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The Spirit of Cult-Ur or Veneration of Light*

—An Old Truth in the New Education of Professor Roerich—

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In the name of Culture, or *Kultur*, all kinds of damaged educational goods have been offered in our modern world.

Those who believe in the popular intellectual gospel of traditional Western culture (*Cogito, ergo sum*—I know, therefore, I exist,) have sold it under the labels of "knowledge", "intellect", "reason", ability or capacity to "perceive", "discriminate", "imagine", "recall", "think", "judge", etc. The price of it is the well-known cancer of modern education—the pride of the hopelessly conceited *Homo Sapiens* who is not ashamed to mix up his wishbone of *human* knowledge with the backbone of *cosmic* wisdom.

Those who believe in the emotional bible of human nature (*Amo, ergo sum*—I love, therefore, I exist) rightly have claimed that "feelings", "emotions", "sentiments", "intuitions", "longings", "desires", "hopes", "ideals", etc., are, biologically speaking, much older and, therefore, more stable and reliable than the "thoughts", "ideas", etc., for a man may argue about the brotherhood of humanity for ages and ages, but until he feels it nothing is done. Unfortunately it is a sad fact that many highly emotional people may be so arrogant and stubborn that in the name of the Human Heart or Love they mix up their wishbone of *physical* or *egoistical* love and *social* or *altruistic* sympathy with the backbone of the whole cosmos—the *universal Divine* or *Platonic* love. It is no wonder that under the name of a lawless, and loveless Cain (I mean *Aesthetics*) the innocent and ideal Abels (I mean *Ethics*) have been killed. Look at those who twisted even the religion of humanity into a worship of men and women by men and women. No doubt such a culture breeds a lack of geometry of thinking and bad action.

Those who believe in the volitional scripture of man's essence (*Volo, ergo sum*—I will, therefore, I exist) are sometimes so violently "active", "dynamic", "pragmatic", "instrumental", "utilitarian", and "humanistic", that they worship the "deed", "behavior", "habits", "conducts", "activity", "spontaneity of will", "play urges", "strong character", "attitudes", etc., without being able to discriminate between the fundamental and ~~necessary~~ issues in the human purpose and so, mix up the deeds of Human Hand with the Power of Cosmos or Energy of the Universe. The result of it is the repeated disastrous inharmonious development of the human muscle and its brute force at the expense of the *higher* human reason and the *nobler* human heart, reducing thus the education of the human being to the level of the human plant or human animal.

Who is going to save us from all these numerous misunderstandings?

A scientist who is trying to make plea for the *whole* man, which may coincide with the *holy* man of all religions (ethymologically speaking the roots of both "whole" and "holy" are the same) which unfortunately are more or less marooned by the mixing up of religious *instruction* (history and geography of holy land, history and antiquity of church organization, mere creeds or dogmas) and religious *training* (mode of prayers and worship, church customs, etc.) with the essence of all religious *education* (culture and nurture of

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love for God and our neighbors, trust in and reverence of what is great and noble both in nature and humanity, past and present; faith; good will towards everybody, and good deeds)?

An educational statesman, or a pedagogical legislator, or a school law-giver who is eager to offer us the laws of Solon or Lycurgus for the shaping of our school curriculae backed by the specific demands of the state, home, society, community; vulcanized by religious, political, and economical creeds, energized by the postulates of experts in natural, technical, scientific, and humanistic sciences and arts?

A modern metaphysician who claims that the Child rather than the Human Being is the center of the whole curriculum?

A pedagogue who does not believe in the personal equation of the teacher, his educational tact and art, his love for the pupils, and his sympathy for the real inheritors of the physical, mental, and spiritual wealth of our nation?

No! The light must come from another, better, older and more reliable source. That source is crystallized in the art, thoughts, and deeds of a modern educator who preaches an old truth—the worship or veneration of light, the very meaning of culture or the Cult of Light, to use the ancient roots of these two words, *Cult-Ur*.

The man who states so simply and yet beautifully the real meaning of culture hails physically from dark Russia; mentally he is a real cosmopolitan like Goethe, Shakespeare, or Peter Petrovich—Nyegosh; spiritually he belongs to the ages like our Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, or Ralph Waldo Emerson. His earthly name is *Nicholas Roerich*.

