

By V. M. POLEVOY (USSR)

The National and the International

Certain Questions of Methodology

Out of the endless variety of problems related to the subject of this Congress, as so aptly proposed by the Irish AICA Section, I would like to point out certain questions of methodology and dwell upon specific notions and phenomena, which are important to gear the discussion on the subject under study.

I) Primarily, the phenomenon which we can term "the world art", meaning a certain system which currently encompasses by and large all the regions of the Globe and comprises the whole variety of art in the big and small countries and nations of the world. This system was formed as a result of the accelerating historical process where the isolation of cultures was being overcome, where cultures reciprocally studied and recognized each other, and cultural contacts were being established. History knows not only fruitful contacts, but also has seen some terrible lessons of the suppression and destruction of the once flourishing cultures by aggressors and colonizers. It knows equally the theory and practice of fascism and racialism which labelled the cultures of entire nations and races "inferior". Thus world art as an interrelated system of art schools of different countries and peoples of the world is a value which belongs to the world community. It was created through hard work.

The system is composed of heterogeneous elements. The nature and structure of various arts differ, their relationships with other art schools and with international trends in art vary. These peculiarities depend to a great extent on the national identity of art. It is known, however, that the art of tribes in different countries, the art of a multinational country as a whole, the art of entire regions of the Globe have stable common features. Obviously it is not in the national basis that the roots of such peculiarities should be sought. Socio-historical typology is their cause. In this respect world art can be seen as a system combining various arts of peoples, countries and regions in terms of their socio-historical nature. At present there coexist and interact: the traditional, structurally primeval art of a number of tribes and peoples; the medieval, as far as its principles or traditions are concerned, art; various with regard to their national identity arts of the capitalist countries; national and multinational arts of the socialist society. Therefore, the system of world art comprises national, as well as socio-historical variety. It encompasses the phenomena of art in their relationship, and also the interrelation of its development processes as related to the past, present and future.

2) This panorama of world art necessitates the questions of methodology for its study. In this respect the synchronous and diachronous analyses should be put in the first place. The two offer large opportunities. However, if applied indiscriminately, they can easily lead from objective accuracy to unilateral corruption of the actual state of affairs.

Thus, the synchronous analysis gives a possibility of studying



world art in the actual totality of its existing components and relations composed of contacts, influences, struggle of ideas and the like, of assessing the current and unique significance of all the arts of great and small peoples. It's not without reason that the synchronous analysis in the works by Levi-Strausse is so strongly related to the humanistic, respectful attitude towards the culture of historically backward peoples. At the same time, however, synchronous analysis gives a unilateral idea of art phenomena as static ones, outside historical processes, unable to live through periods of rises and falls and as if stagnated in the condition as seen by the observer.

The diachronous analysis is on the contrary, geared towards identifying the place of art phenomena in the process of history. As it studies the development of art and assesses its stages, the diachronous analysis penetrates the historical and artistic importance of coexisting phenomena and processes. In its turn this method is, however, unilateral. According <sup>to</sup> the diachronous method, modern art is to be split into consecutive stages, therefore, the actual interrelation between coexisting phenomena and processes is broken. One can well imagine that some time in the future the events in art of our time will be distributed among various stages of historical evolution, as was done with the art of past epochs in the books and museums, where those, who lived in the same period, are exposed in different chapters and exhibition halls. The harm done by an idealistic and evolutionary approach to the notions of the past times, is obvious. Such an attitude in respect of contemporary art can create a corrupted picture, eliminating the notions of factual esthetic values, of all those relations and conflicts that permeate the art of our time.

So what could be the most adequate way of studying world art of our epoch with regard to its organic values and the laws of its historical development? One should think that a dialectical combination and mutual correction of the synchronous and diachronous methods is the most efficient means. This method gives a possibility of identifying the esthetic value and uniqueness of all the arts and of assessing the way each of them acts in the world system of arts according to its historically specific nature. In this case every art would be seen as an organic historical and artistic phenomenon, as an irreplaceable value in the system of world art, whether it be a national school of arts, an art of a multinational country or of an entire region. What is important is that such a method, combining the diachronous and synchronous analyses, makes it possible to refute categorically the demagogical issue of this or that art being "inferior" or "superior". On the other hand, it makes it possible to grasp the relationships of the socio-historical typology of art (measurable in terms of progress and its national identity/not measurable in terms of any national advantages).

3) Based on this methodology it is possible to identify certain aspects of the international and the local, which is national proper in contemporary art.

The international system of world art, the way it has been established by now, is not opposed to national art schools, moreover, it does not imply "swallowing" them. This system itself was formed by national arts and their relations. The richness and variety of national arts is a most significant international value, which confirms itself against the tendencies of racialist or chauvinistic suppression of national arts schools, the trends of nationalistic "air-tightness" and conservatism.



The importance of a national art school, belonging to the world system of art, does not only depend on its relationship with the international art movements, but also on its national identity whereby the school can enrich the system as a whole. The relationships of national arts are not meant to diffuse international trends of a style. Much more these relationships depend on the socio-historical typology of art, which conditions the birth of certain stylistic movements within a national arts school, the nature of their preponderance, the possibility of accepting (or rejecting) the interpretation of international artistic tendencies in a local framework. Thus, the arts of the socialist countries, which have common socio-historical typology defining the social status and the functions of art, its ideological and artistic principles, develop as national artistic schools. Based on its particularity and traditions, each of them offers a national interpretation to the common sources intrinsic to socialist art, which appears in the nature and composition of prevailing style forms. Socialist movements in the art of non-socialist countries (which have certain ideological propinquity with the socialist ones) are also developing in the context of national artistic schools. The unique nature of art in the USSR depends in many respects on its multinational character and on the fact that it has developed as a single system through an interrelation of various peoples' artistic activities. Previously many of these peoples had only folklore-type arts. In the light of issues dealing with the national and the international, artistic development of these peoples, which by the time of the October Revolution were at the stage of tribalism or medievalism, is of particular interest. Three separate tendencies can be identi-

fied in this development. The rise of traditional folk arts, which is involved in the multinational artistic life of a country as a stable specific value-created by this people. The development of a framework for artistic activity of each nation, which along with a traditional folk art, adopts new kinds of art corresponding to the social and esthetic needs of the nation, namely, painting, sculpture, graphic arts, where they were not known before. A broad rise of esthetic knowledge and ideas of a people, based on general education, thus adopting in its spiritual life artistic values of other nations and of the world culture. Taken together, these three tendencies form a system, which is termed "artistic culture" in Soviet science. It combines various kinds of art and the esthetic consciousness of the society, as well as art criticism, which has its own significance. Harmonious development of artistic culture of every people in the country, bringing together what has been created by the people itself, and what has developed through international relations, a confirmation of its national identity, and the sponsoring of socio-historical progress of artistic culture, is the object of constant care of a socialist society, of the cultural policy of the Party and the state.

Nevertheless, a thorough analysis of the questions of artistic culture (and art is but a part of it) would lead us beyond the subject of our Congress.