

# PANACEA

(DIARY LEAVES)

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By the sign of beauty the locked gates may be opened. With song one can approach a wild yak so that she loses her fierceness and submits to milking. With a song one may tame horses. Even the serpents hearken to a song. It is significant to observe how healing and exalting is each touch of beauty.

Often we have had occasion to write of the importance of the so-called applied arts. Many times we compared the so-called higher arts with the no less significant manifestations of all branches of artistic industry. It is even dreadful to have to repeat again that the button created by Benvenuto Cellini is not only not inferior to, but undoubtedly far superior to, multitudes of average paintings and funerary sculpture. These comparisons are old and it would seem that reminders were no longer necessary; but life itself indicates quite the opposite.

In all fields of life, the sphere of applied art, which is blatantly stamped with some such shameful appellation as "commercial art", is abruptly separated from the general understanding of art. Instead of a gradual realization of the unity of the substance of creation, humanity seems to be striving to divide itself still more pettily, and to spread mutual humiliations. It would seem also absolutely apparent that the style of life is created not merely by the great individual creators but by the entire body of artists in the applied arts. It is not always their hands which create a poster or a work of jewelry. By some inexplicable curiosity, the products of ceramics are considered inferior to sculpture in marble,



although the charm of the Tanagra has given us ample evidence of a noble folk creation.

One may still hear the sorrowful exclamation of many young people: "I cannot live by art; I have to enter the commercial field", thus implying that by this act the artist dooms himself to the inevitable disgrace which is presumed to accompany participation in practical art.

What material, what circumstances, could deprive an artist of his quality? What manner of demand would compel him to do anything inartistic in any expression of life? What type of promoter would destroy the creative fire which gushes unrestrainedly through all materials? It is important for each promoter, even for the most elementary and inartistic one, that his product be clear, vivid and convincing and easily assimilated by the masses in their daily life. After all, which of these conditions may be regarded as disgraceful? Rafael himself, after receiving his order, was guided by the condition of conviction. Truly, the quality of conviction in no way contradicts the true artistry.

Gauguin, through sheer desire for self-expression, painted the doors and interior of his dwelling in Tahiti. Vrubel placed his "Princess Swan" on a platter. The number of examples is countless, in which the most diverse artists sought for expression through the most extraordinary materials. As we have previously noted, the material itself by its very subtle quality, lends a special conviction to the object. Is there need to repeat the identical examples which have been mentioned as often in widely varying circumstances? Not discussion but action, should strengthen the attitude so necessary for culture. If we reach the expression of the unity of arts, we thereby affirm the need of the closest correlation of all branches of art in its various materials.

It would be difficult to indicate a defined order in which such workshops could be conducted parallel with sketching, drawing and life classes. This order must be left to life itself. In



each country, in each city, and, even more, in each district of the city, there are special impressions of life. Hence to these problems one must respond first. Near a large textile factory, it would be good to provide drawing and the study of the technique of this industry. Near ceramic and porcelain factories one could lend assistance precisely to this medium ; thus expanding and refining the understanding, one should correlate in the immediate neighbourhood, the practical expressions prompted by the closest possibility. Incidentally, one should not overlook the fact that the physical environment of three of these workshops will afford reciprocal assistance and provide unsuspected combinations which will afford new and fascinating possibilities. The open mind of an instructor, unhampered by prejudice, and the broad demand for creativeness from the students, will result in that living vibration which, uncongealed by monotony, will afford to the craftshops an endlessly practical variety and conviction.

Another gracious quality is gained through the manifestation of practical variety. They temper the spirit, freeing it from the sense of limitation, which so often constructs our dwelling of fear. But it is from fear, above all, that each aspect of creation must be liberated. In fear, creation cannot be free ; it will bind itself with every chain and forget the noble and victorious discipline of the spirit. Long ago it was said : " One must be cured of fear ". One must pursue such methods consciously, in order to liberate oneself from that fear of dusky pettiness, and the creeping phantoms, which caused even the stone that fell from heaven, a flame with a heavenly fire, to become opaque. Truly, opaque and veiled, when it could have been transparent for all, this Scarab of Light.

