

The art in a craft consists of what goes on within oneself. There are, it must be looked for first, within oneself. We can be told this is the beginning, but to understand may take a long time.



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# THE ART IN A CRAFT

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I knead a large lump of clay, attempting, through my hands, to know all about the process. At times the clay moves so effortlessly that my hands seem to follow, not to initiate, the movements of the clay. I try to observe how my thoughts and feelings respond to what is happening. I notice an emotion in my hands that seems to connect them with my chest, and by means of which I derive special information about the clay. I feel that I begin to know the clay; my hands are surfaces that contain it in every direction. The clay cannot move except by instruction from my hands. Each instruction is the same. The lump is clasped and pushed down upon itself. Clay flows to the center of the lump where it is lost in the mass. From there it will follow an outward path. My hands watch constantly. After a few minutes, when the texture of the clay has ceased to change, my hands tell me to stop.

Why do I knead?

Kneading removes air bubbles and distributes the moisture in the clay uniformly through the mass. There are other reasons. Kneading is the potter's first experience of the workable clay. In kneading he becomes familiar with the clay. The motion of his hands and the clay is



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part of the circular movement that is the essence of the craft. The potter experiences roundness as he kneads. The pot begins early, before the clay has had sight of the wheel.



What is required of me before I can work in a craft? What is required of me before you will know, without a question, that I am a craftsman? Is it that I work with clay or wood, weave wool, or pile stones into a wall? Am I a craftsman because I make new shapes out of these materials, because I build with my hands? No! A craft is a way of working. A craftsman is, because of the way he builds. A craft is the study of three laws of building. A craft is the study of how a man must be in order to build.

How must I be, in order to build? It seems to me now that to answer this question is the main purpose of the craft.

Three laws of building govern work in a craft. What is built according to the three laws is built well. What is not built according to the three laws is not built

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well. It is not sufficient to build according to one or two of them. The laws are independent of each other, but there is no craft in which they do not act together. They are identical for all crafts. The difference between crafts is that the laws are manifested according to the nature of the material of the craft.

To be a craftsman is to be able to work according to these laws. The craftsman's own tools are his movements, his thoughts and his feelings, functioning properly together. The three laws of building are the expression of these functions in a man. The quality of what the craftsman builds depends on the quality of these functions. Through them he begins to understand the three laws of building and how they apply to his craft.



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**W**hat does it mean, to build? To build is to allow to exist. To build a pot is to allow clay to exist in the form of the pot. To build a bench is to allow wood to exist in the shape of the bench. To build a rug is to allow wool to exist in the pattern of the rug.

They exist, the pot and the clay; but they exist in different degrees. The pot is more than the clay; it exists more; it contains more order. In this way we speak about existence and order. Similarly, the bench is more than the wood, the rug is more than the wool, and the wall is more than the stones.

What is the measure of this order?

We live in a world of construction, of things that have been made. I cannot but be amazed at the amount of order in these constructions. I think of the steps needed to build this house—each board measured and cut and nailed, each pipe and wire installed. The number is enormous. Wherever I look, it is the same—even with smaller things. Every step, no matter how small, in building a house, a car, a pot or a bench contributes to the order within it. I conclude that its existence depends in some way on these steps—their number and quality.

Yet, even as I acknowledge the order contained in these constructions, something about them does not satisfy me. They are incomplete. Something has been left out of them. Something has been kept from them. I see that they have been built in a certain way. The question arises: could they exist more? Could more order be put into them so that, instead of being ordinary constructions, they could be extraordinary constructions?



The answer is that this is possible, but only if we follow the three laws of building. Therefore, we speak about these laws because it is here—at the boundary between extraordinary and ordinary—that a craft begins.



**T**he law of the body—the principle according to which the body functions in a craft—is to be able to make every movement needed in the craft. There must be no movement that the body cannot make, none that it cannot do. It must be capable of whatever the craft requires. The body must be certain about this. The

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craftsman never has to say: this should be done, but I have not the skill.

