

## ART AS AN AXIOLOGY OF MAN

**1. Introduction. Art in Human Life.** More than being either surrounded by, or inserted into nature, man is connected to it, since he participates in its functioning. To achieve such a participation, he intervenes in nature not only for his own sake and survival, but also in order to exert his authority upon it by using the appropriate means in the best, i.e. in the most «economical», way which, in most cases, also happens to be the most elegant. For this purpose, man disposes of his own body with all its abilities, as they have been developed by him, particularly of his arms and fingers. To combine his efforts with those of his companions, he has made out of his voice an articulated instrument for communication. Working at a common aim, and expecting a common result through a common effort have led him to become aware of the importance of rhythm.

Through labour the development of the human mind has been accelerated. For man, tools are prolongations of his hands and, as such, help him reach and manipulate what is located away from him, be it the unreachable. The first tool to have acquired a magic power might have been a reed used as a musical instrument, then a scalpel, then a pencil, which, together with weapons, were considered more efficient if decorated in an adequate manner. What these tools helped create is a certain number of ritual formulae to be uttered or engraved. Before meaning a song, the latin word *carmen* (= charm) meant an incantation. All these data are known today thanks to ethnological research on primitive cultures. They are more or less identical in every primitive society, and show how art and with it man himself was liberated from social and magic constraints.

The origin of art is thus closely related to man's concern to dominate the reality of nature by substituting for it another reality which emanates from an imaginary world of his own and which he nevertheless shares with all the others. C. G. Jung<sup>1</sup> has excelled in pointing out the importance of the collective unconscious which allows artistic creation that emanates from a precise consciousness to be fully shared and understood by a given cultural community or even acquire universal recognition. Consequently, one may assert that art is the most brilliant form of human creativity. Through art man defies what seems to be implacably and ruthlessly normal, recurring and



obsessive in his life, and has access to what is unique, exceptional and unknown, without immediately threatening him. Art represents for him his own freedom, a freedom however that is self-controlled through its own system of rules which are common to all works of art, but also particular to each one of them. The function of art is to manifest each time this possibility and this ability that man has to instaure a material concretization of his most intimate existential aspirations.

It becomes obvious that art is more than a serious game, as Schiller had tried to show. In fact, far more than it seems, a game is a serious occupation which imitates art by imposing its own rules which are reversions of social rules and, hence, their respective negations. This is why, at all times, minds rooted in established values feel offended by artistic freedom. A typical representative of the classical Athenian, on the one hand Plato deeply deplored the artistic innovations of his contemporaries, namely the liberty with which, following Homer, the tragic poets of his time manifested a kind of impiety by altering well established myths concerning gods, especially by attributing human vices to them; this is why, in his *Republic*, he proposes that poets be banished from the ideal city. On the other hand, an artist himself, Plato suggests that, prior to their expulsion, poets be honoured by being crowned; and much later, in his *Sophist*, he goes as far in pleading the cause of art as to accept that, notwithstanding its pernicious effects, art is absolutely necessary to human life (which needs rhythm and harmony; *Protagoras*, 326 b) to such an extent that, «deprived of art, life would become impossible» (*Sophist*, 299 e). It is striking that in one of his early works Plato uses exactly the same expression about a life deprived of the possibility of being philosophically examined (*Apology*, 38 a). Art, then, becomes the equivalent of philosophy, i.e. the highest expression of the human mind, which embraces every manifestation of human existence.

If philosophy is a reflection of the mind grasping itself (Aristotle, *Metaph.*, VIII 19, 1074 b 34 = *noēseōs noēsis*) and, hence, a reflection on the utility and value of life under each one of its aspects, then art is itself an integrating part of life, since it helps man grasp his whole existence from inside, i.e. through his own deeds and creations. In this respect, art is the reflection of the inner world of man, an objectification of the system of values that govern his internal life. As such, art is the activity of man which is the most appropriate to reveal to him, with an indisputable plenitude, the meaning of his existence.

In order to become an efficient activity of mind, philosophy requires (a) a separate conception of each one of the aspects of a given problem, and (b) a previous distancing of consciousness from its object, i.e. from itself. On



the contrary, art is the direct manifestation of consciousness in its totality: distancing is, in this case, not prior to artistic activity, but inherent in it, as objectification. In the same order of ideas, if philosophy helps make precise the meaning of life, art contributes to give life a meaning and an overall value. From this viewpoint art becomes a value itself.

**2. Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art.** Officially, as a philosophical discipline which aims at evaluating art, aesthetics is a rather modern creation, since it dates only from the eighteenth century, when it has been given its name by A. G. Baumgarten. Its roots however, and even its most important representatives are to be found in ancient times, especially in Greek thought. This does not mean that other cultures in antiquity did not have their own patterns and criteria in appreciating artistic creations; on the contrary, they produced highly valuable forms of art which became traditionally imposed, which means that they were accepted because they corresponded to some real, yet rationally unexpressed axiological needs. Egyptian and Mesopotamian artistic creation, not to mention others, are still considered among the finest realizations history of art has to deal with. The Greeks first tried to and succeeded in conceptualizing artistic reality as a process and as a result of human creativity, particularly in what is related to the work of art considered as a form. They even went further by examining what is beyond art, i.e. the beautiful.

The philosophical determination and evaluation of the beautiful became the principal, if not the unique, concern of philosophers dealing with the problems of art. The beautiful itself was given the importance of an entity which every simple beautiful creation was believed to emanate from, and to refer to, due to a kind of participation by virtue of which it existed itself. This artistic essentialism was inaugurated by Plato and illustrated first by Aristototele and later by Plotinus and Augustine. However, in parallel, another conception of artistic value had been developed. It was based on the Pythagorean idea that everything consists of numbers, and that, consequently, the beautiful is the result of certain numerical combinations which are manifested under the aspect of proportions. Plato himself was not entirely negative toward such a theory, which at least he found appealing. However, Gorgias the sophist played with this idea in his attempt to build an aesthetics of the appearance: perceptual distortion, he insisted, has to be corrected; artists should distort their forms beforehand so that, when perceived, they seem «true». This prescription was accepted by artists: the subtle refinements in the construction of the Parthenon and the general adoption of the respective *canons* (or rules) of Myron and Polyclitus (according to which the



height of the head of a statue should be in proportion to its whole height, a proportion expressed by ratios such as 1:8 or 1:7, respectively) are the most prominent examples the popularity of Gorgias' theory.

In modern times, Gorgias' theory has been interpreted in a very different way by theoreticians of art who have been deeply impressed by «positivistic» conceptions which, in fact, Comte, the founder of positivism, never defended. According to these conceptions, there is a need for experimental precision and subsequent mathematic expression of those forms and structures which are most agreeable to the senses (Birkhof, Mase, Haug, Bense, Klaus). This should, the argument could run, help codify a certain number of artistic models in order to direct future efforts of artists towards forms of art which would be immediately accepted and successful. Such an assumption is a vicious one, for it underestimates (a) the value of the outcome of artistic processes which is not a mere product for commercial purposes, but a unique and unrepeatable creation; (b) the value of artistic freedom which is inherent to artistic activity and which requires that every kind of artistic form be accepted as such; and (c) the value of aesthetics itself as a philosophical discipline, for, in fact, it classes it among experimental disciplines of measurement. There are two ways of reacting against such a tendency either by proving the unsound basis of its theoretical foundation, though such a crusade seems to be without prospects since numerous contemporary aestheticians tend to be contaminated by the new conception of aesthetics or by frankly abandoning aesthetics to its new concerns and try to save if not its own dignity, at least the dignity of its past and recent philosophical accomplishments, by creating a new discipline: philosophy of art.

One should be aware that, under such a denomination Hippolyte Taine tried, a century ago, to proclaim a naturalistic support to his conception of the history of art, according to which art in each society would be the result of the interaction of geographical, climatic and historical factors. As a consequence of this idea, Taine especially tried to evaluate the conditions under which Greek or Dutch art flourished. The meaning proposed here for the philosophy of art is quite different from Taine's one: it is, namely, the original one accorded since the eighteenth century to aesthetics. The problems it entails certainly are problems which are experienced by the philosopher, but which are far beyond actuality, since they relate to the very essence of man, i.e. his creativity. While dealing in general with the same problems as aesthetics, philosophy of art could claim to transcend them by referring to the instaurative activity of man which is his exclusive privilege. The relationship, then, between aesthetics and philosophy of art would be



that between primary and secondary research; or, to put it more clearly, philosophy of art would be an aesthetics of the second degree. The principles on which philosophy of art, thus conceived, might be based should necessarily refer to an analytics, to a dialectics and to a hermeneutics of art. They should namely pertain to the problems of creative intentionality, of the processes of creation and of its circumstantial factors.

It is true that such a structural approach to art could perhaps seem to conceal the real philosophical problems that have been pointed out by classical aesthetics, both ancient, and modern. This is not true, however, since all of these are reducible to only one: that of the relationship, ontological and existential, between man and his own creation; and that philosophy of art is intended to include all these questions within its own range of interest. Philosophy of art would, in this case, concede to aesthetics the exclusivity of experimental research to which some contemporary aestheticians would like more and more to confine themselves. It is to be hoped that the divorce between classical aesthetics and some modern aesthetical tendencies will not be realized. However, even if it were to be realized, philosophy is ready to help traditional aesthetic conceptions to survive.