Professor Roerich is known as a great symbolic painter, archeologist, pioneer artistic worker in theatre, great traveller, deep philosopher, and an educator, *par excellence*. As a writer he covers a large number of fields in different languages. In English we have his "Real of Light," "Shambhala," "Heart of Asia," "Flame in Chalice," "Altai—Himalaya" (A Travel Diary), "Adamant," etc. (all published by Roerich Museum Press, 310 Riverside Drive, New York City). He has organized a large number of highly educational institutions such as *Master Institute*, *Corona Mundi* (an international center), *Cor Ardens* (an affiliation of the creators of beauty everywhere throughout the world), *Alatas* (an international, non-commercial publishing society for the interchange and dissemination of new and constructive ideas by means of the *art preservative*), *Urusvati* (a new outpost of science — Himalaya Research Institute of Roerich Museum), etc. For us the most important is the Master Institute of United Arts situated in a twenty-four story palace of the Roerich Museum, and offers practical and theoretical courses in music, painting, sculpture, architecture, opera class ballet, drama, lectures, courses in dynamic symmetry, a three-year course in fine arts, a three-year course in design and illustration related to industry, and a few special courses.

All of these courses and institutions are designated to realize a New Era in the evolution of humanity. Professor Roerich builds up this New Era on two solid foundations—*Knowledge* and *Beauty*. When he came to our United States with an exhibition of his paintings (at the invitation of the Chicago Art Institute) Professor Roerich at once took steps to resume and duplicate the work he had inaugurated in his native, Slavic country, that of uniting the arts, and thus uniting men and women through beauty, for beauty is the uni-

ence." It is rightly observed that Roerich as a teacher satisfies the idealist without confronting the realist, that he constantly seeks the dormant, latent or hidden truth, the unrevealed beauty, the Lost Word.

3. As a great artist-teacher Roerich does not believe in any kind of *Metho-denreiterei* or panacea for this or that artificial method of teaching, learning, and examination. He loudly cries: "Every standard leads to tyranny," and is eagerly trying to explain to us "the all-penetrating understanding of the beauty of art, which shall save us from death-imparting standardization and from the pernicious débris of life." According to Professor Roerich the "fundamental flame of Culture shall be one, but its sparks in life shall be extremely manifold as well as precisely individual. Like a careful gardener, the true culture-bearer will not ruthlessly crush those flowers which enter life outside his garden, if they belong to the same precious kind which he safeguards. The manifestations of culture are just as manifold as are the manifestations of the endless varieties of life itself. They are the true branches of the one sacred Tree whose roots sustain the Universe."

4. Professor Roerich points out very clearly that the first sign of lack of culture is a quarrel. In order to get rid of this dark ignorance he gives us the following advice: "Let us not belittle each other, because of the small is generated the small. Let us feel ourselves as hearty co-workers for the enhancement of life and the deepening of knowledge. Before us lies an immeasurable field of work and to each are given unlimited possibilities, for the approach to light is boundless. Our thought will abandon rivalry for there is enough room in Infinity. Besides, contentment and tolerance are the first adornments of Culture."

I believe that this new coöperative spirit and mutual aid, rather than the old competition and class struggle, in our great and noble profession is of greatest importance right now in our great America which is eager to try anything which deviates from our old school routine work. Gropings in the dark are very dangerous in education, too, and Professor Roerich's didactical orientation via Cult-Ur may bring us real pedagogical health and a real didactical happiness. This Veneration of Light of Professor Roerich is, no doubt, ~~nothing~~ ^{1 of} new in modern education, but this fact, too, is an additional reason why we should follow the spirit Cult-Ur. Let us approach the great teacher Roerich with awe and a sincere greeting: "Welcome, Cult-Ur of Roerich!"

