

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

Who are the Rosicrucians?

GA 55

*For those who seek a still stricter schooling, my books *Truth and Knowledge* and *The Philosophy of Freedom* are particularly suitable.*

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Today's subject, the Rosicrucians, is one which few people are able to connect even remotely adequate ideas. And indeed, it is not easy to arrive at anything conclusive about what the name implies. For most people it remains extremely vague. If books are consulted, one is informed that the Rosicrucians are thought to be some kind of sect that flourished in the early centuries of German culture. Some say that it is impossible to verify whether anything serious or rational ever existed behind the fraud and charlatanry associated with the name. On the other hand, some learned books do proffer a variety of information.

If what is written about Rosicrucianism is true, one could only come to the conclusion that it has consisted of nothing but idle boasting, pure fraud or worse. Even those who have attempted to justify it, do so with an air of patronage, though they may have found that Rosicrucianism is able to throw light on certain subjects. But what they have to say about it, for example, that it is involved with alchemy, with producing the philosopher's stone, the stone of the wise, and other alchemical feats, does not inspire much confidence.

However, these feats were for the genuine Rosicrucian nothing but symbols for the inner moral purification of the human soul. The transformations represented symbolically how inner human virtues should be developed. When the Rosicrucians spoke of transforming base metals into gold, they meant that it was possible to transform base vices into the gold of human virtue.

Those who uphold that the great work of the Rosicrucians is to be understood as being symbolic are met with the objection that in that case Rosicrucianism is simply trivial. It is difficult to see the need of all these alchemical inventions, such as the transformation of metals, simply to demonstrate the obvious fact that a human being should be moral and change his vices into virtues.

However, Rosicrucianism contains things of far greater import. Rather than further historical description, I shall give a factual account of Rosicrucianism. The historical aspect need concern us only insofar as we learn from it that Rosicrucianism has existed in the Occident since the fourteenth century, and that it goes back to a legendary figure, Christian Rosenkreuz, (Christian Rosenkreuz (15th century) was the founder of Rosicrucianism, a group of secret brotherhoods claiming esoteric wisdom in the late Middle Ages.) about whom much is rumored, but history has little to say.

One incident that appears as a basic feature of various accounts can be summed up by saying that Christian Rosenkreuz — that is not his real name, but the one by which he is known — made journeys at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. On journeys through the East he became acquainted with the book M — — — — , a book from which, so we are mysteriously told, Paracelsus, the great medieval physician and mystic, gained his knowledge. This account is true, but what the book M — — — — actually is, and what study of it signifies, is known only to initiates.

External information about Rosicrucianism stems from two writings that appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the so-called *Fama Fraternitatis* in 1614, and a year later the *Confessio*, two books much disputed among scholars. The disputes were by no means confined to the usual controversy about books, that is, whether Valentin Andreae, (Valentin Andreae (1586–1654) theologian, wrote about Rosicrucianism) who in his later years was an ordinary normal clergyman, was really the author. In this case it was also disputed whether the author meant the books to be taken seriously or whether they were meant as satire, mocking a certain secret brotherhood known as the Rosicrucians. These two publications were followed by many others proffering all kinds of information about Rosicrucianism.

Someone without knowledge of the true background of Rosicrucianism, who picks up the writings of Valentin Andreae, or indeed any other Rosicrucian document, will find nothing exceptional in them. In fact, right up to our own time, it has been impossible to gain even elementary knowledge of this spiritual stream that still exists, and has done so since the fourteenth century. Everything published, written or printed is nothing but fragments, lost through betrayal into public hands. Not only are these fragments inaccurate; they have undergone all kinds of distortions through charlatantry, fraud, incomprehension and sheer stupidity. As long as it has existed, genuine Rosicrucianism has been passed on by word of mouth to members sworn to secrecy. That is also why nothing of great importance has found its way into public literature.

We shall speak today about certain elementary aspects of Rosicrucianism that can now be spoken of in public, for reasons which at the moment would take us too far to explain. Only when they are known can one make any sense of what is found in the often grotesque, often merely comic, but also often fraudulent, and seldom accurate information.

