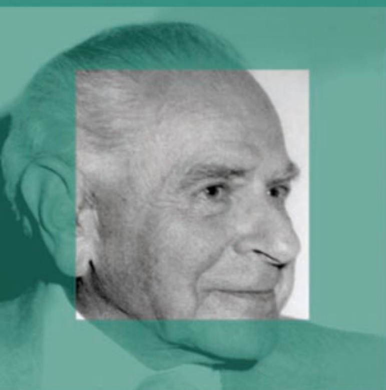
Joseph Agassi and Ian Jarvie



A CRITICAL RATIONALIST AESTHETICS

KRIT RAT

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OF KARL R. POPPER AND CRITICAL
RATIONALISM

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A CRITICAL RATIONALIST AESTHETICS

Joseph Agassi
and
Ian Jarvie

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Dedicated to the memory of
Sir Karl R. Popper
and
Sir Ernst H. Gombrich

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PREFACE

Since their time together at the University of Hong Kong (1962-1963), the authors have been discussing issues in aesthetics and the philosophy of the arts, especially their place in scientific philosophy, the role of reason, and the aesthetic status of popular culture including movies. Agassi's first draft of this book was complete more than ten years ago. All the subsequent drafts have been joint work passed back and forth courtesy of the wonders of the internet.

We shall outline the novel elements of this book in the Introduction. Here let us mention our use of examples. The usual effect of varied examples is to intimidate, especially if a heterogeneous set is used, from different art forms, from different historical times, and from both high and low culture. No reader can be reasonably expected to be familiar with all of the examples an author presents. A few words of reassurance from us can scarcely be expected to mitigate this effect. Let us stress, by way of apology, that we do not expect the reader to be familiar with all of the examples mentioned. Our aim was to choose familiar examples. Where we fell short we can at least say that we hope our examples will be their own reward. If what we say is interesting, then the unfamiliar should whet the appetite.

Winter 2007

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

a) Art as Luxury. Following Gombrich we treat art as skill plus the added value of a critical challenge to the audience. **b) Critical Rationalism**. Amounts to the attitude of "I may be wrong and you may be right, and by an effort, we may get nearer to the truth". We take the "critical" aspect to its empirical limit. Aesthetics includes much that is open to criticism, even to empirical refutation, as Gombrich showed. **c) Aesthetics**. Analytic aesthetics is our closest ally. Its preoccupation with words and overuse of the method of introspection we regard as rather uncritical. Analytic aesthetics is rational but not rational or empirical enough, e.g., the repeated invocation of the irrationalist philosopher Wittgenstein. **d) Gombrich and Essentialism**. Gombrich is invoked but seldom actually discussed in the analytic aesthetic literature. This may be because of his urging that we suspend judgement but more likely it is a failure to cope with his opposition to aesthetics in general and to methodological essentialism in particular. Analytic philosophers sometimes say they oppose the latter – whilst endorsing Wittgensteinian versions of it. We adopt a moderate methodological nominalism.

a) Art as Luxury

To the best of our knowledge, this book offers an aesthetic theory unlike any other text designed for university teaching. The approach and some of the ideas in it we owe to Sir Ernst Gombrich. He in turn was influenced, as we were, by the philosophy of Sir Karl Popper.

We develop what might be called a value-added theory of art. Art emerges alongside, and in the space beyond, the utile, a space which is also the place of luxury. Art is one kind of luxury, where any particular luxury is by definition dispensable, but some luxury is not; and certainly art is not (except perhaps in the city of pigs: Plato, *Republic* 372d). The luxury of art, we suggest, is a playful challenge. We do not think much more can usefully be said by way of defining the arts in general, as they depend upon specific time and place, as well as on the views of artists on their craft and on life in general. Hence, the public that consumes or appreciates has to take up the challenge that the art offers – though only for the duration of the aesthetic experience. In taking up the challenge the public acquiesces to both the medium and the idiom of the artist – again, only for the duration. All artists seek to affect those who encounter their work and it is for the public to select what it finds worthwhile. The public may choose to disengage from the challenge for any number of reasons, for lack of merit, mistrust, boredom, and so on. The view proposed here is very catholic in that the present authors are disposed to value art of almost any kind or style. There are exceptions, though: the public (or parts of it) sometimes goes along with the pretentious and the manipulative; the present authors are allergic to these qualities – in art as well as in philosophising about the arts.

b) Critical Rationalism

Our venture, then, is “a critical rationalist aesthetics”. Modern critical rationalism was inaugurated by Sir Karl Popper. It is not a monolithic position. Various views of aesthetics are compatible with it. During the long years of his philosophical activity, Popper himself developed it in various ways, as did others under his influence. One of his crispest formulations of critical rationalism was, “I may be wrong and you may by right, and by an effort, we may get nearer to the truth” (1945, Ch. 24, I). He described this as an attitude or a policy, not a philosophical position. A fellow student of ours, William Warren Bartley, III, treated it as a position the formulation of which could be improved. He investigated the logic of holding all positions open to criticism, and tried to formulate a comprehensive variant of critical rationalism (Bartley 1962). Popper was always uneasy about this development of a “comprehensively critical rationalism”. He did not see how the exercise of removing logical limitations would strengthen rational argument in the face of irrationalism in practice. Bartley responded by saying that he was interested less in promoting rational argument in practice and more in blocking attempts to turn critical rationalism on itself by showing it to be inconsistent the way it is quite possible to turn traditional uncritical rationalism on itself. (That is to say, traditional rationalism is a theory of rationality as proof, but a theory that itself is not open to proof.) The problem he shared with Popper was, what is the limit of rationality? Yet whereas Bartley deemed this concern central, Popper deemed it marginal, finding more central the promotion of rational discussion in all matters and with all persons and to the limit – wherever that may lie.

The authors of the present volume accept the label “critical rationalist” without being in total agreement about the dispute between Popper and Bartley over it ─ or any other dissent within the critical rationalist camp. Our divergences hardly impinge on our joint venture into aesthetics.

Sir Ernst Gombrich was a personal friend of Sir Karl. The present authors are former students of the latter. This book, then, may be viewed as partisan. It may display all the defects of a partisan work, but not a key advantage, because it is not authorised in any way. The authors have their criticisms of Sir Karl, including of his pronouncements on the arts. They also have their differences with Sir Ernst, and they certainly have no possible claim to be his authorised interpreters. This was a status that, to the best of our knowledge, he always withheld. Nonetheless, what we offer is a version of critical rationalism as applied to aesthetics.

