

Articles

Education of the Artist

George Moore

Overture

Every one is an artist for we each must create our own life, even those who try to escape it. Every one of us must fill the void, blank canvas, empty stage, dance floor – and step out or forth to apply our will to create. The artist uniquely lives this paradox, delight and terror, with and before us not to supplant it – no one can – but to recast through a chosen symbolic medium our resolve to experiment with our freedom.

Artists change how we perceive -- it could not be more basic or “ontological”. If they decorate, intrigue, thrill, shock, provoke reflection or ethical protest – this is merely added or distracting. For we turn to art of any kind not for spectacle or instruction but to slowly or suddenly change how see, hear, even touch and move -- to attune all our senses -- subtly, powerfully, to re-envision the origin of all experience as creation.

An artist becomes an expert in alternate perceptions to refute by example the reduction of experience to its use or our seeming “place” within an ephemeral object-economy with -- a work of art -- to embrace reality beyond utility so we may fully perceive the surprise of existence. Use offers us naught but a practical cause, an empirical “coin” by which to exchange full perception for its or a preset value.

There are no preset values.

Art like life is a permanent revolution -- without guns or even overt protest and should be opposed to all fame-as-authority, careerism or money. It is not a pursuit of success except as the best way to evoke radiance across a global community of awareness. It keeps awe of a brief existence alive by inventing metaphors to lure us from repeating behavior

by rote. It soothes with beauty to spread, say, a rainbow over the ashes of alienation left by comrades lost to spiritual suicide. It resists capitulation to materialism and all behavioral rhetoric. It revolts against racism, sexism, ageism, class, country, religion, economic inequality, but without necessarily saying so. It invents an oasis of illusion by turning illusion against itself to reveal reality.

The freedom to originally perceive is the first *right* granted *every* human being. We may rediscover ancient truths in their nativity, but we may also birth them. We are here to uncover what would remain forever concealed save for our courage to perceive anew -- we, the creatures who temporarily awake.

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Every child is an artist from birth: to explore by doing and creating scenarios from imaginary conversations and characters is already the beginning of fiction. Drawing or sketching what one sees or imagines even with a stick in sand or sculpting clay or mud is already visual art. Imitating voices and singing are almost as natural as breathing. We are shamed from creation early by adults who forfeit their freedom to a faux normality to survive within an object-economy. An artist invites us to back to our origins – to the incept-flame of novelty -- we first intuited as our right to keep learning, imagining, playing with possibilities from the origin of who we are to whom we will become -- our “destiny” beyond determinism -- our life as a freedom. Children are right while reproving adults who unlearn imagination intuit less than the offspring they rule.

Every artist undertakes early the project to protect their creativity. A child can see the sacrifice of imagination on an adult face -- who made themselves homely -- eyes rolling at a supposed regression after noting with envy the gleam of eternity in the youthful eye (the awe) – our first font of beauty. The adolescent chooses a life-strategy, which will include sacrifice and self-discipline: not to kill their spirits through a symbolic activity – even if they lose “future earnings” or a place in the conformist parade.

Narcissists betray this goal and avoid full creation by multiplying a reflexive image of the self to reappear in a baroque funhouse trompe l’oeil for the admiration of cowards. Narcissists, smitten by their image within the mirror of art, freeze their image *as art*. This freezing is an attempt stop (reify or hypostatize) time to grasp and *have*, and this illusion ensnares us whenever having precludes becoming.

The transparency of a mirror ends with its reflection.

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The illusion of a magical connection between consciousness and a thing or things, a conjured causation to reduce perception to owning or being owned by or as a thing, to ignore or even to liquidate the existence of awareness itself – this thing-ness first -- including the fantasy of owning a self – claims we are aware only as an “emergent property” and should ignore that *we* notice, name and describe *things* then “must” cede our choices (our awareness) to inanimate – objects! This assumes having precedes being. It does not. Being precedes having. And being is becoming. Consciousness is who we are and one may list its properties (why?) but it is not a property, nor can “it” -- *we* ever be owned.

Materialists ignore that the elemental power of the universe is creativity and not only may we practice it (creation) but can also conceive its negation *as* materialism.

The Transparency of Self

The self is conceived every moment we choose. It’s like a window that cannot be seen or a glass without sides through and by which we are seen and see. We invent transparency by appearing and we are each a pure appearance who disappears. For with consciousness’ transparency -- absence and presence are identical -- yet evident every moment we breathe. Suppose we exhale an ethos from this paradox? *Then an aesthetic.* Perhaps it already reveals: “Where we stand”, our perspective and answers: “Who am I?” and suggests an horizon for: “What shall I do?” Perhaps to see through one’s self and let the world (and universe) appear uninflected, unmediated -- yet be strong as a presence from and through this seeming absence, this “no-thing”, to be invisible yet absolutely present -- *is* to be free? If we’re obliged to remake such invisible “stuff” from nothing – in this gentle charting of the self by any name or concept -- rather than running interference with the world (screening, deflecting, even tinting) and rather than ignoring -- why not practice transparency of self? Honesty is – transparent.

