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## WHERE DOES BEAUTY COME FROM, OR WHERE DOES IT GO?

One of the romantic stories I read in my childhood ended with these words: “Where does beauty come from, or where does it go?” The intensity and light irony of this unanswered question has been accompanying me my whole life, and the main virtue of such questions is that you can never answer them.

How to answer the questions: What is God? Who am I? What is love? What is beauty? etc. Of course, we do not have unequivocal answers to these, but the search for possible answers can determine the manner, purpose and essence of one’s life.

What is art? — this question reminds me of a religious fable, medieval story: Saint Augustine was walking by the seaside one day, meditating on the difficult problem of how God could be simultaneously three Persons (the unity of the Holy Trinity). He came across a little child. The child had dug a little hole in the sand, and with a small spoon or seashell he was scooping water from the sea into the small hole. Augustine was watching him for a while and finally asked the child:

“What are you doing?”

“I want to scoop all the water from the sea and pour it into the little hole in the sand” — answered the child.

The saint smiled at the child’s naivety.

“That is impossible. Obviously, the sea is too large and the hole too small.”

“Indeed” — said the child, “but I will sooner draw all the water from the sea and empty it into this hole than you will succeed in penetrating the mystery of the Holy Trinity with your limited understanding.”

Augustine turned away in amazement and when he looked back the child had disappeared.

This fable probably reminds us once again that everything cannot and will not be brought into the frame of rationalism. Like faith, art goes beyond rationalism. Despite the fact that there are hundreds of versions of the definition of culture and art, philosophy of culture, psychology, and many different research methods, the main question still remains open — what made the primitive man step back from everyday life and leave his most intense impressions for the eternity. What made all nations, in all times, combine sound and color, stone and earth, their own body, voice and facial expressions into a harmonious whole and creatively transform everything they saw, heard and touched.

There are so many definitions of art that the definitions themselves are sometimes examples of poetic thought — poetry is a stairway to heaven, beauty leads to thinking, and thinking leads to God.

As for the current problem facing the world community, it is the commercialization of all fields and directions of art. I think that the young generation should be given the opportunity to express their opinion and creative position without thinking about the commercial aspect of the creative product. This is a very difficult issue, but extremely relevant for small nations.

Global, large-scale dialogue of cultures is especially important to perceive Asia in Europe not as a terrorist world but as the homeland of Hafiz and Khayyam, and to see America, China and Russia not as nuclear superpowers but as the motherlands of Whitman, Lao Tzu, and Dostoyevsky.

I repeat, it is very difficult to answer the question about the nature of art, but sometimes it is very easy to say what great art is. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a primitivist painter Niko Pirosmi lived in Tbilisi, Georgia. His pictures were brought to Picasso in Paris by Polish brothers Ilya and Kiril Zdanevich. Seeing them, the Spaniard exclaimed he had hardly seen an artist who painted better than him (later Picasso created a graphic portrait of Pirosmi).

The streets of Tbilisi at that time were teeming with Pirosmi's paintings, hung as signboards and advertisements. He tirelessly painted from morning till evening, he did not even get paid in return, and when he was asked why he did not spare himself, he answered: "I can't, as soon as I fall asleep, St. George stands over me with a whip in his hand, grabs the whip and orders me — get up, Nikala, draw! I also wake up and draw and draw." But only geniuses come up with such answers.