

THE FUNCTION OF A ROSICRUCIAN

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Ralph Maxwell Lewis served as the Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order for forty-eight years, from 1939 to 1987. In this article, he explores the purpose and function of being a Rosicrucian.



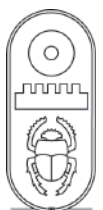
Aristotle, in his renowned *Ethics*, sought to define the nature of *good*. He said that each thing has its function. The function is the ideal, that for which the thing exists. The perfection of a function is its *excellence*, the fulfillment or the end which a thing attains. The excellence of a function, then, is its *summum bonum*, or, in other words, the highest *good* of that thing. For example, a good harpist is one who is an excellent harpist; a good carpenter is one who fulfills his function, namely, the skill of his trade. What, then, may be said to be the function of a Rosicrucian? What is the excellence of that function? What, may we say, constitutes the good Rosicrucian? The function or ideal of a Rosicrucian should be that reason for which he became a member. Furthermore, it should be what is always expected of a Rosicrucian.

Broadly defined, the true function of a Rosicrucian is the acquisition and the application of knowledge. Likewise, whether one is a good Rosicrucian depends on the excellence of this function of acquiring and applying knowledge. This excellence, in turn, depends upon the knowledge which the Rosicrucian seeks. The end to which she applies the knowledge is another factor of the excellence of a Rosicrucian.

The knowledge with which Rosicrucians must be concerned should be *universal* in character. One who continually channels his experience along certain lines, or in certain fields, or who always focuses his consciousness upon certain impressions only, cannot be considered a good



Rosicrucian. The brilliant empiricist, or the learned scientist who acquires through his research or studies a useful knowledge, may not necessarily be a worthy Rosicrucian. There is something more required of him. Pythagoras, the great philosopher, the leader of the mystery school at Crotona; Paracelsus, the physician and alchemist; Michael Faraday, the physicist; Sir Francis Bacon, philosopher and statesperson—each of these personages gained eminence in the academic and scientific worlds. But their creditable achievements by which the world recognizes them were not the principal reasons for their becoming distinctive in *Rosicrucian annals*. There were other factors, other functions, that caused them to be honored by the brothers and sisters of the Rosy Cross.



The knowledge which the Rosicrucian seeks must always be related to the trinity of mysteries. These mysteries are: birth, life, and death. Another way of referring to these mysteries is: being, manifestation, and transition. The so-called mysteries are really only aspects of *one* single nature. They are divisions of the totality of human experience. In other words, the human mind divides its experiences into the categories of these three so-called mysteries. The fact that we perceive the one as *three* stresses the necessity for us not to limit our search for knowledge to any one of them.

The Known and the Knower

The first requisite of a Rosicrucian is to have the proper attitude of mind. The Rosicrucian must accept two basic premises: First, that there is *that* which is to be known. Second, there is the *knower*. That which is to be known is all-inclusive; it is the Absolute, the ultimate, the omniscient – the perfection. Therefore, that which is to be known is the plethora or the fullness of all being. Early in her metaphysical studies, the Rosicrucian realizes that no thing has real existence until it is known. Nothing is, except what it is realized to be. We are often told in philosophical abstractions, and it is a scientific fact as well, that without the ear, there is no sound. Likewise, without the consciousness, the Absolute is without form. We can say that until a thing is known, it is *not*; it has no existence.

The human being is the *knower*. It is men and women who give being or the Absolute its reality by their conceptions. Through humans who are part of the Absolute, the Cosmic acquires its self-consciousness, its own realization. With the gradual breadth of human consciousness, the Absolute becomes more expansive. It is not that the human mind actually adds anything to the Cosmic substance. That would not be possible.

But through human mind the Cosmic substance assumes identity. Its potential manifold images increase in proportion to the structure of human knowledge.

For analogy, the nature of a mirror is not the sum of all of the images, all of the reflections which may be seen in it. We cannot say that a mirror is a collection of the things which we perceive on its surface. But it is such images that cause mirrors to be known to us as such. These images reveal that phenomenon by which we identify it as a mirror. In like manner the human mind helps us to appreciate, through its concepts, that there is such an existence as the Cosmic. The majesty, the beauty, the harmony of the Cosmic are really born within the mind of humans. Humans are *the knower*. That which is self-contained, self-sufficient, as is the Cosmic, has no opposed states or counter conditions; it has no determinative factors. In the Cosmic, there are no such conditions as large or small, old or new, chaos or order. There is but a *one-ness* of a being. It is human beings who in contrasting our consciousness and the various states of our mind to the Cosmic, conceive from this contrast such qualities as beauty, harmony, and others.

Mental Explorations

The Rosicrucian comes to realize that there is nothing which humans cannot know if one sincerely inquires. There are no definite mandates established prohibiting human scrutiny of the universe. Theology once thought that there were certain limitations beyond which humans should not go in our search. But there are no limitations which are irreverent. There are no Cosmic powers which attempt to constrain the human mind. As Holbach, the great French encyclopedist said, Nature tells the human to seek light and to search for truth.

In our explorations, people cannot make a serious mistake in our appraisal

of the Cosmic. Now, it is true as we look back through the centuries at the various concepts that humans have had about the universe, about being, and our own nature, that some seem to be erroneous, but these concepts were in accord with the level of human consciousness at that time. After all, the essence of the Cosmic assumes various forms in the molds of the human understanding. As people think, *that is existence to us* at the moment of our thought.

