

Governed by Sensations:

The Sensian Way

Natural Moderation for the Survival of Humanity

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Many eons ago, a conglomerate of professors, chefs, florists, artists, and musicians came to the conclusion that the world was not just unaesthetic and unwanted: it was downright distasteful. They no longer wanted a part of it, feeling that something deep and burrowing was lying, subconscious-dormant-aching. Something, they felt, was being neglected in their lives.

They found one another at disparate cultural happenings: art gallery openings and cafés, and, ironically, over the Internet. Chat rooms, business databases, dating websites, and all manner of unlikely run-ins across the virtual spider web created a network of individuals who secretly discussed this specific collective lacking they felt. From superurban¹ warriors to suburban junkies across the world, they all reverberated with the same desire: “Not here.”

After years of talking, there was a convention in New York City. Aptly named “Sense,” this disturbingly large, invitation-only event seemed like a crossover between a cult and a workshop: a large panel of professionals and aesthetes assembled themselves, sat down, and surveyed a wide-eyed, possibly cynical crowd.

An Italian violinist stepped up. “Well, it’s great that we’re all here, but we need something to start with. I think, being in the Big Apple, we can safely begin with what we perceive often (and my expertise, if you will): **sound**. What is it about this place, particularly, that seems to numb us? It’s a cloud of mechanical noises, bombarding us at all hours in a chaotic, nonsensical way. Traffic, subways, planes, conversations... we’re surrounded, on all angles, by sounds we had no part in directly instigating. Most of us, if we have the means, even resort to our own sound worlds: iPods, video games, or cell phones bombard us at close range, instead, as if that were somehow better for our ears and our right to choice.”

¹ I’ve never used this word before in a paper. An online dictionary tells me that “super” and “urban” are generally hyphenated, but I wanted the enjambment in this case because it introduces my neologism style that will come in the following pages.

“I create music. It is sound with a purpose; when I compose, I organize it in a way that is enjoyable, based on formulas of sound theory, and even formulas that call upon your memories or instill new ones. My performance – on a good day! – is a technical feat, again from organization and technique. What I’m really doing, then, is taking a set of inputs for a sense – in this case, sound – and organizing them in a desirable way at the most basic level, and – ”

A bulky German chef jumped up to cut him off. “I do the same thing! With every dish I create, I take different tastes that I understand, and manipulate them in a way that uses balance – based on years of experience and experiments, of course. Sure, I have some basic formulas, like you do, that are acceptable in most cases, but I find myself modifying what I cook in each cultural setting that I find myself in.”

Politely raising herself from her seat, a floral designer stood with these two. “Isn’t that a problem, then? When we deal with senses, everyone is accustomed to something different based on their homes. How can we accommodate individuality of interests and interpretations? I know many women buy roses from me for the stigma rather than the scent, but a rose, no matter how lovely, is not loved by all of my customers for its inherent aesthetic value.”

“These are all very good points,” said the musician, “and I think we have much to consider with how we are to make our living spaces more aesthetically redeemable. I think we are broaching on the need for a new aesthetic, in whole, but also one that is respected, if not integral, to a new society.”

“Sense... yes, interesting...” The florist was lost in thought while the cook had already sat down, satisfied. The musician felt the adrenaline of a new world, but found his legs unable to support it and sat down. The crowd began to murmur a bit, but the light bulb had already turned on. “Of course! Why don’t we make our lives indulge our senses: our tongues and ears and

mouth and nose and hands and then, and then everything will have to work out! No more of this work for lives, disgusting! None of this balmy suburban residue, everything built by businessmen for children to view, never knowing... art! Enough! We'll start everything from the ground upwards, making a place where our senses are as sharp as the day we are born. We are visceral creatures: we notice when a neighborhood tree gets chopped down, friends in close quarters battling for beauty on their turf. We need a place for everybody to enjoy and grow and listen and learn and, for God's sake, just be *beautiful*. Why, with all of our technology and science, have we continued to look over this fact? As a cultural whole, here in America, we bypass the gut reactions of our bodies: 'This shirt feels like sandpaper, but anyone worthwhile wears it' or 'I bought this vase for a million dollars because it's a million dollar vase' are ideals that we need to stop. This plastic aesthetic has gone too far, but we all buy into it, and we're *still* miserable!" The florist was shaking with excitement, the trembling of her hands visible from a few of the front rows.

These aesthetically dissatisfied people continued to have meetings like this, probing at ways to satisfy a mass of individuals who, on the whole, were attached to their own desires and sensual preferences. Initially, they referred to themselves as *Sensians* when talking amongst each other. The Latin root of *sensus* – meaning faculty of feeling, thought, and meaning – seemed appropriate among them, as their acknowledgement of these sensuous perceptions was at the core of their values.

These annual meetings continued for nearly thirty years; over this time period, they began a fund that amassed enough money to buy a decent-sized island² not far from the Cayman Islands

² The use of an island – land that is physically isolated from other concurrent cultures – is inspired by More's *Utopia* (More, 41), wherein the Utopians are given a place that affords entirely natural defenses from intruders and allies

– a privately-owned paradise. It was amazing, to these people of average salaries, that they could ever own such a place, but further that it was previously owned by a single, well-endowed gentleman with more property than he cared to manage. If only he had a grasp of the possibilities he had, lying dormant in his possession, but that was his loss. *Sensia* was born.