Rosicrucianism is one of the methods whereby what is called "initiation" can be attained. What initiation is has often been a subject of discussion in our circles. **To be initiated means that faculties slumbering in every human soul are awakened.** These faculties enable a person to look into the spiritual world that exists behind our physical world. **The physical world is an expression of the spiritual world of which it is a product.** An initiate is someone who has applied the method of initiation, a method as exact and as scientifically worked out as those applied in chemistry, physics or any other science. The difference is that the method of initiation is not applied to begin with to anything external, but only to the human being; he is the instrument, the tool through which knowledge of the spiritual world is attained. An individual who genuinely strives to attain knowledge of the spirit recognizes the deep truth contained in Goethe's words:

*Mysterious by Day's broad light,
Nature retains her veil, despite our clamors,
and what she won't reveal to human mind or sight
Cannot be wrenched from her with levers, screws or hammers.*

(Faust, Part I, Night. trans. Bayard Taylor.)

Deep indeed are the secrets nature holds, but not as impenetrably deep as those maintain who are too comfortable to make the effort. The human spirit is certainly capable of penetrating nature's secrets: not, however, through the soul's ordinary faculties, but through higher ones, attained when its hidden forces have been developed through certain strictly circumscribed methods. A person who gradually prepares will eventually reach a point where knowledge attainable only through initiation is revealed to him; to speak in Goethe's sense: The great secret is revealed of what "ultimately holds the world together" — a revelation that is truly a fruit of initiation.

It has often been explained that the early stages of initiation can be embarked upon by anyone without any danger whatever. A prerequisite for the higher stages is the very highest conscientiousness and devotion to Truth in spiritual research. When an individual approaches the portals through which he looks into quite different worlds, he realizes the truth of what is often emphasized: that it is dangerous to impart the holy secrets of existence to great masses of people. However, to the extent that modern humanity is able, through inner preparation, gradually to find their way to the highest secrets of nature and the spiritual world, to that extent can they also be revealed.

The spiritual scientific movement is a path that guides human beings to the higher secrets. A number of such paths exist. That is not to say that the ultimate truth attainable takes different forms. The highest truth is *one*. **No matter where or when human beings ever lived or live, once they reach the highest Truth, it is the same for all. It is comparable to the view from the mountaintop, which is the same for all who reach it, no matter what different paths they choose to get there.** When one stands at a certain spot on the mountainside, when a path is available, one does not walk round the mountain for another path. The same applies to the path of higher knowledge, which must be in accordance with a person's nature. What comes into consideration here is too often overlooked, that is, the immense differences in human nature. The people of ancient India were inwardly organized differently from modern people. This difference in the higher members is apparent to spiritual research, though not to the external science of physiology or anatomy. It is thanks to this fact that we have preserved up to our own time a wonderful spiritual knowledge, and also the method whereby initiation was achieved — the path of yoga. This path leads those who are constituted like the people of ancient India to the summit of knowledge. For today's European it is as senseless to seek that path as it would be to first walk to the opposite side of the mountain and use the path there rather than the path available where one stands. The nature of today's European is completely different from that of the Oriental. A few centuries before the Christian era began, human nature was different from what it was to become a few centuries later. And today it is different again.

As we have seen, initiation is based upon awakening in human beings certain forces. Bearing this in mind, we must acknowledge that a person's nature must be taken into account when methods are developed whereby he becomes the instrument able to perceive and to investigate the spiritual world.

The wonderful method developed by the Rishis, the great spiritual teachers in ancient India, is still valid for those belonging to the Indian race. At the beginning of the Christian era the right method was the so-called Christian-Gnostic path. The human being who stands fully within today's civilization needs a different method. That is why in the course of centuries and millennia the great masters of wisdom who guide mankind's evolution change the methods that lead to the summit of wisdom.

The Rosicrucian method of initiation is especially for modern people; it meets the needs of modern conditions. Not only is it a Christian path, but it enables the striving human being to recognize that spiritual research and its achievements are in complete harmony with modern culture, and with

modern humanity's whole outlook. It will for long centuries to come be the right method of initiation into spiritual life. When it was first inaugurated, certain rules were laid down for its adherents — rules that are basically still valid, and because they are strictly observed, Rosicrucians are not recognized by outsiders. Never to let it be known that one is a Rosicrucian is the first rule that only recently has been slightly modified. While the wisdom is fostered in narrow circles, its fruits should be available to all humanity. That is why until recently **no Rosicrucian divulged what enabled him to investigate nature's secrets. Nothing of the knowledge was revealed; no hint was given theoretically or otherwise, but work was done that furthered civilization and implanted wisdom in ways hardly noticeable to others.**

