

— ROSICRUCIAN — BEACON

December 2021, Vol 31, No. 1



Find your Deeper Self

IN THE depths of your being resides your deeper Self, an aspect of your being which breathes in calm reflection the very rhythm of the universe. It is in touch with all things and communicates with all that matters for life on Earth. It seeks to instruct and guide its human ward how to live a good life, and does so with care for its wellbeing. And above all, it does so with love and compassion for all expressions of life.

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

This deeper part of you is a veritable slumbering genius, eager to help you express your hidden talents with greater refinement and sophistication than you have ever considered possible. And the most productive thing we can ever do is to find and communicate with this Self.

For millennia, seekers of universal truths have known of the existence of a kernel of perfection lying dormant in every person, manifesting supreme confidence, calmness, maturity and wisdom. This deeper Self is called by Rosicrucians the 'Master Within', for it has in abundance, qualities of refinement, high purpose and spiritual maturity we would expect only of the most accomplished of people.

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

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



membership@amorc.org.uk
<https://www.amorc.org.uk>



@RosicrucianOrderEMEA



@RosicrucianOrderSouthAfrica



@AMORC_UK



<https://rosicrucian.online/>



ROSICRUCIAN BEACON

December 2021, Vol 31, No. 1

CONTENTS

The Oceanic Feeling of Oneness - by Frank Dyer	2
Mystics of Aragón - by Mary Jones	6
O Pure Heart - by Jean Pierre de Caussade	15
The Emperor & the Seed - by Jenny Tsang	16
The Trinity of Power - by Walter Albersheim	19
Ancient Egypt's Literature - by Rodman Clayson	22
The Dark Valleys of Life - by Mary Wilson	30
Choose this Day! - by Paul Layton	33
Ancient Afghanistan - by Bill Anderson	36
Book Review: The Word Went Forth - Laura DeWitt James	46
Leonardo da Vinci: The Quality of Genius - Adrian Ford	48

ISSN 0966-033X

Published quarterly by the
English Grand Lodge for Europe,
the Middle East and Africa of
THE ROSICRUCIAN ORDER®
A.M.O.R.C.®

Greenwood Gate, Blackhill,
Crowborough TN6 1XE
UNITED KINGDOM

Tel: +44-1892-653197
Email: info@amorc.org.uk
Web: www.amorc.org.uk

EDITOR

Bill Anderson

Design and Layout

Cloud White

Statements made in this publication are not the
official expressions of The Rosicrucian Order or
its officers unless specifically declared to be so.

All material published in this magazine
is copyright of the Supreme Grand Lodge of
AMORC and may not be copied or reproduced
in any form without the prior consent of the
copyright holder and the individual contributors.



Cover spread

The calm of an early winter's sunrise
belies the months of heavy snow and
ice soon to come.



The Oceanic Feeling of Oneness

Life is often conceived of symbolically

by Frank Dyer

Life is often conceived of symbolically as a circle. Mention is made of the cycle of nature, the wheel of rebirths, cycles of history, and numerous other manifestations of the circle dating back to the most remote antiquity. A true cyclical process consists of the development of a phenomenon from a point of origin through a series of transformations, and back again to this initial point. Hopefully, while the points of origin and destination are the same, the phenomenon in question has benefited from the cycle in terms of progress, growth and reintegration at a higher level.

In the evolution of human consciousness, the point of origin is the mind of the newborn infant. This stage of consciousness has been described in psychoanalytic literature as '*primary narcissism*', for at this early stage the infant makes no distinction between himself and the outside world. He is the centre of all, and to the limited extent to which he perceives external objects, he regards them as part of himself. There is no distinction between sensations arising within him and





mysticism views this point as but a stage in the cycle of personal and spiritual evolution. The point at which mysticism and psychoanalysis diverge is in their respective views of religion in terms of conscious experience. In a letter to Sigmund Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic school of thought, the author and poet Romain Rolland once described the *oceanic feeling of eternity* which gave him the sensation of oneness with all creation.

Freud, while conceding that this was probably a genuine experience, although foreign to him personally, tried to account for it within the context of his developmental theory. He wrote:

those which flow in from the outside. All psychic energy is directed toward a self-system which embraces both ego and that which is not ego.

This happy state is short-lived however, since the infant gradually discovers that he is not the source of all gratification and requires objects outside of himself in order to maintain equilibrium. The first object to which he relates is his mother's milk. He learns that the painful feeling of hunger does not subside on its own, and that gratification occurs only when he is breast or bottle fed. He therefore acknowledges the external world and forms an emotional attachment to this first object which he associates with gratification. This is the first step in a long process of development during which the infant discovers the limits of his own body..., in other words, where '*me*' stops and '*not me*' begins. He forms emotional attachments to people, beginning with mum and dad, and begins to make sense out of the world through concept formation, categorisation, value judgments, logical inferences, and a host of other cognitive operations.

In the healthy adult, the result of this process is a well-differentiated ego, or self; an efficient conceptual framework and system of values with which to deal with the outside world, and the ability to work and to love. This is the essence of the psychoanalytic concept of mental health, the goal of psychoanalytic therapy being to remove those emotional obstacles to proper performance of one's work, to secure loving interpersonal relationships and self-esteem.

While this represents a final goal of psychoanalysis,

Our present ego-feeling is therefore only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive, indeed, an all-embracing feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it. If we may assume that there are many people in whose mental life this primary ego-feeling has persisted to a greater or less degree, it would exist in them side-by-side with the narrower and more sharply demarcated ego-feeling of maturity, like a kind of counterpart to it. In that case the ideational contents appropriate to it would be precisely those of limitlessness and of a bond with the universe..., the same ideas with which my friend [Rolland] elucidated the '*oceanic*' feeling.

Is this *oceanic feeling* nothing more than a remnant of the state of primary narcissism of earliest



Romain Rolland





The Zen Master Huángbò, author of what is perhaps the most uncompromising exposition of this idea, said in the 9th Century CE:

Ordinary people indulge in conceptual thought based on environmental phenomena; hence they feel desire and hatred. To eliminate environmental phenomena, just put an end to your conceptual thinking. When this ceases, environmental phenomena are void; and when these are void, thought ceases.... Thus all things are naught but Mind..., intangible Mind.

More recently, a pupil of the famous Indian adept Ramakrishna, Narben, who later became Swami Vivekananda, related his first experience of samadhi (unity with the Cosmic) as follows:

And then, at the marvellous touch of the Master [Ramakrishna], my mind underwent a complete revolution. I was aghast to realise that there really was nothing whatever in the entire universe but God. I remained silent, wondering how long this state of mind would continue.... I kept having the same experience, no matter what I was doing..., eating, drinking, sitting, lying down, going to college, strolling along the street. It was a kind of intoxication, I can't describe it. If I was crossing a street and saw a carriage coming towards me I didn't have the urge, as I would ordinarily, to get out of its way for fear of being run over. For I said to myself, *I am that carriage. There's no difference between it and me.*⁸

"I was aghast to realise that there really was nothing whatever in the entire universe but God."

Finally the 19th Century master himself, Ramakrishna, in describing his first experience of *non-dualistic samadhi*, that is, the complete elimination of all form, including the subject, relates what occurred upon



Swami Vivekananda

infancy? Is the theory of psychoanalysis comprehensive enough to explain this phenomenon? It must be borne in mind that Freud was an advocate of the materialist philosophical position which asserts that all phenomena can be defined in terms of physical substance. He went so far as to postulate that every event in consciousness was the result of a chemical reaction in the brain and nervous system, and that science would someday evolve to the point where this would be readily demonstrable in all cases.

Mysticism however, asserts that humankind itself is evolving to the point of realising a true existence beyond the phenomenal world of material form. In this regard, the issue of an oceanic feeling has occupied thinkers for thousands of years. This feeling is a subdued form of the type of enlightenment which mystics of all races, cultures and nations have sought throughout the centuries..., the intimate experience of reality as the expression of the Cosmic Mind. A few examples will serve to describe the profundity of this experience.



learning the art from a wandering monk. Until this time he had chosen the image of Kali, the Hindu mother-goddess, as the object of meditation.

I opened my eyes and told the Naked One [the monk]: *'No, it can't be done. I can't stop my mind from working. I can't make it plunge into the Atman [absolute, unmodified Being].'* Then he looked around the hut till he found a bit of broken glass. And he stuck the point of it into my forehead, between the eyebrows. *'Fix the mind here'* he told me. So I sat down to meditate again, firmly determined. And as soon as Mother's [Kali's] form appeared, I took my knowledge of non-duality as if it was a sword in my hand, and cut Mother in two pieces with that sword of knowledge. As soon as I had done that, there was nothing relative left in the mind. It entered the place where there is no second..., only the One.⁴

In these accounts of three of the most enlightened mystics of the East is seen the culmination of what is a



Kali

painfully long path for sentient beings everywhere. The trenchant lesson which psychoanalysis offers mysticism, albeit indirectly, is that this path too is a true cycle. As the leaves bloom, fall and bloom again..., as the tides rise, fall and rise again..., so the human consciousness begins with the formless, acquires form, and eventually returns to the formless. We begin in a state of unity with the All, perceiving neither ourselves nor any object as distinct from an inseparable One.

This however, is a most naïve state of Enlightenment, since the infant *'knows not that he knows.'* He then evolves to the stage of form perception, structuring the world in categories and concepts, and establishing the boundaries of his own

The trenchant lesson which psychoanalysis offers mysticism, albeit indirectly, is that this path too is a true cycle.



Ramakrishna

ego. And there are those few in every age who complete the cycle entirely; who, with an unbending will, discard the cognitive framework which they have so laboriously built up and which had enabled them to advance along the Path. With this act they return to the formlessness of infancy in which *'I'* and *'It'* no longer have meaning. The enlightenment however is no longer naïve, for now they *'know that they know'* and have consciously, deliberately and painfully come full circle. While the point of origin and destination are the same, the human consciousness has benefited from the cycle in terms of progress, growth and reintegration at a higher level.

1. Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, 1930, London: Hogarth Press
2. *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po*, New York: Grove Press, 1958, p. 45
3. Isherwood, *C. Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, New York: Simon and Shuster, 1970, p. 206
4. *Ibid*, p. 118





Mystics of Aragón

by Mary Jones

Aragón is an Autonomous Community in the north-east of Spain, coextensive with the medieval Kingdom of Aragón. It comprises three provinces: Zaragoza, Huesca and Teruel, with the capital in the ancient city of Zaragoza.

Zaragoza was originally settled by the ancient Iberians¹, later becoming the Roman provincial city Caesaraugusta². In 714 the Berbers and Arabs took control of the city, renaming it Saraqusta, a corruption of the original Roman name. It grew to become the largest Muslim-controlled city of Northern Spain and was the main city of the Upper March³. From 1018 to 1118 Zaragoza was one of the Taifa⁴ kingdoms, independent Muslim states which emerged in the 11th Century following the implosion of the Caliphate of Córdoba. Unlike the modern image of a Caliphate, this was a

multi-ethnic and highly civilised state where there was freedom of worship for Christians and Jews alongside the majority Muslims.

During the first two decades of the Taifa period, 1018–1038, the city was ruled by the Banu Tujibi. In 1038 they were replaced by the Banu Hud, who had to deal with a complicated alliance with El Cid⁵ of Valencia and his Castilian⁶ masters against the Almoravids⁷, who managed to bring the Taifa kingdoms under their control. After the death of El Cid his kingdom was overrun by the Almoravids, who, by 1100, had managed to cross the River Ebro, which brought Aragón into direct contact with them. The Banu Hud stubbornly resisted the Almoravids and ruled until they were eventually defeated by them in May 1110. In 1118 the Aragonese conquered the city



from the Almoravids and made it the capital of the Kingdom of Aragón.

