



*The International School
of the
Golden Rosycross*

An introduction

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Haarlem, The Netherlands

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PART 1

The quest for life's meaning

Why do human beings exist? What is the real purpose of human life?

Perhaps you are no longer satisfied by the conventional answers to these questions, and feel driven by a very deep-seated inner urge to find some indefinable, missing 'something.' Perhaps you give it a name -- you say you want to find out who you really are, or you want to experience conscious union with God, or you want to become a more loving human being -- a source of healing in the world -- or you want to find inner peace, and lasting happiness. Or perhaps you can't quite put a name to what you are looking for, but you know it's something, and you have to find it.

In fact, the urge to find that 'something' is quite powerful in you, powerful enough to drive you out of the ordinary acceptance of life that so many other people appear to enjoy, and onto a quest that may already have led you through libraries, courses, workshops, groups and all kinds of experiences.

Sometimes you feel as though you're getting near your goal, but then, just when it looks as though it's almost within your reach, it slips out of your hands again. So you keep going. You keep trying.

If you, too, are involved in this quest, you may well find that the teachings of the Rosycross can be of help to you. It must be emphasized, though, that what the International School of the Golden Rosycross teaches is not meant to be accepted 'on authority.' Rather, its aim is to awaken in you an awareness of something that, deep down, you *know already* although, temporarily at least, you may have forgotten it. When this inner fount of wisdom is awakened within you, and you learn to listen to it, and follow it, the path to liberation will be opened wide. In this way, we can become fountains of Living Water for the benefit of all our fellow human beings. Let us explain what we mean.....

The dual nature of the human being

First of all, there is one fundamental Rosicrucian insight which, though at first glance may seem very simple, can actually prove decisive in our quest for life's meaning. This insight, if understood and worked with on a daily basis, can help enormously in purifying our urge to seek, so that it becomes much more dynamic and capable of reaching its goal. This insight is the knowledge that our urge to seek -- our yearning for absolute truth, perfection, healing, love -- does *not* originate in the part of ourselves we are accustomed to calling 'I,' although it may *appear* to do so. Our thirst for the Absolute actually originates from an eternal principle latent within us. This *eternal* principle is quite distinct from the 'I' or ego, and remains in a more or less dormant state in most people. The Rosicrucians call this principle of eternity the 'Rose,' but it is also known by many other names, such as 'divine spark,' 'spirit-spark atom,' the Christos, the Pearl of Great Price, the Precious Jewel in the Lotus, and so on.

The two orders of existence

This brings us to the second fundamental tenet of the Rosicrucians: the knowledge that the Rose -- the eternal principle latent in the heart -- is subject to one set of laws, while the rest of

our being is subject to another. We call these two sets of laws the 'two orders of existence,' or the 'two nature orders.'

Apart from the Rose, our whole being is a product of nature, entirely subject to the laws of time and space. That is why, of ourselves, we can never achieve anything absolute and lasting, for our creations will always be subject to finiteness and temporality.

The Rose, on the other hand, as the principle of eternity latent within us, is subject to the laws of eternity. That is why, if we want to transcend space and time, if we want to reach the Absolute, the eternal, we will never be able to do so with any part of our self as it is at this moment. If we want our thirst for the Absolute to be satisfied, we will need to begin by 'standing aside,' as regards our ordinary, I-central consciousness, and allowing the eternal principle latent within us to develop so that it gradually becomes predominant in our system.

A bridge from time to eternity

As a gnostic school, the International School of the Golden Rosycross helps and supports its pupils in their efforts to shift the I-central consciousness from its position as 'king' in their inner household, and to restore it to its proper role: that of 'servant' to the growing True Self within, the Christ-Self, the Rose. Simultaneously, this Rose within them is given all the sustenance it needs to be able to grow. If the pupil cooperates and perseveres in this process, the Rose increasingly unfolds and blooms; it becomes an inner source of light and love that sheds its perfume and radiance over all, for the benefit of all.

In the following sections we would like to tell you more about the Rosicrucian understanding of how this source of the eternal within you can be unlocked.

PART 2

The heart of religion

The teachings given by the International School of the Golden Rosycross are not new. The method of restoring to life the Rose -- the original, divine Self -- can be traced at the heart of all the world's great religions. However, we human beings in whom the I-central self predominates are prone to misunderstanding, since we tend to interpret the teachings of religion as if they were intended for the ordinary I-consciousness. In this way, messages regarding the spiritual path are distorted, and the original truth is forgotten as the years go by.