That is the first basic rule; to elaborate it further would lead too far. Suffice it to say that today this rule has been partly relaxed, but the higher Rosicrucian knowledge is not revealed. **The second rule concerns conduct, and may be expressed as follows: Be truly part of the civilization and people to which you belong; be a member of the class in which you find yourself. Wear the clothes that are worn generally, nothing different or conspicuous.** Thus, you will find that neither ambition nor selfishness motivates the Rosicrucian; he rather strives wherever possible to improve aspects of the prevailing culture, while never losing sight of the much loftier aims that link him with the central Rosicrucian wisdom.

The other basic rules need not concern us at the moment. We want to look at the actual Rosicrucian training as it still exists and has existed for centuries. What it is possible to say about it deals only with the elementary stages of the whole system of Rosicrucian schooling. Something ought to be said about this training that applies to spiritual scientific training, namely, that it should not be embarked upon without knowledgeable guidance. What is to be said about this subject you will find in my book *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment*.

The preliminary Rosicrucian training consists of seven stages that need not be absolved in the sequence here enumerated. The teacher will lay more emphasis on one point or another, according to the pupil's individuality and special needs. Thus, it is a path of learning and inner development, adapted to the particular pupil. These are the seven steps:

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1. Study, in the Rosicrucian sense of the word
 2. Acquisition of imaginative knowledge
 3. Acquisition of the occult script
 4. Bringing rhythm into life, this is also described as preparing the philosopher's stone. This has nothing in common with the nonsense written about it.
 5. Knowledge of the microcosm, that is, of man's essential nature
 6. Becoming one with the macrocosm or great world
 7. Attaining godliness (*Gottseligkeit*).
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The sequence in which the student passes through these preliminary stages of Rosicrucian training depends on the student's personality, but they must be absorbed. What I have said about it so far, and also what I am going to say, must be looked upon as describing the ideal. Do not think that these things can be attained from one day to the next. However, one can at least learn the description of what today may seem a far distant goal. A start can always be made provided it is realized that patience, energy and perseverance are required.

The first stage or study, suggests to many something dry and pedantic. But in this case what is meant has nothing to do with erudition in the usual sense. One need not be a scholar to be an initiate. Spiritual knowledge and scholarship have no close connection. What is here meant by study is something rather different, but absolutely essential; and no genuine teacher of Rosicrucianism will guide the pupil to the higher stages if the student has no aptitude for what this first stage demands. It **requires the student to develop a thinking that is thoroughly sensible and logical**. This is necessary if the pupil is not to lose the ground under his feet at the higher stages. From the start it must be made clear that, unless all inclination towards fantasy and illusion is overcome, it is all too easy to fall into error when striving to enter spiritual realms. A person who is inclined to see things in a fanciful or unreal light is of no use to the spiritual world.

That is one reason; another is that though a person is born from the astral world, that is from the spiritual world next to the physical, as much as he is born from the physical world, what he experiences there is completely different from anything seen with physical sight or heard with physical ears. One thing, however, is the same in all three worlds — in the physical, the astral or spiritual, and the devachanic world — and that is logical thinking. It is precisely because it is the same in all three worlds that it can be learned already in the physical world, and thus provide a firm support when we enter the other worlds. If one's thoughts are like will-o-the-wisps so that no distinction is made between what is merely depicted and reality, then one is not qualified to rise into higher worlds. This happens for example in modern physics when the atom, which no one has even seen, is spoken of as if it were a material reality.

However, what we are discussing now is not what is generally meant by thinking. Ordinary thinking consists of combining physical facts. Here we are concerned with thinking that has become sense-free. Today there are learned people, including philosophers, who deny the existence of such thinking. Modern philosophers of great renown tell us that human beings cannot think in pure thoughts, only in thoughts that reflect something physical. Such a statement simply shows that the person concerned is not capable of thinking in pure thoughts. However, it is the height of arrogance to maintain that something is impossible just because one cannot accomplish it oneself. **Human beings must be able to formulate thoughts that are not dependent on what is seen or heard physically ["Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29 ~Anthony]. A person must be able to find himself in a world of pure thought when his attention is completely withdrawn from external reality. In spiritual science, and also in Rosicrucianism, this is known as self-created thinking.** Someone who resolves to train his thinking in this direction may turn to books on spiritual science. There he will not find a thinking that combines physical facts, but thoughts derived from higher worlds, which present a self-sustaining continuous thinking. And as anyone can follow it, the reader is able to rise above the ordinary trivial way of thinking.