Spiritual Giants

For some people we are living in a society of ephemeral, short sighted values, which has giving rise to an extreme form of egoistic individualism. We see selfishness and short-sighted goals every day, and shockingly in all strata of society, from the old to the very young. Is there a solution to this? Of course there is, but there is at present little appetite to undergo the changes needed to change the world into a better, more inclusive and humane place for all its many species to coexist.

There have of course been in all ages at least some men and women of high moral and spiritual stature who have left behind teachings and ways of living that have so impressed their peers that these *'new'* and better ways of living have been adopted by a few, sometimes many, and thereby slowly raised the global level of human awareness above the more primitive urges everyone once possessed. The ethical, moral and spiritual principles passed on were overwhelmingly based on a single refinement of human nature, something we treasure today above all other things: we call it *'Love.'*

Love is the single, most cohesive power that exists in the universe. It ensures that the highest levels of freedom balanced with the most inclusive forms of justice and equality humans can think of are constantly not far from the forefront of daily thought, daily discussions and daily actions. People throughout the world have this *'way of*



Image: Wikimedia / Falconaunani

Taifa kingdoms.

living or *'inner attitude'* as an ideal to strive towards; for it has demonstrated over and over again countless times its superior status to such an extent that there exists today a worldwide *'group awareness'*, and energy field or égrégoire that has gained traction to such an extent that we find it everywhere represented by ordinary people, from the wealthiest to the poorest.

Of course this group awareness did not emerge in a vacuum. It evolved over many centuries from millions of small good deeds, small good intentions, kind words and acts of compassion. And occasionally it received a brief efflorescence of knowledge (scientific, moral and spiritual) from the life works of a person who embodied in his or her life the very essence of goodness as represented by the spiritual principles embodied in the concepts of *'light, life and love'* so cherished by mystics of all ages. People with a moral and spiritual maturity well beyond that of the average person of his or her age have existed in every era, though we certainly know of only a few of them today. By far the majority we must presume, lived quietly, bettered the lives of their immediate community, and died in anonymity.

In this article I will discuss three such personalities from Aragón who stand out as leading lights in the service of humanity. Of course they were not the only lights of righteousness of their respective eras, but history has ensured that they were the ones written about and therefore recorded for us to read about today. Although they were not saints in the standard sense of the word, they were far



Corridor of aljaferia alcazar of Zaragoza Spain.





Catholic Basilica de Nuestra Señora del Pilar y río Ebro in Zaragoza, Spain.

ahead of their times and left legacies that have helped the world to advance itself to higher, more inclusive levels of civilisation. The three I will be briefly discussing are *Ibn Gabirol (Avicbron)*, *Ibn Bājja (Avempace)* and *Miguel Servet*.

Ibn Gabirol / Avicbron (1021 – 1158)

Zaragoza and its surroundings were at one time an

important part of Islamic Spain bordering the Caliphate of Al-Andalus⁹. After the dissolution of the Caliphate, Zaragoza became the seat of one of the Taifa kingdoms in the period between 1018 and 1118. It was in 1038 that the clan of the Banu Hud took over the kingdom and led it to the heights of power and glory. The period between the accession to the throne of Al-Mundhir II, of the previous Banu Tujibi clan and the occupation by Alfonso I ‘*The Battler*’, king of Aragón and Navarre, who made it the new capital of his kingdom in 1118 was one of the most brilliant in its cultural history.



Ibn Gabirol

Solomon Ibn Gabirol (c. 1021-1058), known in the West primarily as Avicbron, was born in Málaga (Málaga in Andalucía, southern Spain’s Costa del Sol), but at a very young age moved with his parents to Zaragoza (northern Spain) where he was educated and wrote three parts of his major treatises, as well as poems and some 20 books. His ideas were so important they had a strong and lasting influence on the intellectual life of the city for several centuries. Crucially though, he is remembered as one of the first teachers of Neoplatonism in Europe. His role has been compared to that of Philo¹⁰ who served as an intermediary between Hellenic philosophy and Judaism. Nearly a thousand years later Ibn Gabirol restored Neoplatonism to Europe.



He was moved first and foremost by the Neoplatonic theological sense that God's reality infuses all things, and by the concomitant ethical and existential ideal of a '*Neoplatonic Return*', namely the notion that we must strive through thought, word and deed to reclaim our own truest being and likeness the source of All. Ibn Gabirol's writing in this regard indirectly, though deeply, influenced the Church and virtually every spiritual and mystical movement since his time. It wasn't until 1846 however that Avicbron / Ibn Gabirol, formerly believed to have been a Muslim poet, was identified positively as the Jewish scholar and mystic Solomon ben Judah.

Avicbron suffered from delicate health and acute sensitivity, which, combined with the death of his parents at an early age, caused him to mature very early in life. In 1045, aged 24, he wrote in Zaragoza his "*Book on the Improvement of the Moral Qualities of the Soul*." It is unfortunately the last date recorded from his life which ended 13 years later. As a poet he developed a fresh form of composition of Jewish poetry, creating an authentic school. However, his influence on religious poetry is more personal. Setting an example still emulated today, his religious poems are still used in Jewish ceremonies such as Yom Kippur¹¹ or the Day of Atonement. For part of his life he served as Cantor in a synagogue, and his religious sentiments are embodied in the rational thought, piety, mysticism and asceticism of the Zaragoza school.

Ibn Gabirol's greatest concern was in understanding the nature and purpose of the human being: "*...we must understand what we are [our nature] so that we know how to live [our purpose]*." And like many other Neoplatonists, he explored layers of cosmological and metaphysical realities in an attempt to understand how to live the best human life possible. Sadly only one of his philosophical works "*The Fount of Life*" based on an earlier Neoplatonic Arabic work called "*Fons Vitae*" has come down to us. The chief doctrines of the work may be summarised as follows:

- All created beings are constituted of "*form and matter*."
- This holds true of both the physical and spiritual worlds, of which the latter is the connecting link between the "*first substance*" (the Godhead) and the "*substance divided into nine categories*" (the physical world).

- Matter and form are eternal and exist everywhere.

The main thesis of *The Fount of Life* is that all that exists is composed of form and matter. One and the same 'matter' runs through the whole universe from the highest limits of the spiritual realm down to the lowest limits of the physical world. The further this '*matter*' is removed from its first source (*the Godhead*), the less spiritual it is. He insists forcefully, over and over again, that this universal matter is the substratum of all that exists, and nothing exists without it. The book, which is heavy going,

Ibn Gabirol's greatest concern was in understanding the nature and purpose of the human being.

is written like a Socratic dialogue in a dry and arid style in contrast to his poetry; but it expresses the same meaning '*the unease of Man*' with his descent into gross matter, his transmutation, the longing for union with the one God, absolute and eternal, revealing an insight into the origin of the Universe, providing both a bridge and an avenue of return to God. In this context the ultimate source of the thoughts of Ibn Gabirol are to be found, at least in part, in the writings of Aristotle, Plato and the revised versions of Empedocles¹².

Although based on the works of several philosophers of the classical period of Greek civilisation, *The Fount of Life* is still a unique and very original work, setting out three essential tenets as follows: (a) *the aim of knowledge*, (b) *self-awareness or perception of the world* and (c) *the consciousness of God*. His goal, reflected in consciousness, has to be accompanied by a devout and upright way of life. The pilgrim must continue ascending step by step, through many ever decreasing incarnations, until s/he arrives at the Soul, then arrives at the intellect, and finally attains enlightenment where union with the Divine is accomplished.

At the beginning of this journey, the substance and nature of God remain a complete mystery to the neophyte and can only be glimpsed by mystical intuition. This concept places the Ibn Gabirol firmly



in the strictest interpretations of both the Jewish and Islamic traditions. His enlightened approach, the logical and philosophical path he proposed, will culminate in the final mystical union.

The Fount of Life had a widely diverse influence. His ideas were picked up in the West by Bishop William of Auvergne and Duns Scotus¹³, but the Dominicans Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas consistently rejected them. As a final comment, I will quote one of the sayings collected among his writings: *“I will ride through this life seeking the truth, although I do not know what destiny awaits me.”*

Ibn Bājja / Avempace (1085? – 1138)

Avempace is the Latinised form of his name Abū Bakr Ibn Bājja. He was born in Zaragoza towards the end of the 11th Century, probably between 1085 and 1095; the date is uncertain. His grandfather and father were humble silversmiths, far removed from intellectual circles. He developed into an accomplished musician as well as a physician, mathematician, astronomer and philosopher. In the Jewish quarter of Zaragoza a small enclave of high culture had developed before his birth and a great

Ibn Bājja embodies in his writings the concept of the goal of all humankind as being union with the Godhead.

philosophical school existed in which scholars and mystics were prominent. This cultural and mystical flowering is unfortunately hardly remembered today.

When the Almoravids conquered Zaragoza in 1110, the Almoravid Sultan appointed his brother-in-law as the new governor who, in turn, appointed Ibn Bājja as Vizier¹⁴, an office he held for three years. Ibn Bājja composed panegyrics for the new Almoravid governor who rewarded him lavishly. He also wrote poems that pleased him and they both enjoyed music and wine. In 1118 the Aragonese Christians occupied the city after a long blockade and set about persecuting the philosophers and scholars who had not fled. A notable exception were



Ibn Bājja

certain Jewish scholars who secretly kept the school.

It is not clear if Ibn Bājja left before or after the fall of Zaragoza, but we do know he was for a time given sanctuary at the court of the governor of Murcia. However, soon after arriving there in 1118, some powerful and jealous men in the governor's court conspired against him and soon had him imprisoned. For nearly 20 years until 1136, we have no information on his life. We do know that in 1136, he was in Seville and from there he went on to Almería and Granada, then to Oran¹⁵ and Fez¹⁶. He was assassinated and buried in Fez where his tomb still existed until the 13th Century.

Ibn Bājja studied the work of Aristotle, Avicenna¹⁷ and Al Farabi¹⁸ in particular. However, the ideas of Aristotle held by Ibn Bājja were a strongly Neoplatonised version. He reveals a mystical and aesthetic side to his nature that Thomas Aquinas later referred to. Ibn Bājja is the one philosopher above all others who clearly defined the direction subsequently taken by Hispano-Islamic thought. And he was the first to directly influence Averroes¹⁹, Maimonides²⁰, Albertus Magnus and Ramon Llull among others. His most celebrated works are the *“Rule of the Solitary”*, the *“Epistle of the Farewell Message”* and the *“Epistle of Conjunction of Intellect with Man.”*

Ibn Bājja embodies in his writings the already well-known concept of the goal of all humankind as being union with the Godhead. To achieve this end, we must perfect our qualities and moral virtues. He introduced four steps to illumination, realised by the



passage of three progressive states of consciousness: “*matter*”, “*acquired wisdom*” and “*insight*.” The Godhead contains both the vital life force of the universe and the greatest accumulation of knowledge ever known, with its unique, universal, essential, clear and eternal nature. Here the process of abstracting spiritual ideas and the three states of consciousness can be seen from the work of Aristotle, culminating in the contemplation of pure thought in the fullest meaning of Neoplatonism. Ibn Bājja affirms that all philosophers agreed that the soul is a substance and portrays Plato as one of his sources:

Since it was clear to Plato that the soul is assigned to substance, and that substance is predicated on the form and matter which is body, and that the soul cannot be said to be a body..., he fervently defined the soul in its particular aspect. Since he had established that the forms of spheres are souls, he looked for the commonality of all [souls], and found that sense perception is particular to animals, [but] that movement is particular to all, and therefore he defined the soul as *‘something which moves itself’*.

