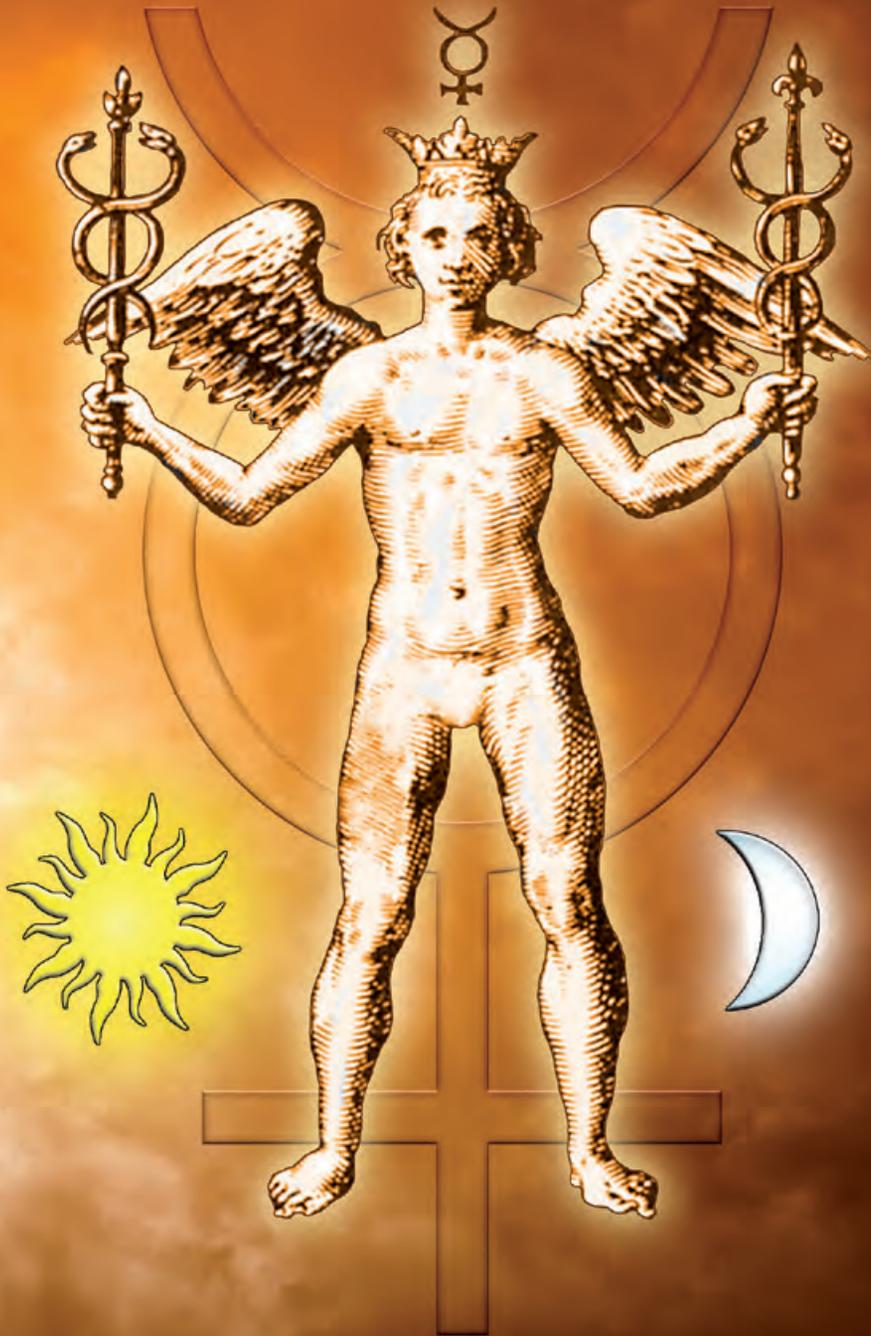


BROSICRUCIAN BEACON



September 2012



The wonder of Life

THINK FOR A MOMENT that you were not here, not a living person on the sphere below we call Earth. No breeze on your face, no warm sunshine, no twitter of birds in the forest, no smell of salt spray by the seaside, no loving hand to hold, no beautiful music to hear, no exquisite words to read. All that we value, every single thing we care about is down there..., on our home planet. What intense longing we would feel if we were not there.

How little it takes to understand the privileged state of our existence on earth. And how precious our planet is to all its forms of life, not just humans. If you seek a closer connection to all that surrounds you..., a deeper appreciation of all things

on earth..., if happiness, peace and fairness is what you seek for all your co-inhabitants of this wonderful blue planet..., then learn to commune with your inner self, find the deeper you, and through it find the Consciousness of the Cosmic itself.

By reading this magazine you have an open mind, you seek the deeper values of life, and this message was undoubtedly meant for you! To find out more about the Rosicrucian Order, visit our website www.amorc.org.uk or contact us for a free copy of our introductory booklet *The Mastery of Life*.

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September 2012, Vol 21, No. 4

CONTENTS

- 2 **Building the Temple of Man - Part 1** - by Lynn Hodgkinson, SRC
- 8 **The Radiant Dawn** - by Bill Anderson, FRC
- 15 **Being Content** - by Ralph M Lewis, FRC
- 18 **The Nature of Alchemical Mercury** - by Paul Goodall, FRC
- 25 **Medicine Man: Heal Thy People** - by Frank Isles, FRC
- 30 **Philosophy: Its Nature and Purpose** - by Alexander F Skutch
- 35 **The Paradise Garden** - by Connie James, SRC
- 40 **The Valley and the Mountain** - by Gregory Sablic, FRC
- 41 **Art and Medicine: Two Complementaries** - by Brenda Andersen
- 44 **Who Am I** - by Roland Northover
- 44 **Day-Break** - by A Humble Hedge-Cutter

COVER SPREAD

“Alchemical Mercury”



Building the Temple of Man

– PART 1 –

by Lynn Hodgkinson, SRC

This article is adapted for the *Rosicrucian Beacon* from a presentation of the same title given by the author during a Rosicrucian Convention at the Ammerdown Centre, Radstock near Bath on 15-17 June 2012.



INCE THE earliest civilisations, humankind has recognised the existence of an invisible power. People have striven to express this power in many different ways: the nature and laws of this higher intelligence, this divine entity and creator of all, this all-present being, this father, mother, divine presence, the ruler and guardian of our existence on Earth. It can be seen in the earliest forms of art and

sculpture across different civilisations throughout the world's history.

In recognising the omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience of this unseen entity, we recognised our own inferior or inadequate status in the Cosmic scheme, or at least our imperfections and our need to be guided and governed by its invisible power. This gave rise to a sense of deference, of a desire to acknowledge the might



and majesty of a higher state, and to reflect this in a respectful and reverential way whenever we wished to appeal to, communicate with, or receive inspiration from it. Acknowledgement of this higher power required the preparation and establishment of a special exalted place: a place of sanctity, a sacred space.

The Creation of a Significant Space

In the early history of the human civilisation the concept of the Temple was born. It may have begun with something called a *templum*. This is a Latin word describing a zone of the sky or earth marked out by the diviner or soothsayer as a suitable place in which to take auspices. He would observe the flight and cries of birds within the *templum* and draw omens from these signs. It was a sacred space that could be inaugurated either in the sky or on the ground. A *templum* in the sky was marked off with imaginary lines which divided it into four regions according to the cardinal points. On the ground, the space might either be marked off with imaginary lines or eventually, with physical delineations such as trees or walls.

It is at this point in human development that the concept of the Temple was born. This was a major step forward in the ascent of consciousness for early humans. The Temple-space was to be a distinct and holy place where one stepped out of the everyday activities of the mundane world, cleansed the mind and body, and entered the silence to commune with the Absolute. It was a place of sanctuary, a tabernacle where the Holy of Holies could be found.

Some of the oldest sanctuaries were natural woods. In Sir James George Frazer's book *The Golden Bough*, we can read about the creation of the Sacred Grove, and the veneration and worship of the sacred Tree in many

The Temple-space was a distinct and holy place where one stepped out of the everyday activities of the mundane world.

different civilisations throughout human evolution. As the centuries passed, these sacred spaces became increasingly sophisticated, gradually evolving into monuments, and ultimately into the beauty and majesty of the great temples, churches and cathedrals of the world. The central attribute of the Temple was the Altar itself, being the threshold of contact with the Holy Presence, the connecting bridge between the Earth plane and the spiritual.

Within this temple space, human beings engaged in the most profound and meaningful expressions of the



A templum in the sky was marked off with imaginary lines dividing it into four regions according to the cardinal points. Within it the flight and cries of birds would be observed by the diviner in order to abstract omens from such observations.

higher aspirations of themselves. Whether in a forest grove, surrounded by the beauty and harmony of nature, or in a cathedral, surrounded by inspiring lines of form and symmetry, it functioned as a sanctuary where the mystic could retreat for a while into the Silence. The sanctuary of today remains the same: a place where illusions and errors fall away, a place of enlightenment. Even now it is somewhere we can, for a moment, find meaning and peace amidst the chaos of creation and the hustle and bustle of our daily existence.

Spiritual Ascent

The development of the temple was commensurate with the beginnings of a sense of humility, a recognition of unworthiness giving rise to Will: the will to develop and aspire or *rise* to a state that brought human consciousness in closer contact with that of the Divine.

Regarding our own spiritual journey, there is also that sense of ascent or rising associated with the reaching of the Temple. Whether in the form of a quest or series of personal trials, we symbolically cleanse and transform ourselves by metaphysically ascending the steps of the sacred edifice. And the only way we can do this is through the learning experience, and an increasingly enhanced level of self-knowledge. In other words, we have to work to reach this special exalted place, to prepare ourselves, to improve ourselves, to prepare to meet with the beauty and perfection of the Divine.

Once we enter the Temple we set ourselves in relation to the universe. We are at a connection point with higher realms, with the Divine. This is because the temple is the place where both realms, the macrocosm and the microcosm, meet and are one. It is where we recognise





Some of the oldest sanctuaries were natural woods containing a Sacred Grove within which people could engage in the most profound and meaningful expressions of the higher aspirations of themselves.

the oneness of the universe and the unity of all matter. It is where we begin to experience the connectedness of all existence, and our own place in the scheme of things. It is the birthplace of knowledge and understanding, the school where we begin to recognise the Divine Within and its relationship to the Whole.

The Divine Within

At some stage then in the evolution of human consciousness it was clear that the Divine was not just something which was 'out there' and separate from humankind, but spoke to some corresponding spark within us.

The Temple had become a place where the divine connection could be made, to experience a conscious realisation of the Divine within and without. The Temple was therefore important in facilitating spiritual communion. But in tandem with its development was also a shift in realisation of the human relationship with the Eternal, namely, that we are revealed to ourselves by transcendence. We realise the Divine within, and the sacred is revealed to us as a human attribute of which we have allowed ourselves to be dispossessed. As aspiring mystics we come to realise the operation of Cosmic law on all planes of existence, in the universe and in ourselves. And through this knowledge we truly enter our own Inner Temple.

The Cosmic Tree

So let us return a moment to those sacred groves and trees that were referred to earlier. Perhaps it is here where we can pick up the golden thread, the key to our understanding. Our ancient forbears perhaps knew a thing or two after all! In many ancient mythologies, the *centre* of the Temple or

the sacred *tree* or *pole* at the centre of the sacred ground, represents the descent of the sacred or the Divine; the realm where the initiate might ascend to the Divine or Cosmic realm. The sacred space had become the point of intersection, the threshold, the 'key' for entry to the other realms of our being.

This Cosmic Tree is the pillar which holds up the sky and permits communication between the world above and the world below. It epitomises the plan of Creation: it is pivot, axis and sphere. Through its roots, it is attached to the nourishing earth, and through its leaves it opens to the light. The so called 'Axis Mundi' (cosmic axis, world axis, world pillar, centre of the world), in religion or mythology, is the world centre and the connection between Heaven and Earth. As both the celestial and geographic pole, it expresses a point of connection between sky and earth where the four compass directions meet. Communication from lower realms may ascend to higher ones and blessings from higher realms may descend to lower ones and be disseminated to all. It is the Tree of Life, the tree of all knowledge. Indeed the Tree of Life of the Kabala encapsulates this symbolism.

In varying cultures the Tree has always been a symbol of growth, rebirth and ascent. The Druids



There is also often a sense of journey or ascent associated with reaching the Temple. Whether in the form of a quest or series of trials whereby we symbolically cleanse ourselves, or physically ascend the steps of the sacred edifice, it is about changing or transforming ourselves in some way.





The sacred is revealed as a human attribute of which we have allowed ourselves to be dispossessed. Once we realise the operation of Cosmic law on all planes of existence, we have truly entered our Inner Temple.

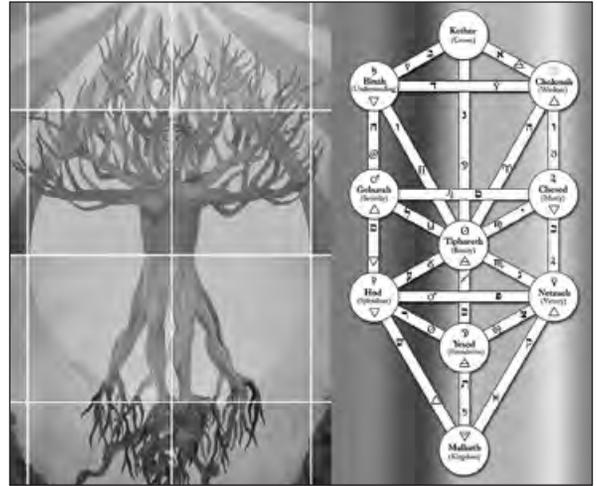
venenerated the Oak tree. The Laurel was sacred to Apollo at Delphi. To the Chaldeans the Cedar was the tree of life and revealer of oracles. To the Irish the Hazel was the tree of knowledge. The Divine or Cosmic Tree rooted in Heaven can be found in Maori, Indonesian, Micronesian, Aztec and Mayan mythology. In the Hindu *Katha Upanishad* the ancient tree symbolises Brahman, the Immortal. All worlds are contained within it. The Atman is the spirit of Brahman within, and can only be accessed through a sincere willingness to embrace spiritual growth.

As a matter of interest, in relation to the sacred tree we might consider the *Maypole*, that quintessentially European phenomenon. One theory holds that Maypoles were a remnant of the Germanic reverence for sacred trees since there is evidence for various trees and wooden pillars being venerated across much of Germanic Europe including *Thor's Oak* and the Saxon *Irmingsul* pillar. In Norse paganism, cosmological views held that the universe was a world tree, known as *Yggdrasil*. It has been suggested that the Maypole was in some way a continuance of this tradition.

The Chain of Being

Other symbols of ascent and descent, or communication between realms or different levels of existence are the images of a ladder, stairway or chain. These are featured widely in medieval and Renaissance art, because the Cosmos was conceived as a series of interlocking *hierarchies*, like links in a chain or steps on a ladder, from the material realm through to the highest divine sphere.

The concept of the 'Great Chain of Being' expressed



The Cosmic Tree is the pillar which holds up the sky and permits communication between the world above and the world below. The metaphysical constructs of the Axis Mundi and the Tree of Life allow communication and ascent from lower realms to higher ones, and blessings from higher realms may descend to lower ones for dissemination to all.

the order and harmony of the Cosmos. This ascent and descent between worlds can also be a journeying or transference between different levels of consciousness. In such symbols we see, metaphysically speaking, that All is ultimately embodied in one great vibrational keyboard; different levels of consciousness within the one spectrum.

The Golden Chain of Zeus (*Iliad* Book VIII 19-27) described by Homer relates a story in which Zeus boasts to the other gods about his strength, saying that if he hung a golden chain from the sky, and attached the earth, the sun,

The quest for the Divine Experience and Inner Communion has been narrated in many and various tales.

the moon, the sea and all the other gods to it, he would still be able to pull them up; and all of them combined would not be able to pull him down out of heaven. We also see this symbolism in the 'Ladder of Lights' inherent in ancient Egyptian and Tibetan mysticism, and medieval alchemy.

The Ladder of Ascent

From remote antiquity, the ladder was taken as a paradigm of spiritual ascent. In a bas relief from the 3rd dynasty of Ur, dated c. 2070-1960 BCE, there appears a seven rung ladder suggesting initiation leading from the lower to the higher realms of consciousness. Above the initiate is the conjunction of the crescent moon and sun, symbolising the union of masculine and feminine principles as the





The visionary ladder upon which the sleeping Jacob sees angels ascending and descending is a representation of the discovery of the temple within, a major step forward in one's personal spiritual evolution and the approach to true self-knowledge.

central meaning of initiation.

The best known example is that of Jacob's Ladder recounted in the Christian *Bible* (*Genesis* 28:10-19) which was widely interpreted as a symbol of Cosmic Harmony, and famously depicted in an inspiring painting by William Blake. It is a visionary ladder upon which the sleeping Jacob sees angels ascending and descending, a symbol of cosmic harmony. In the account, God says (after describing the land which he gives to Jacob and his descendants):

"Behold I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said: Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it, this is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven."

In veiled language Jacob has discovered the Temple Within. Access to higher realms is through our own inner gateway. This is a major step forward in one's personal spiritual evolution and the approach to true self-knowledge. This is the meaning of the words: *"Know Thyself and thou shalt know the Kingdom of Heaven."* In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, we read:

"In the centre of the castle of Brahman, our own body, there is a small shrine in the form of a lotus flower, and within can be found a small space. The little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe. The heavens and earth are there, and the sun and the moon and the stars and all that now is, and all that is not: for the whole universe is in him

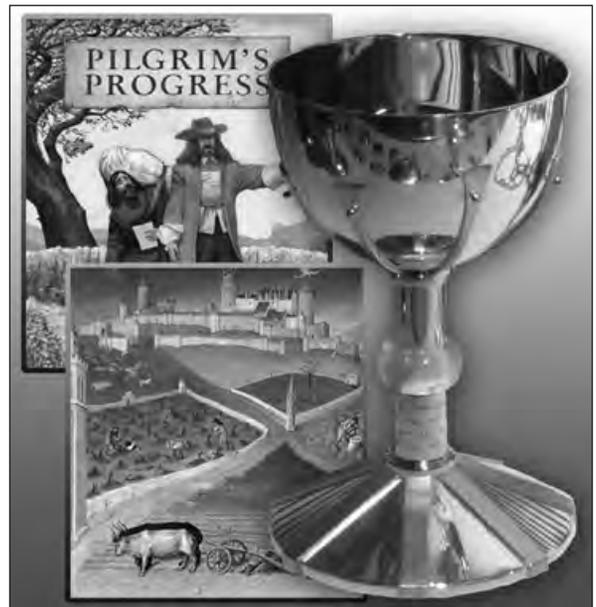
and he dwells within our heart...

"There is a bridge between time and eternity, and this bridge is atman, the spirit of man. Neither day nor night cross that bridge, nor old age, nor death, nor sorrow. There is a spirit which is pure and which is beyond old age and death; and beyond hunger and thirst and sorrow. This is atman the spirit in man, all the desires of this spirit are truth. It is this spirit that we must find and know: man must find his own soul. He who has found and knows his soul has found all the worlds, has achieved all his desires."

We could say that the process is one of returning from exile, of rediscovering that which has been lost.

The Spiritual Journey

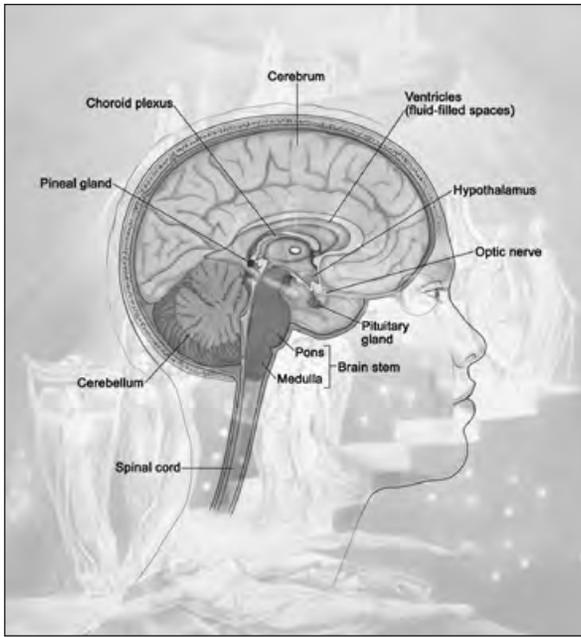
The quest for the Divine Experience and Inner Communion has been narrated in many and various tales since the beginning of the attempts by people to articulate their inner experiences. It is the Chrétien de Troyes' *Holy Grail*, Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, and the stories of the Knights of the Round Table. These stories describe the journey to a profound mystical experience. Consider the tale of Sir Galahad who in his simplicity and humility *"...looked into the depths of his own being, entered the Temple*



of his own heart and communed with God in the Silence, at

Rediscovering that which has been lost and the journey to a profound mystical experience is a theme central to works such as Malory's Morte D'Arthur, The Vision of Piers Ploughman, The Pilgrim's Progress and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.





"We have an inner transformer which acts as the channel of communication. It is called the Pineal Gland. Perhaps we could say this is our personal Cosmic Tree, or mystical Ladder of Lights.

his own altar."