It is with the body's certainty about this that the law is concerned. This is the body's knowledge of the craft. How different this knowledge is from thinking that I can do. There is no thought here. The body is alive in sensation unëqually distributed. It can produce the strength and direction of the force that is called for. Energy for the movement accumulates instantly in the body at the point of departure, unaffected by where it has been before.

By analogy, if we consider movements as musical notes, we can say that the body must be able to play long notes and short notes, loud notes and soft notes, smooth notes and staccato notes, deafening notes and notes so faint they can barely be heard. The body must have strength to play for a long time. It must possess the full repertoire of the craft.

How can the body achieve this repertoire? How will the craftsman become skilled? One method is to practise in the craft. But there is a more important way. Every motion that the craftsman makes during the day, of which he is aware, adds to the repertoire. There is no motion however slight that, if he is present to it, will

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fail to contribute to the repertoire.

A step through a doorway, a hand lifted from a steering wheel, each is a movement with wood, a movement with clay. If my body is aware of the movement, the sense of it spreads within me and is deposited. Wherever in my body it begins, my limbs become familiar with it. The movement is stored within me as if in a space that has opened for it. We have within ourselves many such spaces, each capable of holding the essence of a motion. When the body is aware of the movement it makes, the corresponding space becomes filled. The movement will be available when it is needed. If the movement is again made with awareness, the space remains filled; if not, the space becomes empty. A space once filled will last for a very long time. There are so many motions during the day that, if I were present to them, the spaces within me would be filled each minute.

To be able to make every movement in the craft is the law of the body. Thus I can visualize without restriction.



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**T**he law of the head—the principle according to which the head functions in a craft—is to know the right order in which to do things. This law is difficult to understand. It seems so simple, so obvious, that it does not seem to be a law. Who would think of not doing things in the right order! Yet we rarely do things in the right order, except in a trivial way. We do not begin in the right order nor do we end in the right order. The power of this law is immense.

What does it mean, to do things in the right order? It means that what is intended is inevitable. For example, if I wish to join two pieces of wood so that my fingers cannot detect the joint, then, if I do things in the right order, the joint will be so smooth that my fingers cannot detect it: If I wish the joint to have a small gap, then, if I do things in the right order, the joint will have a small gap. What is desired is inevitable.

How can I know the right order? There is only one way: the present step must be done completely. If this is done, a miracle will occur: the next step will be shown.

At that point we must accept what is shown and not deny it. If the head goes over and over it, attempting to repeat the moment, the true knowledge of it disappears.

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The step may be large or very small for which this moment occurs. The thought is relaxed, the head alert, not to let it pass. At the right time, at the beginning of the new step, the old forces will turn and depart. The moment of being shown is like a swallowing, like an inward intelligent breath. In the intelligence of these moments the head receives all of its knowledge of the craft.

The head is the initiator of activity, the source of rest and of rhythm. Its law is the law of faith, the step-by-step by which the future is made.

The head works by faith, in a craft. But the faith is based on a certainty. From its own experience the head knows this fact well, yet it can never prove, never declare that it will be shown the way. The knowledge of the head is held to the step, until the step is over. The craftsman proceeds in no other way.

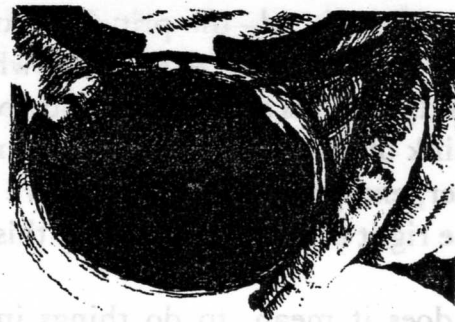


The law of the emotions—the principle according to which the emotions function in a craft—is to build with love. This is the most difficult of the three laws to understand. Yet, although the three laws must be obeyed equally, this is perhaps

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the most important one of the three. We are unaccustomed to seeing things that have been built with love. One may live a long time without seeing anything that has been built with love. We have so little experience of what this law means.