It was temperate and fertile, but not as susceptible to the traumatic storms that plagued the main islands. They still had the ability to mix with the outside world for basic supplies in an emergency, but were not wholly reliant upon them. With their funds, they were able to begin construction on the location before people would move in. They set up a defense system of metal alloy walls with two gates – one that was obvious and public, along with another gate that used holograms to appear continuous with the wall in case of an unexpected intrusion.

The Sensians, in their planning, decided that sensual perception, per each sense, was crucial to the happiness of the people. The way that their living space accommodated the senses also needed to avoid a hierarchy to keep with each person's desires, as they all came from different cultures and predilections. They deemed that nature would be their guide, from buildings to tools to the dress of the people.

For example, houses were constructed with only a few rooms, but afforded for large windows and temperature-changing insulation that adjusted to the weather outside of the house to reach an indoor equilibrium. Also, the color of the houses – like a tree's foliage – gradually changed from season to season, like a seasonal *moodpaint*.³ For example, a house could have a fall color of maroon that shifted to a dark blue in winter, then a pale yellow in spring to a more golden hue in summertime. Houses need not have the same moodpaint: for example, one

alike. I modified the defenses of Sensia to better accommodate for an invasion, which I didn't think was covered in *Utopia*.

³ Also delineated in **Glossary**, page 26.

moodpaint set could shift across pastels, or another across red-orange-yellow shades. This moodpaint also applied to the Sensian's clothes, if they desired, or the pathways they traversed, as well as the furniture in their houses or the walls inside their houses. If they wanted, they could also choose to have natural materials as part of their housing décor, such as wood paneling or ivy that grew alongside their porches.

The streets and walkways, too, afforded for sensual delight. They used earthen materials – from brick to slate to other minerals – and placed them in beautiful and texturally interesting patterns and grooves that were comfortable to bare feet or sandals.⁴ They were the preferred footwear of these people, by far, as they afforded both connection with the outside and comfort in temperate weather. Shoes or boots were necessary for colder times; Sensians understood the limits of human perception versus human need, but these were still highly comfortable and served their primary function well.

The buildings also needed a layout that was indicative of healthy, open communication and experience. They formulated a series of towns that used concentric rings of buildings to organize their resources. The interior circles contained the public resources that the Sensians needed, from libraries to dining areas to playgrounds and gardens for relaxation. They were carefully designed to create a core of sense resource areas that were not dominated by any particular sense – there was no definite focal point that one would think of as the center of town, but a conglomerate of specialized sense areas that took an equal share of the town's focal energies. The next ring out was given to residencies of different kinds of families and lifestyles, while the outermost rings held the practical professions as well as interspersions of land left to

⁴ From the walking tour of the Moravian community in Bethlehem, the early Moravians incorporated a wonderfully unique set of patterns and textures to their buildings and walkways. I think this enabled them to express themselves in a way separate from nature while affording an interesting variety in their walkways and buildings.

nature and wildlife entirely. This way, the Sensians never felt completely isolated within their towns, and industries could bring in workers from other neighboring towns easily if there was a need.⁵

After years of living with a broad, semi-organized mix of artisans and professors (educators) and those with desire and working strength (common folk), they needed a stronger hierarchy of power for the benefit of all. People needed to be restricted in some way so that their sympathetic abilities were not abused, whether by themselves or by others. Therefore, they needed a specialist core of experts to determine when people were being jeopardized.⁶ They were *sensekeepers*: men and women specialized in one of the five senses.⁷ These leaders needed much experience in their honed sense: they traveled to experience the aesthetics of their sense, and also undertook intensive cultural study to understand the incorporation of their sense in other cultures. Through a combined thesis and presentation of their findings – at an incredible depth, not unlike attaining a doctorate degree – they were chosen to hold terms spanning a decade at a time. At this turning point, the peers in their field spoke with them and reevaluated their understanding, sensitivities, and overall passion for their sense. They could request a revision or upgrade of their original studies, as well, if they felt that a particular sensekeeper was not honed enough in their field anymore.

⁵ The idea of living in concentric circles was heavily inspired by Davis' *Ecology of Fear*, which used a circular model to express the economic subversion of Los Angeles. My rendition applies the concept in a different way for the benefit of people instead of the suppression of them. (Davis, 364-5) Also, my concept borrows from Campanella's *City of the Sun*, in which the cities take a circular shape so that education may happen peripherally and peripatetically, but my plan uses this to focus education areas to a specific area of the city internally. (Campanella, 279)

⁶ In Solanas' *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*, people of rationality and empathy have no need to compete, and therefore no need for government. (Solanas, 7) Although the Sensians strove to be people of sensual empathy, they felt that minimal governance was necessary to protect individual comfort. They also did not express a desire for more complex, convoluted leadership or politics.

⁷ Also delineated in the **Glossary**, page 27.