In order to make accessible the elementary stages of Rosicrucianism, it was necessary to make available in print and through lectures, material that had for centuries been guarded in closed circles. However, what has been released in recent decades is only the rudiments of an immeasurable, far-reaching world knowledge. In the course of time more and more will flow into mankind. Study of this material schools the pupil's thinking. For those who seek a still stricter schooling, my books *Truth and*

Knowledge and *The Philosophy of Freedom* are particularly suitable. Those two books are not written like other books; no sentence can be placed anywhere but where it stands. Each of the books represents, not a collection of thoughts, but a thought-organism. Thought is not added to thought, each grows organically from the preceding one, like growth occurs in an organism. The thoughts must necessarily develop in like manner in the reader. In this way a person makes his own thinking with the characteristic that is self-generating. Without this kind of thinking the higher stages of Rosicrucianism cannot be attained. However, a study of the basic spiritual scientific literature will also school thinking; the more thorough schooling is not absolutely necessary in order to absolve the first stage of Rosicrucian training.

The second stage is the acquisition of imaginative thinking. This should only be attempted when the stage of study has been absolved, so that one possesses an inner foundation of knowledge and has made one's own thoughts that follow one another out of inner necessity. Without such a foundation it is all too easy to lose the ground under one's feet. But what is meant by imaginative thinking?

Goethe, who in his poem, *The Mysteries*, showed his profound knowledge of Rosicrucianism, gave a hint at what imaginative thinking was, in the words uttered by the Chorus Mysticus, in the second part of *Faust*: **"All things transitory but as symbols are sent." The knowledge that everything transitory was mere symbol was systematically cultivated wherever a Rosicrucian training was pursued. A Rosicrucian had to acquire an insight that recognizes in everything, something spiritual and eternal. In addition to ordinary knowledge of what he encountered on his journeys through life, a Rosicrucian had to acquire imaginative knowledge as well.**

When someone meets you with a smiling face, you do not stop short at the characteristic contortion of his features, you see beyond the physiognomic expression and recognize that the smile reveals the person's inner life. Likewise you recognize tears to be an expression of inner pain and sorrow. In other words, the outer expresses the inner; through the physiognomy you perceive the depths of soul. A Rosicrucian has to learn this in regard to the whole of nature. As the human face, or the gesture of a hand, is the expression of a person's soul life, so, for the Rosicrucian, everything that takes place in nature is an expression of soul and spirit. Every stone, plant and animal, every current of air, the stars, all express soul and spirit just as do shining eyes, a wrinkled brow or tears. **If you do not stop short at today's materialistic interpretation that regards what the Earth-Spirit says in Goethe's Faust as poetic fantasy, but recognize that it depicts reality, then you know what is meant by imaginative knowledge.**

*In the tides of life, in action's storm,
A fluctuant wave,
A shuttle free,
Birth and the Grave,
An eternal sea.
A weaving, flowing
Life, all-glowing,
Thus at time's humming loom 'tis my hand prepares
The garment of Life which the Deity wears!*

If for you these words of the Earth-Spirit depict spiritual reality, then you will know that you possess a deeper logic, and can calmly accept being called a fool by materialists who only think they understand. As the human physiognomy expresses the life of the human soul, so does the physiognomy of the earth express the life of the Earth-Spirit. When you begin to read in nature, when nature reveals its mysteries, and different plants convey to you the Earth-Spirit's cheerfulness or sorrow, then you begin to understand imaginative knowledge. Then you will also recognize that it is this that is presented as the purest and most beautiful expression of the striving for imaginative knowledge in Rosicrucianism, and also in what preceded Rosicrucianism, the ideal of the Holy Grail.

