

6 ART

6.1 *What Art Is*

¹Art exists to afford us beauty, perfection in form and colour; to develop the sense of beauty in everything; to fill our minds with longing for the world of ideals. The goal of art is to discover the perfect forms of beauty, the primordial images in the world of ideal beauty, the world of ideas. The path to this goal means striving to beautify everything, also ugly things, so that they may approach the ideal of beauty. “True art sees beauty everywhere.”

²Art is for man his instinctive striving towards the ideal of beauty. This ideal of primordial beauty he will find only as a causal self in the causal world. When man has reached the causal stage and become a causal self, he has reached the highest stage of development attainable by man. The development of mankind implies that ever more people reach ever higher stages and finally the causal stage.

³Aspiration to beauty exists in all fields of the matter, consciousness, and motion aspects: the beauty of form, of idea, and of force. When development has reached the point where the significance of the matter aspect has been reduced to being a mere basis, then the material forms will have reached the highest perfection of form as well.

⁴In our striving to get increasingly closer to this ideal, we are attracted to the goal and reach it in the end: unity in all, the beauty of unity, the unity of beauty, an eternal “mystery” to the learned, to the artist until he has entered unity.

⁵Every epoch has its own patterns, its own particular artistic conception. That has long been an aesthetic tenet, which indeed is valid at the present stage of mankind’s development. But Platon is right, too, when asserting that there are final forms of beauty. Platon has hinted where the origin of art must be sought, namely in the world of ideas. He has also said that we have once in the world of ideas seen the original forms of beauty. In the world of ideas the laws of art are revealed, and without knowledge of that world mankind will remain disoriented.

⁶To the esoterician art is a reflection of the world of ideas with its beauty and harmony. Art becomes symbolic by giving expression to an idea. The true artist strives to render in the physical world, with his small means, as much as possible of the causal forms of the world of ideas.

⁷True art thus cannot be understood until in the world of Platonic ideas; and there, in full only by those causal selves who are of the fourth department and who can assimilate the energies of that department. This is so because the causal form is not only the idea of beauty. It is much more than that. The highest manifestation is force.

⁸At the present stage of mankind’s development, art belongs to emotionality and is still far from mentality or ideality (causality, 47:1-3).

⁹All human beings have a sense of beauty, a conception of beauty. But the ideal of beauty is individual, in many cases collective.

¹⁰The conception of art is individual and the production of art as well. Art is a sphere where everyone has his own taste and also has a right to it. Taste depends on individual character, individual experience, interest, etc., and of course on level of development. In our times, taste seems to depend more on emotion than on knowledge of facts, of objective reality.

¹¹Human art can be exercised by all, irrespective of their departments. But this kind of art is everything connected with the sense of form and colour and harmony, etc., and is to a high degree the result of the individual’s occupation with such things and his technical knowledge of them.

¹²The forms and colours of nature afford us the norms of our conception of beauty. This is true only of generals, of course, not of particulars, which may be complete failures. Also the artist’s choice of motive depends on those norms. The motive should always render what is general, never what is particular. The more the motive expresses the idea (what is the most

general), the more the artist approaches the ideal.

¹³Just like everything else, art gives us opportunities of consciousness activation of many different kinds. The very exercise of art develops many different qualities and abilities. The ability to visualize is necessary to discipleship. This ability is acquired through exercise of art. But then it must be reproduction of reality determined by law, no arbitrary imaginative construction. The esoterician knows that arbitrariness of any kind is the opposite of conformity to law and counteracts evolution. The forms of art must, just as the forms of organic life, be shaped according to eternal laws. The same is true of music in the matter of harmony, which is a basic law of evolution. From this we may understand how totally disoriented mankind has been during the 20th century.

¹⁴Art is neither slavish imitation nor caricature. Art is characterized by that which Raphael calls the “idea of beauty in the artist’s own conception”. Therefore, a primitive or disoriented mentality or hatred’s repulsive emotionality does not find the way to it. Every true art critic from Aristoteles and Plinius to Winckelmann and Reynolds convincingly made it clear that the purpose of art is to ennoble and elevate things, not to uglify and debase them. The work of art is an ideal product. The most ordinary model appears full of poetry to anyone who possesses the ability to discover the ideal form behind the more or less failed physical shape. Anyone lacking this ability will profane and vulgarize the most beautiful form.

