

# Design for Living\*

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THAT you have asked me to come to your meeting implies a friendship for which I am grateful. It also carries with it a responsibility which I must adequately endeavor to meet. What is it that you expect of me; what can I give you in return for your confidence in me? Let us see if it lies within my power to fulfill your expectations.

There has been a long stretch of years since the World War. What things can we look back upon as being of outstanding value to civilization, what achievements have been accomplished since the post-war period?

Science, in most of its multitudinous applications, has made the process of living easier for most of us, but it has at the same time so complicated social, economic and political conditions (to name but three of the many factors involved) that we have become a restless, anxious, dissatisfied people whose bewilderment and anxiety increases from day to day. Time and space have been harnessed, the machine does all but provide a living for us without effort on our part and yet on all sides suffering, delusion, despair and injustice encompass us. From every direction comes the cry, "What now?"

You, as a profession ostensibly developed to relieve and to benefit humanity, must often have heard this cry. In every station of life, from every class of society it is being echoed. There is an ominous note of despair in these two words. And yet, shall we despair? Is the outlook so hopeless? What is it that makes men fear, for despair is *fear*.

Is it the fear of losing those creature comforts to which we have accustomed ourselves? Let us ask ourselves frankly do we not often avoid taking issues because we fear that our decision will react unfavorably upon our physical comforts? Are we not afraid that through a definite stand for that which we know to be ethical we shall be deprived of the luxury or even the comfort that money purchases? And, *having* these comforts, do they bring us happiness? Look for the happy man. Will you find him on the highways and in the byways? Is his happiness reflected in the countenances of the multitude? It should be there if anywhere. Something must be wrong. I wonder if it is not that something is wanting in our scheme of living. Are we afraid to acknowledge to ourselves that our lives have been badly designed? The design for living involves so many things (some of them more important than others) we should note and, having noted, we should take heed and act. Act, because we know right from wrong.

First let us consider fearlessness. Fearlessness should first and foremost be carried into all of our mental processes. "I must not fear. Even tho' darkness hides the road from me, I must not fear." Fearlessness involves two widely differing reactions, one a physical and the other a mental process. The

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\*Delivered before the Edward H. Angle Society of Orthodontia, in New York City, May 1, 1938.

causes for physical fear can usually be discerned. We can gauge them and we can, with reasonable persistence, overcome them. But mental fear is an entirely different thing. We become unbalanced during the agony of mental fear. Our reason will not come to our rescue; it fails to act. Under such stress we usually seek the shortest way out of our trouble and thereby lose strength and determination. We must, with all the intelligence at our command, fight mental cowardice.

Second, we must look at all things with that fine frankness and deep honesty which our reason dictates. We must use to its uttermost capacity the intelligence with which we have been endowed. Frankness and honesty go hand in hand; one supplements the other. In frankness we do not beat around the bush. We say to ourselves, "I must face this issue with utter disregard to its convenience or its ease! I can be honest with myself only if I am honest with my conscience."

Third, we must be open minded. Our way is not necessarily the only way or even the *right* way towards our goal. To be deaf and blind to the reasoning and the acts of others is narrowing and prejudiced. It can lead to serious injustice. It generally thwarts our purpose. Open mindedness denotes strength both of mind and of purpose. Obstinacy is a weakness, it is a break in our design for living.

These considerations seem quite sufficient to start us on our way toward a design to be thought of as fully developed men regardless, too, of the stones that in opposition to our chosen field of effort may be heaped upon our path. Unless we are fearless, reasoning, honest and open minded, our desires and our good intentions will not help us to formulate a design for living.

Design is a term which is of prime importance in my individual profession. Without design there can be no completeness. Design is a pattern; it is intention; it is a definite ordering or organization of all the elements which are brought into a picture. I really cannot see why the well-formulated laws which go into the structure of a building, into the composition of a sonnet or a symphony, into the painting of a picture or the modeling of a statue should not likewise enter into the designing of our lives. For do we not build our mental being just as an architect, a builder or a leader builds his structural organization? Do we not refer with complete consciousness of its implication to the "Great Builder"? Yes, the laws of design are fundamentally alike. They apply to the animate and to the inanimate.

The design for living should present to all of us a definite objective into which, first and foremost, there should be a consideration and a place for beauty. Now beauty is a variable, an elusive thing to find and, once having been found, a difficult thing to capture.

Beauty is a subtle, an intangible thing of the mind; it is metaphysical. It comes and it goes with no definite laws to govern it. We feel its presence way down deep within us and it does something to our feelings which with all our reasoning faculties we are utterly unable to grasp or to explain. It makes this person shout; it makes the other silent; and it even moves some to tears—hence beauty in the individual is a variable reaction. But in our design for living beauty must not—nay, it *cannot*, be omitted. Whatever form the design may take, there must be a definite place for beauty. Without it our lives become a commonplace, almost a meaningless void. Beauty helps to make life

worth while and unless a thing is worth while it is useless and merely an impediment to any progress. You can make the dominating element in your design for living anything you may desire but you should reserve at least one spot in your design where you may always see beauty, should you be looking for it. In one individual the dominant element of life's design may be music; in another it may be color; in a third it may be form; in a fourth it may be movement. It may even contain all of these.

In all the world there is no place where beauty does not lurk. I do not say that it is always visible, tangible or obvious or compelling *but it is there*. The things that come too easily to us are not always the things that afford us the greatest joy, and beauty is not always easy to find. One person, so attuned, may discover beauty which twenty, passing by, will fail even to surmise.

