

MYSTIC LIGHT

The Mystic and the Occult in Max Heindel's Writings

Part 3

DOES MAX HEINDEL'S major work, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, that eminently occult work, have mysteries? According to its author the "mystery hidden in every line" of the *Cosmo*, what it "preaches on every page, [is] THE GOSPEL OF SERVICE" (*Gleanings of a Mystic*, GM, 135). A mystery signifies what is hidden, not overt. An occult writing is an uncovering of what is covert. When Heindel calls Wagner's soul "deeply mystic" (GM 153), he means that the composer had a certain attunement to esoteric truths, but not necessarily a clear intellectual conception of hidden realities. Earlier in *Gleanings* Heindel writes that the composer, "with the rare intuition of the master musician" sensed the mystery (31). He did not consciously perceive and realize the full significance of the connection between the death of the Savior and the regeneration of nature; rather, he "unwittingly stumbled upon the key" to a sublime mystery (154).

Terms such as *mystic birth*, *mystic marriage*, and *mystic death* must remain imprecise precisely because they pertain to mysteries. To repeat, *mystic* used as an adjective signifies that the spiritual occurrence is similar to the earthly event denominated by the noun it modifies. But some "are tired of parables and long to learn the underlying facts" (182). They "feel an inner urge to take the Kingdom of God by storm" (181). "The Rosicrucian Fellowship was started for the purpose of reaching this class." The methods it employs "are definite, scientific and religious; they have been originated by the Western School of the Rosicrucian Order" (182). We do not



Splendor solis, S. Trismosin, London, 16th century. The British Library, London

The Philosophical Tree

Earthly abstract thinking (dry branch) is exchanged for living thinking, making possible knowledge of the invisible worlds. "Plant this tree [of knowledge] on the lapis [soul body] ...that the birds of the sky [living thoughts] come and reproduce on its branches; it is from there that wisdom rises."

wait, as does the mystic, but we willfully and intentionally set about to emigrate to the Kingdom of Heaven. We imitate our Elder Brother Jesus (170, 172) just as the Catholic, but more, we "exalt God in our own consciousness" (172), for "till Christ be formed *in us*" (in a mystic birth!) we will be blind to His presence (159).

The use of *mystical* in the sense of *metaphorical* is evident in the passage referring to the divine creative Word that “expires” at the Spring Equinox: “*It dies upon the cross at Easter in a mystical sense*” (GM 155). It does not actually die. A figurative death occurs.

Who is this *mystic* whose *gleanings* we are studying? The book’s title, *Gleanings of a Mystic*, was given by Heindel’s wife, Augusta. In the Forward she refers to the author as “the mystic” and immediately adds that these collected writings “contain some of his deepest thoughts, and are the result of years of research and occult investigation.” She adds that “The occultist has received much from the book entitled *The Web of Destiny*, which is a mine of mystical knowledge and helpful occult truths.” Are these synonymous terms? Which are which? Max Heindel does not refer to knowledge as *mystic*, but the term *occult knowledge* is used seven times in the *Cosmo*. He may have been a mystic, but his *Gleanings* and other books are the result of occult research, either his own, or, in the case of the *Cosmo*, the Elder Brothers’.

“Mind is the predominating feature” (117) of those who want to accelerate their soul growth by practicing the exercises of retrospection and concentration, thereby advancing “scientifically towards the goal of Initiation” (119) and becoming members of the Rosicrucian Order, which is an *occult* Order. “Please remember that if anyone offers to initiate you into an occult order, no matter if he calls it ‘Rosicrucian,’” his demand of an initiation fee stamps him as an impostor (20). In this same passage the writer says he received “The Light” in the “Mystic Temple” of the Rose Cross. Here *mystic*, as in many other contexts, means figurative. The Temple is etheric and cannot be seen by physical vision.

