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Expanding Our Awareness

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In this issue of
the
Rosicrucian Digest
we explore living
our lives with
an Expanded
Awareness.

Expanding Our Awareness

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ON ECOLOGY

Imperator Claudio Mazzucco, FRC

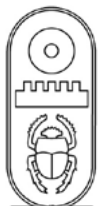


The Italian Grand Lodge of AMORC, in Ornano Grande.

A few moments before starting to write this message, I gazed through the window of my office in the Grand Lodge, here in Ornano Grande, Italy, and I saw the garden just prepared by one of our volunteer fratres. A simple hint from me on the advisability of having a small vegetable garden was enough for the frater and a soror, also always very present, to prepare the land, bring the small plants and arrange them in order on the small furrows. Certainly, what I want to talk about, and reflect upon with you, is not the vegetable produce of the Italian Grand Lodge but how nature can reveal its intrinsic order to the human being, an order of which we ourselves are a part, and which we as Rosicrucians call “the Cosmic,” and how ignoring this order has generated, among other things, the environmental problems we are witnessing. It is interesting to note

how the word “Cosmic” stems from the original Greek *Kosmos*, meaning order, but a form of order that has a form of beauty in it.

Looking out from above (my office is on the second floor) I was able to clearly appreciate how the Vital Life Force impregnates the planet and feeds life. Those plants that I now see in the garden are the result of processes fundamentally linked to photosynthesis. It is a wonderful way, created by nature, to imprison and use the positive energy radiated by the sun on our planet in the plant world. But if we looked with a lens on that small piece of land, where the various vegetables will now grow, we could see an infinity of other living beings, especially bacteria, but also insects and worms of various kinds. A living network with its own life processes; interconnected in a harmonious whole.



And, if I widen my gaze beyond our garden, towards the hills, the perception is clear. That life is spread over the entire surface of our planet, making it finally similar to a living being; a living planet or Gaia, as it was defined by the English chemist James Lovelock referring to the myth of Gaia. And as a living being, our planet has found its homeostatic equilibrium through an infinity of processes that are all interconnected.

As an example only of how the planet is made up of infinite processes that guarantee the maintenance of a balance such as, for example, the percentage of oxygen in the atmosphere or the average temperature, think of this cycle that I will now illustrate: siliceous rocks like granites and basalts are decomposed by fungi, bacteria, and lichens, thus releasing the calcium and silicon that compose them. With the carbon dioxide (CO₂) present in the air, carbonates are formed, which are the main component of the structure of microalgae and shells. When these algae and shells die, they fall to the bottom of the sea and form thick layers of carbonates. The tectonic plates then push these carbonates into the depths of the earth, where the temperature is very high. Finally, with this intense temperature, these carbonates decompose again, thus producing the initial carbon dioxide expelled from the volcanoes. Having returned to the atmosphere from where it came, it starts the whole cycle again.

Now, we, who observe all this life and these processes permeating the soil, air, and water of the planet, we ourselves, are the result of this process. The atoms that make us up were generated after the first moments of the Big Bang (which corresponds to thousands and thousands of years from the beginning of the universe.) And after a long journey of billions of years, these atoms formed our planet (about 4.5 billion years ago), then,

following infinite combinations still not completely scientifically clear, the first living forms appeared (about 3.7/3.8 billion years ago.) Then multicellular organisms surfaced about 700 million years ago. The story of the appearance of our species on the planet is still being written. There are still paleontological and archaeological studies in progress that find skeletons of those who were the progenitors of the human species, but, for the moment, we can say that about 3.2 million years ago, with the skeleton of Lucy, a female hominid walked erectly. Finally, present humans appeared about 200,000 years ago.

Regarding the appearance of life on the planet, the discussion is still very heated. There are biologists and chemists who claim that it is the result of random



The famous "Lucy" skeleton, on display in the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

combinations, a thesis supported by the famous book *Chance and Necessity* of the 1960s by the French biologist Jacques Monod. There are other scientists who have a very different idea. British mathematician, physicist, and astronomer Fred Hoyle (1915-2001) used a brilliant and provocative analogy to explain that the mere probability of a chance meeting of molecules is not enough to explain life. He says such a chance encounter would be tantamount to a hurricane hitting an old iron landfill and producing a fully functional Boeing 747.

We are formed from those same atoms born from the Big Bang and from others subsequently generated as a result of nuclear reactions in the various stars of the universe. These atoms are reintegrated into our body through nutrition and breathing because “we lose atoms all the time.” We are therefore a bridge of atoms that once belonged to comets, stars, or nebulae

(who knows?!) and which now form plants, like the ones I am looking at, and my own body with its brain is looking at them. Atoms looking at atoms! In the cells of my brain, which I now use to write this message, there are atoms that have belonged to the earth, to some bacterium, to an insect, or even an animal, to the water that evaporated from the sea that traveled thousands of miles in the clouds to then fall in the form of rain, in a vital circle that connects all living species to the planet. The writer Primo Levi wrote a beautiful text on the history of the periodic table of the elements and the carbon atom, one of the atoms at the basis of life, illustrating the saga of this atom in an almost poetic way.

Observing this vital process makes us perceive how we are the part of the planet that thinks, feels, imagines, and dreams. We are the planet, and this is an indisputable truth, although we have, most of the time, the perception of being something different and separate from it. In fact, with a certain presumption, we also consider ourselves superior to the rest of living beings while, in reality, our life is intimately associated with that of all the other species of this planet and with the planet itself. Somehow, Earth has generated us in the same way that our

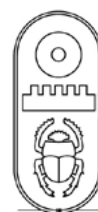
mother has generated us. This has caused many civilizations to refer to the planet as “Mother Earth.”

The discussion of ecology today has become of great importance, practically an emergency, even if we know that there cannot be a true ecological thought without a corresponding expansion of consciousness. In other words, it is one thing to make an ecological

discourse even well-founded from a philosophical and scientific point of view; it is quite another to live and feel according to what one claims to know. And this is perhaps the drama of the human experience on this planet. Many now rationally understand our link with it and with the life it contains, but, from here, to developing a renewed ethics, there is an abyss that can only be overcome through experience of a spiritual nature. When I use the word spiritual, I mean an integral, complete, marking, and transforming experience. An experience of such a scope that once a person has experienced it, they no longer return to being as they were before, and it shows from the way they live. The person continues to



The Crab Nebula, a supernova remnant, is seen in this composite image from NASA.



do the same things they did before, but not as they did before. It is not necessarily an experience of a religious nature in the common sense of the term because the spiritual experience precedes the religious one. It can certainly also happen through religion, but it is not the prerogative of any religion to produce it. A deep immersion in an artistic work or being absorbed by a scientific problem can equally generate the conditions for experiencing this experience.

Do you not find it extraordinary, or rather amazing, that is, something that arouses both a sense of wonder and amazement, that we are this particular agglomeration of atoms that thinks, studies, experiments, and experiences emotions; and that it now raises the matter of how all these atoms, in this arrangement (that is us) are capable of producing thought? But will an atom or a group of atoms ever produce thought alone, or will it be necessary to add some other non-material element for this purpose? Hermann Joseph Muller, who won the Nobel Prize in Medicine, wrote: "To say that a human being is made up of certain elements is a satisfactory description only for those who intend to use him as a fertilizer."

And what other human experience could ever connect the scientific knowledge we have now reached of this whole process to its deepest and most transcendent meaning if not the mystical experience? An experience that by its nature produces a sense of wholeness, of belonging to a Reality that overwhelms, is beyond those who experience it, but in which at the

same time you feel you belong? It is called "Oceanic Sentiment" by the Nobel Prize winner (for literature) Romain Rolland, "Cosmic Consciousness" by the Canadian psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke, "Tao" by the philosopher Lao Tse, and the "Order of Nature" by the physicist Werner Heisenberg.

We, Rosicrucians, bring in our heritage the commitment and tools to build the conditions so that the human being can experience moments of harmony that allow

us to experience this mystical experience at different intensities. Our teachings aim to expand the consciousness of the human being by expanding our vision towards larger dimensions of reality. The teachings are not intended to prepare us to make good speeches. The time for speeches is now over. Furthermore, they are not, obviously, a path for free hours or a system for obtaining powers of any kind. The teachings are not an activity reserved for those who remain closed in their room and

that ceases when they leave it. Rather, the Rosicrucian teachings lead us to a new way of understanding life through various experiences and thus developing a new attitude towards the events that compose it.

Let me recall in this reflection an important aspect of the mystical or spiritual experience, which is that which relates to the "moral sense." The word "moral" here should not be understood as the set of rules imposed perhaps by a religious culture or by social conventions. Rules that do not take into account reality

"To say that a human being is made up of certain elements is a satisfactory description only for those who intend to use him as a fertilizer."



and are not being respected often by those who propose them become more properly what we call moralism.

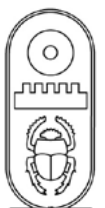
The moral sense here must be understood as listening to the voice of conscience that manifests itself in the inner silence, making us perceive, time after time, what is right to do, the right action, so that our existence benefits us and the life of beings who share the environment with us. Let me quote the Italian philosopher Vito Mancuso:

It feels like an indistinct but real call and you are fascinated by it. And when we say yes to this mysterious call, we tend in its direction, and this sweet tension within us is called “ethics.”

The lack of this listening is the tragedy of our experience as human beings on this planet. This particular deafness is much more than a simple hearing loss. It is a generalized drying up of perception, which today is stimulated by such violent and aggressive impulses that it then tends to no longer be sensitive to a subtle voice that speaks within each of us when the conditions are propitious. The moral sense is that inner voice that dictates to us rules of behavior that we could never transgress even if we were alone and no one could see us. It is a sense that gives to the life of individuals a refined quality to the extent that it removes them from vile, vulgar,

dishonest, selfish behaviors and at the same time elevates them towards the perception of the harmony of nature and empathy towards living beings, inviting them to act with benevolence and justice. This action is the foundation of true environmentalist thinking.

At this point, we might ask ourselves if the moral sense can be developed or if it is innate in humans. This is an important question that has accompanied many philosophers throughout the history of human thought, and today is also a topic of study in neuroscience. This is because, on a simple observation, we can conclude that there are people who seem to totally lack a moral sense, while others manifest very high and refined degrees of it. From the Rosicrucian point of view, this meaning corresponds precisely to what we call “spiritual evolution.” Indeed, it is a condition that is not characterized by the presence of extraordinary powers (although there may be) in individuals, but by a capacity for profound discernment, a refined moral sense, and a high degree of empathy. A condition that can be achieved progressively but that often appears fragile and at risk of being lost under the influence of the ego. In fact, its absence is easily recognizable because, in spite of an individual’s possible economic success, their failure as a human being will always stand out.



According to Rosicrucian thought, this evolution is one of the potentialities of the human being; we have an unshakable trust in it and channel our energies to favor the creation of the conditions in which everyone can experience, even if for a few moments, this voice within themselves.

Let's hear what Ralph Maxwell Lewis said:

As we often say, civilization is not a simple improvement of the environment in which the human being lives or an easier access to material resources. It is also the perfecting of oneself, of the individual.

In order not to remain on the theoretical level when we talk about a spiritual or mystical experience, I invite you to recall an experience that you may have had. You may have tried, perhaps when you were a child, the experience of being carried away by the waves of the sea towards the beach. A bit like a surfer does, but without the surfboard, letting yourself be carried away by the flow of the wave. Or even just to be lulled by the waves before they break. In those moments in which we are dragged, we experience a sensation of pleasure that

cannot be described. There is no difference between us and the sea, and while we are being dragged, we only feel the desire, the deep desire, that the experience will not end, that the wave will drag us as much as possible. The water touches our whole body with a gurgling that caresses us, and we have a feeling of being the sea because we lose the perception of the limits of the body. We are the sea, we merge with it, but we are also the blue sky above us and the sand below us. It is a mixture of impressions that generates a perception of unity marked by the sense of happiness and the desire that it does not end, that it lasts as long as possible. Well, perhaps this is an experience that in its childlike simplicity can suggest what is described by the mystics of all ages, and that constitutes the initiatory experience par excellence, our spiritual destiny: to experience Unity. And like the wave that arrives on the beach and then disappears and becomes the sea again, perhaps we too, in this experience of union with the Whole, will feel that we have always been in the Cosmic, thus rediscovering our own eternity.



“Experiencing the sea is too global, too mystical, to be reduced to an intersubjective interaction... There is an essential difference between an intersubjective interaction, which takes place in a cultural space, and what one feels when one is alone at the sea under a starry sky, moved by the splendor and immensity of the cosmos, with the feeling of being completely immersed in this global space, without being able to do anything but take part in it, without being able to find the words to describe it. At sea, I am no longer myself, I am the Cosmos.”

JUST BENEATH THE SURFACE OF EVERYDAY LIFE – EXPERIENCING AWE

Grand Master Julie Scott, SRC

“The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.”

- William Butler Yeats



Just beneath the surface of everyday life lies something remarkable – opportunity after opportunity for experiencing awe. In fact, it’s a wonder that we all don’t walk around with our jaws dropped all the time.

The Sufi mystic Rumi wrote a poem entitled “How does the Divine Keep from Fainting Looking at Itself all day?” That’s a good question.

Awe is an overwhelming feeling of amazement for something that is grand, special, or unique. It is a very powerful emotion that can have a transformative effect on our lives.

Studies have shown that awe usually involves two basic components:

1. When we personally connect with something vast that broadens our thinking.

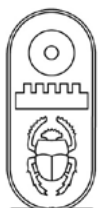
This could be in terms of:

Physical size – the starry sky, the Grand Canyon, or a blue whale (the largest animal on Earth).

Age – dinosaurs (who lived 240 to 65 million years ago), or the 20,000 year old handprint left by a shamaness at the entrance to an initiation cave in Altamira, Spain, or 10,000 year old Gobeki Tepe with the most ancient temple structures ever discovered.

Complexity of detail – how our body heals itself, air traffic control, or the remarkable self-organization of ants.

An individual’s skill – Michelangelo, Johann Sebastian Bach, or Serena Williams.



Impact – Moses, Buddha, Yeshua, Mohammed, Galileo, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Marie Curie, or Martin Luther King, Jr.

What or whom do you find awe-inspiring related to:

- Physical size
- Age
- Complexity of detail
- An individual's skill
- Someone's impact on the world.

2. When the situation creates a need for accommodation.

This means that our experience challenges our normal understanding of the world and we need to reconfigure the mental constructs that we use to understand the world.

For example, when Dr. Edgar Mitchell, the sixth human to walk on the moon, traveled back from the moon amid the vast darkness of the cosmos, his eyes became fixed on Earth. As he neared Earth, he was enveloped by a profound sense of universal connectedness.

He wrote, "I realized that the story of ourselves as told by science – our cosmology, our religion – was incomplete and likely flawed. I recognized that the idea of separate, independent, discrete things in the universe wasn't a fully accurate description. What was needed was a new story of who we are and what we are capable of becoming."

Many astronauts have reported similar experiences. A similar search for a new
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story may have led you to the Rosicrucian Order.

We have all had experiences of awe – perhaps when gazing upon the vastness of the stars and humbly realizing a diminished sense of self. It isn't negative to feel smaller – it's humbling and we can then reassess and modify our idea of where we fit in with the interconnected universe – we're part of something grand.

Westerners, perhaps especially Americans – value the individual and being bigger. We may be able to appreciate a diminished sense of self though by thinking of the Statue of Liberty and all that she stands for.

This colossal statue is fifteen stories tall. Millions of immigrants have gazed upon "Lady Liberty" as they entered Ellis Island. Think of what this statue symbolized for them or possibly for you – freedom and the potential for expanded opportunities.

That's humbling.

Or perhaps you have experienced awe while giving birth or being present at the birth of a new being. Think of this for a minute – this person wasn't on Earth and then, the next minute she was! That alone is enough to keep our jaws dropped for a lifetime.

Then the little ones smile for the first time and roll over and figure out how to walk. How do they do that? That's awe-inspiring.

And there are many more opportunities to experience awe.





Outer Space

Solar eclipse: A solar eclipse occurs when the moon gets between Earth and the sun, and the moon casts a shadow over Earth. On August 21, 2017, 88 percent of Americans (261 million people) took time to witness this awe-inspiring event. Hundreds of Rosicrucians and neighbors gathered at Rosicrucian Park to experience this moment together.

Aurora Borealis (the Northern Lights): Sten Odenwald, author of *The 23rd Cycle: Learning to Live with a Stormy Star*, explains how the Northern Lights are generated:

When a coronal mass ejection collides with Earth's magnetic field, it causes complex changes to happen to the magnetic tail region. These changes generate currents of charged particles, which then flow along lines of magnetic force into the Polar Regions. These particles are boosted in energy in Earth's upper atmosphere, and when they collide with oxygen and nitrogen atoms, they produce dazzling auroral light.

