

Writings by Gunther Aron 1978-2013

Introduction by Geraldine Aron

“VISUAL ART” A PERSONAL VIEW

The Personal Experience	5
Aspects of Art Appreciation	5
Sense of Beauty	6
The Development of Creative Thought and Art	6
The Origin of Ideas – and Nascent Creativity	7
The Seedbed of Visual Art	7
Basic Conditions for the Development of Civilization	8
Emotional and Biological Drives	9
Regarding Free Will and Creativity	10
Distinction Between “Art” and “Craft”	11
The Story of the Half-Shell	12

THOUGHTS ON OTHER MATTERS

The Menorah as Symbol and Object	14
Morality	15
Re: Pacifism	16
On God	16
On Spirituality	17
Re: Science	18
The Meaning of Life	18

Brief Biography	19
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Introduction

Exactly when it began, I don't remember...certainly after the computer came into our lives and we learned about Word. Gunther had been writing his thoughts on yellow lined tablets for some time...I had paid little attention...but, then he began to ask me to type them up and print them. That is where Word came into the picture.

Unfortunately I never bothered to learn how to "do" Word properly and so, as the new thoughts tumbled from his red pencil, new chapters were sometimes created or old ones rewritten. I simply revised them without saving the previous copy. The result is a mess of about 11 folders and two three-ring notebooks with Gunther's writings all with an occasional page marked with the faithful red pencil.

The revised writings would be placed in a new notebook...then more revisions in red pencil would be entered on certain pages as he would read them over - often months or even years later. I would then be asked to retype them - and I did, not saving the previous copy, Very few of these earlier writings can be found on the computer - only the more recent ones - which are often not like the ones I find in the various notebooks!

So, rather than drive myself completely crazy, (which I did for two days) I have compiled what I feel is representative of his thoughts and let you take them as that.

A note book similar to this will go to the New Mexico Jewish Archives here in Santa Fe housed at the New Mexico State Archives.

The complete set of his writings - each in it's own note book, with the revisions written in red pencil, are in the Bauhaus Chicago Foundation Archives in Chicago where anyone who wishes to thoroughly study Gunther's train of thought can do so...I wish them luck...

The following are a few of these writings.

Geraldine Aron
Santa Fe, New Mexico

“VISUAL ART”

A PERSONAL VIEW

by Gunther Aron

***Man cannot know the world -
he merely perceives it..... and,
by Art, he changes his perception.***

The world over....

all babies cry when they feel discomfort and alone.

all babies smile when they feel well and safe in their mother's arms.

In maturity....

the way man follows this inborn trait of seeking comfort and safety is by creating
“civilization”.

THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

A strong positive image of myself enabled me to work freely and without trepidation. This self-image was perhaps a gift from the smiling faces and caring eyes that are part of my early recollections - these told me, I was of value. Consequently, I felt what I produced was of value. This conviction served me well and never left me.

Any abstract work of art is a composition of haphazard visual components organized coherently into a complete work by means of "moments of aesthetic insight" that I have acquired during my creative life. In total these "aesthetic insights" constitute my artistic sensibility and joined with technique, they represent my artistic vocabulary.

Crucial in my understanding of the creative process is my conviction that I needed to challenge myself in my work continually by intently considering different possibilities. Challenge leads to diversity and sometimes, mutation into new styles. A work in progress takes an active role in the creative process. The process is one of continuing mutual adjustment and mutual development between the emerging work and me. I usually begin a work by going through a number of previously "put aside" sketches.

Once I have started a work based on such previous conceptions, the dialogue to bring this "beginning work" to completion works like this: with aesthetic memories accumulated over many years. I carefully scrutinize this beginning work and attempt to elicit from it orders on how to proceed; what modification in its form to make, what additions or deletions to make that seem in harmony with its quality and, also enrich the piece. Such changes have to be not only in accord with my aesthetic sense but also they must fit my manual skill and available equipment.

This dialogue includes the organizing of visual factors in such a way as to stimulate interest, doing so with clarity, decisiveness and simplicity, developing and using pleasing shapes and paying close attention to the relationship of positive and negative spaces of a composition and effecting a harmonious relationship between all parts. Once such changes have been made, this process of eliciting orders from a now slightly changed work starts once more and continues until the time when the work asks for no more changes - when the work seems a whole. The above described composing process takes place partly in my mind and partly as an "hands on" process.

ASPECTS OF ART APPRECIATION

A work of art can be viewed as a series of "moments of discovery"; moments of "keen insight" allowed only the artist, during the creative process.

An experience of a work of art by any other person will, of necessity, be lacking these "moments of keen insights" and any appreciation of such a work therefore must be based on a different set of artistic values - values that are preset in the viewer beforehand, with the capacity of the viewer to assimilate that which is "new and personal" in the new piece of art viewed.

