A Statement of Purpose

To teachers and students seeking the creative outlook on international problems and opportunities, World Unity Magazine offers a source of reliable information and non-partisan comment. It deals with the fundamental issues of human life and civilization as revealed by vital movements in philosophy, history, science, religion, economics and politics. With the aid of leading scholars in Europe, Asia and America, World Unity strives to promote understanding and cooperation among races, classes, nations and religions. A new culture is rapidly developing based upon a science of human relationships the effect of which will be to revitalize the influence of education in human affairs. World Unity faithfully records the emergence of the international mind amid the welter and confusion of this transitional age.

"It has been ver encouraging to see the warm reception which World Unity has received and to note its constant progress. There was room for a magazine which should devote itself to a non-partisan discussion of the intellectual and moral aspects of world cooperation and international movements, and World Unity has met this need in a most satisfactory manner."—John Dewey.

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ART AND WORLD CULTURE

by
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Artist, Author and Explorer

As a prayer, we repeat that knowledge and beauty are the real cornerstones of evolution, the gates to a world community. We affirm this, not only as a prayer, but even as a command, to all humanity. We know that in these spheres all hearts must be united. Love, labor, and noble action are not abstract, misty symbols for the enlightened workers in the beautiful fields of creation. Endlessly we must repeat this command of beauty and knowledge. We must insist that the creative sense of the beautiful should be applied in every-day life; that every household should be beautified, that in each home books should have the place of honor.

Many encouraging signs now manifest themselves simultaneously in all countries. Countless hearts scattered over the world consider art, beauty, knowledge as the most unifying powers. I myself have seen these, our numberless friends; in twenty-five countries, I have witnessed how these vigilant hearts not only rejoiced in beauty, but felt that here lies the one stronghold where their hopes for evolution could be exalted. I have witnessed how through application of the Beautiful they solved so many social and domestic problems. Truly it is cause for the greatest enthusiasm to perceive how so many different peoples in many countries consider beauty and knowledge as the great motive power, which set the stones for the coming progress.

We have the right to regard beauty as a real motive force. For a moment, imagine the history of humanity without the treasures of beauty. For a moment, let us erase from our memories
the majestic images of Assyria and Babylon, the dynamic symmetry of Egyptian art. Let us forget the beauty of the Gothic primitives, the enchantment of Buddhist glory and classic Greece. Let us disrobe the tales of heroes and rulers of the garb of beauty. Without the adornments of beauty, how crude remain the pages of history! Truly, not a single heroic achievement, not one constructive victory may be imagined without the sense of the beautiful. In creative enthusiasm, the young generation attains the beautiful. And how else could illumined enthusiasm enter into our lives? Verily, only from the creative fields of art where are expressed all spheres of the Supreme.

Studying the past, we may affirm that creative art has been the motive power for progress of life. The form of life is the synthesis of evolution. Is it not an inspiring thought to realize that the evolution of humanity culminates in Beauty?

Verily, we can evaluate art and beauty as the great motive powers in the new conception of life and in the service to humanity for the construction of the approaching beautiful evolution. In this justified enthusiasm, we can proclaim beauty as a real motive power.

The history of humanity provides splendid evidences of how the creative thought of beauty was evaluated in ancient times.

From former days, perhaps in 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 rivers 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 songs and give the command that all those who appreciate the songs and who care for and guard the singers shall find the gates open to Paradise." And Christ replied, "Yes, I shall give them, not golden mountains, but my songs; and all who appreciate them shall find the gates open to Paradise."

Herein you have the essential and vital combination of world brotherhood through beauty, and you see that the highest symbol of human understanding becomes the highest guardian of beauty.

