

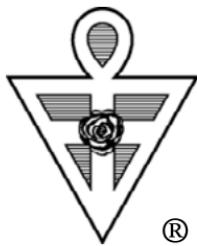
CLAUDIO MAZZUCCO



I SAW YOUR LIGHT FROM AFAR

I SAW YOUR
LIGHT
FROM AFAR

Claudio Mazzucco



The Supreme Grand Lodge of the
Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis



The words in the title, taken from one of the Rosicrucian Order's rituals, represent one of the main themes of this book. The Light is that of seekers, who, uniting themselves within a spirit of fraternity, walk together in search of an even greater Light. Fraternity, rather than a utopian ideal with no relevance to the reality of our lives, is a necessary requirement for humanity's evolution on this planet. There is no evolution of an isolated individual, only of groups, systems, and communities.



The figure on the cover is based on the Fool as expressed in the Tarot in the Rosicrucian Tradition as a tool for the unfolding of consciousness. This figure serves as a medium of expression for the Overself of Being, the Superconsciousness, the Divine Self, the boundless Light, and the beginning of all life. This Light appears to us as the active principle of being which precedes all visible manifestations, always youthfully unspent and always standing on the precipice as the boundary to manifestation. The Absolute can only be expressed in the terms of our own personal experiences and imprints by us and is therefore represented as a human being. As such, Claudio Mazzucco, as the worldwide director of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, lets us share in his intuitions and longings, in which wise people are able to recognize something higher, that Light that one always sees only from afar... from a distance, because it precedes one's own experiences and is at the same time the goal of our common journey. That higher spiritual Light, which always shines to us from afar, is That which was, is, and will always be, the immortal principle, which exists in eternity behind all forms of existence, which precedes all being and establishes it.





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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

This book is a collection of messages that I wrote during the years in which I served the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis as Grand Master. I feel the need to clarify immediately that a Grand Master in the tradition of the Rose Cross as perpetuated by AMORC is not an enlightened being, that is, not a person capable of giving all the answers to the big questions of life. I hope I haven't disappointed you with this statement; what I mean is, you will not find in this book imposing magical formulae or definitive answers on why we are here, nor what the meaning of the pain and suffering in the world is, nor the meaning of love as a universal law. Instead you will find the reflections of a Rosicrucian student, as members of the Order prefer to call themselves.

To reflect is to consider the thoughts we are having at a given moment. As a student I certainly have more doubts than certainties, but I believe that a healthy and mature spirituality is nourished by this, much as science is. Also, I believe we now have all that is to be written, said, or thought in the field of spirituality. But I am sure that not all that has been written, said, or thought has been

made into a reality. As human beings we must act according to a new ethic, based upon a new vision of reality regarding what the universe has placed in the world and generated on this planet (and who knows how many other planets?) – life. This life seeks to perpetuate itself through an infinite number of processes, expressing intelligence and wielding incredible power. We may disregard this observation, but nature, for her part, has no regard for our beliefs. These messages deal with different aspects of life while seeking to restore community life and trust between people. We, in AMORC, are an initiatic community, but the ultimate objective of our teachings is to have us realize in the depth of our hearts that we belong to the human family, and to have us become worthy to sit at its table and share its fruits of knowledge and affection.

One final point: these messages were written monthly and are not necessarily linked, so they can be read in any order. Also, in the messages you will find some terminology such as “Imperator” or “Sanctum” that are specific terms we use exclusively within the Rosicrucian Order. I am sure this will cause no great difficulty. I hope this book will be of some use to you.



A handwritten signature in cursive script, followed by a graphic element consisting of a grid of lines with diagonal strokes through them.

Claudio Mazzucco
Imperator



APRIL 2009 THE MYSTICAL PATH

Socrates said: “the unexamined life is not worth living.” We believe that it is an intrinsic trait of human nature to strive for knowledge and that this manifests itself to a greater or lesser degree in different soul personalities, according to their stage of evolution. Mysticism, in this context, is an inner pathway, arising as a response to the ever-increasing calls of the soul.

As we gradually grow in awareness about our own nature and expand our understanding of who we are, we discover an increasingly harmonious response within us to those impulses urging us to become ever more curious about the mysteries of life, the beauty and harmony, which in turn triggers a virtuous, self-perpetuating circle. We become increasingly aware that there are truths that go against everything that may appear obvious to us, and we learn that logic and rationality are only one aspect of human nature. However, on this

journey, we are also challenged by aspects of daily life which, for a number of reasons, may not reflect what is actually happening within us. We may, at some point in our lives, no longer appreciate certain relationships, certain environments, or certain ways of “passing the time.” We may also feel uneasy about the pace, daily commitments and worries that prevent us from dedicating our energies to the things we consider truly important. We are being influenced by the material dimension and have a sense of not being able to escape it. We would like to be, as Plato says in *Theaetetus*, more like philosophers who sit in meditation than like mounted archers who run around shooting arrows.

The Mystical Path proposed by Rosicrucian mysticism does not intend to fuel the idea that a person, in their personal quest, should turn away from life, family, and friends, and become a recluse. Far from it. Rosicrucian mysticism is like a continuous breath of fresh air, its purpose being to reignite the fire that is partially extinguished. This fire can ignite certain aspects of our personality, purify those aspects and restore those energies that are an inherent part of us. When this internal movement is triggered, the Mystical Path starts to slow the internal rhythm down, enabling each Rosicrucian student to “see” more clearly whatever might otherwise have been overlooked, preventing them from going through life without recognizing it.

As they engage more and more in the practice of self-inquiry, with a high degree of sensitivity, the Rosicrucian, slowly and harmoniously, leaves behind those anxieties that are typical of life, those false hopes, those patterns that cause human relationships to decline, the passing of time that only seems to increase boredom. Thus, they restore the quality of interpersonal relationships, strengthening their bonds with life and with the world, becoming agents of divinity as they begin to substitute the mere theory of spirituality with the actual practice of a spiritual life. During this process, the soul is nourished, transmuting the personality of the individual who, cherishing it, reaches a greater inner maturity while things appear to be moving more slowly.

To quote the great Italian poet Eugenio Montale (1896-1981), we observe how “obscure things tend towards clarity.” One of the aspects that becomes increasingly clear as we proceed along the Path is that prosperity is a condition linked to awareness. Humanity’s state of mind determines its reality. Even the possibility of allowing those energies available to us to flow is linked to the degree of awareness that characterizes our level of personal evolution. We slowly let go of the inclination to think that happiness is a condition belonging to the future: when I have more money, when I have more time, when I am retired, when I have a bigger house, etc. The slowing of this pace within us allows us to “see” the things we already have, enabling us to plan

a future without far-fetched, fantastical ideas or out-of-proportion illusions. We have a saying that a Rosicrucian student keeps their head among the stars and their feet planted firmly on the ground. This expression clearly explains the position we must take in the face of life. We must recognize that we are already, here and now, bearers of a certain degree of realization, nurturing within us gratitude towards the universe and the God of our Hearts, manifesting compassion towards all creatures (remembering those who are in physical and emotional pain), and always expressing trust in life and humanity, must constitute the conduct of every student who aspires to great inner revelations.

Reading the history of Rosicrucian mysticism, we naturally draw parallels between 1614, the year of publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, and our present time. The seventeenth century was a critical period for Europe. The birth of science, as we know it today, occurred during that time; the discovery of the New World was relatively recent; printing was spreading knowledge like never before; and religious wars were raging, bringing widespread famine and death. Undoubtedly, we have come a long way since then. Many negative aspects have been overcome, yet certain experiences persist and carry a heavy burden of anguish and insecurity.

The response of the Rosicrucians at that time was the publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis* and

the *Confessio Fraternitatis*, reminding people of the need to place their lives under the auspices of knowledge and fraternity among people of good will. This invitation has been repeated ever since by our Order (like the manifesto *Positio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*) and we, Rosicrucians of the twenty-first century, carrying our history in our hearts and looking to the horizon, must spread thoughts of peace, harmony, and prosperity to the whole of humanity. To this end we are reminded today of the pledge we made to ourselves before joining the Order, when we embarked on the path of self-knowledge. Let us draw strength from the fraternal bonds that unite us and spread the light of knowledge of which AMORC is a worthy heir for the world!





JULY 2009 OUR CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

During the forum of a recent public conference, I was asked how the Order benefits society – that is, what sort of contribution it makes to society at large or whether, on the other hand, its methodology is self-centered and aimed only at benefiting individual members while not helping others. The question is rather interesting and deserves careful thought and reflection.

In many countries these days there are many problems and issues which volunteer groups try to deal with. These groups help freely and they arise spontaneously. There are groups dedicated to the homeless and the less fortunate, and those dedicated to helping with drug or alcohol problems. There are groups dedicated to orphans and groups dedicated to the aged. There are groups dedicated to adult literacy and those dedicated to providing medical treatment in far-flung and forgotten places. There are groups dedicated to instructing

rural communities on land-management to maximize food production and those dedicated to protecting the environment, and there are other groups dedicated to looking after abandoned animals. Such groups are present all over the planet and the people involved in them come from all walks of life. This should encourage us to have some faith in humanity because compassion and fraternity are some of the highest qualities of human consciousness.

Each organization can only deal with one problem. It would obviously be impossible for any one of these to deal with all the problems that arise in a society made up of so many people. So, what about AMORC? How does it contribute to the societies in which it is found? How does it help people and what does it have to offer? By analyzing not only the history of the last 400 years, but also the more ancient history of the Order, we may conclude that AMORC's role lies in the educational sphere. Rosicrucianism is essentially a system or process of education. This statement may appear surprising, but as a description this is very close to the essence of what the Order actually is. However, we have to make what we mean by "education" clear in this context. As we often do, we can go back to the etymology of the word *educate*, which comes from the Latin *educere*, meaning "to bring forth." In his introduction to Plato's *Republic*, Giovanni Reale, an expert on Platonism, opines

that often the title of a book determines what the reader will be able to take from it, because the reader looks only for what they expect from the title. In this sense he argues Plato's *Republic* is poorly understood because it does not deal as much with politics as with education. Similarly, we can say that the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, is not concerned with developing psychic powers or better understanding the laws that govern our lives – if that means its scope is limited to appealing to our egos – but rather, the Order works in the field of education because it seeks to manifest the deepest qualities of the human soul in the lives of its members.

The aim of Rosicrucianism is to bring forth the virtues of the soul, leading to its full expression. It's a method of spiritual development that gradually and harmoniously brings each individual closer to living by the highest ideals. Its scope is to develop our psychic sensitivity, which in turn also increases our degree of compassion. It develops in us a greater capacity for reflection and reduces impulsivity, leading to self-mastery and increased willpower. It provides us with increasing moments of inner silence, even in the midst of a crowd. And every sincere student receives revelations about themselves and the nobility of their origins through an inheritance we all carry within: the Inner Light, the Master Within.

For this reason, we find Rosicrucians working

at all levels of society, from the humblest jobs to the most qualified professions. We can recognize them by the light they have to offer, especially in the company of others. Each in their way contributes to the raising of consciousness of humanity as a whole by their interaction with others. So the Order does not take any specific action in society, but leaves each member free to act according to their own lights. With the passing of time spent in the Order, this participation becomes more in tune with our highest spiritual understanding, the true nature of humanity, and our role as a soul personality incarnated on this planet. The raising of individual consciousness always produces results in the wider community and this, above all, is what the Order brings to society. Paraphrasing Elizabeth Laser: When you lift a single soul, you lift the entire world.





NOVEMBER 2009 THE RHYTHM OF NATURE

There's a beautiful story titled *The Man Who Planted Trees* which describes a seemingly boring life. A man decides to withdraw from society to live in an isolated area of the Pyrenees. It's a desolate place, where he lives a solitary life with only his dog and local animals for company. The somewhat-hostile environment had slowly pushed the local population elsewhere, leaving the region where he had decided to live almost uninhabited. Anyway, he starts to systematically undertake a project with meticulous planning: he collects, selects, and plants acorns. He does this with a well-defined rhythm for years, and the final result, before delivering his life to the God of his Heart, is that this desolate place is restored to woodland with good water retention. Thus, rivers return, the area becomes repopulated by animals, and, seeing the beauty of the place, families decide to return. The history of humanity is full of such examples of persistence and perseverance that

produce incredible results. What I would like us to reflect upon together is the power and strength of such focus and perseverance, while noting also how this applies to the Rosicrucian Path.

We live in a period in which time is limited. Nobody has enough time for themselves and so the time left has to be used to achieve the maximum results. Who among us has never experienced the strange sensation that the week has just passed without us even noticing? Rosicrucian philosophy teaches us that time is made up of moments of consciousness; periods in which we are present and fully aware as conscious observers. The opposite is unconsciousness, not being present to ourselves and there being no conscious observer. In this condition, events overtake us and occur without leaving any conscious impression. We live in a kind of time-lapse movie where the story has lost cohesion and emotions cease to flow. “For everything there is a season, a right time for every intention under heaven,” says Solomon in Ecclesiastes chapter 3, showing that it is not a person’s place to alter the natural rhythm of life. We cannot make a rose bloom in ten minutes, but rather we must know how to wait, transforming the waiting into an activity full of awareness – conscious awareness!

One who plants a tree knows from the outset that only after a number of years shall they enjoy its shade; fifteen days is not enough. The problem

lies in the fact that we must free ourselves from the feeling that time is marching on. We have to return to being able to do things – quickly or slowly as the case may be – without compromising our inner sense of time, without living a sort of inner marathon.

Some students of the Order ask me why, after studying a monograph, they are not able to obtain results despite following the instructions received and applying them scrupulously. Besides this, we see the proliferation of courses that teach such things as “astral travel” or promise to “open our chakras” – and all in just a weekend. Without judging the honesty or sincerity of those who teach such things and lead one to believe we are like a television set (in that having mastered the remote control we can select whichever channel we wish to watch), we can surely say that even under the most generous of hypotheses this shows a great naivety and lack of knowledge of Cosmic Laws.

If we approach self-knowledge through the optics of consumerism, seeking to “get” as much as possible in as short a time as possible, the results will be hardly noticeable. Ironically, even when there has been some achievement, if the inner pace does not slow down to the rhythm that the Cosmic has decreed for each of us, we will not be very conscious of it. We may, for example, not realize that we already possess some useful tools for the work before us or, on the other hand, we might

convince ourselves of having mastery of some of life's laws while, in reality, we are becoming prey to illusions and are in fact not able to pass the tests that life will in any case send us. If we approach the studies of the Order with humility and sincerity, we will soon understand that there is a huge amount of work to be done, and that mastery of the principles and Cosmic Laws will not happen without a new understanding of both ourselves and the world maturing at the same time.

Each monograph contains a seed which requires the right nutrition and time to flower. If we read the monographs like someone might read an interesting book while also being in a rush to know the ending, we will not grasp the essential fact that in this story each of us necessarily writes our own ending. The teachings must act like the pen with which each of us fills the remaining blank pages of our book. Only then, like the man who planted trees, can we truly become an instrument for change and rejoice inwardly at those things that lack of time seems to require us to otherwise put aside.





DECEMBER 2009 DOES AMORC GUARD A SECRET?

What I'd like to talk about and reflect on together is the meaning of the inner secret of an initiatic order. This starts with the following sorts of questions: Do Rosicrucians guard a secret? Are we in possession of information about which people must be kept in the dark? Under the hypothesis that such a secret exists, does it confer on its holder any sort of occult powers?

Since time immemorial, Orders like ours have been shrouded in mystery. The idea that we guard a secret that could put the existence of society as we know it in danger has for centuries been an accusation against orders like ours and has even been the reason why some unscrupulous people request membership.

Even today, some members tell me that on the Internet there are movements that are hostile towards initiatic orders because, according to those who run those sites, such orders conspire to

subvert the established order and seek to create what some call a “New World Order.” There are even books, that in their ravings, attempt to explain how AMORC controls the minds of its members, that use examples to support this thesis which are in fact very positive and contradict the very thesis of “mind control” altogether. But let’s return to the original questions by asking ourselves what an initiatic secret is, and, having clarified this, how can we affirm the validity of such a secret, and in what way can we claim to be the keepers of it.

The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, AMORC, gives us a form of knowledge which is itself sacred. We are talking about knowledge that can reveal to people their deepest nature, their true relationship with both nature and the God of their Hearts. This knowledge is non-denominational and non-dogmatic. On the contrary, it asserts the necessity that all of us develop an inner truth that satisfies us during each period of our lives. Put like this, we can see that the scope of an Order such as ours is high and noble and therefore it would be auspicious if the largest number of people possible were to come into contact with its teachings. In any case, things aren’t so simple. We know that along the Rosicrucian journey there are a series of stages at which a number of students leave the Order; sometimes for a while, sometimes permanently. This is because the journey requires sincere effort, persistence, pure intentions, humility, and a fraternal spirit. Also, the journey must be

compatible with the psychological make-up of the student.

Gradually, as the student progresses along the initiatic path, an ever wider and more fully expressed truth develops within, facilitating integration of the different planes of being. This progress is a real achievement, the result of work and commitment. If this path were to be overly popularized, revealed in its entirety, stripped of its private and intimate quality, presented like any other of hundreds of courses that we might come across daily, it would immediately lose its transformative power because it would lose the essence of the secret that it guards. That secret isn't made up of words or secret codes, nor is it about a mad need for power in society or politics. It is not aimed at enriching its possessor materially, but rather it teaches and perpetually transforms the student.

With each progressive step along the initiatic path, there is greater silence. When perceived, it is accompanied with a strong emotion and an indescribable joy. To possess it produces a greater love for humanity and respect for all creatures. To receive it is like being reborn and to guard it becomes the only option for the true initiate. So, do we possess a secret? I'll let you decide. But I suggest that you participate in the Lodge initiations, live the teachings with humility, and remain loyal to the Order that has welcomed you and which has placed

great trust in you. As for the secret, our smile and inner joy revealed by our thoughts, words, and actions are enough to communicate this to one with the eyes to see.





FEBRUARY 2010

ETERNAL POSTULANTS

In this message, I wish to speak mainly to those who joined the Order in the last year and who are still forming their first impressions of Rosicrucianism. For the sake of clarity, the first thing that must be said is that the Order is not a correspondence course. This statement seems obvious and no doubt you have already understood it, but a superficial or hasty evaluation can lead to confusion regarding the true nature of AMORC. In general, people who join the Order are looking for new answers to age-old questions. They want to know who they really are; if some part of us lives after death; whether some part of us existed before this life; whether there is some intelligence that governs the world; whether this intelligence is immanent in all things or outside the world itself. Perhaps they want to know if it is possible to restore health in some way other than traditional medicine and questions of this sort. René Descartes, the seventeenth-century philosopher, proposed the use of methodical doubt

as a way to reach the truth. Doubt is needed to progress in self-knowledge and knowledge of the world, and methodical doubt is one of the Rosicrucian methods.

The Order encourages us not to accept claims – even those in the monographs – on faith, but to ask questions and to reflect, to seek through meditation and experience the answers that satisfy us most at any one time. The Order is not, as we have said, a correspondence course. Its aim is not to provide intellectual information like a school or university. The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis has its source in the spiritual plane, through which it is connected to the Primordial Tradition, the seat of all spiritual knowledge. It follows that the knowledge the Order transmits is not proportional to the information presented in the monographs. In other words, the spiritual growth of a member of the Order is not necessarily proportional to the number of monographs they have read. The knowledge that we aspire to cannot be written down, but must be reached as a result of harmonization with the psychic and spiritual dimension of being. That which the Order provides through the monographs is a method that tends to establish a rhythm and an essential discipline for those who seek the answers to the aforementioned important questions.

Our first conclusion then is that the Order does not teach truths *per se* but, notwithstanding

AMORC's mystical heritage and exceptional cultural level, teaches a methodology. With all this in mind, it is important to remember that the essence of the Order transcends its material organization. Our members come from diverse cultural backgrounds and the monographs are written in a way that makes them comprehensible to everyone. But we must not confuse the simplicity or complexity of a text with what the Order is actually about. To illustrate this with a simple analogy, we might say that we should not confuse a book of recipes with one of its delicious dishes. The first is but the tool for achieving the second. And having read the recipe does not mean we are able to make the dish. It may be necessary to try many times before arriving at something that resembles the recipe; otherwise, the world would be full of great cooks.

And that is what a spiritual path is like. There are no shortcuts or simplifications. There are no masters who can "awaken us" with a magic word or gesture and make us masters in our own right. Before we can answer even one of the preceding questions satisfactorily – meaning neither intellectually nor by citing famous texts, nor by repeating what we have heard from others, but rather with words that come from our own hearts and with words that leave the door open to further truths which respect the sensibilities of others – we must master our physical nature, master our passions, use language that represents the nobility

of our quest, and develop ethics which reflect our lofty ideals. And all this requires work in order to integrate it into our lives.

Normally the result comes neither tomorrow nor the day after tomorrow. As we proceed, we realize that the important thing is to be on the path. Fundamentally it is the path itself that matters because it already contains all the truths we seek. And on the path, we always find other seekers with whom we share the difficulties and joys of the journey, which is to say, fraternity. And here is our second conclusion: growth and inner development are individual processes, but we can benefit greatly from an environment that welcomes us and creates the necessary conditions for the practice of virtue, the exchange of opinions, and the mystical life of a group. Experiencing diversity is essential for spiritual development and for the awakening of the consciousness of the presence of the Divinity within. For this reason, it becomes ever more important that the Rosicrucian Path is supported and strengthened by attending an Affiliated Body.

I would like to repeat my welcome to new members and remind you that the Grand Lodge is always open to your ideas, suggestions, and questions. And to older members of the Order, I ask that you always keep alive the flame that brought you to the portals of the Order in search of the answers to the fundamental questions of life,

and that this enthusiasm reminds you that we all remain eternal postulants in search of Truth.





JUNE 2010 GROWING TOGETHER

The fourth Rosicrucian manifesto, *Positio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*, is a lucid analysis of the situation in the developed world that highlights signs of imbalance in many areas of the human condition. Suffice it to say the Order's position has always been optimistic regarding the human story. It is also true that the appearance of Rosicrucianism "out in the open" happened during a moment of great crisis in Europe, offering a new way forward to the "learned" of the time and restoring the dignity which belongs to humanity (*Fama Fraternitatis* and *Confessio Fraternitatis*, seventeenth century). Here is the question I would like us to reflect on together: Is it sensible to hope for change in the human condition without each of us in our own sphere adopting a new ethic and a new way to relate to living beings and things in general? In other words, can we expect a change in the direction of the world without such change happening first in ourselves?

As members of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, we know that the study we have undertaken has the aim of developing a new vision of humanity, nature, the universe, and the Divine. It helps us to understand the connectedness of all phenomena and how apparent diversity emerges from a single reality. For example, in this sense it is much easier for a Rosicrucian to speak about ecology and the environment because we know intimately that we are speaking about ourselves; a Rosicrucian understands that there doesn't exist a real separation between the "external" environment and the self "within." The same is true when we relate to others. We gradually develop a vision of "wholeness" where the other becomes an aspect of our own reality and the manifestation of a different grade of divine nature.

In this light, competitiveness ceases to be necessary because such competition requires that somebody "loses," and we know that in some sense when anybody loses, we all do. We gradually learn to discover truths via a higher truth that each of us carries within, the higher truth of synthesis. For this, however, we need to keep the Mystical Path foremost in our minds. It is evident that a new vision cannot be achieved overnight, nor can it develop without undertaking genuine inner work. Using a garden as a metaphor again: the rose must be nurtured, protected, and fed the right amount of nutrients, otherwise weeds and insects will devour it. A modest but constant effort is needed:

daily taking care of details, observing changes, irrigating with the right amount of water, and using the right soil nutrients.

It's essential that, when coming into contact with a Rosicrucian, a person can sense this inner work, which manifests not so much through the beautiful words that one may be able to say but rather by being an example to others. It's essential to cultivate good manners, to control one's speech and to pay attention to the words we choose as well as the topics of conversation; for example, by avoiding negativity, bad news, and stories of human misery and misfortune. To be rigorous in self-evaluation and tolerant of the weaknesses of others has always been one of the best examples left to us by the Masters of the past and as such we want to be worthy to be the heirs of this Tradition. Of course, we don't intend to reduce the Mystical Path to a mere manual of good manners, but at least we can conclude that we can't really speak about spirituality or spiritual evolution if our lives remain unaltered, that is, if we don't show substantial changes in our attitude towards other people and towards things in general; otherwise, we would be living a lie. It's important that each member of the Order be a light in the world and that when we meet for various mystical activities that we can appreciate the totality of individual lights, thus better illuminating our own reality and enhancing our own vision.

