

**Introductory Core Concepts
Independent Study Module No. 12**

Acquiring First-Hand Knowledge

1. Instruments of the Ego:

It is the hallmark of a good artisan that he is very fastidious as to the quality and condition of the tools he uses, because he knows that the work depends as much upon their excellence as upon his skill. The Ego has several instruments which are its tools, and upon their quality and condition depends how much or how little it can accomplish in its work of gathering experience in each life.

Question 1:

[You are welcome to [e-mail](#) your answers and/or comments to us. Please be sure to include the course name and Independent Study Module number in your e-mail to us. Or, you are also welcome to use the [answer form below](#). (*Java required*) You will find the [answers](#) to the questions below in the next Core Concepts Independent Study Module.]

What are the Ego's instruments for acquiring first-hand knowledge? (*The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*)

2. Methods of Spiritual Endeavor:

The object of spiritual endeavor is the conquering of the lower nature—union with the Higher Self—but to be efficacious the method of seeking that union must be appropriate to the stage in evolution of the aspirant. Eastern methods are unsuitable and dangerous for Western people.

The Rosicrucian method of attainment differs from other systems in one special particular. It aims, even at the very start, to emancipate the pupil from dependence upon others, to make him self-reliant in the very highest degree, so that he may be able to stand alone under all circumstances and cope with all conditions. Only one who is thus strongly poised can help the weak.

The Rosicrucian Order was started particularly for those who must satisfy the reason before heeding the voice of the heart. Intellect imperiously demands a logical explanation of everything—the world mystery, the questions of life and death. Therefore, the Western Wisdom Teaching intends, first of all, to satisfy the aspirant for knowledge that everything in the universe is reasonable, thus winning over the rebellious intellect. When he can believe in his heart that which his head has sanctioned, he can start to live the life of purity and service which will unfold his latent spiritual faculties. His rate of unfoldment will depend upon his own efforts, and his ability to

maintain poise and self-control under trying circumstances will indicate the degree of his spiritual attainment.

Question 2:

How does the Rosicrucian method of attainment differ particularly from others? (*The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*)

3. The Value of Prayer:

The Leaders of humanity instituted **prayer** as a means of bringing pure and lofty thought to work on the vital body, and enjoined us to "pray without ceasing." The spiritual aspirant who is following the intellectual path particularly needs to cultivate the spirit of worship and adoration which is necessary for true prayer, and when upon the wings of love and aspiration, propelled by the intensity of his earnestness, he has soared to the Throne of the Father, there may come a time of sweet but silent communion more delightful than any other state or stage.

Question 3:

Give a brief analysis of the **Lord's Prayer**, pointing out the correlation of its parts to the different vehicles. (*The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception, (1) and (2)*).

4. Clairvoyance:

What a man sees depends upon the sensitiveness of his eye. Some people can distinguish objects at a distance which are invisible to other people. Artists perceive shades of color which ordinary people cannot distinguish and some people are color

blind; and there are those who cannot see at all—they are blind. The people who can see farthest or distinguish the most delicate shades of color are more clairvoyant, or clear-sighted, than the rest.

Thus, we may understand that a **clairvoyant** is a person whose sense of sight has become so extended that he perceives another world, which is invisible to most of us, and that he is able to see everything there. There are two kinds of clairvoyance, or spiritual vision, however: the positive and the negative. Positive spiritual vision is a definite faculty as real as physical sight and as necessary to perception of the spiritual worlds and to true insight into superphysical conditions as physical sight is indispensable to a comprehensive insight into material things. It is accomplished by living a life of purity and "loving, self-forgetting service to others," paying special attention to the eating of pure food, and to the exercising of the faculties of observation, discrimination, and devotion to high ideals. Thus the seven currents in the desire body are developed into powerful vortices, the creative force is raised to the head where the gap between the pituitary body and pineal gland is bridged, and the aspirant becomes positively clairvoyant, able to see into the spiritual worlds at will.

The student should understand, however, that the evolving of voluntary clairvoyance is an arduous task, and this faculty, consequently, is possessed by few, while negative clairvoyance, unfortunately, has been developed by many who had no high ideals to prevent prostitution of their faculty for money. The trained clairvoyant must have given proof of his

utter unselfishness, and he never exercises his faculty for personal gain or to satisfy mere curiosity.