The Golden Rule

"Do we practice the Golden Rule? Do we make it a rule of our lives to treat others as we, in similar circumstances, should like to be treated? There is an implicit democracy in so doing. It means that others have equal rights to considerate treatment with ourselves. It takes much imagination and much experience to be able to treat another as one would like to be treated. The rule trusts the initiative and the good judgment of the individual. It says in effect that what you would like to have done to you, it is right for you to do to others. You would like to be treated justly, kindly, courteously, and at times mercifully; then treat men so. You would not like to be cheated, stolen from, lied to, deceived, betrayed; then do not so to others. Give to the world the best you know, and the best may come back to you; but, if not, even so continue to give the best."—Herman Harrell Horne.

versal and true solvent whereby racial and national animosities may be dissolved. It is, no doubt, rightly said that Professor Roerich is a "Prophet of Universal Beauty," and there is perhaps no better country in which to spread such an educational gospel as our America, a *rendezvous* of all nations and a cross-road of all cultures and civilizations.

The most striking items in the new education of Professor Roerich could be summarized in the following:

1. Cult-Ur or Veneration of Light of Roerich is that modern *magisterium mundi* (store of wisdom) which does not praise or condemn what we call intellectual, emotional, and volitional factors in our education, but weighs and considers all these items in the light of Sophia or Universal Wisdom. As he says: "Many thousands of years before our era the Egyptian knew the creativeness of thought, and it has been said everywhere: *Thought and Love*. And under the sign of the Heart and the Serpent and the Chalice in all its multifor-
mity of benevolent symbols is being given also the wise, preordained inscription, *Thought and Love*."

Because from a thought, an emanation absolutely real, we contrive to make abstractions, we forget that it is not the hand, but the thought which creates and kills. And of Love we have made either a sour sign or an "abomination of fornication." That apparently is the idea of a "Guiding Spirit," the idea of "High Leadership" for the future players of educational objectives in our schools, regardless of whether they are based mainly on play or learning by doing for children below school age (from birth to the seventh year), or on art (from seven to fourteen years) or on intellect and Logos from fourteen years up to physical death.

2. For a realization of such a great Cult-Ur, Professor Roerich is making plea for real teachers who are not mere drill-masters, mechanics, judges, disciplinary agents, but real educators, inspirers, *gurus* and rabbis (originally these two professions were a happy combination of teacher, preacher, and healer or physician). As Roerich says: "People again remember about the Teacher. Of course these teachers must not pertain to a grandfather's study with all its petrified remains. The Teacher is He who reveals, enlightens and encourages. He who will say, 'Blessed are the obstacles. Through them we grow.' He who recalls the beautiful Golgothas of knowledge and art, because therein lies the creative achievement—he will not be rejected by the strong spirits. He, himself will realize the value of the Hierarchy of Knowledge; and in his constant movement will create the ascending researches." A real teacher must be a servant of Cult-Ur, a constant seeker or admirer of Light as Roerich wisely advises: "Valuing the luminous cumulations of nations, the servant of Cultur will distinguish between accidental transition and real existence. Understanding this great responsibility of human existence the Light-bearer of Culture brings to both his thoughts and actions a high quality. He intelligently analyzes the miraculous strength of nature, remembering that, without exception, everything that exists may be beneficially utilized for our well-being. In the name of this well-being and Light, one discovers in himself the precious language of the heart—a vocabulary which is fuller and more beautiful than any dictionary. What bright convictions the language of the heart carries with it; and how effectively does its victorious testaments destroy even the darkest gates of lies and ignorance! Certainly we are convinced that lies are foolish and futile, for in the Spirit, a lie finds no refuge. Wisdom rests in reality which renounces neither spiritual nor physical exist-

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COMMENTS ON PROFESSOR PAUL RADOSAVLJEVICH'S ARTICLE "SPIRIT OF ROERICH'S CULT-UR OR VENERATION OF LIGHT IN MODERN EDUCATION"

"One day, nearly three years ago, I brought my term paper up to an office on the 4th floor of the School of Education Bld'g. A very dear professor said to me, "Instead of coming in, to take your examination this morning, you go up to the Roerich Museum and spend your morning there!" I did so. It was a morning I shall never forget! Two weeks ago, I received a leaflet on the "Spirit of Roerich's Cult-ur" by this dear dear Professor and what did it mean? It brought back that happy, exulted morning where I passed through the museum, undisturbed-studying the art of the man whose life and work comes to me through this leaflet-with a freshness and a vividness which your pen alone portrays. Again I'm standing before canvasses. This time you have taken me there!" Mary L. Antolick, Junior-Senior High School, Mechanicville, N. Y.

