



Château d'Omonville
27110 Le Tremblay
FRANCE

ORDRE DE LA ROSE-CROIX
MOUVEMENT PHILOSOPHIQUE, INITIATIQUE
ET TRADITIONNEL MONDIAL

Tél. : 33 (0) 2.32.35.41.28
Fax : 33 (0) 2.32.35.66.03
Internet : www.rose-croix.org
Courriel : amorc@rose-croix.org

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"Nothing is impossible for the young."

Socrates (5th century B.C.)

OPEN LETTER TO YOUNG PEOPLE

**by Serge Toussaint, Grand Master of the French Jurisdiction
of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC)**

Speaking to young people by means of an Open Letter is something that I have been wanting to do for a long time; but I have continually put it off, concerned that it might come across to them as overbearing and pompous, or that they might consider it 'corny', not to mention those who might see it as the work of some "guru" trying to attract attention. But we all know the saying "*Fear does not spare us from the danger!*" Also, I have always thought that we should have the courage of our convictions, at the risk of being unfavorably received, poorly thought of, or even laughed at. I therefore decided to write this letter, it being understood that my purpose is not in any way to fuel argument or controversy, but hopefully to encourage people to reflect.

To start off with, I would like to state that I have a genuine liking for young people; this in itself is nothing original, particularly as few people would dare to say or admit to the reverse. Yet I have never given in to the 'cult of being young', which for me constitutes a form of playing to popular opinion, and an admission that there is a 'cult of being old'. Although I feel young at heart and endeavor to retain my inner child, I am perfectly aware that the main part of my current life is behind me, and that my youth now belongs to the past. I say "*my current life*" because, like most Rosicrucians, I concur with the principle of reincarnation. But that is another subject...

Without wishing to play around with words, to me it seems preferable to like young people, rather than the state of being young. Many people say they like young people, whereas in reality what they like is the memory of their own youth, through them. This being said, it is natural, when we are lucky enough to have had a happy childhood, to experience a certain nostalgia for it. The fact remains that liking young people means having empathy for them, which entails listening to them and wanting them to be happy - preferably with them willing, rather than reluctant. Such is my own position, but this does not mean that I approve of or like everything they do and say, which those who adhere to the 'cult of being young' tend to do or make others think, in order to appear young in the eyes of others.

.../....

Having as I do the opportunity to travel a lot as part of my office, I would first of all like to say to young people how pleased I am at seeing - and it is very noticeable - that the vast majority of them are neither racist nor nationalistic. They are also open to all cultures. It is most likely the first time in history that young people on a worldwide scale have been this universal in outlook. This is in large part explained by the fact that transport and communications, and now the Internet, have turned the world into a single country. There is a further explanation for the emergence of this universalism: whether they are conscious of it or not, and often beyond what appears to be the case, human beings evolve inwardly from generation to generation, not to say from incarnation to incarnation.

Because young people have an increasing open-mindedness about the world, they are much more pacifist than previous generations were. In the past, patriotism, nationalism, fear of others, racial prejudice, etc. helped bring about war. Once it was under way, the spiral of hatred, fed by the desire for revenge, led even the least warlike people into killing and slaughtering. Nowadays, even if they are not necessarily against the use of military force, the majority of young people are anti-war, this being in itself more positive. We can only be pleased about this, because Peace is one of the most noble of ideals that there is. Peace is, in fact, an archetype that is an integral part of the human soul. This means that the more Humanity evolves mentally and spiritually, the more this ideal will be expressed in both individual and collective behavior.

Under the effect not only of the evolution that operates from generation to generation, but also of the increase in the availability of knowledge, information and understanding, young people are more cultivated and less naïve than their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were at their age. This explains why, as is clear, the religions have lost influence over them; their dogmas are no longer suited to the mindsets of our times, in either moral or doctrinal terms, generally speaking. At the beginning of this 21st Century, how many young people believe that Humanity comes from an original couple, Adam and Eve, who were removed from Paradise for eating the forbidden fruit? Similarly, how many believe that the body is resurrected, and that at the end of the world God is going to separate good people from bad people? Do not think that I am challenging or criticizing the religions. They have served - and are still serving - a useful purpose, if for no other reason than that they enable millions of people to live their faith on a daily basis.

