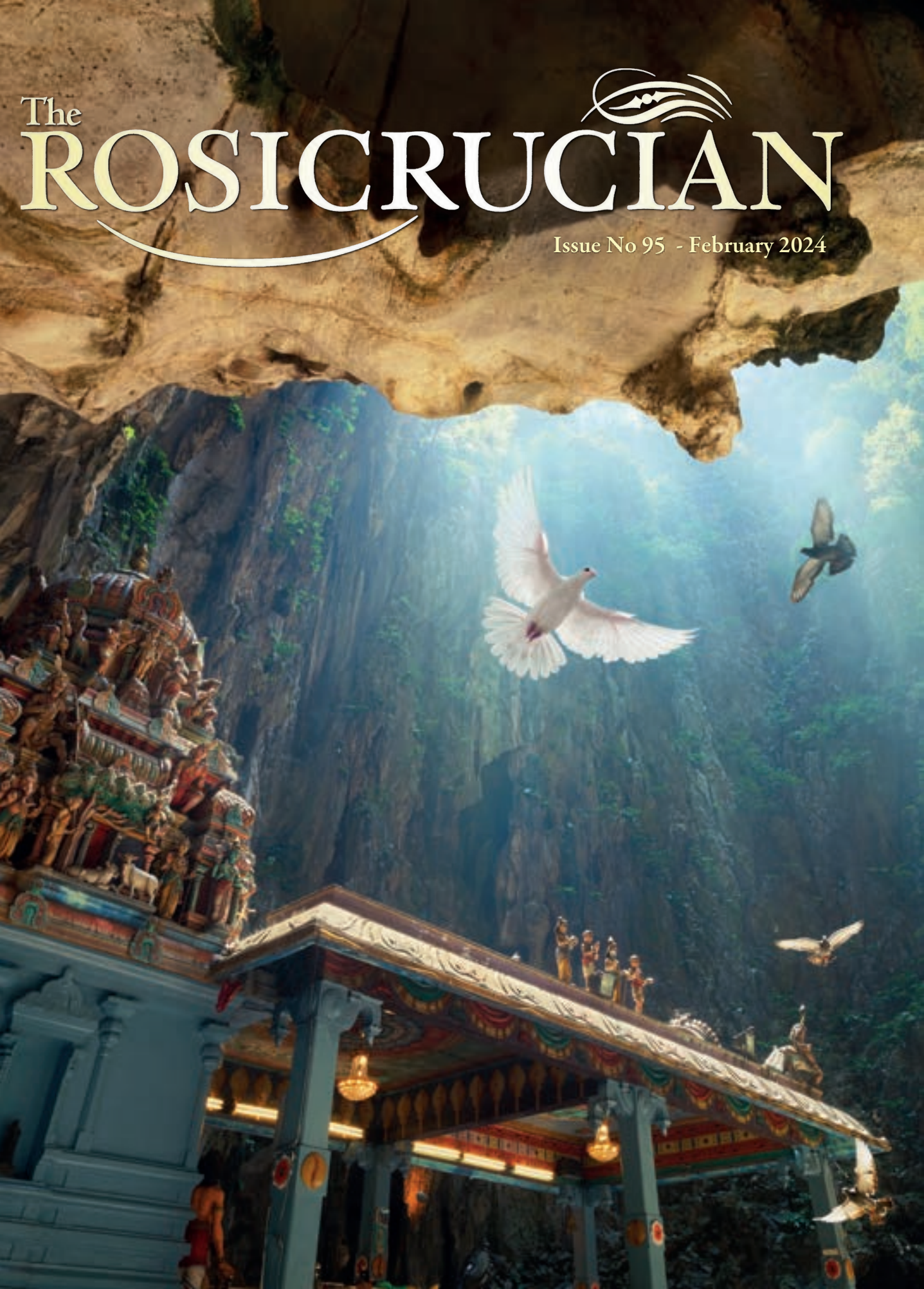

The
ROSICRUCIAN
Issue No 95 - February 2024



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.

info@amorc.org.au
https://www.amorc.org.au
@amorcstudents

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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Editors: Lucy Crawford-Sandison
Birgitt Olsen

Design: Cloud White

Address all correspondence to:

The Editor, 1/20 Commercial Rd,
Strathalbyn, SA 5255, AUSTRALIA

Tel: +61 8 7092 4111

Email: editor@amorc.org.au

Web: www.amorc.org.au

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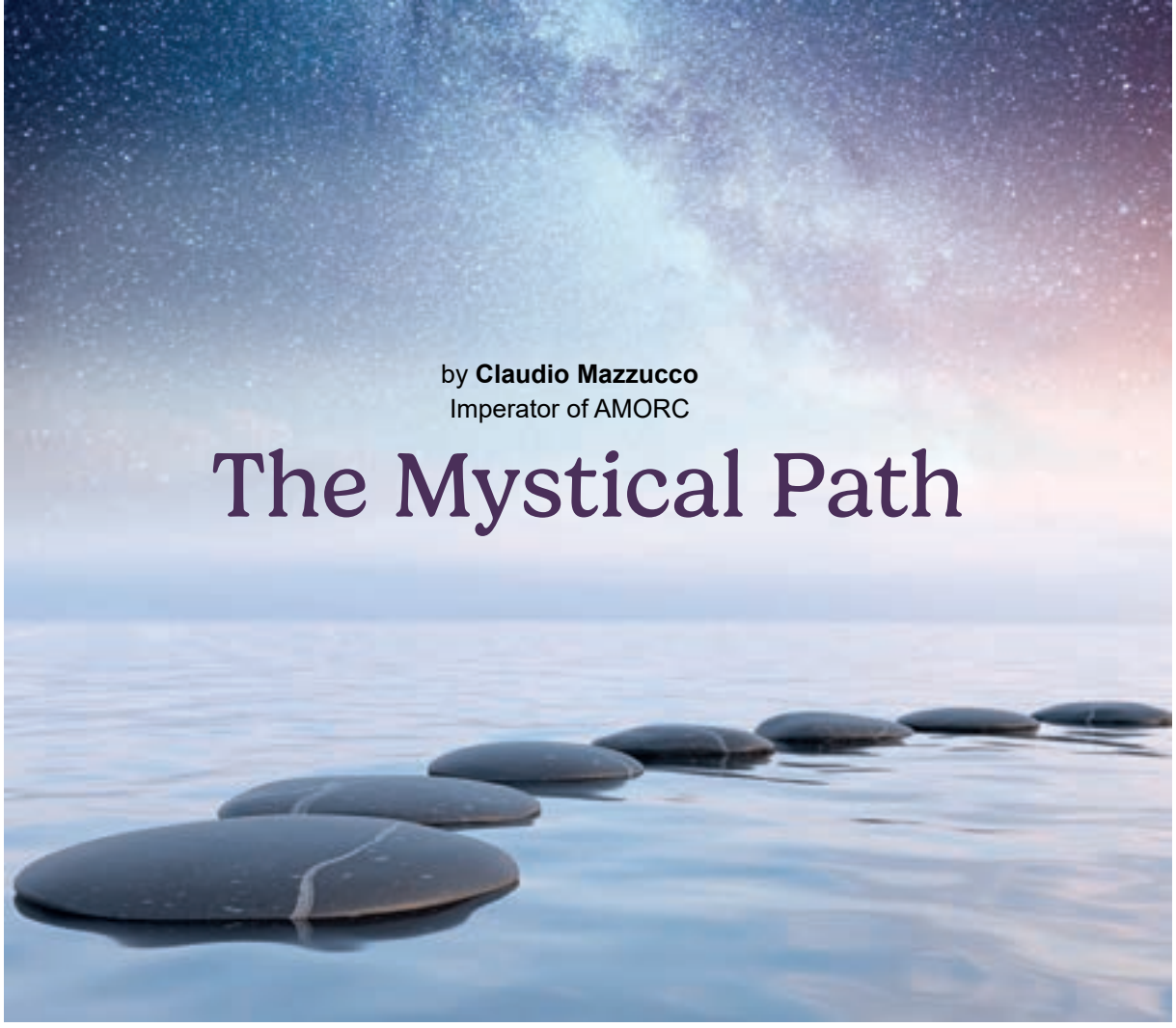


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Hidden in the quiet depths of a seemingly chthonic world, beneath the dense tropical vegetation on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the Batu caves conceal treasures of spiritual beauty. Birds take flight, illuminated by the shafts of sun rays that touch upon the intricate details of a Hindu temple.

The limestone caves are used regularly as a temple complex for festivals and pilgrimages. Known for the serene and meditative atmosphere, visitors can walk for hours poised between the light of the sun and the darkness of the earth.

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by **Claudio Mazzucco**
Imperator of AMORC

The Mystical Path

Plato said: *'the unexamined life is not worth living.'* We believe that it is an intrinsic trait of human nature to strive for knowledge and that this manifests itself to a greater or lesser degree in different *'soul-personalities'* according to their stages of evolution. In this context, mysticism is an inner pathway, arising as a response to the ever-increasing calls of the soul.

As we gradually grow in awareness about our own nature and expand our understanding of who we are, we discover an increasingly harmonious response within us to those impulses urging us to become ever more curious about the mysteries, beauty and harmony of life which, in turn, triggers a virtuous, self-perpetuating circle. We become increasingly aware that there are truths that go against everything that may appear obvious to us,

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and we learn that logic and rationality are only one aspect of human nature.

However, on this journey, we are also challenged by aspects of daily life which, for a number of reasons, may not reflect what is actually happening within us. We may, at some point in our lives, no longer appreciate certain relationships, certain environments or certain ways of *'passing the time.'* We may also feel uneasy by the pace and our daily commitments and worries that prevent us from dedicating our energies to the things we consider truly important. We are influenced by the material dimension and feel that we cannot separate ourselves from it. We would like to be, as Plato says in the *'Theaetetus'*, more like philosophers who sit in meditation than mounted archers who ride around shooting arrows.

The mystical path proposed by Rosicrucian mysticism does not intend to fuel the idea that humanity, in its personal quest, should turn away from life, from family and friends, and become a recluse. Far from it. Rosicrucian mysticism is like a continuous breath of fresh air, its purpose being to reignite the fire that is partially extinguished. This fire can ignite certain aspects of our personality, purify them and restore those energies that are an inherent part of us. When this internal movement is triggered, the mystical path starts to slow down the internal rhythm, enabling each Rosicrucian student to *'see'* more clearly whatever might otherwise have been overlooked, preventing them from going through life without recognising it.

As they engage more and more in the practice of self-inquiry, with a high degree of sensitivity, the Rosicrucian slowly, and harmoniously, leaves behind those anxieties that are typical of life, those false hopes, those patterns that cause human relationships to decline, the passing of time that only seems to increase boredom. Thus, they restore the quality of interpersonal relationships, strengthen their bond with life and with the world, becoming agents of divinity as they begin to substitute the *mere theory of spirituality* with the actual *practise of a spiritual life*. During this process, the soul is nourished, transmuting the personality of the individual who, cherishing it, reaches a greater inner maturity while things appear to be moving more slowly.

Quoting the great Italian poet *Eugenio Montale* (1896-1981), we observe how *'obscure things tend towards clarity.'* One of the aspects that is clarified as we proceed along the Path, is that prosperity is a condition linked to awareness. Humanity's state of mind determines its reality. Even the *possibility* of allowing those energies available to us to flow, is linked to the degree of awareness that characterises our level of personal evolution. We slowly let go of the inclination to think that happiness is a condition belonging to the future: when I have more money, when I have more time, when I am retired, when I have a bigger house, etc.

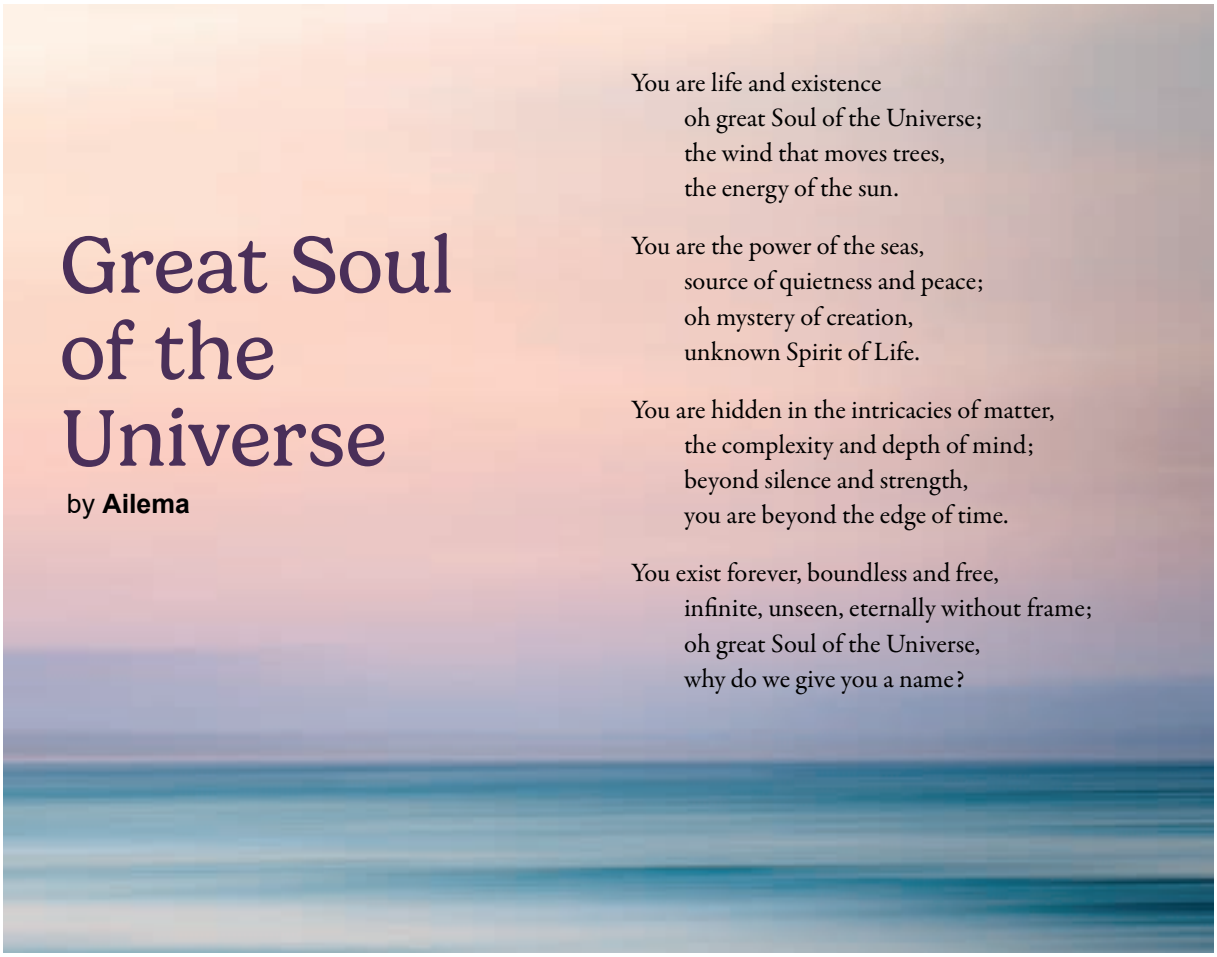
The slowing of this pace within us allows us to *'see'* the things we already have, enabling us to plan a future without far-fetched, fantastical ideas or out-of-proportion illusions. We have a saying that a Rosicrucian student keeps their head among the stars and their feet planted firmly on the ground. This expression clearly explains the position we must take in the face of life. The conduct of each person who aspires to great inner revelations, must recognise that we are already, here and now, bearers of a certain level of realisation. We must nurture, within us, gratitude towards the universe and the God of our Heart, manifest compassion towards all creatures, remembering those in physical and emotional pain, and always express confidence in life and humankind.