Earthrise: The photo at left was taken by Apollo 8 astronaut Bill Anders on December 24, 1968. What feelings arise in you when you gaze upon this photo?

And closer to home there are many awe-inspiring opportunities in the Natural World.

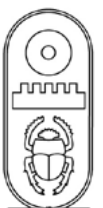
More than Humans

Cheetahs are the fastest runners on the planet. They are capable of running 83 miles per hour. Think about that for a moment and compare it with the speed that you drive. One exceptional cheetah was reliably recorded running 93 miles per hour. This video captures the grace and power of this amazing animal: https://youtu.be/THA_5cqAfCQ

Bees have been shown to understand the concept of zero. Scientists discovered this after training bees to count shapes, following previous research that revealed that they can count to four. A hive of bees will fly over 55,000 miles to make one pound of honey and can create 100 pounds of honey in a year. One third of the food we eat depends on bees for pollination.

Bears can count too and they use tools. They can solve problems and communicate across species, including expressing their emotions. A male grizzly bear can weigh up to 790 pounds and stand nearly ten feet tall. A grizzly bear's bite is strong enough to crush a bowling ball.

Plants can feel, see, smell, and remember. The biggest tree is a giant sequoia in California's Redwood Forest. It is 30 stories tall and 82 feet (25 meters) in circumference.



California holds the record for the oldest living trees, too. Some of the state's bristlecone pines and giant sequoias are thought to be 4,000 to 5,000 years old.

Underneath an individual **mushroom** is a vast network that can spread for acres. It is made up of tiny threads known as mycelium that connect different plants in a forest. Scientists call this underground ecosystem made up of roots, fungi, and bacteria the "wood wide web."

Human Beings

Every second our body produces 25 million new cells. DNA contains the instructions needed for an organism to develop, survive, and reproduce. The lifespan of our DNA is tens of thousands of years. Neurons send information to our brain at more than 150 miles (241 kilometers) per hour. There are about one hundred billion nerve cells in our brain – that's a one followed by 11 zeroes. The human brain will grow three times its size in the first year of life.

Awe-inspiring Art



Tibetan Sand Paintings are created by Buddhist monks who mindfully tap tiny colored grains of sand through a small tube. When completed, the paintings are swept away as part of an ancient ceremony symbolizing the transitory nature of material life.

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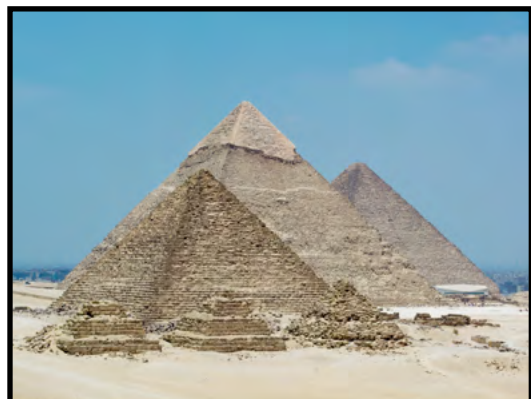


The **Cueva de las Manos** (Cave of the Hands) in Argentina is named for the hundreds of hand paintings stenciled on the rock walls. The art dates from between 13,000 and 9,500 years ago.



The Journey of Humanity, the world's largest canvas painting, is the size of ten tennis courts. Based on artwork created by children during the pandemic, it recently sold for \$78 million.

Awe-inspiring Architecture



Pyramids of Giza



Machu Picchu



Tiger's Nest

Mysticism

Consciousness is most definitely awe-inspiring. I think this is what attracted most of us to the Rosicrucian Order.

Here are the first three points of the Rosicrucian Ontology – our statement regarding the nature of being.

- The Divine is the Universal Intelligence that thought, manifested, and animated all Creation according to unchanging perfect laws.
- All of Creation is permeated by a Universal Soul that evolves toward the perfection of its own nature.
- Life is the vehicle for cosmic evolution, such as it manifests in the universe and on Earth.

The Rosicrucian monographs tell us that we are all mirrors in which the Divine contemplates Its own reflection, Its own magnificence. It experiences Its own Beingness through our lives.

Now, doesn't that inspire awe?!

We contribute to the evolution of consciousness by expanding our awareness.

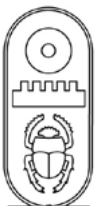
Past Emperor H. Spencer Lewis wrote:

There is nothing so inspiring,
so filled with peace,
happiness, perfect health,
joy, and contentment
as the development of the
spiritual nature.

Benefits of Awe

- Awe decreases stress levels, especially when we are awe-inspired in Nature. Physicians have begun prescribing spending time in nature or in green spaces. In Japan, sixty-four Forest Bathing Forests have been established as a part of their national well-being program.
- Awe increases generosity and kindness. In a study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, researchers gave ten raffle tickets to their participants and then asked them how many, if any, they would like to give away to another participant who had no tickets. They discovered a strong link between the experience of awe and how many tickets they were willing to give away. They theorized that awe helped to diminish people's egos and self-importance and that can lead people to be more kind, generous, and social.

Awe researcher and psychologist Jonah Paquette suggests that these studies help explain why awe evolved. Feeling awe makes us more willing to help those in need, and in turn increases our sense of connection to others. At a community level, looking out for everyone and placing collective needs above our own gives us a greater chance of survival.



- Awe experiences make us happier and more satisfied with life and impact our mood. These experiences can make us happy in the short term and this benefit lasts too, even weeks later.
- Awe leads to new perspectives. Many people feel a stronger sense of unity with humanity or creation as a whole following an experience of awe.
- Awe experiences can also alter our subjective experience of time. In a study conducted by Stanford University Business School, people often reported feeling “rich” with time during the experience and afterwards. It can be as if time had stood still.
- **Tune into your senses** – Be aware of color, texture, scent, taste, touch, and sound.
- **Step away from your computer** – You may find it helpful to set aside certain hours of the day when you will not be on your computer or take the weekend off.
- **Awe journals** – Keep a journal of your awe experiences, from the simplest to the most moving.
- **Listen to music** – Enjoy music that creates the feeling of awe. Practice recreating the feeling without the music.
- **Engage with others** – Spend time just being with a child or your dog or watching wild animals.

How to Experience More Awe

In his book *Awestruck: How Embracing Wonder Can Make You Happier, Healthier, and More Connected*, Jonah Paquette shares these suggestions:

- **Linger** – When you find yourself experiencing awe, stay with that feeling for as long as possible.
- **Slow down** – Allow time each day to be more mindful.

- **Reframe day to day tasks** – Pause to appreciate how remarkable many of our daily activities are.
- **Awe walks** – Take time to walk in nature, attuning with the plants, animals, landscape features, and elements that live there.

As Rumi asked, really, how does the Divine keep from fainting looking at Itself all day?

“How Does the Divine Keep from Fainting?”

Rumi

The wonder of water moving over that rock in the stream justifies existence.

The swish of a horse’s tail—again I am stunned by the grandeur of the unseen One that governs all movement.

I resist looking at the palms of my hands sometimes.

Have you ever gotten breathless before a beautiful face, for I see you there, my dear.

There is a wonderful problem waiting for you that the Divine and I share:

how to keep from fainting when we see each other.

In truth:

how does the Divine keep from fainting looking at Itself all day?

Light is moving like a stream, and the myriad celestial beings applaud.

Dwell on the beauty of life. Watch
the stars and see yourself running with them.

– Marcus Aurelius

If I had influence with the good fairy – I should ask that
her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so
indestructible that it would last throughout life.

– Rachel Carson

Do you bow your head when you pray or do you look up into
that blue space? Take your choice, prayers fly from all directions.

— Mary Oliver

The feeling of awed wonder that science can give us is one of
the highest experiences of which the human psyche is capable.
It is a deep aesthetic passion to rank with the finest that music
and poetry can deliver. It is truly one of the things that make
life worth living and it does so, if anything, more effectively if it
convinces us that the time we have for living is quite finite.

– Richard Dawkins

Look at everything always as though you were seeing it either
for the first or last time: Thus is your time on earth filled with
glory.

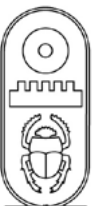
- Betty Smith

Perhaps it is not so much what we learn that matters in
moments of awe and wonder, but what we feel in relationship
to a world beyond ourselves, even beyond our own species.

- Terry Tempest Williams

One cannot help but be in awe when [one] contemplates
the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of
reality.

- Albert Einstein



Life is deep and high and distant;
and though only your vast vision can
reach even her feet, yet she is near; and
though only the breath of your breath reaches her
heart, the shadow of your shadow crosses her face, and the echo
of your faintest cry becomes a spring and an autumn in her
breast.

And life is veiled and hidden, even as your greater self is
hidden and veiled. Yet when Life speaks, all the winds become
words; and when she speaks again, the smiles upon your lips
and the tears in your eyes turn also into words. When she sings,
the deaf hear and are held; and when she comes walking, the
sightless behold her and are amazed and follow her in wonder
and astonishment.

– Kahlil Gibran

If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years,
how people would believe and adore and preserve for many
generations the remembrance of the city of God which had
been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty
and light the universe with their admonishing smile.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a
blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably
magnificent world in itself.

– Henry Miller

Give yourself a gift of five minutes of contemplation in awe
of everything you see around you. Go outside and turn your
attention to the many miracles around you. This five-minute-a-
day regimen of appreciation and gratitude will help you to focus
your life in awe.

- Wayne Dyer

Science makes people reach selflessly for truth and objectivity;
it teaches people to accept reality, with wonder and admiration,
not to mention the deep awe and joy that the natural order of
things brings to the true scientist.

- Lise Meitner

MEDITATIONS ON EXPANDING OUR AWARENESS - LUCID WAKING

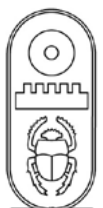
Julian Johnson, FRC

Humanity has been on a quest to expand its awareness from the earliest times of its communal existence. The desire to know and understand its environment and capabilities have been critical to our survival and growth as a species. This continually growing body of knowledge is passed down generationally in the form of culture with the aim of benefiting the welfare of the group's members and future generations. Humankind's expanded awareness of the world we live in and the forces acting in our world have progressively led to the development of the many technologies which have promoted human health and material welfare. Our awareness of the nature of our material environment has increased exponentially in the last two centuries, enabling humanity to sustain a large population and simultaneously increase longevity.

An important engine of this progress has been our ability to extend the range of our physical senses beyond their intrinsic limits and to employ the resulting expanded awareness of our environment to our material benefit. Over many centuries, humankind has designed and created instruments that significantly extend the

range of our physical senses. One example is our sense of sight. Microscopes enable us to discern the minute qualities of materials well beyond the capacity of our eyes, which are limited by our eyes' lenses and the nature and density of the receptor cells of our retinas. X-ray machines produce visible impressions created by energy that passes through our bodies to which our eyes are otherwise insensitive. Similarly, telescopes enable us to see light particles that continually strike our eyes when we look at the night sky, but which otherwise are imperceptible to us. Video equipment enables us to see events that are distant in space and time. Numerous other inventions similarly augment our senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

Notwithstanding the relative progress that humanity has made in building our awareness of the physical forces that govern much of the observable universe through the extension of our generally recognized five physical senses, human experience has led many to accept that there are other knowable phenomena that lie immediately beyond the typical scope of these senses and our awareness. Some of these phenomena have been



scientifically documented in recent years, such as the identification of a brain area endowing humans with an innate sense of direction due to our brains' ability to register changes in the magnetic field lines of Earth. There is also evidence of an internal sense of touch which allows us to sense subtle conditions within our physical body. Experienced yogis use this capability to reduce their heart rate or increase their bodily temperature at will. The use of intuition to access information without reliance on memory or normal sensory means is another example.

The exploration of these and similar phenomena is generally left to the area of study known as parapsychology. Gaining wide notice in the 1960s and 1970s, parapsychology investigates capabilities of consciousness extending beyond the five physical senses, such as telepathy, precognition, telekinesis, and remote viewing. Thousands of years of human experience from around the world give credence to the existence of these phenomena, although they escape examination by conventional scientific methods.

While these various means of expanding our awareness have significantly impacted how humans experience the world, an important avenue for expanding awareness with unlimited potential for bringing about a transformation of the experience of humankind remains largely unexplored. Based on our lived experience, it is apparent that there is more to us than what literally meets the eye. There is a part of us that we can all see and touch, and there is another part of us that is not discernible nor measurable by our five physical senses. While humankind continues to study extensively the first part, which is the physical body and the accompanying material world revealed through our senses, we have devoted comparatively little attention to the seeming intangible part, which is our awareness.

From a mystical point of view, our ability to reflect upon our own awareness is one of the greatest assets of human consciousness. While it is widely recognized that animals and plants exhibit consciousness and even decision-making capabilities to promote their survival and comfort, human beings appear to be unique in our ability to contemplate the



fact and nature of our awareness. This represents a higher expression of self-consciousness than simply recognizing an individuated identity which can be seen in other species.

However, the human capacity to reflect on the immaterial aspect of self is generally overlooked and its benefits not fully recognized. While we are awake, the mental life of most human beings is devoted to the same concerns as other creatures, centered on meeting organic needs for finding food, mating, and avoiding discomfort and threats to one's physical existence. We also know from direct experience that when not occupied by immediate needs, humans spend a great portion of their mental life ruminating on past events as well as contemplating various versions of future states. Cataloging these thoughts will reveal that they are chiefly related to securing material needs in more elaborate fashion for themselves, their offspring, and other members of the species.

While humanity has made great progress by expanding its awareness of the nature of the material world, it is of equal importance to be aware of awareness. The content of awareness changes continuously, but awareness remains the same. The content of our awareness has dramatically changed since we were children. Nonetheless, we experience the world from the same center of perception throughout our lives. Our circumstances

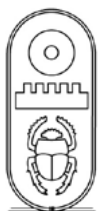
may change, our clothes may change, where we live may change, our bodies may change, our name may change. However, the locus or point of our awareness, the seer behind the eyes that look out on the world does not change. Even death does not alter this. Based on accounts of near-death experiences, the same point of awareness continues beyond the cessation of the functioning of the human body. Awareness is the immovable object.

To be aware of awareness itself is to temporarily wake up while we participate in this dream we call life. It is what we could call Lucid Waking, a parallel to Lucid Dreaming, where we are aware that we are in the dream state while dreaming. Lucid Waking takes us away from the preoccupations of work, family, and friends into the mystery of our existence.

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The key to the gate of Lucid Waking is to hold in mind the state we experience when we look up at a star-filled sky and realize that we exist among the multitude of stars in the universe and are momentarily transfixed by the Cosmic questions of: "Where am I?" "What am I?" "Why am I here?" Lucid Waking is to realize that you exist. It is to realize that we are part of the immense phenomena that we call the universe.

For students of mysticism, Lucid Waking is also to remember that we take part in an Infinite Intelligence that underlies all that we see and experience. It is to understand that we are part of





something that has had no beginning and has no end. It simply IS, always has been, and always will be. It is to find rest in that we are a part of that which is beyond time and eternal.

Focusing on the infinite aspect of our being opens new doors of awareness of our relationship with the Cosmic Intelligence, which most people call God or the Divine. We experience the vibrant connection between the macrocosm and the microcosm that bridges the Infinite Intelligence and our seemingly infinitesimal self.

Just as there are techniques for cultivating Lucid Dreaming, we can employ tools to cultivate Lucid Waking. However, in making use of such tools, it is important to slowly build on using them to allow the mind, our personal mental structure, to become progressively at ease with this expansion of awareness. Lucid Waking means adding to our framework of reality moving toward a previously seemingly incomprehensible unknown that we heretofore have found to be overwhelming, as indicated by the feeling of awe we get upon the contemplation of the unknown presented in a vast night sky filled with innumerable stars. While inspired by the sight, we typically retreat from it and its unknown implications,

returning to the comfort of thoughts related to more familiar elements of everyday life. Nonetheless, it is possible to build up our capacity to sustain longer intervals of such contemplation through regular gentle extension of our pre-existing mental and emotional boundaries. This practice is not unlike slowly building up physical strength in weight training. Too much weight lifted too soon can lead to harm, while progressive increases in weight with proper periods of rest in between can steadily and safely increase our capacity. Unlike the dangers accompanying hallucinogenic drugs, the Rosicrucian precept that “evolution not revolution leads to lasting change” is particularly applicable to this work.