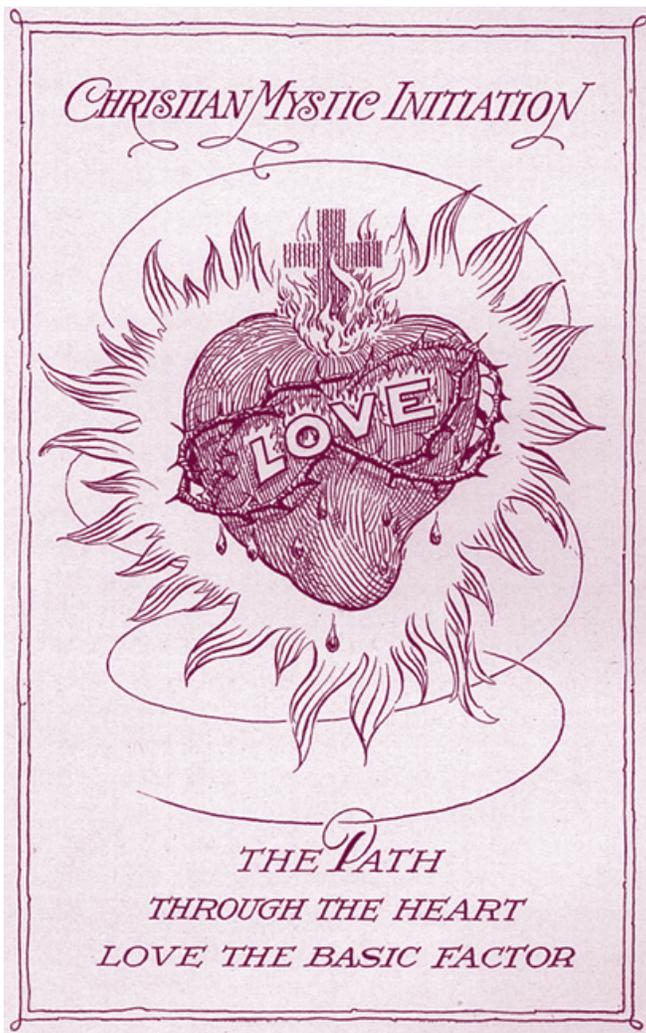
Were one to characterize Heindel himself as primarily a mystic or an occultist, a disservice would be done to the complementary side of his nature. Manly Hall, the author of a masterful compilation of the world’s esoteric teachings, preferred to call Heindel “America’s foremost Christian Mystic.” Hall was a student of the Rosicrucian Fellowship in the 1920’s. He wrote an introduction to what “may properly be considered as Max Heindel’s first literary effort,” a sixty-page essay entitled *Blavatsky*

and the Secret Doctrine (DeVorss & Co.). “It was through the writings of Blavatsky that Max Heindel received in this life his first knowledge of occult sciences. He recognized gratitude to be the first law of occultism and his fine soul preserved to the end a beautiful spirit of gratitude for the inspiration and instruction he had gained from *The Secret Doctrine*, which, in the *Cosmo*, he calls “an unexcelled work” (512) and one of the “very valuable works on occultism” (270).

Hall describes the *Cosmo* as a “textbook of Christian Metaphysics” (10), a description that would give offense to orthodox Christians due to the breadth and depth of occult knowledge contained therein. Elsewhere, calling Heindel “a pioneer in Christian mysticism” (14) and “the greatest Western mystic of the twentieth century” (19), Hall uses the same expression August Foss employs in referring to a body of occult truths. He says that Heindel “greatly increased his store of mystical knowledge” from what he knew as a member of the Theosophical Society between 1904 and 1905.

We repeat that a mystic does not have such knowledge as Max Heindel possessed. Heindel himself states that “The Mystic is usually devoid of intellectual knowledge” (IQ&A 290, *Cosmo* 520), particularly occult knowledge. Hall gives an altered and exceptional (and Platonic) meaning to mysticism, whose “true purposes” are, he avers, “to perpetuate, interpret, and apply the idealism of the race” (12). Such purposes presuppose the possession and use of advanced reasoning and analytical powers that are simply not part of the traditional mystic’s capability or concern. His example and work may have that effect over time, but it was not the product of a conscious intention.

