FEELING AND QUALITY

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INTRODUCTION

In speaking of my work, it is necessary to turn to my life and life style. In conducting our lives, we exist by codes or values. These values determine our identities as individuals or groups. These values are subject to constant re-evaluation. This process of re-evaluation is common to all of us. It is a part of our daily lives, yet I have found that it has become the major factor in my life.

In the following sections, I will discuss the process of value choice in my life as it relates to my art activities. I will be using information obtained from various aestheticians, critics, and artists in developing concepts concerning my art-making processes. It is important to note that much of the material that I will be discussing is, perhaps, logically faulty. Many of the sources are trying to develop general rules for art and art-making, which preclude many forms of expression commonly accepted as art. Yet, these sources, for the large part, support my personal views of my artistic activity. Thus I can state that while I do not accept the main premise of their works, namely, that these are general rules for all art and art-making activities, I can accept their theories as supportive of
my own personal expressive processes.

As for the choice of the sections entitled

Feeling and Quality, they can best be explained by the

following quotation:

It is only when feeling and quality are... united that we can speak of esthetic value... It is possible and even useful for some purposes to abstract quality or feeling from its relational setting and to consider it separately. If we wish to emphasize the objective pole of the relation, we can say that the function of art is clear and vivid realization of quality. Or if we wish to emphasize the subjective pole, we can say that the function of art is the expression and cultivation of feeling. Now these functions are not really separate and independent -- they are two sides of the same process. The function of art is to make articulate the whole gamut of human values, and this function embraces and unites the other two.¹

FEELING

Intuition and Expression

In The Breviary of Aesthetics, written in 1913, Benedetto Croce wrote:

As to what is art - I will say at once, in the simplest manner that art is vision or intuition. The artist produces an image or a phantasm; and he who enjoys art turns his gaze upon the point to which the artist has pointed, looks through the chink which he has opened, and reproduces that image in himself.

And of expression he writes:

And yet there is a sure method of distinguishing true intuition, true representation from that which is inferior to it: the spiritual fact from the mechanical, passive, natural fact. Every true intuition or representation is also expression. That which does not objectify itself in expression is not intuition or representation, but sensation and mere natural fact. The spirit only intuits in making, forming, expression. He who separates intuition from expression never succeeds in reuniting them.

Croce, in linking intuition to expression runs into a problem of definition. It is popularly accepted that intuition is also, "...pure, untaught, noninferential knowledge," not necessarily linked with expression and

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in fact, could be said to be "...mere natural fact."

Clement Greenberg, in an article entitled "Seminar One" in the November 1973 issue of Arts Magazine (pp. 44-46), clarifies this paradox by declaring intuition as both sensation and expression.

Existence, experience, knowledge are unthinkable without intuition. So is aesthetic expression as such, art as such. But there is a crucial difference between the way ordinary or primary intuition — which is necessary to existence, experience, knowledge — makes itself felt and the way aesthetic intuition, which is not necessary to anything at all, does. Ordinary intuition informs, appraises, orients you, and in doing that always points to other things than itself, to other things than the act of intuition itself. Ordinary intuition does this even when furnishing data for pure knowledge, for knowledge valued for its own sheer sake; even there the act points to something other than itself; that is, data.

The moment, however, that an act of intuition stops with itself and ceases to inform or point it changes from an ordinary intuition into an aesthetic one. An aesthetic intuition is dwelled on, hung up on, relished or disrelished for its own sole sake and nothing else. The intuition that gives you the color of the sky turns into an aesthetic intuition when it stops telling what the weather is like and becomes purely an experience of the color. The same conversion takes place when the intuition of the taste or smell instead of for what it means in the way of allaying thirst. The same happens with the recognition that two different things cannot be one and the same when the intuition involved here is savored for itself and does not lead to thought or action (This last is a farfetched example, but it is not an impossible one.) In short, aesthetic intuition is never a means, but always an end in itself, contains its value in itself and rests in itself.5

Thus, Greenberg clarified the paradox in Croce's writings. I would also add that primary intuition may be expressed in the manner of objective observation and reporting of phenomena, but in and of itself it cannot be expressive. By this I mean it cannot convey feeling. It can only report sensations.

At this point it is possible to set forth a sequence of events leading to expression. In plotting the activity that leads to expression I start with sensations or experiences, the ordinary intuition. These intuitions may be either internal (instinctual) or external. These are the daily occurrences that bombard us. The raw material that affect the senses and filter into the mind where they are weighed against our values. At this point they change from the objective to the subjective, from sensation to feeling. It might be said that feeling is aesthetic intuition but I differentiate to the point that feeling may include raw unarticulated emotion. Aesthetic intuition, because it is also expression, is articulate. It may not necessarily be physically reproduced, but it has that capacity.