Again we have the quotation from the oldest Russian historical chronicles by the Monk Nestor, indicating how Prince Jaroslav appreciated knowledge and beauty: "Jaroslav founded Kiev the Great and its Golden Gates with it. Loving the laws of beauty and of church and being a master in books he read them by day and by night and wrote them too, thus sowing literary seeds in the hearts of true men, which we now reap. But books and images are rivers that carry wisdom through the world and are as deep as rivers. Also Jaroslav lovingly beautified the churches with images and with splendid gold and silver vessels and his heart rejoiced upon it."

Besides we have also beautiful quotations from some later chronicles of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, teaching us that the best spiritual achievement for the rulers is to guard art and even to use art in their own life.

Knowing these quotations, one is not surprised to see in the opera "Snegourotchka" that the Tsar is at the same time an artist, and is beautifying his own palace. This is not merely a sophisticated message for royalty, but the fundamental reverence for beauty of the people. For if you ask me what countersign and certificate you would have to show to be allowed to enter a strange village, I would give you the best advice: enter the village singing, and the more pleasing your song the better your welcome. If they ask you for a certificate, show them a drawing or a painting; it is the certificate best understood, and you will be assured that you can remain there forever. You have your shield and your guard.

Beauty is in reality a pan-human feeling, existing alike in
the city and wilderness. Often the heart nourished upon the beauties from the source of Nature is more open and speaks more vividly the miracle-making, pan-human language.

This we found also in Asia. With real joy we recollect how everywhere there the most beautiful traditions are dedicated to the meaning of creative art. These traditions are vital because in every country of Asia they regard and speak about works of art in the most beautiful way, using the most refined symbols, so that very often we have to learn these refined expressions dedicated to the beautiful. Let us recollect how the simple Mongol speaks of the perfection of art in the following legend:

"In olden times in Kucha lived a celebrated painter. Once, as a deposit against a loan, he brought his painting representing a head of cabbage and a butterfly to a merchant and asked three thousand sar. A boy, who was taking the place of the owner of the shop, gave him the requested loan. The owner returned. He was indignant that, for a cabbage and a butterfly, the boy should have lent so much money. He chased away the boy and considered the money lost. Winter came and on the appointed day the artist brought the money and asked to have the painting back. They took out the painting and the owner, to his terror, saw that the butterfly had disappeared from the picture. The artist demanded his complete picture as described. The owner was upset. The painter said, 'So you have unjustly thrown out the boy. But now only he can help you.' The owner called the boy. For three days the boy kept the picture near the fire and the butterfly appeared again. Then the boy said, 'You have not appreciated the artist, but he is so perfect that his colors have all the qualities of nature. The butterflies appear in the warm summertime. For the winter they disappear. The same happens also in the painting.' Only the warmth of the fire recalled the butterfly to life in winter as well. So perfect is this painter! And the owner was ashamed and adopted the boy and made him rich for his wisdom."

The same simple Mongol repeats what the Buddha said in the Suttras: "The greatest crime is ignorance."

And let us again recollect all these beautiful legends and stories from the "Tao" and from the Buddhist world, that connect the meaning of art and knowledge with the supreme feelings. What beautiful lines "Tao" dedicated to the true scientists!

During five years of travel in Asia we have seen innumerable libraries in each monastery. In every temple; in every ruined Chinese watch tower, there was a library with a collection of most remarkable books—a collection of famous biographies, dictionaries, books of history and science.

When you see a lonely traveler in the mountains you may be sure that in his knapsack is a book and a work of art. You may deprive him of everything, he will resign it; but he will defend his real treasure, the book or the work of art.

* * *

Our motto always was: Humanity is facing the coming events of cosmic greatness. Humanity already realizes that all occurrences are not accidental. The time for the construction of future culture is at hand. Before our eyes the revaluation of values is being witnessed. Amidst the ruins of valueless bank-notes, mankind has found the real value of the world's significance. The values of great art are victoriously traversing all storms of earthly commotions. Even the "earthly" people already understand the vital importance of active beauty. And when we proclaim: Love, Beauty and Action! we know verily that we pronounce the formula of the international language. And this formula which now belongs to the museum and the stage must enter every-day life. The sign of beauty will open all sacred gates. Beneath the sign of beauty we walk joyfully. With beauty we conquer. Through beauty we pray. In beauty we are united. And now we affirm these words, not on the snowy heights, but amidst the turmoil of the city—and realizing the path of true reality we greet with a happy smile the future.