While there are many poetic works of Faith and Spirituality, for example, *The Vision of Piers Ploughman* (c.1360), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th century) and *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), there is another medieval one in particular that is especially beautiful called *Pearl, Cleanness and Patience*. It uses the device of dream and vision, and is the personal record of a spiritual crisis brought about by the loss of something or someone very dear. The crisis is resolved by the assurance which spiritual revelation and experience brings, and the knowledge that the beauty and innocence of childhood, or something precious to us and which we thought lost, is actually within, and accessing it opens the gates to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Pineal Gland

Fast forward now to the present day, while keeping in mind those archetypal symbols of tree, ladder, stairway, chain and bridge which all describe the process of communicating with higher levels of consciousness. There is within the human brain an inner transformer which acts as the channel of communication. It is called the Pineal Gland. Perhaps we could say this is our personal Cosmic Tree, or mystical Ladder of Lights. Here is an extract from a Rosicrucian Degree monograph written by former Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, Ralph M Lewis. In it he provides a very succinct description of the importance of the pineal gland and its function:

"...the pineal gland... is a very small organ, about the size of a grain of wheat, and yet it is a most vital one. It is, shall we say, a transformer of the Cosmic Consciousness, of the intelligence of the Cosmic, into rates of vibration, into an energy which is discernable by our objective minds. For further explanation, and as an analogy, we may say it is like a little valve that at certain times, depending upon our thinking and our meditation, and because of certain psychic exercises we perform, opens and permits Cosmic inspirations and Divine Wisdom to pass through and be reduced to a means that the brain can translate into comprehensible notions and concepts.

"Again, we may say it is like a radio receiver that reduces high frequency electro-magnetic waves to sound waves to which our ears respond and which can be conveyed to our brain where we can interpret them. It is a bridge across which the Divine Consciousness passes from the Cosmic to the mortal mind of man.

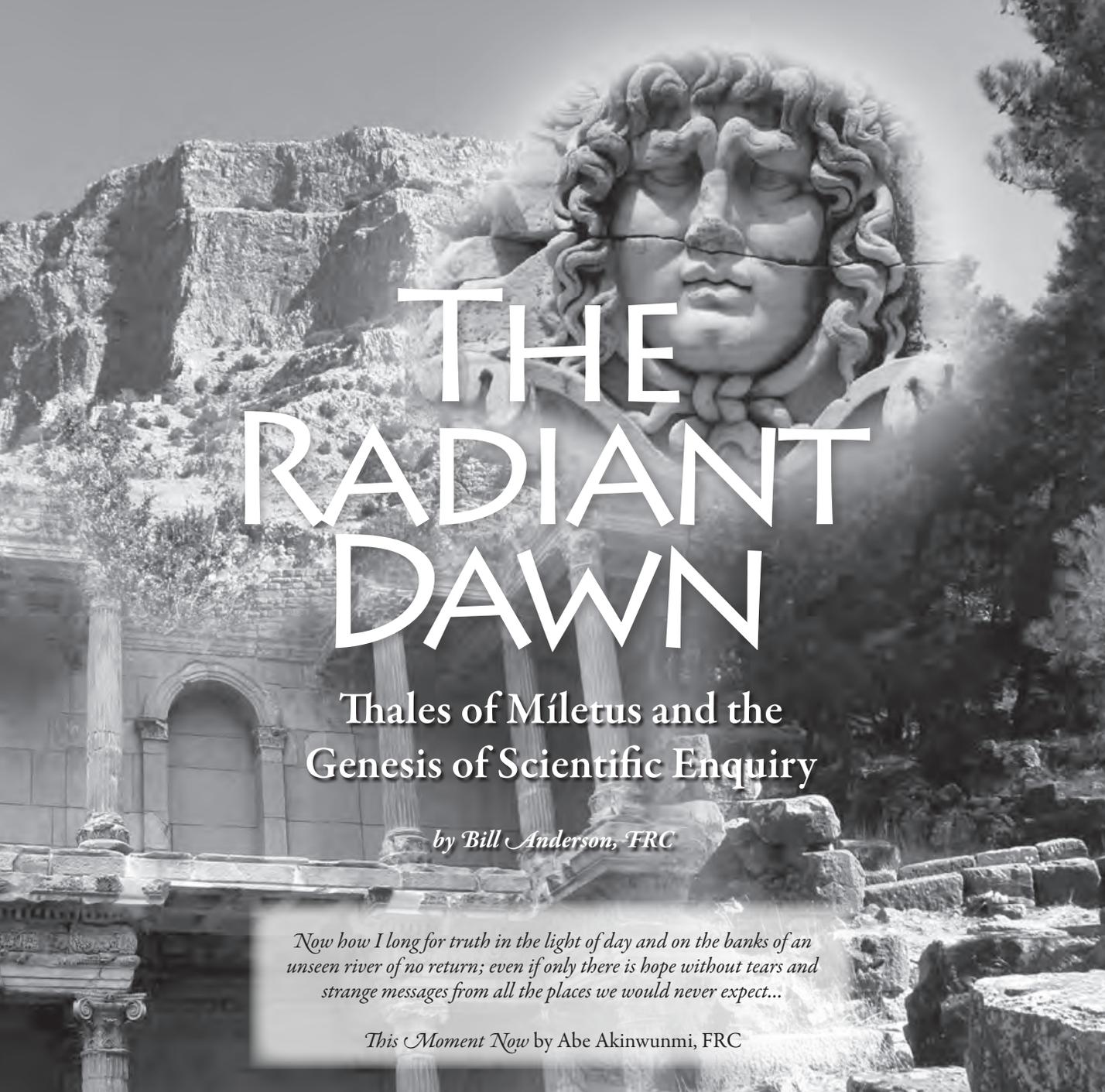
"This then is the Third Eye. It gives us vision of the Cosmic, a perception of God, and an insight into those Divine realms, far removed from the physical. It is the true eye of the soul."

In this first part we have travelled together from the development of the Outer Temple to that of the Inner Sacred Space. Accessing the Divine experience at a personal level is only possible when one enters this sacred space. The Temple is the starting point, the stepping stone, the springboard for the ascent of consciousness. And so, physically entering the Temple is the symbolic equivalent of entering the silence within ourselves to ascend to higher levels of consciousness and to commune with our higher self and the God of our Heart. In part two we will explore the Temple of Man further through pictorial symbolism and metaphysical concepts.

Sources

1. For this first part of the article I am indebted to James Haughey, "The Altar of God" in the *Rosicrucian Digest*, October 1974, pp. 8-10, 34.
2. I would like to acknowledge that the whole presentation was particularly unified in concept by my reading of the works of Ralph Maxwell Lewis, Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC (1939-1987), and also the work of Rosicrucians who wrote in the *Rosicrucian Forum* and *Digest* over the years.





THE RADIANT DAWN

Thales of Miletus and the Genesis of Scientific Enquiry

by *Bill Anderson, FRC*

*Now how I long for truth in the light of day and on the banks of an
unseen river of no return; even if only there is hope without tears and
strange messages from all the places we would never expect...*

This Moment Now by Abe Akinwunmi, FRC

T WAS A HOT summer's afternoon, when all sensible people stay indoors and rest. But, I've always done my own thing and this time was no different. Hot, sunny afternoon, to me, meant fewer tourists to disturb my musings. Anyway, I had a hat, backpack and plenty of water with me.

I Feel a Presence

I was on holiday near Ephesus on the Aegean coast of Turkey (in Anatolia, from the Greek word meaning 'east' or 'sunrise') and had driven south and inland to

the site of the ancient city of Priene (Πριήνη in Greek). It had been, at one time, on the coast, built overlooking the sea, on steep slopes and terraces extending from sea level to a height of some 380 metres (1,250 feet.) So here I was, sitting in the ruins of the Bouleuterion or Council House staring out across the fields towards the fabled city of Miletus (Μίλητος.) Once, all those fields had been under water, until gradually, down through the ages, the silt brought down river by the river Maeander (yes, the one where we get the word 'meander' from) deposited so much silt that the land gradually extended out into the sea, leaving both Priene and Miletus landlocked.



I found it very peaceful sitting there, save for the incessant sound of the cicadas which however, strangely lulled me into a period of quiet introspection. There were no other tourists near me, and what few there were on site were clustered around the Temple of Athena, the ancient Greek goddess of wisdom, further up the hill. The city had been built on the steep slopes of Mt Mycále (Μυκάλη,) which towers over the city. At one time this was a peninsula jutting out into the sea, pointing towards the island of Samos across the strait where Pythagoras was born. Mount Mycále is partly made of rocks laid down during the Palaeozoic era, the oldest of the geologic eras some 542-251 million years ago. That era was a time of dramatic geological, climatic and evolutionary change, which witnessed the most rapid and widespread diversification of life in Earth's history.



The ruins of the Bouleuterion or Council House at the site of the ancient city of Priene

As I sat there alone, I felt the need to meditate, and what transpired surprised me. Sitting in the sun under the mountain, I felt a presence, very ancient, but palpable. A sentience is the word I use to describe it: not unfriendly, but waiting. Waiting for what, I could only guess. Perhaps for a resurgence of times long gone, of times when this part of the world was one of the great, intellectual hotspots of the planet, a sacred place from the dawn of civilisation itself?

After a while, I felt it was time to leave, so I walked down the hill, back to my car and made my way across the one-time bay and through the cotton fields to the *khora* or territory of Miletus, an area known as Milesia in ancient times, some 25 kilometres (16 miles) away, and my somewhat basic hotel in the nearby town for the night.

Before the Persian invasion in the middle of the 6th century BCE, Miletus was considered the greatest and wealthiest of Greek cities.

That evening I went out for a walk while overhead the great summer triangle, the first magnitude stars Deneb, Vega and Altair, dominated the night sky. This grouping of stars has always fascinated me; a great triangle in the heavens above, and a good sign for the next day. I sat for what seemed like hours, watching it as it crossed the sky, letting my imagination roam back through time some 2,500 years to a time when someone else was watching the stars and contemplating the mysteries of the universe.

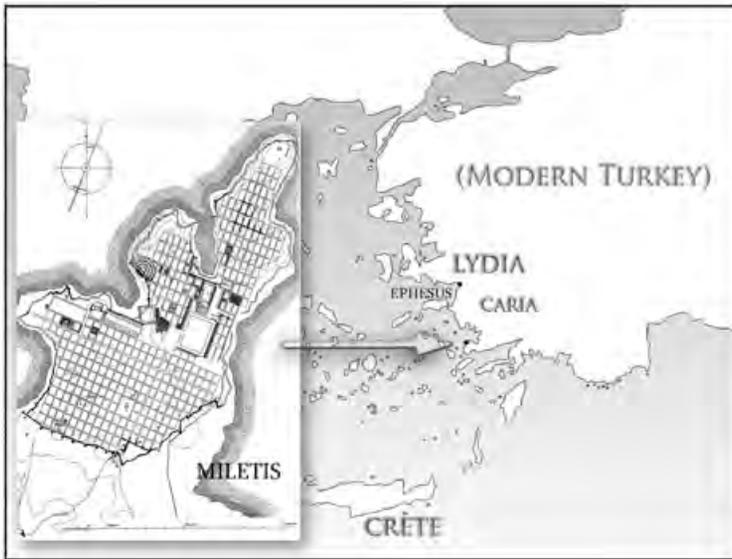
New Dawn

The new day saw me out after an early breakfast and heading as fast as possible towards the ruins of the *pólis* or city of Miletus. Another beautiful day, which would give me time to look around before the first of the tourist buses arrived. Originally, the city had also been built on a peninsula jutting out into the sea, but the land had reclaimed itself and the sea was now some 10 kilometres (6 miles) away. What is interesting though is that Miletus lies in a straight line between Priene and the sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma (Δίδυμα,) which was, after Delphi, his most celebrated temple, with its own oracle. Apollo himself is thought to have had an Anatolian origin.

After a walk around the site I made for the theatre with its panoramic views and sat down to contemplate what I knew about the city, what I had seen and read about, and its most famous son. Miletus was a marvellous city in what is now Aydin Province of Turkey, near the mouth of the Maeander River in ancient Caria. Before the Persian invasion in the middle of the 6th century BCE, Miletus was considered the greatest and wealthiest of Greek cities. It had a large territory which included rich agricultural lands and tree-covered mountains that supplied timber for its navy and grazing for its flocks. The sea was the main connection with the other Greek city-states while the Maeander valley led deep into Anatolia which was the ancient heartland of cultures and ideas.

In the early and middle Bronze Age the settlement, then known as Millawanda, had come under Minoan





Originally the city of Miletus was built on a peninsula jutting out into the sea, but the land has reclaimed itself and the sea is now some 10 kilometres (6 miles) away.

influence. Legend has it that an influx of Minoans from Crete occurred, displacing the indigenous people. The settlement was renamed Miletus after a place in Crete. Following the devastation caused by the eruption of Thera and the demise of Minoan civilisation, the Late Bronze Age (c: 13th century BCE) saw the arrival of other Indo-European Luwian language-speakers from south central

The wealth of Miletus was the result of its success as a trading centre.

Anatolia known as the Carians. The town was destroyed in the 12th century BCE and starting about 1000 BCE the territory was resettled extensively by the Ionian Greeks. Legend relates of an Ionian foundation event sponsored by a founder named Neleus, (a Mycenaean Greek,) from the Peloponnese in the south of mainland Greece.

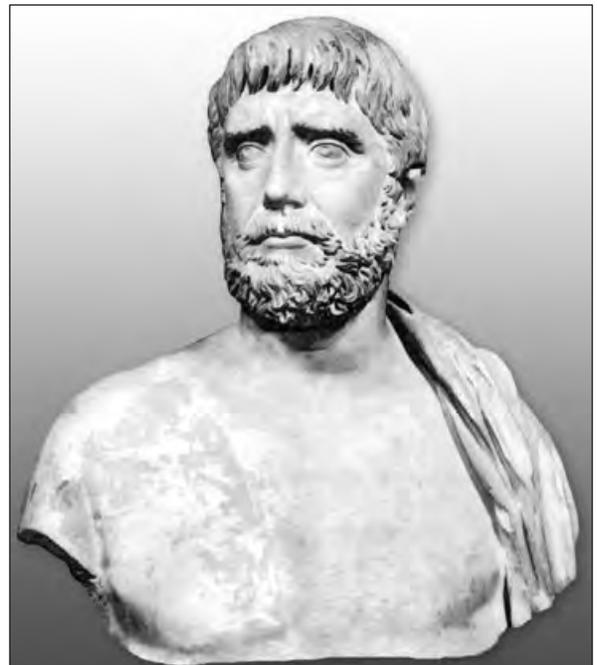
Apart from Greece proper, the Greeks had spread around the Aegean Sea and along the coast of modern Turkey. The Greek Dark Ages that followed were a time of Ionian settlement and consolidation in an alliance called the Ionian League. There then followed the Archaic Period of Greek civilisation that began with a sudden and brilliant flash of art and philosophy on the coast of Anatolia. In the 6th century BCE, Miletus was the site of origin of the Greek philosophical and scientific tradition, when Thales, followed by Anaximander and Anaximenes (known collectively, to modern scholars, as the Milesian School) began to speculate about the material constitution of the world, and to propose speculative naturalistic, as opposed to traditional, supernatural explanations for various natural phenomena. Science was born.

First of the Seven

There is a saying that the Greeks always have a word for it. But for one Greek in particular, that word is 'amazing'. Thales of Miletus was the first of the great Greek philosophers, one of the Seven Sages of Ancient Greece, who was said to have been the originator of the phrase 'Know thyself' which was engraved on the front façade of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. There is a question mark about Thales' birth year, which is believed to be around 640 BCE, but all sources agree that he died in 546 BCE, aged 94 years.

Miletus, where Thales was born, was the most important city of a series of city-states that stretched along the east shore of the Aegean Sea. An area dotted with myriads of islands large and small, notched with multitudes of inlets and bays, and with a favourable climate. His parents were Examyus and Cleobuline. Some said he was of Phoenician ancestry. Others said that he belonged to a noble Milesian family. In any case, time has shown that Thales gave as much prestige to his city as he received from it.

Thales appears to have always remained unmarried. This event was important enough to be mentioned by Plutarch in his *Parallel Lives*, in the story of Solon of



Thales of Miletus was the first of the great Greek philosophers, one of the Seven Sages of Ancient Greece, who was said to have been the originator of the phrase, 'Know thyself'.





Miletus held a trading concession at Naucratis on the Canopic or westernmost branch of the Nile, and it is possible that Thales first visited Egypt on a trading mission where it is reputed he gave a demonstration to the Pharaoh Ahmose II on how to measure the height of the Great Pyramid.

Athens, another of the Seven Sages of Greece. If Thales did produce any children, none of them became prominent enough to become historically recorded. And though we remember Thales primarily as a philosopher and scientist, he was not exactly a pauper. He was an enterprising businessman, becoming a dealer in olive oil and salt.

It occurred to me that establishing whether or not Thales travelled and which countries he visited is important to establish what information he could have acquired from other sources. Plato made the point that the Greeks took from foreigners what was of value and developed their notions into better ideas. Eudemus, who was one of Aristotle's students, believed that Thales had travelled to Egypt. A number of ancient sources support that opinion, including some who stated that he spent time with the Egyptian priests. By 620 BCE, or even earlier, Miletus held a trading concession at Naucratis on the Canopic or westernmost branch of the Nile, and it is possible that Thales first visited Egypt on a trading mission. Travel to Egypt would not have been difficult. The wealth of Miletus was the result of its success as a trading centre, and there would have been no difficulty arranging passage on one of the many vessels which traded with Egypt. It is related that while in Egypt, he gave a demonstration to Pharaoh Amasis (Ahmose II) of the 26th dynasty, whose capital was at Sais near Naucratis, by merely thrusting his staff into the ground at the end

of the shadow cast by a pyramid, and thus, by forming another shadow, he compared the two shadows and measured the height of the pyramid for the pharaoh. He is also said to have given an explanation for the inundation of the Nile after witnessing the phenomenon.

Josephus wrote that Thales was a disciple of the Egyptians and the Chaldeans which suggests that he also visited what is now Iraq. It is thought that Thales visited the Babylonians and Chaldeans and had access to their astrological records which enabled him to predict the solar eclipse of 585 BCE.

Miletus had founded many colonies, perhaps as many as 90, around the Mediterranean and especially along the coasts of the Black Sea. The Milesians traded their goods for raw materials, especially iron, timber and fish. Strabo mentions a sheep-industry and the yield of soft wool, and Aristophanes mentioned the fine and luxurious Milesian wool. The Milesian traders also had access to the hinterland. The land around the mouth of the river Maeander was fertile, and planted with olive trees. Thales

himself was associated with a commercial venture in the production of olive oil in Miletus and on the island of Chios, but his interests may have extended beyond those two places. Olive oil was a basic item in the Mediterranean diet, and was probably a trading commodity of some importance to Milesian commerce.

It seems likely that Thales was one of the 'great teachers' who, according to Herodotus, visited Croesus, the king of Lydia, in his capital Sardis. From Sardis, he could have joined a caravan to make the three-month journey along the well-used road, to visit the observatories

Thales realised that certain definite principles applied to geometric shapes.

in Babylonia, and seek out the astronomical knowledge which the Babylonians had accumulated over centuries of observation. Alternatively, as Milesian merchantmen continually plied the Black Sea, gaining a passage on ship could have been easily arranged. From any number of ports Thales could have sought information, and from the port of Sinope he may have ventured on the long journey to Babylonia, perhaps travelling along the valley of the Tigris, as Xenophon did in 401-399 BCE.

In a letter said to be from Thales to the mystic Pherecydes of Syros, regarded as the teacher of Pythagoras, Thales stated that he and Solon had both visited Crete





It is said that Thales wrote of his travels to Pherecydes of Syros (depicted here) who is regarded as the teacher of Pythagoras. Travel was not exceptional among notable people during those times.

and Egypt to confer with the priests and astronomers, and travelled all over Greece and Asia. All we can say from these reports is that travel was not exceptional, with many reports describing the visits of mainly notable people to foreign lands. There must have been any number of people who visited foreign lands, about whom we know nothing.

Water, the First Principle

Looking out over what was once the sea, you can understand why Thales concluded that water must be the basis of all things. He believed this because water is colourless, shapeless, is ever-changing, ever-moving, and of great quantity on Earth, disappearing and reappearing as by magic. He observed that water always flows according to a set pattern or cycle, that it does not appear to change from this pattern. He noted that water falls from the sky, visibly, to pour into streams, rivers, lakes, then into the sea. He knew that water, wherever it existed, was only transient, even in plants, animals and people, and that from all these it returned to the sky invisibly, once again to fall visibly. So, of course, he thought water must

be the basic stuff from which all else comes.