The universal path

In all the world's great religions the idea is expressed that, in the beginning, human beings had a perfect connection with their origin, with the Absolute, with God. When they lost this connection they became twofold creatures in a world separated from God, no longer able to live in the original Light-World.

The original teachings behind all religions describe a path of return to that Light-World, a method of restoring our connection with the Godhead. Hence the word 'religion', which stems from the Latin *re ligare*, 'to reconnect'.

This possibility of restoring our connection with the Godhead is beautifully described, for instance, in the ancient Egyptian text, the *Corpus Hermeticum*:

'It was His will that the link with the Spirit should be placed within reach of all souls; however, as a prize for the race. He sent down a great Mixing Vessel, filled with the powers of the Spirit and He appointed a herald and bade him proclaim to the hearts of men: 'Immerse yourselves in this Mixing Vessel, you souls who can; you who believe and trust that you will ascend to Him who sent down this Vessel; you who know for what purpose you were created.'

The Holy Grail

The prize for the race is the immersion, the purification, the baptism of water, wine and spirit in the Mixing Vessel, the Holy Grail. This Mixing Vessel, the Holy Grail, filled with all the powers and attributes necessary for our return to the Light-World, really does exist. It has always existed and will continue to exist as long as there remains one single human being who has not yet found the way back home. However, it exists not as a form but as a *vibration* and, because of its purity, it can never be touched or tainted by the lower, I-central self.

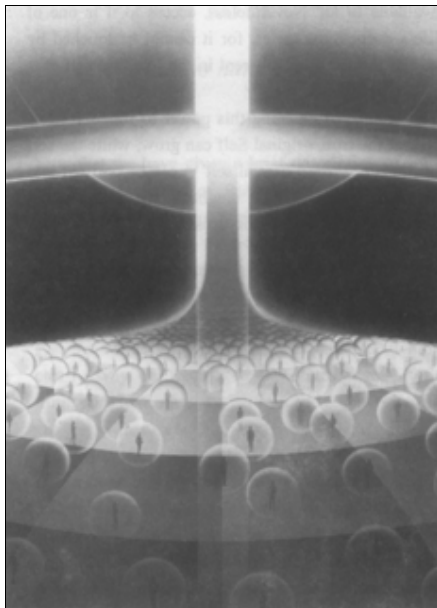
That is why the classical Rosicrucians said, in their manifesto, the *Fama Fraternitatis R.C.*, published in 1614:

'Thus our Building, even if thousands were to see it from nearby, will forever remain untouched, indestructible, invisible and totally hidden from the wicked world.'

So there is a divine power with the aid of which the spiritual Self latent within us can be restored to life. In this way the human connection with the Absolute is reestablished. This divine power -- the power of the Spirit, or 'Tao,' as the Chinese call it -- is freely available to all.

Nevertheless, access to it is one of life's deepest mysteries, for it cannot be touched by any of the faculties inherent in the I-central self.

The science of enabling this power to function in us so that the true, original Self can grow, while the self of illusion -- the I-central self -- can be purified into stillness, is the science taught in the International School of the Golden Rosycross.



PART 3

The two nature orders

Now that we have given a brief description of some of the basic tenets of Rosicrucian philosophy, we would like to go into some of these ideas in more detail. The first idea we would like to discuss is the concept of the two orders of existence -- two distinct systems of laws and conditions which we call 'the two nature orders.' If we can understand how these two systems work, we will be able to understand more clearly why our search for absolute values -- for truth, pure love, absolute wisdom and so on -- has not yet met with success.

Our nature order -- the world of 'dialectics'

The evidence of our senses tells us that everything which comes into existence in the world we see around us will someday turn into its opposite. This constant interchanging of opposites is the fundamental essence of our world. In our yearning for absolute values -- for lasting peace, love, and truth -- we often tend to overlook that inescapable fact. Nevertheless, logic alone is enough to tell us that everything which comes into existence is going to disappear someday; it is only transitory, never absolute.

Think about this for a moment. Nothing we are, nothing we do, nothing we can create is going to last; sooner or later, it will all decay and return to where it came from. We are transitory creatures of an ever changing world. We begin to age and decay even before we leave our mother's womb. Nothing is perfect in our world. Nothing can last in our world. Change and death are the only two laws we can absolutely rely upon. They surround us inexorably, like prison walls. This fact is confirmed by Lao Tzu, Buddha, and all the world's great religious teachers.