To sum up, this process helps us grow in the awareness that in our mystical garden the attentive gardener himself is the rose, and with its mysterious petals, the rose and the gardener are but one and the same. Further, the growth of this consciousness produces its own kind of fruit, which is of benefit to all humankind.





JULY 2010 HOPE

“The kind of hope I often think about, I understand above all as a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope within us, or we don't.... It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.... Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well.... It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

-Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*

I start this message with the enlightened words of the former president of the Czech Republic, because often during public conferences we are questioned about our position regarding the state of the world. The perception of the gradual decadence of the organizations that have for decades given humanity its long-term

security, as well as the issues of pollution, energy, global warming, war, and new diseases, have all disseminated the perception that we – humanity – are heading down a dead-end road. In this light, the recourse to hope, rather than being a sign of interior awareness, has become a sign of naivety and being uninformed. Let's try to understand the situation from a Rosicrucian point of view. Let's raise our perspective for a moment and observe the world from another angle, by looking dispassionately at the footprints left by people over the span of thousands of years.

If, on the one hand, a pessimistic view of the future presents itself, on the other hand, and in a subtler but no less powerful way, a more “integrative” vision arises as well. What do I mean by “integrative vision”? I mean that an awareness of the interconnectedness of all systems in the universe is continually increasing. With the arrival of humanism millennia ago, a more living, organic perspective of the world began to develop. People in the fifteenth century saw the universe as a network of interconnected events such that each part had a vital living quality. In this universe, the various parts that make up the world attracted or repelled each other in harmonious play wherein each living being had its allotted place. In this somewhat animistic view, no part was truly distinct from the whole and all parts worked together in harmony. Together with Hermeticism and Kabbalah, this worldview gave rise to Renaissance magic, which

sought to act on the unfolding of reality using various formulae. Contrary to the way it may seem, this concept did not disappear with the beginnings of science but simply took a parallel trajectory. It remained alive within initiatic schools in which scientists often played a role, and it influenced the birth of modern science as we know it today. What is happening today is a gradual expansion of this awareness that the universe is, as the physicist James Jeans said, more like a great thought than like a great machine.

The growth of environmental, animal rights, and civil rights movements – movements for the defense of people and life, for the recognition of our common belonging to planet Earth – can give us an idea of the process that is currently underway within human consciousness. Science itself (in particular physics, biology, and psychology) is increasing this “integrative vision” wherein the co-participation of everything in the universe and the sharing of every living being in one reality becomes ever clearer. In the Order, we refer to the “Cosmic” as the order and system that pervades the universe and expresses the Divine’s intelligence in action.

For a Rosicrucian, to harmonize with the Cosmic leads to the development of a clearer awareness of a process that was always and will always be taking place beyond space and time, and yet which is also taking place here and now. In this light we can indeed be optimistic about the future,

not because we believe in the intervention of some being external to the world, but simply because this Being is in the world and we are an expression of it. As Havel masterfully said: “[Hope] is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”





SEPTEMBER 2010 SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY

Today I'd like to reflect with you upon the state of the world at the current time as we increasingly feel the need to take a position that is up-to-date with all the changes coming in the twenty-first century. What sort of actions are required by people in these times? "Return to a coherent humanism based on values. Only in this way will it be possible to regain the meaning of life," says Enrique Rojas in his book *El hombre light* [*The Light Person*].

As Rosicrucians we share this view, as expressed in the fourth manifesto *Positio Fraternitatis*. But in practice what does this approach entail? We can say that it entails a conscious and deliberate effort towards respect, care, affection, cordiality, and conviviality. Living in a world of perpetual conflict and tensions, we end up getting trapped in a mindset that doesn't let us see the world in any other way. The consequence of this "way of life"

is greater aggression, frustration, and depression in various forms, including hyperactivity. Many members of our Order came to the portals of the Rose-Croix in search of a different “way of life.” That is, they are searching for a different attitude towards the world and life in general. We know, however, that this is not achieved by snapping one’s fingers. Behind small and certain changes there is always the work of spiritual alchemy. We mustn’t fool ourselves into thinking that joining a school or studying texts is sufficient to make such a change. As already said, a conscious and deliberate effort towards the ideals we have embraced is essential. The word we are focusing on here is “effort”; it means that it is necessary to apply force to combat inertia and to alter an undesirable state, to change a situation that seems cemented.

Much as if we want to move a heavy weight blocking a door we wish to open, it’s very difficult to do so without applying conscious and deliberate effort. In our case, our attitude must start with the awareness that there isn’t a world “out there” that needs changing, but an inner universe that is altered by expanding our consciousness. We can see only that which we are; nature continually reveals aspects of ourselves to us, and only by transmuting our personalities are we able to develop a different attitude. We come to see that which we are – and this is a law.

A Rosicrucian understands that the road towards such transformation is long and difficult; they don't live under the illusion that half an hour a week is sufficient to truly transform their personality. They understand that it is necessary to live in this world using experience as an essential ingredient for the work. Our laboratory is the world – work, family, friends, and society in general. Wherever we meet others of our kind there is an opportunity for growth. And we all know how difficult it can be, how many lessons there are that seem insuperable, so that at times it tests our faith in ourselves.

The Order advises us to focus on the positives. Consciousness directed towards an objective has the power to make it happen. If we focus too much on our weaknesses, they may get worse. Whereas if we focus on the quality we want to strengthen, it will increasingly manifest in our lives. To this we must also add a sense of gratitude because this shows awareness of both our condition and how the Cosmic puts opportunities for growth before us. It is a duty to show cordiality towards others, recognizing in them different levels of expression of the Divine Nature; therefore, that is what we have to do. Besides, as a whole, we are a perfect expression of the law of evolution.

Recognizing this means that we can turn over a new leaf in our relationships with others. Until we feel true affection for all beings, we have to

use discipline in our lives to make us behave as we would wish others to behave. If we don't adopt such measures sincerely, all our efforts at raising ourselves up will be useless and illusory. We might be able to write intelligent discourses on philosophy and spiritual subjects, but rising above mediocrity is another matter. We may be able to entertain others with clever arguments and great words, but the status of a mystic is seen in what one is, and not in what one possesses or says. I invite you to remove from your vocabulary words that are charged with the negativity of aggression and hostility. Let us carefully choose words that lead to trust, raise the spirits, bring tranquility, and change the vibratory state of the environment around us. Let us avoid critical comments and become more generous with praise. Let us become true agents of Divinity, conscious that this is what is expected of a true Rosicrucian.

“If it be right and desirable for thee to speak, speak things which are to edification. Bad custom and neglect of our real profit tend much to make us heedless of watching over our lips. Nevertheless, devout conversation on spiritual things helpeth not a little to spiritual progress, most of all where those of kindred mind and spirit find their ground of fellowship in the Divine.”

– Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*



OCTOBER 2010 HUMAN LANGUAGE

This time I would like us to focus our reflections on the use of language to describe what the Rosicrucian Path is really about, and the values that motivate the student of a mystical and initiatic order. Language is one of the frontiers in philosophy and neuroscience research: when it first arose in human history, how it came about, how it is used, and how it describes the inner universe. These are all issues that scientists and philosophers consider when trying to understand the functioning of the human brain and consciousness. We know, for example, that our brain uses language to express ideas and communicate. We know also that in using language, rational thought is limited by the number of words a person knows.

Taking this to its logical extreme, it means we cannot even have thoughts that go beyond the words in our vocabulary. If our vocabulary consists of two hundred words, then we can think using

only those two hundred words. If our vocabulary contains five thousand words, then our thoughts can be more detailed and precise because we are able to think using those five thousand words, and so on. For every word, we can create a family of synonyms that add nuance or variety to the concepts we wish to express. The Inuit from the Arctic regions use more than thirty different words for snow. Each one describes some quality of the crystal allowing them to think more precisely. This first reflection shows us the importance of reading and experiences, like traveling, in increasing our vocabularies and improving our ability to think.

There are a whole range of experiences that language cannot fully express, such as falling in love. In this case we are struck by a magical condition that lifts us up and makes us lose our sense of objective reality. We experience a total fascination with the face of our beloved, which in mystical terms calls us to the choice that our soul has already made. Upon seeing the “vision,” we physically experience an accelerated heart beat, sweaty hands and a blush. Often we may lose awareness of the sensation of our own weight and become “light.”

Physiology explains that this is an excretion of hormones, and psychology speaks of emotions, but nevertheless it is certain that all this comes after we have seen the face of the person we have fallen in love with. That which happens in the exact

moment of such a “vision” cannot be described in words. The same is true of the mystical experience. The attempt to describe the living mystical experience can quickly become impossible because the limitations of language do not allow us to define clearly what happens in every person. But we can make some allusions to our experiences using the language of analogy as a tool. An analogy can help us elicit an idea by describing something altogether different.

Often in the history of spirituality, great Masters have been noted to use this powerful tool to allude to that which cannot be said directly. For example, the analogy that describes the spiritual path is, most aptly, the path that climbs up the mountain. Embarking on a spiritual path such as Rosicrucianism is “like” climbing a mountain to which we are attracted, whether because someone has told us about the beautiful scenery seen from the summit, or one is fascinated by the vision of the peaks themselves, or even because of photographs taken from the path. Obviously, a simple description of how the path winds up the mountain unveiling new views around every curve, the smells that one can sense, or the freshness of the air, the difficulty of certain stages, or places to stop for a break, that is, a factual description, is not sufficient to communicate that which one learns from personal experience. We must ascend the path ourselves.

Once the decision is made, we look for advice in guides written by experts which tell us what to take in our packs so as to avoid unnecessary weight while making sure we have all the necessities. At the beginning of the path, we will find people who, like us, have decided to climb the “mountain.” Some are in great shape and can climb without difficulty, making us think that maybe they have already climbed “before.” Others show great difficulty even in the first few steps and we know that they will soon come to a halt on the path. Along the path we are also struck by the scenery that unfolds before us, moving us with its beauty. Behind one curve we see some rare flowers with intense colors that catch our gaze. At other times, however, the sky becomes dark and fills with threatening clouds.

So we follow the “instruction manual” and we make ourselves safe, waiting for them to pass while appreciating even this aspect of nature. One step at a time we climb. The views become wider and the scenery that was at first limited by our location begins to become grander and more beautiful. Often someone who climbs from the north “sees” different scenery to someone who climbs from the south, and at times people get lost seeking to convince others that the true view is that which they saw from but halfway. The climb can last many days, indeed all our days, because even he who has not consciously chosen to follow the path is in fact already on it.

Some who would like to climb to the summit by taking a short-cut decide to skip stages. And sometimes there are guides written just to “sell copies.” They claim it is possible to save time this way and arrive at the summit early. This approach to the path shows they do not know it. The person who knows it well does not hesitate to say, “climb slowly, observe every detail,” and they point out that every stone or flower contains within itself the whole path and that, to see this, one must but know how to look. And perhaps the most important thing is to know you are on the path, that is, to be conscious of it. Analogy is a powerful tool, and the initiation rituals of the Order are based on it. Rituals guide us in the awareness of the path we are climbing, and bit by bit they help us to better appreciate the panorama that unveils before our eyes.

May our eyes witness the dawn of the new born day, the golden dawn of the Rose Cross, aided in our ascent by the Masters of our Tradition! So Mote It Be!





DECEMBER 2010

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE

Maya Angelou said in a 2011 *Arizona Republic* interview: "I have great respect for the past. If you don't know where you've come from, you don't know where you're going." Many times when we hear the inner call that pushes us to undertake a journey in search of ourselves, we come into contact with an enormous number of possibilities. With the click of a mouse, we learn about an infinite number of movements, schools, streams of thought, etc. that invite us to undertake their method of study. They open chakras, awaken the intelligence of the heart, enable us to contact the Divine Self, teach the techniques of meditation, the arts of healing, natural nutrition, shamanic practices, and so on.

Most of these movements started in the 1960s and 1970s in response to a sort of revolution that our society was going through back then. Gradually they mingled together creating new streams of thought, adding to yoga a bit of Andean

Shamanism plus some Navajo techniques, or melding Taoist meditation with the spiritual practices of the peoples of Central America, or mixing the Vedanta philosophy of ancient India with a bit of superstition – all with a new style of music in the background made possible by new technologies, electronics specifically. To all this was given the name “New Age” to indicate that the “new age” (the astrological age of Aquarius) had magically brought humankind to a new dimension. This process of remixing and fragmentation has continued to the present day. Even though we understand how it has played a role in the process of the consciousness of humanity in seeking new truths, we also believe that sometimes it has been the source of confusion in the minds of many.

Thus, some people join the Order because they expect to see techniques revealed that, as if by a click of the mouse, will change their lives. They delude themselves into thinking that it is enough to decide to join a new school and voilà – they expect that in a weekend their life will change and some illumined Master will hold their hand and guide them to the discovery of their inner self and that they will come into contact with various powers. These people are most often destined to leave AMORC because the Order is quite another thing altogether. Looking back, we can see in all these expressions of consciousness a necessary process and in the final analysis all these movements in any case form part of the eternal process. But when

we look back behind us with honesty, we shall also acknowledge that whatever changes our lives have undergone, however small, were the result of our own work; it was a methodical exercise and the conscious application of our will.

I'm not speaking of superficial changes that diminish with time leaving us to return to the starting point; I speak of evolutionary changes of the personality, those with no going back. Reason in this case necessitates that the Order cannot perform miracles; we do not transform people into superheroes who master psychic projection at will, who read the minds of others, or who cure the sick. Rosicrucianism is an initiatic Path and as such follows the rhythm and pace decreed by nature. As Rosicrucians we know that nobody can transmit any powers to us, if these are not based on our own work and dedication. If we look ahead as Rosicrucians, we see a future of constant work, maturation of understanding, transmutation of the personality, achievements made up of small daily steps – a program for life. We don't want anybody to be misled or attribute to the Order a role that it does not have. We are not a New Age group, with all due respect to those who have joined one. We don't mix traditions and above all we do not promise things that we cannot achieve.

We guarantee this though: the ethical commitment to fraternally help every seeker, to practice compassion and respect towards all

living things, to study in order to expand our understanding such that we are conscious that every soul that is lifted, lifts the world, and to transmit to every student the teachings of the Rose Cross as it has been entrusted to us. Many things are changing in the world and consciousness never stops. It proceeds in infinite motion, eternally. It is up to us, while looking at and analyzing the past, to define and plan where we want to go and what the meaning of our life should be. Let me draw this reflection to a close with the following words of Rudyard Kipling:

*“Something hidden. Go and find it.
Go and look behind the Ranges -
Something lost behind the Ranges.
Lost and waiting for you. Go!”*





JANUARY 2011 OUR DREAMS

“*The wondrous arouses no surprise in us, because it is in the wondrous that we hold the deepest confidence. The joy we have upon seeing it comes down to the fact that seeing it confirms the truth of our dreams.”*

– Ernst Jünger

I start this message with the words of this famous German writer and philosopher because I believe it offers valuable insight to those seeking self-knowledge on the initiatic path. The second part of the citation in particular encapsulates a beauty that goes beyond mere speculation or fantasy: the wondrous can give us moments of joy because it confirms the truth of our dreams. It is easy to underestimate the power and value of our dreams. This can happen because traditional education

tends to remove anything that is not logical or evident from our thinking, removing from us anything which does not conform to its general way of thinking about reality and thus suppressing that which most renders a person divine: the ability to create within themself what will only afterwards be called their destiny. When we dream about our future with a plan or a hope, we enter a subjective state and for a few moments lose contact with the world around us. On what we might call the mental or inner plane, such moments often come with emotions that give life to the dream.

It is here that education can interfere, teaching us that what the mind has produced in this way is just a result of the imagination, something that has no place in our advanced technological world. “Stop dreaming and put your feet back on the ground,” we hear, if someone suggests an idea that to someone else seems too fantastical to be achieved. On the other hand, if we analyze the moment in which with our eyes open we are struck by the dream, it is evident that it comes from somewhere beyond our will. The process starts without us having any control over it. The speed and depth of the thought is as if it came from outside ourselves. We are like spectators. A paraphrase of a saying attributed to Arthur Schopenhauer goes: You can do anything you want, but you cannot want whatever you want. This means that such a desire does not come from a rational choice.

As Rosicrucians we know that we are incarnated in this physical body carrying with us the baggage of experiences imprinted on the memory of our soul personality. That is, we arrive with, if not a mission to accomplish exactly (this would be too presumptuous), more a road map as to where we should be going. We are born with potential, sensibilities, vocations, tendencies, and inclinations which are in part a product of our environment, in part hereditary, but in large part we come to this world already carrying this package. It acts to prompt our being to do what it came here for. It seeks in every way, conditions permitting, to find an opportunity to express its true self. And it is precisely this package, which we call the “soul personality,” that gives us those moments of vision which constitute this road map.

In this message, something remains to be addressed: How can we go from a dream to reality? Is it possible that what we are thinking might be something more than just a pipedream? Rosicrucian philosophy teaches us that thoughts are things. We gradually learn to leave behind the idea that reality is made up only of things with weight and measure (things that can be seen and touched) and so we slowly expand our understanding of reality. Thoughts are things and as such they occupy a realm that can be visible or invisible, but not for that reason any less real. An erroneous way of thinking can bring illness or even death. Correct thinking can strengthen our immune system

and restore health. Modern science (particularly physics, biology, and psychology) has for some time now been examining the effects of thoughts on reality. From such studies we are reminded of the words of the famous English physicist James Jeans: “The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine.” The influence of human thoughts on physical things has been known for a long time and proven beyond all doubt through statistical studies that discount the effects of coincidence.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the difficulty is in overcoming the cultural conditioning of our education; at heart we are people with our feet on the ground. However, the role of the Order is to assist us in developing a new vision of reality. It has been undertaking this task for a very long time because there have always been individuals who have overcome the barriers of the five senses and of education, perceiving an unexpected and wondrous dimension to human nature. This dimension is that which reconnects us to Divinity and makes us all brothers and sisters. This dimension compels us to dream, to conceive of a fulfilled and joyous future, a future of true peace among nations and not a mere armistice. As Rosicrucians we are proud to keep our feet firmly planted on the ground but also to keep our head among the stars, and we know this to be our birthright. We wish to strengthen the confidence we have in the wondrous, and enjoy the

happiness that such a vision brings – and confirm the truth of our dreams.





SEPTEMBER 2011 THE INNER JOURNEY

*“Listen to the reed and the tale it tells,
how it sings of separation:
Ever since they cut me from the reed bed,
my wail has caused men and women to weep....
Whoever has been parted from their source
longs to return to that state of union.”*

– Rumi

These inspiring words of the Sufi poet sublimely introduce this month's message. Only a true master can express the human condition so exquisitely. And his poignant mystical words evoke the feelings that make us all brothers and sisters on this planet: we are the reed cut from the reed bed and seek to return to the time when we were still united with it! These words are evidently about all humanity with nobody excluded. Nevertheless, not everyone is aware of this “nostalgia” present in their hearts. I call on you, seekers of truth, who have embraced the Path of Knowledge and aspire

to find that homeland, Eden, the Land of Salem where once ruled Melchizedek, that isle of Utopia in the New Atlantis of Francis Bacon, knowing that none of these symbolic places are to be found on a map.

Our journey is an inner journey, but no less difficult or free of dangers. We seek the place where our inner being can find peace, a land where we are not foreigners but welcomed as a son by his parents after a long journey. This journey can be seen throughout the history of humanity and we are part of it: we are pilgrims traveling towards self-realization and self-knowledge. We have chosen a guide for our voyage – the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis – symbolized in the form of an old sage and knower of paths, who points the way to the joy of discovery and adventure. On this journey we are accompanied by other seekers with whom we share the joys and difficulties of the day, each keeping their individuality, convictions, and liberty without impediment... a fraternal fellowship. But in every moment we are aware of the nostalgia that fills our hearts, a nostalgia much like when we are far from our home country or the town or place we have chosen as our home.

If we could see the whole planet from above during a single moment, we would see on its surface the non-stop motion of human beings moving from north to south, east to west, those looking to enjoy themselves, those seeking rest, those fleeing

for their lives. It is in our nature to seek the ideal place, the ideal conditions, and no law or border can stop it. But we, pilgrims of the truth, we know that the place we seek is here and that the reed is never truly separated from the reed bed, because its origins remain within and the separation is illusory. Otherwise, it could not sing! One day our journey will come to an end. Nobody can say when because this is up to the God of our Hearts. But until the end of our days on this Earth we shall endeavor to be conscious of the bonds that unite us and to be conscious of how all humankind is in truth one big organism. Every person is therefore our brother and sister.

Let's look at each day with renewed hope based on the knowledge of our divine birthright and the certainty that one day, we "will go on walking in the presence of Adonai [the Divine] in the lands of the living" (Psalms 116:9). So Mote It Be!





JANUARY 2012 THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

We often see, among the words that describe the various virtues, the word *practice*. At root, the word *virtue* comes from the Latin word *virtus*, which means “moral strength.” A strength only has meaning if it is applied to something, otherwise it remains in an unmanifested condition, a potential. The same can be said of virtue. So when we refer to it, in general we are referring to its practice, applying it to a real situation. Just this step of moving from theory to practice, from the potential to the manifest, would be arduous enough for one incarnation! Think, for example, about tolerance. It is a word used a lot today. For some it simply means being very nice; an interpretation that seeks to hide one’s inability to express the full meaning of the word. By others it is often defined in a more learned way but is then difficult to apply. Tolerance in the final analysis is difficult to practice, and being hidden behind fine words does nothing but slow the awakening of consciousness.

that evolution requires. When we refer to practical application, whether in the exercises of the monographs or regarding virtue, we mean this: the deliberate and conscious application of the will to reflect on the right way to act regarding a variety of situations that life presents so that, one small step at a time, our behavior is corrected.

Life is the place where we can evaluate the learning and development that we have achieved on the path towards self-knowledge. There are no exams or written or oral tests that can precisely measure our level of development on the initiatic path other than our intimate personal reaction to situations as they arise. On the other hand, as already said, we're not talking about becoming tolerant, patient, humble, kind, generous, compassionate, or reflective in the blink of an eye, at least if these are not already part of our character at this stage in our evolution. As you have already understood, we're not talking about reading something on a topic and then as if by magic transforming ourselves. It takes practice.

We need to properly assimilate each virtue, creating a mental image that expresses each of them to us immediately. Regarding tolerance, for example, we have to be clear about what it means, otherwise it won't be clear what objective we want to reach. Many confuse tolerance with enduring something. They think it necessarily involves suffering inwardly, sacrificing their thoughts

and aspirations for the benefit of another who is usurping their rights. This triggers aggression and territorialism that distances us from practical tolerance. This reaction is rooted in a primitive fear that is still part of human nature, the fear that the other constitutes a threat and danger. Fear reinforces the “them and us” mentality, which affects significantly how we look at diversity. Tolerance, on the other hand, is an outward-looking centrifugal dynamic within consciousness that tends towards integration with diversity to reach a higher level of stability and harmony. This dynamic is only possible by understanding our own nature. Such practice must be undertaken by setting small milestones for each attempt. This work is long and slow and alchemical in nature.

We certainly cannot skip this step. It is not important how many monographs we have read or how many years we have dedicated to the study of spirituality. What counts is practice and the degree to which we are able to express in our lives the lessons that we have learned intellectually. For this reason, we may meet refined people with a high level of spirituality who are not educated; people able to say the right words at the right moment, incapable of making negative criticism, who are full of gratitude and able to respect all kinds of diversity without feeling intolerant. This is because they have a natural sense of service and don't use the word *sacrifice*. When they ask us “how are you?” we feel that their interest is sincere.

These people are a model for those who are seeking self-mastery.

There are no short cuts even though we might be able to analyze such attitudes and discuss them in detail: we aren't talking about explaining something, but being something. We're not talking about understanding the attitudes of others, but becoming ourselves, that of which we often speak highly. On this Path there is no teacher other than example. To this end I invite you to apply a conscious and deliberate effort. Let us exert ourselves by practice to bring into the mastery of life that which so often remains limited to our rational understanding and the mastery of the intellect. The moment requires it, our lives call for it, our Order wishes it, and the Masters hope for it. As is said in *Unto Thee I Grant*: "Defer not till the evening what the morning may accomplish!" Let's begin an intense and profound practice of virtue without self-glorification or self-sacrifice, aware of the objective that we wish to reach and trusting in the presence of the Master Within, the guardian of our evolution.





MARCH 2012 ECOLOGY

“We must bring back into society a deeper sense of the purpose of living. The unhappiness in so many lives ought to tell us that success alone is not enough. Material success has brought us to a strange spiritual and moral bankruptcy.”