**3. Historical perspectives.** Several of the preceding considerations refer to the history of aesthetic theories. Nevertheless they remained uncoordinated. The problem of the history of aesthetics has to be faced in a more precise manner. As has already been said, no real aesthetic theory was produced within the limits of ancient oriental cultures, and it is only in Greece that such theories first appeared. Most of them display a striking rationalistic character. Although one may find Greek sensualistic ethical theories opposed to rationalistic ethics, practically no important sensualistic aesthetics was ever formulated in Greece. Even Gorgias' sophistic aesthetics is, indeed, a rationalistic one, though of a reversed type, of course. Plato, however, mentions artists and critics as well as craftsmen who excell in virtuosity and in underlining the importance of mere artistic delight, but fail to link it to the wider problems philosophy is interested in. They even, Plato continues, try to flatter the masses as if they were acrobats or jugglers (*Rep. X*, 598 d; *Laws VII*, 790 e; 791 b).

The first to have ever fashioned a complete aesthetic theory, Plato takes as his starting point the assumption that there are concrete structures in nature and in art which find an exact correspondence in structures within the human body. The coincidence of these two kinds of structures when an artistic form is perceived arouses sensual pleasure. However, only few are



wise and able enough to understand well by themselves the transcendental meaning of the structures and of their coincidences (*Timaeus*, 88 e). At the level of sensual and artistic delight everything is a matter of motion. Regular motion pleases whereas irregular motion entails individual and social disease. The role of art consists, according to Plato, in helping impose on the consciousness such or such a kind of motion. Good educators will allow only good artistic models to be perceived by young people (*Rep. III*, 398 e; *Laws*, VII, 815 a).

It becomes clear that Plato's aesthetic theory is not yet totally liberated from ethical concerns. For him, the essence of art is beauty itself which is just another aspect of the Good. It is a mistake to repeat that Plato is an idealist. He of course speaks of ideas, but, as of «being beings», i.e. of realities *par excellence*. In fact, Plato is a realist. For him, through a dialectical ascent, the human mind is enabled to detach itself from the sensible incarnations of beauty and to reach the intelligible beautiful which is the most real one (*Symposium*, 211 e). After having contemplated it, the mind becomes able to recreate it through imitation, by providing artistic images of its «shadows», i.e. the sensible forms. In the hierarchy of beings artistic creations are therefore considered as imitations of imitations (*Rep. X*, 597 e). The Platonic theory of artistic imitation exerted a deep influence upon aesthetics up to the late eighteenth century.

Plato's troublesome disciple Aristotle shares in general the views of his master. He insists, above all, on the necessity of analyzing prominent masterpieces, especially tragedies, which are imitations of important acts (to the imitative character of art Aristotle, again after Plato, adds a purificatory power) in order to discover the complicated structure that forms the aesthetic kernel of each one of three constitutive parts (*Poetics*, 6, 1449 b 24). Likewise, Aristotle proceeds to the analysis of theoretical forms (*Rhetoric*, III 10, 1410 b 28; II 24, 1401 a 7), which he recognizes an aesthetic importance. For him however the beautiful is not a transcendent entity, but resides «in greatness and order» (*Politics*, H4, 1326 a 33; *Poetics*, 7, 1450 b 37). Cicero interprets the Aristotelian notion of order as symmetry (Aristotle, *Metaph.*, M3, 1078 a 36). Aristotle is the first to have dissociated from the beautiful two aesthetic qualities: the graceful and the laughable. He identifies the former with a kind of mutuality; the latter with «harmless ugliness» (*Poet.*, 5, 1449 a 35).

Aristotle's conception of the beautiful as residing in order entails that the beautiful is a successful combination of unity and multiplicity. This idea was followed in late Antiquity (Augustine) and, throughout the Middle Ages (Thomas Aquinas) and Renaissance, up to the eighteenth century. Plotinus



and Proclus strongly supported excessively Platonic views on art and the intelligible beautiful, thus giving birth to a whole tradition in Greek medieval aesthetics and art, while pseudo-Longinus insisted upon the motion of the sublime as applied to rhetoric. All these traditions, Platonic and Neoplatonic, Aristotelian and pseudo-Longinian, deeply influenced thinkers during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century in France (Yves-Marie André, J.-P. Crousaz, J.-L. de Buffon) in England (Hogarth, Young, Webb) and in Germany where Winckelmann renewed the problem of classic art and proceeded to a distinction between beauty and the beautiful, and where Lessing gave a magisterial analytical account of what the beauty of certain classical artistic masterpieces consists of.

The preromantic period in European culture favoured theories dealing with the aesthetic feeling inspired by nature (Rousseau, Shaftesbury). Imitating Montesquieu who had proved the relativity of human laws, in France, Voltaire, by publishing in the *Encyclopédie* his article on «Taste» opened new horizons to aesthetic relativism («for the male frog, the beautiful is his mate»), and in England Burke renewed aesthetic interest in the notion of sublime. In Königsberg the precritical Kant took advantage of these two lessons as early as in 1764, when he published his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, as a prelude to his third critique, the *Critique of Judgment* (1791), which had the same «Copernician» revolutionary effect as his *Critique of Pure Reason*, published seven years before. Kant's third critique opened a new era in aesthetics. After Kant it is impossible to discuss aesthetics without referring to his theory which has completely changed the traditional positions on the matter.

For Kant the beautiful is not an observable, sensible or intelligible object. It is both a «feeling of judgement» and a «judgement of feeling». Being a feeling, (a) the beautiful is not a concept, nor is it subsumable under any concept: it is each time unique. Besides, (b) the beautiful, just as Plato had already pointed out, is totally dissociable from the useful. Further more, (c) although a personal or subjective experience, the beautiful pretends to have a universal value (it is on the ground of this assertion that Kant's third critique could have been entitled «Critique of aesthetic reason»). Last but not least, (d) the beautiful is a «finality without proper aim». Each one of these four fundamental characters of the beautiful corresponds respectively to each one of the four fundamental classes of the categories of pure reason: quantity, quality, relation, modality. It is clear that Kant's aesthetics completely fits with his epistemology. For Kant the beautiful is to be discovered within ourselves. The work of art thus becomes for consciousness, through its form, an occasion for experiencing the beautiful: the more



equivalent experiences it causes the more it happens to be appreciated, but still the beautiful does not reside in it, it resides within consciousness. In the same way Kant makes of the sublime also a feeling. For him, the aesthetic sublime is caused by the impression of infinity. Here Kant thinks of the «greatness» or rather the grandeur of the Aristotelian beautiful, deprived however of any order. An Aristotelian reflection also underlies Kant's assertion that the sublime is caused by the impression of a danger which is very far from affecting us, i.e. a «harmless» damage, just as harmless ugliness is the laughable according to Aristotle.

Hegel's aesthetics is entirely subordinated to the same general dialectical scheme as his whole philosophical thought: the movement of the Idea. For Hegel, the beautiful is the sensible manifestation of the Idea. With Hegel a historical vision is integrated, for the first time after Plato, into aesthetics. Within such a vision, the Idea manifests itself through art in different ways according to time and space. In the Orient art is *symbolic* (architecture); in Greece it becomes *classic* (sculpture); and in Europe it evolves as *romantic* (painting). Art then may explain the particular artistic form or style. In this respect Hegel is the forerunner of Taine. In fact, up to our days, most of subsequent aesthetic theories are combinations of Kantian and Hegelian thoughts, in one way or another. One should particularly mention the eclectic combinations of Th. Reid and V. Cousin, as well as that of Ruskin who presented some fundamentally Hegelian theories under the cover of an absolute idealism. Schopenhauer's aesthetics mark a neat return to Platonism, while Nietzsche's most important contribution was his distinction between Dionysian and Apollonian spirit in Greece which decisively helped understanding of the essence of Greek tragedy.

Due to his profound culture, Marx's personal contribution to aesthetics was a complete dissociation of economic production from artistic creation. He thus allowed his followers to recognize the uniqueness of the work of art and to respect in general artistic treasures of the past. Auguste Comte himself had an infinite respect for art. His followers however, beginning with Fechner, inaugurated, as a reaction against to the traditional aesthetics, called «from above» an aesthetics «from below», mainly on an experimental basis. This tendency continues up to our day. After Jouffroy, who wrote about «aesthetic sensitivity», Theodor Lipps repeated, under the name of «theory of the *Einfühlung*», a rather mystical conception concerning the possibility of interpenetration between consciousness and the work of art. Max Dessoir's rationalistic aesthetics was dominating in Germany during the first half of our century, while in France Étienne Souriau's views on artistic creation as an «instauration» were widely shared by his disciples, and in



England Sir Herbert Reed inaugurated a new tendency in aesthetics, based on art criticism. Wittgenstein's fragments dealing with aesthetics reveal a very refined artistic consciousness, but also a strong tendency towards a kind of aesthetic mysticism. The respect for traditional aesthetic values, together with the defense of artistic freedom under a rather hermeneutic viewpoint, is now being promoted by the dynamic International Academy of Philosophy of Art (Geneva) whose members are either philosophers with artistic activities or artists with activities in the field of philosophy.

