

A VISIT TO THE TEMPLES OF HUMANKIND

RICHARD GROSSINGER



Hall of the Earth (detail)

Usually I mistrust new-fangled or reborn spiritual groups—and that includes fundamentalist Christians, Muslims, and Jews these days—by the rule that it is near impossible to invent or re-codify a religion without turning the faithful into robotic partisans and menial drill sergeants. Needing open-minded inquiry and bristling at sanctioned rituals, I am ever on guard against the spiritual bully and the fanatic in their many guises. Even some sincere Buddhist groups seem to me trapped in unexamined rituals and mudras without honoring the improvisational and divine novelty of the universe and without conferring on their practitioners the means to think and act on their feet. I am all for guru worship and the authenticity of thousand-year-old practices, but it's hard for me to accept sacraments or regimens when I don't perceive their profundity. If something doesn't feel conscious and truly wise, I won't go there. In that sense I would take crazy poets and artists any day over divine squadrons.

Yet my wife Lindy's and my first visit to the Temples of Humankind at Damanhur in Italy was special and unique; it allayed my concerns and exceeded all of my expectations. By the late afternoon, I had experienced the rudiments of a far-flung intentional community, a federation with a thousand citizens, its own currency, schools, shops, social services, and a sacred art, architecture, and technology that rivals anything on the planet. That's a strong statement, but I don't believe one could come here and see it with his (or her) own eyes and not be affected. Astonishing that such a thing exists and most people have no inkling of it!