

THE ART OF PEACE

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Art, as defined by Webster's dictionary, is "the human ability to make things of form and beauty; creativeness".

I should like to add two more criteria to this definition of art: first, great art is lasting, and second, its communication is universal.

Plato, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Beethoven: all are examples of masters of their art. Plato's dialogues continue to be read. Michelangelo's frescoes never cease to impress. Shakespeare's plays still thrill all nations, and Beethoven's symphonies are still performed throughout the world.

According to E. M. Forster, man in the creative state is
.....taken out of himself. He lets down as it
were a bucket into his subconscious, and draws
up something which is normally beyond his
reach. He mixes this thing with his normal
experience, and out of the mixture he makes
a work of art.

Judging by man's long history of upheavals, revolutions, and wars, peace seems to be something which is normally beyond man's reach. Cannot mankind be taken out of himself enough to create a work of art such as the world has never seen--a work of art called peace?

Peace is an art. It is a form of beauty; it is creative; and it is made through human ability and effort. Therefore, it ought to comply with our other criteria of art as well.

Peace should be lasting: not cracked, then patched; not broken; then put back together; not destroyed, then remade. My generation knows only the uneasy peace following World War II and the half-peace following the Korean Conflict. From the Battle of Thermopylae to the Battle of the Bulge; from the Carthaginian Wars to the Cold War: men have fought for peace, longed for peace, and prayed for peace. Yet no country or people have thus far been able to create a lasting peace.

Peace should be universal: not restricted to one nationality; not confined to one class. Universal peace, as an art, would unite all people in one common feeling. It would destroy separation, set aside violence, and educate all people to union. It would reach beyond the bounds of an American, a Russian, a Chinaman, an African, and show, not by arbitration or compromise or treaty, but by life itself, the joy of a universal union between all peoples.

The solution for peace is quite simple if we all regard ourselves as artists. We need to master the art of peace.

All arts require certain tools. A language, a brush, a chisel, an instrument--the usual tools of an art are not the implements for creating peace. As creators of peace we require somewhat different tools to accomplish our art. We must possess five basic tools: 1) discipline 2) concentration 3) patience 4) supreme concern 5) love.

The tool of discipline is a difficult one to master. We, as craftsmen, must have not only outward discipline, but a deep inner discipline as well. To deal with other people, to work long hours on one minute detail of one's art, to stop one's irrational thoughts from exploding--these all require this tool.

Nor does mastery of the second tool, concentration, come easily in this day of rush, noise, and distraction. How can we concentrate when we're already late for work, when the radio is turned to full volume, or when baby John has just upset his glass of milk. Yet if we are to achieve peace, we must learn concentration. By concentrating fully on peace, we can become so emerged in it that separation of the essence of peace and the essence of our individuality is impossible.

The tool of patience is perhaps the most delicate of all our tools. In spite of its fragile nature, patience is sturdy. We must use it constantly, for rarely is a goal achieved without patience. This instrument is necessary

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if we are to perfect our art. We who live in the United States must not be so quick to view the world as right or wrong, good or bad, friend or enemy. We must acquire the patience to investigate, to find out what other cultures believe, to search for a mutual bond of understanding. Let us cease to be ugly Americans, who lose peace because we have already lost our patience.

A fourth tool in the creation of peace is that of supreme concern. If we are expert in the management of all other tools and have not supreme concern, the art of peace remains a shell of what it could become. The ability to care cannot be faked as a mere technique. When supreme concern is real, it is the finishing touch to any work of art. But when one no longer cares, the art is soon forgotten and lost to mankind's vision and memory.

The final tool, love, is the strongest and most basic. This tool forms the skeleton of our art and determines the shape of its being. It is the beginning and the ending. Love, in this case, is not a relationship to a particular object or person; it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole. If we learn how to use love, the use of the other tools will come more easily. To truly love is to lose oneself; not in a rigid fixation on one object, but in the very core existence of mankind.

Now that we have our tools of peace, we must be willing to practice and to work. We must never cease from trying to perfect the art of peace, and we must be willing to give to protect it.

Recently over two million dollars was spent in purchasing one oil painting of lasting value, Rembrandt's "Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer". Aristotle had his own ideas concerning the value of art. He once said "All art consists in bringing something into existence." How much would you be willing to give to bring lasting peace into existence? How much would I be willing to pay to keep peace for posterity?

It has been said over and over again, that the present struggle is a struggle for men's minds. It is not a battle of men or machines, but of ideologies. It is not so much a fight for external peace, which is now being sought through the United Nations, military action, and law courts, but a fight for the inner man--to control his soul and his mind.

Gandhi, the peace-loving ruler of India, once said, "All true art is the expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they are the expression of the inner spirit of man."

Thus, we need to reach men through their ideas. We need to communicate through a lasting and universal art, wrought by our tools of discipline, concentration, patience, supreme concern, and love. Only by using this rationale for peace can we hope to create peace.

Are you willing to be an artist? Will you help develop and perfect the art of peace?