

Art In The 21st Century

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A Bridge between Beauty and Values

I. Art is the expression and transmitter of a culture's values

SH Lee

Culture refers to the totality of the various kinds of human activity, including economy, education, religion, science, and art, among which the most central is art. In other words, art is the essence of culture. • *Explaining Unification Thought*, p. 246

The art a culture creates and consumes affects its soul:

Life elements develop the spirit. They are the spiritual equivalent of physical nourishment for the body. Eat healthy, be healthy; eat poorly, be sickly. Same with our spiritual intake, of which art is a major part. The great thinkers of the world's disparate cultures knew this.

Pythagoras

The members of his religious society, the Pythagorean Order, lived by a set of religious, and ethical rules. ...salvation could be reached through purification, the renunciation of worldly sensuality, and the observance of ascetic abstinence. ... The negation of sensuality prior to physical death enables the soul to achieve the ideal of, and physical purification through the use of medicine and gymnastics. • *History of Philosophy*, p. 21

Confucius

... rites, music and poetry were fundamental. According to Confucius, rites, as an institution, regulate our mind and direct our desires. Music, as a "civilizing force," harmonizes our sentiments and restrains our passions, Poetry, as a "moral force," moderates our nature and inspires our ethical feeling. Thus, the arts are important of themselves, but they are also the foundation of ethical learning. In Confucius' words (CHAP. VIII): sic. • *The Story of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 22

1. 'It is by the Odes that the mind is aroused.
2. 'It is by the Rules of Propriety that the character is established'
3. 'It is from Music that the finish is received.' • *Confucian Analects*, p. 211

In the Taoist *Chuang Tzu* (Chapter XXXIII, *Tien Hsia*), the specific purpose of each of these subjects is given:

Poetry is to teach ideals, History is to teach events; Rites is to teach conduct; Music is to teach harmony; Change is to teach the dual forces of the universe; and Spring and Autumn is to teach the great principle

of honor and duty. • *The Story of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 22

As in the practical application of the arts already noted above, the stress here is on the use of education in the development of personality rather than upon knowledge for its own sake.

Mencius

1. Mencius said, “The richest fruit of benevolence is this — the service of one’s parents. The richest fruit of Righteousness is this — the obeying of one’s elder brothers.

2. “The richest fruit of wisdom is this — the knowing those two things, and not departing from them. The richest fruit of propriety is this, the ordering and adorning those two things. The richest fruit of music is this, the rejoicing in those two things. When they are rejoiced in, they grow. Growing, how can they be repressed? When they come to this state that they cannot be repressed, then unconsciously the feet begin to dance and the hands to move” • *The Works of Mencius*, p. 313-314

Plato

... musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful; and also because he who has received this true education of the inner being will most shrewdly perceive omissions or faults in art and nature, and with a true taste, while he praises and rejoices over and receives into his soul the good, and becomes noble and good, he will justly blame and hate the bad, reason comes he will recognize and salute the friend with whom his education has made him long familiar. • from *The Republic*, Book 3

...God takes away the minds of poets, and uses them as his ministers, as he also uses diviners and holy prophets, in order that we who hear them may know ... that God himself is the speaker, and that through them he is conversing with us. ...God would seem to indicate to us and not allow us to doubt that these beautiful poems are not human, or the work of man, but divine and the work of God; and that the poets are only the interpreters... Was not this the lesson which the God intended to teach when by the mouth of the worst of poets he sang the best of songs • from *Ion*

‘Those who are pregnant in the body only, betake themselves to women and beget children — this is the character of their love; their offspring, as they hope, will preserve their memory and give them the blessedness and immortality which they desire in the future. But souls which are pregnant ...conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain. And what are these conceptions? - wisdom and virtue in general. And such creators are poets and all artists who are deserving of the name inventor. But the greatest and fairest sort of wisdom by far is that which is concerned with the ordering of states and families, and which is called temperance and justice. And he who in youth has the seed of these implanted in him and is himself inspired, when he comes to maturity desires to beget and generate...and naturally embraces the beautiful ...he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only—out of that he should create thoughts...search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution... but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. • from *Symposium*

