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**Living in Harmony  
with the Natural World**

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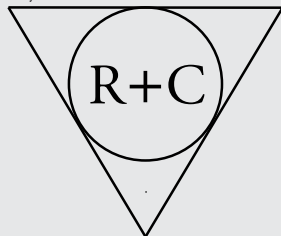
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# LIVING IN HARMONY WITH THE NATURAL WORLD – OUR NEW STORY

*Grand Master Julie Scott, SRC*

What an amazing opportunity we have to create a New Story to guide human behavior related to living in harmony with the natural world – to transform our paradigm. A paradigm contains the basic assumptions and ways of thinking shared by members of a group. For example, a paradigm is the norms that a society accepts and perpetuates.

In our society, our norm, our paradigm, has been to view nature as apart from us and often as something to be conquered and dominated. Cultural historian and geologist Thomas Berry described our society's paradigm towards Mother Earth as seeing her as a gravel pit and trash dump to be used as we wish. Many people see nature as outside of ourselves and our species, although, of course, as Rosicrucians we know that we are essential elements of the interconnected whole, including nature and the animal kingdom. Others avoid the overwhelming feelings of addressing the challenges that human beings have created for the natural world by denying them.

As our lives and habitual patterns are interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, extreme weather, and many other issues at this time, that are more related than many people realize, we can take advantage of this auspicious moment to transform society's paradigm – “the norm” – in order to better live in harmony with the natural world and fulfill our role in the interconnected whole.

This issue of the *Rosicrucian Digest* explores this opportunity.

Researchers have studied what causes groups to give up their beloved norms – to make paradigm shifts. They are almost always precipitated by a crisis. The paradigm no longer solves problems like it may have once done. Anomalies – things that the paradigm can't explain – start piling up. The norm starts making us sick.

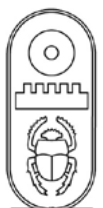
It would seem that we are at that point today.

It may seem like it would be relatively easy to make a shift when the current paradigm is no longer serving the group, however research has shown that this is typically not the case. Often people dig in even deeper to the old paradigm hoping to perpetuate it because they can't even see the possibility of a new paradigm.

Albert Einstein wrote, “During the revolutions [paradigm shifts] in physics early in this century [the twentieth century], it was as if the ground had been pulled out from under one, with no firm foundation to be seen anywhere, upon which one could have built.”

Denise Breton and Christopher Largent in “Recovery: the Art of Paradigm Shifts” write about how this often manifests in science. This can also be applied to society in general.

The more the paradigm fails to do its job, the more old-paradigm scientists try to make it work. The paradigm is ripe for a revolution, but because they've forgotten that they even have a paradigm, scientists



conclude instead that their world is falling apart. Solutions – alternative ways of doing science – don't exist. As far as they're concerned, they've explored all the possibilities, and the only options they see don't help. They're too paradigm-bound to notice that they're stumbling over the limits of their own models.

This is where the Rosicrucians come in. The world needs a new paradigm, a new story as Thomas Berry and others have called it, and the New Story that Rosicrucians have to offer is actually an old one.

The Rosicrucian manifesto, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, published in 1614, tells the story of a mythical figure named Brother C.R., later called Christian Rosenkreutz, who, in his travels, is introduced to some of the most profound wisdom in the world – from Cypress, Damcar, Egypt, and Fez. When he returns to Europe, enthusiastic about sharing what he has learned, the scholars and religious leaders didn't want to hear what he had to say. Rather, they were more interested in protecting what they already believed – in defending their paradigm. They did not want their “knowledge” questioned.

So, Brother C.R. created a fraternity – the Rosicrucian Order – to perpetuate the wisdom that he had gathered on his journey. His goal was to create a fraternity capable of providing council to the rulers of Europe (like the ancient oracles), who would become guiding lights of society. In the *Fama*, new Rosicrucians, who came along 120 years later, perpetuated this wisdom to help restore peace to their world, which was in crisis, and to guide people based on living in harmony with the natural world.

What did Christian Rosenkreutz learn in his travels?



**First he visited Cyprus**, the birthplace of the Greek goddess Aphrodite whose union with Hermes gave birth to Hermaphrodite, an androgynous child. Androgyny symbolizes the balance of the primordial masculine and feminine, **harmonized wholeness of the spiritual and material**, and freedom from the world's duality. In alchemy, androgyny is a form of spiritual alchemy in which a new being is created through the natural harmony of the feminine and masculine.

**Damcar** was a mystical city of secret Arabia, inhabited by a group of adepts. An important encyclopedia **gathering together both scientific and esoteric** knowledge was compiled there. Damcar was known to have safeguarded the *Corpus Hermeticum* – the core documents of the Hermetic tradition that perpetuate the wisdom of the Mystery Schools of ancient Egypt. This tradition emphasizes correspondences and our interrelated nature.

While in Damcar, C.R. met with the Ismaelian magi who passed on to him important knowledge in physics and mathematics (contributions from the Arab world) and gave him a secret book called the *Book M* (*Liber Mundi* - Book of the World) with the ideas of Paracelsus, which he translated into Latin.

Paracelsus, the German-Swiss physician and alchemist, **had worked to synthesize many different branches of esoteric knowledge**. He was a pioneer in several aspects of the medical revolution of the Renaissance, emphasizing the value of observation in combination with received wisdom and establishing the role of chemistry in medicine. He rejected the Galen medical approach and met with the most important alchemists of his time, not only to learn their efficacious medical treatments, but also to **discover the latent forces of Nature and how to use them**.

After three years of study in Damcar, C.R. spent a brief time in **Egypt** studying biology and zoology. He then traveled to Fez.

**Fez** was an important philosophical and intellectual center with magnificent libraries. It was also known for its **alchemy schools**. C.R. perfected his knowledge of historical cycles there and learned through nature that what is below is like that which is above. C.R. was **introduced to the “elementary inhabitants” (gnomes, fairies, nymphs, etc.) who revealed many of their secrets to him**. These are the invisible, spiritual counterparts of visible Nature – the essences of earth, air, water, and fire. According to Paracelsus,

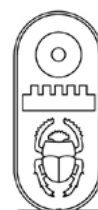
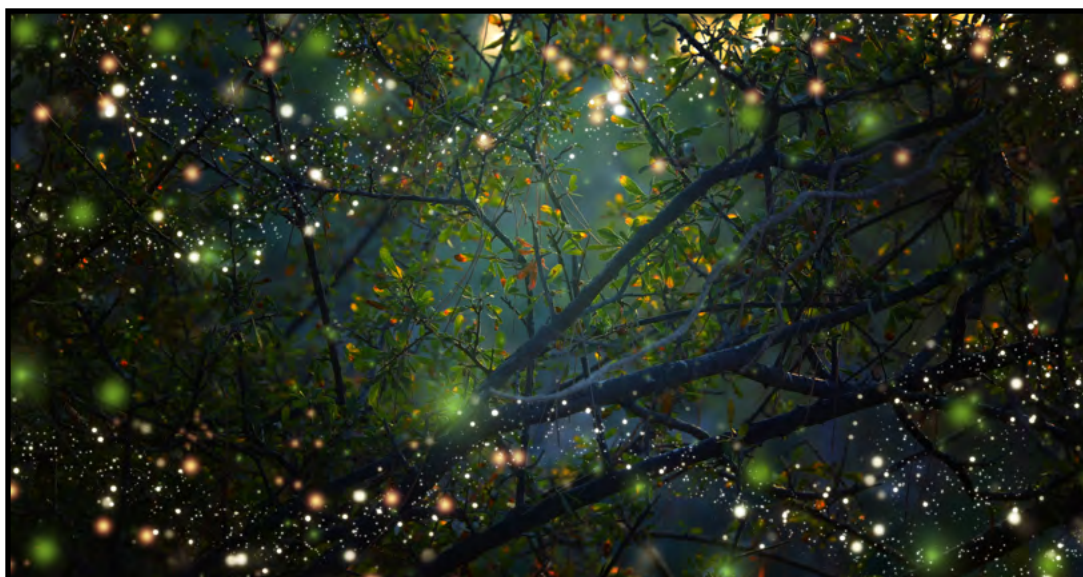
they share the secrets of Nature with those who know how to contact them.

C.R. was extremely impressed with the **trans-disciplinary collaboration** among the scholars of Arabia and Africa who met each year to share their knowledge. They celebrated if they found better ideas or if experience showed the reasoning of their previous findings might not be correct. Every year their knowledge was amended.

The perspective of Brother C.R. expands our awareness to see that we are part of and connected with everything – with each other, you and me, with all humanity, with all beings and all life – trees, dolphins, deer, oceans, and bees, and with the essences of earth, air, water, and fire.

We are connected with and part of everything in the Universe, of which we are not the center. We all swim in the same vibrational sea. The rates of our vibrations give us the impression that we are separate, but we are not.

As Denise Breton and Christopher Largent observed in scientific revolutions throughout history, old-paradigm practitioners can't see that their paradigm caused their crisis. They believe that we don't need a new paradigm, we just need to





NASA image, Hubble ST, Cat's Eye Nebula

make the one we have work better. Nothing is wrong with our social systems, since this would call the underlying paradigm into question. Instead, when things don't work, they declare that something must be wrong with us.

The solution is for each of us to tune into our internal guidance systems – our souls, but of course, that means that we have to disconnect from the prevailing paradigm and paradigms don't let go easily.

Franz Hartmann wrote in *With the Adepts: An Adventure Among the Rosicrucians*:

The continual rush after more money, more comfort, more pleasure, after we already possess all we require, and which characterizes our present civilization, is not necessarily a sign of greed, viciousness, and moral depravity; but it is rather caused by the instinctive impulse, inherent in the constitution of humans, to reach something higher and better, which expresses itself on the physical plane.

People intuitively know that, no matter how rich in money or fame they may be, they have not yet reached

a state in which to be contented and to rest; they know that they must still keep on striving for something, **but they do not know what that something is**. Not knowing the higher life, they strive for more of those things which the lower life affords, and thus waste their energies for the attainment of things which are useless to them. Our curse is to not know our true nature.

Our New Story is based on knowing our true nature – that we are mirrors in which the Divine untiringly contemplates Its own reflection. We are essential elements in the interconnected whole, including the natural world, and are participating in the evolution of the universe. We are part of the harmony of the natural world. This is communicated in every Rosicrucian monograph, in the Rosicrucian manifestos (new and old), and in the work that we carry out in our sanctums. Our Story is living in harmony with the natural world.

We can help to create this societal paradigm shift through our daily choices related to what we purchase, how we spend our time, and how we walk upon Earth. We can educate ourselves and vote

for leaders who understand and support living in harmony with the natural world and then by staying informed and involved in bringing about change. And we can share this New Story by serving as examples for others to follow.

The *Fama Fraternitatis* ends with a request to the leaders of Europe to consider their offer to help restore harmony to society and to declare their agreement. In 2014, 400 years after the publication of the *Fama*, the Rosicrucian Order published another manifesto – the *Appellatio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*. *Appellatio* means the call or appeal. This manifesto isn't a call to just leaders; it is a call to **every Rosicrucian** and to all mystics to participate in the transformation of our society. **You** are being called upon to participate in shifting our paradigm and to spreading Our New Story – one of living in harmony with the natural world –

for the good of all people, all beings, and our amazing planet.

So Mote It Be!

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ThomasBerry.org

“The best arguments in the world won't change a person's mind. The only thing that can do that is a good story.”

“Humans carry around legacy behaviors and biases, jerry-rigged holdovers from earlier stages of evolution that follow their own obsolete rules. What seem like erratic, irrational choices are, in fact, strategies created long ago for solving other kinds of problems. We're all trapped in the bodies of sly, social-climbing opportunists shaped to survive the savanna by policing each other.”

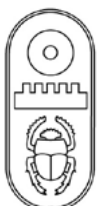
“She tries to turn the story on its head. This is not our world with trees in it. It's a world of trees, where humans have just arrived.”

“We all travel the Milky Way together, trees and people. . . . In every walk with nature one receives far more than one seeks. The clearest way into the universe is through a forest wilderness.”

“Who does the tree-hugger really hug, when he hugs a tree?”

“Now they need only learn what life wants from humans. It's a big question, to be sure. Too big for people alone. But people aren't alone, and they never have been.”

- Excerpts from the Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Overstory*, by Richard Powers



# WE ARE THE ONES WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

*Attributed to an unnamed Hopi elder*

**Y**ou have been telling the people that this is the Eleventh Hour,  
now you must go back and tell the people that this is THE Hour.  
And there are things to be considered.

Where are you living?  
What are you doing?  
What are your relationships?  
Are you in right relation?  
Where is your water?  
Know your garden.  
It is time to speak your Truth.  
Create your community.  
Be good to each other.  
And do not look outside yourself for the leader.  
We are the ones we've been waiting for.

