

SHELLING

Although the extract consists in just one long sentence, it overflows with profound meaning. If taken apart, these words might appear simple and plain but since they are so beautifully intertwined they seem to subliminally reveal unspoken truths. In fact, each time I read the sentence, my mind discovers a new detail and births numerous questions. Therefore, after analysing, as much as I could in a short period of time, the extract, I find myself in an almost full agreement with Schelling's words. I also believe that art has a sacred task and that through it human beings can draw upon hidden spiritual truths, however, I am not certain it can be designated as the highest form of philosophy.

In order to provide further explanations and to delve deeper into my assertions, I will now proceed by offering a few arguments and examples in support of my thesis.

First of all I think it is utterly important to stress the fact that Schelling lived between the end of the 1700s and the first half of the 1800s, when an artistic phenomenon, the so called "Romanticism", caught on, starting from Germany. Romantics praised the emotional, irrational and impulsive side of human nature, the "dionysian" spirit, as Nietzsche would address it, and considered art the only thing capable of expressing, in the purest of terms, this aspect of the human soul. Art (not just figurative art but also music, dance, etc.), similarly to the orgiastic rites that took place in Ancient Greece to celebrate the god Dionysus, was seen as a gateway to access the divine. For this reason art was invested by the Romantics with an almost religious duty and, like Schelling himself, held this form of expression in high regards.

It is easy to understand why this was especially when one realizes that the period of time during which Schelling lived was extremely tumultuous. Wars and revolutions raged impetuously and peace was nowhere to be found. This panorama led Schelling to turn to another reality, another realm, another universe: art.

I believe that to this day art has the same function that it had centuries ago: it can still offer an escape route away from a dystopic reality, even though it was stripped of its original religious

purpose.

But has art, nowadays, really lost the ability to communicate with the Idea, with God, with a higher spiritual source of energy or however one wants to name it?

After pondering on this question I concluded that yes, it is still possible for art to link one with the divine. Maybe it is not one's intention to make use of art to access something metaphysical but while admiring a work of art, for example the Sistine Chapel painted by Michaelangelo, or while listening to a beautiful piece of music, one can feel an undeniable connection to something that cannot be defined.

Akin to this theory is the one elaborated by the German philosopher Schopenhauer. He also asserted that the work of art made by the artist, a human being more elevated than the rest of men and endowed with special qualities (this is an obvious reference to Kant's philosophy), can help anyone approach the world of the "Ideas".

It is a marvellous interpretation with which I completely agree but, on the contrary on what Schelling affirms, I would not consider art the highest and purest form of philosophy. The reason behind such a strong opinion dwells in the fact that I would not define "art" with the word "philosophy" but rather with the term "key", which can open the doors to hermetic truths, or with the word "wire", that can plug one in a dimension that goes beyond one's senses and rationality. Through art one can rise above and embrace the sublime.

Margherita Meissner