

EUGEN ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY

THE ARTIST AND HIS COMMUNITY

Commencement exercises

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CHAPTER ONE: TO BE ARTISTIC

I

1

THE STORY OF ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY LEARNING ENGLISH

When I was a kid of ten in Berlin, Germany, I learned English from a very fine American lady. She told me that the best English spoken in the world was to be found in Boston, Massachusetts. My teacher said that the ladies of Boston made a point of speaking better English than the British, that they cultivated the creative arts and literature more than any other group of people.

To a dreaming and wondering boy, far distant things of which he had no visible impression – and I never saw a picture of actual Boston before I came to this city – I say, to a boy only hearing these things, Boston acquired a mysterious quality like a place all by itself. It was not an American city. It was an arch of fineness.

2

And so I fell especially happy today to be invited to the Stuart School in Boston, to this place where my childish vision comes true so completely;

*by the aim of your school,
by the origin of this institution,
by its close connection with Florence,*

the school expresses in a most genuine way something new and original and yet something in line with the great Bostonian tradition of longing to be at home in the places of beauty.

3

Naturally, then, let me take you instantaneously to Florence for a second little episode.

THE STORY OF THE MONA LISA STOLEN IN 1913

When I lived in Florence in 1913, the Mona Lisa of Leonardo had been stolen from the Louvre. Word came by grape-vine telegraph to the folks of the city, that the thief had fled from France to Italy; that he had gone to Florence; that he had committed the theft in Paris only in order that Florence should reclaim this gem of art of one of her greatest sons; that he was hiding in a poor *albergo*, a hostel, in a poor quarter of the old city.

This news kept us in continuous excitement.

Finally, it became known that the picture would be given back to the French; however, it would be exhibited in the Uffizi for a month, and thus the vision of the thief would come true at least for one happy month.

The Florentines reveled in the story, loved the thief, flocked to the Uffizi. And while admiring the picture, they also thought of keeping the memory of this feat, and they rebaptized the tavern. It was called "*Alla Gioconda*", the Inn of the Mona Lisa.

4

Thus, you see that a work of art gave life to the city of Florence for a whole month.

The event was deemed important. The warmth of emotion did not cool off because *Donna Lisa* had lived and was painted many centuries earlier. It was just as in Cimabue's days in 1300 when the whole Florentine community is said to have marched out in procession from Florence to Portoallegri to receive the last painting of Cimabue, the Madonna Rucellai.

A life-giving fire ran through the members of the community because they felt ennobled, every one of them, by that work of genius.

A work of art binds together the artist and his community.

II

1

Let me talk on this subject, then, today: *the artist and his community*.

You and we all are on the crossroads today. We all are accustomed to consider the question: the artist and his public.

I contrast this usual question of the artist and his public in my question: the artist and his community; because we all have to decide how far we are going to be the artist's public, how far we are going to build up for him and with him his home, his community, his fellowship.

2

Let us first visit the artist's community; then, let us turn to your special situation as graduating from a school of the creative arts.

3

In our modern world, we easily think of the genius of an artist as on the one side of the fence, and of the public as standing on the other side of the fence looking, perhaps I should say gazing or staring, at his work, admiring him.

Here stands the artist, a tremendous peak, a pylon like the triangular pylon on the New York's *World Fair*; there we stand, the public, with our admiration, a circle if not a globe of pedestrians. The symbols of the World's Fair, unknowingly contrast the round world of the globe-trotting mediocrity, the all of the earth, with the spear-thrust of immortal effort. They stand, the pylon and the globe, as you know, in the centre of the Fair, unconnected, yet side by side.

In this conception, the artist embodies all the energy and vitality reaching to the stars; the public passively looks on as we do when we sit dreamingly at the movies. In the theatres of Hollywood, we sit as if under a hot shower bath. Something is done for us; we need not do anything.