Like sand, the Cosmic contains within itself no permanent impressions but may be molded into any kind or form. The Cosmic is ever-ready to assume various forms, different kinds of reality, when the human consciousness is prepared to perceive and conceive them. Since the Cosmic is potential with all things, it naturally is plastic, and the mind can mold, or adapt this plastic substance to its conceptions. The more extensive the understanding of the human mind, the more magnificent appears the Cosmic design, just as the more extensive the ability and aesthetic conception of an artist, the more magnificent become her creations.

The only serious mistake which humans can make is to deny the fullness of our own nature. This denial is the mystical concept of the old theological doctrine of the original sin. In other words, the original sin, to the Rosicrucian, is a person's denial of his spiritual faculties, his divine powers. He who refuses to understand himself is damming his own powers. It has been truly said that there are none so blind as those who will not see.

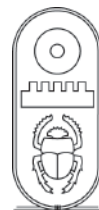
No One is Free

The problem of freedom enters early into the functions of a Rosicrucian. The Rosicrucian learns that no one is actually a *free agent*. No person is wholly an arbiter of her own wishes. The Rosicrucian knows that no person can set up ideas or concepts which are absolutely indepen-

dent of the inclinations of her nature. She who wills as she desires makes a choice which she considers free, but she is, in fact, dependent. After all, when we decide to do something, we are only conforming to what we really are. Our apparent victory over ourselves when we say we are asserting our wills is, after all, but the dominance of one impulse of our nature over another. As a consequence, the Rosicrucian says, if will is the product of the impulses of our nature, and we are truly free in the exercise of it, then it is advisable for *will* to represent not just one aspect of our being. We would make it represent our spiritual as well as physical side.

The Rosicrucian understands life to be more than just an attainment to a point of observation. To the Rosicrucian, life is not merely the climbing to a pinnacle to look down upon a collection of ready-made realities lying at his feet. But rather, to the Rosicrucian, life is a span of *materialization*. Life affords him the opportunity of converting Cosmic intangibilities into realities; or, in other words, life is a theater for Cosmic expression. Our bodies and our minds are the actors on the stage of this theater. It is here on this physical plane that beauty and the elements of the arts and sciences are born. It is here also that the *heaven* of ecstasy is experienced, and that the *hell* of torment is fashioned.

During this conscious interval, the light of the mind, our consciousness, is like light shining into a darkened room. At first, all is dark and formless. Then, with the entrance of the light, things come into existence. They have a nature, a reality. It is the same with the light of the mind which gives order and form to an otherwise unrealized universe. The human mind does even more; it confers purpose on the Cosmic. Purpose exists nowhere else except within the inner vision, the idealism of humans. After all, the Cosmic has no end in view; the Cosmic is not



trying to perfect itself nor is it aspiring to be something – it already *is*. The Cosmic, therefore, is perpetually in a state of self-sufficiency. Humans in our limited consciousness conceive purpose; we believe that there is an idealism toward which the Cosmic is moving, and inspired by that conception, we endeavor to emulate it. We thus move forward in our own life. To use an illustration, it is like walking toward a star which we never reach but, in doing so, we travel far and we learn much.

The Rosicrucian attitude toward our mortal, physical, and earthly relationship is an expedient one. The Rosicrucian does not deny her material obligations. She is obligated to her family, her friends, to her business connections, to society in general. The Rosicrucian does not try to escape the world by venturing into a series of vagaries and speculations. The Rosicrucian does not seek a refuge where her ideals remain sound only because they have not been exposed to down-to-earth realities.

The Rosicrucian attitude toward this life may be summarized in these few words. *We work to live that we may live to know*. By living as long as we can and as intelligently as we can and with an open, liberal mind, we glorify the *unknown*. We are then fulfilling the function of giving the unknown existence in our own consciousness.

Human Responses Materialize

If our daily labors lie within the scope of the trades, the arts, and the sciences, we are indeed fortunate. We are then given the opportunity of manifesting the so-called Cosmic mysteries. We can then materialize our human response to the Absolute. In other words, we are given the opportunity to express in some material form that harmony of the Cosmic which we sense within our own nature. We experience, as inspirations and as ideals and plans, our unity with the Cosmic. Such individuals are really building a micro-

cosm, a small universe, which, to them, reflects the macrocosm. In their creations, in the things they do and build, they believe they see the order and harmony of the Cosmic. It is like the artist who tries to catch a sunset on his canvas. No matter how perfect his work, it is not actually what the sunset is, but it becomes a symbol of what his eyes see and what his emotions experience. It gives him pleasure in feeling that he has caught part of the spirit of the great universe.

The *real* builder, the real creator, is not one who merely provides the world with strange new devices. The world is already too laden with gadgets, with innumerable things which keep us from ourselves by compelling us to be continually devoted to them. The gadgets we have today, the baubles we are turning out, figuratively have upon them a label which reads: "To escape the responsibilities of life, indulge me!"

The person who is really a builder is the one who finds gratification in her personal *humanitarian* impulses. The real builder finds satisfaction not in the thing which she is building, but in its impact, the effect it will have, upon society – what it will do for humankind generally. She believes, or wants to believe, that her products, or her services, are in some way advancing humanity toward a fuller living. This fullness of life she interprets in the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural sense, not only in the economic sense. Such mechanics, artists, scientists, teachers, are all contributing to the excellence of humanity, and this excellence or goodness, as we have seen, is the knowledge and appreciation of the great unknown.

Those whose daily labors may not be directly related to the crafts, arts, and sciences, should, nevertheless, be gratified that their labors provide sustenance and certain leisure hours as well. During such leisure, the functions of one's being may attain their excellence through such channels of study as AMORC.