

KNOW THYSELF

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Know Thyself can be an easy phrase to repeat, and it may suffer from over-familiarity, so that we miss its true depths. Grand Councilor Michael Shaluly considers the journey that humanity has traveled with this injunction, and how it has guided us, and still does today.

A Seeker glanced eastward to the rising sun and found awe and mystery and love in one moment. This cosmic work of divine inspiration was feeding the soul a full dissertation. Whispering wordlessly from the depths, consciousness had realized itself.

The above expression defines a moment when one is touched from within to follow the way of the heart. For centuries the mystery schools have been a place for mystics to study and follow these urges of their inner voice. Historians relate that in the ancient mystery schools of Greece, above the portal of Apollo at Delphi was inscribed the injunction “Know Thyself.”

These two words travel through time and give us pause even to this day. What might the author of this directive have meant to convey to the world at the time? Was this philosopher aware that these two

simple words would travel to all corners of the world, and survive to make us ponder their meaning so many centuries later? Pause for a moment now, and observe what these words create within you.

The Quest for Self Discovery

From our first moments of the recognition of self and the beginnings of our conscious existence, to the present day, we have shown a ceaseless and continual desire for self-discovery. What drives this desire? Where does it come from?

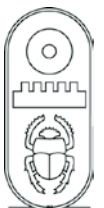
From the beginning of our first attempts at civilization to the modern day, we have demonstrated a powerful yearning to understand our relationship with all things, and indeed, with ourselves. It doesn't matter that we may have been wearing white robes in an ancient desert village, or a suit in the middle of a glistening modern city. Each of us has experienced, and continues to experience, the urge to advance towards a greater “something.”

Legend has it that when humanity first became self-aware, one of our predecessors raised his or her arms in adoration to the rising sun, giver of all life. Turning to watch the life-giving rays advance upon the firmament, there before our seeker was his or her shadow, which formed a cross. Thus, our Rose Cross was born, as was humanity's quest to understand, not only creation, but also the movement of our consciousness within it.

Centuries later the sages of old passionately labored to assist humanity to see beyond our difficult physical existence. In so doing, they promoted an exploration of self in conjunction with scientific inquiry, for they knew that the contemplation of consciousness was vital to our existence. They knew that humanity is interconnected with all things.



Partially reconstructed Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Photo from the Rosicrucian Archives.



Long before the masses would accept it, these mystics understood that our planet elegantly spun through space in rhythm with our vast universe, and that consciousness had become aware of, and was a part of, this grand movement and unity. They were keenly aware of the harmonious balance of give and take that breathes animation into all things. Through these mystics, the ancient mystery schools were born into a world that, to this day, thirsts for knowledge that will lead to Peace Profound.

These mystics of old continue to reach down through time to give us more than contemplative statements for us to peruse. Their remaining works speak to us now as they did then, and allow us to observe the advancement of consciousness through the history of humanity.

Think about what life must have been for human beings when we first experienced an awareness of self. All that surrounded us must have been mysterious and beyond comprehension. For the first time, we would have asked ourselves “Why am I here? How am I here?”

The great mysteries of birth and death, and of our temporal existence, came into our consciousness. Natural occurrences such as night and day, thunder and lightning—all these may have been viewed as terrifying, inexplicable events. Perhaps to make sense of the strange world that surrounded us, we attempted to explain these phenomena through fanciful tales, a multiplicity of gods, or by other means. But the power of thought is a driving force behind our conscious evolution and comprehension of all things, and therefore, over time, science and understanding began to develop. As our understanding of physical phenomena increased, so also did our knowledge of, and answers to questions about, physical phenomena. As we freed ourselves from some of our fears and physical distractions, we gradually developed more time for reflection upon our conscious existence.



Spiral Galaxy M101, NASA and ESA

Development of the Mystery Schools

The great mystery schools, of which our present-day Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, is an integral part, developed around this evolution of conscious understanding. These schools were a natural progression born of love and the desire *to be*, or *to know*. Many great scientific discoveries were a direct or indirect result of the workings of these mystery schools, but all who crossed their portals shared a common purpose: to pursue the inner urge to communicate with God, and to unveil those great mysteries of our conscious existence—the mysteries of life and death.

Unlike research of a physical nature, however, where there is provable and measurable data, the quest for inner unfoldment was not so easily defined. Much of this work focused upon individual experiences, inspiration, and intuition. How does one define the invisible? Even though each of us can realize that our thoughts are invisible, we also know with certainty that they exist, and we know they are powerful. In fact, we know that while we are conscious, we cannot escape thought.

Yet, there have been many forces throughout time that wanted to tell others how to think, why to think, and desired to exert control over the masses. As a result, mystical work was often consigned to a fringe element in many societies and was

shunned by many. For this reason, the mystics of the past and the mystery schools themselves often had to function secretly to avoid persecution. For those ready to embark upon this path, this did not matter, for the desire to be aware of the greater, invisible self within was an unavoidable certainty.

Though often functioning at great risk, the mystery schools consequently served an invaluable purpose throughout history, just as they do today. Even in the present, many individuals are impelled by the great whisperings of self, but know not how to pursue the answers. Hence, many conceal the most beautiful part of themselves with outer stimulation to keep the mind occupied. When the time comes, the consciousness of these individuals will pause and listen as the quiet, calm power of the small voice within reveals itself. They will then follow the path pursued by our mystic ancestors.

The Journey of Humanity

This is our journey, the journey of humanity, and though filled with the harshness that stems from misunderstanding and ignorance, it is nonetheless a beautiful voyage towards a reunion with the God of our Hearts. It is a journey to indeed know ourselves, for only from ourselves can we attain true peace and true joy. If we are unhappy, it comes only from within ourselves.

Conversely, if we are joyous, this too comes from within us. What greater good can we do than to learn the ways of God, that breath of life that inspires each and every moment that gives us life? The spark of life within us comes from our breath and contains all that we need for a fulfilling life. The quiet, sweet, and calm urgings of the subtle voice from within are now stronger in our world than they have ever been.

Humanity's quest continues to define itself, and there is a realization among many that there is more to life than our outer surroundings. The journey to find inner growth has begun, and great questions and



Overlooking the Delphi theater and Temple of Apollo. Photo from the Rosicrucian Archives.

their answers rest upon *you*, the seeker. Driven by conscience, the voice of self, calm and unwavering, will remain strong and unmoved as your guide.

With a glimpse of this inner beauty through communion with self, darkness will be dispelled, and a greater light will be seen. Through this effort, you will find others of like mind who can be strong arms to lean on for support and guidance. Just as when the words "Know Thyself" were first inscribed in ancient Greece, the mystery schools are alive as an avenue for us to find spiritual and mystical understanding.

Your eyes are the eyes of the beholder, and as you journey inward, it is the human soul that will become brighter as an awe-inspiring wonder. The hand of the architect of time is absent there. Age will be replaced by wisdom; darkness replaced by understanding. In the face of adversity, words of inspiration will greet you.

We are the seekers, all of us, and we are now at the Portal of the Temple, guided by the sweet voice of conscience. Just as the sages of old, we also are building a grand and beautiful temple for others to pursue. May we go hand in hand gracefully and with loving thoughts, and present to the world that eternal request that leads to self mastery: Know Thyself.