To build with love is the way the craftsman separates himself from his work. It is the way he continuously takes leave of his work as it progresses. It is the way he does just enough, not more and not less.



This law is the way of approach to the moment. The craftsman is aware, not only of the strength and direction of his movements and his initiation of them, but of the way they begin and end. Each movement shows this awareness. This knowledge belongs to the emotions. The beginning and end of a movement contain all of the knowledge of the existence of the part. The craftsman starts and stops each step so as to demonstrate this knowledge. This is the law of the forming of surfaces, the separating and uniting of parts. There is quiet, each part in its place, under this law. The effect is profound. All things exist and are separate when they are

built with love.

The power of love in a craft is to give life. The laws of the body and head produce a perfect dead skeleton. By the law of the emotions the skeleton receives flesh; it comes alive in every part.

Love separates. In separating, it unites. It does this by forming the boundary around each part. The boundary between ordinary and extraordinary construction is traversed by love.



We see a relationship among the three laws: the law of the body belongs to the present, it never knows the future; the law of the head provides the path out of the present into the future; the law of the emotions surrounds the present with the past and the future. The three laws act together at a center.

What are some examples of the three laws?

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The ability to make the required motion is our skilful servant. It needs no thought or delay. Its house is in the fingertips or elsewhere. It is always quiet and available.



Patience, which accepts each step, is the willingness to do things in the right order.

The craftsman knows the proper proceeding at every point in his work.

In a room full of things, if there is no crowding, there is love. In a room full of people, if there is no crowding, there is love.

Therefore, do not listen with your head alone. By itself, the striving of the head has little merit. The craftsman listens with the three parts so that his work can correspond to the three laws.



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**T**he craftsman's work is profitable for his customers. What has been built according to the three laws carries the message of its own existence. However small, it exists wholly, not in part. The message speaks in the intended way of the three laws of functioning. Through his work in the craft, that which existed in the craftsman is disclosed to another person.

The message is received by all who come in contact with it who have the beginning of an understanding. The others will take no notice. Thus, the message will never be received in the wrong way. To receive such a message is warm and unquieting. Just as it is impossible to build according to only one law, so the message reaches more than one part of a man. It defeats the single sense, fits no present pattern. This is the meaning of what deserves to be called a message.

For himself the craftsman profits greatly. To accept to work in a craft is to agree not to hide oneself. It is impossible to cheat, to avoid being seen. What is built in the craft corresponds to the state of the craftsman. If I am asleep with my eyes open while I talk with you, tomorrow I can say that I was awake. You will have forgotten, and the others will not know. But what I build today you will see tomorrow. Tomorrow you will know that I was asleep, and you will laugh when I deny it.

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**B**y being ready to begin, the craftsman instantly creates within himself the form of what he wishes to build. This is the first impulse of his work. It is an impulse of love. As he works he maintains the existence of the form constantly within himself, in every part of his body, pressed against his arms and his legs, in the back of his head, not losing it at any moment, moving aside from it only as it becomes realized. He releases himself from it each moment on the boundary where it is actualized. This is what is meant by building with love.

All that is properly built begins and ends on the impulse of love. Love defines the boundary between objects, the coming-to-rest. The direction of movement of a force changes to the perpendicular direction between objects; in the change of direction, surface is created. The quality of the change is the measure of the quality of the love.

The vise exerts enormous pressure on the wood, yet if the wood shrinks a few thousandths of an inch, the force will be gone. This is the behavior of a force at a boundary. The force at a boundary never ends abruptly nor even diminishes, but it is met or it turns away.

The way of beginning and ending a movement must first be produced within ourselves. It comes from the emotions. Then it can be produced outside.

The craftsman builds just enough to allow his work to proceed, to allow it to do in all ways what it has to do. The pot exists sparingly, the bench exists sparingly; nothing can be taken away. This is a sign of the presence of love. Love gives to each object the surface which is not the visible surface.