The Egyptians called artists and sculptors " Seenekh " or " Revivifiers, resurrectors ". In this definition is manifested a deep comprehension of the substance of art. How immeasurably broadened this concept can become if we apply it to all manifestations of life, when we acknowledge that each adorer of daily life is an " artist of life ". And



this true "revivifier of everyday life himself will be uplifted with new power. will become imbued with creative spirit in ennobling each object of daily life. Then the shameful and hideous understanding of "commercial art" will be cast out of usage. We shall call this noble adorer of life "artist of life". He must know life ; he must feel the laws of proportions. He is the creator of the needed forms ; the evaluator of life's rhythms. To him, numbers, correlations, are not dead signs but the formulæ of existence.

Pythagoras calculates and creates, sings praises in rhythm, prays in rhythm ; because numbers were not only the earthly but the heavenly rhythms—the music of the spheres. With Pythagoras, the mathematician, resounds also St. Augustine, the theologian : "*Pulchra numero placent*", beauty enchants by number. This magnet of numbers, proportions, correlations and technical consonances, necessary for each of life's adorners, precludes all diminishing or disintegration of the great creative understanding.

Do not let us fear to speak in the highest terms of each manifestation of beauty. A solicitous, exalted expression is a shield for all practical art, which is often to the obscurity of the cellars. A country which is mindful of the future, should protect all—from the smallest to the greatest—for whose vindication it will be responsible at the great Judgment of Culture. Facilitating the destiny of these builders of life, the country of culture only fulfils the fundamental covenant of the Beautiful, so beautifully expressed by the poets of antiquity : "*Os homine sublime dedit coelumque tueri*". I gave to man a lofty forehead that he should perceive the summit.

With an exalted covenant the *Bhagavat Gita* confirms the multiformity of creation : "By whatever path you come to me, by that path shall I bless thee."

Plato ordained in his treatises on statesmanship :

It is difficult to imagine a better method of education than that that has been discovered and verified by the experience of centuries ; it can be



expressed ' in two propositions : gymnastics for the body and music for the soul'. 'In view of this one must consider education in music as the most important ; thanks to it Rhythm and Harmony are deeply inrooted into the soul, dominate it, fill it with beauty and transform man into a beautiful thinker...He will partake of the Beautiful and rejoice at it, gladly realize it, become saturated with it and will arrange his life in conformity with it.

Of course, the word music, in this case, should not be understood as routine musical education, as it is understood now, in its narrow sense. Music had in Athens, as service to all Muses, a far deeper and broader meaning, than to-day. This conception embraced not only the harmony of sound, but the whole domain of poetry, the whole domain of high perceptions, of exquisite forms and creation in general, in its best sense. The great service to the Muses was a real education of taste, which in everything cognizes the great Beautiful. Just to this eternal Beauty in all its vitality we have to revert, if only the ideas of high constructiveness are not rejected by humanity.

Hippias Maior (beauty) of the dialogue of Plato is not a hazy abstractness, but verily the most vital noble conception. The Beautiful in itself ! The perceptible and conceivable ! In this reality is contained an inspiring, encouraging welcome to the study and inrooting of all ordainments of the Beautiful. "The philosophic moral" of Plato is animated by the sense of the beautiful. And did not Plato himself, who was sold into slavery through the hatred of the tyrant Dionysius and when liberated and dwelling in the gardens of the Academy, proved through his example, the vitality of a beautiful path ? Of course, Plato's gymnastics were not the coarse football or anti-cultural breaking of noses of modern prize-fights. The gymnastics of Plato were the same gates to the Beautiful, the discipline of harmony and uplifting of the body into the spiritual spheres.

Not once we spoke about the introduction in school of a chair of ethics of life, a course of the art of thinking. Without the education of the general realization of the beautiful, these two courses will again remain a dead letter. Again in the course



of only a few years the high vital principles of ethics will turn into a dead dogma, if they are not imbued with the Beautiful.