A sensekeeper had the purpose of enriching others with their knowledge and experiences within their sense, but they were also a sensory policing force. Should a Sensian deviate from a peaceful and productive life – harming others by forcing an inundation of scent on their neighbor, for example – then the offending Sensian was examined by a sensekeeper to evaluate their sensual predilections and sensitivities to find the most effective punishment. To further the example, let's say that the Sensian was especially in-tune with sound. A sensekeeper could then advise that, for his punishment, he would be forced to hear sound at an uncomfortable volume, called *soundhurt*,⁸ or, depending on his habits, be devoid of sound entirely for a period of time, called *soundvoid*.⁹ Either would be especially hurtful to this particular Sensian, and would target a specific weakness that is so fundamental and physiological that he would be foolish to wrong another person again.

After the criminal Sensian's weaknesses and case were investigated, a board of seven sensekeepers would hold a meeting to discuss the proper fate for this individual. The odd amount of people assures that there is often a majority; an abstention from voting would call in a new sensekeeper as a substitute to reassess the situation and then cast his decision. From the day that their duties are decided, no sensekeeper is looked upon poorly for abstaining judgment because it is well understood amongst them that a solid decision is better than uncertainty when dealing with another man's life.

For serious crimes, such as rape or murder, the Sensian at fault would be tried under a larger tribunal of sensekeepers – known as a *sensorium*¹⁰ – who would wager the harshest punishment for such an extremely criminal person. Sense removal might be used for such

⁸ To inundate one's ability to hear to the point of pain. See **Glossary**, page 27.

⁹ The artificial removal of the ability to hear. See **Glossary**, page 27.

¹⁰ See **Glossary**, page 27.

perpetrators: in this situation, a surgical procedure may be used to numb or *oversensitize*¹¹ one of the criminal's senses, rendering everyday life into a torturous endeavor. His sudden loss of his ability to see, for example, would be readily apparent to anyone he encountered, especially because other Sensians would not be allowed to assist him in his adjustment. Humiliated and severely disadvantaged, he would not be easily trusted or befriended by another Sensian for the rest of his life. Or, if colors became an overwhelming experience for this person, he would find pain in looking at the color of leaves changing in autumn. The beauty that normal Sensians find in nature's vibrance would become a painful reminder of his crime every time he opened his eyes.

If a criminal was especially wicked, finding no reason to cease harming others, nor affected by punishment that harms himself, he would be cast out of the community altogether. A miniscule, nameless island, too far to swim to and walled in on all sides, was home to one farm and one field. This was where criminals were abandoned to. Sensians did not believe in taking another man's life to avenge a loss¹², so criminals were allowed to keep their lives, but had to survive entirely on their own. Without community or culture, they were left to make food and eat food in a way of life slightly more cultivated than wildlife. The rest of their lives were of no concern to the Sensian people; the privilege of their knowledge and resources were forever lost to such villains, and the Sensian people found it rude to mention such a criminal in conversation, even after his exile.

¹¹ To exacerbate a sense's ability to perceive, allowing for facile sensory intake overload to the point of pain or numbness. From *Parable of the Sower*, Lauren's experiences opened up a world of negative sensory perception that is crucial to the balance of Sensian life and justice. (Butler, 44) See **Glossary**, page 26.

¹² In *I Shot Andy Warhol*, Valeria Solanas sees no value in lives that do not follow the beliefs of her manifesto, especially men. (I Shot Andy Warhol) Sensians, even when their values are breached, do not wish further destruction upon others, and therefore refuse to take lives into their hands under the guise of justice.

Upcoming sensekeepers were encouraged to act as *senseadvisors* for a few years prior. These individuals were less versed in a particular sense than a sensekeeper, yet showed genuine passion and growth in their field, acting as a liaison between the masses and the keepers. They were more informal in their conduct, and hence more approachable for counsel in situations of withdrawal or inundation. They existed to alleviate problems before they reached the level of a sensekeeper, which was a class that had few numbers as it was; the entrance requirements were more demanding, and not many sensekeepers lasted beyond two or three decades because of the intensity of their study. The workload of senseadvisors was a mix between that of the common people and the sensekeepers – they retained one profession, either aesthetic or pragmatic, and spent the rest of their work hours on research within their sense specialization.

The common people of this society were known as *dualworkers*.¹³ They divided their work hours across two professions: a first profession that had a *practical* end in providing for the necessities of Sensian society, such as farming to provide a food source, as well as a secondary, *sensuous* job that served as a culture-enriching aspect, such as sensory research or painting. Such dualworkers needed an additional hour of rest over sensekeepers, as they had the most difficult physical workload of all of the classes, but they had a wonderful opportunity to pursue two interests that balanced one another in many respects. For example, one could be a dualworker in construction and sculpting; both professions utilized the dualworker's predilection to use their hands, but the two applications balanced both an artistic application and a need to contribute to the society that supported them. In essence, they were kept simultaneously in touch with the needs of the whole (to sustain life) as well as the individual's needs for expression and identity (to enrich life). Overall, their career choices worked within cottage industries, giving

¹³ See **Glossary**, page 26.

preference to workshop environments over factory settings. This enabled a variety of activities across the day for workers, as opposed to one activity that was done thoughtlessly multiple times. In nature, there is no need for mechanization: that level of industrialization was created to satisfy a capitol, and in turn a human greed. This is unnecessary in Sensia, as work was as much for the process of enriching the worker as it was for the end product.¹⁴

