

MODERN MAN IN SEARCH OF SPIRIT

In this article, it is my intention to share some of my thoughts on the spiritual situation that “western” man faces in our era. I believe it to be of the highest importance to reflect on these matters, so that we be able to realize and put into perspective the purpose of our Order and the work that we aim to fulfill.

In the epilogue to his seminal work *The Gnostic Religion*, Hans Jonas discusses the similarities and differences between the first centuries AD and our “modern” existentialist days (the book was written in 1958). He presents a very apt and vivid picture of what has come of modern man due to the great revolutions of thought that have their root in the enlightenment era of the seventeenth century. He quotes Nietzsche saying: “Nihilism, the weirdest of all guests, stands before the door”. Much has happened since then, and today we

can tell for sure that in modern philosophy, nihilism has not only stepped in but also joined us at the dinner table. This is the beginning of a crisis that we now are desperately trying to resolve. Jonas also quotes Pascal saying: “Cast into the infinite immensity of spaces which I am ignorant, and which know me not, I am frightened”. This, I believe, is a key phrase that describes very well the situation that we are facing in this modern era. It is a situation that is unparalleled in all of history. Jonas himself has a very interesting point in saying that the ones who shared the most similar way of viewing the relation between man and the world with ourselves were the early gnostics. For them, the whole Greek idea of the beautifully ordered cosmos, “with whose immanent logos my own can feel kinship”, was nothing more than wishful thinking, and they regarded their place in the world more like the result of a brute accident. Sometimes it was even viewed as a result of an evil demiurge casting them into a prison, trapping them forever in illusionary matter.

In a way our situation today seems even more absurd. At least the gnostics had been thrown into the world by an (in some cases) malicious entity, which meant that they still could place their own existence into a bigger picture. As a result of modern philosophy and science we are in a similar position, the difference being that we don’t have anyone that has thrown us into our world anymore. We are completely alone, tossed up into a world that just doesn’t

care! As long as the world was understood as “cosmos”, there was always a reason for us to be here. Now we are instead trapped into existence in a remote corner of the universe, as caring entities in an uncaring environment. A world without a hierarchical order is also a world removed of an ontological basis for values, which means that today the self is thrown back to rely completely on itself to confer all meaning.

This is a difficult situation that we are born into. Like mentioned earlier, it is one that is historically unique. All great changes of thought in the latest century, from positivism to post-modernism, have contributed to the destructuralization of the old self and its world that we now are witnessing and taking part of. This has resulted in a society that is more technically and scientifically evolved than ever, but with it's active agent, man, being completely lost. We can see the symptoms of confusion and ignorance all around us. Consumerism is growing like a plague, infecting the minds of everyone, reshaping our values into worshipping youth and success. People abandon organized religion, leaving the churches empty, their stones withering. The most striking example of western society's incapacity to understand matters beyond the mundane world is the abhorrent and reprehensible demonization that is being pursued against islam. The crimes that are being committed against these servants of higher truth and light, in our society of profane shallowness and egomania, are ultimate proofs that our understanding of spirit is alarmingly low.

So what should we do, then? Don't get me wrong and think that the purpose of this article is to preach about the evils of modern society, and how we must turn our back on relativism and embrace old traditional values and worldviews. Absolutely not. On the contrary, I believe that we need to see our current situation as the birth pangs of something new that contains great potential and great dangers at the same time; As something that can be taken into completely different directions depending on our own choices, either into confused decadence or into elevated spirituality.

In many ways, all we have left is our inner temple. All the facades of outer religion are crashing down and being run over by “modern thought”, creating the impression that there never was anything more to it than a big castle built in the air, fueled by superstition and unconscious Freudian desires. This is, in a way, a good thing. We have finally the opportunity to get rid of the negative shadows that have been clinging on to spirituality for the last 2000 years and only keep its pure essence. It is also a good thing that we are standing completely naked, abandoned in a cold uncaring universe, because now we don't have any anthropomorf beings left to project ourselves upon. The complete absurdness of the fact that we really are here as caring creatures, as products of a completely cold and neutral world, can and should be seen as a strange kind of sign that there might be some light to be found somewhere after all. All we have is our inner temple, and all we can do is to turn and look within.