**4. Aesthetic Categories.** Provided that (a) an object in general is what constitutes for the human consciousness an exterior aim of reference; that (b) an aesthetic object, natural or artistic, is what may effect any aesthetic emotion; and that (c) an aesthetic object can receive, beyond any emotional appreciation, a rational appreciation and the attribution of a meaning and of a value such that the intentionality of human consciousness is objectified through it, then, the elucidation of a whole axiology of the aesthetic object is possible. This elucidation of aesthetic objects is made through categories, i.e. through very general classes of appreciative notions. These general classes of notions are the type Plato speaks of in the *Sophist* as the highest «genera» (*megista genē*).

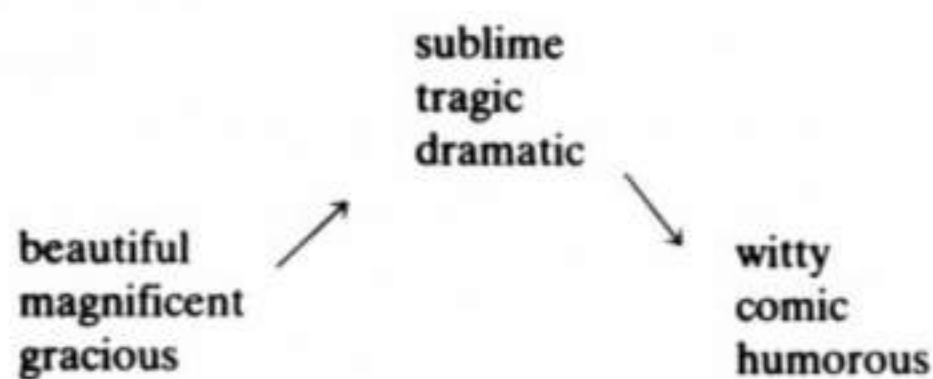
For Aristotle, categories denote properties of being. Aristotle distinguishes ten such categories: substance, quantity, quality, place, time, activity, passivity, etc. Attempts have been made from time to time to reduce these ten categories and the most successful attempt seems to have been that of the eclecticists of the nineteenth century. They condensed the ten Aristotelian categories into five: substance, form, the relation holding between these two, and time and space. In opposition to the categories of Aristotle, which are ontological, those of Kant are mainly epistemological. They are not attributes of being any more, but the very tools of the mind which enable it to organize in its way the world which is initially presented to the understanding as completely disorganized. For Kant, a category is a general fundamental notion of the understanding which is independent of language, innate to the mind, and so general that it is not further subsumable under another notion. We then say that such categories are non-reducible. Aesthetic categories display the following characteristics: (a) They have a double nature. They are if not ontological, at least existential, because they are parts of the nature of the aesthetic beings they qualify. And they are epistemological, because it is through them that the aesthetic reason appreciates and evaluates the aesthetical objects. In other words, aesthetic categories denote the aestheticity of the object, as well as the noetic and



aesthetic disposition of understanding. (b) In spite of their generality, they are indefinite in number. One may even say that their combination leads to a variety of aspects which are as numerous as the aesthetic objects themselves. (c) They may be so arranged as to form axiological levels. This does not mean to say that some of them are more general than others, but only that the aesthetic objects to which they are applied occur more frequently. Their importance is, so to say, an empirical one. (d) All aesthetic categories refer to the beautiful, not because they can be subsumed under it, but because the beautiful is, in a way, present in every aesthetic object, even negatively. In aesthetics, every appreciative effort presupposes the evaluation of beauty. In effect, the beautiful underlies every particular aesthetic category. One may even assert that it emerges stroboscopically from the mixture of all the other categories. The beautiful becomes the criterion *par excellence* in aesthetics, a criterion of aesthetic satisfaction.

On a qualitative basis one may distinguish binary, ternary and polymeric, or manyfold systems of categories. Besides, other mixed systems are eventually possible. Kant, after Burke, elaborated a rather naive polarized system whose two constituent notions are the beautiful and the sublime. Like Kant, Schopenhauer proposed another binary system based upon the opposition between the beautiful and the pretty, and Victor Hugo a similar system based upon the opposition between the sublime and the grotesque.

Charles Lalo tried to work out a ternary system by combining nine categories, each of which exhibits certain dynamic tendencies. In effect, the nine categories mentioned are grouped into three classes and at the same time form a dynamic curve:



The first group is supposed to comprize «possessed» categories. The second, «sought» categories. And the third, «lost» categories. Such an evaluative system admits some critical observations: (i) It has an intensely moral character. (ii) It is exclusive and schematic. How can, for instance, categories such as idyllic, poetic, satiric etc., be incorporated into it? (iii) Finally, it is a «closed» system. Unlike Lalo's system, the liberal aesthetics of



Étienne Souriau pretends to lead to (a) a conception of isonomy between aesthetic categories, and (b) to a centered conception of categories. Souriau distinguishes two scales of categories, one descending and one ascending, which he arranges circularly in what he calls «the wheel of aesthetic categories». One will observe again the existence of dynamic curves, as in Lalo's system, even if these curves suggest a different aspect. In any case, they are completely independent from the circular shape Souriau attributes to his system. They do not proceed from its graphic figure, but they are inherent to its very conception: (a) beautiful, noble, magnificent, sublime, pathetic, lyric, heroic, tragic, dramatic, melodramatic, caricatural, grotesque; (b) grotesque, satiric, ironic, comic, gay, strange, picturesque, pretty, gracious, poetic, idyllic, elegiac, beautiful.

These categories are supposed to be the most frequently used in aesthetics. Souriau's scheme presents the advantage of allowing, at least theoretically, any other category to be incorporated into it. Its structure is claimed to be circular but it is fundamentally axial, underlined by the existence of the two special curves denoting a polarity between the beautiful and the grotesque. In fact, Souriau's scheme necessarily takes the shape of a convex lens not that of a wheel. It is basically a binary system, similar to those of Kant (beautiful-sublime) and of Victor Hugo (sublime-grotesque), or, more precisely, it is a combination of these two systems, and suggests a variation of an element of Lalo's ternary system (e.g. beautiful-sublime-witty), since it retains the characteristic of the latter's dynamic curves (in fact, one cannot even exclude that it also retains, to a certain extent, the moral aspect of Lalo's conception, precisely because of the opposition of its two curves). These dynamic curves make impossible any real isonomy between categories, contrary to what Souriau claims. The negative replica of the curve «beautiful-sublime-grotesque» is the curve «grotesque-pretty-beautiful» which reunites the axial scheme «beautiful-pretty» of Schopenhauer.

The curves thus defined are merely interpolated by means of the other categories. Furthermore, it is not clear from Souriau's thesis whether categories like gracious, poetic, lyric, etc. belong only to one curve or to both. The difficulty makes it necessary to reconsider whether the whole conception of Souriau can be maintained on a very different basis.

To be circular, and above all to save the principle of isonomy, a system of aesthetic categories has to be necessarily centered around the category of the beautiful which is supposed to fill the whole shape thus defined, and, in a way, to serve as its foundation. Therefore the shape had to be so understood as to consist of concentric circles which define circular zones indicating various classes of categories. A great number of categories which belong to



more that one class (and this is a warrant of their isonomy) will overlap with other zones of these classes. In this way, a more satisfactory topological repartition of the aesthetic categories can be constructed, which would be more accurate to the nature of these categories and their mutual relations.

**5. Creativity and Creation.** For several centuries educators focused on preparing new generations to acquire moral principles together with extended knowledge. Religious concerns happened to be added to educational programs to help stress the importance of moral education. Within the limits of the ordinary curriculum, mathematics seemed to enable many students to display and cultivate their abilities in grasping the importance of a given situation and in finding or rather inventing appropriate solutions. The same thing occurred as regards the study of classical language: «strong-in-theme» students were regarded as brilliant, because they displayed aptitudes in inventing new ways of expression both correct and elegant. During the last decades however another value: creativity, has been accepted by educators as being at least as important as those of inventivity and world integrity. This shift has occurred due to the growing importance of art in cultural life and to the cultural indigence within everyday life. Besides, it has been proved (especially during world war II) that better decision makers were among those who had been culturally educated and had the opportunity of training themselves in a creative job.

There is no need to insist here on the theoretical difference between inventivity and creativity. Both denote the ability to find out new elements that help ameliorate a given situation. The specific character of creativity however is that it enables to instigate a whole situation. It is indicative of the importance given to creativity in all societies and cultures that in monotheisms the supreme being is given creativity, and that in polytheisms at least one major deity is given creativity and accomplishes the same task: the creation of the world, even if, unconsciously, man in this way has proved, at a universal level, which value he regarded as supreme within the framework of human behavior, and towards which he displayed his sincerest respect. What has grown important among contemporary educators, in East and West, is to encourage by all means the development of creative abilities among the new generations.

Programs and methods have been conceived in this respect in a totally new manner. Students are encouraged not to endure a rather boring discipline (solfège, vase copying), but are left free to express themselves. What everyone of them displays in a more talented manner obviously is what he is better gifted at, although in almost every case there is a hidden element



which the educator, together with the psychologist, is called to detect, to evaluate and to interpret, to the student's personal interest. Helping young individuals develop their creativity education aims at allowing them to broaden their personality, and become aware of their rights and responsibilities. Such a policy is intended to prepare open-minded and self-confident citizens, with both civic and critical qualifications. Besides these activities which are scheduled to promote creativity at a strictly personal level, other activities have been planned in order to promote group creativity (games, group performances etc.).

