

## PROBLEMS OF ARTISTIC CREATION

### THE LESSON OF THE RENAISSANCE

In his *Trattato di Pittura*, written in 1435, Leon Battista Alberti recalls Zeuxis, who, judging his own paintings invaluable, refused to put a price on them. The nobility of art and the artist's interests are thus defended in a work which expressed above all the tendencies of a new generation. But it was also the first manifesto in a propaganda campaign whose fruits were to be fully realized a century later. The artist would finally come to be respected, paid for his pains on an equal basis with the man of letters (until he surpassed the latter), be renowned and assured of meriting his fame. Michelangelo rejoiced in the hardness of marble and bronze because these materials would assure the survival of his works over a long period. When Vasari sent him a copy of his *Vite*, he thanked him with a sonnet, in which he congratulates Vasari for his work on behalf of artists—and not only contemporary artists, since he also refers to those who, having lived in less fortunate times, had fallen into, or risked falling into, oblivion: *Or le memorie altrui già spente, accese...*

Translated by D. Bennett & V. A. Velen.

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The value of art had doubtless been recognized and affirmed long before the efforts of an Alberti or a Vasari. The artist's conscious pride in his metier is age-old. In 1355, the Sieneese painters defined in the statutes of their guild their role and purpose in terms that stress the dignity of art: "We are, by the grace of God, the ones who show men who are ignorant of learning the miracles performed by virtue of and for the glory of the Holy Faith." This text and many others of the same type—and older—would seem to indicate that painting, certainly justified for its beauty and further for instructing the masses, and honored above all by the extent to which it served religion, did not enjoy complete autonomy.

In the sixteenth century a certain Sieneese painter, Pacchiarotto, who was tied to old forms, executed commissions for a clientele as hidebound as himself. As indifferent to the lure of fashion as to the examples of his greatest contemporaries, he smugly held to the rules of a religious imagery sanctified by a glorious past. But if his hand remained faithful, his heart was no longer in his work. Limiting his horizons to traditional themes but ignoring the teachings whose interpreter he was, he painted majestic virgins and touching little predellas, while he pursued a dissolute and according to some reports even criminal life.

This one case gives pause for reflection. The esteem in which, despite everything, a Pacchiarotto was held indicates a new attitude as much on the part of the artist as on that of the public toward a work of art. The dignity of the work is increasingly less linked to its didactic utility (or, in other words, its subject). If the work is still admired for its intrinsic beauty (as it had always been), this admiration is freed from themes and addressed to hitherto neglected or unperceived aspects. Such admiration is engendered as much by technical achievement as by the free expression of a personality. This latter point is particularly noteworthy. Just barely emerged from the shadows, the artists commanded attention, and in less than a century advanced to first place. It was taken for granted that the merit of a statue or painting did not lie only in its beauty—that is, in its conformity to a certain ideal and, in the last analysis, to the spectator's desire—but in the fact that it translated sincerely

a man's vision, reflected his thought and his true genius. In the center of a sixteenth-century altar a Madonna is a Madonna; painted by Raphael, it is still a Madonna but even more "a Raphael." The work as a creation and the artist as a creator aroused the interest of an ever growing public. Due to this new type of curiosity a problematic of art was elaborated or, more specifically, expanded its domain. The problems of art were no longer only the province of the artists. Their terms became diversified, their solutions were no longer enumerated in handbooks on techniques; they involved a return to postulates or theories concerning the principles of art, its methods and aims. In this sense the theoretical writings of Alberti marked a decisive progress, but it remained for subsequent generations to take up and make fashionable a problem too often ignored since antiquity, barely touched upon by Alberti himself, and in any case treated in ignorance of its psychological aspects: the problem of artistic creation.

Without doubt, in the sixteenth century, the fervent nostalgia of romanticism was unknown and unforeseeable. If the first symptoms of Baroque ebullition had already appeared, they hardly attracted the attention of contemporary observers. Biographers, critics, historians and theoreticians did not mention them. They kept aloof. When their attention was directed to the problem of artistic creation, the painful mystery, the dramatic aspect of every artistic effort, the loneliness of the man of genius, his inner struggle, are not apparent to them. These secret areas were for them not yet objects of study. Instead, they strived to better understand and analyze, in the light of contemporary examples and philosophical teachings, the technique of the creation, its rules, various styles, and above all the conditions in which a work, which was not created out of nothing but out of matter, took form. It should be noted that it is not a question here of the "doing," of the methods or habits peculiar to each artist, no more than of the atelier practice, but of the general conditions of the creative act to which the creator, whatever his training and temperament, is necessarily subjected.

On March 28, 1546 (the second Sunday in Lent) Benedetto Varchi, speaking before the Florentine Academy, made his celebrated commentary on Michelangelo's first sonnet, *Non ha*

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*l'ottimo artista alcun concetto...*, and on that occasion distinguished between the different processes in the creation of a work of art. By work of art he simply meant, without reference to the concept of beauty or giving to the word *art* any greater connotation, any object made by human hands and not produced by nature: a pile of stones as well as a building.

Everything created by art, Varchi said, follows one of these five modes:

1. Changing and transforming one thing into another, as when a statue is made from bronze (a new form imposed on matter).

2. Putting together elements of the same kind, which are found dispersed and separated, as when one makes a pile of stones.

3. Reuniting (judiciously) things (materials) of different kinds, as when one builds a house.

4. By means of an alteration (of the matter) through the effect of some active agent, as when one makes brick from clay or bread from flour.

5. By removing or reducing the parts, as when one makes a Mercury out of marble (*col togliere e levar via delle parti, come si fa d'un marmo Mercurio*).

We note that these five modes can be reduced to three: alteration of the given material in its form or substance (numbers 1 and 4); the assembling and composition of elements of the same sort or heterogeneous (numbers 2 and 3); reduction of parts (number 5). The last process is that of the direct carving of the stone cutter, statue or wood sculptor.

Varchi addressed the Florentine Academy a second time in the course of Lent, 1546, on the 4th of April. The subject of this further "lesson" was the "hierarchy of the arts." Let us note right away that Varchi successively pleads several causes. One will note too the extension of the word "art" to encompass more than in the preceding lesson, in which the arts touching on the production of material objects were not considered. This time the speaker embraced all human activities: the major and minor arts, industries, techniques. However, our principle interest in this discussion lies in the comparison, fully explored, between painting and sculpture.

