Art and Faith

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Art and Faith

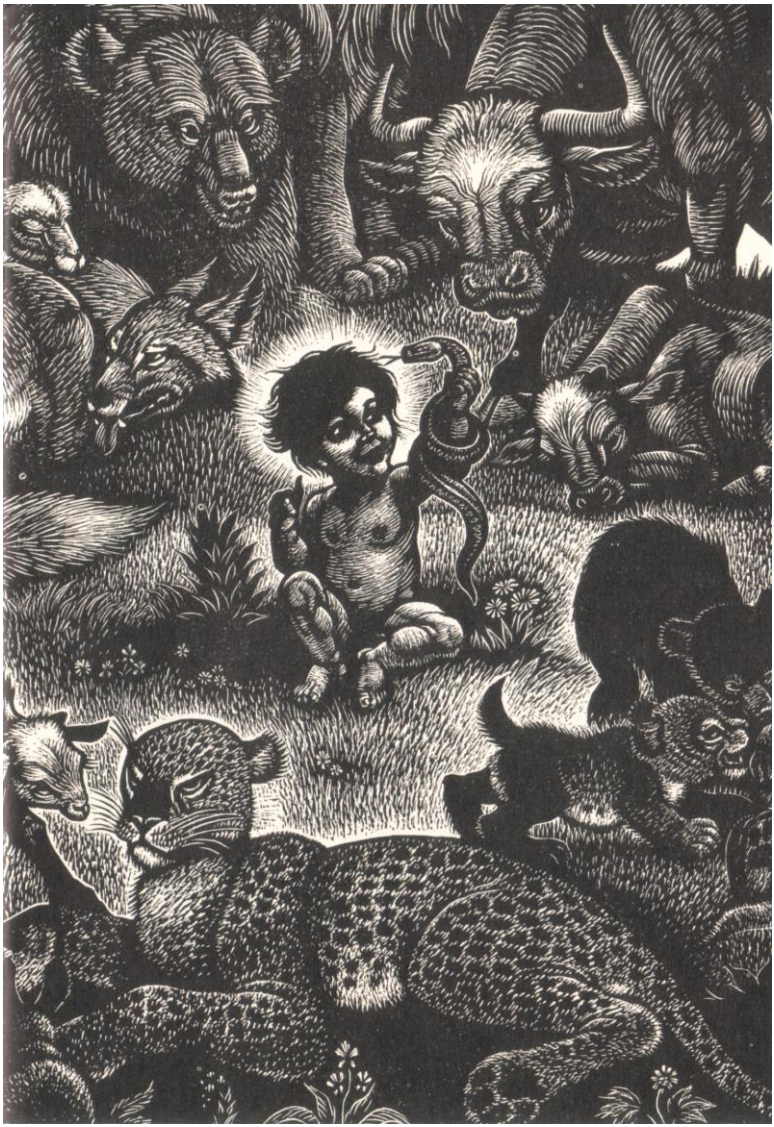
If any type should be regarded as the ideal type it is the artist. But we have seen that there is no such thing as the artistic type. Every type has its artistic (that means its aesthetic) attitude, its moments of spontaneous development… Every man is a special kind of artist, and in his originating activity, his play or work, he is doing more than expressing himself; he is manifesting

the form which our common life should take in its unfolding.

Jacob Burckhardt

The only hope of saving our civilization lies in the spiritual and psychological sphere. Civilization is dependent on culture; unless we as a people find a new vision we shall perish.

Herbert Read



A New Preface

A decade in the Age of the Atom is heavy with changes. With bated breath we live from day to day under the shadow of the Terrible Cloud—expecting the worst, hoping for the best.

In the world of art, a decade is little indeed. Art has survived all cataclysms; it is imperishable because it is of the Spirit and it renews itself in constant creative giving. A decade measured against God's Eternity is infinitesimal, a grain of sand moved imperceptibly by the vast ocean of time. Man creating order, form and meaning out of the raw material of thought, color and sound—the poet, the artist, the composer—wages his endless battle for perfection, for immortality, for truth and beauty. These fragile creations, wrought by mind, heart and hand, have left their mark on this earth. They will still be there long after the empires of kings and conquerors have gone to ruin and oblivion.

The Fathers of the Early Church used the written word, the harmonies of sound, the graven image, in all their splendid forms to spread the Gospel across the Earth. In fact, it is doubtful that without its vast iconography Christianity could have imprinted itself so indelibly in the hearts and minds of men over such vast areas of time and space.

Perhaps it was in part the corruption of these arts that turned a small group of schismatic Christians, called the Quakers, against all the art. The Purists became Iconoclasts, perhaps to their own detriment. It is idle to speculate what art in its purest, simplest, most spiritual

form could have done to spread the influence of Quakerism over a larger sphere.

But one can't deny the historic facts that a lack of insight and imagination on the part of leading Friends drove Edward Hicks to despair and Benjamin West to England—and worldliness. Now Friends are happy to bask in their fame. Who knows how many searching souls were drawn to Friends' gentle beliefs by Hicks' many "Peaceable Kingdoms," surreptitiously painted by a man whose creative talents could not be suppressed by stern "eldering."