Under such conditions the way that leads to creation itself is more or less cleared. Creativity is the foundation of creation and, as such, has to be carefully encouraged. Creation is the actual outcome of creative potentiality of the human being. Indeed, every human being must be given the opportunity of creating, be it at the level of artistic activity or at any other level of practical life. Creativity then should be encouraged not only at school, but at all ages. Even people of the third age may find a new meaning in their lives if each one of them is given the opportunity of exercising his own creative vitality. Creation presupposes creativity. Whenever the latter is absent, no real creation could follow. The problem is to be able to detect creativity whenever it is not fully manifest. Through creativity and creation the existence reaches self-liberation, and the satisfaction of having instigated an aesthetic being, just as the mother is proud of having given life to a human being. There are, indeed, various levels at which creation may be considered from a phenomenological viewpoint: a biological, a practical, etc., and then, «last but not least», an aesthetic one. These levels express a kind of hierarchy which is established with the notion of consciousness as the main criterion. Artistic or aesthetic creation is supposed to start from disponible data which are subsequently brought together to be combined for the first time or in a completely different manner, whereas cosmic creation is supposed to be from nothing (*ex nihilo*), the transcendental creator providing the elements he combines. This idealization of the heavenly creator is but a projection of the human creative consciousness which is obviously unable to find new data by itself.

In Anaxagoras' cosmology, the world, a sphere, is composed of all kinds of items in disorder. Then comes the «Mind» (*Nous*). Its action starts at a minimal point of the periphery of the sphere by creating there a kind of local whirl which is rapidly propagated to the whole sphere and finally imposes order on it, by creating *homoeomeries* («bodies consisting of similar particles»). Aristotle will recall this image when he will define order as the main character of the beautiful. In Anaxagoras' conception of creation there





is nothing to be created *ex nihilo*. Nor is it in Plato's myth of cosmogony (*Timaeus*, 36 a). But Plato cleverly avoids entrusting the task of creation to the supreme being: the God; he entrusts it to an inferior deity, the «Creator» (*demiurge*), who proceeds in a very complicated way, to shape (from materials already given to him and which he combines in a very sophisticated manner) the structure of the world's soul. In doing so however he does not proceed alone, but is guided in his activity by constantly staring at the celestial model of his creation. The divine artist proceeds again here as a human artist, by imitation, conformingly to Plato's theory.

Only during the eighteenth century Leibniz gave a detailed philosophical account not only of what *ex nihilo* creation could be, but also of how such a creation could be conceived of as a criterion between cosmic and artistic creation, provided one is able to answer first the following question: to what extent is artistic creation due to a preestablished harmony or to a harmony in process to be?

**6. Dialectics of Artistic Creation.** Artistic creation covers undoubtedly the whole and complete conduct of the artist toward the final instauration of the work of art. It is, in a way, a dialogue between the creator and the entity created or in process of being created, a fight («lutte avec le Carrare», the French poet Théophile Gauthier exhorts the sculptor), but also an act of love, from which a new being is born. An entity just as other entities in nature, the work of art is, no doubt, a being, but at a higher level. It has all the characteristics of a being, but to a more important extent and under a more radiant form. It is not a mere being, it is a beautiful being and, hence, it is a *morebeing*. Consequently, artistic creation is a very complicated form of access to aesthetic completion. Though complicated, it is analysable. Its analysis shows the recurring alternance of two types of processes concerning the work of art as a whole and as a coherent system of parts. The first type of process manifests, on behalf of the creator, an idealistic conception of the general structure of the work or of each one of its parts, which he tries to realize through the material available to him. The second type of process manifests, on behalf of the artist, a pragmatic conception of his incapacity to reach the initial ideal form, but also of his capacity to change that initial form into a derivate one which he is able to match. This is the fundamental structure of what one may call dialectics of creation. At the level of cosmic creation, i.e. of the realization of the world, difficulties do not exist, since it is supposed that everything has been planified beforehand, and that the Absolute's mind coincides with its will. At the level of human artistic creation however the artist has to be at every moment aware of his chances to meet his



aims. He then has to define the seasonableness of each one of his acts, so that it may be as efficient as possible. One can call such a seasonableness, *kairos*, from the Greek word meaning «the right moment».

Stating his incapacity to shape his work according to the ideal vision he first has proposed to himself, the artist seeks the best new ideal vision that would fit to the sketch he has already realized, so that he may reshape the latter under the best possible circumstances. It then frequently appears that such a process, far from leading to failure, leads to a quite new form which is often far more successful than the one initially imagined would have been. Everything depends on an apparently insignificant change which in this case turns out to be critically essential, i.e. literally «kairic». Reshaping, then, will be understood as the outcome of the intentionality of creative consciousness when applied to forms under construction. And, since the Aristotelian distinction between matter and form is still valid when applied to the philosophy of creation, one may say that the artist may intervene both in matter and in form by intervening in what allows their existing together, i.e. their relation; in modern terms, *structure*.

The real problem has to be envisaged by the artist when he feels that the work he creates is about to be accomplished. The problem is a crucial one, since it is a problem concerning the «last touch». Anything less, and the work is still unfinished; anything more, and the work becomes too heavy. Here again, the notion of *kairos*, of the right time to stop at, acquires a very high importance. Nevertheless structuring and restructuring the work of art supposes particular phases of the artist's labor through which the work of art has to go successively. Each time, the artist proceeds to a free selection of means suggested to him either by his own imagination or by the appearance of the work at a very precise phase of its becoming. It is clear that, although each one of the two dialectically interwoven types of processes in artistic creation is extremely complicated, it very simply obeys a principle which it illustrates at the same time. The idealistic process corresponds to a *constructive* principle; the pragmatistic process, to a *finitive* principle.

Very frequently artists are confident enough to make public, directly or indirectly, secrets they should normally leave within their workshop. All know exactly how Paul Valéry was inspired in writing, *Le cimetière marin* or *La Pythie*, and the process he followed to take advantage of such an inspiration. We know exactly how Beethoven came to write the final version of the «Marcia funebre» of his *Eroica*. And we know exactly by means of the «X» rays, how Watteau completely restructured his painting entitled *Delights of dancing*. As has been already said, it is easy to follow similar processes on a microscale, within each part of a wider work. The main theme of a tonal



fugue undergoes slight alterations in the answer, in order to match with its initial exposition. The need for such «programmed» changes results from a long experience. One has to do with purely technical changes that are necessary as far as one insists on following such or such traditional form. Structural modelling and remodelling has to be fixed each time according to the specific nature of the work on which it is applied.

The «kairic» aspect of creation is expressed through «kairic» categories: *not yet* (or *too early*) and *never more* (or *too late*); *not enough* and *too much*. When applied to the creation of the work of art, these categories acquire a decisive importance for the qualification of the work itself and of its creative process as well, with particular reference to the creative intentionality of the artist. Artistic creation is no doubt a continuous struggle where the artist proceeds alternatively according to two fundamental methods of behavior, that of structuration and that of correction. Structuration consists not only in conceiving and imposing shapes and forms, but also in reconsidering them. Correction consists not only in respecting rules, but also in violating them, since imposing new rules might seem more adequate to the final form the work tends to receive. This is not a mere passage from potentiality to actuality, for, normally, the morebeing of the work of art is even beyond its actual being. The specific aspect the violation of rules finally leads to a continuous orgasm of artistic form (which means both tension and radiating expansion). Morebeing is, then, equivalent to a continuous orgasmic state, and is reached through the objectification of the artist's intentionality in the work of art. By ascribing a meaning to his work, the artist gives at the same time a meaning to his life. Likewise, when experienced, the work of art conveys its meaning to the perceiver.

**7. Artistic Techniques and Styles.** As has already been said, Hegel discerns in the beautiful a manifestation of the Idea. This manifestation is not a «static» one, but is always in motion through art which is itself one of the expressions of civilization, and, hence, of history. The temporal coefficient is thus introduced into consideration of the process of artistic reality. Being related to history, art necessarily follows its movements and even the directions of its movement. And, since «history moves from the East to the West», so does art. Hence the great stages of the world history of art: the Middle East, Greece, Western Europe. Independently of the schematized and overgeneralized character of such an assertion, one has to admit that the idea of art in motion is highly interesting. This motion however should not be taken, in a geographical, but in a purely developmental and evolutionary sence.



Plato with whom one has always to start with when such questions have to be faced, had already envisaged the problem of artistic techniques and styles. For him, as a follower of Damon from Oa, artistic rules should not undergo any change, for «no artistic rule may change without entailing the change of the state's, most important laws» (*Rep. IV*, 424 c). Plato reinforces his statement by arguing that the Egyptian state, for example, has remained steady and unshakeable due to the steadiness of its art. We are today in a position to know that Plato was wrong as far as evolution in Egyptian art is concerned. Namely, we know that changes have occurred in Egyptian art as in any other art, though at a feeble rate, and this is what may have misled Plato in his judgement. The fact is that changes take place in every artistic field, and that they are due to artistic unrest.

An artistic technique like every other kind of technique, is the outcome of an effort to define a concrete way of obtaining in a certain domain a precise result through appropriate means. The next step is the acquisition in the same domain, by the artist, of an undeniable skill which may be address or dexterity, craft or facility, mastery or expertness, and even excellence. Once such a technique has been acquired, the artist's concern is how to go beyond his own accomplishment. He then tries new ways of deepening and refining his technique. We know that short before Plato fulminated against his contemporary artists, Promomos of Thebes, a well known *aulete* («flute-player»), had invented a gadget, which applied to his *aulos* would allow him to get from his instrument special effects. We also know that some decades before, Euripides, the tragic poet and composer, had already proceeded to a series of musical innovations. This was also true of sculptors and painters at the same period. Archaeologists today may even say with precision which month of a given year a statue or a ceramic of the Greek golden age was produced.