Many vital conceptions of antiquity have become in our household belittled and vulgar instead of the deserved expansion. Thus the all-embracing, wide and lofty service to the Muses turned into a narrow conception of playing one instrument. When you hear nowadays the word music, you imagine first of all a lesson of music often with conventional limitations. When one hears the word museum, one understands it as a store room of any kind of art objects. As every storehouse, this conception creates a certain flavour of deadliness. Such limited conception of the word museum as a storage place, so deeply entered our understanding, that when one pronounces this conception in its original meaning—muzeon—then no one understands what is really meant. Yet every Hellene of even average education would at once know that Muzeon means first of all the Home of Muses.

Primarily, Muzeon is the abode of all aspects of the Beautiful; not at all in the sense of storing only different kinds of art creations, but in the sense of the most vital and creative application of them in life. Thus one hears nowadays often that people express surprise when a Museum, as such, occupies itself with all spheres of Art, occupies itself with the education of good taste and with the spreading of the sense of the Beautiful.

Here we remember the ordainments of Plato. But in the same way, one may remember also Pythagoras with his Laws of the Beautiful, with his adamant foundations of cosmic realizations. The ancient Hellenes went so far as to crown their Pantheon with an altar to the Unknown God. In this exaltation of spirit they came close to the refined, inexpressible conception of the ancient Hindus, who pronouncing "*Neti, neti*" by no means wanted to say anything negative, but on



the contrary, by saying "not this, not this" manifested thereby the untold greatness of an inexpressible concept.

It is significant that such great conceptions were not abstract, as if living only in the mind and reason: no, they dwelled in the very heart, as something living, life-bringing, inalienable and indestructible, as defined so beautifully in the *Bhagavat Gita*. In the heart was aflame that sacred fire, which was at the base of all flaming commandments also of the hermits of Mt. Sinai. The same sacred fire moulded the precious images of St. Theresa, St. Francis, St. Sergius and all the Fathers of the "Love of the Good", who knew so much and were understood so little.

We speak of the education of good taste, as of a matter of truly basic world significance of every country. When we speak about vital ethics, which should become the favourite school hour of every child, we appeal to the contemporary heart, pleading to it for expansion, if even only to the extent of ancient ordainments.

Can one consider as natural the fact that the conception so glorified already in the time of Pythagoras and Plato, has been so narrowed now and lost its actual meaning, after all the ages of so-called progress. Pythagoras even in the fifth century B. C. symbolized in himself the whole harmonious "Pythagorean Life." It was Pythagoras who affirmed music and astronomy as sisters in science. Pythagoras, who was called by bigots a charlatan, must be horrified to see how instead of showing a harmonious development, our contemporary life has been broken up and mutilated and that we do not even understand the meaning of the beautiful hymn to the sun—to Light.

To-day very strange formulas sometimes appear in the press. For instance, that the flourishing of the intellect is the sign of degeneration. A very strange formula, if only the author does not attribute to the word intellect some special narrow meaning. Of course, if the word intellect is only taken



as the expression of the conventional withered mind, then to some extent this formula may have its foundation. But it is dangerous in case the author understands intellect as intelligence, which first of all should be connected with the education of good taste as the most vital principle of life.

Quite recently, before our eyes, in the West has been adopted the new word—*intelligentzia*. In the beginning this newcomer was met rather suspiciously, but soon it was adopted in literature. It would be important to determine whether this expression symbolises the intellect, or according to ancient conceptions it corresponds to the education of good taste.

If it is a symbol of a refined and expanded consciousness, then we have to greet this innovation, which perhaps will remind us once more of the ancient beautiful principles.

In my letter "Synthesis" the difference of conceptions of Culture and Civilization were discussed. Both these conceptions are sufficiently separated even in standard dictionaries. Let us not therefore return to these two consecutive conceptions, even if someone would be content with the conception of civilization without dreaming about the higher conception of culture.