Question 4:

How is positive clairvoyance attained? (*The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*)

5. Spiritual Exercises:

Two specific exercises, [retrospection and concentration](#), are given by the Rosicrucian School to the aspirant on the path of preparation. Both lead to the unfoldment of spiritual sight and power, the former being especially important.

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Question 5:

Give a brief description of the morning and evening exercises designed especially to aid in developing the latent spiritual powers inherent in each individual. (*The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, (1) and (2)).

6. Spiritual Teachers:

The Bible teaches us very clearly that we should try all spirits and judge them accordingly. If we do this, we shall never be deceived by self-styled teachers. The true Teachers, the [Elder Brothers](#), who are now preparing the conditions of evolution which are to prevail during the Jupiter Period, have the consciousness pertaining to that Period. Thus, they naturally and without effort use the external picture speech by which

they, when speaking, project pictures upon the consciousness of those whom they are addressing, and thereby at once give evidence of their identity.

The student should realize that no highly evolved teacher could afford to give his time and energy to the instruction of a single pupil, when he might just as easily teach a large number. Therefore, anyone who thinks he is being visited habitually by an Elder Brother as an "individual teacher" is being deceived. Self-reliance is the cardinal virtue which aspirants are required to cultivate in the [Western Mystery School](#). No one is allowed to lean on Masters, nor blindly to follow Leaders. The [Brothers of the Rose Cross](#) aim to emancipate the aspirants who come to them; to educate, to strengthen, and to make them co-workers. At most, they only advise and suggest when asked for assistance. The student will save himself from many pitfalls if he will bear these facts clearly in mind.

Question 6:

How may we recognize a true spiritual teacher? (The preceding paragraph contains all information required to answer this question but more on this subject can be found in [Letters to Students, by Max Heindel](#))

7. Initiation:

The general idea of [Initiation](#) is that it is merely a ceremony which makes one a member of a secret society; that it may be conferred upon anyone willing to pay a certain price, a sum of money in most cases.

While this is true of the so-called initiation of fraternal orders and also in most pseudo-esoteric orders, it is altogether an erroneous idea when applied to Initiation into various degrees of truly esoteric Brotherhoods, such as the [Rosicrucian Order](#).

Initiation is an inward experience, entirely separate and apart from any ceremonial whatever, and therefore, it is an absolute impossibility for anyone to sell it to anyone else. There is no golden key to spiritual attainment; merit alone counts. Initiation can positively never take place until the requisite inner development has made the aspirant ready to be shown how to use his accumulated power. Initiation changes a person's whole life. It gives them a confidence that they never possessed before. It clothes them with a mantle of authority that can never be taken from them. No matter what the circumstances in life, it sheds a light upon his or her whole being that is simply wonderful. You must have the soul power requisite for Initiation or no one can initiate you.

Question 7:

What is true initiation? ([The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception](#))

8. Study Guide Questions:

Complete [The Rosicrucian Mysteries Study Guide, Section 1](#)

9. Study Guide Questions:

Complete [Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception Study Guide, Section 17](#)

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Answers to [Core Concepts Independent Study Module No. 11:](#)

1. (a) The Materialistic Theory holds that life is a journey from the womb to the tomb; that mind is the result of certain correlations of matter; that man is the highest intelligence in the cosmos; and that his intelligence perishes when the body disintegrates at death.

(b) The Theory of Theology asserts that at each birth a newly-created soul enters the arena of life fresh from the hand of God, passing from an invisible state through the gate of birth into visible existence; that at the end of one short span of

life in the material world it passes out through the gate of death into the invisible beyond, whence it returns no more; that its happiness or misery there is determined for all eternity by its actions during the infinitesimal period intervening between birth and death.

(c) The Theory of Rebirth teaches that each soul is an integral part of God, enfolding all divine possibilities as the seed enfolds the plant; that by means of repeated existences in an earthly body of gradually improving quality the latent possibilities are slowly developed into dynamic powers; that none are lost by this process but that all mankind will ultimately attain the goal of perfection and reunion with God.

2. The varied phenomena of the universe support the idea that the path of evolution is a spiral. Observation shows that all things move in progressive cycles — the branch, the twig, the leaf, the seasons of the year; even the solar systems.