Reading the history of Rosicrucian mysticism, we naturally draw parallels between our present time

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and the 1614 publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis*. The 17th century was a critical period for Europe. The birth of science, as we know it today, occurred during that time; the discovery of the New World was relatively recent; printing was spreading knowledge like never before; and religious wars were raging, bringing widespread famine and death. Undoubtedly, we have come a long way since then. Many negative aspects have been overcome, however certain experiences do keep repeating themselves, with their heavy burden of anguish and insecurity.

The response of Rosicrucians at that time was the publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis* and *Confessio Fraternitatis*, reminding people of the need to place their lives under the auspices of knowledge and fraternity among people of good will. This invitation has been repeated ever since by our Order (see the Rosicrucian manifesto *'Positio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis'*) and we, Rosicrucians of the 21st century, carrying our history in our hearts and looking to the horizon, must spread thoughts of peace, harmony and prosperity to the whole of humanity. To this end we are reminded today of the pledge we made to ourselves before joining the Order, when we embarked on the path of self-knowledge. Let us draw strength from the fraternal bonds that unite us and spread the light of knowledge of which AMORC is a worthy heir for the world!



Great Soul of the Universe

by **Ailema**

You are life and existence
oh great Soul of the Universe;
the wind that moves trees,
the energy of the sun.

You are the power of the seas,
source of quietness and peace;
oh mystery of creation,
unknown Spirit of Life.

You are hidden in the intricacies of matter,
the complexity and depth of mind;
beyond silence and strength,
you are beyond the edge of time.

You exist forever, boundless and free,
infinite, unseen, eternally without frame;
oh great Soul of the Universe,
why do we give you a name?

Image - Ben Mack / Pexels

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Anonymous

There is a soft sadness in passing time, a melancholy such as touches autumn days when leaves fall and nature is filled with winter's imminence.

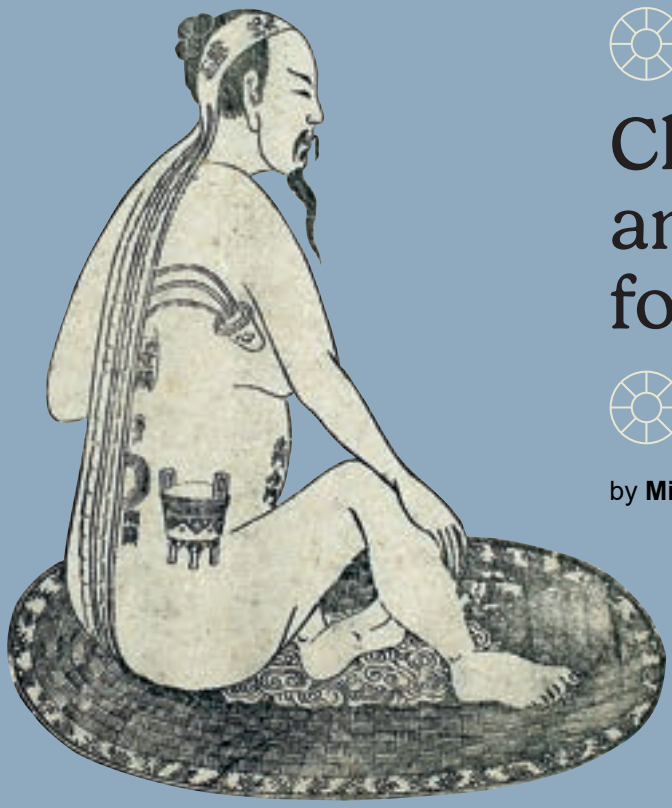
'Time's winged chariot' is ever at our backs and seems to hurry near. Not that one *'feels'* older. Inside, the same ego looks out and ponders the world. But when old friends come by, the streaks of grey, the lines around the eyes and the stoop of a spine once erect, make plain that what has happened to them must be happening to us.

It is strange that we should all grow old and that time affects what we feel to be our inmost self. Maybe we judge too much by the grey and the lines and too little by the feeling.

After the first stab of realisation of passing time, we may observe that friends have not really changed; underneath, they are the same recognisable personalities despite the repeating cycles of the years. Let the grey, the colours and the lines be forgotten. Let experience, patience, tolerance and peace be the intangible marks we recognise.

And if there be a soul, these things will surely be of it. If we take with us what we do *not* leave behind, then these things will march forward with us. Why go back a day? Why should the river not press to the sea? Why should spring not come again or the flower return to the seed; or the leaf to the branch; or the egg to the nest? Down the incarnations, greeting old friends, why should we not say: *'Why you are here, and you have not changed! The flower has left its seed and has returned. The intangible that ever* ***was*** *still* ***is****. Your beauty enhanced in repetition makes you lovelier than ever.'*

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Chinese Alchemy and the Search for Immortality

by **Michael DeMarco**

Above: *Illustration of the practice called Xixin Tuicang (wash the heart and retire to a hidden place) fromXingming Guizhi (Pointers on Spiritual Nature and Bodily Life) by Yi Zhenren, a Taoist text on internal alchemy published in 1615.* Credit: Chinese woodcut: Daoist internal alchemy. Wellcome Collection.

Before attempting to compound one of the Chinese elixirs for immortality, such as the *"Scarlet Snow and Flowing Pearl Elixir"* or the *"White Sublimate of Quicksilver Elixir"*, it would be wise to heed the words of *Lao Tzu* regarding our motives and methods. In verse 55 of his *Tao Te Ching* he says: *"That which goes against the Way will come to an early end."*

The Chinese search for immortality has been a long, complex road involving many hazards as we shall see. Fortunately for us, we can benefit much from the long history of trial-and-error in the Far East and attempt by Chinese sages to reach states of permanent bliss. In addition, we will come to know their discoveries concerning human concord with *'The Way of Nature'* or the *'Tao.'* Of all cultures seeking immortality, the Chinese clearly made an exceedingly thorough and all-encompassing effort. And as with other cultures, their

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methods of achieving their goals were varied, sometimes pursued with an emphasis on a single method, but usually following a broad holistic approach.

Inscriptions on bronze artefacts from the 8th century BCE show an ever-present concern for attaining immortality. At this time, a search for permanency was born which later had profound consequences on the Chinese conception of humanity's relationship with nature. This seed spawned a philosophic growth that would develop into manifold branches with each branch holding the same intention, namely, the attainment of immortality.



A reconstructed section of the Great Wall of China.



Chin Shih Huang Ti – China's first emperor.

Imagination was perhaps the prime motivator in the search for immortality, with fanciful stories, embellished with their authors' secret longings and hopes, spreading the grand idea that immortals do exist. On rare occasion, the presence of such immortals among humans was attested to by a fortunate few. Winged or not, immortals would fly effortlessly across the skies, their only nourishment being the air they breathed. But where was their habitat? Would they share their most precious secret of immortality?

The Immortals

Early imperial expeditions were sponsored to find immortals, known as *"hsien."* The emperor *Wei* (358-320 BCE) of the *Ch'i* kingdom, financed costly voyages in search of the reputed island home of immortals. Known as *P'eng-lai*, it was supposedly somewhere off the northeastern coast of China. Many continued this royal patronage, such as emperor *Chao* (311-279 BCE) of the *Yan* kingdom, and others thereafter.

Another traditional residence for the immortals was the summit of Mount *K'un-lun*, in the far-off

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Chinese woodcut, Famous medical figures: Portrait of Ge Hong. Wellcome Collection.



Acupuncture chart, heart channel of hand shaoyin, Chinese. Wellcome Collection.



Chinese woodcut: Alchemical refining furnace. Wellcome Collection.

reaches of western China. But, when Imperial missions failed to locate immortals in the mountains and at sea, more emphasis was made on finding or developing a method closer at hand.

A leading factor in greatly intensifying the sacred quest was initiated by China's first emperor, *Chin Shih Huang Ti*. He is remembered primarily as the grand unifier of China, the first to succeed in politically uniting the nation in 221 BCE. This first emperor of a politically united China also standardised coinage, chariot axles, the Chinese script, as well as piecing together many small walls to form the *Great Wall of China* which still exists in large part to this day. Fascinated by the concept of immortality, his power enabled scores of magicians, called *Fang Shih*, to flourish in their pursuit of ways of achieving eternal life.

For his own personal reasons *Chin Shih Huang Ti* was fanatical in his support of the *Fang Shih*. He was deeply afraid for his life after three attempts to assassinate him narrowly failed. He eventually withdrew from public eye to devote time and money toward his newfound task of finding immortality.

Thousands of *Fang Shih* were drawn to the Imperial Court to offer their services, each claiming to possess a method of obtaining immortality. Their methods focused on rational means. First of all, since physical immortality was being sought, the successful method must involve methods of preventing the body from going through its usual ageing process. The logical solution to their problem would be to nurture the body with elixirs into something more durable than its normal constitution.

Just as today, most people then believed that you are what you eat. In the Chinese conception, this included foods, liquids and the air they breathed. As a consequence, the *Fang Shih* often stressed a strict dietetic regime, including the ingestion of herbs and drugs. This was accompanied by respiratory exercises and gymnastics conducive to aiding the body in its metamorphosis to the immortal state.

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Putting the miraculous elixir on the tripod.
Chinese woodcut: Taoist internal alchemy. Wellcome Collection.



Lao Tzu

Wei Tan
The External Search

The primary concern with the *Wei Tan*, or *External Tradition*, was to first slow down the decaying process as much as possible with proper diet and exercise. In conjunction with this, and of utmost concern, was the alchemical production of an elixir to be ingested, and which would cause the physical body to become immortal. But woe betide the royal patron who did not first let his alchemist drink the elixir, for some concoctions proved fatal!

The most renowned exponent of Chinese alchemy was *Ko Hung* (c. CE 280-340), who was the first to break the secrecy of the oral tradition. He eventually presented much of the Chinese knowledge known to him on the subject of alchemy in the voluminous *Pao-p'u tzu*. The alchemical tradition that was enthusiastically pursued for so many centuries provided adepts with many strange items for ingestion. These included lead, silver, gold, digitalis, mica, pearls, brown hematite, jade, quartz, sulphur, and realgar.

The idea behind including alchemical materials in one's diet was to offer the body sustenance in the form of elements which were clearly known to have long life in themselves. The various methods of preparation, including pulverising, mixing, soaking, heating and storing, proved to be a worthwhile endeavour in providing the Chinese with many praiseworthy accomplishments in chemistry, mineralogy, a copious pharmacopoeia, and such inventions as porcelains, cloth dyes, metallic alloys, gunpowder and the magnetic compass. Nevertheless, the tradition of the external search failed to provide a way to immortality.

Nei Tan
The Internal Search

Gradually the previously mentioned external methods for attaining immortality became internalised. Although the reliance on elixirs fell into disuse, there remained a strong concern for health-oriented practices considered conducive to longevity. One reason for this was to assure a suitably long lifespan for attaining immortality through a different means.

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What was previously sought outside was now found within. The alchemical tripod became a symbol of the human body; with cinnabar and mercury corresponding to the yin-yang duality, such as those forming the poles of bodily energies. The internal bodily energies and their inner circulation were of major concern since they were understood as the very pulsation of the eternal source of life. The road to immortality became a *'Return to the Source'*, attainable only through correct meditation.

Chinese meditation shares, in common with other schools, a desire to obtain a realisation of the Absolute. In the Chinese tradition, an understanding of the meditative practice and its ultimate realisation, are expounded in the philosophy of *Taoism*.

Taoism

Finding its essential core in the writings associated with the philosophers *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu*, Taoism presents a simple view of reality. *Lao Tzu* himself said: *"My words are very easy to understand and very easy to put into practice, yet no one in the world can understand them or put them into practice" (Tao Te Ching, 70)*. Keeping this straightforward simplicity in mind, we get a glimpse of the Taoist concept of immortality.

First, since all things are composites and subject to change, they are impermanent. As with the human body, all things have an allotted lifespan from the time they are formed. Mimicking the movements of animals noted for longevity, such as the crane and tortoise, has a slight effect on prolonging one's years. Imitating foetal breathing, known as *"embryonic respiration"*, is similarly only a part of the necessary practice of attaining immortality. As noted in the *Chuang Tzu*, this *"simply shows the desire for longevity."*

The Taoist secret of immortality rested in their realisation of the absolute *'way'*, known as the *Tao*. There is a constant referral to the *Tao* as the *Mother* or *Source* of all things. Through the meditative process the Taoist adept *'returns to the Source'*, thereby *'embracing the Unity.'* The meditative process known as *"Internal Alchemy"*, and necessary for Tao-realisation, was also found to be the necessary path to immortality. The process of creation as stated in the *Tao Te Ching* (verse 42) is what the meditative process reverses:

> The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures. The myriad creatures carry on their backs the yin and embrace in their arms the yang and are the blending of the generative forces of the two.

Both Internal and External Alchemy have shared a common vocabulary, confusing those unaware of the symbolic intent. Upon final analysis, the meditative process includes a complex system of symbolism used to guide the purifying process of the mental state until it returns to its pristine originality.

The Calm and Clear Mind

If the body can be understood as the tripod, one's very spiritual essence and mental faculties are its alchemical ingredients. Transmuting these into a Grand Elixir requires mental purification, accomplished by calming the mind through proper emotional and psychic refinement.

Once calmed and clear, the mind becomes mirror-like, reflecting the eternal *Tao* and conferring all its potent attributes upon the individual by its mystical *'Heavenly Identity.'* No animal or weapon can inflict a fatal wound upon such a Tao-like person. *Lao Tzu* asks: *'Why is this so?'* and then answers: *'Because for him there is no realm of death.'*

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by Walter J Albersheim

Goethe the Mystic



In 2024, the world celebrated the 275th birth anniversary of a soul-personality who has won acclaim as one of the immortal masters of the written word: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

The test of time ranks Goethe with great literary luminaries such as Homer, Sophocles and Shakespeare. In countless essays and speeches he has been praised as a lyric poet, a dramatist, novelist, scientist and statesman..., but few have discerned in him for what he really was..., a master mystic! The obvious philosophical and social significance of Goethe's renowned dramatic poem Faust has been widely discussed, but its mystical content has remained almost entirely unrecognised.