So hasn't it ever struck you as strange that, in spite of the inescapability of imperfection, change, and decay, we still yearn for a perfect life? Haven't you ever wondered how it is possible, in view of the facts of life, that human beings can even have any notion of absolute values? How did the idea of the absolute, of perfection, even enter our heads? Where did it come from? Certainly not from the world we see around us.

Look. Someday, every one of us is going to die, and yet we maintain a kind of conspiracy of silence, a shared fantasy, in which we live our lives as if death did not exist! And if you have ever experienced the loss of someone close to you, you may have observed that there is a part of you that will *never* accept that this person has gone, no matter what beliefs you may or may not have about an afterlife. Wherever do we get these passionate longings for the everlasting, for the absolute, when all the evidence of our senses tells us that they do not exist?

Well, the concept of the 'two nature orders' offers an answer to this question. In the International School of the Golden Rosycross we often refer to the nature order in which we live as the world of 'dialectics.' We use the word '*dialectics*' because our world is characterised by constantly interchanging opposites. This 'dialectical world' includes not only the material, visible world we see around us, but also the realm our subtle bodies inhabit when we are asleep, and even in the after-death state.

The original, divine nature order

Apart from, separate from this 'dialectical world,' but occupying the same space, is another, quite different nature order. This second nature order is characterised by perfection, absoluteness, eternity. The Rosicrucians call this second nature order the 'immovable kingdom,' because in it, duality and the interchanging of opposites do not exist. There is only an eternal growth and development, from glory to glory, and from power to power.

So you see, the eternal values, the absolute truth, freedom and love we long for really do exist, but not in our world, not in the world we belong to, the dialectical world.

Why does the dialectical nature order exist?

To understand why this dialectical world exists, it helps to remember that there is a plan underlying creation. The International School of the Golden Rosycross calls this 'the divine plan.' You could imagine the divine plan flowing like a stream, with a certain direction, momentum, and destination. Every creation is free to move in and out of the stream at will, gathering experiences along the way. However, as long as the creation always returns to the stream and remains, overall, in harmony with it, it will be carried along by the current, and all will be well. But if, in free will, a creation wishes to maintain itself *permanently* in a state not in harmony with the stream of the divine idea, what happens then? Let us try to see the logical answer to that question.

We can imagine what happens if we continue with our analogy of a stream of flowing water. If a creation seeks to exclude itself from the flow of the divine current, because it wants to hold onto some aspect of it, and make it permanent rather than allowing it to flow, it can only do so by becoming crystallized, like a heavy stone in the water. Then, because it is crystallized, heavy, it can no longer experience the helping, carrying effects of the current, but will experience its flow as a series of buffetings, just as any obstruction does when placed in flowing water.

This is a much simplified image of how the two nature orders have come into existence: the divine nature order -- where the helping, carrying, continuously developing effects of the divine stream are experienced; and the dialectical nature order -- the world we know -- in which the correcting effects of the divine stream are experienced, so that nothing is allowed to last and everything is constantly brought back to its starting point.

The Fall

Now can you see that becoming subject to the second system of laws -- the correcting system -- effectively isolates the creature from the world in which the first system of laws -- the divine system -- operates? And can you see that such a creature, that has deviated from its underlying plan, will remain isolated from the order of nature to which it originally belonged until such time as it chooses to return to the divine plan?

The Universal Philosophy teaches that, in the distant past, a large group belonging to the human lifewave did indeed decide, in free will, to deviate from the plan underlying their existence. In this way, they isolated themselves from the divine nature order and became confined to the dialectical order of existence. The result was that, eventually, all the faculties they had been able to use while still subject to the first, divine system of laws, atrophied, and they fell into a dormant state, in which they could not die, because they were eternal, but in which they were inactive, asleep.

The task of humankind

If you have followed us so far, you will be able to see in your mind's eye the dormant sparks of fallen, divine humanity, like seeds, unable to live, but unable -- either -- to die. What could be done to rescue these dormant creatures? To bring them back to a state of true life again?

Consciousness and will are needed for this task, but the fallen divine creatures no longer have any, in their dormant state. Where can that consciousness, that willingness, come from? Well, the Rosicrucians teach that the human race as we know it was created for precisely that one purpose -- to act, consciously and willingly, as servants, for the restoration of the original, divine creature. That is the task, the calling, of every human being, and if we succeed in it, we too will be able to share in the life of eternity.

We, mortals, are *not* that divine creature, but we bear it within us, as a dormant spark. And it is within our power to allow that dormant spark to come alive again, and to return from its state of exile to the divine world, its home, the 'House of the Father.'