3. What we are, what we have, all our good qualities are the result of our own actions in the past, rather than the result of the whims of a capricious God. What we lack in physical, moral, or mental excellence may yet be ours in the future, any degree of development being possible to those who put forth sufficient effort.

4. Genius is extraordinary talent beyond that which is possessed by the ordinary individual, and was acquired by close application and hard work in many previous lives.

5. We are reborn into certain families and environments to obtain the necessary experiences to further our evolution.

6. Generally speaking, every Ego is born twice during the time the Sun is passing (by precession of the equinoxes) through one sign of the zodiac, and, in order to obtain all experience, it is reborn alternately in a male and a female body. Each person is born at the time when the position of the bodies in the solar system will give the conditions necessary to his experience and advancement in the school of life.

7. Alcoholic liquor was needed on account of its benumbing effect upon the spiritual principle in man, making it possible for him to know, evaluate and conquer the physical world.

Supplemental Reading Material:

I. Justice In The Aquarian Age

Every saint has a past. Every sinner has a future.
—Oscar Wilde

The Aquarian Age is an age of individual freedom and responsibility. The Aquarian Age government will not make laws that try to control the individual lives of people. Thus, there will be nothing in this category of laws in need of enforcing.

If people are trained in resonance [so that they can understand and sympathize with other people] and in logic, then they need only one law to govern their interpersonal relations, namely, "Do unto other as you would have them do unto you." In the Aquarian Age, people will recognize that just as they do not want anyone else interfering with their personal

freedom, so also they must not interfere with anyone else's personal freedom. People will recognize that just as they do not want others stealing their possessions, injuring them or dominating their lives, so also they must not steal from others, or injure or dominate others. When conflicts between people do arise, the people themselves should get together, discuss their differences, try to learn to understand the other's point of view, and look at the situation objectively, so that they can themselves arrive at a mutually satisfactory solution to their problems.

If some members of the society do persist in interfering with other people's freedoms, and if negotiations between the people involved do not resolve the problem, then the government may be forced to arrest the accused, carry on a trial, and [if guilt is proven] detain the criminal. In trials, the reconstruction of what happened will be facilitated by the development of etheric vision, which will enable people to read the records of the past which are stored in the reflecting ether. [See Max Heindel, "[The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception](#)"] Socratic questioning may be used to lead one who has been convicted to feel the hurt he caused others, to recognize the consequences of his actions, and to recognize what led him to commit the crime and what alternative ways he could have used to handle the situation. The convict may also be led to decide what he can do in order to make restitution for his criminal actions and then be encouraged to carry out the restitutions.

People commit crimes because their selfish desires [greed, anger, lust, desire for excitement, et cetera] are in control. If

through Socratic questioning they can be induced to look at situations intellectually, and to consider the feelings and rights of others and consequences of actions, then their minds and Egos can gain control of their lives, and crime will no longer be attractive.

References

—Heindel, Max. *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*.

II. Aquarian Methods of Healing

That on which the mind is constantly dwelling will inevitably be that which the man shall become.

—Annie Besant, *In the Outer Court*

In the Piscean Age, sickness is accepted as an act of God or a chance occurrence in nature. In the Aquarian Age, people will recognize that certain actions, feelings, and thoughts lead to disease, and they will determine what behaviors lead to what diseases. With the approach of the Aquarian Age, already a start has been made in determining the effects of various foods on the body, the effects of emotional stress on the body, the needs of the body for appropriate amounts of exercise and rest, and the need for cleanliness.

In the Piscean Age, the nature of a given person's illness often remained a mystery. With the approach of the Aquarian Age, scientific instruments are being developed and used for observing the functioning of the various parts of the body so that abnormalities in functioning can be detected. As the

Aquarian Age stimulates the development of etheric vision, and as etheric vision allows one to see through solid matter, people will become able to see at a glance what organs are diseased and what problems exist in the etheric energy currents which vitalize the various organs of the body. In the Aquarian Age, astrology will also be used as a means of determining the root causes of disease.

In the Piscean Age, people tend to have faith in their doctor and in the remedies which he gives them, and sometimes it is their faith which is the major curative factor. In the Aquarian Age, the people themselves want to understand the cause and nature of their disease so that they can make up their own minds as to what they need to do in order to recover.