The heart of these tools is remembering. It is bringing back to mind that you exist. One approach to doing this is with eyes open, mentally repeat “I am” or “Am” or “I exist” or some other simple words with similar meaning. Looking at a candle flame from a distance can be a useful visual sight. When doing this exercise, don’t reflect on any context. Reflecting on possible contexts will take you away from the goal of the exercise, which is to spend time in pure awareness without the conditioning of other thoughts. We want to have an “empty” mind except for it being occupied by awareness. When thoughts intrude, as they invariably will, simply come back to your focus on awareness. Do this exercise for five to ten minutes and then transition into whatever method of meditation that you find most compatible personally or return to your regular activities.

When watching or hearing news of world events, no matter how disturbing, remind yourself that everything takes place within the Consciousness of God, the Cosmic Consciousness. As the Master Jesus put it (Matt. 10:29-30), “Are not two



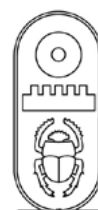
sparrows sold for a penny? Yet none of them will fall to the earth without your father. Even the hairs of your head are each counted.” Or from the words of Acts (17:28), “In him [It] we live and move and are.” The truth of these statements is reflected in one of the hallmarks of Cosmic Consciousness, as reported by those who have experienced it, namely the realization of the imminent presence of the Divine Intelligence throughout all reality.

Another tool for helping to focus on awareness is by mentally asking yourself with eyes wide open the following question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” The intent here is not to answer the question, but to ponder it. Let it sink in. Let it remind you that you exist versus non-existence. Momentarily feel your place in eternity, outside of time, without beginning or ending. Just recognize that you exist. Repeat the prompt several times, for as long as you are comfortable, to bring your mind back to focusing on awareness.

Various experiences in nature can bring us to a heightened state of awareness and consideration of our place in the universe. When given the opportunity to be in such a setting, whether a star-filled sky, a beautiful sunset or sunrise, or a

majestic mountain vista, at the moment it elicits a heightened sense of your being and aliveness, stay with it. As the sensation fades, reinvoké it with the same or similar thoughts that accompanied the experience initially. Repeat the process several times and then turn your consciousness inward through meditation or resume your regular activities. When another opportunity presents itself, repeat the experience.

The tools offered above and others of one’s own design can help with the process of acclimatization of our consciousness to an expanded reality. Initially, in the intentional journey toward Lucid Waking, it is normal to experience our mind’s resistance to it. Our mind clings tightly to the version of reality that we have built up since childhood and which presently enables each of us to navigate conscious experience with reduced anxiety. This is one reason why individuals hold on so tightly to world views they have formed despite being repeatedly exposed to evidence that contradicts those views. Nonetheless, we can slowly stretch the boundaries of our awareness through exercises that incorporate recognition of elements of reality that we have excluded from conscious awareness while adding to our awareness elements of reality that



reduce the accompanying fear that might be aroused through expanded awareness.

For example, humans spend little conscious time throughout most of their lives dwelling on the unavailability of physical death, or transition as Rosicrucians commonly refer to it, and its relatively imminent nature, except to regularly make choices to avoid its accidental occurrence. Reading about the scientific evidence supporting reincarnation or the continuation of awareness beyond physical death shown through the investigation of near-death experiences can help us incorporate the seeming unknown of death into our conscious awareness while also affirming the continuation of awareness beyond the point of transition. The words of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin reflect this well: “If at death we realize that this life is an illusion, why do we treat it differently now? The nature of things does not change.”

Let us note that meditation in its various forms complements all of these exercises. Meditation gradually loosens

the grip of our physical senses on our consciousness, allowing us to attune our consciousness to other aspects of reality which are ordinarily overwhelmed by the impressions brought to us by our senses. Meditation turns our awareness inward, focusing our awareness on the Knower rather than the known.

To summarize, awareness is the most profound aspect of self, as awareness is of the nature of the Soul, which is an extension of the Cosmic Intelligence. The value of its study is pointed to in the words of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, “The door by which the Divine goes out of Itself, It enters the human soul. The door by which the human soul goes out of itself, it enters the understanding.”

Let’s value and cultivate our awareness as the precious gift that it is.

Author’s note: The film *Waking Life*, available on Amazon Prime, is an interesting exploration of topics discussed in this article.



THE MERCURIUS PRINCIPLE: AN ALCHEMICAL MODEL OF CREATION

Dennis William Hauck, PhD, FRC

There is one breakthrough idea in alchemy, that once you fully understand it, makes the secretive work of the alchemists an open book. The idea has to do with the true nature of mercury. In his *Lexicon Alchemiae (Dictionary of Alchemy)*, published 1612), German alchemist Martin Ruland Jr. (1569-1611) describes the importance of mercury in the Great Work:

“Mercury is mentioned everywhere, in every alchemical work, and is supposed to perform everything. Everybody wastes his brain and money in endeavoring to produce a quantity of it. Mercury is a thick gluey liquid, yet it does not stick, for it is of a dry nature—Moist and Warm Water inseparably mixed with Earth so that they either remain together or depart together in experiments. In *Speculum Alchimiae (The Mirror of Alchemy)*, published 1597), Roger Bacon states that mercury is a ‘Living Gold’ that kills or makes alive, moistens and dries, warms and cools, and becomes opposite things according to the measure of its regimen.”

Ruland goes on to list over 60 names alchemists used to refer to ordinary mercury, but then he pauses solemnly to caution his readers: “You must always be careful to distinguish what is generally and particularly stated concerning mercury, as to whether it be about ordinary mercury or about Our Mercury. Do not make a mistake; otherwise, the information will be useless.” Ruland is being rather secretive here, but the “Our Mercury” he is talking

about is Mercurius, the spirit of mercury as mind and imagination, which is at the heart of any alchemical transformation.

Psychologist Carl Jung (1875-1961) clarifies this double meaning in his book *Psychology and Alchemy* (1944), in which he noted that when alchemists spoke of mercury, modern readers assume they were talking about the liquid metal, but in

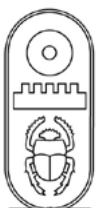
fact they were most often referring to Mercurius, the world-creating spark of consciousness concealed in all matter. This spirit of pure consciousness had the same qualities as liquid mercury and acted like a quicksilver mirror that reflects the world yet flows freely and takes the shape of any container.

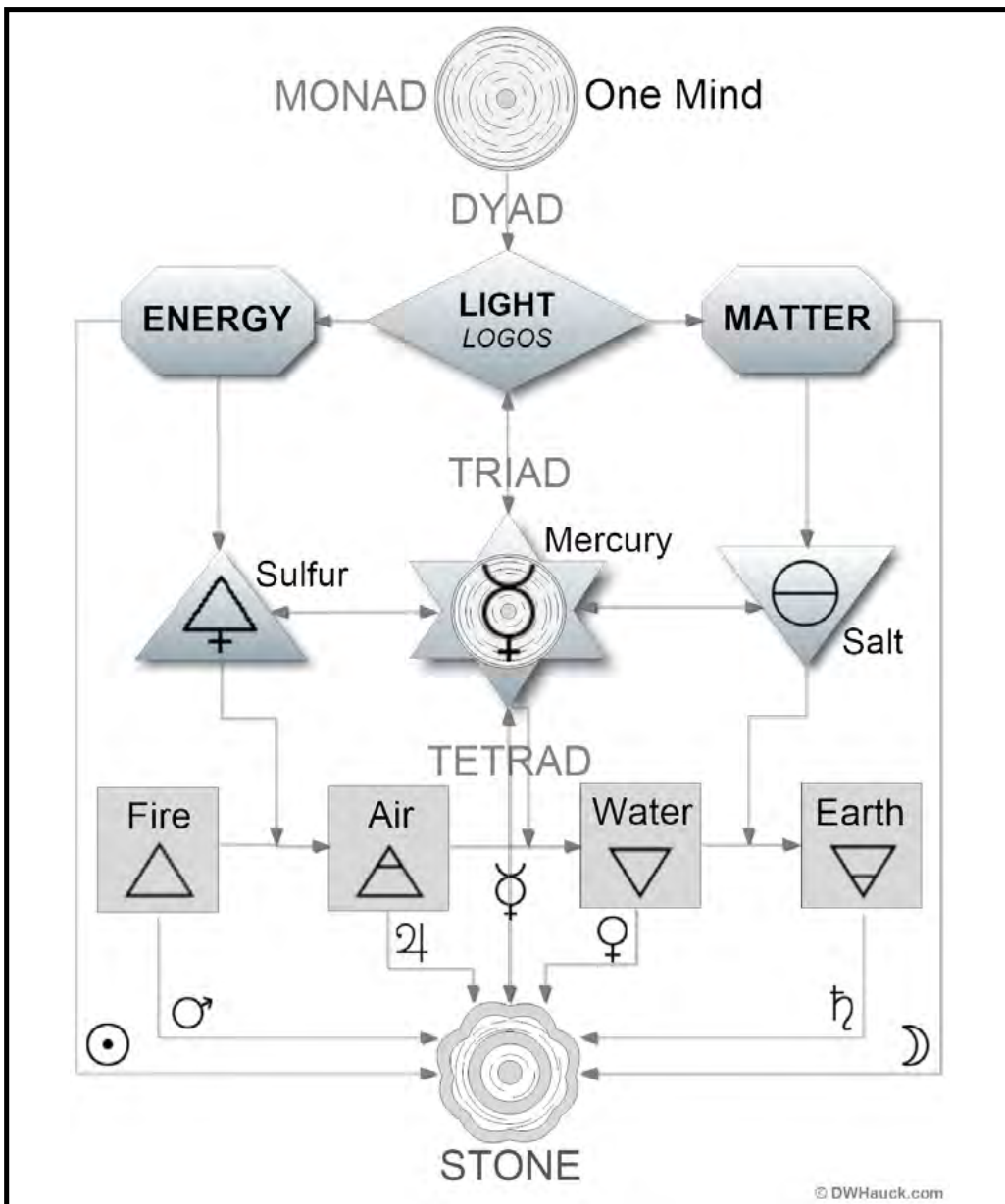
“Mercurius stands at the beginning and end of the Work,” Jung explained. He continued:

It is the *Prima Materia* and *Caput Corvi* (Raven’s Head) of the Nigredo at the beginning. As the dragon Mercurius, it devours itself, and as the dragon it dies, only to rise again in the *Lapis* (Stone). Mercurius is the play of colors in the *Cauda Pavonis* (Peacock’s Tail) and reason for the division into the Four Elements. It is the Hermaphrodite that was at the beginning, who splits into the classical male-female duality that is reunited in the conjunction to appear once again at the end in the radiant form of the *Lumen Novum* (New Light) of the androgenous child that becomes the Philosopher’s Stone. Mercurius is



The Alchemy Exhibit at Rosicrucian Park, San Jose.





all – metallic yet liquid, cold yet fiery, poison yet healing, male yet female, matter yet spirit – a symbolic force uniting all opposites.

Alchemical Cosmology

Mercurius is the most important tool in all of alchemy and the essential ingredient in any transformation. To understand why this archetypal Mercury is at the center of alchemical work, we have to review the cosmology the alchemists believed was behind the creation of the universe. Their belief is based on a mixture of Pythagorean ideas and Hermetic principles. Pythagoras

(570-490 BCE) taught that the universe came into being through emanations originating from an indivisible point of consciousness (or “singularity”) called the Monad, which is sometimes described as the transcendent “One Mind.” It is important to note that the Monad is all there really is. That is the meaning of the alchemist’s famous dictum of “All Is One,” or as Pythagoras put it, the universe is “one Whole of wholes.” In the above chart, I have summarized the alchemical model of creation that emanates from the Monad.

The Monad

At the top of the diagram is a chaotic circle containing a singular point at its center. The Monad singularity is surrounded by the chaotic Abyss or One Thing from which it emerges. In the Hermetic tradition, the first projection of thought into the chaotic Abyss is the divine Word (or Logos) that causes the explosion of light and consciousness that creates our reality. Alchemists believe that primal burst of creative forces – the condensation of light and mind from nothingness – still happens on both the physical and spiritual levels in their laboratories and in their souls.

The Dyad

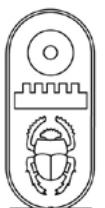
The first and only act of the Monad is the utterance of the Word, the first thought that causes the Big Bang and sets the universe in motion. After that, only the Logos remains, as depicted in our model by the crystallized light in diamond-shaped emanation on the level of the Dyad or Duality. It echoes through spacetime in the Mind of Nature or what Hermeticists call “Mind the Maker.” This emanation from the Monad is embedded in the laws of physics and mathematics.

The Logos as the Mind of Nature can only be expressed in terms of duality, which is depicted in the diagram by the two opposing positive and negative poles shown with the first created opposites of energy and matter. The divine Word can only be expressed in duality because – since the universe was created from nothing – it must always add up to zero. This is a fundamental law of both Hermetic philosophy and science. So, every positive thing must be neutralized with its opposite negative thing, and every particle of matter must have its corresponding particle of antimatter. Everything must add up to zero. Thus, the first principle of natural law is this oppositional duality in everything.

The primal opposites of energy and matter are connected through the Logos of light, as shown in our diagram. Energy is expressed in fields of force or waves, while matter is expressed in particles and solid objects. Psychologically, energy is associated with the masculine archetypes of aggressive expansion and spirit, while matter is associated with the feminine archetypes of passive contraction and soul. These are the alchemical icons of the Solar King and Lunar Queen.



An illustration of the Solar King and Lunar Queen from the fifteenth-century text Splendor Solis.



The Triad

The Triad or third level of emanation in our model is the Three Essentials, the three forces of Sulfur, Mercury, and Salt. These forces of creation are engendered through the primal opposites of energy and matter through the intermediary of light. Sulfur is carried in the upward-pointing triangle of Fire, and Salt is carried in the downward-pointing triangle of Water. Thus, Sulfur is a manifestation of energy, Salt is a manifestation of matter, and Mercury is a manifestation of light. These ancient concepts have the mathematical relationship of $E=mc^2$. In our diagram, Sulfur as energy and Salt as matter are shown as opposing forces balanced by Mercury as light at the center.

Mercury is represented by the star-shaped figure made by merging the triangle symbols of Fire and Water. Just as Dr. John Dee placed Mercury at the center of his elegant *Hieroglyphic Monad* cipher, Mercury stands at the heart of our model. The circle at the center of Mercury is a repetition of the singularity in the Monad. In other words, Mercury shares the same kind of consciousness as the One Mind of creation.

Furthermore, Mercury sits at the center of the vertical axis of reality or *Axis Mundi* (World Axis). This reflects the Hermetic concept that Mercury can access all levels of reality from heaven Above to the myriad of manifested things Below and everything in between. That is to say, our reflected consciousness can reach any level of the embedded divine consciousness in the universe using contemplation, concentration, meditation, imagination, and other tools of mind.

The Tetrad

In the Tetrad emanation, we find the Four Elements (Fire, Air, Water, and Earth) of physical reality. They are created from the interaction of the Three



Frontispiece of the Monas Hieroglyphica by John Dee, printed by Willem Silvius in Antwerp, 1564.

Essentials. Fire and Air are influenced by the force of Sulfur (energy). Air and Water are influenced by Mercury (light), and Water and Earth by Salt (matter). The original thought or Word is fulfilled in materialization. Or as the Emerald Tablet puts it: “Its inherent strength is perfected if it is turned into Earth.”

The alchemical philosophers postulated that the emanations of the Four Elements are filtered through seven planetary archetypes culminating in a new embodiment of consciousness or “stone.” A stone could be spiritual (such as a powerful thought or astral body) or physical (such as a chemical precipitate, a rock, or a planet). The crystallized Stone at the bottom of our diagram is the manifestation of thought in our model. The multi-layered object represents the



The Alchemist by David Teniers (1649).

cosmological completion of the Word. Matter in our universe still contains the original spark of consciousness that created it, but it is also shaped by the external forces around it.

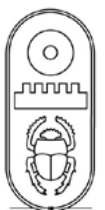
The seven archetypal forces shaping the Stone in our diagram represent the seven planetary influences of Hermetic philosophy. These are indicated by their corresponding alchemical cipher. The primal opposites of energy and matter are the Sun and Moon, while the Four Elements are expressed archetypally as Mars (Fire), Venus (Water), Jupiter (Air), and Saturn (Earth).

The seventh planetary archetype in the creation of the Stone is Mercury, which is the light of consciousness that originated in the One Mind Above and is reflected in Mercury Below – in the personal monad or individual world each of us creates for ourselves. Th at original spark of light and consciousness from the level of the Monad is projected through the Logos and transmitted by the mercurial light

in all sentient beings. In other words, we create our personal reality in much the same way the universe was created. Synching inner reality with outer reality in the pattern of universal conscious creation filtered through the planetary archetypes is the *modus operandi* alchemists use in their transformational work.