There are at least four ways to be critical of ideas, or four criteria of rationality. Ideas can be tested for their

─ inner or logical consistency

─ external consistency or consistency with other ideas that are deemed true, especially scientific ones

─ consistency with known empirical facts

─ adequacy to the problem or problems that they come to solve, or to any problem that happens to be under discussion

(Bartley 1962, Ch. V, sect. 4; Wisdom 1975, pp. 69-82). Aestheticians will

normally implement the first and last of these criteria (or "checks" as Bartley termed them). Our book is original in that we always have the second in mind and we think the third form of criticism, i.e., empirical test, can with benefit be deployed in aesthetics much more extensively than has hitherto been tried. We see no reason to give blatant falsehoods a pass simply because tradition does so.

Do we not mix up facts and values in allowing empirical criticism in the arts? Much is said about the impossibility of deducing values from facts, and it is trivially true. Yet we can observe facts about values and about valuation; we discuss facts that are repeatable and testable so that they may possess scientific potential. We claim that there is ample evidence — repeatable and testable — to refute some of what passes for aesthetic theory, though it is claimed to be true, and even a priori valid or empirically proven or both.[1] Criticising such theory, especially empirically, often takes us across disciplinary boundaries. Analytical philosophers of aesthetics share with Hegelian and historically oriented philosophers of aesthetics (about both of whom more later) some fetishising of disciplinary boundaries, fetishising that they articulate as a worry about what is truly, genuinely, authentically, or essentially philosophical. This is a scruple we lack. Rather we take from Popper the slogans that our interest is in problems and our efforts seek possible solutions, caring little or not at all about disciplines, and that dedicated seekers after the truth "follow arguments wherever they lead" (Plato, *Republic* 394d).

Where we think we have refuted a theory, we offer only partial replacement: the comprehensive ideas we present are not sufficiently developed to be comprehensive explanations proper, only beginnings. Some significant aesthetic observations are presented here as items of empirical information that are repeatable and that invite testable explanations. Some explanations are offered too, but they are rudimentary, as befits an inaugural work.

c) Aesthetics

We studied philosophy in the mid-twentieth century when aesthetics had rather a thin presence in academic instruction. There was a relatively small literature; there was little going on that might be called research; and our teachers did not think there was much to be done with it (cf. Passmore 1954). This may have had something to do with the general uneasiness within scientific philosophy when it came to questions of value. The most extreme effort to cope with value was the emotivist view according to which all assertions of value were no more than disguised expressions of personal taste and personal preference (Ayer 1936; Stevenson 1944). Although very few philosophers espoused this extreme view, those who dissented did not present a cogent alternative (but see Robinson 1964).

Most aesthetics was historical in nature, doing exegesis on the classical texts from Plato and Aristotle to Kant and Hegel. It seemed very old fashioned and quite oblivious to the need to integrate what was being said into the scientific outlook. The tone was relentlessly highbrow, taking it for granted that the arts meant the "seven" classical arts (historicised by Kristeller 1951/1952). At the

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1. The sociologist Becker, discussed below, uses empirical observation to cast doubt on quite a few features of philosophising about the arts (Becker 1982).

time we were students, history of philosophy of any kind was considered not philosophy proper but rather a branch of history (cf. the ambiguous status of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*: very few professional and still fewer scientific philosophers published in it). Furthermore, the dominant influence was Hegel and his historicism. Hegel was and still is considered the source of the best grand narrative into which to fit the arts. It was and still is considered in need of no more than some marginal tweaking here and there to accommodate later developments. Yet Hegel was the bête noir of the modern-minded philosophers by whom we were taught. Some of them, though, would not share our aversion to élitism.

Like all prejudice, that against Hegel was an exaggeration. The influence of Hegel on art history did not neuter the scholarship or the enthusiasm from which all could learn. In philosophy proper, a prominent philosopher of art was the Hegelian R. G. Collingwood. In the style of Hegel, he gave an important place to art in human endeavour. He viewed the imagination as situated between sensation and cognition, as a distinct level of experience. He viewed art as the activity undertaken by the imagination in order to articulate emotions and thus render them objects of contemplation. This articulation thus invited the public to share the imagination behind the artistic activity and manifested in its product. He vigorously opposed a view like ours: art has nothing to do with craft, or skill, he maintained, since those were instrumental, end-driven activities. He made a case for the view that artistic activity is undertaken for its own sake, and is thus self-sufficient. He viewed it as not goal-oriented: the goal of the artist is to articulate something fresh or new and no more than that, to create a work of art that satisfies its own goal and not be oriented to any external goal, much less to one that can be specified in advance.

Collingwood's Hegelianism is free of much of the objectionable determinism and shallow metaphysical optimism of Hegel. He retains the valuable idea that art is spiritual or transcendental, and also that it expresses some elements of collectivism. Gombrich acknowledges this in his balanced and generous tribute to Hegel as the father of art history. He notes the whole raft of important German art historians who were grappling with the Hegelian problematic in trying to reconstruct the spirit of the age. He also argued that the history of the *avant-garde* and of modern architecture is much illuminated by thinking about the influence of Hegel (Gombrich 1977 (1984), pp. 62-69).

In passing, Gombrich also mentions the influence of Hegel on Marx (*op. cit*., p. 254). It follows that the attention that we pay to Marxist views of art and aesthetics later in this book are one way in which we engage with the spirit if not the letter of Hegel.

Since the time we were students modern-minded philosophy has seen a revival of interest in aesthetics. Mind you, expansion of the universities has meant that there are also more Hegelian discussions than ever. But there was for us a more promising development that calls itself "analytical aesthetics". This is pursued by scholars trained in so-called analytical philosophy who turn that training to the traditional questions of aesthetics and proceed by means of close reading, careful analysis, and rigorous argument. They deal with the traditional

questions, but with scarcely any reference to their treatment in the Hegelian tradition. Mostly they refer to Aristotle and Plato, to Hume and Kant, and more so to each other. Almost all of them respect science, although situating aesthetics and its concerns in the scientific world view is seldom an explicit part of their problematic.

To give some idea of analytic aesthetics we turn to a few recent self-descriptions. The introductions to three comprehensive volumes and a review of an anthology provide these self-descriptions. These are: *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, edited and introduced by Berys Gaut and Dominic Lopes (2001); *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, edited and introduced by Jerrold Levinson (2003); and *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, edited and introduced by Peter Kivy (2004). We supplement these with Roger Pouivet's expansive review (2005) of the volume *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art. The Analytic Tradition, An Anthology*, edited by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, that appeared in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (2005). A small group of contributors circulate through these volumes and through the pages of that journal constituting, perhaps, the core membership of "analytic aesthetics".