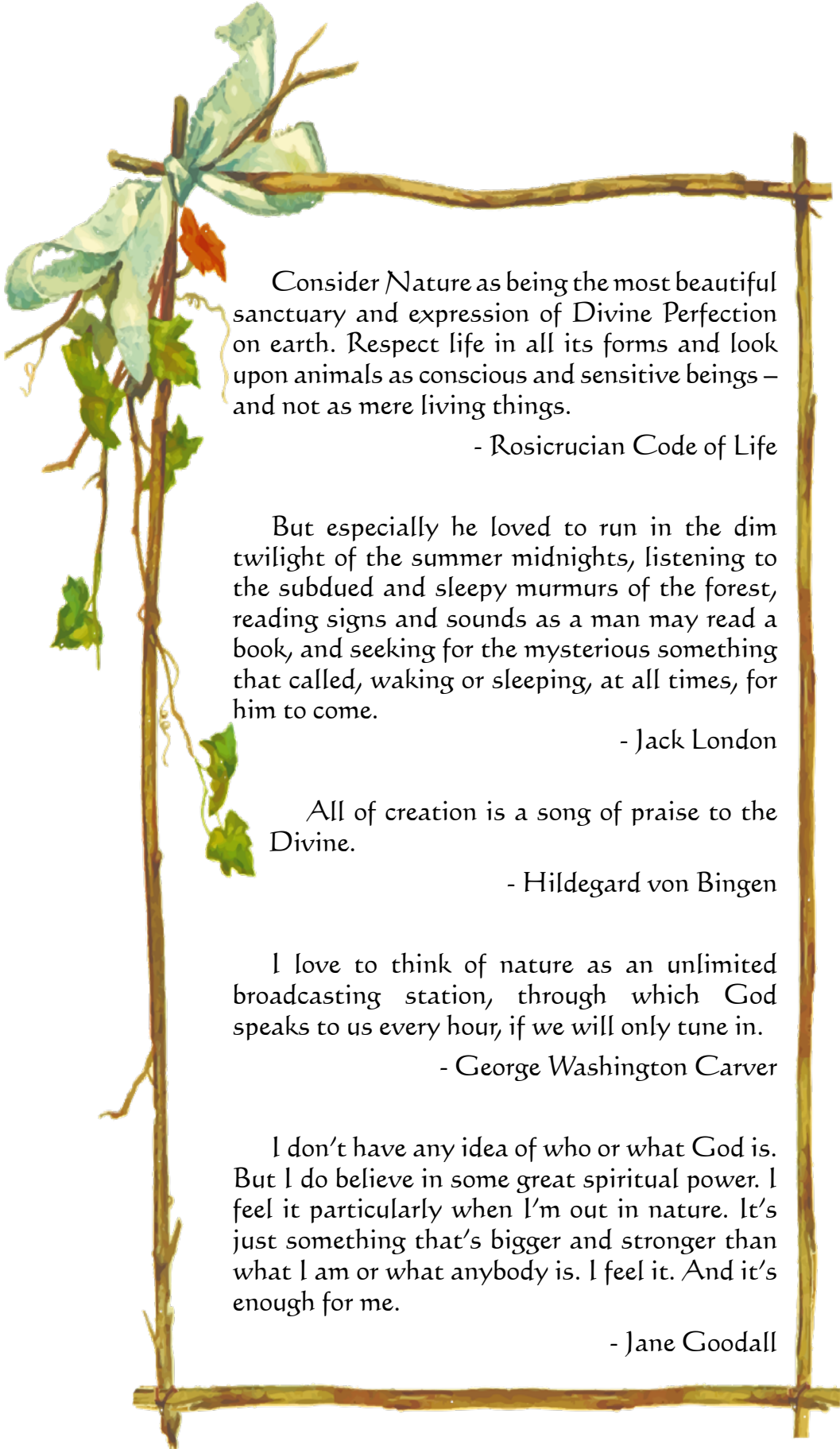
Then he clasped his hands together, smiled, and said,  
This could be a good time! There is a river flowing now very fast.  
It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid.  
They will try to hold on to the shore.  
They will feel they are torn apart and will suffer greatly.

Know the river has its destination.  
The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the  
middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above water.  
And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate.

At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally,  
least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do,  
our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt.  
The time for the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves!  
Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary.  
All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

We are the ones we've been waiting for.





Consider Nature as being the most beautiful sanctuary and expression of Divine Perfection on earth. Respect life in all its forms and look upon animals as conscious and sensitive beings – and not as mere living things.

- Rosicrucian Code of Life

But especially he loved to run in the dim twilight of the summer midnights, listening to the subdued and sleepy murmurs of the forest, reading signs and sounds as a man may read a book, and seeking for the mysterious something that called, waking or sleeping, at all times, for him to come.

- Jack London

All of creation is a song of praise to the Divine.

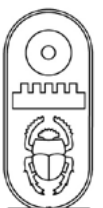
- Hildegard von Bingen

I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in.

- George Washington Carver

I don't have any idea of who or what God is. But I do believe in some great spiritual power. I feel it particularly when I'm out in nature. It's just something that's bigger and stronger than what I am or what anybody is. I feel it. And it's enough for me.

- Jane Goodall



# LISTENING TO EARTH: WRITING AN ECOLOGICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*Ruth Wilson, SRC*

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

*- Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)*

When Henry David Thoreau “wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life,” he didn’t register for a university class nor did he join a book discussion group. What he did, instead, was to go to the woods “to see if I could not learn what it had to teach.” His motivation for learning was not to earn a degree or to make money, but rather to “live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.” Through his journal, Thoreau leaves a record of his life in the woods and shares insights on how he sought out the essence of what life has to offer. In one journal entry he wrote, “I did not read books the first summer; I hoed beans.” We find, as we read further in his journals, that it was through hoeing beans, wading in the marshes, listening to the booming of the snipe, and smelling the whispering sedge that Thoreau arrived at deep understandings about life and the nature of who we are as human beings. He notes, “At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable.” This is just one example of the many insights Thoreau gained through his closeness to nature.

Most of us have moments when seeking the essential facts of life become very important to us. We begin asking deeper questions about the meaning of life and wonder about who and where

we are and how we ought to live. Some of us look to various religious traditions for guidance. Others search their own minds and souls through meditation and reflection. Still others use a more academic approach, turning to readings in philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and other related disciplines.

Thoreau’s decision to look to the woods for wisdom reflects a long-held belief that Earth, itself, can be a teacher. This belief has been articulated by people of various times and cultures, but seems to be overlooked by the mainstream of society today. We find that ideas on how to listen to nature and learn its lessons in today’s fast-paced and plastic world are rarely articulated. Perhaps it’s time to reflect on ways in which we can make “listening to Earth” a part of our search for wisdom and guidance.

## **The Ecological Autobiography As a Type of Vision Quest**

While each one of us might use a different approach to hear the voice of Earth and learn its lessons, one particular approach that has proven helpful to some is writing an ecological autobiography. In an ecological autobiography, one tells the story of his or her personal experiences and relationship with nature over time. Most such autobiographies begin with childhood experiences and proceed to the present. The autobiography includes not only facts about remembered experiences,

but also insights and perceptions about the meaning of those experiences. Some autobiographies also include a discussion of specific themes or patterns which surface through reflecting on one's story.

The focus of an ecological autobiography is on the self in relation to the natural world. This aspect of one's self is sometimes referred to as "the ecological self." While the ecological self is considered to be an integral part of who we are, it represents an often-unexplored part of our identity. A major reason why people write their ecological autobiographies is to delve more deeply into the meaning and characteristics of their ecological self and to identify implications (or lessons) for their present and future direction.

While the process of developing an ecological autobiography calls for analysis and synthesis, the experience isn't as much of an intellectual exercise as it is an emotional journey – or a journey of the heart. The process might be thought of as a type of "vision quest" where an individual commits the time and energy to explore the wilderness of his or her own past experiences with the natural world to discover personal meaning and direction.

Individuals who have gone through the process of writing an ecological autobiography report very powerful and rewarding outcomes. Such outcomes include a deepened understanding about their relationship with the natural environment and a renewed commitment to live more harmoniously with the world of nature. Comments in their reports include: "It was good for my soul." "It hit me pretty hard." "It really moved me. I realize what my roots are and what I need to do in the future." "It helped me get in touch with my feelings for the environment." "This has helped me both to re-establish my commitment and to remind me of my duty towards the natural world." "The memories have shown me what is important to me."

## Writing an Ecological Autobiography

Individuals interested in writing their ecological autobiography should first let go of the need to record everything they can remember about their experiences with the natural world. Such a record would, of course, be impossible. They should also keep in mind that the primary focus of an autobiography is on experiences versus facts. Specific dates or other details surrounding an event are not as important as the way in which the event was experienced and what it might have meant. An individual writing an ecological autobiography should spend time reflecting on the meaning or essence of nature-related experiences. They may find the following questions helpful in doing so.

**What experiences with nature do I remember most vividly?**

**What about those experiences made them memorable?**

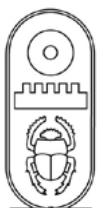
**What special lessons or insights have I gained through these experiences?**

**Have nature-related experiences influenced any decisions I've made – possibly career decisions, decisions about where to live or where to vacation?**

Another task of the autobiographer is to look for recurrent themes in his or her episodes in nature and insights gained through nature-related experiences. One autobiographer identified the following themes:

- => Earth isn't just something all around me; it's a part of me.
- => A priority of my life is to live simply and impart as little harm to Earth as possible.
- => I feel a deep emotional bonding with Earth

It's not unusual for autobiographers to identify shifts in their relationship with Earth over time. One individual who



was able to articulate the nature of these changes wrote the following entry in her journal: “Changes in my relationship with nature have moved from idle curiosity to action; from playing in nature to learning from it; from seeing nature around me to seeing nature as part of me.”

### **A New Way of Being in the World**

Developing an ecological autobiography can be a complex, challenging, and rewarding process. During the process, development occurs not only with the written document, but within the individual, as well. The development within the individual tends to be from simple introspection to self-understanding, and then to transformation. This transformation need not be limited to how one thinks, but may extend to one’s way of being in the world. A thoughtful analysis of ecological autobiographies may also reveal valuable insights, which go beyond the individual. Such insights may pertain to the whole of society, giving us direction for a more positive collective future.

A prayer shared at a United Nations Environmental Sabbath Program addressed the concern of how we have forgotten who we are and how, because of this forgetfulness, we have become estranged from the movements of Earth. The prayer is:

We have forgotten who we are.

We have alienated ourselves from  
the unfolding of the cosmos  
We have become estranged from  
the movements of the earth  
We have turned our backs on the  
cycles of life.

We have forgotten who we are.

We have sought only our own  
security  
We have exploited simply for our  
own ends

We have distorted our knowledge  
We have abused our power

We have forgotten who we are.

Now the land is barren  
And the waters are poisoned  
And the air is polluted.

We have forgotten who we are.

Now the forests are dying  
And the creatures are disappearing  
And humans are despairing.

We have forgotten who we are.

We ask forgiveness  
We ask for the gift of remembering  
We ask for the strength to change

We have forgotten who we are.

The prayer acknowledges our wrongdoing – recognizing that we have abused our power and exploited simply for our own ends. The result, as articulated in this prayer, is that the land is now barren, the waters are poisoned, and the air is polluted. Finally, through this prayer, we ask for forgiveness and the strength to change.

The ecological autobiography can be one approach we might use to help us through the change process. It can be a tool to help us listen to Earth as our teacher.

\*Quoted from the U.N. Environmental Sabbath Program, in *Earth Prayers*, eds. Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 70-71.

*Note: All quotations from ecological autobiographies and related reports are from students or workshop participants engaged in writing their ecological autobiographies under the direction of the author, Ruth Wilson.*

# HARMONIZING WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

*Grand Master Julie Scott, SRC*



Throughout the Rosicrucian teachings we are encouraged to harmonize with the natural world. There is nothing like breathing in the fresh air with its cosmic essence, or soaking up the Sun's glorious energy, or being inspired by a majestic mountain, a powerful river, a soaring eagle, or a mother deer with her fawn.

There are many reasons that we benefit from harmonizing with nature. Of course, nature shares vital food, oxygen, and natural resources that nourish our bodies. But it's more than that, isn't it?

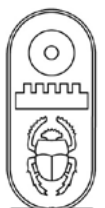
Harmonizing with the natural world expands awareness of the self to include the vastness of the sky, the density of the mountains, and the fluidity of the river.

This connects us to our natural state of being – awareness that the environment is not something apart from us. We are essential elements of the environment and nature, making us something much grander.

Not only does this benefit us, it also benefits the environment, because the more inspiring experiences we have with nature, the more likely we are to be passionate about protecting the environment.

Being in nature also takes us beyond language. Leonard Shlain, MD, in his book, *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*, offers that the process of learning and using various alphabets rewired the human brain, in many ways disconnecting us from our more holistic, right brain modes of thinking and making linear, abstract thought more dominant. Harmonizing with the natural world connects us with that more holistic experience.

H. Spencer Lewis described a more holistic way of communicating in the book, *Lemuria, the Lost Continent of Mu*, which he wrote under the pseudonym Wishar Cerve. He stated that the Lemurians obtained their knowledge through the observation of nature and they developed an ability, and an organ in the center of



their forehead, that allowed them, through mental telepathy, to communicate with animals, plants, and other Lemurians. He said that it is quite likely that this sixth sense was an organ equal to or in some way connected with the present small organ in our modern bodies known as the pituitary body.

I had a related experience once. A friend of mine, who was a ranger in a redwood forest near San Jose, encouraged me to place my forehead on a redwood tree. I had no expectation of what might happen and wasn't used to doing something like this. When my head touched the tree trunk, I immediately began to see on the screen of my mind scrolling letters of an alphabet that I was unfamiliar with. They were something like Egyptian hieroglyphs and something like the Hebrew alphabet, but they weren't either of those. I believe this tree downloaded something to me. I don't consciously know what it was, yet I am certain that this download has informed me in some ways.

Perhaps it has helped me to guide some of the recent projects at Rosicrucian Park. Shortly after this encounter I began serving as the Grand Master of the English Grand Lodge for the Americas, where I am very committed to making Rosicrucian Park a model for the sustainable use of natural resources.

Since the year 2000, Rosicrucian Park has been organic and since 2005 we have replaced our water-hungry lawns with more than 5,000 native plants. This has resulted in a savings of more than 10 million gallons of water per year and a financial savings of over \$842,000 since 2005.

By converting to online monographs in 2015 and making all other publications

paper-free beginning this year we are saving more than 640 trees per year. That is the equivalent of one full forest the size of Rosicrucian Park every year!

Rosicrucian Park has achieved Net Zero Energy Status. We now produce enough clean, renewable energy to meet our own annual energy consumption requirements. Even though every expert told us that this wasn't possible with our historic buildings, we persevered and achieved this status. The resulting energy savings means that this project will pay for itself in just ten more years and the savings to the environment began immediately.