4

If this were the true relation between the artist and his public then I should have an explanation for a strange poem which I read some time ago, in the New York Times. This is what the poem said:

THE STORY OF THE OLD FRIEND WHO HAS SEEN ALL THE PICTURES

A doctor goes to see an old friend who is sick. He finds that nothing special is the matter with this, and advises that, and recommends a third thing; the old man stolidly replies: "I have seen all the pictures; I have seen all the pictures." And he declines to live any longer. "I have seen all the pictures."

Now, if likewise, the public of the arts should say in the end: "I have seen all the pictures", would that be the public for which genius toils?

Does study of the creative arts mean just this: to see all the pictures? And then die from fastidious days.

III

1

We have facilities like no other generation for enjoying all the pictures, all the sites, all the music, all the great cathedrals ever built, ever composed, ever created - by travel, through reproductions, in lectures, in museums. For the first time, the whole

world has become an open book to the mass of men. Every year, so to speak, we are able to do more in a shorter time.

Shall we end in despair like the old man because we *have seen all the pictures*?

2

You would not have worked for years now, in the field of the arts, if this were to be your relation to genius and to art: he the skyscraper, you his admirers; he the active creator, we a passive receiver of his outpourings, a receiver that finally revolts against "too many pictures".

3

Let us look for a better story about the artist and his community.

You all have read the *Fairy Tales* of Cinderella and Snow White, and Red Cap and so on and so forth, as collected for the first time in 1812 by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, in German.

These two famous brothers, in their youth, befriended one of the queens of the romantic school, Bettina von Arnim, a friend of poets and kings. And so, the Grimms brought to Bettina their first edition of their now famous collection of fairy tales.

In the printed dedication they said that they felt sure Bettina would appreciate the eternal poetry contained in the modest folkore.

4

Now, comes my story:

THE STORY OF BETTINA VON ARNIM

For, as time went on, Bettina and Jacob Grimm became very, very old; and they looked old like Johann Strauss and his sweetheart in the movie, the *Great Waltz*, on the day of triumph for the king of the waltz. (If you have seen the movie, you also may have felt the pang in your heart: what it means to grow old.)

Notwithstanding the lapse of one generation, Jacob Grimm, for a new edition of the *Fairy Tales* in 1843, printed a new dedication to this effect:

"To Bettina von Arnim, after a long life of friendship, I am dedicating these fairy tales once more. I am not afraid of annoying you with these old stories, well known now; because, in your old days, you are able to look into the flower-cup of a lily as

though you were perceiving it for the first time in your life. And by this quality of wonder, you will find these fairy tales as fresh and startling as when I brought them to you in our prime.”

IV

1

May I become dry and prosaic, for a moment, by asking for the logical meaning of this remarkable sentence: “Yet, I have seen you stop in front of a simple lily and look into its cup with the wonder of first youth”?

If we can find the full rational meaning of this sentence it may contain the secret of the artist and his community. Bettina von Arnim, at seventy, was untired, unspoiled; she was not simply a member of the public, potentially she was the artist.

For, what else is the artist but the man who can see God’s world as though he had never seen it before?

2

The artist whom you admire, admires the universe himself. It takes these two admirations to place the arts in our community.

The artist’s ever fresh admiration of the world is quite astounding when you consider that he *sees, hears, smells*, many more things than the ordinary man with blunted senses.

3

Usually an artist pays much more attention to the world, he tastes more sensations, sees more pictures, light, colors, outlines than the regular Babbitt. And so, even with outer conditions equal between the artist and the public, the artist always is more impressed, more struck by his environment than the layman.

In spite of this the artist shows the ingenuousness of a man who sees a thing for the first time, and feels not embarrassed at all in admitting his surprise.

4

To be artistic, then, means to be able to see the world today as though it never had existed before.

The artist is that eye and ear and taste of first wonder at the dawn of creation. Art is the dream of humanity's spring, eternally young, eternally surprising. Remember all your own delights in art: they always contain an element of divine surprise, what Victor Hugo has called a "*frisson nouveau*" over the fact that this or that exists in our world and can be brought to light by a hand obedient to our senses and showing, in the work of the artist, as his discovery.