¹⁵Only those creations of art in the physical world which are in the greatest possible agreement with those in the causal world (the world of ideas) are the truly immortal masterpieces. The artist who was the most successful in his attempts at “creating” works of art was Leonardo da Vinci. The great majority of the works of art produced hitherto thus have no “eternal value”. Instead they are expressions of the human conception of existence and the individual’s level of development. That imitation of the artistic conception of certain disoriented individuals appearing in fashion trends clarifies that such “artists” are new in their profession and did not develop a true understanding of art in their previous lives. It takes three incarnations to become a “talent” and seven to become a “genius”.

¹⁶Just like most other things arisen since the two world wars, so-called modern art argues the destructive work at annihilation. It affords us what is ugly, normless, repulsive, at best mere meaningless. A modern German art philosopher considers that ugliness, too, may be art. Ugliness in all its abomination can never be art, however perfect its technique. Art exists to make life beautiful. Caricature disfigures things and reproduces aptly people’s gossip about each other and satisfies the malice of envy. True art makes even ugly things beautiful because the great artist can discover beauty everywhere. Klinger’s etching, *The Faun Looking at the Sleeping Nymph*, may serve as a classic example of true art.

¹⁷People begin to understand art only when they have reached the stage of culture. Goethe’s conception of the essence of art and of what objects are suited for artistic representation remains unchangingly valid. At the stage of civilization, technique, mannerism, artistry are confused with art. Art ennobles physical reality, is superior to nature, and Goethe is right in saying so.

¹⁸Until it is revealed to mankind what art is, mankind is wise to keep to the age-old principle saying that art exists to make life beautiful, afford us beauty. A great artist makes even ugly things beautiful.

¹⁹People will dispute about what art is a further five hundred years. They will defend all new crazy things by saying that the old masters were always misunderstood by their contemporaries. Therefore, it is in the “essence of art” that all new things are misunderstood. Then art consists in understanding all new follies.

²⁰It is true that new ideas are always opposed by those who desire nothing but what is familiar to them. There is, however, a limit to everything, also to “new” things. That limit has already been exceeded in modern art. What militates against the essence of art can never be art.

6.2 *Emotionality Disorients People*

¹Human art implies adoration of the beauty of form. It is dependent on form, typical of emotional consciousness, of “desire”, even if in its highest refinement. People adore the form, since they are unable to fill it with purpose.

²The life-ignorant always fall victim to the power of beauty. Even an individual so far advanced as Goethe refused to learn from other people than the good-looking and constantly brought down new sufferings on himself by hopelessly falling in love with the beauty of form. But what is physical beauty to noble emotionality or knowledge, insight, understanding, power of judgement?

³The slaves to beauty apparently have no understanding of the tyranny of beauty and its idiotizing effect. The adoration of beauty may be defended where beauty competes for excellence with goodness and wisdom.

⁴Just like so many other things, art demonstrates mankind’s total disorientation and aberration. Art, when a phenomenon at the emotional stage, believes itself able to interpret reality and the meaning of life, which is, it alone, a sufficient proof of its megalomania and self-idolization. The great Goethe’s exhortation, “bilde, Künstler, rede nicht”, remains valid for artists of all times. Their manner of speaking reveals their helpless attempts at interpreting what is to them eternally incomprehensible. Treating of their theories of art, countless, profound, just like philosophers exhaustless in their mania for speculation, would be as meaningless as being influenced by magniloquence heard in the nursery.

⁵The consciousness of the emotional world is the realm of feelings and imagination with its illusoriness, in itself irremediable. At the transition to a new zodiacal epoch, the new vibrations streaming in from another constellation have a dissolving effect on all old ways of looking at things. The ideas ruling, which have been incorporated with systems of thought (idiologies), are eliminated, and amid the rejection of mental molecules from human brains taking place emotional consciousness rules sovereign until the mental molecules of the new ideas have been able to replace those of the old ideas. Only when mankind has reached the mental stage a few million years hence will human beings be spared such recurring mental chaos. This is the most distinctly felt in the sphere of art. Artists, who pursue the 2–4–6 path from the highest emotionality to essentiality (via the unity centre of the causal envelope), become the most disoriented of all and grope their way along in the darkness ruling. If they could use the time of transition to cultivate the higher emotionality and seek the ideal, they could be guides for mankind at large. By rejecting form, which is the mental element of art, and cultivating formlessness and, with it chaotic feeling, as they now do, they contribute to aggravating disorientation.

