



*The tip of your nose*

Did you ever ponder the function of the tip of the nose, beloved reader? The explanation proffered by Dr. Pangloss is that noses were created to support spectacles, and I confess that for a time I found this theory satisfactory; but one day, while I was meditating this and other obscure points of philosophy, I hit upon the true, authentic explanation. Indeed, I had merely to remember the custom of the fakirs. The reader doubtless knows that a fakir will spend long hours looking at the tip of his nose, with the sole purpose of seeing the divine light. When he fixes his eyes on the top of his nose, he loses the sense of external things, creates within his mind a beautiful image of himself, grasps the intangible, shakes off his earthly shackles, dissolves himself, and becomes etherealized. This sublimation of one's being, via the tip of his nose, is one of the most lofty

phenomena of the spirit, and the faculty of achieving it is by no means confined to fakirs; it is universal. Every man has the need and the ability to contemplate his own nose, in order to see the divine light, and such contemplation, resulting in the subordination of the universe to one nose, establishes social equilibrium. If noses contemplated only each other, the human race would not last two centuries, indeed, it would not have survived the most primitive tribes. I hear an objection from the reader: „How is it, then, „he says, „that no one ever sees men contemplating their own noses?“ Obtuse reader, this shows that you have never been inside the brain of a hatter. A hatter walks past the store of a rival, who opened it two years ago; than it had two doors, now it has four; it promises to have six or eight before long. In the windows the rival's hats are displayed; through the doors walk the rival's customers. The hatter compares the store with his own, which is older and has only two doors; and he compares those hats with his own, for which the demand is relatively poor although the prices are the same. Naturally he is chagrined; but he walks on, his eyes looking downward or straight ahead. Then he concentrates, seeking the reasons for the other man's prosperity and his own failure, when he is really the better hatter than the other... At this moment, if you look closely, you will see that his eyes are fixed on the tip of his nose. The conclusion, therefore, is that there are two major forces in society: love, which multiplies the species, and the nose, which subordinates it to the individual. Procreation, equilibrium.

„Epitaph of a Small Winner“ by the Brazilian author Machado de Assis (1880/ page 88-89).