* In certain formulae used by Egyptian priests, magical chants changed bread, wine and honey into divine substances. From a 5th Dynasty magical papyrus we read:

> When Ra weeps, again the water flows from his eyes upon the ground and turns into working bees. They work in flowers and trees of every kind and wax and honey come into being.

Just as the cat is called the *'gentle heat of the sun'*, the bee represents the *'tears of the sun'.*

1. *The Tears of Re (Beekeeping in Ancient Egypt)* by Gene Kritsky ISBN: 978-0-19-936138-0.



Nesut bit or King of Upper and Lower Egypt, where the bee was the representation of Lower Egypt.

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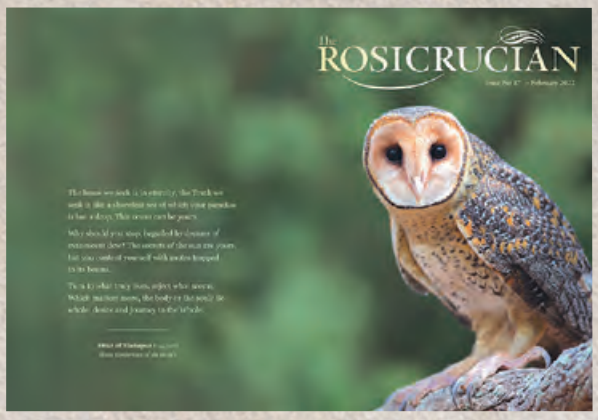
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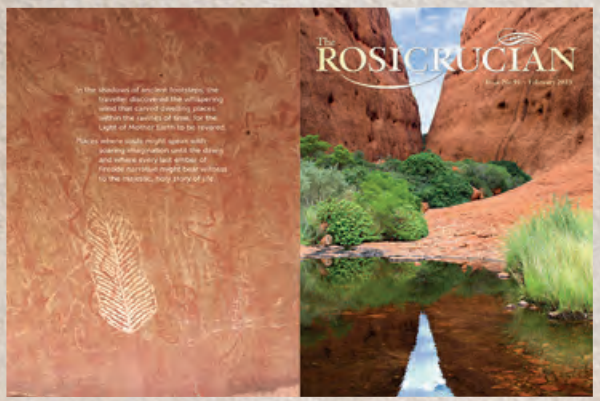
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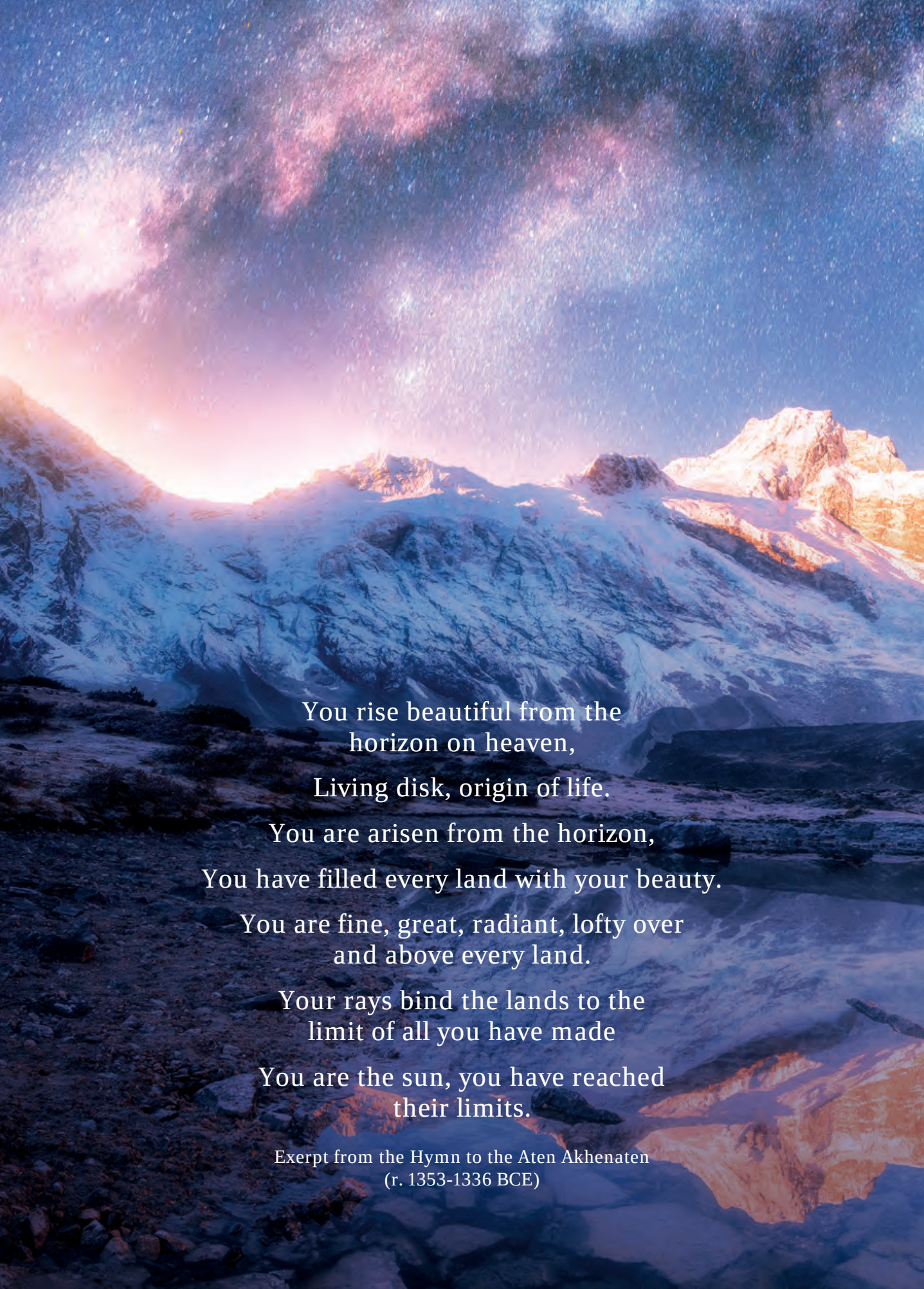








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You rise beautiful from the
horizon on heaven,

Living disk, origin of life.

You are arisen from the horizon,

You have filled every land with your beauty.

You are fine, great, radiant, lofty over
and above every land.

Your rays bind the lands to the
limit of all you have made

You are the sun, you have reached
their limits.

Exerpt from the Hymn to the Aten Akhenaten
(r. 1353-1336 BCE)