– Ben Okri

Ben Okri, a writer and a member of the Rosicrucian Order, expresses something here that is dealt with in the *Positio Fraternitatis* manifesto and which is at the heart of the large imbalances that industrialization has brought the world. One such imbalance, which we reflect upon here, is our relationship with the environment. Its study is called ecology. Words such as ecological, bio-compatible, bio-ecological, eco-sustainable, etc., have become so widespread that they risk losing the meaning they should have. Their use in marketing serves only to confuse consumers and ease the conscience of producers, thus perpetuating

damage to ecosystems that we are intrinsically part of. We often speak about environmentally friendly cars running on eco-friendly petrol(!), green detergents, green building methods, and green raw materials without considering further what these terms really mean.

Used like this, these terms are meaningless. Every human activity has an environmental impact, so we can only talk about our degree of impact but not about truly green products. Furthermore, we must treat ecological systems as complex systems and, as such, acknowledge that environmental problems cannot be solved with simplistic solutions. Despite this, we can see that humanity's ecological awareness is advancing, however slowly, much as the awareness of the need for social justice and peace between nations and individuals is also advancing.

The question we must consider is the following: Will a real change in humanity's vision, a paradigm shift, be possible without that change coming through a change in consciousness that comes from a spiritual worldview? Note well, we are referring to a spiritual worldview and not a religious one. Is it possible to develop a healthy and profound perspective on nature and the environment without that perspective coming from the expansion of consciousness of the individual? We are of the opinion that it is not. Sometimes we hear people say, "we must protect nature," quite unwittingly

and sincerely, but totally without seeing the larger picture.

Nature, in reality, has no need of protection. It is estimated that 98 percent of the species that have ever existed on this planet have disappeared or, to be precise, have gone extinct. Nature will reassert its equilibrium by eliminating humanity, if necessary. It would not treat us with any special consideration or more exceptional privilege than if we were the ants or the bees or the grass upon which we tread. Meister Eckhart, the fourteenth-century mystic and philosopher, said that the Divine is as present in wood and stone as It is in us, the difference being just that we are capable of knowing it. This is the consciousness to which we should aspire and which ought to guide us in the decisions we have to make. The environment isn't something "out there" to be protected. This is a limited and partial understanding. There is a continuous exchange of matter and energy between the environment and ourselves, so that in a certain sense we are not separable from it.

Furthermore, there is a widespread perception that we are about to cross a threshold after which it is difficult to predict what will happen to humanity. This feeling is expressed in catastrophic visions of the end of the world, such as asteroids about to strike the planet, and apocalyptic prophesies such as predictions of strange illnesses breaking out with no known cures. These are perceptions

that can occur during the process of awakening because a large part of humanity is already dying from disease, hunger, and war caused by the economic systems that have been set-up on the planet and from which only a fraction of humanity reaps the benefits. We all feel we are approaching a crossroads and that we must correct the imbalances caused by our way of life. Economists and scientists are already beginning to argue for the need to make these changes. But as Rosicrucians we are convinced that this will not take place without raising consciousness. The conscious act of taking part in an Order such as ours is important in moving forward towards a new society. Leaving behind old ways of thinking, old ways of relating to others, to the environment, and to ourselves, as well as old ideas about what constitutes prosperity and happiness, all this requires inner development, and this is the scope of the Rosicrucian Order that Rosicrucians of the past already called for when they referred to a “universal reformation of humankind.” Being part of an Order like ours makes us responsible for a spiritual heritage passed down from person to person. And we understand the necessity of acquiring an inner balance that makes room for the Master Within.

Unhappiness and frustration, which are different aspects of depression, are with us today as perhaps never before in human history. And the “bankruptcy” of which Ben Okri speaks is the result of the distance between our rational and

spiritual sides. Only by re-embracing our humanity and recognizing our inner spiritual nature are we able to understand that we are the environment, the planet is us, and all humanity is one. Don't be mistaken – it takes work and application to establish behaviors that reflect our ideals. We're not talking about undertaking detailed research studies on ecology, world peace or respect for the animal kingdom, but about embracing such attitudes ourselves. To do this without artifice or sacrifice, we have to apply ourselves to the Path of spiritual searching and then, consequently, change will occur. We hope that the Affiliated Bodies of the Order become not only places where the oral Tradition of the Rose Cross is perpetuated but also meeting places for the exchange of ideas, conversation, and fraternity.

We have to create the opportunity to get together with others who, like us, seek self-improvement and growth. We have to apply ourselves to creating groups that share ideas and reflect upon the fundamentals of life. We have to create "mystical ecosystems" where consciousness expands like a beautiful vine that rises towards the light of the Sun. This is a great way to feed the soul while we would all agree that the body is already quite well-fed. Rosicrucians of the twenty-first century have this educational task: to contribute to the expression of all the potentialities of humanity and of all the capabilities rooted in our true nature. If we conduct this task, it will become

no longer necessary to speak about ecology and the environment because we will have understood that we and the environment are one.





JUNE 2012 A BRIGHTER FUTURE

“Not knowing when the Dawn will
come,
I open every Door....”

– Emily Dickinson

We start with this profound thought from this famous American poet in order to introduce the topic of our reflection. Art, in this case poetry, has the power to arouse feelings that greatly transcend what is achievable by the rational mind. The rational mind, for example, analyzes a sentence like this by finding the subject, the tense, and so on. But the sense of being open to the unknown, the mystery, the inner readiness and acceptance, the trust and the peace that this sentence evokes are perceptions of our non-rational, non-logical minds. It is this attitude to which we dedicate our thoughts today – to our ability to hope and to imagine a brighter future for ourselves and humanity as a whole. We have

previously taken the opportunity to analyze how our rational minds tend to break up and subdivide experiences in order to understand them. This attitude often makes us lose sight of the whole; something that can only be truly revealed and understood in its entirety. It is important therefore to circumscribe the rational and objective and to harmonize it with the functioning of the inner mind.

As Rosicrucians we know that humanity has always experienced moments of great crisis. Our history shows that our brothers and sisters of the past were highly incisive during moments of humankind's greatest privations. The risk is always that we lose sight of the meaning of life and end up simply "surviving." In these times, many people are literally oppressed by an incessant inundation of bad news. From the economy to the environment, from politics to social issues, everything seems to be falling apart and collapsing. And we don't yet see a new model to replace the one that has brought us here. But when I say, "we don't yet see," this doesn't mean that no model exists. For many years many thinkers have been considering how to protect humanity from the risks created by our current development model.

Many people all over the planet are undertaking experiments to show that other development models are possible and desirable for society, and many are successful. One such experience is that

of an Israeli kibbutz where Palestinian and Israeli children are educated together and grow up in an atmosphere of peace. Examples such as this are like cells of love, essential to restoring health in a sick body.

There are many examples of attempts at betterment among all facets of the human condition. What I would like to highlight is the initiative of people of goodwill who are able to “see” and perceive such new visions. One of the essential requirements for success is that the level of consciousness of those participating is sufficient to create a sort of “critical mass” that allows the idea to manifest. This level of consciousness is not acquired simply by waiting for something to happen but by acting consciously on oneself to nurture such vision. The Rosicrucian Path is like this too. It helps each individual to perceive their connection with nature, the universe, and the Divine, reminding us of the true meaning of the incarnation of the soul on this plane.

The Rosicrucian Path helps every student to develop their own “vision,” emphasizing their inner potential to raise and expand consciousness towards new levels of reality. If somebody does not believe that peace among nations (and not simply an armistice) is possible, or if somebody doesn’t believe that peace among individuals is possible, or if somebody doesn’t believe that an economy channeled towards the well-being of humanity is

possible, then this person will eventually have to come to understand that their disbelief is one of the causes for the delay in its manifestation. Our inability to perceive a utopia (by thinking that it is an unrealistic whimsy) reduces the “critical mass” available, slowing its achievement.

Building a fairer and more balanced world must come through raising consciousness, an elevation of the awareness of individuals that enables one to conceive and implement new projects that can benefit all humankind, even in seemingly small ways. A Rosicrucian is a person who keeps their head among the stars but their feet planted firmly on the ground! All members of our jurisdiction, I'd say all members of our Order in the world, already provide a useful impetus to raising humankind's consciousness through their work and roles in society. Our meetings, our work together in Affiliated Bodies, our conferences, our Initiations, and our Sanctum periods are all powerful ways to transform and raise consciousness. There's a lot of work still to do, and to implement it we have to be particularly focused and permeate our vision with the enthusiasm and trust that can be achieved only by those who understand they are children of the universe and an expression of the Universal Mind in action.



OCTOBER 2012 ROVICRUCIAN PEDAGOGY

“There will be no butterflies if life does not go through long and silent metamorphoses.”

– Rubem Alves

For some people it is strange to think of an initiatic order like the Rosicrucian Order as a school, that is, bringing to its members a sort of education. Naturally, when we speak of education we don't mean a school of the sort we have all been through; not a physical place with walls and ceilings and an assigned teacher instructing those who must learn, its students. The concept of education, pedagogy, is broader than this. In general, when we think about school there are lots of things we would like to be different regarding what is thought to be most useful to teach. Without getting too much into sociology and anthropology we might say that the commodification of education and the issues of production and competition have led to a gradual distancing of education from its original objective,

which was to produce individuals that knew how to express their inner nature in harmony and fullness, leading to a richer and more prosperous inner life.

Pedagogy has been studied by many thinkers throughout the history of civilization. Examples include those with whom we are familiar such as Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget, as well as grass-roots “street educators” who work with whatever is at hand for materials, making do with circumstances and whatever is available. They therefore learn alongside their students. We define *pedagogy* as the systematic, theoretical, and practical study of education and training in different contexts and for different stages of life. So, the objective of pedagogy is to find tools for learning and education, discovering new methods by looking at things from different perspectives. And so the teacher is the first to learn – teaching becomes an exchange rather than a one-way street.

Having spoken about education, its etymology (*educate* being from the Latin *educere*) means something along the lines of “bringing forth from within.” Finding the different ways and strategies for “bringing forth” is exactly the task of pedagogy. In this sense Rosicrucianism has a pedagogy, recognizing axiomatically that each person has a Master Within and that, “only the Master Within can guide us to self mastery.”

Furthermore, AMORC also has a motto: “the greatest tolerance, with the strictest

independence,” which recognizes the importance of the diversity of individuals and the necessity that the process of acquiring knowledge (to which all pedagogy aspires) takes place while respecting the individual and their liberty. In some jurisdictions these principles, which form the basis of Rosicrucian philosophy, are applied to the school education of children. But above all it is applied to the education of adults when, having requested affiliation and having been accepted, they start to follow the path as laid out in the monographs and attend Affiliated Bodies. In the case of the monographs, sometimes there is the complaint that they are “too simple” and that some of the topics can be found in books, in libraries, or on the Internet. This is true, although some of the monographs were written at a time when the Internet wasn’t even a part of science fiction!

Let’s think about the example of the study of the psychic nature of people and psychic projection. You can find thousands of books about it in libraries or on the Internet. We can also find many courses that tell you in one week many of the ideas in the monographs which are covered only after some years of study. Without wishing to judge or be critical, we have to say that this approach is typically consumeristic: by thinking we can buy knowledge we confuse it for information and we fail to take into account that there is a “pedagogical process.” That process transforms information into knowledge, restructuring our inner life by

using the emotions, the intellectual learning, and the new level of consciousness gained.

“Nature makes no leap,” said Gottfried Leibniz. And we have to concede that any educational process requires time, application, reflection, and lived experience. It has to be transformed from theory to practice, from information to experience. In this sense Rosicrucian pedagogy has a constructional quality. It lays a foundation for our thinking upon which we can build new ideas as each member individually accepts them according to their personal experience over time. The Order does not propound a revealed truth (a compendium of ideas that must be accepted uncritically) but rather provides us with a set of methods that enable us to discover that which is to be learned.

Doubt is part of the method, and the method couldn’t be simpler. Although here we must be clear that “simple” doesn’t mean “easy.” Rather the word implies the idea of homogeneity and harmony. Rosicrucian pedagogy is simple and harmonious because it takes into account the inner pace of each member, treating spiritual development in the same way as cultivating a garden, where time and technique must be applied until eventually the beautiful roses bud. All the others (accelerated courses, revolutionary technologies, the “opening of chakras”) are the typical delusions of our industrial information age – an age that has no

time to spare, no longer knowing natural processes and, on occasion, requiring novelty to soothe the troubles of life. We cannot cultivate a garden with an excavator! We said that “simple” doesn’t mean “easy.” The Rosicrucian Path is not easy as it requires a paradigm shift, a new perspective on reality that only forms over time, slowly and gradually, without traumas or imbalances, but harmoniously instead. Yet in the society in which we live everything is fast! Everything must happen in the shortest possible time, because time is money!

We live in the “fast” society! To understand the nature of the shift and accept the pace required is not for everyone. This isn’t sterile elitism but a self-selection by the individuals themselves. For this reason, some members leave the Order after a few months, others after a few years, often thankful for what they have received and at times saying that they have found a “faster” method and so on. We understand that all this is the natural order of things. “Pedagogy” requires development through safe and balanced methods. Rosicrucianism can in this sense consider itself a pedagogic method that has much to offer. Over time and in silence, we discover that the student and master are one, and this revelation comes about to the degree to which the one approaches the other, thus unveiling the Supreme Unity.



MAY 2013 THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

“A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but when it twists things, it breaks the spirit.”

– Proverbs 15:4

“Anxiety in a person’s heart weighs him [them] down, but a kind word cheers him [them] up.”

– Proverbs 12:25

We start this message this month with these words from the Book of Proverbs in the Bible because, as is often the case with literature concerning wisdom, its words often reveal truth. An old Rosicrucian manuscript says, “Before turning to the Masters your mouth must first have lost all ability to utter malice.”

The Order consists of people who seek to discover the profound meaning of existence. We are looking to give the arc of our life a true and deeper meaning by placing it within a larger harmonious

scheme. This certainly isn't an easy task and nor are we talking about an activity that can be delegated to our spare time. On the contrary, it is a life-style choice and a way of dealing with life's events by giving each of them in turn an interpretation that gradually unveils ever more of our true nature. Evelyn Underhill, an English scholar who studied humankind's spiritual nature, rightly wrote that we can see only that which we ourselves are. For this reason, reality as we perceive it is continually showing us who we are.

The Rosicrucian Order is a sort of disciplinary school that helps us to find a new way to see reality. To do this it has to cultivate in each of us ever more refined ethics that represent in some way the degree of understanding that each of us is developing within. It is for this reason that we insist that language itself is a reflection of our inner desire to access this higher reality. We study the way in which sound has an effect on our lives because vibrations have a physical character and sound interacts directly with our physical bodies. Since sound also transmits a message, it can interact with our emotional, psychic, and spiritual natures.

A common example of sound that transmits a message is music. Understanding how a sequence of sounds and silence can affect our emotions to the point of making us cry or incite a battle is a topic of study in various scientific fields, because even though we are used to it, when one thinks

about it, it is still an amazing effect. These effects are explained in detail as one progresses along the Rosicrucian Path. In short, we may say that sound acts on the psychic centers of the body producing the effects we know. We can extend this concept beyond music to the spoken word. Choosing words and when to say them can often be difficult. Coarse vocabulary, an aggressive tone, excessive intensity, or things said at the wrong moment produce catastrophic results.

On the other hand, good words filled with friendship, calmly spoken with the right intensity, produce miracles. When we speak, we are transmitting emotion to those we are speaking to and so we must always be attentive to what we are saying and how we say it. Expressions like "I'm someone who says things as they are," or "I'm someone who says things clearly," are sometimes just hiding an inability to master this marvelous instrument developed over millions of years of evolution. The consequence of the inappropriate use of language is, as we know, the wounding of the hearts of those who listen. On the other hand, one who has grasped the importance of this instrument on the Path of spiritual knowledge uses it every day, aware that every word has profound effects that go beyond the physical. They choose their words with care: motivating, positive, encouraging, complimentary, and appreciative. When such people criticize, it is immediately understood from their tone that they do so only to the extent they

truly believe it to be constructive. They continually seek to steer the conversation to positive and constructive topics. They avoid negative criticism, aware that words filled with negative emotions have devastating effects.

We must consider the mastery of language as a mystical exercise – one of the hardest – and take as examples those who have already mastered this aspect of the Path and put it into practice without any longer realizing it. We must make a conscious and deliberate effort to be like this and not allow bad habits to take root with excuses like, “that’s just how I am”. Let us make a conscious effort to better use this instrument that nature has given us, practicing it daily, observing the effect of how much we say and how we say it. I’m sure that one day, when we are in the presence of our Initiator, a smile will welcome us and the great truths of life will be revealed in a single word: “Silence!”





APRIL 2014 DISCERNMENT

“*The psychological transformation would be that whatever was formerly endured is now known, loved, and served.”*

– Joseph Campbell

The above words of Joseph Campbell, the great scholar of mythology, invite us to reflect on a very important aspect of the Mystical Path: “discernment.” In his treatise titled *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among People*, the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau addresses one of the most challenging aspects of human experience: the necessity to make choices. He notes that while animals are born ready for the life for which they are destined, the same does not follow for us humans. A cat, for example, will always behave like a cat and will only eat food specific to cats. A finch will always behave like a finch and will only eat food that finches eat. A starving cat would never eat seeds; nor would a starving finch

eat sardines. Choosing patterns of behavior, other than those nature has determined for them, is not part of animal nature.

However, for human beings it is the opposite. At each instant of our lives, we are presented with decisions and choices to make. Every single human act is the result of a choice, and choices are often difficult to make. When we decide upon a particular action, we are, by implication, relinquishing the thousands of other possibilities there might have been if we had made different decisions. We know very well that by saying "yes" to one thing requires that we forsake others, which often makes a choice difficult: if I decide to go on a mountain holiday, I cannot go to the seaside; if I decide to read this book now, I will not also be able to read another one at the same time. But choices are not only about simple decisions such as where to go on holiday or what to read first. Any one decision could profoundly affect the rest of our life, for example, choosing the person with whom to share our life; or deciding on one type of work over another. Choices are influenced by many factors, such as the moral values we have developed over time, the environment we find ourselves in, our physical wellbeing and so on.

Another factor that makes each important decision a difficult step to take is that, deep down, we know that we will not have sufficient time to read all the books we wish to read, embrace all the

people we would like to embrace or go to all the places we want to visit. Our time is limited and sooner or later we shall leave. Choices must be well-thought-out, and we are obliged, as a result, to abandon all other options.

One of the elements necessary for a well-considered choice is discernment. Discerning is key when we need to set out on a path that appears before us while knowing that there are other paths we could take. Discerning means seeing more clearly, and this “seeing” is certainly not about having good eyesight! Discernment can be practiced in such a way that, over time, it becomes increasingly refined and sensitive to very subtle stimuli.

This, in fact, is what happens on the Rosicrucian Path. Although we do not often notice it, the methodical system of study and practice produce a heightened capacity for discernment, capable of perceiving the different nuances and hues that the untrained mind may not perceive. This process should help us to become more confident individuals, mindful of the different routes that life tends to take, enabling us to understand that what we call “fate” originates from ourselves and does not intend to punish or reward us, but simply make us aware of the extent to which we are attuned with cosmic law.

The great Masters of humanity are such not only for their extraordinary abilities but also

because of the discernment they demonstrated when particular situations presented themselves and a decision was necessary. Examples include Yeshua's response to those who wanted to stone the adulterous woman, Buddha's choice to take the Middle Way, and Socrates's response to the citizens of Athens after his death sentence: "The hour of departure has arrived... I to die, and you to live. Which of these two is better, only the Divine knows."

May discernment be the true light in our lives.





JUNE 2015 INNER TRANSFORMATION

“Once, when [Rabbi Elimelech’s] soul rose up to heaven, he learned that with his holiness he was rebuilding the ravaged altar in the sanctuary of Heavenly Jerusalem, which corresponds to the sanctuary of Jerusalem on this Earth.”

– Martin Buber

This short quotation from one of the writings of the famous Austrian philosopher and educator Martin Buber takes us back to the core of one of the fundamental aspects of the Rosicrucian initiatic Path, namely the inner transformation of the individual who embarks on it. A distinctive feature of the Rosicrucian Path is alchemy; and the fundamental purpose of alchemy, in a nutshell, is transmutation. To transmute means to change something’s form or nature, or, for example in alchemy, to transmute means to change a base metal (like lead) into gold.

Transmutation, in this context, consists of the fulfilment of a series of stages that take place in an individual's life, which causes a kind of spiritual elevation that produces a change in personality with subsequent impact on the material plane. For such transmutation to take place, certain conditions are necessary, without which any process of this nature remains on the intellectual and material plane. One of the pitfalls of the initiatic Path is confusing a knowledge of the mystical with the transmutation we have just mentioned. One of these conditions relates to our capacity for reflection.

To reflect (from the Latin *reflectere*) means "to bend back," and in this case it refers to an action of the individual's consciousness in which it first projects outwards and then turns inwards. Even though this description might be referring to a simple process, this step often proves to be very difficult. Reflection means observation of oneself, but this observation may unveil aspects of the personality that may need modification; and becoming aware of this may even be a painful experience. On the other hand, while this is a step that each of us may take alone, it requires some training on a psychological level.

Another essential requirement is to learn, through extensive preparation, to interpret the symbolic language that nature often places before our eyes. Our civilization has structured itself over the centuries by strengthening its logical outlook

on reality. Logic is only one of the processes that the brain can utilize to learn; it is like a mental schema, so that anything that does not fit neatly into its categories may be unintelligible to us.

Mystics of the past have stressed the need for the pilgrim on the Path of Noble Truths to learn to interpret events as analogies, which some might even consider poetic. Basically, it is a matter of reasoning through metaphors and analogies which can be interpreted on multiple levels, suggesting truth without ever actually stating it outright. If I say, “he fought like a lion,” I am, of course, not referring to any violent form of combat with the death of one of the opponents, although the phrase could mean that as well. While I might be referring to a type of courage or strength, I could also be referring to a kind of nobility of spirit. This simple example shows how this phrase can be interpreted from various angles.

Dreaming, one of the means by which our subconscious speaks to us, utilizes a symbolic language that requires some experience to understand. A sequence of images and emotions often conveys aspects of our personality that need to be understood, transmuted, and integrated; where interpreting them in a logical way would lead us astray. This is also one of the reasons why the Order tells us that we should not ask others to interpret our dreams, because they are messages concerning our innermost nature and use a

symbolism which is intimate to us alone and which cannot be fully grasped by anyone else. Analogies, metaphors, and associations are the language which the soul uses to express itself. To understand them requires a kind of harmonization rather than a logical-rational analysis. This is also the typical language of an initiatic ritual which uses metaphors, symbols, and analogies to retrace the adventure of the incarnation of being in matter. Its interpretation reveals to the initiate the meaning and hidden significance of the various processes of nature.

Last but not least, there is discipline, which must be the basis on which to build the entire transmutation process. The ancient alchemists carried out their proceedings ceaselessly for days, often using low temperatures in their furnaces so as not to force the process beyond its natural limits and thereby rendering all their efforts futile.

Discipline turns out to be one of the most difficult aspects of our current era, an era characterized by a desire for the unknown to become known sooner rather than later. In effect, we worry about it. We are concerned about the future, wanting it to become the present rapidly, while the present soon becomes the past. We are thus depriving ourselves of the only real tool we have for learning what we really need. We must engage our discipline in the struggle against the speed with which people normally live. A sense of anxiety and lack of time

pervade our so-called post-modern societies, and any effort to reclaim personal time encounters serious difficulties.

All our members must know that what has led them to knock at the Order's portals awaits discovery. But this discovery will only come about if each succeeds in establishing in their own life the necessary discipline to interpret nature (inner and outer) in its analogical language, reflecting on his or her own experiences, replacing old ideas and concepts with ideas and thoughts of a higher order, thus proceeding towards the transmutation of one's own personality. In so doing, we too can play our part in rebuilding the altar of the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem, and we will know deep within our hearts and minds that it will correspond to the altar of the temple of Jerusalem on Earth.





APRIL 2016 ESOTERICISM

Some of you have asked to what extent esoteric philosophy is able to influence society because, from what you can see around you, the world is heading in an ever more materialistic direction. We can start from here for this message. First of all, it is necessary to clarify the word *esotericism* (and *esoteric*) in order to avoid falling into a language trap and being diverted. The word *esotericism* is one of those words that has in recent years suffered a significant change in meaning and so we should pause a moment on this point. Today the word *esoteric* is used by the media to refer to a range of activities, often illicit or charlatan and based on a pseudo occultism that pacifies the anxieties and fulfils the needs of twenty-first century people. Dictionaries define the word *esotericism* as a collection of teachings that are transmitted to a limited number of select people.