6.3 *Music*

¹The purpose of music is to bring us into the harmony of life. From this we can grasp how far from understanding life human beings are.

²Music is “the most divine and spiritual of arts.” (45-self K.H.) It arouses attraction. Atonalism breeds disharmony, disruption.

³Music can debase us, and this is what everything mere rhythmic does and all atonal music, everything disharmonious.

⁴Music exists in all worlds. It cannot be “transformed”.

⁵Song of praise is harmony with the all.

⁶Because all pioneers were unappreciated by their contemporaries, all bunglers are geniuses; this seems to be the logic of wiseacres. Beethoven, Wagner, etc., were disliked because they burst the forms of art prevalent at their time. But atonal musicians cannot understand the essence of music, and that is another matter. Noise is not music.

⁷Wagner accepted Schopenhauer’s theory that life was filled with suffering to the breaking-

point. Wagner's own theory was that music should mirror reality, and since life was disharmony, music should be so as well: only so much harmony and melody was to be included as made life bearable. Art exists to raise human beings above suffering, however, to guide them into the world of beauty and happiness.

⁸Modern music with its disharmonies works at destroying an important "sense of truth" in the individual. In the causal world, every vibration that did not agree with reality would be recognized at once by the fact that it created discord. The sense of harmony develops slowly all the way from the mineral kingdom and is an infallible sense of truth in all worlds, also to man in his worlds. So-called musical culture has ever since Beethoven increasingly withdrawn from harmony. The "tattered human soul" must have discords. Goethe's instinctive understanding of reality appears in his verdict on Beethoven's music: "Beautiful and insane to the point of driving one crazy." Mankind has continued going downhill in this respect as in all the other cultural respects, having no idea of the essence of culture and its purpose as a factor of reality.

6.4 Goethe's Conception of Art

¹Goethe was an initiate of the genuine Rosicrucian Order. The many spurious orders were created in the 19th and 20th centuries. He did not rise to the higher degrees, as is clear from his opinion about Cagliostro, who had attained the highest degree. (The members of lower degrees did not know of those of higher degrees.) In any case he was allowed to study Saint German's written presentation of the esoteric knowledge system and in so doing acquired a conception of reality and life that was basically correct.

²In a previous incarnation, Goethe was a Greek sculptor, a disciple of Praxiteles. This explains his keen interest in Greek art. Even the replicas of it he saw in Italy roused his remembrance, which enabled him to visualize the Greek originals in those replicas. Also he correctly realized that Greek art was exemplary and was the acme of human art.

³The following account of Goethe's conception of art is given to those who have seen through the aberrations of modern art and seek the laws of life valid for art; it is given to serve them as a lodestar:

⁴Nature's forms of life evince a tendency to aspiration to beauty. But nature is only seldom able to reach the perfect form of beauty and can never preserve it.

⁵The purpose of art is to "surpass nature", not to seek to imitate it. Its purpose is to seek to present ideal beauty permanently and to ensoul it.

⁶The condition of producing the perfect forms of beauty is understanding in which respects nature's attempts have failed. Comparative anatomy can guide the researcher in his striving to find the ideal human figure in the human body.

⁷Art proceeds from universals to particulars. It is concrete and can never be abstract. Clarity is an objective norm of beauty. The artist must work in freedom, but it must be freedom regulated by law. The forms of art must be produced in accord with eternal laws, if they are to be objective, true, beautiful.

⁸It is important to choose the suitable objects. Not everything in nature is suited to artistic representation. Only that which is the expression of an idea and thus in agreement with the fundamental forms of life and, moreover, possesses beauty in itself, should be represented. All representation of the "inner life" must be limited to such things as can be conveyed through figure and gesture. The highest simplicity is reached only by mature mastery. Form is more important than colour.

⁹Even in Goethe's time art had been completely led astray under the influence of the sovereign arbitrariness, self-glory, irresponsibility, not to say total life-ignorance, of philosophical subjectivism. That degeneration of art, "romantic art", was characterized by Goethe as lack of restraint. "Romanticism is illness."