Mercurius in You

The spirit of Mercurius exists in all of us, but it is only expressed in pure awareness freed from the inner bureaucracy of ego and the endless chatter of thoughts that flood our minds. When Hermeticists speak of the “mind’s eye” or “seeing with the eyes of spirit” or “using the true imagination,” they are referring to Mercurius capturing the “Seed of the World” as the divine mind dreams it. Paracelsus believed the mercurial mind envisions the divine source of anything, which can then be explored and even altered through pure, focused contemplation. “The true imagination,” he summarized, “leads life back to its spiritual reality, and it then takes on the name of



meditation.” For him, true imagination is the ability to envision what transformation looks like and work with it in the light of mind. Carl Jung elaborated on this idea in his *Psychology and Alchemy*:

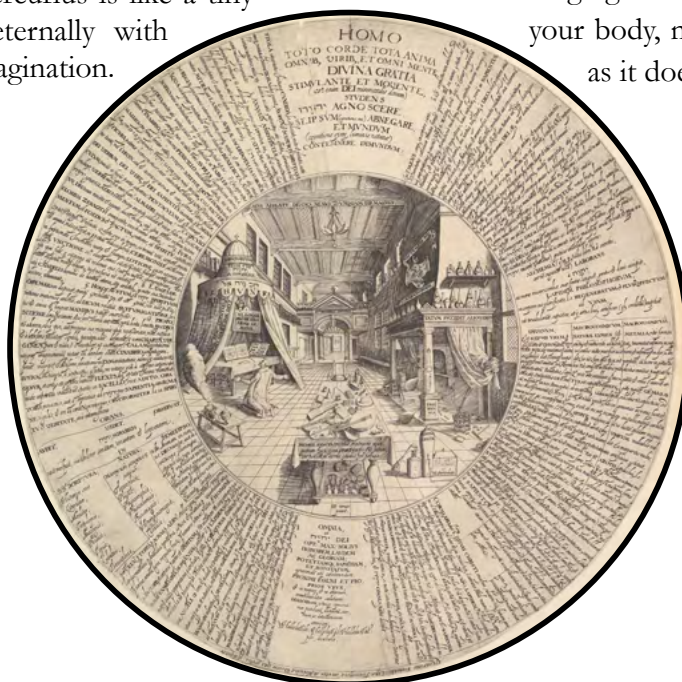
The alchemists’ concept of imagination is the most important key to understanding the Opus. We have to conceive of their imaginal processes not as the immaterial phantoms that we take fantasy pictures to be, but as something corporeal—a subtle body. The act of imagining was like a physical ingredient that could be fitted into the cycle of material changes in the lab. The alchemist related himself not only to his unconscious but directly to the substance he hoped to transform through the power of imagination. The alchemical act of imagining is therefore a concentrated extract of life forces that produces a subtle body, a psychoid hybrid of the physical with the psychic.

Mercurius and the patterns of consciousness it contains originates from the monadic One Mind, but it becomes an *independent* force in our world. In each one of us, Mercurius is like a tiny star shining eternally with pure, living imagination.

Problems arise when the microcosm we create from our personal Logos becomes salted and frozen in time, when the quintessential Mercurius that enlivens us no longer shines through.

The solution is to reanimate or mercurize your mind. Let consciousness flow again like a child’s by desalting yourself. Alchemize your life and live with the imaginative integrity of Mercurius. Get out from under the constant cascade of irrelevant thoughts that pollute your mind and focus on the One Thing in your life that shines directly from your heart. The power of your projection in the world will be determined by the clarity of your mind – by what you do not think about.

The game of life is never the same from one generation to the next, so rise above it. Extract your consciousness from supporting the world view of others whose vision you do not share and focus on the greater reality of the alchemical universe within you. Be mindful and reflective and flow freely into life with the light of Mercurius surging unobstructed through your body, mind, and spirit – as it does in the universe.



The Alchemist’s Laboratory, attributed to Peter van der Doort (sixteenth century).

EXPANDED AWARENESS THROUGH INNER SILENCE

Ese Magege, SRC

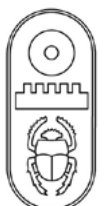
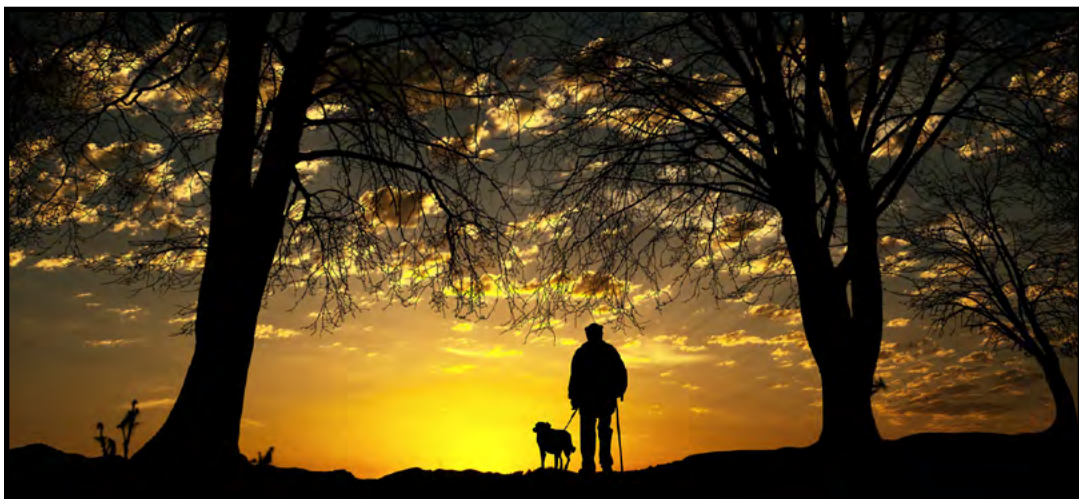
Philosophers and other great thinkers have spent years studying the interconnection between the invisible fields of energy and matter. As we all know, we experience the world of matter with our senses. However, to connect to the realm beyond our senses, we must be in attunement with the principles and laws that help us transcend the realm of matter.

Let us ponder the following questions: Is awareness limited to the perception of our five senses? Is it possible to perceive things beyond smell, taste, sight, hearing, and touch? Can we perceive things before we are conscious of them?

We often encounter events that show that our consciousness is not limited to our five senses. We have sometimes been compelled to follow subtle impulses that led to surprising favorable outcomes. We have followed our hunches and gut feelings that led us in the right directions and, at other times, even kept us from danger. For example, while rushing to keep an appointment, we could make a wrong turn into an unintended route, only to discover later that the previously intended

route had delays. There have been reports of individuals who missed a flight only to discover later mishaps associated with the missed flight. We tend to attribute these circumstances to luck. Is it luck? Or is it possible that a higher part of ourselves perceive these mishaps and lead us to take alternative paths? Where do hunches and gut feelings come from?

Resident in all of us is a divine essence that is limitless, expansive, intelligent, and knowing. It is part of the integral all, and as such our perceptions of events are not limited to time and space when we are attuned with this essence. To experience this divine essence resident in us is to expand our awareness beyond the five senses. How can we do that? By turning our focus inward and becoming completely silent. Our understanding of self is expanded by realizing through inner experience this divine essence and its nature. Learning about our nature alone is not enough. It has to be experienced within. Only then can we start to grasp who we truly are. Through inner silence, we can attune with the divine essence.





Let us explore who we are from an intellectual standpoint. This will help in understanding the interconnection between us and all things.

Rosicrucian Ontology states that people are dual in nature. We have a soul and a physical body. The soul is a spiritual energy that animates the physical body and impregnates each cell of a being. It is an extension of the Universal Soul that infuses all of Creation. Consciousness is an attribute of the soul. It has a form of perception and thinking transcending all cerebral faculties. It is for this reason a person in a coma continues to think and perceive the environment. As per our teachings, we know there are three planes of consciousness: the earthly, spiritual, and cosmic planes. The spiritual consciousness from the spiritual plane is that divine consciousness united with our earthly consciousness in our bodies. As the name implies, the Cosmic Consciousness from the cosmic plane is

the consciousness of the Cosmic. It is the Divine Intelligence, and cause of all things that permeates the entire universe. And, in Cosmic Consciousness, there is a sense of all-knowing and seeing a situation from a cosmic view point. We all have varying degrees of this consciousness depending on our level of study and development. It is the ultimate goal of all of us, as students on the path in quest of self-mastery to attain complete Cosmic Consciousness.

Nevertheless, to experience higher levels of consciousness requires elevating our awareness to a higher realm where we can transcend the limitations of matter. One of the ways to do this is to train the self in proper attunement. Using meditation, we can attune with one or more higher levels of consciousness. In meditation, we realize the various manifestation of self, such as the physical, emotional, psychic, and intellectual aspects of self. As we go deeper in our meditation, the self begins to express as a dynamic silence. It is a silence

that is so unlimited that any phenomena could psychically manifest in it and be realized.

In this silence, all thought and cognition cease. The mind passes from the consciousness of objects into a state of perfect tranquility. Time and space are absent. Time passes without our knowledge of it. In this silence, the mind is rejuvenated, and great clarity and new inspiring ideas may arise.

A distinction should be made here between the silence brought about by will, such as that which you experience when you stop talking, and this unlimited dynamic silence that results from attuning with the higher consciousness. This type of silence we refer to is a dynamic silence. It is a state of tranquil rest that is not brought about by our will, but naturally occurs when we attune with the higher planes of consciousness.

In this inner silence, there is a sense of oneness, a realization of the ALL. In the silence, we attune ourselves with the cosmic mind. Cosmic attunement is a pure channel for knowledge and truth devoid of the delusions and colorings of the objective world. We can also seek knowledge or insight into our problems. No matter how complex the problem is, it can always be resolved through proper cosmic attunement, even though the solutions may not be according to our will. The secret behind attaining good health, happiness,

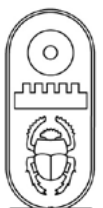
and a fulfilling lifestyle can be found in cosmic attunement. Cosmic attunement should be the primary responsibility of all students on the mystical path.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize consistency in our practice of inner silence. A minimum goal of once a day is recommended by H. Spencer Lewis. It could range from five to thirty minutes. This should be the time when our mind is completely at rest. The consciousness, like the body, needs complete rest to maintain its health and vitality.

We must turn away from seeking our power from outside ourselves. Instead, we must turn our searching consciousness inward and seek the inner light and intelligence. By turning our consciousness inward, we bring our objective mind in contact with the divine consciousness resident within us, which harmonizes with the absolute, the cause of all, the essence that permeates all things.

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with the divine and divine consciousness. When we learn to go into the silence and attune effectively with the cosmic at least once a day, we will find that not only are many of our problems solved, but other problems are often prevented from coming into our lives.



DELVING INTO THE FOLDS

Michael Shalaby, FRC

We often hear that we have to keep our body moving to stay physically healthy and we have to keep our mind active to stay mentally sharp. Rarely, if ever, do we hear recommendations that we should strive to explore the boundaries of consciousness to expand our awareness. Even if we were encouraged to do so, what method would we use? We are born into families, traditions, and ways of thinking that tend to define us. Our awareness is inclined to linger within this limited realm, fitted into a small box and seldom peeking outward towards other possibilities. But there is a deeper root within us. We should cherish our traditions and heritage, and yet we can recognize an ever-greater perception of ourselves with the mental will to redirect thought. Expanding our awareness requires an open but questioning mind so that you find your truth and guidance from your heart.

Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, a great mystic of the past well known to Martinists and Rosicrucians alike, spoke of the practice of delving into the heart. He states this work is laborious, in that we have to recognize thought that is beyond our thought, a guidance that is always with us but masked or in the folds of the illusions we create for ourselves. If we can get past the physical hardships we create for ourselves, we can unfold the guidance of the heart that will lead us more calmly and lovingly through life. These mystics of the past knew of

the real work required to find our higher self. An expanded awareness is not an end that we achieve, it is dynamic and always becoming ever more expansive. We have to stretch our thinking on all planes in which we think – objective, subjective, spiritual, subconscious, and beyond.

We, as mystics, do probe our conscious boundaries for a direct communion with the Divine. In return, we receive inspirations that are difficult to define. We analyze all forms of relatable human experiences, a compilation of the awareness of our world that we have developed. Science has given us empirical knowledge, religion has given us a reverential view, the arts inspire us and so forth, all pointing to a great power behind all creation. From centuries of human effort to now, mysticism within humankind has ceaselessly searched for origins and clues to the perplexity of human awareness.

Our consciousness is aware, therefore, that we are unaware of something deeper, and it is that deeper something that we desire to become aware of. We can see the heavens move, we can marvel at how our body functions, and ponder just how or why “all” exists as it does.

The schools of mysticism guide their students that it is within that we can realize Cosmic Consciousness, a state where we can experience a consciousness of all that is. That state must be experienced to understand it. At a recent Rosicrucian



La meditation, Alphonse Legros.



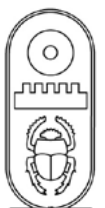
gathering, we discussed an app that allows one to take a picture of a plant and learn the name of that plant and other information about it. In a state of all-knowing Cosmic Consciousness, would we be able to name that plant in our language and all other languages? Is that the type of all-knowing knowledge we are speaking of? Or would it be beyond this objective world, a deeper awareness and understanding of the essence of all of nature? Notice how we tend to place our objective thinking upon even an unknown state such as Cosmic Consciousness.

We look outside ourselves to answer an inner desire; thus, when we explore the outer world, we are still exploring ourselves. Let your mind dwell on that for a second: We look outside ourselves to answer an inner desire; thus, when we explore the outer world, we are still exploring ourselves. Allow your thought patterns to pay homage to that intimate desire that drives us to ponder and seek. All of your explorations are within you.

We can only marvel at how our consciousness grows in various directions from the moment we begin life on Earth. As infants our awareness is for a time focused inward and the folds that

eventually cover our intimate connection to the Divine have yet to develop. Eventually, awareness must look outward and begin to confront this wondrous outer-world that we are born into. Our attention is drawn away from that inner observance into the various activities that require our attention, time, and efforts to learn and survive in society. This is as it must be as we make our way into and through our experience in the human kingdom. Perhaps, however, humanity as a whole is more prepared to begin to maintain a greater awareness of that internal world from where we came.

Finding our inner nature is a laborious process. It is laborious because it requires our will to overcome our illusions. We live in this world, and it is oftentimes hard to recognize anything beyond the physical, even when we know that an invisible, guiding consciousness allows us to be. In this physical world, we experience difficulty and tragedy, beauty and love, the ups and downs of life. Who has time to “refocus” our awareness to a higher level when there is so much to struggle with here and now? The laborious task before us is to change our thought patterns even in the midst of chaos. When we look across the various sources that vie for our attention, it is



important to find a way to steady ourselves with that great guiding power that creates everything. Indeed, stop for a moment and ask yourself, in the quiet of your mind - is it truly possible to access a power that created everything?

This piece will now focus on the word “living.” Where do you live? The first thing that comes to mind is usually our street or city. Take a moment and contemplate the question a little more deeply than you are used to, and let it settle...where do you live? There are a number of answers, all of which are correct. Besides our physical surroundings, we could also say that we live in a certain mental state familiar to ourselves. More deeply, we can understand that we reside within ourselves, in a state of being that is within the folds of consciousness, an eternal home, a state our soul personality abides in, ensconced in the arms of that which created us.

Our teachings state that we live in a sea of Cosmic Consciousness. Stated more simply, we live in consciousness. Consciousness is not separate from our physical presence or our physical world; we live in it. During our waking hours, we are unaware that we live in a guiding consciousness because we seem to be only an observer to it. Yet, we observe and contemplate the very consciousness that allows us to observe.