We harvest precious rainwater from several roofs to large hidden storage tanks, saving more than 35,000 gallons of rainwater per year for irrigation use.

I believe somewhere in my consciousness my connection with this redwood tree and then other trees after that, influenced these manifestations. For millennia, shamans and other mystics have been informed by plants. Why wouldn't plants be able to communicate with us? We co-evolved together.

Many years ago, my friend Emma, who introduced me to the Order and became my mentor, came to my house. She was sitting on a couch across from me, which had two house plants next to it. It seemed to me that during our conversation my plants leaned towards her, however, I didn't mention this to her.

The next time Emma came to my house she sat in the same place and this time I made a mental note about the positions of the plants at the beginning of our conversation. Once again, within about thirty minutes, both plants had leaned towards Emma. They loved her energy, as many people did. And she loved them.

She was always radiating love. Imagine the lovefest that occurs in a forest!

When we harmonize with the natural world we also attune with our source of Being, through the four elements.

Being in nature reminds us of our connection with the Whole. Our bodies are made up of minerals from the body of Mother Earth. We breathe in life-giving cosmic essence, which is radiated to us through the rays of the Sun, with every breath of air. Our bodies are made up of 70 percent water and some of our blood cells are made of 90 percent water, reminding us of when we lived in water. And we can experience the regenerating power of fire that burns within every cell.

Let's attune with these four elements.

For a few minutes, concentrate on the bones of your skeleton, your muscles, your tissues, and your organs as material substances drawn from earth.

Next, pay attention to the regular rhythm of your breathing and on the continuous movement of air in and out of your lungs, bringing life giving cosmic essence from the atmosphere into every cell in our beings.

Now imagine yourself inside a blood cell. Visualize it as a reddish sphere composed mainly of water and kept alive by a continual electromagnetic influx from its nucleus to its outer membrane.

Finally concentrate all the heat of your body around the pituitary gland in the center of your head at the level between your eyebrows. See this gland as a ball of fire that does not burn, but from which radiates a soothing and regenerating light.

*My whole being is strengthened by earth, vitalized by air, purified by water, and regenerated by fire. It is done!*

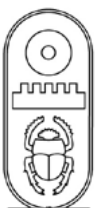
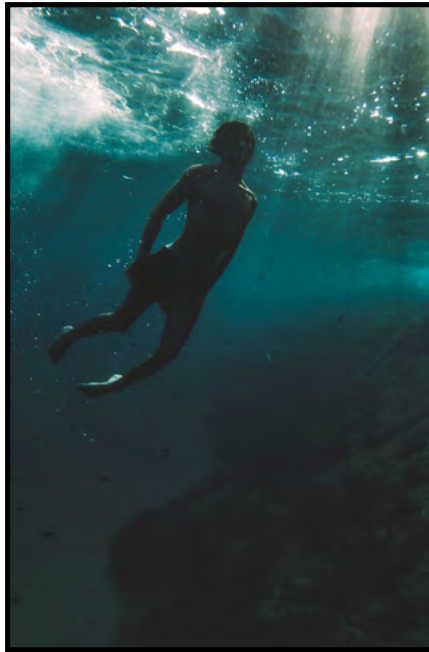
It's a very powerful experience to harmonize with the natural world, probably much more appreciated by all of us at this time. But you know how it is sometimes - we get busy, we're tired, it's too hot or too cold outside, and the next thing you know, days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months and little by little we become disconnected from nature.

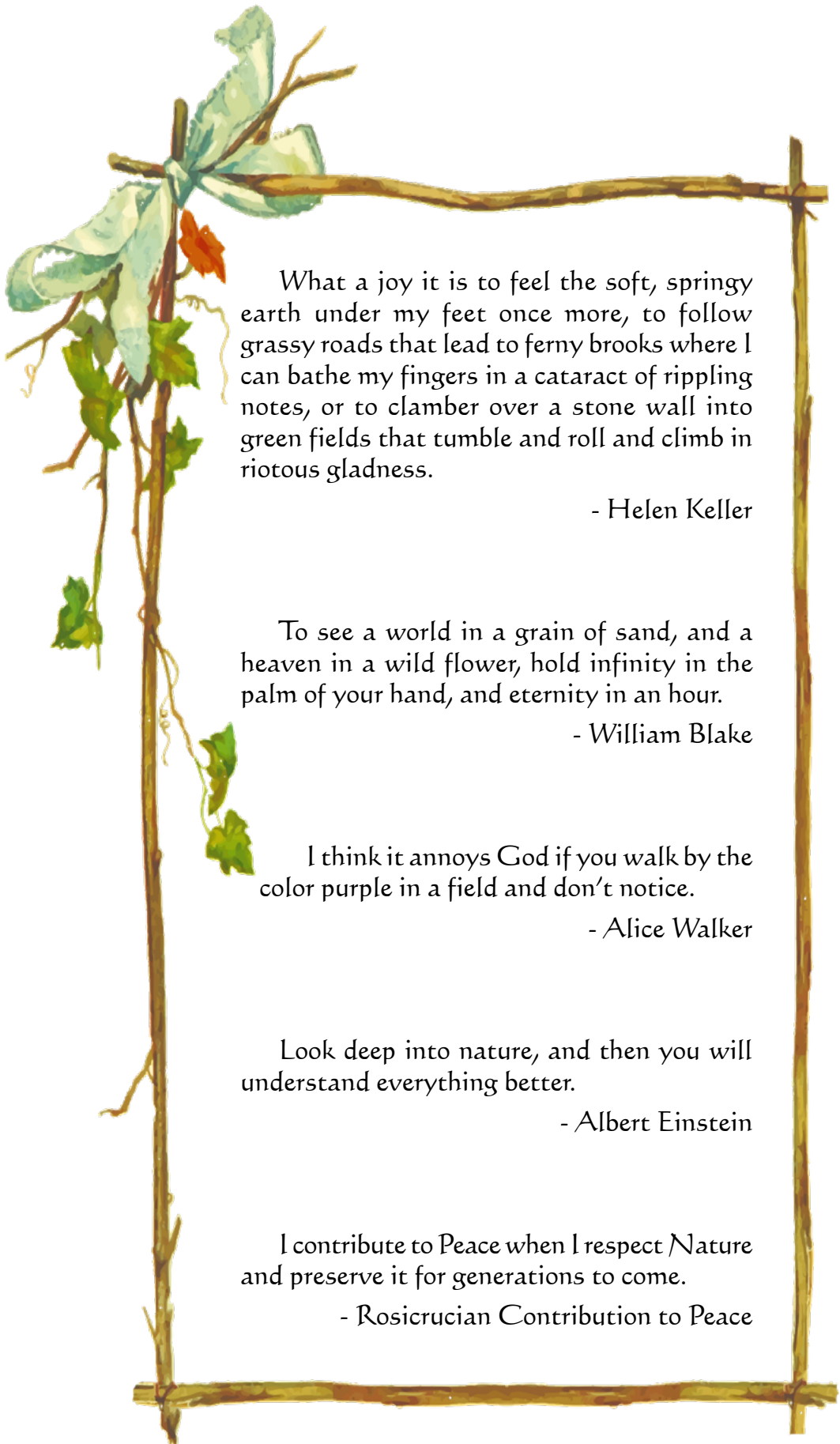
There is a term for this disconnection from nature: it's called Nature Deficit Disorder. Many people are studying how this disconnection from

nature affects our physiology, our mental and emotional health, and our spirituality. They are also studying how it affects our communities and society, including the odd ways in which human beings pollute and harm the very environment that sustains us.

Fratres and sorores, may our harmonization with the natural world benefit more than just us individually. May it also benefit all beings and our beautiful Mother Earth.

So Mote It Be!





What a joy it is to feel the soft, springy earth under my feet once more, to follow grassy roads that lead to ferny brooks where I can bathe my fingers in a cataract of rippling notes, or to clamber over a stone wall into green fields that tumble and roll and climb in riotous gladness.

- Helen Keller

To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour.

- William Blake

I think it annoys God if you walk by the color purple in a field and don't notice.

- Alice Walker

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.

- Albert Einstein

I contribute to Peace when I respect Nature and preserve it for generations to come.

- Rosicrucian Contribution to Peace



# UNIVERSAL INTELLIGENCE: THE PLANT KINGDOM

*Julian Johnson, FRC*

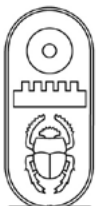


Research on the subject of the Universal Intelligence of the plant kingdom goes back about one hundred fifty years to the era of Charles Darwin, and the amount of research is voluminous. For Rosicrucians who think about consciousness, the research gives a new view of the world around us. This is illustrated by an experiment in which researchers showed people a short film and then asked them to note what they had just seen in the short clip. One part of the clip had a horse in it, another part of the clip had two birds, and another had three people, and that was what people reported. But in all of them, primarily what was there were plants, trees and other flora. The research showed that people have what the scientists called “plant-blindness.” We really don’t notice plants. However, what present research shows is that plants are as sentient and intelligent as other living creatures.

Universal Intelligence lives in the plant kingdom. A basic Rosicrucian

tenet is that there is one intelligence, one consciousness. In accounts of people who’ve had momentary experience of Cosmic Consciousness, one of the key features is awareness of an imminent intelligence that’s in everything, surrounding everything, and which we’re part of. So that Universal Intelligence is really what this is about. What we see in the animal kingdom and in humans, manifests in very similar ways in plant life. So, one Universal Intelligence is not new to us. All living things manifest this Intelligence and you can see it in the smallest gnat. The tiny little creature that’s ducking around us – it’s trying to live, trying to find food, trying to reproduce, and trying to avoid irritation. It’s doing nothing unique in its objectives. It may not watch Netflix, but it acts similarly to other forms of life.

We find that whether we consider a protozoan or a larger animal, the behavior we see with living things, we similarly see in plants – self-preservation, seeking





nutrients for food, reproduction, and avoiding irritation – trying to be in comfort, not discomfort. Most of us learned about plant reproduction in school, so there's no need to go into detail here. We know there's pollen and there are seeds, etc. Most of science, up until the present time, looks at plants as being almost inert, in the sense of being passive actors – not active agents. Scientists observe how plant reproduction takes place. Bees visit and carry away pollen, a seemingly passive role for the plants.

From a scientific point of view the key features that researchers look for in categorizing intelligence is the ability to take in information from one's environment, the ability to process and integrate that information, then deciding how to act on the information and lastly, and this is really where scientists lately have been somewhat forced to yield regarding the intelligence of plants – the ability to solve problems. Besides the preceding, there is a separate scientific debate as to whether plants are conscious. Many get stuck on that point,

however it is enough to remember that plants are active problem solvers.

One of the most interesting comments about this subject is an observation that plant life is, ironically, the closest thing to alien life on our planet. Plants don't have eyes and ears and legs and move around in the ways we're used to seeing in other life forms. Nonetheless, plants are sentient creatures responding to their environment, and they share the world with us.

Let's look at some plant characteristics. They are sessile, which means that they don't move around; they are rooted in a fixed location. It's very interesting when you think about them. Scientists who are interested in this field recognize that plants have to solve all the problems that other animals face: being able to survive in their environments, getting food, etc. But they can't get up and move to address their needs. Pretty much every other living creature moves to get what it needs, if it's not immediately present in its own environment. Plants are rooted, so they clearly have to be very creative in getting what they need. While people don't see plants as conventionally moving creatures, plants do move through growth. That's the behavior they employ to access resources not immediately present. Related to this, plants act on a much slower timescale than our own. Plants move so slowly compared to humans that we think that nothing is happening. However, we can see these behaviors clearly through time-lapsed photography. In an ironic twist on this fact, there was a *Star Trek* episode where a type of alien creature came to Earth that functioned on a much faster scale of time, and they looked at humans as being inanimate. They began to do with people what they wanted. They saw people as inert and inanimate so they had them for lunch and other things like that.

What's also interesting is that plants, in addition to having functions that are akin to human senses, actually have additional senses. You could say that plants have the five senses we're accustomed to, plus additional ones. Another point is that plants have sophisticated means of self-defense to protect themselves as all living creatures do. They also communicate with other plants through various means. They have memory. They exhibit purposeful decision-making: They crunch incoming data and, in effect, say I'm going to do this, not that. They can distinguish self from non-self. As we know, plants reproduce through a variety of means: wind, insects, animals, etc. for distributing their seeds and pollen.

A look at plant bodies reveals that plants are very different, which has made it so confusing for traditional scientists to get their arms around plants. Plants don't have lungs, they don't have kidneys, they don't have livers, they don't have organs like animals do. Even tiny bacteria have different organs. There is the nucleus, the mitochondria, and other elements. Plants don't have organs as we know them; they don't have a brain. Many scientists have great difficulty in recognizing intelligence when something doesn't have a brain. But if you simply look at a key defining characteristic of intelligence – problem solving – we see plants meet this test, even without an obvious brain.

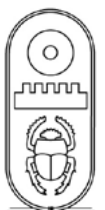
Plants are modular. Instead of having internal organs, plants have everything in each part of the plant because they must withstand being eaten. If something ate half of an animal, or human, they'd be dead. Plants must tolerate that. They can't move. They can't run away. So, in the instance of being eaten, if they had a brain or specific organs, if they were localized, they would not survive. There is a lot of research showing that the root tips are really where a key amount of processing



goes on in plants – it is mediated or stimulated or takes place in the root tips and a little area right behind the root tips. So, the processing area of plants likely exists below the ground.