SENSE OF BEAUTY

Man's sense of beauty is a subjective development in each individual. It is a form of subconscious and emotional reaction to some current sense perceptions, which he may find pleasing or displeasing. This capacity to discriminate between what looks or sounds better or worse or, feels right or wrong, is an inborn and also conditioned, deliberately, developed faculty. Pertaining to the artist, this development, in the main, takes place during the creative dialog that occurs between the artist and the (ACTIVE!) work in progress. A work of art is an "aesthetic order, of pertinent components" that an artist is trying to create: by a core vision (a stimulated weak idea) and then envision new choices, choosing those that would enhance the work in progress and, eventually lead to its completion.

However, the most influential factor in determining the artist's sense of beauty is the artistic tradition, into which the artist is born. Also, there seems to be a special place for those emotional factors in the scheme of beauty that evoke a special form of "Ahnung"- a gentle reawakening of memories and feelings, that reconnect with important factors of one's past life; especially those from one's early childhood. In a wide sense, both physical and spiritual/mental, feelings, connected with places, relationships, experiences or events, painful or joyful, that are part of life.

These, and inborn propensities and the above mentioned developed sensitivities, compound into a person's sense of beauty.

Gunther Aron 1978, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Revised: 29 January 2005

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE THOUGHT AND ART

In the course of one's life, one is exposed to billions of particular impressions. It is the manner and province of an artist to select and compose from this palette.

"Esthetic Qualities" of low energy that are remembered in the deepest recess of the mind, jointly with genetic information, represent the latent stage of creative thought and abstract art. Through the process of the mind assimilating newly added information, such "Esthetic Qualities" are energized and grow into "Perceptible Ideas". These represent the incipient stage of abstract art.

Pertaining to the individual visual artist, after having started a work, the work becomes active. By being intensely studied, it stimulates the artist's mind and continues to do so until the work is complete. While the work is incomplete, it engenders a "creative uncertainty" between the artist and the work that seeks resolution. The attempt at seeking resolution generates the creative energy that produces new images and thoughts in the artist. This creative energy assures that emotional contact during the creative dialogue between the artist and his work through which both transform one another.

THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS - AND NASCENT CREATIVITY

A Healthy Form of Brain Change

When information enters the brain through the senses, the information creates impressions on the brain - some strong, some weak. Such impressions become assimilated into the mind (the active brain containing the accumulation of lifelong impressions). These impressions, over time, weaken deteriorate or disintegrate into incoherent fragments or vanish altogether from conscious memory; but, leaving behind negative copies of themselves. Impressions and fragments and negative copies intermingle and combine tentatively into new, but often blurred, combinations. Such blurred combinations by stimulation, like, thinking and feeling or by introducing new impressions through the senses, may become sufficiently clear, to be perceived, represent "weak ideas".

The creative process is a deliberate conscious extension of the involuntary subconsciously occurring process that produces weak ideas: by continuing thinking, feeling and introducing and evaluating new changes, the artist attempts to complete a "weak idea" into a perceivable work, to what seems to him, its natural completion.

THE SEEDBED OF VISUAL ART

In prehistoric times, drawing pictures served mainly the purpose of transmitting information, however, at some point someone found delight in drawing for its own sake. Visual art appears to have its seedbed in religion; spirituality, cosmic loneliness and other strongly felt emotions, an inborn sense of beauty, and a need for self-expression as well as a need for communication and vainglorious display. Art is a manifestation of something that has its origin only in the feelings and thoughts of "man". The art of an individual artist has its inception in the artistic tradition of the particular culture into which an artist is born. Individual differences between artists result partly because of different inherited abilities and character and of different life experience. One's surroundings play a particularly important part. For instance, if an artist is born and grew up in the desert southwestern part of the United States, his work might show a proclivity for a feeling of spaciousness and show a special sensitivity for colors and color combinations one finds in the desert. The most cogent factors however, are the result of differing philosophies of art as well as different personal aesthetic sensibilities that each artist has been able to induce in himself.

BASIC CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILIZATION

Fundamental Conditions

Even though man has become astoundingly successful through science in ascertaining how nature works, in a mechanical sense, he has not the slightest demonstrable idea why the Universe came into existence in the first place or by what agent. Partly for this reason the world remains fundamentally unknowable to man. The part of it that he can or does know, merely represent his perceptions through his senses and speculations about them, particularly, how they seem to interact.

As the part of man's collective perception of the known world, differ from person to person, through differing life experiences and inborn natures, manifold personal views of the world arise.* Such personal views, to be more accurate, are merely impressions of manifestations of qualities perceived by an individual and are the kind of perceptions only man is capable of forming. They are a constantly, changing and expanding, collective view of the world. Such world view had its modest beginnings at the arrival of man on earth, by his examining his surroundings. This constantly changing view of his world, is on the whole a rather frightening and painful one. When our ancestors first became aware of themselves and their environment intellectually, when their instinct conflated with reason, they probably found themselves living in small groups trying to survive in strange and hostile surroundings. How they dealt with this challenge to survive and how they interpreted the world around them, gave us our history and present civilization. How we deal with current challenges will strongly influence the future of mankind.

* a) making all communications between people comparative, b) making all human concepts and systems comparative, c) making universal peace impossible.

