

## SUMMARY

This thesis is structured in six chapters. Chapter I contains an introduction and includes purpose, theory, method, and concepts. The main purpose is depicted by the title as being the roots of Swedish ideology concerning what today is generally named design, as embodied in the concept of more beautiful or better things for everyday life (in Swedish: "vackrare vardagsvara"). This is achieved by introducing two main relevant actors at the historical scene, the Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts, also translated as the Swedish Society of Industrial Art (in Swedish "Svenska Slöjdföreningen", abbreviated SSF, later renamed the Swedish Society of Crafts and Design (in Swedish: "Föreningen Svensk Form"), and its director, Gregor Paulsson, during the decisive years 1920-1934.

The actors' background is what was going on mainly in England and Germany, and the perceived social problems in Sweden of poor housing and of the need to educate the working class in an aesthetic ideal of hygiene and consumption of cheap beautiful household articles and furniture. One purpose of the thesis is to investigate how a cultural elite legitimated its attempts to improve people's tastes and choices, a second purpose is to investigate the possibility of such an educational program, and a third purpose is the discussion of the content of the ideology behind it all as formulated in a main paper or manifest.

Theoretical perspectives are chosen on the basis of their capability to deal with the nature of taste in relation to social groups and phenomena (Pierre Bourdieu) and to deal with the meaning of aesthetics and avantgardism as political and ideological radical manifest as well as a means for understanding modern or, rather, postmodern man: aesthetics or beauty in consumption as expression of subjectivity and tension between individual and collective social body (Luc Ferry). In the course of such investigations two emerging themes are highlighted, the dialectics between tradition and modernity, and between national and international.

The methodological basis of the thesis is the academic tradition of hermeneutical understanding, consisting of the reading of text and the formulation of its context, in particular the tradition to which it belongs. Concerning such a key actor as Gregor Paulsson this includes both his relevant texts and relevant aspects of his life, mainly in terms of ideas. In this endeavour a rich sample of quotations is adduced in order to convey the history and context of ideas.

The chapter concludes with a survey of contemporary research related to the subject of this thesis, and it can also be seen as a way of defining its originality in terms of similarities and differences.

Chapter II contains a background and includes philosophical ideas and aesthetic movements in Europe which have influenced SSF. It considers its activities: the Arts and Crafts movement in England, the Swedish national romantic movement, Deutscher Werkbund in Germany, and Swedish moulders of public opinion and new ideas, like Ellen Key and Carl Larsson. Important historical aspects of the Arts and Crafts Movement are considered in terms of the historical role of such personalities as Henry Cole, William Morris, and John Ruskin.

A deeper understanding of their strivings requires a reminder of the possible meaning of aesthetics and its relation to both art and technique. For this purpose a reference is given of key points in the work of the philosophers Plato, Aristoteles, and the Enlightenment's Alexander Baumgarten and Immanuel Kant, ending with Luc Ferry's revival of Kant in order to illustrate modern aesthetics and subjectivity. With this overview we are better equipped to follow the development of design as illustrated in the London exhibition 1851 and the raising interest for museums in Europe.

This development also implied a rising interest for educational activities oriented towards improvement of taste, such as by means of the Arts and Crafts movement. In Sweden this rising interest was represented by the social and ethical thinker and literary essayist Ellen Key. Her particular standpoint claimed a sort of causal relationship between beauty and the moral good, a "religion of beauty" with a basis in an ideal home environment, including furniture and kitchenware. A relevant model of such an environment is considered to be the renowned home of the artists Karin and Carl Larsson. In the meantime this sort of educational thinking was represented in Germany by the Deutscher Werkbund where aesthetics and technology, in particular industrial aesthetics, was tied to architecture, seen, in a Kantian spirit, as the mother of all arts. This sets the stage for a more detailed discussion of the Swedish scene as represented by the aforementioned Gregor Paulsson and SSF.

Chapter III is an ideological biography of Gregor Paulsson. The chapter deals with biographical data and ideological development, and the social aesthetical texts which were important in his activity in the National Museum and The Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts. Gregor Paulsson is considered mainly in his role as social aesthetical propagandist and museologist/curator.

The intellectual development of Gregor Paulsson starts from a general interest in the history of art. As he is influenced by the thoughts of Ellen Key such an interest shifts gradually towards social aspects of architectural and industrial design. This outcome was supported by the particular intellectual climate at the university of Lund and close contacts with continental Europe, and, in particular, Germany and Berlin. Important influences came from the radical program of Deutscher Werkbund and its radical program for broadening "Kunstgewerbe" to "Werkkunst" including matters of taste, quality, education, and standardized mass consumption consciously related to political economy.

All this was related to parallel development within the German artistic avant-garde, and Paulsson's contribution was his critical stand against exclusive elitism and attempt to adapt it all to a sort of social democratic pathos, that is, quality consumption for the workers and the people at large. Such interests were already clear at the time of his first employment at the National Museum which also founded his lifelong interest for the social educational mission of museum institutions, i.e. museums "for the people", especially a museum of contemporary art. This very same interest was pursued at his following employment as manager of SSF which he used as a platform for reformatory agitation in favour of a national "philosophy" of design for the people.