Psalm 23 perhaps is an attempt to guide us to a realization of living in conscious creation. This prayer ends with the words: “goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life for I dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Open your consciousness to a higher realization of sacred writings such as this, for they may be guiding you to a higher awareness of yourself. When you get consumed in what seems to be the outer movements of the world, might it help you to remember

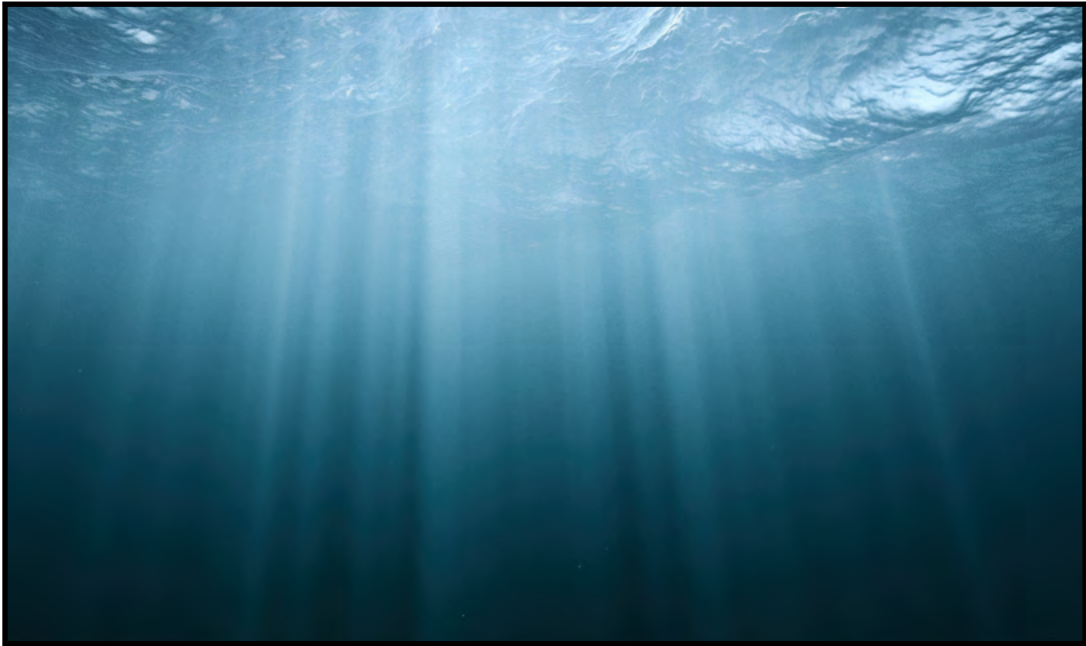
that you dwell in the house of the Lord... forever?

Now think of a person you know well. What is it that you know? Allow this question to settle a bit... what is it that you know? In our mind's eye, we see their physical features. We instinctively know that while their outer form is familiar to us, there is a deeper part of them. We have an impression of their personality and various traits such as their sense of humor, their temperament, and so forth. From our previous introspection of our deeper “home,” we can also know that they too share the ultimate home in the arms of our creator just as we do. We can therefore know that in some way, hidden in the folds of our hearts, we are connected.

Now think about the love that you have for someone. What is it that you love? Again, allow this question to settle. It may be fair to say that your love for someone is physical, emotional, and beyond. As human beings, we get to experience many kinds of love toward others, as well as love towards animals, nature, and so forth.



Meditation, John George Brown (1910).



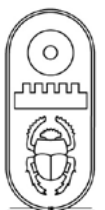
For now, examine the love you have for someone close to you, go inward and ask yourself, what is it that you love in this person? All answers are correct. As you wish, you can progress to other people and things. What is it that you love in your family pet, or your garden, and so forth? This analysis, if you allow it to grow, may reveal deeper levels of love within that you have for the world around you.

There is a calm within us. Like a turbulent ocean on the surface, we can find a quiet serenity within if we go deep enough. As human beings, we are unable to stay below the surface, for we must come back up for air after a short duration. This is symbolic in that we live in this world, and while we are below the surface, we can gain strength and courage from that serenity and bring it back to this world. Having the wisdom of serenity can indeed give us courage and direction to battle the bobbing waves of life. We can allow the world to settle around us through the expanded thought gained from the quiet. Our Order tells us that we can transcend the physical through thought. As you go about your day, allow words and situations to settle within you before you react to

them. We have all seen others who handle seemingly tough situations with ease. We all have the power to do this with an expanded awareness. Settle into yourself and the power that creates; in your mind, submerge below the waves, find the quiet, and bring that power to the surface.

It may be difficult to recognize the actuality of connecting to the force that creates us. We know that force exists, but our objective consciousness tends to separate itself from that force. It is an oxymoron; we are conscious of that energy that gives us life, we can and do observe it, but since we observe it, we feel we are separate from it. We even know that it is a part of us, but still feel we are observing from outside of it. But we are connected with that which we observe.

It is through our scientific observations that we discovered bioelectricity, or the regulation of cells through electrical signaling. Cells use ion fluxes, or electrically charged flows, to communicate. This touchless electric communication structure across tissues comprises an ancient and highly conserved communicating and signaling system. We receive different electrical signals. On one level, we receive



impulses that we are objectively conscious of; on another level, we receive impulses that obviously perform necessary functions, but we are consciously unaware of them. On a mental level, we receive thoughts that we are conscious of; and we also know there is a realm of thought that we are unconscious of, perhaps a realm where thoughts are generated and then translated through the sprinkling of light into the chambers of our objective consciousness. Tam Hunt, an evolutionary biologist, wrote about the scientific work that relates this bioelectricity to consciousness. Paraphrasing, he stated:



The Toilers of the Sea, Albert Pinkham Ryder (1880).

In nature, electric fields power processes essential to life, perhaps even consciousness itself. Scientists are learning how electric and magnetic fields reveal key aspects of consciousness. The prevailing view for some time was that the brain's electric fields are a side effect of the brain's activity. Now, there are active theories that these fields may drive the brain and help explain consciousness. It is likely that the body's electric fields are associated in some manner with some kind of consciousness at various levels.

Consider these words from the Book of Genesis: darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of the Divine was hovering over the waters. Roam with the meaning of these beautiful and profound words for a moment.

That spirit hovers over all of us, connecting us to everything, to the very

source of life. It is always there, sprinkling us with the light of vital life force to maintain us. You are a vessel receiving this guidance. It is animating your body and animating your awareness. Turn your thoughts toward this light sprinkling down upon you and let it settle into you. The energy of creation hovers, holding galaxies together just as it holds us together as sentient beings. We are observing this divine flux even as we are a part of it. It is as if we can confirm that hermetic law that states the universe is mental, that there is a guiding thought in all things. With this knowledge, consider that the word "Lord" from Psalm 23 is not

something outside of us. It is that part of us that invisibly guides us in life, as the shepherd guides the sheep, just as we see the cells guided and transmitting knowledge within us. No matter the occurrences in the outside world, this beneficent power is with you.

Sit now, and simply relax into yourself. Take a few deep breaths, and as you exhale, relax into your chair. Think of anything that may be bothering you, a memory, a situation, a person. We will call it a visitor. Welcome this visitor into your inner home; as you exhale, let it settle with you. You are together in the house of the Lord! In this house, the forces that benevolently hold the fabric of the universe together converge around you physically, psychically, and spiritually. Visualize now the light that contains this power encompassing your visitor. Allow this brightness to grow in illumination until your visitor disappears

within it, absorbed into the goodness that this light is. Now, feel that goodness permeate your entire being.

That benevolent force is always with you, functioning completely selflessly for you. Whether you have been kind or unkind, whether you have helped or harmed, this force serves you. It is a noble love of autonomic consciousness operating behind your objective consciousness within the folds of your heart. All of these universal forces envelop you, creating the miracle of you! You are a holy being, privileged to witness overwhelming, selfless love in action. That pure love hovers with you now and remains with you for all of your



Magdalene with Two Flames, *Georges de La Tour* (1640).

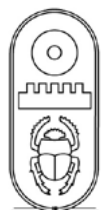
terrestrial days. Look within where you reside. Say mentally to yourself, “I am.”

In conclusion, we are fortunate to witness consciousness open up to this world by our own experience and by watching others go through their various stages, recognizing the ongoing evolution of conscious awareness.

From our human perspective, we follow a pattern of light, life, and love. With that first breath, there is the light of consciousness, followed by our ability to live and grow into this world, followed by love for others and things and for life itself if we allow it. It also shows our desire to reach up to that pure essence of love.

Perhaps from the Creators point of view, it is the opposite – love, life, light. From that all-creating essence, a pure love existed that had a pure desire to share; from that love and desire, life developed to begin a journey through consciousness; and then light shown in the form of human consciousness that became aware of a pure love that is our origin. Our awareness is to develop an awareness of the Divine. It is up to you to develop the will and desire to find that which is most important to you.

While we cannot see the Divine, we know It is there because we live. Abide in Its grace with your thoughts! Close your eyes often and enter that quiet that selflessly awaits to guide you. Settle into your conscious being with simple pauses, looking into the surface of the deep within you, and allowing the Divine creator to move you. With this practice, you will delve into the folds of your heart so that it blossoms to release the aroma of pureness.



JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE GARDEN

Gail Butler, SRC



A painting depicting an Egyptian garden in the Tomb of Nebamun (Eighteenth Dynasty).

If we pause to contemplate not simply the beauty and form of a domestic garden, but its elemental “beingness,” we see that its inner life is rich and significant. The concept of a garden has evolved, not only alongside humanity, but also within our consciousness from the earliest foundations of civilization.

As an archetype, the garden represents the Soul, its qualities of abundance, joy, innocence, peace, and order. The garden in its most refined expression represents an expansion of consciousness. In an untended, neglected state, the garden mirrors a consciousness of dormancy and stagnation.

By examining the history of gardens in their various expressions of form and function, we get clues, not only of their effect upon our collective evolution of consciousness, but how we may each nurture our own “Inner Garden.”

The evolution of the garden began when humans fenced outside spaces with

the intention of keeping something, such as animals, either in, or out. The earliest manifestation of the garden was purely functional, consisting of easily erected and deconstructed fencing to accommodate a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Around 10,000 years ago, agriculture allowed civilizations to blossom, and people began creating walled spaces.

Particularly in Iran, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Levant,¹ gardens became more elaborate. Here, affluent individuals built and planted decorative gardens, not only for practicality, but also as beautiful esthetic spaces.

Sixteenth-century BCE Egyptian paintings record some of the earliest known pleasure gardens, although it’s very likely such gardens predate this period. Perhaps enclosed gardens originated in desert climes as retreats from the heat and searing brilliance of the desert sun – private oases of serenity and beauty.

From the Middle East, into Greece, Rome, France, Italy, and across to the

British Isles, gardens became necessary embellishments to the estates of wealthy citizens and colonizers alike. Lush gardens, ornate statuary, and magnificent water features became emblems of status. Additionally, the garden began to incorporate symbolic and religious components, in addition to its sensory delights.

Whether emulating an oasis, displaying a homeowner's status, or creating an earthly paradise, private gardens became places to make offerings to deities, to pray and meditate, and perchance, to experience mystical ecstasy.

Before long, the middle classes began to create garden retreats of their own, albeit less imposing. Eventually, some communities conceptualized the idea of public gardens to beautify their municipalities and to edify their populace.

Persian Paradise Gardens

In monochromatic, waterless places surrounded by shifting dunes and craggy precipices, it's reasonable to conclude that people idealized the afterlife as a beautiful garden. Thus, Paradise became the blueprint for private and public gardens in what is now Iran.

O self at rest and at peace, return to your Lord, well-pleasing and well-pleased! Enter among My servants! Enter My Garden.

- Surat al-Fajr, 27-30, Qur'an

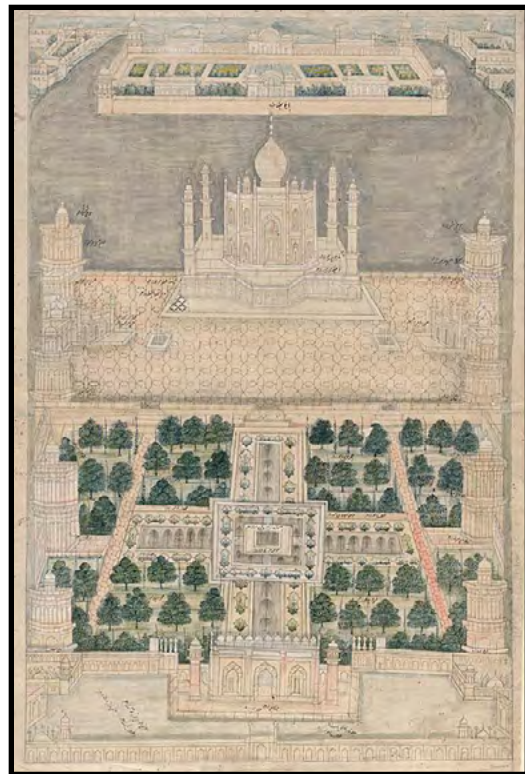
Ideally, the Persian paradise garden is formal and symmetrical in design. Traditionally, it's divided into four quarters. The quarters are planted with trees for shade and fruit, with herbs and fragrant flowers to perfume the space, inviting bees to linger, building hives dripping with sweet, golden honey. No religious images or statuary distract from the serenity, purity, and purpose of these gardens.

Water – in the form of a pool or fountain – held an important place at the garden's center. Sometimes narrow channels would carry water into the four quarters, echoing the architecture of Allah's Paradise as described in the Qur'an.

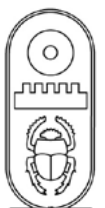
Allah has promised the men and women of the believers' Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, forever, and fine dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. And Allah's good pleasure is even greater. That is the great victory.

- Surat at-Tawba, 72, Qur'an

This classic, iconic garden style is called *chahar bagh*, meaning "four gardens." Sometimes the *chahar bagh* is referred to as an "Islamic" garden. It figures prominently in Sufi symbolism, paintings, and prose, for its spiritualized ideal inspired Sufi songs of love and mystical prose.



Watercolor drawing with bird's eye view of the Moonlight Garden complex, Taj Mahal, eighteenth century.



The following lines illustrate the tone and tenor of mystical love poetry: “Unable to perceive the shape of you, I find you all around me. Your presence fills my eyes with your love. It humbles my heart, for you are everywhere.”²²

The objective to which Sufis aspired is summed up in the following quotation. “Sufism is more about promoting our inner garden, from languages to mere words, to wordlessness. It is more about educating our ear to listen to the voice that does not use words.”²³

The Sufi mystic knew that one must step past the beauty and fragrance of the outer garden and into the realm beyond appearances to commune with the Beloved, for that is where Paradise is truly found.

The Biblical Garden

Early in the Bible, in the second chapter of Genesis, the Divine created a garden: “God [the Divine], planted a garden toward the east, in Eden, and there he [It] put the person whom he [It] had formed” (Genesis 2:8).

The Divine’s last act of creation, as told in Genesis, was to inhabit the Garden with people. In this manner, the work was completed. Perhaps the Divine’s Garden could not reach completion without us, but are we complete and whole without the Garden?

“They themselves will be like a well-watered garden, never to languish again” (Jeremiah 31:12).

Ancient Hebrews planted their gardens as practical and pleasurable places to stroll along shaded pathways. Stone benches provided spots to indulge in peaceful contemplation. There would be olive and pomegranate trees, date palms, apricot and fig trees. Grapes were grown for wine. Herbs such as coriander, mustard, hyssop, mint, and dill provided savor, and conferred healing and repast. Lilies were a favorite flower, as were saffron crocus, poppies, and anemones.⁴

Embedded in the walls of long-ruined gardens, archeologists found pollen revealing the presence of non-indigenous plants such as citron (etrog), myrtle, Persian walnut, birch, and cedar of Lebanon.⁵

The second most-renowned garden in the Bible, after Eden, is the Garden of Gethsemane. In Yeshua’s time, it may actually have been an olive grove. Today, it’s maintained as a garden of pilgrimage because scripture tells us that Yeshua came here prior to his crucifixion.

While the disciples slept, Yeshua prayed: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, but not as I wish, but as you wish” (Matthew 26:39).

It was to Gethsemane that Yeshua in despair retreated. Perhaps, in finding refuge among the olives, he felt more fervently the proximity of his Father.



One of the locations claimed to be the Garden of Gethsemane.



An impluvium in an atrium, looking through the tablinum toward the peristyle, House of Menander, Pompeii before 79 CE.

The Roman Atrium

While seeking subject matter for this article, the words “atrium of the heart” ran ceaselessly through my mind. What was my inner muse trying to impart?

Looking up “atrium of the heart,” I learned that the heart’s upper chambers are, in fact, called *atria*.⁶

Temporarily leaving aside this enigmatic and cryptic start to my research, atria of another sort arose – those of the classic Roman villa.

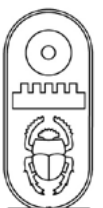
Roman villas were built around a central atrium consisting of an open court. At the center of the atrium was the *impluvium*, a shallow pool sunken into the floor to catch rainwater from the open roof. The impluvium also added cool ambience to the space.