One might well ask how Goethe could have been such a giant, a master in so many fields, if it were not for some special faculty of mystical illumination? Great is only he whose work, transcending mere beauty, ennobles us by a reflection of the Light which he received. It behoves us therefore, as students of

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Image: Wikimedia/Tamoikin Art Fund/Earthsphere



Faust and Mephisto by Anton Kaulbach.





1876 Faust, large German edition.

mysticism, to recognise the mastership of a man who was endowed from birth with spiritual receptivity, knew the Rosicrucian Order and broadcast its truths, even though veiled in poetical form.

His outward affiliation with mystical organisations may be investigated by biographers and historians but his progress on the spiritual path needs no such studies, for it shines forth from his life's work. A great part of that work is familiar to all well-read people who speak German. Much of it has been translated into English although not even the best translation renders the melodious beauty of a perfect poem which, by-passing our analytical mind, speaks directly to the soul. Whether we read the originals or the translations, we must, however, learn what to look for in order to find his mystical self-confessions. And like all writings of this nature, they elude the casual reader who is not already a seeker.

Inborn tendencies leading the young poet toward the path are mentioned in Goethe's autobiographical work *'Fiction and Truth from my Life.'* The son of well-to-do, upper-class bourgeois parents, he was a tall, vivacious, good-looking lad, with a precocious gift for languages and for rhyming. He expressed much zest for life and possessed insatiable curiosity. Several extrasensory experiences are recorded, the most striking one occurring in his student days while he was riding away dejectedly after a final parting from his sweetheart, Friederike. Suddenly he saw himself *'not with the eyes of the body, but of the spirit'* returning on horseback, clad in a strange, grey, gold-embroidered suit. Fate, or accident, verified this vision in full detail some eight years later.



Goethe in the Roman Campagna.

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Another sign of linkage to a super-personal intelligence were his sudden flashes of artistic intuition. He tells about poems written at night in a semiconscious daze and finding them complete and perfect in the morning, though scribbled diagonally across a scrap of paper. He even began a poem about the *'Wandering Jew'* by stating that a midnight inspiration compelled him to *'jump out of bed like a madman.'*

With wealth, talent, temperament and good looks favouring him, it was only natural that he enjoyed to the full the pleasures of student life and became involved in many flirtations and amorous attachments. But soon he felt the need to cleanse himself from this social whirl through long solitary nocturnal walks. In *'Wanderer's Night Song'* he exclaims that he is bewildered and tired of joys and sorrows alike, and prays for *'sweet Peace.'* In *'Even Song'* he feels an intimation of profound peace in the sunset on solitary mountaintops. Such physical wanderings eventually leads him to *'The Path.'*

Glimpses of Divinity

Nature worship brings him moments of exaltation when the clouds seem to enfold him so that like Ganymede, the cup-bearer of the gods, he feels himself carried up as on eagle wings to the bosom of a Heavenly Father. But such raptures do not last and give way to deep despondency and, eventually, to the *'Dark Night of Despair'* which comes to every mystic, and becomes recognised.

In the *'Harper's Song'* he cries out against the divine powers which allow people to sin but then metes out punishment for a guilt they are too weak to avoid. Again, as Prometheus, he





Top Left: Goethe, sketch, Sternbrücke in Weimar.

Top Right: Goethe, sketch, Faust and Erdgeist.

Bottom Left: Goethe, sketch, 1810, Monolith, Central Bohemian Uplands.

Bottom Right: Goethe's notebook from studying Judaeo-German, 1760.

Opposite page: Goethe in 1828, by Joseph Karl Stieler.





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rebels against the gods who demand worship from men whom they doom to misfortune and death. He refuses to bow to fate and resolves manfully to shape his own destiny. Later he realises that the seeming injustices of one lifetime may be resolved in a new life.



In his *'Song of the Spirits over the Waters'* he likens earthly life to water that rains down from heaven, flows along on earth for a while and then evaporates back to heaven, undiminished though invisible and impalpable, to start a new cycle of existence. Having regained confidence in life and mankind, he calls upon man to be *'noble, helpful and kind'*, and to exemplify in himself the qualities which he formerly ascribed to imagined divinities. At about this period of life, at the age of 35, an age so significant to mystics, he seems to have found contact with Rosicrucians.

In a fragmentary epic entitled *'The Mysteries'*, he tells of a pilgrim impelled toward his travels from on high. Lost at night in a mountain wilderness, he finds shelter in a monastery. The cloister door is adorned with a cross and roses. The legendary tale breaks off abruptly. Why was it not completed? Did the poet himself remain at the outer gate of the Order, without knowledge of its inner nature, or did he find that true mysteries can only be intimated to the multitude by fragmentary hints?

The second reason seems the more likely one, because in the introduction to *The Mysteries* Goethe warns us that the path might seem to lose itself in the bushes, intentionally, and that none could puzzle out its meaning merely by mental effort. Clearly, he implied that each of us must find his or her own experience to progress. While association with Rosicrucian mystics undoubtedly helped Goethe in his life's quest, it offered no shortcut to salvation for him any more than it does today for other students of the mysteries. He kept on searching and studying the wisdom of all cultures and times, especially those of the East. He wrote ballads about Hindu legends, and an entire book of verse, named *'West-Eastern Divan'*, in the style of the Persian mystic-poet Hafiz.

Freedom from Doubts

At long last, 30 years after writing *'The Mysteries'*, Goethe could proclaim that he had attained the *'Golden Dawn of Illumination.'* This confession is hidden away among the orientalising Divan series. Like *The Mysteries*, it is prefaced by a warning and addressed to the Wise only, not to the jeering crowd. The flame of a candle shining through a night of earthly love, beckons him on to Greater Light and Greater Love. He praises the living soul that like a moth is drawn to, and finally consumed by, this flaming Greater Light so that it loses its mortal identity. The poem closes on the triumphant note:

> Until you have attained this..., to become [evolve] by dying..., you are but a dull guest on a dark Earth.

The injunction *'Die and Become!'* is often quoted but rarely understood. I myself, although loving Goethe since boyhood, had to read the verses many times before their meaning dawned on me. Fortunately, the poem is written not only for those who, like the poet, have experienced *'Flaming Death'* (they no longer need its challenge) but to all of us who long for this experience, knowingly or unknowingly.

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After this poem was completed, one senses that Goethe is free from doubts and worries. He scoffs at fear about the transitory nature of earthly life, exclaiming: *'We are here to eternalise ourselves.'* Yet he does not retire into an ivory tower but stresses instead one's duty to put one's shoulder to the wheel on behalf of the common good.

> Let Man bestir himself while it is Day [for] the Night will come when he may work no more.

His manifold activities included those of Minister of State, Theatre Director, Court Poet, scientist and dramatist. He was the *'Olympian'* whose presence was sought by visitors from all over the world.

Unavoidably, the poetic works of a man so sure of himself lack the passionate appeal of those written when he was a struggling and erring youth: we cannot feel kinship with One too high above us. Goethe no longer wrote romantic poetry, becoming instead the protector of such young romanticists as Lord Byron and Victor Hugo. However, some of his last verses were pure gems of wisdom, condensed into proverb form. And so, toward the end of his long life he could declare:

> Throughout the infinitely many-fold and ever-changing cosmic cycles, Joy of Life streams forth from all created things, from the mite as from the giant Sun. And all this struggle for existence is Rest Eternal in the Lord.

Verily, one who has attained such serenity is a Master mystic. The poetry of his old age may no longer appeal to the uninitiated, but his life itself is a work of art, a tale of seeking and finding, of the good fight unto victory. May it spur us on to equal effort and equal reward!



Poem "The Violet" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Illustrations – Eugen Neureuther

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ORDO ROSAE CRUCIS



by Nobilis

The concept of *service* is at the heart of the mystic's life and we might say there are three factors that determine the type and quality of that service in the mundane world.

Connectivity

First, humans have a unique and innate *connectivity* to what Rosicrucians refer to as *'the Cosmic'* or the *'divine scheme of things.'* When the idea of service asserts itself, the aspiring mystic seeks avenues of doing good, thereby outwardly demonstrating an altruistic attitude, giving money to charities and physically supporting, through volunteer work, various schemes for the less fortunate in society. This is commendable work and there is merit to that in terms of karmic effect. There is also the fledgling connection with the mental idea of what service is.

Later it becomes increasingly apparent that the service being performed is not something that is

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meaningful in any higher sense. There is a perception that these outward actions are not just self serving but only affect the fate of human beings temporarily, in this one lifetime, and is relatively meaningless in terms of bringing others toward a better understanding of a divine Reality in which homelessness does not exist. So, a higher purpose is looked for that this desire to serve might be anchored to. It is eventually realised that there needs to be an inner connection to the seeker's concept of Truth, and to be guided by it. We might deem this contact to be a calling from what Rosicrucians know as the *'Master Within.'* There is then a consequent response to the divine Plan, and service is being performed at a higher level. In this way we might say there is a connection with the *'Heart'*, the higher emotion, so that inner divine inspiration may follow.

The connection to the Master Within allows the energies of the Heart to be expressed.

Purgation

Secondly, there is a need for a purgation of what we might term our personality nature. The aspiring mystic is taught to be *'equipped for service'*, that is, to purify the emotions, build up the mind with knowledge, obtain virtues, and otherwise become a fit disciple capable of serving humanity. Maintenance of one's personality nature is by control of the ego and this is achieved through constant attention, certainly in the early stages, and the adoption of a disciplined lifestyle as taught in the Rosicrucian Order.

During this cleansing, attunement with the Cosmic becomes more and more a part of life, and the whole act of service shifts to a higher level. The connection to the Master Within allows the energies of the Heart to be expressed. The mystic becomes guided by the Master Within through the ways of the Heart, and uses the personality instrument as needed to inspire, lift and aid. This can only be achieved through time but is certainly a fine and necessary quality that equips one for service in the mundane world.

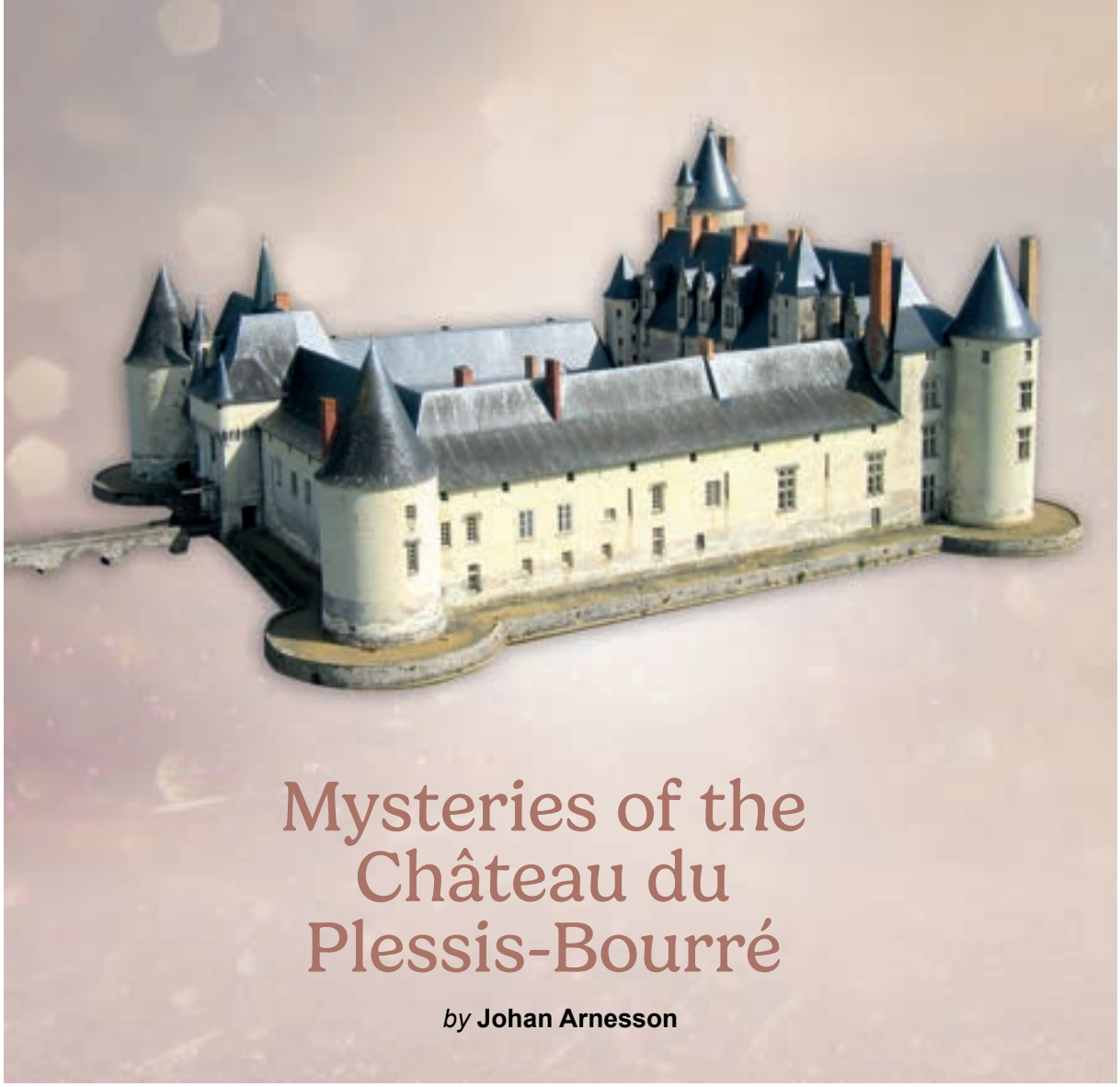
Collective Service

The third factor is *collective service*. As the desire to serve develops, there is a growing desire to come together with people of like mind and similar aspirations. This is reflected in the many religious and mystical organisations that have emerged over the millennia. Each formed its own unique methods of serving humanity, with certain individuals being recognised as truly representative of their organisation through the service they give to humanity. While these individuals are few and far between, they are examples from which the aspiring modern mystic will take lessons. This is the value of group work in its influencing aspect between its members.

Group work means collective service, and in this higher type of service, mystics are not doing things of themselves, based on the capacity of their own personality. They are acting as components of a collective, parts of a group; and the divine Cosmic influence moves each of them individually in such a way that the action of the whole group produces one united service effect. We might make the analogy of the group being like a hand and the fingers representing the individuals of which it is composed. A lone mystic cannot direct the hand, but collectively there is an accomplishment that none on their own could either see or achieve.