### Sight

Now we're going to go through human senses. Let's begin with sight. One of the basic premises of sight is response to light. Plants can perceive and process light. Evidence of this is that shoots always grow towards the source of light. And they'll do a lot of things in order to succeed at that. On the other hand, roots always grow away from the source of light so they're aware of light as well. They have what we perceive as sight. They respond to that part of the electromagnetic spectrum that we call light and do so in more sophisticated ways than even humans do. They differentiate between different parts of the light spectrum, not so much for aesthetic purposes, but they'll respond differently to sensing more infrared light on the spectrum. If they're trying



to seek light, they obviously don't want to be where it's more likely to be shady, in terms of the canopy. So, they're going to seek out more direct light. They can perceive the difference based on the light spectrum. There are other things they do that are really fascinating. Clinging plants such as vines can sense an object in their environment and can even discern an appropriate object to wrap around.

### Smell

The sense of smell is a recognition of chemical molecules in the air. Like humans and other animals, plants can pick up what we would say is a scent in the air. In fact, this is a key part of how plants communicate and defend themselves. Plants emit chemical signals and respond to chemical signals emitted by other plants. For example, plants issue different chemicals depending on the nature of the threat. If it's a bacterial threat, there will be a different chemical emitted by some plants than if it's a herbivore threat. For example, if a caterpillar is eating a plant's leaves, a specific chemical is emitted. Sometimes a chemical is emitted to notify the rest of the plant and sometimes it's to notify plants around as well. So, plants emit chemicals and other plants can sense and process those molecules, which again is what we do with smell in order to respond.

Now for some bad news: For those of you who like neat lawns – that nice smell of fresh cut grass - that's grass going “Oww!”

Screaming, plants are emitting multiple chemicals saying their body is being attacked, as well as working to mitigate the injury inflicted by the lawnmower or grazing deer.

### Touch

Plants actually respond to physical contact with other objects. A video on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/dTlJaIVseTc>) shows a plant reaching out in its environment and as soon as it touches a nearby pole, it immediately begins to attach to that pole and wrap itself around it. Some may be familiar with the plant called the *mimosa pudica*; it's a plant that collapses when you touch it. There are also the carnivorous plants like the Venus flytrap which respond when touched by insects. There are also the clinging vines. They can discern what is a good surface to wrap around. Others will look for trees. They don't wrap around the tree; instead they attach themselves to the tree. So, plants respond to an object's surface.

### Taste

Plants can recognize different herbivores. Based on the herbivore's saliva, plants will emit different chemicals. For example, plants have been shown to recognize one type of caterpillar versus another or other kind of insect. They release specific chemicals to ward off the caterpillar.

Venus fly traps and probably most types of carnivorous plants can discern



when something is not food. They'll close up and basically stay closed for about twelve hours if it's not digestible. If they find something that is digestible, they'll stay closed for about five to twelve days. So, basically plants demonstrate they have a way to taste or respond to chemicals that they encounter in their environment for securing nutrients or food.

### **Hearing**

Plants can also hear. Many people talk to their plants based on the assumption they can hear or respond to the physical vibrations that the voice creates, that is, the sound or pressure waves of the movement of air. Well, they're correct. For example, in laboratory experiments, scientists can take certain types of plants that are known to respond to caterpillars with a chemical defense, and, if they simply play the amplified sound of a caterpillar eating a leaf, the plants will issue a chemical response as if it was actually being eaten by a caterpillar. Plants recognize the sound of the eating and they will put out chemicals that ward caterpillars off. Similarly, plants will respond to the sound of water flowing through an underground pipe, wrapping themselves around the pipe, below ground – as if seeking to get access to water.

Scientists are investigating plants that make a type of clicking sound at the root level. They believe there is some type of communication taking place through clicking sounds that are interpreted by other plants. All of these examples provide evidence that plants have the capacity to hear and interpret sound. With hearing added, we see that plants share the five commonly recognized senses possessed by humans and many other animals.

### **Other Senses**

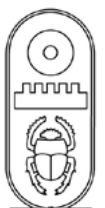
Beyond these five senses, plants have several other senses, including a sense of gravity. Shoots will always grow upwards and roots will always go down. There's an

intelligence in plants that will make sure that the stem grows up and the roots down no matter how you position or plant the seed. So, they can sense gravity. Plants also have other senses – which allow them to sense humidity, water, and oxygen.

Like humans, plants use their senses to assess their environment, particularly to identify nutrients or food. Since plants can't move, they seek out nutrients in the ground they're in. When they identify nutrients in the soil, they shoot out roots to get access to it. For carnivorous plants like the Venus fly trap that typically exist in more acidic soil where appropriate nutrients aren't as present, they get their nutrients from the animals they eat.

Like with all living things, self-preservation is a biological instinct. So, let's look at plant self-defense. As noted earlier, plants put out chemicals to deter herbivores. The acacia tree is an example. When acacia trees are being grazed by antelopes, they emit tannins. Tannins are the bitter stuff in teas. Acacia trees will put out tannins to make themselves unappetizing. There is a scientific report showing that, in at least one instance in a South African game reserve, the trees put out enough tannins to kill multiple animals in a herd of antelope.

Plants also emit chemicals to attract help. When certain corn plants are being eaten by caterpillars, they'll emit a chemical that attracts wasps that eat caterpillars. They're not the only example. Just imagine: the caterpillars come along and the plants put out a call and help comes just like in *Star Wars*, but it's to kill a bug. More broadly, plants very often communicate with one another when being attacked by a pest by issuing chemical signals to one another, a behavior often seen among forest animals who employ certain calls when a predator appears.



Plants also communicate at the root level. There's an enormous underground communication network between plants. In a forest, there are literally miles of underground connections between the trees. Scientists have called this the WWW – the Wood Wide Web. There are also fungal connections linking trees. Below the surface of the soil there are enormous fungal colonies. They connect plants at the root level and there are exchanges of information and resources, such as water and nutrients. Research has also shown that in the sharing of resources, plants will favor their own kin, although not exclusively.

One example is that larger trees will provide nutrients to smaller trees that are in the shade. If you look at the forest canopy, light is heavily blocked off. Trees in a shaded area don't get much sunlight. Yet a small plant needs solar energy to grow. In an example of resource sharing, some trees will provide through the root level, nutrients to smaller trees, until they get large enough to break through and get access to more light on their own. Another example can be seen with trees that stay green year-round. Evergreens will share nutrients with trees that lose their leaves. As leaves are the primary place of photosynthesis, without them, there isn't an opportunity for photosynthesis. So, evergreens have been shown to share resources with trees until the seasons change.

Let's further explore memory in plants. There are a couple of ways that we've already seen this. If a plant has been subjected to a particular pest in the past, for example an insect herbivore or a bacteria, they will more quickly produce appropriate defensive chemicals than a naïve plant that has never been exposed to that same pest. Somehow plants retain memory that they've encountered the threat before and respond more readily.

Just like our own bodies have antibodies that respond more readily because they've been primed by some past experience and will more immediately go in and attack what's putting our bodies in danger.

The Venus fly trap has memory and a seeming ability to measure time. There are three little hair-like elements on the top and bottom sections of the pod of a Venus fly trap. These are not the many tendril-like appendages on the outside perimeter of the pod that hold the animal trapped when closed. If an insect touches one of the hair-like elements inside the pod and then another within twenty seconds, the pod springs shut. So, the plant remembers that it's been touched once and if touched again within a 20-second time period, it closes on its prey.

The *mimosa pudica* plant that we discussed earlier is another plant that closes up. Scientists researched ways to see if the plants could be habituated not to respond. Scientists dropped a plant from a height of six inches onto a piece of foam and the plant closed its leaves in response. However, after four to five repeat droppings, the plant no longer responded by closing its leaves. The plant appeared to recognize that it was not in danger. A month later, when again



*Mimosa pudica*

dropped six inches onto the foam, there still was no response. However, if the plant was instead shaken, it would close its leaves. For at least a month, the plant retained the memory regarding the foam.

Plants can also recognize self versus non-self; they typically avoid wrapping around their own stalks. Also, they won't compete with their own roots and they don't compete the same way or try to block off their own offspring at the root level. So, there's a kind of recognition of a child-plant of the species.

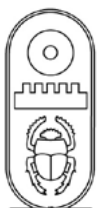
Plants also make choices. For example, roots looking for nitrogen in the soil. A plant has to use energy to grow roots or stalks. Their resources are limited, so they use their energy just like we do – prudently. So, when a plant encounters nitrogen in the soil, researchers have found that the plant is able to decide whether a patch of nitrogen, which might be very rich, is a better place to grow and invest by growing out more roots there, versus another patch. But what's interesting is that when one patch is not as dense but is increasing in density, the plant will grow out roots toward the area that's increasing in density, even though at the immediate point it is less dense than another patch. It's making a decision about how it's going to use its resources. Another example is that a plant will direct itself around obstacles. If a plant is growing roots down and encounters a stone or obstacle in its way, the plant will make a right or left turn rather than just remaining stuck there. It also seems that plants are able to discern an object before they actually come into physical contact, although researchers are not sure how they do it. But the plant will begin to turn to avoid the object. So, they're making intelligent problem-solving choices.

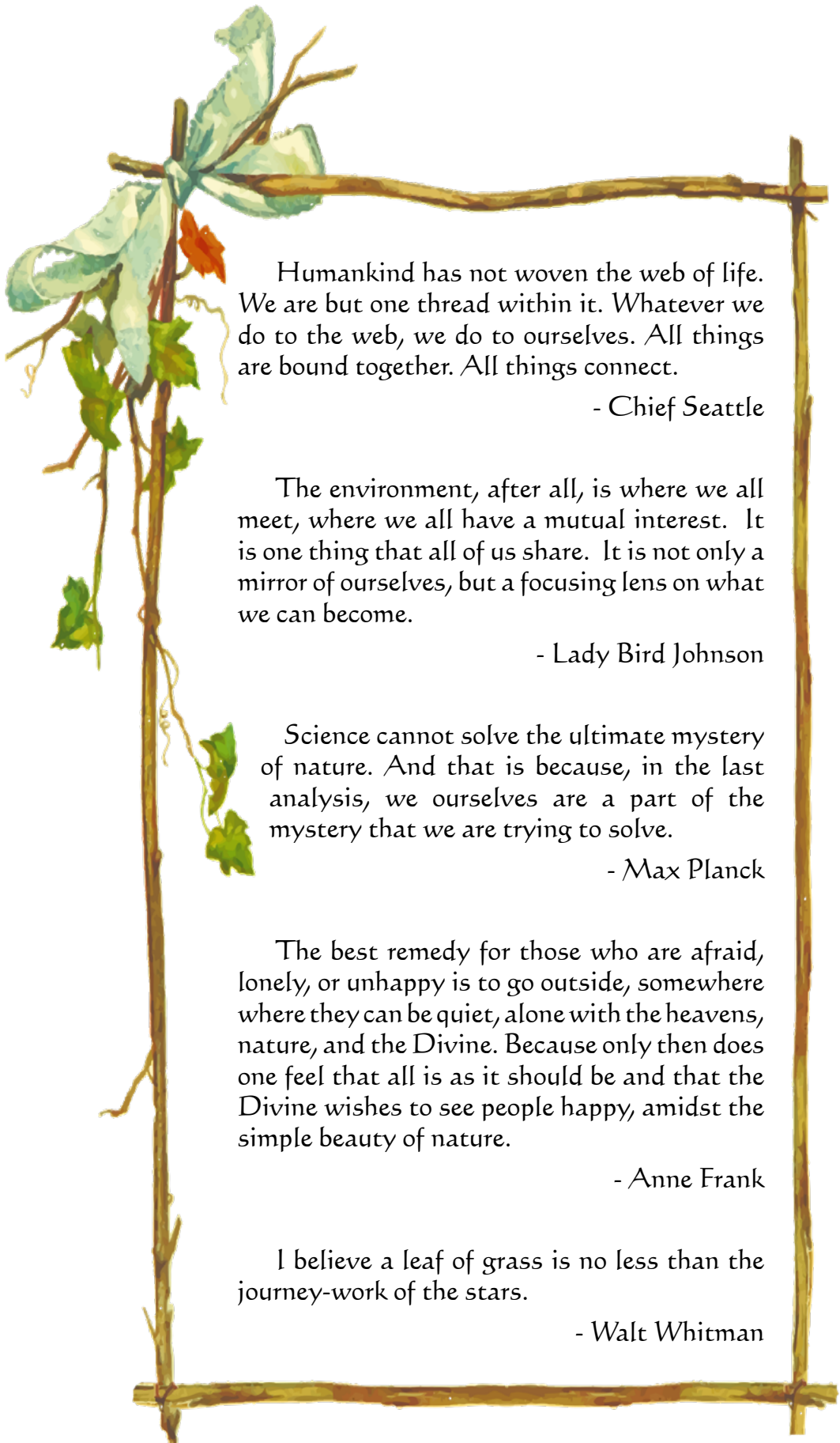
In another experiment demonstrating plant choice, two plants were placed several inches apart. One had a weak type of stalk

and the other was a tomato plant with a stronger stalk. In between the plants was a little seedling. The seedling was a parasitical plant. It latches on to other plants and gets resources from them. Using time-lapsed photography, the parasitical plant was seen growing toward the more favorable source, which was the tomato plant. Overall, the evidence shows that plants make choices and have the ability to solve problems.

There was a widely publicized book in the 1970s called *The Secret Life of Plants*. One of the book's subjects, Cleve Backster, was an expert in the use of the polygraph machine or lie detector. One feature of a polygraph machine is that it measures electrical conductivity based on the presence of moisture. In an unrelated experiment utilizing plants, he concluded that plants seemed to respond to thoughts directed at them. Based on his findings, he continued down this line of research. Later other scientists failed to replicate the experiments, so his hypotheses were considered to be debunked and lost attention. Recently, a TV program called *MythBusters* took up Baxter's experiments with plants. In a video that appears on YouTube, the program hosts set out to debunk Backster's work. They were surprised by the results. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fStmk7e9lJo>) Backster did many more experiments with plants, pointing toward plants being much more sensitive to the consciousness of other entities around them than we humans generally are cognizant of ourselves.