In the Piscean Age, people tend to passively put themselves in the hands of the doctor and expect him to bring about a cure. The doctor obliges by giving drugs, which take control of parts of the body away from the Ego and force the body to carry out certain functions. Or the doctor may do massage or other manipulations which again force certain things to happen in the body. In the Aquarian Age, however, people will aim at self-control. People will learn to use their willpower to direct their minds to in turn direct their actions. People will learn to mentally control their feelings and to release inner tensions. People will learn to control their subconscious minds, which in turn direct the functionings of the various organs in the body. People will learn to direct the flow of etheric forces in their bodies, and to use these to aid in healing.

References

—Heindel, Max. *Astro-Diagnosis*.

III. Aquarian Mental Exercises

[The student] must adopt such a position that he may regard all his sundry experiences from a higher point of view.

—Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*

For those who wish to hasten their learning of the lessons of the Aquarian Age, two exercises have been given to humanity. One is called retrospection. The other is called concentration.

The exercise of retrospection is performed each night after the aspirant has lain down in bed. The aspirant relaxes his body, then reviews the events of the day in reverse order, starting with the events of the late evening and gradually proceeding in reverse order toward the things which were done in the afternoon, then those which took place in the morning, and back to the very moment of awakening. As he brings each scene to his mind he tries to feel the effects which his actions have had on other people. If his action caused someone pain, then he tries to feel that pain. If his actions gave someone joy, then he tries to feel that joy. He tries to see cause-effect relationships, and when he decides that certain actions have undesired effects, he resolves to reform his life.

While doing the exercise of retrospection it is important that the body be relaxed, because when it is tense the personal desires still have a grip on the body, and they will make it difficult for one to obtain a higher, impersonal, objective view

of the events of the day. The reason for reviewing the events of the day in reverse order is that this enables one to see first the effects and then the causes, which facilitates judging the desirability of the causative actions.

The exercise of retrospection helps one develop the Aquarian skill of self-evaluation, and thence self-control. It gives a growing understanding of cause-effect relationships and helps develop the Light within. The attempt to feel how one made others feel increases one's skill in resonance and aids in conflict resolution.

Because Aquarius is ruled by Uranus, which has an influence on the nerves in the body, one of the problems people will encounter in the Aquarian Age is nervous tension. There is stress associated with the freedom, exploration, and personal initiative which the Aquarian Age will foster. The exercise of retrospection, if done with the body relaxed, will gradually help one overcome nervous tension.

The exercise of concentration is performed in the morning at the very earliest moment after the aspirant awakes. If the body is comfortable he should at once relax and commence to concentrate. If the body is uncomfortable the aspirant may rise to relieve it ere he concentrates, but much of the efficacy of the concentration is lost by the delay. The aspirant then focuses his thoughts on some object, or some subject, or some image, or some quotation, and aims to unwaveringly hold it before his mind for about five minutes.

The exercise of concentration aids in the development of resonance if an object or a quotation was chosen for concentration. If mental images are created or some subject contemplated, creativity may be fostered.

References

—Besant, Annie. *Thought Power*. Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1973, pp. 71-93.

—Heindel, Max. *The Rosicrucian Christianity Lectures*.

—Heindel, Max. *Teachings of an Initiate*.

IV. Self-Control In The Aquarian Age

Of all the bonds that hold the world in chains

Man frees himself when self-control he gains.

—Goethe

The Aquarian Age is to be an age of individual freedom. The lives of people are to be freed from the domination of kings, priests, teachers, public opinion, archangels [national spirits], and astrological forces. Each person is to learn to control and direct his own life. Let us examine what is involved in getting control of ourselves.

It says in the Bible that "God is a spirit" [[John 4:24](#)] and that "God created man in his own image." [[Gen. 1:27](#)] Thus, man is a spirit. Each human spirit has built for itself [with some help] a mind, a desire body, a vital body, and a dense physical body. The mind can be used for reasoning and forming plans. In the desire body are built the desires, daydreams and emotional

feelings of the person. In the vital body sense perceptions are received, and habits and memories are stored. The dense physical body is the instrument through which the Spirit is able to interact with the solids, liquids, and gases of the physical world. It is the responsibility of the Spirit to learn to control its bodies.