But remembering about *intelligentzia*, it is permissible to ask whether this conception belongs to Civilization, as to expression of intellect or whether it does already touch a higher region, that is to say whether it belongs to the region of Culture, in which already the heart and spirit act. Of course, if we assume that the expression *intelligentzia* should remain only within the limitation of the mind, then there would be no need to burden with it our literary vocabulary. One may permit an innovation only in such cases, when really something new is introduced, or at least when ancient principles are renewed in present modern circumstances.

Of course, everyone will agree that *intelligentzia*, this aristocracy of the Spirit, belongs to Culture, and only in this connection one could greet this new literary expression.



In this case, the education of good taste belongs, of course, first of all to the *intelligentzia*, and not only does it belong, but it becomes its duty. Without fulfilling this duty, *intelligentzia* has no right for existence and condemns itself to savagery.

The education of good taste cannot be something abstract. Above all, this is a vital attainment in all spheres of life, for where can there be a boundary to the service to the Muses of the ancient Hellenes? If in the old days this service was understood in its full glory and adapted to life in the whole beauty of its principle, then should we not be ashamed, if in superstition and bigotry we cut off the radiant wings of the rising spirits?

When we propose ethics as a course in schools, as a them most inspiring, limitless, full of constructive principles, we thus presuppose at the same time the transmutation of taste, as a defence against vulgarity and ugliness.

Andromeda said: "And I brought thee the Fire!" The ancient Hellene, the follower of Euripides, understood the meaning of this Fire and why this Agni is so precious. We, however, in most cases babble about this inspiring conception as about phosphor matches. We attach the high conception of Phosphor—the bringer of Light—to a match and try to light with it our extinguished hearth, in order to prepare the broth for to-day. But where is To-morrow, this radiant wonderful To-morrow?

We have forgotten about it. We have forgotten because we have lost the ability of searching, have lost the refined taste, which urges to betterment, to dreams, to higher consciousness. Dreams have become like dull slumber; but he who does not know how to dream, does not belong to the future, does not belong to humanity with its high ideal.

Even the simple truth that dreams about the future are the basic distinction of man from animal, has already become a truism. But truism in itself is no longer a generally accepted



truth, as it should be, but became the synonym of a truth of which one should not think altogether. Nevertheless disregarding everything, even in times of the greatest difficulties and world crises, let us not defer the thought about the education of taste, let us not put off the thought of life-bringing ethics, as of a necessary course of school education. Let us not forget the art of thinking, the art of memory, and let us forever remember the treasure of the heart.

A certain hermit left his retreat and came with the message, saying to everyone: "Thou hast a heart". When he was asked why he does not speak about mercy, patience, devotion, love and all other benevolent foundations of life, he replied: "If only they do not forget the heart, the rest will adjust itself." Verily can we appeal for love, if it has no place to reside? And where could patience dwell, when its abode is closed? Thus in order not to torture ourselves with inapplicable blisses, we must build that garden, which will flourish in the realization of the heart. Let us stand firmly on the foundation of the heart and let us understand that without the heart we are as a lost shell". Thus the Wise Ones ordained. Thus ordains *Agni Yoga*. Thus let us accept and apply.

Without the untiring realization of the Beautiful, without incessant refinement of the heart and consciousness, we would make the laws of earthly existence cruel and deadly in their hatred against humanity. In other words, we would, when killing the Beautiful, assist the most shameful, debased downfall.

The Romans said: *Sub pretextu juris summum jus saepe summa injuria; suaviter in modo fortiter in re.* (Under pretext of justice a strict application of law is often the gravest injury. Be gentle in manner, though resolute in execution).

Let us be broad and resolute in the realization of the Beautiful!



