

Axiological Bases of the Modern Art*

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Abstract—This article deals with the essence and the basic directions in modern culture. The author considers that culture has initially two lines in development. The main line, connected with an instinct of self-preservation of the mankind, directed on creation and the creativity. This line limits instinctive behavior of the person. The second deviant line, connected with destruction, nihilism and nothing the limited freedom.

The author connects occurrence of this line in development of culture, first of all, with fundamental change of public consciousness, crash of traditional values, and development of technical progress, occurrence of a mass society and with the statement in a society of some democratic principles which have been automatically transferred on creativity. So, introduction of a principle of equality in a society, and declaration of absolute freedom in creativity, finally, has generated equality in art when everyone can become the artist if it is accompanied with advertising and money.

Keywords—*axiological bases; deviance; main and deviant lines of historical and cultural development; absolutization of self-expression; quasi art; aestheticization of ugly*

I. INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of the ideal, the image of beauty of nature and people were the essence of the preceding art. Man, his appearance, his beauty, his spiritual aspirations and quests were the center of attention of classical art, and people were the main research object from ancient times and until the end of the 19th century. There was beauty cult in art.

We can call this line in development of art the main line of cultural development, of human development, for it is connected with mankind's instinct of self-preservation, and it grows directly from the bases of art. There were certain canons, not only in society, but also in art, which was connected with concepts of skill, imagery, humanity. It was art that attracted you with incomprehensibility of its method of creating, in which there was a feeling of a secret and magic, when you were attempting to understand how the work of art was created; it had a lasting feeling of inaccessibility of excellence for the receiving subject. And furthermore, it had both detachment from everyday life and symbolization of life, identity and deep psychologism; it was characterized by originality and novelty of graphic arts and image subject, an allergy to banality, high level of richness

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of details — discoveries, uniqueness and cohesion of a detail and general idea. It raised and resolved the most important and fundamental issues of human existence and spirit expressed the most intimate mysteries and the truth of the world and the mankind, the soul of men and the Universe; it was the key to understanding the supreme values of the mankind. This was the art that had educational and purifying harmony, for it facilitated the approach of catharsis from perception of the works of art. It was largely created by the elite and for the elite. We will call this line of development of art the main line.

However, along with the main line of development in art there have always been and there are deviant lines of development, i.e. those that are side lines of development, but under certain historical conditions these deviant forms begin to be produced as main. In this case the deviance refers to the social phenomenon which is expressed in relatively mass, statistically steady forms of human activity that don't meet the standards and expectations which have been officially established or virtually developed in this society. Quite often what was born as a cultural and art anomaly, gradually, within the process of recent liberalization of culture, becomes the norm and loses its quality of deviance.

But let's turn to the analysis of modern culture, moreover, to such form of it as art. The author of this article deeply believes that art that arose at the end of XIX — the beginning of the 20th century can be defined as deviant, anti-art, counter art, quasi art. This "art" discredits the very concept of art, causes the blurring of cultural norms; it draws attention to itself by the fact that its representatives allow themselves to make actions that can be classified as deviant behavior.

So what are the axiological bases of the quasi-scientific creativity that arose at the end of the 19th century, particularly in the arts?

II. SHIFT IN THE GENERAL PARADIGM OF CULTURE AND VALUE

Fundamental change of artistic consciousness was directly connected with reaction to those global changes that were happening in society since the middle of the 19th century. There was a change of the general cultural and value paradigm that was defining the way people live and the way they see the world, principles of knowledge, bases of morals and art. Progress in development of theoretical thinking destroyed the spiritualized image of the world that existed

for many thousands of years, which was based on the realization of divine law, wisdom of the Universe. Due to this vision, an individual had rather solid ideas about how he should live, what he should love and hate, what he should believe in, and what the main values and principles of world order are. At the end of the 19th century an individual lost his benchmarks, for, having destroyed the old view of the world, not only was he unable to answer the holy questions of life, but also he created even more complex problems.

Declaration of almost absolute freedom mainly from God made the Person himself feel like God. But if he is a God, then he can create the rules and play by them; play by these rules and violate them all on his own. Therefore, if everything is allowed in morals, then it is certainly allowed in art. One can do anything to bewitch the viewer and the listener. Thus, there are no norms for the artist to follow. His aesthetics becomes that without the norms of ideal, sublime, fine.