Gaut and Lopes announce that "philosophical aesthetics today is a vibrant field" whereas "twenty or thirty years ago it was not uncommon for philosophers to claim that there was nothing much of philosophical interest to be said about the arts" (xvi). They offer three reasons for the revival. First, philosophers have given increased attention to the practice, history, and criticism of the individual arts, even to the point of writing about individual works. Second, philosophers have realised that many topics of general philosophical importance – representation, imagination, emotion, and expression – arise in the arts in ways that cannot be overlooked without loss. Finally, there is an "increased pluralism" in analytic philosophy as it has expanded outwards from the heartlands of the philosophy of language and of science to work on new areas.

Comment: The first and the third reasons that Gaut and Lopes adduce explain very little; they amount to no more than description of the burgeoning of the field. Its "increased attention" and "increased pluralism" comprise the very revival that we wish to see explained. The second reason they offer we find intriguing. The idea is that the arts should be part of the data that endeavours such as a theory of perception or of the emotions ought to explain. If anything, we would put the matter more generally and more forcefully: there is no philosophy of the human condition worth the name that does not include an account of the arts and of their value. The question remains, why was this ignored for decades and then noticed?

Levinson goes into much more detail to introduce a book that presents "the state of the art in philosophical aesthetics as it is practised in the English-speaking world" (v). He detects three foci through each of which the whole subject can be adequately perceived: the practice of making or appreciating art and the objects of that attention (art); the properties or features of art such as beauty, grace, dynamism (aesthetic property); and an attitude or experience (aesthetic experience). Leaving aside the "much debated" issue of which of these

is prior, Levinson stresses the close relations between these three conceptions. Do they fail to capture, he muses, the aesthetics of nature, the theory of criticism, and the nature of craft? No; for, on closer inspection nature falls under the category of aesthetic property or aesthetic experience; and criticism and craft fall under the category of art.

After surveying the views of different philosophers on art, aesthetic properties, and aesthetic experience, as well as the ensuing debates between them, Levinson discusses five central problems in analytic aesthetics. First, there is the concept of the aesthetic which evolved from a general rubric covering how we perceive, through Kant's notion of disinterested perception and Schopenhauer's notion of objective perception, to the modern notion of aesthetic contemplation and whether it delivers something special, an aesthetic experience proper. Beardsley says it did; Dickie says, that is a myth. Are there aesthetic properties? The Wittgensteinian Sibley says there are but they are accessible only to those who possess the special faculty of taste. Debating all these claims comprises much of the current analytic aesthetic literature and consumes much of the energy of contributors to it. Walton borrows from Gombrich the notions of styles, genres, or media as categories; he blended them with the notion of perceptible aesthetic properties, adding to it those of the whole that requires attention to intention, tradition, problems and similar matters – all of which are not particularly aesthetic (Gombrich 1968, 1974). This again has generated much controversy.

Levinson then surveys the analytic literature on the definition of art. The problem begins with his view of Wittgenstein as anti-essentialist. Morris Weitz says, art is an open and indefinable concept in Wittgenstein's sense. Partly in response to this, Dickie proposes a definition that emphasises the institutional aspect of art, showing thereby that in the search for definitions the analytic school need not confine its studies to conceptual analysis proper. Others in that school follow Gombrich (without mentioning him) and define art as works created with the intent to add to the body of extant art and to respond to it. But giving up definitions does not kill the Wittgensteinian hydra. We are not surprised to learn from Levinson that it reappears in the form of the hope of applying to art Wittgenstein's reference to situations in which concepts (like "game") apply to diverse cases (of games) that bear only some indescribable resemblance to one another – situations that exhibit what he called "family resemblance". Family resemblance aesthetic analysts offer in lieu of a definition of a concept reports of the experience of similarity between works of art that partake in that concept. And they invite their readers to share this experience. What the set of such resemblances consists of is subject to further deliberation and discussion.

Thirdly, there is discussion of what kinds of entities art works are; whether they are the same sorts of things in all the arts; how they are identified and individuated; and whether they are basic or emergent. This question is ontological, as are all questions concerning kinds of entities. "The agenda of ontology of art in analytic aesthetics was largely set by three works", we are told. One is by Nelson Goodman, who is a moderate nominalist (a musical work is the

class of performances – past, present, and future – compliant with the score, the score being the set of all texts that exhibit the same complex of symbols, a symbol being the set of all signs that designate the same sound, the sameness of sounds being their resemblance to the ear under normal circumstances, these being a set etc.). A second is by Wollheim, in whose view art works are types whose properties are transmitted to their tokens. The third is by Wolterstorff, who added that the types are normative because there can be improperly formed tokens (misprints, wrong notes, unacceptable or bastardised performances). After mentioning other views, Levinson writes, "only a pluralist ontology of works of art can be adequate to the great diversity of existing artworks, artforms, and art traditions … artworks are very many kinds of things, and are thus not all encompassable within a single metaphysical category" (17).

Fourthly, representation. Acknowledging the impact of Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* (1960) which

> famously argued against 'the innocent eye' model of picture perception, and for a view that acknowledged the history of pictorial representation, which Gombrich conceptualised as a progressive march towards ever more realistic, illusion-sustaining images, arrived at through a protracted process of 'making and matching'. This was followed in 1968 by Goodman's *Languages of Art*…which, while accepting Gombrich's thesis of the historicity of representation, rejected his emphasis on illusion, arguing that pictorial representation was entirely a matter of denotation, conventionally established, and had nothing to do with illusion or its psychological cousin, perceived resemblance (17).

Levinson does not elaborate as to how analytic philosophers have added to this debate, nor does he list the exchanges that took place between Gombrich and Goodman.[2] Instead, he sketches two "currently influential" accounts. Richard Wollheim argues that "seeing-in" is an important process, whereby we see in a painting simultaneously both what we are intended to see and a two-dimensional image. This is but a variation on Wittgenstein's "seeing-as". By contrast, Kendal Walton says, pictures generate fictional worlds by guiding our imagination according to the implicit rules and conventions of games of make-believe. Levinson also mentions two other views, one involving a natural pictorial competence and the other stressing that pictures are necessarily selective descriptions. Although his discussion of these suggests that empirical research could be relevant here, he gives no indication that analytic philosophers involved in these discussions have taken their inquiries in that direction or even that they wish to do so.[3]

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2. (Richmond 1994), Ch. 2, notes 35 and 47 are excellent summaries of these exchanges ─ see also (Gombrich 1972).