Aristotle

Enough has been said to show that music has a power of forming the character, and should therefore be introduced into the education of the young. The study is suited to the stage of youth, for young persons will not, if they can help, endure anything which is not sweetened by pleasure, and music has a natural sweetness. There seems to be in us a sort of affinity to musical modes and rhythms, which makes some philosophers say that the soul is a tuning, others, that it possesses tuning... And now we have to determine the question which has been already raised, whether children should be themselves taught to sing and play or not. Clearly there is a considerable difference made in the character by the actual practice of the art. It is difficult, if not impossible, for those who do not perform to be good judges of the performance of others. Besides, children should have something to do, and the rattle of Archytas, which people give to their children in order to amuse them and prevent them from breaking anything in the house, was a capital invention, for a young thing cannot be quiet. The rattle is a toy suited to the infant mind, and education is a rattle or toy for children of a larger growth. We conclude then that they should be taught music in such a way as to become not only critics but performers. ...they who are to be judges must; so be performers, and that they should begin to practise early, although when they are older they

may be spared the execution; they must have learned to appreciate what is good and to delight in it, thanks to the knowledge which they acquired in their youth. ... freemen who are being trained to political virtue should pursue the art, what melodies and rhythms they should be allowed to use, and what instruments should be employed in teaching them to play: for even the instrument makes a difference. Let the young practise even such music as we have prescribed, only until they are able to feel delight in noble melodies and rhythms, and not merely in that common part of music in which every slave or child and even some animals find pleasure. ... The vulgarity of the spectator tends to lower the character of the music and therefore of the performers; they look to him—he makes them what they are, and fash- ions even their bodies by the movements which he ex- pects them to exhibit. ... In education the most ethical modes are to be preferred ... But for the purposes of education, as I have already said, those modes and melodies should be employed which are ethical... • from *Politics*

II. Beauty

A. Views of Beauty

Beauty is the emotional stimulation that the object gives to the subject. It is the object's value grasped emo- tionally. Also, the value of an object is latent, until it is judged as beautiful by a subject.

• *Explaining Unification Thought*, p. 251

Before this interaction, its value is essential, potential, not fully realized.

1. Plato

...But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty the divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human life — thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? ... beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities, and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?' • from *Symposium*

2. Plotinus

Beauty addresses itself chiefly to sight; but there is a beauty for the hearing too... in certain combinations of words and in all kinds of music, for melodies and ca- dences are beautiful; and minds that lift themselves above the realm of sense to a higher order are aware of beauty in the conduct of life, in actions, in character, in the pursuits of the intellect; and there is the beauty of the virtues. from *Ennead 1 | Sixth Tractate*

...the Soul—by the very truth of its nature, by its affiliation to the noblest Existents in the hierarchy of Being — when it sees anything of that kin, or any trace of that kinship, thrills with an immediate delight, takes its own to itself, and thus stirs anew to the sense of its nature and of all its affinity. This, then, is how the material thing becomes beautiful - by communicating in the thought that flows from the Divine in the Soul's becoming a good and beautiful thing is its becoming like to God, for from the Divine comes all the Beauty and all the Good in beings Therefore the Soul must be trained — to the habit of remarking, first, all noble pursuits, then the works of beauty produced not by the labour of the arts but by the virtue of men known for their goodness: lastly, you must search the souls of those that have shaped these beautiful forms. • from *Ennead 1 | Sixth Tractate*

Everywhere, doing and making will be found to be either an attenuation or a complement of vision • attenuation if the doer was aiming only at the thing done; complement if he is to possess something nobler to gaze upon than the mere work produced. • from *Ennead 3 | Eighth Tractate*

3. Kant

...the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good, and that it is only in this respect ... that it gives pleasure.... By this, the mind is made conscious of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere sensibility to pleasure received through sense, and the worth of others is estimated in accordance with a like maxim of their judgment.