They managed their time daily through a *time reservoir*¹⁵: a modular system of time

management applied to all classes of Sensians, from children and basic dualworkers to sensekeepers. This system, by one-hour blocks¹⁶, asked Sensians to decide how to disperse their hours for rest, work, relaxation, and meals across their days. Any Sensian’s time reservoir could be reshuffled at any

HOUR	Child	DualWorker	Sensekeeper	Elder
6:00 AM	REST	REST	REST	REST
7:00 AM	REST	REST	Meal A	REST
8:00 AM	Sensefocus	Meal A	Work	Nonsensehour
9:00 AM	Meal A	Career A	Work	Meal A
10:00 AM	School	Career A	Sensefocus	Work
11:00 AM	School	Career B	Work	Work
12:00 PM	School	Career B	Work	Sensefocus
1:00 PM	Meal B	Meal B	Meal B	Meal B
2:00 PM	REST	Sensefocus	Work	REST
3:00 PM	REST	Career B	Work	REST
4:00 PM	School	Career B	REST	Sensefocus
5:00 PM	School	Career B	Sensefocus	Meal C
6:00 PM	Meal C	Meal C	Meal C	REST
7:00 PM	Sensefocus	Sensefocus	Work	REST
8:00 PM	Sensefocus	Career A	Work	Work
9:00 PM	School	Career A	Nonsensehour	Work
10:00 PM	School	Career A	Work	Sensefocus
11:00 PM	School	REST	Work	Nonsensehour
12:00 AM	REST	REST	REST	REST
1:00 AM	REST	REST	REST	REST
2:00 AM	REST	REST	REST	REST
3:00 AM	REST	REST	REST	REST
4:00 AM	REST	REST	REST	REST
5:00 AM	REST	REST	REST	REST

Examples of Hour Distribution Across Different Work Classes

¹⁴ Marx makes the point of addressing the industrialization and degradation of labor to a machine-like, unfulfilling state. Sensia serves as an exact opposite of that end. (Marx, 44) This also contrasts the highly-mechanized dystopia work ethic found in *Brazil*. (Brazil)
¹⁵ See **Glossary**, page 27.
¹⁶ This concept of time-division was heavily influenced by Zamyatin’s *We*, but I disagreed with the regularity it had across all adults, never changing to accommodate seasons or nature because both had been overrun entirely. (Zamyatin, 10)

time, but it was encouraged to change one's schedule only when the season was shifting, so as to keep one's biological rhythm from being jarred about without care to the body's needs and habits.

They possessed the same twenty-four hour division of the day as we do, and allocated eight to ten hours for rest. Younger Sensians could request more or less rest hours as their bodies grew, but children were generally given more flexibility because their parents closely monitored their bodies and their balance of time anyway, and it was understood that the day-to-day needs of children varied as their bodies changed. Meals were given across three hours, with the strong suggestion that they be used for three separate one-hour meals, but those who preferred two meals, with one of them longer than the other, were also allowed. They deemed it impossible for any person to healthfully live on one or three meals within a three-hour block period per day, so this was one of the few time reservoir rules they had to consider. Because of the freedom of time, and choices with the placement of time modules across the day, they lived with open doors at all times. Those who preferred night shifts were just as welcome to breakfast at 5 PM as the child who came to eat dinner at 3 PM.

Individual Sensians had predilections for some senses over others, as all people are physiologically structured differently. It is the way of nature to have differences among members of a species. As this was encouraged, Sensians of all ages were given hours for *sensefocus*¹⁷ in which they could choose to learn, indulge, and hone one of their five senses. Usually, adults were given three or four hours to engage in sensefocus, with the choice to divide these hours across the day and across the senses in any way they desired. These hours were

¹⁷ See **Glossary**, page 27.

spent experiencing their chosen sense, such as perusing a natural flower garden for scentfocus,¹⁸ or in study on an intellectual level, such as attending a lecture on the characteristics of scents in Asian culture (their preferred flower scents and perfumes, for example). They could also choose to use these hours alone or with others, allowing for the sharing of sensual experiences, including sex.¹⁹ This did not need to be predetermined when they scheduled their hours each season, affording them flexibility with their time from day to day. Also, sensefocus hours were one of the few times when a Sensian could choose to have privacy. This was decreed because time spent honing a highly personal ability could not be expected to happen publicly or with others, and often required strong concentration or absence of movement – things not often found in the presence of jocular companions or rambunctious children.

Sensians, in their lives of sensory indulgence, also required time for *nonsense*²⁰: not the literal use of the word, meaning something that is illogical, ridiculous, or out of place, but a state in which the senses are suspended. This could be taken during meal times (in other words, using part of that time allocation – not necessarily multitasking while eating a meal) if they were allocated for an amount of work and rest hours that did not allow for a separate hour of nonsense. Most Sensians do not set aside a time for this in their time reservoirs, but take notice to stop during meal times to be without a certain perception for ten to fifteen minutes. For example, one might, after a gorgeous and tasty meal, find themselves overwhelmed with smells, and choose to

¹⁸ Each of the five senses has a neologism that combines the name of a sense and the word “focus” to express an activity a Sensian engages in to hone in on the specified sense. For example, studying horticulture for the sake of experiencing the color of foliage is engaging in *sightfocus*. See **Glossary**, page 27.