The reawakening of the divine spark

So the reason why we experience yearnings for the absolute, for truth, for the divine, should now be much clearer. As we said in Part 1, these yearnings do not originate from us, creatures of transitoriness, but from the divine spark we bear within us. They are the longings of the divine spark for its lost home, the divine order of existence it once knew and inhabited.

These yearnings, which can -- as you may have experienced -- develop into an all-consuming hunger and thirst, represent the first stirrings of the dormant divine spark within us. So that inner disquiet, that desire which, perhaps, is motivating you to read this introduction, is in fact the most important faculty you have as a spiritual seeker; it is the 'Ariadne's thread' that can, if you react to it in the right way, lead you right out of the maze. Perhaps the 'Sleeping Beauty' is not awake yet, but she is stirring in her sleep -- a sign of life! And where there is life, there is hope!



PART 4

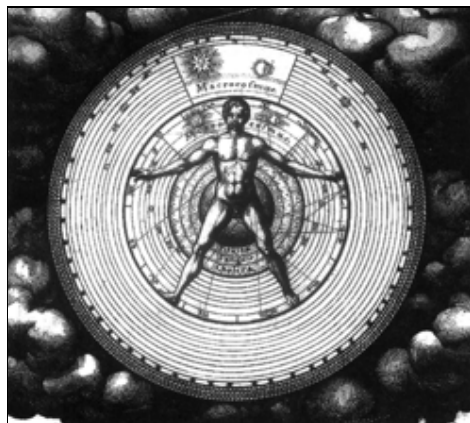
The human being as a microcosm

In this section we would like to give you a brief description of the human system of vehicles as they are understood by the Rosicrucians. You will then be able to see more clearly the part played by the divine spark in your bodily system as a whole.

In the International School of the Golden Rosycross, the human being is seen as much more than just a physical body. In reality, the human being is a 'microcosm,' or cosmos in miniature.

The microcosmic firmament

The outermost layer of the human microcosm, surrounding us like an eggshell, consists of a magnetic field which we call the 'lipika.' The lipika can be seen, if you like, as the 'sky' of our own miniature cosmos, our own personal zodiac, because it is studded with many magnetic points like stars. These magnetic points act as filters, admitting from the cosmos into the microcosm only those energies which resonate with them. In most people, these magnetic points are attuned only to the dialectical order of existence, the universe of separation and death.



The respiration field

Inside this magnetic sphere is a space called the 'respiration field.' This space is filled with magnetic lines of force running from the magnetic points in the lipika to the material body of the temporary, mortal personality which is you or me.

The subtle bodies

As is widely understood these days, this material body consists not only of the physical body we can see and touch, but of more subtle bodies as well. Altogether there are -- in the present-day human being -- four physical bodies, each of different grades of subtlety, all interpenetrating each other. So our visible, material body is interpenetrated and surrounded firstly by the etheric or vital body, which guides and controls the life processes going on in the material body.

Interpenetrating the etheric and material bodies and extending some distance beyond them is the astral body. In this body, our desires and emotions, and our feelings of attraction and rejection are manifested and radiated outwards.

Then there is the mental body. This is concentrated mainly around the head and is involved in attracting and radiating all the forces concerned with our thinking processes. It is not yet really mature in the majority of human beings, so that in most people it is hardly possible to speak of a 'body' as such.

The divine seed

And now there is one last aspect of the microcosm we would like to mention -- the Rose of the Heart, or spirit-spark referred to earlier. This Rose of the Heart is situated right at the centre of the microcosm at a point which coincides with the top of the right heart ventricle. The Rose of the Heart -- being the last remnant in the microcosm of its original, divine state -- is not affected by any of the forces at work in the dialectical nature order, the world of time and space. It can only react to the forces of the original, divine nature order. So, until it can be touched by the divine forces it remains sleeping, dormant, like a seed. And like a seed, it contains the whole blueprint, the whole matrix, of the original, divine microcosm. It only waits for the divine sunlight to reach it, and then, with the cooperation of the human personality, it will be able to unfold and the whole microcosm will gradually be able to be restored to its original, divine state. But a lot has to happen before the human personality is willing and able to allow the divine sunlight to reach the Rose of the Heart.