Varchi recalled for his audience how Baldassare Castiglione in the *Cortegiano*, printed in 1528, had justified painting: "More craftsmanship is employed in painting than in sculpture." Sculpture lacks the infinite possibilities of painting: perspective, the color that makes possible the representation of light and shadow, the distances, the enormous landscapes, the thickly populated scenes, the forests, the plains, the illumination of a city.

Varchi then gave his justifications for sculpture. Some were already formulated in the *Cortegiano*. Others were new. In enumerating the advantages of sculpture Varchi considered one to be the fact that it could be touched. The sculptured object is a volume, a solid mass. It attracts our hands, which painting does not; its beauties, the harmony of its forms are somehow perceptible through our finger tips. Touch is considered the least deceptive of our senses, the final proof of truth. Sculpture "copies substance," while painting is related to "the accidental." Varchi limits himself here to interpreting in pedantic terms the difference between "being" and "appearing."

If the tangible reality of the sculptured image can justify a preference for it, it can also inspire mistrust. But in any case it is a fact which has had undeniable consequences in the history of painting and sculpture, and often explains their separate destinies. A painting is a mark, a sign written on a surface; a statue is a thing and we can easily imagine the power of latent life in its mass. This possibility of animation has given birth to many fables, from Pygmalion to Don Juan, and if sculpture has been more suspect than painting in the eyes of iconoclasts, it is because the idolatry of carved images seemed more alarming.

Varchi did not express a preference between painting and sculpture, but after the publication of his two addresses to the Florentine Academy, he wrote to Michelangelo to ask his opinion. Could he have doubted the response? Although Michelangelo practiced both arts, he always professed himself a sculptor. On this occasion he even said, "I am not a painter."

Sculpture was not only *his* art, it was the "foremost of the arts," *la prim'arte...* "I believe," he wrote to Varchi in 1549, "that painting should be considered to be better the more nearly

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it approaches sculpture, and sculpture to be worse as it approaches painting. This is why it has always seemed to me that sculpture is the luminary of painting, and that the difference between them is like the difference between the sun and the moon." Thus the variety of its subjects and the fullness of its designs cease to be an argument in favor of painting. Far from assuring its pre-eminence, they signify its weakness. Sculpture no longer has anything to do with the "picturesque;" it preserves its purity only by turning away from "history."

"By sculpture," Michelangelo added, "I mean what one makes by cutting from the mass, for what one makes by modelling is similar to painting. In brief, since painting and sculpture both come from one intelligence, one can let both live in peace and here give up any argument, because it takes up more time than making statues. If the one who writes that painting is nobler than sculpture understands in the same way everything he writes, then my servant could write better than he."

To whom was this vehement reproach addressed? To Leonardo, as is usually believed? Or rather to Castiglione, as the text of the *Cortegiano*, cited by Varchi, would lead us to believe? The matter is of little importance. Whoever are its detractors, sculpture has rights to nobility and privileges which without doubt are easy to misjudge, but which are impossible to deny.

There is first of all something in it that da Vinci himself concedes—sculpture defies the centuries. In a sonnet addressed to Vittoria Colonna, Michelangelo contrasts the brevity of life, of the artist and his model, to the perpetuity of a statue.

It is nevertheless an easy argument whose banality could not have escaped Michelangelo. If the primacy of sculpture lies first of all in the creative act, it should be inseparable from a process which allows no room for regret, and which—without excluding, quite the contrary, the long time spent in preliminary meditation—does not allow, at the decisive moment, the least hesitation or slip of the hand. Varchi observed that the sculptor does not return to a work, while the painter retouches his. It would seem that it was Michelangelo's repugnance to altering the purity of the first creative inspiration, as it issued from the inner self where all images are conceived, that led him to give sculpture (or direct cutting) first importance, and in painting to

prefer frescos to the painstaking work of oils. When he was about to start work on his *Last Judgment*, he discovered that the wall of the Sistine Chapel had been prepared for oils, and he immediately ordered the glaze to be removed.

Rapidity and sureness of execution can also be the case with the painter, but the passionate attack on stone gives the sculptor alone the feeling of unveiling beauty. As we have seen, Varchi placed sculpture among the arts that he characterizes as the partial cutting away of a worked over matter—*un levar via delle parti*. Michelangelo never expressly stated that he saw this as one of the reasons for preferring sculpture to the other plastic arts, but at every turn he lets it be understood. The thought of this cutting away, of this uncovering of a form prefigured in the mind and pre-existent in the matter, obsessed, tormented and finally exalted him. He at one time expressed this in the sonnet:

*Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto  
ch'un marmo solo in sé non circoscriva  
col suo soverchio...*

A sculptor conceives nothing, and can conceive nothing but what a block of marble already contains, and his art is to bring into the light what is hidden in the opaque mass by a superfluous bulk, the *soverchio*. Thus a general condition of artistic creation is expounded which could not be ignored at a time when the teaching of the school kept it alive: *In lapide est forma Mercurii in potentia*.

In his *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi*, Galileo has one of his characters exclaim in admiration and regret, "If I look at a most excellent statue, I think to myself, when will you know how to remove the superfluous cover (*il soverchio*) from a piece of marble and discover this beautiful figure that was hidden there?" Nothing exists that cannot exist, that has not already existed in some form; nothing is made that cannot be made, so that every action consists of giving reality to a possibility: *Actio agentis nihil aliud est quam extrahere rem de potentia ad actum*.

Painting is no less subject to this common law than sculpture. The painting—and this is still Galileo commenting—"is in essence on the painter's palette where the colors are." The same

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for the arts which like poetry and music seem to do without material support, it would be quite easy to show that, on the contrary, they materialize two times: once in the sonorous waves of which their output consists, and again in the written symbols which translate, establish and transmit them. And all the possible combinations, hidden in the body of numbers, are as genuinely present as the statue in the block of marble.

It is not, however, the same presence, since in this regard the statue has an advantage which for the unsophisticated remains remarkable. In addition, natural philosophy, as it was conceived in the sixteenth century, did not by any means deny this reality of the object covered by a *soverchio* which went beyond its contours. Like metal in the vein, the object was there, already endowed, even before its form was unveiled, with physical properties essential to this form.

The pre-existence in the material mass of one, or as Galileo said, "a thousand" beautiful statues does not make the artist's intervention useless. On the contrary, it imposes itself on the artist in two ways. Undoubtedly Sagredo thinks first of the competency of the hand, but it is not enough; the hand is employed in the service of an intention. A choice must be made among an infinity of possibilities. The first step in the creative act is the birth of the "idea."

