

**Adolf Loos**

**Creating  
your home  
with  
style**

Taste  
is timeless

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## Learning How to Live

The new movement that has stricken all the residents of this city like a rampant fever – the settlement movement – requires a new person. And as Leberecht Migge<sup>18</sup>, the great gardener, so correctly points out, they will need to have “modern nerves”.

It is easy for us to describe the people with “modern nerves”. We do not have to strain our fantasy. They already exist, just not in Austria. They are located somewhere further west. Obtaining the nerves the Americans already possess today will be left up to our descendants.

In America the city dweller and the farmer are not so clearly distinguishable from each other as they are here. Every farmer is half a city dweller and every city dweller half a farmer. The American city dweller has not distanced himself as far from nature as his European counterpart has, or to define it more precisely the continental European, because the Englishman is pretty much still a farmer.

Both the English and the Americans consider living together with other people under one roof a rather unpleasant situation. Every person, rich or poor,

18 Leberecht Migge (1881–1935) was a German landscape architect, regional planner and political writer, best known for the incorporation of social gardening principles in the *Siedlungsbewegung* (settlement) movement during the Weimar Republic.

strives to live in his own home – be it just a cottage, or a dilapidated hut with a shabby straw roof hanging down. In the city they have theaters and build apartment blocks in which the individual apartments can cover two floors connected by a wooden staircase. Cottages built on top of each other.

And with this I have come to the first point of what I would like to elaborate on. The individual in his own home lives on two floors. He clearly separates his life in two parts, in life during the day and life at night, in residing and in sleeping. One should not view life on two floors as something uncomfortable. Bedrooms, in the way we are accustomed to, do not exist. They are too small and not very “livable”. The only piece of furniture is the white-lacquered iron or brass bed. Even a bedside table will not be found. And there is certainly no standing closet. This is replaced by a walk-in-closet, which we might easily term an enclosure. The bedrooms are only for sleeping purposes. They are easy to tidy up. One advantage they do have over our bedrooms is the fact that they have only one door and therefore can never be used as a walk-through-room. In the morning the whole family comes downstairs at the same time. Even the baby is brought down and remains with the mother throughout the day in the “living rooms”.

Every family has one large table at which the entire family congregates for meals. Farmers do the same.

In Vienna only about 20% of the population does this. And how does the other 80% make do? Well, one sits by the stove, three at the table and the others – and there usually are others – sit along the window boards.

Now, every family that lives in its own home should get a table that, just like the table of the farmer, is located in the living room. Having meals just like the farmers. That certainly will cause a revolution! There are voices for and against. "No, we will never do that! I saw the farmers in Upper Austria do this. They sit there at the table and all eat from the same bowl. No, we are not used to such practices. We all eat separately." A concerned father said, "What, at a table? What for – to prepare my children for tavern visits?"

When I tell people these stories they laugh heartily, but I am crying inside.

We will not argue about the table. Soon people will realize sitting at a table together for breakfast can save money. The *Viennese Breakfast* – a sip of coffee while standing by the stove and a piece of bread, half of which is eaten on the stairs and the other half on the street – generally rouses the need for a *Gulasch* at ten a.m.; it therefore qualifies as a misnomer. Not forgetting the fact that, because the *Gulasch* is a bit spicy, it must be accompanied by a mug of beer. This meal, which the English and the Americans do not

even have a name for, is called *Gabelfrühstück* (fork breakfast) here in Austria. It obviously carries the name because only the knife really comes into play. Of course, one should never eat with a knife, but: "how else can you eat the sauce!"

We can thank the male head of the family for this "second breakfast", which will remain part of his daily routine for as long as he has to make do with only a black cup of coffee at home. However, his wife will soon find out that, for the same amount of money, the whole family can partake in a wonderful American Breakfast. It's so filling that one cannot eat anything until lunchtime. For most American families breakfast is the favorite meal. Everyone is refreshed by a good night's sleep; the room is cozy, freshly aired through, and warm. The whole table is covered with food. First, everyone eats an apple. Then, the mother distributes the oatmeal, this wonderful product to which all Americans can attribute their energy, the country's greatness and posterity. The Viennese, of course, will make sour faces when I reveal to them what oat and meal mean in German. But in Lainz<sup>19</sup> we will serve the day-trippers this oat grout prepared the American way and hope that we can convert all of Vienna to oak grout eaters. What

<sup>19</sup> Lainz is a district of Vienna located on the northwestern borders of the city and was/is a popular weekend excursion location for middle class Viennese day-trippers.

good are our beautiful, oat-fed horses of which we are so proud? People here should also beget "dry" heads and expressive faces.

Be they rich or poor, farmer or millionaire, oat-meal is part of the daily breakfast diet of all Americans. Everything else, the cheap fish or the expensive veal cutlet is dependent on the individual financial circumstances. Naturally, there is tea and bread that, strangely enough, is also served at lunch and dinner.

Lunch is a very simple procedure. The father is not at home and the mother is busy throughout the morning cleaning the house, because she does not have a servant or cleaning lady. It was this missing hired help that brought about meals being prepared and served in the living room - for it is the right of the woman of the house to spend her time in the living room and not in the kitchen.

This arrangement, however, requires dividing up the cooking procedures into two parts. The first part consists of cooking at the stove, the second part being the preparation and the cleaning of the dishes. The first part is done in the living room where the stove is located. However, it is an absolute necessity that the stove is invisible to the greatest extent possible. No one wants to actually see the stove.

What has not been invented in America to solve this problem? Just recently I saw a photograph, actu-

ally two, in a periodical. The first photo was of a stove integrated into a wall alcove and the second was of a desk. Yet, it was the same alcove in the wall, however with a press of a button it rotated, just like a tabernacle, and became one or the other according to requirement. It was operated electrically.

However, such arrangements require more than just technical expertise. They require individuals who are not afraid of cooking. We, who have a mild aversion to cooking - a feeling that farmers, the English and Americans do not have - wonder why these "foreigners" are able to have their meals in hotel dining rooms where the food is cooked in sight of the guests. These rooms were called "roasting rooms" during the war and now have been renamed "grill-rooms". But even the ordinary settler will call it an *eat-in-kitchen* or *kitchen living* and will feel as noble as an English lord, or as ordinary as an Austrian farmer.

If one really wishes to "settle", then this individual must relearn the basics. We must forget about the municipal apartment blocks. If we wish to go into the countryside, then we have to let the farmer teach us his way of life. We have to learn how to live.