16 September 2012

EMOTIONAL AND BIOLOGICAL DRIVES

The Development of Creativity in Man

In the beginning, our ancestors' drive to live and their craving to satisfy hunger, the need for love and the provision of safe shelter and the drive for regeneration and survival may have occupied most of their time, energy, thought, and actions. In addition, an inborn potential for fear and courage, a craving for power and the capacity for awe and compassion are at the root of the change from man having lived in nature to man currently living in civilization. In more recent times, adding to these basic needs and drives is the realization that man, like all life on earth, is governed partly by his place on the food chain. These emotional and biological factors together with man's inborn capacity for thinking, feeling, imagination and curiosity, resulted in creativity, the enabling force that allowed civilization to evolve. Civilization is an attempt by man to ameliorate the harsh conditions of nature and explain the world through religion, philosophy and science. Concomitantly he developed customs, traditions, laws and ethics systems necessary for living together in large groups...

Creativity in the individual is a sensitive reaction to current life experience. This creativity of the individual, as the driving force behind civilization, is collectively speaking, the process of organizing what appear to us as random factors in a unique and meaningful fashion. By putting some of the observable world around us in some kind of order, we may feel that we can control our environment rather than have it control us. By supplementing and sometimes supplanting our natural environment with a man made environment we may feel more comfortable, as we assume truly or falsely that a man made environment is more amenable to control. Creativity operates by thinking, feeling, imagining, curiosity and "trial and error" in conjunction with discovery and invention. The result has been the development of civilization's institutions such as art, skills, religion, philosophy, social systems, economic systems and science. Everything man has ever said and done, or says and does, is merely an explanation or confirmation of civilization and nature. For the process of civilization to have arrived at the point where some part of it flowered into culture¹ and where man's curiosity began to flourish, it required the additional and indispensable ingredient of "free time". This was supplied only when man started domesticating animals and growing his own food. At this juncture, large cities became possible – the traditional place for fertilization and cross-fertilization of ideas. Such city environment was also most conducive to the eventual development of the "individual" artist.

¹ The refinement of mind and development of the arts

25 November 2009
Rev: 17 January 2013

Re: FREE WILL and CREATIVITY

"Creativity" and "free-will" had their genesis concomitantly with that of "modern man," the time when reason began to conflate with instinct in our progenitors. Both a defining capacity of "modern man," they are now part of his nature. But historically as important, independent and much speculated about concepts, they made their appearances only fairly recently. Both are imperative concepts, that enabled man to create civilizations; but for purpose of this discussion, I wish to discuss the basic roles they play in western philosophy, religion and science.

In philosophy, they are its foundation. In religion, both are corner stones: free will is an imperative concept, for the justification of the doctrine of sin and, creativity plays a major role in the creation of religion and-its later development. Regarding the concept of science, creativity and free will are its foundation.

One of the peculiar characteristics of science, is its movement. It moves backwards and forwards simultaneously. From God's vantage point, it tends to move backwards to the time of the Big Bang, that point where all of man's intellectual pursuits must end their movement. Science is a form of reconstructing the development of the world in which we live in a manner that is comprehensible to man.

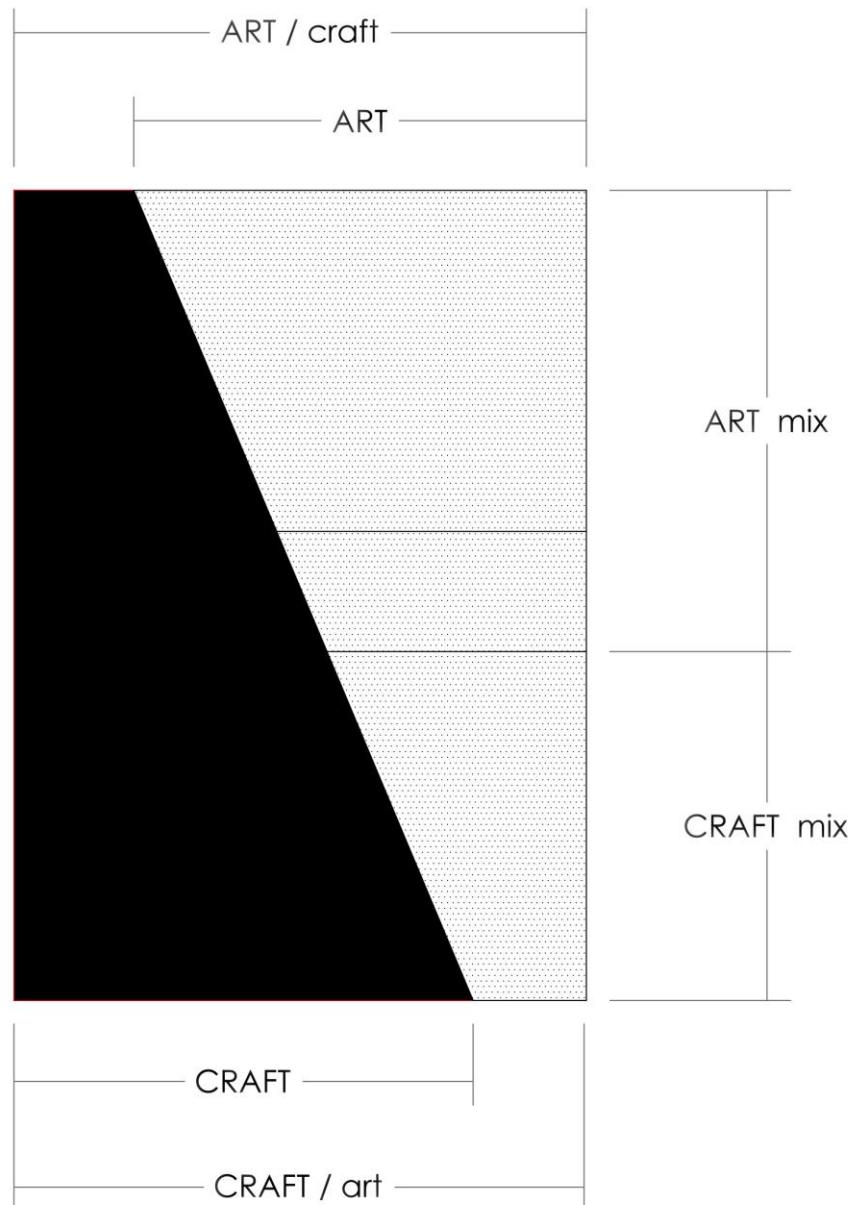
On the other hand, from man's limited vantage point, the same process is experienced as creating something new, something moving forward. This is the basis for characterizing man and his works as being creative. Clarifying the question, "Does man exercise freewill?" or "Is everything in the world completely predetermined?" The way I see it, a part of man's existence depends largely on events of the "big picture," the world beyond man's significant understanding or significant influence. To that extent, the life of an individual appears to be predetermined by a chain of events leading back to the Big Bang but not everything is beyond his influence in the human sphere of our universe.