The craftsman repeatedly tests the quality of what he builds. When a surface has been made thin so that forces no longer penetrate it, it is done. As he builds, he moves from surface to surface, thinning each one, comparing it with the form he has inside.

At a surface two forces meet. First one, then the other is stronger by an imperceptible difference. In the act of their opposition, on the quiet surface, is love.

Love produces the boundary around each part. It is the beginning and end of what the craftsman builds. The boundary separates; in the act of separation, two parts are united. Only that which has become separate can be united with the rest.

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To unite is the sole purpose of love.

Where is the boundary? It is in the length, the weight and the edge of the wood; the glued joint; the lift of the pot, the space inside; the points of stones. One must look for it everywhere.

Just as there is a boundary between two objects when both exist in a high degree, the one helping to sustain the other, so there is a boundary between the craftsman and his surroundings, the one helping to sustain the other. By the quiet resolution of the forces within the workshop the craftsman is aided to be quiet inside. The workshop helps to sustain him, allowing no part of him to fail completely. The craftsman knows this, and he first actively seeks and then accepts this help.



The head is the source of rhythm in a craft. The steps in the work, their times and directions, provide the rhythm, but unless the steps are completed the rhythm cannot be experienced. Thus, rhythm comes from the full acceptance of this law. Out of the coming-to-rest, the new step begins. The head perceives; the body responds. What is this moment if not a moment of rhythm? The craftsman experiences the rhythm of his work when he remembers the steps through which he has passed. He remembers the steps not distantly but with a sense of their individual completions. His remembering lasts until the work is finished. It is an exact experiencing in his head. Whether he works for a long or a short time, whether days intervene between periods of work, this experience is available to him. It is like a residue in his brain. Its presence is not necessary to his work, perhaps, but it is satisfying, and it is there. It is the substance of the way he has come. The rhythm in a craft partakes of no time. It is not repetition in time. It is the continued quiet substance, the now beyond the past, which he waits for while he works. It is the growing history of his craft. The craftsman assembles this knowledge into what he perceives is the rhythm in the craft.

The work leaves behind it the innumerable shapes of the growing object. The steps are filled with movement. Their history-being-formed provides the rhythm.

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in the craft.

By the law of the head the pot spins large, the stones are piled high, the rug adds threads.

The head—the watcher—establishes, establishes. By this is meant to think in a craft.



The craftsman works in touch with each moment. His concern is with the present; except for the form within him he has no knowledge of the future. To attempt to know it before it is ready to be known is to work inexactly. Energy is lost, creativity destroyed. This is a consequence of the law of the head, the law of right order. We depart from this law when we try to move out of the present step. In our hazy vision we seem to succeed. This is a trap. The path stops where we are, and we can follow no further.

Concerned with the future, we forsake the present moment, not knowing that

this leads away. The craftsman never builds in this way. The present step is completed, the boundary permitted to be clear. His effort reaches just to the mark.

The future sits around us, waiting to be tried. And who will not try it? This is the secret of the easy loss of creativity.



**T**here is always plenty of noise in the well-run shop. Noise in the shop is the burden unshouldered, the distraction ignored. While the craftsman holds to his direction, all else clatters and clangs on the floor.

He is careful not to build up his shop too quickly lest at any time he become inferior to the tools. His work is endangered if he has too many tools or if their forces are stronger than his needs. His tools are extensions of himself in the craft. He arranges them in the shop so their forces are contained and then works fast so as not to notice them.

His tools do their work in the straightest line, without interference. The work

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is accomplished, the shop grows as needed, and the craftsman lifts hardly a finger to get it done.

What is not built in this way is dull. What is revealed is marvelous, as unexpected as light. The craftsman prepares the work to fit into its own space. Within himself he holds open the space for it.

A giving-and-receiving takes place between objects that have been built according to these principles. This is the recognition by each one of them of the existence of the other. This movement takes place without the benefit of time. It is proportionately strong as the objects are clear or exist in a high degree. It occurs to the great benefit of each object because it discloses the boundary between them.