And now you see that this is not an idealist's dream, but for the real construction of practical life. Those who are not blind
must see that the question of art now becomes not a technical matter, but everyone acknowledges that the questions of Beauty and creative knowledge have become most vital factors of life. Formerly one heard stories of artists dying of hunger while rich financiers built their palaces. Today, events have brought out the reverse; I have heard stories of bankers dying on top of mountains of worthless banknotes. And we have already heard how an entire country could be supported by the price of old tapestries. So you see how practically this great evolution is working before our eyes. Beside this, another question of the same deep significance is coming into life. Some days ago a prominent architect told me that he regrets so much not having the constant cooperation of painters and sculptors from the beginning of a project, because only through essential collaboration from the very beginning can something really harmonious result. I have often heard dancers say they needed to know something of sculpture and plastic, and certainly you have often heard that painters require music and that music evokes the significance of color.

In unifying institutions we had a significant experience in this direction, showing how necessary it is to combine under one roof the idea that the unity of arts is also not apart from life, and how all musicians, painters, sculptors, architects and dramatists can be united and supported by each other. Different branches of art do not distract, but evoke some new center of the brain not yet utilized. And certainly we know that the function of many centers of the brain is still unknown to us.

The gates of Paradise mentioned in the old legend are not only imaginary. Truly, especially now, we face a most significant time when the vital medium of art is entering home life. Humanity, distressed by political unrest and surrounded by the debris of its old beliefs, is seeing how easily this new emotion, constructive and vital, may be found in daily life.

We have often mentioned that even prisons must be beautified. This is not an allegory. The great prison of life is so easily beautified and a real key to happiness and joy is to be found therein; the countersign of song and the certificate of a creative work!

Finally, if we have witnessed the beautiful evolution of civilization and culture, we may in the same way understand what a far more beautiful evolution awaits us. It is near. It is vital. It is practical for everyone.

Should someone ask why, in the mêlée of our days, one may be concerned with questions of Beauty, you may safely answer, "I know the way of the future." Friends, if we realize how vital Beauty was during ancient times, what immense uses of the emanations of Beauty we can make in our everyday life. If in the Middle Ages, Beauty was considered as the "Gates of Paradise," and if even a modest old chronicler of the Eleventh Century could assert his joy before Beauty, how necessary it is for us to take all practical advantage of this basis of life, and fully fortified by our contemporary discoveries, to repeat "Love, Beauty, Action!"

How all-embracing is Love; how profoundly must be felt the sense of Beauty; and how vitally must we understand the meaning of that virile expression, Action! This command must not be forgotten once we can introduce it into our daily life. The new era is not far off, and not a single day may be lost. Perhaps you will ask me why we must repeat constantly this prayer of Love and Beauty. Because, frankly, so many avoid Beauty in their every-day life, and erroneously seek a reason for this irreparable mistake. If Beauty is the Shield of the World, if the coming evolution is luminously radiant with discovered rays and energies, even the smallest seeds of this splendor must be reflected in our life. The awaiting ones, the aspiring ones, must be the first to prepare the place of Beauty in life. Thus, incessantly, until we see the results, must we repeat this prayer of Beauty—the crown of Action and Love. Beautiful are the necessities and the responsibilities of our lives.

We have always said: "The main thing is to collect and safeguard all the flowers of beauty. With the years, you may change your tasks and find some more suited to your taste. Do
not close your eyes to the beautiful, flowery meadows of art and you will carry everywhere the enthusiasm and love for the achievements of far-off and perhaps anonymous creators.