Just as history's course, art's course is now and then accelerated or decelerated. There are periods of historical and artistic stress, as well as periods of historic and artistic relaxation. Nevertheless, history and art follow their way. New techniques entail new forms. It is known that if the new technique of curving stones introduced in France during the eleventh century had only been known two centuries before, the gothic style in architecture would have been inaugurated already by the time of Charlemagne. The gothic style succeeding the roman style was indeed that of a real technical revolution. Beethoven's masterpieces would have never been written, had not the modern pianoforte been introduced precisely in his days. Technical changes or revolutions need not interfere within the limits of a given art in order to have an impact on its evolution. It was the invention of photography



that accelerated the abandonment of pictural tradition by the painters of the second half of the nineteenth century.

However evolution in art does not always occur so dramatically. More often a style derives from another, to the extent a character or a series of characters of the preceeding style are suppressed or simply underestimated by the promoters of the subsequent style who then partly alter them or bluntly supplant them by introducing others. The rococo style of the late eighteenth century obviously derives from the baroque style which for two centuries had apposed its seal upon the whole Central and Western Europe: the severe straight lines and curves are broken to give way as such to a gracious combination thereof. At the same time the exterior part of the buildings is lightened, their interior undergoes overdecoration that entails satiety. At the same time, and as by an effect of research of equilibrium, an opposite tendency is reported as far as furniture is concerned: the combined straight lines and curves of the Louis XV style are clearly dissociated in the Louis XVI style. The passage from the so called «baroque» (late polyphonic) music to the so called «rococo» (early harmonic) music, which is almost contemporary to the above changes in architecture and decoration, became possible due to a major revolution in music: the institution and definitive general adoption of the tempered musical scale.

If technical changes are mostly responsible for stylistic innovations in art, psychological and social reasons, and above all purely aesthetic factors, cannot be excluded from such a process. Psychological factors may be reduced to the dialectics between the feelings of avidity and satiety: satiety, as regards what is interminably repeated, provided consciousness is not desperately accustomed to it; and avidity, as regards what is introduced as appealingly new and original, provided it does not seem to threaten one's feeling of security. As far as these secondary characters do not have by themselves any negative effect due to some exaggeration they rather intensify the positive effect of the principal characters by inciting some kind of feeling of adventure or even of risk.

Social factors are, of course, «anaesthetic» ones. They however play an important role in the process of general acceptance of a new style. One gets a rather dramatic idea of what occurs in style changing at a social level when one refers to fashion. Indeed, fashion is a dramatically accelerated and quickly generally accepted change which is itself momentary and transitory. Fashion is always launched by an individual not always for reasons of fancy, but for those of personal need, while the whole social group rushes to follow what everybody knows is a mere play. Some fashions are more lasting however, for, once imposed, they turn out to be convenient. For several



decades after Napoleon had decreed that men's clothes should be black, this was respected. Social factors happen to be altered through ideologies. It is a matter of good sense for a society not to be permeable to altering processes.

Finally, aesthetic factors strongly contribute to style changing. The striking novelty of a masterpiece originally inspires defiance, but subsequently inspires respect on behalf of the fellow artists of the genius that created it. Recognition often comes very early from high ranked and already respected artists. This is the case of Schumann publicly praising Brahms, aged only twenty, as the messiah of German music. Great artists generally inaugurate great styles. Artists of lesser value have to follow them. This does not mean that each artist does not have his own restricted personal style or that every artist, more or less important, does not change his style according to the periods of his life. This leads to a statement that style is a generally accepted manner of behaving in creating, or in enjoying works of art, and of appraising them. Further more, style is for man a particular way of accepting what gives a satisfactory and tasty meaning to his life.

The dialectics between archaism and avant-garde has its roots in the very real dialectics concerning the declining superannual considered as an object either of nostalgia or of reject. A less dramatic form of such a dialectics is that between classical and modern. Be it the most important, this dialectics under its two aspects, is certainly one of the several reasons why art is in principle in constant movement and continuously furnishes new aesthetic values.

**8. Mythical Dimensions of Art.** Two independent activities in man's social existence, myth and art, are closely interrelated. One may even assert that they both obey the same creatively functioning structures as conceived of, formulated by and imposed upon both the individual and the collective consciousness that is in need of self-confirmation. Be they individuals or collectivities, creators of artistic forms and mythical fictions obey not only the powers of inspiration, but also experienced factual structures which they subdue to adequate formal containers that are the means by which they become conveyable. Both artistic and mythical creations, however, are not entirely similar in nature or aspect. Each of them fulfills a different aim because of particular possibilities in accord with which that aim is both conceived and actualized. In spite of their differences, however, myth and art undoubtedly collaborate in defining and combining features that characterize individual and social human life.

The interaction of myth and art may be followed at various levels. This



allows a thorough examination of the various aspects or dimensions of this interaction. Three categories of such dimensions may be studied successively. They can be respectively called *static*, *dynamic* and *kinetic*. Through the first of them one may study the very nature of art as compared to myth; through the second, how art is able to function in respect to myth; and through the third, under which conditions art effectively extends the presence of myth. Such a phenomenological analysis of the problem will allow a general evaluation of the role and importance of art within a mythical context.

**8. 1. Static Dimensions.** Artistic activity obviously has a basically aesthetic purpose, whereas mythical activity mainly displays aptitudes that allow its being applied to processes of organizing and maintaining fundamentally practical patterns of life.

8. 1.a. *The Essence of Myth* consists primarily in expressing, through prominent and striking exemplary models which are homologous to factual, experienced or reported data, *the complicated structures which define the basic functioning of the process through which man is confronted with, adapted to and intergrated into his world and particular community*, thus creating a substitute of a properly historical sphere, and *serving as a pattern*, considered as an actual truth, *in order to help maintain the structural equilibrium it illustrates through its opposition to any kind of disturbance*.

8. 1.b. *The Essence of Art*, in the same order of ideas, mainly consists first in combining already existing elements of reality seen under their intrinsic aesthetical aspect; second, by fusing them into new structures through which it suggests new modes of surpassing already adopted structural values; and, third, in insisting upon their belonging to a potential truth referring upon their being normally unrealizable.

8. 1.c. *The Essence of both Myth and Art* allows, if it does not impose, their combination. Since their functions are both parallel and divergent, concomitant and opposed, they both start from factual data. The aim of myth, however, is mainly to aid their consolidation, whereas the aim of art is mainly to allow a fictive vision of their being surpassed that would make possible any kind of «harmless» secondary improvement. In this respect, myth is an ideal framework of a social structure, and functions as a preventive or curative incantation against any change at the level of social institutions; art is an idealized framework of a possible social remodelling, and functions as a moderating and temperating incantation towards any brutal movement which would be dangerous for a given structure of reality.

Besides their divergent elements, myth and art display substantial similarities which allow their being not only closely interrelated, but also



influential upon each other, especially since both emerge out of visceral structures illustrated by each one of them in its own particular way. Such an interrelation is mainly expressed by the presence of artistic elements within mythical structures. First, in general, a myth is modelled during many generations; second, art intervenes at this level not only by imposing rough fundamental patterns, such as oppositions and repetitions, but also by suggesting complicated means of refining the basic mythical structure through extension or condensation of its various elements, thus assuring its formal equilibrium; third, myth, on the other hand, interferes with art by lending to it its rough materials and thus enriching its thematical content, vivifying its structural aspect, conveying to it its own truth, and making out of it an extension of a mythology.

**8. 2. Dynamic Dimensions.** What is more important than the truth conveyed by myth to art, and hence by art itself to human consciousness, social and historic, is the survey of ways according to which art enables specifically mythical structures to acquire a particularly artistic aspect.

*8. 2.a. Art as a Structured Myth.* It is understood that no myth lacks some kind of structure. The meaning, then, of art as a structured myth is that, in spite of the existence of structures being common both to myth and art, art appeals to specific processes in order to enhance mythical structures by sanctioning them aesthetically through slight readaptations that by no means alter them essentially, but appease their eventual brutal or shocking aspect by rendering it more easily acceptable under a new artistic aspect, precisely because, having lost its proper spell, which has been subdued and replaced by artistic spell, it has become aesthetically objectified. Its initial mythical truth has been converted into aesthetic truth.

*8. 2.b. Art as an Imposed Myth.* Though myths have a structure, they have no evident and defined forms in the sense of easily apprehended outlines that are reducible to knowledgeable categories. Art, on the contrary, has both. Myth needs no form to be understood as conveying a truth; as such, it needs no «distancing»: it remains in a background, exerting from there a continuous influence which, even though immediate, is by no means manifest and precise. In addition, since it deals with institutions, a myth cannot be directly institutionalized without losing its possibility of being «distanced», that made acceptable the truth it conveyed. The suppleness of the structure of myths prevents them from sclerosis. Finally, since they are not frequently renewed, myths tend to lose their dynamism and vitality. Under the cover of art, however, a myth maintains its possibility of being «distanced», especially when introduced into aesthetic forms which are



institutionalized themselves. Religious art and (to a larger extent, because of its transitory actuality) political art are prominent examples of such a process.