The first step only, because creation does not amount to a *concetto*. We are ourselves often tempted to believe that this first creation is of little importance in relation to what follows. The execution, the work of the hand, far from serving the idea, modifies it, enriches it, and in case of need deviates from it, so that the final result is in part unforeseen. Etienne Gilson writes, "Even when everything has been prepared and calculated, the artist still does not know what his work will be." Malraux goes even further when he affirms, "It is often the mind that searches, and *always* the hand that finds." Our intellectual age (an intellectualism which is, however, shy and ready to disown itself at every opportunity) willingly places emphasis on the inevitable transformations in an initial design. An often quoted saying, perhaps apocryphal, illustrates this penchant well. Questioned about his "researches," Picasso is supposed to have replied, "I am not looking for anything, I find." But even had the artist



himself searched, the infinite possibilities among which he is supposed to have chosen would still obsess him in the course of his work. The one most conscious of what he wants, the most determined to make the completed work the perfect image of the idea, knows well that to choose is to exclude, and regret at having to reject some alternative sometimes inclines him to keep it in a work thus wittingly given over to a rough draft, a possibility of accomplishment. Such is the temptation of the *non finito*. Or again the artist, having searched, finds what he was not seeking. Betrayed and overridden by his own hand, he usurps unexpected powers and can himself take advantage of an "accidental masterpiece," provided he values it at its own worth.

Many examples of such surprises have aroused in more than one philosopher of art excessive disdain for the artist's avowed or presumed intentions. Every intention is suspect to them. They think that every freedom must be left to the hand, even to an accidental jet from a sponge. It is therefore not without some irritation nor a little ingratitude that René Huyghe speaks of our "inveterate rationalism," which leads us "to believe that to execute a work of art consists in realizing in the matter a concept already well elaborated in the mind." We are certainly on the wrong track, but in such good company that there is some small consolation. Wasn't this "rationalism" that of Michelangelo? Wasn't he one of the greatest creators and theoreticians of the Renaissance? Let us recognize without embarrassment then that the role of the "plan" in artistic creation remains at least a problem, insoluble perhaps but not trifling. Let us approach it from another angle.

Exactly as his adversaries, the Aristotelians, Giordano Bruno maintains for certain that the sphere is the most perfect solid, the least subject to change. From this he concludes that the final, eternal and immutable element of matter can only be spherical. Then, appealing to observable experience, he believes a proof for this hypothesis is found in the existence of pebbles rounded by the movement of water. Their form pre-exists in any fragment of rock. Nature disengages the form, by setting in motion an energy apparently blind but secretly directed by the soul of the world, always and everywhere present. How can we then deny to human works an intention so generously accorded

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to elemental forces? The artist executes only what he has conceived, be it in forgetfulness of his first idea, for at no point in his work is the mind absent. Even if he will not admit it, his hand "obeys his intellect." Of the two methods, two moments, or aspects, distinguished by Aristotle in every artistic creation, *mimésis* (imitation) and *poiésis* (true creation), it is the first, *mimésis*, that qualifies the work of the hand. The hand obeys, that is, it copies. And what does it copy? Nature, said da Vinci. But for Michelangelo, who was imbued with the teachings of Neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism (both of which agree on this point), the model is no longer the perceptible being but is the child of the mind. The artist does not receive his inspiration from the external world, or at least not directly. The beauty outside—*il bel di fuore*<sup>1</sup>—penetrates his soul through his eyes; it is transmuted there into an "image of the heart"—*immagine del cor*<sup>2</sup>—and becomes a universal form. In the poems that contain these phrases, we recognize the most familiar Platonic themes of the period. From the other side, Varchi, in his "Lesson on the First Sonnet," throws light on an Aristotelian idea which was just as evident and no less fashionable. Assimilated to the *exemplar* of the Latins and the *forma agens* of the scholars, the *concetto* can be suggested by viewing a natural object (and through this detour brought back to the Idea, if we consider every visible form as the emanation of an idea); but it is also to a certain extent a creation of our mind. This is necessarily true if we speak of a form which is not to be found in nature. When an artisan makes a bed, his model is his idea of a bed, unless he reproduces another bed, which shifts the conditions of the problem but does not modify them, and it is still true to say: *forma agens respectu lecti est in animo artificis*.

We still know nothing of the nature of the concept, but to advance step by step without straying far from the commonly accepted doctrines of Michelangelo's contemporaries, we can note at any rate that the work of the hand is the imitation or translation of an inner image; for even if the artist has in view

<sup>1</sup> Sonnet, *Non vider gli occhi miei cosa mortale*, Edit. Frey, No. 79, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Quatrain, *Amor, la tua beltà non è mortale*. Edit. Frey, No. 62, p. 51.

an object existing outside of himself as his model, this object (be it natural or artificial) must pass through his consciousness and be absorbed by him. Here we have the *exemplar*, the beginning and end of all creation, its first moment and its ultimate end. Now let us seek to describe the genesis of this inner model.

"If you still do not see the beauty in yourself," said Plotinus, "do as the sculptor of a statue which must become beautiful: he removes a part, scrapes, polishes and cleans until he frees the beautiful lines of the marble; as he does, strip away the superfluous."<sup>3</sup> This comparison between the sculptor's art and our own search for beauty, for the "universal form" (or a latent destiny) obsessed Michelangelo. Did he borrow it from Plotinus? We hesitate to believe this. To tell the truth we know nothing. Michelangelo pretended not to be a philosopher and his correspondence hardly enlightens us as to his reading. He was, however, attentive and willingly opened himself to the teachings which agreed with his own aspirations. One thing is undeniable: the Plotinian accent given to certain words that undoubtedly came from the heart.

The madrigal *Siccome per levar, donna, si pone...*<sup>4</sup> gives us an example: "as a living figure is hidden in the hard stone, so are my good intentions, if there be any, buried deep in the superfluity (in the *soverchio*) of the flesh." The lady to whom this poem is addressed (Vittoria Colonna) alone has the power to remove this exterior covering and bring to light what it conceals of reason, virtue, strength. Here is the woman loved who "sculpts" her lover. But if we return to the sonnet *Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto*, we see that, on the contrary, it is the lover who strives to actualize in the beloved woman what among the powers of the soul will be most favorable to him. For the soul contains everything, as does the marble. Varchi comments, "As in marble there is beauty and ugliness, so in the beloved person are all the pleasures and torments." If the lover, like the artist, does not obtain what he desires, the fault is not his. "My death and your mercy, you bear together in

- *Canzades*, I, vi, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Edit. Frey, No. 84.

your heart, and the ardor of my weak genius knows how to achieve no more than death.”