When Jesus, a wonderful example of service, said *"Where two or more are gathered in my name..."* he sounded the call to group work, and to united, collaborative action. What is certain is that the type of service that one is inwardly called to do is ultimately determined on how one inwardly stands in relationship to God.

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Mysteries of the Château du Plessis-Bourré

by **Johan Arnesson**

The story of the *Château du Plessis-Bourré* begins with the French merchant *Jacques Coeur* (c. 1395 – 1456) who rose from humble origins to become *'Maître des Monnaies'* (*Master of the Mint*) in 1436. In 1439, he further rose to become the *'Grand Argentier du Royaume de France'* (*Minister of Finance*) to *King Charles VII* of France (reigned 1422 - 1461).

It was during this period in history that *Joan of Arc,* the *'Maid of Orléans'* (c. 1412 – 1431) lived and inspired the hearts and minds of thousands of French soldiers to fight for the French king. Jacques Coeur amassed great wealth through banking, trade and the mining of precious metals. It was darkly rumoured as well that he had mastered the alchemical art of transmuting base metals into silver and the castle, which forms the main theme of this article, is said to have many early signs of

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Jacques Coeur

alchemical activity from the period in which Jacques Coeur's wife managed works at the castle. His motto was proudly proclaimed: *'To the valiant heart, nothing is impossible.'* But transmuting base metals into gold? Maybe some things weren't possible even for him!

While driving through the French department of Cher I checked into a B&B in the town of Bourges. Over supper, the husband and wife politely asked if there was anything in the area I would like to see. I explained I was on a private journey through France to soak up its ancient heritage, though especially to discover whatever Rosicrucian connections might still exist. The atmosphere in the little kitchen changed immediately as the husband, assisted by his gentle wife, told me in hushed, solemn tones that they advised me therefore not to leave town until I had visited the house of Jacques Coeur; for this man, they said, was reputed to have had a close historical association with the *Château du Plessis-Bourré* which, as far as they were concerned, had been a major centre of Rosicrucian activity many centuries ago. It was, they earnestly assured me, by far the most important place I could visit in the region, if seeking the pre-Renaissance roots of the Rosicrucian brotherhood was what I sought. A lump rose to my throat as I realised that I could be about to realise the major purpose of my journey of discovery.



Old house in Bourges thought to be Jacques Cœur's birthplace.

The house that Jacques Coeur had lived in for part of his life was very interesting from an esoteric point of view. There was a definite feeling of mystery and presence, and clear signs of someone's preoccupation with alchemy. The stone work in particular had intriguing engravings suggesting that a great alchemist had once lived there. I was filled with joy and excitement that I had found the first hint of the esoteric mystery that had been the main reason for my meandering journey.

Plessis-Bourré

Château du Plessis-Bourré, is described in travel brochures as a *'medieval fortress, 15 kilometres from Angers in idyllic countryside.'* Bourré, the second half of the château's name, refers to one of the area's most enigmatic historical figures from the late medieval period. *Jean Bourré* (1424-1506) is virtually unknown today, despite the extraordinary competence and loyalty of this man to successive French kings who bestowed upon him their utmost trust in permitting him to manage their finances. He was secretary, treasurer and confidant of *King Louis XI* (reigned 1461 – 1483) and later treasurer under *Charles VIII* (reigned 1483 - 1498) and *Louis XII* (reigned 1498 - 1515).

The first half of the name of the château, *'Plessis'*, refers to a woven

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Painting of Jean Bourré.

hedge around a property. Jean Bourré and his wife *Marguerite de Feschal*, bought the property, then called *Plessis-du-Vent*, and began their project of building a magnificent, if large, home. While Jean carried out his royal duties for the king at court, far away, his wife managed the construction of the château, organising roughly hewn stone to be ferried down the Loire river from Saumur to be dressed on site and used in the construction of the château.

While many of the buildings listed in guidebooks for the area have long since fallen into ruin, Plessis-Bourré is a remarkable exception, for it is largely unchanged from the structure raised in the years between 1468 and 1473, having survived many turbulent times. Its rectangular shape, with four round towers on the corners, a wide moat and drawbridge, hints at something exceptional. It was clearly not for an ordinary person or family, but for a man of considerable wealth and more than just a hint of esoteric mystery.

A Magnificent Ceiling

The most intriguing part of the Château is found on the first floor in the *'Guards Room'* with its exquisite 11x7½ metre ceiling, with six painted sections separated by wooden beams. Each section has four hexagonal compartments depicting, all in all, 24 allegorical scenes harking back to the early years of alchemical enquiry in Europe. Eight of the scenes depict people from medieval legends accompanied by text. The other 16 scenes depict symbols that would have been well-understood by the early alchemists of the time, though some of these scenes are difficult to relate to hermetic symbolism from later centuries, the sort that are well understood nowadays. Despite the difficulty of interpreting some of the scenes, the ceiling is undoubtedly one of the finest examples of 15th century hermetic art to have survived into our times.

Some of the paintings had been hidden for a long time behind a false ceiling and were rediscovered only relatively recently. The paintings are mainly grey on a blue-green background and it is believed they were made by the hand of Bourré himself. They reflect the height and richness of French medieval art in a visual, story-telling medium that, from the Renaissance onwards, had generally appeared in print rather than in buildings.

When I entered the room for the first time (I have visited many times since) I was aghast at the atmosphere and sheer aura of presence it evoked. Even after so many centuries of constant use, I could smell the ceiling wood, as fresh as if it were newly erected. It caused me to involuntarily breathe in deeply as I closed my eyes while trying to intuit what the room had been like when new. With a sense of depth of both space and time, I could feel something very special still there, a sort of presence or reminder of something beautiful and spiritually majestic that had once occurred in this very chamber, not once but many times and carrying into our times echoes of spiritual accomplishment at the highest levels attainable.

When I entered the room..., I was aghast at the atmosphere and sheer presence it evoked.

The rich imagery was quite staggering as I looked at these 24 enigmatic pictures of animals and strange creatures, as well as male and female figures in bizarre poses surrounded by abundant vegetation. The

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With thanks to Jean-Jacques Dejeunes for all ceiling images – jjdejeunes.com



The Guard's Room - The painted ceiling.



The Guard's Room.



The goose that one shoes.

alchemical symbolism on several panels was obvious and of special interest to me, but the majority seemed curiously at odds with the more conventional images of alchemy that I had seen countless times in modern books. Virtually all panels, however, appeared to be early precursors of the style and contents of alchemical symbolic art which became standardised in Europe during the following century.

Alchemy

Modern mystics, like the Rosicrucians, often refer to themselves as *'transcendental alchemists'*, referring to the *'Great Work'* of turning base metals into gold as an inner, spiritual process, rather than a physical one. From the discoveries made in the 20th century, we know of course that transforming one element into another, heavier element, can only occur through the nuclear process of fusion of two or more atomic nuclei into a new single nucleus. And while this occurs in the heart of a star or in a nuclear fusion reactor, it is not likely to occur at ordinary room temperature and pressure through ordinary chemical processes; at least as far as we know thus far!

Transcendental alchemy is, today, usually explored through dry academic treatises and metaphysical abstractions. But for me, the attraction of old alchemical imagery prods my mind to discover questions, associations, insights and plain silence before a mystery that maybe, just maybe, is based on historical fact and chemical processes that the modern world has yet to discover, or perhaps re-discover. Only a psyche immersed in ancient mythology, bible stories, myths and other old literature of the times, along with a good knowledge of old French, Latin and Greek, as well as an ear for sounds and puns, could produce this particular imagery. Alas though, this is no longer part of any modern curriculum, to our great loss.

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Some time later I discovered a connection between Jacques Coeur and Jean Bourré. It was through the writings of the French alchemist Eugène Canseliet (1899 – 1982). It is said that Canseliet was the only student of the mysterious *Fulcanelli*, a pen name used by a French alchemist and esoteric author whose identity is still not definitely known. Fulcanelli was a 20th century alchemist who had revived interest in the subject through his and Canseliet's 1926 book *'The Mystery of the Cathedrals'*, re-published in 1976. Apparently, Fulcanelli urged Canseliet to put *'FCH'* after his name to denote himself as an adept. Perhaps these letters, that had first appeared in the 18th century, scratched onto the walls of this château and other buildings, referred to *'Frères Chevaliers d'Heliopolis' (Brother Knights of Heliopolis)*.

The connection Canseliet made between the two residences in Bourges and Plessis-Bourré was evidently based on circles and triangles (suggesting fire and water), the rose and small sculptured figures tucked into the masonry. A key was the *'marmoset'*, a quaint figure from the *'Arabian Nights'* holding a jug and a cup, with a banner of mysterious words. But what of the paintings?


· Omnia · ab · uno · · ·



Jean-Jacques Dejeunes – jjdejeunes.com

The fable of the eels.



The sayings of Chichiface.

to tell the visitor that talking too much does more harm than good, in this case both fatal harm to the bird and harm to those who have to continue listening to its incessant chattering.

The magpie's *'speech'* symbolises communication and creative expression. When a magpie speaks, we need to listen with great attention to what is being said, regardless of our distaste for the painful home truths being spread about us. The magpie's chatter is also a symbolic message that we need to say what is on our minds more clearly, articulate our words properly, and not chatter like a magpie.

Speak up, express your opinions calmly and rationally, be creative with your spoken words. So, the woman sewing up the bird's anus rather than its beak is wasting her time, because the uncomfortable message about her will still come out of the magpie's beak.

Le dit de la Chichiface *(The sayings of Chichiface.)*: This shows an animal, gaunt of face and body, having been forced for 200 years to feed only on *'faithful women'*, an odd analogy to the modern mind but not so in mediaeval times. In the painting, however, the creature is happy as it bites the flesh of a fleeing woman. In other words, finding its food, namely a faithful woman, was depicted as being as rare as creating the Philosopher's Stone. In the male-dominated society of the time, no thought was given to the difficulty (or ease) of finding a *'faithful man.'*

The remaining 16 paintings clustered in groups of four have early alchemical themes but accurate interpretation, while difficult, is not impossible. A few however, clearly depict particular stages of alchemical transformation, while others appear to be supplementary comments on the alchemist's required attitude, the nature of the process or the substances used.

Les Deux Beliers (*The Two Rams*):This, the first stage of the alchemical process, denotes the constellation of Aries. The terrestrial and celestial rams suggest that aspiring alchemists must deal with both a spiritual and earthly struggle, hidden initially from sight, but ultimately attracted to each other so powerfully that the quest denoted by Aries becomes

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The two Rams.



The female Bear and two Monkeys.

objectively realised by the aspiring alchemist. Symbolical of sulphur, denoting the soul, the ram is also the carrier of the fabled Golden Fleece from Greek mythology (Philosopher's Stone in this context) and finding the fleece is the ultimate goal of the aspirant's quest.

L'ourse et deux Singes (*The Female Bear and two Monkeys*): This painting commenting on *'the work'*, suggests the balancing act required by the adept to steer the work through all its stages. One monkey, chained by its neck, follows nature while the other, chained by its stomach and blowing a long trumpet, lets itself be carelessly carried along. The bear hints at the constellation of *'Ursa Major'* (Great Bear) and the Pole Star in the constellation *'Ursa Minor'* (Little Bear), a light source denoting the constant, unchanging, guiding though faint light of all seekers.

The bear in the painting also represents the *'materia prima'*, the primordial, original material of the universe, associated by alchemists with Mercury (both the element and the Greek/Roman fleet-footed god), which in turn symbolises the wisdom of sages of the past that all alchemists, aspiring or accomplished, must eventually seek to understand and to live by their spiritual tenets.

L'âne chantant sa messe *(The donkey sings his mass)* suggests that the fool is the wisest. The Great Work required a positive disposition, courage, enthusiasm and both spiritual maturity and innocence. The ass which carried Jesus into Jerusalem, was the carrier of a priceless treasure, the Sun. The ass is therefore the carrier of the Mystery sought by all true alchemists. Those who have visited Chartres cathedral may have seen on the outside of the south tower a small, now-eroded, statue of a donkey holding a type of zither. As a carrier of the Mystery, the donkey plays music and thereby provides the key to the cathedral's strict harmonic proportions. The Mystery involves the laws of vibrations and harmony that the student or adept must learn to use in order to completely transform their being.

La fontaine philosophale *(The philosophical fountain)* This image has historically caused the

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greatest amount of comment and outrage. From the middle of a hexagonal fountain, a lion spits *'water'* into the mouth of a naked young man. A young woman, with head shaven and skirt lifted, urinates in a male manner into a hat held by another naked young man. This scene depicts polarities and the two philosophical waters that eventually coagulate into a unity to finally produce the Philosopher's Stone. Philosophical mercury, a source of rejuvenation, is a solvent that whitens the dark earth.

We must not forget, in our alchemical researches, that alchemical paintings, engravings and statues, almost without exception, allude to well-known spiritual processes. Aspirants seeking the Golden Way and its ultimate prize the Philosopher's Stone, seek, above all, to become harmonised with the forces of the body and soul that come together in a special manner with the purpose of transforming the consciousness from its usual, always-on-show, base, outer human cares of daily life, to the ever hidden, refined, inner concerns of the soul.

La jeune fille et la tortue (*The girl and the long-tailed turtle*): An adjoining painting depicts a young girl on a turtle (symbol of the Roman god Mercury), suggesting that the process of not only finding the Philosopher's Stone but merely finding the entrance to the Golden Way, is a painstakingly slow process, requiring extended periods of concentration and arduous work on oneself. The secret is hidden well beneath the turtle's shell, and the youth of the girl suggests the innocence and purity of intent required when attempting to both begin the journey and to reach its ultimate destination.

L'homme anguipède et la fileuse *(the anguiped or snake-legged man and the spinner):* This depicts a curious mythological figure, half-man, half-snake, with his arm around a naked, pregnant woman who is spinning with the aid of a spindle and distaff. A small child is sitting on the anguipede's back and sucking the anguipede's tail through a horn-like tube. Surrounded by heavy foliage, the scene suggests a stage close to the end of the alchemical process, for the transformation has finally produced the child (which is within the mother); namely, it has produced *'the red stone within the philosophical egg.'*

With the foliage representing regeneration, the mother represents water, the universal solvent. Her



The [indecent] Philosophical Fountain.



The Maiden and the long-tailed Turtle.

Jean-Jacques Dejeunes – jjdejeunes.com

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The Elephant, the Monkey and the Two Chests.



The Lion-man.



The Tamed Unicorn.



The black pregnant Siren.



The sailing trolley and its female guide.



The battle between the Eagle and the Lion.

Jean-Jacques Dejeunes – jjdejeunes.com

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Jean-Jacques Dejeunes – jjdejeunes.com



The snake legged man and the spinner.



The Phoenix.

work is to simmer the concoction with a secret fire at a precise temperature and for a precise period of time in order to produce the alchemical child. The man, symbolising the *'elementary fire'*, is related to the more delicate fire of maturation (the art of spinning) of the feminine nature that the adept must master.

