

Max Heindel's Message

Unnatural Means of Attainment

WHEN ONE INVESTIGATES a certain subject in the invisible world, many fascinating byways open up. He is constantly lured away from the main line of research by this, that, or the other theme which attracts his attention, and there is great danger of losing sight of the goal and of wandering off in a maze of incoherency. Sometimes the temptation to follow a bypath is stronger than my power of resistance; and recently, while working on the *Web of Destiny*, the figure of a hermit who had starved his body to the semblance of a skeleton—who had whipped himself till the blood flowed from sores that were never allowed to heal, and thought he was serving God by these austerities—led me to search for the origin of this hideous practice. I have written a lengthy article on the subject for our magazine; but as the matter is important, and many of the students are not subscribers to the magazine, I have deemed it best to give you the main facts.

In the ancient Mystery Temples the main truths now taught by the Rosicrucian Fellowship concerning the vital body were given to the aspirant to Initiation. He learned that this vehicle was composed of the four ethers: the *chemical ether*, which is necessary to assimilation; the *life ether*, which furthers growth and propagation; the *light ether*, which is the vehicle of sense perception; and the *reflecting ether*, which is the receptacle of memory.

The aspirant was thoroughly instructed in the functions of the two lower ethers as compared with the two higher. He knew that all the purely animal functions of the body depended upon the density of the two lower ethers and that the two upper ethers composed the soul body—the vehicle of

service in the invisible world. He aspired to cultivate this glorious garment by self-abnegation, curbing the propensities of the lower nature by will power, just as we do today.

But some, who were overzealous to attain, no matter how, forgot that it is only by service and unselfishness that the golden wedding garment, composed of the two higher ethers, is grown. They thought the occult maxim, “Gold in the crucible, dross in the fire; light as the winds, higher and higher,” meant only that so long as the dross of the lower nature was expelled, it did not matter how it was done. And they reasoned that as the Chemical Ether is the agent of assimilation, it could be eliminated from the vital body by starving the physical body. They also thought that as the Life Ether is the avenue of propagation, they could by living celibate lives starve it out. They would then only have the two higher ethers, or at least these would be much larger in volume than the two lower.

To that end they practiced all the austerities they could think of, fasting among others. By this unnatural process the body lost its health and became emaciated. The passional nature, which sought gratification by exercise of the propagative function, was stilled by castigation. It is true that in this horrible manner the lower nature seemed to be subjected; and it is also true that when the bodily functions were thus brought to a very low ebb, visions, or rather hallucinations, were the reward of these people; but true spirituality has never been attained by defiling or destroying “the temple of God,” the body, and fasting may be as immoral as gluttony.

Let us endeavor to use moderation in all things, that we may be worthy examples to others and earn admission to the Temple by virtue of right living. □