Let us look for a moment at the true nature of the Holy Grail. This ideal is always found in every Rosicrucian school. The form it takes I shall describe as a conversation which, however, never took place in reality because what I shall summarize could only be attained in the course of long training and development. However, what I shall say does convey what is looked up to as the Quest of the Holy Grail:

Look how the plant grows out of the earth. Its stem strives upward; its roots are sunk into the ground, pointing towards the centre of the earth. The opening blossom contains its reproductive organs, which bear the seeds through which the plant continues beyond itself. Charles Robert Darwin, (Charles Robert Darwin (1809–1882) the English naturalist who first formulated the theory of evolution.) the famous natural scientist, is not the first to point out that, if a person is compared to the plant, it is the root, not the blossom, that corresponds to his head. This was said already by esoteric Rosicrucianism. The calyx, which chastely strives towards the sun, corresponds to the reproductive organs that in human beings are situated downwards. **Human beings are inverted plants. A person turns downwards and covers up in shame the organs that the plant chastely turns upward to the light.**

To recognize that the human being is the plant inverted is basic to Rosicrucianism, as indeed to all esoteric knowledge. Human beings turn their reproductive organs towards the centre of the earth; in the plant they turn towards the sun. The plant root points towards the centre of the earth; human beings lift their heads unfettered towards sunlit spaces. The animal occupies a position between the two. The three directions indicated by plant, animal and human are known as the cross. The animal represents the beam across, the plant the downward, the human being the upward pointing section of the vertical beam. Plato, the great philosopher of antiquity, stated that the World-Soul is crucified on the World-Body. He meant that human beings represent the highest development of the World-Soul, which passes through the three kingdoms of plant, animal and human. The World-Soul is crucified on the cross of plants, animal and human kingdoms. These words of Plato are spoken completely in the sense of spiritual science and present a wonderful and deeply significant picture.

The pupil in the Rosicrucian school had repeatedly to bring the picture before his mind of the plant with its head downward and the reproductive organs stretching towards the beam of the sun. The sunbeam was called the "holy lance of love" that must penetrate the plant to enable the seeds to mature and grow. The pupil was told: Contemplate man in relation to the plant; compare the substance of which man is composed with that of the plant. Man, the plant turned upside down, has permeated his substance, his flesh, with physical cravings, passion and sensuality. The plant stretches in purity and chastity the reproductive organs towards the fertilizing sacred lance of love. This stage will be reached by an individual when he has completely purified all cravings. In the future, when earth evolution has reached its height, a person will attain this ideal. When no impure desires permeate the lower organs, a person will become as chaste and pure as the plant is now. That individual will stretch a lance of spiritual love, the completely spiritualized productive force, towards a calyx that opens as does that of the plant to the holy lance of love of the sunbeam.

Thus, the human being's development takes him through the kingdoms of nature. He purifies his being until he develops organs of which there are as yet only indications. The beginning of a future productive power can be seen when human beings create something that is sacred and noble — a force they will fully possess once their lower nature is purified. A new organ will then have developed; the calyx will arise on a higher level and open to the lance of Amfortas, as the plant calyx opens to the sun's spiritual lance of love.

Thus, what the Rosicrucian pupil depicted to himself represents on a lower level the great future ideal of mankind, attainable when the lower nature has been purified and chastely offers itself to the spiritualized sun of the future. Then human nature, which in one sense is higher, in another lower than that of the plant, will have developed within itself the innocence and purity of the plant calyx.

The Rosicrucian pupil grasped all of this in its spiritual meaning. He understood it as the mystery of the Holy Grail (a cup or chalice, associated in medieval legend with unusual powers, especially the regeneration of life and water, and later with Christian purity. Became identified with the cup used at the Last Supper and given to Joseph of Arimathea.) — mankind's highest ideal. He saw the whole of nature permeating and glowing with spiritual meaning. **When everything is thus seen as symbol of the spirit, one is on the way to attain imaginative knowledge; color and sound separate from objects and become independent. Space becomes a world of color and sound in which spiritual beings announce their presence. The pupil rises from imaginative knowledge to direct knowledge of the spiritual realm. That is the path of the Rosicrucian pupil at the second stage of training.**

The third stage is knowledge of the occult script. This is no ordinary writing, but one that is connected with nature's secrets. Let me at once make clear how to depict it. A widely used sign is the so-called vortex, which can be thought of as two intertwined figure 6's. This sign is used for indicating and also characterizing a certain type of event that can occur both physically and spiritually. For example, a developing plant will finally produce seeds from which new plants similar to the old one can develop. To think that anything material passes from the old plant to the new is materialistic prejudice without foundation and will eventually be refuted. What passes over to the new plant is formative forces. As far as matter is concerned, the old plant dies completely; materially its offspring is a completely new creation. This dying and new coming-into-being of the plant is indicated by drawing two intertwining spirals, that is, a vortex, but drawing it so that the two spirals do not touch.



