

This is the beginning. First, I would like to state my firm belief that no one really knows anything. Our ability to understand each other, let alone the meaning of life, is illusionary at best. All knowledge is temporary and the unfathomable extent to which space and time extend is mind blowing. Life is mysterious and unpredictable. Although I believe that what we perceive as chaos is essentially based in cause and effect, the complexity of this imperceptible order is beyond our abilities, much like perceiving the speed of light. Regardless of my occasional ego, I have inevitably returned to the realization that I am only guessing at everything, and perhaps when I die, life will become clear. Secondly, with that in mind, I naturally believe that anything is possible. Once again, no one really knows the answers, so anyone could be correct. One is forced “to remain unbiased and curious--*rerum novarum cupidus*”¹ This open mindedness has led me to explore any area of ‘knowledge’ that I was not raised on. I believe that fear stops learning, and the obliteration of preconceived notions and fears is the *life* in living. Therefore, to live is to learn, pressing on into the darkness of the unknown. Finally, I seem to feel most comfortable stating how ridiculous I believe our “serious” systems of knowledge are. Any system of knowledge that has lost the belief in the foolishness of youth in favor of the seriousness of ‘grown ups’ will never be complete. I once heard a Taoist saying that continues to keep my ego in check:

Compared with Heaven and Earth, man is but a mayfly
 Yet, compared with the great Tao, Heaven and Earth are just a bubble and a shadow.

I trust in the chaotic order of nature, and hope that through my artwork I find a place in that order. It is my bridge between the real and ethereal.

¹ Jung,C.G. Fwd. To The I-Ching (Book of Changes). Trans. Wilhelm/Baynes. Princeton U.P, 1967.

The Creative: Heaven, Positive, "Yes," Father, Strong, Yang, Primal Power, Light Giving, Active, Spirit, Essence, Power, Energy, Motion, Duration, May/June, Zenith, Deity, Sage, Holy Man, Perseverance in Right, Sublimity, Potential Success, Furthering, Head, Origin, Great, Beginning, Love, Mores, Li, Superior, High, Untiring, Radiant, Ruler, Zeus, God, Dragon, Leader, Life, Circle, Midnight Blue, Deep Red, Odd Numbers, Three, Unity, Round, Jade, Prince, Metal, Cold, Ice, Horse, Tree Fruit, Spotless Purity, Firmness, Change, Straight, Upper Garment, the Word, Masculine, Male.

At the beginning, there is Creativity. There is an intrinsic need to create in man. It has always been there, and it continues to grow and change. The question "why make art?" leads only to "what is art?" Art is life. One can look in history books and see how ancient humans had no concept of "art" apart from survival. Even today, most Australian Aborigines have no word for art.³ Over time, things change. The world continues to expand and multiply and complicate. As the flower blooms, the petals separate. In our civilized world of separation and segregation we have successfully dissected and labeled all parts of the whole. However, in that process we have lost sight of the original puzzle, forgetting the importance of certain pieces, and disregarding the importance of each. This confusion was bound to happen, naturally, as the world filled up with people and ideas, and the amount of information became unfathomable. One can only handle so much before overloading and experiencing a meltdown. Hence, certain aspects of the human experience are glossed over, omitted, and denounced as unnecessary for survival. In a literal sense, this is true. One does not need to do anything but eat and sleep to survive. Why then are the caves of Lascaux painted so elaborately? The scientific method of answering this question is limited to a biased beginning. It is a nice way to fit ideas and concepts into conveniently labeled drawers, but it is nevertheless a mere piece to the puzzle, not the entire thing. Creativity takes on many forms, but it is essentially the force that inflates us with life. Without it, we are living dead.

³ Bahn, Paul. *Prehistoric Art*. Cambridge U.P., 1998.