8. 2.c. *Art as a Substituted Myth*. Under such conditions, art provides particular items that may be raised to the rank of mythical presences. The law of «distancing» is valid here again, and entails the vanishing of the importance of artistic form. «An-aesthetic» considerations are thus introduced in evaluating artistic creations. One may refer to such artistic creations independently from their respective aesthetic forms. Consequently, such artistic realizations tend to exert a certain influence that reaches the limits if not of imitation, at least of complience on behalf of younger generations. Considered as independent of its intrinsic value, it is not their form that interests any more, but the myth they have created around them at an «an-aesthetic» or quasi «an-aesthetic» level. Mythical truth may be converted into «artistic» truth, aesthetic or «an-aesthetic». It thus either survives or merely imposes itself in an easier way, or even is transposed to a quite different tonality. The parallelism of mythical and artistic structures makes easier such a transposition.

**8. 3. Kinetic Dimensions.** These dimensions apply to problems of myth conceived of as transposable to art. They may be called «kinetic» because they refer to the modalities of the movement through which, under their artistic cover, myths are propagated within a given social and cultural means. Their importance is stressed by the fact that, in relation to them, one needs to refer not merely to myths, but to whole mythologies.

8. 3.a. *Art as the Prolongation of a Mythology*. It has already been stated (when dealing with static mythical dimensions of art) that myth enriches the aptitudes of art in conceiving new elements of expression and in extending its power on the consciousness. Art has access to this possibility first by referring to separate myths as parts of a given religious, national or political mythology into which it interferes itself: Aeschylus' *Prometheus*, Wagner's *Siegfried* and Anouilh's *Antigone*, but also Picasso's series of «Doves» are, at various levels, examples of such an artistic reference to a mythology with is experienced as «vivid» or, more or less, as «revived», but to which art is itself freely reduced; second, by completing creatively a given mythology: Euripide's *Helen*, Gros' *Bonapart* or Portinari's *Church in Pampulia* (Brazil) are outstanding examples of this category of artistic accomplishments.

8. 3.b. *Art as a Creation of Mythologies*. Inversely, art often needs to create its own mythology within which it has the possibility of better expressing its message, that is, such a mythology easily becomes a kind of form through which art is perceived. There is a particular mythology in



various «utopias» or in Zola's and Proust's syntheses and in Jeronymus Bosch's fantastic pictorial world. Their creations are not even conceivable outside these mythologies which are parts of them.

8. 3.c. *Art as a Mythology itself*. This is the case of artistic works which resume the whole process of artistic existence because of their importance. There is a mythology of the *Iliad* and of the *Parthenon*, as well as a mythology of Dante's *Comedy* or Michelangelo's *Creation of Man*, and a mythology of Beethoven's *Ninth Sympony* or Picasso's *Guernica*. Besides, there is a mythology of artists and of works, which is created for certain purposes independent from any search for truth.

Kinetic mythical dimensions of art allow one to understand the way in which art is integrated into a given culture that is eager to accept new mythologies in order to adapt them to its needs before expressing itself through them. Just as every myth creates a temporal structure which it imposes upon a certain culture, kinetic mythical dimensions of art create a particular temporality according to which they proceed to restructuring experienced temporality by remodelling it as a «kairicity», i.e. as a binary categorical structure overlapping the ordinary ternary categorical structure of time (to the notions of past, present and future, it opposes the notions of *not-yet* and *nevermore*). Mythical dimensions of art help the understanding of the passage from a continuity qualified by temporality to a discontinuity qualified by «kairicity», by allowing one to conceive the structures by virtue of which myth inserts itself into the cultural (and hence into the historical) process to which societies are closely linked. The «kairic» contribution of artistic structures to culture completes the fundamental mythical structures of the universe of man, and creates a truth which both completes and transcends the truth already reflected in and manifested through myths.

**9. Artistic References: Personal, Social, Transcendent.** Art is a complex of formal entities which are conceived and created in order to function as values within the general scheme of values being considered as objectifications of the intentionality of consciousness. The function of the work of art as value may be experienced both directly and indirectly. The direct experience of an artistic value is the aesthetic delight it evokes in the perceiver, and which is due to the enjoyment caused by its formal excellence. Its indirect experience resides in the meaning that is attached to its very particular and specific individual form: a meaning which is rather a precise message from the creator to the perceiver, or rather a systematically structured group of messages. Such a message may concern (a) the human being in itself; (b) the human being as part of society; and (c) the human being as facing the



transcendent reality. The work of art obviously functions as a value, but in different directions. This makes it multi-significant and polyvalent. However, all of its particular axiological functions may be reduced to only one, i.e. that of myth. A work of art is a myth in itself which encloses multiple meanings and messages of which each consciousness may perceive, conceive and receive the one which is the most appropriate to it according to its own needs and intentions.

**9. 1. Art and the Human Person.** Art is the outcome of the personal labor of man, and as such it registers and condenses in it all the various procedures it has gone through, which are procedures that widely reflect activities of human consciousness. A work of art which is contemplated by a human consciousness is not merely an object, a part of the world which may incite to meditation as to what the relationship between the world and the given object is; in fact, a work of art is more than an object, it fascinates through its structure and form, but above all it is the objectification of the human struggle prior to its final instauration. It is the recording of the history of the artist, a recording perishable, of course, by virtue of its material consistence, yet imperishable by virtue of its unique and excellent form. It stands before the artist or the perceiver (the artist being the first perceiver of his own work) as a testimony of the ever repeated instauration process which Horace qualifies in his own poetical way: *Exegi monumentum aere perennius* (*Carm.* III, 30,1). Such a «monument» needs not, of course, be really «monumental», i.e. constructed at a big scale, or display huge proportions; all it needs to be considered as such is to have been clearly conceived of as a major problem and as a unique and unrepeatable solution to this problem altogether. The human perspective thus indicated is then that the work of art invites man, through its own existence, to grasp his personal existential status through a kind of corresponding structural elements, whose parallel reality is constantly reminded or simply suggested to him, thanks to the dynamic authority the presence of the work of art exerts on the person. Its formal superiority or excellence is, from its own viewpoint, the testimony that it is a new world, out of the world of potential worlds, that has come into actual being by virtue of will and skill of man. The work of art, then, becomes a fascinating hymn to man's capacity, ability and, above all, creativity. The existential dialogue between man and the work of art may, of course, have no end. It leads however to the celebration of both.

**9. 2. Art and Social Values.** It is a fact that, besides personal values, art may convey social values. First of all it may be the creative outcome of a



common artistic labor; then, it may contain a meaning and even a message corresponding to a collective mentality which results from the collective work that preceded its creation; finally, besides its strictly aesthetic function, it may also have a more or less open social function. There is an undoubted theoretical authenticity of social values in art which is clearly reflected in the social value of art. The problem then arises of the best manner to treat such values *in* art and *through* art, so that they be preserved from any kind of falsification and degradation. In fact, there is no axiological hierarchy in this field. However, one may refer to some values that seem to be preponderant to the extent they are more largely accepted than others. Respect of fundamental liberties, as well as respect of human dignity, both applied to social ethnic etc. groups, seems to be a form of respect due to inalienable rights. In art, what is less tolerated than crude and cynic negation of these values is their covert and sophistic negation. Art's precious tools are, no doubt, nuances rather than bare light and darkness. At this level, however, every kind of treachery is easily discovered and (provided circumstances allow it) early rejected. Sophisms are normally not accepted. K. G. Jung was right in introducing the term of «collective unconscious», but the term of collective consciousness voluntarily admitting treachery and fraud is inadmissible, and the eventual fact it refers to, as well. Deception however is still possible in this respect as far as it is fraudulently introduced into the *human consciousness - work of art* relation. Under such conditions a pseudo-value is really imposed under the cover of a true value. Political and ideological aspects of such a process will be examined in chapter 10. One should admit that art and society are «locuses» of human reality. Even if they are not identifiable, they penetrate and complete each other. Art is capable of conveying social values provided the intentions of consciousness involved are sincere. On the other hand, society is able to convey and to consume works of art. Far from being incompatible with each other, artistic and social values are complementary values of the same reality to be erected, i.e. the one that proclaims the universal respect of the human person.

**9. 3. Art and Transcendence.** Religious art finds its foundation in the imaginary. The imaginary displays a revealing function at the aesthetic level of the idea of transcendence. This function becomes relevant when the consciousness of existence tries to confirm it as a more being, through the unreachable. By such an effort the existence moves towards the infinity of transcendence. By searching within its own reality it finds appropriate elements which it allows to acquire aesthetic forms capable of suggesting what from a strictly rational viewpoint would remain undefinable. If such a



move is only possible through the category of the sublime, this is due to the fact that, more than any other aesthetic value, the sublime expresses the tyrannic aspiration of existence towards morebeing. Religious art, then, is a kind of mediation between human existence and the absolute. It raises human consciousness towards the level of transcendence, while on the other hand it introduces the latter into human consciousness under the aspect of a comprehensible form. Religious art does not only serve as a formal and structural myth which includes the possibility of attracting the sympathy of the believer; it also is that kind of sympathy projected towards a sensible form of the religious myth. One may speak here of the «paradox of the believer» who does see in a religious work of art both an aesthetic presence which functions as a charm, and a real presence of what it is supposed to represent (pictorially or sculpturally, but also poetically and musically) a manifestation of the absolute. One of the most important religious poets of the twentieth century, Paul Claudel, confesses that it was under the magic of a particular atmosphere created by a manifold artistic presence in the Cathedral of Paris during Christmas office that he was converted to christianity. It is important to emphasize that (a) artistic creation based on religious data reinforces the aesthetic value of a certain kind of art since it enhances its main features; (b) religious contemplative reality often upholds the artist himself who proceeds to the instauration of his work, by vouching for the existence of a better communion and understanding on behalf of a certain public; (c) religious art is by no means synonymous to ecclesiastic art (however, religious artistic reality is helped surviving by maintaining the bond that unites to the particular tradition it perpetuates; (d) contemplative creation and creative contemplation produce parallel effects.

