

ATHENA AND HEPHAISTOS*

'ARTIFEX OPERATUR PER SUUM INTELLECTUM'. ST TH. AQUINAS, 'SUM. THEOL'. I, 14, 8.

In the production of anything made by art, or the exercise of any art, two faculties, respectively imaginative and operative, free and servile, are simultaneously involved; the former consisting in the conception of some idea in an imitable form, the latter in the imitation (mimesis) of this invisible model (paradeigma)¹ in some material, which is thus in-formed. Imitation, the distinctive character of all the arts, is accordingly two-fold, on the one hand the work of intellect (nous) and on the other of the hands (cheir).² These two aspects of the creative activity correspond to the "two in us", viz. our spiritual or intellectual

*This is the last article written by Dr. Coomaraswamy.

1. An imitation,—“for if it did not effect that, it [painting] would be held to be an idle playing with colours” (Philostratus, ‘Vit. Ap.’ 2. 22.). Of an invisible model,—cf. Plato, ‘Timaeus’ 51 E, 92, Rep. 484 C, 510 D, E, 596 B, ‘Laws’ 981 A; Plotinus, ‘Enneads’ 5. 9. 11. “It is in imitation (anukṛti) of divine forms that any human form is invented here... [for instance] this divine harp, of which the human harp is an imitation” (‘Āitareya Brāhmaṇa’ 6. 27, ‘Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka’ 8. 9). The painter is to “put down on the wall what has been seen in contemplation” (‘tad dhyātam,’ Someśvara, ‘Abhilāṣitārthacintāmaṇi’; 1. 8. 158).

Plato, of course, by “imitation” means an iconography of things unseen, and deprecates the making of “copies of copies,” or realism in the modern sense of the word. It is in the same way only that Apollonius, in Philostratus, ‘Vit. Ap.’ 6. 19, calls “imagination (phantasia) a wiser artist (demiourgos) than imitation,” because the work of the creative artist depends upon “the imagination even of what has not been seen,”—if, indeed, it is not better to make “no images of Gods at all...inasmuch as the intuitive mind (gnome) can draft and represent (anagraphe...kata anastypoutai) better than any artist”. This last is what would be called in India a purely “mental” (‘manas’) or “subtle” (‘sūkṣma’) worship.

2. Philostratus, ‘Vit. Ap.’ 2. 22. cf. ‘Śatapatha Br.’ 3. 2. 4. 11: “Were it not for intellect, the word would babble incoherently,” and ‘Kauṣītaki Up.’ 8. 6. 7: “When intellect is their rider then all things are effected by the two hands...for indeed, without the cooperation of intellect, the two hands would make nothing intelligible,” i. e., would not know what they were doing.

Self and sensitive psycho-physical Ego, working together (synergoi). The integration of the work of art will depend upon the extent to which the Ego is able and willing to serve the Self, or if the patron and the workman are two different persons, upon the measure of their mutual understanding.

The nature of the two faculties, which are respectively the formal and efficient causes in the production of works of art is clearly stated in Philo's account of the building of the Tabernacle "the construction of which was clearly set forth to Moses on the Mount by divine pronouncements. He saw with the soul's eye the immaterial forms (ideai) of the material things that were to be made, and these forms were to be reproduced as sensible imitations, as it were, of the archetypal graph and intelligible patterns...So the type of the pattern was secretly impressed upon the mind of the Prophet as a thing secretly painted and moulded in invisible forms without material; and then the finished work was wrought after that type by the artist's imposition of those impressions on the severally appropriate material substances";¹ and in more general terms by St Bonaventura, who points out that "the work of art proceeds from the artist according to a model existing in the mind; which model the artist discovers (excogitat=cintayati) before he produces, and then he produces as he has predetermined. Moreover, the artist produces the external work in the closest possible likeness of the interior model".²

The work of art is, then, a product at once of wisdom and method, or reason and art (sophia or logos, and techne).³ It may be noted here that the primary references of the words 'sophia' and 'episteme', cf. Hebrew 'hochmā' and Sanskrit 'māyā,' are to the artist's "cunning" or "science", from which the sense of "wisdom" develops; and that while "techne" can often be rendered by "art" as opposed to "artless labour"

1. Philo, 'Moses', 2. 74-75.

2. St Bonaventura, 'De red. artium ad theologiam,' 12.

3. 'Homerio Hymns' 4. 483, in connection with music. Otherwise expressed, in the case of metalwork, it is by art and reason (he techne kai ho logos) that the material causes, fire and steel, etc., are dominated (Plutarch. Mor. 436. A. B). Cf. references in notes 2, p. 1 and 1, p. 4.

4. Māyā, 'from 'mā' = 'man,' vgl. 'metis'...goettliche Kunst" (Grassmann, 'Woerterbuch zum Rigveda'); cf. Liddell and Scott, s. vv. 'mao' and 'metis'.