It may have some significance then that a decade ago Friends published a little pamphlet concerned with the interrelationship of Art and Faith, soon out of print and now reissued.

Much has happened in these ten years. The world has slipped a little closer to man-made destruction. Art has moved away from mere surface explorations, from junk collages, assemblages, and often accidental action painting—to a more serious contemplation of the human predicament, as reflected in man himself.

To be sure, the image of man emerging from the artist's studio is somewhat deformed and tinged with insanity. How could it be otherwise in a world unhinged by fear. But it seems that Faith, Hope, Compassion—or desperation—are stirring people all over the world into believing that perhaps Salvation is still possible and that the beauty and the peace of this best of all worlds are still worth fighting for. It would be good to believe that the tremendous interest

in art, evinced by hundreds of new galleries and a new generation of ardent collectors, is based on more than speculation. Perhaps there is hope that even among Friends the arts are beginning to take root, assume meaning and a truly devotional significance. Only then can art become an enhancement of life rather than an "encumbrance," as early Friends would call it.

But art can never be sectarian. It must be universal, a true instrument of peace that brings people together in a deeper awareness of their common joys and sorrows. Art has moved from its geographic centers and has spread to the remote corners of the globe. For better or for worse, art has become an international movement, a means of communication which crosses racial, ideological and linguistic barriers more successfully than diplomats and politicians ever can. It is useless and paradoxical to think of contemporary art in terms of White or Colored, Capitalist or Communist, Catholic, Jewish—or Quaker.

In our fight against war and violence, the arts should take their rightful place—"an Instrument of Thy Peace"—as St. Francis and Edward Hicks expressed it in their different ways.

The Birth of Art

Armed with a crude stone weapon, a man crawled out of his cave to hunt the mighty wild bull. He sniffed at the weather. He had not yet discovered the power of expressing himself in words. He grunted when he felt well and he roared and bellowed when he was unhappy. Hunting for

food was his main occupation. He stalked his prey with all his animal cunning, until he had cornered it, killed it. As he stood looking down at the shaggy form before him, he saw life slowly draining out of it. His eyes followed the blood trickling down on the grey rock, tracing crimson lines and rivulets. And the man admired the beast's strength and exulted in his own which had proved superior to that of the animal. He ran his fingers idly through the blood, and before he knew it he had shaped on the rock a crude outline of an animal. It seemed like magic, and the idea excited him.

He plucked a few hairs out of the animal's fur, dipped them into blood, and soon he had completed an image resembling his prey. And the man was amazed at the work of his hand. At that moment it meant more to him than hunting and killing. What he had done no man had ever done before him. His dumb brain did not yet grasp the fact that he had been ordained the first artist on this earth; he had become a creator.

The head of the tribe must have caught the importance of the hour. He saw powerful magic in it. "Go to the big cave where we always assemble," he may have said, "and draw this animal on the wall; draw all the animals we have ever hunted. This magic may lure them into our valley. We shall have food and fame and power!"

The new-born artist lost no time. He worked feverishly, and out of his mind, which had lain dormant so long, came the imagery of man just emerged from his most primitive state of animal existence. The practice of this mighty magic

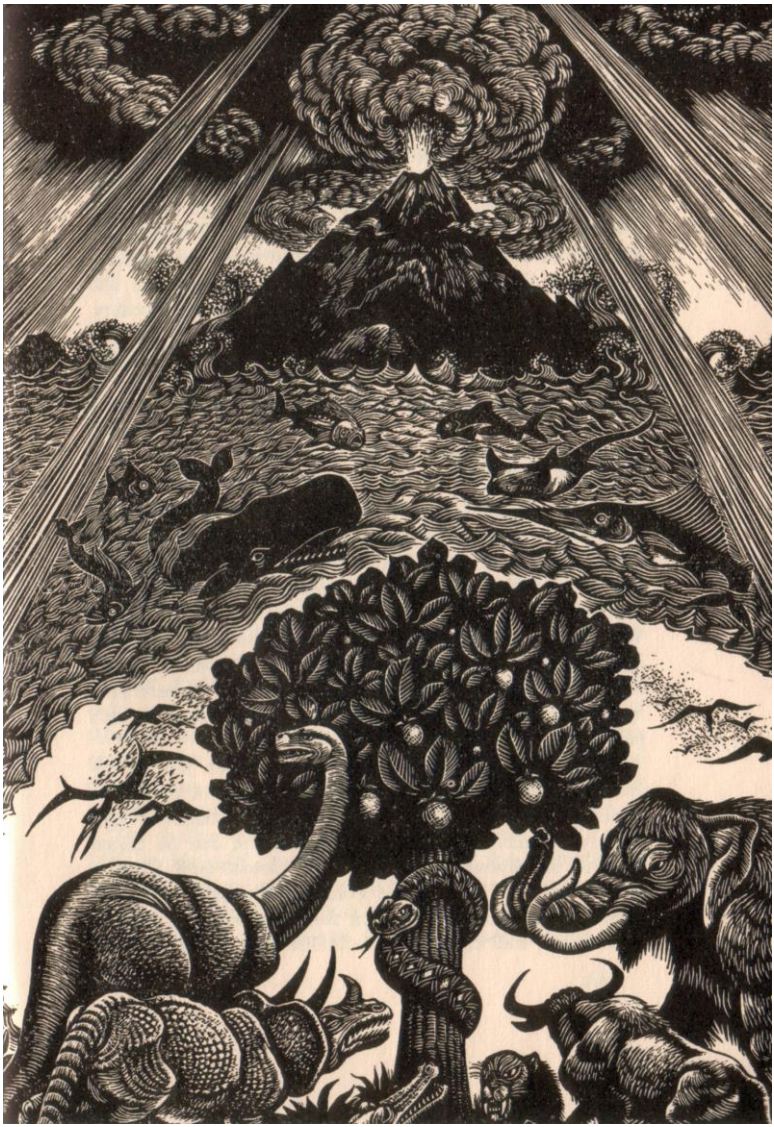
spread from valley to valley, was passed on from tribe to tribe, from father to son.

