

“The artist’s intelligence” was written 15 years ago as an ironically inflected reference to a 1960s text about the profession of the salesman. To emphasize its historical context, the text was not adapted to use gender-inclusive language.

The artist’s intelligence

Let us choose one of the many artists available. If he stands contemplatively in his studio, or sits next to his work table, if he consciously loses himself in his activity, if his understanding of his calling concurs with the idea he had of it beforehand, then he will realise that the acuity and the precision of his observations have led him to the point where he has found a way to develop his existence as an artist, unerringly. With this in mind, the changes which come to pass in our subject become clear as a result of certain characteristics.

He puts aside the irrelevant matters which disturb his attention and distract him from his way of finding the truth, he immerses himself with joy, seriousness, and interest in the tasks he has set himself and, in doing so, pursues his one sole purpose: the productive channeling of all his mental powers in order to advance his intent of being a good artist — as a result of exercise and his receptivity.

These considerations represent intelligence and as a result of them, he will realise, all of a sudden, that a new quality is invigorating him — a process called fantasy. Above all, this is what provides him as an artist with swiftness, confidence, originality, and a productive technique. It is clear that everything that happens within him, between fantasy and thought, gives him a unique touch which defines his personality. That attracts attention, and memory responds accordingly.

None of the procedures which he now exhibits are mundane ones, for an artist who only works mechanically has missed his calling in very basic terms, and, if that’s the case, has failed utterly. Anyone who is aware of this fact will work successfully, for the very reason that intelligence is intentional action.

An intelligent artist is a thinking, judging human being, a person who is striking in his originality and in the productivity of his creative work, and thus achieves something extraordinary. Moreover, a person is also intelligent if he can attain personal autonomy through correct judgment, healthy productivity, and astuteness of mind. It is clear that the drive to work consciously comes from within. The simple act of doing something triggers human responses which determine the act itself. Creating a piece of art is an act of will which, the more it manifests itself, becomes dependent on the artist’s personality.

Once the artist’s intelligence has been spurred on by his determined actions, his sensory perception will become more and more differentiated. Such artists experience objects, forms as well as humans and nature much more centred. They see and hear more clearly and — how improbable this may sound — their sensibility becomes more reactive, it comes to life and blossoms in the very moment that is stimulated artistically. As a result, new notions build up which fertilise thinking, taste and fantasy; something like a subtle sensation, a sensitivity, comes about.

And here, an important factor counts: decisiveness. Anyone who reacts correctly at the right point of time and makes the correct decisions is intelligent. Decisions are rooted in sense of responsibility. The intelligent artist does not glory in the superb

faculties of his mind and leaves them to that.

First and foremost, the artist is interested in his work which is still coming into being, his intelligence brings him to the point where he no longer works purely based on feelings, but rather out of consideration, conclusion, and intention.

If he takes this into account, then he is creating a system of values for himself, judgment so to speak, which makes him able to act as an advisor to humankind. He draws up basic precepts which determine his artistic acts, yet, not such ones that form a rigid system. It would be unwise to set up a stubborn order according to which work proceeds automatically.

Aspiration in general is inherent in the artist, and how the recipient reacts to his actions depends on the artist alone. Should the act not be appreciated, and does success not turn up, this is judged as a mistake and must be transformed into a positive outcome.

Yet, every action requires energy. Anyone who immerses himself in his work unreservedly summons up an enormous intensity for it. Aspiring to completion, the artist does not rest and finds no repose until the last gaps of uncertainty, vagueness and knowledge are filled. As a result of the energy invested, brilliant achievements are accomplished, and the sole way is forward carried by one's own energy, which is the trailblazer for one's position.

Not least, this source of power finds expression in diligence, which is nothing less than an intense urge. As a result of these considerations, the artist will remain healthy, for stamina, based on reserves of energy, is required for his activities. The artist learns to divide his energies up sensibly in order to optimise the use of his strength. Thus, new powers arise, new possibilities, a lasting joy grows, with a minimum of fatigue, and the rhythm of work takes on solid forms. The artist steps forth, freed from limitations and inflexibility, his outlook broadened for the things around him, he creates real tenets that can only arise from a healthy body. He is the enemy of that shallowness that always creeps up, an even bigger enemy of inconsistency, and he has the advantage of the ability to amass quick defences within himself which enable him to overcome obstacles without a lot of effort — defences that help not to be hesitant as well as to fight for his cause honourably, and clearly without pity. Eventually, in order to stand in the light, his face spattered with blood, as the glorious victor.

With deepening experience, this forms the prerequisite for becoming a boy scout of his own artistic work in order to use his sensory organs to place them at society's disposal.

text: Siggi Hofer

translation: Etienne Thierry