

ON ECOLOGY

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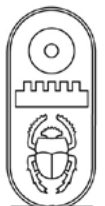


The Italian Grand Lodge of AMORC, in Ornano Grande.

A few moments before starting to write this message, I gazed through the window of my office in the Grand Lodge, here in Ornano Grande, Italy, and I saw the garden just prepared by one of our volunteer fratres. A simple hint from me on the advisability of having a small vegetable garden was enough for the frater and a soror, also always very present, to prepare the land, bring the small plants and arrange them in order on the small furrows. Certainly, what I want to talk about, and reflect upon with you, is not the vegetable produce of the Italian Grand Lodge but how nature can reveal its intrinsic order to the human being, an order of which we ourselves are a part, and which we as Rosicrucians call “the Cosmic,” and how ignoring this order has generated, among other things, the environmental problems we are witnessing. It is interesting to note

how the word “Cosmic” stems from the original Greek *Kosmos*, meaning order, but a form of order that has a form of beauty in it.

Looking out from above (my office is on the second floor) I was able to clearly appreciate how the Vital Life Force impregnates the planet and feeds life. Those plants that I now see in the garden are the result of processes fundamentally linked to photosynthesis. It is a wonderful way, created by nature, to imprison and use the positive energy radiated by the sun on our planet in the plant world. But if we looked with a lens on that small piece of land, where the various vegetables will now grow, we could see an infinity of other living beings, especially bacteria, but also insects and worms of various kinds. A living network with its own life processes; interconnected in a harmonious whole.



And, if I widen my gaze beyond our garden, towards the hills, the perception is clear. That life is spread over the entire surface of our planet, making it finally similar to a living being; a living planet or Gaia, as it was defined by the English chemist James Lovelock referring to the myth of Gaia. And as a living being, our planet has found its homeostatic equilibrium through an infinity of processes that are all interconnected.

As an example only of how the planet is made up of infinite processes that guarantee the maintenance of a balance such as, for example, the percentage of oxygen in the atmosphere or the average temperature, think of this cycle that I will now illustrate: siliceous rocks like granites and basalts are decomposed by fungi, bacteria, and lichens, thus releasing the calcium and silicon that compose them. With the carbon dioxide (CO₂) present in the air, carbonates are formed, which are the main component of the structure of microalgae and shells. When these algae and shells die, they fall to the bottom of the sea and form thick layers of carbonates. The tectonic plates then push these carbonates into the depths of the earth, where the temperature is very high. Finally, with this intense temperature, these carbonates decompose again, thus producing the initial carbon dioxide expelled from the volcanoes. Having returned to the atmosphere from where it came, it starts the whole cycle again.

Now, we, who observe all this life and these processes permeating the soil, air, and water of the planet, we ourselves, are the result of this process. The atoms that make us up were generated after the first moments of the Big Bang (which corresponds to thousands and thousands of years from the beginning of the universe.) And after a long journey of billions of years, these atoms formed our planet (about 4.5 billion years ago), then,

following infinite combinations still not completely scientifically clear, the first living forms appeared (about 3.7/3.8 billion years ago.) Then multicellular organisms surfaced about 700 million years ago. The story of the appearance of our species on the planet is still being written. There are still paleontological and archaeological studies in progress that find skeletons of those who were the progenitors of the human species, but, for the moment, we can say that about 3.2 million years ago, with the skeleton of Lucy, a female hominid walked erectly. Finally, present humans appeared about 200,000 years ago.

Regarding the appearance of life on the planet, the discussion is still very heated. There are biologists and chemists who claim that it is the result of random



The famous "Lucy" skeleton, on display in the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

combinations, a thesis supported by the famous book *Chance and Necessity* of the 1960s by the French biologist Jacques Monod. There are other scientists who have a very different idea. British mathematician, physicist, and astronomer Fred Hoyle (1915-2001) used a brilliant and provocative analogy to explain that the mere probability of a chance meeting of molecules is not enough to explain life. He says such a chance encounter would be tantamount to a hurricane hitting an old iron landfill and producing a fully functional Boeing 747.

We are formed from those same atoms born from the Big Bang and from others subsequently generated as a result of nuclear reactions in the various stars of the universe. These atoms are reintegrated into our body through nutrition and breathing because “we lose atoms all the time.” We are therefore a bridge of atoms that once belonged to comets, stars, or nebulae

(who knows?!) and which now form plants, like the ones I am looking at, and my own body with its brain is looking at them. Atoms looking at atoms! In the cells of my brain, which I now use to write this message, there are atoms that have belonged to the earth, to some bacterium, to an insect, or even an animal, to the water that evaporated from the sea that traveled thousands of miles in the clouds to then fall in the form of rain, in a vital circle that connects all living species to the planet. The writer Primo Levi wrote a beautiful text on the history of the periodic table of the elements and the carbon atom, one of the atoms at the basis of life, illustrating the saga of this atom in an almost poetic way.

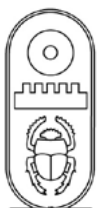
Observing this vital process makes us perceive how we are the part of the planet that thinks, feels, imagines, and dreams. We are the planet, and this is an indisputable truth, although we have, most of the time, the perception of being something different and separate from it. In fact, with a certain presumption, we also consider ourselves superior to the rest of living beings while, in reality, our life is intimately associated with that of all the other species of this planet and with the planet itself. Somehow, Earth has generated us in the same way that our mother has generated us. This has caused many civilizations to refer to the planet as “Mother Earth.”



The Crab Nebula, a supernova remnant, is seen in this composite image from NASA.

