

GRIST

Diocese of New Ulm Social Concerns Office June & July, 2009

from } **Malcolm de Chazal's *Sens-Plastique***
trans. by Irving Weiss, Green Integer, 2008

Brightness is "reverberating" sunlight.
Looking at bright light makes it echo.
The blind know light as a feeling on their skin.
A World of Light where everyone is given
as much light as his powers can absorb.
The sun doesn't draw very well but paints divinely.
At noon the sun seems to breathe in everything.
Darkness falling fast is laced with light.
Night is day by moonlight.
The halo around the moon
is the wedding ring of Night and Day.
Shadows run on the plains, walk in valleys,
gallop in summer, and trot in winter.
Color is a sermon; light is a Mass.
Color is about light; light is about God.
Colors drink and eat light.
The butterfly's wing is the Jacob's Ladder of Light,
fusing the color of the earth with the hypnotic,
magnetic brilliance of the sun.
The shadow of a trembling leaf looks like butterfly wings.
The shadow of a butterfly vibrates like a leaf.
We associate light with sounds.
Color has timbre as well as tone.
Water makes light sing.
Clouds are the highest of all water containers.
During times of drought the birds climb higher in the sky
as if they were going to drink straight out of the clouds.
It rains silence before it rains.
After a rain, forest trees wear plumes of light in their hair.
When flowers perfume the air in spring, imagine how
the rain must spread their fragrance to faraway plants.

A plant's mind imagines in its roots,
thinks in stem and branches,
and remembers in its leaves.

There is no greater master of color, form, and design
than the flower, who teaches by looking:
not by your looking at her but her looking at you.
The real painter is the one who lets the flower
hold him in her gaze.

With its petals fallen,
the heart of the flower stops radiating.

The sunflower keeps its eye on the sun
with its back turned to the shade.
We die facing life with our backs turned to death,
as if we were walking out of a room backwards.

Autumn is all the seasons in palimpsest.

Animals look to see. Humans look to see and...
consider. Hence the wavering and drifting.

Animals can predict seasonal changes,
sense the coming of rain, a period of drought,
an oncoming tornado, or the approach of thunder.
Knowing how to read animal language
would make prophets of us all.

Everything descends into our memory by the staircase
of the senses and thinks its way up into the mind again
hoisted by the imagination.

The fragrance of the voice you love
penetrates so deeply into your soul that you can taste it –
a voice that can open your budding thoughts
into a flowering of new perceptions.

If our thoughts linger even for a moment on those now
dead whom we once knew so well, nothing evokes their
presence more than recalling the sound of their voice.

The thrill of a spoken compliment lies in its pauses.
The heart feeds on silence more than anything else.

Eat your meal in colors and no dish lacks seasoning.

Table talk is a form of seasoning.
When the conversation wavers,
the dishes seem to lack salt.
When the topics are uninteresting,
we reach for the pepper.

Women eat when they talk, men talk when they eat.

Woman knows how to keep quiet when she is in the right, whereas man under the same conditions keeps on talking.

In a happy home the man is head of the house but the woman is in charge.

A pair of loving eyes is the best kind of double bed. There's nothing more restful than deep affection.

Fearful eyes stammer.

"Ah" is the shortest as "oh" is the longest of human cries. We are born in an "ah" and die in an "oh."

A baby's circle of a smile. There's no more heavenly feeling of being taken up completely than by a baby's enveloping smile.

Goodness opens up the features.

Goodness civilizes the intelligence.

There can be no true goodness without simplicity. There can be no true simplicity unless goodness has been tested by suffering.

When life depresses you in times of trouble, a little self-indulgence is worth more than a sermon.

Suffering doesn't ennoble unless there is greatness to begin with.

Just as the mind is worthless if it lacks judgment, so is the heart if it doesn't know *how* to give itself.

Nothing influences people more than selflessness.

Anyone who has been loved doesn't have to exact obedience from others.

A cheated heart demands collateral and then lends out only at mortgage rates. Deception eventually turns it into a businessman.

How many people are authoritarian because they can't govern themselves!

The overreaching mind devours the senses, and the overindulged senses consume the mind. Philosophers end as emotional infants. Don Juan ends with the brains of a little boy.

We eat water when we're dying of thirst. We drink food when we're famished. Long deprivation perverts tasting. The same law applies to all our senses.

Thinking too much congests the feelings. Ponder your life and very little of it is left to live.

Reining your senses in too tightly risks choking them. Unrestrained pleasure turns to pain.

Nature warns us: it is better not to be at all than not to be what you are.

The freedom to be yourself is the highest form of justice to others.

Natures too much alike repel each other. A house full of saints would be an insane asylum.

To cure the madman of his folly, let him live it out in full, like making a kite belly out by feeding it more string. But of course there aren't enough Europes to go around for all the Napoleons out there.

You cannot take the pulse of your opinion until you voice it.

A flick of the fingernail tells whether the closed jar is empty. The first word out of a fool's mouth is enough to convict him.

Fools are your only protection against fools: the hazy kind are your buffer against the aggressive ones.

The bee is too busy gathering honey to stop and wonder at those heavenly halls it keeps constantly entering. Man is too busy making a living to live.

In the eternal commerce of existence itself, and in the business office we call life, God is ushered in last – like the least important of clients.

To saints the world is the wafer itself, to egoists it is just a pebble to scuff.

Whenever we direct our visual attention and concentration, the act enters into the nature of things: when we look, we become the thing being looked at, which is the way God made the world to be lived in – without compartments for us and the world to inhabit separately.

God's first words to man have been spiritually inscribed in each of us and passed down subconsciously from generation to generation since the Creation. These very words may even be the password to Eternity that we murmur unknowingly to open doors to the world beyond, the key to the house a tenant returns to the landlord at his final departure.

The Cross of Christ: transverse arms universally horizontal, upright universally vertical. Sleep and vigil. Coupled symbol of death and resurrection.

If we ever had any idea of the tremendous things God has in store for us and even made us capable of we would collapse dead away.