Metallurgy had been practised long before Thales presented his hypotheses, so he knew that heat could return metals to a liquid state. Water exhibits changes more obviously than any of the other so-called elements, and can easily be observed in its three states of liquid, vapour and ice. The understanding that water could generate into earth is basic to Thales's watery thesis. At Miletus he could observe that water had the capacity to thicken into earth. Miletus stood on the Gulf of Lade through which the river Maeander emptied its waters. Within living memory, older Milesians had witnessed the island of Lade increasing in size within the Gulf, and the river banks encroaching into the river to such an extent that at Priene, across the gulf from Miletus, the warehouses had to be rebuilt closer to the water's edge. The ruins of the once prosperous city-port of Miletus are now ten kilometres distant from the coast and the Island of Lade now forms part of a rich agricultural plain. There would have been opportunity to observe other areas where earth generated from water, for example, the deltas of the rivers Halys, the Ister (Danube), the Tigris-Euphrates, and almost certainly the Nile. This coming-into-being of land would have provided substantiation of Thales's doctrine. To Thales water held the potentialities for the nourishment and generation of the entire cosmos.

Geometry

In school we learn about geometry. Geometry is the relationship of lines, curves and angles to one another. Some of these relationships are so obvious, so simple, that it can be difficult to believe that each one had to be discovered for the first time. For example: any straight line passing through a circle's centre and bisecting that circle's perimeter on both sides divides the circle into two equal parts. This fact appears so simple that it astounds us

Thales was interested in almost everything, investigating almost all areas of knowledge.

that someone had to discover it initially. That someone was Thales.

While travelling in Egypt one time, Thales looked at the very practical methods used by Egyptian assessors in measuring land for tax purposes. It occurred to him that their quite complicated system of triangles, rectangles and lines could serve other practical means. Always on the outlook for new and better ways of doing things, he set about studying these matters and soon came to realise that certain definite principles applied to all triangles,





To Thales water held the potentialities for the nourishment and generation of the entire cosmos.

rectangles, angles and circles. As his studies advanced, he found many fundamental truths. Among these are for example, that if two sides of a triangle are equal, then their opposite angles are equal. What we regard today as an elementary geometrical fact was difficult for students of many lands over the centuries to understand.

The following are also Thales' geometrical firsts, making him the author of abstract geometry:

- He discovered that when two straight lines intersect, the opposite angles are equal.
- He found that the sum of the angles of any triangle equals two right angles, or 180 degrees.
- He proved that the sides of similar triangles are proportional.
- He appears to have been the first man to inscribe a right-angled triangle in a circle.

Astronomy

Thales was a practical man as well as a theorist. He did things as well as thought about things. Without a computer, Thales calculated accurately the total eclipse of the sun on 28 May 585 BCE. More than this, he predicted that eclipse far enough in advance to leave plenty of time for the prediction to become known generally. The culmination of the event became of such consequence that when it actually happened, it stopped a fierce battle between Ionia's neighbours, the Lydians and the Medes. Both sides called a halt to their fighting, laid down their arms, and sat down and talked it over!

Other amazing astronomically things attributed to Thales record him as the first man to divide the Earth's year into 365 days. He also believed the earth floated in a 'sea of elemental fluid'. This idea may well have been the initial concept of a

'universal ether'. History tells us that Thales drew maps of the stars, something never done before, but none of these have survived the 2,500 years since his death.

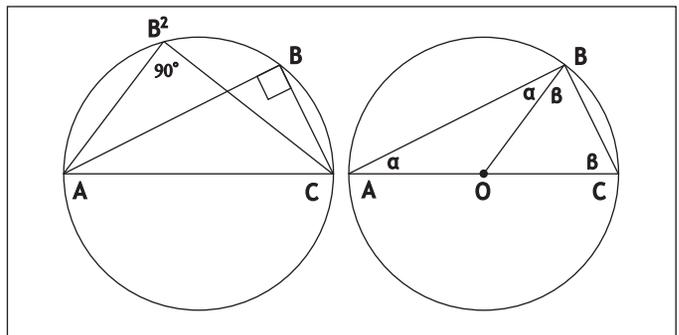
Electricity

As far as written history is concerned, Thales seems to be the first man to have recorded observations covering that phenomenon we call electricity. He achieved this distinction by noting that when the material we know as amber was rubbed vigorously with woollen cloth or fur, it attracted to itself other substances like hair, feathers, straw, paper and so on. The Greek word for amber is *elektron*, which describes its particular sunny, yellow colour rather than its electronic properties. Our word 'electricity' comes from this Greek word, or later from the Latin equivalent, *electricum*. Being a man of wide interests, Thales also knew about the strange force we call magnetism. He carefully studied loadstones, those naturally occurring rocks high in iron which we know as magnetite. Sailors in those days believed that if their ship were held together by iron nails and sailed over an unknown bed of loadstones, the natural magnetic force would draw all the nails out of the ship's timbers and the boat would fall apart.

If it had not been for others who closely followed Thales' philosophy, we might not have much idea of what he did or thought. Either he neglected to record his own thoughts, which seems unlikely, or they have been lost since.

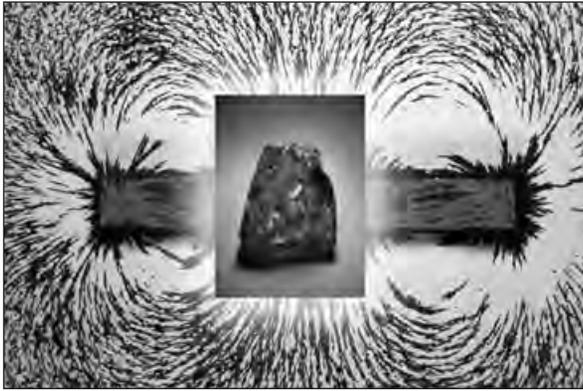
Philosophy Begins in Wonder

It was time to leave Miletus, the tourist buses had started to arrive, and my musings were coming to an end. Those who believe that Thales inherited his views from Greek or Near-Eastern sources are wrong. Thales was esteemed



Geometry: Thales' Theorem states that an inscribed angle in a semi-circle is a right angle (90 degrees) leading to other geometrical and mathematical theorems.





Electro-magnetism: Thales seems to have recorded observations on the phenomenon we call electricity. He noted that when amber was rubbed vigorously with woollen cloth or fur, it attracted to itself other substances. The Greek word for amber is 'elektron'.

in his times as an original thinker, and one who broke with tradition, not as someone who conveyed existing mythologies. Aristotle unequivocally recorded Thales' hypothesis on the nature of matter, and offered a number of conjectures based on observation in favour of Thales' declaration. His report provided the testimony that Thales supplanted myth in his explanations of the behaviour of natural phenomena.

Thales would have been familiar with Homer's acknowledgements of divine progenitors but he never attributed organisation or control of the cosmos to the gods. Aristotle recognised the similarity between Thales' doctrine about water and the ancient legend which associates water with the gods Oceanus and Tethys, but he reported that Thales declared water to be the nature of all things. To Aristotle, Thales' theories were so obviously different from all that had gone before that they stood apart from all earlier explanations. Thales' views were not ancient or primitive, they were new and exciting, and were the genesis of scientific conjecture about natural phenomena. Aristotle acknowledged Thales as the founder of natural philosophy.

Thales was undoubtedly what we would term today a 'polymath', for he investigated virtually all areas of knowledge: philosophy, history, science, mathematics, engineering, geography and politics. He proposed theories to explain many of the events of nature: the primary substance, the support of the earth, and the cause of change. He was involved in the problems of astronomy and provided a number of explanations of cosmological events which traditionally had been attributed to the gods. His questioning approach to understanding heavenly phenomena was the beginning of Greek astronomy and philosophy, which continues today in modern science and the pursuit of truth found in mysticism.

His hypotheses were new and bold, and by freeing

phenomena from godly intervention, he paved the way the rise of scientific endeavour. He founded the Milesian school of natural philosophy, developed the scientific method and initiated the first western enlightenment. He was highly esteemed in ancient times, and a letter cited by Diogenes Laertius, and purporting to be from Anaximenes to Pythagoras, advised that all discourse should begin with a solemn reference to Thales.

Thales is the first person we know of who proposed explanations of natural phenomena which were materialistic rather than mythological or theological. His theories were new, bold, exciting, comprehensible, and possible of explanation. He did not speak in riddles like Heraclitus, and had no need to invent an undefined non-substance, as Anaximander did. Because Thales gave no role to mythical beings, his theories could be refuted, and arguments could be put forward to discredit them, an approach he would no doubt have approved of. His hypotheses were rational and scientific, and Aristotle, while acknowledging him as the first true philosopher, nevertheless criticised his hypotheses in a rational, logical and scientific manner.

Twenty-five centuries ago Thales wondered: "Of what and how is the world made? What is the relation of the world to the rest of the universe?" The most outstanding aspects of his heritage are: The search for knowledge for its own sake; the development of the scientific method; the adoption of practical methods and their development into general principles; his curiosity and conjectural approach to questions of natural phenomena. In the 6th century BCE Thales asked the question, "What is the basic material of the cosmos?" A complete answer has yet to be discovered!

Once again, with the sun rising higher, it was time to move on; this time to Didyma, following the Sacred Road from Miletus. And I was looking forward to what I may discover there.



Twenty-five centuries ago Thales wondered: "Of what and how is the world made? What is the relation of the world to the rest of the universe?"





Being Content

Satisfaction As a Thought Process

by Ralph M Lewis, FRC

CAN WE EVER be content? Defining what contentment really is comes down to how satisfied we are with our present status. But does the sustaining of a particular satisfaction equal prolonged contentment? Continuous stimuli, invariable sensations, no matter how enjoyable at first, eventually result in boredom. However, we should observe that consciousness is an active state, its activity being maintained only by varying stimuli.

Psychological tests have proven for example that when we are exposed to a continual sound of unvarying pitch and volume, we eventually become 'deaf' to it. Our consciousness appears to no longer respond to the auditory impression. In fact for us to hear a habitual sound requires us to concentrate upon that sound; we need to consciously

isolate it from other sounds of which we're aware. Contentment therefore does not arise from a particular thing or condition; it can only come from a general state of *freedom from any kind of aggravation.*

Let's suppose for instance, that someone enjoys listening to music. When listening to it, anxiousness or aggravated disturbance of the emotions are dispelled or are, at least, more easily suppressed. But if the music that contributes to their sense of well-being was played repeatedly, hour after hour, day after day, its agreeable and pleasing sensations would diminish. The listener would finally come to experience the same piece of music as being *unsatisfactory* and inducing dissatisfaction. It is a common experience that a play or a film that once brought pleasure is less and less satisfactory in doing so every time it's seen thereafter.





When listening to music or reading a book, anxiousness or aggravated disturbance of the emotions are dispelled or are, at least, more easily suppressed.

There are people who will tell you that all through their lives they have found happiness in the reading of a particular book or in reciting the words of a poem without experiencing any diminishing gratification. But actually, if we think about it, that book or poem wasn't being read or recited constantly. There may have been hours or even days between the reading, so the stimulus wasn't constant enough to cause monotony to set in.

Monotony follows where there's no change, and if our consciousness isn't varied enough, a state of lethargy and irritation occurs. Those of us who are exposed to constant intense excitement, as great mental and physical activity, or those who are engaged in strenuous work, will often need to wind down, expressing a desire for quiet and relative inactivity. When they achieve this, a sense of contentment arises.

Having said that, this doesn't mean that a state of less stimulation is necessary for contentment. Rather, it shows that the conditions of the previous environment, taken collectively, were becoming all too *monotonous*. Moreover, the quiet and peace that follows is a different kind of experience, a consciousness of different stimuli which, by contrast, is a gratifying *change*.

Personal Satisfaction

The elements of contentment lie principally within ourselves. We won't all experience 'well-being' in the same environment. Our temperament, personality and conditioning must be taken into consideration. For example, a dynamic person, one of considerable nervous energy, can find pleasure only in exceptional activity. Their energy must be dissipated or it causes a restlessness that is discomforting. Another type of person may be an introvert. Their contentment is had perhaps in contemplation, periods of abstraction and creative thought.

Continuous restlessness is evidence that we have desires and urges that aren't being satisfied. We may frequently change our interests, but to no avail. Consequently, our inability to achieve contentment isn't always due to any monotony in our mental or physical activity. It must be realised that, although variations or changes are necessary factors of contentment, they alone aren't sufficient. The change must be consistent. It must be a change within the group of things in which we find satisfaction.

Individual Pursuits

However, a continuous change of general interests by someone is an indication of *emotional* (not mental) instability. It demonstrates that they are not aware of that desire or desires which will bring them the personal satisfaction they crave. Their frequent changes from one kind of activity to another imply a blind search for a source of inner peace. Such plunging into life may of course eventually unearth or reveal to them the course they should pursue for satisfaction, but it is a trial and error method which most often brings failure and discouragement or even mental and physical suffering. Having said that, we do need to have some exposure to life, to its multiplicity of appeals and demands, if we're to learn what's in harmony with our latent abilities and desires.

If our consciousness isn't varied enough, a state of lethargy and irritation occurs.

When we are young our minds are continually active and we need to find a channel for expression; if not, our inhibited energy may lead to emotional distress. Youthful mental energy sometimes makes it difficult to attach ourselves to, or engage with anything worthwhile for a length of time. For young people, education should allow exposure to different fields of human endeavour, an essential component so they may find a relationship to their inclinations. They should, as in all progressive, modern schools, have an opportunity to do manual work as well as academic subjects. In this way, a connection may result allowing them to concentrate on a particular sphere of activity where they'll find contentment.

As far as the individual pursuit of contentment is concerned, an essential first step is to begin by asking yourself what you want in life? This shouldn't be construed in terms of particular things. As we've said, no one thing alone, if constantly indulged in, provides a long-lasting feeling of satisfaction. The question should be related to your feelings, your urges. In general, what activity, what kind of life, physical or intellectual, appeals to you?



The Right Choice

A little thought will soon make clear to you that such answers as 'wealth' or 'fame', for example, are inadequate as ends in themselves. *Wealth per se* is an award that's achieved as the consequence of the accomplishment of something else. You cannot set out to be wealthy. Rather, we become wealthy because we've been a success in some business venture or other. We cannot be successful in an enterprise unless we can give ourselves fully to its demands. To do this without any mental reservation, we must really enjoy it. What we do must make us content.

The same reasoning applies to fame, which is recognition for some achievement. We must first, by hard, personal work, win that fame. Again, to win acclaim we must have some outstanding ability. This ability must be liked. It must provide personal contentment.

There are many people who find satisfaction in *creating*, for example. They firstly need to discover, by personal analysis and endeavour or just through a natural bent, what kind of creative talent they have. They should try writing, painting, music and perhaps other pursuits such as woodwork or mechanics, always being aware however that it's the act of creating that provides the greatest satisfaction for them. Others may find that, when they're outdoors or close to nature, working on a farm or in the forests, they experience an ecstasy or sense of unusual well-being. Such pursuits will often lead to a career that is very satisfying.

In contrast, how unfortunate are those people who discover, only after they have incurred many obligations and commitments which prevent them from making changes in life, that they're in the wrong job? Life can be miserable in this kind of situation unless they resort to an effective substitute, such as a *hobby* or pastime. Once a particularly satisfying interest has been found, engaging in it will be a contributing factor to their contentment.

Sometimes it may be that the needs of daily life and family obligations don't



As far as the individual pursuit of contentment is concerned, an essential first step is to begin by asking yourself what you want in life?

permit the time for us to indulge in our talents and desires. Consequently, we will suppress our interests, hoping that eventually when we retire we will be able to find the time to pursue them. In the meantime we will be deprived of contentment which sometimes leads to unrest, casting an emotional gloom over our lives and creating what we might see as a drab existence. The only option for someone in these circumstances is to try and find at least an hour or two a week to do what satisfies their interests. This will at least provide a feeling of contentment that will bridge the interval until circumstances change and they can spend more time engaging with their pastime.

Remote Ideals

There is also a negative aspect to this subject and it concerns that state of mind by which we permanently obstruct the acquisition of contentment. The lives of others, great men and women, have always been the incentive for many to achieve success and happiness. However, not everyone can be a Beethoven, a Francis Bacon or a Thomas Edison. Consequently, don't make your ideal in life the activities of a famous film star, singer or sports person unless you have within yourself similar ingredients.

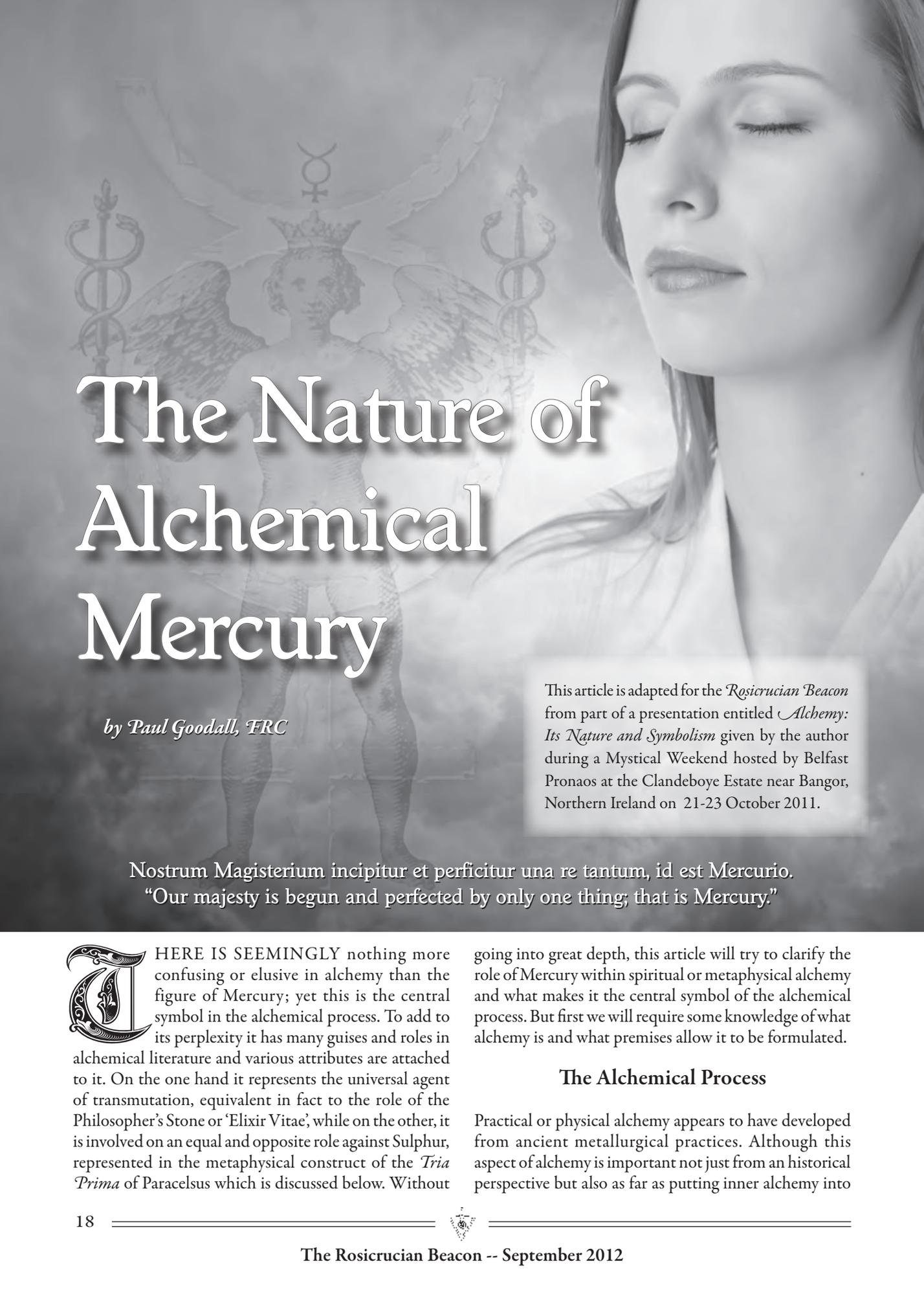
Live for today! By that statement it is not implied that you shouldn't plan or prepare for the future. Rather, don't just make every day a building block for some future castle of dreams. Try and live a life so that some part of each day will satisfy a healthy and natural desire. Ideally, contentment should be cumulative daily, not a sudden prize at the end of life.

We must also realise that contentment isn't a great exaltation, reaching to a peak of emotional pleasure and satisfaction. Such a state can be dangerous because it cannot be sustained and the let-down, the reaction, can be adverse. The realisation of contentment is an adjustment to the affairs of life in order to have normal pleasures and satisfaction. It is a smooth highway rather than an acceleration to peaks and a plunging down the other side.



Once a particularly satisfying interest has been found, engaging in it will be a contributing factor to contentment.





The Nature of Alchemical Mercury

by Paul Goodall, FRC

This article is adapted for the *Rosicrucian Beacon* from part of a presentation entitled *Alchemy: Its Nature and Symbolism* given by the author during a Mystical Weekend hosted by Belfast Pronaos at the Clandeboye Estate near Bangor, Northern Ireland on 21-23 October 2011.

Nostrum Magisterium incipitur et perficitur una re tantum, id est Mercurio.
“Our majesty is begun and perfected by only one thing; that is Mercury.”