A main difference from the British Arts and Crafts movement was the positive enthusiastic acceptance of modern technology and industry to the point of expecting that it would inspire new forms, types, or standards for cheap high-quality mass consumption [cf. IKEA]. In terms of current terminology one would characterize this attitude as a social democratic technological determinism enlightened by aesthetic ideals of animating or "putting soul", in industrial technology and production. The problematic relation between aesthetics and ethics,

both in the German and Swedish cultural arena at that time, can be illustrated by Oswald Spengler's "Nietzschean" cultural criticism in terms of the reduction of metaphysics to knowledge, and, further, to value and form.

Chapter IV concerns the early history and activities of the Swedish Society for Arts and Crafts seen as an introduction to the Baltic Exhibition 1914, and the subsequent schism which eventually led to the reorganization of the Society and a new ideological orientation. Its activities were directed towards increased cooperation between artists and industry, and a special department was established as an employment office for companies and designers under the management of textile artist Elsa Gullberg. This chapter also includes a brief portrait of key persons in the Society.

The experienced failure in the Swedish contribution to the Baltic exhibition became an argument for the need for a shift from the training of a sort of "best practice" among craftsmen and artisans who were more workmen and mechanics, to the education and fostering of cooperation between artists, particularly architects, and engineers in industry. Nineteen century's conception of an ethical unity of conscientiousness and skill at work suggested that the decline of popular taste was an indicator of moral decline to be remediated by a revival of ideals of simple beauty.

Such a revival and its concomitant ennoblement of taste would also be fostered by and anchored in earlier genuine Swedish traditions in the eighteenth century and an increased museum and exhibition initiatives in cooperation with the much admired German Werkbund. This development can be illustrated by short "bio-ideological" sketches of relevant key personalities who participated in the SSF-activities, such as Carl Bergsten, Torsten Sibelius, Elsa Gullberg, Carl Malmsten, and Erik Wettergren. The latter was particularly active in connection with the so called schism in SSF in 1914, a conflict among influential persons in art and industry, triggered by the claims of a modernization of its program in view of the perceived failure to meet new techniques and industrial methods.

A new industrial aesthetics was to replace the earlier initiative and decorative ideals with new simple forms or standard "types". The dynamics of the conflicts and strivings can be illustrated by means of Ludwik Flecks social-epistemological conceptions of group thinking and consensus.

Chapter V is a study in several sections of the articles for everyday use seen in industrial practice with Gustavsberg's porcelain/china factory and Orrefors' glassworks as two separate historical studies. The 1917 Home Exhibition is surveyed as an example of the educational ambitions in the development of people's taste. The focus of the chapter, however, is the international industrial art exhibition in Paris 1925, and the debate about it in the Swedish and French press.

In contrast to the earlier chapters which dealt with ideas and theories about articles for everyday use, this chapter concentrates on such articles in practice. By practice is means how (1) the articles were produced, (2) the evaluation of their quality, and (3) their presentation in exhibitions.

For illustrating production two factories were chosen on basis of the criterion that they applied the idea of cooperation between art and industry, that is, artists/designers and

engineers or entrepreneurs. The factories were the Gustavsberg's china factory and the Orrefors' glassworks. The dynamics of cooperation are illustrated in all the biographical details of the involved actors, difficulties and successes.

To illustrate evaluation a narrative tells how the manufacturing industry itself took the initiative for the creation of a jury involving three representatives of the SSF, two representatives from the manufacturing industry itself, one museum representative, and one each from the retail and wholesale business. The challenges which were met are also described.

To illustrate presentation an account is given of the exhibition in Gothenburg 1923 on occasion of the city's 350 years jubilee where the occasion arised to show also whole Sweden's commerce, industry and cultural manifestations. The exhibition worked as a test and showroom for what was to be considered as SSF's work until that point of time. Among the questions which arise one of the most prominent is the understanding of quality in its relations to taste and social dimensions, economic-political conditions, lack of standard housing for the working class, etc.

The chapter concludes with an analysis of documentation on, and reviews of, the Paris international exhibition 1925, Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, in literal translation dealing with the "modern decorative and industrial arts", a rather confusing and rough correspondent to the other French expression "art déco", the English "arts and crafts", or the German "Kunstgewerbe", or the Swedish "konstslöjd-konstindustri".

For the first time it appears that there are close relations between world exhibitions, museums, and department stores. One of the main issues raised by the Paris exhibition, beyond the tension between traditionalists and modernists, turns out to have been, with a few remarkable exceptions, the loss of the social and welfare dimension of housing and design in favour of a bourgeois display of refined luxury articles, free from daily chores, and where enjoyment was most important. Consequently the exhibition could be a disappointment for professional craftsmen, designers and artists while people at large could paradoxically appreciate it as a cheerful market and popular festival. In the same spirit the exhibition marked the breakthrough of fashion and the ideal of prevalent styles in dress and personal decoration, which also explains the perception that the needs and money of the affluent are what directs the contents of such exhibitions. It is in this context that the Swedish contribution was praised for its fidelity to the original explicit social ambitions of the exhibition, even if it is an open question to which extent the Swedish rhetoric of social concern corresponded to real results in the home country where an elite was dictating taste to the people while the products seemed to be still bought by an elite.

