

John Lane
The Spirit of Silence
Making Space for Creativity
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This book is a sequel to the author's 'Timeless Simplicity' - Creative living in a consumer society; and takes us further into the possibilities of following our potential, discovering the truth of ourselves and perhaps glimpsing the God behind all creation, to whom, consciously or not, we all move.

Lane begins this absorbing book with a short chapter headed 'Spiritual Space', in which he points up understandings and experience of silence and solitude in all the major religions. He brings us the beauty and the interpretations of artists and philosophers from all parts of the world. The breadth and variety of the quotations from many famous and some less known names give us a window into the most wise and saintly and the most creatively endowed among human beings. This chapter ends with a pointer to our need for interior quietness in a world of noise and over-activity.

The next chapter focuses on the attainment of such quietness and its use, through well-known guides, for example, Hildegard of Bingen, Thoreau, Cezanne, Merton and others. We then move into the possibilities of what Lane calls 're-enchantment'. He reminds us of George Herbert, Monet and others who have learnt 'the art of the commonplace'; suggests the need for a spirit of gratitude and praise, use of our creative ability, the importance of relationships and the healing power of nature. To live in the present moment, to look for the beauty around us and to meditate on what we find attractive and lasting: all these will bring great benefit to our quality of life and stimulate our creative talents.

The last chapter is short and is entitled "Just Live Right". Here we find examples of people who, through the ages have, in Lane's view, done so. He begins with Virgil, who lived quietly and wrote his poetry through years of war and civil disorder; and follows on with Montaigne, Walt Whitman nursing the injured and others. These and many others, writes Lane in conclusion, 'turned adversity into advantage, hate into love, the negative to its opposite'; so providing inspiration for all seeking sanity in an apparently mad world.

Returning briefly to his theme of the need for silence, solitude and slowness, he gives us finally a line from Thich Nhat Hanh, "The destruction of the human race can only be avoided by finding a new cultural direction in which the spiritual dimension plays the role of guide".

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