The great philosopher Plato in his *Seventh Letter* refers to a series of oral doctrines passed on to his disciples in person that he was never to have written down. Experts call this the “esoteric doctrine” of Plato. More recently, Professor Antoine Faivre of the Sorbonne has tried to characterize esotericism by identifying six characteristics. Briefly, one point is the idea of a living Cosmos, meaning that each part of the universe is related to each other part so as to form a single large living organism. If we look at this concept carefully, we can see that it was already a part of humanist thought in the 1400s, where the Cosmos was seen as a single living organism whose parts attracted or repelled each other according to well-defined principles and the knowledge of which came to be the basis of Renaissance magic. *Magic*, as it happens, is another word that over time became redefined.

The idea that the universe, or rather the Cosmos, is a living entity whose parts interact continues in various fields of science and in common experience today. The New Age movement itself promulgated this idea in the 1970s. From there it was taken up by the environmental movement. Physics in the early 1900s made the case for the idea of interaction, namely that the universe is a network of interconnected events where each node of the network interacts with all others. Today, environmental issues have become urgent. We have become aware that what we do in our immediate environment affects the whole planet.

We are suffering the consequences of the mistakes of the past and yet authorities are still making decisions without considering the complexity of ecological systems and are making choices that have worse consequences than the problems they seek to solve.

The idea that our world is made up of interconnected parts, of which we are one part, is a thoroughly esoteric idea! And we cannot overlook the poetic side of these ideas. It follows by deduction or from simple observation that evolution towards a better and more beautiful condition is a law. Everything seems to progress towards a perfection of its own nature. We can also conclude that we, placed inside this reality, should ourselves progress towards a better expression of the good, the beautiful, and the true as a consequence of evolution.

Recall the sensation that you feel every time you look at nature, the natural environment around you, or watch the look in the eyes of young children when they see brightly colored and marvelous fish, or the plants and other strange beings that harmoniously move with the waves in an aquarium... or we might look into a telescope and point it to the starry sky, maybe towards a planet (Saturn, for example) or the Moon and observe the sensation within you. I say “sensation,” not reflection or objective thought. I don’t mean the scientific description but just the sensation. Study

a tree, perhaps alone in the middle of a field, or a storm, its lightning etching a multitude of patterns as it crisscrosses the sky, or watch a chimney and its smoke. Observe yourself while observing.

Something within us is watching and the sensation is that of belonging to a harmonious whole. No science has yet explained why a mass of stones with their tops white with snow, that we call the Alps, arouses such emotion in us. This is what esotericism tells us: it is the sensation of belonging to a single Being that expresses itself in many different ways and that can be observed here among us.

Our tasks are to make these sensations the fulcrum of our decisions; to understand that evolution is a law that is active on many levels of existence; and to accept that there aren't traps for us in the universe, but a single law that we can only call Love. If we sincerely wish for a better world, we just have to look for these sensations inside us and make them a part of our objective lives, starting from our ethical decisions in our relationships with others and with the environment, and with ourselves. This is what we seek in the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, and we tend to move towards such visions of reality, expressing thoughts of gratitude as we do so to all those who came before us; those who left the road open – a bright and noble path. We are fundamentally an esoteric Order and we seek with all our strength to remain such.



JUNE 2016 MYSTICISM

“I do not seek salvation in mere apathy – awe is the greatest boon we humans are allotted, and though our world would have us stifle feeling, if we are stirred profoundly, we sense the Infinite.”

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*

This month’s message starts with the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the great German writer, philosopher, and scientist. I chose it because it seems to me an enlightened description of both the deep and true nature of our being and a poetic description of the mystical experience. The word *mystical* (and therefore *mysticism*) is one of those words that gives rise to an incorrect impression of what the experience entails. We are already familiar with words that over time have taken on new and different meanings. Recall such words as *utopia*, *esotericism*, *magic* – words that today suggest naivety and even arouse suspicion or

fear. But this would not be the case if we consider their original meanings.

Mysticism is one such word. In general, the word *mystic* is associated with an image of hermits, those who retreated to the desert in the first centuries of Christianity, or those who have chosen a monastic way of life, far from society, family, and the world, living an inactive life and waiting for a moment of spiritual illumination. Above all if we think about the weight given in society today to rational thought, one is perplexed by the concept of the “mystical” search for truth.

But is this view of the mystic correct? Isn’t this promoting a stereotype far removed from reality? It is useful to note that it would be naive to think that the life of a hermit was, or even is today, an inactive one. Whoever reads the thoughts of the Desert Fathers, hermit monks of the Middle East, will realize that such thinking cannot be conceived without long and painful self-inspection regarding the nature of life, death, and the meaning of existence. This is far from the passive process which may come to mind when referring to “mystics.”

Our reflection must take one more step because, when we refer to our Order as a mystical Order, we are certainly not suggesting we should retreat to the desert to fast and pray until the inner light manifests. Rather we are talking about a path that gradually “lifts the veil” hiding our true nature, bringing us awareness of a new and different reality.

It also lifts the veil from the worldview which has been instilled in us through education, habit, and even impoverished spiritual traditions that have ended up distancing us from our true nature.

What we don't know exactly is who and what we are, and if we thought we did we would be embracing a dogma. But we can say that we are certainly more than just a bundle of cells, appearing by chance on a planet destined to disappear without a trace. Science claims the origin of our universe to be some 13.7 billion years ago. That singular event, known as the Big Bang, began the history of the universe, the appearance of matter, energy, space, and time. This is indeed a difficult (if not impossible) event to imagine but one which scientific observation seems to confirm. One characteristic of the universe is that at the beginning it started to expand. To illustrate this, we might say that it started to inflate like a balloon. Outside the balloon there is nothing. Indeed, it doesn't even make sense to talk about "outside the balloon" since all of reality is really part of the balloon. The gradual expansion cooled the universe, which began at an unimaginable temperature; a number followed by something like thirty zeros! The energy started to generate matter in keeping with relativity: first, simple atoms, the elements of hydrogen and helium, and then through fusion the other elements. This process of expansion cooled the universe and condensed gases into interstellar clouds, galaxies, and planets.

It is estimated that there are some two trillion galaxies in the observable universe. Each galaxy has hundreds of billions of stars like our Sun that produce light through nuclear fusion. We live in one of these galaxies, the Milky Way, on one of its billions of celestial bodies that we call Earth. Our planet is 4.5 billion years old and the oldest known fossils are 3.7 billion years old.

Considering for a moment the immensity of these numbers, we must ask how it is possible that single atoms came together to form complex molecules such as amino acids that then assembled in precise sequences to form the proteins that in turn formed the first life on our planet. From this first life-form, this first primitive simple cell, natural selection and evolution formed an infinity of living beings until we arrived here (me writing and you reading) and another seven billion human beings, as well as the innumerable other creatures that the planet hosts both above and below its surface. Isn't that amazing? Doesn't reflecting on this create a sense of awe? We cannot but think we are that part of the planet – and even the universe itself – that thinks, lives, breathes, and feels emotion.

The matter that composes us appeared just a few hundred-thousand years after the Big Bang yet forms an incredibly complex structure within us, capable of self-reflection. We are studying the matter of the universe and so we are the instrument

with which the universe comes to know itself! And if I ask myself why this whole process that began 13.7 billion years ago has continued until today, I can only feel emotion; even without realizing it, my life is governed by this emotion, a sense of the sacred, quite different from the religious but related instead to a perception of the inexplicable harmony of which we are undoubtedly a part. This is mysticism!

It is inspiring to be aware that the universe lives through us, and that the greatest meaning in this whole story is therefore present in every cell of our body and every atom of our cells. It is certainly difficult to maintain this awareness even for twenty-four hours. Life as we have made it, with its “problems” to solve – its tensions, misunderstandings in our relationships, the rat-race, and the resulting sense of insecurity – continually distracts us from this awareness. Because of this, going into the desert might be of help sometimes. But the art of mysticism requires that we hold this higher understanding in our lives. And this is a daily task. This is certainly difficult, and we often forget that only fraternity can maintain our strength; that we are together in this difficult task and that all the problems that afflict human relationships also provide opportunities for the evolution of our consciousness.

We’re all looking to return to the house of the Divine, because we are infused with a perennial

feeling of nostalgia. The hope that lives in us is irrepressible and emerges when we are moved. And as Goethe says, “If we are stirred profoundly, we sense the Infinite.”





JULY 2016
KNOW YOURSELF
TO TRANSFORM YOURSELF

“It is my deep conviction that the only option is for something to change in the sphere of the spirit, in the sphere of human conscience, in the actual attitude of man [humankind] towards the world and his [its] understanding of himself [itself] and his [its] place in the overall order of existence.”
– Václav Havel, “Responsibility and the Spirit,”
1997

We start this month’s message with the words of the former president of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel. He was a writer, playwright, and Czech politician known for his humanist values. His words and his life story demonstrate this. Analysts, sociologists, philosophers, and economists say that we aren’t seeing the end of the world but the end of a world. We see the gradual disintegration of a system based on a fragmented vision of reality, a worldview permeated by the

thinking of seventeenth-century scientists and philosophers and its subsequent development over three centuries. This has led to an understanding based on splitting things to understand them; breaking things into their constituent parts to see their inner workings. This way of thinking has led to enormous technological achievements, to the domination of many aspects of nature and the world. But it has also led to enormous damage to ecological systems and the environment and to humankind generally. Just consider, for example, wars with increasingly devastating weapons of destruction. And so the concept of progress itself gets debated. At the beginning it meant moving towards greater liberty, mastery of nature, and benefits for humanity; now it represents an uncertain future, where planning becomes more difficult and small shocks can make seemingly solid and permanent systems collapse. For a long time, it was believed that old systems could be used to manage the growing complexity.

Here is an example: until some centuries ago, it was possible to think about the law of the market (the law of supply and demand) as real enough – as a natural law – that guaranteed social balance. Yet today it has become mere fantasy. Demand is managed by creating false needs, encouraging the purchase of products which dominate the market through disproportionate economic power. So we hear references made to this law as if it were still applicable and guarantees social and economic

balance. We aren't reflecting on politics here, at least not in the sense of different ideas seeking power, whatever those ideas might be. Rather, we are reflecting on humanity because what we see is not a curse from above but a pure expression of the inner state of people at present. That simple perspective was understood by the Rosicrucians of the 1600s, as well as by mystics of all times. Reality is an expression of human thought and any change one wishes for must first take place in the human mind and consciousness. What we are seeing is a gradual crumbling of old structures, of old ways of thinking, and the failure today of solutions to problems from one hundred, two hundred, or even three hundred years ago!

Havel explicitly presents self-knowledge as a way to change the world. Let's look at this change from the perspective of the here and now by constructing a useful positive vision of it. Let's imagine an unfinished book with many pages already written. This book is our life. Each of us has our own book where our stories are told from infancy to the present; that is being written now, even as you read this message. Our interactions are in both my book and yours, so that what is written in my book is also written in the books of others. And what others write in their books sometimes appears in mine. So we can see that what we write in our book also ends up in the life stories of others. And all the books of all humanity are interconnected. But note an important point:

often, while writing our own book, we can choose which pages of others we are also writing on. On becoming aware of this, our first response is to increase our awareness of what is happening around us and within us. I recognize that the idea of being an isolated person, who makes no impact on others, is totally illusory; what is written in my book can also be written in the books of others (and who knows how many others) without my realizing it.

From the point of view of our fraternity, we have to be aware that we are educating ourselves (in the highest sense of the term) to write such a book. We write pages alone in silence in our Sanctum, and we write pages collectively in shared moments of mystical practice. We also exchange entire pages of our books. We gradually learn what to write and what not to write, learning to discard that which is not worth reading, whether by us or by others, and to consciously write what comes from within (and that we see in others) that we know we will read with great pleasure in the future. Our path in a sense is almost literary. In our book, letters become words, words become phrases and phrases become our life story. This is in some ways like the formation of our bodies; the atoms become molecules, the molecules become cells, the cells become tissues and organs, and the organs become us. And we observe that certain natural processes repeat magically, moved by a thought that seems to fill the universe. We therefore understand that we

are, in some sense, architects of change – and that the universe itself holds great hope in us.

There are no tricks or traps in Nature – only a single law. That law we call Love.





JANUARY 2017 PROTOCOL

The film *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) tells the true story of an expedition sent to climb Nanga Parbat, the ninth highest mountain in the world. After some adventures, two of the climbers find themselves in Tibet where they meet Tenzin Gyatso, the current Dalai Lama. In one scene in the film, Heinrich Harrer (one of the two expert climbers and author of the autobiography on which the film is based) meets the Dalai Lama while he is a child. Before meeting him, Harrer is instructed by the mother of the Dalai Lama on the protocol that he has to follow in the presence of His Holiness: Harrer mustn't look him in the eyes, he must always sit in a lower position, he must not speak except to answer questions, and so on.

This scene made me think about discipline and protocol. What is not immediately apparent is that Tibet in this period had a deeply mystical atmosphere, thanks to the protocol that they

followed, which included the Dalai Lama himself. There was a certain way of doing things that determined what a foreigner might feel when visiting the country. Even today, many travelers seek the experience of being among Tibetan people for a few days to experience the devotion and solemnity they have towards the spiritual. They do nothing ostentatious; instead, they display small behaviors which combine to create this atmosphere.

I would like to connect this approach to the heart of our Order. Many members who come to see the Grand Lodge describe how they breathe a different air there; how it is great to spend a few hours in the company of other members and participate in its mystical work. We can experience the same atmosphere during the various activities that we organize, such as conferences or Rosicrucian days. But we should emphasize that this atmosphere is created by a lot of small details which, when taken individually, wouldn't mean much (or might even be confusing), but, when the details are combined they create the very conditions we are all seeking and which we expect when we join an Order such as ours.

Nobody would ever consider telling a Tibetan that the way they pray, receive a guest, or celebrate their holidays was mistaken. If we were in Tibet, we would be in a state of openness and observe the atmosphere that each of these customs creates. It is precisely these impressions that we would recall

in the years after our visit. Similarly, it is important that you know the way that we do things inside the Order – our customs – because it is precisely how we conduct ourselves that creates the right atmosphere.

A case in point is that when we ask that certain rules are followed – for instance, being careful about how we dress during an activity of the Order (such as not wearing revealing clothes, not drinking alcohol during a Rosicrucian social hour, not using vulgar language, and so on) – it is for good reason. And certainly we don't want to argue with those who think otherwise. We do these things because, added together, these details create the very atmosphere we are seeking. So, naturally, establishing protocols that might seem unusual is a necessary discipline.

For example, if we tend to use coarse language, we must make a conscious effort not to express ourselves with certain words. Nevertheless, this might happen unintentionally. If we do, and if someone else suggests being careful with our language and avoiding vulgarities, we might feel our way of expressing ourselves is being stifled. If we take offense where none is intended, we won't be able to understand the significance and impact that our behavior has on the general atmosphere. If, however, our attention is focused on the environment, we shall understand that the way things are done has an effect. Controlling the tone

of our voice and using respectful vocabulary and courtesy produces a marked effect and a distinct atmosphere. So, one can understand that when we participate in mystical work dressed appropriately, we will in fact be contributing to the solemnity of the ritual even before it takes place.

Certainly, we know that we are constructing a symbolic building for which good intentions are not enough and for which certain skills are needed. Otherwise, the building would remain just an idea. Each of us must be adequately prepared for the work at hand. Like all work, it requires some effort and energy. We have to assimilate the essentials of Rosicrucian philosophy and not mistake the Order for a club where we get together to eat, drink, and discuss abstract academic topics. Philosophical speculation isn't of interest to us if it doesn't touch people's lives, if it doesn't lead to developing our ethics and to a new vision of ourselves, life, and the universe. We don't get together to speculate intellectually about nature or to demonstrate our intellectual and cultural talents, but to experience moments of elevated spirituality, moments of harmony, and also of social interaction in which our most intimate and recondite side, that of the Master Within, becomes manifest.

Seven Years in Tibet is a great film. Harrer remained the friend of the Dalai Lama until his transition in 2006. When he was young he was an able climber but arrogant and full of himself and

dismissive of others. During his climb of Nanga Parbat, he slipped and was injured, endangering the expedition. The seven years he spent in the different atmosphere of Tibet, with its different customs and approach to the sacred, transformed him. He learned the importance of those details which, when added together, make up the strength of this people, a people today who live all over the world. I hope to be able to meet all of you in the Grand Lodge and to share moments of meaning and fraternity with you.





MARCH 2017

OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

“*Human beings are whole but not complete; they only complete themselves through relationships.”*

– Leonardo Boff

We begin our reflection with the words of the famous Brazilian theologian expressed in one of his articles that expanded on a concept of the philosopher Karl Marx, who believed that the essence of the human being is the totality of his social relationships. Let us now look at how relationships are indeed one of the fundamental elements of evolution, both spiritual and social, as well as the physical and biological evolution of human beings, and how we can view them from a Rosicrucian perspective.

Let us consider how sometimes a simple change of perspective enables us to see certain truths that we had not previously noticed. Think of the fact that human beings grow old as a consequence of the passing of the years. This seems to be an obvious

statement that does not require much explanation. We might say that it is a self-evident truth. Yet, it is false. A car, a computer, a chair – any object made by a person ages. This is because, when it is made, the moment its life begins, the object is finished and complete, ready for work. From the moment it is produced it begins the process of ageing, that is, of its degradation towards a condition where it can no longer perform the task for which it was built. This is not the case for human beings. Unlike objects we are born incomplete and during our lifetimes we continue to develop.

We are, therefore, not born ready for life and then grow old, but we are born incomplete and then in every moment we develop, grow, and expand. We are like a house to which we are continually adding rooms and even floors. An outdated pedagogical view is that human beings stop growing after reaching adolescence. This view has long since been abandoned but it still persists in some people's minds – those who would consider it strange to hear of a fifty-year-old enrolling in higher education. This view, in a certain sense, subscribes to the idea that we only go to school when we are "young".

There is a saying in Arabic culture that a person is like a carpet: every now and then it is necessary to give it a shake to get rid of the dust. We, as Rosicrucians, continually give ourselves a shake to prevent the gathering of moldy dust that distorts reality by obscuring our vision and hiding

our essence. We envisage living beings as being embodied souls, a spiritual essence experiencing matter, and constituting a single, unified being without any segmentation, and yet consisting of both body and soul. This experience is dual; it creates an inner world and an outer world, giving the appearance of separation between these two levels of experience. Looking outside of us we experience the world; looking within we experience ourselves. Furthermore, it so happens that when we look outside of ourselves our own observation comes into contact with the observations of others, and from this interaction relationships are formed.

Incarnated souls, using their eyes to observe one another, see, first and foremost, a great diversity of expression. We can see in the infinite diversity of living beings the endless ways in which the Universal Soul experiences life. On this journey, we first come into this world lacking the means for survival or learning. Many animals can walk within moments of birth, whereas we are helpless and practically inactive for many months before we can take our first tentative steps. And still further months pass before we can walk with confidence. Nevertheless, we fall over many times during our lives, demonstrating that even just walking requires continual learning.

Not only do we experience a relationship with objects, but we experience a somewhat more complex relationship with people. Both types of

relationships create our inner world, and this is constantly expanding and transforming. Forming relationships is an essential activity for us humans and no evolution is possible without it. Even those who choose a life of solitude will never actually be alone as they carry the memories of the lives they once shared with others. Relationship is the key word in all evolution. From the studies of molecular biology, anthropology, archaeology, and other sciences, we learn that all of life's evolution occurs through the infinite relationships between different systems. The apparent separation between the various realms of nature does not really exist, just as there is no separation between my liver and my kidneys or lungs, even though they are structurally different from one another. They exist because of the relationship that exists between the different structures in my body which collectively keep me alive.

The same applies to forests. Contrary to what our senses may lead us to believe, there is no such thing as separation between the infinite varieties of life that exist in a forest. All are interconnected through the mycelia; the life of each component is essential to the life of the whole; and the life of the forests is essential to our lives. A hidden but real relationship exists between us and the forests.

From a Rosicrucian perspective, we need to reflect on the importance of the existence of an initiatic community, a group of people who, while

being fundamentally different, in any case share certain ideals and understandings about life and the meaning of our presence in the world. This may explain why we are so eager to create periods of fellowship between our members; why we organize cultural and mystical activities that are also open to non-members, and why we often have to overcome the common misunderstandings that can arise between people whose vision is still self-centered. These occasions can become moments of reflection that offer each individual a moment of heightened awareness of reality.

The importance of our community lies in the positive response to the harmony that is generated when the purpose of those who come together is noble and righteous. An example that comes to mind is invariably that of the Affiliated Bodies, but particularly of our Grand Lodge, when members, following time spent together, emotionally express sadness when these periods of time are over. This feeling, that can be expressed with the phrase “it’s a pity it’s over,” reflects a level of relationship with others, with oneself, and with life beyond the mundane that reveals the full importance of the work we do within our community. I insist on using the term community because it perfectly expresses a level of relationship that includes harmony, respect, and tolerance among people bound together by an ideal.

It can be stated that we share this “relationship” and, being aware of this fact, I invite you all to strengthen the work of the Affiliated Bodies; to support the existence of the initiatic community to which you belong and which has welcomed you, as well as support other communities where the spirit of human fraternity is present. By doing so, we will work in harmony with the very process that life itself utilizes to propel that which we call evolution.





APRIL 2017 LIBERTY

“*Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.”*

– The Talmud

One of the characteristics of the Rosicrucian Path as expressed by AMORC is the respect that the Order has for the liberty of each member. This position is often one of the aspects most appreciated by those aligned with this path because nobody in good conscience wants to be coerced by others or have their choices determined by third parties. Paradoxically, however, being free to choose can be difficult, just as is defining the concept of liberty itself. From the Rosicrucian point of view, the purpose of emphasizing free choice is to enable each individual to make their own decisions responsibly. This is not always an easy thing to do and often we meet people who

want to be free to choose but don't always want to take the responsibility for their decisions and actions. They end up delegating this innate human quality to others – preferring that others choose for them – so that they aren't responsible for their actions. In other messages, we have looked at the difficulty of making decisions; for example, when we decide to do something we implicitly abandon countless other options.

Furthermore, each decision we make in life impacts our future significantly, and yet we aren't always able to predict the outcomes. This causes the anxiety that makes decision-making "difficult." So we often delegate our decision making to others and thus avoid the anxiety of deciding and taking responsibility for the outcomes. So, it's great to be a member of an organization that respects our individual liberty and does not dictate our lifestyle, our eating habits, or our opinions regarding ethical decisions. Such things may instead be determined by circumstances or by religious beliefs.

But at the same time, it is necessary to remember that AMORC affirms that the responsibility for our actions lies solely with us and that only by reflecting upon our experiences can we expand our individual consciousness. Nobody can do this work for us because each of us must "walk the walk" for ourselves. Certainly being part of an initiatic community helps, because we can find people to share our reflections, to better our decisions, and

to determine the limits of our understanding of freedom.

We can look at some examples that illustrate the concept of liberty. Giordano Bruno, the philosopher who was burned at the stake in the Campo de' Fiori square in Rome in February 1600, had the opportunity to save himself by recanting and retracting all that he had written. Ecclesiastical authority required him to renounce his religious and philosophical position. Had he done so, he would probably have escaped with a few years in prison. But Bruno didn't renounce what he had written. In fact, he tried to explain his position to those who had no intention of listening; he was a "free" man because he did not compromise his values or his ideas and convictions even in exchange for his life. This is an extreme example but an example nevertheless. Now, let's ask: According to the usual concept of liberty – that is the right to do as one chooses – was Bruno free or not? In this case, Bruno could not behave differently because that was who he was. Socrates was condemned to death under the false accusations of teaching non-belief in the deities and of corrupting the young. Before the sentence was enacted his disciples begged him to flee for his life. But he refused, stating that had he done so, his philosophy would have come to nothing. In his *Apology of Socrates*, Plato writes that Socrates, after hearing his death sentence, left the court with these words: "The hour of departure

has arrived, and we go our ways – I to die, and you to live. Which is better only the Divine knows.”

Could Socrates have chosen differently? He believed it was better to suffer an injustice rather than commit one and his loyalty to this belief made him decide to accept the sentence. Here we have two notable examples of high ideals and extreme integrity, each being true to themselves and their philosophies. These are two examples that should be remembered today whenever those who seek to impose their decisions on others rise to power: whenever secularism and pluralism are being restricted by the interpretations of a small number of people, or whenever a spiritual path is replaced by some illumined person who decides for all of us what is best and tells us what we must think or do.