We may surmise that Heindel was born with a strong mystic yearning for union with the one Life, but he wanted more, as his Cain-Seth, Freemasonry-Catholicism antithesis makes clear. He had to know. Specifically and fully. Faith did not suffice. He was grateful to receive explicit occult information. Yet he wanted even more than that. He wanted to experience occult truth first-hand. He wanted to stand in the supersensible worlds, to experience and identify the facts of metaphysical reality. This need is the engine that drives the occult inquiry: to dare all, to know all, to do all; but *not* to be silent—not Max



Heindel. In his study of Blavatsky and *The Secret Doctrine*, Heindel calls the book “The greatest of modern works on occultism” (56). That was before he wrote the *Cosmo*!

Since *mystic* is etymologically and semantically associated with *mystery*, it understandably retains connotations of nonspecificity and subjectivity, referring to what one *experiences* of a supernatural or meta-physical nature, but may not be able to conceptualize, objectify, or explain in the form of supersensible knowledge. The Rosicrucian teachings presented in the *Cosmo* (and Heindel’s other writings) “make no statements that are not supported by reason and logic.” Therefore the *Cosmo* must be “satisfying to the mind, for it holds out a reasonable solution to all mysteries.” What was once obscure or enigmatic is taken into the purview of spiritual science and made a legitimate subject of rational inquiry.

In one of his most informative statements about mysticism, and by association the mystic, Heindel writes that “the one great and absolutely essential idea which underlies mysticism” is that all structures, artifacts and ceremonials pertaining to the religious life are objectifications for what is interior—all “these things are within and not [essentially] without” (AMI 20). “This idea must be applied to every symbol and phase of mystic experience. It is not the Christ without that saves, but *the Christ within*” (*ibid*). Thus the qualifying term *mystic*—as in *mystic bride* (16), *mystic master* (19), *mystic Laver* (21), *mystic Temple* (28), *mystic marriage* (34), *mystic manna* (41), *mystic birth* (52), *mystic blood* (52), *mystic light* (56), and *mystic death* (114)—always refers to an esoteric reality in the occult anatomy or spiritual consciousness of the individual soul. As St. Paul explains, the Old Testament Law of outward ordinances must become mystically inscribed on the heart as inner impulses and moral directives. Like the ancient Tabernacle, it is transferred “from the wilderness of space to a home in our hearts” (21).

A basic tenet of the Rosicrucian Teachings is that all *occult* development begins with the vital body (AMI 55, CL 276, GM 96, LS 182, TI 79), but in *The Web of Destiny* Max Heindel says “all mystic development begins in the vital body” (15). Is this another instance of the inadvertent conflation of the two terms? The Rosicrucian student is not primarily engaged in mystic development. In fact, the religion of those “who have true spirituality...is not based upon the emotional nature...but is rooted in the vital body, which is the vehicle of reason” (17). Therefore the student is directed to become observant and to draw conclusions from his observations; to reason from perceptual experience; to discriminate by separating out the essential from the trivial; to meditate on occult information such as is presented in Western Wisdom Teaching; to strengthen his ability to concentrate and perform daily retrospection, which will improve the memory and simultaneously purify the desire nature.

By these exercises given in the “Western Mystery [!] School of the Rosicrucians,” a viable soul body may be formed out of the two higher ethers of the vital body (18). Such exercises are not performed by the mystic Christian, who engages in devotional

prayer, rather than concentration used by the occultist (*Cosmo* 463). When they do pray, “it is the practice of accomplished occultists to stand with bowed heads” (*WD* 132). Moreover, there are “occult reasons which make collective prayer inadvisable” (129).

The conjunction of the two terms *mystic* and *occult* can challenge our understanding of their respective domains, whose borders at times seem blurred and overlapping. For instance, “the mystic maxim ‘if thou are Christ, help thyself’” is taken to heart by the occultist who believes “we ought to guide ourselves without fear or favor from any spirit” (*WD* 36). This advice is not followed by the traditional mystic, who would not dare such independence, but is a docile, if vehement, affirmer of Christian dogma and looks to Jesus to save him.