Firstly, there is an individual's attitude (a complex arrangement of Energy & Quality) towards and comprehension of an event that he can change. That in turn might change how he views an event and consequently, how he acts in a given situation that may influence its outcome. As regards Free-will per se, it operates in the slack space between components of predestination. "Slack- space" must exist, for without it, there could be no motion and without motion, no change is possible and without change no creativity, in fact no world as we know it can exist. Curiously, by man's actions, he has become himself an active part of predestination. To clarify the matter, predestination represents an aspect of the working of the whole cosmos. "Man's-world" and actions within represent a minor scheme within a very large scheme. It reveals man's degree of independence from predestination in the man-made world around us. The man made changes (changes made by individuals collectively) between past and present, I ~~should~~ contend, substantiate the existence of "FREE WILL" (as necessary part of man's capacity to have created civilizations that have become absorbed into predestination).

17 January 2013

DISTINCTION BETWEEN "ART" AND "CRAFT"

Generally speaking, "art" and "craft" are contained in and are inextricably intertwined with one another in any work of either "art" or "craft". Art, an intuitive expression of an artist's life experience, is characterized by emphasis on aesthetics, feeling and singularity. Craft is characterized by emphasis on manual skill, intellect and repetition. We characterize it as one or the other by which aspect clearly dominates a work.



THE STORY OF THE HALF-SHELL

A Creative Development

It started around 1953 when I was working on a group of small pieces of sculpture that had to be arranged against a wall. A wall is a powerful special element and my small pieces were overpowered. After mulling it over for some time I decided that I would isolate this small group of sculptures from the wall by building some kind of display case. The small sculptures were to be referenced to the display case and the display case should hang on a wall - a kind of two-step vision that I was later to utilize often. From the distance the overall display is visually active and from close up, the detail, or small individual pieces become active. However the edges of the display case I envisioned would be cutting into the composition so I did nothing at that time.

One day, with such notions somewhere deep in the back of my mind, I was walking along Grand Ave. and State Street in Chicago when I noticed a man selling extraordinarily large balloons. Well, I love balloons so I bought a couple, not having anything in particular in mind at the time.