While self-expression in medieval art was restrained by religious sanctions and religious canons and during Modern times — by ethical canons, the declaration of freedom of creativity as absolute value in the 20th century was concurrently the permission to destroy traditional universal moral values that had been developing for several centuries. The idea that art has to be absolutely free from any dependence takes hold. For instance, Malevich saw non-objective art as liberation of artistic creation and art in general from any authority.

III. THE SEARCH FOR NEW FORMS

All this inspired creative search, new experiments that expanded creative space, for the main driving force of true art is “to avoid repetition”, seeing how there is a necessity to create one's own world in the culture. Desire to find new forms, new means of expression, subjects and plots was natural reaction to an impasse. The concept of reflection of life began to be considered outdated, art started gradually losing its descriptive features, becoming a system of marks that express solely artist's inner self. The artist is, first and foremost, a creator, a demiurge; he does not reflect the world in artistic images, but designs new reality, addressing the primary elements of art form.

Thus, art breaks traditional clichés: it searches for an unusual form, and it sees its purpose, firstly, in novelty. It relies on dissonances, disharmony; it deviates from a canon, an example, thereby violating all the rules of art. The spirit of continuity and tradition leaves art, and art is freed from tyranny of art norms and questions of taste. Artists highlight not skill or depiction of soul's life, but the form; they create the style, the direction and uphold not so much specifics of their life experience and views as specifics of the view of the world itself. It is interesting that each of the art directions of modernism (cubism, futurism, surrealism, abstractionism, etc.) considered itself the creator of the universal and “solely scientific” system. That is why we are observing the tendency, which is characterized by extreme intolerance to the positions of others, by a claim for normativity and universality. Following the modernist principle, the artistic

value of the artwork, which we perceive directly, fades into insignificance as the demand for something absolutely new takes first place. Taste, artist's particular talent, his good eye for details that help catch beauty of the world around don't play a very important role any more, and the concept of “inspiration” even becomes not fashionable, and it is almost banished from the vocabulary of the modern artist.

The category of novelty becomes the main aesthetic category that characterizes avant-garde art. Novelty becomes the sign of brilliance of creation, and it's not important how this novelty is shown. Novelty, uniqueness become the purpose of creativity and the standard of value. The novelty cult arises.

IV. NEW THEMES IN ART

This demand for novelty was also extended to the demand for new subjects, plots, contents of the work of art. Given that freedoms and human rights challenged traditional morals, the vacant place was taken by descriptions of those subjects and plots that the morals vetoed, that is, what was considered vulgarity before and demonstrated artist's poor taste.

The discovery of these subjects wasn't admirable, there was no innovation, and they certainly didn't require any magnitude or talent from the artist. These subjects were simply despised, similar to the way genius despises easily available means of self-expression. The nobility era with the principle *honor comes first* was nearing its end, and it had already been replaced by a new era with the principle: *the slightest sparkle of fame comes first*.

What high art considered indecent and crude became an aesthetic and moral norm in democratic society and is now associated with the concept of *freedom*. The actor uses profanity on stage or on screen, dirty jokes, sometimes showing public *physical bottom of his body*, etc. Meanwhile, all these actions are hidden behind beautiful words such as *freedom, self-expression, and personality*.

Physicality becomes the central plot of post-classical art. Traditional art and philosophy raised questions about God, freedom, immortality, meaning of life and history, yet in postmodern there is a conscious mixture of main and minor – rejection of metanarratives and metaproblems as unsolvable.

That is what P. Sorokin is talking about describing emotional type of culture in the last stage of its development. According to him, there is now the kind of art that “ignores almost everything high and noble in the person, in his social life, culture, sadistically focusing attention on everything that is mediocre and especially negative, pathological, antisocial and semi-human ... it is focused on police morgues, criminal shelters, genitals; it acts mainly on the level of the social bottom”. [1]

It's been more than half a century since Sorokin wrote his book, but we still see on the screen movies that promote deviance and portray criminals as charming, strong-willed, powerful personalities that get revenge on the unfair world. There are movies that promote “expansion of mind”,

journeys and adventures with the help of mind-altering substances; the most popular movie genres nowadays are detective stories, thrillers and melodramas.

As regards literature, there are mountains of semi-pornographic dime novels, millions of copies of Castaneda that promote “expansion of mind” and “journeys”; the books that are devoted to astrology, magic, mysticism and esotericism have largely filled bookshop shelves. The portrayal of something sexual, accidents or violence has become the most fashionable and attractive to readers — that is what authors highlight in the book summaries.