This supposition of diverse realities and equally the conviction that everything that we discover pre-exists our discoveries are in the Platonic order. They are affirmed in every domain, the sciences as well as the arts. Euclid, who avowed he was a “Platonic philosopher” and who was called one frequently, considered the mathematical truths demonstrated in the *Elements* as realities perfectly independent of our “yes” or “no”. For him they contain nothing conventional; they are what they are. The merit of the scientist is in discovering them, or better illuminating them with an inner light, for, as in the case of the unrevealed but extant pre-existence of the truth in us, they exist only in the consciousness of this truth. Galileo was hardly pleased that his “innovations” were discussed, though it made him famous, as though it were only yesterday and thanks to him that the earth had started to revolve around the sun. His disciple, Mario Guiducci, in a lecture on Michelangelo’s *Rime*, insisted on the fact that “our modern experiences are not innovations in nature” (*non sono novità in natura*). We create nothing; through methodical effort we grasp the essence of things and we grasp it in ourselves.

Just as the artist when he searches for his subject, that is, an image that will be the true model of his work, finds it in himself and does not create it *ex nihilo*. He discovers it in himself, in sculpting, by a process allied to direct cutting. For Plotinus perhaps and doubtless for Michelangelo the sculptor’s art did not intervene here as an allegory conceived to represent better the sense of an introspective effort. The affinity perceived between the work of the hand and that of the mind is real; it reveals a universal order. In the same way as the hand frees an image from a block of marble, the “poetic” intellect (otherwise termed active and creative) frees the “concept” from the mass of all-inclusive diffuse thought. The birth of the *conchetto* is no more than the passing of one among many realities from the subconscious to consciousness, it being understood that the clear thought pre-exists in the density of confused thought, the mass of which (like the block of marble) constitutes our self.

This self, which is enriched by the contributions of general

experience, becomes in turn a field of experience. It is enriched in two ways: consciously by our attentive perceptions, by our study; unconsciously (and continually) through our unmindful perceptions, which we believe to be stillborn because they do not come alive immediately, but which are registered and live a latent life in our memory. From both an inner world is formed, which assumes a certain coloration that marks an individuality. To this process, variously described by philosophers from the Renaissance to the present, another is added: the birth of a concept which likewise can be the reward of conscious, applied effort or the result of a fortuitous discovery, a sudden seizure. In the latter case the sudden clear image seems to be less stolen from the depths than to have escaped itself to rise to the surface, to impose itself on the artist and sometimes to surprise him to the point where he attributes it to the inspiration of the Muses and welcomes it as a gift from heaven.

Thus, in the sixteenth century, two poetics divide the attention of theoretical opinion; one is based on law and refers to Aristotle, while the other, inspired by Plato, recognizes the power of *furor divinus*. This divergence has aroused passionate debate, but at any rate, the poet (or more generally speaking, the creator) does not and cannot ignore the fact that he is pregnant with multiple possibilities to which, though weakly, the drafts and rough sketches, the preludes to every work of art, bear witness. No less significant are the hesitations of the artists on the course to adopt at the moment of confronting an important task, and even more the state of uncertainty in which beginners who have not yet found their way are maintained. Michelangelo is a case in point. Charles de Tolnay's judicious analyses have pointed out the duality of inspiration that dominated the master's youth: the works of his early years succeed each other in pairs (example: *the Virgin on the Stair* and *the Battle of the Centaurs*, executed contemporaneously about 1493-1494)—pairs whose two members oppose each other, seem to take each other's measure, the one suspect to the other, in which the sacred is opposed to the profane and the form of classicism to that of baroque disorder. Considering his problem from a much different point of view, Varchi forcefully affirms the unlimited possibilities of the human mind, a familiar thesis to

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Renaissance thinkers. It is expressed in other forms by Telesius when, dealing with moral life, he places the accent on man's equal aptitude for good and evil. Varchi's originality lies in his recognition of these opposed virtualities, not only in all human beings, but in every branch of their activity. After having referred back (somewhat abusively) to the "all in all" of Anaxagoras, he states that "in all men exist by nature certain germs which are like the principles of all the arts and sciences"; and it proceeds from this context that if our author presumes the presence in all of us of on the whole complementary aptitudes, he distinguishes in us also all the possibilities for good or bad use of these aptitudes: since we contain good and evil in ourselves, we can draw from ourselves the true and the false, the beautiful and the ugly.

This established, Varchi hastens to acknowledge that the universality of powers in all men does not prevent each from having his own personality. "If it seems that everyone is capable of learning all the arts, it is no less manifest that some among them are more gifted from birth for one art than another (*onde pare che tutti le possino apprendere, non è però che non si vegga manifestamente alcuni essere nati molto più atti a una che a un'altra...*).

With more or less success, and more often in ignorance of the terms of the problem, the artist conciliates a general possibility and the affirmation of a unique personality. This is a fact that the theoretician is obliged to accept and that he seeks to account for. The general possibility results from the fact that the individual is placed, on the one hand, in the perceptible universe, and, on the other hand, finds himself subject to the action of universal Intellect. A double experience enriches him, making of himself (Michelangelo would have said, of his heart) a world from which he draws the elements of his work, and in the choice that he makes at the decisive moment—the moment of activating his powers—his personality is revealed. "The spider," said Sébastien Mercier, "draws poison from the same rose from which the bee extracts a sweet honey." Thus from the same theme two artists draw two different interpretations, and from the same experience two different conclusions. We cannot reproach the spider for drawing poison

from the rose; an animal's act is regulated by an organic law which allows no infraction. Man on the contrary enjoys a latitude which permits him to opt for the poison or for the honey. It is for him to choose well, that is, to choose what serves his own genius.

This choice occurs several times, at every phase of a process in which the execution of the work is only the final goal: a more or less attentive and conscious choice of elements taken from the perceptible world and of those which make up the artist's inner world; a choice of the *concetto* from among the innumerable possible "models" contained in this inner world; a choice of the means of execution, that is, in translating the concept into a material object.