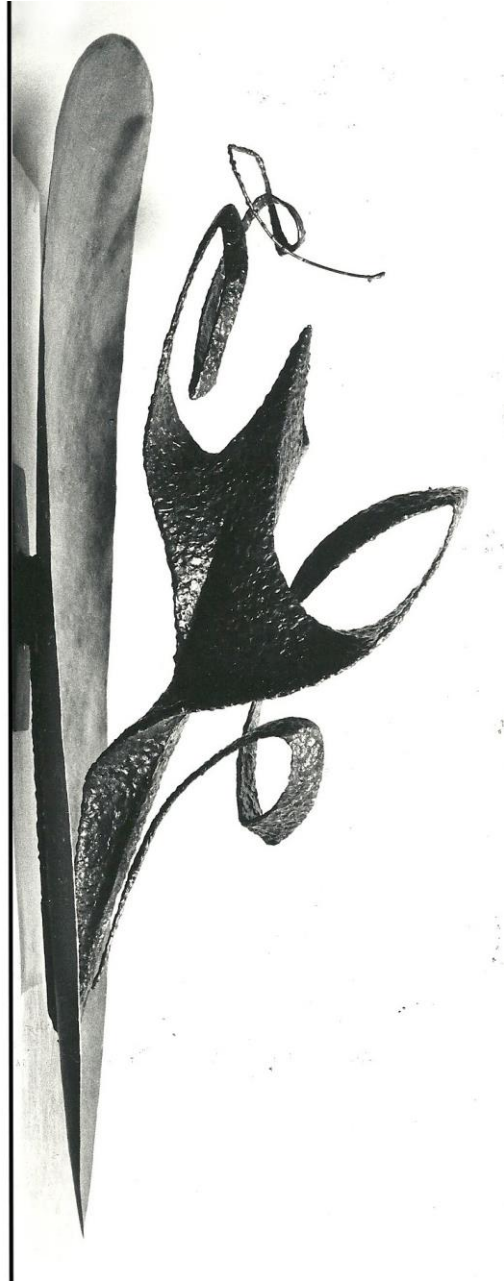
Later it occurred to me that a balloon might be useful in making a better display case so I blew up a balloon, wound string around it in all directions and coated the whole thing with plaster of Paris. After it had set, I deflated and removed the balloon and cut the sphere into two parts. This created a very attractive display case with a minimum of edges interfering with the composition inside.

I never completed that particular project, but ever since that time I have periodically made pieces to be placed next to a wall, using the idea of the half shell, with some inner display. Certain things changed – the plaster shell was replaced by a copper dish and with this new material the shape also changed from a round to an elongated dish. Unfortunately, these wall sculptures had one inherent fault; it was difficult to integrate the outer copper dish with the composition within. Finally I went on with other pieces with other problems but I never quite forgot this particular problem.

Perhaps ten years later, I chanced to look at a vegetable grater in a kitchenware display. It was the sort of grater that has the kind of holes that one gets when puncturing metal with a nail. It came to me that instant to take one of those large elongated copper dishes I had been working with and actually knock a hole into it and develop the resulting protrusion of the hole into a abstract sculpture harmonious with the dish itself. The following illustrations depict the resulting development over several years.

Then, perhaps ten years later, I chanced to look at a vegetable grater, which gave me a clue as to how to solve my old problem. The grater was a piece of tin with many holes of the type one might get when using a nail and hammer and puncturing a piece of tin. It was the type of hole with its edges naturally coming out of the tin and forming a shape of its own!

I said to myself, “Why not take a large elongated copper dish with an undulating edge, knock a hole into it and develop the edge of the hole into a sculpture harmonious to its dish?” And this is what I did. Of course, I did not actually make a large dish and knock a hole into it...but esthetically I did! Then, instead of copper, I used steel and thus throughout my work, sculptures in the half-shell can be noted.



An example of the half-shell idea, a copper and steel sculpture from 1964

THOUGHTS ON OTHER MATTERS

THE MENORAH AS SYMBOL & OBJECT

The menorah was not always a Jewish symbol. It began as a ceremonial object, an eternal light in the shape of a tree, dating back to the time of the Tabernacle. The "light" signifies the eternal, the (for man) unknowable force that underlies everything. The "tree shape" on the other hand, signifies nature, that which man may know.

Since then it has acquired the status of a revered Jewish symbol which has various forms and symbolic meanings: the earliest use as an eternal light in the shape of a tree, relates to the "tree of life" in the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In this connection, the menorah symbolizes the "Birth of Man"; the time when man's animal predecessors began to perceive their surroundings and themselves in an intellectual fashion. When this happened, they began to take an active and deliberate role in their own destiny. They began to develop concomitant those fundamental attributes we associate with man: the capacities for imagination, art in its broadest sense, a sense of power and, perhaps most importantly, for living together, a sense of right and wrong: the basis for developing a particular code of conduct by which a particular society lives.

A second "Tree of Life" was the name accorded the Five Books of Moses" because they are regarded as a spiritual "Tree of Life". They are the foundation of a code of ethics much of the western world lives by. The third menorah is the Chanukah Menorah, celebrating mainly the successful struggle of ordinary country folk to be allowed to circumcise their male children and not to have to eat pork.

These things in themselves no longer seem important to me. However, it is noteworthy that an oppressive government was stopped from willfully trying to deprive some of its citizens of something that seemed extremely important to them, but was of no consequence whatsoever to the survival or governing of the country.

To me, here the symbolism is that the power of government should properly be limited to that which it needs to govern and survive, and to leave unchallenged, to the individual, that which is personal - like beliefs.

Today, a six branched Tree of Life" commemorates the Holocaust and the six million who perished in it. Indirectly, it is a symbol of previous massacres the Jewish people have endured and survived.

December 1996

MORALITY

I believe in an impersonal creative power, and for man, it's only manifestation accessible, is nature. Nature, (including man) in itself, can neither be good nor bad, for it just exists. Judgments, like what is "good or bad" are inventions of man that lie outside of nature and are the foundation of morality. Shared myths are also a factor in the formation of morality.