3. Levinson's tight focus on fellow philosophers fails to mention one of the most influential critics of Gombrich, the literary critic Norman Bryson. He it was who argued that *Art and Illusion* is "*fundamentally* wrong in treating painting as a "record of perception" and hence "subsumed into the psychology of the perceiving subject. But the doctrine remains incoherent … what is suppressed by the account of painting as the record of a perception is the social character of the image, and its reality as a *sign*" (Bryson 1983, p. xii). It is a curious critique, but a highly influential one in art history. Artistic imagery, Bryson holds, is a social construction, as is the

The final problem in Levinson's inventory is that of expression. He notes that much of the discussion of expression amongst analytic philosophers has centred on music.

> It has been asked whether [emotional] responses are fully fledged emotions or just moods or feelings, with no or minimal cognitive content; whether imagination or make-believe is involved in the generation of such responses; whether such responses have objects, and if so what those objects are; whether such responses constitute part of musical understanding; and whether such responses are a sign of musical value. Of particular interest … is to explain how negatively emotional music can have such a powerful appeal for us if, as seems to be the case, it has a strong tendency to evoke corresponding negative emotions in listeners (20).

This summary is dismaying. It mixes up claims and questions that clearly should be investigated experimentally with verbal quibbles – dictionaries define feelings and emotions in terms of one another – and then the discussion turns on one's construal of "negative". At all events, we would not commend approaches to these problems that rely on the primary tools of the analytic philosopher: introspection and analysis of what people tend to say, sometimes glossed as "pre-theoretical intuitions". If science had been beholden to such methods it would be stuck with Aristotle.

We now turn to Peter Kivy, in some ways the doyen of analytic aesthetics (Noël Carroll calls him the "leader of the band" (1999, dedication)). He is very succinct. The volume he has edited, he writes, is itself testimony to the vigour of analytic aesthetics. He notes that Kant as late as 1787 effectively dismissed the possibility of an a priori philosophy of taste and beauty (2). The situation in the mid-twentieth century was similar. The dominant rationalist school, logical positivism, had dismissed aesthetics as simply expressions of taste and emotion. Its emerging successor, language analysis, was even more swingeing. Kivy picks out the anthology *Aesthetics and Language* (Elton 1954) as especially important. In it Passmore groaned about "The Dreariness of Aesthetics", and the young Stuart Hampshire wrote:

> what is the subject-matter of aesthetics? Whose problems and whose methods of solution? Perhaps there is no subject-matter; this would fully explain the poverty and weakness of the books…neither an artist nor a critical spectator unavoidably needs an aesthetic. (3)

According to Kivy, this malignant negativity did not last long, for by 1968

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viewer. Psychology "dehistoricised the relation of the viewer to the painting" making art history impossible. Reviewing the connection between Popper's schema of science and Gombrich's schema of the artist Bryson claims that they founder on the presupposition that there is "access from the observer to the external world". Without this presupposition, Bryson argues, neither Gombrich nor Popper would be able to distinguish any change from change that is progress (Bryson 1983, p. 35). Despite the ambition of this critique it seems not to have been subjected to what it invites, namely counter-critique. Bryson suggests that we can do without metaphysical realism, but he does not notice his own pragmatic contradiction in his very intense efforts to show 'fundamental' error. It is also interesting to compare his views of art to those of the leading aesthetician Nelson Goodman.

Nelson Goodman had published his *Languages of Art* and made philosophical aesthetics respectable again amongst self-styled hard-nosed philosophers.

Roger Pouivet (of the University of Nancy) describes himself as an analytic Iroquois among the Civilised, namely, among Continental philosophers. He brings out the sharp differences between the historically-oriented Continental philosophers and the scientifically-minded analytic ones. (His "Continental" is congruent with our "Hegelian" or perhaps "Heideggerian".) He gives some examples of real and imaginary pronouncements by the former. "Art is the sensible expression of Truth." "Art is Humanity." "Art is the manifestation of the Being." "Art is a hole in Being." "Art is the Invisible in the Visible." "Art is the Unconscious." His list is certainly tongue-in-cheek. He then provides a real quotation from Levinson for contrast. It is hard to tell whether his selection of it is not also tongue-in-cheek:

> X is an artwork = X is an object that a person or persons having the appropriate proprietary right over X, nonpassingly intends for regard-as-a-work-of-art, i.e. regard in any way (or ways) in which prior artworks are or were correctly (or standardly) regarded (Pouivet 91).

We hope Pouivet's tongue is in his cheek; it certainly should be (see our remarks on essentialism below). Anyway, he makes an important point. Analytical philosophers represent that side of the tradition of philosophy that sees it in terms of efforts to solve philosophical problems. Hence, the entire face of a discussion can be altered by a single work. Instances Pouivet cites are a paper by R. W. Hepburn, another by Morris Weitz, and, of course, Gombrich and Goodman's major works. This is Pouivet's evidence that analytic philosophers are rational: they learn from one another. Where a paper is thought to have made a telling point, it may reorient the thinking in its field. His mix of real and parodied attributions to the Hegelian tradition (quoted above), by contrast, is of statements strictly of the take-it-or-leave-it type.

Critical rationalists are not generally sympathetic to analytic philosophy. In the present book, however, we consider the school of analytic philosophy of aesthetics our ally to the extent that its practitioners exhibit deference to standards of rational argument and attempt to adhere to them. Some of their work may be too scholastic or merely verbal, but that is vastly preferable to the mists of reactionary (Hegelian) verbiage produced by adherents to the other tradition. Unlike them, adherents to the analytic tradition are mostly respectful of science and the limits it places on some moves in debates. Regrettably, too few of its practitioners try to use empirical arguments. In general, our references to the Hegelian historical tradition will be sparing, and our references to analytic aesthetics selective.

Perhaps the major philosophical item concerning which we differ from the analytic philosophers of aesthetics is rationality. We all claim rationality. (Even the Hegelians!) But most analytic philosophers accept the traditional view of rationality that loosely identifies science with empirical proof and rationality with science. Another way to put this is, they endorse the view that rationality and irrationality comprise two poles. We shall call this view "all-or-nothing rationality". Not only do we refuse this polarisation, we find it pernicious. It

divides people into the enlightened and the unenlightened, the clean and the unwashed, the highbrow and the lowbrow, the rational and the irrational. It is an either/or philosophy (Kierkegaard). Our position, outlined in many papers, is that rationality is better viewed as an achievement, one that we accomplish by degrees. Humans do not start from zero because already animals exhibit some goal-directed rationality. Neither pure irrationality nor pure rationality is ever realised. We make the latter point because we argue that rationality is itself an unfinished product.