The artist's handwriting - and handwriting is a fine word for the style in great art - his handwriting actually is the expression of his joyful outcry over the miraculous universe.

CHAPTER TWO: DAILY WONDER

I

1

And now we see here a layman, Bettina von Arnim, the reader of the book, praised for this very same quality. She does not differ from the artist in her quality of wonder.

The artist's public, if it is any good, must not admire so much the artist, as it must have the same admiration which the artist felt, before the universe.

2

We, too, kneel in wonder before the world as if we never had seen it before.

3

But this is a discovery. For, today, many people think of themselves less as Bettinas, as potential admirers of God's creation, than as little connoisseurs. And they mistake their place in the artist's community. "*They are connoisseured out of their senses*", as William Blake called it, and George Eliot wrote of them:

"They know everything about the arts, but they run the risk of being ignorant of nothing concerning the scent of violets except the scent itself for which one has no nostril."

4

Now, it is true that some people must be connoisseurs. *The art dealer, the art critic, the historian of art, the art publisher and the agent*, they are the people who have to wait for the artist to appear, and then try to connect him with his public. They are the victims of the artist's struggle.

But long before they enter the scene, there must have run through the community and its artists one common bond of wonder and admiration for something common in both: *God's creation*. In this sentiment, the artist must be backed by his community long before he can start creating anything. Only later he becomes the mouthpiece, the voice, the hand of humanity itself, expressing that same sense of wonder that should be alive in all of us.

II

1

In a true community the pylon reaching to the stars, and the globe smooth and round do not stand for different kinds of people. In a vital civilization it would not be true that the artists were reaching to the stars, and the public staring at something out of reach.

Quite the contrary: *you, we, all of us* are reaching to the stars, and the artist standing on the shoulders of our dreams, of our power of wonder and surprise, gets the stars for us because we have desired them, every one of us.

2

THE STORY OF HIS STUDENTS

My students often make me angry by speaking of genius as something absolutely strange, and calling themselves little men.

That is preposterous. Instead of breaking mankind up into two halves, artists here and public over there, there must have pulsed through humankind one unified stream of wonder and ingenuousness and expectation.

3

You, we, I, we all must write poetry, we all must feel like writing poetry, for example. *You, I, she, we all* must paint, or feel like painting the sunset, and only give up in the face of the tremendous task reluctantly.

We all must start to praise God in his creatures and in songs of love.

Only when, in this active way, our own expectations are harnessed, can the artist do what everybody would like to have done, himself.

4

In this connection a famous story comes to my mind, by that brilliant English writer G. K. Chesterton. The story is very dear to my heart because my great friend Richard Cabot and myself used this story invariably, in our discussions, as a stringent example of our creed.

Now, Dr. Richard Cabot is a great man and a great Bostonian, and his recent passing away is such a loss to this community that I take up the story with special delight, in

memory of Richard Cabot's divine laughter, and his understanding of the creative arts.

III

1

THE STORY OF MR. McCABE

Mr. McCabe was an austere clergy man, I suppose always wearing black, who lived thirty, forty years ago, and he discovered that dancing in the *Alhambra Hall* in London in 1900 was a terrible sin. It was in the days before Isadora Duncan had given the world a new vision of what the dance could and should be. Dancing still was confined to professional and commercialized ballets.

Mr. McCabe had not the slightest idea that our own dancing might be related to the great dance of the cosmic order. He only bewailed the social conditions and the immorality of dancing in the Alhambra.

2

Thereupon our beloved Chesterton wrote:

THE STORY OF COSMIC DANCING

"The main point of modern life is not that the Alhambra has its place in life. The main point, the main enormous tragedy of modern life is that Mr. McCabe has not his place in the Alhambra ballet. The joy of dancing, the joy of suiting the swing of music to the swing of limbs, the joy of whirling drapery, the joy of standing on one leg - all these should belong by rights to Mr. McCabe and to me, in short, to the ordinary citizen.

