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DUSTIN
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CHAPTER 1:
AMERICAN NOTES FOR
LIMITED CIRCULATION

THE GALLERY
WITH ART FROM
NINE ARTISTS

so much as a slap on the wrist for their crimes.

Similar behavior has been reported in Africa and even Europe, with “NATO soldiers, UN police, and Western aid workers operat[ing] with near impunity in exploiting the victims of the sex traffickers” in Kosovo when they flooded into the Serbian province in 1999, according to a report by the Guardian, helping a marginal sex slavery scene flourish into a major industry.

Decriminalise What?

The UN report did not limit itself to merely normalizing pedophilia, also calling for the decriminalization of other questionable activities.

This included not just decriminalizing the possession or cultivation of drugs for personal use, “including by anyone under the age of 18 or while pregnant”, but also “non-disclosure of HIV status”, exposing others to HIV, and even HIV transmission, except in limited circumstances.

Left-dominated California is well ahead on this agenda already, having passed legislation downgrading the knowing or intentional exposure of others to HIV from a felony to a misdemeanor in 2017, and decriminalizing the knowing donation of HIV-infected blood.

The UN report also insisted that “[n]o one may be held criminally liable for consensual practices aiming to assist others with the exploration, free development and/or affirmation of sexual orientation or gender identity” — which would likely rule out legislation banning transgender hormone therapy and surgery for minors.

Conversely, the report recommended that “[p]ractices aiming to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression... may be addressed through other provisions in the criminal law.”

ART AND UNITY: GOETHE ON THE INNER LIFE

Philip Burchill



In our digitally dominated age, we are inundated with endless news, tabloid propaganda, and ideologically infused ‘entertainment’. Moreover, we are being shaped by a type of virtual architecture that isolates rather than consolidates communities. There is, however,

we are to overcome divisions within our culture, transcend the divisiveness of ideology, and build bridges across political factions. Goethe’s vision of art shows us we can redress imbalance and promote cultural unity by producing art that represents humanity’s internal and external world, while simultaneously depicting what is unique to a culture and what is universally common to our inner experience. Directed in this way, art will reveal to the world that the depth of our unity is greater than our differences. It achieves this by direct representation of the inner life, being as it is free from the divisive constraints of language. Hence, it is the transmission of mankind’s internal world onto external forms. In and through it, all people can find their common ground.

In the Romantic era, theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher wrote: ‘Dogmatics is reflection upon prior feelings.’ Another, and more contemporary, way of saying this is that feeling is a pre-cognitive apprehension of reality. This means that reason presupposes the immediacy of sense impressions first captured by feeling. Art has a privileged role of unity because, in it, feeling is given artistic form before reason consigns it to the constraints of linguistic representation. As such, the essential universality of art lies in its nature as a medium of communication free from the mechanisms of speech. It allows the viewer to commune with the artist through a sensuous medium that avoids the disunity and fragmentation of direct discourse. Consequently, it has the potential to unite humanity

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an alternative and richer way of being in the world, one that our Judeo-Christian philosophical tradition points to. I speak of the great art forms that enable us to reconnect with our world in all its fullness, something that Goethe discovered first in Shakespeare. As he said of the Bard: ‘No one had more disdain for the external than he. His interest is directed to man’s inner self, and here all men are alike.’

Art directed to the inner life of mankind speaks of the universal experience of love, hope, and loss. Our epoch needs such art if

in a mystical process where soul speaks to soul in a language that neither divides nor disenchant.

Writing again on Shakespeare, Goethe stated that the poet's ability to reach our inner sense is the most direct form of communication. This is a communion of minds and hearts. Similarly, Beethoven stated that 'music transports the listener into the mental state of the composer' - meaning that it enhances the moral imagination thereby enabling us to step into the shoes of another. Music, like all serious art, is thus an invitation to communicate with the private language of its creator. And, in this shared inner life, mankind finds resonant emotions, desires, grief, disappointments, love and triumph. These are, of course, universal emotions that span time and space.

For Goethe the goal of an individual life is to strive for unity, integration, and wholeness. Art facilitates this in that it addresses the entire person, heart, mind, and body. As John Ruskin wrote: 'Fine art is that which the hand, the head and the heart of man go together.' With the division of labour, humanity has come to specialize in the operation of one faculty to the neglect of others. The salesman uses language, the construction worker labors with their hands, whereas the academics are engaged mentally. Each uses one faculty to the neglect of other senses, thereby causing imbalance within the self. Art has the singular ability to reconcile all our faculties and to achieve internal harmony

and unity. Listening to a piece of music after a day of mental work has the capacity to put the listener in touch with their deep emotions and feelings, their longings and joys, their hopes, and dreams. This is the inner wholeness that modern life denies to so many, but which we cannot fully exist without.

Our society stands in great need of such embodied experiences. Digital communication, popular and social media, separates consciousness from the body, mind

the beautiful which God has implanted in the human soul.'

By visiting museums, cathedrals, galleries, and by spending time in nature, we discover a pathway to ourselves and to an understanding of the deep truth about others. Common experiences of art and nature bind us spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. We discover that we are not alone in heartbreak, in failure, or in grief. We discover that we belong to the human family and, beyond that, to what Edmund Burke called the great 'eternal society'. As Goethe scholar Robert Hutchins writes: 'For Goethe, men are united not merely by a common nature, but also a common tradition. We are all links in that chain that connects the past with the future. The tradition transmits to us the aspirations and achievements of our ancestors and inspires us to realization of the maximum possibilities of mankind.'

In conclusion, we might say that art is the thread of a civilization's identity in the perplexing labyrinth of human existence. That is because it brings us back to reality and grounds us from the flight of speculation and separation that

we experience on the screen. If, therefore, we would frequently engage with works of art, we will undoubtedly promote greater unity within ourselves, learn to see through the other's eyes, and thus counter the divisive and dominating tendencies of contemporary mankind. In this way we will discover a fraternity of transcendence, fused by the common bonds of eternal love.



from heart, and emotion from reason. Modern technology is feeding off imbalance and destroying our ability to engage with those higher aspects of life without which no existence is complete. We would do well to heed Goethe's advice when he said: 'A man should hear a little music, read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of his life, in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of