The Receptive: Earth, Negative, “No,” Mother, Devoted, Yielding, Nature, Late Autumn, Rest, Yin, Cloudy, Overcast, North, Dark Side, Complement of Creative, Space, Maternal, Senses, Mare, Birth, Following, Guided, Acceptance, Solid, Virtue, Shadow, Death, Square, Belly, Yellow, Matter, Inferior, Low, Even Numbers, Two, Servitude, Nourishment, Cloth, Kettle, Frugality, Level, Cow with Calf, Large Wagon, Form, Multitude, Tree Trunk, Black Soil, Feminine, Female

All things cause an effect. The creative force that flows through the artist will lead to something. What is hard to explain is that we are all artists, therefore every action or thought we carry through has the potential for beauty or ugliness. Everything we do causes an effect. It is only confusing because the term “artist” has a separate meaning than “man,” and connotes a difference. There was none to the ancients, and there is none now. By observing the underlying cause and effects of life, we can understand that we are all struggling to survive and simplify the complex mess we have created on this earth. We are all dealing with our own internal tug of war. It is the cycle of all things, concrete and invisible. To everything there is an opposite, or, complement. In a microscopic sense, each human deals with this infinite cycle in the most intimate way. At birth the two spheres of the psyche split apart, and from this point on we deal with our own conscious and unconscious realities.⁴ This is our own cycle of cause and effect. The larger picture, however, deals with the balance of these polarities between ‘heaven’ and earth, or, the animus and anima. On every scale, man has the task of leveling these two complements. The animus being the creative force, and the anima being receptive. Unfortunately, the modern world’s belief that certain pieces of the puzzle ‘don’t fit’ has led to an amazing lean towards the anima. This, like any decision, is continuously having an effect, and responsibility must be taken. The artist-as-shaman must inevitably return.

⁴ Wilhelm, Richard. Fwd. *The Hui Ming Ching (Book of Consciousness and Life)*. New York: Harvest, 1962. p.xvi

The Arousing: Thunder, The Dragon, Yellow, Spreading Out, A Great Road, Eldest Son, Decisive, Vehement, Young Bamboo, Reed, Rush, Galloping, Pod-Bearing Plant, Luxuriant, Blossoming, Spring, Fast, Lively, God coming forth, Movement, East, Rising, Soaring, Foot, Shock, Violent, Terror, Yang, Causes Fear and Trembling, Beginning, Arising.

I believe that the most important overlooked ingredients in the mixture and meaning of life deal with the spiritual and “occult” subjects. The spiritual artist is no longer seen in a shamanic way. Now, he is seen as a tool for marketing if anything, and the driving force for the creator and the receivers, is money. Why is money so prized? Survival is the motivator, being safe and secure in a hostile and chaotic world. Removing oneself from the danger and idea of mortality. Money can be a great way to stay on the anima side of the scales. All that it is, and that it can get you, is bound to this earth, flesh, and it will rot away as we all will. Is that all there is? Well, no one can prove anything, hence, no one really knows—logically. Still, the rational mind is only one side of the complement. I am very aware of the deficiency of irrational thinking in modern society. Beuys felt that our natural ability to grasp art has been killed off by the “rational human being who demands explanation.”⁵ The artist goes by ‘feeling.’ I believe in the ability to understand things on an unexplained level. It is a convenient term—feeling, but it is only a vague push in the direction of something quite indescribable. The artist moves by intuition, visions, psychic influences, the weather, an emotion, déjà vu, sudden flashes of brilliance, and bouts upon the edge of insanity. It is a constant tightrope act, to be a true artist, and not just a tool for those with money. The true artist pushes forward, taking on the responsibilities neglected, and striking out in the faces of those who fear death. Like the shock of thunder, the first time you ever felt it. But is there any direction left to go?

⁵ Rosenthal, Nan. Anselm Kiefer-Works on Paper in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. N.Y.: Abrams, 1998. p.64

The Gentle: Penetrating, Wood, Wind, Eldest Daughter, Guideline, Windlike Dissemination of Commands, Ceaselessness, Gradual and Lasting Effects, Work, White, Long, High, Advance and Retreat, Undecided, Odor, Gray-Haired, Broad Foreheads, White of the Eyes, Arrogant, Eager for Gain, Threefold Value, Sign of Vehemence in Turn.