Probably we should not consent to get through these evolutions. But that is because we are miserable moderns and rationalists. We do not merely love ourselves more than we love duty; we actually love ourselves more than we love joy.

If Mr. McCabe himself had ever felt the ancient, sublime, elemental instinct to dance, he would have discovered that dancing is not frivolous at all but a very serious thing. He would have discovered that it is the one grave and chaste and decent method of expressing a certain class of emotions. I should regard any civilization which was without a universal habit of uproarious dancing as being a defective civilization. About the whole cosmos there is a tense and secret festivity like preparations for a great dance."

3

O Chesterton, you unfettered and loosened my rights of a human being thirty years ago. I thank you for this word today and I accept it one more as a message to the group assembled here.

You shall enter the world with the feeling, I trust, that about the whole cosmos, there is indeed a tense and secret festivity like preparations for the most beautiful dance, and that none of you will love yourselves more than you love joy.

4

The *machine age girl* is very often believed incapable of real love, i. e., of forgetting her aims and will and plans and calculations. And to calculate, means to be bent on loving yourself more than anything else. Take your choice; conquer yourself by loving the beauty of this our world, by joyfully entering into it full of daily wonder.

She, who devoted herself honestly to the arts, loves joy more than herself. If she cannot feel that she should stop working.

IV

1

But I know that at this stage of your life, it is easy for you to have the sense of divine wonder; for, you are young. All that you ought to be told explicitly today is that this sense for the daily newness of the universe is your greatest treasure at graduation.

2

I am sure that many of you will soon have or own a lot of things, big and small, *furniture, dresses, jewelry, money.*

Now, your real dowry for life is incorruptible joy over the daily created universe, created anew by our genuine appetite and the artist's felicitous achievement, based on this our insatiable appetite.

3

And the artistic education given to you at this school, must be viewed in relation to this fundamental joy; then, you will treat this education as the shrine for your joy.

Training in the arts is like a protective custody for your main treasure, your power o keep this joy of the eternal first day of creation alive in you.

4

Don't give up your daily pilgrimage to this shrine. But, as little as in religion, does the shrine matter for any other purpose but for protecting real life.

We do not surround ourselves with art as a luxury. Bad art is stuffy, extravagant, costly.

Great art is an humble means for helping the community to remain full of wonder and joy.

CHAPTER THREE: MATERIAL

I

1

Now, if you will lend me your attention for a second attack, I should like to apply the discovery of the identity of our own and the artist's wonderment in defining the specialized artist and the function of this school.

Why must the universal wonder of humankind be represented by a few men called artists, in every generation? If we all feel alike, why are we not all artists?

Secondly, once this is understood how can any educational process help the arts? In other words, what is the use of a school like this for the creative arts?

I think that you, from the Stuart School, may have a special message to carry into our community.

2

My two questions then are:

First: why do we need special poets, special musicians, special artists at all if everybody presumably is a Bettina von Arnim?

And second: what is the function of a graduating class like this?

3

In answering the first question, why we do need special artists, we must look at creation itself for a moment and its treatment under our hand.

THE STORY OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

I once gave a talk on Paul the Apostle; and a man from the audience afterwards teased me by saying: You really are in love with your material.

I was dumbfounded when he called Paul my material. Of course, I am in love, I hope, with Paul. But I never had thought of calling him my material.

4

Now, any artist is in love with his material; but because he is in love with his material he is quite unable to call it material as the world does. What appears to the insipid onlooker to be his material is the living God in his creatures challenging the artist's services to save them from the mishandling of God by man.

Let us take poetry as an example and ask: *what is the material of poetry?*

II

1

Well, its words, simply words as we use them all the day long, in *discussion, gossip, small talk, advertising, classroom recitations and commencement addresses*. The only little difference between all these usages and the use of words made by poetry is that poetry uses the words as they ought to be used, with their *full power, vitality, evolutionary emergence, and idiomatic flavor*. In all other ways of life, we partially at least abuse language, dry it up, abbreviate it, condense it, stifle it.

