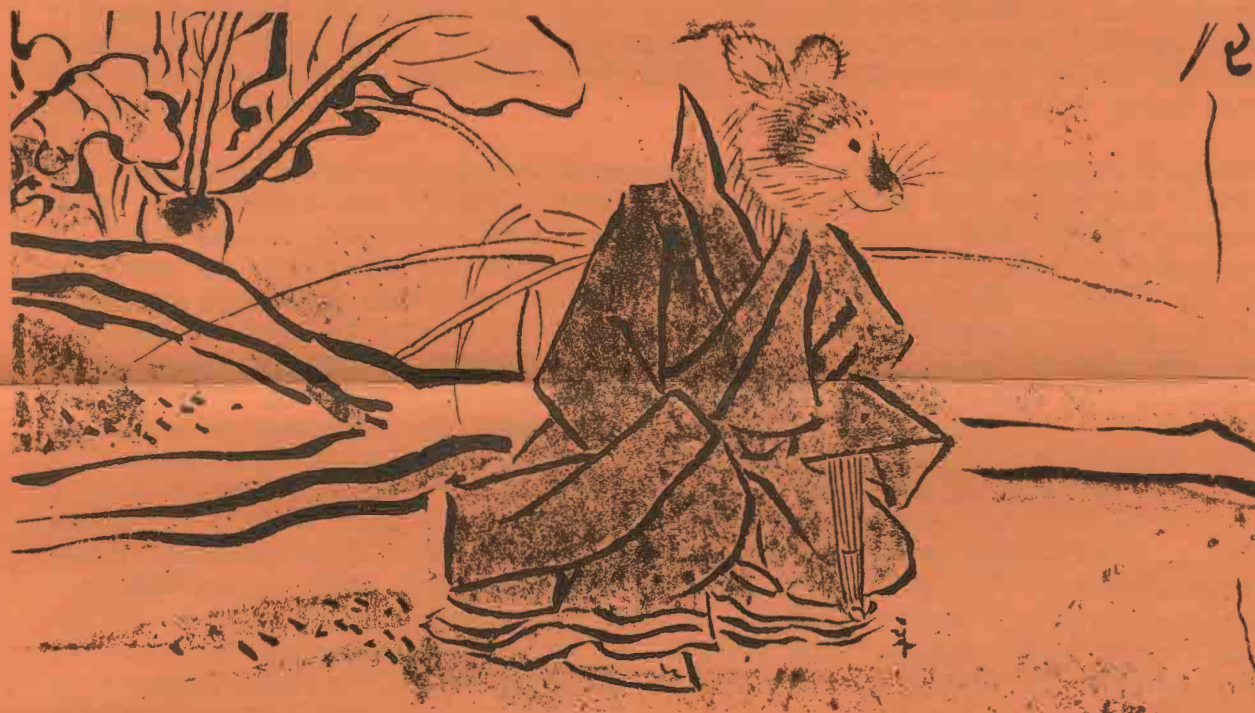


THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

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CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN

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THE YEAR OF THE RAT

Dear Friends,



In the Chinese system of astrology, 1984 is the year of the wood-pine rat. According to the sexagenary calendar, the rat rules every twelfth year in various combinations with the five elements, and the combination of five times twelve in terms of years is a complete life cycle. Even today, in Japan the sixtieth year of a person's life normally marks the retirement age. At this time, the fortunate survivor receives a red cap, is born again, and can do no wrong. Also in the Chinese system, the birth animal has similar meaning with the sun sign in Western astrology. Those born in 1900, 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, and 1984 came into this world in a rat year.

The picture at the top of this page is from an antique, Japanese scroll of the Oriental zodiac. The rat is shown bundled up in a monk's robe with a benevolent smile because he is a fortunate symbol. He corresponds to the sign Aries in the Western zodiac. He is usually referred to as "the Honorable Mr. Rat," or "the Benevolent Rodent."

No one would think of setting a trap for this august visitor. They would more likely leave some choice bits of food around to lure him into the house. Impossible as it may seem, the rat is a direct descendant of the elephant god of India who was the patron of wealth. In Japan, he is associated with Daikoku, a folk deity of prosperity who stands on rice sheaves and is usually accompanied by a rat. The philosophy involved was very obvious to the Oriental mind. Rats only gather where food is abundant and the living quarters adequate. If a rich man loses his fortune, the rats leave with it.

Nineteen eighty-four, the rat is accompanied by the symbols of wood and pine. The element of wood is associated with housing, and therefore suggests protection and the symbolism of the home. The pine stands for courage. It withstands the inclemency of weather and remains green even in the midst of winter. It is strong, upright, and true; therefore appropriately symbolizes right principles, integrities, honor, and, if necessary, self-sacrifice. It is the incorruptible wood. These attributes are emphasized in the affairs of all individuals born in a rat year. They promise that the persons which they rule will meet the challenge of 1984 with dignity and resolution, and their financial resources will be such that the rat will either stay in or move in.