Art has gone in various directions in order to effect the world, sometimes like a catastrophe, sometimes like a storm, but most effectively like a never ending wind. The lasting effect of relentless subtle influence cannot be denied, and it becomes a part of the collective unconscious. As I stated before, the world as we know it continues to multiply upon itself, changing at increasing speeds, rapidly growing more complex. Artwork has done the same. However, some of the most shocking new ideas and concepts soon become old news. I friend recently told me about a video installation of a man peeing on himself over and over again. I can see the “art” involved, but with the sheer amount of video art out there nowadays, will this piece endure? It appears to me that the most effective and enduring artworks deal with the most important and enduring questions of the human race. Perhaps the pee-on-myself guy has a profound concept, but I wonder if people will remember that piece, or if it will be thrown in the “Excrement Art” pile. I cannot say what drives other artists to create, but I can say that my own drive comes from an urgent sense of ‘something more’ to life that is inexpressible in words. Perhaps I am looking for others to connect to the work on the unconscious level, through a more primal visual language. Perhaps it is more personal. In his diaries, Paul Klee writes:

...A strict review of my situation as a creative artist doesn't yield very encouraging results; I don't know why, but I continue to be hopeful.

Perhaps from the realization that at the root of my devastating self-criticism there is, after all, some spiritual development.

...Advancing along a spiritual path: with every step, more solitary.⁶

Solitary internally, but the objects presented externally are for the world to see.

⁶ Klee, Paul. *The Diaries of Paul Klee 1898-1918*. Ed. Felix Klee. Berkeley: U. of CA Press, 1964. p.119

The Abysmal: Water, Ditches, Ravine, Ambush, Bending, Straightening Out, Bow, Wheel, Melancholy, Sick Hearts, Earache, Blood Red, Beautiful Backs, Wild Courage, Slouching, Stumbling, Defective Chariots, Penetration, The Moon, Thieves, Winding Course, Toil, Laborious Listening, Masculine, Sneaking, The Pithiness of Firm Wood, the Heart, the Soul Locked Up Within the Body, Light Enclosed in Dark, Reason, Repetition of Danger, Foolhardiness or Guile, Directed Downward, A Pit.

This is where the real question lies. Am I doing art for myself or for the world? Is it the anima or animus? I question the 'reasons' behind it. I fight thinking about the marketability of my artwork, yet, I feel good when someone purchases a piece, fueling my creative fire (financially). The fight between what I feel is right and what I reason away becomes increasingly difficult as I sacrifice more for my beliefs. The test is not about whether or not one becomes a famous starving artist, rather, it is about self-sacrifice, and the ability to trust the spirit over the rational mind. This leads me to the topic of objects. The modern world is overloaded with material possessions as it is, and I am essentially adding to this pile. It is possible that material possessions are being used to fill a spiritual void, albeit unsuccessfully.

They have forgotten the secret knowledge of their bodies, their senses, their dreams. They don't use the knowledge the spirit has put into every one of them; they are not even aware of this, and so they stumble along blindly on the road to nowhere—a paved highway which they themselves bulldoze and make smooth so that they can get faster to the big empty hole which they'll find at the end, waiting to swallow them up.⁷

Perhaps the experience of buying and owning an object that communicates on some unconscious level can enlighten the owner some how. But, this is an exceptional hope, and one that should not effect the artist either way. The trap lies in forgetting that it is the process, not the object, that is truly valuable. The internal process becomes manifest in artwork when one attempts to see the underlying truths common to all. Only then can the spiritual benefits of making art possibly effect the artist and patron respectively.