2

Ours is a tin can language. Poetry is the only full and complete and perfect usage of words in which the gruesome term "material" gives way to the full resuscitation of God's greatest gift to man: language.

You only need to look to the other extreme of the whole range of using language: to the terms: A.A.A. and N.R.A., and B.B.C., and M.I.T. This is certainly the most imperfect use that can be made of language.

3

Thousands of years ago, the common usage among men, for speaking, was plain chant as you can hear it nowadays in Church when Mass is said or in the Synagogue when the Cantor reads the sacred texts. Plain Chant shows man's real love for his material, language, serving it to the full.

At that time, man used plain chant, neither merely speaking nor merely singing. The two arts of music and poetry had not yet been divorced. Later, our throat grew more and more lazy. Speaking came into existence as a second stage, and this stenographing of our original speech is going on before our ears.

4

When you compare an Italian and a Chicago-man, you may feel, in your physique how the throat is shutting up more and more. First we used our lungs, later our throat, later our mouth, and now people try to use their nose only.

III

1

To make up for this loss of plain chant in daily life, singing branched off in the opposite direction, developing man's capacity to become an organ.

THE STORY OF A FAMOUS SINGER

A famous singer used to call her voice "this beautiful organ".

As to speaking, this, then, is the natural tendency: in our *whispering, chatting, shouting, and yelling* during twenty-five hours out of twenty-four, the natural man does something to his material of words; he debases, abbreviates and finally kills a "material" which originally was part of man's uproarious dancing through a living universe.

2

We kill Shakespeare by using quotations from him on silly occasions.

We really do everything we can so that the treasures of creative language may lie dead on the ground, their spell broken, their magic charm exploited for propaganda.

3

The poet makes up for this. He re-creates language. He has pity on its bleeding and maimed and mutilated corpse.

Language having fallen among the thieves, it is taken up by the poet as the Good Samaritan of creation. He restores the corpse to its splendor, by creating it all over again.

4

Because people make lifelong efforts to destroy the power of majestic language, it takes the life-long effort of special poets to bring it back to life in every generation.

And so the poet would not have to exist if we would all cease making so many empty noises, but would talk only when our heart was so full of something that the words must burst out

*from the bottom of our heart through our lungs,
up our throat,
out of our mouth,
with the nose quietly out of the way,*

*the nostrils perhaps just a little bit trembling in surprise over
this uproarious human heart that suddenly takes away the breath of the nose;
the nose;
the nose only takes an interest in the outside world, and has utter contempt for the outbursts
of the heart.*

IV

1

The poet restores the normal pressure under which full grown speech alone can be attained, and that pressure cannot be had without the pipeline re-opening again from the heart across the lungs up the throat on to our lips.

Then alone does the pressure testify to our being swayed by the sense of wonder and joy and praise and gratitude which made man speak and which makes man speak today.

2

Then, language is not treated as artistic material ever so precious, but as the plain chant at the tense and secret festivity of cosmic life.

This same process goes on in the colors and forms of the universe which we abuse in our dresses.

THE STORY OF ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY'S DRESS

My dress certainly is an offense in the eyes of my maker like all man's clothes. Daily, man testifies to the "Decline and Fall of Trousers".

Our furniture, our building: woe to them.

3

The artist uses to the full what most of us are too poor, too lazy, and too blunted to use at all.

Music - why, we are living in a universe of music; for music originally means the whole rhythmical flow of inspiration of any sort.

The Muses are nine, all in all. The composer makes up for our relapsing into din and noise and deafness in which we moderns seem to specialize.

4

This, then explains, the artist's special message. He is the physician who takes the corpses of created beauty back to the fountain of eternal youth. Since, incessantly, sewage is dumped into the river of human expression killing all the life, somebody has to perform this cure.

CHAPTER FOUR: WAND AND WONDER

I

1

And now, it becomes easy to place this graduating class within modern society.