THERE IS SEEMINGLY nothing more confusing or elusive in alchemy than the figure of Mercury; yet this is the central symbol in the alchemical process. To add to its perplexity it has many guises and roles in alchemical literature and various attributes are attached to it. On the one hand it represents the universal agent of transmutation, equivalent in fact to the role of the Philosopher’s Stone or ‘Elixir Vitae’, while on the other, it is involved on an equal and opposite role against Sulphur, represented in the metaphysical construct of the *Tria Prima* of Paracelsus which is discussed below. Without

going into great depth, this article will try to clarify the role of Mercury within spiritual or metaphysical alchemy and what makes it the central symbol of the alchemical process. But first we will require some knowledge of what alchemy is and what premises allow it to be formulated.

The Alchemical Process

Practical or physical alchemy appears to have developed from ancient metallurgical practices. Although this aspect of alchemy is important not just from an historical perspective but also as far as putting inner alchemy into



context, the act of transforming metals into the superior gold is now largely a select affair, particularly since its practice requires so much effort into finding laboratory space and obtaining costly equipment and hazardous materials. Historically, certainly from the late medieval period, the manufacture of gold came to play a more subordinate role as the symbolical aspect of the work assumed increasing importance. So it is not surprising to find that almost all alchemy practised today has evolved into that of inner work, although that work is defined by the language of traditional physical alchemy which can be regarded as an ‘outward sign of an inward act’. This means that when we are discussing alchemy at the *metaphysical level* we are referring to abstract qualities or *principles* often in terms of and with reference to the physical process.



Figure 1: From the late medieval period, the manufacture of alchemical gold came to play a more subordinate role as the symbolical aspect of the work assumed increasing importance. David Teniers (1610-1690) The Alchemist, 1680. (Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/teniers4.html>)

Premises for Spiritual Alchemy

Let's begin by observing some of the premises or beliefs espoused by Rosicrucians that allow us to formulate a *metaphysical* alchemy that is the inner transformative work of the mystic or initiate.

1. Man as an entity is a dual being composed of active and passive aspects which in alchemical terminology we call male and female or sun and moon.
2. Humans act as agents for cosmic forces that are continually operating on the physical and metaphysical planes.
3. Esoteric teaching informs us that the universe is divided into two worlds called the macrocosm and the microcosm corresponding respectively to the Universe and Humanity.
4. Esoteric teaching also informs us that the totality of everything is the Universal Soul, so that any action we take, however small, has an effect upon this phenomenon since our soul is an ‘emanation’ or partial manifestation of that Universal Soul.

The Human Soul

Underlying, and at the heart of the premises outlined above is the existence of the human soul. The Rosicrucian Order teaches that the human body, along with all things in the universe, is composed of atoms that vibrate constantly under the effect of something called ‘spirit

energy’ that permeates the material universe. In this way we are directly related to the phenomenon of existence. However, what distinguishes human beings from the inanimate, material universe is the possession of a *soul* which accompanies another force that vitalises and animates the body. The soul is imbued with the qualities of intelligence and consciousness and as stated above, is an emanation of the Universal Soul, the totality of creation.

As the human soul possesses to varying intensities all qualities and attributes of the Universal Soul, it can to an extent therefore be considered as being ‘pure, perfect and omniscient’. But it is also constantly striving to evolve itself towards more and more all-emcompassing states of the Universal Soul. The outward manifestation in daily life of the soul is what Rosicrucians call the ‘soul personality’, which reflects the level to which the soul has encompassed its ‘superset’, the Universal Soul. In an absolute sense then, the soul, and hence its soul personality are not perfect, but are evolving.

In esoteric lore, this incompleteness or ‘imperfection’ came about through the ‘Fall of Man’, and given our intimate connection to the universal consciousness which permits our state of existence, we can postulate that we are, each of us, a *microcosm* of the Divine Essence or universal consciousness that permeates everything in the universe. We therefore already possess within us as a potential, *Absolute Wisdom*: the totality of all knowledge and experience we can ever accumulate. This is an important factor in the operation of spiritual alchemy and must be uppermost in our minds if we are to grasp the nature of the ‘Great Work’ which esoterically describes the alchemical process undertaken by the initiate. We are microcosms of the universal





Figure 2: Man is a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm that is the universe.

consciousness permeating the whole universe, and we therefore already have within us, well within our reach, this Absolute Wisdom.

It is a term that denotes the hidden and generally inaccessible part of our consciousness that is closest to the universal consciousness or Mind of God. And by dint of this connection, it incorporates universal truths. It is the font of knowledge that the initiate aspires to in tandem with his or her spiritual development, and is the goal of spiritual alchemy in the sense of becoming at one with divinity and what we might call 'finding oneself'. Rosicrucians call this goal the 'Mastery of Self' which can be defined as *"...an experience where one personally knows, through direct knowledge, the source of all being."*

The Great Work

From what has been said, and making the case for what we term 'Spiritual Alchemy', it follows that every human being is both a material and a spiritual microcosm of the Divine macrocosm (see Figure 2). This means that each of us is an *agent* for cosmic forces that are continually operating on the physical and metaphysical planes of Universal Creation, whether we are aware of it or not. However, through mystical, alchemical practise, the initiate participates more fully in the Great Work; in other words, in Cosmic Evolution as it is taking place in the universe, in nature, and in each person. The goal of Spiritual Alchemy is specifically to help us to develop and use these powers constructively for the well-being of ourselves and others. Spiritual Alchemy, as perceived by Rosicrucians, is therefore, a special means of achieving our

mystical quest and of perfecting ourselves inwardly. This ultimate goal of alchemical work is generally referred to as the 'Philosopher's Stone'.

As we have now made mention of the Philosopher's Stone, some kind of definition is called for. It is referred to in alchemical writings under several other names such as the 'Elixir Vitae', the 'Grand Magisterium' and the 'Red Tincture'. The sole purpose of procuring this substance through *physical* alchemical work relates to its property as the universal agent of transformation. Once obtained, it is used to 'perfect imperfection' in all things by a process called 'projection'. At the *physical* level it has the ability to transmute base metals into gold, while at the philosophical or *metaphysical* level it is the *realisation of potential* and is a *catalyst for change*, transforming the dedicated mystic into the 'Illumined Philosopher'.

The Tria Prima

Having covered the *raison d'être* of spiritual alchemy and our place in the scheme of creation, let us now look at a metaphysical structure called the *Tria Prima* (the 'three in one') which is the term used to describe the triangular arrangement in Figure 3. Something we must keep in mind as we examine this facet of alchemy is the confusing sets of theories that developed regarding the relationships of the qualities that constitute this metaphysical structure. Essentially it is composed of the four classical 'elements' (earth, water, air and fire) and the principles of sulphur, mercury and salt. And there are also several other correspondences generally associated with these constituents.

The whole forms a triangle reflecting the fundamental Rosicrucian principle of the 'Law of the Triangle'. This law states that *"a perfect manifestation cannot be produced without the union of two conditions of opposite polarity"* (the active and passive in this case), and indeed, we find

Traditionally Sulphur and Mercury are, at the physical level, considered the *seeds* of all metals, one being male, the other female.

that the Tria Prima, and alchemy generally, operates in this manner. This is an important law and is integral to the operation of the Tria Prima.

The Sulphur – Mercury Theory

The Tria Prima of Paracelsus developed from the dualistic Sulphur – Mercury Theory of the Arabs who, in their turn, inherited it from antiquity, namely Graeco-Egyptian



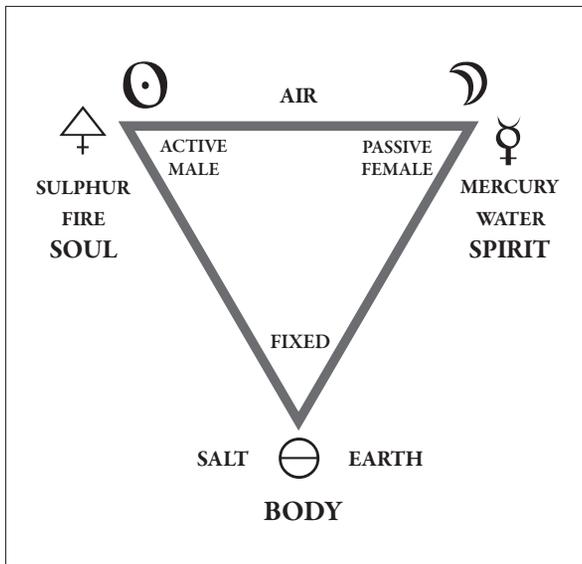


Figure 3: The metaphysical structure of the Tria Prima.

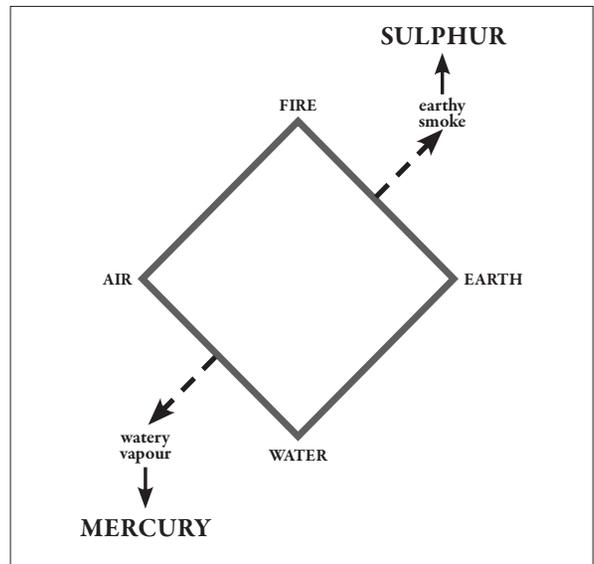


Figure 4: The Sulphur - Mercury Theory diagrammatically represented.

thought, although its ultimate origin is obscure. This particular theory dominated alchemy for several centuries. Traditionally Sulphur and Mercury are, at the physical level, considered as the *seeds* of all metals. Sulphur is considered male and Mercury female. Metaphysically speaking these two principles are inherent in everything including humans. The art of alchemy then is to integrate the qualities of Sulphur and Mercury in order to produce the 'alchemical marriage' that ultimately leads to the *Philosopher's Stone*.

In the Sulphur-Mercury theory, Sulphur is represented by the Sun, is masculine and is linked to the Fire element (hot and dry). Mercury is represented by the Moon, is feminine, and is linked to the Water element (cold and wet) [Figure 4]. Their interaction, namely the union of masculine and feminine, ultimately yields the elixir for producing gold. In fact, we might even place gold at the lower apex of our triangle to convey this union, and we are already heading toward the triad of principles we see in the Paracelsian figure. The analogy to spiritual alchemy is clear where gold, being the purest of metals of the ancient world, is representative of the purity of the soul. In the text of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes it states:

The Sun is its father, the Moon its mother, the wind bath carried it in its belly, the earth its nurse...

According to this text, gold (by dint of its purity, the Philosopher's Stone) has the Sun for its *father* (with Fire and philosophical Sulphur which bestows a gold colour), and the Moon for its *mother* (with Water and philosophical Mercury which bestows a silver colour).

Mercury, in this dualistic theory is the ground substance or matrix of the Stone. The 'wind' that is referred to above equates with Air, the volatile element, representing the rising vapour in the distillation stage carried out in a still, a vessel that is often referred to as the 'Philosopher's Egg'. The rising of volatile spirit in the form of Air is analogous to the death of the body and release of the vital energy that animates all the cells. The element of Air carries the 'Stone' aloft like a seed, and the earth nourishes it and brings it to maturity.¹

The Sulphur-Mercury-Salt Theory

Considering now the Tria Prima of Paracelsus: to the Mercury-Sulphur Theory he added a third principle, Salt. In this arrangement Sulphur (the Soul) is the cause of structure, substance and combustibility, being also the agent of growth. Mercury (the Spirit) provides the vaporous and liquid quality, penetrating and enlivening things while Salt (the Body) holds matter together by giving it fixity and firmness.² Of course, given the preceding remarks concerning the workings of the Sulphur-Mercury Theory, it was probable that the third principle of Salt was already implied before its actual association by Paracelsus. He describes the working of the Tria Prima as follows:

Know then that all the seven metals are born from a threefold matter, namely Mercury, Sulphur and Salt... Mercury is the Spirit, Sulphur is the Soul and Salt is the Body... the Soul which is indeed Sulphur unites those two contraries, the body and



the spirit, and changes them into one essence.³

He seems to be telling us that the Soul is an intermediary between Spirit and Nature, hence the relationship of Sulphur to the volatile Air we see in the diagram. He also assigns three other qualities to those already outlined which have a more *physical* nature:

*The three principles from which all things are born and generated are phlegm, fat and ash. The phlegm is Mercurius, the fat is Sulphur and the ash is Salt. For that which smokes and evaporates over the fire is mercury; what flames and is burnt is Sulphur; and all ash is Salt.*⁴

Graphically demonstrating the Sulphur-Mercury-Salt Theory is an emblematic illustration from the *Book of Lambspring* published in 1625 (see Figure 5). It shows a deer and unicorn meeting in a forest clearing. The forest represents the Body while the deer and unicorn symbolise Soul (Sulphur) and Spirit (Mercury) respectively. The accompanying text brings together the metaphysical concept of alchemy and the associated physical and mental work required of the alchemist or mystic, it says:

*He that knows how to tame and master them by Art,
To couple them together,
And to lead them in and out of the forest,
May justly be called a Master.
For we rightly judge*



Figure 5: Graphically demonstrating the Sulphur - Mercury - Salt Theory is an emblematic illustration from the *Book of Lambspring* published in 1625. The forest represents the Body while the deer and unicorn symbolise Soul (Sulphur) and Spirit (Mercury) respectively.

*That he has attained the golden flesh,
And may triumph everywhere...*

Double Mercury

Having introduced the theatre within which the alchemical mercury operates, we can now take a closer look at its role in the alchemical process. The elusiveness of Mercury is embodied in one of its descriptions, that of 'double mercury'. In traditional alchemy, Mercurius is produced by the union of Sulphur and 'Argent Vive' (known in English as 'quicksilver').⁵ Argent Vive is termed by alchemists as 'first mercury' and here we have the clue... *First Mercury* is the initial spirit principle acting in conjunction with Sulphur in the *Tria Prima* which in turn leads to the production of 'Philosophical Mercury' or Mercurius, the transmuting agency equating to the Philosopher's Stone at the lower or

The elusiveness of Mercury is embodied in one of its descriptions, that of 'double mercury'.

third point of the triangle.

The figure of Mercurius then, often described as 'mercurial water', has the attributes of both fiery Sulphur and watery First Mercury and this fire and water combination is in keeping with the transmuting properties required on the body or substance being worked on.

An alchemical engraving from Michael Maier's alchemical series *Atalanta Fugiens*, first published in 1617 (Figure 6), goes toward illustrating this. It shows



Figure 6: *Double Mercury*; an alchemical engraving from Michael Maier's alchemical series *Atalanta Fugiens*, first published in 1617 showing the principles of Sulphur and First Mercury acknowledging the figure of Mercurius in his guise of Hermes.



the principles of Sulphur and Mercury acknowledging the figure of Mercurius in the guise of Hermes. First Mercury, who is seated, holds a caduceus in his left hand while Hermes/Mercurius holds it in his right hand. Both Sulphur and First Mercury are looking towards Mercurius. The emblem reflects the double nature of Mercury in that Sulphur and First Mercury are the 'Father' and 'Mother' of Philosophical Mercury, namely Mercurius.

Mercury: Agent of Transmutation

As already stated, Mercury represents the universal agent of transmutation, so let's briefly look at one particular alchemical emblem or mandala that conveys this property. It is from the 'Twelve Keys' of the pseudonymous Basil Valentine who appears to have lived in the early 15th century (see Figure 7). This emblem also appeared in Michael Maier's *Tripus Aureus* ('Golden Tripod') of 1618.

Central to the emblem is the figure of Mercurius (reflecting his role in alchemy) holding a caduceus rod in each hand. He is flanked by two figures leaning toward him and obviously in the process of some kind of action. Also flanking Mercurius are the Sun and Moon representing the male and female (active and passive) aspects. Below him is a double winged object which we might see as symbolising the ascending human soul personality.

Although the names and forms of this figurative symbol are diverse, Mercurius is essentially *one thing*, one matter. He is present everywhere at all times during the alchemical process.⁶ With the addition of the principle Salt by Paracelsus, the role of Mercury becomes confusing; this is why the epithet 'Double Mercury' is often used to describe its role as First Mercury and Mercurius.

Investigating this further, let's now look at another emblem that reinforces this central role of Mercury. Here is an 18th century engraving, also based on the work of the pseudonymous Basil Valentine (see Figure 8).

It is divided into two halves: one side, whose symbolism represents the *female* aspect, contains the moon and a group of seven droplets of water, while the other represents the *male* aspect in the symbols of the sun and a ball of fire. In the central column we see the three components of the *Tria Prima*: salt, mercury and sulphur in ascending order. At the base of the central column are the seven planets in the form of flowers while at its top is the figure of the *hermaphrodite* or androgyne.

To bring these elements together let's first impose the *Tria Prima* triangle on the emblem which immediately clarifies their association (see Figure 8a). As the figure shows, we might superimpose two triangles, one greater

and the other lesser, indicating the higher spiritual alchemical work and the lower physical alchemy. This highlights the subject of our discussion since we can now see that *mercury is central to both*. Reinforcing this we also see that the symbol of mercury also takes this position in the central column between salt and sulphur.

The work of the alchemist or initiate is skilfully depicted in the central column where we get the sense of rising or going upward as it is conveyed by the symbols of salt, mercury and sulphur. This is strengthened when we consider that the central column is seated on a mound of earth and culminates in the figure of the androgyne which itself stands atop the sulphur symbol with the portrayal of the rising phoenix inside it. The phoenix is a symbol of renewal and resurrection signifying the Philosopher's Stone while the hermaphrodite represents a uniting of both male (solar, sulphur) and female (moon, first mercury). We also observe a crown upon the head

As the agent of transmutation Mercury is the mediator by which the sun and moon become united.

of the hermaphrodite indicating attainment. We might see the compass and scythe as symbolising victory over life and death. The initiate or alchemist has to undergo a metaphysical death in order to attain a life that is better than was had previously.

As the agent of transmutation Mercury is the *mediator* by which the sun and moon become united and we see this portrayed in the emblem. The result of this unification is the embryonic Stone we see growing out of the earth mound. Mercury also has an association with water. In this guise of 'mercurial water' or the 'vital force of life', the nourishment required for growth of the embryonic Stone is provided.⁷



Figure 7: Mercury as the agent of transformation from the 'Twelve Keys' of the pseudonymous Basil Valentine first published in 1599.