V. AESTHETICIZATION OF UGLY

Aestheticization of ugly is taking place in art, the category of ugly itself becomes dominating, having replaced the category of beautiful. [2] Just like in life (fashion for dirty jeans full of holes), the fashion for “dirt” arose in art and consequently emerged the categories that haven't existed in aesthetics before: disgust, absurdity, cruelty, violence, shock. The concepts of fine, sublime, ideal have been completely banished from art. In this sense the modern art, unlike classical, which guided the person to be a Person, show his humanity, spirituality, is focused instead on cultivating aggression, a cult of physical force, sexuality.

In classical art the identity of the artist more or less became an afterthought, and his creation took center stage, his identity melted into his work. In modern art the situation is completely different — the things artist does are increasingly reduced to blank marks, it becomes more about the self-expression of his personality. Thus, the things artist creates are not that important. What is important is the gesture of the artist, his pose, his reputation, his signature, and his stunts that get broadcasted around the world. This self-expression of people of art has taken and takes such extreme, deviant, extravagant and painful forms that, echoing M. Nordau, one might call it a disease [3]. Hypertrophy of self-expression arises.

This hypertrophy of self-expression is largely related to the intensification of game and shock value in art, for modern art is mostly associated with a game to which the idea of pathos and earnestness seem strange; and the perspective to devote themselves to art and sacrifice their life for the sake of “great” art will be laughable for most artists. Shock value can be added to this picture — when a “great work of art” can be created without that much work: in a day, in an hour, or simply picked up on the road. Impudence in art is considered the art genius. This art, or rather its representatives, is skeptical about professionalism, questions the technique and approach of traditional art, and rejects all criteria of skill. And, according to José Ortega and Gasset, it's not about the fact that common people consider themselves brilliant and extraordinary in some spheres, but that “the vulgar, petty-bourgeois souls that understand their mediocrity boldly claim their right to vulgarity, and do it everywhere” [4].

There is a possibility of implementation of “art creativity” without any special preparation, without canvases

and brushes in painting, without musical instruments in music, etc.

VI. SCANDAL AS A MEANS OF SELF-EXPRESSION

Art becomes a commodity, and, like any commodity, it needs advertising. And advertising in this case is not the artist's work, but scandal and his deviant, a social behavior. It plays such big part in the fate of the artwork today that these concepts can be identified as new aesthetic categories for the disciplines that study art. Nowadays, the Artist will do anything to get noticed. He constantly challenges public standards, sometimes teetering of the edge of legality. For example, it is a well-known how many scandals and public irritation dada movement caused. According to Walter Benjamin, their poems were the verbal salad that contained crude language and all the verbal garbage that can only be imagined.

These facts from history of art allow to draw a conclusion that considerable success and recognition of modern art isn't attributable to internal factor, i.e. art merits, but, often, to lucky opportunities of external circumstances, and most of all to advertising in the press or television. Big part of this is played at the same time by the scandal associated with the name of the artist. Scandal is an external factor that forces people to pay attention to some artwork that draws their attention [5].

Moreover, representatives of various events, performances consciously seek to shock the public, consciously perform actions that can be classified as deviant behavior — as eccentricity, as deviance.

French critic and art expert Robert Lebel has an interesting take on this problem in his book “The other side of the painting”. This book even has a specific chapter called “Scandal in Art”. Lebel writes that there is a group of people that participate in painting of pictures and their sale. This group includes, first of all, artists who, while explaining their scandalous behavior, cynically appeal to high authority of art and to values of creative freedom. There are also art dealers, collectors that invest capital in art treasures, museum workers and experts-art critics who confirm that the canvas pulled on the stretcher is currently valuable and marketed as a certain number of banknotes. There's a whole “state within a state” [6].

It's been several years since Mokler and Lebel wrote their books, but since then situation did not change for the better, on the contrary – by virtue of some strange paradox the more people make noise about “autonomy of art”, the less they are interested in what lies within the art itself. Pathology of nervous system, private life of the artist, his political views interest public more than the works he paints.

VII. FASHION AND ART: FASHION FOR ABSTRACT NON-FIGURATIVE ART

It is necessary to distinguish the aspiration to become fashionable from the patterns that exist in art, such as aspiration to originality, parability, symbolism. Fashion characterizes art from its outer, random side, and in this case

it is not that different from fashion for clothing. The need for fashion always stems from the depth of human psychology. In this regard fashion is almost more eternal than art, because carriers of art, as a rule, are a minority, and carriers of fashion are the majority.