Walls surrounding the atrium might be adorned with paintings of deities, cupids, or mythological characters. The atrium served as the home’s center of social and political life, and as private space for family to gather and relax.⁷

Just beyond the atrium – if the villa was grand enough – the *peristyle* was located. In this open-air space, plants, fruiting trees, and statuary created a retreat both useful and peaceful. Central to this space was a pond called a *piscine* in which fish could be kept for visual enjoyment and future meals. Some Roman villas combined an atrium and a peristyle into a single, large rectangular courtyard at the center of the villa.

Atrium-grown plants might include roses, cypress, and mulberry trees. Herbs and flowers such as rosemary, thyme, and hyssop were grown. Marigolds, narcissus, hyacinths, and violets perfumed the air.⁸

Within the cool, private confines of their atria, Roman citizens worshipped their deities and made offerings to the *Lares* – the household spirits of the villa. Sometimes philosophers were entertained and atria became spaces for lively discussions. The architectural placement of the atrium at the heart of the villa embodied its importance as the nucleus of inner and outer life.



The Healing Garden

Healing gardens are ubiquitous to many cultures. They might be seen alongside the humblest of abodes, within religious monasteries, and bordering chateaus. From modest plots of herbs encircled with wattle fencing or stones, knot gardens evolved in which curative herbs were planted in simple and complex patterns. Astrological and alchemical gardens grouped herbs and plants in accordance with their planetary signatures and powers.

In Europe, from the twelfth century to the present day, at chateau, palace, and manor, formal herb gardens remain popular. Trimmed box or hyssop hedges tidily bordered geometric beds containing vast assemblages of aromatic herbs and flowers – a cornucopia of sensory delight and bodily well-being! Healing gardens, regardless of size or grandeur, remain living pharmacies of therapeutic and planetary potency.

Monastery gardens included rows of vegetables, fruiting orchards, and henneries, in addition to plots of healing and culinary herbs. While much time was spent working the gardens, benches and stone seats provided places to sit and ponder scripture and doctrine.

At my former country home, a large kitchen garden grew near the house. It was a working garden with raised beds of vegetables and strawberries, and a rectangular garden of culinary and medicinal herbs. A large plot for corn, beans, squash, and melons made this a practical garden. Yet, there was space for flowers to enchant the eye and lure bees and butterflies. A bower of old lilacs divided the garden and made a shady nook for a metal chair. Here, I could sit and watch my garden grow. What actually occurred in those idyllic moments beneath the lilacs was that on some level my garden grew me.



Gardens of the Tarot

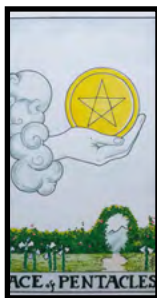
With its enigmatic history and diverse manifestations of interpretation and style, the Tarot – whether as a tool of prognostication or a path to enlightenment – features meaningful garden imagery.

Referring to the Universal Waite deck, we see symbolic hints of natural and cultivated landscapes on the cards of the Major Arcana. It's upon the cards of the Minor Arcana that most garden imagery is found, in whole or in part. Tarot garden symbolism mirrors the tenor of the temporal lives depicted upon the cards. Most of the Tarot's garden scenes appear only partially illustrated. Seldom do we glimpse the garden's entirety. It's as if its wholeness lies latent, waiting.

Contemplation on this aspect of the Tarot hints that the garden is dual in nature, manifesting both without and within. Perhaps we cultivate only particular aspects of ourselves leaving much of the Inner Garden in dormancy?

The suit of Pentacles is where most garden imagery is found, reflecting that this suit represents the Earth element.

On the Ace of Pentacles we find a complete garden, unoccupied except by a mysterious hand emerging from a cloud. What is being offered?



Does this card illustrate the beauty and bounty available when we cultivate our earthly nature with care and discrimination?

The Nine of Pentacles places someone – you, or me perhaps – at the

center of the garden. Pentacles bloom abundantly hinting that the earthly nature has been pruned and nurtured for fulsome growth. Grapes hang ripened, ready for the gardener. A hooded bird of prey sits upon the occupant's hand – one's animal nature gently controlled?



Two trees stand at the back of the garden. Do they represent a duality that has been balanced within the person standing between?

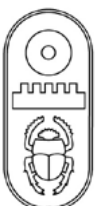
Surely the individual occupying the garden has cultivated it with care and patience, enjoying the abundance, knowing its secret, for this garden is shown lush and complete.



Of further interest is the Five of Pentacles, populated by two battered individuals struggling against a winter storm. There's no hint of petal or leaf in this bleak scene. Yet, seemingly unnoticed by the pair, a window of pentacles glows warmly.

Perhaps these two are unaware of the comfort and companionship promised by the welcoming radiance?

Certainly, this pair appears to have been cast from their garden, or is unaware of its existence?



If only they would turn and look!
If only they'd widen the circle of their
awareness and embrace the succor awaiting
within the windowed
sanctuary!

The Metaphorical Garden

Gardens send their roots deep into the human psyche. Perhaps we cannot begin to reach a budding awareness of the inner self until we trace these roots to the mysterious and fertile places they occupy within us.

An ancient rhyme asks: "How does your garden grow?"⁹

This question is applicable not only to the physical garden, for poets like Walt Whitman also speak with the language of the heart.

Unseen buds, infinite, hidden well,
Under the snow and ice, under the
darkness, in every square or
cubic inch,

Germinal, exquisite, in delicate
lace, microscopic, unborn....¹⁰

Poetry may be appreciated both intellectually and emotionally, certainly. But, if we penetrate more deeply, it hints at the mystical as well. Poetry is the language of the soul spoken with the words of the heart, and illustrated with pen upon the page.

By reading carefully what flows from the poet's pen, listening intently to the mystic's wisdom, contemplating the Tarot's garden imagery – we gently begin our

approach towards the center of a secret, "Inner Garden."

Entering the Garden



Garden Entrance, *H. Spencer Lewis.*

The journey into the garden is not outward as I'd once thought and sought. It is a sojourn into the deepest aspect of our being. It's here we'll begin to unearth an astonishing splendor. This is the secret known to the mystic, penned by the poet, and illustrated upon the Tarot.

Somehow we've forgotten how and where to find entry, or even why we should seek it. Perhaps the pace and complexity of our lives has obscured the way. However, we needn't revive the path unaided! We have the examples of Sufis, poets, and mystics as guides.

Perhaps my muse's puzzling directive, "atrium of the heart," was two-fold. It gave me a starting point for my research – the word "atrium." It also led me unerringly to the place where each of us may commune within the garden.

As we each tend to and seek the "Inner Garden," consciousness expands beyond form and beyond thought. At this threshold, between thought and pure consciousness, we enter the center of the garden. Here, all boundaries and limitations fall away. Here, we discover communion with the living essence pulsing at the heart of all things and within ourselves.

Sufi mystics showed us the way through the physical garden, and into the "Inner Garden". Poets have written



Keukenhof flower garden in the Netherlands.

of the inner life of the Garden, and the Tarot shows us that the “Inner Garden” is reflected outwardly.

Here is their roadmap as I’ve distilled it:

One must tarry, sit a spell, and allow the senses to open to the natural using all five of them – feast the eye upon beauty, color, and form; taste the aromatic herb; smell the myriad fragrances; hear the wind, water, birdsong; feel leaf and petal, the moist, opulent soil.

Then, we must again feel – this time emotionally – the poignancy that these sensations stir within us. Is it peace, joy, calm, yearning, connection – something else?

Lastly, grasp tightly the gossamer thread of Love and allow it to lead you into the Center of the Garden, toward the Being-ness within.

Endnotes

¹ The Levant includes the countries of Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.

² Hakim Sanai, *The Walled Garden of Truth*, translated by Priya Hemenway, (Kansas City: Andrews McMeel Publisher, 2002), pg. 41.

³ “Cultivate your inner garden with Sufism,” *Express Tribune*, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1403143/cultivate-inner-garden-sufism>.

⁴ “Plants of the Garden,” Charles Stuart University, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.csu.edu.au/special/accc/biblegarden/plants-of-the-garden>.

⁵ “The secret life of plants in an ancient, royal Judean garden,” Israel21c: Uncovering Israel, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.israel21c.org/the-secret-life-of-plants-in-an-ancient-royal-judean-garden/>.

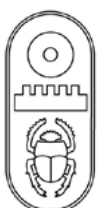
⁶ “Atrium,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/science/atrium-heart>.

⁷ “Sample Plan of a Roman House,” vroma.org, accessed September 15, 2021, <http://vroma.org/vromans/bmcmansu/house.html>.

⁸ “Ancient Roman Gardens,” History and Archaeology Online, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://historyandarchaeologyonline.com/ancient-roman-gardens/>.

⁹ “Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary,” Old European Nursery Rhyme.

¹⁰ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004).



RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PAST

*H. Spencer Lewis, FRC
Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1915 - 1939*



Entrance to Karnak Temple, Luxor, Egypt. Painted by H. Spencer Lewis during his Egyptian trip of 1929.

One of the arguments most often used in an attempt to deny the possibility of reincarnation is this: If we have lived once before and our memory retains any knowledge of that existence, why is it that we do not recall any event of our previous lives?

You will note that this question, no matter how it may be worded, always includes the positive statement or the positive intimation that no one ever recalls anything of his previous incarnations. The question is really not a question but a statement and precludes any argument, since it assumes right from the very start that no one does recall anything of the past.

Such an attitude is absolutely unfair for two reasons. In the first place, no one has a right to assume because she has no distinct recollection of a previous existence that no one else has; and, second, it is not right to assume that the mind does not occasionally reveal to us real pictures of the past which we do not understand or appreciate as having any connection with the past.

To illustrate my point, I will refer to just one very recent and fortunate conversation. A businessman of conservative and orthodox religious viewpoints, wholly out of sympathy with the doctrine of reincarnation, called upon me in regard to my plans for a trip to Egypt and Palestine with a number of my coworkers. He frankly admitted that while he was not interested in the research we intended to make or any of the ceremonies that we would attend while in Egypt, he nevertheless had a deep-rooted desire to go to these foreign lands but had never wanted to go alone. Now that a few persons in his city, whom he knew fairly well, were going with us, he wished to go along with them and enjoy their companionship on such a trip. Knowing from previous remarks made by him that he was out of sympathy with many of the thoughts expressed in this book, I asked him bluntly why he wanted to go to Egypt and Palestine rather than on any other tour. His first answer was this: "Because I have always felt a strange fascination or a peculiar attraction toward some part of Egypt or the Holy Land."

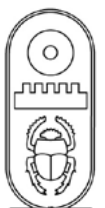
I tried to analyze his statement and find out what part of Egypt, or what things in Egypt and the Holy Land were responsible for the attraction he felt. His answers were always indefinite and vague until I finally drew from him the following: "Well, ever since I was a young man, I have felt that certain pictures I have seen of Egypt or Palestine were more interesting to me than pictures of any other part of the world. I do not mean pictures of the busy streets of Cairo, but of some of the outlying, native villages. I have always felt that I would find something there or discover something in such a locality that would be of intense interest and perhaps personal profit to me in some way."

Upon further investigation, he reluctantly admitted that some of the scenes he had seen of native villages and people with native costumes seemed "somewhat" familiar to him, and he further admitted that this fact had led him to read many different books on the history and customs of Egypt and the Holy Land. And, that in some passages describing incidents of a few centuries ago, he seemed to feel a familiarity, or a sympathetic understanding, as he put it, which only increased his attraction toward those countries.

I could not help smiling when he made these admissions with such reluctance, for I knew at once precisely what he was experiencing, and I also knew that it was useless at the present time to point out to him why certain incidents in history relating to certain localities and peoples and certain scenes and places connected therewith were "somewhat" familiar to him. I know that if I had pressed my questioning far enough, he would have admitted that some of these scenes were as familiar to him as though they had been seen by him sometime in a dream. This would have aroused his suspicion,

however, and caused him to feel that I was trapping him into admissions which he did not care to make, and so I dropped the argument.

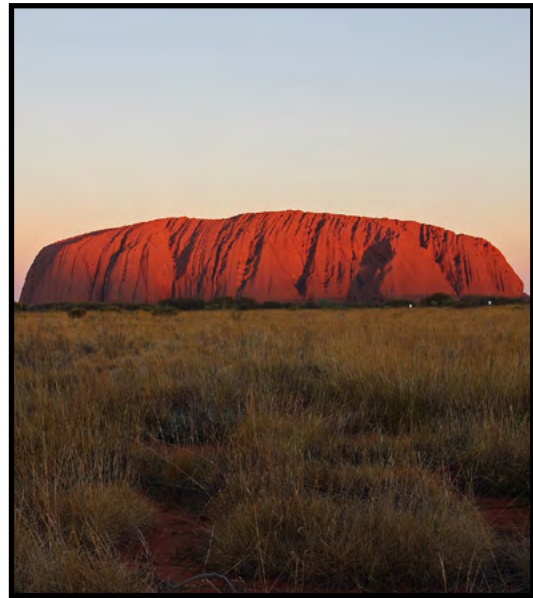
This experience on the part of this man is typical of that which can be found in the life of the average person. I believe that in my lifetime I have questioned perhaps ten thousand people in regard to so-called recollections of the past. I have not called these things by that term, but have asked them frankly this question: Do you ever find in your "moments of meditation, contemplation, or revery, certain scenes of places, people, buildings, or homes, rising in your mind like pictures or scenes that were familiar to you?"



If this question is asked before anything is said about the subject of reincarnation, the average person one meets in the average walks of life will frankly admit that such is true in his case and that he has often wondered about it, and has really been puzzled about it. If the person to whom the question is put is one who has traveled much, especially in foreign lands, he will generally add that, "When I was traveling here or there, I was surprised suddenly to come upon a scene in front of a building (park, public square, bridge, or other picturesque setting) that I found to be precisely a duplicate of what I had seen in my mind many times, but which I had never before seen in real life."

When these persons say that they have come upon scenes which they had never seen before in real life, they always mean that they had never seen them in this life or in this incarnation, and they will frankly tell you that it was the first time that they had ever traveled or had been anywhere near the familiar scenes in their present earthly existence. If, then, you open the subject of reincarnation and ask them if it is not possible that the familiarity with such scenes maybe due to having lived near them in a previous incarnation, you find some who are broad enough in their thinking to realize the possibility of this and admit that it may be true, whereas others will instantly tell you that since they do not believe in reincarnation, they cannot look upon these things as an indication of having lived once before.

This means that we must allow such persons to offer another theoretical explanation of why and how they have scenes coming before their consciousness with a certain degree of familiarity but which they have never seen in actuality. The explanations thus offered are often amusing and, of course, associated with extreme supernatural principles or



impossible mental laws. In other words, the explanations do not explain at all. And yet these persons will seriously assure you that they do not have any recollections of a previous existence and, therefore, they certainly could not have lived at some other time.

On the other hand, nearly every person who has read of historical events in other lands at other times than at present has found herself strangely attuned with the history of certain periods or of certain places, and is attracted more to the history of these places than to other places. Sometimes this interest is in relation to places in America or even in the same state where the person now lives, or often the places are located a few hundreds, a few thousand, or many thousands of miles away.

Then there are many people who in moments of reflection, relaxation, or reverie find themselves slipping backward, so to speak, to a rapid panorama of scenes and incidents which seem to struggle to come up out of the fog and mist of past recollections, but cannot quite reveal themselves in all of the clearness and distinction that makes for perfect recognition. People who have experienced this are often puzzled, not

only by the peculiar pictures that do come close to the borderline of clear perception, but by the multiplicity of scenes that seem to flash so rapidly in the background of the consciousness. There are also many who have had certain definite impressions come to them from the depths of their consciousness, which seem to be related to their own lives in a time and period long past. These persons, too, are puzzled over these things, but seldom associate them with anything like a past existence.

Now, just what should one expect in regard to the recollection of events in a past life? Is it logical for the average person to expect that the events of a past life should be registered in a memory so close to the borderline of our present consciousness that we can easily reach across or pierce through the veil that separates the past from the present and bring these pictures into living reality? Assuming that the memory we have now is the same memory that we have had in a previous life, and assuming that in its storehouse vaults it retains all of the pictures and impressions registered upon it throughout all of our lives, is it logical to suppose that it should be an easy and simple thing to reach into those vaults and unlock the records at will and withdraw clear and distinct pictures relating to any period of time? If you believe that this is logical, then it is reasonable for me to ask why it is not possible for you to reach right into your storehouse of memory now

and withdraw all the scenes, all the pictures, relating to the events of your life in the present incarnation during your life in the present incarnation during your second, third, and fourth years of childhood. Can you do this?