For many thousands of years these prehistoric paintings lay hidden in darkness until a little Spanish girl discovered them, quite accidentally, in the caves of Altamira, in the year of our Lord, 1879.

Modern artists had long been familiar with the arts of the Incas, the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans; they had cherished the sparkling treasures of the Middle Ages, of the Renaissance. Yet these primitive paintings done by Stone Age artists reveal a power that commands our admiration. These early masterpieces can hold their own in competition with the most daring modern art experiment, and critics admit that their mastery of line and form has rarely been surpassed.

In 15,000 years we have surely added a few tricks to the art of pictorial representation, but it has slowly been drained of its magic powers. We have applied our skills, our spells and our magic to the splitting of the atom; we fashion robots directed by remote control; we can produce rain by seeding clouds; we soar through the stratosphere sipping tea and reading our papers; we transmit sounds and images in seconds around the earth. We have sold mind, body and soul to the machine and, like the sorcerer's apprentice, seem to have forgotten the formula to stop it. The magic of art, which lifted man out of his material dependence and made him God's co-creator, a dreamer of truth and beauty, seems almost to be forgotten. But art is still the magic

formula which can stop the robots who seem to run our world.



Traditions in Art

Art is a conscience that plagues us, a longing for creative power that can bring us closer to the source of all creation; a power we seem to have lost. We do not like to admit it, but the art which grips us most deeply is the art of the past. We depend on that heritage more heavily than we realize. Why are we so reluctant to see ourselves as a tiny link in a long chain that stretches back into the dim past? Artists should have no reason to be ashamed of their ancient lineage unless they feel that they haven't added much to art's past glories.

Picasso is considered a great modern master. Yet he admittedly draws many of his inspirations from the art of the ancient Cretans, from the Incas, from the Etruscans. Our modern mosaics, technically and spiritually, can be traced back to the Byzantine school. From Orozco and Rivera's murals we look back at the Pompeian frescoes. When we compare the mediaeval Unicorn tapestries with our modern textiles and wall coverings, we realize how much we have lost. We look at the sculptures of Brancusi, Moore, or Lipschitz and compare them with those of the Egyptians, the Chinese or the Assyrians created thousands of years ago. We compare our ladies' jewelry with those exquisite earrings and necklaces worn in the city of Ur 5,000 years ago and we realize that we have lost not only the spirit, but also the skill.

In communicating our thoughts in print we realize that most of our modern typefaces can trace their ancestry straight back to the inscriptions on the Trajan column in

Rome. We have hardly had a new idea in type design during the last 2,000 years and in book design not since the days of Gutenberg.

As artists, we may rebel against tradition, but we rarely have anything new to say, nor are we more articulate than the artist of the past. We think we are revolutionaries, but we lack the clear objective which makes a revolution succeed. We are self-proclaimed non-objectives trying to turn God's world into an abstraction. We hate to admit that we are confused, desperately longing for direction. So we throw ourselves into technical experiments, puttering around with a multitude of new materials, trying out new combinations of color, form and line; discussing space, tensions, and textures as if art were a mechanical toy and not primarily a thing of the spirit. We seem to deny now that man was made in the image of God and that we are meant to be creative too, each in his own way. We cannot live without art and not pay the penalty of facing spiritual starvation.

The decline of the arts came with the decline of man's faith in his own creative powers. From the beginning of time man felt the urge to make images to ward off evil, to soothe the gods, to glorify himself with work produced by his own hands. Neither the artist's impulses nor his tools have changed much since the dawn of history. What has shifted constantly is the social background against which he works and the patrons on whom he depends.

Patrons of Art

It was the tribe, in all probability, which prompted the first artist to paint hunting scenes on the walls of his cave dwellings, placating the spirits of the hunter and the hunted. The tribal chiefs became princes who used the artist to create for them monuments of fame and power, glorifying and recording their masters' deeds for posterity, or imploring the gods to protect them.

In Greece and Rome, the State itself became the patron of the arts, the artist an honored citizen who brought glory to the rulers and received gracious nods from the gods whose marble forms graced temples and public squares.