Here we can begin to sense what the purpose of our venerable Order is destined to be. It must be one of the beacons that can help people cross this abyss and fulfill the process of reaching spiritual maturity. This cannot strictly be done by hanging on conservatively to old ways and traditions, believing that peoples' needs of today can be met by writing out old remedies of the past.

Before we are in position to do any good for others, we need to take the journey ourselves. This is why it is of utter importance to do the “lunar” work of the SRC as thoroughly as possible. We need to be brutally honest with ourselves on the way and be ready to plunge into that hole that we have been staring into, ready to crystallize what is at the bottom. All of our unstable foundations need to be destroyed, and somewhere along the way we will be standing naked realizing that our complete essence is resting on emptiness. There is nothing there supporting, or even constituting, the person we imagined ourselves to be. The “me” that sent out to save itself from the beginning is the one who needs to be left behind. This paradox points at the major obstacle on this side of the veil. It is a battle that I myself yet

only have seen the beginning of. Therefore I cannot provide any sure answers about how to move forward from here, but even the moon can sometimes reflect some pure rays from the sun, that can work as a guide in the darkness.

I believe that we need to fully realize that when the “me” proves to be empty, the saviour needs to come from somewhere else. Suddenly there is no such thing as “my salvation” anymore. It merges into something infinitely bigger. This brings to mind the symbolism of the tarot card of The Lovers (in this case the Marseille or Rider-Waite deck). Valentin Tomberg’s work *Meditations on the Tarot* contains some very profound insights about this card (as well as on all the others). I really cannot recommend this book enough. In this card we can see the person standing before the choice between the way of the heart or the way of power. Tomberg reflects on the fact that to ourselves, we always seem a little more real than our surroundings do. This is because in our current state we love ourselves most of all. The way of the heart is, according to Tomberg, pursued by *extending the love that one has for oneself to all other beings*. Total communion between One and Other, between two polarised beings constitutes the absolute fullness of spiritual, psychic and physical being, in love. It is through love that we are able to remember our original state of unity in Eden before the Fall.

This has resonance in the teachings of Valentinus, Pasqually and Saint-Martin. All three stress that complete salvation through gnosis is necessarily a cosmic event, not an individual one. The latter is only partial. Valentinus claimed that the material world is the result of ignorance, and although one individual reaching gnosis removes some of its illusionary qualities, the thing that really matters is the collective state. From this we can learn that when the veils of illusion start to lift microcosmically, the results naturally should extend outside of ourselves. The saving rays of the sun and the fire of Shin, that enter from outside and make the inner dawn possible, need to be reflected back out on the world. This

will probably be self-evident when it is realized, considering the axiom *as above, so below*.

This brings me to contemplate our beautiful symbol of the rose cross. The natural, and probably only, way to make this rose bloom is through self-sacrifice. Reaching out for union with Christ means turning oneself inside out, nailing the dying microcosmical soul on the cross, and being reborn in perfect union with the macrocosm. This is the aim of the Great Work, something that can only be accomplished through Love and Will. So seek ever to awaken and fan the flames of love, desire and sacred devotion in your hearts! Stare in Silence into the darkness of your soul. When the vessel has been emptied completely, the foundation for resurrection has been laid. Our Angel is awaiting our return, longing to unite with us in the Bridal Chamber.

Not until this has become a reality can the “solar” work of the SSA begin. The holy work of theurgy, ascending to unite with the highest with the purpose of bringing down the light back to earth, will not be possible before we have completed the earlier mentioned work. First we need to make conscious and free ourselves from the negative influences of the planets and the zodiac. Then we can rebuild ourselves with a pure nephesh, one that is always ruled by the sun of our ruach. Solve et coagula!

To all my brothers and sisters in this Order I wish the best of luck with this Great Work. It is important that we all take the time we need with the work on the inner development of ourselves, but keep in mind that the bigger purpose is to affect the world at large. Our work shall be to the honour of the Lord of the Universe, who works in Silence, and whom naught but Silence can express.

Fraternally in LVX

Frater L.I.E.