In the utter barrenness of the desert, in the darkness of the night, in the scorching heat of the tropics there exists beauty for him to whom that beauty speaks. It may reveal itself in the sound of silence, in the fullness of empty spaces, in the gentleness of overwhelming strength. Always, everywhere, if we seek beauty, we shall find it and it is ours, *only* ours, though all the rest of mankind may have missed it. Beauty is not confined to one individual or to one group; it belongs to all. And that was the spirit which brought about the Renaissance. It came as a treasure sent from heaven upon those medieval people to whom the right to search for love and beauty had been denied. St. Francis of Assisi, Dante and Giotto showed them that love, freedom and beauty was theirs by right, by right of their God-given, indestructible humanity. And they took it and loved it and were reborn. Yes, a hundred times yes, this must be embodied in our design for living.

Then in our design there are the obligations we owe one to another. Tell me, what would my life avail me if I were destined to exist alone in the vast space of the universe? If I had food and comfort, ease and leisure, of what avail would all this be to me if I had no one with whom I might share, no one to love and to serve?

What do you *do* with your talents? Do you bring them back to your master saying reverently "Behold, Master, the ten talents which thou gavest me—here they are intact, not the smallest of them is missing." Is that what *you* do with your talents? You may have a bag of fine, fertile, golden grain which you have put carefully away, guarding it against loss and defilement. Is that what the grain is destined for? Perchance your neighbor may be in need of grain to sow upon his barren acres. Does your hoarded treasure relieve your neighbor's needs? Sow that grain, or give it to the needy to sow for themselves, or still to others who may likewise be needy. It is only through giving that we can have. "Have," you say, "have what?" Why yourself, of course. Through giving of yourself, through sharing with others that which is you, through service, generous, free and kindly service, and *only* through that, can you hope to be made aware that you *have* a bag of grain to give. That, too, must be considered in your design for living. You owe an eternal debt to yourself—pay it.

It is obvious that we are not all made of the same stuff and that therefore we should make ourselves familiar with the stuff of which we are made. If I am made of silk, do not let me expend myself upon a harsh substance or in a cause which will merely destroy what I am, with no benefit to others, or to

myself. If I am iron shall I impose my strength and my weight upon the thistledown? *Let me know myself* and where I may fit, and having found just where in the scheme of world-striving I fit, let me fit *well*. Let me so change this angle or that line or yonder form and mass, so that all the parts of this design of my life shall fit. To make it fit I must know my life's purpose. I have painstakingly prepared myself and have faced with strength, openness and breadth of mind this question of purpose. I have considered beauty and my talents. I know so far as human mind can know, that for this purpose in life I am *fit*. Then let me serve as only those who are fit can serve. Let my own recompense be considered last. Let me get my greater recompense from a duty well done. What a glorious ring there is in these simple words—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Gold cannot buy such praise. Whose good and faithful servant are you? Your master is your conscience. Heed your master well for he judges, he rewards and he punishes. You may try to deceive yourself, but you cannot deceive your conscience. It is ever alert to find you out.

In your design let the pattern of "service" shine out in compelling colors; do not hide it in deep shadows. Let all who observe become aware of it that they may know whence to turn for service. Let this part of your design be a clear, clarion note.

In our design for living we must be exacting with ourselves. An artist destroys many sketches he has painstakingly made before he becomes convinced that he has done the best of which he is capable. Does he consider his discarded efforts a loss? No, if he is honest he accounts these discarded sketches as part of the day's work. What *is* he striving for? Why does he discard sketches which may contain elements that are good? Because they do not fit in with the purpose for which they were intended. If it is a design for a mural it needs well selected elements that shall be decorative, as well as static, which are essential to the purpose for which the design is being made; for the space and the place it is to occupy. If, in considering his design, he finds that it does not contain all the essential qualities that are required, he judges it to be a bad design for this particular mural and tries again. If the design he is making is to advertise or sell shoes or brooms or food, it must contain entirely different elements and must be built up to sell the goods to those who may be interested. The design must attract clients. Now the mural quality and the selling quality differ utterly. A good design, or poster, made to advertise, must inevitably meet the requirements of the purpose for which it was created. It has value to the user only insofar as it meets with his special requirements but, be the purpose whatsoever it may, the design must conform to well established laws. It must attract in order that it may sell, and nothing attracts more strongly than honesty and beauty, which are always vital selling points.

You are all designers. You all have something which you desire to bring to the attention of those who seek. In your design you must plan carefully to stress the honesty and beauty of your purpose. Are you trying to sell your talents? Are you designing to get a large and easy profit? *Orthodontia sells itself*—you need not worry about that. Your design does not have to sell Orthodontia; it must sell *you* as a person to be trusted, to be confided in, to be eagerly and joyfully met. You must design your lives (which in your case is built around the fine profession of Orthodontia) to sell your services, the thing

that your training, your ideals and your opportunities so eminently fit you to give.

Give all that is in you. Believe that in so doing you are conforming to design. Do not smile and whisper, "pipe dream," to yourselves. It can be done, it *has* been done. I firmly believe that it will always insure you against dire want. It will give you a living that is adequate and in the degree in which you use your talents you shall be rewarded. In the honesty, faithfulness and unselfishness with which you carry out that well designed life of yours, you will find contentment, respect and honor. All men shall know you as the man of good intent.

That is what I mean by the Design for Living. Friends, will you so design your lives? Will you be an honor to your profession? Will you so strive and live that your profession will shine brilliantly in that immeasurable heaven of service? Others have done it, why not you? All that is essential is faith in yourselves and in one another, trust, a united purpose and a never failing courtesy and respect for each other's beliefs and acts.

These things will achieve success—the unqualified success of your chosen profession.

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