If you find the subject of the intelligence manifesting in plants intriguing, there are lots of books on this subject. Ultimately, for the mystical student, the emerging scientific insights lead us back to our recognition of the Oneness of the Cosmic Consciousness in all things.





Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.

- Chief Seattle

The environment, after all, is where we all meet, where we all have a mutual interest. It is one thing that all of us share. It is not only a mirror of ourselves, but a focusing lens on what we can become.

- Lady Bird Johnson

Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are a part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.

- Max Planck

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature, and the Divine. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that the Divine wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature.

- Anne Frank

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars.

- Walt Whitman



# AN OPEN LETTER TO ANIMALS

*Serge Toussaint, FRC  
Grand Master, French Grand Lodge*

The greatness of a nation can be judged  
by the way its animals are treated.

- Gandhi (1869-1948)

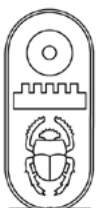


An open letter to the animals? When they are unable to read! What an absurd idea, in theory. But who knows? Perhaps, beyond our words, they are able to understand what we are thinking and saying about them. And if you accept that humans are animals – admittedly extraordinary ones – then this letter is addressed both to you and to the animals, through you. I therefore invite you to give it a careful read with an open mind, and to derive food for thought from it.

Because they feel superior to all other creatures, human beings have a tendency to think that Earth belongs to them, and that they can use Nature however they wish, without being accountable to the so-called “inferior” realms. They are forgetting that

the first hominids appeared around ten million years ago, whereas animals have been living on our planet for hundreds of millions of years: therefore the animals were our planet’s first inhabitants, and it is the animals, along with the vegetable realm, that have had an input into making it an environment favorable to human life. This means that the animals have, as it were, prepared the way for our arrival, and that we are indebted to them for our living here.

Before continuing, I think it would be useful to briefly remind ourselves of the major stages in the evolution of life on Earth. According to scientists, life may have first appeared in the seas and oceans as far back as four billion years ago, in





the form of single-celled organisms. Life then gradually developed and gave rise to increasingly sophisticated creatures: amphibians, reptiles (including the much-talked-about dinosaurs), birds, mammals, then the first hominids, from *Ramapithecus* around 12 million years ago through to *Homo sapiens* (the species to which we belong) around 300,000 years ago, by way of Cro-Magnons, Neanderthals, and so on. Humanity is therefore the result of a very long evolutionary process that owes a great deal to the animals, not to say to the animal nature, in the noblest sense of that term. This explains why the human being, in its embryonic and then fetal development, replicates the major stages that life has followed as it has evolved.

Ever since Humanity appeared on our planet, it has been dependent on the animals inhabiting it: first for food and clothing and then, having domesticated some of them, for moving around, carrying loads, working the earth, etc. Without them, human beings would have been unable to either survive, or to improve their living conditions in the way that they have been doing throughout history. But instead of appreciating them and respecting them,

humans have come to consider animals as things placed at their disposal by Nature, or even by the Divine Itself. It should be noted that this attitude was not confined to the most uncultivated or uneducated: in all ages, philosophers and thinkers tended to do the same, showing the degree to which this “inferiorization” of animals was embedded in people’s minds.

Besides the fact that animals contribute either directly or indirectly to our food, many inventions beneficial to humanity have been inspired by them: boats, submarines, planes, helicopters, parachutes, radar, sonar, weaving, and so on and so forth. Very often, in fact, it is by observing and imitating the know-how of animals that we have ended up moving around in the air, on the water, and beneath the oceans, and have created machines, devices, and tools that have enabled humanity to make progress in the field of technology. Seen in this light, animals are our masters, and we have a lot more to learn from them.

Of course, and most fortunately indeed, there have always been people of all races, nationalities, and social classes who have respected and loved animals,

whether wild or domesticated. In all eras, there have been those who have dedicated themselves to their protection and care, and to promoting a better understanding of them. Let us not forget that there exists a Universal Declaration of Animal Rights, formalized in 1978 by UNESCO, and that numerous associations have been created over the past few decades for the purpose of working for the protection of animals; obviously, we should give our support to these. The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, for its part, published a “Rosicrucian Declaration of Human Duties” in 2005, in which it says: “It is each individual’s duty to respect animals and to truly see them as beings that are not only alive; they are also conscious and feeling.”

As you know, animals have endured and are still enduring humankind’s stupidity, ignorance, and cruelty. From the pain inflicted on them as part of magico-religious practices based on superstition, to the suffering they are subjected to in the name of an outmoded concept of what is science, not to mention those that are cruelly slaughtered for their meat or to produce luxurious personal adornments from their skins, millions of animals are dying every day, in the most barbaric conditions. And while I recognize there may be a case for humankind getting involved in controlling the animal realm to avoid the proliferation of certain species, I do not understand how people can go hunting for fun, to the extent that birds are bred for “release” into the wild the day



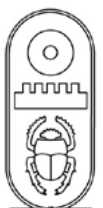
before a shoot. What can we say, either, about fox-hunting or stag-hunting?

The magico-religious practices that I just referred to particularly concern those rituals during which animals have their throats slit and their blood drained out, for the purposes of taking away a curse, removing or admitting an evil spirit, enlisting the help of evil forces, or warding them off, and so on. Animals are also sacrificed in order to obtain the favor of the Divine Itself. However, whatever conception one may have of the Divine, it ought to be clear to any believer that no sacrifice of this type can please It, and that the Divine disapproves of any suffering inflicted unnecessarily on animals.

Does this mean that certain suffering endured by animals is necessary? No, it does not. Let us rather say that there are

reasons to justify the killing of some, but not of others. At the risk of surprising you, I am not shocked by the fact that we sacrifice some animals in order to feed ourselves, because I think that this can be responding to a need, and is part of the natural order of things. In the wild, there are many animals that kill other ones in order to feed themselves. This may be something we deplore, but it is the

case. It is even necessary, in order to avoid the proliferation of certain species whose survival would otherwise be threatened through lack of food or habitat. The act of preying on other animals therefore forms part of the laws that enable Nature to regulate and renew itself. We can, therefore, understand humans killing animals for food.



Unfortunately, as you know, animals killed for food are too often slaughtered in a cruel manner, causing them to suffer unnecessarily. It should be both a moral duty and a legal requirement to slaughter them in such a way that they do not become stressed, and feel the least possible pain, or even none at all. Moreover, all animals concerned should most certainly be reared “as close as possible to Nature” and, when the time arrives, transported under the best possible conditions. You will undoubtedly agree that if this were the case in all countries in the world, it would be a great step forward in terms of respect for animal life. In the same vein, how can we fail



to be shocked when we learn that some 25 percent of animals slaughtered end up not being eaten, but in the incinerator?

Earlier on, I also mentioned the suffering imposed on animals “in the name of an outmoded concept of what is science.” This clearly concerns what is referred to as “animal experimentation,” or “vivisection,” not to mention “cosmetic testing.” Such practices are both barbaric and unnecessary: unnecessary, because the way in which the animal that is being tormented reacts is, in the vast majority of cases, not transposable to humans; barbaric, because the experiments being carried out cause it extreme stress and pain, of which we should be utterly ashamed. But here too, we have to be realistic: it is sometimes necessary to carry out certain

operations on animals before performing them on humans. This should be only on an exceptional basis, and then it is vital to ensure that they suffer as little as possible, as is meant to be the case when a person is operated on in a hospital or clinic.

What can we say, either, about the animals that are killed or mutilated throughout the world, because their meat, horns, bone, bile, fins, tails, or other parts of their body are supposed to increase intelligence, physical strength or lifespan, cure cancer or AIDS, be an aphrodisiac, and other aberrations? How pathetic and sad it is, to see that millions – or even billions – of people still believe in such superstitions, and therefore participate

in the capture and massacring of animal species that are often rare and at risk. Unfortunately it will take a long time to get them to understand that these beliefs have absolutely no foundation, and that their ‘traditional’ character is a deception. On the same lines, what on earth is there to appreciate about bullfighting, cock-fighting, and other barbaric “traditions”?

The question of whether Rosicrucians are vegetarian is one that I am often asked, particularly at Conventions. The answer is that some are, and others are not. In this area, as in all areas concerning their private lives, AMORC leaves its members entirely free to choose for themselves. Some eat meat, and others do not. I would add that being vegetarian is not a requirement for being on a spiritual quest, and is not an indicator of spiritual evolution. This is why



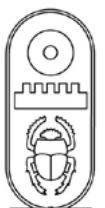
the Master Yeshua, among others, said that “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth” (by means of the words that they speak). Most of the vegetarians that I know are vegetarian either because it is better for their health, or because they are taking a stand against the maltreatment of animals, which we can only respect and agree with. Without actually arguing in favor of vegetarianism, my view is that, if only for environmental reasons, it would be very much in humanity’s interest to reduce its consumption of meat.

Following these general considerations, I would like to address a more mystical aspect of the “animal condition.” Contrary to what is thought by most people, including those who respect and love them, animals do not constitute a realm fundamentally different from the human realm. From a Rosicrucian point of view, animals – just like human beings – are vehicles of the Universal Soul and Its major attribute; that is, they are vehicles of the Universal Consciousness, as It is expressing Itself on Earth through all living creatures. That is why, in various forms and to differing degrees, they have sense faculties and are intelligent. We only need to look at the way they protect themselves from predators,

find their food, chase their prey, build their nests, put together their lairs, raise their young, and so on. Such things are often attributed to their instinct. But what we call “instinct” is in fact nothing but the expression of the Universal Consciousness through the animals.

As for the most evolved animals, there is no doubt in my mind that they have a soul that has reached the stage of acquiring its own identity over a period of time. This applies to those that live in direct contact with humans, such as cats, dogs, horses, donkeys, and other domesticated animals, and also to monkeys, elephants, whales, dolphins, and other wild animals.

They are all conscious not only of their environment, but also of themselves. Consciousness of self is not, therefore, the sole prerogative of human beings, even if it is unquestionable that in humans it is particularly developed. This means that animals are capable not only of reasoning, analyzing, imagining, extrapolating, and more (this probably being the case for the most evolved animals), but that they are also – and perhaps most importantly – capable of reflecting on themselves and their condition.



If you are one of those people who has a dog, cat, or other “pet” animal, then I am sure that you will have become convinced that they possess consciousness of self, and that all they are lacking is speech, as we commonly say. Better yet, you will have noticed that they have a “sixth sense” that enables them to sense the atmosphere and the mental states of those they live with. When I was a child, we had a dog whom I loved, who clearly loved me too. Whenever I became unhappy or sad, he came to me and looked me in the eyes, as if to comfort me. I have no doubt whatsoever that this was a spiritual communion, an exchange between souls.

In common with consciousness of self, love is in no way the sole prerogative of human beings. Apart from the personal example I have just mentioned, we have all heard or read genuine accounts proving this: dogs that have let themselves die on the graves of their masters, cats that have travelled thousands of miles or kilometers to get back to their adopted family, horses that have taken their injured rider back to the place they set out from, and so on. But it would be wrong to think this only applies to domesticated animals. Wolves have brought up children (this is not a myth), gorillas have become friendly with humans (among them Diane Fossey),

dolphins have saved sailors, etc. Animals are most certainly able to love and to have empathy and even, I am convinced, to show compassion.

We sometimes hear talk about the cruelty of certain animals, especially those that live in the wild. This is nonsensical, because no animal – predators included – attacks another with the deliberate intention of making it suffer: it attacks for food, to protect itself, or defend its territory, or some other reason connected with its survival or that of its offspring. Likewise, when a shark, crocodile, bear, snake, or other animal seriously injures a human or even kills them, it is out of predatory or defensive instinct: they may be showing that they are dangerous, but not that they are cruel. Only humans, in fact, are capable of showing cruelty to animals and to their fellow creatures. This is due to the fact that humans have free will and are able to use it in a negative fashion, to the point of committing acts that are unworthy of their status.

Like most Rosicrucians, I think that there is reincarnation. In other words, I think that each human being has a soul that reincarnates at regular intervals until it has attained the state of wisdom, the ultimate goal of its spiritual evolution. However,



metempsychosis – which is the belief that a human being may come back in the body of an animal in order to atone for its errors – seems totally unfounded to me, if only because it is opposed to the law that we find on Earth and throughout the universe, the law of evolution. On the other hand, I think that an animal that is sufficiently evolved may, at some point, cross over into the human stage and experience its first life in that realm, and then reincarnate there. If you accept this principle, then it could be that the dog or cat that is so familiar to you is in the process of becoming human ...

Whether we are aware of it or not, all living things are interdependent, not only biologically, but also karmically. This means that, in accordance with this spiritual law of karma – also known as the “law of reaction” or the “law of compensation” – humanity’s well-being is influenced by, among other things, the way in which it treats animals.

Pythagoras had fully understood this, because he said: “For as long as people continue to destroy the living things of the lower realms without pity, they will know neither health nor peace. For as long as they kill animals, they will kill one another. The one who sows murder and suffering cannot reap joy and love.”

In connection with these observations, I am convinced that the more human beings

respect and love animals, the more they will respect and love one another, for they will be opening up to what mystics in general and Rosicrucians in particular call “Universal Love.” In parallel with this, medicine and surgery will make such progress that, by pooling what is best and most humanistic about them, they will together be able to cure most of the illnesses that can affect humanity. Indeed I think that – in accordance with the law of karma, this time in its positive aspect – the physical suffering of human beings will lessen in line with their applying themselves to not making animals suffer.



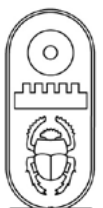
To close this article, I invite you to imagine that the animals are able to reply to it with a “Letter to Humans.”