In the final stage, ideal mystics, as conceived by Ibn Bājja, are revealed. However, the image of perfect mystics, although good in principle, always come up against the problem of human society and is frustrated by the historical and political circumstances in which they are obliged to live. This stands in the way of obtaining of what they most desire, their own perfection and Union with the Divine. To provide a

solution to this perennial problem, Ibn Bājja proposed a method for mystics to withdraw individually for a while in solitude from the world, subsequently returning to the community but keeping apart from it, and thereby avoiding being contaminated by its less desirable elements. This idea Kirkegaard²¹ went on to develop several centuries later.

Ibn Bājja composed a musical piece in Zaragoza, along the lines prescribed by Al-Farabi. He also read the *Encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Purity* and in the same city made the acquaintance of Ibn Al Arif²². The mystical influence of both these sources can be found in his writings and it is likely he was the first person (of intellectual stature) in the West to give detailed commentaries on Aristotle’s ideas. Even today, some aspects of his mystical philosophy would be ideal for people in the West to adopt, for they provide

Servet has earned the gratitude of many great minds for his scientific discoveries and his devotion to the sick and the poor.

some genuine solutions in combating the effects of the extreme form of materialism and dearth of true spirituality that we face today.



Ibn Bājja affirms that all philosophers agreed that the soul is a substance and portrays Plato (pictured) as one of his sources.

Spiritual acts render him nobler, and the intellectual acts render him divine and virtuous. The man of wisdom is therefore necessarily a man who is virtuous and divine. Of every kind of activity, he takes up the best only. He shares with every class of men the best states that characterise them. But he stands alone as the one who performs the most excellent and noblest of actions. When he achieves the highest end, that is, when he apprehends simple substantial intelligences that are mentioned in the [Aristotelian] ‘Metaphysics’, the book ‘On the Soul’, and ‘On Sense and the Sensible’, he then becomes one of these intelligences. It would be right to call him simply divine, and he will be free from the mortal sensible qualities, as well from the [particular] spiritual qualities... (Rule of the Solitary, Ibn Bājja).





Miguel Servet

Miguel Servet (1511 – 1553)

Miguel Servet, disciple of the liberal sciences and a martyr to free thought, was born on September 1511 in Villanueva de Sixena (or Villanueva de Sigena in Huesca province of northeast Spain). He died in Geneva in 1553, burnt at the stake on the orders of John Calvin²³. He was a Spanish theologian, physician, cartographer and Renaissance humanist, being the first European to correctly describe the function of pulmonary circulation. He was a true polymath, versed in many sciences: mathematics, astronomy, meteorology, geography, human anatomy, medicine and pharmacology, as well as jurisprudence, languages, poetry and the scholarly study of the Bible in its original languages. Servet was a Hellenist, physician and philosopher who has earned the gratitude of many great minds for his scientific discoveries, his devotion to the sick and the poor and for his indomitable independence of thought and conscience.

There was much going on in Spain during this

period to make a serious minded youth thoughtful about questions of religion. Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic²⁴ were on the throne, determined to secure political unity in their new nation by compelling religious uniformity. A spirit of the most intolerant orthodoxy therefore controlled all aspects of life. In 1492, for refusing to deny the faith of their fathers and profess Christianity, 800,000 Jews had been banished from the kingdom. In the same year the Sultanate had been overthrown in Granada, and although for a few years Muslims were tolerated and allowed to continue with their faith, they were soon compelled to choose between converting to Christianity, being burnt at the stake or being driven from Spain.

A matter incomprehensible to the Church at the time, was the Muslim dilemma of having to accept God as a trinity rather than a single, overarching God of all creation. It was the most insurmountable obstacle for Muslims, for it contradicted for them the first and most important article of their faith, the undivided unity of God: that God is one, not three. During Servet's boyhood, some 20,000 men, women and children of all ages, Jewish and Muslim, were burned at the stake for refusing to deny their unitary concept of God. Despite the resistance of the liberty loving Aragonese, the Inquisition was set up among them to root out heresy, and these things must have made a deep impression upon the mind of the young Servet.

His theological arguments were heavily criticised by both the Catholics and Protestants of his time as he rejected the threefold image of God.

The brutality and injustice of these events may well have laid the foundation for the main passion of his later life.

At 17, Servet was sent to the most modern university of the time, the University of Toulouse in the South of France. There he indulged his passion for theology, and one idea in particular came to obsess him: the notion of the Holy Trinity as an obstacle for the understanding of three major religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam. He studied the Bible deeply and discovered that the Trinity is





Miguel Servet exchanged many letters with Calvin (pictured) until he was denounced by Calvin and executed.

not even mentioned in its pages. Although less orthodox than Catholic and Protestant Christians, he always firmly believed that any thought, once discussed, has the power to come into existence and remain thereafter as a canon of perceived truth merely because of that first discussion. His theological arguments were heavily criticised by both the Catholics and Protestants of his time as he rejected the threefold image of God as well as the rite of baptism. Interestingly, Toulouse was the centre of Catharism until 200 years before his time, and it is known that many Cathars left the Languedoc region of France and fled to Aragón where they found for a while a measure of protection. Servet's scientific contributions were equally notable, as he was the first to write about the circulation of blood through the body²⁵, which he set out in his book: *Christianismi Restituto* ('The Restoration of Christianity') published shortly before his death in 1553. In this work he argued for a more personalised perception of Jesus, as a divine entity willed into being by God the Father. This concept, the direct precursor of the Unitarian movement, brought him into conflict with both Catholics and Protestants, forcing him to publish an article revising his ideas scarcely a year later.

In 1536, he returned to Paris to continue his medical studies. It was a wise decision, for he began to make a name for himself as a doctor and went on to discover that blood oxygenation takes place in the lungs and not in the heart. But he made one small mistake by drawing a connection

between medicine and astrology, and that was enough to have him expelled from the university. Although the inquisition absolved him of guilt, he was condemned by the parliament of Paris. So he returned to Lyon to practise medicine. His fame reached the archbishop of Vienne²⁶, for whom he would even serve as a personal physician.

In Vienne he earned fame and fortune as a doctor and an editor. He even had time to rekindle an old and fateful friendship and started corresponding with John Calvin on the topic of the Holy Trinity. The situation was much different than the days in Paris. Calvin had become a top religious leader and would not accept criticism of his own ideas. Calvin had sent Servet a copy of one his books, and when Servet returned it loaded with corrections, Calvin cut off the correspondence and announced that if Servet ever showed up in Geneva, he wouldn't leave the city alive.

In 1546 Servet sent a copy of his most important work, the *Christianismi Restituto* to Calvin. On reading it, the outraged Calvin denounced Servet to the Inquisition at Lyon, and Servet had to hastily take flight. On a fateful leg of his journey to Italy via Geneva, he was detected, arrested and condemned to be burnt at the stake. His death provoked a furious outburst on the part of the Protestant population over the pronouncement of the death penalty on the grounds of heresy. How could Calvin, such an outspoken enemy of Catholicism, be in league with the Inquisition?

Over time, the historical figure of Servet has begun to gain recognition (the University Hospital of Zaragoza bears his name and there's a foundation named after him) and his role as a humanist has increasingly become known.

Reflections by Servet

- *"Faith lights the lamp which only the oil of love can ignite."*
- *"The divine has come down to mankind so that mankind can ascend to the divine."*
- *"If I love someone in an affectionate manner, I am dependent on her, she surrenders herself to me and leads wherever she wills."*
- *"The tendency to trust impostors and godless men"*



and not ourselves, is an inherent part of the human condition, as none can recognise his own faults."

- *"Nothing separates me from God but a still, small voice or a ray of sunshine."*

Quotes about Servet

- *"This man is wise and I think without any doubt he teaches the truth; but he falls into the clutches of the devil. Take care this does not happen to you."*
-- William Farel, executioner and the right hand of John Calvin during Servet's execution.
- *"To kill a man does not defeat a doctrine but only kills the man himself."* -- Sebastian Castellion, French humanist on the execution of Servet.
- *"Miguel Servet, geographer, physician, physiologist, has earned the gratitude of mankind for his scientific discoveries, his dedication to the sick and the poor, his indomitable independence of thought, his intelligence and his conscience. His convictions are irrefutable. He gave his life in the cause of truth."*
-- From an inscription engraved on the monument erected in 1908 in the French town of Annemasse, 5 kilometres from Servet's place of execution.

Footnotes

1. Iberians, were one of a prehistoric people of southern and eastern Spain who later gave their name to the whole peninsula. Waves of migrating Celtic peoples from the 8th to 6th Century BCE⁸ onward settled heavily in northern and central Spain, penetrated Portugal and Galicia, but left the much earlier immigrant population of Bronze Age Indo-European people of the south and east intact.
2. The Roman emperor Augustus founded a city called Caesaraugusta to settle army veterans from the Cantabrian wars (northern Spain). The foundation date is not known, but it is believed to lie between 25 and 12 BCE. The city did not suffer the usual decline so common throughout the last centuries of the Roman empire and was captured peacefully by the Goths in the 5th Century CE.
3. The three frontier regions of Muslim Spain were the Upper March, around Zaragoza, the Middle March around Toledo and the Lower March to the north of Lisbon.
4. A Taifa was an independent Muslim-ruled principality, usually an emirate or petty kingdom, though there was one oligarchy, of which a number formed in the Al-Andalus

after the final collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate of Córdoba in 1031.

5. El Cid: Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (c. 1043 – 1099) was a Castilian nobleman and military leader in medieval Spain. He was called El Cid (the Lord) by the Moors and El Campeador (the Champion) by Christians, and is a national hero of Spain. He was born in Vivar del Cid, a town near the city of Burgos. He found work fighting for the Muslim rulers of Zaragoza, whom he protected from the domination of Aragón and Barcelona, further bolstering his military record and reputation as a leader.
6. Castile: The Kingdom of Castile was one of the medieval Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula.
7. The Almoravids were a Berber dynasty of Morocco, who formed an empire in the 11th Century stretching over the western Maghreb and Al-Andalus. Their capital was Marrakesh, a city they founded in 1062.
8. The Common Era abbreviated as CE, is an alternative naming of the calendar era, Anno Domini, abbreviated AD. BCE is the abbreviation for Before the Common Era, an alternative to Before Christ, abbreviated BC.
9. Al-Andalus: also known as Muslim Spain or Islamic Iberia, was a medieval Muslim cultural domain and territory occupying at its peak most of what are today Spain and Portugal. At its greatest geographical extent, in the 8th Century, southern France (Septimania) was briefly under its control. The name more generally describes parts of the Iberian Peninsula governed by Muslims (given the generic name of Moors) at various times between 711 and 1492.
10. Philo of Alexandria (c. 25 BCE – c. 50 CE), also called Philo Judaeus, was a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria in the Roman province of Egypt. He used philosophical allegory to attempt to fuse and harmonise Greek philosophy with Jewish belief. His method followed the practices of both Jewish exegesis and Stoic philosophy.
11. Yom Kippur also known as Day of Atonement, is the holiest day of the year in Judaism. Its central themes are atonement and repentance.
12. Empedocles (c. 490 – c. 430 BC) was a Greek pre-Socratic philosopher and a citizen of Agrigento, a Greek city in Sicily. His philosophy is best known for being the originator of the cosmogenic theory of the four Classical elements: *Fire, Air, Water* and *Earth*. He also proposed powers called *Love* and *Strife* (the two sides of the much earlier concept of a primordial binary dualism) which would act as forces to bring about the mixture and separation of these elements. His speculations were part of a wider history of the universe which also dealt with the origin and development of life. Influenced by the



Pythagoreans, he supported the doctrine of reincarnation. Empedocles is generally considered the last Greek philosopher to record his ideas in verse. Some of his work survives, more than in the case of any other Presocratic philosopher.