***Le phénix** (The phoenix)*: Finally, the quintessence, the rising sun, the Golden Fleece, the Philosopher's Stone, the firebird, emerges.

As for the rest of the paintings, commentary on them will be left for another article on the Château du Plessis-Bourré.

The Dragon and the Lion
The Centaur, the Elephant and Monkey
The Unicorn
The Two Dogs
The Pregnant Siren
The Chariot with Sails

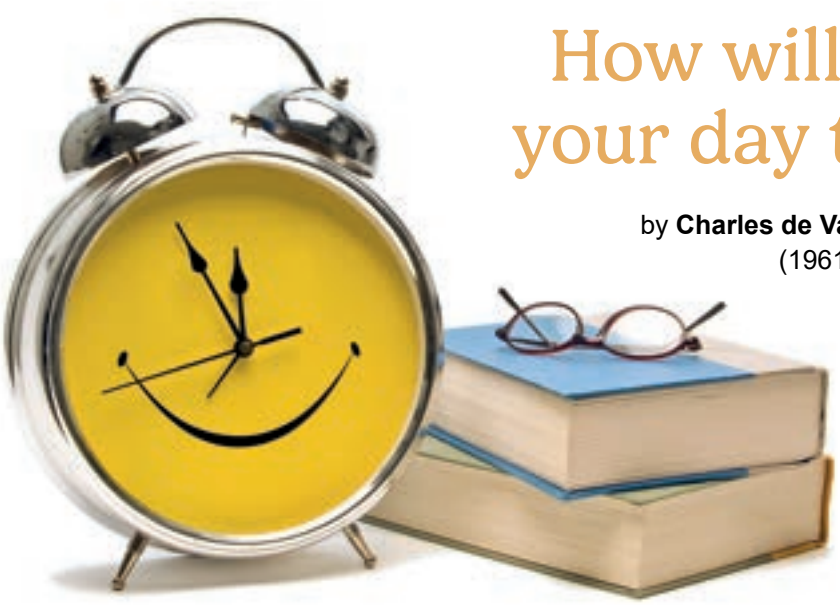
In addition to the above, there will be other articles on this topic, for it is an inexhaustible source for contemplation. If you read French, explanations for many of the paintings can be found in the book *Le Plessis-Bourré*.

In the room there is a small sculpture, an athanor or alchemist's furnace with a mysterious fire supplying constant heat, here depicted as a nest from which two youths emerge. It is an unusual property for an athanor to possess, but placing my hands around it and briefly going inwards into my being, I could feel centuries of thoughts and high aspirations of previous aspirants come through to me as a deep emotion of reverence for the once secret quest of mediaeval alchemists before the advent of science.

Rational, scientific thought and procedures were not necessary for their quest. Knowledge about the rotation of the planets around the sun, the existence of other suns, galaxies and even the finite size of our universe, were not required. Through their methods, however archaic they may seem to our 21st century minds, these mystics still accomplished the spiritual liberation and illumination that so many of us yearn for today and would give a king's ransom to acquire.

If you ever have the opportunity of visiting the Château du Plessis-Bourré, be sure not to miss it, for it is well worth the journey, and it could, for you, as it was for me, be a journey of true discovery.

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How will you start your day tomorrow?

by **Charles de Valois Saint Dumont**
(1961 - 2020)

Michael is the sort of person some people love to hate. He's always in a good mood and always has something to say. When someone asks him how he is, he repeats the old cliché: *"If I were any better, I would be twins!"* A bit puzzled, I said to him one day:

> "How can you be so positive all of the time?" to which he replied with a broad smile: "Each morning when I wake up, I have two choices, to be in a good mood or a bad one. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I choose to learn from it and not be a victim. Every time someone complains, I choose to point out the positive side of life. It's your choice how you live life. When you remove the superfluous, every situation is a choice. You choose how to react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or a bad mood."

And then one day Michael was involved in a serious accident, falling some sixty feet from a communications tower. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, he was released from hospital with metal rods in his back. I saw him about six months after the accident and when I asked him how he was, he replied: *"If I were any better, I'd be twins. Want to see my scars?"* I asked him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place. The first thing that went through his mind was the well-being of his daughter. Then, as he lay on the ground, he remembered that he had two choices..., he could choose to live or to die and he chose to live. Michael continued:

> "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into A&E and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes I read that I was a dead man. I knew I needed to take action. Then a nurse asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes', I replied, and taking a deep breath I said, 'Gravity!' Over the laughter of the staff, I told them solemnly that I was choosing to live and they should please operate on me as if I were alive, not dead."

Michael lived, thanks not only to the skill of the medical staff, but also because of his amazing attitude. Attitude, after all, is everything. So, don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. After all, today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

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The Salons Rose-Croix

by **Rick Cobban**

Early in 1892 a haunting poster appeared in the streets of Paris. It depicted three women, one of them nude and sunk into the mire of daily life, slime dripping from her finger-tips. The two other women ascend a celestial staircase. The one on the lowest step, dressed in dark clothing, occupies the middle ground, offering a lily to a near transparent woman higher up the stairs who, it appears, has left life's pollution far behind.

This light, diffuse woman, representing pure idealism, holds in her right hand a smouldering heart. The steps are strewn with the flowers of Mary: roses and lilies. Masses of clouds and stars swirl about the mountain peaks at the top of the stairs. The picture is framed by a pattern of crucified roses set on altars. The bottom of the poster announces the opening of the first *"Salon de la Rose-Croix."*

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The Salons of the Rose-Croix

This poster by Carlos Schwabe (1877-1926), the German Symbolist painter may be familiar to many, but the story of esoteric and artistic ferment surrounding the Salon Rose-Croixs is far less well known. Between 1892 and 1897 a remarkable individual organised the *Salons de la Rose-Croix*, a series of six celebrated art exhibitions. That individual was Joséphin Péladan. He was imbued with the deep mysticism of the Rosicrucians of Toulouse by his brother Adrien Péladan.

Together with Papus and Stanislas de Guaïta, Péladan was one of the founders of *L'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix* (Kabbalistic Order of the Rose Cross). On 17th February 1891, he announced in a letter addressed to Papus published in the journal *L'Initiation* that he would sever his relationship with the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose Cross. This was because of the differences in his understanding of the purpose and direction of Rosicrucian activity. Thus was founded in May 1891 his own Rosicrucian group *L'Ordre de la Rose-Croix Catholique et esthétique du Temple et du Graal*.

This Order was divided into three grades: Equerries, Knights and Commanders. Péladan, as Grand Master, was known as Sâr Mérodack Péladan in his Rosicrucian inner circle. Wearing extravagant violet robes with his beard and hair styled in what he described as the *"Assyrian"* manner, Péladan became a flamboyant figure simultaneously respected, admired and ridiculed in Parisian society. His Order's activity was based in France but it also spread into Belgium. Esoteric work was carried on simultaneously with its public artistic and literary activities. Péladan believed that art and music could uplift the soul and promote a more charitable and spiritual world. The *Manifesto of the Rose-Croix* and the *Regulation and Monitor of the Salon Rose-Croix* were published in 1891.

The first Salon Rose-Croix exhibition opened on 10th March 1892 in the famous Durand-Ruel Gallery. It was one the most successful exhibitions of the year. Two thousand press invitations were sent out as well as special



Wikimedia / Morburre

Joséphin Péladan



Paul Durand-Ruel in his gallery in 1910. The first "Salon of the Rose-Croix" exhibition opened on 10th March 1892 in this famous Gallery.

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'I Lock the Door Upon Myself' (1891) by Fernand Khnopff.

invitations to private individuals. More than 22,600 visiting cards were left. On the street outside the Salon the police were forced to control the traffic of carriages bringing visitors to the exhibition. The doyens of Parisian high society viewed the Salon. Great artists, writers and poets such as Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau, Émile Zola and Paul Verlaine, as well as the composer Erik Satie passed through *"the great artistic show of the year"* according to Remy de Gourmont in the *Mercure de France*. The most well-known symbolist artists exhibiting at the six Salons were Carlos Schwabe, Fernand Khnopff, Jean Delville, Armand Point, Félicien Rops and Alexandre Séon among the hundreds of artists who exhibited in the Salon. Naturally the standard of the works exhibited varied, but at its best, the artworks exhibited were rich in symbolic meaning.

The examination of one painting *"I Lock the Door Upon Myself"* (1891) by Fernand Khnopff will demonstrate the many levels of meaning symbolised in the art of the Rose-Croix. The audience viewing this painting received the understanding they were capable of perceiving. An androgynous figure is shown in a room. Some saw only the imagery of the popular characterisation of the femme-fatale as being both seductress and chaste. A more insightful interpretation reveals a more mystic vision of the soul personality in contemplation, turning within from the objective world. The androgynous figure symbolises the soul beyond duality and the power the Magus has gained over life and death in meditative isolation. The range of work exhibited may be seen in the painting by Jean Delville, *"Satan's Treasures"* (1895) and Armand Point's *"The Siren"* (1897) which reveals the diversity and ambitions of Salon exhibitors.

The contradictory nature of Péladan's ambition for the art exhibited, and his need to guide the Salon through its manifesto and rules gave rise to problems for both his Order and the Salon Rose-Croix. One of the more contentious issues of Péladan's elitist view of Rosicrucian activity may be found in the statement:

> Art, this initiatory rite to which only the predestined should be admitted, is being turned into a commonplace to suit the crowd.

This attitude was demonstrated in Péladan's complex expectations and criticisms of the artists and their work that would be exhibited within his Salon. The inflexible rules of the Salon were enforced and discouraged some artists from continuing their involvement. However, other artists were inspired.

Jean Delville organised Symbolist art exhibitions and Péladan's work in Belgium. Péladan's vision for the art of the Salon is summarised in his maxim:

> The work of art is a fugue: nature supplies its motif; the soul of the artist creates the rest.

This statement in many respects could have been the guiding thought for the development of many aspects of 20th Century modernism. In fact, several artists who would later play important roles in the development of modernism exhibited in one or more of the six Salons. Georges Rouault became one of the great independent painters of Fauvism; Émile Bernard a light of the Nabis; Antoine Bourdelle a romantically expressive sculptor and Ferdinand Hodler developed into Expressionism. Jan Toorop became a leading painter of Art Nouveau while Félix Vallotton devised his version of objective realism.

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'Salome Dancing before Herod'
by Gustave Moreau.



'The Poor Fisherman'
by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes.

The Symbolists

Symbolism began as a literary movement in the novels *Là-bas* (*'Down There'* or *'The Damned'*) and *À rebours* (*'Against the Grain'* or *'Against Nature'*) by Joris-Karl Huysmans with their themes of decadence, dandyism and occultism. This should be contrasted with Péladan's symbolist novel *Le Vice suprême*. The hero of this novel is a mystic Magus who uses his abilities in the service of the highest ideals. The poet Jean Moréas formalised the Symbolist movement in a manifesto in the newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1886. Albert Aurier defined it as the painting of ideas to symbolise the intangible and unseen. Symbolism was a reaction against the excesses of Romanticism and the materialism of Realism and Impressionism.

The symbolist painters Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon were invited to join the Salon, but both declined, preferring their reclusive ways. Moreau's symbolist painting inspired by myth and biblical events represented the *fin-de-siècle* mood of late 19th Century France. In his paintings *"Salome"* and *"Voice of Evening"*, jewelled visions entrance the viewer with the evocative power



'The Eye floats towards Infinity like some Weird 'Balloon'
by Odilon Redon (1882).

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Poster for the fifth Salon de Rose Croix Point Sarluis.



'Silence' (1911) Often Redon.

of the symbol while pointing toward a veiled reality. Moreau's teaching and art inspired artists such as Gauguin and Matisse to achieve a new synthesis in their art.

The great muralist Pierre Puvis de Chavannes was not interested in imitating nature. He captured a universal symbolic mood in each work by depicting a particular event. Through static scenes of large-scale carefully muted decorative serene colour schemes he created paintings of monumental power. One giant study for such a mural *"Saint Genevieve Provisioning Paris under Siege"* (1897-98) may be viewed in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. We see in the painting *"The Poor Fisherman"* (1881) the contemplative mood evoked by the subtle colour, the awkward diagonal composition and the fisherman's state of supplication.

All of this brings the viewer into a state of psychological identification with the spirituality of the scene. The metaphysical silence found within the art of Puvis de Chavannes quietly gained him both the respect and influence upon all painters interested in evoking the spiritual in their art. The power of that silence would not be found again until the metaphysical paintings of the Italian pioneer of Surrealism, Giorgio de Chirico.

Composers such as Erik Satie and Claude Debussy were involved in a parallel symbolist enterprise of creating a more spiritual music. Satie composed a fanfare of harps and trumpets, *Les Sonneries de la Rose-Croix*, for the Salon's opening ceremony at the first exhibition in the spring of 1892. However, his best known works are *Trois Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*. Erik Satie's influence continues today in the work of modern minimalist composers such as Philip Glass and Michael Nyman. The prints, paintings and drawings of Odilon Redon find their inspiration in the imagery of dreams and the unconscious. In his work, as in much symbolist art and poetry, the viewer's engagement in the process of interpretation and intuition of meaning of each work is the most important element. In this way the viewer also enters into the mystical and the visionary experience.

Often Redon would add a title which is like a small poem running parallel to the visual impact. The

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D'Où Venons Nous? Que Sommes Nous? Où Allons Nous?" (1897), Paul Gauguin.

lithographic print *"The Eye floats towards Infinity like some Weird Balloon"* (1882) attests to such a visionary experience. In his painting *"Silence"* (1911) Redon depicts Harpocrates, the god of mystical silence, with the gesture of the forefinger pressed against the lips that is familiar to Rosicrucian mystics. He reminds us that, ultimately, the greatest mystery cannot be spoken. It is beyond the intellect and all symbolic representation.

The Nabis

After 1898 the Nabis (a Hebrew/Arabic word for *"prophet"*) became the main proponents of Symbolism while the *Salons Rose-Croix* began to fade into history. Leading artists of the Nabis were Émile Bernard, Maurice Denis, Paul Sérusier, Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard, and Paul Ranson. They were a group of artists with diverse styles and beliefs united in their interest in creating a new, modern, spiritualised art.

They met wearing costumes in their homes and studios to share meals and discuss art, philosophy, religion and mysticism. They regarded the quintessence of the creative act as spiritually uplifting for them and all who viewed their art. The theories and art created by the Nabis using sacred geometry and abstraction of perceived reality truly made them prophets of the explosion of modernism in the 20th Century. However, Robert Pincus-Witten points out that echoes of the Salon could still be heard.

They regarded the quintessence of the creative act as spiritually uplifting.