The Christian Church was next in dispensing patronage. Places of worship needed imagery to stir the faithful to religious fervor, to perpetuate also the memory of the mighty supporters of the faith: popes, emperors, princes and patricians. But the Church not only fed the artist's body, she also nourished his spirit; she gave him inspiration, sometimes a feeling of divine mission and of heavenly purpose. How else can we account for such a profusion of great masters within the short period of a few centuries?

With the rise of industry came the decline of the Church. Rich merchants and noblemen delighted to play the artist's benefactor by ordering portraits to flatter their own vanity. Pictures of opulent nudes and still-lives adorned library and dining room, attesting to their owners' wealth and *savoir*

vivre; divine inspiration replaced by stimulation of the flesh.

With manor houses and palazzos going fast the way of all taxes, with wall space dwindling and garden statuary crumbling away, new patrons of the arts came forward, holders of vast fortunes and, incidentally, prodigious users of picture material.

The artist of the 20th century, if he wants to live, has to serve an industrial purpose; he must help in selling mass-produced merchandise. Pretenses are gone, niceties dispensed with. The term "commercial art" is born. Art has become unashamedly venal. It sells anything from health to horror, from food to fashion, from pleasure to poison.

Now the commercial artist can become a prince himself. He can acquire a fortune, social prominence, national importance. But in order to get it, one little thing is required of him—he has to sell himself, too, body and soul.

If the morality of selling to the public more things than it needs, or can afford, is questionable, so is the artist's work that helps the salesman. If illustrating magazines with lurid pictures designed to excite man's baser appetites seems profitable prostitution, the artist is a partner in that business. But the way of the world is that it adores worldly success and it argues that the artist who is "doing well" must also be good.

Profit and comfort are the pillars of our industrial age. We are slowly raising them to the dignity of gods. By their

verdict, the so-called fine artist becomes a useless member of society, at best a lovable and impractical bohemian who cannot be employed gainfully unless he tries to fit into the profit system of economy and efficiency.

Eric Gill wrote: "You cannot serve God and Mammon… The work of artists becomes degraded if it lacks purity of motive." The artist who wants to serve God will have to embrace poverty. There must be quite a few who embrace poverty—unsung and unwanted in our pagan world. Yet, I think those are the happy ones, happy as only those can be who live an integrated life, worshiping as they work, creating when they feel inspired, freely giving of their talent without counting the pennies of their reward.

Childhood and Art

The clock of history cannot be turned back, but our hearts must turn back to find peace again, faith and union with God in creative work. We were all born artists; we were all geniuses when we were little. We were born free in mind and free in spirit. Where, then, does our enslavement begin?

The normal child is born with every quality a creative human being needs. He has imagination—the freedom to rise above earthbound rationality. He has perception, grasping the essence of a thing seen for the first time. He has insight—feeling the vibration of human emotions before they become visible. He has enthusiasm—applying himself freshly and eagerly to each new task. He has spontaneity—reacting to life and its steadily changing

aspects. The child is also able to concentrate on essentials without being sidetracked by the countless distractions of everyday life. All these qualities are the basic ingredients of creative man which we must try to preserve or to recapture.

We are bemused to see the majority of people gradually losing these faculties in homes and classrooms ruled by so-called "common sense," by conformity and practicality, and later in the grinding process of drab mechanical labor. In our industrial civilization, "imagination" becomes a serious handicap because it may impede the speedy operation of a routine job; "perception" is twisted into specialized training for a given task; "insight" may be interpreted as intrusion into other peoples' business; "spontaneity" and "enthusiasm" may cost you your job if you step out of line; "concentration"—yes, that you must continue to practice—but only on the *one* operation which you have been trained to do; but it is imposed concentration that will make you prematurely old, stooped and tired because it excludes initiative and free will, the incentive to create.

And to make matters worse, most of us lose the child's capacity for play. Even if we have time left for leisure, we do not know how to use it creatively, to play significantly. We ask for ready-made entertainment which does not lift our soul, but kills our time. We stare at television, we go to a movie, we play a card game, we mix among the crowd to drown our loneliness, our longings. We sit in a drug store, shuffle along Broadway or Main street, we go to a ball game or to a beach filled with thousands of people who feel as lonely as we do.

Too often we see the decline and fall of individuality beginning in our children. We see them drop into formation, falling into the same pattern of love and play, of dress and mannerism, of political and social conformity. The vast majority of our adolescents will look around and find little that recommends itself as a vocation which satisfies both body and soul.

Fragmentation of Art

Industrialization is rapidly engulfing the few islands which allow the practice of a craft, of creative initiative. Educational enterprises like printing and publishing, promotional media like commercial art and advertising have become industries administered by business men who hire specialists, trained to handle only one phase of production, efficiently and speedily. Even farmers, those rugged individualists, are rapidly turning into large producers of specialties.

We know, however, that creativity consists of a joining of mind, matter and soul. There was a time when a shoemaker made a shoe, a cabinet maker a chair, a printer a book, a builder a house. They conceived, designed and executed their work as a unit. Their minds set in motion their hands to form the matter, and their hearts rejoiced in the achievement in which the whole complex human being was engaged. This left no room for idleness, no parts were unused, no faculties unemployed. Man could function as a unit—spiritually and physically. He was responsible for his creation, he could take pride in it (or take the blame for it if it was faulty), but the dignity of the work lent dignity to its creator.