The Struggle

Though it can occur any time in one's life, often in childhood or adolescence an artist refuses to surrender to a world reduced to things. The "reason" is rarely recalled in our retrospective rationales or the stories we tell except in utter candor -- not to refuse to "grow up" -- but reject that we must lose our playfulness, open-heartedness or spontaneity -- and so betray our imaginations.

Yet, this clears the playing field for what one can do and why one lives.

Anyone can be an artist in school or in their early twenties but can one, despite sporadic or small successes, or being wholly ignored, maintain creation throughout a lifetime? One needs be a Stoic with regard to all materialism, to re-read perhaps Thoreau's "Economy" from *Walden* and read behind his advice to "Simplify, simplify, simplify" to envision a dedicated writer who aspires to write full time without spending so as not to have to earn much money. The economy of the artist is the essential question, the riddle really, of how to pursue art but never to cheat anyone (including oneself) of a dime, yet live fully, pay bills, and even travel and enjoy oneself while "spending" one's time on earth celebrating the gift of consciousness -- without rancor or resentment.

The ethos of the artist should then be more honest and kinder than those who pursue normal professions. The discovery that all values are created much like a painting does not utterly relativize truth or dissolve its discovery but exposes its origin. Freedom is not license to regress or best conformists in deflection, slight-of-hand, malice or greed nor to fabricate excuses so as not to pull one's own weight financially. Art is not regression, a lack of responsibility, play-acting or license. To become an artist is not to inherit a privilege but to exercise by example the right to create.

If an artist is to be entrusted to express gratitude to be able to perceive at all -- to renew our perception not only within enclaves of an elite art-world but in every walk of life we need visions of the possible -- works of art -- to explore our freedom.

An artist is a "grown-up" who continues to *play* yet refuses to let others pay for their existence.

Freedom is work and involves anxiety, forlornness and responsibility. Art is work since to know its history, enough of one's contemporaries to respond to and enhance our culture (or community of awareness) then to isolate with what media and how one will reflect unique perception -- and (!) -- after years of intense practice -- *if one wishes to replenish the human spirit* -- become adept at offering a vision. The work of art, even if it offers a "negative pleasure" -- a critique -- adds to the delight in constant change inherent to our being briefly *and* fully awake.

The young artist begins to explore mediations, and may explore several to widen the latitude of his or her early learning, and this choosing shall not be rushed so the young may enjoy a great education across all fields of study. An artist need not be a "specialty idiot" -- to quickly narrow and so conform to a division of labor, to deny breadth of vision, largess and perhaps the horizontal goal to which every one may aspire -- to become wise...

Some arts yield mastery to extreme youth, say, pop songs or instrumental virtuosity (e.g. Mozart) and rarely in poetry (Rimbaud). But many genres and mediums resist early mastery, say, feature films, full-length novels or discovering an original philosophy. The psychology of the practice may require decades. This takes staying power: stamina and patience. Yet long practice may ripen until a single note, brush stroke or sparest of compositions may reveal the unique ...

An artist unseals the urn of mortality to release the genii of wonder.

The Unique

If open to the unknown and unknowable -- as the former child within us to a flower or to the air -- an object observed or soul met does not reflect an estimation of a knowing-process or a forced wariness obliged by convention -- but to perceive the unique.

If experiences seem repeated -- *we* repeat them -- we render duplicate what is not. *Experiences are rarely "the same" 'til we make them so.* Since we create time by our recognition of it, just as it creates us, without inserting a temporal divide between creating and receiving we receive *when* we perceive & so create the unique as if it "just-appeared" (Is this innocence?). Convention separates creation from reception in a sequence to compromise the unique and innocence -- But!

Innocence is the child of wisdom.

And: Wisdom is the child of innocence.

And: The unique is not rare, perceiving it is.

For the artist to envision he or she will need be an expert in noticing fine detail, from one sliver or cameo of the whole, say from one violet petal to evoke all biologic life. This choosing too is experimental, and may seem highly idiosyncratic but only with a precise noticing of the unique – may we reflect universal experience.

In becoming an artist one experiments with what constitutes an object and what it is to be human.

After long, unrewarded years of practice to realize confidence as a craftsman as an artist masters a medium and the complexities of a genre with a vision that allows every or any perception to be unique even close friends may not recognize nor trust their own taste -- needing you to be conventionally successful to think you are. But even if one “is” one may discover it is not fame or money nor the trappings of name and status but the process of art from which one has learned through long, dilated experience: by suffusing intuition into knowledge one’s greatest work of art may be one’s own soul. Mind and spirit can evolve. What once appeared but a falling star on one’s mental horizon -- the possibility of becoming a great human being, may rise like a long-awaited dawn. Now even art or thought may appear as a symbolic “thing”, insofar as both mediate to reflect the origins of one’s soul.