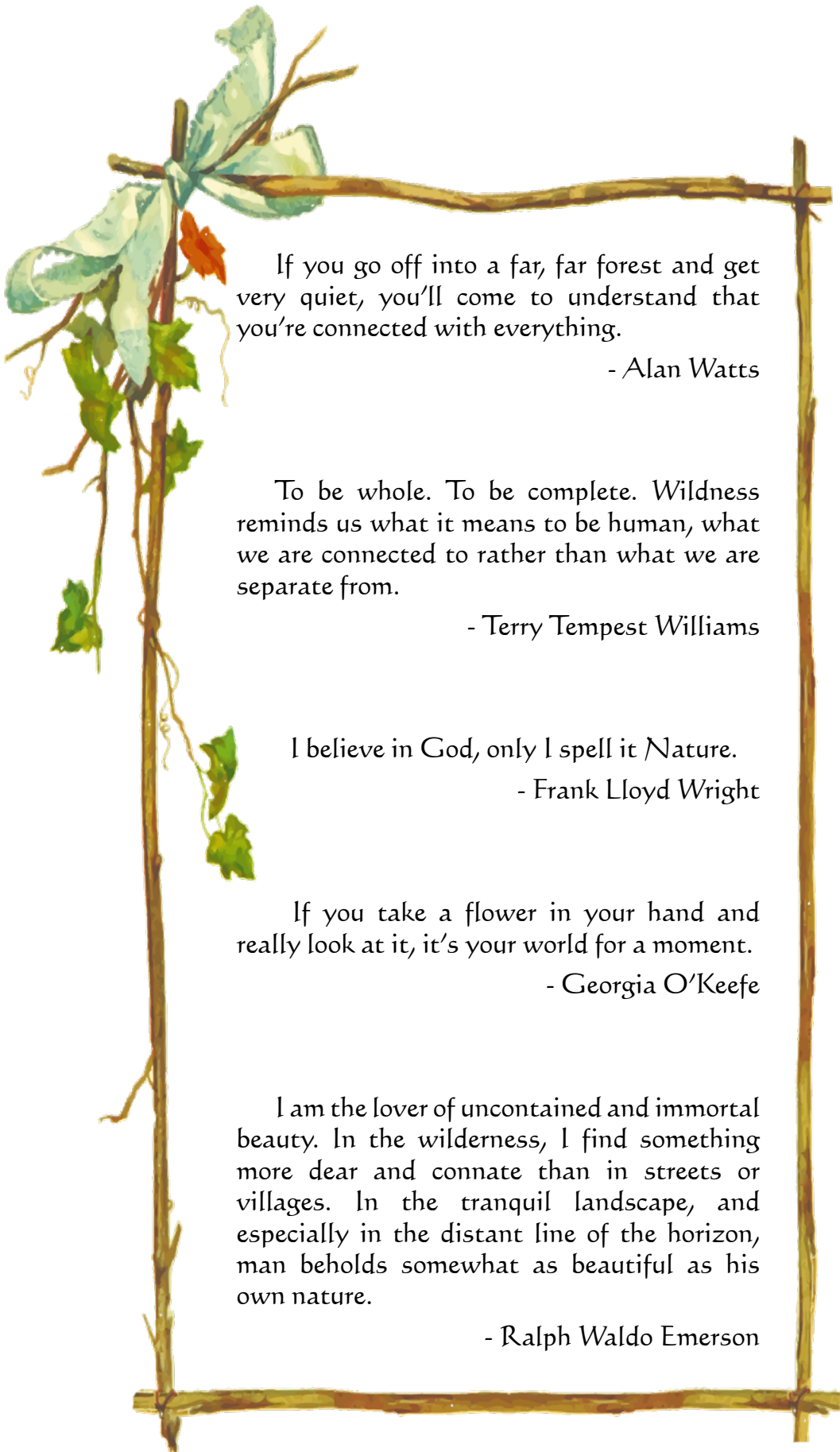
What, in your view, would they say to us?

How would they assess our behavior towards them? What would they ask us? What hopes would they have, both for themselves and for us? In pondering these questions, bear in mind that it is possible we shall have to make recompense to them in the beyond, particularly to those who, like us, have an individual soul and are taking part in the evolution of the Universal Consciousness, as it is expressing Itself on Earth.

In the bonds of the love that the animals expect from us, I send you my warmest wishes.

**In the United States, corporations have been granted personhood, which affords them rights, but currently human beings are the only animals with legally recognized and enforceable rights.**





If you go off into a far, far forest and get very quiet, you'll come to understand that you're connected with everything.

- Alan Watts

To be whole. To be complete. Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.

- Terry Tempest Williams

I believe in God, only I spell it Nature.

- Frank Lloyd Wright

If you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for a moment.

- Georgia O'Keefe

I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



# THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE BOOK OF NATURE – OUR IMPERTURBABLE PEACE

*Michael Shaluly, FRC*

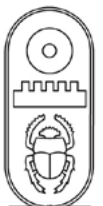


We are fortunate to have opportunities to meet fellow mystics and practice our mystical work. We are guided to these moments by our nature, and by nature herself. It is an illusion that we are separate from nature, and with a little introspection, we can know this to be true. There is an interest that comes from within us, and here you are as a reader, following that interest. It is in our make-up to do this, and we are therefore following the impulse of nature herself. Indeed, the book of nature reveals herself to us in hidden ways, and we often miss the subtlety of her calling. But she has called all of us at this moment. Our mystic heritage exists because we feel this calling yet cannot identify it. Mysticism is the practice of searching for the promise behind this calling...that we are more than what we perceive from our physical senses, and that we are directly linked to nature and to our creator. Our inner self knows

that we live within the pages of the book of nature, and within those pages exist chapters of the book of humanity, a book of us!

Rosicrucian studies bring forth centuries of inner inquiry to us. For those who hear the promise from within and can no longer suppress their desire to search, AMORC is a strong foundation and a guiding force for self-discovery, maintaining the knowledge of our masters of the past. Within AMORC, the light of knowledge shines towards removing the misconceptions of life through symbolism and gradually advancing degrees of study.

The Sixth Degree of AMORC is focused on health and healing, which at first glance may imply that it is largely focused upon a study of the human physical body. This is true to a degree. We know that our bodies require proper nutrition, water, rest, and exercise, and there are details and



exercises to show why this is so. Without these elements in proper proportions, we can suffer physically, mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually. As we proceed deeper into this degree, however, it becomes obvious that our health is intimately linked not only to material elements, but also to a spiritual element that gives animation to all things. Note the prayer that we learn in our teachings that we can use before meals. While holding our hands above the food, we state:

God of my Heart, God of my Realization, grant that this food may be purified and magnetized by the *spiritual vibrations* emanating from my hands, and that it will satisfy the needs of my body *and soul*. May all those who are hungry participate in this meal and share *spiritually* with me the benefits I shall gain from it.

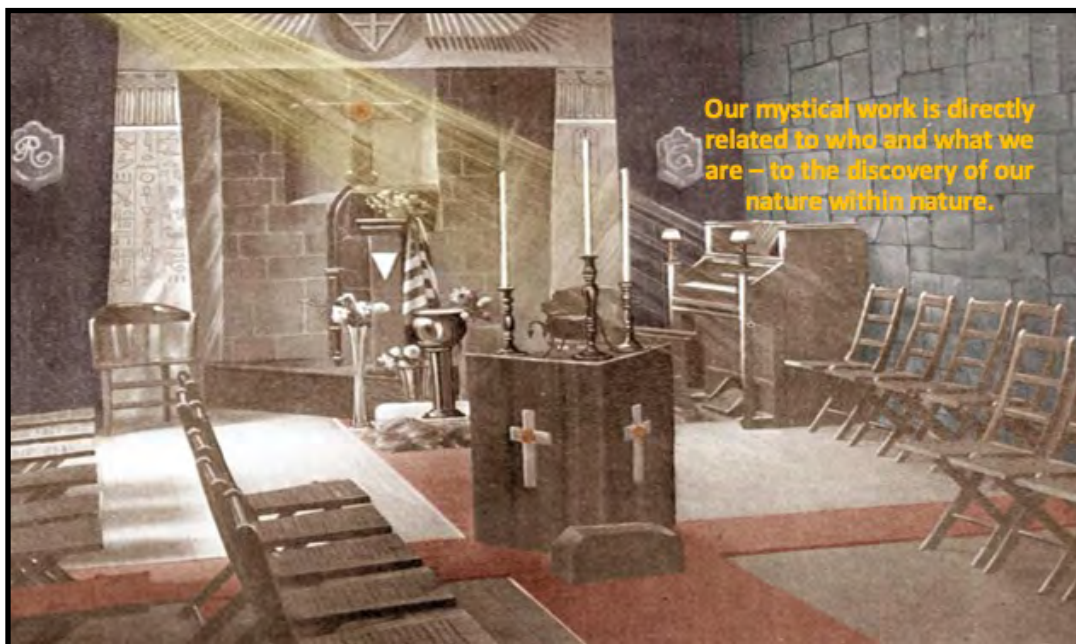
Our overall wellness is interdependent with nature, and through focused exercises, we can redirect our will and our thoughts to attune with the balance of nature. Note we do not say attune only our bodies to nature, we speak of attuning our entire being with the harmony of nature. The nature of us as human beings is ultimately spiritual and

linked to creation and our creator in a very special way, as expressed by this quote from one of our monographs:

On the spiritual plane, Cosmic harmony manifests in an illumination of the consciousness and the wisdom that follows from it; on the emotional plane, by a feeling of Peace Profound and love for all Creation; on the intellectual plane by an acquisition of an inspired reasoning and a strong ability to resolve problems; and on the physical plane, by good health and great reserves of energy.

We also find suggestions of the omnipresence of the Divine's hand connecting us to nature in many other ancient writings. As an example, we find these words in the book of Job in the Bible:

But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.



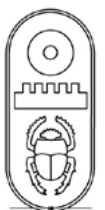
Hearing the voice of nature requires that we look past our mortal expectations and objective thoughts, in the same manner that we hear that sweet, small voice of our inner self. Open yourself now to your nature and to mother nature! Your autonomic nervous system is finely tuned to the nature of this universe, and this attunement, hidden to your objective consciousness, keeps your body functioning. Thus, without knowing it, you are guided by that nature which exists everywhere. If we can refocus our objective thinking towards our oneness with nature, our thoughts can be illumined by her.

Take a moment, close your eyes, and think of nature. What comes to your mind's eye? If you want to travel to a tranquil place in your mind, where do you travel to? Most often when we search for peace, we direct our consciousness towards the natural world. We hear her speak through flowing waters, falling rains, animal calls, and the rustling of vegetation; we accept her earthly fragrances, and our soul finds comfort dwelling in her arms. All around you and within you are the whisperings of the book of nature, yet recognizing her approach perhaps requires us to listen to her language. Allow the remainder of this article to flow to you in nature's language, listen intently to the inspirations that occur inside of you, and capture, hold on to, and keep with you, any subtle Cosmic insight that emerges. None of us can remember an entire article, and much of what will be said will gradually slip away from us. Within this work, there will be nuggets of truth that ring true to your conscious mind. These nuggets are nature's way of guiding you to her pages. Keep them on hallowed ground. These impressions may come to you long after reading this article. Let them open to you in their own time.

We live and breathe and function within the pages of the book of nature and our desire is inseparable from her. What desire, you ask? It is a pure desire deep within you that you share with nature. She calls you when you search for solace and comfort. When you close your eyes, looking for a place of rest, she appears to you and embraces you, for her desire is for you to observe her, to be with her, to experience her. Even when you examine yourself, you find that you are examining nature. This is the language that may open our hearts through a deep understanding from the source that we share with all things.

When we express the words, "the book of nature" and "the book of humanity," we can certainly look at them as symbolic, a way of chronicling our actions and our relationship to our environment. They can be micro-focused, such as our own conscious world, and they can also be macro-focused, such as the story of all of humankind and its relationship to all things. Rarely, however, do we grasp the actuality behind such a grand symbol. While symbols are meant to be a representation of something else, they can also be real, even those that may be invisible to our material perceptions. So how might our journey through the pages of the book of nature be real?

We each have a story and a history that sprang from somewhere at some point in time. There is also a story of nature that surrounds us, that gives us this place to abide within during our conscious voyage. We know nature created our abode here on Earth long before humanity came unto her, and within her were created the conditions that allow us to be as incarnated souls. Our living functions therefore depend upon her. Our human consciousness can recognize that we are functioning with her, even though our worldly thoughts live





with the illusion of separateness. There is a structure to the universe that we find ourselves in, and there are laws that govern our place within this universe. These laws are measurable and create a foundation for us to work and evolve within. In other words, it is like we are all bound in a book, with pages connected one to the other, and a cover that gives rise to an idea of our story within it. We get to write this story within these pages. Now, that is a symbolic statement, but who can say that is not also a very real statement? We are writing this story during every moment that we enjoy our breaths during this great privilege of life. Not only our waking moments, but also during our unconscious moments... our hopes, dreams, and aspirations, our imaginings, our creations. We write upon these pages with our deeds; we write with our words; and yes, we write with our thoughts. We write in the book of humanity, all within that creation of the book of nature. You are writing right now. Take just a moment, inhale deeply, and relax. Upon the book of nature, what are you writing right now? From what place are your thoughts, words, and deeds emanating? Examining this, what do your

thoughts, words and deeds tell you that you are writing? All of us together are writing the pages of this hour, and our thoughts will spring forth from here and continue our writing. Take a moment now, relax and experience nature in your mind. Just simply attune with nature and remain open to impressions that may come to you. There is no rush. Relax and commune for just a moment.

Perhaps eventually, we will, together, complete the book of the evolution of humanity through nature. May we each understand that our contribution influences the outcome of this book and of nature. May we find our center that will touch our hearts and touch the hearts of all humanity, that we might grow only in the greatest, impersonal love for one another and for creation.