The discussion of ecology today has become of great importance, practically an emergency, even if we know that there cannot be a true ecological thought without a corresponding expansion of consciousness. In other words, it is one thing to make an ecological

discourse even well-founded from a philosophical and scientific point of view; it is quite another to live and feel according to what one claims to know. And this is perhaps the drama of the human experience on this planet. Many now rationally understand our link with it and with the life it contains, but, from here, to developing a renewed ethics, there is an abyss that can only be overcome through experience of a spiritual nature. When I use the word spiritual, I mean an integral, complete, marking, and transforming experience. An experience of such a scope that once a person has experienced 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 did before. It is not necessarily an experience of a religious nature in the common sense of the term because the spiritual experience precedes the religious one. It can certainly also happen through religion, but it is not the prerogative of any religion to produce it. A deep immersion in an artistic work or being absorbed by a scientific problem can equally generate the conditions for experiencing this experience.

Do you not find it extraordinary, or rather amazing, that is, something that arouses both a sense of wonder and amazement, that we are this particular agglomeration of atoms that thinks, studies, experiments, and experiences emotions; and that it now raises the matter of how all these atoms, in this arrangement (that is us) are capable of producing thought? But will an atom or a group of atoms ever produce thought alone, or will it be necessary to add some other non-material element for this purpose? Hermann Joseph Muller, who won the Nobel Prize in Medicine, wrote: "To say that a human being is made up of certain elements is a satisfactory description only for those who intend to use him as a fertilizer."

And what other human experience could ever connect the scientific knowledge we have now reached of this whole process to its deepest and most transcendent meaning if not the mystical experience? An experience that by its nature produces a sense of wholeness, of belonging to a Reality that overwhelms, is beyond those who experience it, but in which at the

same time you feel you belong? It is called "Oceanic Sentiment" by the Nobel Prize winner (for literature) Romain Rolland, "Cosmic Consciousness" by the Canadian psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke, "Tao" by the philosopher Lao Tse, and the "Order of Nature" by the physicist Werner Heisenberg.

We, Rosicrucians, bring in our heritage the commitment and tools to build the conditions so that the human being can experience moments of harmony that allow

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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 teachings are not intended to prepare us to make good speeches. The time for speeches is now over. Furthermore, they are not, obviously, a path for free hours or a system for obtaining powers of any kind. The teachings are not an activity reserved for those who remain closed in their room and

that ceases when they leave it. 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 compose it.

Let me recall in this reflection an important aspect of the mystical or spiritual experience, which is that which relates to the "moral sense." The word "moral" here should not be understood as the set of rules imposed perhaps by a religious culture or by social conventions. Rules that do not take into account reality



and are not being respected often by those who propose them become more properly what we call moralism.

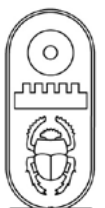
The moral sense here must be understood as listening to the voice of conscience that manifests itself in the inner silence, making us perceive, time after time, what is right to do, the right action, so that our existence benefits us and the life of beings who share the environment with us. Let me quote the Italian philosopher Vito Mancuso:

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 is called “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 drying up of perception, which today is stimulated by such violent and aggressive impulses that it then tends to no longer be sensitive to a subtle voice that speaks within each of us when the conditions are propitious. The moral sense is that inner voice that dictates to us rules of behavior that we could never transgress even if we were alone and no one could see us. It is a sense that gives to the life of individuals a refined quality to the extent that it removes them from vile, vulgar,

dishonest, 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 environmentalist thinking.

At this point, we might ask ourselves if the moral sense can be developed or if it is innate in humans. This is an important question that has accompanied many philosophers throughout the history of human thought, and today is also a topic of study in neuroscience. This is because, on a simple observation, we can conclude that there are people who seem to totally lack a moral sense, while others manifest very high and refined degrees of it. From the Rosicrucian point of view, this meaning corresponds precisely to what we call “spiritual evolution.” Indeed, it is a condition that is not characterized by the presence of extraordinary powers (although there may be) in individuals, but by a capacity for profound discernment, a refined moral sense, and a high degree of empathy. A condition that can be achieved progressively but that often appears fragile and at risk of being lost under the influence of the ego. In fact, its absence is easily recognizable because, in spite of an individual’s possible economic success, their failure as a human being will always stand out.



According to Rosicrucian thought, this evolution is one of the potentialities of the human being; 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 for a few moments, this voice within themselves.

Let's hear what Ralph Maxwell Lewis said:

As we often say, civilization is not a simple improvement of the environment in which the human being lives or an easier access to material resources. It is also the perfecting of oneself, of the individual.

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 may have had. You may have tried, perhaps when you were a child, the experience of being carried away by the waves of the sea towards the beach. A bit like a surfer does, but without the surfboard, letting yourself be carried away by the flow of the wave. Or even just to be lulled by the waves before they break. In those moments in which we are dragged, we experience a sensation of pleasure that

cannot be described. There is no difference between us and the sea, and while we are being dragged, we only feel the desire, the deep desire, that the experience will not end, that the wave will drag us as much as possible. The water touches our whole body with a gurgling that caresses us, and we have a feeling of being the sea because we lose the perception of the limits of the body. We are the sea, we merge with it, but we are also the blue sky above us and the sand below us. It is a mixture of impressions that generates a perception of unity marked by the sense 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 suggest what is described by the mystics of all ages, and that constitutes the initiatory experience par excellence, our spiritual destiny: to experience Unity. And like the wave that arrives on the beach and then disappears and becomes the sea again, perhaps we too, in this experience of union with the Whole, will feel that we have always been in the Cosmic, thus rediscovering our own eternity.



“Experiencing the sea is too global, too mystical, to be reduced to an intersubjective interaction... There is an essential difference between an intersubjective interaction, which takes place in a cultural space, and what one feels when one is alone at the sea under a 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.”