The very traditions of Art we must safeguard and inroot in contemporary life. Whence else will come the nobleness of spirit? How else will grow the dignity of personality? Whence will descend the realization of broad co-operation and mutual trust? From the very same inexhaustible source of radiant, blessed creativeness. Life is transformed by the achievements of Culture. Difficult as they may be in the time of narrow materialism, we know that these achievements will be the moving force of humanity. Light is one and the gates to it are verily international, and accessible for all who seek light. Darkness is admitted only for the time of sleep, but verily it is not for sleep humanity perfects itself through millions of years.

It is not a truism to think of and invoke Culture. With all means, not restraint in quantity, we must bring into the chalice of Culture all accumulations of our hearts. It is said that we now approach the epoch of fire. What a wonderous nature-element it is, if we can realize it and apply it benevolently? Kindling the torches of spirit, is it not beautiful to realize that in other countries the very same torches also radiate? This realization of co-operation will strengthen and uplift our quests. Whether we shall behold these friends with the physical eye, or feel them in the spirit of our heart, we know not what is more precious. It is important to know that the Chalice of the Graal, the Chalice of Culture, is interminably being filled and that in hearty co-operation our friends deposit there their best spiritual values.

Leonardo ordained :

He who despises the art of painting, thus despises a philosophic and refined conception of the universe, because the art of painting is the daughter, or rather grandchild of Nature. Everything that exists, was born from Nature, and has been born in its turn the science of painting. is why I say that painting is the grand-child of Nature and relative of God. This He who blasphemes the art of painting, blasphemes Nature.

The painter should be all-embracing. O, artist, may thy versatility be as infinite, as the manifestations of Nature. Continuing what God began, strive to multiply not human deeds, but the eternal creations of Gods,



Never imitate any one. Let every masterpiece of yours be a new manifestation of Nature.

History records the manifold remarkable achievements of Leonardo da Vinci in all domains of life. He left amazing mathematical writings, he investigated the nature of flying, he conducted medical researches, and was a distinguished anatomist. He invented musical instruments, studied the chemistry of paint, he loved the wonders of natural history. He adorned cities with magnificent buildings, palaces, schools, libraries; he built large military barracks, constructed one of the best ports in the Adriatic and planned and built great waterways; he founded mighty forts, constructed war machinery, sketched military plans...Great was his versatility.

But after all these remarkable achievements, he remained in the memory of the world as an artist—as the great artist. Is this not a true victory of Art ?

“Verily, verily, Beauty is Brahman. Art is Brahman. Science is Brahman. Every Glory, every Magnificence, every Greatness, is Brahman.”

Thus exclaimed the Hindu saint coming back from the greatest Samadhi. A new path of beauty and wisdom shall come.

The great Swami Vivekananda tells us :

“Don't you see I am above all a poet?” “That man cannot be truly religious, who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandeur of art.” “Non-appreciation of art is crass ignorance.”

From former days, perhaps the fifteenth century, in Russia there has come down to us a legend in which Christ is proclaimed as the highest guardian of beauty. According to this legend, when Christ was ascending to heaven, some troubadours approached him and asked :

Lord Christ, to whom are you leaving us ? How can we exist without you ?



And Christ answered :

“My children, I shall give you the golden mountains and silver river and beautiful gardens and you shall be nourished and happy.”

But then St. John approached Christ and said :

“Oh Lord, give them not golden mountains and silver rivers. They do not know how to guard them, and someone rich and powerful will attack them and take away the golden mountains. Give them only your name and your beautiful song, and give the command that all those who appreciate the songs and who care for and guard the singers shall have the open gates to Paradise.”

And Christ replied :

“Yes, I shall give them, not golden mountains, but my songs; and all who appreciate them shall find the open gates to Paradise.”

Rabindranath Tagore finishes his book, WHAT IS ART with such words :

“In Art the person in us is sending its answer to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts.”

There is no other way, O friends scattered ! May my call penetrate to you. Let us join ourselves by the invisible threads of the Beautiful. I turn to you, I call to you ; in the name of Beauty and Wisdom, let us combine for struggle and work.

During the days of the Armageddon let us ponder on Eternal Values, which are the cornerstone of Evolution.