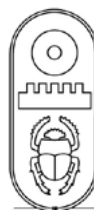
You may answer and tell me that you do

Assuming that the memory we have now is the same memory that we have had in a previous life, and assuming that in its storehouse vaults it retains all of the pictures and impressions registered upon it throughout all of our lives, is it logical to suppose that it should be an easy and simple thing to reach into those vaults and unlock the records at will and withdraw clear and distinct pictures relating to any period of time?

recall certain incidents of your childhood and youth very distinctly. At best, you may tell me of ten incidents clearly registered in your mind and easily recalled, which relate to your earliest years. But, think of the millions of other impressions and pictures that are locked in that memory and which you cannot recall. The few that you speak of constitute such a small fraction, and such a small fragment, that it is hardly worth speaking about as an illustration of recollection.

Let us examine the few that you do recall, and let us see how clear and distinct they are.

Do you remember the first time you were allowed to play on the street or to play with your neighborhood companions? You may answer by picking out one incident connected with this important event in your life. But, if we analyze that incident, we find, first of all, that there is some unusual feature connected with it, which not only impressed you very profoundly at the time, but impressed your parents or your relatives, or your companions, and caused them to speak about it often. The event may have occurred in your second year, or your fourth year, but you will find





The 14th Dalai Lama, born Lhamo Dhondup, the highest spiritual leader of Tibet. The Dalai Lama is believed by Buddhists to be able to choose the body into which he is reincarnated.

that it was an event that was probably discussed and spoken about in your household for several years thereafter, and was not only registered in your mind and memory a number of times, but through repetition of description and the telling about it, it was carried along into your fifth or sixth year of life.

Then perhaps many times during your eighth or ninth year, you easily recalled that event and spoke about it, and heard others speak about it, and so it was once again brought up out of the musty old records of the past into the present and was again registered in your eighth or ninth year, even though it had originally occurred in the second, third, or fourth year. Now, perhaps during your twelfth year, it was recalled again by some similar event or some family discussion, and once more the picture and incident that was becoming slightly vague and preparing to fade into the indefiniteness of the past was revived and recolored and strengthened in its details and registered once more in your twelfth year.

This may have happened so many times in your life that this particular incident out of millions of others has been refreshed from time to time and brought from the past into the now, until, when you want to recall it now, you only have to reach back to the last time that you registered the incident to revive it, and bring it into close examination.

You will admit that such an incident is not typical of all the incidents of your past. To prove this, you can take any one of the incidents of your childhood, which you easily recall, and after having described it and painted it in all of its fullness of reality, ask yourself this question: What did I do the next day after this incident, or what did I do that same afternoon or evening? Certainly, if you reach into your past easily and quickly and get in contact with a certain day or hour of your past life as a child, you should be able to move the finger of recollection along the unwritten records to the next few lines and recall what happened a few hours after the incident you relate. Can you do that?

Usually, the few incidents of childhood that are easily recalled are not only those which have been revived from time to time, as stated above, but they are widely separated from each other in nature and in period of time, and the great gaps in between these events remain absolutely unrecalled. Does this not tend to prove that although a perfect record of all events in the past is retained in the mind, the matter of recollection is not so easy, and it is not given to people to have free access to all of these impressions?

If you ask why it is that it is not as easy to recall all of the events of a certain day or month twenty-five years ago as it is to recall the events of yesterday or last week, let me point out to you the psychological fact that our present consciousness of ourselves is always in the nature of a central point in

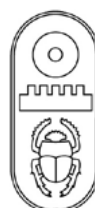
a large picture, and this picture contains the events of the last few days. As we go backward, past the few recent days, the picture extends itself into vagueness and indefiniteness. Today we are conscious not only of ourselves and our immediate surroundings, but we are conscious of the things we did this morning and of the plans we made for this afternoon, tonight, and tomorrow. We are right now in the center of a whirling mass of impressions and this gives us consciousness of ourselves and our relationship to people and places. But a person would soon lose saneness and soundness of mind and become a hopeless maniac if there were in the borderline of her present consciousness the living, vibrating impressions of all the things that had occurred in her past life or since childhood.

As each day passes, the pictures and impressions that were alive and active in the consciousness for a while are slowly taken from it and placed away in the records of the memory. It is like the librarian in a large library who makes it his business each morning when he finds new copies of new issues of magazines and periodicals on his desk to go into the reading room of the library and deposit these new issues and collect those which are becoming old and place them away in the reference files to be called for on demand. If the old ones were allowed to accumulate while the new ones were constantly added, there would soon be such a litter of publications on the reading table as to make it impossible to be aware of which were new and which were old.

So we find that while the records of the past are stored away indelibly, they can only be recalled by association of ideas or by some special process which enables us to pick one impression or one scene at a time from the past records and bring it into the now. Sometimes, through the association

of ideas or the similarity of scenes and events, a picture or impression of the past is brought into present realization. The older that impression is, or the more ancient the picture, the more vague and indefinite it is, until some of these are like fantastic sketches on a transparent surface through which we can see so clearly as to make the picture almost invisible. If this is true regarding events which have occurred within our present lives and which are not more than 30, 40, or 50 years of age, think of how indefinite must be the impressions stored away in the memory and which are 100 or 200 years old.

According to the cycles of reincarnation, the average person today would have ended the last previous incarnation on Earth about 100 to 130 years ago. That means that one would have to reach back at least 130 years in order to have impressions of the last years of that previous existence. If 30 or 40 years will soften pictures and impressions and cover them with a mystical veil of indefiniteness, 100 years would surely make them very



vague and very faint indeed. Only the most impressive, the most psychological, and important of such ancient pictures and impressions, perhaps written and printed in blood or pain, suffering, trial, and anxiety, would be so indelibly impressed as to retain brilliancy at the present time.

Is it any wonder, then, that in our reveries and meditation, we have but faint pictures and impressions coming to us like familiar scenes, and these are never frivolous things or connected with mere transitory conditions. Impressions of a city or of a building, or of a race of people, of a park, or a bridge, or something of this kind may be the registered pictures that accumulated in the memory through years of serious contact with them and are, therefore, more indelibly impressed than the mere passing events of one day or one hour.

However, there are those people who have at times found many definite recollections in connection with certain events that were of more than ordinary

importance in their past lives. On one of my trips through Europe a companion traveler seeking for a certain castle that he had seen in pictures and which seemed familiar, suddenly came upon it when he did not expect to do so. It was late in the evening and by artificial light he saw only the remnants of an old iron gateway in a huge wall. This had been no part of the picture he had in his mind. But, as he stood before it with me, wondering where the gateway led to, he suddenly recalled or felt a degree of familiarity with that opening in the wall. Turning to me, he said: "If there is another small doorway inside of the enclosure of this wall whereby a person can walk down a few steps and pass under the wall, then I know where I am."

With our flashlights and lantern, we went inside the old and abandoned enclosure and found, fifty feet away, another opening in the wall closed with remnants of wood and much shrubbery, and which led down twelve steps to a tunnel under the wall. And this in turn



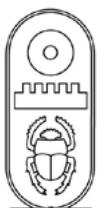
led to an underground chamber which my companion perfectly described to me before we entered it. Returning again to the highway and our hotel, we waited until daybreak and then found in the center of this walled enclosure the old building that he had described to me so often in our interviews in America, and for which he had been searching in Europe. The interior of this great building was precisely as he had described it. In fact, we had some trouble in having a doorway opened to another underground passageway and chamber, which my companion described accurately before we entered it, and which the guide and authorities of the village claimed had not been opened for one hundred years or more because of its dangerous condition and the difficulty in reaching it.

My companion claimed that he had either lived or labored in and around this place, and that his duties took him especially into these underground places, which were probably wine cellars in his time. I cite this illustration to show that one picture, one impression, one thought, may associate itself with another and serve as a key to unlock a number of related pictures and impressions. The sight of that old gate in the wall recalled to this man's mind the fact that there was another archway in the wall leading to an underground room. This he had never recalled in all of his other talks about a castle and its many rooms. Very often, the sight of one part of a building or part of a city will instantly recall from memory other related pictures and impressions which seem so familiar to us that we feel we could write about them, paint them, and reach out and touch them.

Whence come these impressions, these pictures? Not from our present lifetime experience, surely, for most of these things relate to distant and faraway places which we have not contacted in the present life.

Then, we have the cases that are quite frequent where a child or an adult suffering under some unusual mental or psychological condition is placed in a state where the storehouse of the memory suddenly unlocks itself and reveals a mass of its impressions and pictures in living brilliancy and without restraint. One case of this kind was that of a young girl in a hospital in Montreal, who could speak only French and knew nothing of any foreign languages and was not well educated. This child was in the hospital for an operation against which she protested and fought with all the strength in her little body. Finally, as the last moments approached and the doctors were ready to take her into the operating room, she made one more struggle to battle with them. In her wild fury and frenzy, she threw herself into a hysterical state in which she screamed and laughed and wept. Unable to control her, they were about to strap her to a chair, when her fury again burst forth in the wildest talk that the doctors and nurses had ever heard.

This time the girl talked perfect English and told them that she had had



this operation performed in a previous life, when she was thirty-five years of age, and had suffered so much from it that she refused to have it done again. She gave her name, her family name, the name of the town in which she had lived, and many other incidents of her life, and then suddenly relapsed again into quietness and could not remember later what she had said or that she had expressed such ideas. The use of perfect English and the strangeness of the facts she related induced the authorities to make an investigation and this was continued by several organizations and newspaper men. It was found in the town where she claimed to have lived and passed away that a woman of her age and name had lived there some eighty years previously and had passed away, and even the grave and tombstone were located, verifying the name and the date.

In India, a young girl through illness entered into a peculiar psychic state in which she claimed that she recalled her previous life and knew where her previous

relatives could be located. Eminent investigators accompanied the young child to the city she mentioned and which she had never seen in her present life. She led the investigators along a certain road previously described, to a certain building which she had also previously described, and there, beneath the flooring of one of the rooms, in a condition and position as she had predicted, they found an old box containing records which were identical with those that she had mentioned to them. These records proved the identity of the girl and verified her story.

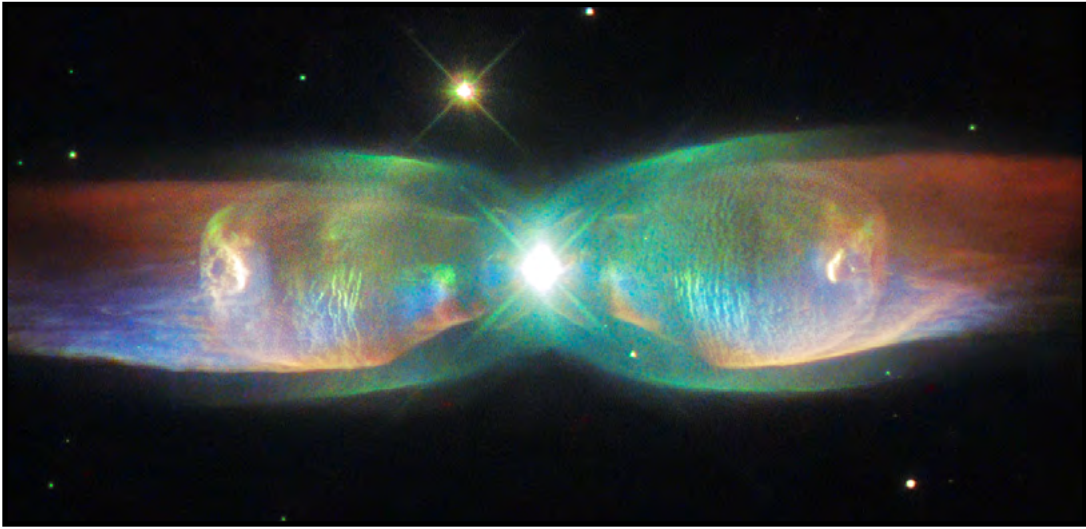
Hundreds of such incidents as these have been recorded in the past and verified by every investigator who has looked into the matter. A complete list of these cases would make interesting reading, but would make a book of this kind too cumbersome. A denial of these facts is merely a denial of published knowledge beyond dispute.

Each one of us has in her memory, in the closed and sealed books of the past, a complete record of her previous experiences, impressions, and activities. These serve us at times as lessons learned and experiences to be used as standards to guide us in our present living. But because we cannot easily recall them, and cannot drag them out into the open as we would bring forth the things of yesterday, is no proof that they are not there, for when occasion requires, or when they will serve some purpose, they are available; and every person who has had considerable experience in the practice of certain psychological, metaphysical, and mystical laws has brought forth sufficient impressions from the past to prove at least one or two of her many past incarnations.



IS THE DIVINE AN ENERGY?

*Ralph M. Lewis, FRC
Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1939 - 1987*



If we think about it for a moment, free from any emotional allegiance, we must conclude that it is extremely presumptuous for a person to think that her finite intelligence is capable of embracing the absolute nature of the infinite. Whatever the qualities of such a cause, paramount would be the fact that such would exceed the border of any sense qualities from which a person derives her ideas. Simply, if anything can be defined as unknowable in its absolute state, it would most certainly be the nature of such a thing as a First Cause, regardless of whatever other term someone might assign to it.

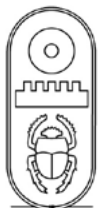
Yet the mystic speaks of apprehending, that is, contacting and of experiencing the Divine, or the Cosmic, by any of various delineations. Are we then denying that the mystic has had such an experience? The mystic has transcended in his mystical experience the limitations of his peripheral or receptor sense qualities. He has become aware of the extent of a state or condition that transcends any objective experience. It causes him to enter into an ecstasy, an exalted feeling of pleasure.

However, following the mystic's subjectivity, there is then her endeavor to

convert the elements of her experience into objective terms. She transforms the experience into words, forms, and qualities which she can understand. More succinctly, she creates a mental word image of her experience which is related to his particular intellect, education, and general association.

For example, the Buddhist having such an experience may call it "Nirvana"; the Muslim might say that "Allah" was revealed to him; the Jew, "Jehovah"; the Hindu, perhaps "Brahma"; the Parsi, "Zoroaster." Unfortunately, the religious zealot will generally insist that the particular experience which he has had is the absolute nature of the First Cause, and furthermore – exactly as he objectively interprets it. He will be apt to be prejudiced against any divergent notion.

We can therefore say that a person creates her own image of the omnipotent and omniscient cause. A person creates the Divine not in essence, but in the qualities which her mind attributes to It, the image by which she conceives this essence. As for the First or Initial Cause, which is thought to be ubiquitous, considering it an energy is just as plausible as any other concept.



Thought is energy. Therefore, those who believe in a cause – that is, a mind cause – would certainly likewise be admitting that thought is an energy.

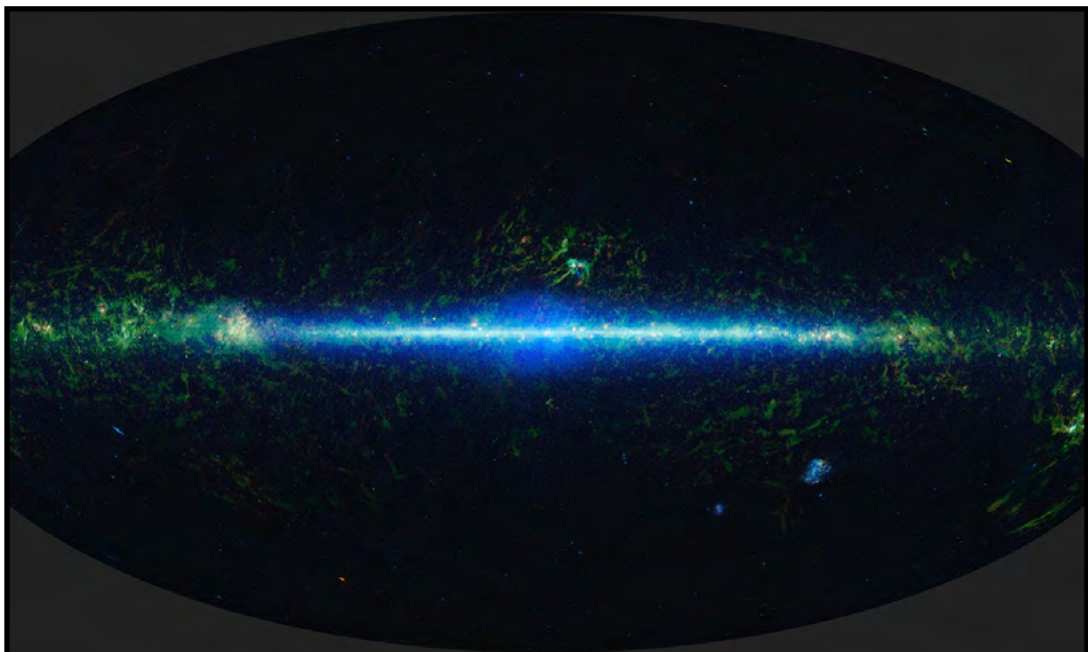
Even the orthodox religious student will recall the doctrine of the “Logos” in John 1:1 of the New Testament which states, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God [the Divine], and God [the divine] was the word.” This definitely implies thought being formed into the energy of the spoken word. Centuries before the compiling of the New Testament, the Egyptian priests said the divinity Ptah, who was a patron deity of the artisans and who likewise symbolized cosmic thought, created the universe by the spoken word. We are told that Ptah “pronounced the name of all things.”