Figure 1

Many events take place, both physical and spiritual, that correspond to such a vortex. For example, we know from spiritual research that the transition from the ancient Atlantean culture to the first post-Atlantean culture was such a vortex. Natural science only knows the most elementary aspects of this event. Spiritual science tells us that the space between Europe and America, which is now the Atlantic Ocean, was filled with a continent on which an ancient civilization developed, a continent that was submerged by the Flood. This proves that what Plato referred to as the disappearance of the Island of Poseidon is based on facts; the island was part of the ancient Atlantean continent. The spiritual aspect of that ancient culture vanished, and a new culture arose. The vortex is a sign for this event; the inward-turning spiral signifies the old civilization and the outward-turning the new.

As the transition took place from the old culture to the new, the sun rose in spring in the constellation of Cancer — as you know the sun moves forward in the course of the year. Later it rose in early spring in the constellation of Gemini, then in that of Taurus and later still in that of Aries. People have always felt that what reached them from the vault of heaven in the beams of the early spring sun was especially beneficial. This is why people venerated the ram when the spring sun rose in the constellation of Aries; it is also the reason for legends such as "The Golden Fleece" and others. Earlier than that the sun rose in spring in the constellation of Taurus, and we find in ancient Egypt the cult of the bull Apis. But the transition from Atlantis to post-Atlantis took place under the constellation of Cancer, whose sign is the intertwining spirals — a sign you find depicted in calendars.

There exist hundreds and thousands of such signs that the pupil gradually learns. The signs are not arbitrary; they enable those who understand them to immerse themselves in things and directly experience their essence. While study schools the faculty of reason, and imaginative knowledge the life of feelings, knowledge of the occult script takes hold of the will. It is the path into the realm of creativity. If study brings knowledge, and imagination spiritual vision, knowledge of the occult script brings magic. It brings direct insight into the laws of nature that slumber in things, direct knowledge of their very essence.

You can find many who make use of occult signs, even people like Eliphas Levi. This can provide an idea of what the signs look like, but not much can be learned, unless one is knowledgeable about them already. What is found in books on the subject is usually erroneous. The signs used to be regarded as sacred, at least by the initiates. If we go back far enough, we find that strict rules concerning their secrecy were imposed, incurring severe punishment if broken, to ensure they were not used for unworthy purposes.

The fourth stage is known as the *preparation of the philosopher's stone* (the stone of the wise). What is written about it is completely misleading; often it is such grotesque nonsense that if true anyone would be entitled to be scornful. What I am going to say will give you a great deal of insight into the truth of the matter.

At the end of the eighteenth century there appeared in an earnest periodical a notice concerning the philosopher's stone. It was clear from the wording of the notice that its author had some knowledge of the matter, yet gave the impression that he did not fully understand. The notice read: The philosopher's stone is something that all are acquainted with, something they often handle, and is found all over the world. It is just that people do not know that it is the philosopher's stone. A peculiar description of what the philosopher's stone was supposed to be, yet word for word quite correct.

Consider for a moment the process of human breathing. The regulation of the breath is connected with the discovery, or preparation of, the philosopher's stone. At present human beings inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide, that is, what is exhaled is a compound of oxygen and carbon. A person

inhales oxygen, life-giving air, and exhales carbon dioxide, which is poisonous to both human and animal. If animals, who breathe like human beings, had alone populated the earth, they would have poisoned the air, and neither they nor humans would be able to breathe today. So how does it come about that they are still able to breathe? It is because plants absorb the carbon dioxide, retain the carbon and give back the oxygen for human and animal to use again.

Thus, a beautiful reciprocal process takes place between the breath of humans and animal, and the breath, or rather assimilation, of the plant world. Think of someone who every day earns five shillings and spends two. He creates a surplus, and is in a different position than someone who earns two shillings but spends five. Something similar applies to breathing. However, the significant point is that this exchange takes place between human beings and the vegetable kingdom.

The process of breathing is indeed quite amazing, and we must look at it in a little more detail. Oxygen enters the human body; carbon dioxide is expelled from it. Carbon dioxide consists of oxygen and carbon; the plant retains the carbon and gives a person back the oxygen. Plants that grew millions of years ago are today dug out of the earth as coal. Looking at this coal we see carbon that was once inhaled by the plants. Thus, the ordinary breath, just described, shows how necessary the plant is to a person's life. It also shows that when humans breathe they accomplish only half the process; to complete it they need the plant that possesses something they lack to transform carbon into oxygen.