(*atechnos* tribe)¹ this distinction is the same as that of mere "industry" (tribe) from "method" (*methodos*)². It amounts to the same thing to say that in matters of handicraft or manufacture (*cheirotechnike*) there is one part more allied to science (*episteme*), and another less, and that "without enumeration, measurement, and weighing, the arts (*technai*) would be relatively worthless...and a matter of mere practice and toil";³ or to distinguish art (*techne*) and mere experience (*empeiria*) from science (*episteme*), though the artist needs both.⁴ All these dicta provide a background for the mediaeval: '*Ars sine scientia nihil*' and '*Scientia reddit opus pulchrum*'.

We recognize that for anything to be "well and truly made" the cooperation of the hands as efficient cause and intellect as formal cause is indispensable. The purpose of the present article is to call the attention to the expression of this mythologically in terms of the relation of Athena to Hephaistos, the former being the Goddess of Wisdom who sprang from the head of her father Zeus, and the latter the Titan smith whose wonderful works are produced with the help of Athena as co-worker (*synteknos*)⁵. Athena and Hephaistos "share a common nature, being born of the same father" and live together in a common shrine (*hieron*) or as it were in one and the same house⁶: she is "the mind of God" ('*he theou noesis*', or '*nous*'), and called also Theonoe, and he "the noble scion of light"⁷. From them all men derive their knowledge of

1. Plato, '*Phaedrus*' 260 E, cf. 270 B.

2. Aristotle, '*Etoph. Elench.*' 3. 18.

3. Plato, '*Philebus*' 55 D—56 A.

4. Plato, '*Rep.*' 429 C, '*Ion*' 532 C. 536 C.

5. Plato, '*Statesman*' 274 C. for an example of their cooperation cf. Homer, '*Cypria*' 5.

6. Plato, '*Critias*' 109 C, 112 B.

7. Plato, '*Cratylus*' 407 B. For Theonoe as a type cf. Euripides, '*Helen*,' *passim*, e. g. 530, where she "knows all things truly." Hephaistos is more properly to be connected with '*Aph*' to kindle; his being '*phlox Hephaistolo*'. *Iliad* 17. 68. Characteristic epithets of Hephaistos are '*klytomētis*', "famed for his art", '*klytotechnos*', "famed for his craft," and '*klyto-ergos*', "famed for his work". Athena is '*chari-ergos*', "she who—by her wisdom, or science—gives the work its grace or beauty" ('*Anth. Pal.*' 6. 205),—here is the "formal cause", or "exemplary cause", or "art in the artist" by which he works. "Noble" (*gennalos*), characterising Hephaistos may refer to the common paternity of Hephaistos and Athena ('*Critias*' 109 C), but may rather mean "faithful", by no means implying that his function is not servile, cf. Euripides, '*Helen*' 799. 1611, where '*gennalos*' goes with '*doulos*', and implies a freedom only of the mind (*nous*), in the sense of Philo's '*Quod omnia probas liber sit*'; cf. Aeschylus, '*Prometheus*' 45, where Hephaistos works for Zeus at a task that he "hates".

the arts, either directly or indirectly; "Hephaistos, famous for his art (klytometis),¹ aided by Athena of the gleaming eyes, taught glorious works to men on earth"; or it was Prometheus who stole from them "immanent artistic wisdom (entechnon sophian) and fire", and gave them to men "as a divine portion (moira)".

Here the words 'entechnos' and 'moira' imply that the human "artist in possession of his art" (entechnos demiourgos)⁴ is such by participation (methexis, metalepsis) in the Master Architect's creative power. Athena and Hephaistos, in fact, "agreeing in their love of wisdom and of craftsmanship (philosophia and philotechnia), both together chose this land of ours as being naturally fitted to be the home of virtue and wisdom, and therein they planted as native to the soil good men, and set in their minds the structure of the art of government". All this means that the human artist—say, the blacksmith at his forge—in possession of his art has within him both a wisdom and a method, a science and a skill; and that as a whole man, responsible for both operations, free and servile, and capable alike of imagination and of execution, is of the nature of