Let us remember these examples so we always recall that being free is fundamentally a part of human nature and that our beliefs and values are ultimately what determine our actions. Having faith is ultimately about being true both to ourselves and to that which we truly and deeply believe in our hearts. Living like this produces an ethic that not only benefits the Rosicrucian community but benefits all of society, because the deeper we go into our own being the more we discover that those things which are essential for one person are in fact vital for all humanity.



MAY 2017

A NEW PARADIGM

This year Protestant churches celebrate 500 years since the protestant Reformation of Martin Luther, a German monk and theologian. For Rosicrucians, what interests us is the spirit of Luther's times and how human consciousness shapes history. The Reformation started with the publication of Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* aimed at reforming rather than splitting the Roman Catholic Church. There had already been other movements that attempted to bring Christianity back to its roots. These movements emphasized poverty and the importance of Christ's teachings as a way to purify the Church from all that was superfluous and that was distancing the Church from its original ideals. For us the Franciscan movement comes to mind, but it would be no less true of the Waldensians and of many others, some of which started to appear as far back as the eleventh century, when they were often treated as

heretics, with the dramatic consequences we know about.

Luther lived in a period of history when many of the certainties that typified the thought of that period (the paradigm of that time) were crumbling. The impetus for this included (i) the “discovery” of the New World, (ii) the beginning of scientific thought through foundational texts such as Nicolaus Copernicus’s *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, (iii) the beginnings some years earlier of the philological analysis of religious texts by humanists such as Lorenzo Valla, and (iv) many other events such as the Hermetic texts translated by Marsilio Ficino in Florence in the 1400s. These developments radically changed the worldview that had been supported by the Roman Catholic Church. And these new ideas could be shared as never before in history... the Gutenberg movable-type printing press enabled a previously unparalleled, widespread sharing of knowledge. Just imagine that before the printing press the only way to read the Bible was to obtain a hand-written copy!

Luther’s arrival on the religious scene was not an isolated event, but was likely a consequence of the bigger picture it was a part of. Many people were sensing that the dominant worldview could no longer withstand the changes that were taking place. When what we see fails to correspond with what we think and believe, such a rupture creates

a crisis in any individual or society. Within a short time, Europe had split into two, with the north under a predominantly Protestant influence and the south under Catholicism. Luther claimed that every Christian was their own priest; there was no longer any authority that could stand between people and Christ. The ecclesiastical hierarchy was thus eliminated. He claimed that every Christian had to know how to read the Bible, and so it was translated into German. Indeed, that was the birth of the German language as we know it. This also meant that soon the north of Europe became more literate than the south.

From the point of view of Rosicrucian history, the first Rosicrucian manifestos appeared in Protestant Europe. This is because free thinkers were protected from persecution and prosecution by the Inquisition if they lived under the aegis of a German principality such as the Palatinate of Frederick II. The *Fama Fraternitatis* appeared for the first time in 1614, a century that opened with the burning at the stake of Giordano Bruno in the Campo de' Fiori square, Rome. In 1632, Galileo Galilei published his famous *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*. This cost him a life prison sentence from Cardinal Robert Bellarmino, who had condemned Bruno some years earlier. René Descartes, a Roman Catholic philosopher and mathematician who had an interest in Rosicrucianism, delayed publication

of his *Discourse on the Method* following Galileo's prosecution because he feared a similar fate.

Descartes left France for Holland in order to, among other things, search for the Rosicrucians. In their philosophy they had laid the foundations of a new paradigm, a new vision of the world, called by the historian Frances Yates "The Rosicrucian Enlightenment" because it preceded the Enlightenment by some decades. Our brothers of the past were convinced that a golden age was on the horizon – a utopia that was being formed in the Palatinate that allowed all humanity to live a free life of research that would expand human knowledge for the benefit of all humanity. These were high ideals free from the fetters of imposed truths that had limited humankind's ability to think and stultified the best evidence for the presence of the Divine in people: the ability to perceive the truth and to investigate it.

This era ended with the famous Thirty Years' War, bringing death and destruction which decimated the population of Europe. The Rosicrucian Movement then moved to Holland and England. Holland is the birthplace of the philosopher Baruch Spinoza who became aware of the Movement after his excommunication from the Jewish community. Spinoza went on to write some fundamental philosophical and mystical texts, including foundational works for what would become modern democracy. Finally, in 1693, a group

of Rosicrucians left the old continent for what Europeans called “The New World,” arriving first in Philadelphia and later establishing a community in Ephrata (Pennsylvania).

Today, we are living through another paradigm crisis. We can see that, in the face of new realities, our habitual way of looking at the world has become inadequate. Economics has forgotten its original mission, science has become a tool in the hands of economic interests, and religion seems as if it might disappear under the weight of an entirely materialistic worldview. This worldview has often infiltrated religion and distorted its meaning, and politics seems to be run by corrupt individuals whose only objective is power and influence. But we know that what is called a “crisis” isn’t just something that exists out there in the world but comes from deeply held beliefs. So it is fundamentally a crisis of human consciousness.

Even as Rosicrucians we are not immune; we are also susceptible to this torrent that dilutes and dulls all values and ideals. For this reason, we find ourselves spending a great deal of energy thinking about how to proceed. We are constantly concerned about whether our thoughts are in harmony with what nature requires of us. But if it is true that the crisis is rooted in our way of thinking, it must also be true that through our way of thinking the great transformation shall come about: the Great Reformation of Humanity to which the

Rosicrucians of the past aspired. As inhabitants of this planet, we feel that much of what we have constructed is no longer working well. It is failing to produce the benefits life requires and is instead degrading it. We feel it even before we understand it rationally, and we feel it as something that lies beyond ideologies and dogmas.

Perhaps the time has come for our embarking on a voyage to a new world. If we leave behind the superfluous, our luggage should only carry a few essentials; we should take with us the means by which we will build a new way of thinking and a new reality. In this context, the fraternal mystical spirit is like a cloak that protects us from bad weather. Moreover, our will, coupled with an untiring faith in human nature, shall be our lighthouse. Perhaps our descendants shall remember this period as that of the Great Reformation that finally sets humankind on its way to its Divine destiny.





JUNE 2017 THE COSMOS

“Such admirable systems... cannot be attributed to chance or to any principle unable to distinguish and set [them] in order.”

– Giordano Bruno, *Concerning the Cause, Principle, and One*

“All things were together; then came Mind and set them in order.”

– Anaxagoras

This month we will reflect on the words of two of the many philosophers who have contributed to the history of human thought: Giordano Bruno, also known as “Il Nolano” (born in Nola in 1548 CE), and Anaxagoras, a pre-Socratic philosopher who lived in the fifth century BCE. Philosophers are studied as a part of the Rosicrucian Path, albeit not all the philosophers in history, and admittedly not in an in-depth academic manner. This is because the purpose of such study is to enable us to

become aware of the common thread that binds the thought of those who, throughout their lives, have dedicated themselves to a deeper understanding of the Cosmos and their relationship with existence, transforming this understanding into a code of ethics for life.

We are interested in the study of philosophy not as a subject for academic examination, but rather as an insight into how the Cosmic operates through the human mind in an attempt to observe and express itself. Those who observe nature straightforwardly, without intellectual interpretations, are able to perceive this Cosmic activity with clarity.

Although we recognize early on the mystical journey that reason is one of the fundamental aspects of human development, we also understand the profound truth of Blaise Pascal's words from his book *Pensées [Thoughts]* (1670) when he stated that "The last function of reason is to recognize that there is an infinity of things which are beyond it. It is but feeble if it does not see so far as to know this." Therefore, a point worth emphasizing is that the studies of the Order are not primarily intellectual in nature. It is not a matter of accumulating information and being able to repeat it by heart. This is far removed from the Rosicrucianism vision. Progress on the Path is not evaluated based on the number of monographs read.

What the two philosophers Bruno and Anaxagoras seem to have wanted to convey to us is the immanent presence in nature, and therefore within ourselves, of the Mind that organized and still organizes the Cosmos. They proposed a concept that is expressed in the infinite forms of nature, from the most basic form of matter to the most evolved beings in the universe. They alluded to a force (bearing in mind the limitation of the term) that drives all creation towards a condition of ever-increasing complexity.

It should be clear from the above that we are not talking about merely reading the texts, but about a deep and intimate participation in an experience, which involves perceiving the essence whose action starts from within us and recognizing its action outside ourselves as well. It is not my intention to give the impression that all of this can be achieved by the repeated use of formulae or procedures, as if we are instruments that can be controlled with the push of a button. We are not machines and each of us has our own pace. But in our case, it is important to understand that if a particular experience described in the monographs has not yielded the desired results, it does not necessarily mean we can draw a definitive conclusion; we cannot say that we have failed or that the experience did not yield any results at all.

To provide you with an idea of what I mean, it is enough to say that many members will have had

important insights into their own state of being while reflecting on the failure of an experience. This makes us realize that, in the final analysis, the experience had in fact an extraordinary outcome if we consider the resulting state it brought about.

When asked about their experience of the Divine, some cosmologists have rightly pointed out that it is not within the realm of science to consider whether the Divine exists or not. Yet they do state that when studying the Cosmos and the universe, the impression that comes from it is one of “order.” The universe is ordered and this is precisely the meaning of the Greek term *kosmos*. *Cosmos*, the experts tell us, is a word that unites, as only the Greek spirit can, the notion of order, organization, or structural perfection with that of beauty.

For this purpose, I would like to share with you a memory from when I was a student. The physics teacher gave a mathematical demonstration on the whiteboard which ended with a formula describing a particular physical phenomenon. He concluded his demonstration by saying, “Guys, look how elegant this demonstration is!” And I then wondered how a mathematical formula or explanation could be elegant or beautiful. Later I discovered that indeed a particular mathematical explanation, like an ingenious move in the game of chess, produces a strange aesthetic sensation of beauty, and I discovered that the demonstration was indeed beautiful! It followed a path that could

not be anything else; it was simple and clean and, in a certain sense, elegant.

One of the effects of recognizing this order, both within nature and within us, is the sensation of beauty that it leaves with those who experience it. In essence, all the spiritual experiences to which we aspire, all the knowledge we seek to acquire during our lives, is intended to help us perceive the order and splendor of the Cosmos; a Cosmos of which we are an integral part; a Cosmos observing itself through the eyes of living beings; a Cosmos that changes itself according to what it sees.

We live in tumultuous times, our rituals say, and we seek a place where our consciousness can find shelter. But those who have experienced the beauty and order of the Cosmos, and those who seek it, are being called upon not to dwell in the shadow of the columns of the temple, but to work ceaselessly because the time is right for humanity to have glimpses of a new horizon and finally understand that so many admirable systems cannot be attributed to chance.





JULY 2017 ETHICS AND SPIRITUALITY

“There is no ‘environment’ in some independent and abstract sense. Just as there can be no organism without an environment, so there can be no environment without an organism. Organisms do not experience environments. They create them. They construct their own environments out of the bits and pieces of the physical and biological world and they do so by their own activities.”

– Richard Lewontin, *Biology as Ideology*, 1998

Today we shall reflect on the words of Richard Lewontin, an American geneticist and biologist, that take us to another level of observation of life and life’s relationship with its environment. In Paris, 2015, there was a meeting of the representatives of various nations of the world to discuss the climate issue. It has become an emergency in many places on the planet and puts at risk humanity’s life on Earth. It is increasingly clear that the implications, origins, and potential

consequences of climate change relate to many areas of our lives.

Often the media warns us of the possible catastrophes to which we are headed, such as desertification, rising sea levels, more intense and unpredictable weather conditions, and so on. They tell us what could happen without considering the reality of what is already happening in many places on Earth, thus propagating a limited outlook and an egocentric bias towards the richest countries on the planet, which fear losing their comfortable position. One of the things that we must consider as Rosicrucians is the ethical question regarding our lifestyles. This is because we are convinced that ethics and spirituality (as the Order defines them) are two sides of the same coin. One does not exist without the other.

Let's imagine we are invited to a party. We know from the outset where it will be held and that the host will supply all manner of delicious food in abundance in a welcoming and comfortable environment. But the invitees to the event will be coming from different places and will have different livelihoods, and will not all be able to arrive at the same time. Some will arrive early, others will drop in from time to time during the event, and some will arrive late when the meal has almost ended. We arrive halfway through the evening, and we find that many people are already stuffing themselves on the food laid out carefully on the table in the

center of the room. Some took far more than they were able to eat and are throwing away nearly full plates in the bins provided. Furthermore, we notice that as the party goes on those who are arriving find less and less available and yet waste ever more of it in a vicious circle that science calls positive feedback; since there is less available to eat, one must take more, but since more has been taken then there is ever less available. The last to arrive at the party finds just scraps and crumbs on almost-empty plates.

So what should we think of the people who came before the last people? What should we think about a group of people who won't consider those who arrive after them but who instead look out only for themselves as if nobody else existed? This is more or less what is happening to our planet; some take much more than is fair while others take less. But worse than that, nobody is thinking about those who will arrive later (future generations), who have the same right to enjoy the Earth's abundance and all that nature offers as we do. From this we are led to the concept of sustainability, that is, human activities that don't compromise future generations in the sense that we do not have the right to exhaust the resources of the planet.

Lewontin emphasized that living organisms and the environment are strictly linked, with one influencing the other in a mutual cycle of interdependence. For example, before the

appearance of the first organisms on Earth, the atmosphere was not very conducive to supporting life. But processes created by the first organisms gradually changed the atmosphere making it ideal for the proliferation of life in a multiplicity of forms. Claiming that the environment and living organisms are all part of the same thing – that each creates the other and that it makes no sense to talk about one without the other – is totally in agreement with Rosicrucian mysticism. Even if this claim goes beyond the limits of our reasoning (whether or not we consider it reasonable, whether or not we consider it a profound truth) it must become a reality in our lives, shaping the behavior of us all. It is not so obvious that this will happen.

A process of reflection needs to take place in each of us that gradually leads to a new vision of who we are, our purpose in life, why we are here, and where we are going. Whether we are just a highly structured collection of atoms that by chance has come to reflect upon its own existence (without rhyme or reason, so that as we appeared so we shall disappear), or whether on the other hand we are the result of a universal process and that life is a necessary consequence of this process with consciousness present everywhere in nature is a question that must be brought to the forefront of people's minds.

We need to develop the concept that the environment is not “out there” and to be protected

but is an unfolding process where we and the environment are a single entity, whether physically or in terms of the consciousness that animates us. We need to nurture the idea that future generations are as important as ours. If we reverse the timeline, those that come after us are fundamental to who we are today, what we want to be, and how we wish to treat the host that has invited us to the party.

So, as you can see, Rosicrucian mysticism isn't a sort of retreat to some beautiful monastery on the top of a mountain in some distant country. It isn't a rejection of everyday life. We create the environment in all senses: physical, biological, and social. Time and again we decide what our ecosystem should be like and in turn, moment by moment, it affects what we become. Our responsibility is enormous and for this reason the Rosicrucian Path is not a mass movement. It would be a lot easier to demand that somebody else should do our chores and take on our responsibilities while we simply wait "to spiritually evolve under the auspices of a master." Rosicrucianism (as undertaken in AMORC) is about continual work, where the process of life itself is the master that at every moment points the way to our Master Within.

We don't harbor childish fantasies or labor under illusions regarding spirituality. We understand that it takes constant awareness, stepping up as it were from one level of understanding to another to see things in a clearer perspective. And we know

that this process takes place in the company of others. I hope we can meet soon in person since we affectionately and respectfully share the same Path, and because each of us needs the company of others on that Path.





OCTOBER 2017

THE IMPORTANCE OF HARMONIZATION

“*All the misfortune of humanity comes from not knowing how to stay at rest, in a room.”*

– Blaise Pascal

This month our message opens by citing the French philosopher, mathematician and theologian, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). However, we are going to start with a story in the news.

A study conducted by researchers at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has shown that young people are not able to remain silent for more than a few seconds, returning as soon as possible to the use of a smartphone, tablet, or computer. This study, published a few months ago in the science magazine *Le Scienze* (the Italian edition of *Scientific American*), has shown that while in the past people who were by themselves tended to start thinking about their lives, various projects they were undertaking, their life situations or visualizing

the future, today their attention is immediately drawn to communicating with others on Facebook, WhatsApp, and so on.

People are gradually losing the ability to be solitary and this is not good for many reasons. While the usefulness of the communication facilitated by this technology is undeniable, it is also true that such use of technology is slowly eroding our ability to live an inner life: it speeds up time, is too distracting, and reduces our ability to listen. From a Rosicrucian perspective we should view this recalling that, from the first monographs, we are taught to prepare a Sanctum for study and meditation to create the necessary inner conditions to contact the Master Within. But we also know how hard it is for many people to stay away from their phones and how this symbiosis with technology tends to reduce our capacity to listen to ourselves.

Of course, we are not criticizing the technology itself because it is just a tool and we must choose how to use it. The problem does not lie in the technology but in the way we employ it and how much we allow it to dominate our lives. A university professor once told me that, during his explanation of the causes of the First World War, his students were looking downward because, even as he was speaking, they were all reading the same article about it on a well-known Internet site. The Internet

site in question has been given the same authority as the professor (perhaps even more).

For some this may seem natural. But it is not! Many of our members inform themselves using the Internet (Facebook in particular) about doubts they have regarding the history of AMORC or about the teachings, but they do not send their questions to the Grand Lodge. Instead they assume that what they read on Facebook is true. This tendency has significantly increased the amount of mental “noise” that we all suffer. It’s a sort of background noise, continually sending us thoughts and messages that demand our attention. This produces an unsettling distraction that interferes with all forms of inner harmonization and even our ability to listen to others.

Applying the discipline required of us by any genuine initiatic path is really quite an effort these days. Nonetheless it is the only road to higher knowledge. There are no short cuts to self-knowledge. Reliance on technology, combined with a reduction in our vocabulary, is “dumbing down” our thinking. We think in terms of the number of words we know. With a vocabulary of one hundred words, thinking becomes limited to one hundred words; with two thousand words, thinking is restricted to the use of two thousand words. It is evident that a limited vocabulary leads to a simplification in our thinking, impeding

our ability to have more profound and complex experiences.

In his book 1984, George Orwell imagined a society managed by “Big Brother” who controlled all human activity, significantly curtailing freedom and liberty. One of the most important tasks in this society, undertaken by a special government department, was the reduction of vocabulary by removing words that were deemed “unnecessary.” Thus, reducing vocabulary was seen as the best non-violent form of social control. Excessive use of social networks can lead to the very same results. It is strange that people who would fight against a possible Big Brother in modern society, that is, a system to control the entire population, instead, completely voluntarily, hand over personal information about their lives to an IT system that uses this information to make money but has done nothing to benefit the society it feeds on.

Let me stress that I am not describing a conspiracy because the choice to share our information is ours and ours alone; it is therefore not the result of any hypothetical hidden power. I would also like to reiterate something concerning superstition that we considered in a previous message. The belief in occult correspondences that determine the future (whether of ourselves or people in general) is a mind game that has accompanied humanity since the beginning of our history on this planet. Religions themselves

sprung from this kind of thinking; they explained events in terms of the anger or the satisfaction of the deities and thus determined the fortune or misfortune of a people. Today more than ever we encounter superstitious explanations for a nation's state of affairs, or the situations of individuals, and they are spreading exponentially on the Internet. There are explanations that have, for example, co-opted beliefs in reincarnation to logical absurdity by claiming that entire nations suffer hunger for karmic reasons, or that an individual's illness is caused by their karma. These are superstitious claims that have no basis in the law of karma or rational science but stem simply from the human mind's need for a causal explanation of events. Rosicrucian mysticism is not based on this kind of thinking, and we must be very careful to avoid a veritable mental poisoning.

How can we develop the discipline for study and harmonization? How can we develop the ability to "stay at rest [alone], in a room," as Pascal says, without suffering the anxiety of the outer silence? Each of us can suggest a way: for example, the use of music. Listening to relaxing music before and during the Sanctum period is a powerful tool for introspection. Music has the power to elevate us and to help us achieve harmony on deeper levels of our consciousness. It is therefore important to use this tool. Participating in the Order's group activities can also help because listening is one of the most important activities on a path to spiritual

knowledge such as ours. This requires training and practice, and of course leaving the phone turned off, at least when we are sharing moments of harmonization and dialogue. We must rely on our own responsibility. We are gifted with the power of reason, which can discern between what is useful and what is not. We have to make well-thought-out decisions and use our will to bring about what we truly want.

Recently I listened to a person who, when considering the problems of the world, shouted out “Somebody has to do something!” Now, I ask myself and I ask you: who should do something if we wish to build a better world for ourselves and our children? Who has that responsibility? Will we find the answers on the Internet, perhaps in some forum for illuminated beings? Or will we find the answers peacefully in our silent reflections in our rooms alone in contemplation and listening to what emerges from our souls? Whoever chooses the latter will hear the inner voice that says: “It’s up to you and you alone to do something. Start looking at yourself sincerely and ask yourself what you really want, what you are really seeking. Once the task is understood, start making the changes yourself.”



JANUARY 2018

THE PITFALLS OF THE PATH

“As the true lover is convinced that he [they] has [have] found in his [their] bride the one Rose of the World, so the mystic, in the first glow of his [their] initiation, is sure that his [their] quest is now fulfilled.”

– Evelyn Underhill

Our reflection this month begins with the words of the English author of *Mysticism*, a magnificent book first published in 1911 and one of the classic texts of Western spirituality and in particular of mysticism. Contrary to what one might think, mysticism is not about taking a passive attitude or waiting for something to happen while doing absolutely nothing, for example, while on retreat in a beautiful monastery.

Mysticism, explained Underhill, is a form of experimental science whose results cannot be communicated, only its method can. Practicing mysticism means searching for a form of sacred

knowledge not as thinkers but as doers; and frankly I cannot think of a better definition of the Rosicrucian Path! The interesting point for us lies in the text cited at the beginning, which highlights one of the greatest risks for those who tread the path of spiritual knowledge; a risk which sooner or later will present itself: the feeling of having understood what there was to understand; the sense of having reached a higher level than others, of having attained a kind of enlightenment and therefore also of authority.

Let me give you an example that typifies how this process can take place within an initiatory order. We are inclined to think that the neophyte (one who has just been admitted into an order) is somehow inferior to those of us who have been on the path “for many years.” We may deceive ourselves into thinking that a person who has just joined an order, and is identified by the traditional title of neophyte, is like a child who is beginning their literacy journey, whereas one who has been a member for many years is like a university student.

This can happen by virtue of the very benefits and results that the Mystical Path brings to those who follow it earnestly. Paradoxically, at the same time as it enlightens the consciousness with new perspectives and understandings, it also puts students in the position of being influenced by their own egos and so they convince themselves that they have attained a high level of

enlightenment. This risk is very real and is often portrayed in initiation rituals, which warn the initiate of the dangers that loom along the Path and of the need to reflect and develop a deep sense of humble gratitude. From a Rosicrucian point of view, humility requires an attitude of reverence and gratitude. It must naturally be developed in the same manner as one would approach any new horizons of understanding, for without this attitude the risk of deluding oneself is just around the corner.

Thinking like this is a mark of the true scientist, and in this way science expresses an aspect of the divinity within us and its similarity to the Mystical Path. There is a saying that the known part of nature – that which we have understood through science – is likened to an island, whereas the sea surrounding it represents the unknown and all that has not yet been revealed by science. Consider this: the more we know, the more the island increases in size, but as it does so, so too does its contact with the unknown. The more we know, the more we become aware that the unknown grows too. What other attitude can one who walks on the path of knowledge have, be it mystical or scientific, if not that of humility? Perhaps this is what prompted the Oracle of Apollo in Delphi in ancient Greece to say that the wisest person in Athens was Socrates because he was the only one who knew that he did not know.

Another danger one may encounter is that represented by the words, “I already know this!” It may indeed happen that we find in the monographs certain topics that we had already found in some specialized book or magazine, but we must not confuse the mere reading of a book or article with the process that takes place in our Sanctum while reading a monograph. Comparing the two would be a grave error, as what takes place in the Sanctum is not a purely intellectual exercise. If that were the case, the Order would have told us that the monographs can be read in front of a switched-on television!

Nowadays we can find a great deal of information of a spiritual, mystical, or initiatory nature both on the Internet and in books and specialized publications. But AMORC is a path, and a path is a process, and a process in turn entails change. If you go back now and read the words written on the back cover of the first neophyte monograph, you will notice that it is a quotation from the Emerald Tablet, which you will most likely have read elsewhere. This is a quote that, given the right conditions, reveals new insights each time you read it. Of course, the text does not change. What changes is the individual who reads it. Therefore, it is important to recognize that even repetition has some meaning, since the individual who lives the experience is different with each repetition.