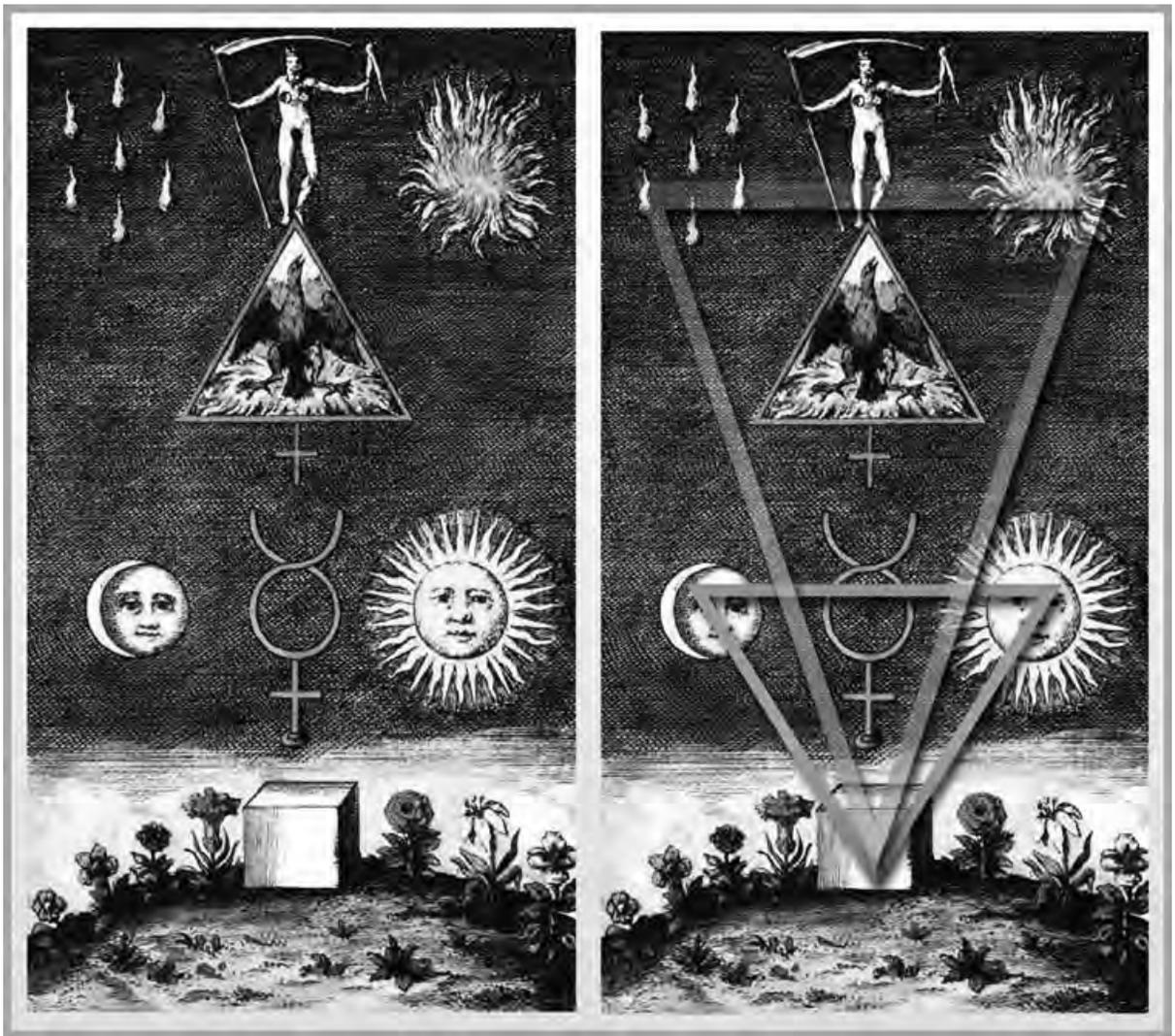


Figure 8: An 18th century engraving depicting the central role of Mercury as a mediator. On the right, the greater and lesser work is indicated by the triangles. (Alchemical emblem source is from www.alchemywebsite.com. The accompanying triangles are added by author of this article)

Conclusion

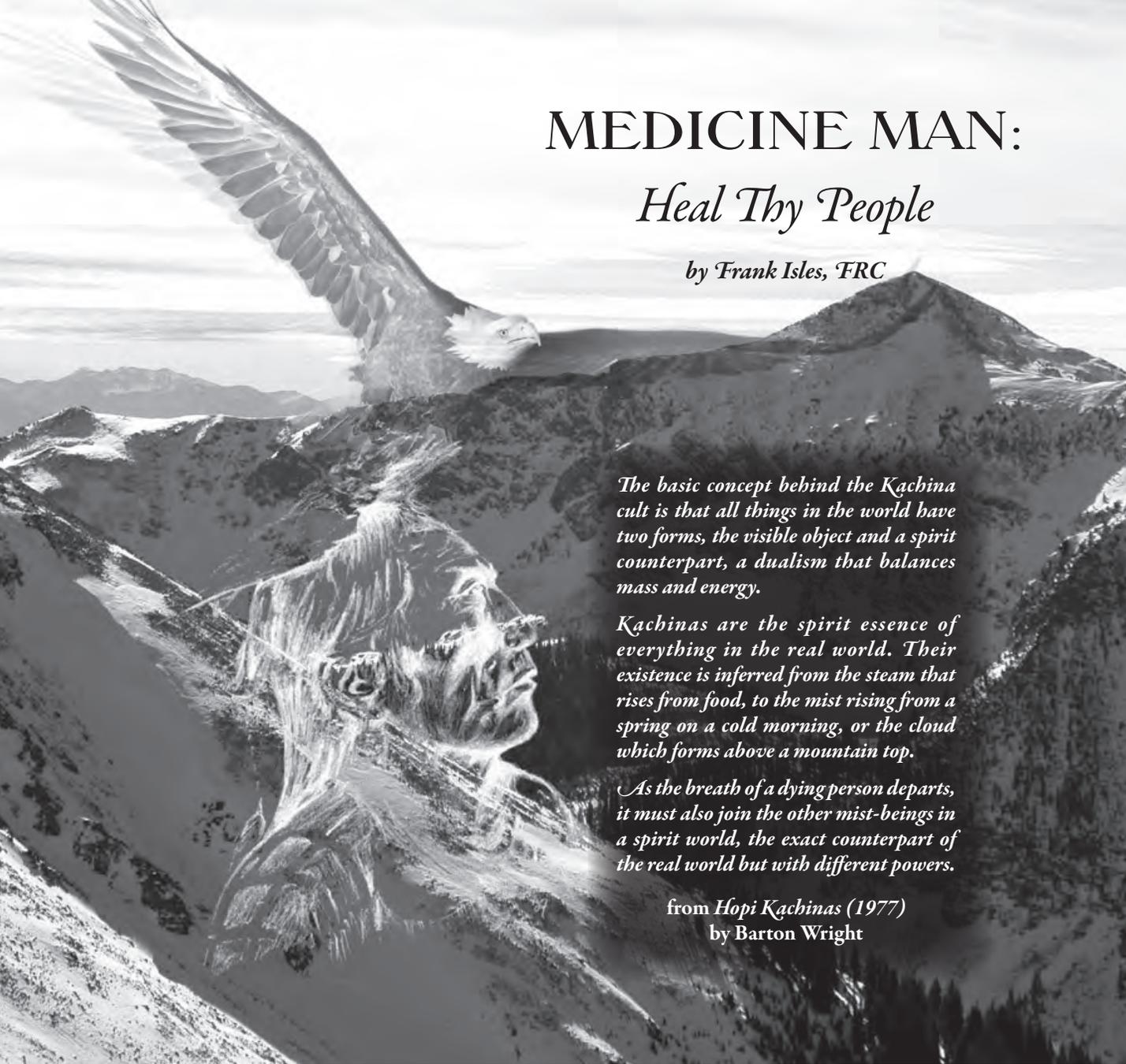
One might ask how this knowledge of Mercury and its nature can be useful to us practically? After all, we are talking metaphysics rather than about something tangible we can grasp in our hands. If we consider the nature of *consciousness* we might be looking in the right direction to appreciate the metaphysical concepts of spiritual alchemy. We cannot physically grasp consciousness, yet we understand its power and nature (within limits) as self-evident. In the same way that consciousness is physically hidden from us, though we note its effects, so Mercury as a hidden 'force' is of a similar nature. There must however be a spiritual impulse or urge on the part of the initiate or alchemist, and direct contact in the form of meditation, to become aware of its role, but also to focus on its symbolism in the practical work undertaken to mould and spiritually evolve the human character and soul personality. Spiritual

alchemy is directly connected to consciousness and it is through a conscious awareness in the initiate's daily work of Mercury the *mediator*, that spiritual attainment will ultimately be accomplished.

Endnotes

1. Hanegraaf, Wouter (editor), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, Brill, 2006, pp. 25-6.
2. Abraham, Lyndy, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 176-7.
3. Quoted in: Read, John, *Prelude to Chemistry: An Outline of Alchemy, its Literature and Relationships*, Kessinger Reprint, p. 27.
4. *Ibid.* p. 28.
5. Abraham, p. 124.
6. *Ibid.* p. 125.
7. *Ibid.* p. 128.





MEDICINE MAN:

Heal Thy People

by Frank Isles, FRC

The basic concept behind the Kachina cult is that all things in the world have two forms, the visible object and a spirit counterpart, a dualism that balances mass and energy.

Kachinas are the spirit essence of everything in the real world. Their existence is inferred from the steam that rises from food, to the mist rising from a spring on a cold morning, or the cloud which forms above a mountain top.

As the breath of a dying person departs, it must also join the other mist-beings in a spirit world, the exact counterpart of the real world but with different powers.

from *Hopi Kachinas* (1977)
by Barton Wright

AT THE HEIGHT OF the Great Depression, Jon, a 12 year old Hopi Native American boy lay dying in a city hospital in Flagstaff, Arizona. He had been ill on and off for several years, and with both mother and father deceased, his only remaining family were his maternal grandparents now well in their eighties. Despite assistance from a local charity, Jon had received very little modern education and was ill prepared for the coarse ways and pace of city life. For a month he had lain mostly alone in the ward. The doctors and nurses tending him had been kind but devoid of warmth and emotion; and he sensed painfully that they were not of his family, his lineage, his heritage, and he knew as well that they knew he would soon be gone.

Late one night, as he lay in the dark room hearing the occasional ambulance siren as it arrived in casualty, he started feeling strangely detached from and disinterest in the affairs of life, in particular the stressful and hurried ways of the hospital and the many noisy city people who came and went every day. Lying there, he could feel the cold, numbing presence of death creeping up his legs, and he knew his end was near. With calmness he accepted his fate and closed his eyes as he drifted off into unconsciousness.

Suddenly, he became aware of a presence, and despite the pitch darkness, standing by his bed and clearly visible, was a tall Kachina dressed in a dancing kilt and sash, carrying a blue feather in his left hand. For years, Jon had



tried to understand and embrace the ways of white people who seemed to own everything and have power over all things. His aged grandparents had taught him many things from their past, but it had all been starkly at odds with the interests of the other children at school, none of whom had shown him any real friendship or interest in the ways of his people.

Because of his frailty, and despite the ardent wishes of his grandparents, Jon had not been initiated into the ways of his people. His grandparents had given all they could of what they had learnt themselves, but even they had lost much of what had once permeated their people. The only thing Jon knew of Kachinas was through stories his grandmother had sung to him, so he was apprehensive as his Kachina spoke.

"I am your Guardian Spirit. I have guarded you always, but you have been careless. I will wait here and watch over your body and protect you on your journey."

With tremendous power, a gust of wind lifted Jon like a feather and swept him out of the hospital, out of city and over to the distant mountains. Below him passed vast flat mesas, deep ravines, revered old water holes, and finally the old pueblo. Walking into his home, he saw his grandmother affectionately combing his grandfather's hair. They did not see him, but he felt great love and respect for them. And then, as a feather in the wind, he was swept away again. Passing below him he saw the sacred places of his people, places of legend and power, and the Kachinas walking by in beauty, each one facing him and displaying briefly an object of meaning. Then a great realisation came upon him, and he knew he had decisions to make and years of trials yet to endure before he would see these scenes again. In an instant the experience was over, Jon was in limbo, unaware of anything, the initiation was over, it was done!

The Kachina Speaks

"My nephew, you have learned your lesson," the Kachina said, *"but you have a long life ahead of you and many lessons yet to learn. Go back, go back to the hospital and to your bed. You*



Silent warrior Kachina by Rabbit. (Source: <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Pictures/Native-Artwork-page2.html>)

will see a dying boy lying there, but do not be afraid, I will be at your side always, even when you cannot see me. Put your arms around his neck and warm yourself, and you will soon return to life. But hurry, before the people bury you."

Jon obeyed, his body warmed and stirred back into life. Two nurses were next to him and one of them holding his hand said with excitement, *"his pulse is back, his heart's beating again; this is incredible, it's been hours!"* When Jon opened his eyes, the other nurse looking at him with kindness and bewilderment said, *"Jon, you passed away last night; we were so sad. But as you did not cool off as all others have in the past, we left you until now. We were about to take you to be buried by your people."* The following day while still in bed, Jon's Kachina appeared again.



As the tribal holy man the 'Medicine Man' was the one called upon to deal with the mysterious. Life's mysteries however extend beyond medication. He was the tribe's minister, philosopher, singer, ritualist, artist, physician, prophet, and seer

"Some day my boy, you will be an important man in the ceremonies. You will learn more than your parents and grandparents ever knew, and you will preserve for your people the ways of the past. But if you do not obey the callings of your heart, if you do not obey my every command, you will be



punished, but only four times. You will be given only four trials in your life, and when you face the fifth, your life will end. Live well therefore, live in the ways of our people and I will hold you lightly, as between two fingers. But if you disobey me I will drop you, and you will never return. Goodbye, I am ever at your side."

Then, taking a step back, the Kachina raised his left hand in salutation and faded from sight as a soft eagle feather rose from the floor, floated through the door and vanished.

Jon led an active and rugged life, and never forgot his Guardian Spirit's admonition. In the many times of danger and stress he had to endure, he felt the presence at his side of his Kachina guarding and protecting him so he could face and overcome the trials he was destined to undergo. For the rest of his life he remained at the pueblo, though also learned eventually the modern ways, and the language of city people. But he lived a life of frugality in service to his own people. He was initiated into the secrets of his ancestors, learned the ancient rituals and became a modern 'Medicine Man'.

Holy Man: Medicine Man

This is one instance of how a Native American became a modern Medicine Man. It wasn't always done in this way. Frequently however, there was a vision or psychic experience around the age of 12 or 13, and the boy then knew his destiny. The Medicine Man's contact with his



The sacred medicine bundle was the holiest of items among the Native Americans. Each bundle contained a varied collection of objects and representations of spiritual significance, from animal skins and effigies to ceremonial pipes. Stewardship of these bundles was usually vested in a member of a tribal clan or society, although the power of the bundle was believed to be beneficial to the entire tribe. The bundles were opened on specific occasions, and according to precise ritual. (Source: http://www.barefootworld.net/sacred_bundle.html)



Howard Terpning's Blessing from the Medicine Man. In his psychic, psychological and psychiatric work the Medicine Man excelled. He would heal the whole man or woman. (Source: <http://itooamhere.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/appreciating-native-american-art.html>)

fellow tribesmen was close and frequent. He was known and watched from infancy. His advice, visions and premonitions had to be successful most of the time or he would lose the respect of the tribe. He therefore had to be good at what he did.

You may recall how in the New Testament Jesus was ridiculed in his home town. His neighbours dared him to demonstrate his powers, and that was not the best environment for good and noble works. The instances of rejection of genius by friends, relatives, home towns and native countries are numerous. Yet, in the instance of the Medicine Man, serving under the most trying of conditions, we find tribal acceptance.

Just who were the Native American Medicine Men and what services did they perform? The title is deceptive, for it seems that the word "medicine" was associated with any mysterious force. As the tribal holy man was the one called upon to deal with the mysterious and the unexplained, he was in many ways the one person above all who could deliver true healing to his tribe. Hence he was a true 'Medicine Man'.

Life's mysteries however, extend beyond medication. We must therefore consider the title in its broadest possible sense. He was the tribe's minister, philosopher, singer, ritualist, artist, physician, prophet, seer, psychologist, historian, and much more. Primarily however, he was a holy man who cared more for his people and their history and traditions than any others alive.

In the field of physical therapeutics, the Medicine Men made extensive and notable contributions. Sweat baths, sun bathing, spinal manipulation and counter irritation (zone and reflex therapy) were reportedly used by them. They also set broken bones, performed bloodletting, pulled teeth and bandaged wounds. They prescribed diets as well as fasts. Their herbal, animal and mineral remedies have been a constant source from which





Kiva Kachina Dance by Ray Naha: *The Medicine Man, as a holy man, fostered and guided the tribe's cosmology and approaches to life's mysteries. Here a dance is performed in a 'kiva' or temple.* (Source: <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Pictures/Native-Artwork-page3.html>)

modern pharmaceutical and nutrition experts are even now still drawing. They discovered such items as castor oil, cascara, numerous diuretics, emetics to induce vomiting and excrete poisons, anaesthetics to kill pain, as well as

The Medicine Man, as a holy man, fostered and guided the tribe's cosmology and approaches to life's mysteries.

sedative and hypnotic herbs. They discovered quinine bark for the control of malaria and used willow bark, containing the ingredients of aspirin, for the symptomatic relief of rheumatism and arthritis.

Traditionally, some Native Americans believed that within the area where the disease occurred, a plant or herb for its treatment was also to be found. They accumulated deep insight into the uses of many herbal remedies, a knowledge that has for the most part not survived into the 21st century. The Incas of Peru for example, would send runners to the seashore for fresh fish to cure goitre due to the lack of iodine in the high altitude streams. In the Yucatan and other areas of Central America, 2000 years before Columbus, native healers filled dental cavities, fitted false teeth and applied artificial limbs. Their skill with surgical instruments was fine enough to relieve pressure in the skull through the difficult art of trepanning. And it is believed they even managed Caesarean delivery long before the birth of Julius Caesar.

In his book *La Filosofía Nahuatl*, the famous Mexican author Miguel Leon Portilla notes that the Aztec wise men distinguished between a true doctor 'el verdadero medico' and a 'witch doctor,' who generally relied on superstitious practices. One of the criteria for differentiation was that a true doctor knew how 'to concert the bones'.

In his psychic, psychological and psychiatric work, the Medicine Man excelled. He realised something perhaps better than some modern physicians do. A patient is much more than a broken bone, a high fever or a slipped disk. The holy man would heal the whole person. He knew that somatic ailments can leave psychic scars and vice versa, and he therefore saw fit to incorporate the powers of music, art, religion, psychology and philosophy in his treatments. Full and excellent rapport was one of his usual rewards. Many of the technique he used mystify us today, but that they were effective and resulted in genuine cures is not in doubt.

Astral Travel

Instances of psychic projection (astral travel) as Jon experienced, were not uncommon. The Medicine Man tried and no doubt often succeeded in manipulating the psychic forces involved in healing processes in order to alleviate suffering. One can well imagine the depth of psychotherapy involved during a week of continual treatment with attendant drumming, chanting, rituals, sand-paintings, and visits from loved ones. The healing attributed to great Medicine Men of the past are analogous to the miracles of the New Testament, and may well have been of the same calibre and power.

The following unusual case shows some aspects of the Medicine Man's approach. A 10-year-old boy had been unsuccessfully treated for a bladder condition by several doctors. A Cherokee Medicine Man was called, and as he warmed his hands over some hot coals, he had the boy strip to the waist. Over the lower back in the region of the kidneys, he placed his warm hands directly over the boy's kidneys. As he softly rubbed the area, he chanted some old healing words, perhaps what Westerners would call a prayer. Then he whistled a single note, which he repeated several times over and finally announced he was finished, departed, and the boy was cured. Eighty years later the patient asserted that since that day, he had never again had a recurrence of his ailment. The use of sounds, chants and the laying on of hands for therapeutic purposes is not new to the Native Americans, and there is ample evidence to suggest that there existed in past centuries some truly notable holy men who possessed not only great psychic power, but spiritual maturity that far exceeded that of the norm.

Hard as it may be to believe, Medicine Men reputedly even cured gallstones. After working on the patient's abdomen, the Medicine Man would suddenly open his hand to reveal a stone, no doubt meant to be the actual gallstone. Of course it may have been a mere



magicians trick to begin with, but it could equally have been a supreme ability to manipulate reality, and by so doing to cause miraculous cures to manifest. The patient's belief that the trouble was something tangible, altered the perceived reality for good and removed the affliction. The Medicine Man's unusual powers were also directed at such practical duties as directing his tribe to the location of game and warning them of the approach of an enemy party. Custer's Last Stand is perhaps a prime example of the latter phenomenal practice. Story has it that the famous Sitting Bull, who was a Medicine Man, had a vision of the approach of General Custer and his men prior to their historic battle.

As the premier holy man of the tribe, the Medicine Man fostered and guided the tribe's cosmology and approaches to life's mysteries. Pueblos, Navahos and other tribes recognised the sun as the most powerful of creative forces; the primal source of life. In Taos, every spring, the members of each kiva or temple 'worked for the sun.' For six weeks they were confined to the kiva in a state of withdrawal from the outside world and rarely spoke during this period. With pale cheeks and gazes turned inwards, in the darkness of the kiva the initiates were oriented to the infinitely expanding radiance of the Sun, the imbuer of all things with life. Towards the end of this immense endurance rite, they were wholly enraptured, and 'initiated into the sun.'

In western literature similar extended ecstatic states have been described by Honoré de Balzac in *Louis Lambert* and by Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke in his classic book *Cosmic Consciousness*. Not understanding these states, society has too frequently regarded them as periods of mental instability. But such episodes, when done in a true

initiativ manner have inevitably been followed by deep renewal and long periods of creative productivity on the part of the participants.

James Hobbs, in his book *Life in the Far West*, throws some interesting light on 19th century Comanche beliefs. There is little doubt that they had a firm belief in, and commitment to a future existence beyond life on earth. Their afterlife began beyond the setting sun in the west. They believed in a Great Spirit from which they came, and considered the Sun as the visible means through which the Great Spirit was revealed.

In fact the Comanches found it difficult to separate the two, and humbly revered the Great Spirit through their worship of the Sun. It was a dominant feature of their beliefs, and they revered it as the source of all living things. The Sun was the primordial principle of all life, the source of all things. The Earth was worshipped as a 'Mother,' as it was the producer of all that sustained life. In death, the Comanches returned to the 'Father,' partook of the joys of a veritable 'happy hunting ground,' and after a time, returned to mother Earth to be reborn in order to keep up the population and power of the tribe.