There are those who conceive the primary cause as being a universal consciousness, but then again in our human experience we accept consciousness as an attribute of life, and life in its vital force and function is likewise an energy. Furthermore, whatever someone conceives this cosmic essence or substance to be, it is by the very fact of being – so far as human experience can conceive it – a parallel to energy.

A disembodied mind energy, as a creative force in the universe, is not generally accepted by the majority of the world populace. It is principally because of the human tendency of attributing to a supreme Initial Cause qualities similar to those of a person’s own being. For example, a person is causative; that is, he is conscious of introducing changes or innovations in his own surroundings and his own actions. He equates this volitional causation with personal freedom and creativity. He is aware that such gives him a superiority over most all other life forms. Consequently, he is thus inclined not to attribute any lesser power or quality to what he considers a transcendent superior being.

To say that the Cosmic – a universal cause – is an energy would only be offensive to those people who prefer an anthropomorphic Divinity; that is, one having humanlike form. However, these persons are then denying their deity as being determinative or having will and purpose, for certainly will and purpose are related to mind, and mind in its manifestation is energy.

Modern science has given an equivalent to matter and energy, at least



to the extent that there is an interchange between them. Simply, behind all reality is a kind of electromagnetic spectrum; its range or limitations being unknown. Generally, scientists do not concede that such a phenomenon is the Divine. But if that phenomenon is the basic cause of all that exists, then whatever people choose to call it, it is the Creator. To state that such an idea is a sacrilege is actually to assume that humans do know the exact nature of the Divine.

This then brings up the question of the authoritative nature of the sacred religious works which are all quite specific in their definition of a divinity. The first outstanding fact to be observed from the reading of such literature is that the works are not in agreement on their concept of a primary or divine cause. Therefore, another point of view, such as that of a cosmic energy whose order or manifestation appears to be related to the energy which we know, has as much right as an abstract speculation as any of the other so-called sacred expositions.

Let us realize that the sacred works derive their authority principally from the declaration that they are the result of divine revelations. Nevertheless, the word descriptions of these revelations are the construct of the human mind that objectified them. We may then ask which was right or wrong: Ptah, Akhnaton, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jehovah, Mohammed, and numerous other personages or concepts which were held to be equally sacrosanct to millions of people.

Nevertheless, it is to humanity's credit that people do recognize a supreme something which lies beyond themselves and which engenders within them awe, humility, and a love for as well as a desire to understand it.

Do people in any way take part in shaping the universe? We arrive at our ideas, the knowledge we have, from the sensations we perceive from our receptor senses. The impulses registered on our eyes and our organs of touch, for example, provide those primary qualities by which we form an image of our experience. Sight conveys

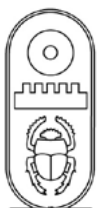
to us the notion of space, colors, and dimensions. Touch likewise gives us the notion of space and dimensions, or size and weight, and so on.

However, these images, the mental forms which we have of our perceptions, do not actually correspond with whatever is the source of our impressions. In other words, the vibrations which register in the brain create ideas which are translations of what is actually there. For analogy, one may see something which to him

has the color of red, yet to another who is colorblind it may appear to be green. What then is its true nature? Of course, the spectroscope would show that the vibrations are within a certain band of the spectrum of light; yet the color is a mental image.

If we did not have the receptor senses and the qualities associated with them, we would not attribute to reality the particular forms which we do. In this regard, we are reminded of the old tale of the blind

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A pair of quasars appear together at the core of two merging galaxies. (NASA)

men and the elephant. Each man based his description of the animal according to which part of its anatomy he touched. The one who felt its trunk thought it to be similar to a tree; the one who felt its great ear believed it to be either a fan or a leaf. In actuality, however, it was quite different from either of the conceptions.

Supposing people were deprived of sight, their consciousness of the phenomena of the cosmos would obviously be quite altered. Or suppose people possessed another sense faculty for perceiving reality. Human consciousness might then establish quite a different series of images of the cosmic phenomena that now exists. We say, then, that “being” exists; in other words, there is reality which is quite independent of the human consciousness. Succinctly, if a person did not exist, being would continue to be what it is. However, form is attributed to this being, that is, reality, by the human consciousness; it is a product of a person’s receptor senses, reason, and imagination.

Even our modern instrumentation is altering the impressions which our unaided vision has had of the heavens. Radio telescopes and space travel have disproved some of the ideas, the mental images we have had of remote celestial objects. The

cosmos is not three-dimensional; nor is it limited to the colors of the spectrum as we perceive them.

We should not forget that it was not long ago that our mental image of the Earth was that it was flat and not round. Further, it was not long ago in the period of recorded history that people believed Earth to be the center of the universe. People have reshaped the cosmos in their minds by later observations and impressions.

The absolute, true nature of the cosmos may never be known by the finite mind of a person. We are learning more of the phenomena of the cosmos and its myriad changes, but we cannot be certain that our experience of what we perceive is reliable. People, by means of such sciences as astronomy, cosmology, and astrophysics, are trying to discover, that is, to arrive at, a rational theory as to the origin of our immediate universe and the greater universe which we say consists of galaxies, solar systems, planets, and so on. Whatever phenomena may exist which advanced technology will reveal may once again in the future alter our image as to just what the cosmos is; in other words, it may cause us to reshape it in our minds.

CAN WE KNOW THE ABSOLUTE?

Cecil A. Poole. FRC

The concept of the absolute means completeness or perfection. This meaning is the very opposite of relative. Something that is relative is objective and changeable, while that which is absolute is complete in itself and represents a perfect state. Absolute is sometimes used as synonymous with the Divine, or Divine Mind. In the definition of metaphysics, there is always the conclusion that metaphysics tends toward the understanding of the ultimate reality, or ultimate being. In this sense, metaphysics is directly concerned with the absolute.

To refer to the idealism of Plato, we remember his concept that ideas are more real than any part of the material universe. He believed that the ideas in the mind were reflections of the physical world and that the ultimate idea or absolute form existed above and superseded all individual ideas. On the basis of these conclusions, Plato eventually postulated that form is more real than any material thing can be. Form is the essence of reality and not matter, which is the basis by which different things in the physical universe are distinguished one from the other.

As an example, in order to understand further this Platonic point of view, we might use as an illustration the fact that the same matter exists in animals and in human beings. That is, there is no difference in matter between, let us say, an elephant and a person. Both of these living entities are

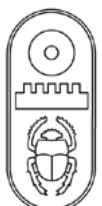
made of the same material. To be more technical, they are of the same chemical composition. Both are made so that they even function in a similar way. At the same time, there is considerable difference in the organization of the matter of which an elephant and a human being is constituted. They are different in their appearance. They are different in their function. They are different in their habits. There are a few similarities. They both breathe. Blood circulates, and they possess what we know as life.

It is therefore the form that anything takes rather than the matter of which it

is composed that makes the difference between material objects. For this reason, the idealist claims that reality can only be understood when it is considered in terms of form and ideas, not because it is different as a result of our physical perception. The idealist clings to the concept that ideas are the ultimate reality, that we cannot go beyond the ideas that develop in our own mind and consciousness. This is

not to say that everything else is an illusion but rather that ideas are fundamental or basic.

It might be well to point out here that in the metaphysical concept of idealism there are subdivisions, in other words, different schools of thought. There is no one metaphysics. There are many metaphysics, so to speak.



Subjective idealism believes that only ideas exist and nothing else. The English philosopher George Berkeley advanced this theory to its ultimate form. He upheld the theory that there was no external world which a person perceived. A person had only ideas which she projected into her environment and which caused her to believe that the physical world existed. Berkeley's concepts were much more profound than this short reference to them, but nevertheless convey the general idea that subjective idealism deals only with ideas and nothing else.

Other thinkers support the metaphysical concept known as objective idealism; that is, there is a physical world that is made up of objects. The universe is composed of physical things. We perceive them, and as a result of our perception, form ideas concerning them, their nature, their appearance, and their function. For objective idealists, the material world in a sense acts as a trigger to set off the ideas that are within the mind of the perceiver. These ideas, in the final analysis, are real.

I look at a book. It seems to consist of paper bound in a certain form. As I look at it, unless I am already familiar with the book, its purpose, its contents, and the reason for its existence are not apparent, but if I study it, the idea is created within my consciousness of what it really is. As I gain the impression of its contents, I formulate my own conclusions and mentally become familiar with this idea of a book, which, according to Plato, would represent a more perfect idea than has ever been achieved in the physical world.

Objective idealism seems to be a logical process, one to which many who have

studied metaphysics subscribe because it acknowledges what a person finds to be the obvious. Since we can know only what we perceive, since we can actually experience and realize only the ideas that are in our minds, we cannot deny the logic that has come from the fact that every human being, and apparently every animal, from observations of its behavior, acknowledges the existence of an actual, external, material world. We cannot walk through a door. We know that it is a solid material. Therefore, it is hard for us to accept the extreme idealism that it does not exist except in the mind.

According to the objective idealist, it exists in the same form that the materialist considers it to exist. But I, as an objective idealist, accept it only in terms of the interpretation and the mental judgments that result from its perception within my mind.

Regardless of the technicality of some definitions, philosophers, particularly the idealists, generally agree in distinguishing two distinctly different ways of knowing a thing. The first way infers that we are external or moving about the object concerned. The second way of knowing is to enter into the object.

The first method depends on the point of view from which we perceive the object and on the symbols by which we express ourselves in attempting to tell what our perception produces in our mind. We must always be aware that language is a symbol. The words by which we express ourselves are symbols for what we understand or perceive. The second method of perceiving a thing depends neither upon our viewpoint nor the position of the object, nor does it rely on any symbol.



We gain the first kind of knowledge by perceiving the object from the outside as a part of our immediate environment. This form of perception can be described as relative. In the second form of knowledge, we perceive an object by entering into it. In doing so, we attain the absolute.

For example, when I perceive an object in space, my perception of motion will vary with my position and with my point of view. It may move or I may move. My understanding of it will depend on my objective perception and the interpretation which I place on my perception in my mental processes. If we consider an object to have absolute movement, we would be attributing to that moving object an interior, or a state of mind.

We would imply that we are in sympathy or in harmony with those states. We might say that we would be inserting ourselves within the object as a result of our sympathetic understanding or projection of or to the object. By this second method of

obtaining knowledge, I am within the object. My experience will depend neither upon my position nor upon the symbols with which I interpret its motion, since I have rejected all translations in order to comprehend its being. I have entered into it, and I shall have obtained an absolute.

As another example, we might consider an actor taking part in a play, motion picture film, or television series. The author of the play has produced the character. The actor's words and actions are dependent upon what the author has decided. I therefore cannot identify myself with the actor through objective perception. If I

identify with the character, its entire being would then be my being, and his actions would be my actions. When I am simply observing the play or motion picture, what I know about any performer would result from the viewpoint from which I observe such actions.

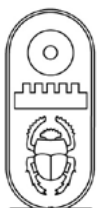
All the traits of actors performing in a play are therefore known to me only with comparison with other people or things I already know and are signs by which the actions are expressed symbolically. Symbols and points of view place me outside any character I witness. They permit me to know only what the character has in common with others and not what the individual himself actually is. That which is peculiarly the self of the individual is the sum total of his essence.



That essence cannot be perceived from without or expressed by words or other symbols. What I witness has left me with a relative concept of the individual. To be in a state of oneness or coincidence with another individual

whom I witness would give me the absolute, the perfect conception of what the witnessed individual actually is. In this illustration, the absolute would be synonymous with perfection.

As another example, we might consider a group of photographs of a town or city, taken from all the points of view that were possible, including those from an airplane. We could put them together, but they could never be equivalent to the town itself, in which we could move about and observe directly what the town was. The composite photographs would be only a relative representation of the town.





Again, this idea can be found if we had all the translations of a poem in all possible languages to add together the different patterns of meaning, correcting each other to give a more and more faithful translation, yet the translated poem would be relative. It would never succeed in rendering the complete inner meaning of the original, that is, the absolute. Everyone who has attempted to make translations from one language to another is aware of how difficult it is to express the absolute meaning contained in the original. The absolute is the original poem or object and not its representation. The original and not its translation is perfect by being perfectly what it is in the first place. It is the absolute and is not the relative.

The following illustration has been frequently used to bring out a similar idea. When you raise your arm, you accomplish a movement from within. It is a very simple perception on your part, requiring no particular thought or analysis. At the same time, for me, that movement or action observed from outside of you through my own perceptive apparatus would seem to be your arm passing through one point, then through another point. Between these two points there exists the possibility of other points. If I should begin to count, the action could conceivably go on forever.

Viewed from the inside, the absolute is simple. Perceiving it from the outside in relation to the signs and symbols which express it, it becomes a complicated and never-ending process. In the final analysis, we can conclude that the absolute can be comprehended only through intuition, while everything else we perceive falls within the limits of analysis.

This concept is well described in a statement by the French philosopher Henri Bergson.

An absolute could only be given in an intuition, while everything else falls within the province of analysis. By intuition is meant the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects. To analyze, therefore, is to express a thing as a function of something other than itself.

In the end, all analysis is therefore translation. Analysis is a development into symbols. A representation is taken from various points of view from which we note a resemblance. Intuition, in contrast to physical perception, is a process that

takes place within the mind and has its roots within the soul or inner self. The Rosicrucian philosophy defines intuition as the ability to perceive through other channels than the physical senses. It is therefore an intellectual sympathy having certain emotional patterns by which one is able to attune himself with something outside himself and to coincide with what is unique in the other thing, and, as a result, gain absolute knowledge of it.

The intuitive process is more or less spontaneous. We have difficulty in attempting to analyze it objectively as it happens inside us. Thus it is difficult to put into words what has taken place in an intuitive experience. In experiencing intuition, we are approaching the absolute, which, as has been repeatedly stated, is not translatable into symbols of any kind.

The absolute, we have said, is simple, complete. Intuition, too, is a simple and complete process. That which originates through intuition is in all probability more disposed to lead us to a degree of comprehension of the absolute than is anything we perceive. Analysis, on the contrary, reduces an object to elements already known and expresses a function of something other than itself. As I have already stated, it is a translation, a development into symbols, a representation taken from successive points of view. In its desire to learn of an outside object, analysis can multiply without end the number of its points of view in order to complete its always incomplete representation.



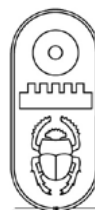
The process of analysis continues into infinity. It becomes more and more complicated, ever adding to the data collected, but the simple action of intuition is more specific. It is complete in itself, and through intuition we immediately grasp the absolute and not merely various points of analysis. The function of science is analysis. It works primarily with symbols. It seeks to

describe the objective world as a result of the perception of the observer. Those who accept a mechanistic or materialistic concept of metaphysics believe that they may be dealing with ultimate reality.

The only way in which we can possess or grasp a reality absolutely instead of knowing it only relatively, of placing causes within it instead of observing its actions from the

outside, of experiencing and conceiving the results of intuition instead of making an analysis, is, in short, by seizing it without expression, translation, or representation by symbols, which may be considered one of the ultimate purposes for metaphysics.

According to Henri Bergson, metaphysics, in the last and final analysis is “the science which claims to dispense with symbols.” To dispense with symbols is to dispense with analysis. To dispense with analysis is to go to the heart of anything, to enter into the object, to learn through intuition rather than by objective perception. This is the true path toward the comprehension of an ultimate reality, which is the meaning of metaphysics.





THE SMUGGLER

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The following story is taken from *The Sufis*, by Idries Shah.

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Nasrudin used to take his donkey across a frontier every day, with the panniers loaded with straw. Since he admitted to being a smuggler when he trudged home every night, the frontier guards searched him again and again. They searched his person, sifted the straw, steeped it in water, even burned it from time to time. Meanwhile he was becoming visibly more and more prosperous. Then he retired and went to live in another country. Here one of the customs officers met him, years later. “You can tell me now, Nasrudin,” he said. “Whatever was it that you were smuggling, when we could never catch you?”

“Donkeys,” said Nasrudin.