Customs and traditions are the means of transmitting important information for survival and harmonious coexistence. These, when willingly followed for a long time, become second nature. In conjunction with biological factors they transmute into morals. These, in turn, together with a common history and common blood, foster social cohesion - the ultimate condition necessary for survival.

CREATIVITY is a necessary pre-condition to the development of morality. It had its beginnings in the minds of those of our ancestors in whom instincts and emotion began to conflate with a developing intellect and sensitivity. Among creativity's first manifestations were the making of tools and changes in the manner they procured food for themselves and conversely, how they managed to prevent from becoming food themselves. This required the acceptance of appropriate, correct behavior, on the part of all members of a group. The form of this required behavior I should characterize as constituting insipient MORAL LAW. Jointly, with an inborn capacity to form attachments as well as empathy, and with the chemical changes that occur in the brain/mind and body of the pregnant woman that prevent her from killing her newly born child (the raising of whom would cause her much effort for many years), mainly form the basis of an early stage of MORALITY.

Later, in times of Hunter/Gatherer, when man had progressed to living in extended small bands, important new and changing circumstances, especially the emerging importance and power of the warrior/hunter and the power of the shaman, became additional determining factors in the development of new forms of customs and traditions, the adoption of which, eventually transmuted into changed forms of MORALITY.

From the time man began to grow his own food and domesticate animals, living in large groups became possible. At this point, order was secured by new forms of traditions and customs and beliefs or imposed laws. These were imperative for the harmonious co-existence of the group's now larger membership and ultimately for its best chance of survival. These new developments produced, by and large, a male dominating set of morals that have changed little over the millennia in substance; the changes that occurred were only in scale until the renaissance and later the industrial revolution. The warrior had become an army, the shaman an organized religion.

Currently, new sensibilities as regards morality are forming, aided by new inventions, particularly those that have provided us with previously unattainable information. These, and a shift in economic, social and political power in the world and within the state, are shifting away from the state to the individual as witnessed by cyber-attacks and terrorism, politically and socially, largely through the development of convenient birth control methods, have altered personal behavior and relationships. These new forms are now widely accepted. However, perhaps most importantly, it is a new and keen sense of global interdependence, with the needs and role of animals play in it, together with the sense of urgency to protect the environment. All these are altering inherited values, largely from Greek and Judaic sources, that have served us well, until now. The hallmark of this new sense of global interdependence

and oneness with earth, is the haunting image of the sun rising over earth, a small sphere, our home, floating lonely in the vastness of space, the picture taken by astronaut Harrison Schmitt, standing on the surface of the moon.

12 September 2012

Re: PACIFISM

There cannot exist both universal peace and universal morality at the same time as a permanent condition. Man's nature requires morality in a wide sense and therefore, also war. The reason for this is the following:

In the worldly sphere, the defense of one's family and nation, etc. has long been regarded as a moral imperative.* Similarly, this holds true for what, we may call broadly speaking, "spiritual" beliefs as well as traditions.** In as much as the most important questions that concern man cannot be answered by reason or in the laboratory, most of mankind falls back on beliefs for answers.

There are two kinds of irreconcilable beliefs: Scientific - Believes the world as man may know it is being "discovered" and Religious - Believes to know the world as having been "revealed". Beliefs and morality are inextricable intertwined. Acting in accordance with generally accepted beliefs acquired by way of cherished traditions is regarded as morally correct. The fact that beliefs vary from time to time and place to place (and there is no reason to suppose that one person's beliefs are the beliefs of another) conflict of one sort or another is inescapable.

The defense of those beliefs that are deemed most important by a particular group, even by means of war, takes on the form of a moral matter. Therefore, wars as such are inevitable. Consequently, peace loving persons should concentrate their efforts on minimizing the ferocity and the occurrence of war through working for "compromise" as a policy. In those cases where this is not a choice, action at the most opportune time will cause the least damage.

* which is an act of physical self-preservation of an individual and society.

** which is an act of emotional self-preservation of an individual and society.

February 1998

ON GOD

Gunther's answer to Gene Goodman's paper on "God":

The "idea" of God" is essentially man's inability to envision "existence" and a "material reality" without a creator.

Concomitantly with the "idea" of "God" as the "benevolent father" (or currently entering theology, "mother") the invention of the "idea" of "heaven", represents two notions that make the often miserable existence here on earth, bearable. In man, there seems to be the inescapable need to "believe". Even the sciences are beliefs – merely of a different kind. And pantheism, your own brand, is no more grounded in reason than the diverse superstitions the rest of us hold.

15 August 2012

ON SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality as a noble human emotion that will guide man's way of life, is a sensitive, elevating reaction of man, to major aspects of his life; in the man - made and to the natural world around him. The natural world, inscrutable, savage, beautiful, awesome, miracles majestic, horrifying; the man-made world, precarious, caring, brutal, hopeful.

Man's inner drive to ameliorate harsh conditions of life on earth, and his need for seeking guidance and comfort, in dealing with the vicissitudes of his existence; coupled with man's inherent desire to explain and control his world, to: understand the understandable, explain the unexplainable, resulted in the evolution of science and religion.