By contrast we see man reduced to a mere tool by the machine which has superseded him. Man has become an extension of the machine; he serves it instead of being served by it. The servant has become the master, and the former master has become dumb, deaf and blind, insensitive to his servitude. Creative man has been confined

to the small studio, the workshop, the laboratory, but he has become a rarity in the office, the factory and in many of our institutions of learning. Mass production has condemned man to the galley where he is allowed to pull an oar back and forth or push a button, turn a screw, fill a bottle, pull a lever, not knowing any more what the sum total of all the specialized labor will produce. The specialist, sometimes called "skilled worker," has lost his identity. He will develop *one* function of his mind and body at the expense of all the rest. His hands become mechanical tools, his soul becomes dull and listless—the first step toward the creation of an automaton. In most cases he will never see the finished product at the end of the assembly line, power-press, or lathe, nor can he claim any sponsorship or responsibility for it. And so he goes home, his body tired, his mind empty. What he misses he will rarely realize, nor will he be able to express his yearning. Now and then he seems to hear, as though through a fog, a voice calling him. He feels a longing to go back to his childhood when he was creative, full of play, imagination, curiosity, insight and enthusiasm—when he could use all his faculties in glorious harmony. The voice fades away, but the longing remains, and our worker drowns his loneliness, his emptiness, in the vacuous companionship of other lonely ones, filling the streets, the pubs, the movies, the highways, in a gigantic and endless procession that leads to nothing.

These mass media of escape always point back to childhood. We see the juvenile antics of middle-aged men at Legion and Shriners' conventions, hear the crowd roar at the ball games, see them consume cheap movies and

comics geared to the mentality of an adolescent. A game of frustration is played here on a grand scale, unhinging the more sensitive minds and brains until their owners frantically turn for help to the psychiatrist or analyst.

The soul is asking for a home again. The mind rebels against its own emptiness. The hands, those precious, wonderful instruments, ask for some creative occupation. Most of us have sold our freedom for a pseudo-security, a shaky, uneasy prosperity which lulls our conscience to sleep. But we cannot be creative without freedom. Today, modern artists are supposed to entertain and not to discuss or illustrate social problems. If the artist should feel a social concern, if he wants to speak up against man's cruelty to man, he is condemned as an agitator, as a subversive.

Worship and Art

If the artist's work is his worship, if he earnestly desires to serve God and through Him, man, the artist will, in the end, achieve that peace of mind, that freedom of the soul, that mastery of matter which will bring him to the foot of the Cross. He will leave behind him egotism, which causes an artist to rotate around himself in constant self-reflection, deadened to the labors, joys and sufferings of his fellow men. Greed will have to go. Greed, which is hunger for the power that money can buy, for prestige and fame, a hunger that perpetuates itself and can never be satiated. Speed will have to be discarded. Speed, which kills the craftsman and his work, which spoils the enjoyments of nature, dulls our senses, prevents meditation and the maturing of a growing mind.

Sex, to which we are slave since our expulsion from Paradise, rules our lives more powerfully than we care to discuss. Instead of sanctifying what God gave us, too often we worship the flesh and we prostitute it as the most potent sales agent the world has ever seen. The artist becomes the procurer—he displays the body in its most alluring light and uses it to sell everything from patriotism to cosmetics.

The artist who succeeds in freeing himself from all these encumbrances will have to embrace poverty. One of the artist's biggest problems has always been to resist the pressure and influence of those who patronize him. To reduce his standard of living to bare necessities is his most effective means of independence.

In our world of growing tensions, in our civilization of fear and insecurity, it seems that voluntary poverty, as Christ and St. Francis and Gandhi knew it, is the only way to remove entirely from our lives the causes of strife and frictions. Like the apostles working with their hands to secure the necessities of life, sharing with those around them, physically and spiritually, the man of the spirit can maintain himself, his integrity and his independence.

Within this framework freedom of expression is a necessity. The artist cannot be creative without freedom. Without it his voice is muted, his hand crippled, his thoughts numbed. He cannot work half slave and half free. Try for a moment to imagine how intolerable our lives would be without the ministrations of arts and letters, how bereaved we should be, each in his own way. How drab our lives would be without the Psalms and the Gospels, without

the memory of a Rembrandt or a Gothic Madonna we have seen somewhere. Think of radios, jazz and soap operas if they were unrelieved by Bach, Mozart or Beethoven. Think of the Spirituals and how they have sustained the Negro's spirit under oppression and persecution, how they have also enriched American music and culture. Think of the world without the works of the great composers, poets, artists and writers. These have survived wars, plagues and destruction; they have stood the test of time and achieved immortality.