One problem which the Spirit encounters in trying to control its bodies is that the bodies have certain limitations. A Spirit cannot make a dense body fly if that body does not have the needed wings or other mechanisms. To overcome such problems the Spirit needs to restructure the archetype of the body, which work is usually done in the interval between lifetimes on Earth when the Spirit has its consciousness focused in the higher worlds.

Another problem that the Spirit encounters in trying to control the bodies is that the bodies may be insensitive to the commands of the Spirit. For example, the bodies may have the needed structure to play beautiful and inspiring music on the piano, yet the Spirit may have difficulty in getting the bodies to obey its commands to do so. The fingers may stumble or not give the right touch to the keys on the piano. Practice is needed to overcome this type of difficulty.

Another problem which the Spirit encounters is that bodies that have been given the proper structure and sensitivity may yet cease to function properly, unless they are properly cared for. When the bodies cease to function properly the Spirit cannot as easily get them to obey its commands. Learning what the bodies need in order to remain healthy and exercising

the will needed to do what is known to be right will take care of this problem.

The bodies are also difficult to control because they have desires of their own which are contrary to the will of the Spirit. The bodies feel pleasure in wild, uncontrolled actions, feelings, and thoughts. The mind would rather wander than concentrate on solving some problem which the Spirit has set before it. The desires would prefer to react to hate with hate, rather than be subjected to the internal control necessary to turn hate into love so that love can be given out even though hate was received. The vital body and dense physical body are more comfortable doing what they are accustomed to doing, rather than being subject to the type of control needed to change their patterns of action. The bodies enjoy the sensual pleasures that can be obtained from alcohol and drugs, even though these take control of the bodies away from the Spirit. The bodies want sexual stimulation, though this uses up creative force which the Spirit wants to use to build the mind and make it function creatively. The bodies like comfort and rest, while the Spirit wants to gain experience. The bodies want to satisfy their own selfish needs and desires, whereas the Spirit grows by serving others.

Paul was aware of these things as he wrote: "Walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh...Now the works of the flesh are plain; immorality, impurity, licentiousness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like...But the fruit

of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." [[Gal. 5:16-23](#)]

What does the Spirit need to do to get its will to prevail over the desires of the bodies? The point to start in gaining control is with the mind. When the lower bodies are in control, they get the mind to rationalize and come up with reasons as to why they should get their way. The Spirit needs to insist that the mind think objectively and logically and cease its rationalizing. The Spirit needs to get the mind to learn to distinguish between desires of the lower bodies and goals of the Spirit. Once this distinction has been made, the Spirit can then obtain a mental commitment to plan to do only that which leads toward the goals of the Spirit. Then the desires and actions can be made to align with the mental commitment.

When the mind, under the direction of the Spirit, has made a resolution, then the resolution should be kept unless it is found to be in error. If the resolution was to attain some goal, slowness or delays or repeated failures should not be allowed to weaken one's determination. If the resolution was to perform some task for the benefit of a person or of society, the gratitude or ingratitude that one receives should not be allowed to influence one's actions.

Once a person has developed self-control, then he can decide for himself where he will go and what he will do. Then he will be able to say along with William Henley,

*I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*

V. Aquarian Age Allegories

An allegory is a study of some familiar [material or concrete] system, which by comparison with some less familiar [spiritual or abstract] system, can give one insights into the latter. Allegories will appeal to the Aquarian man because they help him develop and use his own reasoning powers to obtain a greater understanding of spiritual realities. Below are given some allegories for the reader's contemplation.

How the Oak Tree Grew

Once a little acorn fell to the ground. It was so little it did not even look at the world around itself, but just lay there curled up in its own little acorn fashion. Gradually, it became covered by leaves and other bits and pieces of things that float around in the air. Also the ground beneath it, when softened by rain, gave way and let the acorn sink down into it. As time passed, the acorn became dimly aware of itself. It also began to realize that its surroundings felt very stuffy and dark. It began to feel a need, more subconsciously than consciously, for light and freedom. It began to reach out. It, itself, did not know what direction to reach in, but when it made the effort to reach out, there were nature spirits which guided it in the right direction.

At last its tip emerged from beneath the ground. It looked around and was dazzled by the light and beauty of its surroundings.