While I understand the lack of interest in religion on the part of young people, particularly in the West, I am nonetheless sorry that this has made them lose interest in spirituality; this loss of interest is in fact unhelpful to their well-being, because it has created a void in the deepest part of themselves. Given that "*Nature abhors a vacuum*", many of them are filling this void with activities that monopolize and even intensify their physical senses and their minds, sometimes to an extreme extent, to the detriment of their inner life. This results in psychological imbalance, which largely explains why many young people are not really happy and are clearly suffering from discontentment. We only need to look at the fact that in the so-called 'developed' countries, the number of suicides among the young is continuing to go up, to the point that it is becoming of great concern. How can we fail to be moved by such a state of affairs?

Yet how can we criticize young people for lacking in spirituality, when their elders have played their part in making society more and more materialistic? Nowadays, as we all know, the world is driven by money. Of course, money has always had a great influence on human beings, but this influence appears to have reached its heights, and is leading to unbridled greed and avarice: venerated like a god, it is the basis of a religion without soul, with its servants

and its worshippers; its creed is the simplest possible one, and summed up in one word - “have” (more and more); on its altar are sacrificed the most basic moral values - honesty, integrity, fairness, generosity, sharing, etc. We of course all need money, and so it is not money that is to blame, but the excessive importance that is given to it nowadays. Instead of the “*servant*” that it ought to be, it has – at all levels of society - become an extremely “*bad master*”.

So what exactly is the spirituality that most young people are lacking, in which they might find a source of wellbeing? Firstly, let us clarify that it does not require following one of the religions that currently exist, even more so as young people are tending to turn away from them, as mentioned previously. Put simply, this spirituality is based on the concept that every human being has a soul, and that the purpose of life is to improve this soul. How is this to be done? By working unrestrictedly on one’s personal development, or more exactly on the perfecting of one’s personality. The basis of spirituality – not in the religious sense, but in the mystical sense of the word – lies in this work of perfecting. From this perspective, God is not only the Intelligence, Consciousness, Energy, Force (the term used is not important) that is at work in the Universe and Nature; in mankind, He is also what we commonly call “*the voice of one’s conscience*”.

The increasing influence that money is having over society has given rise to a sub-culture, for which television is currently the main vehicle. What absurd, offensive, degrading programs we constantly have on the screens, not to mention the violence. Many of them were created for young people, which suggests that those who finance, produce, program and present them think that young people like stupidity and crudeness, and enjoy debasing themselves. In the face of such disrespect, when will young people finally assert themselves, and opt for programs that are appropriate for their intelligence and their true inclinations? Would young people not become more mature, if they were to refuse to watch - and even protest about - this barefaced manipulation of minds? Just like the Internet, television reflects society: it reveals its best, along with its worst. It is up to people as a whole, and young people in particular, to make television and the Internet tools for cultural and moral upliftment, rather than for becoming foolish.

One of the most harmful manipulations that ‘reality TV’ is engaging in with young people, is the glorifying of “celebrity”. Backed up with much voyeurism and exhibitionism, they are made to think that one of the main purposes of life is to become famous, and therefore be admired and idolized, or even worshipped. What can such a cult of the ego lead to, other than disappointment and disillusionment? As experience demonstrates, fame alone does not make people happy and fulfilled; in many cases, it even causes doubts, anxiety, and stress. Happiness is not to be sought in the way that others look at us, but in the way that we look at ourselves. This means that we must learn, above all, to be good company for ourselves. Those who achieve this do not experience any desire to be famous, any more than they go off idolizing this or that “star” to the point that they seem to be living through them, by proxy.