13. Duns Scotus or John Duns, commonly called Scotus or Duns Scotus as well (c. 1266 – 1308), is generally considered to be one of the three most important philosopher-theologians of the High Middle Ages
14. A Vizier is a high-ranking political advisor or minister.
15. Oran is a major city on the north-western Mediterranean coast of Algeria, and the second largest city of the country. Located near the north-western corner of Algeria, 268 miles (432 kilometres) from the capital Algiers, it is a major port and the commercial, industrial and educational centre of western Algeria.
16. Fez is the third largest city of Morocco, and was the capital of Morocco until 1925. It is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Al-Qarawiyyin, founded in 859 CE, is the oldest continuously functioning madrasa in the world. The city has been called the 'Mecca of the West' and the 'Athens of Africa'.
17. Avicenna: (c. 980 – 1037) was a Persian polymath who is regarded as one of the most significant thinkers and writers of the Islamic Golden Age. Of the 450 works he is known to have written, around 240 have survived, including 150 on philosophy and 40 on medicine.
18. Al-Farabi (c. 872 – between 950/951), was a renowned scientist and philosopher of the Islamic Golden Age. He was also a cosmologist, logician and musician, representing the multidisciplinary approach of Muslim scientists.
19. Averroes (1126 – 1198) is the Latinised form of Ibn Rushd. He was a medieval Andalusian Muslim polymath. He wrote on logic, Aristotelian and Islamic philosophy, theology, psychology, political and Andalusian classical music theory, geography, mathematics and the medieval sciences of medicine, astronomy, physics and celestial mechanics. Averroes was born in Córdoba, in present-day Spain, and died at Marrakesh in present-day Morocco.
20. Moses Maimonides was a preeminent medieval Spanish, Sephardic Jewish philosopher, astronomer and one of the most prolific and influential Torah scholars and physicians of the Middle Ages. He was born in Córdoba under the Almoravid Empire in 1135 or 1138, and died in Egypt in 1204. He was also a rabbi, physician and philosopher in Morocco and Egypt.
21. Søren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855) was a Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, social critic, and religious author who is widely considered to be the first existentialist philosopher.
22. Ibn al-Arif (born 1088 in Almeria and died 1141 in Ceuta) was a famous Andalusian Sufi.
23. John Calvin born Jehan Cauvin (1509 – 1564) was an influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism. Originally trained as a humanist lawyer, he broke from the Roman Catholic Church around 1530. After religious tensions provoked a violent uprising against Protestants in France, Calvin fled to Geneva in Switzerland.
24. The "*Catholic Monarchs*" is the joint title used in history for Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragón. Ferdinand and Isabella are noted as the premier monarchs of the newly united Spain at the dawn of the modern era. Their primary goal was to conquer the Muslim kingdom of Granada and completing the Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula.
25. William Harvey is credited with the first detailed study of the pulmonary circulation of the blood, but Servet came before him at least in understanding that blood circulated.
26. Vienne is a commune in south-eastern France, located 20 miles (32 kilometres) south of Lyon, on the river Rhône.

O Pure Heart

By **Jean Pierre de Caussade**
(1675 - 1751)

Listen to a pure heart as it gently whispers in your ear...

Look at me carefully O child, for it is I who gives that love which always chooses the better part; the one who creates in you that mild but effective fear that arouses such dread of wrong-doing that you can easily avoid it.

I impart that excellent understanding that reveals the greatness of God and the merit of virtue. And it is again I who causes in you that passionate and holy yearning which keeps your guiding soul resolute in its great virtue and in your steadfast expectation of the nearness your Creator.

Yes, O Pure Heart, invite everyone to gather around you and enrich themselves with your inexhaustible treasures and avenues to a life of holy service. There is no spiritual practice, no path to holiness, which does not find its source in you.





by **Jenny Tsang**

The Emperor & the Seed

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Young boys, what beautiful plants, trees and flowers you have grown. It gladdens my heart that you have taken care of things of beauty possessing perfection that even the gods themselves cannot match. I see that you have learned too in this year how to care for the very things upon which all living things depend and you are now well qualified to toil in the fields for the rest of your days to feed your families and sell your produce on the market.

Much as this has gladdened my heart, I am even more gladdened that today the gods have revealed



to me who among you will become my appointed successor. Guards..., bring into my presence the boy named Ling, and with him his empty pot.

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

Then the emperor addressed the boys one more time:

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

What have we Learned?

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

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





The Trinity of Power

by **Walter Albersheim**

This article aims at finding a common bond between world views which, on the surface, seem to diverge widely. We refer to:

- 1. Religious concepts of a 'Holy Trinity'.*
- 2. The physical concept of the preservation of energy.*
- 3. The Rosicrucian concept of the universe as vibrations, manifesting in accordance with the Law of the Triangle.*

Let us begin by looking for basic agreement between different versions of a Trinity, such as the Christian and Hindu interpretations. According to Christian theology, the Godhead consists of three persons: *Father, Son* and *Holy Spirit*. The Father is the supreme source of all power. According to most Gospel

descriptions, He generally does not act by Himself but through the two other persons who, in effect, seem subordinate to Him.

Jesus states repeatedly that he does not act of himself but carries out the will of the Father, and that the Father



will send the Comforter, the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to his disciples. The Son, identified in the Gospels as Jesus the carpenter's son, personifies God's love, the driving force that fills us with the will and power to work for the kingdom of God. Finally, the Holy Spirit is divine power in action. It is likened to the *'Breath of God'*, the rustling of His wind, but also to the fiery power that fills people with enthusiasm and ecstasy so that they can prophesy, *"speak with new tongues"* and act as leaders of humankind.

In Hindu theology, the three persons of the Holy Trinity or Trimurti, are *Brahma*, the Creator; *Vishnu*, the Preserver; and *Śiva*, the Destroyer. Of these, the first, Brahma, is the highest, as shown by the fact that Brahma or *'the Brahman'* by Itself and totally alone, is conceived of as the one and only Universal Being. One may therefore liken and identify this person to the Christian concept of the Father. It is equally natural to compare Vishnu to the Son. A power that keeps alive the creation and all creatures within it must be a loving power that strengthens and vitalises like the Christ spirit of the Gospels.



17th Century painting of four-headed *Brahma* as an aged man.

But what of the fierce destroyer and killer, Śiva? In the immortal realm of divinity, death and destruction do not have their common, earthly meaning. They stand for action and change, because every change, every new form, implies the end and therefore a kind of death of previous manifestations. As representative of change and action, Śiva is analogous to the Holy Spirit of the Christian Trinity. This is further confirmed by the fact that Śiva is also the god of dance, of the arts, of poetry, of religious fervour and ecstasy. Thus, we find in both Trinities a supreme, creative mind power that expresses itself in love and in action.



Vishnu

Modern physics sees the universe as endowed with a vast but constant store of power that manifests as either mass or energy. Energy, in turn, takes many forms such as light, heat, sound, electricity, chemical affinity, flowing water or air, but also the mobility of living organisms. The Rosicrucian viewpoint is similar to that of science,

Modern physics sees the universe as endowed with a vast but constant store of power that may manifest either as mass or as energy.

which is only natural inasmuch as many aspects of the Rosicrucian curriculum are scientific too, though it deals, in addition, with areas of knowledge that science can in all honesty not deal with yet.

According to Rosicrucian teaching, all Being is Energy, and all Energy is vibratory. Nowadays, the term vibrations has been cheapened by indiscriminate use, so let us go back to the original meaning of the term:





Śiva

The Latin root *vibra* means a slender, whip-like twig; so vibration means a whipping, oscillating motion. We may study its character by its classical prototype of a swinging pendulum. The pendulum is set into motion by an initial supply of energy, such as the lifting of its bob to a maximum height or elongation. This energy storage can last a long time. Even if seemingly consumed by friction, it has only been transformed into other expressions.

Now let us look at one period by itself. At the beginning of each swing, all motion stops for an instant before it reverses its direction. At this point, all the energy expresses as polar tension, as an overcoming of the pull of gravity. Then, in mid-swing, having reached its lowest point, the pendulum has transformed all that polar or potential energy into motion..., kinetic energy, momentum or action.

You may see in these two so different forms of energy an analogy to the two subordinate persons of the Trinity. Potential energy stands for the love and eagerness to approach the attraction of Earth..., akin to the driving love of the Son. Kinetic energy is the restlessly moving action of the Spirit. These two are in dynamic balance: The tension must manifest in action, and the motion overshoots its aim, creating new tension. Only the sum total of these energy forms remains invariant, constant in the midst of activity, like the eternal Being and Mind power of the Father.

Note that this process of energy transformation is also symbolically expressed by the Rosicrucian *Law of the Triangle*. The polar tension between the elongated, raised pendulum bob and the force of gravity stands for the two polar and opposite points of the triangle, and the release of tension in motion exemplifies manifestation at the third point of the triangle. All three points together, like the three persons of the Trinities, express the totality of Being..., permanence beneath all seeming change.

What lessons can we human beings learn from these symbolic laws? Outwardly and physically, we are puny compared with the bulk of a mountain or the strength of a hurricane, but inwardly we are privileged to become one with the entire Cosmic Mind and its limitless power. We can use meditation to store up potential energy, namely the strength and willingness to act constructively in harmony with the Cosmic. And in action we can become channels through which the invincible Cosmic Spirit can flow and express itself as healing power, artistic inspiration, or as illuminating knowledge.

Let us strive to be the third point of the triangle in which the vibratory energy of the Cosmic manifests; or if we wish to express the same goal in terms of Trinity, let us strive to become imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit so we may attain son-ship and one-ness with the wisdom and peace of the Father!





Detail from the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

ANCIENT EGYPT'S LITERATURE

by Rodman Clayson

A few key ancient Egyptian texts have survived on papyrus into modern times, and they are thankfully housed today in museums throughout the world for us to read and learn from. No doubt most ancient Egyptian written texts have been lost, but enough have survived to give us an extraordinarily deep insight into life in those ancient times.

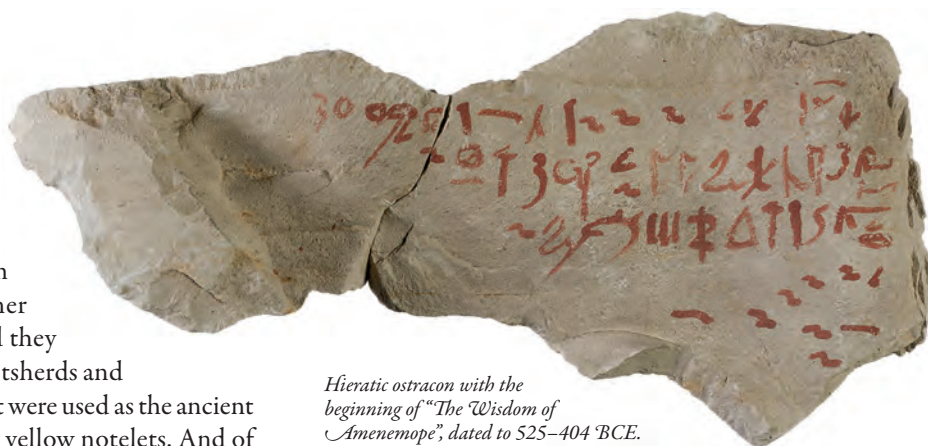
Writing reveals the culture of a people, and the texts of ancient Egypt include various *'wisdom precepts'*, autobiographies, letters, stories, songs, hymns, dramas and of course



magical spells. The earliest writings were inscribed on the inner walls of pyramid chambers and their mortuary temples. We also find them incised or painted on the inner walls of tombs and coffins; and they exist as well on thousands of potsherds and ostraca, chips of waste stone that were used as the ancient equivalent of our modern little yellow notelets. And of course there was writing on papyrus, which is still our most important source of ancient Egyptian 'literature' as opposed to terse one-liners. The papyrus scrolls were written on in black and red text first in hieroglyphics, but later in hieratic, and even later in the demotic.