Underlying the dispute about how rationality is construed is a deeper dispute about the functions of being rational, of deploying argument. A critical rationalist aims to pinpoint and to solve philosophical problems. The function of argument in this process is to bring objections to the solution so as to test whether it is false and, if it is, whether it can be corrected or replaced. Although this is mostly the way argument actually proceeds, a long tradition in philosophy construes it differently. Analytic philosophers of aesthetics adopt this construal. Popper christened this construal "uncritical rationalism". The critical rationalist already mentioned, W. W. Bartley, III, christened it "justificationism". By this he meant that the function of argument, indeed the entire enterprise of philosophy, is engaged in finding reasons to justify positions, including solutions to problems. Thus a lot of philosophical literature is structured in the following way. An author adumbrates an opinion and reviews the arguments surrounding it. Then the author offers arguments that supposedly vindicate the opinion, that dispose of the objections, and hence supposedly entrench it. Critical rationalism takes on board the discovery that such moves are no justification, that no move is a possible justification, not even in science. Using arguments for justification is uncritical. Whether uncritical rationalists are genuinely interested in solving problems is moot. Because one can offer justifying reasons for competing preferred solutions — more than one solution may be justified — claiming justification may very well be the abandonment of a debate just when it starts being interesting. From our point of view this clinches the case against justificationism or uncritical rationalism in favour of the pursuit of debates about solutions to problems to the end.

Critical rationalists do not claim that arguments ever justify, and, in particular, they do not claim that the best responses to the best objections to their views ever justify them. These remain forever conjectural solutions to problems. A view that has survived the current crop of "checks", as Bartley termed them, may indeed be simply the best we have. This offers no assurance or prediction that it will survive a later crop of checks. All the critical rationalist can say is that for the moment the view has been checked as thoroughly as possible.

Where else do we differ from the analysts? Well, in our heroes, to be sure. Analytic philosophers constantly doff the hat to Wittgenstein.[4] The more clearly and emphatically we articulate our refusal to do so, even our refusal to

4. Gaut, for example, writes about "a philosophy as powerful as Wittgenstein's" (Gaut 2000, p. 26) as though this was a foregone conclusion. So much for the efforts of critics like Popper, Wisdom, Gellner, and others (ourselves included), to lay to rest the legend of Wittgenstein as a great philosopher.

pay attention, the more we risk uncomprehending dismissal by members of the analytic school. We suggest that the hagiographic attitude to Wittgenstein and his dark musings is a blotch on the claim of analytic aesthetics to proceed in a rigorously rational manner. There was nothing rigorous or even rational about the form of Wittgenstein's later philosophy; and no modern aesthetician would allow that the irrationalist form could contain rational content.

d) Gombrich and Essentialism

Despite our differences with analytic philosophers, we share with them a hero, if we may rely on Levinson's account: Ernst Gombrich. Strictly speaking, his interest was mainly in the history of the graphic arts. He was something of a critical rationalist, and a scathing critic of Hegelian and Hegelised historiography. He was super scholarly. Many analytic aestheticians are familiar with some of his works, yet they do not discuss his ideas or even refer to him much.[5] Perhaps they do not know what to do with his critical rationalism and the encomia to Popper that permeate his studies of the history and psychology of art. An art historian whose citations range from empirical psychology to a leading scientific philosopher is a puzzle to the aprioristically inclined members of the analytic school. The neglect of Gombrich's ideas may also be due to his habit, not to say his philosophy, to close a number of questions only pro tem. His treatment of the *avant-garde* art of the twentieth century is an example: he put it in historical context, articulated the ideas the artists put forward as their rationale for their work, and made it clear that he found some of the ideas and the works interesting, and a lot more uninteresting. He took care to avoid suggesting that a work was uninteresting because the words accompanying it were. His great monograph *Art and Illusion*, in particular, allocated more space to the impact of *avant-garde* styles on posters than on gallery items proper because there the art did work, regardless of the words accompanying it. In effect his policy towards the question of the permanent value of this or that *avant-garde* artist was "let us wait and see". This contrasts with some of the analytic aestheticians, Danto, Dickie, Carroll and others, who want to move heaven and earth to find ways to legitimate *avant-garde* art as art proper and/or as worthwhile art – even when it is anti-art, implicitly and explicitly. In many ways we find Tom Wolfe's sadly neglected essay *The Painted Word* (1975) more illuminating. It was anticipated by Danto (1964), to which its relation is unclear, but it is a better aesthetics as well as a funnier, better work of art – in its text and in its graphics.[6] It bears comparison with such worthy but unfunny analytic ruminations as Stephan Davies' *Definitions of Art* (1991) and Carroll's *Theories of Art Today* (2000).

Another and more precise explanation is that Gombrich criticised and rejected aesthetics as an impossible enterprise. As Richmond puts it: "all possible theories of aesthetics must be mistaken, because rules or methods for discussion of aesthetic quality must be inapplicable to aesthetic value"

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5. The indexes of the three volumes discussed above have very few references to Gombrich, more to Goodman, and many more to Wittgenstein, Wollheim, Danto, and others.
6. We shall also discuss later in this work the interesting theory of Sassower and Cicotello on the *avant-garde* (Sassower and Cicotello 2000).

(Richmond 1994, p. 12). This leaves little room for anything but history and the exercise of conditioned taste.

Gombrich also refused to discuss the old essentialist chestnut, what is art? He began his now classic *The Story of Art* with the flat declaration that, "There is no such thing as Art. There are only artists … Art with a capital A has no existence" (1950, first para of Introduction). To some analytic aestheticians this has to be the most dismaying aspect of his work. Much ink has been spilt in efforts to answer this essentialist question, to state the necessary and sufficient conditions for an item to count as a work of art. A "real" definition is sought of what is transparently a social construction over time. In declaring ourselves standing on the shoulders of the giant Gombrich, we refuse to take seriously this continuing vein of essentialism that finds expression in analytic aesthetics.

In a recent book of essays, *Theories of Art Today*, the editor, Noel Carroll, declares that for years essentialists were intimidated by early readings of the late Wittgenstein to the effect that art could not be defined because it was an "open concept". Carroll declares that Arthur Danto has refuted this view of art as an open concept by his claim that artworks can only be artworks after they have been "enfranchised" by art theories (1964). For, such theories are in themselves definitions of art, although they comprise only one way to define art. Another way to define art was George Dickie's suggestion that art is the totality of artworks, and these are products that the institutions of the art world treat as artworks. The result of this two-pronged assault, according to Carroll, is that "in the seventies through the eighties" the topic ─ the essentialist definition of art ─ has returned to its dominant position, for example, in the relevant journals. Carroll indicates that the idea of art as an open concept, though meant to follow Wittgenstein, may clash with the idea noted by Levinson of art as a concept denoting things that share a "family resemblance". Although interest in "what is art?" has "slackened somewhat", Carroll adds, it is still a lively topic and "progress on the problem is being made".[7]

Our judgement is different. Making progress with the problem "what is art?" is impossible: it has no unique solution, as there are no real or essential definitions of art or of anything else, hence every definition is valid although some may be more useful than others. (This last statement is well within the analytic tradition as stressed, say, by all members of the Vienna Circle.) The search for a definition is not a problem but a project for a wild goose chase.