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Many artists never study philosophy but they are close to it nonetheless. Philosophy is mistaken for abstract conceptuality for its own sake yet this is but an encrypted extract from its origin. Philosophy opens every perspective of awareness not as an ideal but an engagement with how awareness makes everything “happen”. This is also the field celebrated by art. Philosophy is the exercise of free thinking — art — free imagination. Both, if pursued truly, presume perception is experimental. If an artist so wishes (or fancies!) they can grow conceptually to augment their metaphoric invention and the combination may prove athletic: the birth of character coheres with ideational fluency to let the artist deepen beyond the behavioral style of personality. One can explain, if one wishes

to, what one does. One may “have” an ethos as well as an aesthetic. One may slowly become a great human being. One may become wise.

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We are born to a world that prizes things over experience. We hear of “gathering” or “accumulating” wisdom – but how to gather what is not a thing? “Things” are not alive and tell us nothing not assigned them by us for our use. How to grow more seasoned, keen, wider in experience? Perhaps the future-wise intuitively suspend ordinary causation and opposition, relativize (but not quite neutralize) good and evil, hot and cold etc. as co-relative (since they are) and withhold literal belief to cultivate tolerance? If we save or store not things but insights – might noticing minute differences reveal the original extempore music of improvising time by exploring our creation of it? Might the arrow (fate) that gathers nothing but insight fly through the literality of things to suspend belief — to reach tolerance & delight? To reveal the consciousness perceiving them, to personally, perennially burst, blossom, and flower?

Wisdom counsels us to bend with the wind. We are finite and must let go even of life. Yet if expectations must yield when may our resolve rise? It still requires one stiffen facial muscles to smile. In our brief series of days we face wind, darkness & cold: crimes of neglect & madness, the herd’s reproach, convention’s revenge, the ice of rejection, long, difficult projects, poverty, aging -- we need to bend yet stay resolute -- to let go *and* resist.

In our invisible absence, from nothingness, our consciousness ascends to the All to appear as never before in freedom. *Can we accept loss and remain revolutionary in our resolve to remake the world?*

Perhaps like a painter with a full palette before a blank canvas of events we may leave the world untouched or incarnate as color and shade in action, as we choose. Or as an astronomer studies light in space to the far reaches of the universe our perception can shift from spectral blue to red as we approach or withdraw at will.

Perhaps wisdom is a synthesis of intuition and knowledge, innocence and experience, inaction and action? The courage to experience without precedent -- the absence of any guide as to how one should think or act

— a momentary lifetime exploring a blank canvas of unrehearsed novelty.

Suppose: *Wisdom does not end with experience but begins an experiment with all experience.*

We can let the energy animating the universe flow through us in effortless efficacy without severing our identity with nature. We can stand out and *up*, resolutely, for the creation of new truth. We can pursue peace within and try ... to change the world.

Wisdom listens to secrets sent by intuition.

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There are many theories of what art is and a few almost as beautiful as art itself. Yet there is no greater experience than freedom and this an artist must embody through acts of love called art. If art refers back to the origin of perception through metaphor as philosophy with concepts, if genius, demystified, is the courage to create from the origin of our being from nothing, if our souls dilate, transparent of self before the unique rising to universality: we eventually change how we perceive: *We educate ourselves to practice art then slowly it educates us:*

We presage to become sage.

Mortality as Paradox

Mortality is paradox: “I am aware that I will become unaware.” You can say it but never understand it. Time is paradox: if one could fully isolate a moment there would be no given continuity from before to the next, all identity, including the percipient’s, would dissolve. And how brief or long may a moment be? So we must impose an identity and invent ourselves -- but “who” imposes or invents anything when we vanish? There are many angels-on-a-pin paradoxes in the history of logic. They are still separating mathematic and imaginary mustard seeds now, tossing rice at the frozen marriages of the mutually exclusive, but the puzzlement is no longer academic when it comes to our life. Zeno’s paradox, Kant’s antinomies, even Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, all the great and manufactured “problems” are like invisible chess games yet -- do we really have time to play? When logic leads to its violation a plume of intuition escapes as in

a noiseless explosion but without heat or fire -- or are the fireworks then their tracers our dreams? The collision is our expectation meeting the mystery when the imagination's arc ends as it begins in awe: the incept-flame of novelty. Children and the wise have this in common: they honor the unknown but love the light more than the space between stars.

To paint fresh vistas across the field of perception, to sketch in silhouette future freedoms across our mortal sky, to dance the discovery tempo of the unique in a second innocence embracing all experience, to conjure melodies from the air to echo from a primordial advent of awareness to a new civilization of light; to critique, protest all constriction of soul, slavery of class, conformism or money, or the private flight of madness, solipsism or despair – to raise the transnational flag of freedom for all imaginations within our invisible community of awareness -- *we reply to the silence of the universe* -- that we live briefly yet in gratitude for this chance to perceive -- and so to conceive who we are -- from nothing *but once!* -- in our fleeting moment on earth.

This is one why and wherefore. The how and what will unfold undetermined, absolutely open to radical individuality, and novelty.