What can we say, either, about the fashions that are continually being forced on young people, or that they force on one another, whether in the realm of music, clothes, language, behavior, or whatever? Here also, they would do well to ask themselves the question: who, or what, is benefitting out of this manipulation? It is natural to want to assert oneself and find one’s identity, but having personality is not imitating others or following the fashion, in whatever field it may be. Neither is it “doing things the other way round” and overly standing out from others for the sake of being different. Having personality is simply being oneself, and living

in accordance with one's own values and personal tastes. And contrary to what many young people seem to think, there is nothing more worthy of respect - and even admiration - than to be true to our own choices, even if these are 'normal', rather than adopting those that are forced on us from outside in order to be - or appear - "fashionable".

As in the case of religion, young people's connection with politics has also changed a great deal. Let it first of all be made clear that politics is an integral part of society, and a necessity for the governing of towns and countries, from the smallest village to the largest metropolis. Just a few decades ago, politics was central in young people's conversations, everyone sensing a spirit of 'protest', sometimes without really knowing whether what they were protesting about really merited it. Nowadays, many are not interested in it at all. Why is this? Because they feel politics is unable to resolve the problems ordinary people are faced with, and lacks the capacity to make the world a better place. This is why in many countries a high percentage of young people are not voting, except perhaps in local elections where they feel more engaged.

Like people, politics is imperfect, and therefore subject to criticism. But if we concede that in any real democracy we have the leaders we deserve, then politics is the reflection not only of those who are governing us, but also of those who are being governed. In the face of the problems that people as a whole are faced with, it is therefore both too simplistic and too easy to 'have a go' only at those in public office. Quite apart from the fact that we can vote as we choose, we can - and even must - make good use of our free will, and act to make society better. How? By endeavoring to be "*accomplished human beings*", to use the words of Comenius, eminent 17th Century Rosicrucian who is considered the spiritual father of UNESCO. In this respect I have always thought politics, in the philosophical sense of the term, to be first and foremost the art of governing oneself.

In my view, the solution to the current crisis is more an ethical one than a political one, the two not being mutually exclusive. But what is ethics? Simply put, it is the attitude that consists of respecting oneself, respecting other people, and respecting Nature, this not being in any way 'moralistic'. Unfortunately, this respect is distressingly absent nowadays, because parents and adults in general have not passed it on to children. For the last few decades, children have been conditioned into demanding rights. This would not be harmful if, at the same time, they had been made familiar with the corresponding duties and obligations. This has been omitted, and hence the current imbalance with its consequences in society: violence, corruption, intolerance, theft, rape, trafficking of all types, and so on; these are all negative behaviors that indicate the absence of non-violence, integrity, tolerance, honesty, kindness, and so on. It is therefore urgent that we come back to these fundamentals, and it is up to young people to take up this challenge. Given that they are more the victims of the laxness that has been rife for far too long in this sphere than they are the perpetrators of it, this would be all the more credit to them...

In connection with the concept of duties, the young people reading this open letter may perhaps find guidance in the "*Rosicrucian Declaration of Human Duties*", issued by the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) in 2006. This Declaration was published as a full-page document in leading magazines and newspapers, and its publication received the praise of many political, civil, and religious leaders. Its Epilogue speaks for itself: "*If all humans carried out these fundamental duties, there would be few rights left to demand because everyone would benefit from the respect due to him or her and could live happily in society. This is why any democracy should not confine itself to promoting a 'State of Rights', otherwise the*

balance mentioned in the Prologue cannot be maintained. It is also imperative to advocate for a 'State of Duties', so that every citizen expresses what is best in humans in his or her behavior. Only by resting on these two pillars can civilization fully take on the status of Humanity." These words are clearly in no way reactionary or backward-looking, but express what ought to be clear to all of us.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that politics does not belong exclusively to the parties and movements of all varieties that are involved in it. As a governing of oneself, it involves each one of us, and requires the putting of what is best in ourselves at the service of others and society, which brings us back to what I said previously about spirituality. Seen in this light, the highest form of politics is Humanism, a philosophical ideal which means making the wellbeing of every individual the central concern of both those governing and those being governed, alike. What this amounts to is doing to others what we would like them to do to us, and also not doing to them what we would not like them to do to us. This reminds us of course of the principal commandment of the Master Jesus, which is not the moral or spiritual property of any religion, but a source of inspiration for whoever abides by this commandment – whether Christian or non-Christian, believer or atheist. And so, if they are not going to be spiritually-minded, I do urge all young people to be humanistic.