How do we repay our great men of the spirit, who gave us so much at such great cost in suffering and unrelenting labor? Creative man is lonely in his labors. No midwife can assist him, no power can help him along, except for the one great source of strength from which he receives his commands. When Handel wrote the "Messiah," he fervently prayed every morning to Him to whom he had dedicated it, for his work to succeed. Blake saw the face of God, he saw the angels, could take these visions down on paper. Can we imagine his ecstasies but also imagine the ridicule which would be heaped on such a man today? The artist is the eternal fool, close to the child and close to God. His suffering is not a matter of choice; it is in the nature of all creating. The honor roll of the ordeals inflicted upon him by his fellow man is appallingly long.

"Freedom is a margin to move about, to try oneself out," says Peguy, "it is mind working on mind." That is the true artist's conception of his vocation. Seeing through the fabric of texture and flesh into the soul of things, sensing impending change, suffering with humanity, he is alone in

his creative labors, and like most prophets, he must expect to be stoned and derided, silenced and neglected.

To the artist for whom art is an act of worship, its spiritual substance is distilled from insight gained through contemplation, its skill gained through long hard years of devoted practice and striving for perfection. A work of art is conceived in joy and agony, it grows in ceaseless toil and is delivered in painful ecstasy. Then comes the slump, the sleep of exhaustion, the slow regeneration of spent energy and substance, followed by a period of scrutiny and doubt, and finally the awareness of new thoughts stirring and growing inside. A ceaseless urge sweeps the artist along, prodding him, rewarding him with occasional flashes of deep insight and revelation, then again plunging him into darkest despair, leaving him tantalizingly short of the goal of final perfection.

Mystery of Art

Art is an act of grace, mysterious, God-given, and equally mysteriously withdrawn. It seems that the mystery of art defies analysis by psychologists, professional critics and historians. Maybe it can only be experienced by the artist himself who has been singled out for ordainment, he knows not why. His greatness is determined by the depth and emotion of the message which he is able to transmit through his work, down the ages.

Pigments applied to a wooden tablet by a mediaeval painter; a psalm written in Hebrew 3,000 years ago on a piece of brittle papyrus long blown to dust; the figure of a

woman carved out of Egyptian granite long before the birth of Christ; music composed by a tired German organist in a powdered wig 300 years ago: all are eternal manifestations of the human spirit which can still make us choke with emotion, can make our hearts beat faster, can purify us and bring us closer to God.

The mystery becomes magic when we consider the power of illusion that will make us accept a Bosch landscape as Hell itself, fiery and terrible, peopled with unimaginable horrors and nightmares; will make us pray when we look at a Crucifixion by Gruenewald or a Nativity by Giotto. We are irresistibly drawn into the spirit of the revelation as experienced by the artist.

Magic was the bow of Paganini. Magic are the vibrations of a human throat, producing sound which will move a vast audience to frenzied ovations. Magic is the power of words in certain constellations, prose or poetry; read in solitude or spoken from the stage, bringing tears to our eyes or laughter to our lips.

It is the magic, the mystery and the charity of art that speaks through the work of Titian to a lonely millionaire, who spends a fortune on building up a collection of old masters to keep him company in his solitary life. Persons isolated by their wealth, disappointed by their family life, starved for beauty, color, warmth, turn to a small tablet covered with paint—for which they willingly pay enormous sums—and never regret it. Can not art perform that same service for the lonely little man who craves

companionship of the great, the sublime, the beautiful, but has only a few dollars to spend?

Necessity of Art

To the majority of people, art does not mean more than an occasional visit to a museum or gallery, a kind of holiday rarely taken, an escape from the humdrum routine of their daily existence. To them, art is an exotic, remote phenomenon, bashfully approached.

Art actually begins at home like everything else that vitally concerns us. In our communities we try to create a tolerable or wholesome social or political atmosphere. But in order to be effective our reforming zeal has to begin with us in our homes. If we are equally eager for art and culture, we must try to create first in our homes an atmosphere in which minds can grow, in which imagination is stimulated and in which enjoyment is added to even the humblest routine chore. Can we think of our homes as places where art can grow if we are surrounded by atrocities, shoddy prints or gaudy paintings, badly designed and poorly produced furniture, offensive wall paper? If our homes look untidy, cheap, neglected, it is because we do not really live in them. The average citizen lives in the office, the club or the pub, the street or the movie theatre. How rarely one finds a home which looks as if love had created it, a home where you would like to stay and enjoy peace of body and mind.

It doesn't take much to create a home, if one is creative. It can be attractive and even beautiful, and at the same time very simple. It can consist of four whitewashed walls with a fine old chest in the comer, or with a few pieces of simple, well-made modern furniture. It can be austere

without being forbidding, with one single print on the wall, but a good one that you like to live with, that speaks to you. Books, to reach out for whenever you need them; flowers, in a well-designed vase, placed in the right spot; a fabric, preferably hand-woven, on your cushion, couch or window will cheer you up when you come home. If the floor should happen to be good solid oak, well scrubbed or polished, you won't need any Persian rugs or cheap imitations. Harmonious colors and proportions can create an atmosphere in which art can grow and that is where we start. This is where we raise our children—and maybe where they will raise theirs. This is the place from which they will start out and inevitably influence the taste of their friends. Home is a reflection of man's spirit, the domain where he can start to create the little things which will deepen his understanding of the great things in art.