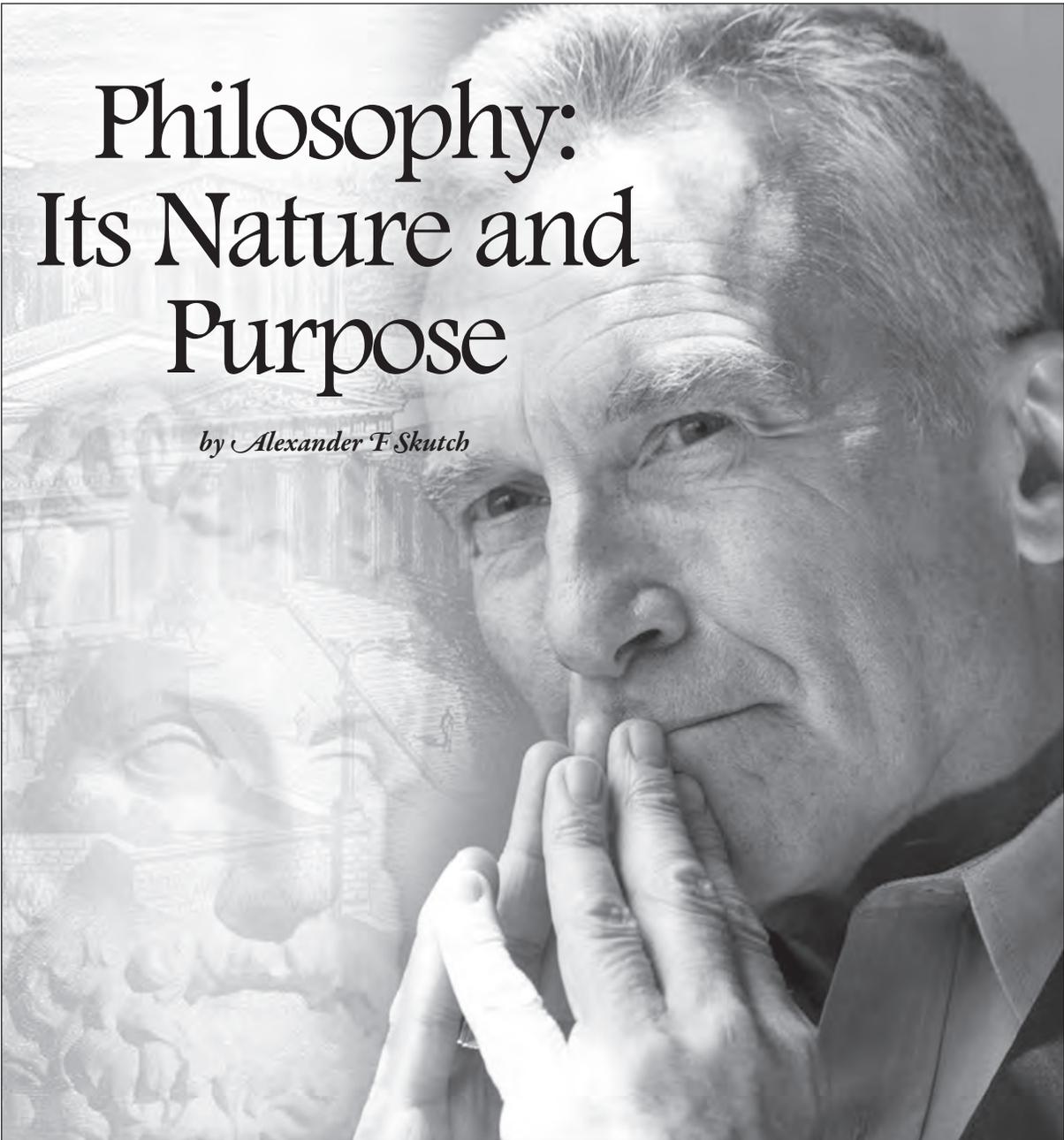
Of course the abilities and teachings of the Medicine Men varied with each tribe, and one of the greatest assets of any tribe was to have a Medicine Man of high calibre. Over the past century, as western minds have slowly come to understand the central role of the Medicine Man in Native American culture, there has been a growing sense of respect and even reverence for the central role played by such individuals. One of the deepest, most mystical and moving descriptions of the crucial role of the Medicine Man in Native American societies of the past (both North and South America), emerged in a series of books written by the anthropologist Carlos Castaneda between the late 1960s and 1980s.

The ancient Native American view of life on earth, and the links that bind all living things to each other, is something every western educated person would do well to research, come to understand and live by. There is a beauty and respect for nature that is so desperately needed in today's world. With the failure of various treaties on climate change now threatening the long-term existence of life on earth, every person would do well to delve into the higher aspects of the ancestral American view of the so-called 'Great Hoop of Life,' a sphere of reality within which all animate and inanimate things exist and interact with each other in equitable ways in accordance with natural justice and what in other parts of the world is called the 'law of karma.' Adherence to the laws governing the Great Hoop and its contents, was and remains the most important mission of every Medicine Man, past and present.



Sun worship: The Sun was regarded as the visible means through which the Great Spirit revealed himself. Inset shows an 1886 engraving of Cree Indians performing a Sun Dance. (Source: <http://fcit.usf.edu/florida/photos/native/lemoyne/lemoyne8/lemoy804.htm>)





Philosophy: Its Nature and Purpose

by *Alexander F Skutch*

PHILOSOPHY BEGINS with wonder. To understand what it is, we must go back to its origins. First among the things of wonder is the world itself. How did it begin? Of what is it made? How is it governed? Even children ask their parents these fundamental questions.

Western philosophy today evolved from the genius of the ancient Greeks. They established and outlined it. Their ideas were such that until modern times no European thinker made any advances of outstanding originality. The earliest Greek philosophers flourished in the prosperous

Ionian cities on the Eastern shore of the Aegean Sea, in Asia Minor. They were largely interested in physical problems. Above all they sought to discover some single substance of whose modifications all the multiplicity of things is composed.

Wonder, or curiosity, is one of the fundamental attributes of the human mind, which has made us what we are. But even more deeply rooted and insistent is the desire to lead a good and satisfying life, our yearning for happiness. The penetrating intellects of the Greek thinkers soon perceived the intimate connection between their

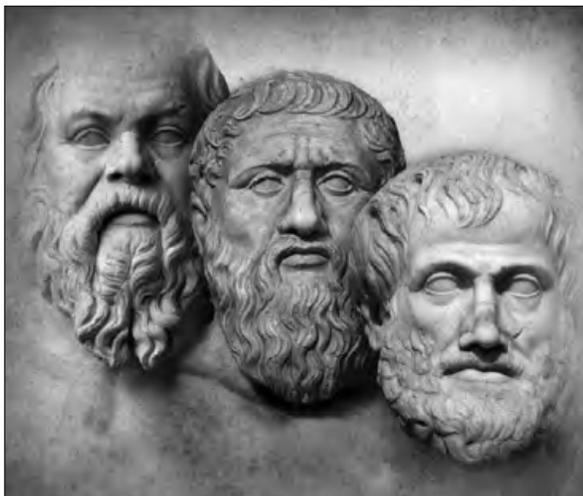


desire to know and their yearning for happiness. We do not live in a vacuum, but in a world which has definite modes of procedure, known as the 'laws of nature'. Moreover, we also have definite characteristics. We have our human nature, which is largely inherited, but subject to modification by social and individual effort. This must also be taken into account by anyone who earnestly desires a good and happy life. Only by understanding ourselves and the world can we intelligently pursue our highest goals and set happiness on a firm foundation.

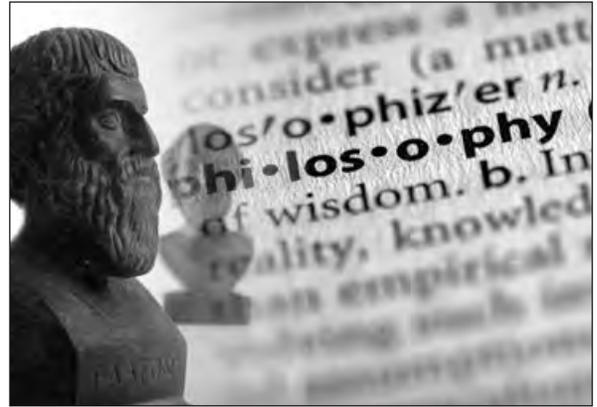
The great systems of Greek philosophy sprang from the intimate union of two fundamental and interrelated human interests: the thirst for knowledge and the yearning for happiness and fulfilment. Essentially there were three divisions to Greek thinking: logic, physics, and ethics.

- *Logic* is the study of pure thought, independent of any objects.
- *Physics* is the study of how things happen in the world of material objects.
- *Ethics* is the study of how things ought to happen in the world of human beings.

With such a vast field, the cultivation of philosophy became a large undertaking, fit to engross one's best faculties for a whole lifetime. Some thinkers placed more emphasis on one division of philosophy than on another. Socrates (c.469-399 BCE), one of the pioneers, was scarcely interested in physics; but in his later years he seems to have devoted most of his time to impressing on his contemporaries the need for expert knowledge, and a better understanding of the terms associated with the leading of a good life.



Three faces of philosophy: From the back, Socrates, his disciple Plato, and Plato's pupil, Aristotle.



Although the philosopher ardently desires true knowledge, he above all yearns for 'wisdom', which is the application of truth to life.

His disciple Plato (429-347 BCE) was far more concerned with logical, moral and political problems than with physics and cosmological speculation. Aristotle (384-322 BCE), who was Plato's pupil, is outstanding for the breadth of his interests and the scope of his writings. He wrote treatises on logic, physics (including long works on zoology), aesthetics, ethics, politics or the art of government, and even metaphysics or the discussion of

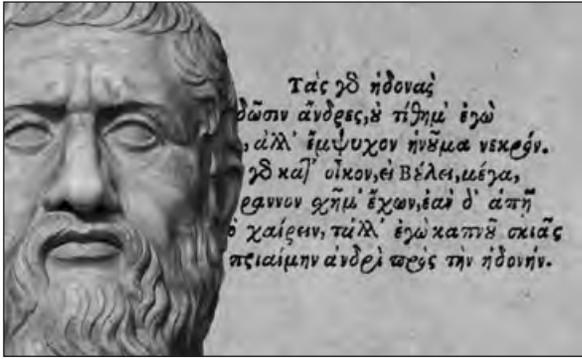
To understand what philosophy is, we must distinguish it from science and religion.

what lies beyond the world of phenomena, especially of God. The great Stoic system is also remarkable for its vast elaboration in many fields.

The second important centre of philosophical inquiry in ancient times was northern India, where thinkers no less acute than the Greeks, turned their attention to much the same problems and reached different conclusions. The *Nyaya* school of philosophical speculation is based on texts known as the *Nyaya Sutras*, which were written by Aksapada Gautama from around the 2nd century BCE. The Indians developed a logic comparable to that of Aristotle; in the *Vaisesika*, a metaphysical philosophy closely allied to the Nyaya school of thought, an atomic theory developed which has some resemblance to that of Leucippus and Democritus. But the avowed end of the six classical systems of Indian philosophy (Vedic systems) is the release from suffering and the attainment of enduring happiness. Their logic, their physical and cosmological speculations, their prescribed disciplines, were means to this supreme end.

In China, the third ancient centre of philosophical activity, the correct conduct of life or the attainment of communal harmony appears to have claimed relatively far greater attention than understanding of cosmic order. This





The term 'Socratic Dialogue' refers to works in which Socrates is a character discussing moral and philosophical problems; it is a genre of prose literary works developed in Greece at the turn of the fourth century BCE, preserved today in the dialogues of Plato and the Socratic works of Xenophon.



Taken together, the biblical Old and New Testament provide a frame of reference for human life whose comprehensiveness we can hardly deny, no matter how we may judge its correctness.

approach set them apart from Western philosophy where probing the nature of underlying reality was the prime end.

The Goal

What, then, is the goal of philosophy? When we consider philosophical endeavour in the light of its origins and its total scope, we might define it somewhat as follows: Philosophy is the attempt to give life significance, coherence, and stability by seeing it whole, and in relation to a greater whole. Nothing is more important to any being than its achieving a proper relation to the whole of which it is a part.

In the case of ourselves, the larger systems with which it is indispensable for us to cultivate proper relations include our families, our community, the natural world which supports us and, above all, the Universe which embraces all of these.

Philosophy and Science

To understand adequately what philosophy is, we must clearly distinguish it from certain related endeavours, especially science and religion. The scientist and the philosopher are equally dedicated to the *pursuit of truth*. In so far as they are loyal to their respective callings, they regard the acquisition and diffusion of truth or knowledge as a sacred obligation; and the deliberate distortion of truth should not be permitted.

But the scientist, in his professional capacity, is concerned merely with the *accumulation of factual knowledge*. Some scientists believe that the application of these facts to the conduct of life is no concern of theirs. The more impersonal their knowledge, the less relation it has to human problems and aspirations, the more highly they seem to value it. Although the philosopher, as the scientist, ardently desires true knowledge, he above all

yearns for *wisdom*, which is the application of truth to life. At the conclusion of the *Philebus*, a long Socratic dialogue written between 360 and 347 BCE which investigates the highest good, Plato assigned first place to measure and moderation, second place to beauty and perfection, and third place to mind and wisdom. Science and art, which include factual knowledge, came fourth from the top.

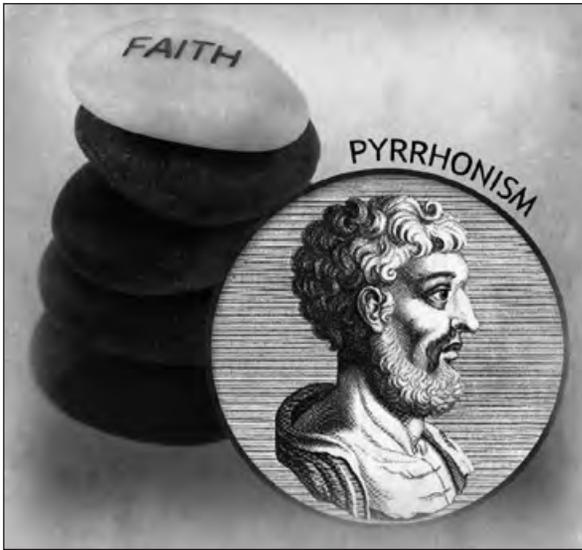
The aims of philosophy and religion are almost identical. Both have had the audacity to ask, and propose answers to the deepest questions.

That the truths which philosophy discovers must be related to the conduct of life is a necessary consequence of the philosophic endeavour to give life significance and stability by seeing it whole and in relation to a larger whole. Thus to define philosophy as 'love of truth' or the 'pursuit of truth' is not quite accurate; since this does not distinguish it from science. The literal meaning of the word 'philosophy' is *love of wisdom*. Wisdom is more than truth or factual knowledge, for it implies the application of this knowledge to life.

Philosophy and Religion

The bonds which join philosophy to religion are no less close than those which unite it with science, and they are even more massive. Most of the great philosophers were deeply religious men, although many could not accept the orthodox beliefs of their age and nation. And from this we may deduce the resemblances and differences between philosophy and religion. At its best, religion, no less than philosophy, strives to give life significance and stability by seeing it in relation to a larger whole. For this it needs, as in philosophy, a comprehensive view of the origin, nature and destiny of the world and of humanity. Taken together,





Pyrrho was the starting-point for a philosophical movement known as 'Pyrrhonism' that flourished several centuries after his own time. A devotee of this philosophy, Sextus Empiricus (depicted here), advises that we should suspend judgement about all beliefs. 'We should neither affirm any belief as true nor deny any belief as false. This view is known as Pyrrhonian scepticism, as distinguished from Academic scepticism, which, according to Sextus, denies knowledge altogether. (Adapted image and text source: <http://www.masterandmargarita.eu/en/02themas/h22.html>)

the biblical Old and New Testament provide a frame of reference for human life whose comprehensiveness we can hardly deny, no matter how we may judge its correctness.

The aims of philosophy and religion are then, almost identical. Both have had the audacity to ask, and propose answers to, the deepest questions, touching the grandest and most momentous problems which occur to the human mind. Yet despite their close resemblance in scope and aims, they differ profoundly in methods. This difference can be most succinctly expressed by saying that *philosophy is critical*, and *religion uncritical*.

Philosophy is constantly searching and testing. It desires the latest verified discoveries, from whatever source they may come. It insists on subjecting all alleged facts and all plausible explanations to merciless scrutiny, and it relentlessly rejects everything which will not withstand this probing.

Religion, on the other hand, rejects this critical examination. Once having accepted a solution of one of the grand cosmological or human problems, it regards the question as closed; no longer a fit topic for investigation and free discussion. What philosophy welcomes as indispensable to the intellectual life is anathema to an established church. For it, there is no greater crime than to question what the sacred books advance as indubitable facts, for to disprove them might undermine the very foundation of the whole elaborate doctrinal structure.

While Roman Catholicism ruled supreme in western Europe the convicted might procure pardon for some of the greatest of crimes against humanity, but to question articles of dogma was the unpardonable offence for which burning alive was prescribed.

In the measure that the human intellect is inquiring and original, the thinker inevitably comes into conflict with the dominant religious notions of the day. Any attempt to philosophise within the framework of an established religion is doomed to restriction and will not produce wisdom as we defined it above.

As has been stated, religion, no less than philosophy, strives to give life stability and significance by seeing it in relation to a larger whole. However, it is prevented from wholly achieving this because of its very dogmatic foundations. To achieve this comprehensive vision demands free inquiry and receptivity to all fresh insights, from whatever quarter they may come.

Faith

It is sometimes held that religion differs from philosophy in that the former demands faith, whereas the latter can dispense with this attribute. This is a false distinction; for *neither can dispense with faith*, although they need it in different degrees and with reference to different things. The faith required by religion often has reference to particular alleged happenings; and the more incredible they are, in the light of ordinary experience, the more merit is sometimes ascribed to unquestioning belief in their occurrence. Regarding faith as meritorious and desirable in itself, sometimes as the highest religious virtue and the surest road to salvation, religion has rarely taken pains to reduce the burden it must bear.

Philosophy, by striving for rational demonstration in every sphere where this is possible, has tried to reduce faith to a minimum.

Philosophy, by striving for rational demonstration in every sphere where this is possible, has tried to reduce faith to a minimum. Yet philosophy cannot dispense with faith without being driven to that extreme form of scepticism known as *Pyrrhonism*, which doubts all things, even the possibility of knowing anything. How, for example, can I be sure that I live in a world containing solid objects extended in space? When I dream, I seem to see and touch such objects, yet when I awake I recognise that they were unsubstantial creations of my own mind. Are not the things and people which I see, feel, and hear in my waking hours merely more vivid hallucinations of the same sort?



Does anything really exist outside my own mind?

Countless pages have been written on this problem, and it has become evident that the existence of an external world, containing solid extended bodies, is not strictly demonstrable *but demands an act of faith*. We need faith in the adequacy of our own psychic processes, in the essential honesty of nature of which we are parts, or, as the French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) put it, *“faith in the goodness of God, who does not constantly deceive us”*.

Moreover, philosophy could hardly maintain its investigative nature if there was a lack of faith that reality is somehow rational, purposeful or friendly, so that if we understand it and put ourselves in accord with it, it will support our highest aspirations. Far from being able to discard faith, philosophy requires a deeper, more serious and fundamental faith than religion, which often demands unquestioning belief in relatively trivial matters.

A Way of Life

The philosopher’s penchant for building vast ‘systems’ embracing the whole scope of human knowledge has been disparaged in recent times. Today there are many philosophers who restrict their professional activity to the analysis of the meaning of words and phrases, to logical investigations, or to the criticism of science and its methods.

In order to avoid errors and place its conclusions on a firm foundation, philosophy needs (and from ancient times has found a place for) such preliminary labour; just as biology needs microscopes and astronomy requires telescopes. But one whose philosophical work stops short with details of this sort does not deserve to be called a ‘philosopher’ in the traditional meaning of the word. If nothing else were essential, then the microscope maker would deserve to be called a biologist and the manufacturer of telescopes an astronomer. These analyses certainly do not fall under the heading of wisdom, which is what the philosopher has from ancient times aspired to win.

Although the philosophic system need not be as elaborate as the structural concepts erected by Aristotle in ancient times, or his more modern descendents, philosophy still attempts to give life significance, coherence and stability by seeing it as a whole, and in relation to a greater whole. At very least it requires a world view or cosmological doctrine, an interpretation of the nature of man, and an ethic or doctrine of values and conduct. These must together form a coherent, self-consistent body of thought in order to form a system, or at least the essential framework of one.

Because of the continuing incapacity of the strongly



‘Because of the continuing incapacity of the strongly established religions to assimilate and adjust their teaching to our modern scientific understanding of the cosmos, life and man, philosophy alone can guide humanity from its present deplorable confusion to its ultimate goal.