In a section of *The Web of Destiny* entitled “The Occult Effect of Our Emotions,” the author’s inquiring mind is turned toward investigating the prior lives of several hundred persons in order to arrive at some basic principles regarding the operation of the law of cause and effect. From his youth Heindel had a practical, inquisitive cast of mind; he wanted to know *how* things work, *what* constitutes them, and *why* certain conditions must prevail for them to properly function. He was a ship’s engineer, he “electrified” Mt. Ecclesia, was learned (and self-taught) in hydrolics, desalination, printing, physiology, mechanics and other technical areas. He implemented his knowledge, grounding theory in practice. He may have possessed a developed intuitive sense, qualifying him as a mystic, but he was a practical mystic, seeking explanations for his insights. He cleared pathways to practice so that his wisdom and visions could be both useful and confirmed on the material plane. Solomon the mystic had wisdom. He could picture a temple. But he could not build it. Hiram Abiff could build this living temple of the soul, the soul body. He had both the occult knowledge and the skill required to give form to the etheric structure.

The traditional mystic is not fascinated by the structure and processes of the physical world, or, for that matter, the supersensible worlds. God or Divinity is the sole object of the mystic’s attention and devotion. Since creation is the work of the Divine Mind and man is made in God’s image,

using the mind to delve into the divine “mysteries” so that they dawn to understanding in the light of reason can be described as an act of piety.

While truths of the supraphysical worlds are not *directly* transmissible by physical plane languages, they can be symbolically or analogically presented. And they can be logically spoken *about*, because “nothing that is not logical can exist in the universe” (*Cosmo* 440). Spiritual realities as archetypes have their material counterparts, which may resemble them. The lower is *like* the higher. Thus Heindel writes that the Hermetic law of analogy is “the master-key to all mysteries” (*WD* 115). While the mystic may have certain beliefs, the occultist knows the reasons why those beliefs are (or are not) true and can enunciate them—logically or analogically—thereby enlightening others. Myth and poetry are particularly effective in the analogical presentation of spiritual verities. But they do not *directly* address the faculty of reason.

For Heindel and, he presumes, for students of the Rosicrucian Teachings, it does not suffice to be given exercises for soul growth and automatically perform them. The mind itself must be consciously engaged. It must know more than the *how*; it must know the *why* of what it does. The author of the *Web of Destiny* feels the need to study and deliberate on the “occult effect of the emotions engendered by esoteric exercises” (111). The mystic prays the “Our Father” with fervor. The occultist may do likewise. In addition, he needs to know that it is a petition to threefold God by the threefold spirit for the needs of the four lower human vehicles. Does he pray “better” for so knowing? Perhaps. At least his intellect is more apt to earnestly and fully participate in the prayer.

In her forward to *Teachings of an Initiate*, Augusta Foss calls the author “the Western Mystic” and then states that his last eight books “comprise the later investigations of this seer.” The occultist, like the scientist, investigates; the mystic does not. The occultist goes out to find, identify, and categorize; the mystic waits for inspiration, for the gift of spiritual understanding. The author’s wife is correct in saying that “seekers along [both] mystical and occult lines” will realize the value of his works. The mystic component is given by “words [that] reach to the very depth of the heart of the reader,” because

they are the expression of “the heart throb of this great lover of humanity.”