Our houses of worship too, reflect the deterioration of our faith and, subsequently, of our creative power. There are many ways of building a church or a meeting house, but they are rarely built with our thoughts, our hearts and our hands. After making a down payment we may ask an architect or a contractor to come in and submit plans to build our house of worship. We ask for a simple design, according to our tradition; we may dispense with organ, altar or stained glass windows, but we insist on all the trimmings of our comfortable bourgeois suburban architecture. We rarely move our hands and minds to contribute to the appearance of our churches or meeting houses, we leave that to the experts. What can we produce, even under the most favorable circumstances? We will

produce a building that has all the modern comforts of every good American home. It will have telephones, refrigerators, electric ranges, scientific ventilation and concealed lighting. It warms up at the flick of a finger. The outside is well landscaped. Architecturally it is inoffensive, unostentatious, uninspired and uninspiring. Materially, it has everything a 20th century Quaker would want, except that it seems to chill the spirit. Three hundred years ago the building of a church or meeting house was a dedicated communal effort; the spirit entered into it and is still visible after centuries of worship. It can do us a lot of good to think about a whole community combining their thoughts and labors to honor God.

Art—A Reflection of Life

It takes devotion to create and reverence to enjoy beauty. We can all become artists if we make our hearts and minds receptive. Herbert Read, in "Education Through Art," has written intelligently about the importance of art in our daily lives. "Art leads from play to fulfillment," he says, "from feeling to drama, from intuition to dance or music, from sensation to design, from thought to craft."

Contemplate the glorious example of devotion: the Cathedral of Chartres, built in 400 A.D. on a site which had been the first altar to the Virgin Mary; destroyed by the Normans in 853; burned and rebuilt in 900; again in 1020, in 1194, and from 1200 to 1260 rebuilt on parts of the structure left from previous destructions, integrated into one harmonious whole by generations of builders. On that same spot the Cathedral now stands; 2000 figures guard

and adorn its windows, portals, cornices, each one a work of art in itself. Who created them? Nobody knows. The artists are anonymous and so is their glory. They were artisans, craftsmen, but they were also religious people. To them, art and worship were one and the same thing. In those thousands of silent statues we can see the tenacity of generations of consecrated artisans.

And now Chartres has become a show piece for tourists, much admired, yes, but as an object lesson easily forgotten. Our twentieth century minds find it difficult to grasp the spiritual power behind this monument of human devotion to God; generations of anonymous, humble townspeople, rich merchants, pious noblemen, each contributing his bit to the final glorious fruition of this project. While we have accumulated enough wealth to write out generous checks, usually without much sacrifice, we have impoverished ourselves spiritually. We do not produce, with all our money, anything approaching the inspirational example of Chartres. There is a mystery involved, the mystery of Grace. We have lost faith, and consequently art has lost its power. Art has ceased being a necessity of life; we have lost touch with it because we have lost God.

How does the modern artist fit into this new world? What is the nature of his work and how does he speak to our condition? Modern art should be the mirror of our times. But what happens to the artist who tries to express the problems and anxieties of our age which admittedly is out of joint? “Look at this painting or this sculpture,” we laugh. “We can’t make head or tail of it! It’s completely crazy, topsy turvy, distorted; only a sick mind could have

produced it!" How few of us realize that we are only laughing at ourselves. We have helped to create it ourselves. We have helped to create this world, but we don't want to be told. We want the artist to continue producing entertainment, pleasant pictures, idyllic music, colonial dwellings.

Modern art, to a large degree, reflects our lack of faith. At the beginning of our series of world wars, when it started to demolish the confining walls of academism by creating Dadaism, it also destroyed some of the sound foundations of art. Dadaism created an art form made of bits and pieces of junk left behind by the mechanization of our lives, by war and its destruction. It was an artist's revolt, a going back to childhood, an attempt to laugh off a nightmare. Cubism attempted the organization of the fragments. Surrealism delved deeply into the recesses of the mind and depicted its fears and follies. Non-objective art again tries to ignore the world of realities. It aims to erase any trace of representational form; escapes into a land of spatial shapes, as we might expect to encounter them on trips to strange new planets. Abstract art may well be a subconscious dodging of moral responsibilities. We play with forms, textures, lines and colors, as if unaware of the state of the world, of man's interdependence, his social and political struggles.

A new dimension is added to art today: movement, speed. Calder's mobiles, wire constructions which sway in the wind, tinkle and cast strange shadows, express our restlessness, dispel also our loneliness.

And as if to dare fate and negate our shivering fear of atomic attacks, we build huge skyscrapers, seemingly of sheer glass, held together with steel and aluminum, while down in the streets, signs point to the nearest air-raid shelters.

Modern music, too, reflects the dissonance of our lives: the din of our traffic jams, the hustle and bustle of the rush hour, the cocktail party, the assembly line.

Integration of Art

We must recapture what we have lost, we must fight for our faith, fight our way back to God. We must become creative again, whole again, and aware of our responsibilities as architects of a new moral order.

It is useless, if not criminal, to invade the universe with dazzling machines and with blank and immature minds.

The first command of civilized man is to create order out of chaos.