If we do not start from this premise then there is a risk that the assertion “I already know this” will lead us to the outer portal of the Order, and, dare I say, of any genuine spiritual Path. We must remember the importance of a proper mental state and an open-mindedness that always puts things in their rightful perspective, avoiding the illusion that we have become masters when we hardly know the meaning or depth of the word. It is imperative, as Underhill reminded us, that goodness, beauty, truth, and all other facets of reality direct the human soul; the lover, the philosopher, the saint, the artist, and the scientist must, without exception, act upon them or else they fail.





FEBRUARY 2018 EDUCATION

“*Every citizen has the duty to undertake, depending on what is possible, a chosen activity or role that promotes the material or spiritual progress of society.”*

– The Constitution of the Italian Republic,
Article 4

In the last few years, we have had many opportunities to reflect on the educational value of the Rosicrucian Path in these messages. Although education is primarily linked with learning and growing up during school years, as Rosicrucians we consider education a lifelong process. Unlike the things we manufacture, we are not born complete, but day by day we slowly construct ourselves using our life experiences and our reflections upon them. A car, refrigerator, or bicycle is built ready for its respective task because, from the beginning; it already has all the features needed to perform the tasks it was built for. But

we are not. As human beings we grow and develop over the years through countless experiences, one of the most important examples being school.

Based on this, we would expect AMORC to be perfectly aligned with the Italian Constitution's statement that contributing to the progress of society spiritually is a duty (note well that it is a duty, not just an option). Implicit in this duty is the fact that spiritual education is an essential part of the education of the individual and essential to society as a whole. Our society is far from recognizing the importance of our role, relegating this concept to a limited religious interpretation of spirituality. This stands in contrast with countries which fully recognize that organizations such as ours play an educational role in creating a better society. In the United States of America, for example, the government sent our Order official greetings on its one hundredth birthday via a letter from the president at that time, Barack Obama. The same is true in Brazil, where the government has just recognized National Rosicrucian Day (August 2, the date of transition of Harvey Spencer Lewis, first Imperator of AMORC). AMORC has also been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, along with many other organizations and individuals who in their own ways contribute to society and deserve recognition.

I wish to emphasize that being recognized in these ways shows an aspect of the Order that is not

readily recognized: education is a lifelong process that is more than simply about conventional schooling. Schooling is just a part of education. Understanding our spirituality is just as important as literacy. Spiritual illiteracy, that is, the total lack of knowledge concerning who and what we are, is as much a cause of the wrongdoing of our society as is the inability to read and write. In fact, it could be said that it is infinitely worse since we often find uneducated people who have a vivid and luminous expression of the heart while, on the other hand, highly intellectual people quite often have an attitude that can be very damaging.

AMORC is classified correctly as a school. To be sure it is an unusual school dedicated to spiritual literacy by means of a “pedagogy” that seeks to bring out the spiritual nature of each of us, just as is implied by the etymology of the word “education.” We are on a path that slowly and safely – in a balanced way – expands our understanding of who we are and what our relationship really is with nature, others, ourselves, and the God of our Realization. A Rosicrucian is a person who observes, learns, transforms, and grows with the experience of life by applying an ancient knowledge reinterpreted in modern form.

Having the honor of being Grand Master, I have the privilege of reading the letters that many of you send the Grand Lodge concerning your lives. Often there is a gradual change in the way people

view their life experiences, the seizing of new opportunities, improving one's work and family relationships and, through the training of the mind, the development of an improved sense of inner balance. So I can state that we, members of AMORC, are in total harmony with what the most enlightened people have stated since the earliest times: that education (in the broadest sense of the term) is the only road that can lift humanity out of its darkness, and that the only thing from which humanity must be saved is ignorance.

So we must be proud of our path. We should not waste the opportunity to share with others the importance of a path that has, within the nobility of its precepts and the safety of its methods, the flame that illuminates the way that must be taken. The human species today wields immense power over life and the future of the planet and its inhabitants, but only education can lead us to a brighter future, and restore a balance that has been upset by an extremely materialistic approach to education. As Rosicrucians of the twenty-first century, as heirs to this ancient noble tradition, we have the duty to be light-bearers of this pedagogy, doing our part as examples of tolerance and respect. The future must not be merely something we are approaching but something we construct. We must actively create it moment by moment.



MAY 2018

ON BECOMING SOMETHING BETTER

“*A person is an imperfect thing which tends incessantly [to want] to [become] something better and bigger than itself.”*

– René Descartes

In this month's message let us reflect on the process of human betterment by starting with the words of French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes. He is considered by scholars to be the founder of modern philosophy and mathematics. Students will recall among other things the system of Cartesian coordinates and in philosophy his famous *Discourse on the Method* with its famous statement “*cogito, ergo sum*” (I think, therefore I am). The aspect of betterment we are interested in here is related to our spiritual growth, the knowledge of who we are, that which “is” in us, and the meaning of our existence. Growth in this sense means penetrating more deeply into the nature of the mystery that is present in us and about which

generally we know little. From a Rosicrucian perspective we can say that such spiritual growth is a process, which is to say that something changes. Therefore, changes in the personality of the individual are the measure of such growth. In the words of Descartes, we are “an imperfect thing” and tend to “something better,” and this “tendency” is the process which rightly starts when we realize the need to progress towards the light of a new understanding of life.

From a Rosicrucian point of view, we should recall that this process is not something that happens separately from the natural processes around us as we aren’t distinct from the world around us. On the contrary, we are deeply immersed in it, starting with the very matter that we are made of. Natural cycles are profoundly important to our physical and psychic make up and so the process is strictly related to timing and works according to its own rhythm, which may vary from person to person in the same way that different types of plants may respond differently to the same environmental conditions. This is one of the reasons for the progressive structure of the monographs.

Let me suggest something for you to think about. If the Grand Lodge were to send you all the monographs at one time, so that you would have several thousand pages to read, at the end of the “book,” do you think that the result would be the

same as a monthly distribution of weekly readings? Is our progress a matter of quantity? Or perhaps, on the other hand, is it a reorientation towards a new perspective that unveils that which has always been right under our noses but for many reasons we couldn't see? The Russian writer Anton Chekhov said in the *Notebook of Anton Chekhov* (1921): "A person will improve when you show them what they are like." This type of knowledge is usually conceived of in terms of "seeing" something, as a sort of "vision": and the ancient Greeks saw supreme knowledge in terms of "seeing." This is not by chance. However, this will be a topic for future messages.

For now, let us reflect on the fact that our progress along the Path requires us to make slow but sure steps if we wish to go any distance. An exhausting sprint to the halfway mark is an effort in vain because we will get tired quickly and abandon the Path, perhaps in search of other dreams. But what can we take as an indication of our progress or of getting closer to the ideal of "something bigger and more perfect"? Perhaps if we acquire the skill of psychic projection to distant places? Maybe telepathy? What would you consider to be a sure sign of spiritual progress? Rosicrucianism emphasizes that all of the above may well be the consequence of spiritual development but may also not be. Sometimes "paranormal" phenomena can be brought about by serious mental imbalances.

This is certainly not what we want, nor is it within the scope of our teachings.

The Order stresses that a sort of “moral elevation” is the sign of progress on the path. It is a sort of refined moral sense in each person that enables us to discern our real place in the world, as well as our relationships with others, with ourselves, and with Nature. “Moral” in this sense entails a level of clarity with which we can listen to the inner voice of our conscience which leads us incessantly towards the good, the beautiful, and the true, but from which certain features of modern life can slowly distance us.

If we look at various characters in history, we find, on the one hand, there are those who have given a lot to humankind through generosity or altruism, and on the other hand, there are those who have done unthinkable damage through cruelty and injustice; what differences do we see? In both cases they were physically healthy biologically functioning human beings, able to think and act, but for some reason they produced diametrically opposed results. From the Rosicrucian point of view, the difference lies in the development of the soul personality and the consequential ability to listen to the voice of conscience – in short, a difference in moral sense.

I hope that this brief message has thrown a bit of light on our path, above all for new members. Showing courtesy and respect for every

living thing, taking care in the use of language, maintaining balance in the wake of life's ups and downs, being optimistic, continual reflecting, avoiding dogmatic views on life, taking special care of the old, and having a balanced relationship with the material side of life without becoming its slave: these are only some of the qualities that could be cited that are signs along the path that we must follow "incessantly" towards something, as Descartes said, better and bigger. And this I wish for you all. So Mote It Be!





JUNE 2018

THE VALUE OF THE PAST

“*Go back to the past and that will be real progress.”*
— Giuseppe Verdi

These are fascinating words coming from the great maestro of Italian music, and one who left his mark on global culture. Let us reflect on how this idea can help us develop as we walk a path of spiritual knowledge, the roots of which are lost to history. Many people tend to describe the past as a period when there was more respect between people, more discipline, more respect for the public good, a greater sense of civic duty, and generally less superficiality. They see a deterioration of the foundational values of society, dragged into decline – while younger generations are distracted by things that are shallow and fleeting. The human mind tends to value the past in a biased way, by preferentially remembering its benefits while often failing to see the benefits of our own times.

Neuroscientists study this phenomenon to learn more about the functioning of the brain. For example, consider what a toothache meant years ago or how an infection would have been addressed before penicillin, and we realize how much worse life could be than it is today. And remember in Europe only seventy-five years ago we were in the middle of a war that resulted in millions of deaths.

By looking at things like this, some might think that an initiatic order is like a religion preserving ancient customs that have lost their meaning, and that joining such an Order is a desperate attempt to preserve the past while not keeping up with the present. It's therefore necessary to clarify our position. Certainly, as Rosicrucians we don't want to return to the horse and cart but if there is something of value in the past then this needs to be preserved. So, we are talking about constantly re-evaluating what things from the past may be considered "real progress" today, rather than things that might be fascinating about the past but are not of value today. This word "value" can be applied to distinguishing between what in the past should be continued and what should be discarded. For the Order, everything that raises human moral and spiritual consciousness has value. But we no longer post manifestos up on church doors as our fratres of the past did because, while freely promoting our ideas has value, we use modern methods of communication to do so. And yet, as communication becomes more and more

technological and effective, we still think it is essential for people to meet in person and not only via social networks.

There are aspects of human nature that have greatly changed over the centuries. We are beings shaped by relationships: with the environment, with others, with ourselves, and with our own ideas of the Divine. All these relationships make us who we are and contribute to the process we call “evolution.” For this reason, our rituals are to be conducted as they always have been: in the privacy and solitude of our own Sanctum, or in an Affiliated Body together with other members. We use words, gestures, and symbols that come down to us from a remote past, and these we strive to keep both living and unaltered.

From a certain point of view, Rosicrucianism can be seen as a chivalric tradition. This tradition has distant origins that can be found in the Christian world and the Islamic world, characterized by the high ideals of honor and justice. Respect for all human beings and their dignity is considered a value worth fighting for. The sword, a knightly symbol, is a symbol of the justice to which we aspire. The horse is the ego that would drag the aspiring knight off to wherever its desires can be satisfied but which must be tamed and subjected to the will of its master. The true Rosicrucian is above all a “Knight of the Rose Cross” and although in the modern world every commitment

must be signed by a notary to have any value, for a Knight of the Rose Cross their word, before the symbol of the Rose Cross, is their bond. The values of knighthood are still relevant and necessary, and as Rosicrucians we hold them dear.

Courtesy, respect for diversity, protecting the weak, emphasizing justice, honor and the value of one's word, having a heart that can respond to sacred symbols, respecting different faiths, and sharing in a spirit of fraternity – these are all values that come from a distant past but which when lived today represent real progress for all humanity. As already mentioned, "to change" does not always mean creating something completely new, but often, as Verdi reminded us, bringing new life to the past. So Mote It Be!





APRIL 2019 LOVE

Some time ago a person who was not a member of the Order asked me some questions about our use of the word *love*. He felt it was unctuous and overly sentimental, burdened with the romanticism of an age now superseded by a scientific worldview. So, he asked me for our interpretation. Love as a sense of a sentiment of affection is just one expression of what *love* means in the Rosicrucian context. If we stick to the context of human relationships, and notwithstanding the importance this emotion has in human relationships, I would say this is a limited application of our philosophical usage of the word. In our teachings, Love refers to a universal principle with many sides to it, the aforementioned being but a part of it. To illustrate this, I will tell you about an experience had by Werner Heisenberg, the Nobel-prize-winning physicist and one of the fathers of quantum mechanics, famous for his uncertainty principle. In the 1920s, Germany was going through a period of tumult. It had just lost the war and was

heading towards revolution.

As a result, the youth movement in Munich organized a meeting in Prunn Castle (about sixty miles from Munich) to discuss the future of the country. On that day a huge number of young people, full of enthusiasm and passion, were present. Upon returning they would see the world totally differently. The speeches were impassioned and lively. They debated whether the fate of Germany was as important as the destiny of humanity, whether the sacrifice of lives for a cause had value, if one's own values were more important than traditional values, and so on. Gradually, as the debate progressed, differences became apparent, and the different conceptions of "order" grew all the stronger and came into conflict. Heisenberg observed that the more they debated the clearer it became that this juxtaposition of different kinds of order resulted in a complete breakdown of any order at all. Heisenberg started to think that order in the universe was an impossibility, that it did not exist; that there was no kind of order that oriented itself towards any "unifying center." Here are his words:

“This chaotic environment, I felt, was only possible because all these types of order were partial, mere fragments that had split off from a central order; they might not have lost their creative force, but they were no longer directed toward a unifying center. Its absence was brought home to me with

increasingly painful intensity the longer I listened. I was suffering almost physically, but I was quite unable to find a way towards the center through the thicket of conflicting opinions. The hours passed between speech and debate. The shadows in the courtyard lengthened; the grey light of dusk and then night, lit by the Moon. Then there was a hush as, high above us, a young violinist struck up the first great D minor chord of Bach's Chaconne. All at once, and with utter certainty, I had found my link with the center. The clear phrases of the Chaconne touched me like a cool wind, breaking through the mist and revealing the towering structures beyond. There has always been a path to the central order in the language of music, in philosophy, and in religion, today no less than in Plato's day and in Bach's. That I now knew from my own experience."

Heisenberg gives the name “central order” to that which we mean by “love,” an ordering, unifying center that brings harmony to (and is the foundation of) the universe. “Love” is a universal law that spurs living beings in their evolution toward ever greater complexity by way of expressing this harmony.

Naturally, the last part of the quotation is the most important: Heisenberg was sure of his revelation because he had lived it by his own experience. True lessons come only from experience, otherwise they remain in the realm of

faith. For this reason, Rosicrucians don't look to convince others of their own convictions but invite others to walk with them on the path in search of the experience of universal Love. Perhaps the lack of perception of this harmony, of this unifying center, is the true tragedy of humanity. With our teachings we hope that every Rosicrucian lives such an experience and does not become a mere repeater of empty words, or an intellectual of esotericism. The scope of the Rosicrucian Path is to give the tools to every sincere seeker so that in their own way they build up to a moment when, as if under a spell, they experience a special kind of music or vibration that arises and leads to the Supreme Revelation. Then everyone will know what Love really means.





JULY 2019 MORAL SENSE

“Plato’s Republic is not a book about politics, but education.”

— Giovanni Reale

The words of this great Platonic scholar introduce our reflection this month. *Republic* is a collection of Socrates’s dialogues (to what extent invented by Plato is not known) with various characters on topics concerning the city’s constitution and the proper way to live with others. In his book, Plato deals with the issue of justice in a very interesting dialogue between Socrates and Glauco. In this dialogue Glauco presents an argument to Socrates (which Glauco admits he doesn’t actually believe) to try to trip up the great philosopher. His argument posits that an individual behaves justly only out of fear of punishment from the law; if there weren’t any punishments, one would act entirely out of self-interest. We shall soon see what this has to do with Rosicrucianism.

In Book II, Glauco tells the story of Gyges, a dutiful and law-abiding shepherd. One day after a storm, Gyges finds a chasm that has opened up because of the upheaval created by the tempest. Inside the chasm there is a sleeping or dead giant and Gyges spots a ring on his finger. So Gyges takes the ring and runs off. After some days the king calls all the shepherds to the castle for a meeting. During the meeting Gyges notices that when the stone in the ring is turned towards others they cannot see him, but when the stone is pointing towards him they can. The ring gives Gyges the power of invisibility. From that moment on Gyges completely changes.

For instance, he seduces the wife of the king, who Gyges then kills. In short, empowered by invisibility, he causes all sorts of mayhem. This dialogue deals with what today we would call “moral sense.” Moral sense is the set of rules we would still follow even if we were invisible. It consists of those things that we wouldn’t do even if we were sure not to be punished. Unfortunately, we see that this is not always the case. One quickly notices that there are more Gyges around than Socrates, and thus Glauco’s argument has dominated the development of our society in its creation of laws and associated punishments. If a person finds a wallet full of money and, although they are in financial need, takes it to a police station to have it returned to the owner, such an event would be notable. In other words, what we

would expect people to do – “normality” – is that upon finding a lost wallet they would keep it for themselves.

Why is this topic of any interest to us as Rosicrucians? From the start of the Order’s path there are stages which are called “oaths.” Many of these promises, or oaths, are written on a sheet of paper, to be signed and returned to the Grand Lodge. Now, we’re not talking about a legal contract here, or a court order for which there may be a fine or sanction if breached. But if there are no punishments or penalties for broken promises, with whom are we making them? What value do they have? Note that the Order is giving each of us an opportunity to evaluate our moral sense, to see just how much value our “word” has and whether it reflects our personality and identity.

From the outset it is made clear that should we leave the Order the monographs have to be returned. We are all informed about this the moment we join and it is an agreement directly with the Order. But after this, there are oaths in the Neophyte degrees and in the Temple degrees, each with respect to a specific stage of the teachings. None of these shall result in penalties if they are breached because the obligation is with oneself and evaluates our moral sense. Each of us has to evaluate our own character (the qualities that make up our identity) until we find ourselves on a spiritual path that is independent of the Order. As far as a person’s

identity is concerned, our own moral sense will make this clear in our relationships with other members of our community. If I say to another that I will follow a certain course of action and then don't do so, then there is no reason for them to believe my word the next time. Such a person won't be able to form stable bonds with people because they just create a climate of distrust around them.

On the other hand, there is a saying in the Order: "Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters, it must have lost the power to do harm." Moral sense is not simply a matter of social custom – even if it may sometimes seem to be – but is something more profound; it is the measure of a person's spiritual development.

Many people believe that a spiritually developed person is able to produce psychic phenomena or to discuss complex theses, perhaps on simple topics. But from a Rosicrucian point of view, self-development – or better still, the spiritual growth of an individual – can be understood from their moral sense, from those laws that they impose on themselves; from those things that they would never do even if they were invisible. Moral sense is therefore a dialogue in the first person between the individual and themselves. I test myself and evaluate the consequences of my actions and may decide to avoid certain behaviors even if they are in some sense advantageous. The great personalities who have lived on our planet did exactly this:

from Yeshua to Socrates, from Giordano Bruno to Gandhi, from Nelson Mandela to someone closer to home such as Giorgio Ambrosoli. All of them could have decided to do things differently than they did, but their moral sense led them to act in a way that benefited the greatest number of people, even when this cost them their lives. Perhaps Yeshua was referring to this when he said that there is no greater love than to give your life for your friends.

In the beautiful book *Cosmic Consciousness*, written at the end of the 1800s, author Richard Bucke analyzes the experience of illumination, having experienced it himself at one point in his life. In this study of consciousness, Bucke says that a refined moral sense is one of the prerequisites for this evolutionary leap called “illumination.” Think about this when you come across a document, declaration, or oath upon which you are supposed to reflect and then sign and send back to the Grand Lodge: that moment is a sort of initiation. Deciding to sign and respect it is up to you. No law will punish you if you do not obey it. But, grasp its value and understand that in front of you is a tool of great value for your spiritual growth. And rise to the occasion.



NOVEMBER 2019 NEW TECHNOLOGY

“*We drag ourselves behind digital media, which, beyond conscious decision, decisively transforms our behavior, our perception, our sensation, our thinking, our life together.”*

– Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects*, 2013

This month we shall consider the words of the Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han, who is considered one of the top experts in the field of cultural criticism and teaches in Berlin. As is often the case, we use the ideas of philosophers, teachers, and experts in various fields of knowledge and the human condition to lead our reflections and put into finer focus our perspectives as Rosicrucians. These reflections are useful and in the final analysis necessary because our path is to be lived within the society in which we live with both intensity and sensitivity – and not apart from it. Despite how some might interpret the use of the word “mystical”

in the name of our Order, we do not advocate separating ourselves from society, family, work, or the world around us to become hermits passively awaiting enlightenment. Instead, we believe that we are in this world and in a specific environment precisely because here is where our experiences must happen. It is there that we have something to learn and share. “Mystical” in this sense indicates the spiritual experience that illuminates the panorama of our lives, giving new meaning to the world around us. The quotation by the philosopher, Han, is taken from a book that contemplates the effects of social networks – and digital technology more generally – upon humanity.

Since this technology is relatively new, nobody knows exactly how over the long-term it will affect our intellectual abilities and our capacity for relationships within communities. But certain effects are already evident and tend to cause concern among experts, especially when one considers the impact on the development of young children. These effects (at least those known so far) have already been recognized to include a significant reduction in powers of concentration, the lessening of vocabulary, and reduced mnemonic skills. Regarding vocabulary, it is important to remember that our thinking is restricted by the range of our vocabulary. A person who knows one hundred words (which is the average number actually used per day by Italians in normal conversation) is limited in the scope of

thinking by those one hundred words. A person who knows one thousand words will clearly have a wider range of thinking.

The Italian language has some five hundred thousand words, so every thought in Italian is some combination of those five hundred thousand words. Now, there are different types of memory associated with different parts of the brain. For example, we speak of a memory for numbers, a memory for visual images, and for words. Here is an interesting exercise regarding memory: write down ten arbitrary words and then try to memorize them. Once they are memorized, try to say them in reverse order or try to remember which is the fourth word in the list – or the seventh. Then, repeating this experiment later, try to link a visual image to each word and put all these images into a sequence – for example, mentally place one image above another so as to form a tower of visual images.

Now, we can look at the tower and see that it is easier to remember the words and their exact positions by looking mentally at the “tower of words” we have mentally constructed. This shows us that memory for visual images is much more developed than memory for concepts. The “art of memory” was based on these ideas and was used by ancient orators. It is also used today by many people to remember a sequence of arguments during such occasions as public speaking. Returning to topic,

we must emphasize that memory and vocabulary are essential aspects of an individual's growth, and the gradual loss (or at least decline) of these skills are a tragedy for humanity. As Rosicrucians we follow a path that makes significant use of visual memory – we also increase our vocabulary to make lived experiences more understandable and therefore more applicable to daily life. If we think about the symbolism used in Rosicrucianism we soon realize that every part of it is linked to a concept that grows as the student advances along the Path.

The rituals are genuine techniques in the “art of memory”; they are not simply practiced to remember concepts, but, as Giordano Bruno taught, they also make sure that the ideas presented during the ritual develop within us. They become living ideas that are processed by the subconscious mind and grow into intuitions and new perspectives. We expand our language skills by studying the texts of the monographs and in the concurrences inside their front covers. The latter are texts which highlight the connections between what we are studying and the thoughts of philosophers and scientists, among others – they often say the same things that are heard in an initiatic school like ours but use different language. By making these connections we learn the importance of analogy, metaphor and symbolism, which is communicated in simple terms and yet is never simplistic.

The quotation cited above ends by saying that technological change also transforms how we relate to people. Recall that the process we call “evolution” – whether in biological or spiritual form – always takes place through relationships. There is no evolution of single individuals but rather the evolution of groups, systems, and communities. This is true whether we speak of bacteria or people. Everything in nature evolves via interrelations and even “know thyself” ultimately becomes knowing others. If we think how much strain we are putting on human communication, and therefore relationships, by using computer systems as the medium, it’s clear to see that the trend of our times is towards the fragmentation and dissolution of communities and not towards their construction and strengthening.

The average person is convinced that they have many “friends” and are part of a world where “we are all connected” and that we are all part of a larger community. But in reality what we see is greater loneliness and a sense of inadequacy pervading society. The unconscious message is that we have become irrelevant in the face of societal change and that we simply have to suffer it. “Armchair revolutionaries” are a case in point, described by some as people who express their indignation towards injustices in the world from the comfort of an armchair, convinced that a few angry words on a screen can change the world. But such attempts simply demonstrate their isolation. We should

spend our energies strengthening communities and, in our case, the Rosicrucian community. We must promulgate the beauty and profundity of the experiences that we have when we are together and surrounded by the ideals of the Order.