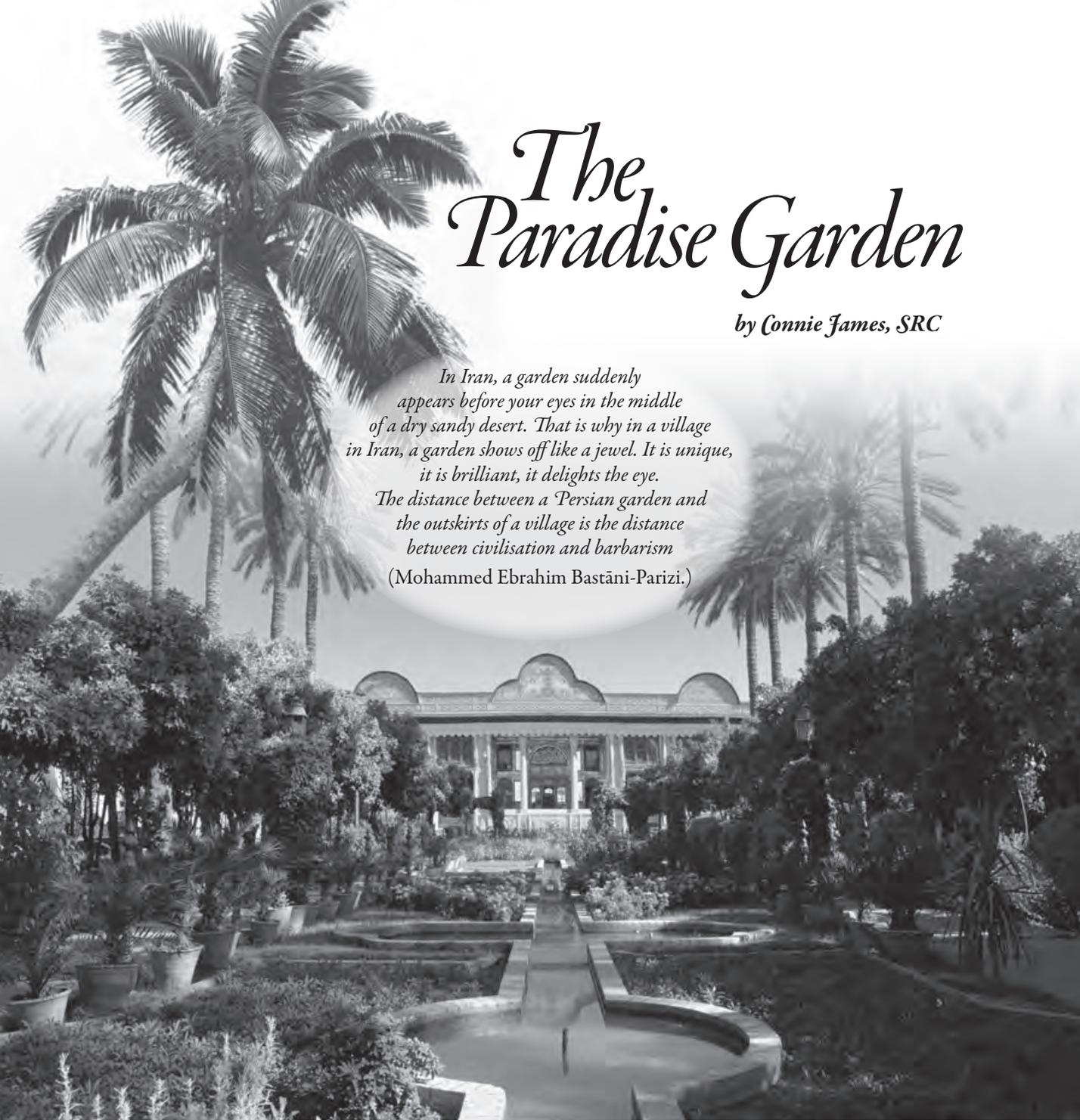
established religions to assimilate and adjust their teaching to our modern scientific understanding of the cosmos, life and man, philosophy alone can guide humanity from its present deplorable confusion to its ultimate goal. It is our best hope. Philosophy at its highest has had aims as lofty as religion at its highest, but its methods are far more adequate; for it is critical and capable of growth, whereas institutional religion clings desperately to outworn notions of a bygone age.

Philosophy, we should never forget, was in the days of its glory in the ancient world not simply an intellectual exercise but a *way of life*. The Stoic, the Epicurean, the Pythagorean, the Platonist or the Neo-Platonist did

Philosophy alone can guide humanity from its present deplorable confusion to its ultimate goal. It is our best hope.

not merely learn the principles of his philosophy; he lived it. When we consider all that this venerable term implies, perhaps it is audacious of anyone to claim for themselves the honourable title of philosopher. But one who aspires to it must above all endeavour to live like a philosopher; for the ability to expound philosophical concepts and doctrines does not of itself entitle anyone to this designation. The true philosopher must be ready to accept obligations and endure hardships, to modify his occupations and habits, the whole tenor of his life, as his philosophy demands.





The Paradise Garden

by *Connie James, SRC*

*In Iran, a garden suddenly
appears before your eyes in the middle
of a dry sandy desert. That is why in a village
in Iran, a garden shows off like a jewel. It is unique,
it is brilliant, it delights the eye.*

*The distance between a Persian garden and
the outskirts of a village is the distance
between civilisation and barbarism*

(Mohammed Ebrahim Bastāni-Parizi.)



ON THE MARVDASHT plain to the east of the Zagros Mountains in the Iranian province of Fārs, 43 kilometres (27 miles) from Persepolis, lie the scattered remains of the earliest known recorded garden.

It was here, at a site called *Pasargadae* by the Greeks, from the Persian *Pāsārgād*, where the real founder of the Persian Empire Cyrus II (the Great) built his capital and his tomb. Even today, some 2,500 years later, you can still see the remains of gleaming

white columns, set against a background of brown hills.

In order to understand the real significance of Persian gardens, both informal and formal, we need to put them in the context of the surrounding countryside of Iran. It's a land given to extremes in climate, from severe winters with blizzards, to burning summers with blinding dust storms. The mountains are for the main part barren and rocky, and the ever present deserts are covered with dust or a yellow slime where the water doesn't drain away. Within the desolation are green valleys and hidden





The idealised Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Garden of Eden or Paradise: The English word 'paradise' comes from an ancient Avestan Persian word for an exceptional kind of garden, pairi-daeza, meaning a 'walled enclosure', a retreat from the dangers of the world

forests. Elsewhere, the land can be dangerous and hostile to the unprepared visitor. The Persians, however, saw a latent inner beauty, like that of a jewel encased in rock. They left the countryside for the most part pristine, admiring it for what it was, as nature intended, and sacred as God's creation. Where land was required for human habitation, rather than scarring the earth, they helped make it blossom, a refuge not just for themselves, but for animals and rare plants as well. This was the ancient Persian paradigm.

Some people think that the four quadrants of the garden symbolised the four quadrants of the Persian Empire.

The English word 'paradise' comes from an ancient Avestan Persian word for an exceptional kind of garden, *pairi-daeza*. As a compound word, *pairidaeza* came to mean a celestial garden, a heavenly paradise on Earth; in effect a walled garden. The description of the Garden of Eden as a paradise is derived from this Persian idea, and some say, Eden was located in the northern Iranian Zagros Mountains. Classical Greek writers called Persian gardens *paradeisos* (plural, *paradeisoi*). The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, were said to have been built based on the Median (western Iranian) gardens of the Zagros Mountains.

Chāhār Bāgh

The style of Persian gardens can be both formal and informal. The formal gardens are the type found in front of

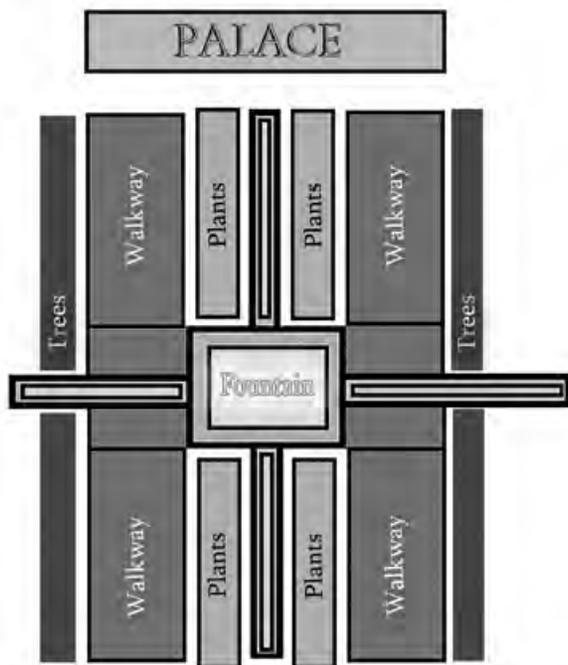
palaces, and are geometric in their layout. Cyrus' garden, the *Chāhār Bāgh*, meaning 'four gardens', consisted of four squares within a square; a quadripartite ground-plan. In addition to the various formal gardens in Iran, the gardens of the Taj Mahal in India are also an example of a formal garden. Examples of informal gardens are the family bāghs found on the outskirts of major Iranian cities such as Tehrān, Esfahān and Shirāz.

In Persian (Fārsi,) the word *chāhār* means four and *bāgh* means garden. *Chāhār Bāgh* was the formal garden style used by Cyrus the Great for his palace gardens at Pasargadae. This garden at Pasargadae is the earliest known example of the Chāhār Bāgh, a design that became the core design for subsequent formal Iranian gardens up to and including the gardens of India's Mughal emperors. The gardens of Shah Jahan's Taj Mahal are based on Cyrus' Chāhār Bāgh design.

Some people think that the four quadrants of the garden, the four rectangles or squares within a rectangle or square, symbolised the four quadrants of the Persian Empire. The squares were created by walkways and straight white limestone lined water channels that connected square basins or pools placed at regular intervals. These water-courses or aqueducts formed the principle and secondary axes of the quadripartite layout and are the earliest known record of gravity-fed water rills cascading into regularly spaced basins arranged in a geometric system. The channels and basins served both a practical irrigation function and an aesthetic function. Besides which, they also modified the climate of the immediate surroundings.

There were two pavilions beside the Pasargadae





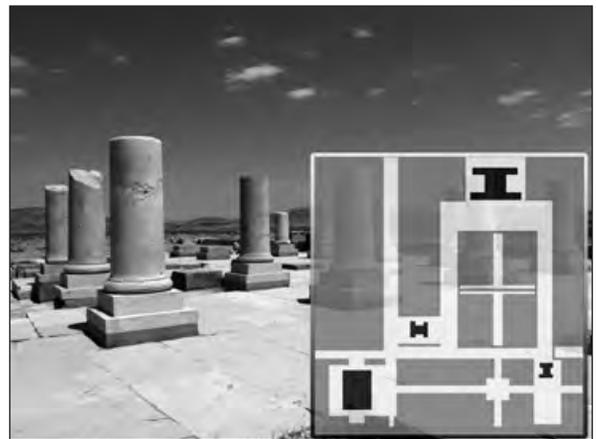
A schematic diagram of a Persian garden: The style of Persian gardens can be both formal and informal. The formal gardens are the type found in front of palaces, and are geometric in their layout. Note the quadripartite structure with focal water feature, connecting aqueducts, and surrounding trees, as well as the placement of the palace. [Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_gardens]

garden, where the royal family or visitors could sit and enjoy the beauty and fragrant air. Cyrus also had a throne placed at the midpoint of the southwest portico of his palace from where he could view and contemplate the gardens and possibly even hold audiences. In addition to the formal gardens, there would also have been a surrounding park-like forest that included animals.

According to Hobhouse, Hunningher and Harpur in their book *Gardens of Persia* (2004), the Chāhār Bāgh gardens of Pasargadae could have contained fruit trees such as pomegranate and cherries, nut bearing trees such as almond, vines and roses, an under-carpet of clover interspersed with spring-flowering bulbs such as iris and tulips, as well as poppies. The surrounding trees such as white-stemmed poplars, cypress and plane would have provided wind breaks. When all the elements of the *pairidaeza* gardens are considered together, they form an integrated composition of shade, micro-climate, vegetation, refuge and healing.

Description of Achaemenid Gardens

The gardens of the Persian Shahs and their satraps became legendary. Greek and Roman authors such as Quintus Curtius, Xenophon and Plutarch give consistent accounts of the satrap's paradise gardens:



Inset shows a reconstruction of the palace garden of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae c.550 BCE. The paths are conjectural. Water channels define the space between two palaces. There are two small pavilions. This is the earliest known remnant of what became the classical Persian garden. It is likely to have been planted with cypress, pomegranate and cherry. [Source: http://www.gardenvisit.com/history_theory/]

Plutarch describes the *paradeisos* of the Achaemenid satrap at Sardis as follows:

“One of them was the handsomest because its lawns and refreshing waters, its retreats and its manicured lawns displayed an unimaginable royal luxury.”

Xenophon describes the paradise-gardens at Celaenae, the satrapal capital of Phrygia and Dascylium, the satrap capital of Lydia, both in Western Turkey. In Celaenae, Xenophon and his companions saw:

“...a great park filled with wild animals, and watered by the Meander.”

Xenophon notes that in Dascylium:

“That is where Pharnabazus maintained his residence, with handsome large villages all around, abundantly provided with all the resources, and with game both in enclosed paradises and in open spaces - magnificent game! Through the whole length flowed a river stocked with every kind of fish. Wildfowl were there in abundance as well, for those who might hunt for birds.”

The Medes and Persians developed the garden and garden designs on lines similar to their empire buildings. They brought with them their love and veneration for trees. In their Zoroastrian religion, the cult of trees played an important part, and with them, as with the Assyrians, the symbol of eternal life was a tree with a stream at its roots. Another object of veneration was the sacred miracle tree,



which within itself contained the seeds of all. Among the Persians, tree-planting was a sacred occupation, and as Strabo says, was part of their education:

“Boys received instruction in this art in the evenings. And so it came about that this reverence was seated deep in the souls of even the lowest stratum of the people, the common soldiers.”

Rejuvenation of the Spirit

Iranian gardens are ideal places to rejuvenate the spirit. They're a meeting place for all elements of spiritual and material creation. They're a place for personal reflection as well as strengthening family, friendship and community bonds. They're places, if you so choose, to reconnect with your spiritual self and to take a break from active life to continue a spiritual quest.

The Persian garden is a sacred space where your inner voice can be heard. It's a place for sacred contemplation and spiritual nourishment. The pools or channels of water that are invariably an integral part of the garden's

A paradise-like garden is seen as a place for spiritual and mental rejuvenation.

design, are places for self-reflection. The entire setting is tranquil and serene. Complimenting the self-reflection is meditation, especially when accompanied by the intonation of Rosicrucian vowel sounds or chants.

The Zoroastrian approach to the paradise-garden is a balance between the competing demands and functions of life. The need to develop a calm environment to enable someone to refocus isn't an end in itself, only a means of enabling you to lead an active, productive and useful life. Both pursuits have a time and place in everyone's



Naghsh-e Jahan Square, Isfahan, Iran: a Persian garden on a vast scale enclosed on all sides by buildings and featuring a central fountain. Constructed between 1598 and 1629, it is now a UNESCO World Heritage site.



The tradition and style of the Persian garden influenced the design of gardens from Andalusia to India. The Taj Mahal is one of the largest Persian Gardens of the world.

life. A paradise-like garden is seen as a place for spiritual and mental rejuvenation. It's also a place for individual introspection, as well as a place for calm dialogue and philosophical discussion. But a paradise-garden isn't the only means of creating an environment where you can achieve serenity. Nature has provided us with her own profusion of gardens from the desert oasis, to verdant meadows, to picturesque valleys and mountain slopes with breath-taking vistas. For the Persian Shahs, their paradise-gardens gave them an opportunity to bring nature into their backyard and one they could stroll through or sit and gaze

upon in close proximity to home and work. Sunlight and its effects were also an important factor of structural design in Persian gardens. Textures and shapes were specifically chosen by architects to harness the light. Due to the dry heat of Iran, shade is also very important in a garden, without which it could not be usable. Trees and trellises largely feature as biotic shade; pavilions and walls are also prominent in blocking the sun.

Also related to the heat is the importance of water in gardens. A form of underground tunnel, below the water table, called a *qanat* is used to irrigate the garden and its environs. Well-like structures then connect to the *qanat*, enabling the drawing of water. Alternatively, an animal-driven Persian well would be used to draw water to the surface. Such wheel systems could also be used to move water around surface water systems. Trees were often planted in a ditch called a *jub*, which prevented water evaporation and allowed the water quick access to the tree roots.

The Chāhār Bāgh symbolises the source of life. At the centre of the garden is a fountain or source of water, which then flows into four



narrow canals that run at right angles and divide the garden into four beds. The symbolism of the canals is that they represent the four rivers of life running north, south, east and west to water the earth. In the garden itself, the movement of the water would have cast the light and brought a dynamism to the garden.

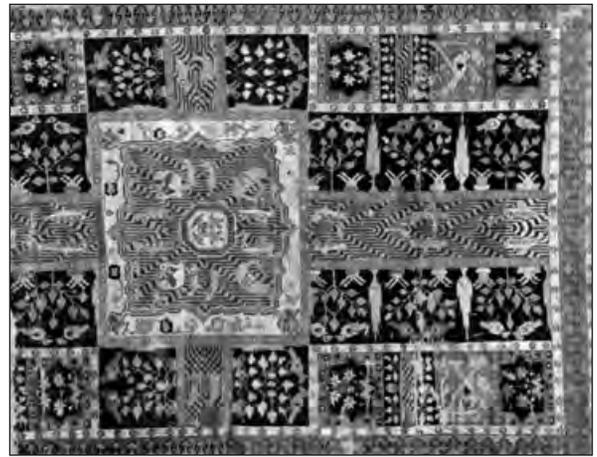
The four beds could be approached in a number of ways: they could be paved to create a place to lay out cushions; they could be planted with brightly coloured flowering plants; or they could be sunken beds to give the impression of walking on a carpet of flowers. In Persian, the word *gol* means both a flower and the rose, which has a major role in Persian poetry; for not only is the beloved's physical attributes identified with the rose, but his/her tears are rose water and s/he dwells in a *golestān* or rose garden. *Golestān* is also the title of a collection of poems and aphorisms by the poet Sa'adi, for whom roses are pieces of wisdom and clues to happiness, and the rose garden is wisdom itself.

In the book *Goftegi dar bāgh* (Dialogue in the Garden) I found the following description of a garden in Shirāz, the capital of Fārs province, and the cultural centre of Iran.

"In Shirāz, at the edge of that city, behind high walls, there is a sanctuary, sheltered from the chaos outside. When you open the door, you step into a vestibule or under a false arch with stairs on both sides and possibly a hexagonal reflecting pool and the shimmering of water on the scales of a few red goldfish that continuously slide along the turquoise-coloured tiles at the bottom. There is shade, water and the tranquillity of the fish. In the damp, cool shade, you rest to take a breath of fresh air and are sheltered from the thirst of the sun and the fever and frenzy outside.

"Then, the gravelled avenue leads to an open space with a mound overflowing with violets, begonias, petunias, wallflowers, dabbias and a few cornflowers. The borders of the mound and around the flowers are covered with short, decorative boxwood. The continuation of the avenue on the other side of the open space, a little further, a building with a vast veranda, halls on both sides, sash windows with coloured glass and an open and cheery appearance.

"There are two slender, tall cypress trees in this timeless garden, and a few purple and amber jasmine plants, and about the reflecting pool, the length of the veranda, with a short rim, shallow, a wide stone fountain in the middle and the sky



Layout of a Persian garden on a Persian carpet. At the centre of the garden is a fountain or source of water, which then flows into four narrow canals that run at right angles and divide the garden into four beds. [Image source: <http://www.kavehfarrokhi.com/iranica/achaemenid-era/pasargardae-the-persian-gardens>].

mirrored in the water. Around are Judas trees, mimosa trees and acacia trees and avenues that stretch from the open space to the four corners of the garden and divide it into several sections. One corner of the garden is taken over by four or five aged plane trees which are planted in a circle so that in the middle, under a canopy of their branches and leaves, a cool, shady area oblivious to the sun above stretches out on the ground. This is a place to lie back and rest from the fire and chaos outside."

Epilogue

Capturing visions of the old Iran at the threshold of the modern age, Vita Sackville-West wrote in *Passenger to Tehran* (1926):

"A savage, desolating country! But one that filled me with extraordinary elation. I have never seen anything that pleased me so well as these Persian uplands, with their enormous views, clear light, and rocky grandeur." She went on to say, "Persia has been left as it was before man's advent."

When I visited Tehran, I had the opportunity to visit some privately owned gardens located on the outskirts of the city. The gardens were walled compounds and a change in climate was evident immediately on entering through the garden's doors. Cool fragrant air welcomed me. In summer, while the surrounding land was desert-like, barren and very hot, the gardens were lush with vegetation and cool. Water, often drawn from a well, played a significant role in the design and in the creation of the garden's micro climate as well as its



calming environment. They were oases with a spiritual quality and places for the restoration of spiritual, physical and community health.