"Ah," it said, "now I am enlightened. Now I can see all. What a wonderful and glorious state of existence. I now have reached the goal of my existence."

"No," said the nature spirits, "see that big tree over there. You must grow as large as that tree."

"But that is impossible," said the baby oak tree. "I can never grow to be that big. Even one of its leaves is bigger than I am. And look at its big thick trunk, its strong bark, and its thick limbs. Why, even if I grow as hard as I can all summer I will never reach that size."

So the baby oak sat there, discouraged, making no effort to reach what it considered an impossible goal, and its tiny leaves began to wither and fall limply down.

"But you must try," said the nature spirits. "The God in heaven would not give you an impossible task. He will probably help you."

"Well, I don't feel very well when my leaves are limp. Maybe I should give it a try," said the baby oak.

So he perked up. And God did send rain to the little oak when he needed it, and He did send him the strengthening and uplifting rays from the Sun. And the little oak grew all summer. It was, in fact, so busy growing that it had little time to worry about whether or not it would get as big as the big oak.

Fall came, and the little oak's leaves began to fall off. The little oak felt very sad about this.

"I worked so hard to grow all those leaves," it said. "How can I ever get anywhere if that which I have achieved is taken

away from me."

"Don't worry," said the nature spirits. "You will not lose anything that essential to your progress."

The little oak tree then went to sleep and slept all winter. In the spring when it awoke and looked around itself, it noticed an oak tree much smaller than itself which had just recently poked its head through the soil for the first time.

"Look how much bigger I am than that baby," said the little oak tree. "It is the one who needs to work hard at growing, not me."

So again it stopped making an effort to grow and let its new set of leaves, which were just coming out, droop and hang limply.

"But look at the great big oak," said the nature spirits. "You must not be satisfied until you are as big as it is, and even then you must not be satisfied. Even it has growing to do."

And so the little oak continued to grow, summer after summer. And it did become tall so that it could see far and wide over the countryside. And the little oak did become big and strong, and did gain the ability to produce many acorns itself and to shade and protect many smaller plants and animals under its broad and sturdy branches.

Overcoats and Firewood

Once upon a time there were two islands that were separated by an ocean. The island to the south was called

South Country. It had a pleasant climate and this was where most people lived. The island to the north was called North Country. It has a very, very cold climate, and people did not go into it unless they had some purpose. There was, however, a good reason for going into the North Country; namely, that in the North Country could be found precious jewels that could not be found anywhere else.

When people were to go from the South Country to the North Country, they would first get round-trip tickets for the boat ride across the ocean and back. On the ticket would be written both the time of departure and the time of return. During the boat ride they would each be fitted with a large heavy overcoat, a warm hat, and boots. They would also drink wine on the way across, which was supposed to keep their blood warm in the North Country. Unfortunately, the wine would also make them forget what they went to the North Country to get. They then would sometimes spend their time in the North Country playing games with one another, or gathering firewood [often much more than they would ever need for the time they were spending there]. At any suggestion that they gather jewels they would just laugh and say, "But jewels can't keep you warm. What do you want those cold little things for?"

The wine would also make them forget what their companions had looked like before they had put on their overcoats, hats, and boots, and they would begin to identify their companions by the overcoats, hats, and boots which they wore. If one of their companions took an earlier boat back than they did, they would often find his overcoat on the shore of the

ocean and then they would weep over it because it could no longer play games with them or help them gather firewood.

When time came for them themselves to return they would try to carry the firewood which they had gathered onto the boat. But the captain of the boat never allowed firewood on the boat. It wasn't a very large boat and there really wasn't room for both firewood and people. Also, the captain knew that there was no need for firewood in the South Country [although he had given up trying to argue the point with the travelers and now just told them it was against the law to bring firewood onto the boat].

When these forgetful travelers would arrive back in the South Country and when the effects of the wine would wear off, they would remember [with remorse] that they had set out to get jewels and had not gotten them. Then they would start preparing to set out again.

A Foggy Island

Someplace in the middle of the ocean there is a large island. In the middle of this island is a mountain. Surrounding the mountain are rolling hills, which make the traveler go up and down and up and down if he is to go toward the mountain. The climate is such that most of the time there is dense fog along the coast and for a considerable distance inland. But the air does gradually clear as one gets closer to the mountain. The reason people are interested in this island is that on top of the mountain is a magic castle and all who enter it see wonderful visions and attain wisdom concerning all things.