We have to communicate the beauty produced in a community that has a powerful spiritual Egregore. We have to affirm that it gives rise to sublime moments. And we must always recall that we cannot build a closed community because we continually interact with our environment. The entire history of Rosicrucianism emphasizes the strength and importance of being together, of harmoniously sharing affection and knowledge. Affection and knowledge are two aspects of the human experience that we lose when they aren't shared. Within a community like ours they are increased and are multiplied to the benefit of the community and the environment around us. These days the world is living through a profound crisis. Some view it as economic, some as environmental, and some as social. We know that this crisis arises within the hearts of people in such a way that nothing that is done, when determined by environment or upbringing, can really change anything. Everything we see is a result of people being distanced from their true selves and polluted by the immense background noise of information systems that have infiltrated every part of our lives. It's become common to see a young couple in a restaurant looking at their phones instead

of talking, exchanging glances, or sharing words of affection. It's common to see cars or trucks swerving out of lane because the driver is looking at their phone.

How about a bit of healthy resistance to all this? Why not stay together and spend more time together? Those trying to rise above the mere material needs of existence cannot remain isolated. No telephone or computer can replace a handshake, a smile, a hug, that is to say, our physical presence. My hopes and my energies are directed towards this goal and I hope I can meet you all, and that all of us will be full of enthusiasm and happiness about having joined an Order like ours.





JANUARY 2020 DISCIPLINE

“And if I tried to give you a clue at the cost of your own experience, I should be the worst of teachers and should deserve to be sacked!”

– Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery*,
1999

This month we begin our reflection with words from this great book by Eugen Herrigel, a German professor of philosophy. While teaching Western philosophy in Japan, he met a Zen master who taught him archery. During his lessons with the master, he came to understand the difficulties of the art. He had thought that archery was simply pointing the bow in a particular direction and releasing the arrow towards the center of the target. If it were simply that, archery would not be considered an “art.” Only after many meetings with the master did he realize the importance of breathing; done correctly it completely changed his connection with the bow and the target,

improving his shots significantly. He took the Zen master to task and asked him why he hadn't taught him the importance of breathing. His response was simple yet disarming. If the master had done so immediately, he would not have given sufficient importance to it. Along the Rosicrucian Path it often happens that new members of the Order say they are already familiar with certain topics in the monographs. They say that they have already read up on a topic on the Internet or come across it at a conference, so they ask to skip certain monographs or levels, or they leave the Order.

This attitude typifies the impatience of the Western world and perhaps by now the whole industrialized world. This is an "all and now" culture. Paraphrasing the message of that book, this attitude is like wanting to take up the bow with skill because one has read about it on the Internet or has watched a YouTube video on the topic. One of the oldest traditions, Zen Buddhism reminds us (as does the Rosicrucian Tradition) that we need a lot of practice to have even the slightest results on a spiritual path. It is not enough to read that breathing is important or that meditating is fundamental to self-knowledge, just as it would not have been enough for the philosophy professor to know theoretically that breathing is essential in archery. Quite the contrary – being told this too early would have caused him to discount it as a detail already understood.

One day, after many attempts, he realized all by himself the real nature of the art he was learning, despite it having been before his eyes all along. But only after personal experience did he grasp the importance of the art and the words of the master.

Our Order's teachings continue for many years because their aim is not to produce intellectuals who are objectively knowledgeable about spiritual matters or merely acquainted with the culture of esotericism. This would be as easy as it would be pointless. Rosicrucianism is a spiritual alchemy and requires time, practice, and discipline. It is a Path open to whoever feels sincerely that life and time, which run like sand between their fingers, must be given meaning. And through this path they awaken the meaning in themselves. But be warned: success on the path is proportional to the commitment made. It is quite understandable to think that it is much easier to read a book (or to go to some classes or a conference) that will unveil the "great truths" of life, or "open our chakras," whatever that may mean. Today there are many books, courses, and conferences on the subject of self help. Often they are a mishmash of diluted but authentic spiritual traditions stripped of their true meaning; they are forms of economic exploitation typical of our times.

Soon we realize that we naturally forget such "teachings," that almost nothing that we have read or heard just once remains formative in our lives.

We cannot assimilate anything that does not have a rhythm and is not supported by discipline and experience. This is just as true for self-knowledge as it is for archery.

Discipline is a word that we have to analyze to avoid misunderstanding, especially in this context. *Discipline*, as used here, means finding a rhythm or pace for stimulating the mind and body with a precise cycle and maintaining that cycle and instill it in our lives. At the beginning this can be difficult until we get used to it. But with time (and the required amount of time is not the same for everyone) it becomes easier for us. At that point no one needs to explain its importance to us; we have discovered it for ourselves and it is especially understood in the continuous and harmonious stimulation that the monographs and the Sanctum periods provide us. Now we have the same perception that the author of the archery book has: that we are really one with the bow and the target.

In other words, we become that to which we aspire, not because we have said or read something, but because we have experienced it ourselves. This is a form of consciousness passed down by our Order and is surely the greatest challenge that one faces on this journey. Years ago, if one wanted to be thoroughly informed about a subject, one would have used an encyclopedia and might even have had to conduct some arduous research, perhaps reading a book by an expert in the field. It all took

time, effort, and energy. But all of a sudden we find ourselves at a point where most people who want to know something can just type it into Google or Wikipedia. In a few seconds we have in front of us such a quantity of information that a lifetime would not be enough to read it all. This access to information is without a doubt positive; the problems lie with the quantity of the information and its sources.

Much of the data on the Internet makes the relative importance, quality, and reliability of the sources difficult to judge. This makes all the information practically useless to those who are not experts in research or to those who do not know which sources are truly reliable. It's quite common for members I meet to cite what they read and hear on the Internet as reliable simply because it was posted by somebody with many "likes" or simply because they found the site well-presented. Facing such an enormous amount of information, they can lose sight of what they really need to be doing, such as following a simple discipline as required by Rosicrucianism.

The result is the problem of the New Age (greatly exacerbated by technology) that tends to mix traditions, depriving them of meaning and efficacy. It combines a bit of yoga with Latin American shamanism or Navajo spirituality with a dash of Buddhism; it might even merge courses on "healing" with "sweat lodges" and "quantum

dieting,” as well as special diets for healing any disease. You might think I am exaggerating but I can assure you that I often see or read about this in letters from people who are interested in the Order. AMORC’s clear step-by-step process is greatly hindered by the confusion on the Internet. Yet it is also great to see how life can change for the better when the process is understood and followed whole-heartedly. When the teachings are allowed to structure understanding and are transformed into experience, we immediately see a change in people’s personalities that leads to a more positive outlook, calmness, and a better relationships with others and their surroundings.

My hope is that we can take something of a break from all the information on the Internet. Let’s spend a bit more time on social activities, listening to others, and having more conversations. We might join and attend the Order’s Affiliated Bodies. All living beings evolve together and so we should spend more time on relationships, reading serious writings, and having in-person fraternal relations with other members of the Order. This would be an antidote for the information poisoning that we are suffering, and both our lives and our spiritual paths would benefit.



SEPTEMBER 2020 SUFFERING

“This is the view of life of Greek antiquity, a tragic optimism. Life is by no means continuous fun or a party; there are many monstrous, wrong, sad, and corrupt things in life. However, realizing all this, one must have harmony before one's inner gaze and try to make it a reality.”

– Pavel Florensky

Pavel Florensky was a mathematician, philosopher, and Orthodox priest who was born in Azerbaijan and died in a Soviet concentration camp in 1937. I have chosen the words of this great figure of mystical (as well as scientific) thought because his life exemplifies a soul personality who, despite enormous suffering, was able to perceive a different reality in life, find his purpose, and hold his vision firmly fixed on the horizon of Light which is our destiny. The above quotation was taken from letters he wrote under dramatic conditions during his imprisonment, which ended with his execution.

The clarity of his words shows he was a person who achieved a high degree of spiritual discernment, which we can sense.

The objective of this month's reflection is to address one of the most difficult of human experiences: suffering. No path of genuine spiritual knowledge can avoid this reflection, however difficult it may be. Neither is simplistic reasoning, such as "it's karma," acceptable for explaining any type of suffering. Such reasoning seems to say there is nothing worth saying because everything is already clear: suffering is the result of punishment and those who suffer somehow deserve it. Here, more than ever, we need the humility to acknowledge that as human beings we are as if covered by a veil that obscures our vision from the reality of life, and every day we struggle with the implications of this seeming blindness.

Suffering takes on many different forms of expression. It can be physical or emotional, and both can be equally "painful". No one is *a priori* free from it. Everyone, even the most advanced mystics, are subject to it. The parable of Yeshua's life is full of moments of both physical and emotional suffering, as if to illustrate the journey of human beings on this Earth. He understands the experience that awaits him and asks the Divine "if you choose, take this cup from me" (Luke 22:42) expressing an unspeakable emotional pain – that of someone who knows what awaits him, who

knows his future. Losing a loved one in the family can produce an emotional pain so strong that it completely overwhelms those who experience it. The same applies to physical pain. Let us also bear in mind that there are “lesser sufferings” such as being unfairly reprimanded by someone we did not expect it from, being ignored or feeling insignificant in life. Or we may feel sadness for the suffering of another living being, that is, compassion and empathy.

Some Italian researchers concluded in the 1980s that empathy has a physiological basis: we are meant to feel empathy. Once we become aware of the existence of suffering and of its presence, we need to decide what attitude to adopt when faced with it. This is what will define how we overcome this experience should we encounter it at some point in our lives. It is our understanding of life itself that determines how we will deal with pain should it be there waiting for us later on our journey.

I think that first of all we need to maintain an attitude of humility and recognize our own limitations. The Stoics taught that there are events in life that depend on us and therefore deserve our commitment to handle them in the best possible way. But there are things that do not depend on us and that we should learn to accept with serenity as part of the natural unfolding of existence. In this regard, the Stoics conducted spiritual

exercises by imagining tragic situations that could occur and, when they did not occur, they would consequently experience a feeling of constant gratitude. But if these tragic events had happened, they would have found themselves well prepared by considering them to be a part of life. They also practiced a thought experiment regarding their own transition. This practice, which would today be considered morbid and to be avoided at all costs, is in fact a powerful means of acquiring a perfect awareness of the value of the current moment and constitutes a vision that, from a universal perspective, gives a quality of great intensity to life in each living moment.

Visualizing our own transition enables us to have a perception of our own eternity. The great philosopher Plato, in his dialogue *Phaedo*, states that “to philosophize is to learn to die.” What we can learn from Stoic thought (in which Rosicrucianism is steeped) concerns the concept of “preparing oneself” in the sense of establishing within ourselves a discipline that prepares us to face life with everything it entails, including suffering. Acknowledging the existence of suffering and knowing that no one is immune to it – not denying it with tropes that tend to avoid it – is a mature attitude that encourages our thought and reflection.

Florensky’s quote points out that, although we may be aware of the many injustices and sufferings

in the world which we ourselves at various times in our lives may experience, we must learn to look within, focusing constantly on harmony and then seek to turn it into a reality. This in essence is what we do on the Rosicrucian Path: we learn a kind of discipline that makes us sensitive to our inner vision, a vision that, as we focus our attention on different moments of life and events, tends to create a new ordering of priorities and values, a new awareness of the depth and meaning of the life of each human being. We therefore build into our lives a harmonious whole comprising both pain and suffering. Of course, I do not mean that suffering should be denied or avoided or diminished in any way, but rather it should be given meaning – because the lack of meaning exacerbates suffering.





OCTOBER 2020 THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

A few moments before starting to write this message I gazed through my window from my office in the Italian Grand Lodge, in Ornano Grande, and I saw the garden that had just been prepared by member volunteers. A simple hint from me on the advisability of having a small vegetable garden was enough for the volunteers, who, always very present, had prepared the ground, brought some small plants, and had carefully arranged them in order in small furrows.

What I would like to talk about and reflect upon with you is how nature can reveal its intrinsic order to the human being, an order of which we ourselves are a part, and which we Rosicrucians call the “Cosmic,” and how a lack of awareness of this order has generated the environmental problems we are witnessing. Looking down from above (my office is on the second floor) I could really appreciate how the Vital Life Force impregnates the Earth and feeds

life. Those plants that I can now see in the vegetable garden are the result of processes fundamentally linked to photosynthesis. It is a wonderful way, invented by nature, to capture and use the positive energy radiated by the Sun on our planet.

But if we looked with a lens on that small piece of land where the various vegetables are now growing, we could see an infinity of other living beings such as bacteria, insects, and worms – a living network with its own life processes interconnected in a harmonious whole. And if I widen my gaze beyond the garden, towards the hills, the perception is clear: that life is spread out over the entire surface of the planet, making it similar to a living being – a living planet or Gaia, as it was defined by the English chemist James Lovelock. And as a “living being” our planet has found its homeostatic equilibrium through an infinity of interconnected processes.

By way of example only, think of this cycle: siliceous rocks like granites or basalts are decomposed by fungi, bacteria, and lichens, thus releasing the calcium and silicon that make them up. With the carbon dioxide (CO_2) present in the air, carbonates are formed, and these are the main components of the structure of microalgae and shells. When they die, they fall to the bottom of the sea and form thick layers of carbonates. Tectonic plates then push these carbonates into the depths of the Earth, where the temperature is very high. Finally, under the action of this heat,

the carbonates decompose again, thus producing the initial carbon dioxide. This is then expelled by volcanoes into the atmosphere from where it originated, and this starts the whole cycle again.

Now, we, who observe all this life, and the life processes permeating the soil, air, and water of the planet, we also are the result of this process. The atoms which make us up were generated in the first moments of the Big Bang (which corresponds to thousands and thousands of years from the beginning of the universe; for example, it is calculated that light appeared 380,000 years after the Big Bang). After a long voyage of billions of years, these atoms formed our planet (about 4.5 billion years ago). From this came the first life-forms (the oldest known fossil is 3.5 billion years old), and so on until today.

We are formed from those same atoms from the Big Bang and from others produced later. These atoms are reintegrated into our bodies through nutrition and respiration. Atoms that once belonged to comets, to stars, and to nebulae (who knows?) now form plants, such as those that I am looking at, and my own body, which is doing the looking. Atoms looking at atoms! So in the cells of my brain that I am using now to write this message there are atoms that a short while ago were part of the earth, some bacteria, an insect maybe, or an animal. Perhaps they belonged to the water that evaporated from the sea, traveling thousands of kilometers in

the clouds to then fall as rain, in a life producing cycle that links all living species to the planet.

Primo Levi wrote a beautiful story titled “Carbon,” in his book *The Periodic Table*, about the carbon atom, one of the atoms fundamental to life, illustrating the saga of this atom in an almost poetic way. Observing this vital process makes us perceive how we are the part of the planet that thinks, feels, imagines, and dreams. It is an indisputable truth that we are the planet, even if most of the time we perceive ourselves as being something separate and different from it. With some presumptuousness we see ourselves as superior to other living things, whereas in fact our life is intimately linked with the lives of all the other species on the planet and the planet itself. In some sense, Earth generated us in the same way as our mothers did. As such, many cultures refer to Earth as “Mother Earth.”

The discussion of ecology today has become of great importance, practically an emergency, even though we also know that there cannot be true ecological thought without a corresponding expansion of consciousness. In other words, it is one thing to arrive at a scientifically and philosophically well-founded environmental understanding, but quite another to live and feel according to what we claim to know about it. And maybe this is the limit of the human experience on this planet: by now many people understand rationally our link with the planet and with life, but between

going from here to a new ethical approach there is an abyss that can only be overcome by spiritual experience. When using the word *spiritual*, I'm referring to an integral, complete, marking, and transforming experience. It is an experience that, once a person has had it, they no longer return to being as they were before, and it shows from the way they live. The person continues to do the same things they did before, but not as they were doing them before. This experience doesn't necessarily have a religious quality because spiritual experience precedes the religious experience. It certainly can also happen through religion, but no religion has sole prerogative on producing it.

Do you not find it extraordinary and something that arouses both a sense of wonder and amazement that we are a particular agglomeration of atoms that thinks, studies, experiments, and experiences emotions? And that it now raises the question of how such a system of atoms (that being us) is capable of producing thought? But could an atom or a group of atoms ever produce thought alone, or is some other non-material element also required for this purpose? Hermann Joseph Muller, who won the Nobel Prize in medicine, wrote: "To say that a man [person] is made up of chemical elements is a satisfactory description only for those who intend to use him [them] as a fertilizer."

And what other human experience could ever connect our scientific knowledge of this whole

process to its deepest and most transcendent meaning if not the mystical experience? An experience that by its very nature produces a sensation of wholeness – of belonging to a reality that overwhelms us and is beyond those who experience it – but which at the same time makes us feel a sensation of belonging. It was called the “Oceanic Feeling” by Nobel Literature prize winner Romain Rolland, “Cosmic Consciousness” by Canadian psychiatrist Richard Bucke, “Tao” by the philosopher Lao Tzu, and the “Order of Nature” by the physicist Werner Heisenberg.

As Rosicrucians we have in our heritage the commitment and tools to build the conditions by which the human being can experience moments of harmony that allow us to experience this mystical experience at different intensities. Our teachings aim to expand the consciousness of the human being by expanding our vision towards larger dimensions of reality.

The scope of the teachings is not to train us in making fine speeches. The time for such talk is now over. Furthermore, they are not, obviously, a pursuit for our free time, nor a system for acquiring powers of any kind. The teachings are not an activity reserved for those who remain closed in their rooms and that ceases when they leave them. Rather, the Rosicrucian teachings lead us to a new way of understanding life through

various experiences and thus developing a new attitude towards the events that life consists of.

Let me recall in this reflection an important aspect of the mystical or spiritual experience, that which relates to the “moral sense.” The word *moral* here should not be understood as a set of rules imposed, for example, by a religious culture. Having a moral sense must be understood as listening to the voice of conscience that manifests itself in inner silence, making us slowly perceive what is the right thing to do, the right action, so that our existence benefits others and the life of beings who share the environment with us.

Let me quote Vito Mancuso (an Italian philosopher and theologian): “It feels like an indistinct but real call and you are fascinated by it. And when we say ‘yes’ to this mysterious call, we tend in its direction, and this sweet tension within us we call ethics.” The lack of this listening is the tragedy of our experience as human beings on this planet. This particular deafness is much more than a simple hearing loss. It is a generalized withering of perception, which today is stimulated by such violent and aggressive impulses that we are becoming insensitive to the subtle voice that speaks within each of us when the conditions are propitious.

The moral sense is that inner voice that dictates to us the rules of behavior that we could never transgress even if we were alone and when no one could see us. It is a sense that gives to the lives of

individuals a refined quality to the extent it removes them from vile, vulgar, dishonest, and selfish behaviors, and at the same time elevates them towards the perception of the harmony of nature and empathy towards living beings, inviting them to act with benevolence and justice. This action is the foundation of true environmental thinking.

At this point, we might ask ourselves whether the moral sense can be developed or if it is innate. This is an important question that has occupied many philosophers throughout the history of human thought, and today is also a topic of study in neuroscience. This is because, as a simple observation, we know that there are human beings who seem to totally lack a moral sense, while others manifest it to a far higher degree. From the Rosicrucian point of view, this meaning corresponds precisely to “spiritual evolution.” Indeed, it is a condition not characterized by conferring extraordinary powers, though they may be present, but by a capacity for profound discernment, a refined moral sense, and a high degree of empathy. It is a condition that must be reached gradually but that often appears fragile and at risk of being lost under the influence of the ego.

According to Rosicrucian thought, this evolution is one of the potentialities of human beings; we have an unshakable trust in it and channel our energies to favor the creation of the conditions in which everyone can experience, even if just for

a few moments, this voice within themselves. In order not to remain on the theoretical level when we talk about a spiritual or mystical experience, I invite you to recall an experience that you must have had. You may have had, perhaps when you were a child, the experience of being carried by the waves onto the beach – like surfing but without the board, just letting yourself go and being taken by the flow of the waves – or being tugged back and forth by the waves before they broke.

In these moments when we are dragged by the waves we feel a sensation of pleasure that cannot be described. There is no difference between us and the sea. And while this is happening we feel the deep desire that it will not end, that the wave will drag us as much as possible. The water touches our whole body, and we have the perception of being the sea because we lose the perception of the limits of our own body. We are the sea, we merge with it, but we are also the blue sky above and the sand beneath. It is a mixture of impressions that produces the perception of unity, marked by a sensation of happiness and the desire that it does not end, that it lasts as long as possible. Well, perhaps this is an experience that in its childlike simplicity can hint at what is described by mystics of all ages, and that constitutes the initiatic experience par excellence, and our spiritual destiny: to experience Unity. And like the waves that arrive on the beach and return back to the sea, perhaps we too will discover in such an experience that we have always

been a part of the Cosmic, thus rediscovering our own eternity, as Henri Laborit stated:

“*The experience of the sea is too global, too mystical, to be reduced to an intersubjective interaction, which takes place in a cultural space, and what one feels when one is alone at the sea under the starry sky, moved by the splendor and immensity of the Cosmos, with the feeling of being completely immersed in this global space, without being able to do anything but take part in it, without being able to find the words to describe it. At sea, I am no longer myself, I am the Cosmos.”*





NOVEMBER 2020 THE OLD TRUTHS

“These old truths are the ones that reappear in every period of history, in ours as well, both because they have been lived so strongly in the past that they continue to mark our unconscious, and because they are always reborn gradually as the generations re-experience life.”

– Pierre Hadot

This quotation, taken from one of the books of this famous professor of ancient philosophy, is about the “old truths.” This phrase resonates very strongly with me and I hope it does with you. Stop for a moment and reread those words, and wait a few moments before continuing to read: “old truths.” The words *old truths* recall something that has passed through all of history and that has come down to us today – Something that re-emerges in the life experience of people and that leaves an indelible mark. It is, however, already a part of us because it has been lived with intensity

in the past and thereby leaves its mark deep in the human soul. Reflecting on this expression, I clearly realized that our Order keeps alive and passes on these old truths, not by writing them in books or monographs, much less on Facebook or WhatsApp. We have a very powerful tool, a tool passed down from the past and which contains within itself all that can awaken the experience of these old truths: this tool is our rituals.

In 1934, a federation of initiatic orders was founded in Brussels with the aim of evaluating whether an order was effectively imparting the methods that connect it to the Primordial Tradition. This federation was called the *Fédération Universelle des Ordres et Sociétés Initiatives* (FUDOSI). AMORC was a part of this because it was recognized as being one of the orders that could legitimately pass on the Rosicrucian Tradition in the New World. Harvey Spencer Lewis was one of the three Imperators who were active in the federation – he even created its symbol. The way to evaluate whether an Order was or was not fit to be defined as Traditional wasn't through authorizations or documents of any kind, but by the quality and content of its rituals. The old truths aren't concepts that can be articulated or defined using common language, and for this reason they can't be found in books, scrolls, or monographs; they are the consequence of the experience of the soul's incarnation in matter and result from humanity's encounter with life. From

this experience comes the unsuccessful attempt to express these truths in language.

Over time humanity has found more refined ways to awaken these truths in those who seek them, methods that allow them to emerge from within us. Arts such as music, painting, and poetry are among these tools. In particular, art that is intended as a means of producing the experience of an elevated consciousness in human beings, an ecstatic state, a perception of beauty and harmony that defies rational explanation is an important tool. In the practice of spirituality, rituals have the function of producing this effect. A ritual is a collection of gestures, words, movements, myths, symbols, and metaphors that suggest these old truths without spelling them out.

More generally, entire tomes have been written on rituals in the fields of anthropology, history, and psychology. What traditional rituals communicate, however, cannot be found in writings. Their message belongs to the spiritual dimension and not to scientific rationalism. If we read one of these scholarly academic texts on the anthropology of rituals we will certainly be satisfied intellectually, but we will in no way be able to say that we “know” what a ritual is; to know this it is necessary to have access to the process – to the dynamics – and therefore to its effects. Lighting a candle might simply mean there is no electric current, but if we observe carefully it can also be an action full of

meaning, a gesture that, seen with the inner eyes, ceaselessly reveals old truths. And so in this way, the candle or other forms of fire are necessary components of rituals. They reveal something that is not simply “shedding light” but something that is found on a higher plane of existence.