Affirming that the treasures of art and knowledge are the most important impulses in the growth of humanity, we must surround those milestones of mankind with vibrating love. Such is the task of the collector.

The names of many collectors are recorded in history inseparable from the creators, because in collecting, these men themselves became creators. In emphasizing the significance of collecting, we speak of something not abstract, but of something vital, something which gives living impetus to the beautiful. This broadened consciousness will lay the best foundations for a truly creative spirit in the new generation.

Collectors, as the antithesis of destroyers, form a special legion beyond epochs and nationalities. By no means are they retrogrades, imprisoned in their own egotistical desire of acquisition. Every true collector feels it necessary to share with understanding spirits his cultural treasures. In every collector has already flowered the seed of selfless joy towards beauty. Collecting becomes the cultural thermometer of each nation, and one may estimate the cultural level of nations by these revealing milestones.

The collector learns to protect the treasures of creative genius entrusted to him by destiny as an honorary guard. He is not a casual visitor of museums who transfers the complete responsibility upon a curator; he himself is the guard of those treasures which are before him, and which will radiate their light upon many after him. Absorbed in the life of creations, the collector extracts the true wisdom of his treasures. From the covetous Fafnir he is transformed into a guard who has won the right to possess the Ring of Achievement. The process of collecting is something like a dynamo of artistic creative power, which directly acts upon the spirit of the collector. Just as Mime brought up Siegfried, so bliss may be found in art treasures whatever their circumstances. As in heaven, so on earth. And there is nothing extraordinary in the fact that artistic creations are rising in price even in this conventional, earthly valuta. During war and revolutions, the monetary values of the beautiful were conclusively revealed. Whole countries, whole cities who could not protect themselves with land or buildings, found the means of their existence in their artistic treasures. This is a fact of great cultural significance.

Time was when wives prevented their husbands from acquiring real art objects, preferring property with the belief that it was indestructible. They did not count upon earthquakes. To them, a printed bank-note was more valuable than a Rembrandt, an El Greco or a da Vinci. One cannot blame them when one remembers that they simply did not understand the true, unchangeable values. But now the era of womanhood has come, and woman will be the real protector and collector of the beautiful.

It is also very instructive to observe the great variations of collections, from the strictly conservative, which present only one school or even one group, up to individual combinations. These latter collections at the present time represent a special interest. The trained eye of the connoisseur of the beautiful, focuses his attention upon the most modern of these manifestations of art, but is aware as well of the paths and roots of these recent achievements. Such collections cannot remain without giving place to the expressions of creators which were the milestones of the forward movement of art. Superbly instructive instances are coming to the front. Van Gogh and Gauguin are paired with the great innovator El Greco. The latest modernists are hanging on the same wall with Brueghel the Elder. In such coordination, place is found also for Giorgione and Italian and Flemish primitives—all those who laid the steps for the victory of art. In such horizons, collections cease to be narrow and dogmatic, but excluding every possible intolerance, they verily cultivate the broad meadows of mankind for a future artistic harvest.

The records of collecting reveal that these never-to-be-
repeated treasures enhance in earthly and spiritual values. Happy is the land where the movement of enlightened collecting has begun. There the human spirit will flower, to reveal new evidences of fortune and peace.

* * *

Humanity in diverse ways is striving for peace, and everyone, in his own heart, realizes that this constructive work is a true prophecy of a new era. In view of this, it is certainly incongruous to hear discussions on the comparative desirability of various bullets, or on whether one type of ship is closer to the conceptions of world unity than the cannons of two battleships. Let us, however, consider these discussions as preliminary steps toward the same great peace that will tame the belligerent instincts of humanity by the resplendent and joyous creations of the spirit.