Be they, references to man, to society or to the absolute, artistic references are only openings of old and new domains in which art may find its inspiration, provided they do not tend to become exclusive and to impede art from being completely free by first suggesting, then imposing to him prohibitional thematic and formal systems. Religious tradition is, of course, a value in itself, but as soon as it functions arbitrarily and negatively for art's promotion it has to be denounced. So does every kind of ideological (or social) prohibition (e.g. social realism).

**10. Falsifications of Art.** Artistic creation is meant to be a highly authentical series of instauration steps. This normal procedure is however often falsified due to several factors which play against its authenticity. The three most important factors at this level are *power*, *ideology* and *commerce*. As far as *power* is concerned, it should be said that power itself has to be art,





otherwise it cannot last. On the other hand, in exercising its own art, power has to ask for the help of creative art on a permanent basis. It also appeals to ideology and morality. Ideology sustains power from a conceptual viewpoint, by establishing links between man and the world. Morality sustains power from a normative viewpoint, by establishing links between human consciences. As for art, it sustains power from a formal and aesthetical viewpoint by referring to a variable hierarchy of effective values which are supposed to reflect an invariable hierarchy of real values. It becomes clear that every power has to favor the promotion of artistic activity, provided this activity remains at its service, even indirectly. The important thing for power is not the aesthetic outcome of artistic creation, but the complex of conditions under which artistic creation is exerted. Power easily accepts initial suggestions on aesthetic principles acceptable by it. Power, then, has recourse to ideology in order to have these principles conceptually confirmed. The difference lies in the fact that art is mobile in itself, whereas ideology has to be strict, otherwise, its sophistic character becomes too obvious. However, once these principles have been established, no deviation from them is either encouraged or even allowed.

The more a form of power is freely accepted, the more it favours an artistic climate of liberalism. Religious power would have never been autocratic had it not have to face rivalries from inside: heresies, general tendencies (iconoclasm in Byzantium) etc. Such crises reinforce the religious dogma which exerts in its turn a dominating tutorship on religious art — classical Greek art which was religious in several respects was free from any such domination because of the fact that there had never been an official religious dogma in classical Greece. Even christian art has always been more or less free to follow its own way. On the contrary, the rich confessional variety in christianity has favored the eclosion of extremely rich artistic tradition. The difference between traditionalism and conformism is that traditionalism results from a sincere preference for forms which have already been tested, whereas conformism results from a fainted preference for forms which, directly or indirectly, are convenient to a given power. One may refer to the aesthetic categories which have been imposed by totalitarian regimes.

Even artistic myths have been elaborated at all times in order to celebrate a single person holding the power. The «cult of personality» is not an invention of the twentieth century. The «century of August» is the product of a «will of divinisation». One might even see a negative aspect of Mecene's activity: that of recruiting artists for the celebration of power and of its political orientation. One should say however that art itself is a form of power, and that its influence on society is immense. There is even a





possibility of defining an art of exerting the power of art. This is why art has always been an ally or an enemy of power. More than political action art is meaningful as a means of denunciation. Art reacts against lie by rendering the power ridiculous. In this case, its name is Aristophanes or Molière, Aesop or La Fontaine, or even the Soviet humoristic review *Krokodil*; *The Marriage of Figaro* or *Guernica*.

*Ideology* is the para-philosophical cover not only of power, but also of its subversive forces. In this case, it is said that the artist should be engaged in and his art should serve ideology. It is, of course, understood that no really anti-humanist art is imaginable either in its conception or in its orientation. But what indeed is above all asked from artists is to approve of political activities decided by factions in power outside it. This is why ideology exerts itself a kind of altering and falsifying power upon the artist. Not only thematically, but also stylistically, does ideology influence artistic activity, by imposing principles and norms generally edicted by politicians or somber artists. Art that succumbs to such edicts is anything but a leading art, and no sincere artist would ever admit of such a devaluation of his creative dignity. The problem is that for a great number of artists ideology becomes a means of survival, if not of success, a means not only of protection, but also of promotion of their work. In some cases even great artists have such an attitude which can only be understood as the result of a naive mentality and of a complaisance in being cherished (and also exploited) by their mates.

Finally, *commerce* is perhaps the most uncontrolled factor of artistic falsification. Critics are always willing to come to the rescue of publishers or art galleries' managers. In contemporary societies where an aesthetic snobism is not only inevitable, but also cultivated through mass media, the various circuits of people involved in the commerce of literary, plastic or musical artistic values may impose with great easiness works and persons of their own choice which is, of course, not necessarily a choice of excellence, but a choice of favoritism of some kind. Such an artificial projection of values without value has to be artificially maintained, otherwise it fails. This is revealed to be true *par excellence* if artificial support ceases for some reason. The artist who had benefited from such a support immediately and almost certainly loses his aura. What is worse, there is often an illicit alliance between commerce and ideology aiming at mutual benefit for artists and artistic tendencies favoured by either side. It even happens that artistic tendencies demounced by a certain ideology are soon after admitted and favoured by it on new grounds which are very sophistically presented as deriving from the same ideology, but which in fact, are hiding the real deal between the ideology's leadership and the commercial circuits. The idols



cherished before are destroyed and supplanted by new myths with again a temporary mission.

It is a myth still in our day that art can survive without serving power, ideology or commerce. Artists should be aware of this fact and be able to try to save their dignity, albeit wounded. Artists should defend their freedom of thought and expression, their freedom of being sincere, their freedom of inspiration and their right of presence. Otherwise art, what we mean by authentic art, cannot be prevented from vanishing.

**11. Art as a Value. Artistic Perspectives.** For thousands of years art has reflected not the world, as the Marxist theory unilaterally maintains, but human life in its most complete expression. Indeed, art is the evidence of man's self-consciousness, of his own existence and of the modalities under which this existence may become manifest. Happiness and sorrow love and hate, birth and death, woman and the child, labor and leisure, knowledge and ignorance, matter and transcendence, the person and the group, the past and the present, nightmare and hope, nature and the cosmos, reality and ideality, plus several other thematic categories, in one word all of human experience is still being registered in artistic forms of the most diverse nature and importance. Art remains the most prominent proof of man's creative presence. On the other hand, art is only a kind of material that man leaves behind himself for our own documentation of his existence and behavior, it has of course a meaning for those who particularly study his artistic activity, but, above all, it has a meaning for him in general. Not only does it express his aspirations, but also helps him become conscious of his own existential status, discover a polyvalent meaning in his existence and finally find his true way towards his own accomplishment.

Art thus acquires the status of a value. It has, indeed, the most significant quality required to be such: it is, just as all values, an objectification of the intentionality of consciousness in such a way that, once it has been objectified, it functions, in respect of consciousness, as a center of attraction. Emanating from the most intimate level of human existence, art also appeals to it through the numerous correspondences it establishes with it. As a value, art is not self-sufficient: it needs to be experienced again and again at the level of perception and at the level of creation as well. Art is never an activity and a reality that occurs only once. Although its creations are supposedly or really unique and unrepeatable, it itself, just as love, is a repetitive fulfilment. The intentionality of human consciousness (which, in fact, is the consciousness of existence) is not only continuously oriented towards creative processes, but also avid to realize them. It only happens that



some individuals are more skilled than others at creating universally valuable forms. These are the inspired artists. This does not mean however that all the others are deprived of any creative need. This is the reason why so many of them become extremely sensitive to artistic forms either by themselves or when they have been properly educated.

The significant fact is that art is not to be found only in the concert halls or in the museums. What André Malraux called the *imaginary museum* has nowadays been realized. Art has invaded our homes at reasonable prices. This is true not only of poetry and of the plastic arts, but also of music and all the performing acts as well. Technology has succeeded in allowing us to have at home a better quality of performances of concert music than it is possible to have at a concert hall. This is not the privilege of the «privileged». Those who do not enjoy yet our century's conquests are those who still seem to prefer other delights because they have not been seriously oriented in this direction. There is still a great deal of artistic analphabetism in our societies, but governments do not seem to care about this problem and the commercial circuits still prefer to inundate the market with articles which are even more inexpensive to them. Together with ideologies, this is the real «drug» for people: it cultivates bad taste and, with it, helps to flourish a whole commerce of show business etc. Freedom of artistic expression must be guaranteed. But why should low quality products be privileged as they are?

From this viewpoint one may be disgruntled, but one has no right to be pessimistic as far as the future is concerned. For several decades our ecosystem has been seriously disturbed, but our societies become every day more aware of the danger.