Concomitantly, spirituality had also come into existence. This happened, when "sensitive man" driven by his nature, involved himself, in what he regarded as important, humanizing enterprises and ideas, those beyond mundane matters, those that are consequential to forming his values. For the general public, the most pervasive paradigm of spirituality are represented by religion and love of country. Sometimes, a fervent dedication to political ideas rises to the level of spirituality; certainly that feeling of awe and marvel, when contemplating nature or, works of art, at times, engender elevating feelings. This appears to hold especially true of some- music. Music has shown to have a unique capacity to effect man's emotions: to reconnect one with pregnant events or places of one's past, at times, evoking transcendental moments. It has also shown, to have the capacity to promote the most gentle of emotions, but also, the most vile brutality.

For an artist, spirituality may manifest itself as: a strong commitment to one's art, or arise during one's inner search, of how one regards important matters in life, in general, and perhaps, more specifically, during one's attempt to come to terms with the inevitabilities of one's own life, as well as those aspects of nature that one may find painful. In any case, such activities do determine the way one relates to one's fellow humans, and how one views others of earth's creatures and consequently, how one conducts oneself towards them. The mediums, through which spiritual values are transmitted to an individual as well as a community, are customs, traditions, morals and the institutions that comprise civilization, particularly the arts, religion and the family. Unfortunately, I feel civilization to be a form of anarchy against nature that will eventually be our ruin.

As our scientific and technical knowledge increases quickly and human nature apparently, changes only slowly, an ever widening chasm develops between them, so does the potential for inflicting irreversible damage to earth as a place for future man to live. The result for me is a rather unenthusiastic acceptance of my being part of a painful "eat and be eaten" world, both natural and manmade; However, also an inscrutable world, awe inspiring and often amazingly beautiful and inspirational. My conviction - that all of mankind, is essentially irrational and the world a lunatic asylum - marks and mars my relationship with other persons. On the other hand, my relationship to dogs and others of earth's creatures that are in need of man's protection is more accepting. My relationship to them is strongly impacted by my firm belief that, like all of mankind, I am essentially just another of earth's creatures without especially ordained rights or privileges; but rather, having special responsibilities that come with having been endowed with an intellect.

As I have stated before, I believe in an impersonal creative power, and I regard the belief in a personal god and man being unique in the entire universe, as the final exercise in hubris. When coupled with the delusion that one's god is the only true god (and therefore everyone should be compelled, as an act of benevolence, to follow his dictates) is the final act of folly. We presently live with its disastrous consequences. And a belief in heaven as an actual place

rather than as metaphysical, induces in many, a form of impudence towards Earth. It denigrates Earth to merely the status of a proving ground for getting to Heaven. Failure to accept that Earth represents the only home for Mankind results in inadequate caring for Earth: our only permanent home.

For me, trying to live rationally has engendered a sort of cosmic loneliness and pessimistic outlook. I have the unshakable conviction, that man's most basic questions are unanswerable. (Who am I, Where do I come from, is there a personal god, etc.?). The confident answers supplied by religion I don't find convincing and science has no answers since all of man's intellectual enterprises must end at the instant of the big bang. (or begin?) I therefore don't ask those questions with the expectation of an answer I could accept. For me, the feeling of awe when contemplating nature, and my regard for other creatures, is the true religion. These attitudes and feelings are, what I experience as spiritual. I have no formal religion. My temple is the earth and the ways I live are my prayers.

Re: SCIENCE

Science is an attempt by man to understand his world by reason and demonstration. It is a process of reconstructing the development of the natural world by the rediscovering processes, previously hidden from man's awareness, going back towards the time of the "big bang". This appears to man as "a moving forwards" and the results as representing something new and original.

24 April 2013

THE MEANING OF LIFE

The Meaning of One's Life and One's Morals are Interwoven

The meaning of life is a continuously evolving construct of emotions of/in an individual's MIND.* Wittingly or unwittingly, the meaning of an individual's meaning of life derives from one's genetic and emotion driven attempt to reconcile and satisfy the demands of his community, with those of one's personal aspirations and needs.

The process that takes place is firstly: one's attempt to satisfy the dictates of nature in a socially acceptable way, especially the drive to survive and gratification of the sexual drive. Secondly: by an individual's absorption into one's own nature, the character of one's nation. These are the result of one's nation's myths, history and culture. These are expressed in its written laws and customs, traditions, and other beliefs, especially the important ones - those that have been accepted over a long period of time because of their apparent benefit to the community and have transmuted into morals. The belief in these has become second nature. This process promotes one's attachment to the land and its people.

* MIND is the active BRAIN: activated internally through thinking, feeling and dreaming and externally through information received through the senses.