The fact remains, however, that the shells of even one of these cannon can destroy the greatest treasures of art and science as successfully as a whole fleet. We deplore the loss of the Library of Louvain and the unreplaceable loveliness of the Cathedral of Rheims; we remember the beautiful treasures of private collections which perished during the world's misunderstandings. We do not, however, wish to inscribe above them, words of enmity; let us simply say, “Destroyed by human error, and recreated by human hope.” Nevertheless, errors in this or any other form can be repeated and other precious milestones of human achievement can be destroyed.

Against such errors of ignorance we should take immediate measures. And even though these may be only preliminary measures of safeguarding, some very successful steps can be taken. No one can deny that the flag of the Red Cross proved to be of immeasurable value and reminded the world of humanitarianism and compassion.

For this reason, a plan for an International Peace Pact which would protect all treasures of art and science through an International Flag has been outlined by the Roerich Museum for presentation through America to all foreign governments. The purpose of the project, which has been submitted to the State Department and the Committee on Foreign Relations, is to prevent the repetition of the disasters of the last war on cathedrals, museums, libraries and other lasting memorials of creation of the past.

It is the plan of the project to create a flag which will be respected as International Neutral Territory, this to be raised above museums, cathedrals, universities and any other cultural center. The plan, projected by the Roerich Museum, was drawn up according to the codes of International Law by Dr. George Chklaver of the Paris University, Lecturer in the Institute of International High Studies, in consultation with Professor Albert Geouffre de la Pradelle, member of the Hague Peace Court, Vice President of the Institute of International Law, of Paris, and member of the Faculty of Law, and the Sorbonne. Both are Honorary Advisors of the Roerich Museum.

As set forth in Article I of the Pact, “Educational, artistic and scientific institutions, artistic and scientific missions shall be deemed neutral and, as such, shall be protected and respected by belligerents.

"Protection and respect shall be due to the aforesaid institutions and missions in all places subject to the sovereignty of the High Contracting Parties, without any discrimination as to the State allegiance of any particular institution or mission.”

When the idea of an international cultural flag was first propounded, we were not surprised to find that it met with unanimous interest and enthusiasm. Experienced statesmen wondered why it had not been thought of before. When we asked our honorary advisors, Dr. George Chklaver and Professor Albert Geouffre de la Pradelle to frame this idea into an international formula, we received not only a splendidly formulated project of international agreement, but also many answers full of pan-human sympathy. This international flag for the protection of beauty and science would not in any way demean any interests or lead to misunderstandings. On the contrary, it elevates the
universal consciousness which must be awakened. As the Red Cross flag needs no explanation to even the most uncultured mind, so does this new flag, guardian of cultural treasures, speak for itself. It is simple enough to explain, even to a barbarian, the importance of safeguarding art and science.

It is imperative to take immediate measures to preserve the noble heritage of our past for a glorious posterity. This can only come if all countries pledge themselves to protect the creations of culture, which after all, belong to no one nation but to the world. In this way we may create the next vital step for a universal culture and peace.

For the individual, what is the way for immediate application of beauty? First of all, let us beautify our homes with the most sincere expressions of beauty. As we repeat, perhaps these expressions will be fragmentary or they will be only fine reproductions of great creations. It does not matter, for even in small fragments of good reproductions great conceptions are reflected and can lead us to great understanding.

The sense of the Beautiful purifies our thoughts—nothing may be a greater stimulus for pure thoughts than this self-sacrificing enthusiasm. And finally, once for all, we must realize that thought, not deed, is the strongest force. And for this reason, the conception of pure thinking is the most practical one. We are not afraid even to use the word practical, because we must be constructive, using all material—matter as well as spirit—and in this way we can understand that even these two conceptions are one.

In this great understanding, we may forget all pettiness and without any sense of destruction we may beautify and build up the unfinished towers of beauty. And in this way, little by little, we shall become accustomed to the great sense of infinity. And to the eternal Great Beginning—the beginning of light, the beginning of enlightenment, the beginning of labor and beautification that shall transform our every-day life, so isolated and timorous, into constant attainment, thus transforming the limited "I" into the unconquerable "We."