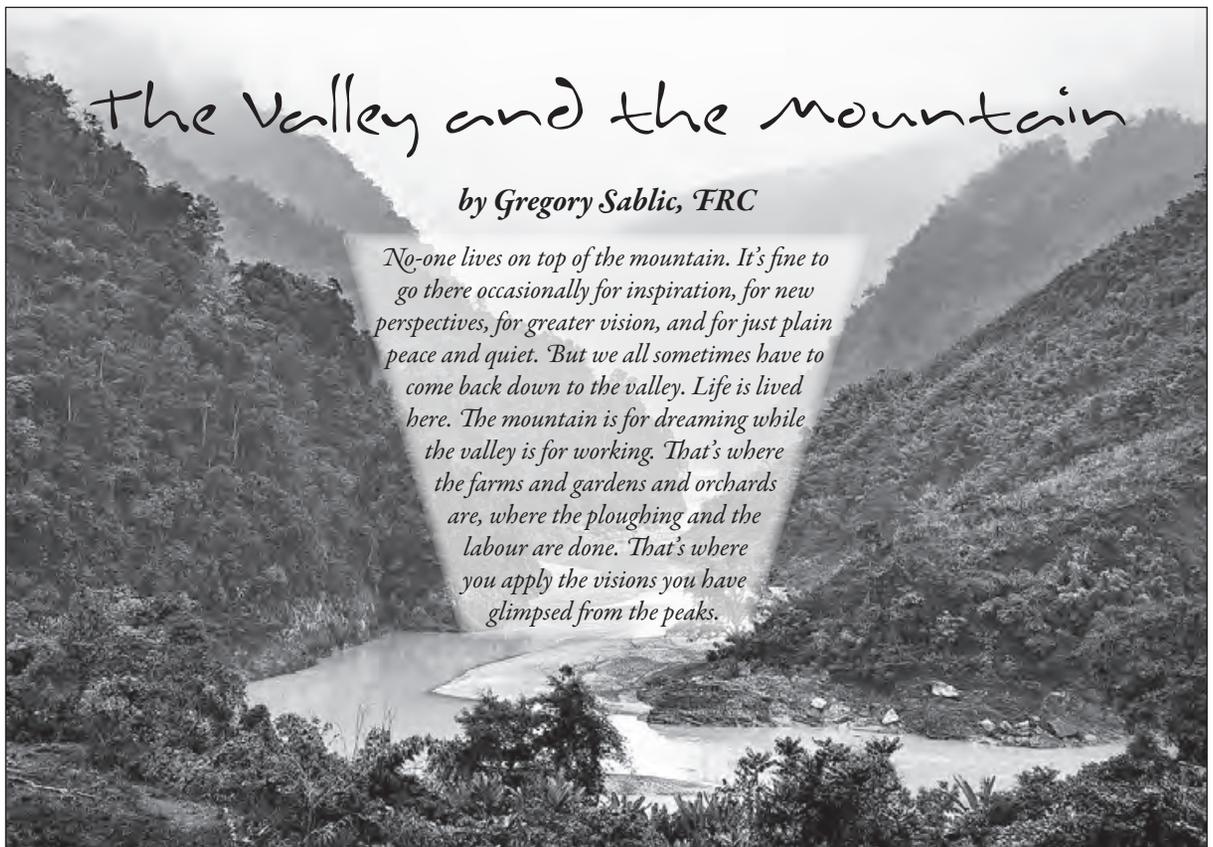
As the religion of Islam spread, so did Persian style of garden making. And in all the lands that were conquered by the Arabs, artisans assimilated local traditions mixed with impressions from religion. So today, we have evidence of Persian gardens that spread from Moorish Spain and North Africa in the west, through the Middle East and what used to be the Persian Empire and then to the awe inspiring palaces of the Mughal-period in India, which date from the 16th century. All are different but all are based on the core values of Chāhār Bāgh and the original concept introduced in the Persian paradise gardens. And this style can be scaled to fit any space from a tiny courtyard to enormous palace complexes such as those in Kashmir.

“They bear witness to the rather extravagant hope of inventing paradise on earth; of creating, despite the rigours of the climate, a space far from the uproar of cities and human unrest, where the splendour and profusion of plants gives a picture of nature pacified and tamed. Is not this dream a nostalgic memory of the first garden, where man and woman experienced

*a golden age before being driven from it by the angel with a sword of fire, condemned to wander in arid lands? Or should we imagine the reverse: That the garden east of Eden is a buried memory of the paradises constructed in ancient ‘Babylon?’” (Gerard Grandval in his preface to *The Persian Garden: Echoes of Paradise*, 1998 edition)*



The traditional Persian garden of Eram in Shirāz, the sixth most populous city in Iran and the capital of ‘Fārs Province in the south-west of the country.

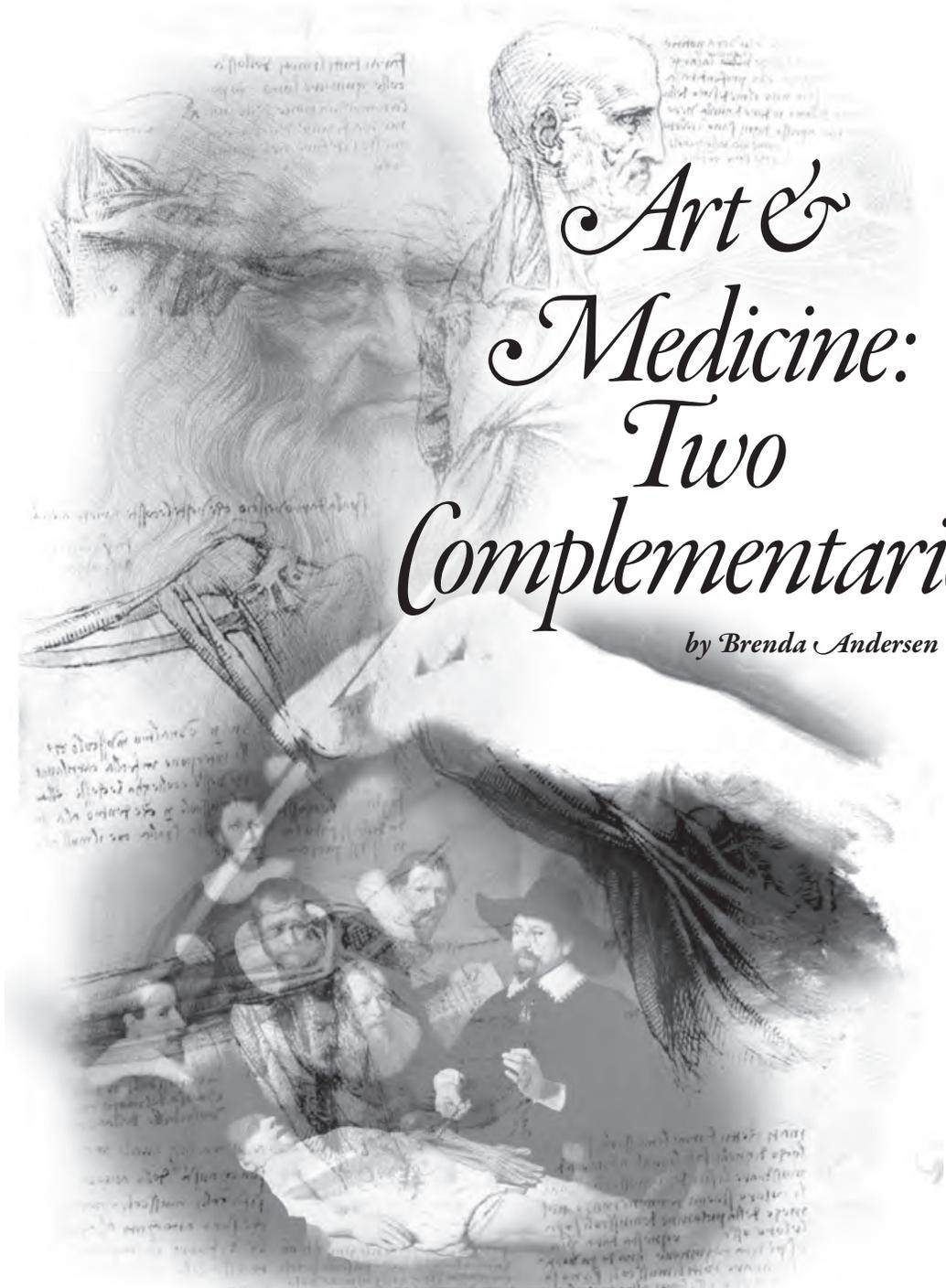


The Valley and the Mountain

by Gregory Sablic, FRC

No-one lives on top of the mountain. It's fine to go there occasionally for inspiration, for new perspectives, for greater vision, and for just plain peace and quiet. But we all sometimes have to come back down to the valley. Life is lived here. The mountain is for dreaming while the valley is for working. That's where the farms and gardens and orchards are, where the ploughing and the labour are done. That's where you apply the visions you have glimpsed from the peaks.





Art & Medicine: Two Complementaries

by *Brenda Andersen*



ANY CENTURIES AGO, an unknown Egyptian artist carved on the wall of a pyramid a simple depiction of a doctor performing an operation. Today, operations can be seen in films, television and the internet. You'll be amazed what you can find on YouTube these days! We do find however that throughout the ages, art and medicine have been inseparable.

Medicine is known as the 'healing art'. Art on the

other hand, has been referred to as 'natural science'. It's interesting to note that in medieval times, artists belonged to the same guilds as doctors and apothecaries (pharmacists.) Art meant 'craft' and there was no distinction between them. Perhaps it was the fraternity and equality between the two that encouraged the tremendous interest that artists began to show in anatomy and in the illustrated manuscripts that doctors began to use in their treatises during the Renaissance.





Andreas Vesalius illustrated by Stephan Van Calcar (inset)



Cassiodorus

The medical textbooks of the great Flemish anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) were illustrated by Stephan van Calcar, a pupil of the great artist Titian (c.1488-1576). Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) made more than a thousand anatomical sketches for an encyclopaedia planned by his young medical friend, Marco Antonio della Torre. Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), after an intensive study of the human body, drew a self-portrait showing exactly where the illness that later killed him was located. And it is to the immortal Leonardo da Vinci that we owe the still popular phrase, “*A man is only as old as his arteries.*”

The medical profession is certainly a combination of medicine and art, and the old Chinese saying “*One picture is worth a thousand words*” proves that it would be almost impossible to teach medicine without pictures. The first portrait of a doctor was a monument erected by Pharaoh Sahura of the 5th dynasty, c.2550 BCE. Its purpose was to honour his chief physician for ‘curing his nostrils’. A Philistine statue to Baal-Zebub, the Lord of Flies, reveals in its script the ancient belief that insects spread disease. Two thousand years later it was proved that flies spread sleeping-sickness, that mosquitoes carry malaria, and that ticks and lice cause many illnesses. The

statue did indeed not lie!

In the 5th century BCE, one of Greece’s greatest doctors, Cassiodorus, recommended the use of pictures in the study of medicine. He advocated the principles of Hippocrates (c.460-370 BCE), the ‘Father of Medicine’, and the herbals of Dioscorides (c.40-90 CE), one of our earliest botanists. Both left illustrated texts for their followers to use in their medical pursuits, but while his advice was employed for the learning of medicinal plants, it wasn’t until the 12th century CE that anatomical charts were used for visual instruction. By the end of the 15th century artists and doctors worked together to increase their mutual knowledge of anatomy. Plastic surgery

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had its beginnings at this time too, but until modern psychologists were able to prove its effects on personality and general health, it remained a costly and painful remedy for lost beauty.

Artists have both immortalised and lampooned the medical profession. The Dutch painter and etcher



Rembrandt shows young medical students intent upon their subject in his *The Anatomy Lesson* (1632). Another Dutch artist, Jan Steen (1626-79), painted more than 20 pictures of doctors. And Hans Holbein the Younger (c.1497-1543) did both art and history a favour when he painted the English king, Henry VIII, handing the charter to the master of the first English Barber-Surgeon's Guild.

In contrast, at the same time that the French Renaissance writer François Rabelais (c.1494-1553) was writing his satires on medicine, the German artist Hans Weiditz the Younger (1495-c.1597) was caricaturing their practices. The benighted doctor, trying to collect just payment, was the inspiration for a famous poem and an equally famous cartoon illustrating it.

*Three faces wears the doctor:
When first sought, an Angel's,
and a God's, the cure half wrought.
But when the cure complete, he seeks his fee,
the Devil looks less terrible than he.*

While artists per se were painting pictures of doctors, illustrating texts on anatomy and botany, and revealing life from a medical standpoint, many doctors were displaying artistic and creative talent too.

In the 11th century in Spain, the great Andalusian doctor, Abu al-Qasim Khalaf ibn al-Abbas Al-Zahrawi (Albucasis,) invented new instruments for treating wounds, removing tonsils, and extracting barbs. He made forceps for use in childbirth and also became one of the first-known oral surgeons; he performed operations on ugly, irregular teeth. The great Rosicrucian apologist Robert Fludd (1574-1637) made mechanical toys, such as a self-playing lyre and a wooden bull that bellowed. A Dutch anatomist, Frederik Ruysch (1638-1731), discovered a method for solidifying parts of the body using collared injections, although Leonardo had already done the same with wax. Over one hundred years earlier the French surgeon Ambrose Pare (c.1510-90) introduced artificial limbs and trusses for ruptures; later, the Scottish obstetrician William Smellie (1697-1763) constructed a little leather manikin in order to demonstrate various parts of his lectures on midwifery.

However, it was the Scot Sir Charles Bell



Robert Fludd

(1774-1842) who attained the highest achievement of an artist-doctor. Through his art studies in anatomy, he was prompted to write a treatise on the relation between the emotions (joy, fear, etc.) and muscular action. Proceeding further in those studies, and obtaining a medical degree, he discovered and classified the motor and the sensory nerves. His researches led the way to our modern knowledge of Neurology and Neurosurgery.

It's easy to see how a surgeon can develop an operation until it becomes a work of flawless art and how an artist can depict the body so perfectly; however, it is often difficult to tell where Science leaves off and Art begins.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), one of the world's greatest philosophers, wrote: "*Colour is the voice of God speaking through Nature*" and today the psychology of colour has become an important factor in the decoration of hospitals, schools and all public buildings. Here, once again, the artist and the doctor are working together to soothe, heal, instruct or please the public eye. Doctors have found they can stimulate, depress, excite or calm their patients through the use of colour. And one of the most successful forms of treatment for mental health issues is the encouragement of all types of creative art. It's the basic ingredient in

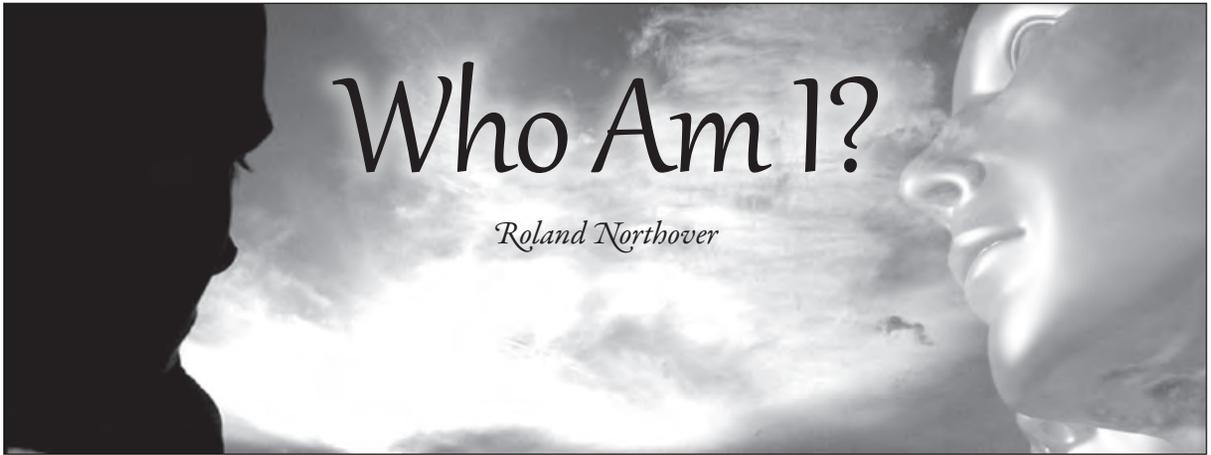
The great Rosicrucian apologist Robert Fludd (1574-1637) made mechanical toys, such as a self-playing lyre and a wooden bull that bellowed.

occupational therapy.

In industry too, they've discovered how to reduce eye strain and fatigue and even certain types of accidents through the scientific application of coordinated colours. Today, the camera has replaced the artist in the illustration of medical texts, but the application of art as a healing aid is receiving even greater attention. The doctor who once used art to help his study is now advising his patients to study art.

Modern science, rather than widening the gulf between them is, instead, drawing the two mediums closer together. The study of nature and man, Art and Medicine, will always remain inseparable parts of a homogeneous whole. And someday, the picture of health will be recognised by all as the finest expression of beauty on Earth.





Who Am I?

Roland Northover

A M I THIS FLESH, these bones, this blood, this outer shell? Or the encasement, something that I wear? Am I this thing that walks, that talks, that's sometimes ill, and oftimes active, well, and sometimes still?

Am I the riot of emotion's fickle flame, fanned by eventful wind wherever it may blow? Or sport of fear, harbinger of greed or gain, am I my mind, the thoughts I think..., my brain?

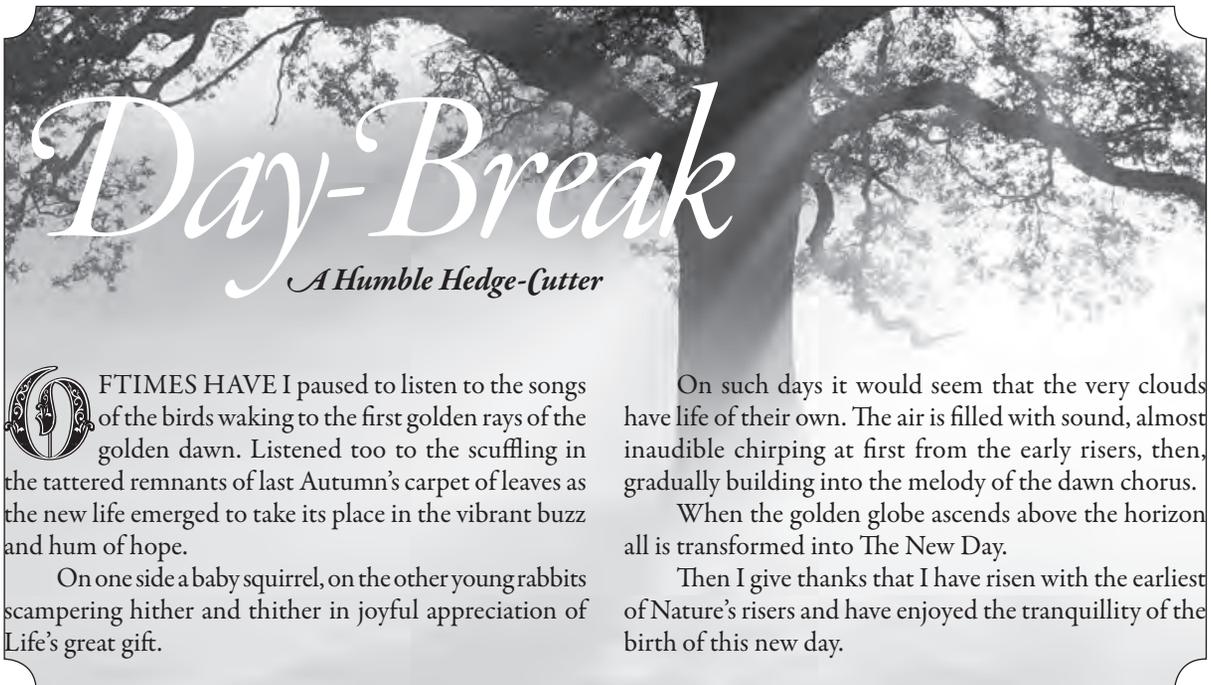
If I..., the real I, am these..., 'tis surely strange that I can manage if I will, to still, their vagaries and do to them just what I will..., arrange their fatefulness..., decide their good or ill.

The answer's clear, I'm none of these, these

servants of my Self, but their own Master when I choose to send them on my errands..., and see that to myself they bend and that they fulfil my will, my purpose and my end.

Who is this Super Self, this Will, this Master Man? Is he alone or is he patterned chequer in a Plan? The answer's just the same to these three questions ..., for 'tis Livingness of God, encased in man, I am. I'm that..., God's Livingness..., a priceless gift enwrapped, in threefold shell of body, emotions and mind.

But none of these, though son of humankind, and freed from their entanglement when Charon's kindly hand returns the gift from whence it came..., and where God is..., I AM.



Day-Break

A Humble Hedge-Cutter

O FTIMES HAVE I paused to listen to the songs of the birds waking to the first golden rays of the golden dawn. Listened too to the scuffling in the tattered remnants of last Autumn's carpet of leaves as the new life emerged to take its place in the vibrant buzz and hum of hope.

On one side a baby squirrel, on the other young rabbits scampering hither and thither in joyful appreciation of Life's great gift.

On such days it would seem that the very clouds have life of their own. The air is filled with sound, almost inaudible chirping at first from the early risers, then, gradually building into the melody of the dawn chorus.

When the golden globe ascends above the horizon all is transformed into The New Day.

Then I give thanks that I have risen with the earliest of Nature's risers and have enjoyed the tranquillity of the birth of this new day.



Unity in Diversity

THE next European Convention will be held from 7th to the 9th June 2013 in The Hague. The Convention theme is 'Unity in Diversity' and a number of Rosicrucians will explore this theme. Further details will follow in months to come. For those of you who remember the Rosicrucian European Convention in Barcelona a few years back, you will recall what a beautifully arranged event it was.

For all who live in Europe, please make a point of attending this exclusive Rosicrucian event. Conventions involving many hundreds of members, possibly in excess of a thousand this time, are very special times of reinforcement of the bonds that unite Rosicrucians of many different backgrounds and cultures, and especially so in Europe with its wealth of different languages and customs. For members living much further afield, as your travel costs will be an important factor, please prepare well in advance, and start planning now.

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Attendance Fee: €35

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Speakers will include:-

- *Lynne McTaggart*
- *Tom McFarlane*
- *Marja de Vries*
- *Michel Bénot.*

THE Dutch Grand Lodge is hosting a one-day seminar at which internationally renowned speakers in the realm of spiritual authorship will be doing presentations on aspects of spirituality as related to science. If you can make it to this very special public event, why not combine it with a few days of sight-seeing in Holland. The main tourist season will be over, and it may be a very pleasant time to take in the many beautiful sights of the country.