25 September 2012



Gunther Aron with sculpture I-3-F, Chicago, 1964; Photograph by Charles Reynolds

Gunther Aron

Brief Biography

- 1923 Born March 16, Jastrow, Germany, a small market town (now Jastrowie, Poland)
Jastow had been an important center of horse trade; a friend's father was a blacksmith in whose simple shop Gunther watched horses being shod and tools of iron being made
- 1937 Sent by parents to Berlin, age fourteen, to attend the Reichsvertretung - a newly established trade school created to prepare young Jewish boys for an uncertain future and help facilitate their survival in any foreign land
- 1939 Gunther transfers to the trade school ORT in Berlin, a well-established trade school also acting as a vehicle to escape from Germany; only a few months later he was among about one hundred boys (half the school) to make a dramatic and sudden departure by train through Cologne to Holland, there safe, just as Germany was invading Poland in September
- 1939 Attends ORT school in Leeds, England
Attends evening classes at the Leeds Art School
Began working as a toolmaker in a small shop that supplied jugs, dies and fixtures to munitions and aircraft factories
- 1948 In late December, he boards the Queen Elizabeth bound for the U.S. where his two sisters and brother were now living, sponsored by a relative living in the Chicago area
- 1949 Early January, arrives in the United States and travels to Chicago to live with his sisters and their husbands; begins working for Webster Chicago as a tool and die maker
Attends evening drawing classes at School of the Art Institute of Chicago

- 1950-52 Attends evening classes at Institute of Design; with little money and very few tools, he began creating jewelry out of copper wire; he also made several large plaster sculptures as well as linoleum cuts, wood sculpture and useful objects
- 1952 Hospitalized with tuberculosis at a T.B. sanitarium in West Chicago, ending his student days at the Institute of Design; out of hospital, begins creating jewelry in the basement of his sister's friend in Skokie
- 1953 First shows his jewelry (copper earrings and pendants) at Chicago's Old Town Art Fair where he meets his future wife, Geraldine Nelson Pauling
Work with jewelry evolved into more sculptural work, and it was around this time that he began to develop the Half-Shell idea (see page 12)
- 1956 Enjoys working in his first real studio - a rented store at 1604 North Wells Street with living space in back; the earrings were able to grow into larger sculptures
He and Geri marry in December, and during the next seventeen years make their home (and studio) in several locations on Chicago's north side
He first makes a pair of candlesticks for Geri, in lieu of her buying something 'off the shelf'; this then led to the making of Hanukkah Menorahs for sale at the Old Town Art Fair and others.
- 1957 A group exhibit held at the Aron studio/home on Wells Street: *Painting Sculpture Collage*, displaying works by Morris Barazani, Harry Bouras, Ernst Dreyfuss and Gunther Aron; the exhibit announcement was designed by Tad Takano
- 1958 Exhibit of paintings by Morris Barazani and sculpture by Gunther Aron at the Aron studio
Gunther becomes a US citizen
- 1968 During a trip to New Mexico, the Arons found and purchased an old schoolhouse in Lamy, New Mexico, a small village outside of Santa Fe.
- 1973 Move to Lamy, New Mexico (near Santa Fe) to an old school house purchased several years before. With some remodeling, it became both home and studio plus a studio apartment which was rented out; it was here that Gunther was extremely productive creating both menorahs and sculpture
- 1988 Feeling it was time to move to town, the Arons sold the school house and moved to Santa Fe where Gunther continued sculpture in metal sculpture, and creating jewelry of silver, copper and turquoise in his garage studio
- 2014 Gunther dies of congestive heart failure, August 27

Exhibitions

Aron Studio group exhibitions, Chicago

The Artist's Guild of Chicago

Chicago Public Library

Print Exhibitions of Chicago

Chicago and Vicinity, the Art Institute of Chicago

Midwest Momentum, an exhibit of religious art, Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago

Hillel Foundation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois

Jewish Community Center, Dallas

Gary Indiana Art League

Guild for Religious Architecture at the St. Petersburg, Florida Museum

National Interfaith Conference on Religion & Architecture, San Antonio

Guild for Religious Architecture, Loch Haven Art Center, Orlando

Museum of New Mexico Crafts Biennial

Fuller Lodge Art Center, Los Alamos, New Mexico

National Conference on Religious Architecture; Miami and Phoenix

Biennial Conference of American Hebrew Congregations; Toronto, Houston and Los Angeles

Sylvia Plotkin Judaica Museum at Temple Beth Israel, Phoenix

Chicago's Bauhaus Legacy, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art

Public Collections

Bauhaus Chicago Foundation
Capitol Art Collection of New Mexico
Joods Historisch Museum, Amsterdam
Judisches Museum, Berlin
Skirball Museum, Los Angeles

Private Collections

Congregation Beit Tikva, Santa Fe
North Shore Congregation Israel, Glencoe;
a permanent loan from the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, Chicago

Publications

The Arizona Republic, Arts Section
Arttalk, by Rosalind Ragans
The Chicago Tribune
Chicago's Bauhaus Legacy, Volume 2
The Chicago Daily News
The Jewish Yellow Pages
Momentum, Chicago
Modern Liturgy
NATA Journal
New Mexico Craft
New Mexico Magazine
The New Mexico Jewish Link
Palm Beach World
The Santa Fe New Mexican and its Christmas magazine supplement, Filiz Navidad
The Santa Fe Reporter and its supplement, Adobe Christmas