Don’t think that AMORC is a school that sells teachings or that that which we seek is written down anywhere. What we find written in our teachings has the sole objective of preparing us to see that which we do not see right now, to perceive what currently we don’t perceive. It is the ritual that does the rest because it is there that the Masters of our Tradition have put all the pieces in place so that whoever experiences the rituals with humility, dignity, and respect can experience these truths arising from within themselves. This is why one of the first sets of instructions we receive in the monographs is about setting up the Sanctum. This is a place that we set aside in our home to be our place of study. It consists of two candles, a Rose Cross, a tablecloth, a mirror, and an incense burner. These are all simple ingredients, but they introduce us to study and meditation via a ritual. From this we should understand that the Rosicrucian Path isn’t based simply upon reading the monographs. The reading of the monographs reveals very little if done without creating the right atmosphere – the right conditions – because that which is to be revealed isn’t present objectively in the text but is

brought out from within us by the text and by the conditions in which it is read.

We have often been criticized because the monographs offer a simplified form of ritualism that in the past could only have been experienced by physically going to a temple and necessarily done in a more involved way. But by remembering that what we are looking for is within us – wherever we might be – then, when there is humility and respect for the Order that has welcomed us, much can take place within our own Sanctum. So we defend the choice of detailing some of the rituals in the monographs because it is a tool that has allowed thousands and thousands of people in the world to have experiences that otherwise would not have been available to them. That said, I invite you to participate in one of the Order's group activities. I invite you to come to the Grand Lodge some time to take part in a ritual, though I understand that in our jurisdiction this isn't always easy due to distance. Or you can go to an Affiliated Body.

By doing so the second important requirement for spiritual and mystical experience is satisfied: that of partaking in community. Contrary to what you might think, a path of spiritual knowledge such as AMORC is not based upon being alone to obtain spiritual elevation. In some ways, of course, being alone is easier than sharing space, ideas, and emotions with others. Certainly we all have the need for moments alone where those first person

dialogues can take place; by conversing with ourselves we may pose questions to ourselves and find the answers.

Have you ever happened to ask yourself: “But what am I doing?” It’s almost another “us” – one inside us – that answers: “I don’t know, it’s up to you.” These moments are essential but the growth of each of us, what we refer to on the spiritual Path as “know thyself” necessarily requires relationships with others. It’s only through dialogue that growth and self-knowledge comes about. And we spend 99 percent of our time with others. Excepting moments spent in meditation (or those moments when we go fishing or to the mountains or whatever), the rest of life is spent with other people, even if they aren’t there physically. These other people may be those at work, in the family, or at school. Yet these may not always be people with whom we can share fundamental questions.

To illustrate this, we might wake up one morning thinking about transition, having thoughts about why we were born, where we were born, why we had the good fortune to be born into a certain family and to have had square meals each day, and why millions of people aren’t so fortunate. These are questions that require answering. But to see that we cannot share them with whomever we like, it is enough to think about the example of transition. On the topic of transition, one often has to keep silent in order not to be negative, to avoid

the bad omen associated with macabre thoughts. People avoid talking about transition as if it doesn't concern everybody. Some even touch certain materials belonging to a transitioning person or certain parts of the body of a transitioning person, half in hope that by doing so they can delay the inevitable, an inevitability imposed by nature. Yet it is an event full of mystery about which we would like to be able to talk more calmly.

An initiatic community also helps because by knowing others we may know ourselves better. We also have the opportunity to share and reflect on the things we hold dear. We know that we are among people who are making an effort to embrace the diversity of others, those who understand that it is in diversity and not in homogeneity that opportunity for growth exists. It is in community that the most elaborate ritualistic moments find expression and make the "old truths" emerge. These old truths speak to us about who and what we are, why we are here, what life expects of us, what our responsibilities are, where values are to be found and how to nurture and share them. They also communicate the importance of humility – not humility as submissiveness but rather acceptance of the limitations of our abilities to understand. Books that reveal the old truths are not written on paper but are still available to us, waiting for us to learn how to turn their pages and how to read their words and message.

I hope that these messages in our monthly bulletin may be useful in leading us to better reflect on our tasks and responsibilities in these times . I would be happy to have you send me a message saying that you have read it even if nothing more is said. I would feel much closer to you and hopefully you will feel closer to me.





DECEMBER 2020 TO BE A ROSICRUCIAN

“For we have not been sent into this world, even the most splendid theater of the Divine, that as beasts we should devour the pastures of Earth.”

– Johann Valentin Andreae, *Description of the Republic of Christianopolis*, 1619

Johann Valentin Andreae was a Protestant theologian of the 1600s who was linked to the Rosicrucian movement. In fact, he is the author of what is considered to be the third Rosicrucian Manifesto, the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, published in 1616. Like others, he was looking to build a new society with people who were actually living a mystical Christianity, a form of spirituality that sought to overcome religious differences, which were the cause of wars such as the Thirty Years’ War, which devastated Europe. For centuries there were wars whose only goal was to have one interpretation of a few lines of the Bible prevail over another. For example, the 1600s

– a period in which the Rosicrucian Movement appeared publicly historically – is a century that began dramatically when Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in the Campo de' Fiori square, Rome. Bruno had traveled to various European countries and was in contact with many members of the Rosicrucian circle.

The seventeenth century was also the century of John Amos Comenius, a Moravian philosopher associated with Rosicrucianism and whose image is on the UNESCO award for outstanding education research and innovation. It was also the century of Francis Bacon, with his texts about the renewal of the sciences and his utopian book, *New Atlantis*. And it was also the century of Shakespeare, Galileo Galilei, and the birth of the scientific method. I mention these people and events to emphasize that this was a historical period in which a new paradigm was emerging. And this new vision of the world was opposed violently at times by the predominant systems at the time. In science, the Aristotelian worldview was dominant; in religion it was the Roman Catholic Church and its inquisition. The word *paradigm* has various meanings, but here it means a certain vision and interpretation of reality. It means the way in which we conceive of the world and the way in which we explain events. Over time older paradigms are replaced by newer ones. One vision is replaced with another in the endless process of the evolution of human consciousness.

When a certain vision or understanding of the universe can no longer give us a complete explanation of certain events, when that vision cannot satisfactorily explain those events, a new vision begins to emerge and new theories and explanations arise to bring humanity to a new stage of development on Earth. There was a time when we believed that Earth was the center of the universe and the sun orbited around it – then came Copernicus. In the past, Newtonian science held that time was an absolute – then came Einstein. In the seventeenth century, the Rosicrucian Movement appeared and with it arose an endeavor to overcome a paradigm that could no longer explain reality as we experienced it.

This is a very exciting subject and deserves further investigation, but my objective here is for us to reflect on the fact that in the twenty-first century, we once again find ourselves at a moment where the current paradigm is beginning to crumble before us. The way we have explained our relationship with life up to now no longer works and nature herself is showing us this eloquently. I'm referring not only to the pandemic, which is indeed a significant indicator, but also to other issues that characterize our society, which we continue to insist on understanding using the same old theories even though they explain very little.

For instance, the world of work and economics faces a crisis that has already lasted for decades.

Experts are trying to resolve it through old methods, which to some extent actually caused the crisis. Our solutions to these crises contain the very seeds that generated them. In my role at the heart of the Order, I see many people who no longer have the energy to do what we consider essential in life; They no longer care about the deeper meaning of life or the search for the meaning of their own existence. Often they don't have the energy to read even a single page of any text whatsoever. Being able to dedicate time to oneself becomes an almost heroic act. The philosopher Byung-Chul Han wrote a book called *The Burnout Society* (2010) in which he shows exactly how the economic system's approach to labor has sapped the strength of humanity. It is a system that cannot provide a dignified job to everybody and thereby leads us to accept unemployment, insecure jobs, and the "unemployable" – as if this were a natural condition.

And this occurs as if a society or a community can exist without recognizing and even guaranteeing the dignity of each of its members. The widespread feeling is that a life well-lived is one in which self-realization is measured by consumption and economic success. A person who does not achieve high standards of economic "well-being" is considered a loser in the contests of life. The concepts of well-being and prosperity have suffered an upheaval and have come to mean living in a state of opulence. And often, notwithstanding

relative economic successes, we see humanity's failings in terms of such aspirations. This way of thinking, encouraged by the economic system, has hindered the spiritual quest.

One comes to think of "buying" knowledge in much the same way as one buys products in a supermarket. One can't imagine a spiritual path as a life-long process because one desires results quickly. There is no time to lose. But what then will its results be like? The motto of our times is "time is money" – or, as Professor Domenico de Masi said, "in the worship of efficiency, it is interpreted as quantity and speed" – where a competent individual is one who does a lot of work quickly. And thus the objectives are essentially unachievable. We remain feeling frustrated, weary, and lonely, and this finds its outlet in social networks where we have hundreds of "friends." Technology evolves in such a way that people are not needed for certain kinds of work. At one time, this freed people from the heaviest work, which was a real benefit. Today, however, with the advance of artificial intelligence, we see an uncertain future approaching, one in which people are largely replaced by computers, threatening greater unemployment. And, in the middle of all this, to maintain the current economic system, it is we who have "consumed the pastures" (Joel 1:19) of Earth. Science is at a critical phase.

Largely supported by economic interests, humanity's goals have rarely promoted the

development of consciousness. And yet consciousness may be considered an aspect of the Divine presence. Often the goal for the development of further technology is to produce immense profits for a small fraction of the world's population. Sometimes its use is even the cause of disasters on the planet. We are thinking about the use of atomic energy and its application, whether in war or for the simple production of energy. Faced with all this, is the paradigm going to change? Are we witnesses to a change that will elevate humanity, or will we be helpless witnesses to a new catastrophe?

Having made these reflections, it is now necessary that we turn our focus elsewhere. Not to avoid looking at "reality" but to look where a new reality is already emerging – a reality that is on its way but which we don't always see clearly. We don't see the enormous number of associations that work to bring relief to people, that work to protect the environment and animals, that work for the defense of civil rights, and that bring healthcare assistance to forgotten demographic groups. We don't see, or we see only with difficulty, the enormous levels of altruistic effort, heroism, and empathy that occur every day on this planet. We don't see, or we see only with difficulty, people who each day make the decision to benefit their communities even when those decisions come at personal cost. We don't see that, at this time, among such people, there are also

thousands of Rosicrucian members who apply the ideals of our Tradition and history.

Ours is a noble history full of heroism and the chivalrous principles of justice and equity – a history in which we can take pride. We are not the product of the economy. We are not here because we are looking for work or wanting to get rich. The Order has survived for centuries because of the unselfish efforts of thousands upon thousands of Rosicrucians whose intent is not to buy or sell teachings. The teachings absolutely do not aim to make one rich; many have made personal sacrifices to maintain the Order in difficult times. We have always called for “Universal Reformation,” as referred to in the Manifestos of the 1600s, but this is not a revolution that would overthrow existing powers. Instead, it seeks to transform the human being, a transformation that leads us to remove the veil that conceals our true nature and eliminates ignorance, because only from ignorance must we be saved.

Being a Rosicrucian is therefore not simply paying the subscription fee and having a membership card. Being a Rosicrucian means adhering body and soul to the ideals of fraternity and tolerance. It means striving to spread a particular form of knowledge – that which has within it something of the sacred – for the benefit of all beings. It means looking at Nature and the planets not as different and separate from us

(or even worse as a store of raw materials to be exploited) but as different aspects of ourselves, the real basis of all true ecological thinking. As I have noted in other messages, we are that part of the planet that thinks, feels and loves. We and the planet are one. Being a Rosicrucian means recognizing spirituality as a form of maturation and growth rather than as a vague but simple matter of research. Rosicrucianism is not about the manifestation of psychic powers. It means looking with compassion upon our brothers and sisters even in times when they behave less than maturely, because we know that the Masters of our Tradition will look upon us with the same love and compassion despite our limitations.

Being a Rosicrucian means being responsible and bearing our identity with pride because it is noble. We remember our roots and know that they, like the roots of a plant, are both the past and the present. The paradigm that we see disintegrating before us began this process centuries ago. Today, we have the responsibility to be agents of transformation because of our special inheritance and because: “Others have struggled and you are the heirs of this struggle” (Comenius). Let us be worthy heirs.



FEBRUARY 2021 OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD

“Unhappy person, sorrow no longer here, I pray thee, nor let thy life pine away; for even now with a ready heart will I send thee on thy way.”

– Homer, *Odyssey*, Book 5

This famous quotation from Homer refers to one of the significant moments in one of the foundational works of our civilization. It narrates the adventurous voyage of the return of Ulysses to Ithaca, the island from which he had departed to participate in the Trojan War, and where his wife Penelope and son Telemachus were awaiting him.

I’d like to reflect with you on the life we lead and our place in the world. This begins with the Greek vision of the Cosmos and particularly with that of Aristotle. Part of our teachings is dedicated to the Greek philosophers because knowledge of their teachings is important to understanding the Path of what we call the “Primordial Tradition” – a Tradition from the distant past, handed down

throughout history to our current times. We are speaking of an invisible thread that passes through many great civilizations, including Egypt, giving them a mystical and philosophical dimension, from which arose many philosophers such as the Greeks, and yet its true origins remain hidden deep within the human heart.

The word *cosmos*, from which Rosicrucians derive the word *Cosmic*, describes a universal order and harmony containing the inherent quality of beauty. It is a nuance, experts say, that only the Greek language could relate in a single word. The philosopher Aristotle described the universe as ordered so that everything acts according to its proper function and has a well-defined place. The self-realization of each human being – meaning to lead a happy life – consists in finding one's true place in the *Cosmos*. And when one finds it, one experiences a feeling of joy, happiness, and completeness, called in Greek *eudaimonia*. Aristotle observed that every human being is gifted with talents, and being able to express these talents requires collaborating with the order of the *Cosmos*, and as such finding one's true happiness. When this takes place, the whole world benefits.

To illustrate this, I recall that, when I was a child, televisions weren't like those of today. They were very large boxes with a lot of empty space inside and a collection of glass objects (vacuum tubes) that lit up when the television was turned on.

When it broke, you called a technician who arrived on time with a tool case, opened the television set, and replaced one or two items, almost always the vacuum tubes. When the television set was closed, it resumed its normal function. To me as a child, this process seemed almost magical. I wanted to be present when the technician arrived to help with this “ritual.” By analogy, the vacuum tube, when properly installed, contributed to the harmony of all the other parts. A vacuum tube acquired its meaning when it was fully able to exercise its function. It didn’t have a meaning alone but as part of the whole within the television set. And so it is with us. For Aristotle, we human beings also have a place; we belong somewhere in the Cosmos. Only when we find our proper place and are able to express our talents can we be truly happy.

In the chapter of *Odyssey* cited above, while returning to Ithaca, Ulysses is kidnapped and held for seven years by the deity Calypso on the island of Ogygia. The deity Calypso is immortal and falls in love with Ulysses. But during the day, when she looks for him, she finds him sitting on a rock looking out towards the sea and weeping. He weeps with pain and nostalgia and continually wants to leave the island and return to Ithaca. Calypso plays her last card in order to keep him: she promises him immortality if he remains with her. And it is no normal immortality; instead of aging, our hero would remain forever as fit and healthy as he currently is. But even this doesn’t work. In the

end, Zeus orders Calypso to let Ulysses go, and he builds a raft and resumes his voyage. Philosophers point out that this passage is perhaps the first great lesson in Western philosophy.

For us as Rosicrucians, philosophy isn't so much an academic subject as a continual reflection on the meaning of our lives, upon the choices we have to make, and how we conduct life so that the time allotted us in this world is put to the best use. The great lesson, we might say, is that Ulysses refuses to exchange his true place in the Cosmos even for immortality. He knows that his real life is awaiting him and that he will find happiness only in Ithaca, his "right" place in the world. Nothing can change this, not even the promise of eternal life. It can happen, unfortunately more and more rarely, that people find a place, a job, some activity or other, or perhaps a place to live, which, at some point in their lives, they sense they were born for. They feel deeply that these are the places or states in which they wish to spend the rest of their lives. In that moment they experience a sense of realization, fullness, the absence of unnecessary desires, completeness, and happiness. They feel as if life has acquired a deeper meaning.

It is a condition that requires no explanation. We simply feel it. And Aristotle tells us that every person, whatever they undertake, they are ultimately trying to reach this state. I said that this is ever more rare because what we euphemistically

call our “lifestyle” is really a way of life that tends to distance people from this state, that limits our options and hinders our finding our place in the Cosmos. And yet each of us inwardly feels that we have vocations, talents, and affinities with certain places, people, and the sorts of jobs we would like. As a case in point, recently I was listening on the radio to a famous economist who was explaining the case of youth unemployment: the young study subjects at university which the labor market doesn’t require. He was implying that people shouldn’t seek to do what they feel to be their vocation but do what the “market” determines to be their most appropriate roles in any particular moment. He was in fact proposing a humanity subservient to the market.

This would be as if, in the story of the *Odyssey*, Zeus had said to Ulysses: “Yes, OK, Ithaca is the right place for you, the place where you would be happy and find your wife, your son, the land where your ancestors rest. But you know, the market today wants immortals; therefore, go ahead and weep but here is where you must stay!” This is clearly absurd and yet it is becoming the rule. This conflict between our inner feelings and the forced choices of life leads us away from a healthy and mature spirituality and instead leads to relationships even with the transcendent that are mediated by the market. Thus we always see more and more companies that place in their employee training programs courses of meditation and relaxation,

because it is seen that by doing so people produce more.

Furthermore, we see a proliferation of courses, teachers, and training centers of every kind that, for a nice fee, offer spiritual qualifications, open chakras, or teach astral projection. This is the “market” dressed as spirituality. With this in mind, we understandably can’t expect people to revolutionize their lives. From a Rosicrucian point of view, a revolution is never a healthy process anyway. But a gradual redirection, a significant making up of lost ground, a rediscovery of forgotten values – these are necessary. There must be a gradual reallocation of time to get to the “right place.”

Nobody thinking clearly can say this is easy, or to be achieved over a weekend or instructed via YouTube. As with all processes, this reallocation of time requires a certain discipline. Only then, when we learn to do something well after repeating it many times can we do it automatically, without thinking or costing us energy. Evidently, we cannot learn this just by reading a book or participating in a course. These can certainly be useful stimuli. But after that there is work to do and a journey to undertake. And nobody can do this for us. Indeed, it is a journey that lasts a lifetime. On this journey, it is well to remember there will always be a Calypso that seeks to hold us back with promises of various sorts. Ulysses left Ogygia to resume his journey, one

in which many adventures and dangers awaited him before he reached Ithaca. But he could not have done otherwise.

And us? Once we realize that we too are on a voyage to our Ithaca, and that we are confronting dangers and obstacles of every sort, it's great to know that we are no longer on the beach looking out to the horizon, weeping. Instead we have already built our raft and we are together with others on this voyage. We know that many experiences still await us. But when we find our place in the Cosmos – the Promised Land – wherever we may find it, the whole universe will celebrate with us because it is to this that we are called. As Aristotle reminds us in *Nicomachean Ethics*: “And the highest good towards which all individuals tend is happiness.”





MARCH 2021

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

Our planet has surpassed seven billion human inhabitants. We are more than seven billion on a small planet and, according to the projections of experts, our population will continue to grow and expand. What I would now like to reflect on with you is the fact we are seven billion people, but each with their own thoughts, their own beliefs, their own faith, and their own view of the world. Even among the faithful of a church, the understanding of the divinity to whom they direct their prayers differs from person to person, just as is the case that within a political party where ideas about how society should be organized differ among members.

In our Order, there is a fundamental rule, which is that of freedom of thought. Freedom, often mistaken for the idea that “I can do whatever I want,” is a very complex notion that takes on various nuances as we reflect further upon it. It is closely linked to the concept of responsibility.

AMORC respects the personal convictions of each member and that makes it possible for there to be members of various religious and political denominations without this leading to tensions of any kind. In our invocations and prayers we use the expression “God of my Heart, God of my Understanding” because we recognize the fact that this understanding of the Divine varies from human being to human being according to their life experience. For example, we study reincarnation but do not consider acceptance of it to be essential; there are members who accept it, members who do not accept it, and members who develop their own ideas about it.

Although what I am writing may seem normal and obvious to you, in truth, it consists of one of the most difficult human experiences: developing our own vision while at the same time accepting a vision that differs from our own. This is not something so obvious or easy to do. The most common impulse we have is to try to convince others that our vision is the clearest, fairest, and most relevant to tradition or faith. Today, the mechanism behind this attitude is better understood by science as well. As a result of brain studies, we learn about the satisfaction we feel when many people agree with us on an opinion, causing the secretion of certain substances into the bloodstream that produce a sensation of well-being. This is also the mechanism used by social networks when they continuously offer us those same theories and opinions that reinforce our

idea or understanding of life, preventing us from seeing other perspectives. We spontaneously seek consensus and the confirmation of our beliefs. When we do not find this, our automatic reaction is to turn away to find another group that can provide us with these satisfactions. Alternatively, we engage in aggressive behavior toward people who think differently from us.

One of the main sources of destructive conflict occurs when people think they have the right to impose their thoughts on others; when they are convinced that it is precisely their mission to convince others to adopt their ideas. It can certainly happen in an environment where the personalities present, for various reasons that we will not address here, are of a weak disposition and have not reached the maturity to have sufficient critical sense. Such thinking produces the phenomenon of the cult, in which there is a leader who dictates the rules and defines how everyone should behave and what the right choices are to be for each member of the group. Individuality ceases and freedom of thought disappears. In sects, a false harmony often prevails because, as there is no diversity in thinking; apathy and lack of reflection produce a general stagnation which is mistaken for harmony. In AMORC we advocate the need for freedom of thought, but we also emphasize that this must be accompanied by an essential attitude of responsibility. The etymological origin of

responsibility means “to answer to oneself or others for one’s acts and behavior.”

Concerning freedom and free will I propose a reflection that shows how complex the topic is. Let us imagine that we are walking along a street when we catch sight of an old man walking in front of us. As he walks with slightly unsteady footsteps, a wallet falls out of his trouser pocket. We, who are following behind him, pick up the wallet and immediately notice that there are banknotes carelessly arranged inside. We suspect that he may have withdrawn his pension. No one sees us, not even the old man, who is walking well ahead of us.

Now the question is: are we free to keep the wallet? Some would certainly say yes, because we are free individuals, we have free will and we can decide to do whatever we want, even to keep the wallet. While we know that a tiny fraction of the world’s population would actually keep the wallet, we also know that a great many human beings, including ourselves, could not. Not because we are afraid of punishment (remember that in the example no one can see us) but because something inside us tells us that keeping the wallet is wrong. The very thought of it causes us discomfort. A law within us dictates that we should behave in a specific manner.

Where then is the free will? What meaning does this expression have when I am faced with a situation where I know perfectly well that I am

not free to choose? Let us observe this particular absence of freedom where the resultant behavior (not taking the wallet) produces an inner satisfaction in us because we have adhered to a higher principle; “to a moral law within us,” as the philosopher Kant said; or to the voice of the Master Within, as we would say. Since we know that not all human beings would return the wallet and that not all people would behave in a righteous manner, we need some rules.

The coexistence and survival of any group is assured by the existence of shared rules so that it is not left to individual understanding (or moral sense) in deciding how best to behave. The greatest difficulties lie in keeping people with very different understandings of life united. Common experience has shown us that often when there are people in a group who think differently from one another, instead of a civilized discussion that would enable the development of a vision superior to the current one, what actually happens is fragmentation. The idea prevails that since my understanding is better than yours then I can create my own group based on the very gratifying illusion that it will be composed of people who will agree with and think like me. In the age of social networking this process is intensifying out of all proportion.

In AMORC we seek to develop a more advanced vision of human nature. By combining mystical experience with scientific knowledge, we seek

to understand the best way to remain united in a community made up not of people who think the same way about everything, but of people who decide to explore transcendental dimensions of life together. We are people who are united by common ideals and who understand that diversity is precisely the tool used by nature to enable us to see different perspectives, that is, different vistas that we would otherwise never have been able to see. Therefore, freedom must guarantee diversity but at the same time be protected by rules to allow everyone to coexist in the most constructive manner possible. This also holds true for the formation of everything from a country, which has its supreme law in its constitution, to the smallest sports club. This approach has secured the existence of AMORC for more than a hundred years and will continue to be the beacon that guides us.



THE ROSICRUCIAN ORDER, AMORC

Purpose and Work of the Order

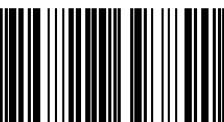
The Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, is a philosophical and initiatic tradition. As students progress in their studies, they are initiated into the next level or degree.

Rosicrucians are men and women around the world who study the laws of nature in order to live in harmony with them. Individuals study the Rosicrucian lessons in the privacy of their own homes on subjects such as the nature of the soul, developing intuition, classical Greek philosophy, energy centers in the body, and self-healing techniques.

The Rosicrucian tradition encourages each student to discover the wisdom, compassion, strength, and peace that already reside within each of us.

www.rosicrucian.org

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