Pollution does not only affect the water or the atmosphere, but also our ability to perceive the beautiful around us. This destruction of the environment and of man's quality of life has already reached its highest point. Huge programs of sanitation of our environment are in the process of being realized. Where slums projected their ugly contours, beautiful gardens appear, decorated with works of art. Man is conscious of his present state of a degradation and, once more, requires the right to enjoy artistic acquisitions which are the celebrations of his own creativity and skill. There still is more than enough to do. Western societies have not the right to forget either the third world or the second one. Art can give to all human beings a more meaningful life. One should not forget that, for Plato, «man's whole life needs good rhythm and harmony», and that «a life without art is not worth being lived».



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## Η ΤΕΧΝΗ ΩΣ ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ

### Περίληψη

Ἀπὸ χιλιάδες χρόνια ἡ τέχνη καθρεφτίζει τὴν ἀνθρώπινη ζωὴ στὴν πληρέστερην ἔκφρασή της, κι ὄχι τὸν κόσμον, ὅπως μονομερῶς ὑποστηρίζει ἡ μαρξιστικὴ θεωρία. Εἶναι τὸ φανέρωμα τῆς ἀνθρώπινης αὐτοσυνειδησίας, τὸ φανέρωμα τῆς ἴδιας τῆς ὑπαρξοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Χαρά καὶ λύπη, ἀγάπη καὶ μῖσος, γέννηση καὶ θάνατος, γυναῖκα καὶ παιδί, γνώση καὶ ἄγνοια, παρελθὸν καὶ παρὸν, μαζὶ μὲ διάφορες ἄλλες θεματικὲς κατηγορίες, μὲ μιὰ λέξη ὅλη ἡ ἀνθρώπινη ἐμπειρία, εἶναι καταγεγραμμένα σὲ καλλιτεχνικὲς μορφές, φύσης καὶ σημασίας διαφορῶν. Ἡ τέχνη παραμένει ἡ πιὸ σπουδαία ἀπόδειξη τῆς δημιουργικῆς παρουσίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ὡστόσο ἡ τέχνη δὲν εἶναι μονάχα ἓνα εἶδος ὑλικοῦ ποὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀφήνει πίσω του ὡς ἀπόδειξη τῆς παρουσίας του· ὡς τοιαύτη ἔχει σημασία μόνο γιὰ ὅσους μελετοῦν τὴν καλλιτεχνικὴ του δραστηριότητα. Πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα ἡ τέχνη ἔχει σημασία γιὰ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν ἀνθρωπο-δημιουργό της· ὄχι μόνο ἐκφράζει τὶς ἐμπνεύσεις του ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν βοηθεῖ νὰ λάβει συνείδηση τοῦ ὑπαρξιακοῦ τους καταστατικοῦ, ν' ἀνακαλύψει μιὰν πολυσθενῆ σημασία στὴν ὑπαρξή του, καί, τέλος, νὰ βρεῖ τὴν ἀληθινὴ του πλήρωση.

Ἔτσι ἡ τέχνη ἀποκτᾷ τὸ καταστατικὸ μιᾶς ἀξίας. Ὅπως ὅλες οἱ ἀξίες εἶναι κι αὐτὴ μιὰ ἐξαντικειμένιση τῆς προθετικότητος τῆς συνειδήσεως, ποὺ ἐν συνεχείᾳ λειτουργεῖ ὡς πόλος ἑλξεως. Ὡς ἀξία, ἡ τέχνη δὲν εἶναι αὐτάρκης· ἔχει ἀνάγκη νὰ βιώνεται συνεχῶς, τόσο στὸ ἐπίπεδο τῆς ἐμπειρίας ὅσο καὶ στὸ ἐπίπεδο τῆς δημιουργίας. Δὲν εἶναι ποτὲ δραστηριότης καὶ πραγματικότης ποὺ πραγματοποιοῦνται ἐφ' ἅπαξ. Παρ' ὅλο ποὺ ἡ δημιουργία της εἶναι μοναδική, ἡ ἴδια, ὅπως ἀκριδῶς καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη, εἶναι μιὰ ἐπαναλαμβανόμενη πλήρωση· μόνο ποὺ μερικὰ πρόσωπα εἶναι πιὸ ἱκανὰ ἀπὸ ἄλλα νὰ δημιουργοῦν καλλιτεχνικὲς μορφές ἀξίας οἰκουμενικῆς. Αὐτὰ τὰ πρόσωπα εἶναι οἱ ἐμπνευσμένοι καλλιτέχνες, πράγμα ποὺ δὲν σημαίνει πὼς οἱ ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι στεροῦνται τῆς ἀνάγκης γιὰ δημιουργία. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ὁ λόγος γιὰ τὸν ὁποῖον τόσο πολλοὶ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι ἰδιαίτερα εὐαίσθητοι καλλιτεχνικά, εἴτε ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν, εἴτε μετὰ ἀπὸ κατάλληλην παιδεία.

Τὸ σημαντικὸ εἶναι πὼς ἡ τέχνη δὲν εὐρίσκεται μονάχα στὰ μουσεῖα καὶ στὶς αἵθουσες συναυλιῶν. Ὅτι ὁ André Malraux ὠνόμασε «φανταστικὸ μουσεῖο» εἶναι σήμερα πραγματικότης. Ἡ τέχνη ἔχει «εἰσβάλει» στὰ σπίτια μας, καὶ μάλιστα μὲ λογικὲς τιμές. Ἡ τεχνολογία μᾶς ἐπιτρέπει νὰ παρακολουθοῦμε μιὰν καλύτερης ποιότητος ἐκτέλεση στὸ σπίτι μας ἀπ' ὅσο σὲ μιὰν αἶθουσα συναυλιῶν. Καὶ κάτι παρόμοιο δὲν εἶναι προνόμιο





τῶν «προνομιούχων». Ὅσοι σήμερα δὲν ἀπολαύουν τῶν καλλιτεχνικῶν κατακτήσεων, εἶναι ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ προτιμοῦν ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ. Διότι ὑπάρχει πιά στὶς κοινωνίες μας μεγάλος ἀριθμὸς καλλιτεχνικὰ ἀναλφάβητων, ὅμως οἱ κυβερνήσεις δὲν φαίνεται νὰ ἐνδιαφέρονται γι' αὐτό. Ἐξ ἄλλου, τὰ ἐμπορικὰ κυκλώματα προτιμοῦν νὰ κατακλύζουν τὴν ἀγορὰ μὲ καλλιτεχνικὴν πρραμία ποὺ τοὺς κοστίζει πολὺ φθηνά. Τὸ γεγονὸς αὐτό, μαζὶ μὲ τὶς «ἰδεολογίες», εἶναι τὸ πραγματικὸ «ναρκωτικὸ»· καλλιεργεῖ τὸ κακὸ γούστο καὶ συντελεῖ στὸ νὰ ἀνθεῖ τὸ ἐμπόριο ἐπιχειρήσεων, θεάματος κλπ. Ἡ ἐλευθερία τῆς καλλιτεχνικῆς ἔκφρασης πρέπει βέβαια νὰ προστατεύεται, γιὰτὶ ὅμως τὰ χαμηλῆς ποιότητος προϊόντα νὰ χαίρουν προνομίων;

Δὲν θὰ ἔπρεπε ὥστόσο νὰ εἶναι κανεὶς ἀπαισιόδοξος γιὰ τὸ μέλλον. Τὸ οἰκοσύστημά μας, ἐδῶ καὶ πολλὲς δεκάδες χρόνια, διαταράσσεται σοβαρά, καὶ οἱ κοινωνίες μας ὅμως ἀποκτοῦν ὀλοένα καὶ περισσότερο συνείδηση τοῦ κινδύνου. Ἡ μόλυνση δὲν ἐπηρεάζει μόνον τὸ νερὸ καὶ τὴν ἀτμόσφαιρα, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἱκανότητά μας νὰ αἰσθανώμαστε τὸ ὠραῖο. Αὐτὴ ἡ καταστροφή τοῦ περιβάλλοντος καὶ τῆς ποιότητος ζωῆς ἔχει φθάσει στὸ ἀπροχώρητο. Ὅσῳ τεράστια προγράμματα ἐξυγίανσης τοῦ περιβάλλοντος ἔχουν τεθῇ σ' ἐφαρμογὴν· προγράμματα ποὺ προβλέπουν, μεταξὺ ἄλλων, καὶ τὴ δημιουργία, σὲ περιοχὲς ὑποβαθμισμένες, κήπων στολισμένων μ' ἔργα τέχνης. Συνεπῶς, οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἔχουν συνειδητοποιήσει τὴν ὑποβάθμιση, καὶ προβάλλουν τὸ δικαίωμα νὰ χαίρωνται τὰ καλλιτεχνήματα ποὺ ἀποτελοῦν τὴ δόξα τῆς δημιουργικότητος καὶ τῆς ἐπιδεξιότητος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Οὔτε ἔχουν τὸ δικαίωμα, οἱ δυτικὲς κοινωνίες, νὰ λησμονοῦν τὸν τρίτο ἢ καὶ τὸν δεῦτερο κόσμον. Ἡ τέχνη εἶναι δυνατόν νὰ χαρίσει ὅ' ὅλα τ' ἀνθρώπινα πλάσματα μιὰν ζωὴ μὲ περισσότερο νόημα. Δὲν πρέπει νὰ παραβλέπεται πῶς, γιὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα, ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου «εὐρυθμίας καὶ εὐαρμοστίας δεῖται», καὶ πῶς, δίχως τέχνη, «ὁ βίος ἀδίωτος».

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