¹⁹ In Jameson’s *Politics of Utopia*, he points to the lack of sexual drive in utopians, unable to truly have desire without competition or passion. (Jameson, 53) My utopia *does* have these capabilities, as it does not preclude courting or competition between individuals for attention. Sensia chooses not to mandate it because there must be a degree of freedom for such empathetic people to not only express themselves, but to communicate with one another. They are taught well in school how to articulate their desires and their relationships with the world, and therefore are also able to communicate and have relationships with one another with compassion and openness.

²⁰ See **Glossary**, page 26.

retreat to a nonsense room or garden – a place lacking input for a specific sense – that specialized in *nonsmell* but had a preference for touch and sound. Many varieties of these places abounded throughout the island in different combinations – from simple places lacking sensory perception to complex environments of three or four senses in different extremes.

Education was paramount to the lives of Sensians: they believed that the study of cultures and sciences served to provide intellectual and conscious depth to their interactions, giving a breadth of acceptance across the wide variety of individual tastes that Sensians deemed crucial to a fulfilling life. Children, therefore, always had at least ten hours of instruction and supervision per day, covering everything necessary to become appreciative, productive, cooperative, and creative members of society. Their instruction progressed from the basics (language, arithmetic, reading comprehension) to the sciences and historical studies. As they aged, they began to have more choices in their course of study, leading to a *dualapprenticeship*²¹ when they were 15 years of age to 17 years of age. They held two apprenticeships, simultaneously, just as they later held two professions concurrently. They needed to be both practical and sensual professions, respectively, as they would be later on. Students had mobility with their apprenticeships, and were only required to stay with a given study for a year.²² After a year had been spent, they could choose to switch one or both of their apprenticeship fields, or could continue with the same profession for one or both of them. At 19 years of age, they were asked to finalize their career choices, but were given leniency and additional guidance if they had difficulty choosing.

²¹ See **Glossary**, page 26.

²² Unlike Campanella's *City of the Sun*, the young adults of Sensia do not receive 4 hour lectures in all of the sciences and then decide upon a single career for the rest of their lives based upon that. As many adults attest to, experience is integral to deciding one's career path. Such a decision is important to the lives of the Sensians, therefore the *dualapprenticeship* system afforded for flexibility to ensure that every kind of decision-making person could reason and experience in a way that was comfortable to them. (Campanella, 284)

Their education, aside from giving children a basis of understanding themselves and their country, introduced them to a broad spectrum of foreign cultures. Their schools were a melting pot of ideas, concepts, and sensory connections based on libraries of samples that would not be naturally possible within the small confines of Sensia: for example, recordings of music from Tibet that sound sensekeepers were familiar with, but were unable to perform, were available to the students as recordings. Their classrooms were spacious and open, with windows that spanned the walls. Teachers chose between closing off the area with shades or keeping it clear for nature to enter into the eyesight of students. They even wrote on the windows of the school, from time to time, as a special way of opening their creativity and structuring their ideas while taking in the divine simplicity of nature. This open cultural and aesthetic erudition helped these young people choose what they liked and what they didn't, quite simply, but further gave them the vocabulary and wealth of resources to articulate their desires and why they enjoyed or disliked certain experiences. From this, they were taught to accept their desires, but to suspend judgment of others' wants: all students learned, from the first day of school, that their interests were different, from the physicality of their eyes and noses onward, and that these differences were to be embraced and enjoyed without feelings of jealousy or disdain. These irregularities in choice were part of nature, and nature is the root of all true beauty. Children were well-acquainted with nature across the world, and were especially in touch with the wildlife of the island.

The Sensians applied their love of sensory variety to their entertainment industry and medical fields as well. They used their sense studies to create toys and devices to assist in sense

honing.²³ Whereas most people would prefer to experience sense variety in their environments as consequential to life, these trinkets aimed to deliberately train the ability of one of the sense areas. For example, a child might have difficulty distinguishing between the sounds of different animals due to an ear abnormality. This child would have been loved and accepted by the community, just as a normal, healthy child was, but would also have been given different sound-training toys to develop those abilities in addition to his normal course of study. On the other hand, this technology was also applied for older Sensians to take delight in via the unexpected combinations of senses. For example, a sense scientist could design a flower that looked beautiful, emitted a bell-like tone, yet had no scent. An oddity such as this would have delighted and pleased a seasoned Sensian of scent, for example, by surprising her with an unnatural, yet amusing, experience.

The Sensians were aware of those who gradually declined in their abilities to work or perceive as they aged. Senseadvisors, because of their counseling abilities, were often on the lookout for those that seemed to miss out on experiences as they grew old, helping these Sensians adjust to the changes of their lives. As their senses took the final evolution, whether naturally numbed or oversensitized, the senseadvisors would do their best to intervene in the Sensian's work environment (by providing earplugs for a construction Sensian, for example, or a lighter load of physical duties for a gardening Sensian). If the Sensian at hand was particularly struggling with their work, though, a senseadvisor could meet with a board of sensekeepers, with the Sensian present, to discuss an alternate profession, such as research, that was not as physically demanding.

