

ART :

The Movement of Cosmic Order

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It's unfortunate that the word art has fallen into its present use, for it is now very far away from its original meaning.

Currently, it is a blanket label covering all sorts of products, and activities, glorifying the creative and imaginative talents of certain individuals.

Initially, however, it was pointing to the fundamental movement of existence and to an essential freedom and joy that can be found there.

If we explore its roots in the Proto-Indo-European language, it comes from the suffixed morpheme ar(ə)-ti- which is the source of the Sanskrit rtih meaning “manner or mode”.

Its root morpheme, ar, means “to fit together” (to come together).

It is also closely related to the Sanskrit word Rt, or Rta, which is a reference to cosmic order, the fact that the

universe is a dynamic, flowing process moving to its own inherent order.

Combining these various nuances, we find that the general meaning of the word art was originally “the manner or mode of coming together in cosmic order”, or more simply “living as the movement (the flow) of the cosmos.”

It’s very striking that now, 6,000 years later, the general public doesn’t know this meaning of the word, even though many artists have repeatedly expressed this meaning whenever they have described their own work process.

Man is an instrument of nature [cosmic order] Picasso “The current of the river of life [the flow of the cosmos] moves us.” Agnes Martin “Art is a kind of inner current in a human being.” Marcel Duchamp

“My paintings are not my paintings.” “Your expression is not your decision. Prior to your expression is the urge [the current, the force] that dictates your expression.”

Agnes Martin “You feel that some force [an urge] is

commanding you to do certain things, to accept only certain things.” Philip Guston “The error is in thinking that we play a part in directing this process [this urge, this force].” Agnes Martin

“Truth and reality in art begin at the point where the artist ceases to understand what he is doing - yet feels in himself a force that becomes steadily stronger and more concentrated.” Henri Matisse “Creation is a force ... and everybody has that force.” Philip Guston “No translation can express the mysterious sensibility [the force, the urge] which is the basis of painting or poetry [or any other human expression].” Marcel Duchamp

“What I’m trying to express is woven into the very fibre of my being.” Cezanne “We are born to do certain things and we are born to fill a certain need.” Agnes Martin “The inner desire [the need, the urge] for expression cannot be precisely calculated.” Wassily Kandinsky “I paint what I need to experience.” “At every step I question. Is it what I need to feel, to see?” “The only standard is my need in that moment.” Philip Guston

“You paint because you have to.” “You have to make something that you find interesting, that you find exciting.” “Let’s say, [for example] at some point, I can only make a white line.” “I don't know why.” “It just feels good.” “If things feel right, they feel right.” “I’m like a blind man just feeling my way through.” “I don’t have control over the process.” Stanley Whitney “You do what comes to you [what feels right].” “You can’t get away from what you have to do.” Agnes Martin

“I don't believe in the creative function of the artist. He's a man [an ordinary man] like any other.” Marcel Duchamp

“We are born to do certain things and we are born to fill a certain need.” “If you are supposed to be a painter, you will certainly be one. If you are supposed to be something else, you will be something else.” Agnes Martin

“Art is the opportunity [the permission] to be truly individual [truly unique] in one’s expression.” Marcel

Duchamp “There is no sameness anywhere, no two rocks are alike, no two days, no two moments, no two people.”

“No one knows what your life should be, because it is in the process of being created.” Agnes Martin “I’m just feeling my way through.” Stanley Whitney” “Each breath is a work [of art]” Marcel Duchamp

The word ART originally referred to a way of living. It meant living as the movement of the cosmos, moving to cosmic order. It meant feeling out, and living to, the natural order that is “woven into the very fibre of your being”, feeling free to be the unique expression that you are.

To live as the movement of the cosmos was what it meant to be an artist.

It had nothing to do with a particular product. It had nothing to do with a particular expression. The natural expression of existence is endlessly diverse, endlessly different.

“The most interesting thing about artists is how they live.” “Art is the opportunity [the permission] to be truly individual [truly different] in one’s expression.” “My art is living ... each breath is a work [of art] ... a kind of constant euphoria” Marcel Duchamp

From this perspective, everything in ordinary life is a work of art ... a breath, a gesture, a sound, an object, a relationship, a career, as well as everything else. It is

something to be deeply felt, feeling whether it feels right, and following what it is that you need to be, need to do, and need to experience. It's the joy of living freely as the unique expression that you are.

From this perspective everyone's life is the movement of cosmic order, whether they realise it or not.

Artists however, in the oldest meaning of the word, live as that movement. ART is the manner or mode of living as the movement of the cosmos.

“The painter has the Universe [the cosmos] in his head and hands.” Leonardo Da Vinci “Man is an instrument of nature [the cosmos]” Picasso “I am nature [the cosmos].” Jackson Pollock. “There is only the All of All [nature, the cosmos].” “Everything is that.” Agnes Martin

Unfortunately ... these days ... most people think art is an object on a wall.

The nouns and pronouns used in the above quotes come from a time when the word “man” was used as a general reference to

“personkind”. When you read these quotes, please use the nouns and pronouns that work for you.

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