Fashion in art is only the reflection of its deep need for originality, and it acts as a substitute of this requirement. Considering that fashion is always connected with popularity and even fame, public gets the impression that they are dealing not with a substitute of originality but with something genuinely new in art. Fashion spreads like an epidemic, seeing how it is considered prestigious to be infected with the “new” art virus.

And fashionable works of art are as relevant to pleasure from art as high heels and tight skirts are to convenient walking. As a rule, fashion in art is associated with intellectuality. Fashionable artwork that circulates and gets praised as the highest achievement at first by separate categories of public gradually penetrates the mass market and becomes widespread. It is largely connected with mass delusion of people who would not mind obtaining an aura of intellectuality.

Fashion in art shows that most of public is deprived of healthy art taste and cannot navigate the art on their own. Therefore, something genius will never be fashionable, and something fashionable — will never become ingenious. One could say that it is a peculiar law of art.

Fashion is stronger than common sense, and that is true not only with clothes, but with art as well. Yet it would be unreasonable to fight against it, for it passes like the whim of a child. And like that whim, it comes again. Fashion reconciles skeptics and nihilists. It suppresses and neutralizes them, but it is these qualities that are the foundation of good taste. Fashion implies presence of authority and external signs of prestigiousness, which always contradict internal patterns of art. The majority of active, relevant public, as a rule, is under the influence of fashion, even if they don't value it.

It is a well-known fact that the first works of art of primitive people existed in the form of primitivism. One century later, having passed classicism, sentimentalism, romanticism, realism, many artists reached primitivism once again. But this reversion arose not as a result of artistic unconscious helplessness but as conscious requirement “to be different”, unlike others. Art begins to turn to “primitive” art in all its forms and shapes: African sculpture, Japanese xylography, ethnic pictures and signs, folklore rhythms and images. It ceases to be perceived as rough, imperfect, not mature enough to be considered true art treasure – it becomes fashionable, it is bought at auctions, the prices of such art are constantly growing.

Modern art, Baudrillard claims, has already entered a simulation stage, given that it does not reflect reality any more, but deforms it, distorts; art forms are not created a new, but only vary, repeat. But this powerlessness in creation of new forms is a vivid symptom of the death of art. Baudrillard comes to a conclusion that modern art is in a

state of stasis (standstill, stillness). Use of already known forms and their numerous combinations leads to morbid spawns that Baudrillard associates with metastases, i.e. with morbid malignancies. He predicts the death of art: “Along with all disappearing forms, art seeks to duplicate itself through simulation; but it will still leave soon, leaving behind enormous museum of false art and giving way to advertising”. [7]

Perhaps, Baudrillard simply confirms the idea that was introduced in the 19th century by Hegel who claimed in his well-known work “Aesthetics” that his time “is adverse to art,... since art from its highest opportunities is and remains for us something of the past” [8]. Art is increasingly becoming connected with abstract thinking, so the line between art criticism and actual works of the artist is getting blurry.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Thus, quasi art is not just the absence of any absolutes, it is not just dehumanized art; it is fictional world where a distinct scale of values is formed. Actual values are replaced with fictional: clarity is replaced with ambiguity, in case of dramaturgy it is the theater of absurd where action is replaced with inaction, sense — with nonsense, characters — with pale monotonous shadows.

Therefore, in search of new functions of art, its role and place in spiritual life, in unrestrained desire to reach a certain unconventional and absolutely new layer of art, such innovators sometimes completely lose the sight of cultural and artistic bases of art.

The tragic fact of modern situation is, José Ortega and Gasset pointed out, that mass society spawned the mass-man who became a master, and he “demands entertainment... he firmly says his wishes ...he firmly refuses to serve... he is full of concerns about himself, his entertainments”. [9]

Modern society became more tolerant of some forms of moral, aesthetic cultural differences of people in general, and even the list of the pursued manifestations of deviance has been significantly reduced to just the manifestations that are obviously socially dangerous, i.e. contained in the penal code.

Louder and louder are the voices that argue that art is autonomous and independent of any moral principles, that censorship has no right to exist. How should the artist act in this case? He should bring the person closer to the ideal by portraying beautiful gestures of people, as Schiller wrote about the artist in his “Letters on the aesthetic education of man”: “...give the world that you influence the direction to good, and the quiet rhythm of time will bring further development. You give him this direction; if you, while teaching, elevate his thinking to the necessary and eternal, if you, in other practical activities or art creativity, turn necessary into eternal ...” [10]

Perhaps, this art really is the reflection of modern reality, modern mass society, for the nobility of mind and moral

qualities are necessary not only to create sublime, but also to perceive it.

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