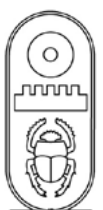
The Traditional Martinist Order also guides students through the book of nature, recognizing that it is always becoming. Its pages guide humanity even as humanity writes upon it. It represents a path for men and women of desire to recognize that which is beyond our physical senses. For this, it is not necessary

to amass intellectual knowledge, because to progress on the path of reintegration, we follow the dictates of our hearts, we read the voice that nature speaks, and we interpret impressions from that spiritual place within us. It is the way to recognize our connection with nature and that holy desire beyond that which we see. When we are inspired by this beauty and holiness, we stop, reflect, and give thanks towards this element of our existence. This method allows us to grow from within, and project outward into the material realm an understanding of that impulse, the flow of Divine integration, that gives rise to all things. Divine Wisdom has sown the symbols of Its virtues all around us that we may learn to benefit from them. Thus, nature constitutes an endless source of knowledge for the initiate. Let us contemplate this for a moment with the Divine:

Let us be alone with the Divine for awhile  
Upon a breath of fresh air  
That dances through leaves.  
Upon that brisk calling that flows  
'round  
Clearing skies to bright blue.  
Touch us with your refrain

And carry us aloft to meet you.  
Our silent tarry evokes your presence  
Through calm's sweet doors.  
Lullaby's from nowhere sound  
Adoring chimes into your silence.  
The animals are hushed.  
Forward they come to receive you.  
As day blinks to clear her eyes  
To salute your coveting hands,  
A flowing fountain of fauna  
Welcomes your guiding goodness.

Let's be alone with the Divine for awhile  
Whence the hours find their beginning  
And thoughts find their reason.  
Embracing all senses with life  
That we might quiet them  
To hear the voice that creates,  
That lives beyond our living,  
That holds our hand as we ponder  
In an endless search for you.  
Yes, with tangled hearts we draw near,  
And as your affection comes forth,  
We hear your smile  
And contentment touches our being.





There is a desire to existence. If there were no desire, there would be nothing. When we observe nature, we can see her pure desire, calling us to observe the Divine she longingly attempts to share with us. Though often unaware of it, we feel this desire and are drawn to it. Until we become aware, we misread this desire through our ego. There are levels of desire in all of us that drive us to achieve things, to create things, to continue to be. At the lowest level is our ego, related to our name and our material world. The urgings of the ego are for survival, for protection, for food, for procreation. These are powerful and necessary driving forces for life, though they are the easiest to misread and can blind us by ambition, lust, and the need to dominate. Above this is a subjective form of desire; a desire to enjoy the fine arts, to be happy, to be inspired, to do good and be recognized. Above this is a spiritual desire. It focuses on the desire to assist others, to love all things, to assist humanity to grow in a positive direction, to commune with nature and give reverence to a higher power. There may yet be another level of desire, and it is perhaps the most difficult level for the human ability to comprehend. It is noticeable, however, everywhere, and

that is the desire of creation itself to be. We see this desire manifest everywhere in nature. Nature creates and gives and shares regardless of what our personal creations might be. This pure desire is oblivious to our material weaknesses. A beautiful sunrise is there for all conscious creatures; a morning breeze will welcome even the harshest personality; the lapping waves upon a shoreline greets mother and child, the strong and the meek. Truly, nature shows us impersonal love, and a guidance towards the greatness that we might become. And we are linked to this Divine desire.

This guidance manifests in its own way. Years ago, AMORC members enjoyed a mystical journey to Greece together. It was magical to travel to those areas of the great philosophers and sages we studied in our fifth-degree monographs. These soul personalities found a way to capture their inner inspirations and present them to the world to form a structure within societies that might more closely follow and flow with nature. A highlight of the trip was our sojourn in Delphi. Many of us are familiar with the words, "Above the portal of the temple of Apollo at Delphi in ancient Greece was inscribed the injunction, Know

Thyself!” What a privilege it was to stand upon that very ground where this temple once existed, and where the great mystics maintained that thread of teachings to pass on to us, that we might continue the work of unfolding nature’s secrets to the eyes of an awakening humanity. Bring yourselves to this place now in your mind’s eye. The sun shines through scattered clouds, and a soft wind blows giving voice to nature. As you stand upon a mound there, you are implored to be silent and to open your heart so that inspiration might come to you. Now, a question arises: What would our world be like if the mystery schools never existed? In your silence you hear the rustling of nature around you, and your thoughts recognize and speak to the wind bringing these ancient memories to you:

Spirit spoke and you began  
Our journey, befallen unto your hands.  
Your gesture commenced our eternal quest,  
We are bound to you in a holy test.

With us you amass upon this sacred ground,  
Your desire whistling through field and mound.  
The trees, they welcome your familiar note  
Memories so distant, upon you, they float.

The clouds, you move them here and there  
To cast a shadow and stir the air,  
With whistled tones upon our brow  
You give voice to the land even then as now.

As you wander past, those creatures near

Take notice and speak that you are here.

You build your link to express and declare

That you dwell in the bosom of earth and air.

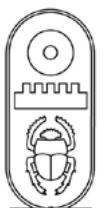
You harbor the breath that sparks into life

A subtle inhale of invisible might.

Our thoughts are sewn to your winged flight

With you we drift to our masters’ light.

Our connections with our world during our human experience are many, and it is worth our time to recognize that we can unveil these connections through mystical work and therefore through mystically evolving thoughts every single moment we turn our gaze inward. When we close our eyes and observe what we find there, there is a peace, a holy wonder, for we look towards our creator and the beauty of divine creation. Outside of this inner observance, life can seemingly tumble before us, fleeting with every moment towards the end of our terrestrial existence. Yet when we pause and reflect, simply close our eyes and go inward, we can touch a grand connection that is visible and invisible, that sustains us, guides us, and inspires us to move forward. We can tap into this connection and ride it towards our Cosmic origins, in communion with the mystics of the past and within the embracing arms of nature. A key is to simply look inward, listen, and find nature inside. It is simple. The Divine is there in you, in nature, in the essence that surrounds you. As the ancient Greeks said, there is a noumenon behind the phenomena. You see the phenomena of a lightning bolt, but you don’t see the noumenon of the conditions and energy behind this manifestation. Rather than



allowing our thoughts to get caught up in a flailing, illusory, objective reality, we can easily recognize an invisible actuality behind this illusion and then recognize the greatness of our conscious role in all that is.

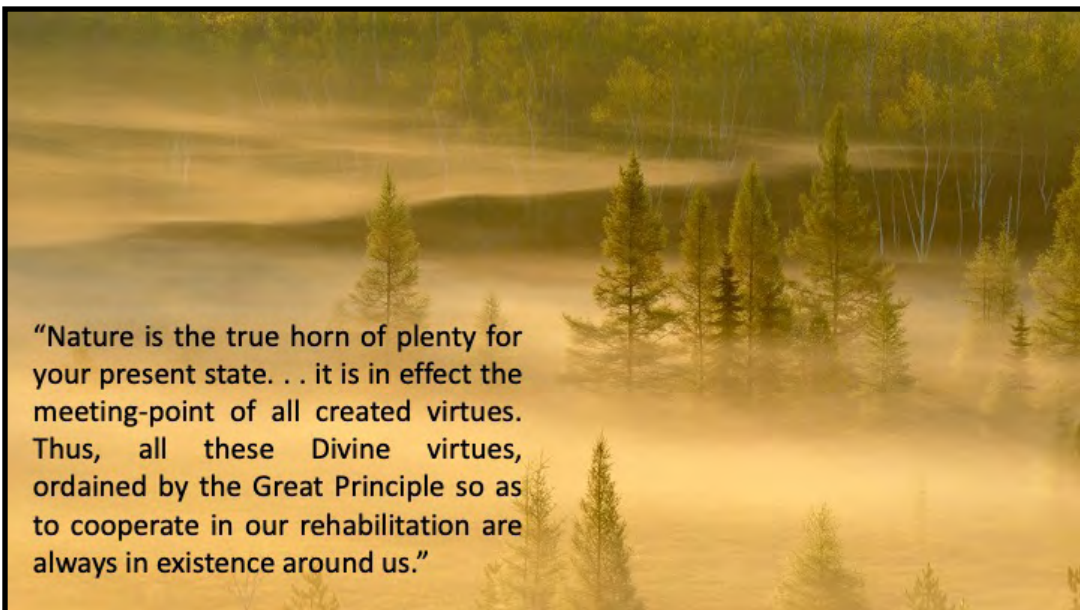
From the moment of our first breath, we autonomously attach to nature. We are one with her. As our ego develops, we attach to other people and their ways of thinking and doing, as well as to other surroundings that we find ourselves in. This ego connection then advances in many directions as we travel within the forest of errors that we create. Upon this mystical path that we have chosen, however, we can build an ability to recognize our connectedness, and as this sense grows, we can feel the tug of humanity upon us from time to time. When you feel this tug, strive to commune with nature. Allow her pure desire to guide you to that same pure desire that is deep within you. Our separateness is an illusion, and as this illusion becomes clearer, we recognize in others that our differences, our similarities, all the things that make us human, are all a part of ourselves, bound together with nature. We share these traits as, together,

we move and grow towards the absolute love that we seek.

Imagine what a conscious merging with the pure will of nature would be like! A pure peace, an imperturbability to the seeming difficulties of life. We hear the word silence and we think of a condition of no sound. Mystical silence has an entirely different meaning. It is a state we achieve wherein we are open and receptive to the mystical inspiration of the Cosmic mind. Jacob Boehme stated:

The Creator is nothing and everything and is one Will in which lies the whole world and all of creation. In the Divine all is eternal... The Creator is neither Light nor Darkness...but the eternal Oneness.

In the mystical silence, there is absolute nothingness and at its center is expressionless infinite love. Within this core of absolute splendor and goodness rises a pure desire for expression and reflection of this pureness so that a recognition of infinite beauty can manifest. We are this pure desire, and this is written in the pages of the book of nature. We are here to recognize and translate these pages. We are holy beings, and we are connected to one another and to all that is through



**“Nature is the true horn of plenty for your present state. . . it is in effect the meeting-point of all created virtues. Thus, all these Divine virtues, ordained by the Great Principle so as to cooperate in our rehabilitation are always in existence around us.”**





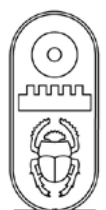
that original spark of being. Through consciousness, we ignite that spark and bring that light forth here on earth so that the invisible spirit of love and splendor may move upon the waters and spread out across the cosmos in consciousness. It is in this way that our connection makes its way back to our creator. We are privileged to be the witness. What a wondrous being we each are!

We are meant to be imperturbable. Peace is a word that we fathom could be, yet in all of nature we see a tug of war to survive. When hunger bites the lion hunts. The prey must flee, and the vultures stand watch. Yet when contentment comes, all these beast's rest. They are driven by nature to fulfill their carnal desires. We as human beings conceptualize a peaceful existence, and most of us have a desire to fulfill this dream. Yet we look at our world, and the world does not always seem to smile back. We see droughts in our world where thirst overcomes all; We see monsoons and floods overwhelm all around them. We see tumultuous times, and on and on. Yet between all this, consciousness, and our desire to be better continues. So where is peace? Does this world recognize it, or is it only to be found in the mind of humanity? Perhaps it is us, only humanity that dreams of it... Perhaps it is only humanity that

can create it within the pages of the book of nature.

So you must answer. This promise of peace exists because deep inside of you resides that pure will, that pure love, and that imperturbable peace found in the voice of nature. Nature shows you the way, and through our observation, we can consciously recognize that we are nature, we are that pure will, and we can reveal this pureness to this conscious world. Only you can bring this peace forward that is within you.

To close, please relax and enjoy some nice neutral breaths, breathing in and out at your own rhythm. Enjoy these calm rhythms; you have nowhere else to be at this moment but here with yourself and your thoughts. Recognize the divine desire that keeps you alive...your breath! The vital life force within you is selfless and all-pervasive. It is the Divine's pure love. As you release any negative thought or emotion, ensconce yourself in this moment, in this breath, in this love, and emerge within the envelope of our divine creator. As you breath, recognize that each breath is holy. The act of breathing is indeed a love song for humanity as it is this autonomous act that takes us through the pages of the book of nature.



# THE UNIVERSE AS ONE LIVING ORGANISM: AN EXPLORATION OF THE COSMOLOGICAL VIEWS OF THOMAS BERRY

Gertrude Spencer, SRC

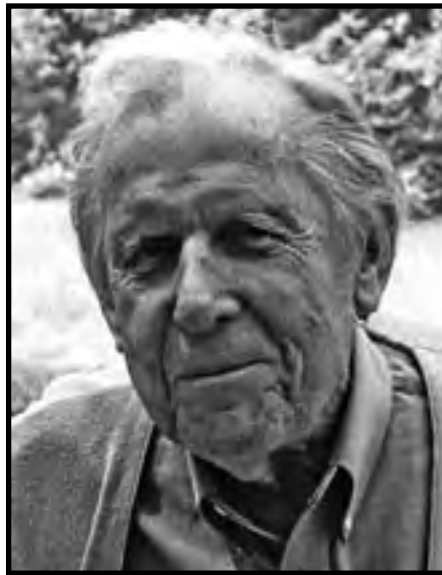
Thomas Berry, described in *Newsweek* magazine in 1989 as “the most provocative figure among the new breed of eco-theologians,” was among the first to say Earth’s crisis is fundamentally a spiritual crisis. A leading figure in the contemporary resurgence of cosmology, Thomas Berry wrote dozens of essays on comparative religion, cultural history, ecological thought, and the cosmological context.

Let us examine some of the extraordinary ideas brought forth by Thomas Berry, who was once regarded as “the most important contemporary thinker in ecological theology.”

Thomas Berry, a cultural historian and anthropologist who called himself a “geologist,” was a priest of the Passionate Order. He founded the Riverdale Center for Religious Research, located on the Hudson River in Riverdale, New York. Father Berry passed through transition in 2009 at the age of 94 in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he was born. He was as active as ever up until his transition – still writing, traveling, and contributing to “The Great Work,” as he called it.