¹⁰Everything problematic, unnatural, ugly is to be rejected. How could perfect beauty be discovered and produced where only the “mists” of formless emotions and visions were recognized as fertile ground for artistic creation? The purpose of art is not to represent feelings and moods. Subjective and individual arbitrariness can never produce a true work of art. Subjectivism, holding that the motive is more important than the form and desiring to give an appearance of reality to what is unreal, is a proof of aberration.

¹¹Schiller shared Goethe’s conception of art, as should not need a further elucidation. Both had reached the perspective consciousness of the stage of humanity. To the things of culture they shared the same attitude, formulated by Schiller in his aphorisms on religion and philosophy. He refused to accept any one of ideologies known in history, in the one case for religious reasons, in the other case for logical reasons.

¹²Ignorance has wanted to make Goethe a “Spinozist”. It was Spinoza’s “style” that appealed to him, its calm, clear, systematic character, so unlike that of all the others, and “pantheism”, appearing now and again, closely related to the Rosicrucian world view.

6.5 *Modern Art*

¹Modern art is one more proof that mankind is totally disoriented in reality and a proof that it is impossible for man to grasp the meaning of life.

²Nothing can better than the art of our times demonstrate the barbarism and irrationalism – the low stage of development – of the clans that were given the opportunity of incarnate during the first decades of the 20th century; nothing can better illustrate the incompetence and dishonesty of the critics who set themselves up as judges of taste and mislead people’s judgement of taste by feigning to understand modern art. Poor mankind to experience such things, to be brought up in such things!

³Modern art strives to remove itself from reality as far as possible. In modern art, everything is permitted except that which has to do with reality and reason. Such art is perversion. The art of our times – with such exceptions as are always to be found – does not live up to its name. It is a travesty of art.

⁴What our contemporaries call ingenious art is only extraordinary technique. The true artist (genius) can be recognized by the fact that he cannot possibly make anything that is ugly. But very few people understand this.

⁵Modern art is ruled by vibrations from the solar plexus centre. That is why emotional impulses control it and reason is eliminated in it. But there no true art without mentality of a high degree. Classic art used vibrations from the throat centre.

⁶Just as there is an atonalism of tones, there is one of colours. Such atonal colours are seen in the auras of modern composers and painters. Harmonious people demonstrate auras of harmonious colours. Atonal music re-acts on the colours of the aura and cause disharmonious psychic states. Our epoch has a sick psyche, as frayed nerves and insane art demonstrate.

⁷Will posterity have an idea of actress Jessie Wessel’s appearance from Grünewald’s painting? It was not the intention either. She did not look like that. His painting is a caricature.

⁸“You see only what you already know” is a psychological law that no one can abolish. It is typical of our modern artistic enthusiasts that they believe themselves able to circumvent it by eliminating the intellect, even by trying to acquire a “new way of seeing”. They could as well try to lift themselves up by their own hair. They have even been driven in absurdum by their slogan, “what we know about the world hinders us from seeing it as it is”. In so doing they have strayed irretrievably into the world of emotional illusions and destroyed the wee bit of common sense they perhaps had once. There will be consequences of this in several future incarnations. Those who work at destroying the “principle of reason” (as the ancients called it), idiotize reason, lower their level of development, and make it more difficult for themselves to acquire mental consciousness. It will be long before they will be able to rise above the emotional stage.

⁹Just as mankind in our epoch is totally disoriented in reality, so it is led astray in art as well. What is being produced is nothing but caricatures of reality. It is as if mankind had been seized with the belief, in the manner of Nietzsche, that the opposite of what is traditional in philosophy, literature, art, music is right. The ancients were certainly mistaken in many respects. Art certainly was far from perfect. Yet it was not as infinitely removed from reality as everything to do with modernism. The masses, always lacking in judgement, follow their authorities. A critic writing in a daily paper, one of those scornfully supercilious ones, tried to make an ironical remark about authorities, wondering where they were. Such critics are the ones to shape the spirit of the times and to direct the masses. And the press readily opens its columns to those fashion-setters and heralds. The important thing is to keep abreast of the times wherever this will bring us.