²³ Inspired by Milton Hershey's ethic of creating a sensual product that many people could relate to on a daily basis, I found the application of such an industry as compatible with Sensia, but across more than taste and touch. Also, the mutability of this application gives a breadth of possibilities for entertainment as well as education. (D'Antonio, 89)

In time, some Sensians lost the faculties of their minds, finding day to day actions confusing or difficult. At that time, a senseadvisor would report this condition, and would meet with a board of five sensekeepers and the closest family members of the Sensian. They would decide if the Sensian should be allowed to live at home indefinitely, with food brought to him and the family given permission to eat with him, as well as how many health attendants would be allowed to supervise him if they were needed. To age, in Sensia, was a grace given to the privileged, and the Sensians took pride in these people for the depth of experiences they possessed unlike those elders in any other country. Therefore, these people were given the most compassionate attention, regardless of how well they retained their faculties.

At some point, a Sensian would pass on to another plane of existence, leaving their body to their loved ones. When this happened, a ceremony of celebration and thanks was held after three days of mourning. Everyone in the town would come out to thank the person for living, for experiencing, and for sharing his knowledge and feelings for the good of himself and all those he met. The body would be cremated afterwards, with the ashes used in the fertilizer for the fields. A Sensian did not know a more honorable way to give of himself than in death, rendering all that he was to the earth to give birth to new life, giving sustenance to his children.

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In the year 2159, the United States and China came to an incredible disagreement over trade relations, upsetting the world economy to a disastrous standstill. Although no blood was shed, the politics on both sides were starving many of the poor populations in each country,

pushing them to unreasonable limits. Many humanists voiced their concerns at lightning speeds, bringing the toil of these people to the attention of world media.

Academics and artists alike knew that, even in this year, they had little political weight. Those who could turn the tides were much wealthier; ironically, the farthest from the problems of daily life. They strategized a grassroots movement to get these people aware of their resources, the consequences of their actions, and then a final tour-de-force: a conversion of them, finally, into an enabling population of cultural enrichment. They would solve their problems at hand *and* reach a new pedestal of cultural enlightenment.

After three years of negotiating, cajoling, and all means of persuasion, they were able to sway hundreds of affluent businessmen towards a more benevolent attitude toward their fellow men. They were successful in their initial goals, but the whipped cream on top that would create an enriching group of people was still not happening. Despite all of the art and music classes they had, they could not sway these people from their inherent materialism.

One of the sculptors in this movement remembered a story of his grandfather's: a handful of his friends had left in a cult-like frenzy for an island to start some sort of community. It was "happiness through aesthetic," he remembered, and soon lost contact with those people.²⁴

By this year, Sensia had definitely fallen under the radar. There was a momentary stir about the people that had left to start this colony, but they were generally laughed off as a hippy cult. They didn't seem to be harming themselves or others, so the world media found them boring and went on to cover the awful things that they were accustomed to. However, the more persistent news spooks were found, met under twilight, paid off to their heart's desire, and asked

²⁴ This paragraph begins an individual experience of Sensia, from venturing away from an accessible reality to broaching on the utopia as an experience rather than a theory. This was done to deliberately counteract Jameson's *Politics of Utopia*, where he finds that most utopian writing has an "anonymous perspective" that is more conceptual than individually accessible. (Jameson, 39)

to inquire about Sensia no further. Busy people prevailed, leaving the island to its development in peace.

When the sculptor remembered this story, he posted on newsgroups to find if anyone else had heard such a tale. By piecing together bits of urban legend and family stories, they were able to approximate the location of the island, if it existed, and decided that their way of life could be integral to swaying the most influential people in the world to cultural enlightenment. The sculptor, a compassionate young Spaniard by the name of Enrique, and his girlfriend, an inquisitive Japanese pianist named Niame, decided to take a boat out to sea, with a team funded by their family and friends, in search of this place. With enough donations, they hired a ship and crew for a week, and headed off.

They were surprised to find a walled-in island of stone and some unknown, shining alloy by the third day. This gave them time to sail about the island for a port, which took them an additional day to find. It was very small, and barely afforded room for their vessel to dock: clearly, these people did not expect to leave, nor allow many guests to visit.

Three guards in robes of cobalt cloth and iridescent sashes stepped onto the pier the moment their boat docked. They did not have weapons, but their stance was definitely defensive. One of them appeared ready to run for reinforcement if the meeting did not go well, but they had a gait of peaceful discussion first, then conflict if necessary.

Niame stepped forward, thinking that these people would not harm an unarmed woman. She addressed them in Japanese at first, but seeing the puzzled expressions on the men, tried again in English. This was effective, and the guards listened to her reasoning for their visit and their intentions of peaceful discussion and simply sharing knowledge. The guard that was poised

to jet at the raise of a finger got his chance, as he was called to alert the nearest sensekeepers of their arrival immediately.

Behind the walls of Sensia, a special board of fifteen sensekeepers decided to allow them to stay for discussion as long as they needed. They felt there was nothing to hide in their way of life, but were wary of any kind of belligerent intrusion. The guards searched the couple for weapons before allowing them to enter. They were given Sensian clothes and footwear, appropriate for the spring season, and a senseadvisor who would guide them through their day. After resting, they would be permitted to speak with the same board of sensekeepers, who would decide their actions from there.