It remains to define the sense of these successive choices, but first it is imperative to make an observation on the artist's responsibility. In the perspective of the men of the Renaissance, it is evident that every work of art derives from a plan and that the artist is always responsible for what he produces. This truth, often unknown today or else forgotten by those who aim to abandon themselves not to their inspiration nor even to caprice but quite simply to chance, has been happily and forcefully recalled by a few lucid minds. Roger Caillois is not afraid to write, "Even if the author has done nothing but follow his instinct or let loose forces that he doesn't control (but to which he gives himself up), leaving them alone (but preparing their way), the work responds to his desire and, however shapeless, the form is what he sought." (*Esthétique généralisée*). These lines would have been unanimously approved in the Renaissance as much by the philosophers as by the artists and art amateurs, but none of them would have dreamed of writing them at a time when the artist's responsibility was not questioned, and when the greatest artists recognized the benefit of serious meditation, preferably solitary, quiet and secret. Vasari recalls that Michelangelo, before his death, burned a great number of his sketches "so that no one could see the difficulties he had endured and all that he had asked of his intellect." And Leonardo says in his notebooks, "I know by experience that one derives no small profit, lying in bed in darkness, by going over again in the mind the essential outlines of the forms previously studied, or other

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things worthy of observation, conceived by a subtle speculation." Every great artist follows his own path, which leads him to understand and express himself. Plato would say that everyone resembles everyone else by reason of their differences, having a common desire to be unique. They therefore have a certain uniformity in their careers, at least at the beginning. At first, the future master searches for himself and looks around him in the hope of finding outside of himself the model which would correspond to his expectation. Outside himself? Does that mean in nature? Not always. In the atelier in which he does his apprenticeship? Very often, and often too by chance, from his encounters with the work of his predecessors. According to Malraux, "if the vision of every great artist is irreducible to the common vision, it is because from the beginning it is conditioned by paintings and statues—by the world of art," and, "the vocations are never born from any other thing than the emotion experienced before a work of art." These affirmations perhaps seem too absolute, at least insofar as they concern the great artists. It is a fact, however, that the young Michelangelo was molded in the beginning in the Medici museum of the garden of San Marco (where he was brought at the age of fifteen), that he drew from Masaccio's frescos and the engravings of Martin Schongauer, that he was influenced by Jacopo della Quercia, that in his *Virgin on the Stair* he sought to *contrafare la maniera di Donatello* (Vasari), that finally in Rome, where he arrived in 1505, at the age of thirty, he was struck by the beauty of antique statuary. This does not mean that he looked down upon the teachings of nature. Passionately interested in the study of anatomy, he dissected cadavers, resisting as long as humanly possible his disgust at their putrid odor.

One thing is certain, that the first efforts of an artist—no matter how great or how much of a genius he is believed to be—evince *mimésis*. *Poiésis* comes in its own time and sometimes makes one wait for it. The personality is slowly unveiled, at first superficially and accidentally, through imitations, indeed copies, then in a more constant and assured way, to triumph finally when the model for every work belongs to the inner world, when the "concept" has become the "model" and the artist's sure craftsmanship permits him to translate it. "A great



painter,” said Matisse (thinking of Manet), “is the one who finds a personal and lasting style to express the object of his vision.”

This does not imply that at the end of his progress toward mastery, every artist must deny the disciplines of imitation, to disavow his schooling, to forget nature. Where does one find (in the Renaissance) painters and sculptors ever ceasing to look for their models in the perceptible reality? It is all too evident that they kept their eyes open, but for the best of them reality became a pretext. Those most concerned with exact likeness—a likeness refined to the point of a deceive-the-eye painting—know that their paintings or statues cannot and should not be perfect reproductions of such and such aspect of the external world. It is barely probable but not impossible that Michelangelo had read the *Cratylus* of Plato. Moreover, the diffusion of Platonic thought in his time and circle was such that an indirect knowledge cannot be excluded. In a famous passage of *Cratylus* the problem of the image is posed. It is presented at first, conforming to the general theme of the dialogue, à propos of the art of writing, or rather, of the correct designation of objects. Before entering into this debate, Socrates recalls to his interlocutor (i) that “the name is one thing and the object to which it belongs is another,” and (ii) that “the name is an imitation,” “paintings are another means of imitating things” (430 a-b). Having granted this, Cratylus remains no less in the illusion that the appropriation of the word by the object must be perfectly correct, neglecting no detail. Socrates considers on the contrary that an image (verbal or plastic) must be an image and not the double of the object. This precision without defect would go well in mathematics: one adds nothing to or subtracts nothing from the number 10 without making it cease to exist. “But for...the image (εἰκῶν) I am afraid that correctness is another thing and that one must on the contrary avoid absolutely rendering the character of the object represented in all its details, if one wishes to obtain an image...If a god, not content to reproduce your color and your form, represents besides, such as it is, your entire inner being, rendering exactly its softness and warmth, putting movement into it, soul and thought, just as they are in you...would there not then be

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Cratylus and an image of Cratylus, or well two Cratylus? (432 b-c).

What Socrates calls image and what we have called an art object is not and cannot be the double of an already existing object (be it itself artificial). It is a new being in the world, a "creation" whose "exactness" consists in a conformity as faithful as possible to the idea which dominates the artist's thought and guides his hand. In God the idea—which is not suggested by any exterior object—has its absolute beginning; even more it is accomplished before it takes substance and appears to the world. This doctrine, which was familiar to Michelangelo, may have inspired, according to Charles de Tolnay, one of the themes of the *Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel; the woman crouching under the left arm of the Lord would be no other than Eve, already living in the divine thought. Furthermore the divine creation is immediate; it requires no tools: the hand of God, or rather His finger alone, is enough to give birth to the first man on Earth, as it is to launch the sun and the moon into space. The act of artistic creation (that is, human creation) is entirely different: it requires time, it is less direct, less simple—and thus imperfect. Nature, says Giordano Bruno, acts from within (*opra dal centro*), while man works from the outside. Man needs the real world which provides him with the object of his meditations and the matter for his work; finally, when the hour of execution arrives, tools are indispensable to him.

In 1547, the death of Vittoria Colonna inspired Michelangelo to write the admirable sonnet, *Se 'l mio rozzo martello*, in which the first quatrain refers to the use of a tool as the unconscious servant of the artist: "if my rough hammer draws a human form from stone, it owes its movement to him who holds it in hand, who guides and accompanies it; it walks with the steps of another (*va con gli altrui passi*).” On the contrary the divine hammer, "whose home is in heaven," acts alone, walks alone, *col proprio andar*. This signifies that "in heaven" the worker and the tool are one, while on earth they are differentiated. On the other hand, if a hammer cannot be made without another hammer (*se nessun martel senza martello si può far*), it follows that man himself, related to but not confused with his instrument, must be forged by the divine hand. In less

veiled terms: the human mind depends on God and the hand "obeys the intellect." This is a double dependence which does not exclude a certain freedom—a freedom of the intellect conceded by the Creator—subject to dangers, a source of anxiety, but also the foundation of human dignity; the freedom of the tool (or the hand) from which springs that unforeseen element that surprises us in every finished work. Pre-existent in the realm of possibility but not yet brought to light, this work finally appears, sometimes an image but not a double of nature, as testimony to a new universe.