⁷ Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes. *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*. N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1972. p.157

The Clinging: Fire, Sun, Lightning, The Middle Daughter, Coats of Mail & Helmets, Lances and Weapons, Big Bellied, Dryness, The Tortoise, Crab, Snail, Mussel, Hawkbill Tortoise, Heat, Firm Without, Yielding Within, Hollow Trees, Conditioned, Dependent, Brightness, Nature in Radiance, Luminosity from Perseverance, Directing Upward, Mesh Net, Doubled Clarity, Spiritual Core

. The idea that we are all the same, although some may be buried deeper in the anima end of the scales than others, is hope of communication in art. Unleashed from “the fetters of an illusionary outer world,” we are all trying to follow our hearts, and do what we know is right.⁸ However, this is the hardest act in this world. We cling to our possessions, and succumb to our vices and temptations. “ Human life on earth is conditioned and unfree, and when man recognizes this limitation and makes himself dependent upon the harmonious and beneficent forces of the cosmos, he achieves success.”⁹ Though there are large amounts of ‘famous and expensive art objects out there that seem to lack this luminous inner core, I believe that these will not endure. When look at works by Beuys , Keifer, Raushemberg, Newman, Klee, Goldsworthy, and on and on, I see that the feeling that drove them to create was not unlike that of the cave painters at Lascaux. I suspect that the cycle is approaching revolution, if we are not in the midst of it already, and that art and science and spirit will become one once again.

To me, the work of art became a riddle to which the solution had to be man himself—the work of art is the supreme riddle, but man is the solution. This is the threshold that I want to identify as...the end of all traditions.¹⁰

I cannot help but question the sincerity of any artist who believes that his/her work will somehow change people, or the world. Yet, this important driving force fuels my insistence to make art. When the art flows through the artist naturally, the bridge between man and nature is made, and once again art is not separate from life.

⁸ Wilhelm, Richard. *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. N.Y.: Harvest, 1962. p.4

⁹ *The I Ching or Book of Changes*. Trans. Wilhelm/ Baynes. Princeton U.P. 1967.

¹⁰ Stachelhaus, Heiner. *Joseph Beuys*. Trans. Britt, David. N.Y.: Abbeville, 1987. p.65

Keeping Still: The Mountain, Bypath, Little Stones, Doors, Openings, Fruits, Seeds, Eunuchs, Watchmen, Fingers, Dog, Rat, Black-Billed Birds, Firm & Gnarled Trees, Gate, Threshold, Limbo, Protect, Watch, Power of Resistance, Hand, Youngest Son, Guardian, Hidden, Mysterious, Transition, Standstill, Northeast, Perfection, Quiet Heart, Between End & Beginning, Stopping Expansion, Germination Begins.

Art is Life. This statement has always been true, even though ideas of art have changed. It is the artist's job to continually respond to his/her respective time period, always trying to bridge the gap between people, man and spirit, heaven and earth, etc.

In response to Anselm Kiefer's work, A. James Speyer writes:

Modern man's lack of a shared spiritual language and a common mythology does not lead Kiefer to the conclusion that art must be created for its own sake, but rather that such a language must be renewed or reinvented.¹¹

The artist can overcome the boundaries of language and beliefs by speaking to the universal underlying themes that flow through everyone. But, in order to do so, there needs to be personal awareness and understanding. In the I Ching, the hexagram Keeping Still refers to the time between the end of one cycle and beginning of the next:

If the movement...is brought to a standstill, the ego, with its restlessness, disappears as it were. When a man has thus become calm, he may turn to the outside world. He no longer sees in it the struggle and tumult of individual beings, and therefore he has that true peace of mind that is needed for understanding the great laws of the universe and for acting in harmony with them.¹²

In the ever-changing modern world, art must consistently be reborn in ways that still encompass the "great laws," yet communicate these timeless truths to a specific time period. In the world of man, there appears to be an inevitable "threshold" that we are fast approaching. This transition state can be seen as apocalyptic (as in Kiefer's monumental paintings), but, as in each individual, a mistake can be avoided if we are in tune with ourselves. At this critical juncture, the role of art must take us across this liminal space.