The Path of experience

We live our lives, we accumulate experiences, many of them painful, and then we die. When the physical body dies, the subtle bodies, too, are dissolved after a period of time, leaving only the sum of the experience gained in that lifetime, which is etched into the lipika. The microcosm then adopts a new system of physical vehicles through the process of birth. This is the cycle of birth and death, which goes on and on, lifetime after lifetime, until gradually -- mostly through suffering but sometimes through intense joy, too -- our consciousness and our desires are purified. At last the recognition begins to be born in us that our soul's deepest sorrow will never be alleviated by anything we might find in this world. The inkling may also

dawn on us that our most profound moments of joy do not belong to the self we are accustomed to calling 'I' at all, but to something much higher. And there, at last, we stand before the Unknown, with open, empty hands. Still waiting, still hoping, but no longer expecting everything of the I-central self and its world. And at that point we can be helped...



PART 5

The holy desire

It is very important, when the soul has reached this point of openness, to understand that our yearnings for perfection, love, goodness and so on do not, in the final analysis, originate from our I-central consciousness but from the last remnant of the divine within us, the Rose of the Heart. Because then, when the heart sends out its pure cry of yearning, when it gives voice to its holy desire, its holy thirst, we will not try to quench it with vinegar, with all the techniques and palliatives our microcosms have acquired over the course of many lifetimes. Instead, our I-central self will remain silent, and in that silence only four, simple words will be heard: 'Your will be done... ..' and that is the Open Sesame.

When, having exhausted all the possibilities we thought we had, we finally stop struggling and surrender to the Divine One within us; when we are filled with only one desire, expressed in the words, 'Your will be done,' it is as if a doorway appears where before there was only a blank rock-face. So now the way forward is open again. It is the path to what the Rosicrucians call 'transfiguration.'

The process of transfiguration

This process of transfiguration is much more than just a metaphysical or a mystical process. It is a very real, structural process. It has often been called an *alchemical* process. To give you an idea of how it is possible for such a radical process to take place in the human system, remember that the human body -- with its material, etheric, astral and mental layers -- is kept alive by drawing into its system and assimilating actual substances -- foods -- which also have their material, etheric, astral and mental components.

These foods are drawn into the body, as we know, via the digestive and respiratory systems. The more subtle, tenuous substances are also drawn into the body directly via the chakra system. And the quality of nourishment absorbed, and the way it is assimilated is determined by the consciousness. For the consciousness, with its thoughts and desires, conditions the chakra system so that it attracts what is in harmony with it and repels what is not.

So imagine that, because of your surrender to the Rose of the Heart, because of the purity of your holy desire, the Rose of the Heart is beginning to open in you. The Rose of the Heart, unlike any other part of your system, is capable of attracting and absorbing the etheric, astral and mental substances of the original, divine nature order. These are the powers of the Spirit, the powers of the Holy Grail referred to in Part 1.

So now you can see how the opening Rose of the Heart can become a 'fountain of Living Water' -- to use the phrase we mentioned in Part 1. The less 'I-centred', and therefore the more 'Rose-centred' we become, the more the Rose of the Heart can become a point at which divine energies are attracted, metabolized, and radiated. This transmutation and radiation of divine energies can then be of help to all those who need it.

With the help of these divine energies, the Rose of the Heart is enabled to unfold and grow, more and more. Gradually, it draws around itself a *new form*, constructed from the pure etheric, astral and mental substances of the Spirit. That new assimilation is the basis of transfiguration, and through it, death is overcome for good. The prayer, 'Your will be done' is

fulfilled as regards the microcosm, and it re-joins the stream of the Shining Ones, journeying back to union with the divine.

Obviously, there is much, much more the International School of the Golden Rosycross could tell you about transfiguration, but the beginning of the process is the most important thing for us, here and now. If we make a start, the rest will follow. And the start is the decision to surrender the self to the Rose of the Heart.

The choice facing us

To end this introduction, we would like to remind you of the choice facing a person in whom the holy desire is beginning to be felt. If, when the holy desire (which we sometimes call *yearning for salvation*) is felt, our I-consciousness thinks: I want to be perfect, I want to be liberated, I want to experience Nirvana, and we go to work on ourselves in our own strength, without any fundamental change in the orientation of our consciousness, then it will not matter what exercises or self-development techniques we use; the Rose of the Heart will still not receive any nourishment because the I-consciousness is only capable of attracting into the system the forces of this dialectical nature order. So instead of helping the yearning for salvation, and hence the Rose of the Heart, to grow, all those techniques conceived and practised by the I-consciousness will only serve to make the personality-system and its delusion stronger and more powerful.