When the couple first awoke the following day, the senseadvisor escorted them to breakfast at precisely 9 AM. Everyone, it seemed, had watches that went off at every hour. Also, as they stepped onto the walkway to the food center, they noticed the feel of the walkway; it was reminiscent of walking on the beach, but without getting sand in one's socks. As Enrique turned his head from the ground to the sky, he noticed that his robe was changing hues, slightly... as was Niame's! As was *everyone's*, as he stared in astonishment at anyone he came across. A few children running ahead to the food center stopped to giggle at his expression, but found breakfast more pressing and ran off again.

They found themselves walking in a seemingly large spiral, entering deeper into the city. Houses became galleries, museums, concert halls, and cafés. Then, these cultural locales became more functional as they came across a large meeting hall and a handful of schools, probably for children as there were playgrounds about. These were lush environments of discovery for children, as they had oddly shaped plants within reach of their public toys, and the caretakers nearby seemed to encourage the children to touch and smell these things. Niame silently wished

to remember a childhood where she smelled anything rather than studying for hours – years, it seemed – for unsatisfying university exams.

They came upon one of the larger, less natural-appearing buildings. Older teenagers were strolling in and out as Enrique and Niame entered. The nameless senseadvisor guided them to a lecture hall of some kind – oddly bright, they thought, for such an enclosed place... so they thought, until they looked up to see a magnificent sunroof, letting in the sunshine and cloudshadows of the morning's weather. At the base of the hall was a panel of five people, all dressed in color-changing robes and looking oddly welcoming and happy.

Niame and Enrique were given samples of many kinds of breads and meats to nibble on. They felt like a buffet was given to them, and graciously took a bit of each, along with generous helpings of their favorites. One of the robed people smiled as the senseadvisor took his leave. She sat in the center of the group, and appeared to be Indian, with a gemstone on her forehead and rich, dark hair parted down the center of her forehead and braided to the back.

She was a woman of many years and quite jovial, and finally exclaimed "I also adore the rye bread! There's something in the taste – a straight-forwardness, a history... and the seeds are delightful to me. I am glad that you enjoy it!" Enrique, surprised by the woman's candor and choice of opening topic, wasn't sure of what to say, so he nodded his head repeatedly like a child discovering chocolate. She continued, "Here, we delight in the discovery of tastes, smells, sounds, sights, and touches that interest and enrich our lives. We go about this lifelong study with fervor and openness. We think that it is crucial to the understanding of happiness, and we choose to endeavor in peace with one another, above all."

"We are not deaf to your concerns. A handful of our sensekeepers have computers with access to the internet by satellite. Although we prefer not to connect directly with the outside

countries, we do recognize the necessity to keep abreast of the events of the world. We also like to keep up with the changes in cultures across the world, for we believe in cultural enrichment beyond ourselves, as well. To come back to your pressing concerns, we understand that there are problems of economic stress in the larger countries. They are powerful, stubborn, and stagnant in much of their national culture. They also have goals that are detrimental to their own lives, and to living peacefully with others. They lack compromise, just as they did when we left many decades ago.”

Enrique took this as a chance to probe further. “We are here to address that very problem! We heard of you from stories that our grandparents told of friends that had disappeared to this place – a place of peace and experience. We are moving to change this world...”

An elderly man on the left end of the table, grey-haired with blue, glassy eyes, raised his hand. Enrique, caught off-guard, excused himself to his seat as the gentleman stood, more politely than the woman. “Young man, it takes more than a shot of culture to change people – I know, I’ve been there. Before I gained jurisdiction over sound as a sensekeeper, I worked with many kinds of people on smaller projects. Even here, there is a stubbornness of taste and predilection – mostly from families that grow those kinds of closed-minds, although that does whittle down from generation to generation of living in Sensia. Anyway, we have the home court advantage here: we have a majority of open-minded people of many original ethnicities, simultaneously breeding and accepting diversity as a way of life. In fact, we have decidedly made it our aesthetic and the basis of our society.”

Niame had been focused intently on the whisper-blue of his aged eyes, finding that his speech was deep and calming. She endeavored to inquire, “How are we to change anything in a

world where we clearly do not have the ‘home court advantage’ that you speak of? I mean, it doesn’t seem reasonable to think we can supplant ourselves into the lives of the disgustingly rich, creating a canopy of education and diversity that they would willingly accept. They haven’t the patience nor interest to allow us, and I’m not sure of how we’d even get past *that*.”

The elder gently responded to her, “The decisions of these people you speak of are not in your hands, child. Especially if they are older, their minds can be set, lost to change or growth. We do not have as much of that problem here, where people are encouraged to experience and renew themselves throughout their whole lives.”