This world is a world of *litter, sewage, advertising, blinding lights, and nasal triteness*. You are equipped with insight and with practice in the arts. You have been initiated into this sacred fellowship which binds together the artist and his community, the whole human race.

2

Please don't take your place only in front of the artist, as connoisseur, as his future public and admirer. Help him to admire the universe. You are between the barbarian and the decadent, on the side of the artist, somewhere in the middle. Among you there are amateurs, and, perhaps, an artist.

But what matters today is not the individual rank which you may claim for your individual self. What matters is if you will think of the artist only as of a man handing out autographed signatures to admirers, and being applauded. That is good, too. We all need encouragement so much.

However, the great sigh of our age goes in another direction. The whole of creation is groaning and moaning for the broadening *of joy, of youth, of wonder*, in an all too well known universe.

3

You are born advocates of that precious material in sounds, smells, movements that God has given to his image, so that we may be clothed by them radiantly.

There are personal limitations.

THE STORY OF ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY'S LIMITATIONS

I can't paint. I gave up music one day when I felt that the musical element ought to fuse with my intellectual life still more intimately, that my thoughts had better become musical.

And yet, despite all our individual shortcomings, we are shot through with the sense of wonder.

4

Without being a creative artist everybody knows creativity. That is the final secret that I entrust to you as the graduating class.

It was already present in Chesterton's uproarious laughter.

II

1

I bring it once more to you, the graduating, matured disciples of art. I shall disclose to you the real meaning of the term "*creative*". Many people harp on this word today. But they are apt to mistake creativity for action.

This is not so. The artist wields a magic wand like Prospero in the *Tempest*. He can change the world.

2

And, during your years here, you often must have wondered over your power of transforming nothing into something. A little art makes all the difference in the world.

But do you know that the words "wand" and "to wonder" actually are of one root and that they look at the same process from two sides?

By the "wand" the world is changed, and by "wonder" we ourselves change.

3

Now, one change cannot be had without the other. World and man are two elements in one metamorphosis. The artist may change the world on condition that he is changeable himself. We create, but we also are created in the process.

Creativity, it is true, means our own doing: however, this active doing is sterile where it is not the result of our own soul's plasticity. When we can dissolve in wonderment and conceive under its overwhelming power, when we are made over, we can make over the universe.

4

In German, we call this metamorphosis, "*Verwandlung*". It is a word pertaining to the words "wand" and "wonder" and uniting them as they always should be united. Creativity is active and passive at the same time. It is divine because it is masculine and feminine, doing and receiving.

III

1

You must not go virile or masculine to be fully human. Strike the balance between the active and the passive in the middle voice, and you will be human.

2

In fact, we all know this fact by instinct. We all treat an artist as changing under the sequence of his works. Look how we react when the name of an artist is mentioned.

Do we think that first is the man, and later his work?

Not at all.

3

Shakespeare is the author of his plays to us. And with every play he has written he has become more the "real" Shakespeare.

Beethoven first is the composer of the first symphony and the Eroica, perhaps. Then he becomes the composer of the Fifth. Later he takes the world by storm with the Ninth Symphony. Finally, outrunning all the living he writes the late quartets, a promise that still is ahead of many, waiting for our maturity in the future to be fully understood.

With every one of *Leonardo's* great works, his reputation was made over.

The work renewed the person to whom it was given.

4

So it is with our wondrous creations in life, They must change us, if they are first rate.

IV

1

Conceiving a work is at the same time a change in quality of our own nature.

You cannot create except by being re-created yourself.

2

It was the tragedy of *Amy Lowell*, here in Boston, that she could not see this.

Emily Dickinson knew it, and so achieved greatness.

3

The sense that does the changing inside ourselves is the sense of wonder, it is that faculty of living as though you never lived before.

We will change the world as long as we can be changed.

4

Let this be your most intimate connection with the creative arts: to be creative also means to be in the making, and being created, yourselves.

CHAPTER FIVE: SEEING AS GOD SEES

I

1

Women who have become emancipated, think too often of life as doing. It is, however, far too wondrous for that.