This is also a year in which the qualities of the rat will be prominent in world affairs. Food will be a major concern and hungry nations must be assisted to secure the necessities of life. Living wages must permit families to have adequate food and shelter so that a kindly rat can move in. Leaders of nations must live up to the pine tree. They must support principles even though this may mean considerable sacrifice. Almost all must work together to prevent bankruptcies from burdening society. In India, a picture of Ganesha and his rat is placed in the window upside down if the store is bankrupt. Pine is a very important natural resource in a wood year. It is a renewable natural resource, but the Honorable Mr. Pine must not be imposed upon. Whenever a tree is cut down, one must be planted. The forests must endure for they also shelter many species of living things which have a divine right to survive.

The moral symbol of the rat in the rich man's house is a gentle reminder that wealth must always be shared with the needy. For the rat to show his head is like a wealthy man exhibiting his luxuries. He may not mention them but they are noticeable, and this display can lead to tragic consequences. We can think of the rat as the eternal proletarian, always struggling to survive. Western seamen recognize the intuitive powers of the rat. They know that it will leave a sinking ship while the vessel is still in port. Many sailors will not sign for a voyage unless the rats are contented. In the West also, these rodents have inspired cleanliness and sanitation--in this way, at least, contributing to the salvation of all that lives. There is an old fable which also may have immediate relevance. A family that had rats in the house bought a cat, which however was too lazy and well fed to be interested in the rats. The family finally bought a rat trap, but the first thing they caught was the cat. Politicians take note. The Western sign of Aries presents three aspects, and the rat also has three basic attributes.

We think of the ram as defensive and protective. Sheep suggest subser-
vience or regimentation; and lambs, gentleness and purity. Large rats can
be dangerous and are associated with wharfs, ships, and dilapidated districts.
Those of moderate size are most likely to appear in private dwellings or
stores where food is sold. In spite of a bad press, mice are still regarded
with some favor, especially by children. When I was quite small, I had a
little white mouse for a pet and he was a thing of joy for some time. In
the Japanese Buddhist ceremony of releasing small animals, children often
liberate their pet mice.

The year 1984 reveals the continuing tendency of nations invading each
other's countries and pillaging their natural resources but, in the year
in which the pine is prominent, benevolent factors will intercede to pro-
tect the needy and the exploited. The pine tree is now one of the most
important Christian religious emblems. It stands for survival against
the encroachments of circumstance. It supports the further spreading
of religious principles throughout the world. It is faith standing firm
against fear. According to the Oriental symbolism, the present year
signifies an awakening of faith in the midst of trouble. In the little
picture at the head of this letter, the smiling rat wears the robes of
a monk which also indicate that religion has converted the rat to a
messenger of good will that will find his way into homes which for many
years have been afraid to let him in. We have come to think that the
stranger is an enemy, but the Good Book tells us that we should share
our goods with those in trouble. It is all rather confusing, but it
seems to sum up in a more or less inscrutable Oriental way that it will
be a very good year for good people and difficult for those who create
difficulty for others.

In Western symbolism, a rat year could be a time when subversive forces
attempt to invade and undermine honorable institutions. It suggests the
Mafia, the criminal underworld, the corruption of our homes, the spread
of narcotics and alcoholism, and the terrifying conspiracies of nations.
The rats are carriers of plagues of every kind. In the East however,
the viewpoint is quite different. Dilemmas are opportunities in disguise.
We will always have some problems, but a friendly house mouse is enduring.
Man himself has created a way of life which has resulted in corruption
and decay that must be scavenged or society will perish. In the year of
the rat, we resolve with firmness of spirit to correct the causes of
pollution on every level of our human relationships. If we accept the
challenge which the rat signifies, there will be no cause for worry. As
suggested in the picture, the rat is also a minister of the Universal
Truth. You can tell by his smile that he loves us all, after all.

Most sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall

Manly P. Hall





PRS LIBRARY BOOK SALE

March 10, Saturday / 9:30 A.M.-4:00 P.M.
March 11, Sunday / 9:30 A.M.-2:00 P.M.

This sale presents an opportunity to dispose of surplus books which could be helpful to others.

Manly P. Hall personally goes through all the books that come in for the Book Sale. Some are saved for the PRS Library, some will be sold, and some interesting duplications will be put up for auction. We have a copy of *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* from the original printings of 1928 in excellent condition. Mail order bids may be submitted. The retail price on this volume, when available, is approximately \$750.

This is our one sale of the year and every cent is used for the Philosophical Research Society--in the library, the auditorium, or for helping to defray expenses in the landscaping of the premises.

We are asking for your help. At the same time, you may very well be helping yourself to clear space for other things--like more books from the March Book Sale.

Bring books at any time. Contact Pearl Thomas for further information at 663-2167.