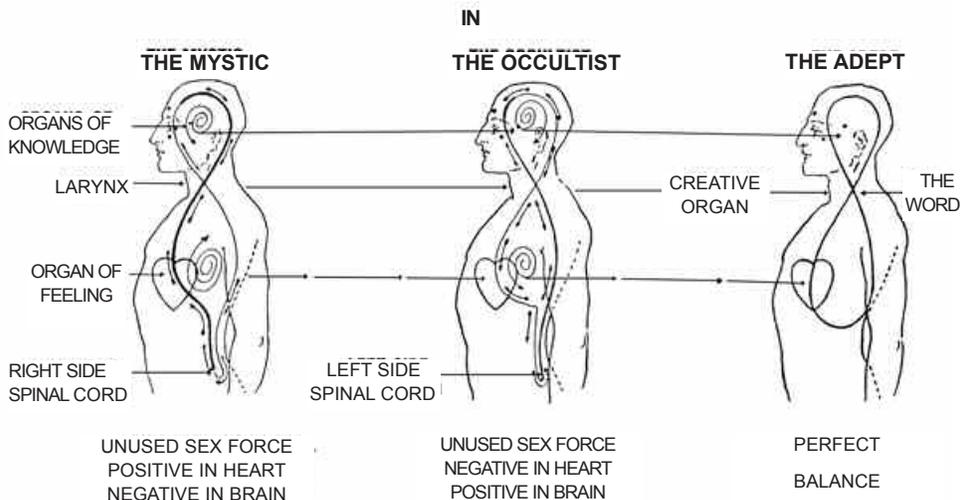
The other, occult, component of Heindel’s writing consists in the “wonderful truths he had garnered through his contact with the Elder Brothers” (*ibid*). The “heart throb” does not teach. It inspires, it can motivate, but it is not a seal on truth. One can be earnest and wrong. One can believe with all one’s heart and soul that a thing is true. That does not make it true.

The fervor of faith has a long history of militant evangelism and “righteous” persecution. Heindel was aware of this abuse. It gave rise to his poem “Creed or Christ” which precedes the *Cosmo* text. He sought to appeal to the reason of his reader by explicating occult truths which can illuminate creedal mysteries and explain life’s enigmas. Lacking occult knowledge, the seeker is confined to mystical faith—often in the face of seemingly contrary evidence—that life is purposeful, God is beneficent, and the human spirit is eternal. Esoteric knowledge obtained by investigation in the supersensible worlds and communicated logically delivers the skeptic and disbeliever from their ignorance and evangelizes their energies to live the life and prepare for first-hand confirmation of what their reason assents to.

Max Heindel had just such a redemptive mission: “It has been the writer’s work to investigate spiritual facts and correlate them with the physical in such a manner as would appeal to the reason and thus pave the way for belief....to give [occult] light to seeking souls on many of the mysteries of life” (*TI* 7). A mystery on which occult light is shed is no longer a mystery.

Max Heindel investigated. So should we. The unexamined life is not worth living. We are meant to know, for we are homo sapiens (*L. sapere*, taste, be wise), thinkers. What distinguishes mankind is mind. The word is derived from Sanskrit *manas*, and *man*, to think. The leader who guided the

THE PATH OF THE UNUSED SEX CURRENTS



Life energies in the occultist and mystic course the head and heart in opposite directions.

Atlantean survivors into the region of the Gobi desert was called the Manu. Ego identity first requires a mind. In some respects the mystic attempts to leap from the desire world into the world of life spirit, hurdling over the world of thought. Some of his flights are successful. But his sojourn in that universal realm is temporary. For he is human, a mind bearer. He must give birth to and evolve that mind.

“If we do not investigate, how shall we know?” (*TI* 17). Here speaks an occultist. And here speaks an enlightened one: “When we consult the occult records we find an interpretation which satisfies the heart without doing violence to the mind” (19, 35). The terms of this sentence could as easily be reversed: The occult records satisfy the mind without doing violence to the heart.

Readers of this study may well ask themselves why they are (if they are) members of the Rosicrucian Fellowship, or at least why they are drawn to the Teachings disseminated by it. Heindel has an answer: “[B]ecause at some time we have been dissatisfied with the explanations of the problems of life given elsewhere” (*TI* 33). We want, even require and demand, explanations. Parables do not suffice. They are milk. We need meat. We want “knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven” (33). However, we come to realize that knowledge by itself is not enough either. “Even the deepest knowledge along religious [mystic] or occult lines is not wisdom” (37). Only when knowledge has

wed love does it transmute to wisdom, whose essence is the Christ principle (*ibid*). Therefore the mission of the Rosicrucian Fellowship is to “promulgate a combined doctrine of the head and heart, which is the only wisdom” (*ibid*).