Making, and being in the making, is one and the same process, called living.

2

By the perpetual sense of wonder in human hearts, obliterating all our prejudices and conventions, the beauty of the world can be recreated daily. And then you will save the artist's place in the community because you will be his community.

3

Today the artist stands far too alone, everybody expecting him to do miracles, and the poor man dies from inner starvation much more than from lack of food. You are the top-soil of the flower-bed in which art can grow connecting the inimical and yet inevitable sub-soil and the stalk and stem of the arts.

4

Yours is the greatest function, at this moment, because the artist and his public are falling asunder; backing the artist by your own sense of wonder, your own handling of God's materials, your own great and lasting expectation on the eve of the great festivity called life.

II

1

Overcome your calculations; look into the flower-cup of the lily, at seventy, as though you were seeing it for the first time in your life. And the artist will come to life, backed by a human community sharing in the conditions of creativity, standing again on the shoulders of our dreams and desires which he expresses better than we ourselves.

Be full of things to be expressed by artists.

2

Lest you mistake my appeal as lofty and impractical in our days of economic planning, revolutions, unemployment, slum clearing, and social worries, it may be in order to mention the very practical side of this attitude.

3

THE STORY OF A YOUNG FRIEND FROM BUFFALO

Three days ago, a young friend from Buffalo visited at my house. He is with the *Federal Housing Administration*, and it is his business to pick the most deserving tenants. At least, he asked me what he should do since these tenants had their eyes on the movie stars and the simonized car of their neighbor; but they would dump their ash-cans right in their own backyard. And no signs, nor advice, nor warning made any impression.

Well, I was a little bit confused myself; then I blushed and said: "Frankly, you know," I said, "I am one of those messy people myself. It does not help to tell me to do this or that. In the case of the ash-cans, I do not feel too sure that I would not dump them if I happened to be a tenant pinched for his rent, his water bill, his work, his family." I said; "I must be frank with you. You don't aim at the center of these people. You try to make it easy for them by talking about ash-cans only. And you let them down; you must aim at higher things to achieve the small ones."

And I had to tell him that when we moved out into the country, an infinite number of chores descended upon me, of which I had never dreamt before. And I was not good at them. I simply was paralyzed by the variety and endlessness of them.

Rationally I knew that I was expected to clean the furnace, and take out the manure, and cut trees, and weed the garden. But I kept my city habits as a means to overlook the chores, pretending that I had to do more important things.

And like the poor tenant, I called more important the things which I was accustomed to do in the city, like writing letters, reading books, waiting for the mail, etc. Only when I realized the complete change of my life from a city dweller to a homesteader, and all the wonderful implications of this change, when I began to accept the potentialities of acquiring a new character myself, only then did I find access to the qualities asked for in serving the deities of space.

Attic and barn and basement and field acquired the reality which things only attain when they become expressions of our own way of life. And then we begin to personalize them as the modern nomad does when he speaks of his car as she.

4

Feeling the charm of being made over, gradually, from a nomad into a man who has settled for good, in every sense of this word, gives us new eyes and new senses.

And then, one day the same ash-cans against which the housing authorities have fought in vain, these same ash-cans will disappear as by witchcraft.

III

1

And it truly is witchcraft because the magic wand has not touched the ash-cans but the blunted senses of the tenant and restored them to their proper glory first.

The so-called practical people who think that to concentrate on little things is the easiest way, don't know the machinery of living people. Aim higher than the so-called practical people, and you will achieve, on the one hand, the very thing which they try to do and cannot do, and, on the other hand, something more durable: you will have changed the things of this world because you have restored the heir of this wondrous world, man, to realizing his heritage.

2

Now I have taken you first to Berlin to tell you how fascinating Boston was when looked at from far away. Then we went to Florence, and to the *Alhambra* ballet in London; alas, my opportunity is over. I had such a good time.

Perhaps I may end this round trip with a short excursion to Mount Monadnock. After all, summer is here and it behooves us at this occasion, to provide a handful of good New Hampshire air. Around Monadnock, you still may feel that the world is on the eve of something.