¹¹ Speyer, A. James. Fwd. to *Anselm Kiefer*. Rosenthal, Mark. Chicago, 1987.

¹² Wilhelm, Richard. *The I Ching or Book of Changes*. Trans. C.F. Baynes. Princeton U.P. 1967. p.201

The Joyous: The Lake, Pleasure, Harvest, Midautumn, Fruition, Sheep, West, Mouth, Youngest Daughter, Sorceress, Tongue, Smashing & Breaking Apart, Dropping Off & Bursting Open, Hard & Salty Soil, Concubine, Destruction, Outwardly Weak, Inwardly Stubborn, Smiling, Rejoice, Manifest, Refresh, Metal, Discussion,

In the end, the completion of all cycles is cause for celebration. However, the hardest stretch of any race is the final lap, when one is pushed to the threshold of enduring or giving up. In the personal sphere, the artist is faced with overwhelming trials, which must be overcome. Never has the world been so overloaded with temptations of the senses; hence, the artist needs discourse and reaffirmation of his path. The 16th century alchemist Gerhard Dorn spoke not only of the anima (earthly) and animus (spiritual) struggle in man, but also the corpus (body), and the difficulty of uniting the three:

So Mens [the union of anima/animus—the ego] goes on preaching that in every kind of art, ...one needs what one could call a regular exercise of self-education; that is why Mens adds that few people have succeeded in producing the universal medicine...¹³

The metaphorical elixir of life is hardly accessible in a world constantly teasing the senses. But the true artist is the magician, shaman, and spiritual guide to the masses, and he/she cannot possibly achieve this status falsely. It is indeed a time of renewal, and rebirth. Just when the critic's shout "nothing's shocking" and everything seems to have been done already, something happens. I believe that it is the artist who can lead the dualist mind to unity, through the subtleties of the unconscious images that we all seem to understand. The task is like any other noble quest on this earth: really hard. The test of the artist is that of endurance ~ for it is the duration of the creative forces, through the infinite obstacles in one's path, that leads to a few successful Artists. Only by persevering on such a path can I really believe that by making art I am helping others somehow. And only by avoiding the catastrophic fates can we really celebrate the death of this cycle.

¹³ Franz, Marie-Luise von. Alchemical Active Imagination. Boston: Shambhala, 1997. p.112

I have attempted to explain my reasons for not only my own drive toward art making, but perhaps the universal need for artists in general, and what art symbolizes to me. Although the end of any cycle (paper?) is really the beginning of the next, I am sure that the themes throughout this paper will reappear again and again in every cycle I go through. There is a story that Dorn uses to explain how once a man glimpses what you may call “enlightenment” he cannot forget or ignore it, and his life will be forever changed.¹⁴ He speaks of it as a child left behind after the phoenix has risen. This child is the seed of “knowledge” and it will grow inside of one if they cultivate it. The phoenix represents return to the earthly plane, but the dilemma lies in the ability to live in our material world with the newfound knowledge of it’s illusion. At some point there was a realization of man in the flesh as a conduit between heaven and earth, *himmel-erde*.¹⁵ I guess at this point I am trying to use art as my bridge between the real and ethereal, hopefully bringing the two together.¹⁶ Perhaps, someday, I will be able to unify my psyche, and no longer need any bridge at all. Perhaps I will fail and die miserable. Perhaps I don’t know what I am talking about. This is the end.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.47

¹⁵ *Himmel-erde*: “heaven-earth,” *Venezia Contemporaneo: Anselm Kiefer*. Milano: Charta, 1997

¹⁶ This idea links with Ellen Dissanayake’s idea of “liminal space,” and the African myth of the turtle being the gatekeeper, or threshold between the top(heaven) and bottom(earth) of its shell.[Andrews, p.363-366.]

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