"I was particularly delighted to receive your latest monograph because it was such a source of information to one whose busy turmoil of life does not allow much reading of such desirable documents. It is accorded a permanent abode in my files along with the many helpful papers that I have received..." John J. Finnessy

"I am grateful for your article on Roerich.....If you have any reprints I would be grateful for several as I have some friends who are interested." A. Gordon Melvin, The College of the City of New York.

".....the reprint of the jewel you have created to represent Nicholas de Roerich. When.....granted.....the privilege of reading it I knew then that it must be mine, yet I had no expectation of the honor of an autographed copy. Please, Sir, accept my deepest gratitude." C. I. Neff Jr. Secretary, West Virginia University.

".....Thank you for the bulletin on "The Idealistic Philosophy of Roerich". The fine, wholesome philosophy of Roerich is refreshing. The emphasis upon joy and satisfaction and beauty and at the same time not minimizing the importance of knowledges and skills is very well done in his "Veneration of Light in Modern Education". I like particularly his statement "blessed are the obstacles, through them we grow". Our State Director of Art, Mr. C. Valentine Kirby, thinks his statement "art will unify all humanity" is choice.With assurances of high regard and deep appreciation, I am:.....Lester K. Ade, Superintendent, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction.

".....I have been able to read and enjoy your comments upon this man who has contributed so much toward education.".... William F. Woodward.

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"Mrs. Nash and I read aloud your reprint on the Spirit of Roerich's. In looking over it now, I notice that we have underlined practically every paragraph.I shall keep this for use in my classes and is something which I can read from time to time." Jay B. Nash, Professor of Education, New York University.

"I received the document which you sent on Roerich, and devoured it in the afternoon. Have made a succession of notes which fit very remarkably into a line of thought I am working on, about which I much desire to confer with you at a not distant date. Should like to have all our students read this pamphlet.....thanking you afresh for sending me this very valuable document, I remain.....Wilbert W. White, The Biblical Seminary in New York.

"Thank you very much for the copies of your Reprint from the Educational Forum "Spirit of Roerich's Cult-ur or Veneration of Light in Modern Education". I recall that you wrote another article about Roerich which I enjoyed very much and I shall take pleasure in keeping a copy of this for myself and making the other copies available in the Library!....Nelson W. McCombs, Librarian, New York University.

"Thanks for your paper on Roerich. May I say "What a man" In your introductory you say "We live in an era of educational evolution which is producing it's own characteristic type of leadership." This reminds me of what Benjamin Kid had to say in Social Evolution, "The natural tendency of man is to degenerate, he is saved by those individuals who are superior, these individuals are leaders". How true this is of Roerich!.....John J. Dailey, The City College.

"Thank you so much for your reprint on Roerich. I have long wondered about that half legendary, half madman-genius. I shall read it with interest.....Geo. B. Vetter, New York University.

....."It is a source of information that I plan to have at my elbow!....Forrest E. Long, Professor of Education, New York University.

....."This is another of the excellent contributions which through your untiring research you are making to American education!.....John W. Withers, Dean, New York University, School of Education.

"I am in receipt of your interesting booklet, reprinted from the Educational Forum. We shall make interesting use of this material in connection with the teachers' section of our Forum.....Frederick W. Roman, Director, Associated Forums, Ltd.

"Thank you very much for the copy of The Spirit of Roerich's Cult-ur or Veneration of Living in Modern Education. I am very happy to have this and I am very glad to know that you too, think highly of the work of Nicholas Roerich. I have studied the development of his soul through his paintings and through his writings. It is just from such men as Roerich and Tagore that we gain an appreciation of the Infinite. We, in

preciation of the Infinite. We, in America, living as we do in a materialistic world of machines need this influence very badly. Thank you for sending me this monogram....William P. Sears, Jr. Professor of Education, New York University.

Received from Mrs. W. P. Sears, Jr.
New York University
March 30, 1934