

Until We See

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Earlier this year I had cataracts removed from my eyes. The effect was amazing. I didn't realise how much my vision had deteriorated over time. I was having some difficulty reading and thought I needed new lenses. However, when I went to see the optometrist, he identified the real problem: cataracts. In fact, he told me I was on the cusp of being legally blind! Now, with the cataracts removed and new lenses implanted, I see clearly. Colours look brighter, and I notice details I had not been able to see for a long time.



With my sight fully restored, I realise *we cannot see what we cannot see until we see!* It is like a refrain that continues to play itself in my mind. We cannot see what we cannot see until we see. And not only with our physical sight. It is equally so with our minds and understanding. At various times during my life, some insight has registered for me, and I said to myself, "Of course. How come I didn't see it until now?"

Usually, I have had all the elements of that insight long before that moment. But I had not seen their import or brought them together into a cohesive whole until it was given me in that moment of insight.

When I read Kevin Gallagher's CEN reflection for June, I find the same insight there too. Kevin writes of how Teilhard de Chardin wrote *The Divine Milieu* as '*a way of teaching how to see*'. In Teilhard's understanding, as Kevin points out, *seeing* is key to the spiritual life. And he is not thinking only of physical sight. He has in mind a deeper sight, the capacity to see the inner reality of things.

For me, to see the inner reality of things requires an evolution of my consciousness. I cannot see what I cannot see until the moment a new dimension of vision is revealed to me. This, of course, is what our Contemplative Evolution Network is about: to contemplate our human and natural world until we begin to see more deeply into its

inner reality; to see the multilayered relationship of all that is with all else that is; to see the oneness that underlies the amazing diversity all around us.

We desire to grow into that greater consciousness, so that we can live consciously within that multilayered relationship with all creation and thereby in our relationship with the God of creation. And beyond our own evolving consciousness, we believe that uniting with one another in daily contemplation, we will contribute to the evolution of the collective human consciousness, as together we grow into that new way of seeing. When the next phase of collective evolution of consciousness takes root in humanity as a whole, perhaps Teilhard's vision will come about:



Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, people will have discovered fire.¹

Mystics ancient and modern, and in many religious traditions, have already discovered that fire. They have written about it, expressed it in poetry, prayer, art, song, and ceremony. But, while their vision may awaken our desire to see what they saw, our capacity to do so needs yet to develop, at least, for most of us. We catch glimpses or intimations of it which lure us on, whetting our desire to see and grow into what they saw and became.

The mystical vision is gift and grace. Yet we also have a part to play in its development. And, living at this time of history, we have many sources and means to aid us on that journey. Perhaps the greatest of these are the discoveries of modern science that have opened to us the mysteries of the Cosmos, both in its macro and its micro reality. Along with what modern science offers, we also enjoy a level of education and literacy unknown in earlier times, together with the means of communication that technology provides. We are exposed to global and cosmic realities and information unknown to generations before ours. What a gift to live at this time of history!

Together with all this richness, we are facing enormous challenges. It is all too easy to be distracted by the sheer volume of information hurled at us each time we connect to media of one kind or another, and it is all too easy to be seduced by the advertising world that keeps telling us everything is there for our narcissistic selves. It is not

¹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Toward the Future*, tr. Rene Hague, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975, 87

surprising that our way of life has brought the Earth to its most critical challenge yet, the threat to its capacity to sustain life.

Many people do not see very far beyond what affects them personally. Climate deniers cannot (or will not) see what they cannot see until either it is too late or, more hopefully, until they see. Similarly, for so many of us who are unaware that we all play a part in creating the world as it is today, for some, a world of plenty or enough, a world of relative freedom and security, but also a world in which many people are oppressed, locked into systems of poverty and powerlessness, people displaced by war, violence, climate change, and so on. In our unawareness, we cannot see that what diminishes one person or community diminishes all of us. The same for what is happening to the Earth itself, we are part of its life system, and where that is diminished, all life on Earth is diminished. Until we see, we will not take responsibility for the wellbeing of all creation, in the care we take of our own environment, physical, mental, spiritual and social.



Hopefully, our daily contemplative hour will awaken us to the blindness that prevents our seeing. Hopefully, as our capacity to see the Mystery that pervades all develops, it will contribute to developing humanity's collective capacity to see that Mystery in all its profundity. This is new leap of evolution in human consciousness that is the longing and purpose of CEN.

And there are many signs of hope that such evolution of consciousness is stirring today: hope in our young people as they continue their campaign for climate action; hope in the emergence of feminine wisdom that brings to the fore a more holistic and relational way of seeing, being and living; hope in the movements for justice and the countless people who volunteer their lives for the betterment of others; hope in our artists and musicians who express their vision for a better world in their works; hope in the emergence of indigenous voices with their deep sense of the preciousness of Mother Earth and their holistic ways of seeing and living; also hope in the mysticism that is stirring up anew today in unexpected places and situations.

So let us continue to open our eyes to ever new ways of seeing. Of seeing the deeper reality of every created being, from the tiniest ant to the most distant galaxies and everything in between, for there we will discover, not only a burning bush but all creation on FIRE, luminous with the presence of God.

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