In this article I will give a few examples of Egyptian literature as opposed to hymns, records of ownership or spells which make up most of ancient Egyptian texts. The oldest maxims we know of are those of the vizier Imhotep from the 3rd Dynasty. Unfortunately none of them have survived, though they are referred to in later texts. Parts of what must have been a large corpus of writings from Imhotep's time were still being quoted even 2,500 years later in Roman times.

Fortunately we do however have the reputed sayings of other wise men such as Ptahhotep, Amenemope, Wakhara, and a few others. Their sayings or maxims are often called wisdom texts, for they declared a preferred way of life, a kind of practical morality that the author wished to pass on to his children or disciples. The virtues of prudence, reserve, honesty and upright living were emphasised, but through it all, one senses the presence the all-



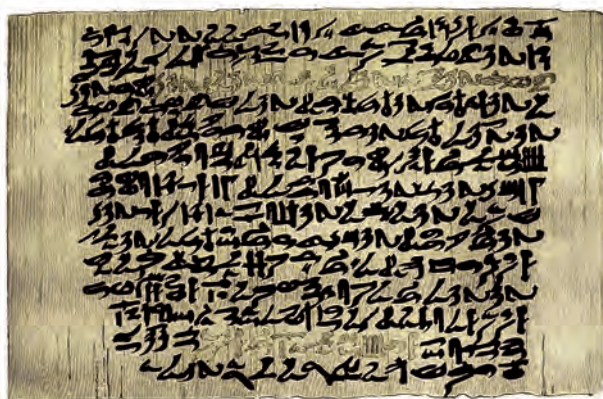
Hieratic ostrakon with the beginning of "The Wisdom of Amenemope", dated to 525-404 BCE.

powerful set of beliefs that pervaded every aspect of life in those times. The wisdom teachings propounded that life, rather than having to be a struggle, could be pleasant if one could find the harmony of the gods in the established order of things.

Here follows one extract from the wisdom teachings of the 5th Dynasty vizier Ptahhotep to his son. Because it is not easy reading, you are urged to read it several times over to fully absorb the message and its full intent.

If you are a leader who directs the affairs of a multitude, strive after every excellence until there is no fault in your nature. Maat [the goddess personifying truth and right-order] is good and its worth is lasting.... While evil may gain wealth, the strength of truth lasts.... He who reckons all day has never a happy moment; He who feasts all day cannot keep his family.... One reaches one's goal according to one's steering [of the bark of Ra on the celestial Nile].... Be not arrogant because of your knowledge.... If you plough and there is growth in the field, the god [probably referring to Ra, Ptah, Amun or Horus] causes it to be much in your hand. Do not boast about this among your kindred. Great is the respect that the silent one calls forth.

If you art wretched, then serve a man of repute, so your conduct will be good before the god [or God]; and he [the man of repute] should be one who you know was formerly insignificant. Do not raise up your heart against him [i.e. don't be proud] because you know about him from the past, but honour him because of that which fell to his lot. For wealth does not come of itself, but it is their [the gods'] ordinance for him whom they love.... It is the god [or God] who creates his success and he protects him even when he sleeps.



The Maxims of Ptahhotep.



[If after warning and correction, your son continues to do wrong] *"...then drive him away..., he is not your son, he is not born to you.... Reject him as one whom they [the gods] have condemned. He is damned already in the flesh. He whom they [the gods] guide, does not go astray; [but] he whom they leave without a boat cannot make the crossing."*

The crossing here refers to the crossing of the Nile from East to West where the dead are buried, or figuratively, the crossing of the heavens to the place of eternal rest in the domain of setting sun. Continuing, the father Ptahhotep emphasises to his son the need for good speech:

...in instructing the ignorant about wisdom and about the rules for good speech, as of advantage to he who will obey them [the gods] and of disadvantage to him who may neglect them.... If a son accepts what his father says, no plan of his miscarries... [and he] will stand well in the estimation of the officials.... As for the fool who does not listen, he can do nothing.... The wise man rises early in the morning in order to establish himself [perform the dawn rites of lustration].... Let not your heart be puffed up because of your knowledge; do not be overconfident because you are a wise man.... Grasp hold of the truth, and do not exceed it.... Long lived is the man whose rule of conduct is right and who goes in accordance with his [proper] course....



Egyptian peasants harvesting papyrus, from a mural painting in a Deir el-Medina tomb dated to the early Ramesside Period.

"Long lived is the man whose rule of conduct is right and who goes in accordance with his [proper] course..."

The Good Life

In the Old Kingdom, instruction was handed down from father to son. By the New Kingdom instruction or wisdom had become the curriculum of schools for scribes. In so many places we see the belief that the 'good life' consists of being honest, discreet, patient, not covetous or envious, being prudent in friendship, paying proper respect to one's temporal superiors, and maintaining steadfastly one's station in life by exercising moderation in all things.

In the 10th Dynasty, King Wakhara had the following instruction prepared for his son, Merikara:

...do Maat [truth or right order] while you endure on earth.... Do not [overly] trust [your] length of years [i.e. your mature age], for they [the years, or time] regard a lifetime as [but] an hour. A man remains over after death, and his deeds are placed beside him in heaps. [But the] existence yonder is for eternity.... He who reaches it without wrongdoing will exist yonder like a god, stepping out freely like the lords of eternity.... Be [therefore] not evil; patience is good.... Give the love of yourself to the whole earth; a good character is a remembrance.... More acceptable is the character of one [a person] upright of heart than the ox of the evildoer.... Do right as long as you are on earth. Calm the afflicted, oppress no widow, expel no man from his father's possessions. Do not kill, but [merely] punish with beatings or imprisonment. Then will this land be well established. Leave vengeance to the god [or God].

Translating from ancient Egyptian to modern English is not the easiest in the world, and one difficulty relates to the word '*God*.' We use this word to denote the Supreme Creator, the Divine, the source





'Detail – Book of the Dead.

of all things, etc.. But in ancient Egyptian times it is not certain if the definite article *'the'* was used, as in *'the god'* rather than *'God'* by itself. Regardless of this, we can however, through the deep devotion constantly displayed by Egyptians to their gods, be assured that whether they referred to *'the god'* or to *'God'*, it was something deeply sacred for them.

The pharaoh was for all intents and purposes believed to be the material incarnation of the god, namely one and the same being that people worshipped from the realm of the gods, but incarnated into flesh and bones. We see this reflected in the early Christian belief that the master Jesus was God incarnate. But the pharaoh would no doubt have been fully aware of the frailty of all people, including himself, and there must have been many pharaohs who died prematurely in battle or due to palace intrigues or diseases such as malaria or schistosomiasis (bilharzia) which was then, as now, prevalent in slow-moving parts of the Nile. So, the pharaoh addresses Merikara as follows:

Copy your fathers who have gone before you....
Behold, their words are recorded in writing. Let he
who knows open, read and copy [?]. Thus, he who
is skilled becomes one who is instructed.

In the 12th Dynasty, the pharaoh Amenemhet I admonishes his son Senusret (Sesostris):

Hearken to that which I say to you, that you may be
king [pharaoh] of the earth, that you may be ruler
of the lands, that you may increase good.

The 9th Dynasty pharaoh Akhtoy gave the following instruction:

Be not evil. Patience is good. Be a
craftsman in speech, for the tongue
is a sword to a man, and speech is
more valorous than fighting.

And finally, there is an interesting statement attributed to Amenemope in the 12th Dynasty:

Verily, man is clay and straw, the
god is his fashion.... [his creator]

Ameni

During the 12th Dynasty, some literary works were written on behalf of earlier pharaohs. One of these stories relates that Pharaoh Snefru of the 3rd Dynasty had a prophet named Neferti called to court to entertain the king with *'choice speeches.'* Neferti made this prophecy:

A king will come forth from Upper Egypt called
Ameni, the son of a woman of the south.... He
will receive the White Crown and wear the Red
Crown.... Be glad you people of his time, the son of
a highborn man will make his name for all eternity.
They who would make mischief and devise enmity
have suppressed their mutterings through fear of
him.... There will be built the 'Walls of the Prince',
and the Asiatics will never again return to Egypt.
They will beg again for water for their cattle after
their custom.... And Maat [truth or right order]
will come into its [her] own again and wrong will
be cast out.

The Ameni mentioned here is undoubtedly Amenemhet I. The *'Book of the Dead'* is a wide collection of spells and hymns that the deceased pharaoh needs to recite accurately as he makes his way through the underworld before reaching the abode of permanent stars. There are also hymns to the sun-god, such as this example:

I am Atum when I was alone in Nun [the primeval
waters]. I am Ra in his first appearance when he
began to rule that which he had made.

What does this mean? "*Ra when he began to rule that*



which he had made" means that Ra appeared as a king before Shu and his sister/consort Tefnut (the first children of Atum) had even separated heaven from earth with the assistance of their children Geb (earth) and Nut (sky or night). Shu symbolised the atmosphere and was the god who held in place the celestial disk over the earth. A pyramid provides us with a prayer to the sky-goddess Nut:

Great one who became Heaven, you assumed power, you stirred, you have filled all places with your beauty. The whole earth lies beneath you. You have taken possession of it. You enclose the earth and all things [in your arms]. May you put this king Pepi in yourself as an imperishable star. Heaven is satisfied and the earth rejoices when they hear that King Pepi II has put Maat in the place of falsehood [or disorder].

A pharaoh's inscription tells us:

I have made bright Maat [truth or right order] which he [Ra] loves. I know that he lives by it.... It is my bread [too]; I also eat of its brightness. I am a likeness from his [Ra's] limbs, one with him.



Imentet and Ra from the tomb of Nefertari, 12th Century BCE. Ra-Horakhty represents the East while Hathor (sitting behind him) with the headdress of Amunet, represents the West.

Creation

The Memphite creation story is truly beautiful and revolves around the earth-god Ptah. The essence of the concept is found in the following inscription:

Every divine word came into being through that which was thought by the heart and commanded by the tongue.

In another text the solar deity Ra says:

Only after I came into being did all that was created come into being.

Further on about Ra it is written:

Ra himself is united with his body.... He is the Universal Lord, the beginning of existing things.... No gods know his true shape.... No witness is borne to him. He is too mysterious for his glory to be revealed, too great for questions to be asked of him, too powerful to be known.

In the 18th Dynasty, of the pharaoh Thutmose III, the vizier Rekhmire had inscribed in his tomb:

What is the king of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father and the mother of all men, alone by himself without an equal.

About himself, Rekhmire had inscribed:

Look after the office of the vizier and watch over everything that is done in it, for it is the constitution of the entire land.... Pass over no petitioner without hearing his case.... Show anger to no man wrongfully and be angry only at that which deserves anger.... The distinction of a prince is that he does justice.

Many Facets

The literature of these ancient people has many facets. Here is the blessing of a god addressing a pharaoh:

I grant you, that you may rise like the sun, rejuvenate yourself like the moon, [and] repeat life like the flood of the Nile.





Depiction of Syrians bringing presents to Thutmose III, in the tomb of Rekhmire, circa 1400 BCE (actual painting and interpretational drawing).

About himself, the boy pharaoh Tutankhamun had the following written:

His Majesty drove out disorder [falsehood] from the Two Lands so that Maat [goddess of truth and right order] was again established in its place. He made disorder [falsehood] an abomination of the land as at the first time [creation].

In his book *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, Henri Frankfort states that the following, taken from a papyrus roll, was to be recited daily at temple service. It was a hymn to the victorious Ra, likely recited daily in temples throughout the land.:

You rise, you rise brilliantly. You are victorious over your enemies. You cause the day boat to sail past, and [to] repel the dragon of the storm at night. He cannot approach at the decisive moment. You have destroyed the power of [your] enemies. The antagonists of Ra are overthrown by the flame of terror.