We need to say a little more about essentialism. Analytic philosophers of art often claim to be anti-essentialist in the supposed spirit of Wittgenstein's anti-essentialism and in the spirit of the Vienna Circle. The anti-essentialism of Wittgenstein is a myth. The myth was started by a misreading of Paul Feyerabend's famous review of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and by its advocacy in the 1964 book of George Pitcher. That book was one of the first monographs to treat Wittgenstein's earlier and later philosophy together. Its Chapter 9 is entitled "The Attack on Essentialism". Essentialism is identified in there as Platonism, as the view that all (proper) general names name unchanging essences. Pitcher does not seem to be aware that the usual name for this doctrine

7. All quotations are from Carroll 2000, pp. 3-4.

is not "essentialism" but "realism". That is, the idea that essences were real, as opposed to the view that they were nominal. The term "essentialism" was introduced by Popper in 1945 because he thought the traditional terminology confused matters . "Realism" was also being used in metaphysics to contrast with "idealism" (Popper 1945, Ch. 11). In adopting Popper's terminology unwittingly Pitcher also overlooks, though perhaps not unwittingly, the context within which it arises. Popper engages in a severe critique of the Aristotelian traditional theory of definition, not the theory of essences. He sharply objects to the demand to clarify meanings. He shows that in science the meaning of problematic terms is stipulated and that concern with meaning can easily become excessive and lead to the cul-de-sac of barren subtlety and sheer scholasticism. There could not be a better description of many of the pages of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and of the huge literature of commentary and exegesis it has spawned.[8]

With these brief historical remarks in hand, let us offer a touch of philosophical analysis. The question of whether essences exist is a metaphysical question. Failure to find essences does not stop the search. That search has been of value. Those who wish to pursue it should be free to do so. We distinguish between two questions here: "what is *x*?" and "what does '*x*' mean?" Following Popper's terminology, we call the search for the answer to the first "essentialism" or "ontological essentialism" and the search for the second "methodological essentialism". Without deciding the metaphysical issue we can distinguish another policy: methodological nominalism. Methodological nominalists do not start from the questions "what is *x*?" or "what is the meaning of '*x*'?" They ask the question, "what shall we agree to call the phenomenon we are discussing and theorizing about?" Methodological essentialism is verbal. It argues from use as though use is a touchstone (Gellner 1951, 1959). How to escape the verbal? Popper's answer is methodological nominalism: treat the word *x* as shorthand for some stipulated description. Already in this Introduction we have said that we shall use "art" in a very wide sense, wide enough so that to almost all questions like "what do you mean by 'art'?" we can answer "whatever you mean and more". Narrowed usage usually betrays an agenda, such as refusing the call Nazi art "art" (see Ch. 3). Using a common word in the service of a persuasive definition is a way of smuggling in that agenda. We prefer agendas to be out in the open, not loaded onto words, built into discourse.

One of the most radical nominalists in analytic aesthetics is Nelson Goodman. He was both an ontological nominalist and a methodological nominalist. He argued that there is no ready-made world independent of language to which scientific and artistic representations of that world can be compared. Representations are only testable against our unyielding beliefs and principles. Just as induction is grounded in habit, so is judgement of what is realistic – in science as in art. Gombrich criticises Goodman's "relativism" in his (1972). As with Gombrich, there is some doffing of the hat to Goodman within analytic aesthetics, but less traceable influence than one might expect. We suggest that Gombrich prevailed in the debate between them, that is, he showed

8. Wittgenstein (1953) "§371: "*Essence* is expressed by grammar."

that methodological nominalists need not give up the idea of a ready-made world and natural ways of representing it.[9] Goodman's methodological nominalism comes in a package deal together with ontological nominalism – only concrete objects exist, and the signs that serve as symbols to name or describe them. He said this was not relativistic. His critics said it was. Levinson's plea for a richer, pluralist ontology is telling (see above).

One of the richest aesthetic ontologies on offer is the institutional theory of Danto and of Dickie, especially the great efforts that Danto has made to normalise, that is, incorporate into the historical tradition, the *avant-garde* artists who are ─ at least seemingly ─ hostile to that tradition, pleased to make fun of it, and even willing to attempt to destroy it (Duchamp, Dali, Cage). If they have a theory about what they are doing, he said, aestheticians should take them seriously (1964).[10] He regrettably does not give us any criterion for what such a theory would be. It would be a stretch to treat some of the strings of words produced in *avant-garde* manifestos (the *Vorticist manifesto* (1912), the *Dada Manifesto* (1918), the *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924)) as theories. The absence of a criterion is crucial because if we agree to view any string of words as a theory then anything can claim to be art that is accompanied by some words. This is not the view that there is no such thing as art with a capital A but one of its opposites: anything has the potential to be art, and so anything is. The first half of that consequence is one we are even inclined to endorse, but not the second. The route Danto has taken to it is not one we would choose.

Dickie's view, which we will discuss further in Chapter 2, contains a lot of truth: that is, most of what we usually consider art is what the institutions of the art world treat as such. It is, at best, a start. His critic, Anita Silvers, claimed that in effect he allows that anything whatsoever can be art. We do not find that conception so evidently absurd as does Silvers (1976). This is more than a possibility: as John Dewey and John Cage repeatedly explained, we can look at anything whatsoever and describe it in terms that bring out its aesthetic aspects and qualities. True, this does not make it art. True, the institutions of the art world are not engaged in capturing this universality of aesthetic aspects or qualities. The aesthetics of mathematics is the paradigm case here: only the institutions of the scientific world can handle it. This is a prime case where empirical evidence is to be welcomed. We would look to such works as Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (Becker 1982; see also Anderson 2000). Becker's symbolic interactionism and detachment are shocking to aestheticians. But he does report lots of interesting empirical observations about how art works are made, received, canonised, kept outside the establishment, and so on. He casts his net wide and so he does not make the mistake of identifying art with the museum or of assuming the worlds of art make up a coherent whole.

So much by way of an Introduction. We will try to be critical rationalists (Popper, 1945) and moderate nominalists (Gombrich 1981) ─ in the hope that the result will be an interesting take on a vital field of human endeavour.