The Rosicrucians introduce a certain rhythm into the breath, detail of which can only be imparted directly by word of mouth. However, certain aspects can be mentioned without going into details. The pupil receives definite instruction concerning rhythmic breathing accompanied by thoughts of a special nature. The effect must be thought of as comparable to the persistent drip of water that wears away the stone. Certainly even the most highly developed person will not attain, by breathing in the Rosicrucian manner, a complete transformation of the inner life processes from one day to the next. However, the gradual change wrought in the human body leads eventually to a specific goal. At some time in the future a person will be able to transform within his own being carbonic acid into oxygen. Thus, what today the plant does for human beings — transforming the carbonic acid in the carbon — will be done by man himself when the effect of the changed breath has become great enough. This will take place in an organ he will then possess, of which physiology and anatomy as yet know nothing, but which is nevertheless developing. An individual will accomplish the transformation himself. Instead of exhaling carbon a person will use it in his own being; with what he formerly had to give over to the plant he will build up his own body.

All this must be thought of in conjunction with what was said about the Holy Grail: that the purity and chastity of the plant nature would pass over into human nature. When a person's lower nature has reached the highest level of spirituality, it will in that respect be once more at the level of the plant as it is today. The process that takes place in the plant, a person will one day be able to carry out in his own being. He will more and more transform the substance of his present body into the ideal of a plant body, which will be the bearer of a much higher and more spiritual consciousness. Thus, the Rosicrucian pupil learns the alchemy that eventually will enable a person to transform the fluids and substances of the human body into carbon. Thus, what the plant does today — it builds its body from carbon — human beings will one day accomplish. He will build a structure from carbon that will be a person's future body. A great mystery lies hidden in the rhythm of the breath.

You will now understand the notice about the philosopher's stone alluded to earlier. But what is it that human beings will learn in regard to building up the human body in the future? They will learn to create ordinary coal — which is also what diamonds consist of — and from it build their body. Human beings will then possess a higher and more comprehensive consciousness. They will be able to take

the carbon out of themselves and use it in their own being. They will form their own substance, that is, plant substance made of carbon. That is the alchemy that builds the philosopher's stone. The human body itself is the retort, transformed in the way indicated.

Thus, behind the rhythm of the breath lies hidden what is alluded to as the search for the philosopher's stone; though what is usually said about it is pure nonsense. The indications given here have only recently reached the public from the School of the Rosicrucians; you will not find them in any books. They represent a small part of the fourth stage: The quest of the philosopher's stone.

The fifth stage, or *knowledge of the microcosm*, the small world, points to something said by Paracelsus to which I have often referred, namely, that if we could draw an extract out of everything around us, it would prove to be like an extract taken from mankind. The substances and forces within us are like a miniature recapitulation of what exists in the rest of nature. When we look at the world around us we can say: What is within us is like a copy of the great archetype that exists outside. For example, take what light has brought about in human beings: Light created the eyes. Without eyes we would not see the light; the world would remain dark for us, and likewise for the animals. Those animals that wandered into dark caves to live, in Kentucky, lost the ability to see. If light did not exist we would not have eyes. The light enticed the organs of sight out of the organism. As Goethe said: "The eye is created by the light for the light, the ear by the sound for the sound."

Everything is born from the microcosm. Hence, the secret that under certain instruction and guidance it is possible to enter deeply into the body, and investigate not only what pertains to the body, but to the spiritual realm, and also to the world of nature around us. A person who learns under certain conditions to immerse himself with certain thoughts meditatively in the inner eye will learn the true nature of light. Another area of great significance is between the eyebrows at the root of the nose. By meditatively sinking into this point one learns of important spiritual events that took place as this part of the head was formed from the surrounding world. Thus, one learns the spiritual construction of the human being. He is completely formed and built up by spiritual beings and forces. That is why he can, by delving into his own form, learn about the beings and forces that built up his organism.

