

THE SPACE OF LOVE by Vladimir Megré

Book 3 of *The Ringing Cedars Series*

Ringling Cedars Press • www.ringingcedars.com

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2nd edition June 2008 • ISBN 978-0-9801812-2-7 (paperback) • LCCN 2008923348

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LADA'S MESSAGE

In place of an Editor's Afterword

As I was finishing writing my lengthy afterword, my four-year-old daughter Lada, named after the goddess of Love, walked in from the garden, hiding a 'present' behind her back — two cucumbers she had just picked, one for me and one for her Mama. I hardly paid any attention to her approach, immersed as I was in my work. Lada quietly sat on a chair and patiently waited for me to become aware of her presence. She considered it totally unacceptable to interfere with an adult's thought process.

At that moment I was busy compiling citations from the unheeded sages of many millennia ago as well as of the recent past, who have all been trying to convey the same message: simple life in close contact with Nature is an absolute condition of happiness and peace.¹ I had noted how significant it was that the understanding of humanity's deep spiritual connectedness to Nature and especially trees — the understanding that once served as foundation of entire cults and cultures² — still survives today in folk

¹Leo Tolstoy, for example, wrote in his *What I believe* in 1884: "One of the first and universally acknowledged preconditions for happiness is living in close contact with nature, i.e., living under the open sky, in the light of the sun, in the fresh air; interacting with the Earth, plants and animals. Being deprived of these experiences has always been seen as a huge misfortune. It is felt most acutely by people locked up in prison. Just look at the life of those who adhere to the dogmas of today's world: the greater success they enjoy in terms of what the world teaches, the more they are deprived of this precondition for happiness."

²In fact, the words *cult* (a system of religious worship or ritual) and *culture* both derive from the Latin verb signifying *to take care of the land or to till*, and reflect the understanding of the sacredness of humanity's connection to the Earth. To the present day the primary meaning of *culture* found in dictionaries is "cultivation of the soil".

customs and such universal symbols of re-birth as the Christmas *tree*. I had also been writing about our former much closer relationship with wild animals and gave examples of people living in our world today — such as Tom Brown, Jr.³ — who, just like Anastasia, can relate to wild animals in the same way we relate to household pets...

I had had things to say on education, too. Just think about it: a century and a half ago — at a time when compulsory schooling had not yet become a “natural” part of our lives — Leo Tolstoy (who, as a proponent of ‘anarchical’ ideals of love, compassion and non-violence, would later be denied a Nobel Prize in literature) already discerned the havoc wreaked on children by the educational system or by what Megré calls ‘spiritual sadism’ and founded a school based on freedom rather than compulsion.⁴ And today John Taylor Gatto, a teacher with thirty years’ experience and a recipient of numerous teaching honours — including the New York City and the New York State “Teacher of the Year” awards — speaking from his decades of teaching experience and his own extensive investigation of contemporary American education — shockingly declares point blank that the school system has been *deliberately* designed to “dumb children down” and kill their creative potential, so as to turn them into compliant members of a “faceless work-force”.⁵ Interestingly enough, Gatto also describes the early childhood years, in terms very similar to Anastasia’s, as “a prison of games” in which children are confined and children’s toys as “suffocating your little boy or girl’s consciousness at exactly the moment when big questions about the world beckon...”⁶

Lada apparently thought that as long as she continued sitting quietly, I would never pay any attention to her. And so she gently whispered:

“What are you doing?”

“Writing good words about the new Anastasia book,” I said, finally turning my head and looking at her.

“Read them to me.”

Responding to her request, I read two paragraphs out loud, and then, remembering Vladimir Megré’s suggestion to “ask the children where and which way we should go”,⁷ I enquired: “Well, what do you think?”

“Papa, it’s so long and boring!” came a frank reply.

“All right!” I laughed, sensing I would probably have to make my afterword much shorter. “D’you suppose you could put it all more briefly?”

“You should live close to the plants,” Lada said in a very serious tone. “In cities cars pollute air and turds from your toilet flow into rivers and make fish unhappy over the dirty water. And papas have to go away and work for money to buy food to eat. Do not cut down trees. God co-created everything. All are His little children.

³See *The tracker* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), *The search* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1980) and other books by Tom Brown.

⁴In Tolstoy’s view, “education does not educate, it only spoils”, and “the best educational system is having no system at all”. For further details, please see his article “Education and Instruction”.

⁵See John Taylor Gatto’s *Dumbing us down* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992), *The underground history of American education* (New York: Oxford Village Press, 2001) and other books.

⁶John Taylor Gatto. *The underground history of American education*, p. 383.

⁷Chapter 19: “What to agree with, what to believe?”

“You want to go see how huge my tomato grew? And the water melon's so handsome!” she finished off.

“I do,” I smiled and, taking me by hand, Lada led me out into the light of the garden.

Brixey, Missouri, USA
Perun's Day (2 August 2005)

Leonid Sharashkin

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