In the Aquarian Age “faith will be swallowed up in knowledge” (58), a phrase first introduced in the penultimate sentence of the *Cosmo*’s first two editions. In this dawning Age “faith must be rooted in reason,” so “both the mind and the religious instinct” are satisfied (56). As the herald of the Aquarian Age “the Rosicrucian Fellowship has been charged by the Elder Brothers with the mission” of leavening the world with “ideas” so that “conditions in the land of the living dead are not shrouded in mystery.” To the inquiring intellect, opaque mystery and ignorance are like a burial shroud that makes us blind sleepwalkers on earth (58).

As elsewhere, the word *mystic* does double duty in *Teachings of an Initiate* and is used where *occult* would better suit the context, as when Heindel proposes to shed “mystic light on the [First] World War” (66-95). The seer explains current conditions by citing his “occult investigations” (68) into the conflict’s origin: The old Romans had become the British and the old Carthaginians were collectively reborn as Prussians (69). Though the “great majority of mankind...scarcely ever thinks of the problems of existence [and]...have probably never given the great questions of life...any serious consideration,” the occultist does—and must (72).

The only admissible reading of *mystic* in the title of this three-chapter investigation on the war is as a cognate for *spiritual*, *intellectual*, *hidden*, or the like—in fact, *occult*. For the author’s purpose is to bring occult facts to bear upon the evident suffering and travail that the war unleashes, thereby justifying it in the sense that it is no longer inexplicable. Human behavior is often irrational. But the cosmos operates according to immutable logic, and occult knowledge confirms this wisdom. When we see that events have causes and that nothing is without a cause, that humans do and must experience the consequences of their own actions, then incentive can be given for altering human behavior, and the law of cause and effect, occultly considered, gives a powerful impulse for making the necessary changes that will improve the human condi-

tion.

Elsewhere Heindel uses *mystic* as a synonym for *occultist* when he states that “A Christian mystic takes a deeper and more far-reaching view” of Easter than most people” (108). Actually, it is the occultist, rather than the mystic, for whom this is true, as Heindel confirms. For whereas the mystic may have a flash of direct but ineffable recognition of the profundity of the Easter Mystery, the occultist author cites a profusion of theosophical references to elaborate the “more far-reaching view,” including Druids, Scandinavian Eddas, Indian Vedas, Egyptian Hermeticism, Greek Mysteries, and Native American serpent mounds (104-105).

Heindel wanted the mysteries opened up and spelled out so that spiritual causes could convincingly account for physical facts. This applies equally to soul development. The Rosicrucian Teachings present “the scientific [not mystical] method of spiritual unfoldment” (108). The Elder Brothers of the Rosicrucians have “originated a scientific method” to “develop the sleeping soul powers in any individual” (112). If the aim of the “Rosicrucian Mystery Teachings” is to “correlate scientific facts to spiritual verities” (*Cosmo* 52), it is clear that such teachings are designed to remove mystery. We enter not into the twilight crypt of a church where the mystic imagination can cut loose; we enter the high noon of clear intellect where reason brings light to what formerly was nebulous, hidden, or perplexing.

One would not call the Elder Brothers or, for that matter, higher initiates, mystics, precisely because they are enlightened as to the mysteries of the spiritual world. However, one could well call them occultists.

A publicly taught religion suffices the needs of most people. The precocity of some demands a higher teaching and a deeper doctrine. The Brothers of the Rose Cross “sanctioned the launching of the Rosicrucian Fellowship to promulgate this teaching” (127). What is taught is occult knowledge. Mysticism can be left to the Churches, who have produced stellar mystics, including St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, St. Francis, and hundreds more. (Continued) □

—C.W.