A word must be said about delving into one's inner being. This penetrating down from the "I" into the bodily nature, and also the other exercises, ought only to be undertaken after due preparation. Before a start is made the powers of intellect and reason must be strengthened. That is why in Rosicrucian schools the training of thinking is obligatory. Furthermore, the pupil must be inwardly morally strong; this is essential as he may otherwise easily stumble. As a student learns to sink meditatively into every part of his body, other worlds dawn in him.

The deeper aspects of the Old Testament cannot be understood without this sinking into one's inner being. However, it must be done according to certain directions provided by a spiritual scientific training. Everything that is said here in this respect is derived from the spiritual world and can only be fully understood when one is able to discover it again within oneself. Man is born out of the macrocosm; within himself as microcosm he must rediscover its forces and laws. Not through anatomy does man learn about his own being, but through looking into his being and inwardly perceiving that the various areas emit light and sound. The inward-looking soul discovers that each organ has its own color and tone.

Human beings will have direct knowledge of the macrocosm when they learn to recognize, through a Rosicrucian training, what it is in their own being that is created from the universe. Once they know their inner being through meditatively sinking into the eye, or into the point above the root of the nose, human beings can spiritually recognize the laws of the macrocosm. Then, through their own

insight, they will understand what it is that an inspired genius describes in the Old Testament. An individual looks into the Akasha Chronicle and is able to follow mankind's evolution through millions of years.

This is insight that can be attained through a Rosicrucian training. However, the training is very different from what is customary. Genuine self-knowledge is neither reached by aimless brooding within oneself nor in believing, as is often taught nowadays, that by looking into oneself the inner god will speak. The power to recognize the great World-Self is attained by immersing oneself in the organs. It is true that down the ages the call has resounded: "Know thyself," but it is equally true that within one's own being the higher self cannot be found. Rather, as Goethe pointed out, one's spirit must widen until it encompasses the world.

That can be attained by those who patiently follow the Rosicrucian path and reach the sixth stage, or *becoming one with the macrocosm*. Immersing oneself in one's inner being is not a path of comfort. Here phrases and generalities do not suffice. It is in concrete reality that one must plunge into every being and phenomenon and lovingly accept it as part of oneself. It is a concrete and intimate knowledge, far removed from merely indulging in phrases like: "Being in harmony with the world"; "being one with the World-Soul," or "melt together with the world." Such phrases are simply valueless compared with a Rosicrucian training. Here the aim is to strengthen and invigorate human soul-forces, rather than chatter about being in tune with the infinite and the like.

When a human being has attained this widening of the self, then, the seventh stage is within reach. Knowledge now becomes feeling; what lives in the soul is transformed into spiritual perception. A person no longer feels that he lives only within himself. He begins to experience himself in all beings: in the stone, plant and animal, in everything into which he is immersed. They reveal to him their essential nature, not in words or concepts, but to his innermost feelings. A time begins when universal sympathy unites him with all beings; he feels with them and participates in their existence. This living within all beings is the seventh stage, or *attaining godliness (Gottseligkeit)*, the blessed repose within all things. When the human being no longer feels confined within his skin, when he feels himself united with all other beings, participating in their existence, and when his being encompasses the whole universe so that he can say to it all: "Thou are that," then the words which Goethe, out of Rosicrucian knowledge, expresses in his poem *The Mysteries* will have meaning: "Who added to the cross the wreath of roses?"

However, these words can be spoken not only from the highest point of view, but from the moment that "the cross wreathed in roses" — what this expresses — has become one's ideal, one's watchword. It stands as the symbol for a human being's overcoming the lower self in which he merely broods, and his rising from it into the higher self that leads a person to the blissful experience of the life and being of all things. He will then understand Goethe's words in the poem: *West-East Divan*

*And until thou truly hast
This dying and becoming,
Thou art but a troubled guest
O'er the dark earth roaming.*

Unless one can grasp what is meant by the overcoming of the lower, narrow self and the rising into the higher self, it is not possible to understand the cross as symbol of dying and becoming — the wood representing the withering of the lower self, and the blossoming roses the becoming of the

higher self Nor can the words be understood with which we shall dose the subject of Rosicrucianism — words also expressed by Goethe, which as watchword belong above the cross wreathed in roses symbolizing sevenfold man:

*The power that holds constrained all humankind,
The victor o'er himself no more can bind.*

*Von der Gewalt, die alle Wesen bindet
Befreit der Mensch sich, der sich überwindet.*

Source: <https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA055/English/AP1987/19070314p01.html>



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