The movement occurs also between parts of an object. By this movement the



object is formed from its parts. This is the self-realization that exists in the product of a craft.

The art in a craft is to be able to produce this movement which is pleasing to the eye of the beholder. To be able to see the movement between objects is to be able to see the air.



To perceive without ideas—to avoid succumbing to them—is the source of the control that the craftsman has over himself.



The craftsman works without guile or guilt. His arms swing merrily. His straight way is combed through his head, his fingers follow, his heart listens.

With much work he achieves the moment when his working becomes effortless. Potential becomes potential again. His energy is very little expended. He works

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continuously, as fresh at the end as at the beginning. The three laws of building live within him. The parts of his work emerge as something being born.

He is alert not to exceed the level for which he works. He continually questions: how far? At each step he asks the question again. To the work of building the bench he brings what is due. Together, the parts will make up the level of the bench.

A requirement is placed on him: he may claim no credit for his work. No matter that his efforts allowed it to be, it is not his. The knowledge he received was acted upon, but he was allowed to receive it. He was the passageway. If he claims credit, the passageway closes. The way to the next step disappears. The craftsman struggles with his claim whenever he strays from the moment, at every step in the work. It is a difficult struggle. He slips and is gone. Later, when he knows that he is lost, he returns to himself. If he can stay within himself, he abandons his claim. He has no need for it. His acceptance of this at the end of the work is the act of separation, the final boundary in the craft.



Pottery is unique among the crafts in that the pot arises from a center. The clay on the wheel is centered by the hands. The revolving clay is quiet; in the quietness is the center. The clay obeys the axis of the wheel. As the wall spins higher the clay possesses a decreasing tolerance within which the wall can depart from the center and the center not be lost. Without this tolerance the wall could not grow. Not to exceed the tolerance is the struggle of the pot. The struggle will show when the pot is done. Tension will be in the wall to the lip of the pot, where the pot ends in the air. If there is much tension, when I see the pot end in the air, I inwardly laugh, ha-ha.

The thickness of the wall knows the center; the height knows it also. The rising wall tests the center, pulling away from it this way and that. The growing pot is a constant test of its essence. All the way up, the wall moves back and forth, attempting to know what it is. By this movement, tension appears in the wall. When the tension is high, the wall is thin, irrespective of its physical thickness. The pot is able to hold space. There is much tension in a separating wall.

Of two pots of equal size, one may hold more space than the other. Greater tension permits the larger volume. Until a level of tension is reached, the clay

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In a traditional society, that is, a society guided by what has been learned, the young craftsman begins with the patterns of what has been found before. Thus, he is molded to work in a certain way. He learns the movements of the body; the established methods teach him the right order in working; the accepted shapes teach him love. Within these boundaries he can safely move. Even at this stage he will have small freedoms. When, as demonstrated by his work, he has understood sufficiently the three laws of building, he can contribute to the tradition with his own inventiveness. His inventiveness may reach far, in unheard of directions, but the tradition forever remains a safeguard to him.

Therefore, how do we copy? We copy by understanding the original impulse, renewing it. Nothing can be copied correctly that was not produced according to the three laws because nothing else has clarity. The intent of the originator becomes what the craftsman knows, to possess while he works. Therefore, it may be said that he does not copy. The impulse was transmitted to him, and it again became an object.



cannot separate, cannot be a wall. The clay remains an object. When the tension is high, strong forces meet at the boundary. There are walls that no force can penetrate. Such a wall is always the product of love.

It is the turning into the perpendicular direction, away from the path, that makes a wall. There is a wall between the craftsman and his work just as there are walls between the steps in his work. It is his separation from the work that allows it to proceed. By doing just enough, by the touch that ends as it touches, the craftsman is able to stay separate from his work.