If, on the other hand, we clearly understand that our yearning for salvation does not belong to us, mortal, finite beings, but to the divine Rose within us, we will have made our first revolutionary step on the road that will lead to the satisfaction of our heart's desire. And if we understand that the Rose cannot be nourished by the energies we, as mortal beings, are capable of attracting, but only by the energies of the original, divine realm, we will want to surrender our whole being to the Rose, so that it can have the freedom to draw into our microcosm the energies it needs to grow.

The Golden Cross of resurrection

What does it mean, to 'surrender our whole being to the Rose'? It is not a merely mystical devotion. Rosicrucian pupils become builders, freemasons in the original sense of the word. With all their faith, love, persistence and intelligence, they exert themselves to *cooperate* with the liberating power set free in them by the Rose, allowing It to carry out the work of demolishing the old and building the new. What is the 'old', and what is the 'new'? The old is the cross of matter, the I-central self and all its consequences in the microcosm. The process of self-surrender enables a living connection to be established between the Rose and the very centre of this cross. Then, to the extent that the old is demolished, the new can be built. The new is the Golden Cross of resurrection, the fiery Cross whose vertical beam is the energy of the higher, divine nature, flowing through the renewed microcosm and spreading out horizontally, via the opened Rose, over the whole world.

Can it really be done?

Perhaps you are thinking, now, that the key to this path of transfiguration -- the holy desire, or yearning for salvation -- is still very far from you. But we would like to ask you to look at yourself again. Perhaps your heart's yearning for salvation is not as far away as you might think. Perhaps it is, in fact, something which has accompanied you so closely through the years that you hardly notice it any longer, like a precious jewel you have been carrying around in your pocket, thinking it was just a stone. For what is making you read this introduction? Surely it is an inner awareness that has been growing over the years, that things

are not as they should be; an awareness of something fundamentally wrong inside us that needs to be healed; a yearning for absolute values, for a love that is not conditional, but unconditional, for a goodness that is not partial, but total, for a truth that is not valid only for today, but for always. There are all kinds of ways we could express it, but if you look within, do you recognize this longing in yourself? Well, even if it isn't pure yet, even if it is still tainted by our mental misconceptions and the ego's natural urge to grasp at everything, this longing is something. It's a start! This longing is real, and it can be our starting point.

How? Well, perhaps a picture will help you to understand. Imagine a medieval knight. He is clad in armour and, though he knows well how to fight, he is not doing so. Instead, at the place where his heart is, he is holding a candle. His whole attention is absorbed in keeping that candle burning brightly, in protecting its light from anything that might disturb it, or blow it out. He keeps its fragile light burning in the midst of the world's turmoil.

Well, that light is our yearning for salvation, our holy desire, the first faint flickering of light and life in the Rose. And, like the knight, we are able, if we wish, to put that fragile light *first*, not only in ourselves but in others also. What exactly do we mean by this? Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri, founders of the International School of the Golden Rosycross, expressed it in the following way:

*'It is a state of being, rather like being in love. If you have ever really loved someone, or been loved by someone, you will know that the whole heart can be absorbed and uplifted by it. This gives rise to an emanation, which radiates from the heart and establishes the connecting link. Well, it is with a love like that, that the heart must devote itself to the spiritual Rose, which is present in the heart, in the centre, of your being. And then, because the Rose is so very near to you and has been waiting for you for such a long time, a powerful connection will come into being between you. Then the foundation for soul-rebirth will have been laid. And that is why the Bible says that only love can set you free.'**

When the highest priority in our lives is the effort to devote ourselves, in thought, word and deed, to the Rose and its yearning, the hold of the I-central ego on the microcosm is bound to be loosened. And, though there may yet be a very long way to go on the road to transfiguration, the axe will have been 'put to the root of the tree'.



This step, then, is the one that will open the Path for you. And yet it is only the beginning. Many more steps will need to be taken, many more lessons learned. If you want to find out more about what this path of transfiguration entails, or you feel you may actually want to walk the path as a pupil, the International School of the Golden Rosycross would like to be of help to you.

If you would like to know more about the ideas mentioned in this introduction, and to find out about the possibility of having closer contact with the Lectorium Rosicrucianum you are welcome to ask for our exploratory course. There is a minor charge for these explorations, as a contribution towards printing and postage. The eight explorations are obtainable from a local centre of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum via regular mail or electronically. Contact us at:

e-mail: info@goldenroscopycross.org

website: <http://www.goldenroscopycross.org>

* From The Chinese Gnosis, p. 223 (Rozekruis Pers, Haarlem, The Netherlands 1996).