In 1899, after the Nabis exhibition, *"Homage to Odilon Redon"* proved successful at Durand-Ruel's gallery. Maurice Denis wrote to Gauguin in Tahiti asking him to join an exhibition of *"Symbolist, Pointillist and Rose-Croix painters"* to be held the following year. Unfortunately, by this time many artists had moved on in their styles and associations with other art dealers in Paris. The exhibition never took place.

The Nabis rallied around Gauguin as the greatest representative of their ideals. In the body of work that reveals the genius of Paul Gauguin it is his largest masterpiece *"D'Où Venons Nous? Que Sommes Nous? Où Allons Nous?"* (1897), which best portrays his

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mystical understanding of the human condition. Known in English as *"Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?"* he drew his inspiration from the unspoilt vision of the indigenous people of Tahiti. In this painting Gauguin wanted the audience to feel *"emotions first and understanding afterwards!"*

It depicts the cycle of incarnation from birth to death. All the spectrum of human activity, aspirations, delights and fears are depicted from the new born baby on the right to the careworn old woman who meditates on the past on the left. A statue symbolising the presence of God stares back at the audience while an androgynous figure perhaps symbolising the soul reaches for the fruit of experience: knowledge and wisdom. It asks the fundamental questions of the origin and purpose of all people, cultures and life itself. Each viewer's life will inform their appreciation of this profound painting and bring meaning to it.

Gauguin evokes associative meaning rather than merely wanting to explain or illustrate.

> I have put all of my energy into it one more time before I die, so painful a passion in such dreadful circumstances, so clear and accurate a vision, that there is no trace of precociousness and life blossoms forth from it.

Gauguin wanted this work to be *"comparable with the gospels."* He achieved the ideal of the Nabis: the complete fusion of content and meaning with aesthetic form. Meditating upon this painting will repay the viewer many times over, for in this work Gauguin was interpreting the great mystery of life.

Legacy of the Salons of the Rose-Croix

Returning to the life of Joséphin Péladan, he continued to do his utmost to convince the public of the value of a mystically oriented symbolic art. He still wore his violet coloured robes and his beard and hair were styled in the



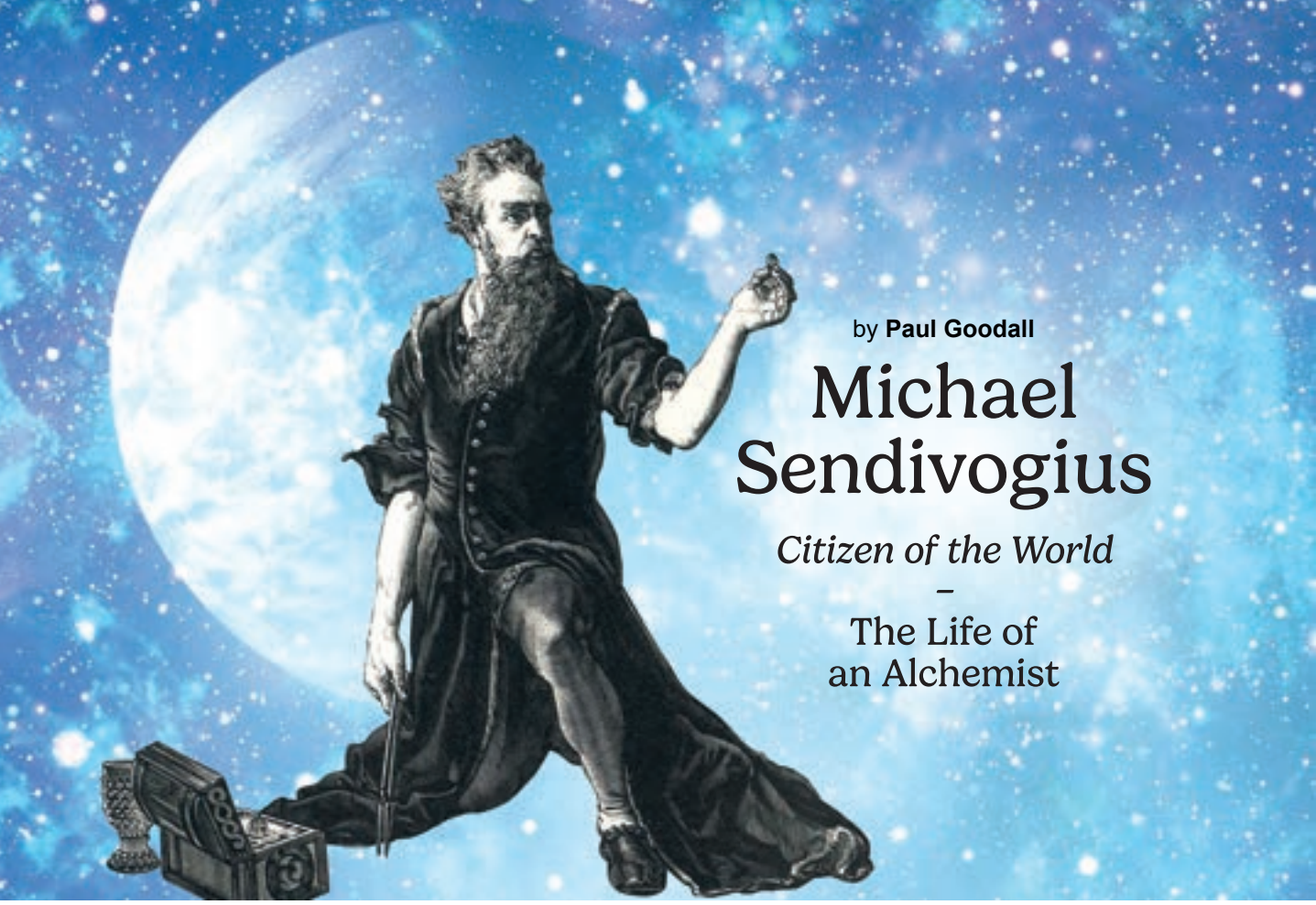
Portrait of Joséphin Péladan by Marcellin Desboutin.

"Assyrian" manner. These deliberately eccentric clothing choices which he made into the science of *Kaloprosopie* were caricatured by journalists. However, by the end of the 19th Century many artists, especially the Nabis, enjoyed wearing extravagant clothing to signify their rejection of conventional bourgeois society.

Until his death in 1918, Péladan continued his esoteric and literary activity, which included ninety volumes comprising novels, plays and studies on art or esotericism. Sâr Péladan's life was a work of art. Indeed, later in the 20th Century, Péladan's mysticism of the *Ordre de la Rose-Croix du Temple et du Graal* in Belgium would be one of the initiatic connections of Émile Dantinne. Using the *nom mysticum* of Sâr Hieronymous, Dantinne played a leading role in bringing together several esoteric groups in the 1930s.

If you look carefully at modern art, with eyes that can see, you may perceive a mystical current that is the aesthetic legacy of Symbolism and the Salon Rose-Croix. In the 21st Century the Rosicrucian tradition of promoting music and art continues through performances and exhibitions in AMORC Cultural Centres such as the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San José and the Rosicrucian Cultural Centre in Paris.

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by **Paul Goodall**

Michael Sendivogius

Citizen of the World – The Life of an Alchemist

In 1617 at Frankfurt, the Rosicrucian apologist Michael Maier (c.1568-1622) published his *Symbolae Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum* (*Symbols of the Golden Table of Twelve Nations*). The title page bears the engraved portraits of the 12 great adepts of 12 nations beginning with *'Hermes the Egyptian'* and ending with the intriguing *Anonymous the Sarmatian. Sarmata* was a contemporary 17th century name for a Polish nobleman, as these were believed to have descended from the ancient Sarmatian tribes. Maier gives a clue to the identity of this figure on page 555 by the use of a caption to accompany an illustration of the adept; he is named as *Heliocantharus Borealis (Glorifier of the Northern Sun)*.[1] Moreover, there is a veiled remark in the margin that links this name with the initials M.S.[2]

Oswald Croll (c.1560-1609) was the first to use this particular name to refer to Michael Sendivogius in his *Basilica Chemica* (1609). Croll was a prominent Rosicrucian[3] and physician to Christian of Anhalt (1568-1630), the main architect of the political aspect of Rosicrucianism.[4] He did this in a cryptic fashion by the use of capital letters within

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words which when read in sequence, spelled out Sendivogius' real name. Another catalogue of adepts and alchemical authors was produced by Johann Daniel Mylius in his *Opus Medico-Chymicum* of 1618, which incorporates Maier's list. In his *Viridarium Chymicum* (1624), Daniel Stolcius also refers to Michael Sendivogius as one of the 12 great natural philosophers fully revealing him as Michael Sendivogius Polonus.[5]

He is also mentioned in the writings of other alchemical authors of the early 17th century as an 'unknown philosopher' but as this century wore on, his actual name became more widely known. This obsession with secrecy on the part of Sendivogius in hiding his real name in his writings has led to the vilification of his character by historians and the loss of his correct place in alchemical history until recently.



Title page of Michael Maier's Symbolae Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum *of 1617, depicting Michael Sendivogius at the top left as* 'Anonymous the Sarmatian.'

Beginnings

Michal Sêdzimur was born in 1566 in Poland at Łukowica between Kraków and the Tatra mountains. At this time the kingdom of Poland was one of the most powerful countries in Europe, controlling the modern Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia. His father was Jakub Sêdzimur and his mother, Katarzyna Pielsz. They were both of noble descent and owned a small estate near Nowy Sącz in the Kraków district. Later, Sendivogius changed his name to Sêdziwój after consulting the genealogist Bartlomiej Paprocki.[6] Sendivogius is the Latinised version of Sêdziwój.

Around 1582 he entered the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, one of the great centres of learning in Europe of the Renaissance period. Several of his contemporaries there had formed a group with an interest centred on the philosophy and teachings of Paracelsus. Polish interest in alchemy was derived largely from the dissemination of the iatrochemistry (the use of medicines, tinctures and the extract of plants) of Paracelsus but also the hermetic philosophy coming out of Florentine Italy following Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Another factor that may be taken into consideration was the extensive mineral and rock salt deposits throughout the country resulting in the expansion of metallurgical and mining activities.

The clergy, however, did not countenance the practice of alchemy, particularly since there were many pseudo-alchemists making money by deceit. A

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Symbolic engraving depicting Anonymus Sarmata *and his teachings from Michael Maier's* Symbola Aureae Mensae.

short work by Father Stanisław Poklatecki (1554-1591), *Pogrom Czarnoksiêskie Blêdy* (*'Rout of the Magicians Errors'*, Kraków') of 1595, condemned alchemy as having no value within the human sphere. The group at the university were thus fortunate in having a sympathetic protector in the shape of one Olbracht Łaski (1536–1603) who was a powerful personality in society and well known as a pretender to the Polish throne.[7] He was also instrumental in bringing John Dee and Edward Kelley to visit Poland and Bohemia in 1583.

Another figure making his appearance in Sendivogius' life at this time was Mikołaj Wolski (1553-1630), a very influential man who had been brought up at the imperial court and had a great interest in alchemy. He had been educated at several European universities and was employed at the court of Rudolf II (Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) in Prague.



The Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II

As was the custom of learned men of the Renaissance, Sendivogius took to travelling over the next few years to widen his knowledge and horizons. A little before 1588 he was journeying to Constantinople via Greece where, it is rumoured, a patriarch of the Greek Church gave him some instruction in the alchemical process. At Constantinople, he says in his *Philosophical Letters* (c.1616), he copied two rare treatises by Hermes while elsewhere in his writings he mentions at this time a strange figure, which he calls his *praeceptor* from Egypt who, apparently, gave him the *white tincture* to effect the transmutation of metals.[8]

He continued his Renaissance education by visiting several major universities throughout the continent: Rome, Padua, Naples, Venice and less certainly, Frankfurt, Rostock, Wittenberg and Cambridge. He eventually entered the University of Leipzig in 1590 for the winter term and matriculated from Vienna the following year. It was while studying at Leipzig that he befriended Joachim Tancke, a physician and alchemist, and Johann Thölde, editor and possible author of the works attributed to Basilius Valentinus.[9]

Michael Maier is

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Michael Sendivogius' coat-of-arms (from Ogród królewski by Bartosz Paprocký).

known to have been a student at Altdorf in 1589 or 1590 and, as Sendivogius was living in the area of Nuremberg, it is quite possible that the two met during this period. In 1594 he was at Altdorf, either as a student or an official, where he became acquainted with the Scottish alchemist, Alexander Seton, who was studying there too. An unusual relationship, while at Altdorf, between Sendivogius and a *'certain Armenian'* is mentioned by Andreas Goldmayer in his *Harmonia Chymica* (Onoltzbach, 1655). He had apparently helped this figure financially and in return had received a tincture for transmuting base metals.[10]

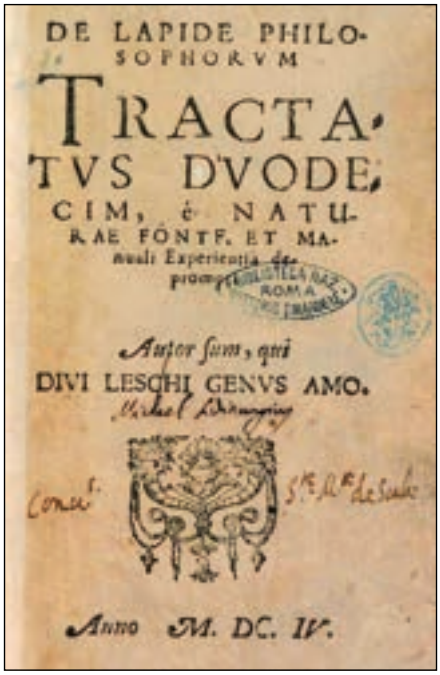
Later Life

Around 1590 Sendivogius married Veronica Stieber. The Stiebers were from the Franconian nobility and held estates in the area of Nuremberg, which included at least three castles.[11] By 1594 they had had two sons and two daughters. It was in this year that Sendivogius and his family arrived in Prague. At first they stayed in lodgings where Sendivogius became friendly with Mikuláš Löw of Löwenstein, a pharmacist and physician, who was so impressed by Sendivogius' knowledge of alchemy and medicine that he brought the whole family to live at his own house. Through Lev he made a number of acquaintances leading eventually to one Ludvik Korálek, a rich merchant with a great interest in alchemy. He had a large library and laboratory, where he and his friends worked at alchemical experiments. Among these, was a doctor of law and councillor to Rudolf II, Jan Kapr. Sendivogius was invited to participate in their work, eventually becoming their teacher. While here he performed several transmutations of base metals into silver. It is through Lev that we learn of Sendivogius' encounter with his *'praeceptor'* from Egypt and the gift of the white powder. According to Lev, he was using red and white tinctures in his alchemical experiments.[12] During this time he also met and worked with the great Czech alchemist, Bavor Rodovský of Hustiran.[13]

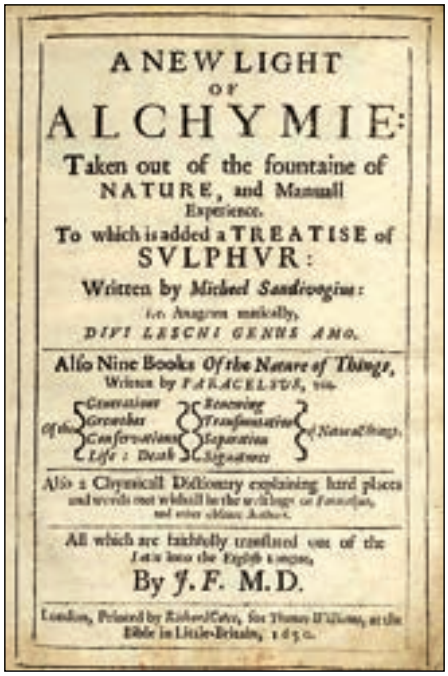
Sendivogius performed a transmutation of a base metal into gold in front of the Emperor and a large number of witnesses.