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9. Gombrich quotes Goodman as trying to narrow their differences in his 1981.
10. One complication considered by Wolfe (1975) is where the source of a theory is not so much the artist as the critic, or even a discussion between them.

Chapter 2
THE ARTS IN OUR WORLD

a) Two points from Howard Becker. Art is a collective activity and art is an ascribed status. **b) The Leading Social Theories of Art.** Plato, Marx, Tolstoy, Danto, Dickie. **c) Naturalism, Romanticism, and Artistic Innovation.** The explanation of artistic progress eludes naturalism and romanticism. Gombrich's incrementalist view solves it. **d) The Diversity of Publics.** In a world with different level of education there are differences of taste but these do not explain or excuse snobbery and élitism. **e) The *avant-garde*.** "Wait and see" is the watchword for the *avant-garde*, especially as so much of the Romantic philosophy behind it is worthless. **f) High Art ≠ Good Art.** These distinctions are superficial and collapse on scrutiny. **g) High Art Without Condescension.** Consumption of poor art shows nothing about the consumers or about standards. **h) An Egalitarian Conception of High Art.** High art is powerful, demanding, and deep. It rewards revisits. Its difficulty is never for its own sake. **i) Philosophers and Low Art.** Some philosophers display hostility to low art. Only a socio-diagnosis can make sense of this. **j) Low Art in Context.** The *cordon sanitaire* that the guardians of culture want between low art and high art cannot be coherently maintained. **k) Humour.** Humour is more low than high and so condemns exclusively high art to solemnity. **l) Mass Culture.** Technology has enriched both low and high art, philosophers to the contrary notwithstanding. **m) Middlebrow Art and Its Virtues**. The middle is where the two poles learn from one another and sometimes exchange places.

a) Two points from Howard Becker

Having in our Introduction said that a critical approach should deploy empirical material wherever it is available, we open this chapter with an overview of the facts about the art world as disclosed by historians and sociologists of art. The American sociologist Howard S. Becker, for one, stresses two features of the world of the arts that strike us as especially salient for philosophy. First, art is a collective activity. Second, to designate something as art is to ascribe a status.

To dramatise the view of art as collective activity, Becker lists the credits of a typical Hollywood feature film. There are dozens of names, and the list is only partial (Becker 1982, pp. 7-9). Becker indicates what we know in general of the contribution of only a few of those named and how important their work may be to the final effects of the film. In a second example, Becker uses his specialised knowledge as a professional jazz musician to emphasise the collective activity in musical performance, activity that in turn relies on further collective activity to supply the instruments, the musical material, the notation, conventions, styles and traditions of that music and its performance, not to mention the coordination required to assemble band and audience in the performance space.

Obviously, collective activity is a necessary condition for the creation of art. No man is an island, not even the artists among us. Yet the characterisation of art as collective activity is opposed to what Becker terms the romantic myth of the artist. That myth tells a story of the lone struggle of the creative artist with his demons or muses as he gives birth to some earth-shattering artwork. (The mythical artist is always male.) Not only is the artist alone in this, he needs to struggle with his loneliness and he should be left alone: other people and institutions are sites of interference, distraction, and frustration. Why does Becker treat this widely believed story as a myth? Is there any reason why Robinson Crusoe, alone on his desert island, cannot produce art? After all, he can scavenge for materials with which to make pictures, sculptures, writings, and other kinds of creation. We need to tackle this issue immediately, even at the expense of postponing our sketch of the arts in the present world.

Becker concedes the obvious truth that art begins with an idea in an individual mind: art is a collective activity and yet artists are often alone in their creative struggle. Logically, there is no contradiction between the assertion that art — or any activity — is both collective and individual: all activity has a social aspect and an individual aspect. Nonetheless, we have here two contrary points of view regarding any social activity, and they compete for our assent. The collective activity point of view leads one to begin inquiry with the institutions, traditions, and conventions, with the structure and organisation of the artworld. The individual activity point of view leads one to begin inquiry with artists' biographies, intentions, messages. We view these points of view as complementary: they contribute to an adequate, balanced philosophy of any action, including action in the arts; yet the order of approach should be first social and then individual.[1]

Can works of Robinson Crusoe, then, be works of art? The question is tricky. It is possible that he or his rescuers thought well enough of his work to retrieve it upon rescue. That might be for sentimental reasons, the way some of us preserve artefacts from our childhood, like diaries or school notebooks. But can it on occasion be genuine art? Is there any reason in principle that the art or writing of Robinson Crusoe cannot become part of the art of our world? None in principle, but the very link to our world and its acceptance or recognition underlines Crusoe's link to collective activity. His writings would need to use the natural language he has mastered and follow the conventions of literary construction associated with that tradition; his paintings would need to employ an idiom that stems from those he learned before he was shipwrecked. Otherwise his writings might be dismissed as gibberish, his paintings as daubs. Ah, but what if he penned what in the art schools they call an 'artist's statement' wherein he explained the relation of his gibberish or his daubs to the mainstream of art or writing? Again, of necessity, this description of how the far out gets the stamp of approval is an implicit acknowledgement that it is art because it engages people

1. Nevertheless, this case is somewhat exceptional, and it may lead to the compromise attitude of attempting to consider first the paradigmatic or ideal type of the individual. The ideal type point of view is a compromise, as the ideal type is a mix, being a set of individual characteristics tacitly chosen for their social import (Agassi, 1959).

in collective activity and that shows how the far-out work connects to the collective idioms and conventions of the pictorial and literary arts and modifies them.

Thus, Robinson Crusoe can conceivably produce art, but only by employing the results of prior collective activities and in building connections from his work to ongoing collective activities. The individualistic notion of the solitary artist is impossible. Philosophical discourse that presupposes it is called into question, as Becker rightly insists.

Turn now to facts about the collective activity known as the arts. In truly integrated, small-scale societies, the art world and the social world are one and the same.[2] The same individuals play many different roles and the same institutions house those roles. We are thinking of the societies classically studied by social anthropologists. In these communities society and culture are one and the same, and so all aspects of culture there took a lower case "c". In modern western society the situation could not be more different. Roles are highly specialised and so are the institutions that house them. When we think of the art world of modern civilisation we do not think of culture with a small "c" but with a capital "C". We think of how many of the arts, classical and modern, provide the opportunity for careers. How there are specialised institutions of education and training, in some cases capped by licensing bodies (architecture).[3] There are firms and entrepreneurs that deal in art, graphic, literary, and other. There are public institutions for collection, preservation, and exhibition. There are government policies and agencies to execute them. There is a class of creators, a class of agents and dealers, a class of commentators and critics, and a class of connoisseurs and collectors. Many of these overlap and intersect. As Sassower and Cicotello stress (2000), in the present day art is part and parcel of the capitalist system, even and especially when it posits itself as in some way opposed to that very system. It is not necessary for us to detail further, there is an easily accessible literature descriptive of the art world in every country that has one (e.g. Wolff 1981; Becker 1982; Zollberg 1990; Anderson 2000).

