

ON SENSUALITY OR
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Niadi Cernica

Summary *Sensuality is, in the everyday life, subscribed to the erotic. This subscription is however unilateral. Non-erotic sensuality is the premise of reception of any work of art: perfume for the olfactory sense, music for the hearing, fine arts for the sight. Poetic literature was initially accompanied by music and nowadays is musical because of rhythm and rhyme. Since antiquity until the end of the European Middle Age, to read meant to read aloud, to hear. The whole of art is liberation of our own corporality. This does not mean that we understand through art something which refers to the “animal” feelings. Through the artistic sensuality man assumes his body in a human manner. This kind of sensuality leads to a radical break between our body and the animal self. Comfort is the practical use of sensuality, luxury (in the elevate meaning) is an artistic use. It is a positive thing and a proof of superior civilization to gather the maximum number of pleasures in life (all belonging to the aesthetics in a sense or another).*

Sensuality is, in the everyday life, subscribed to the erotic. After all, it is neither the worst nor the best association; it just represents a unilateral extreme of the perception of this world. If there was one with only erotic sensuality such a person would be incomplete. Non-erotic sensuality (seen as an art, as a cultivation of the sensations) can offer much more but, paradoxically is less popular amongst people.

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Perfume represents an object of art, in the same way as the arts of sight (painting, graphics, and photography) only that it addresses itself to the olfactory sense. Music, diction or theatre belongs to sensuality, to the correct experimentation, to the refinement of hearing. It is easily understandable that gastronomy addresses to the sense of taste. Feeling can also be educated, cultivated. It has been too often said that art is a way of enlightening humanity, forgetting that art addresses the body, the five senses, in all of its forms accepted as such or not. Nevertheless we will be told that literature is a game of ideas, any kind of idea, and that it has no connection with the senses except the fact that we need eyes to read. It is omitted, in this case, that the first poets were reciters, that the poems of the troubadours were sung, and that in the period between Antiquity and the end of the Middle Age, reading meant reading aloud, listening and modulating one's voice. In the second half of the Middle Age, the rhythm of the poem and then, the rhyme had the purpose of musicality, thus for listening connecting it with the sense of hearing.

We can conclude that all arts forms are a celebration, a continuous festive honoring of our own corporality. From this point of view, today's music and painting, the standardization of our preferences of gastronomy, even the blank verse belong to an unwanted and an uncertain „abstraction of the body”, to an inflation of the idea into a sensuality which is solicited both equivocally and partially. The abjection raised will probably be that instead of connecting art with the most sublime sentiments we associate it with an animal feeling that makes us feel uncomfortable. But we do not associate art with an animal

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feeling but with a bodily one. An eagle has a better sight than we have, and butterflies perceive colors that we can't distinguish. And, nevertheless, they have not developed an art of sight and do not even know what aesthetic contemplation is. From the hundreds of smells that dogs feel, some are useful, some not but none of them are "pleasant" or not for them. Animals use their senses for the orientation, for conservation or perpetuation. Nowhere, for no other being than man, have the senses a different role. On the other hand, a great part of man's sensuality is free; it does not consist in pure environmental adjustment but in pleasure.

It has been said, and often is repeated, thus becoming trivial, that man is separated from the animals through reason (the logical-linguistic thinking) and the only ballast that is a reminder of its origin is its body. But the corporality, celebrated through gratuitous sensations (not useful, but pleasant) is a transfigured corporality, a corporality that is differently used.

Through sensuality, man assumes his body in a human manner.

Through art, man celebrates and loves his body; sensuality (animals are not sensual) is an essential characteristic of the human being, it represents a radical break from bestiality (etymologically speaking). The senses of man, have suffered a real mutation since the time they were used for pleasure, and not for survival, a mutation that has determined the development of arts. Men's body has been since educated for pleasure, for a sensual incandescence that has nothing to do with orientation,

perpetuation or conservation anymore. An old prejudice, still an active mentality, makes us locate the human essence beyond the body hitherto seen either sinful, or a burden for the spirit. We do not deny that having a body we are almost the same with the other beings, but we use our body differently, we use it with a special finality that is specific to the human being. That finality is represented by the art. The victory of man against bestiality is not won by intelligence (gradually higher than that of animals), but by assuming a kind of corporality that no animal possesses. Because of this corporality, the human body is different from the body of other beings, not only gradually, but also qualitatively.

Art will remain specifically human as long as man has sensuality. As a gift of the body, art will never be aesthetically “felt” by computers, even if they can replace and give infinite potential to memory and to the operations of the intellect.

It is odd that in a world that has replaced functionally and representatively the soul with the body, the latter becomes schematic, undergoing a process of that we call “abstraction”. The new painting, new poetry, new music, new gastronomy etc. create powerful standards. Therefore, they are not meant to challenge sensuality, but the mind. The hues, the variations fade away, get disqualified for becoming the prop for a problematic which, after all, belongs to the intellect. It is not necessarily more human what is intellectual, as long as mankind possesses a non-animal sensuality, perfected in thousands of years. Sensuality, in our time, is about to become primitive because standardized.

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If we are human beings, let us assume humanly reason as well as body. Wisdom and the so-called “pleasures of the senses” (arts are not something else) can be reciprocally influenced. It is a positive thing and a proof of superior civilization to gather the maximum number of pleasures in life (all belonging to the aesthetics of a sense or another).

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