To work according to these laws is to encompass the existence of what can be built; to move the clay, wood, wool, stones, not lovingly, but with love. Such is the ability of the craftsman, who can abide within himself. A craft is not merely a relaxation, a refreshment after efforts, or even a livelihood, although it may be any of these. Its pursuit is difficult, and few desire to try it. Whether everything is ultimately possible through work in a craft we do not know. But, much is possible. This is the purpose of the craft, so much being possible in it. The craftsman learns about himself as he works; while he learns, the work exists. He begins to understand, being as dependent on the craft as it is on him.

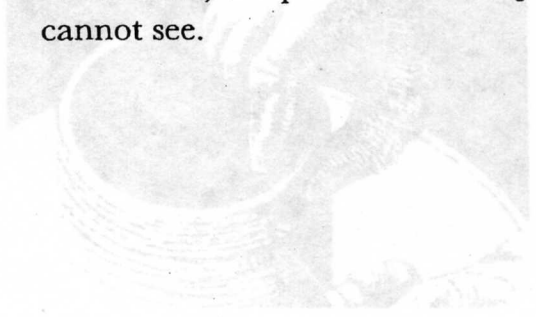
The struggle of the craftsman produced the roundness of the pot.



The craftsman builds, watching out of the corner of his eye. No detective is more alert. He sees the three laws work below his fingers.

He conveys to wood his desire to know the wood. Out of wood he constructs the polished frame. One by one he labels the forces, inserting their cross-sections, bevelled and plain. The joints are cushioned in glue. The strength of the frame flows in parallel lines.

He builds the room according to the laws, the objects in the room according to the laws, the parts of each object according to the laws, down to where the eye cannot see.



**F**rom an unlimited number of possibilities the craftsman selects the decoration for what he builds. Just as two trees of a kind, side by side, are not the same, so design in the craft is held to the laws of the craft and nothing more.

Ornament in a craft is a farewell, a taking leave of the power of the three laws. Creating ornament, the craftsman moves the wall away from its pure direction, releasing a little of its energy, adding to the wall that which is unneeded, in order to diminish the wall.

The wall with much tension cannot be penetrated by any force. But design on its surface can charm it away. Ornament embraces the wall, opening it. It is a hundred gates into the piece.



**T**he greatest love connects the highest and the lowest. The distance, the tension, between that which knows and that which follows is the measure of the love. The head and body, the active and passive forces in a craft, are equally needed in order to be united by that which can flow between them. The existence of the two

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**I**t is at the end of the work that perfection comes in a craft. The nicks and notches, the tolerances that were maintained while the work was being done, disappear in the surface of the new object. The scale is larger, the nicks too small to be seen. Thus, perfection is achieved from imperfect parts.



How long do we work? We persist in the right order, accepting no other answer to this question. With our obedience to this law, relaxation comes. Its source is the moment of rest that follows each step. The moment heals us. It is restorative. The law of the head makes this moment possible. The craftsman is relaxed, the inevitable result of the law of right order.

The heart leaps; the head knows; the body performs. These are the three ingredients in a craft.



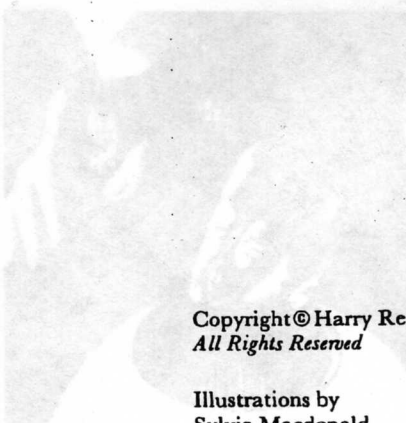


together is the gift given, not worked for. They are united, made necessary to each other, by love.

The distance-between is, for flowing. In this way a boundary is created.

©  
**W**here is the craftsman? How can I find him in myself?

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**I**t would be a mistake to believe that the three laws of building are in any way superficial. They are the laws of movement in life, expressed here in words to suit the study of a craft.



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