“Then where *is* the key?” Enrique stammered, belying the graces he afforded until then. “I can see how powerless we are to change them, and how powerless they are to change themselves, but where is the solution? Where does the change need to happen? There must be *something!*”

To this, the woman to the left of the Indian woman tried to withhold a chuckle. She was younger than her two previous peers, with deep red curls and thick hands. “You know, it’s so easy to be impatient; with your fervor, you forget the strength your years have, and the inherent curiosity they possess. Not only that, but you can rile yourself so easily to a cause.²⁵ I notice, by your eyes and your gait, that neither of you are either American or Chinese. Yet this situation infuriates you, yes?” Both Enrique and Niame nodded, surprised by her frankness. “You made this journey anyway? You appeared to have the resources to come find us, as well – not a small feat by any means. I wager that you could also choose to ignore this global issue entirely, if you

²⁵ In the words of Osama bin Laden, he admits to the strength of young people from the ages of 15 to 25 in waging jihad. (Lawrence, 91) Aside from the physical tumult that these people experience and the breadth of choices they make within this time, they often lack the full weight of life’s responsibilities as the heads of families, and can take risks that older people would not consider, nor do children have the capability of executing successfully. They are prime agents of change.

wished. You could find lives elsewhere, less affected by these two bickering toddler-nations, couldn't you? By being here, though, you are showing that your passion lies to the opposite; altruism, I would hope. No matter, the point is that you had the strength to confront the need for change and admit to an outcome you didn't think was possible before. You knew you could compromise your thoughts long enough to come here before giving up altogether."

The man to her left, an older man of dark complexion, muscular physique, and gray-streaked hair, added to her conclusion. "There are others like you across the class systems your countries possess – including that dank aristocracy in the first world countries. They, by nature of their wealth and self-interest, procreate their blood and their ideas. You cannot change the blood without defying nature – we do not advocate that. The upbringing, though, is something you can interfere with. If you can find ways to open and vary the lives of the children beyond the capitalism and selfishness of their parents... ah! Then, you have change! Nothing like an overnight revolution, but definitely a solid basis for turning over the politics of culture. After a few generations, you could even have a place like this to call your home."

With a sad gaze, Niame understood that his words implied her home could not be here, now. It was for her to experience, yes, but also for her to take elsewhere. After a pause to recognize her sorrow, he smiled and continued, "My way of life is simple, satisfying, and does not inflict any harm on other people, animals, or even the Earth itself. I taste, touch, smell, see, and hear just as well as when I was young. I have never had to compromise these abilities, given to me in nature. As a peaceful Sensian, I never will. My great grandparents were willing to give up their lives, with all of the customs they grew to know and friends they came to love, to create this place. They were young, like both of you, with strong arms and strong hearts. You need to trust in the humanity of who you are, and that, if you dig deep enough, there is a core that resides

in all people. People do not continue to live for nothing – there is a basic need to continue, to experience. You see the value in *saturated* living; you want to help people deepen their lives. What you need to impart to others, then, is that you share this core with them. Not only that, but you see the beauty in it, and wish to open the windows that are often closed outside of here. You want to share and provide for a new way of life, as we give to our children!”

Niame broke down to sobbing, Enrique coddling her for a bit. They both felt the inherent difficulty of such a task. The woman of sanguine curls continued her friend’s speech in a lighter tone, “It is not altogether impossible, my dears. It will take many people, much turning, and time. Oh, so much time. You will need patience beyond your lifetimes, and appreciation of even the smallest victories.”

At this, the five elders rose at once. The man of glassy-blue eyes spoke to them. “We give your our deepest blessings for coming this far and for having the courage to ask the hardest of questions to us. We leave it to you to find the innovation to teach children, and possibly their parents, the beauty in a life lived at peace with nature and sense.”

GLOSSARY

dualapprenticeship – n., system of holding two complementary apprenticeships, unique to Sensian adolescence. A young adult between fifteen to nineteen years old is given into the hands of two master craftsmen of practical and aesthetic careers, respectively. The apprentice holds each apprenticeship concurrently for a year, and may choose to continue one, both, or none of the previous courses for the following year. This system ensures that young people have ample opportunities to learn and appreciate other professions, while finding the careers that will be most comfortable and productive for them as working-class adults.

dualworker – n., an adult Sensian who possesses two careers and tends to both of them on a daily basis.

moodpaint – n., a substance similar to paint that has the ability to shift hue within a color grouping (such as orange-red or blue-purple) depending on the time of year, temperature, and precipitation outside. This substance has also been modified for the clothing of Sensians, should they desire it.

nonsense – adj., lacking sensory input.

nonsensehour – n., one-hour period devoid of sensory information of one or more senses. Example: A garden without scent or sound would be ideal for a nonsensehour.

oversensitize – v., to inundate one or multiple sense organs with input to the point of numbness or pain. This is often artificially induced by sensekeepers as a method of punishment, but can also occur by accident if a Sensian is unwise in their sense experience choices.

senseadviser – n., a class of workers that are specialized in one sense and advise common people on their decisions about their sensory intake levels. They are preferred over sensekeepers because of their informal, more lighthearted level of interest in their chosen sensitivity.

sensefocus – n., a period of time spent honing, training, researching, or enjoying an individual's own perception of one of the five senses.

sensekeeper – n., the highest level of specialist in an area of sensory intake. They primarily research and teach about their sense across all aesthetic and pragmatic aspects.

Sensian – n., a citizen of Sensia, an island near the Cayman Islands developed as a community of aesthetically sensitive people who base their lives on peacefully satisfying their sensory tastes.

sensorium – n., literally, the part of the brain that processes sensory signals. (Oxford English Dictionary, 987) In Sensia, this term is the name of any board of sensekeepers that convenes for official business.

time reservoir – n., system of allocating individual and societal needs per hour across a twenty four hour time-span. Each Sensian modifies their schedule at the beginning of each of the four seasons, so as to accommodate for the different capacities of human work and rest that are prone to change during the year.

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