Thus we have a progression of sensation - value - feeling - expression. At any step change might occur; sensation may affect our values which in turn may change
or restrict what sensations we allow to occur. Feelings certainly affect our values by changing the way we react to each situation and, of course, values dictate our feelings.

At this time I take a stance as to my personal goals. The process I have just described is of utmost importance. The values that I have are directly related to the sum total of my experiences. Yet as I experience further, these values change. The very fact that this change occurs precludes the acceptance of these values as enduring and unchanging. In fact, much of my energy goes into the evaluation and reevaluation of these values and the search for new experience-sensations in order to either establish new values or reaffirm old ones.

Because aesthetic intuition and thus expression are a function of feeling and feeling is a function of ordinary intuition that has been evaluated, aesthetic intuition is a function of ordinary intuition. If this is true, then my work must express my personal experiences and values. It will be descriptive of events and feelings.

Because the work is descriptive, it should present itself clearly. The feelings and events should, in their own manner, be able to be clearly and easily expressed.
QUALITY

Immediacy and Clarity

In discussing quality, it is important to understand not only that which is the finished product, but the steps leading up to that product. For me, the physical process of expression is important. The various steps and actions taken in working, feed back through the experience - value - feeling - expression paths to influence the product. Thus if part of this process becomes bogged down in any respect, the product is less than it should be. The quality of the action must be pure and unrestrained. No elaborate problems and no outside interferences should hinder the smooth flow of the process.

Immediacy is a necessary part of my work. It shortens the span from concept to realization, eliminating unnecessary outside interference and the tendency to make that which is simple, complex. It is difficult to allow an idea to remain simple and to trust a simple solution to the problem. By quickly working a series of pieces, I feel that the idea remains clear and input is gathered from the series as it progresses so that the cycle of thought remains closed instead of open to
interferences that would damage the clarity of the work. Clarity is important. The image should be crisp. It must confer its meaning to me simply and directly. The experiences and feelings I refer to in the work must be clear to me. Subtleties may exist but they should not dominate the work. They should reveal themselves only upon closer examination.

Perhaps the artist who has had the greatest impact on me has been Roy DeForest. Upon seeing his work, I was immediately struck by the total freedom in his use of imagery. His means are traditional: painting and drawing and compositionally his works read easily, yet his images and symbols left me with a feeling of total abandon. Here is a man who can entice me with a look at his own world. He can present this world to me clearly and simply, yet he makes no comment. He allows me to draw my own conclusions, to make his world meaningful in terms of my own feelings.

It is though he is merely providing the stimulus for me to create my own story, yet I know that his story is there. He uses feelings and his experiences to develop the images that appear in his work, but those images do not reveal for me their meaning. They merely reveal their existance and allow me to find my own meaning.
Successful or not, this is the basis for my work. I use those experiences and express those feelings that are meaningful to me. These are the core of my work. They dictate the form that my images take. The symbolism is up to the viewer. I have no message to reveal. Everything that I say is qualified by stating that this applies only to me. The experiences and feelings that form my images are mine and the viewer must find meaning through his or her own life. I am unwilling to reveal these experiences and feelings fully. To do so, I feel, would lessen their importance to me.
CONCLUSION

Approaching the end of this thesis, I find that the process has been defined. The steps in living and art-making, to me, are clear. But what of the product? To what end do we make art? And to what end do we live?

To me these questions have no answer. But the questions themselves are of great import. They introduce the essence of our existence - it is the value.

Value is what we live by, yet it is undefinable. It is certainly the basis of all our actions, yet by itself it is nothing. The value concept that I deal with here relates very closely to the concept of Tao as described by D.T. Suzuki in the introduction to The Texts of Taoism by James Legge:

The Tao is the great principle regulating the course of Nature. Tao literally means 'a path' or 'a way' or 'a course,' but it is more than a map for orientation schematically drawn up for the traveler to follow. The Tao is one actually walking on this 'way' or coursing on through it. No, it is more than that. It is the walking itself, or the coursing itself, which is Tao. The Tao is not where we follow the way as indicated in the map. We are the Tao, the Walker and the Tao are the same.6

We are the value. Within each of us we hold the value of our existence and of course the value of the

works we create. We may never know the value of ourselves and our actions, but we can feel it.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