The following is the sad lament of a husband whose wife died while he was away in the service of the pharaoh:

What evil have I done to you that I find myself in this wretched state.... You became my wife when I was young, and I was with you. I was appointed to all manner of offices, and I was with you. I did not forsake you or cause your heart to sorrow.... Behold, when I commanded the foot soldiers of Pharaoh, together with his chariot force, I made you come so they may fall down before you, and they brought

all manner of good things to present to you.... When you were ill with sickness I went to the chief physician and he made you your medicine; he did everything you said he should do. When I had to accompany Pharaoh to the south, my thoughts were with you, and I spent those eight months without caring to eat or drink. When I returned to Memphis, I took myself to you, and greatly mourned for you with the people of my house."

And here is a happy harp player's song:

Make holiday, verily, verily! Put incense and fine oil together beside you, and garlands of lotus and flowers upon your breast. The woman you love is she who sits by your side. Do not anger your heart over anything that has happened. Put music before you, do not recall evil, the abomination of the god. Think of joys, you righteous, just and true man; calm, friendly, content, relaxed, happy [and] speaking no evil.

Several interesting stories have come down to us too, one them a tale of two brothers, and another about a shipwrecked sailor and his trials and tribulation to get home. Another apparently very popular story which was written down in many versions was about Sinuhe. Our view of the tale is perhaps different from that of the ancients who saw it as a success story. To review briefly, Sinuhe, who was accompanying the crown prince on a campaign, overhears a message reporting the death of his father the pharaoh Amenhet I. The prince being concerned about his father and the no doubt all the intrigue and manoeuvring that will accompany his succession, rushes back to the palace.





A raised-relief depiction of Amenemhat I accompanied by deities; the death of Amenemhat I is reported by his son Senusret I in the Story of Sinuhe.

Sinuhe, suspecting there is a plot against the prince, flees in confusion. Hiding in the reeds, he crosses a waterway and sees new the sentries on palace walls and he believes something bad has happened.

In the dark of the night he flees and continues for days until he makes it into the Sinai desert. Nearly dying of thirst, he is eventually found by Bedouins whom he helps to defeat a foreign enemy. He marries and settles down among the Bedouins but is eventually made aware of conditions in Egypt by means of travellers and messengers from the Nile valley. Finally, the pharaoh (formerly the crown prince) asks him to return and Sinuhe obediently does so. He is well received at court with the queen and princesses present. With the death of the old pharaoh, the crown prince had succeeded to the throne unopposed as Senusret I.

Sinuhe lived happily into a ripe old age. What he had done was not looked upon as desertion, but *"It was like the dispensation of God..., after the manner of a dream."* For him the greatest and most important accomplishment was the preparation of his tomb:

And there was constructed for me a pyramid out of stone within the precinct of the pyramids. The chief architect began the building of it, the painters designed it, the master sculptor carved in it, the master builders of the necropolis busied themselves with it. All the glistening gear that is placed in the tomb shaft, its needs were supplied there from.... It was his majesty who caused it to be made. There is no humble man for whom the like has been done. And so I live, rewarded by the king, until the day of my death comes.

The sage Amenemope wrote the following towards the end of the New Kingdom, around 1000 BCE:

If you find a large debt against a poor man, divide it into three parts; forgive two, let one remain. you will find it a path of life; you will lie down at night and sleep soundly. On the morrow you will find it like good news. The truly silent man holds himself apart. He is like a tree growing in a garden.

The theology of the New Kingdom seemed to advocate humbleness, silence and discretion...

It flourishes, it doubles its fruit, it [stands] before its lord. Its fruit is sweet, its shade is pleasant, and its end is reached in the garden.... Put yourself in the hands of the god [or God] you're your tranquillity will overthrow them [your enemies].

The theology of the New Kingdom seemed to advocate humbleness, silence and discretion..., so not much different from what we admire today, and the above quotation is a good example of this. It would appear that the gods loved the silent man, *"... more than him who is loud of voice."* As we have seen, the concepts of the ancient Egyptian teachings of all periods expounded the good life and the ways of achieving it. Their moral code, perhaps not to the standards of some today, were certainly advanced for their day, eventually spread into neighbouring cultures throughout the Middle East.

It is interesting to note that in the 7th Century BCE, Amenemopet said:



See these thirty chapters; they entertain, they instruct, they are the foremost of all books, they make the ignorant man to know.

I has been suggested that one part of the Book of Proverbs is a reflection of this reference. Ideals and feelings are expressed in poetry and song. In the ancient literature there are many songs and also poems of triumph and of love. The following is an excellent example of a poetic love song:

Come through the garden [my] love to me.
My love is like each flower that blows tall and
straight as a young palm tree, and in each cheek
a sweet blush-rose.

Like the art of Egypt, so much of the literature was tied to religion. This following hymn is an example, and a brief review of the literature of ancient Egypt would not be complete without reference to the *Hymn to the Aton* by the 18th Dynasty (Amenhotep IV). It



Pharaoh Akhenaten and his family adoring the Aton.

is I believe one of the most beautiful and colourful of all Egyptian literature of the time. Rather than present the entirety of one of his hymns, it will be sufficient to give just the first four lines:

Your dawning is beautiful in the horizon of
heaven, O living Aton, Beginning of life! When
you rise in the eastern horizon of heaven, you fill
every land with your beauty.

Some authorities have suggested a close similarity between this hymn and Psalm 104. From a consideration of the diversity of the literature of Ancient Egypt the impression emerges that these thoroughly human people had their hopes and fears, their joys and griefs like any other cultured, civilised people. They were concerned about daily life and its problems and gave thought to social moralising as well as the ever-prevailing theology of living a good life and surviving into an even better afterlife. The extensive translations done by archaeologists of the literature of ancient Egypt reveal to us that this was a culture of the highest sort, perhaps the highest even until the brilliant emergence of classical Greece.

Extract from from the *Hymn to the Aton*.





The Dark Valleys of Life

Creative Alienation

by **Mary Wilson**

My son contracted meningitis a few days before his third birthday. It was a terrible time, watching him scream with pain. After two days in intensive care, he seemed to stabilise but then suddenly relapsed. My husband and I were beside ourselves with fear and grief: fear for what the specialist had gently warned us could happen, and grief over the possible brain damage that we thought may already have occurred.

And while this was happening, I still had to attend to work dealing with important briefs as part of my legal career, while my husband had to be on-site dealing with problems at the refinery where he was the chemical engineer in charge. Two fast-paced careers and a seriously ill child does not a happy family make.

Several other issues had occurred in short succession in the months leading up to the illness, all of them severe knocks to my confidence. Although competent and hard working as a lawyer, I had come up against a block in my professional career. I was dealing with far more cases



than I should have, and the results were at times at best mediocre, no matter how hard I tried to improve. I was facing impending failure in my career, and even old friends seemed puzzled and even a bit offended by the stressed out person I had become.

It was one of those times when everything seems to go wrong, when an ugly, unyielding fate seems to be guiding us to destruction. I recall I didn't even like looking at myself in the mirror and often I wondered how others could stand my presence. Just about everything I encountered seemed to be conspiring to bring frustration and defeat to my doorstep. I was seriously out of tune with the rest of the world!

Out of Tune

At such moments, one feels disconnected, disassociated and disoriented..., out of tune with the rhythm of life. The orderly symphony of the spheres is replaced by a jarring, discordant cacophony. Everything we embark upon goes awry or is more complicated than need be. We experience a sense of separation from family, friends and associates..., and the worst is that we feel such low self-worth that we don't even feel like correcting the situation. I was the one out of tune with everyone else, and it was clear that everything, apart from me, was going about its business as normal. Somehow I had fallen out of orbit, and was floundering helplessly in a disorganised vacuum.

When we are a properly functioning whole, we can cope with almost any problem..., but when not, how does one survive the lonely, isolated hours of this alienation and futility? Pity poor Job as he cried out:

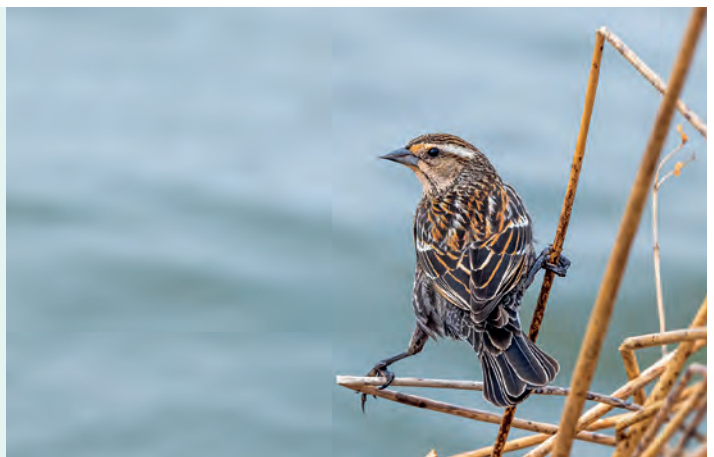
Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea...; ...for the arrows of the Almighty are within me, their poison drowns my spirit....

I wasn't quite the modern equivalent of Job, but it doesn't take much for us to feel an equal sense of helplessness and disorientation. Yet, the problems will eventually be resolved for better or for worse, with or without us. Sooner or later, either we or others will have the strength to sweep them away. When times have been hardest of all, I have often been comforted by words spoken out in my mind: *"this too shall pass away."*

Our son's illness broke through a barrier a few hours after he had entered a coma; he simply awoke, his face had new freshness about it, and he soon returned to vibrant good health. And all my problems and worries dissipated to nothing in but a few months, leaving room for new challenges. But regaining my balance after having lost my footing so badly, took nearly a year to accomplish. I had been sorely shaken by the rapid sequence of events that had pulled me down so hard and fast.

If we have fallen off the path of serenity and orderly growth, we must get back on it again before we can function as vital, useful beings. It is not so much the severity of our problems that unsettle us so much; it is the disjointed, dislocated state of being into which we have fallen. How can we at such times realign ourselves with life? Never give up, always have fortitude in the face of adversity, and never, ever give in to self pity.

The friendly songs of
birds and whisper of
leaves will begin to hum
in our ears and become
a prologue to the gentle
melody of contentment.



Often it is enough simply to be patient, to believe that if we have not found the way, then the way will surely find us..., eventually. Having this confidence is enough for path and pilgrim to find each other again. One day, we will find ourselves at one again with the world. The friendly songs of birds and whisper of leaves will begin to hum in our ears and become a prologue to the gentle melody of contentment. The path we were on will appear once more beneath our feet and all be ours to enjoy again if we but stick it out without compromising our principles. And at that time, when the veil of disorder is lifted from our eyes, perhaps we will perceive that even these low points were necessary parts of life..., for we grew in ways that only those unhappy circumstances could have guaranteed.

Just as all things in the universe ebb and flow according to hidden rhythms, so too must our lives sometimes contract and turn inward before expanding again. It may be essential to endure extremes of despair in order to experience subsequent periods of growth and productivity. No life can follow the path of a straight, unbroken plateau. Nothing in the universe has such a flat, sterile form. Everything ebbs and flows, rises and falls, expands and contracts. There must be valleys in order to have hills. The dark valleys

Just as all things in the universe ebb and flow according to hidden rhythms, so too must our lives sometimes contract and turn inward before expanding again.

of life are a prelude to growth and understanding. Experience leads to knowledge and increased awareness even if the experiences are difficult at times to endure.

Our down periods are not punishments or ordeals that must be borne without reason. They are lessons in how to live a life of goodness, which in turn leads to spiritual growth and an expansion of consciousness and both mental and emotional maturity. If we are perceptive enough, if we observe carefully enough, we can't fail to hear the message. It is then up to us to utilise these teachings in the direction of wisdom and perception.