¹⁰Modern art and music are manifestations caused by a number of factors: desperate defiance of everything traditional and passed on from earlier times, attempts of helplessness to find expressions for self-activity, reluctance to devote time and work to the acquisition of technical skill, dependence on idiotizing art theories. The results are products hostile to life both emotionally and mentally, of the lowest attainable level, lower than those of the stage of barbarism, which never reaches as far down as the effort directed towards what is the lowest possible.

¹¹Art is something for subjectivists. Practising it everyone can swarm around in lawlessness and licentiousness, everyone can concoct his own aesthetics. Entire libraries can be filled with individualistic extravagances. Art is bound by laws, too, and this implies universal validity. We have a very long way to go there, as long as the way to true culture. True art and true culture go together. Nobody can rid himself of individual character. But subjectivism and individualism are banned in true art.

¹²Now art has got mixed up with politics, too. They talk about “democratic art”. That is nothing new, however, but is ancient subjectivistic arbitrariness. Such things return in the circle familiar throughout history. Every time it happens, learned men and prophets arise who preach, “this is something quite new”. In our times it may sound like this: “In the proportions of the Greek statue there is a ferment of pride of noble birth; in the Egyptian pyramid, of self-assertion and despotism.” This quotation is quite sufficient as a glaring example of the supreme wisdom and understanding and omniscience of our modern democratic prophets.

¹³Esoterics alone can put an end to the irremediable mania for speculation of life-ignorance, because esoterics teaches that in all worlds there is one reality valid for everybody: the permanent reality of the general idea. Add to this individual character, which sees something unique. But – and this is the important thing – this which is individual and unique never bursts the limits of what is general, which remains universally valid. This should not be very hard to comprehend.

6.6 *The Art of the Future*

¹The “immortal” works of art that have seen the light of day hitherto, the Greek ones, for instance, are so in a relative sense only. Some time in the future they will be superseded by the forms of beauty of the causal world, such as they can be shaped within the range of what is possible in physical reality. But long before that, understanding of the essence of art, hitherto absent, will be made exoteric.

²The art of the future will be able to give a much more “ennobled” expression to form and render the “soul” in the form, which only the greatest geniuses have been able to do hitherto.

³Art exists to afford us beauty. If it does not do so, then it is on the wrong track and is no art in the esoteric sense. Let then the exoterists hold whatever false view they wish. A truer insight cannot be expected until the great artistic geniuses incarnate, which according to D.K.

will not be until about the year 2500. It will be that long before they can be understood and appreciated as they should. Indirectly this also tells us something about how the planetary hierarchy views the art that can be produced until then. It is not art in the esoteric sense, either in literature, the plastic arts, or music. At the time indicated above the new culture, the first true culture that mankind has ever experienced, is calculated to appear and begin to rise. All of this according to the planetary hierarchy's calculations, which mankind however can bring to nought, as it has succeeded in doing on so many other occasions.

⁴At the present stage of mankind's development there is no prospect of understanding of art as a factor in consciousness development. The inmost essence of art is reaching into reality, not shaping and forming, which are only the means. What is meant here is not what people believe to be reality, but art in its highest exercise reaches into unity. This is still inconceivable, which just demonstrates our total disorientation. It is no use speculating on it; for this will only breed more follies of life-ignorance. Man must wait until he has become a causal self. Only a causal self in the fourth department can understand what this is about: furnishing consciousness with such a form that it can live and develop.

⁵People heard about the fourth department and its connection with art and of course started fantasizing. Artists are found in all the departments, however. One more proof that as long as people fantasize and speculate they are immature for esoterics, which belongs at the higher mental stage.

Endnotes by the Translator

6.2.4 "Bilde, Künstler, rede nicht" means "Shape, artist, do not speak". This is quoted also in PhS 3.21.7.

6.3.2 "... music – the most divine and spiritual of arts." *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter No. 24 b.

6.3.8 "Beautiful and insane to the point of driving one crazy," ("zum Rasendwerden schön und toll zugleich") was Goethe's verdict on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, in C minor, as its first movement was played to him by Felix Mendelssohn in 1830. Goethe's biographer Viëtor adds to this the remark that "this is how he perceived Beethoven's music later, too." Karl Viëtor, *Goethe – Dichtung, Wissenschaft, Weltbild*, 1949, p. 176.

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