1. For metis = 'māyā' see note 4, p. 2. Cf. 'Iliad' 10. 19 'syn metin...tektegalto' and Pindar, 'Olympian Odes' 9. 78 where 'technai = māyābhīh'. Metis as a person is the first wife of Zeus, reborn from his head as Athena (Hesiod 'Th.' 886); the story implying that "the chief god has Wisdom always within him" (H. J. Ross, 'Greek Mythology', p. 80); 'metieta' (for 'metietes') as an epic epithet of Zeus corresponding to Sanskrit 'māyin'; so that "if you would create an image of Zeus you must intuit, or conceive ('ennoein = 'exocogitare', Skr. 'dhyai') encampments, art (metin), and the artistic skills (technai), and how she flowered forth from Zeus himself" (Philostratus, 'Vit. Ap.' 6. 19). Athena is a "worker" ('ergane', Sophocles, fr. 724), as in Latin "operosa Minerva" with Vulcan; and it may be observed that 'energeia' = 'ousia' and is contrasted with 'hyle' (Aristotle, 'Met.' 7. 2. 1, and 6), as 'logos' and 'technē' are contrasted with the material they control (Plutarch, 'Mor.' 436 A, B). Just as, also, for St Th. Aquinas, the artist works 'per verbum in intellectu conceptum', 'Sum. Theol.' 1. 45. 6.

2. 'Homeric Hymns' 20; Plato, 'Critias' 109 C, D.

3. Plato, 'Protagoras' 321 D—322 A.

4. Plato, 'Laws' 903 C; cf. 'Phaedrus' 277 B, where 'to entechnon kai me' are distinguished according to an author's knowledge or ignorance of that of which he treats, and 'Symposium' 209 A, distinguishing "inventive" (heuristikoi) from other artists. For Aristotle, 'Rhet.' 1. 1. 11. and 1. 2. 2, the distinction is that of one whose work is done according to "the laws of art" (entechnos methodos) from one who is not such an expert (atechnos). With 'entechnos' cf. 'enthoos, energeia', 'ennoeia', "inwit", etc.

5. 'Critias' 109 C, D. For the art of government (politēia) as tantamount to the arts in general see 'Rep.' 342,—every art (technē) being a ruler of and stronger than that of which it is an art and for the sake of which it operates.

Athena and Hephaistos both : it is Athena who inspires what Hephaistos effects. So we have Phereclus "whose hands were knowing (epistato) to fashion all manner of wondrous works (daidala), because Athena loved him"¹, and the carpenter who is called "a master of wisdom as to form, by the promptings of Athena"². In this relationship Athena's function, in that she is the source of the formal cause or pattern of the work to be done, is essentially authoritative and paternal rather than receptive or feminine, we need not be surprised to find that the artist's "inspiration" (empnoia, empneusis), or "the divine power (dynamis = śakti) that moves him," is referred to often as "the God", the immanent "Daimon", or Eros, that is to say the Spirit to whom the very word "inspiration" points³.

On the other hand when the servile operation alone is performed by the merely "productive mechanic" (banausikos) who does not understand what he is doing, however industrious he may be, then his service becomes a matter of only "unskilled labour" (atechnos tribe)⁴ and he is reduced to the condition of the mere slave who earns money for a master⁵, or mere "hand" (cheirotechnes) rather than an architect or lover of wisdom⁶. This is precisely the position of the modern chain-belt

1. 'Iliad' 6. 61. Hardly to be distinguished from the Sophia of Hephaistos is "the Sophia of Daidalos" (Plato, 'Euthyphro' 11 E) ; and the like must hold good for Regin, Wayland, and the other great mythical smiths.

2. 'Iliad' 15. 410-411.

3. On inspiration see my 'Figures of Thought or Figures of Speech', 1916, pp. 25-29, and s. v. in 'The Dictionary of the Arts'.

4. Plato, 'Phaedrus' 260 E, cf. 270 B.

5. Xenophon, 'Mem'. 3. 11. 4.

6. Aristotle, 'Met'. 1. 1. 17. ; Xenophon, 'Vect'. 5. 4.

worker, in whom the industrial system whether capitalistic or totalitarian, has divided Athena from Hephaistos.¹

1. All this is, of course, perfectly well known. "Validation of success in terms of externals has become the mark of our civilization. In such a value-system human relations take on the values of the salesman...Under such conditions men everywhere become nasty, brutish, and cruel...Unless Western man is able to release himself from the degrading tyranny of his enslavement to the religion of economics he is as certainly doomed to self destruction as all the portents indicate that he is" (M. E. Ashley Montagu in 'School and Society', vii. 65, no. 1696, 1947). "Today, under the centralised economic order, we appear to be descending below the level of the beast, hating, exploiting and destroying each other on a world scale, and reducing the average man to a standardised automaton incapable of thinking and acting for himself" (Bharatan Kumarappa, 'Capitalism, Socialism, or Villagiam?' 1946, p. 194). There are two positions: that of the tradesman, that "however much...individuals suffer, progression in line with the manufacturing enterprise of civilisation must be allowed free course" (Sir George Watt, in 'Indian Art at Delhi,' 1913), and that of the humanist, that "however much an economic system may succeed in bringing riches it will be unstable and prove a failure if in the process it causes human suffering, or in any way hinders people from a full life" (Bharatan Kumarappa, *ibid.* p. 112). Let us choose between them.