The artist, whatever his calling, must play his part, side by side with the scientist and the engineer, in enhancing the value of life and in adding meaning, joy and beauty to our existence on this—and, perhaps, on other planets.

Epilogue

Like so many other ancient cities of Europe, Cologne, founded 50 years after the birth of Christ, was reduced to rubble during the last war. Several hundred of the most beautiful churches in the world built by generations of devoted artisans, masons and laborers, were destroyed within a few short months. It so happened that five years after the end of the war, I met a young man, a devout Catholic, and a lover of the arts, who had dropped a few of those bombs on my old home town. “So sorry,” he said, somewhat embarrassed, “but orders were orders.” He is now a Trappist monk entered upon a life dedicated to God, work and silence.

Call it accident or atonement, we can’t escape the command to be our brother’s keeper. Our actions and follies are divinely and sometimes diabolically interwoven. The fragmentation and ugliness of modern warfare is undoubtedly reflected in many works of modern art. Life and Art cannot be separated. We are all responsible; we should be seriously concerned. Whatever the follies of modern art may be, we have helped to produce them; they are a mirror held before us. Let’s face it. We have to mend our ways and try to bring order into chaos, piece the fragments together, become whole again, holy again.

We must go back to creative work and significant play, we must drop all empty substitutes, the adolescent thrills and games and gadgets which make us more lonely and more restless.

There is enough excitement in our daily tasks if we approach them reverently and creatively, no matter in what medium we work. Whether we work in the field of human relations, in stone or wood, with pen and paper, there is the thrill of fighting injustice, inequality, disease, of suffering for our convictions, of having the courage to stand up and be counted for all the despised and unpopular causes for which we feel called upon to fight.

We can delight in the realization of the brotherhood of all men without forgetting the soothing value of solitude, the necessity for meditation. We can experience the thrill of finding God close to us in the silence of the meeting house, of our workshop or out under the immensity of a starry sky.

The child, the poet, the fool and the saint—how close they are together in their longing for God. The artist is among them and he may be allowed to believe that men still prefer beauty and truth to ugliness and deception, blooming meadows to scorched earth, a Bach chorale to the screech of battle.

The artist wants to believe with all his heart that man still has a choice, that he does not want to destroy himself, but start a better breed, devoted to Faith, Hope and Charity.

About the Author

Fritz Eichenberg, born in Cologne in 1901, emigrated to the United States in 1933 and became well-known as an artist, educator, printmaker and illustrator of many important books for children and lovers of classics. His work includes

interpretations of the works of Shakespeare, Swift, Poe and the Brontes as well as of the great novels of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky. More recently he has written a textbook on the *Art of the Print*. He has written and illustrated his own fables, *Endangered Species*, and a contemporary *Dance of Death*. He has taught for many years and chaired art departments at Pratt Institute and other schools. He has received five honorary doctorates from various institutions of higher learning. His prints, mostly wood engravings, are in major collections here and abroad. He became a Quaker in 1940 and is now a member of Providence Friends Meeting in Rhode Island. His most recent Pendle Hill Pamphlet is number 257, "Artist on the Witness Stand."

The Engravings

- And the Lord Prepared a Gourd
- And a Little Child Shall Lead Them
- And on the Seventh Day God Ended His Work
- And Their Eyes Were Opened
- And in Her Mouth Was an Olive Leaf
- And She Became a Pillar of Salt

These wood engravings are details from six-by-twelve prints issued by the artist in 1954 as a portfolio of ten wood engravings for the Old Testament. "The prints are in the

collection of The National Gallery, in Washington D.C. & The Hermitage Museum in Leningrad U.S.S.R. & Vatican Library in Rome."

Pendle Hill

Located on 23 acres in Wallingford, Pennsylvania, Pendle Hill is a Quaker adult education, retreat, and conference center offering programs open to everyone. Pendle Hill's vision is to create peace with justice in the world by transforming lives. Since Pendle Hill opened in 1930, thousands of people have come from across the United States and throughout the world for Spirit-led learning, retreat, and community. Every year, people from many faiths and backgrounds come to experience Pendle Hill's educational programs in arts and spirituality, community activism and leadership training, and spiritual deepening.

Programs are offered in a variety of formats—including weekend workshops, extended online/on-campus programs, and evening presentations. Information on all Pendle Hill programs is available at www.pendlehill.org. Pendle Hill's mission of spiritual education is also furthered through conference services—hosting events for a variety of religious and educational nonprofit organizations, including many Quaker groups.

The Pendle Hill pamphlets have been an integral part of Pendle Hill's educational vision since 1934. Like early Christian and Quaker tracts, the pamphlets articulate perspectives which grow out of the personal experience,

insights, and/or special knowledge of the authors, concerning spiritual life, faith, and witness.

A typical pamphlet has characteristics which make it a good vehicle for experimental thought. It is the right length to be read at a single sitting (about 9000 words). It is concerned with a topic of contemporary importance. Like words spoken in a Quaker meeting for worship, it embodies a concern, a sense of obligation to express caring or to act in response to a harmful situation.

To receive each Pendle Hill pamphlet as it is published, order an annual subscription. Please contact:

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