3

THE STORY OF THE HERMIT THRUSH

I have heard there my first and only hermit thrush singing. And I shall not forget my sense of wonder over this song as long as I live.

4

However, this is not the ultimate reason for our going to Monadnock now.

THE STORY OF ABBOT THAYER

I got there something for you, from an artist.

On the foot of Monadnock lies the former house of a painter well known through this country, Abbot Thayer. The house and study have been deserted for years. Books, sketches, furniture, everything is just going to pieces. This famous author of a book on protective coloring, in this his hermitage, has not found any protective coloring. Five years ago I entered Abbot Thayer's study. And what might have been a nightmare otherwise, turned out like a visit to the Grail, for one sheet of paper that was lying on the table. Here from this sheet, a spirit of order seemed to dominate the room like a last will and testament.

In Thayer's handwriting, in the middle of the room, on the table, I read and copied the words which I have printed since, as a message to posterity.

IV

1

I don't know if this is a quotation or a truth formulated by the painter himself. I am inclined to think that it is his own thought. But what does it matter? I don't know if anybody else ever has read it or transmitted it to the world.

2

And so, from the foot of Mount Monadnock I am carrying to you the word, nothing bombastic, no; sober, reflecting, scrutinizing words, and yet telling you why we all crave the artist's attitude.

We all crave our emancipation from the artifact mostly called man to the real human being.

3

Abbot Thayer wrote:

"Art rescues man from his state of being limited to a point and to a moment. Contrive as you will, your camera cannot exclude the peculiarity of the moment and the place. This is the torture of the intellect, that it is condemned to still-photography. But it longs to see from all points, from all moments, as God does.

The bliss of contemplation of a work of art is this sense of emancipation, of seeing as God sees, and as we may sometimes see."

4

Graduating Class of 1939, you are emancipated by the laws of this free country from inequality.

Be emancipated by the bliss of wonder to the emancipation of seeing as God sees. through a wonderful, and, therefore, happy life.

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"Art rescues man from his state of being limited to a point and to a moment. Contrive as you will, your camera cannot exclude the peculiarity of the moment and the place. This is the torture of the intellect, that it is condemned to still-photography. But it longs to see from all points, from all moments, as God does. The bliss of contemplation of a work of art is this sense of emancipation, of seeing as God sees, and as we may sometimes see." (Abbot Thayer)

A work of art binds together the artist and his community.

Conceiving a work is at the same time a change in quality of our own nature.

For, what else is the artist but the man who can see God's world as though he had never seen it before?

Great art is an humble means for helping the community to remain full of wonder and joy.

Making, and being in the making, is one and the same process, called living.

The artist's public, if it is any good, must not admire so much the artist, as it must have the same admiration which the artist felt, before the universe.

To be artistic, then, means to be able to see the world today as though it never had existed before.

We all must start to praise God in his creatures and in songs of love.

We will change the world as long as we can be changed.

NOTE OF THE EDITOR

Transcribed from the typescript. Articulated by chapters (with titles scooped from the text), paragraphs etc. according to the change of tone, which realizes here (and elsewhere) what the author says: *I gave up music one day when I felt that the musical element ought to fuse with my intellectual life still more intimately, that my thoughts had better become musical.*

The twenty parts articulate the great joy, the whole speech being a praise of his own childhood and youth (I played on the piano in Four Wells using scores inscribed with the name of his mother Paula Rosenstock).

Each chapter paces the four fields of the cross of reality, each field again containing four steps – sixteen steps per chapter.

The reader (listener) is taken to

the future as listener

the inspiration of being involved

the listening to what happened and is worthwhile to be listened to just now

the point of fact which opens the progress to the next stage

The fifth chapter is the first of the second quartet of chapters – re-opening the understanding of what was heard.

This beautiful speech is indeed the lily in Rosenstock-Huessy's oeuvre.

Cologne, Decemeber 31, 2016

Eckart Wilkens