

From 'Common Sense – How to Exercise It', by Yoritoma Tashi, (1915)

To dominate oneself to the point of not allowing oneself to become the slave of miserable contingencies which appear as temptations to self-indulgence, and conceal from their pettiness the beauty of the consistent - this is only given to the chosen few and can only be understood by those who cultivate common sense. It is common sense which makes us realize that deference that few persons are willing to analyze, and which lies between judgment and opinion. Opinion is a conviction which is incapable of modification. Opinion depends upon the favorite inclination, upon the mood of the moment, upon sundry considerations, which direct it almost always toward the desired solution. Falsehood does not necessarily enter into this process of tricking things out; it is, three-quarters of the time, the result of an illusion which we are prone to perpetuate within us.

Judgment, in order to be free from all which is not common sense, should then to put aside all personal predilections, all desire to form a conclusion to humor our inclinations. Absolute impartiality of judgment is one of the rarest gifts and at the same time is the noblest quality which we can possess.

But, apart from the question of a sterile abnegation, we must foresee that it may be important not to overestimate one's individual interests, to the visible detriment of the general interest. Common sense teaches us that we should call to our assistance self-control, in order to repress the tendencies which tempt men to sacrifice the general interest to some personal and vehement desire.

The essential factor of control is cool-headedness, which permits of seeing things in their true light, and forbids us to gild them or to darken them, according to our state of mind at the time. Cool-headedness, by leaving us our liberty of thought, enlightens us undoubtedly on the nature of danger, at the same time that it suggests to us the way to avoid it, if it really exists.

Fear, hideous fear, is a sentiment unknown to those whose soul communes with self-control and common sense. ... from the moment when the cause of fear is defined it ceases to exist; it becomes stupid illusion or a real enemy. ... take up ... the argument ... to say either the object of my fear really exists, and, in this case, I must determine its nature exactly, in order to use the proper means first to combat it and then to conquer it. Or it is only an illusion, and I am going to seek actively for that which produces it, in order never again to fall into the error of which my senses have just been the dupes.

We are too easily persuaded that goodness, like beauty, is a gift of birth. It is time to destroy an error rooted in our minds for too many centuries. Goodness is acquired by reasoning and logic, as are so many other qualities and it is common sense which governs its formation. People who lack goodness are the first to be punished for this defect. Serenity is unknown to them and they live in perpetual agitation, caused by irritation which they experience on the slightest provocation.

Happiness consists above all of harmony and of absence of sorrow. Wickedness, by inspiring us with discontent and anger, disturbs this harmony. We must, therefore, banish wickedness, that we may cultivate goodness, which is the creator of harmony. So, we should never lose an opportunity of being good and that without mental reservation. Gratitude is not the possession of every soul and he who does good may expect to receive ingratitude.

The moral sense is the common sense of the soul; it is the superior power of reasoning which stands before us that we may be prevented from passively following our instincts; it is by its assistance that we succeed without too much difficulty in climbing the steep paths of duty.

Beauty exists everywhere; it dwells in the most humble objects, makes all around us resplendent and, if we refuse to see it, we are blinded by an unjust prejudice, or our minds are not open to the faculty of contemplation. Not only does common sense not exclude beauty, but it really aids in its inception and protects its growth by maintaining the reasons which produce its appearance.

It is revealed above all to those who cultivate common sense and reject the sophistries of untruth that they may surround themselves with truth.