Probably, as a result of the influence of Mikołaj Wolski and other contacts he had made in Prague, Sendivogius eventually found himself at the imperial court. An indication of his increasing stature can be found on documents from 1595 naming him as the personal secretary to the king of Poland, Sigismund III Vasa. It is likely that Sigismund employed him in a diplomatic role, as it is known that there was a clandestine relationship between the Polish and Habsburg courts.[14] His fame as an alchemist would not have escaped the notice of Rudolf II. The Emperor had more than a passing interest in hermetic philosophy and supported many alchemists that came to his court.

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DE LAPIDE PHILO-
SOPHORVM
TRACTA-
TVS DVODE-
CIM, è NATU-
RAE FONTE. ET MA-
nuali Experientia de-
Autor sum, qui
DIVI LESCHI GENVS AMO.
Anno M. DC. IV.

LEFT: *Title page of the first edition of* De Lapide Philosophorum Tractatus Duodecim, *1604, in Latin.*


A NEW LIGHT
OF
ALCHYMIE:
Taken out of the fountaine of
NATURE, and Manuall
Experience.
To which is added a TREATISE of
SVLPHVR:
Written by *Michael Sandivogius:*
DIVI LESCHI GENVS AMO.
Also Nine Books *Of the Nature of Things,*
Written by PARACELSVS, viz.
Of the Generation, Generation, Renewing, Transmutation, Separation, Signatures } of Naturall things.
Also a Chymicall Dictionary explaining hard places
All which are faithfully translated out of the
Latin into the English tongue,
By *J. F.* M.D.
London, Printed by Richard Cotes, for Thomas Williams, at the
Bible in Little-Britain, 1650.

RIGHT: *Title page of the English edition of* Novum Lumen Chymicum, *1650, (A New Light of Alchymie).*

As a measure of his ability, Sendivogius performed a transmutation of a base metal into gold in front of the Emperor and a large number of witnesses. Rudolf was so impressed that he ordered a marble tablet to be built into the palace wall to commemorate the event with the Latin inscription: *Faciat hoc quispiam alius quod fecit Sendivogius Polonus* meaning 'Let anyone else do what Sendivogius the Pole has done'.[15] Sometime later he demonstrated a similar transmutation before Sigismund III Vasa.

In 1597 Sendivogius was invited to the court of Elector Christian II of Saxony at Dresden, no doubt by dint of the fame that he was now attracting, but he may also have been used by the Emperor in a diplomatic role. The next year he was made privy councillor by Rudolf II whilst still retaining the position of secretary to the king of Poland. The reputation and respect accorded to him is further reflected in the publications dedicated to him and his family. Jiří Carolides of Karlsperka, the imperial court poet, published in 1598 a number of poems in praise of the family and dedicated it to Sendivogius' son Michael Christopher. Others appeared by Bartoloměj Paprocký, a Polish and Bohemian herald and poet and genealogist, in the same year. When Sendivogius' wife died along with two of his children of the plague that swept Prague in 1599, Johannes Chorinský, a Moravian nobleman and poet, wrote an elegy for Veronica Stieber.

Greeting to my most honoured Friend and a most worthy Companion of the Society of Unknown Philosophers. M.S.

I shall not be wanting to intimate to you the rocks which may stand in your way and to direct your deviating conceits, as often as you will take occasion to consult me about what you are reading or doing. And I protest to you that I will hide nothing from you except those things which you cannot learn but by ocular demonstrations and manual operations. For every art hath its own way and manner of operating and above all, ours which cannot be expressed so well in words but that a particular demonstration and an experimental disquisition be also necessary, which for the most part answers but slowly, the hopes and expectations of philosophers.

Extract from *Letters of Michael Sendivogius to the Roseycrusian Society, Epistle 1*, 1646.
(Source: http://www.levity.com/alchemy/send10.html)

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The Alchemik Michał Sędziwój by Jan Matejko (1867) depicting Sendivogius demonstrating his alchemical skills to Emperor Rudolf II of the Habsburg Empire.

The popularity of Sendivogius had made him enemies too. Ludvik Korálek had fallen ill through alcoholism and after his untimely death in 1599 his family accused Sendivogius of poisoning him by the administration of a medicine. Sendivogius by now was well known as a healer. Apart from this, they also made accusations of extortion against him, which caused Korálek's bankruptcy. A brief summary of events leading up to these circumstances is required here.

Before Sendivogius and his family had come to Prague they had stayed at a house in Jílové in Bohemia owned by Edward Kelley, the one time companion of John Dee. Kelley had been ennobled by the Emperor in 1588 shortly after Dee's departure for England and in 1590 granted substantial land near Jílové by his patron, Vilem Rožmberk (1535-1592). He later purchased the Fumberk estate consisting of a number of buildings in Jílové and a town dwelling in Prague. Kelley and Sendivogius had apparently met during 1590 while both on their travels and Kelley had invited Sendivogius to stay in Jílové. After Kelley's death in 1597, Sendivogius bought the Fumberk estate from Kelley's widow. In order to do this he borrowed 5,695 Meissen marks, a large sum of money, from Ludvik Korálek.

The court case began on 28th July 1599 and lasted three months. Sendivogius pleaded innocent to the charges against him and told the court that the loan had been a perfectly legitimate one. He was eventually acquitted and ordered to repay the loan in six weeks. As to the allegation of poisoning, the evidence was circumstantial and unproven. During the trial Oswald Croll was called as a witness and spoke in Sendivogius' defence. Croll was not only a Rosicrucian, but also a fellow physician who shared Korálek's patronage with Sendivogius.[16]

Although he was spending most of his time in Poland between 1600 and 1604, Sendivogius still continued with his diplomatic activities for Rudolf II

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and Sigismund III. A letter from the Polish king to the Emperor of 13th June, 1600, refers to the despatching of Sendivogius to 'solve the problems of Moldavia'.[17] There was a dispute between Poland and the Habsburgs over rights of access to the Black Sea. He was also employed, among others, on missions to Moscow and Constantinople.

The year following publication of his influential *Twelve Treatises on the Philosopher's Stone* (1604), Sendivogius received an invitation from Duke Friedrich of Württemberg[18] to visit Stuttgart. It is possible that Sendivogius had been here before in 1593. The Duke received him with great hospitality and after many discussions, asked to see a transmutation. Friedrich probably had information already on the ability of Sendivogius as an alchemist. Sendivogius swore him to secrecy and performed two transmutations of mercury into gold. After this the court alchemist, Hans Heinrich Mühlenfels, hatched a scheme to keep Sendivogius a prisoner until he disclosed his secrets to him. Such was Sendivogius' importance to Rudolf II and Sigismund III that they demanded his release and Mühlenfels was hanged in June 1607. It is not known for certain whether Friedrich was implicated in this plot, but the affair became widely known throughout Europe.

During the period of 1607 to 1616, Sendivogius lived in Poland. His long-term patron Mikołaj Wolski became the Marshall of Poland from 1613 and was at the same time responsible for the development of the metallurgical industry. Sendivogius worked with Wolski and lived at his castle in Krzepice conducting experiments in the laboratory there. In 1616 he went to Marburg in Germany at the invitation of Landgrave Moritz of Hesse who had a keen interest in alchemy. While there he visited the university and the iatrochemical laboratory of Johann Hartmann where he subsequently worked preparing a number of Paracelsian medicaments. While here, Sendivogius renewed his friendship with Michael Maier who was currently serving as court physician. In his *Symbolae*



A diagram of a retort-flask being heated on its own appeared in several editions of Drebbel's Treatise on the Elements of Nature. *Was this a depiction of the early production of Oxygen?* [27]

In his Treatise on the Elements of Nature *(1608), Drebbel gives a clue to how he might have manufactured oxygen. In a passage on the origin of thunder, he writes: 'Thus is the body of the saltpetre broken up and decomposed by the power of the fire and so changed in the nature of the air'. This suggests he was aware that heating saltpetre causes it to give off a gas – and realised that this gas was the same substance that allows humans to breathe.* [28]



www.drebbel.net/Database/Drebbel%20submarine.jpg

A depiction of Cornelius Drebbel's submarine event which took place under the waters of the Thames in 1621. From a painting by G. H. Tweedale in the Royal Submarine Museum, Gosport.

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The Hieroglyphical Seal of the Society of Unknown Philosophers.

Let no man judge this present Character to be invented and erected for us for nothing. For the Trident is the Neptune of our Parable which comprehends the whole hermetical Science hieroglyphically and compendiously, as well the Theory as the Practice. But that these Mysteries may be well understood we shall proceed in twofold Order geometrical namely by resolution and Composition or analysis and synthesis.

1. *By way of Analysis first the Maxus is to be considered or the Total Unity of the Figure.*
2. *The Duality, or that Part of Conus or that of the right Pyramids.*
3. *The Trias, or Triplicity of the sines, or that of the angles, and*
4. *The Quaternarium of the Lines, and last of all the utmost Points, the Dimension of the whole figure and the Breatdth of the Lines.*

Each of them have their cabalistic Significations. But the way of Synthesis or Composition, the Reversion of the Quaternarius of the Linse, to a Trias takes Place. Then of the Trias into a Binary of the Cones. [And finally], That of the Binary into a Monas.

(Source: www.levity.com/alchemy/sendseal.html)



Hieroglyphic seal of the 'Society of Unknown Philosophers', bringing together the teachings of John Dee's Monas Hieroglyphia and Michael Sendivogius' Parabola seu aenigma philosphicum.

Aureae Mensae, Maier wrote that he had seen a transmutation performed by Sendivogius which made a lasting impression on him.[19] It is likely that he was referring to Sendivogius' visit to the Landgrave's court at Kassel. Another important figure residing here was Johann Daniel Mylius who was a creator of alchemical emblems. He also happened to be the son-in-law of Hartmann.

Rudolf II died in 1612 and was succeeded firstly by his brother Matthias (as king of Bohemia and Emperor) until 1619, when the Emperor Ferdinand II transferred the imperial court from Prague to Vienna, and then Sendivogius continued his employment as a diplomat between Vienna and the Polish court at Kraków. It seems that he was also given a well-paid appointment by Ferdinand, supervising the construction of a new lead mine in Silesia on the Polish border. The Emperor could not pay him regularly, however, since political and religious strife had caused the Thirty Years War to break out in 1618. After repeated appeals over many years to be paid, Sendivogius was eventually offered two large villages in 1630 and a substantial sum of money. Unfortunately, the previous owner's debts came with the estates and although he later freed himself from these obligations they continued to be such a problem that he decided to sell them in 1636. They were still unsold when he died later in the same year.[20]

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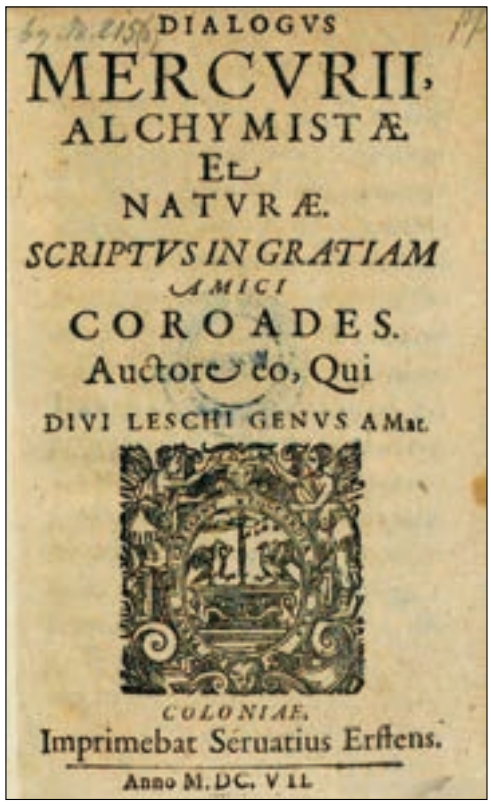
A typical nitrary (Germany, c.1580) with leaching deposits (C) filled with decaying vegetable material mixed with manure. A worker collects efloresced saltpetre from deposits, transporting it then to be concentrated in the factory ('B) boilers.(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nitrary#/media/File:Salnitrera.jpg)

His Works

Sendivogius is known to have produced at least ten works.[21] His most influential and frequently published book was *De Lapide Philosophorum Tractatus duodecim* ('Twelve Treatises on the Philosopher's Stone'), published in Prague and Frankfurt simultaneously in 1604. This ran to 56 editions up to 1787 in Latin, German, French, English, Russian and Dutch. Sir Isaac Newton owned a copy, which is presently housed in the British Library and has marginal notes in his handwriting and corners of pages turned down to mark particular passages. The French chemist, Lavoisier, also had a copy.[22] *De Lapide Philosophorum* is made up of twelve short chapters followed by an epilogue and ending with a 'Parable or Enigma of the Sages'.

Sendivogius advocates a new approach to alchemy, and this is reflected in the change of title in later editions to *Novum Lumen Chymicum* ('A New Light of Alchemy'). He wrote this with the benefit of many years of practical experience and experimentation. In the preface and epilogue, he explains his reasons for producing the work. He wants the adept to understand how change occurs in nature and not be led astray by fraudsters, but also to familiarise the reader with his own experimental findings.

This work has been linked by Rafał T. Prinke to the *Consideratio Brevis* (*A Brief Consideration*) by Phillipus à Gaballa that prefaces the second Rosicrucian Manifesto, *Confessio Fraternitatis*, of 1615. Prinke sees similarities between the general style and phrasing in the first Rosicrucian publications and the statements made in the prefaces and epilogues of Sendivogius' treatises. He goes on to say that the purely alchemical references in the Consideratio are clearly based on *De Lapide Philosophorum*.[23] Allied to this premise is the fact that while Sendivogius was visiting Stuttgart at the invitation of the Duke of Württemberg in 1605, he may have had contact with the members of Johann Valentin Andreae's circle at Tübingen. They would certainly have heard of him, since the Mühlenfels


DIALOGVS
MERCVRII,
ALCHYMISTÆ
Et
NATVRÆ.
SCRIPTVS IN GRATIAM
AMICI
COROADES.
Auctore eo, Qui
DIVI LESCHI GENVS A Mat.
COLONIAE,
Imprimebat Seruatius Erffens.
Anno M. DC. V II.