At any given time there are usually many travelers on the island, all aiming at reaching the mountain top. They come in boats from all over the world, land somewhere on the coast, and then travel inland by foot.

The main problem is that because of the fog, the travelers often get lost. Some travelers are not aware that the magic castle is on a mountain. They tend to wander aimlessly, hoping that by chance they will someday bump into the castle. Since they tend to take the easiest paths in their aimless wanderings, they tend to follow the valleys between the hills which surround the mountain. These valleys go in circles around the mountain, and these wanderers do not get very far very fast. It is said, however, that those following the valleys do gradually get closer to the mountain, somewhat in the same way as a microbe following a groove on a phonograph record would gradually get closer to the center of the record. This path takes so long, however, that even among the first travelers who landed on the island, none going this route has yet reached the castle.

Some travelers do believe that the castle is on a mountain, but they are not aware of the many hills surrounding the mountain. They think that to get to the top of the mountain all they need to do is to always travel in the direction in which the land rises upward. Their problem is that when they get to the top of a hill they sometimes think that they are on top of the mountain itself, and these they stop. They furthermore tell everyone within listening distance that they have reached the top of the mountain and have become all wise, and they sit

there feeling superior not only to those in the preceding valley but also to those in the next valley toward the mountain.

As the wind blows the fog around, occasionally a clear space or channel occurs in the air temporarily. If someone is alert at such times, he may see as far as the next hill, or even [once in a great while] as far as the mountain itself. If he then walks firmly in the direction of his vision, he may make considerable progress before the sense of the direction in which he must go again fades from his mind.

When one has had such a vision, he may call out directions to all those within listening distance, so that they also may go toward the mountain. When this happens, some of the neighbors do not listen because they think that since they cannot see through the fog, no one else can either, and thus they do not think one who says they saw is worth following. Some do follow the directions they hear called out with the attitude of "Let's try it and see if it helps." If they do move toward the mountain, and if they are observant, they can notice the fog getting slightly less dense. A problem encountered by those who are trying to follow someone else's direction is that, not being in precisely the same place as the one giving the directions, they find that what he says does not always apply to them and they may end up going astray.

Sometimes someone gets a glimpse of the mountain and the way to get there, and then writes down specific instructions as to how to get to the mountain. These may get passed from person to person and sometimes even end up on the opposite side of the mountain from where they originated. Then people

following the instructions, to their surprise, find themselves back on the coast instead of at the mountain.

The travelers who have reached the mountain top often set lights up there, hoping that these lights will shine through the fog and help guide the rest of the travelers. The more travelers who reach the mountain top and set up lights, the stronger the mountain top shines and the deeper the light is able to penetrate the fog. But the light tends to be diffused and scattered by fog, so the travelers in the fog still have a hard time telling what direction they should go to reach the source of the light.

Some people have thought of another method by which all travelers who have not yet reached the mountain top might be helped. They suggest that all those at the coast might join hands and form a great big circle that completely surrounds the island. Then they could gradually make the circle smaller by drawing their hands together and occasionally letting a person step inwards and rejoining their hands behind him. Thus the circle would gradually get smaller and smaller and all would then necessarily get closer and closer to the mountain. A few attempts have been made in this direction, but so far the attempts have been unsuccessful because the travelers do not have the patience to stand in place while the circle is forming. And I would guess that even if the circle did get formed some would say that even if the circle did get formed some would say that those next to them were moving too slowly and they would break out of the circle and rush blindly forward. But we should not give up hope. Some day, after they have wandered

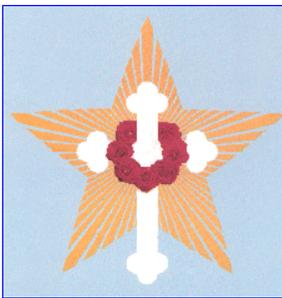
blindly long enough, they may at last be willing to form the circle and stay in it until they have reached the mountain.

Supplemental Reading Material Reference: [The Aquarian Age](#), Elsa M. Glover, PhD

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