Chapter 57

Rosicrucianism in the Contemporary Period in Norway

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Modern Rosicrucian orders, many of which can be said to be children of *fin de siècle* occultism and Theosophy, have been treated in some Norwegian scholarly works and academic studies on topics relating to esotericism, Theosophy, occultism, and the New Age (see for example Gilhus & Mikaelsson 1998: 40; Winje 1999: 214–217 and Løken 2006). These publications and studies have mainly focused on either modern Rosicrucianism generally, and/or the Rosicrucian Order AMORC specifically, whereas a complete survey of the modern Rosicrucian milieu in Norway seems to be still lacking. Consequently, this contribution is mainly based on written and oral primary sources kindly provided by insiders.

My point of departure is in accordance with Massimo Introvigne (2006), who treats Rosicrucian orders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as autonomous organisations, brought into existence following the occult and spiritual revival in the late nineteenth century. None of these orders can lay claim to a continuous existence since the early seventeenth century (Introvigne 2006: 1018), which we may call the Rosicrucian period in the most restricted sense. Thus, the Rosicrucian landscape can be portrayed as having two distinct manifestations: Rosicrucianism in the historical (narrow) and the Rosicrucian tradition in the modern (broad) sense. It is primarily the latter that will be the focus of this chapter.

A natural starting point and main topic of this account is the Antiquus Mysticusque Ordo Rosae Crucis, or Rosicrucian Order AMORC, founded in 1915 by Harvey Spencer Lewis. AMORC is currently the largest modern Rosicrucian order in the world (Melton 1986: 70 and 1986: 72), a fact which is probably reflected in the Norwegian context: Approximately 500 of the 1,200 Scandinavian AMORC members are Norwegian. AMORC’s history and situation in Norway will be presented chronologically, followed by the organisational implications of the case and legal action against the order’s third Imperator, Gary L. Stewart, with the emergence of a new Rosicrucian body in Norway: Den Norske Orden av Rosen og Korset (NORK, i.e., The Norwegian Order of the Rose and Cross), closely affiliated with Stewart’s Ancient Rosae Crucis (ARC). The presentation
will conclude with a brief exposition of a few minor modern Rosicrucian orders which have relatively recently announced their presence in Norway (in the sense that they have members or charters for operation in Norway). Due to their short history as part of the Norwegian religious landscape, their modest size, and the dearth of primary sources, these latter will be treated somewhat superficially. It should also be noted that there may be smaller Rosicrucian orders present in Norway which are not mentioned here.

Many modern Rosicrucian orders in Norway seem to treat their Rosicrucian heritage as being linked to a primordial wisdom tradition, the Rosicrucian manifestos in the early seventeenth century being only one of many manifestations of a purported ageless wisdom. Consequently, the emic understanding of the Rosicrucian tradition can be perceived as a version of the topos of the *philosophia perennis*.

A tentative definition of modern Rosicrucian orders, used to demarcate the currents presented in this article, can be stated as follows: An esoteric and initiatory order drawing primarily (and explicitly) upon Rosicrucianism in the narrow, historical sense as part of its self-designation and of its presentation of its historical or traditional background (and often, but not necessarily, suggesting that this movement was only one of many manifestations of a primordial wisdom tradition).

This definition excludes from the present survey orders belonging primarily to other Western esoteric traditions, which use self-designations related to the rose and the cross. Examples of such orders will be mentioned at the end of this chapter.

**The Rosicrucian Order AMORC**

It is difficult to say when the first Norwegian members joined the Rosicrucian Order AMORC. The present Grand Lodge in Scandinavia has no record of this, there being no administration in Scandinavia before 1920. Due to the early establishment of a Grand Lodge in Scandinavia, it is, nevertheless, safe to acknowledge the Scandinavian Grand Lodge's assumption that the first Norwegian member must have been registered quite early in AMORC's history. It is quite probable that there were Norwegian members who subscribed to study materials directly from the American mother organisation.

The first Grand Lodge in the Nordic countries was established in early September 1920 in Denmark, when Carli Andersen brought home a charter from the USA. It is impossible to state the number of Norwegian members affected by this change in administration, but the present Grand Lodge believes