Job cried out in his pain, not merely for relief, but for guidance and understanding of the meaning of existence. We too can use our times of travail for creative meditation and progress in our individual search for meaning and direction. The universe is never disordered, and our own occasional periods of disorientation can be a vehicle for our greater comprehension of the wonder and beauty of life.

There must be valleys in order to have hills. The dark valleys of life are a prelude to growth and understanding.





Have you read the words of Robert Frost, in the last verse of *The Road Not Taken*? Words like this literally take my breath away.

I shall be telling this with a sigh, somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference.

It deals with my favourite philosophical question of *Choice*. What choices do we have and what do we do with those choices? We can ponder endlessly how much of life is predetermined, how we are limited by heredity, intellect, social status, environment or economics. That's not the issue here; nor do I believe that it's important. However limited our choices may be, what matters is what we accomplish through the choices we make.

Victor Frankl survived the death camps of World War II, and wrote in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*:

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms: to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

I believe we have a great deal of choice; that most of us do not make the most of these choices and that we tend to live our lives based on other people's decisions and expectations. I believe that, too often, we lack the courage



to act on our decisions. Not to decide is to decide. I believe this freedom to choose is one of the most important aspects of our lives, and that to act responsibly on those choices determines the success or failure of our lives.

It's important to differentiate between freedom and license. Make no mistake, this is not the concept of "if it feels good, do it." All choice combines freedom *with* responsibility; they are inseparable. We pay a price for all our decisions and our indecisions, but we've the individual freedom to determine for ourselves when that price is too high.

Each day brings new choices and multiple decisions have to be made. All choices matter and the potential for a better life is all around us. No matter how trivial our choices may seem to be, the decisions we make determine who we become and what the quality of our lives will be. We become in a very real sense the consequences of our choices, or rather our decisions to those choices. So, let me present some areas in which we can exercise our freedom to choose.

We can choose whether or not we believe that all people can develop within themselves an inner core of good and sanctity. All living things seek light and through it life; neither plants nor animals can survive long without the beneficial effects of light from our resident star, whether they receive it directly and visually, or indirectly through the energy it provides. And beyond the physical light that we humans absolutely must have in order to survive, lies the '*inner light*' which is equally essential for our survival. That magnificent inner partner to light that we commonly know as '*life*', and specifically the special form known to mystics as the '*Vital Life Force*', this is the ultimate source of our existence, and we must seek it and nurture it wherever it exists.

Of course we can choose to move into the shadows, away from light and life; but we will in that case eventually die a lonely and unhappy death. Denial of the inner light does not diminish its existence in the warm glow of actuality, and choosing to avoid it, and thereby avoiding life itself, merely changes us for the worse. Better then to choose light and thereby life, and to do so positively, enthusiastically and above all willingly.

We can also choose love. We can choose which people and what creatures matter to us, and then nurture our relationship with them tenderly as treasured parts of our

own being. We can choose to make time for the people and animals we love; and where we initially have none to love, we can choose to go out and seek people and animals to care about. Good, lasting relationships require willing commitments by all involved; but we have the upper hand as we know this and must therefore lead the way by bringing love into the lives of all within reach.

We can also choose health, both mental and physical. Again, we choose not from our limitations, but from the freedom we have to dream of a better self. And where we have health conditions that simply cannot be resolved, we focus all our energy on at least maintaining the status quo, and better still, improving our health in those areas that have not been damaged beyond repair. This positive approach of holding on to and treasuring the areas of health we have, is crucial to our wider wellbeing. We can choose not to abuse our bodies through overwork, through alcohol or drug abuse, through overeating, through not exercising, etc., the choice is of course ours. And for those of us who have generally good health already, we can choose not to whine about the inevitable age-related aches and pains that we know will eventually enter our lives. Choose a positive, can-do attitude therefore towards maintaining your mind and body in as healthy a state as you can.

Remember too that we can choose to surround ourselves with beauty. We can dream of better places, more beautiful surroundings, and then go about creating our little corners of paradise. Even a plant on a windowsill can bring beauty and grace into an otherwise drab existence. For me, each day includes simple pleasures: a walk around the block, a few coins for the beggar on the corner, fresh flowers on the mantelpiece, light streaming through the stained glass windows of my local church, music, candlelight, poetry. So many small things are there just for the taking, even if our circumstances are humble. Seek out therefore the beauty that brings you refinement and happiness.

And finally, we can choose happiness. I know..., how can one be happy if one is daily faced with frustrations and unpleasantness. It isn't easy to be happy, but it is possible. The easiest way of achieving happiness is to choose to be grateful even for the small things in life. Even if you have to pretend to be grateful, do so; for that pretence will, when sincerity is added, turn into genuine gratitude.

This may seem like cold comfort, but please believe me: choosing to experience gratitude, and doing so with





sincerity, is one of the most important choices you will ever make. For from that gratitude, no matter how small it is at first, a whole universe of happiness will open up. If someone makes you unhappy, remember that you can choose the opposite state merely by counting your meagre blessings one by one, and amplifying them to the point where happiness returns. So, choose to be happy, and begin the process of choosing to be grateful.

Each Day, a Choice

We can choose to have fun, to be spontaneous. I have a small magnetic plaque on my fridge which reads: *"Life is not a dress rehearsal."* I take that as meaning that life is serious, it's for real. Yes, I know life is also like a big classroom, and yes we are here to learn our lessons; but we mustn't treat life as though we can repeatedly do a *'undo'* as we do on our computer when we've made a mistake. Taking life seriously, even if it's a school in the broader scheme of things, means that we make better choices, and live with the consequences of our choices without a whimper.

In other words, choose to succeed and don't make your choices on the basis that you just want to see how things will pan out. Don't treat life as a mere dress rehearsal, an experiment. Life's for real, so make proper choices and live with the consequences. We can choose to dream, and those dreams must surely be pleasant and bring happiness to us. Create your own ideals, make your own dreams, and then make it come true.

The crucial thing is to actually make choices, and

never sit of the fence more than a brief moment as you decide. Have the courage to choose and to live with your choices, no matter how they turn out. You are the *'pilot in command'* and there is ultimately no one else who can take responsibility for your life. Remember that proper choosing means selecting the best parts of life and leaving behind the rest. Delete from your life all things that hold you back or keep you in a state of weakness. If someone consistently makes you uncomfortable or unhappy, why are they a part of your life? If the food in a restaurant is poor, or the service slovenly, what do you care what a surly person thinks of you when you leave without tipping? You don't have to answer the phone every time just because it's ringing, and if you don't like your life, look for honourable ways of making it better.

Where unhappiness exists, choose a strategy to change things. The most important step is simply to choose to take that first step out of your dungeon, even if you can't see immediately how to escape. Choose to change things, and accept nothing less than a complete transformation. Make a list of the things that bring you comfort and support, and those that detract you from peace of mind and happiness. I've made some deletions in my life. I no longer make room for plastic flowers in the home, wine in paper cups, chronically negative people bothering me, restaurant meals that cost more than I earn in a day. They're all gone and I haven't missed any of them. Their deletion leaves more time for the things that matter to me, and I pursue happiness without hurting other in the process.

All choices involve consequences, and responsibility for those choices. We have to pay our dues, but what a small price there is for true freedom! We are the sum total of our choices, and our lives are lived out living with the consequences of what we have chosen. Choose life therefore, and make it a happy one!





The site of the monumental Buddha statues of Bamiyan

ANCIENT AFGHANISTAN

by **Bill Anderson**

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

It was a land of no arts, no letters, no refinement, no society, where innocent people lived in continual fear

and danger of violent death. Human life was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short, and their language was coarse by the standards of what had come before it. But by now, I'm sure you know of course that the article was about *Dark Age Britain*.

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





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

My work brings me into daily contact with people from all over the world. It was in this way that I first met some people from Afghanistan, who had come to the UK in search of refuge. I will be the first to admit that my knowledge of Afghanistan was a bit hazy, though I knew it was a very beautiful country, with mountains, deserts and plains. I had heard of the statues of the Buddha at *Bamyan* and the turquoise lakes of *Band-e Amir*. Unfortunately, the recent TV pictures from Afghanistan have made us all the more aware of the troubles afflicting it and other parts of the world with similar ills.

The pictures we see on television give little hint of the glories of the past, and of the importance of this country to the cultural and mystical life of the world. This article then is an attempt to redress the balance from the perspective of *'deep'*, as opposed to *'recent'* history.

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

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

Dawn of History

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

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



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





Lapis lazuli

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

Legacy of Zoroaster

The prophet Zoroaster, the founder of the Persian Zoroastrian religion, one of the great religions of the world, lived and preached in Afghanistan. In the 6th Century BCE, the Persians, who had been converted to Zoroastrianism, conquered Afghanistan, dividing it into five satrapies. The satrapy of *Bactria* had been a powerful kingdom before the Persians, under Cyrus the Great, conquered it. It was so important during the Achaemenid period that it was always governed by a member of the royal family. And it was the Bactrian satrap *Bessus* who



Farvabar on the Zoroastrian temple.

murdered the last Persian King of Kings, Darius III in 331 BCE. Bessus was pursued by Alexander the Great into the modern Afghanistan, which he proceeded to subdue through fire and sword.



Alexander the Great

Afghanistan and the Greek Colonies

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

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





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

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

Demetrius I, one of their greatest kings, rebuilt *Taxila*, the future capital of *Gandhara* and the *Kushans*, which had been destroyed by *Ashoka*, and tried to make his kingdom a union of Greeks, Bactrians and Indians. He even went so far as to mint bilingual Greek-Sanskrit coins. He expanded deeper into India and welcomed Buddhists into his kingdom. *Taxila*, his capital, became a centre of Buddhism for centuries to come, and the resulting merger of Hellenism and Buddhism gave rise to the distinctive and beautiful Gandharan school of art and architecture, which was the first to portray the Buddha in human form. *Menander I*



Demetrius I portrayed on a tetradrachm coin.



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



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

The Gandharan Experience

Around 135 BCE, five Central Asian nomadic tribes known as the *Yuezhi* to the Chinese, conquered the Greco-Bactrian kingdom and founded what has become known as the *Kushan Empire*. It was a multi-lingual and multi-racial empire every bit as powerful as its contemporaries in Rome, Persia and China, but today it is largely anonymous. Its most famous ruler was king *Kanishka* (78-144 CE) the great patron of Mahayana Buddhism. His





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

empire stretched from *Bukhara* in Uzbekistan through northern India to *Patna* on the Ganges and through Central Asia into part of present-day *Xinjiang* province in western China, with his capital at modern day Peshawar in Pakistan.

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

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

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

as Gandharan and the age of the imperial Kushans is considered one of the most creative periods in Asian history

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

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

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



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





MYSTIC OF AFGHANISTAN

*As long as you are busy with your own self,
You will not be admitted to the way to God.*

*Once you are free of your own self,
You will not be deprived of his regard.*

— *Abdullāh Ansāri of Herāt* —

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

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

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

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

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

The Changing Face of Spirituality

Islamic armies defeated the Sassanid Persians in 642, and then passed on to Afghanistan. By the mid-7th Century, the Kushan Empire was in decline and had split into 27 feuding principalities collectively known as Tokharistan. Although Muslims conquered the land and it became part of the great eastern region known as Khorāsān, they found it difficult to hold on to, as the

Afghan cities often rose in revolt. Buddhism, which had such a strong hold on the country, subsequently influenced mystical sects and Islamic scholars in Afghanistan. For a long time after the advent of Islam, cities such as Balkh, Kandahar and Kābul itself still had large Buddhist populations. Local Muslim dynasties



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





MYSTIC OF AFGHANISTAN

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

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

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

— Hakim Jāmi of Herāt —

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

became the norm, but early on they had rejected the rule of the Caliphs in far-away Baghdad.

