

THE BRAIN AND THE HAND (ON DRAWING)¹

It is certainly due to the human hand's conformation that man's brain has managed to develop in such an outstanding manner. As far as I know, this is a fact that has never been noticed by anthropology scholars. A man's hand possesses an agility that Nature did not grant to other living creatures. Therefore, the human brain conceives an idea which the hand translates and expresses by creating a concrete and tangible object. The resulting object then stimulates the brain with a thought and desire for perfection.

In the animal kingdom there are many species that are superior to man for their physical strength, speed in running and rapidity of movement, the agility of their body and elasticity of their muscles; and then there are birds – true masters of space – for whom, when observed, it is impossible not to feel admiration, as for example with a seagull's rapid and light evolutions.

However, despite the undeniable intelligence of certain animals, which derives from a sense of instinct which is much stronger and more authentic than ours which have withered away due to the progress of civilization; I say, despite the intelligence, reflection and logic of which certain animals are capable, man has an enormous superiority over them due to his brain and particularly the conformation of his hands.

The alliance between the brain and the hand is an alliance in which the brain can ideate and the hand can create something to bring the idea into being. Such collaboration between the brain and the hand is the factor which has made the rise of our civilization possible and the creation of numerous works (including authentic masterpieces) and therefore the birth and existence of Art.

Without the conformation and ability of man's hand, our museums would not be full of paintings and sculptures, our cities would not have the many churches and *palazzi* which are true wonders of architecture, and music and literature would not exist. I say that the highest manifestations of the spirit would not exist but also man's everyday life would have taken on a different aspect and we proba-

¹ Text by Giorgio de Chirico, signed "Isabella Far". Typescript datable to the 1940s. The Giorgio and Isa de Chirico Foundation Archives.

bly would have continued to live in caves, struggling to defend ourselves from the cold and danger.

To think that today, man could no longer live in caves and do without all the comforts that the ability of his hands and the agility of his fingers have provided him with, in thinking of all this, I say, one must necessarily suppose that man must be very concerned about conserving the ability of his hands and the agility of his fingers.

It can be logically deduced that in our era of mechanization in which machines are gradually substituting manual labour, man should, indeed, be scared at the thought of what could happen in the future if men no longer knew how to do anything with their hands and would completely rely on machines. In fear of such an event, should make every effort to avoid such a state and create specialist schools to effectively encourage craft, and above-all, return to the true, healthy and eternal conception of Art, urging artists of the day to work in such a way that both the brain and the hand's ability are equally and seriously employed.

Unfortunately, today it is difficult to see a work of Art in which one can sincerely admire the knowledge and skill with which such a work has been realized and, with the passing of years, this shall become more and more difficult.

In my brief discourse, I am thinking above-all of Great Master drawings and at the awe-inspiring ability with which they were executed. To mention just a few of the Masters who dedicated themselves to drawing, I would like to remember Albrecht Dürer in particular who executed drawings of great preciousness. In a different way, although equally beautiful, are the drawings of Fragonard and Watteau, so full of plasticity and free in the markings and shading. Let us also remember Ingres's virtuosity, as well as the beautiful drawings of our nineteenth century painter Giovanni Carnovali, known as "Piccio", which are also necessary to mention. These men were all great artists who lived in eras when knowing how to draw was natural. Prior to them were also writers and poets who drew very well such as Goethe, Musset, Victor Hugo and others.

I would like to make note of how able and capable men were at a time when the words 'craft' and 'technique' did not have a negative meaning like today – a meaning owing to the selfish propaganda of the Modernists; a time when craft meant knowledge and in the field of Art, as in any field, knowledge means power.

With regard to the word "technique", so despised today by the Modernists, it is important to remember its etymology. In fact, the word "technique" comes from the Greek *Tekne* and *Tekne* in Greek means Art.