An example of Sendivogius' use of a pseudonym to hide his authorship. The title page to his Dialogus Mercurii, Alchymistae et Naturae (Dialogue concerning Mercury, Alchemy and Nature), 1607, shows an anagram of his name.

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incident was widely known. The importance of Andreae in producing the Manifestos needs no qualification, since he was the author of the allegorical *Die Chymische Hochzeit des Christiani Rosenkreutz anno 1459* (*The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*), the third Rosicrucian tract.

Of the other nine works by Sendivogius, there was *Dialogue of Mercury, the Alchemist and Nature*, 1607, a satire. In 1616, *Treatise on Sulphur* dealt with the four elements of Aristotle, the three principles of Paracelsus, and included a dialogue, *On Sulphur*. The year 1618 saw the publication of his most extensive work, *Harmony*. This concentrated on the relationship between the elements, principles and planets. It particularly dealt with the part played by air and the 'universal spirit' within air. Its second section paid attention to the principle of the philosophical salt.

The rest of his works were published posthumously. 'Treatise on Salt' in 1656, *A Philosophical Letter*, 1659, and in 1671, *Fifty-Five Philosophical Letters* which clarify further the ideas brought out in his main works. This was in the form of an address to a new member of the *Cabalistic Society of Unknown Philosophers*. It was translated into English by Ebenezer Sibly in 1791 and retitled: *Letters of Michael Sendivogius to the Rosey Crucian Society*. This was followed by *Process on the Central Salt* in 1682, describing the preparation of the Philosopher's Stone. As Dr Zbigniew Szdlo tells us:

> [This] work is interesting from the standpoint of practical chemistry and demonstrates Sendivogius' excellent command of the subject. [24]

Statutes of the Unknown Philosophers published in 1691 in French, is a set of rules in the form of a handbook for the *Cabalistic Society of Unknown Philosophers*. It is in effect a manifesto, on similar lines to the Rosicrucians, for the formation of a new Philosophical Society. Whilst in the preface he states that the gift of knowledge can do so much to help the *'poor and miserable'*, he goes on to say that the *'malice of men'* would manipulate the fruits of any labour and effectively prevent these ideals from being carried out. He speaks of the danger to his life that has occurred on many occasions; a direct reference to the Mühlenfels episode among others to reinforce the covetousness of men. He proposes then, to form a Society of members whose true identity will be concealed, although the Society will become generally known.

> ...in 1968, Operations on the Philosophical Elixir describe Sendivogius' first attempts to prepare the Philosopher's Stone.

Finally, in 1968, *Operations on the Philosophical Elixir* describe Sendivogius' first attempts to prepare the Philosopher's Stone. This work was unknown until some fifty years ago, when it was discovered by Roman Bugaj, a Polish academic who has been one of the principle biographers and researchers into Sendivogius. He found it in the archives of Count Wiktor Baworowski in Lwów (now L'viv, Ukraine). It is dated 1586, when Sendivogius was just twenty years old.[25]

Sendivogius, Nitre, and the Discovery of Oxygen

In 1621 an altogether extraordinary event took place in London. The Dutch inventor and alchemist, Cornelius Drebbel (1572-1633), had constructed a wooden submarine that was propelled by twelve oarsmen. Witnessed by James I and a large audience of Londoners, this vessel made the journey from Westminster to Greenwich, reportedly remaining underwater for some three hours. Diving bells of various designs were not uncommon at this time, but a craft that could stay underwater for a considerable period was quite spectacular.[26] Drebbel must have been using some

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type of air freshening technique to sustain the rowers and himself. But for one reason or another he kept his technique to himself and it remained a secret. The only feasible explanation was that he had, somehow, utilised oxygen, which today is the method by which humans can remain in sealed vessels like submarines and aircraft. Although many versions of this feat gained widespread circulation in Europe, oxygen was not officially discovered until 1774. The question arises how (firstly) this discovery of oxygen came about and (secondly) how its preparation took 150 years or so to become public knowledge?

The answer to the second part of this question is to be found in the way that alchemists communicated in their writings. The style of their writing and use of language was complex and characteristic of the time, employing alchemical allegory in its literature, the cornerstone of which was the hermetic philosophy espoused in the Emerald Tablet of Hermes. The reasoning behind this apparent obscurity was to prevent their knowledge from being understood by the unworthy and put to misuse by evil men.

The key to answering the first part is in the role of a substance called *nitre*. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, nitre, often referred to as *saltpetre* (potassium nitrate), figured prominently in the philosophy of alchemy. It had a number of properties and applications and was the principle component of cooling mixtures, medicines and gunpowder, and was used as a liquid for dissolving metals. The manufacture of saltpetre was in fact a large industry during this period.



Paracelsus

Paracelsus (1493-1541), wrote extensively on the function and use of nitre. He elevated it from a substance into something much more significant from a mystical point of view and saw it as having a vital role as a salt in living organisms. He also brought about the concept of *aerial nitre*, reasoning that since nitre was the agent that produced the explosive effect of gunpowder, then it followed that it had to be responsible for thunder and lightning in the air. By the middle of the 16th century, alchemists were writing of a *universal spirit* pervading all matter.

By the middle of the 16th century, alchemists were writing of a universal spirit pervading all matter.

Sendivogius (among others), who had a grounding in the teachings of Paracelsus, developed these ideas concerning nitre and its link to living processes on earth. He observed over a period of time the main source of saltpetre, namely farmyard soils, and concluded that the 'food of life' was condensing out of the air. The life-giving power of nitre was visibly seen in the enhanced growth of plants when fertilisers were applied to them. We find written in a later edition of *A New Light of Alchymie* (London, 1650 edition, p.44):

> Our water that wets not our hands [i.e. nitre], without which no mortal can live, and without which nothing grows, or is generated in the world!

Sendivogius' work was always in accordance with hermetic principles as expressed in the text of the *Tabula Smaragdina* (the Emerald Tablet). Its fourth precept reads:

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> Its father is the Sun, its mother the Moon; the wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the earth.

Here we can discern the one invisible substance that exists everywhere, is necessary for life, and which forms the key for Sendivogius' theory. It is *aerial nitre* (oxygen), the *'secret food of life'* within the air. Several principles of the Rosicrucian teachings are embodied within this concept.

He wrote extensively on this subject in his first publication, *Novum Chymicum Lumen* (1604), and also throughout his other works, but always in the language of alchemy. He had discovered that by heating a vessel full of liquid nitre, he could separate off a gaseous product that is known today as oxygen. Cornelius Drebbel, who knew Sendivogius from his visits to Prague, and who also must have read or been acquainted with his works, could understand the terminology used and repeated Sendivogius' experiments. Sendivogius' theory described a *'secret food of life which is concealed in air'*, while Drebbel used, in his own words, *'aerial food of life'* in his submarine. This method of producing oxygen could have been employed to sustain everyone in the wooden submarine that made that underwater passage in 1621.

Conclusion

Michael Sendivogius suffered much at the hands of his biographers whose derogatory and erroneous accounts of his life originate ultimately from a poorly researched publication by a Frenchman named Pierre Des Noyer (d. 1693). Des Noyer's chronology of Sendivogius' life written many years after the latter's death, was appended to several editions of Sendivogius' works and displayed a certain antipathy toward Poles and Poland.[29] Subsequent biographies state that Sendivogius had stolen the secret of the manufacture of the Philosopher's Stone from the Scottish alchemist, Alexander Seton, after his death. Some even go on to say that *A New Light of Alchymie* was written by Seton. However, over the last forty years, a number of scholars have compiled a much more accurate and truthful history, working from contemporary documents and primary evidence. In reality there is nothing to substantiate these aspersions on his character.

> There was an element of danger in being known as an alchemist of some stature...

Sendivogius was, however, obsessed with secrecy, as stated at the beginning of this article, and this may go a long way to explain his legendary and celebrity status. There was an element of danger in being known as an alchemist of some stature, and he had to be on his guard against unscrupulous and greedy men who would even go to the lengths of imprisoning him to extract his secrets. One aspect of this secrecy was in the way that he used pseudonyms to hide the authorship of his works. Examples of these are: *Divi Genus Leschi Amo*, *Angelus Doce Mihi Ius*, and *Cosmopolite*. The first is an anagram of his Latinised name *Michael Sendivogius* and is translated as *'I love the divine race of the Lechites (Poles).'* The second is also an anagram and means *'Angel, teach me justice.'* The third translates as *"Citizen of the World."* It can be appreciated therefore how difficult it has been in identifying Sendivogius' works.

Another factor here concerns the custom in this period of dedicating one's work to persons of note, such as rulers. Sendivogius never followed this practice, which reflects his humility on the one hand and his desire to remain anonymous on the other. It may well be that the 'praeceptor' from Egypt that he met during his early travels who gave him the white tincture, and the strange Armenian while at Altdorf university who also gave him a tincture, were fictional characters used to hide his own ability to manufacture these.[30]

If Sendivogius was not a Rosicrucian, then he at least had a close association with members of the

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Rosy Cross. He was certainly highly respected by his contemporary adepts, as was shown by Michael Maier in his *Symbolae Aureae Mensae* of 1617 where Maier reiterates the name *Heliocantharus Borealis* given to him by Oswald Croll. A telling extract from a poem by John Gadbury in the preface to an English edition of Sendivogius' *Harmony*, which was entitled *Sal Lumen & Spiritus Mundi Philosophici* (1657), shows another connection to the Rosicrucians and his stature as an adept:

> Nor dare I, without Sendivogius' Torch, approximate you nearer then the Porch, lest I (presumptuous) should be gazed upon by those that have their Wedding-Garments on.[31]

This is a clear reference to *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1616). It infers that unless you know the teachings of Sendivogius, you must stay in the porch of the church and not be allowed to witness the ceremony inside.

Endnotes

1. A name of some significance that is related to the *'Fourth Monarchy'* or *Quarta Monarchia*; an important political concept of the Rosicrucian *Fama Fraternitatis* that espouses a utopian vision of a perfect society. Sendivogius refers to a *Fourth* or *Northern Monarchy* being established in his *Treatise on Sulphur*, Cologne, 1613. In February of this same year Friedrich V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine married Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of James I of Britain; a marriage that was meant to fulfil the aspirations for a Protestant League in central Europe. Discussed in Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1998 edition).
2. Rafał T. Prinke, *'The Twelfth Adept'* in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited*, Lindisfarne, 1999, pp. 146-147.
3. Croll was the main character to be attacked by Andreas Libavius (c.1560-1616), an early chemist, who was a well-known critic of the Rosicrucian Manifestos. Frances Yates, op.cit. p. 51.
4. See Yates for more on this aspect of 17th century Rosicrucianism.
5. Rafał T. Prinke, *'Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz: The Unexpected Possibilities'* in The Hermetic Journal, 1990, p. 91.
6. His coat of arms of the Ostoja clan has been traced back to the 14th century by Rafał T. Prinke in his article *'Hermetic Heraldry'* in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1989, pp. 62-78.
7. Prinke, op.cit., *'Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz'*, p. 74. The nature of the Polish monarchy was elective rather than hereditary (see John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, TSP, 1993, p. 24.)
8. Prinke, *'Michael Sendivogius – Adept or Impostor?'* in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1982, Vol. 15, p. 19.
9. See Stillman, John Maxson (Prof.), 'Basil Valentine: A Seventeenth Century Hoax' in *The Popular Science Monthly*, 1912, pp. 591-600 where the author provides a convincing argument identifying Valentine with Johann Thölde.
10. Prinke, *'Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz'*, p. 76.
11. Prinke, *'The Twelfth Adept'*, p. 171.
12. Prinke, 'Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz', p. 77.
13. Prinke, *'The Twelfth Adept'*, p. 176.
14. Zbigniew Szydło, *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands: The Alchemy of Michael Sendivogius*, Warsaw, 1994, p. 36.
15. Prinke, *'The Twelfth Adept'*, op. cit., p. 178.
16. Prinke, ibid. pp. 172-178.
17. Prinke, *'Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz'*. op. cit., p. 79.
18. The political and ideological relationship of Duke Frederick of Württemberg to the Rosicrucians of this period is important and is discussed in detail by Frances Yates in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.
19. Szydło, op.cit. p. 38.
20. Ibid. p.41. Sendivogius' daughter, *Maria Veronica von Eisendorf*, eventually inherited all of his worldly goods.
21. See Szydło, 'The Written Works of Michael Sendivogius' in *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands*, pp. 43-66.
22. Zbigniew Szydło and Richard Brzeziński, *'Alchemy: New Light on a Dark Art'* in *History Today*, Vol. 47, Jan. 1997.
23. Rafał T. Prinke, *'Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz: The Unexpected Possibilities'*, op. cit., p. 84.
24. Szydło, pp. 58-59.
25. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
26. See Szydło, *'The Mystery of Cornelius Drebbel and his Wooden Submarine'* in *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands*, op. cit., pp. 1-4. See further a detailed account in Rebecca Stefoff, *Submarines*, Marshall Cavendish, 2006, pp. 22-23.
27. Szydło, p. 83.
28. Zbigniew Szydło and Richard Brzeziński, op. cit., *'Alchemy: New Light on a Dark Art.'*
29. Rafał T. Prinke, *'Michael Sendivogius - Adept or Imposter?'* in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1982, Vol.15, p. 19.
30. Prinke, *'The Twelfth Adept'*, op.cit., p. 174.
31. Quoted in Szydło, op.cit. p. 121.

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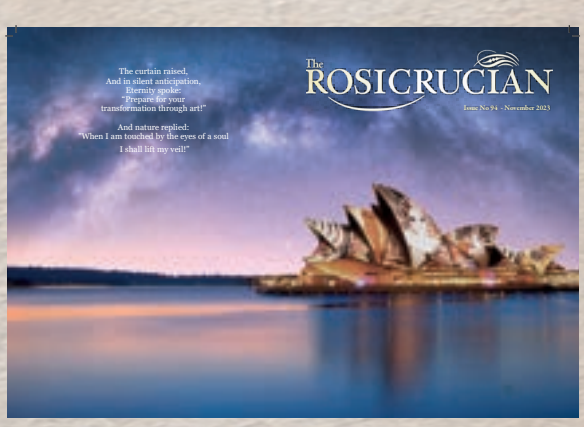
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Freedom

Give me the long, straight road before me,
A clear, cold day with a nipping air,
Tall, bare trees to run on beside me,
A heart that is light and free from care.
Then let me go! – I care not whither
My feet may lead, for my spirit shall be
Free as the brook that flows to the river,
Free as the river that flows to the sea.

by Olive Runner