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

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

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

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



Ferdowsi





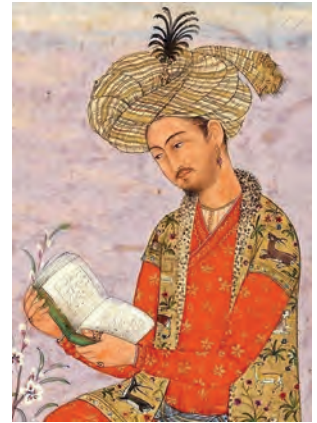
Timurid conqueror Bābur at Ghazni.

Under their rule from 1404-1507 the country enjoyed peace and prosperity. Herāt blossomed and became the political and cultural centre of the sub-continent.

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

India to Persia, Iraq and Turkey in the west.

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



Bābur

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

For the next 200 years Afghanistan was parcelled between the Persians and the Mughals. In 1747, at the very first *Loya Jirga*, when the various tribes united, they chose Ahmad Shāh Durrāni as the first Afghan king. He was the founder of the last great Afghan Empire. The most famous modern Afghan philosopher was Jamāluddin Afghāni from Asadabad. This famous intellectual and political activist was born in 1839. During his lifetime he travelled to Iran, Iraq, India, Egypt, Turkey, Russia, France and Britain. He died in 1897 in Istanbul, where the Sultan had received him. He dwelt on the positive role that religion has played in the moral and



Genghis Khan



spiritual progress of humankind. The Durrāni dynasty lasted until 1973. For most of this time Afghanistan found itself at the centre of the Great Game between the British and Russian Empires.

Balkh

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

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

Zoroaster was not the only great mystic to have lived here. The city was also home to Rabi'a Balkhi, (Rabia of Balkh) a beautiful princess who lived at the court of the Sāmānids. She was Afghanistan's earliest and first female Sufi mystic poet, and very talented she was. Her poems are about nature, love and beauty. In a story similar to Romeo and Juliet, after the murder of the man she loved, it is said she committed suicide and, as the story goes, wrote her final poem in her own blood as she lay dying. Balkh was the home of the famous Persian noble Barmakid family, hereditary custodians of the magnificent Nobahār, (New Monastery, the famous Buddhist shrine there), which was a position of great prestige. Pilgrims flocked to this temple from the Iranian



MYSTIC OF AFGHANISTAN

*Love becomes perfect only when it transcends itself,
becoming One with its object, producing Unity of Being.*

— Hakim Sanāi of Ghazni —

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

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



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





Rumi gathers Sufi mystics.

lands and beyond. During the early Islamic period, the Barmakids became Muslims and joined the Abbasid revolution against the Umayyad Caliphs in Damascus.

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

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

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

AFGHANISTAN Enchantment of the World

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

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

He was of course referring to the recent past of his country, and then times changed. Education and culture flourished again in that ancient country. But once again the Tālibān have returned to power and the country is again in a precarious position. But Afghans are survivors, they will re-build, as they have done so often in their past. Time is not linear, it is cyclical, and I hope their time of greatness will one day return.

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

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

These, our distant cousins who have fled to our shores, have so much to offer their new homes, and we are fortunate to have them among us. Religion is an intimate part of their life, not just something to do on a Sunday or Friday. And in this we can see the ideals of the Rosicrucian. They are proud of their country, having never been colonised by any European power, and have a profound attachment to freedom. Respect



is very important to them as can be seen when they shake your hand with both of theirs and place their right hand over their heart.

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

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

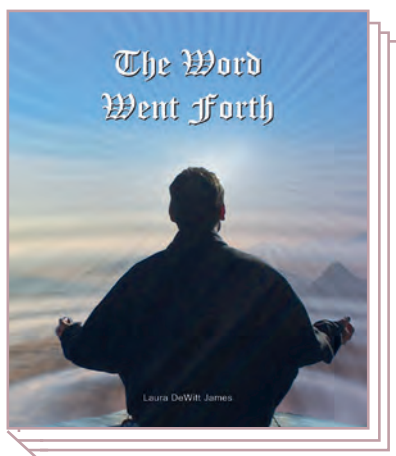
Book Review

TITLE

The Word Went Forth

AUTHOR

Laura DeWitt James



Published by *The Rosicrucian Collection*.
Available at <https://www.amorc.org.uk/collection>

I came across a quote by Ken Roberts: *“The road ahead may not be clear, but take the first step and the next will be revealed.”* And I thought how apt this was to the essence of this book in *The Rosicrucian Collection*. His words seemed so appropriate to the contents of this absolute gem, that although only 74 pages long, it is a rare treasure well worth acquiring.

Originally published in 1942 by the Rosicrucian Order, this delightful little book was out of print for 70 years. In a story-like manner, the author demonstrates from a physical and metaphysical point of view, the nature of reality through the medium of vibrations. Through simple examples and analogies involving repetitive motion, we are introduced to the fundamentals of creation. Elements such as light, sound and other forms of vibration are brought together to form the reality of the seen and unseen worlds in which we live.

The author places the mythological first act of creation in Genesis in perspective by taking the reader on a metaphysical and philosophical journey to discover the importance of vowels in speech and their relationship to the creative impulse. We learn how words and thoughts are related to cause and effect, and how important emotions are as a governing factor in a sliding scale of creative impulse.

As our lives unfold from day to day, few of us realise how powerful an effect we have on others simply by the way we think. When we acquire a penetrating understanding of the relationship of thought with cause and effect, we have the potential to apply that knowledge for the betterment of our immediate environment and that of others.

Ten Chapters

Chapter 1 deals with the concept of vibration in all forms: motion, colour and sound. And the five vowels



in the English language as carriers of sound vibrations. *"A wonderful thing happens. Waves, moving also with increasing tempo gradually assume a rich orange glow...."*

Chapter 2 continues with sound vibrations discussing the difference in vibratory quality of angry versus loving thoughts. The whole topic of sound is so immense that the figures we use in attempting to deal with it may be multiplied almost indefinitely.

Chapter 3 calls itself the ABCs of sound. It discusses the differences in polarity between vowels and consonants, with vowels being considered as 'positive' with consonants being considered as 'negative.' This leads to a discussion about cause and effect as it relates to sound. We are seldom aware of the true relationship between cause and effect, but we would be better aware of this if we could see the patterns of sound that our voices produce.

Chapter 4 states that *"Emotions are Vibrations."* Here the author reminds us that for every sound we utter, we are adjusting ourselves and our environment to a definite vibratory pattern of our creation. We must remember that every word, or mere sound we make, that we perceive as being 'negative' leads to 'negative' karmic consequences. The expression 'seeing red' is well known as a description of a person in a state of anger. And we all know what is meant by 'feeling blue' or having 'the blues.' And there are of course at times people who are 'green with envy.'

**"We learn how words
and thoughts are related
to cause and effect..."**

Chapter 5 deals with 'The Master Gland', discussing the effects of sound on the Pituitary Gland, one which secretes vitally important hormones associated with growth and development, and the very creation of new life.

Chapter 6 takes us back to the beginning of the universe as we currently understand it and the biblical use of the Greek word the *Logos*, commonly interpreted as 'the Word' that triggered the act of Creation. The germ of life was waiting, waiting, waiting (in our post-event experience of time), for that single stimulus that would the deep to stir, rise

and emerge with new creation. And all else came to be 'in the fullness of time.'

Chapter 7 is appropriately entitled *"The Word Went Forth."* After the beginning of the Universe the word went forth syllable by syllable, gathering to itself whirling electrons and subatomic particles to form atoms, and eventually leading to the Earth we know today.

**"The whole topic of sound is
so immense that the figures
we use in attempting to deal
with it may be multiplied
almost indefinitely."**

Chapter 8 is about the *Tetragrammaton*. It discusses the symbolism of 'the Word' in relation to the 'name of God.' That primordial Word was never written down, could never be written down, and instead, its syllables were whispered from person to person and cherished in memory. Gradually, the true pronunciation of 'the Word' was lost and was from then on known as 'the Lost Word.'

Chapter 9 is called *"Law and Love"*, for these are the two most important of the opposing forces that govern the expression of life. *Law is the Outer Self and negation* while *Love is the Inner Self and confirmation*. When Love dominates, the vowels assume the ascendancy, when Law dominates, consonants have the upper hand.

Chapter 10, the final chapter, is entitled *"Vowels and the Awakening Consciousness."* In astonishment at receiving new understanding we cry out *"I see!"* and are bathed in the illumination of 'inwardly seeing' the inner workings of something we formerly never knew existed. A new form of consciousness has been awakened. It is the spiritual glow of an awakening consciousness. That which was lost has been found again.

"For those willing to study its principles, this book could be the starting point to a better understanding of our inter-relatedness with other people, in fact our intimate connection with all living beings."





by **Adrian Ford**

Leonardo da Vinci:

The Quality of Genius

What gives a person vision? What is the source of genius? Throughout history there have been a few men who have had the capacity to look far beyond the times and circumstances in which they lived, and envision innovations which would remain valid for hundreds of years. Such a man was Leonardo da Vinci.

Da Vinci was born in 1452 in a small town near Florence, Italy. He died in 1519. While he is recognised principally as an outstanding painter, sculptor, and architect, he was also a brilliant natural scientist, physicist, engineer, musician and philosopher. His sixty-seven years were strewn with multifaceted accomplishments. He wrote a book describing problems of hydraulics, dynamics, and statics, and is in fact acknowledged as the greatest natural scientist of the fifteenth century. As a philosopher and scientist, he was a forerunner of Galileo, Bacon and Descartes.

The maps he drew are among the earliest examples of modern cartography. As a war engineer Da Vinci devised military strategies. After studying air currents and the flight of birds, he drew designs for constructing an aircraft almost four hundred years before any aircraft ever flew. He also sketched a bicycle very similar to the first bicycle ever built over three hundred years later. Da Vinci investigated the origin of fossils, completed numerous biological studies which included scientific

illustrations, and wrote a treatise on human anatomy. He conceived the idea for a bridge spanning the Bosphorus, twelve thousand feet in length over the sea and a further six hundred feet over land. In 1973 such a bridge was completed and put into use near modern Istanbul. He also designed a gyroscopic system like the one developed by Sperry Rand for *'blind flying'* in 1920.

What enables a person to excel in so many fields? What causes them to conceive new inventions and discoveries? What gives them such keen insight?

Are such talents gifts from God? Are they inherited? Are they developed through education and experience? Modern psychology tells us that genius is the product of both heredity and environment; that what we are born with gives us the capacity for learning and that capacity is the agency which determines what we will become. However inspiration, that tool of the genius, is of a Cosmic origin; and while God might give us the raw materials, we must put them to use in order to cultivate out latent talents.

We have heard many times that the average person uses only about ten percent of their brain capacity. Could it be that the genius quite simply uses more of that capacity? We might well ask, could it be that we all have the potential for genius?



The Rosicrucian Beacon -- Back Issues



June 2011



December 2011



September 2006



March 2007



June 2008



September 2009



March 2011



December 2011



June 2012



March 2013



December 2014



September 2015



December 2016



June 2018



March 2019

Back issues of the Rosicrucian Beacon are available at £5 per issue (postage included). All issues can be purchased on our website www.amorc.org.uk, or you can order at sales@amorc.org.uk or call us on +44-1892-653197.



The Rosicrucian Beacon -- December 2021



Hath this world, without me wrought,
other substance than my thought?

Lives it by my sense alone,
or by essence of its own?

Will its life, with mine begun,
cease to be when that is done,

Or another consciousness with
the self-same forms impress?

-- Frederic Henry Hedge (1805-1890)

(19th Century Transcendentalist)