• *Critique of Judgement*, 1st division, 1st book

B. The determination of beauty

1. Object requisites

Unification Thought explains that, to have potential value, an art object must possess: purpose of creation, harmony of physical elements within the object (i.e., harmony of physical elements with the artist's

underlying purpose, theme, and plan). • *Explaining Unification Thought* , p. 253

a. Aristotle

The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness • from *Metaphysics*, Book XIII

b. Augustine

Beautiful things please by proportion, *numero*, and here as we have shewn equality is not found only in sounds for the ear and in bodily movements, but also in visible forms, in which hitherto equality has been identified with beauty even more customarily than in sounds. Nothing can be proportionate or rhythmic, *numerosus*, without equality... • from *De Musica*, Book VI

c. Kant

Genius is the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to art. Since talent, as the innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to nature, we may express the matter thus: Genius is the innate mental disposition (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art. • from *Critique of Judgement* , 1st division, 1st book

... art always supposes a purpose in the cause..., there must be at bottom in the first instance a concept of what the thing is to be. And as the agreement of the manifold in a thing with its inner destination, its purpose, constitutes the perfection of the thing, it follows that in judging of artificial beauty the perfection of the thing must be taken into account... • from *Critique of Judgement*, 1st division, 1st book

Genius

...For beautiful art, therefore, *imagination*, *understanding*, *spirit*, and *taste* are requisite. • from *Critique of Judgement* , 1st division, 1st book

2. Subject requisites (in Appreciation only)

...The appreciator must lead an ethical life, approaching art with a pure mind... (he) must also have his own way of thinking, individuality, interests, hobbies, view of life, ideas, education... He needs a basic understanding of culture in order to understand art in any real depth. • *Explaining Unification Thought* , p. 271

a. Plotinus

Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, and he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also: cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labour to make all one glow of beauty and never cease chiselling your statue, until there shall shine out on you from it the godlike splendour of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness surely established in the stainless shrine... To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the Soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful Therefore, first let each become godlike and each beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty. • from *Ennead I | Sixth Tractate*

b. Augustine

...But when the soul has properly adjusted and disposed itself, and has rendered itself harmonious and beautiful, then will it venture to see God, the very source of all truth and the very Father of Truth.... to us is promised a vision of beauty — the beauty of whose imitation all other things are beautiful, ... and he will see it, who lives well, prays well, studies well • from *De Ordine*, chap. 19

c. Kant

...we often describe beautiful objects of nature or art by names that seem to put a moral appreciation at their basis. We call buildings or trees majestic and magnificent, landscapes laughing and gay; even colors are called innocent, modest, tender, because they excite sensations which have something analogous to the consciousness of the state of mind brought about by moral judgements. Taste makes possible the transition, without any violent leap, from the charm of sense to habitual moral interest... pleasure is derived which taste regards as valid for mankind in general and not merely for the private feeling of each. Hence it appears plain that the true propaedeutic for the foundation of taste is the development of moral ideas and the culture of the moral feeling, because it is only when sensibility is brought into agreement with this that genuine taste can assume a definite invariable form. • from *Critique of Judgement*, 1st

division, book 2

Conclusion

Art is to improve our present lives, and the future as well.

...If it is our aim to construct a new culture, we must pay attention to art, for art is the essence of culture. First, we must protect the cultural heritage we already have. This heritage includes architecture, sculpture, music, painting, industrial design, and so on.... When we consider such things, we feel responsible not only to inherit our own culture, but to keep it alive, and on this foundation to, to develop a new culture. This new culture will come about through the integration of the best elements within the cultures of various nations and racial groups. So, keeping our national cultural heritage is a sine qua non for building a new culture. *Explaining Unification Thought*, p. 271.

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