His first major work on ecology was *The Dream of the Earth*, published in 1988, Page 40

and in 1992 he and Brian Swimme, a physicist who holds a PhD in mathematical cosmology and teaches cosmology at the California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco, together published *The Universe Story*.



Thomas Berry

Thomas Berry was intensely critical of the attitude of the church, stating that religion has become totally absorbed in the affairs of humanity – regarding the rest of the universe as being insignificant. He called this type of anthropocentrism (or human-centered attitude) “the dark side of biblical religion.”

He noted that the early Christian Church recognized two revelatory manifestations of the Divine, namely:

- The natural world, which was the “First Scripture,” and
- The church and biblical tradition, which was built upon the natural world, and which was the “Second Scripture.”

The revelation of the natural world came first, and the message of Christianity second. He observed that over the last four centuries the balance between these two

revelations has been lost, as an inherent tendency towards alienation from the natural world developed in biblical religion. Christianity is acutely sensitive to suicide, homicide, and genocide, but insensitive to biocide (the killing of life systems of the planet), and to geocide (the killing of the planet itself).

Thomas Berry described the whole universe as one living organism of which we, and planet Earth, are inseparable parts. Everything in existence, visible and invisible, is an extension of the same underlying primary essence we call “the Divine.” All things are basically one and the same, differing only in the way they manifest in specific dimensions, and in the subsequent development according to their individual potentials.

**Everything Is Alive;  
Everything Is Connected**

At the Big Bang, all energy that would ever exist erupted as one single existence. As everything in creation is powered by the same mysterious energy that burst forth at that very moment, all things in existence – rocks, forces (such as gravity and the electromagnetic force), living things, etc., are drawn by the universe into a bonded relationship – into a profound intimacy. The universe, in its physical and spiritual aspects, holds all things together.

Spirit and matter throughout all of creation are not separate, but simply different levels of manifestation which form a continuum.

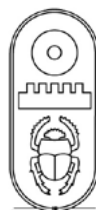
The universe is not “a thing,” but a mode of being of everything. It is a communion of subjects, and not a collection of objects. Everything is alive, and the traditional hostility of Christianity towards animism must be overcome. We must restore the soul to the world. Everything is connected, and mirrors itself in everything else. Full understanding of a proton requires full understanding of the universe. Nothing in creation is divided from anything else, and all things exist in relationship.

“The historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human – at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life-systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience.”

Father Thomas Berry made the startling suggestion that the Bible should perhaps be put on a shelf for twenty years so that we can truly listen to creation. We might then, perhaps, be able to recover the

early Christian view that there were two scriptures: first that of the natural world, and later that of the Bible. Unfortunately, however, we are still reading “The Book” instead of reading the world about us! If we continue doing this, we will drown reading the book.

Our theological view of the Divine is incomplete if we do not consider that the Divine, who made the world, must also be intimately related to it. Only with such a precept can we maintain our true sense of the Divine. If we lose our sense of rapport with the world and with the universe, we lose our sense of the Divine as human beings. To seek the Divine through a mystical experience which transcends nature, means to deny our humanity. It would mean a return to the unconscious bliss of the Garden of Eden, thus





disregarding our evolution as conscious human beings.

### Who Are We?

Furthermore, we need a new story of the universe, a new story of belonging. We need a new understanding of who we really are, and where we came from.

In the “New Story,” humans are seen as that particular element in creation upon whom the universe reflects, and celebrates itself in the deep mysteries of its origins – in a very special mode of self-awareness.

We must develop a new type of religious sensitivity – a new vision of the Divine. We must realize that, in a certain sense, we are the universe, and that each part of the universe, including us, acts as a hologram in which the whole is contained. Thus it can easily be seen that the universe is experiencing certain aspects of itself through us – such as the feeling of awe and wonder of its own mysterious origins and sacred nature. Through us the universe can celebrate itself, and become conscious of its own awesome mysteries. The poet does not think about the universe, but rather, the universe thinks about itself through

the poet. Our eyes that search the Milky Way are themselves shaped by the Milky Way. And the mind searching for contact with the Milky Way is the very mind of the Milky Way searching for its own inner depths.

“Our sense of who we are and what our role is must begin where the universe begins.”

This is a most fascinating concept, as it may be taken to mean that the human mind which seeks mystical attunement with the Divine is the very mind of the Divine Itself

which searches for Its own inner depth in a special mode of conscious self-awareness. An awesome thought indeed. This concept of the Divine touches on the model of Process Theology which perceives the Divine as an everchanging, and ever-developing process. The universe is the Divine’s body, and the Divine is the mind of the universe. Humans have a special part to play in the development of the Divine, supplying to the Godhead the element of human consciousness with all its specific attributes. The Divine is forever experimenting and developing through Its creation. As we see, Process Theology also embraces the Wholeness Model.

## Changes Necessary for a Sustainable Future

Thomas Berry advised us to change our concept of education. Education should not only be geared to train us for jobs, but should also help us to understand our place, and our role in the scheme of things.

Furthermore, economics should be seen as a religious issue. He makes a most thought-provoking statement, namely, that if water is polluted it can neither be used for drinking, nor for baptism.

Thomas Berry emphasized the fact that we must leave our short-sighted anthropocentric position which places us at the height of, and at the center of creation. We are part of the whole, and although we have a very specific part to play in the scheme of things, we are hardly more important than any other part of creation. We must get out of the center of the universe. He comments on the fact that we have arrogantly placed ourselves above all other creatures, regarding humanity and our affairs as the center of meaning and importance.

A democracy that exploits the world is not a desirable form of government. The word “democracy” (derived from ancient Greek) literally means “rule by the people” – referring to people alone, and not to the rest of creation. We should strive towards a biocracy, which is a government concerned with the welfare of all members of Earth’s community.

Our considerations and duties extend far beyond those we have toward each other.

And because current Western religions do not function within this universal context, they have become dysfunctional. They no longer serve their original purpose.

Thomas Berry made the interesting observation that the anthropocentrism of the West gave way to a pronounced theocentrism (placing the Divine in the center) after the event of the Plague in Europe in 1347. People regarded the calamity

as a punishment by the Divine because they had been too attached to Earth and had not committed themselves to salvation from Earth, and to absorption into the Spirit. Attachment to, and involvement with Earth had to be overcome.

Both anthropocentrism and theocentrism deny the unity between the natural world, the world of humanity, and the

world of the Divine. Thus, the mystical bonding of humans with the natural world has become progressively weaker in Western Civilization.

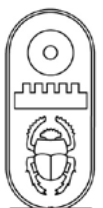
### The Universe Is a Communion of Subjects

Thomas Berry urged us to realize two important facts:

- The Earth is primary, while the human is secondary.
- The universe is a communion of subjects, and not a collection of objects.

He made the statement that we are in need of a new concept in religion assigning the primary sacred community to the universe itself, as our true sense of the

“We are not lacking in the dynamic forces needed to create the future. We live immersed in a sea of energy beyond all comprehension. But this energy, in an ultimate sense, is ours not by domination but by invocation.”





Divine emerges through our perception of the universe. This concept is difficult for us to comprehend, as it requires a change in our image of the Divine. And, we are also deeply convinced of our superiority, of being the Divine's chosen creation, and of our divine right to put ourselves in the center of this world at the expense of the rest of creation.

However, humans become sacred by participating in the larger sacred community of the universe. Thomas Berry stated that the indescribable feeling that accompanies such an experience may truly be called "religion"-namely *re-ligare*, meaning "to bind back to the source." This is more real than theology because the feeling emanates from true experience. If we can reach this change in consciousness, the impact will be of such significance that it may be likened to a new type of revelatory experience.

Thomas Berry stated that the following principles, held by conventional Christianity, will have to be reconsidered:

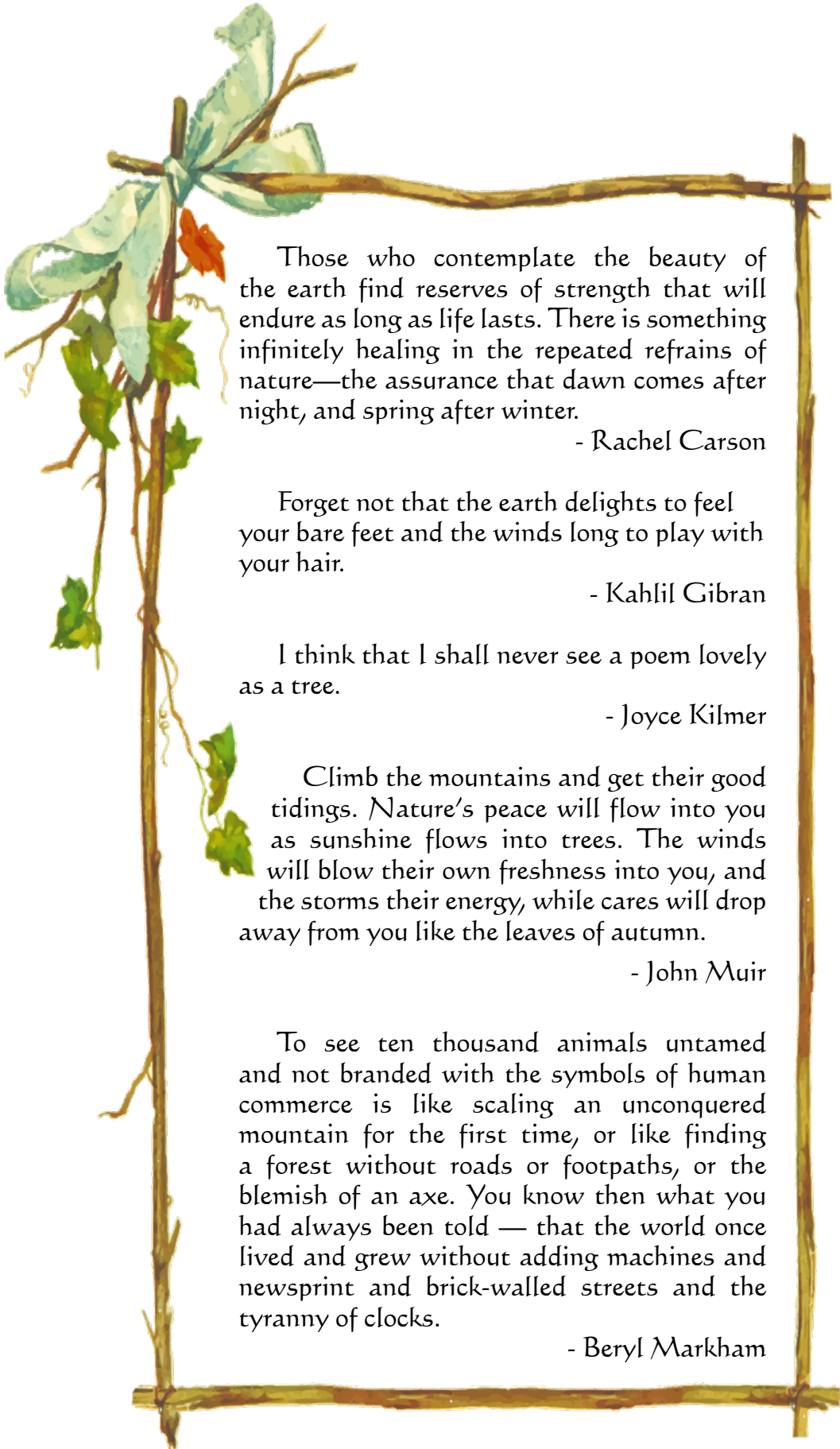
1. Our emphasis on a transcendent, personal Divinity, who is distinct from the universe.
2. The exaltation of the human as a spiritual being, contrasted to the physical nature of all other living beings. (We see ourselves as being so special that our soul has to be created by the Divine in every single case!)

3. The concept that Redemption is a kind of "out-of-this-world" liberation.
4. The Cartesian idea that the world and the universe are a mechanism void of life.

All these "transcendencies" – for example, 1) a transcendent Divinity, 2) transcendent Humankind, 3) transcendent redemption, and 4) a transcendent mind – encourage our fascination with a transcendent technology, which shall liberate us from following the basic biological laws of the natural world. We are striving to create a transcendent goal which, we hope, will allow us to go beyond the human condition. We still try to separate ourselves from the world, instead of recognizing our true place within the sacred community of the universe.

The search for a transcendent technology is a misunderstanding of the goals of modern science – in fact, true scientific understanding is the key to the future of religion.

Having explored the revolutionary New World View that characterizes the postmodern era which emerged in the twentieth century, we see that the new model is based on the Wholeness Principle. This new model of reality is penetrating all fields of endeavor, having made its appearance in science, medicine, psychology, philosophy, and religion.



Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.

- Rachel Carson

Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair.

- Kahlil Gibran

I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree.

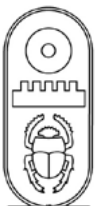
- Joyce Kilmer

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of autumn.

- John Muir

To see ten thousand animals untamed and not branded with the symbols of human commerce is like scaling an unconquered mountain for the first time, or like finding a forest without roads or footpaths, or the blemish of an axe. You know then what you had always been told — that the world once lived and grew without adding machines and newsprint and brick-walled streets and the tyranny of clocks.

- Beryl Markham



# DESCRIPTION OF ROSICRUCIAN PARK FROM AN ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE/BIOREGIONAL POINT OF VIEW

Rosicrucian Park is located in the outer coast range of California, on the eastern flank of the Santa Cruz Mountains in the Guadalupe River Watershed. It is within two miles of the confluence of Los Gatos Creek and the Guadalupe River and it is about six miles from where the Guadalupe River enters the San Francisco Bay at the Alviso Slough.



*Flowers in the Alchemy Garden at Rosicrucian Park*



*San Jose can be seen in the middle of the Guadalupe River Watershed.*



*San Jose is on the West Coast of North America.*



*Earth is 26,000 light years from the center of the Milky Way, which is 125,000 light years across.*