

## **"CARE OF THE BODY"**

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by Rudolf Schindler

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### Shelter or Playground

It is not enough appreciated how directly and clearly our attitude towards life is expressed through our houses. The peasant who is trying to build his house exactly like his father's modernizes it unconsciously. The architect, however, who does not work freely from memory, but who uses reproductions to help his imagination, is too consciously about his effort and creates dead replicas.

Our present houses are too strongly under the influence of the past and its outlook on life. Fear dictated originally the form and spirit of the house. The behaviour of our ancestors was over-shadowed by constant defense reactions against real and imaginary enemies. The emphasis of the historian upon war and its physical heroism proves the tremendous need to counteract these fear complexes.

No wonder that everybody's house was his castle, and that all rooms tried to appear comfortable by emphasising their safety through their heavy walls, small windows ponderous grilles, thick curtains and dim light.

The spirit was only partly broken when the crumbling of the caste system started the lower classes on a period of social climbing. The house was and is a source of social prestige. The parvenu who had access to the front rooms of the aristocrat insisted that his home be historical in design, and that every one of his own rooms be a replica of the luxurious salon which impressed him.

The American house of today is entirely a product of this attitude. Neglecting to consider the changes in our mental and physical life, it tries to give social prestige by masquerading in outworn historical styles.

These changes, however, demand expression. The earth, the sky, and the neighbour, the curse of the past and the retribution of the future have lost their frightfulness.

Our high mechanical development easily controls our living conditions. Our knowledge about our own bodies releases us from slavery, and Nature becomes a friend. The house and the tree of the future will give us control of our environment, without interfering with our meal and physical nakedness.

Our rooms will descend close to the ground and the garden will become an integral part of the house. The distinction between the indoors and the out-of-doors will disappear. The walls will be few, thin, and removable. All rooms will become part of an organic unit, instead of being small separate boxes with peepholes. How petty the attempt to erect each one of different materials and to decorate them separately in different "styles!" Each house needs to be composed as a symphony, with variations on a few themes.

Our present scheme of social life in which we drudge behind the scenes most of the time in order to present an "impressive" face for a few moments of company is outworn. In driving out the king, we have lost the careless instigator of fashionable social manners. Our own everyday actions must achieve the dignity of the past ceremonials. Each one shall create his own fashions—but only for himself.

Our house will lose its front-and-back-door aspect. It will cease being a group of dens, some larger ones for social effect, and a few smaller ones (bedrooms) in which to herd the family. Each individual will want a private room to gain a background for his life. He will sleep in the open. A work-and-play room, together with the garden, will satisfy the group needs. The bathroom will develop into a gymnasium and will become a social centre.

A simplified cooking will become part of a group play, instead of being the deadly routine for a lonely slave.

The architect will try to divine the possible development of his client, and will design a building which may grow with him. The house will be a form-book with a song, instead of an irrelevant page from a dictionary of dead form dialects.

And life will regain its fluidity.