Chapter VI consists of a concluding discussion with a final epilogue containing suggestions of questions for future research. It starts with an overview in terms of a survey of themes which arose in earlier chapters from the efforts to address the three main purposes stated in chapter I. Two themes were already mentioned above, the dialectics between tradition and modernity in SSF's mission, and between national and international in the efforts to design articles for everyday use. Two additional themes also emerged, namely aesthetics as a social force or as a possibility of reforming society by means of aesthetic ideas, and the role of exhibitions in general and of the Paris exhibition 1925 in particular. The themes are related as, for instance, the year 1925 appears as a watershed between tradition and modernity,

between two world wars in which modern Europe emerged and Sweden was formed as a welfare state.

Regarding answers to the main questions, the first question about the legitimization of SSF's cultural elite was answered positively but it did imply a rather uncritical fascination for technology, simplification of social dynamics and an over-confidence in the capability of aesthetic ideas to reform society. The second question about whether SSF contributed to the education of consumers' and producers' taste was answered with a confirmation of successful SSF-agency for the procurement of artists-designers to industry, but there was no significant increase in the production of cheap and good everyday articles. Nevertheless a basis was established for a good mass production. Finally, this chapter addresses the third question about the content of SSF's ideological program based on a timely paper by Gregor Paulsson about "better articles for everyday use".

There appears to be an ambiguity in whether SSF's program was directed towards consumers and/or producers, and about whether its aesthetic elite really could wish to help by educating the disadvantaged masses without at the same time reinforcing its feeling of superiority, and incurring the risk of producing articles who were still too expensive to be bought by others than mainly those belonging to the class of the elite itself. As a matter of fact this cultural elite was not exclusively original but, rather, trend sensitive as in being influenced not only (but mainly) by Deutscher Werkbund but also by the Bauhaus architectural movement whose manifesto was published in the same year (1919) as Paulsson's ideological program for SSF. Against the background of an increasing industrialization there were attempts to merge art or "form" with "economics". On the basis of German idealism in contrast to British utilitarianism, there was an attempt of appropriate and "spiritualize-animate" (*beseelen*) industrial technology as a "nationalist" alternative to its perceived grossly materialistic and utilitarian but successful exploitation in American "Fordism-Taylorism". This was attained through an application of Kantian normativity in terms of a program of "typing-standardization" of beauty-quality of manufacturing processes and articles belonging to a market where consumers meet producers.

The nationalistic dimension of a German-Swedish program would therefore contrast in its ethical-aesthetical undertones the international dimension proper of an international exhibition like the one in Paris 1925, and explain the difficulty of grasping the dialectics between national (tradition) and international (modernism). The debate in the press about the Paris exhibition in general, and the Swedish contribution in particular, especially in view of the inhibited participation of Germany following the first world war, would highlight this problematic search for both a national identity with its social welfare content, and international legitimacy in a beginning global competitive market. The complexity of this setting may help to explain the apparent paradoxes and contradictions in Gregor Paulsson's conflicts with traditionalists like the influential artist Carl Malmsten, and his own later evaluations and attitudes of the relevant events (mainly exhibitions) and of his historical achievements.

Eventually the complexity of the problematic launching of "better articles for everyday use" may also be captured by means of the term "quality" and Paulsson's later widened theorizing of article use along three categories: the practical, the social, and the aesthetical, for an understanding of "the factors which determine the relation between humans and the material environment". Another way is the study of SSF as intellectual elite and a collective thinking body which uncovers the fact that despite of dissent regarding national vs. international and tradition vs. modern, there was an overall consensus regarding the choice of lifestyle or, one would say, regarding class belonging. This could uncover a political naïveté (or

"ingenuousness") in advertising for a "good taste", and at the same time professing the belief that this taste is generally valid (objectively, or, rather, universally) and democratic (social democratic?). In this context Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical perspective becomes especially illuminating.

All this indicates that the "man in the street" would not allow himself to be educated in his taste as SSF had programmed. Paulsson in his later theorizing in the forties would finally adduce that beauty is a value, and that certain values must be common in a democratic society. This amounts to acknowledging the political dimension of taste, with a religious undertone which fits Ellen Key's earlier conception of secular aesthetics as a religion of beauty, instead of God. The working class will choose a more pragmatic and functional view of aesthetics but will not evade Luc Ferry's understanding of aesthetics as (failing?) creation of life-meaning when religion and other common values have lost meaning. The subjectivization of taste and style appears to mean more than traditions and spiritual values. In accordance with this even SSF's mission has been reinstated as moving from moral education of taste to "consciousness of good form".

The thesis concludes with some rough questions for future research, and a provocative dialectical question concerning the role of the apparently absent concept of "ugliness", the shadow-side of the present superficial striving for purely subjective beauty in a design divorced from function. Social, political, and economic strategies have or take gradually less place in the theorizing on design, except for a general statement of hope in a design which will promote national competitiveness in the global market. One main encompassing but still vague future research question will be how to reestablish the broken connection between aesthetics to ethics including its political content, implicit in technology and industry.

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