We cannot be humanistic, however, without also getting involved in the conservation and protection of Nature. We are all aware that our planet is under severe threat: climate change and global warming, excessive deforestation, widespread destruction of ecosystems, disappearance of many plant and animal species, pollution of various types, and so on. It is clear that environmentalism has become the single most important issue of the 21st century. Unfortunately, the economic and social crisis that has been hitting the world for several decades is eclipsing this issue, and we are at risk of not doing what is required to avoid the worst. What we have here, of course, is the legacy of previous generations; but if today's young people do not take action, it seems clear that the Earth, Creation's masterpiece, will become uninhabitable for millions - and perhaps even billions - of people. So let us put our money on their sense of responsibility and on their mobilizing themselves, holding to the thought that their children and grandchildren will inherit a regenerated Mother Earth, with which Humanity will have reconciled itself permanently.

There is another danger threatening the balance of society and what is usually called "*getting on with one another*": namely, individualism. While it is true that the Internet is a great source of information and an amazing means of communication, for me it is a pity that its use has become so excessive, to the point that many young people confess they can no longer manage without it. What can be said, also, about their addiction to mobile phones and smartphones? The paradox of modern times is that, all across the planet, human beings are communicating all day long, yet many of them say they feel totally alone. Here is what can be found in this connection in the "*Positio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*", a Manifesto published worldwide in 2001 by AMORC: "*We notice, moreover, that in this era of communication, individuals barely communicate with one another. Members of the same family no longer converse among themselves, so busy are they in listening to the radio, watching television, or surfing the Internet...*". Is it not time to give priority (back) to direct contact, and to (re) humanize society?

Because of the chaotic state of the world many people, particularly young people, are pessimistic about both their own future and that of Humanity. For their part, Rosicrucians are

– and remain – optimistic, which does not mean they are not realistic. Thus in the article entitled “*Rosicrucian Prophecies*”, which they published in 2011, can be found: “*In the light of our teachings and our philosophy, we are optimistic about the future, even if the current situation leads us to fear the worst. Below the surface, the troubled times that we are crossing constitute a “necessary transition”, which should enable Humanity to transcend itself and be reborn... Humanity as a whole is destined to establish the ideal society that many wise men and women of the past have called for, and which many individuals more or less consciously hope for.*” So, have confidence! Rather than just saying “hope is what keeps us alive”, let us act in keeping with the idea that life is full of hope.

At the beginning of this letter, I mentioned my concern that it might be perceived as ‘corny’, particularly by the young people reading it. However, I don’t think it is ‘corny’ to encourage them to be spiritual, humanistic, and environmentally-minded, to urge them to no longer let themselves be manipulated by those who are selling stupidity, voyeurism, and other products of the ‘mediatizing’ of morals, to warn them against the process of ‘individualizing’ that the new technologies are bringing about, to suggest that they awaken and express the best that is within them, and so on... For my part, I make an appeal to young people’s consciences - and indeed to their souls - to not miss out on their lives, and to make Humanity what it is meant to be: the expression on Earth of the best that life is capable of offering to generations present and future. May young people therefore ask themselves the question: what society, what Humanity, what World do they want for their children?

There is a well-known saying “If youth but knew; if age were able”, implying that young people have the energy required for improving the world, but not the necessary experience. It is my conviction that if young people have the will, they can do so, even beyond our expectations. So let us have faith in them...

With these words of hope, I will finish this letter, and wish happiness and success to all young people who come to read it, regardless of whether or not it meets with their approval.

With my best wishes,

Serge Toussaint
Grand Master of the French Jurisdiction
of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC