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The word *creation* has two meanings: it signifies the creative act or its result, the creating and the created. The first meaning connotes the activation of a power and the expending of energy; the second refers to an entelechy; it is applicable to the universe if it is a question of divine creation and, if of human creation, to every work—finished or unfinished—containing no further evolution.

Questions raised by the existence of human creations can be envisaged from two aspects. If we consider their aesthetic value and if our interest centers on a particular style of one of them, we try to describe it and as far as possible to clarify by means of analysis the new world which constitutes the work of an artist. From this point of view, with regard to Michelangelo, what can be added to what has already been said about this austere and, to quote a hallowed expression, "terrible" world? It is a world of sculpture, even in his paintings, not just populated by but entirely composed of human figures, bared of any accessories, nearly always lacking in the repose and charm of landscape as well as the limits, so restful to the eye, of architectural decor, with no other background than an abyss of space from which surge forth naked events, devoid of any circumstance, and avalanches of human beings, precipitated toward their final ends.

But if, on the contrary, as is our purpose, we do not separate the work of one artist from that of other artists, nor the latter from the whole of human productions, if we give the word

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“art” the broader connotation that we gave it previously, we recognize in everything made by the human hand an element of “artistic creation.” This creation, thus understood, will have its beauties and its ugliness, but we will not have to judge it, our attention being focused principally on the fact of its existence, on the possibility of the existence of new objects in nature which, through the intermediary of man, add to, integrate with and modify it.

In his *Four Dialogues on Painting*, of which Michelangelo is the protagonist, Francisco de Hollanda reports a rather unexpected observation of the master, but explainable in the context of the discussion, which is in praise of painting. Michelangelo does not have a particular technique in mind and is using the word “painting” in a very broad sense. All the arts are encompassed since they all proceed from design and end in a scene. “So much so that sometimes it makes me think there is only one human art: drawing or painting. For, considering what one does in this life, you certainly will find that each, unknowingly, contributes to painting this world as much by creating and producing new forms and figures as by dressing in different clothing, by building edifices and houses which fill space with their colors, by cultivating the fields which cover the earth with paintings and sketches, in sailing the seas, as also in battles and the disposition of armies, and finally in deaths and funerals and in the greater part of our operations, movements and actions.”<sup>5</sup>

If every artist adds his own universe to the universe, the former is juxtaposed to those of other artists, that is, to all men, and it is thus that each contributes to *painting the world*, giving it, by the creation of new forms, a new visage. Here Michelangelo expresses forcefully a truth whose very obviousness easily blinds us to it: that the surface of inhabited land no longer resembles that of virgin soil; a city, a cultivated field, an army campaign, a sail on the sea are the themes of its landscapes, the elements of what we call today the “noosphere.”

It is not surprising that the problem of the *forma artificialis*—so often posed by the philosophers of antiquity and the Middle

<sup>5</sup> *Dialogue II.*

Agés—enjoyed a revival of interest and favor at the dawn of modern times, in a century in which all the arts and industries seemed to flourish, in which discoveries were multiplied and scientific progress accelerated. On the other hand, meditation on such a problem—at a time when philosophical reflection was still tributary to theology—necessarily led to a confrontation between human works and those of Nature, or of God, to the comparison between *human artifex* and *natura artifex*.

On this subject we have, in this journal itself,<sup>6</sup> posed two opinions formulated at the end of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno.

For Ficino, man, “the universal artist,” is an earthly God—*Deus in terris*—and, inversely, he attributes the characteristics of a work of art to the work of a somewhat anthropomorphic divinity. The universe is the model of art works and these, if they do not equal this model, keep something of its perfections, since man, through his creative genius, rediscovers a divine thought. Particularly sensitive to music and the harmony of movements, Ficino freely illustrates his thesis with examples from mechanical appliances, with figured clocks of German make and automated musicians just then in vogue and destined to remain popular for a long time.

In several passages of his treatise, *De la causa, principio e uno*, Bruno also makes a parallel between divine and human creation, but with a completely different intention. Far from seeking, in the similarity between products of art and natural products, a reason to exalt the genius of man, he is only concerned with their differences. These are differences in the processes, since nature, operating “from within,” makes beings grow from their seeds, while man works from outside and “on the surface of his object”; a difference in results, since natural beings are animated (even minerals have a “mind”), while the products of human industry, as such, are not. In a wood or stone statue, it is the wood or stone and not the statue which is penetrated by the *anima mundi*, it is the matter and not the form obtained by artifice. Praise of the arts, an inexhaustible theme in humanistic literature, is rarely found in Bruno. I think

<sup>6</sup> “Renaissance Cosmologies,” *Diogenes*, N. 18, Summer 1957.

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that there is only one example of it in his writings: in the *De umbris Idearum* (1582), when he says "that art in certain cases surpasses nature and, in certain others, is inferior." How is art inferior to nature? In that it retains only the external forms of things (*extrinseca forma*) and not their substance. And how is it superior? In that it stabilizes what it retains and seems to remove it from time. One fears here a banal development but the author spares us this and soon lets us guess his hidden design: opposing art to nature, he recognizes that the latter is "incapable of retaining" those forms that the artist gives to "stone or to a diamond," "since the stomach of fluctuating matter soon digests all." In order to make present what is absent, the sculptor and the painter fix the lines of a face, just as a writer sets a word, a word that flows away and seems to set out toward no end. But if a portrait does not age, if a text committed to parchment or stone makes a living word eternal, it is because the artificial object has no soul. Far from taking the place of nature, from rivaling it and from associating itself with its effort, art only enriches nature with dead forms.

Between these two extreme opinions, which are separated by a century and illustrate in their fashion the apogee and decline of humanism, many more moderate opinions have been advanced. Learnedly, somewhat ponderously, Benedetto Varchi, in his discourse on the hierarchy of the arts (1546), begins by distinguishing in the universe (a completely Aristotelian universe!) between the external and unchangeable things of the celestial world and things subject to changes and accidents, that is, without exception, all those things that appertain to the sublunar world. Then he separates, among the latter group, the "natural objects" (for example, a man) from the "products of art" (for example, Noah's Ark), the difference between these two categories being that natural objects have their source within themselves while artificial objects derive it from others, from the artisan "who works on them from the outside." It seems that we are already rather close to Bruno, but we must note that here no judgment of value accompanies a bland statement; the fact that it has its source outside of itself does not mark the creation of art as inferior. Varchi does not believe, as Bruno, that matter is divine, that the universe is homogeneous and that all

natural beings are given form by the *anima mundi*. A primary distinction between the celestial world and the sublunar world permits him to place the products of nature, which here on earth compose the field of our experience, at a level where their comparison with the products of our art is neither absurd nor sacrilegious. Even more, certain objects exist which raise the question as to which of these two categories they properly belong. Varchi is thinking of products fashioned by animals and gives a spider's web and a swallow's nest as examples, two constructions whose masterly technique amazes and disconcerts us. But Varchi gets himself immediately out of difficulty by refusing the title of art object to the web and the nest. "They seem," he says, "made with art, but in reality they are not: being made *not by reason* but by natural instinct, they cannot really be called art." The word "reason" risks causing unwanted confusion, but the author of these lines does not mean to oppose (whatever else is his opinion on this point) art that proceeds with method and according to a rule to that which is abandoned to the "transports" of inspiration. Let us not forget that it is not a question here only of the fine arts but of all the arts, and that no human creation exists that does not spring from reason in the broadest sense of the word, that is, the intellect. From this arises the freedom of the mind—which is communicated to the hand—a freedom that gives greatness to the creative man, but also weakness, since, placing him in an intermediary position between the divine and the bestial, it makes him susceptible to error in the conception and less assured in the execution, while the animal makes no mistakes, no more than God—*martello senza martello*—whose acts, immediately united to powers, show the same infallibility.

If the additions of man to the works of nature are not created *a nihilo* but emanate from a matter in which, as Michelangelo thought, they are contained potentially, these additions can only be new *forms*. The analyses of Varchi and the observations of Michelangelo, such as Francisco de Hollanda reports them (very faithfully, we believe), give us an idea of the interest aroused in the sixteenth century by the flowering, the life and the singular characteristics of these new forms. Varchi recalls that the problem of the genesis of forms had

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been posed in antiquity by Plato who, not seeing how forms were introduced into things (we mean, into matter) makes recourse to the "ideas," the eternal models, whereas Aristotle and his disciples suppress the problem, no more admitting a matter without form than a form without matter. This debate leaves the question of the *forma artificialis* in the shadow. And Avicenna himself, when he imagines an intelligence-giver of forms, apparently ignores the case of fabricated objects.

Is it true, on the other hand, that these objects consist only of forms? It is only too evident that *primary* matter, in the sense that philosophers, Aristotelian or not, give to this word, cannot be created by man. It is either eternal and uncreated or the work of God. But beginning with the various bodies, simple or composed, that nature offers man, hasn't he the power to produce from them again by artifice? He can alter natural substances by submitting them to artificial physical conditions, notably, as Varchi says by way of example, in cooking. He can also combine them by mixing to make new bodies, a method which for the atomists is definitive in itself, physical alteration being only the observable aspect of a dislocation and decomposition of elementary particles. The problems relative to these creations of substances were the subject of fecund controversy in the seventeenth century, and the distinction clearly enunciated by Angelo Sala (1576-1637) between artificial and natural matter (artificial being that obtained in a laboratory) is without doubt of great interest to the historian of chemistry. The discussion remained open for a long time. As for what concerns notably the possible modalities of a melange, the traditional opposition between atomists and Aristotelians has come down from antiquity. We cannot, in fact, consider a melange as a real mixture if we admit (with Aristotle) the continuity and the infinite divisibility of a substance endowed with diverse qualities; for if, on the contrary, we recognize (with the atomists) the existence of final elements, indivisible and impervious, the every melange—and, in general, every change in matter—is reduced to a new combination of the *minima naturalia*. This philosophical debate—to which Varchi barely alludes—was moreover only of secondary importance, given that, in all cases and regardless of point of view, we ascertain in substances or forms produced by



human industry, the presence of new *qualities* whose generation seems so mysterious that certain people try to explain it by astral influences. This mystery was no less a fact, a truth. By mixing his colors the painter creates a new tone for the pleasure—or displeasure—of our eyes, as the pharmacist draws from his elements a new composition, remedy or poison. It seemed, moreover, particularly disconcerting that the mixture of two inoffensive, or even beneficent, substances could make a poison. Was this not a flagrant proof of the infinity of nature's powers?

Granted nothing exists in the world that does not issue from nature, what will be, in the last analysis, the separate identity of art work? Must we look for it in the fact that it presupposes the intervention of reason, that it results from an intention? Michelangelo does not doubt that in every work of art the material realization must be preceded by the *conchetto*—the true mental realization. Better still, he attributes to this first effort of the mind more importance, more value than the work of the hand. From the pen of an art theoretician, such a profession of faith would be suspect and, in the judgment of more than one artist, would risk being considered useless or scandalous. From the mouth of a craftsman—and what a craft!—we are at least obliged to reflect on it. What does Michelangelo say, in the account of Francisco de Hollanda? “Even with thought the bad painter cannot and does not know how to imagine or desire to do a good painting, as his works show; these most often are little different from his conception and are hardly inferior to it. For if his mind were capable of beautiful, majestic conceptions, his hand could not be so corrupt as not to allow some trace or indication of his good intention to appear. But in this art, only the intelligence that understands the beautiful, and at what point it can be achieved, was ever capable of “high purpose.”

If nature were incapable of intention and “high purpose,” the artificial object would be profoundly different from the natural object, the fruit of chance, and the finished work of art would be superior to the work of nature. But we know that in Michelangelo's eyes it was not so, that nature was dependent on divinity and that there was no creature in the world—living

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being or elementary body—whose birth was not preceded by an idea, by a divine *conceito*. Everything pre-existed in God, even token proofs of the existence of our souls “in heaven” before our birth appeared to Michelangelo as a clear certainty: it became for him an obsessive poetic theme and, perhaps in an episode of the Creation in the Sistine Chapel, a plastic theme.

The moment the fact that they answer to an intention is not what differentiates the products of art from those of nature, should not the essential difference result from the mode of their execution? There is nothing which is not the realization of a plan and, in the last analysis, of a plan of nature, that is, of a divine plan. But the object fashioned or composed by man fulfills nature’s desire only indirectly; it has its source outside and not within itself, and its ideal model is a concept elaborated by a conscience endowed with freedom and therefore susceptible to error. From this springs its own greatness and its insufficiencies. When a painter copies a natural being—a flower for example—it is only too evident that he must simplify perceptible data, whose details multiply to infinity. He chooses his motifs, he eliminates, he abstracts: it is this precisely that distinguishes the image of Cratylus from Cratylus and that—if the choice proceeds from “high intention”—constitutes its beauty. Without doubt, this observation only concerns the plastic arts and, among them, the figurative arts, which only represent a tiny portion of art in the broadest sense. However, the aesthetics of the Renaissance, of which we find the first systematic enunciation in Alberti’s treatises, set up for all artists (the architect as well as the painter) the example of nature. We mean, of nature the creator or, if we may be allowed this anachronism, of natural nature rather than altered nature. It is necessary, said Alberti, for an edifice to be “like a living being”—*veluti animal aedificium*—; everything fashioned by human hands must echo a universal harmony, inseparable from a vital impetus. Such is the common rule for all of the arts. Without even being aware of this, every great creator observes it spontaneously and thus gives his work the character of necessity.

With regard to the *Saint Mathew* in the Florence Academy of Fine Arts—one of the most beautiful examples of *non finito* that Michelangelo has left us, Charles de Tolnay writes, “Passion

models and twists these powerful forms which seem to result from an *eruption come from within.*" Although attacked from the outside, the statue seems to emerge from the stone, to break away from it, to form itself by growing; a work of art, it disputes with natural beings for the privilege of "having its source within itself."

But it is only an illusion endowed by genius. A work of art cannot grow; its maturation, as its blossoming, depends on a foreign will, a foreign hand. The fruit of labor, it is also proof of it and becomes immobile if its creator abandons it from the moment of that abandonment.

The controversies are never ending over the rules of art, the limits of its domain, its processes as well as its ends. But it is beyond discussion that every art work, everything made by human hands, is the result of labor. On this point there is unanimous and most often tacit agreement. A philosopher would be wasting his time in sustaining a truth that no one thinks of contesting and that traditional iconography illustrates to everyone. The innumerable cycles of Genesis on the walls and vaults of churches which depict the work of the first six days and the pagantry of nascent man, were they not done to demonstrate the abyss which separates the two modes of creation? In His omnipotence and without effort, God separates light from darkness, commands the elements, distributes the stars in heaven, and makes animals and plants abound on the earth. Grandiose images, followed, after the Fall, by the unfolding of a tormented tale, dramatized by episodes such as the labors of Adam and Eve, the construction of the Ark and the Tower of Babel. Thus man's toil, the condition of a henceforth precarious existence, is the condition of all of his undertakings, whether they spring from obedience to a divine order and the desire for salvation or, on the contrary, lead to the ends of sinful ambition and the satisfaction of an instinct to rebel.

None of these three iconographic themes was held by Michelangelo. The one whose lesson should be the most consoling still risks humiliating men with the spectacle of an activity which, even though it leads to salvation, seems to be able only to operate in confusion, haste and fever. On the vault of the Sistine Chapel, where the story of Noah is told

in three panels, the construction of the Ark is not depicted.

Michelangelo's correspondence, if it gives us little information about his religious or aesthetic ideas, does not let us ignore his material worries, his weariness and sometimes his discouragement. Harassed by despotic patrons, ill served by temperamental helpers, worn out by incessant effort, and forced nonetheless to abandon or pare down to more modest proportions originally gigantic artistic projects, Michelangelo knew very well that art and labor are inseparable, and that work, in its origins, was the punishment for a nature which, if not overpowered, was at least wounded by evil. Before the prospect of a new day, is it not at first terror which the sad face of *Aurora*, awaking from a dream, expresses?

When Francisco de Hollanda asked him if it was better, in his opinion, to paint slowly or rapidly, Michelangelo answered that the principal thing was to paint well. The one who can only paint well slowly, then works slowly. A prudent answer but one that barely conceals his preference, immediately affirmed. "It is very well and useful to make everything quickly and with dexterity. It is a gift of God to be able to paint in a few hours what it takes another several days to paint..." However, as though he were sorry for this proud confidence, Michelangelo immediately mollifies its import by warning against the dangerous seductions of *far presto*. "A good painter has no right to let himself be deceived by pleasure in his dexterity, if this leads him to be careless in any way, or to neglect his concern for perfection." One should, therefore, apply oneself, and slowly if necessary, each time that it is necessary—that is, often—and always when one has "concern for perfection." But with this condition, however, that this slowness is not shown and that the finished work does not let it be guessed. "What one must work and toil for most in paintings is to make, at the cost of a great amount of work and study, a thing in such a way that it seems to have been done somehow in a hurry, without the least effort, and completely easily, while in reality it is nothing of the sort." Michelangelo repeated freely that "the only figures painted well are those in which the effort is not apparent" (*della quale era cavata la fatica*). Perfection (in the artificial) requires this deception. As for those who do not dare pretend

to perfection, it is always in a rapid execution that they give the best of themselves: "...if one speaks of succeeding or erring, it would be better, in my opinion, to succeed or to err quickly rather than slowly, and I would prefer an expeditious painter, who paints a little less well, to another who is very slow and paints better, but not much better."<sup>7</sup>

This ambiguous response of the master to Francisco de Hollanda's question merits more attention when one perceives in it, outside of advice addressed to painters, a very general rule, applicable to every artistic creation and every human work. The alternation of assured statements and of reserves gives this discourse an uncertain direction, but it leads us step by step toward the conclusion that, in any case, what must be obtained—be it at the price of weary effort—is the illusion of rapidity, the effacement of the traces of effort. By the effort of the mind, the artistic creation is differentiated from the instinctive action of industrious animals; by the effort of the mind and the hand, it is distinguished from pure art—the pacific actuation of powers—which is that of nature or of God. Effort is native to man, his punishment or his privilege, and certainly one must honor and admire it; but if man wishes that his works appertain to those of the Creator, he must destroy his sketches and, if he can, leave nothing to indicate his studies, his worries of any kind, or the slowness of his preparations. And this not by calculation, not with the modest intention of keeping the secret of a recipe, but with the intention of equaling nature or at least of mingling with it, of joining its rhythms, of being adopted by it. Then the work of an artist will be as much a field of flowers, and the heritage of a civilization, as an aspect of the earthly surface. It is the effacement of divine plans which allows us to deny God and to attribute to chance alone the flowering of the perceivable universe. An example is thus set up to man. He should follow it and his efforts will receive their ultimate consecration. If dead humanity left a "painted world," this world would appear to the eyes of some new race (even if it were not so) as having its source within itself. The existence of its artisans would have to be placed in doubt and be honored even by being denied.

<sup>7</sup> Francisco de Hollanda, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-132.