We write from the viewpoint of advanced industrial society where the fundamental means of coordination are grouped under the label "division of labour". The functions of art education, art production, art distribution, art assessment, and art consumption are divided and subdivided into tasks performed by multiple individuals distributed through many institutions. So pervasive are the arts in this advanced society that they are sometimes referred to by the slightly crass label "culture industries". These institutions include concrete ones

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2. Gombrich, 1974, 843: "What we call 'art' in primitive societies is obviously so deeply embedded in the ritual and life of the community that its multiple purpose makes change very precarious. Painting and carving for instance may have a magic or religious as well as a decorative and prestige function. The age of these traditions is often felt to be the guarantee of their value and efficacy; and since no rational criteria can exist to decide which image is more efficacious such changes as occur must be due to accidental 'mutations'." This applies to all activities in societies with minimal division of labour. See also (Gombrich 1968).

3. Mediaeval Europe differed from both preliterate and modern societies: all artisans there (except for the travelling ones) were organised in guilds whose membership was restricted to masters who had produced officially-recognized masterpieces.

such as art schools, art workshops, commercial art galleries and auction houses, museums, and other less tangible ones, as well as traditions of style and performance, bodies of work that are considered canonical, information networks, feedback mechanisms, and so on. The art world is stratified: there are those who are primarily producers, mediators, or consumers. These layers are not exclusive because there is nothing to prevent an individual belonging to all three, just as there are institutions that may serve all three functions.

Activities in the art world are sometimes ranked in a hierarchy, in the way individuals are spoken of as highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow. The art forms themselves are sometimes ranked in this way. When the present authors were students it was quite outlandish to treat the movies as a field of artistic endeavour. That view was held by an embattled minority. There were rankings, in descending order, viz.: grand opera, *opera seria, opera buffo*, burlesque opera, light opera, operetta, musicals. Classical or serious music was held in higher esteem than light music, folk music, jazz, popular. The works of T. W. Adorno on some of these forms give a flavour of how things stood at that time. That consensus, much of it sheer inherited snobbery, has been broken down over the course of the second half of the 20th century to an extent that makes it hard for present day students to grasp that it was ever the case. Nowadays moviemakers, rappers, fashion designers, and all manner of creators refer to themselves as "artists" with scarcely a demurral in sight.[4]

The wide spread of the designation "art" brings us to Becker's second point: to designate something art is to ascribe a status to it. In calling themselves "artists" the diverse creators seek to appropriate a status. Not every usage of the word functions in this way. 'Art class' in kindergarten or school, for instance, refers to pupils mastering the materials and trying to learn. Their work is art only in this loose sense. But if we refer to a teapot as a work of art we are saying it is more than a mere teapot. There is something about its design or its look (or its origin: it is Wedgwood!) that leads the viewer to grant it status over and above other, more mundane, teapots. Just as status can be ascribed it can also be withheld as when we say of the kindergarten finger painting that it is juvenilia, meaning it does not count as art.

To say that art is a status is, in our advanced society, not necessarily transparent. The scale and complexity of our society is matched by a confused and ambiguous status system (or set of such systems). When we were taught sociology it was through examples like Ancient Athens or the feudal system. In Athens the status of adult male citizen trumped the status of slaves, women, and children on almost all dimensions. Similarly to be a feudal lord would give one status advantage along all dimensions: political, economic, religious, educational, sumptuary, health, and so on. How different are matters in our present world, where J. K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series of novels, is said to be among the wealthiest of women in the U.K. in their own right. She is second only to the Queen, it is often added. Once upon a time the Queen would have been at the top of almost all status hierarchies. This is no longer so; not quite. Her very mention in the same sentence gives a boost to Ms. Rowling and

4. The useful word "artiste" seems to have become rare.

something of a come-down for the Queen. This comparison does not settle Rowling's status. The ascription to her of the status of a rich writer is clear. However, the status of a rich writer itself is rather vague. Whether her novels are literature remains to be seen. Her popularity is no barrier, as several of the major prose writers of the English tradition were popular in their own time. But it is not necessarily so. Some critics question the quality of her prose, and some question her synthesis of materials from past stories of magic powers, monsters and evil forces, not to mention the milieu of the private school. Rowling operates in a mainstream field of artistic endeavour, prose writing, and by some received criteria she does it very well. Where she will ultimately stand in the status hierarchy of merit is open to dispute.

Popularity in the arts is a mixed blessing. One reason for this is the ambivalence of the tradition. Religious painting, for example, functioned mostly to illustrate *Gospel* stories and to assist in devotion. Hence its idiom was as transparent and accessible as artists could make it. Classical ballet, by contrast, was an art of the royal court. It required time and leisure both to perform and to appreciate. The royal court was a closed society with only a select few admitted. Ballet was neither literally accessible nor metaphorically accessible since its conventions were esoteric. Opera, finally, was in the middle ground: traditionally one had to be well dressed to gain entry, and this was a condition that was not always easy to meet.

Thus, some arts are intentionally too difficult or too rarefied to be accessed by all. Influential writers in the 20th century, such as Clement Greenberg (1939) and Dwight Macdonald (1953), made much of this. Anything accessible or easy they found suspect, possibly mere *kitsch*, certainly middlebrow. How to sustain their view in the face of great but popular art: the old masters, for example, or the standard orchestral repertoire, or the best-sellers of Dickens and Trollope? Various tactics were available. One was to grasp the nettle and assert that all of the above were indeed mere middlebrow, bourgeois creations. The contrast was with the difficult, the demanding, the new. Another tactic was to subject these popular works to esoteric techniques of analysis: historical, semiotic, musicological, psycho-analytical. Simpler, competing approaches could then be dismissed as oversimplifications.

No doubt, our objection to exclusivity as a merit, whether social or intellectual, has an egalitarian component. More important is that the tactic of exclusion is often a form of obscurantism, obfuscation, mystification. But not always: ballet, to repeat, was esoteric because it was developed in a restricted environment. And then, when it became more accessible, it proved not intrinsically difficult to understand, and no more troublesome to master than a musical instrument. The huge popularity of ballet in the Soviet Union is an example; as is its extensive following amongst certain classes of young girls. Art forms that seem rarefied or esoteric seem that way because knowledge about them is not widely diffused. (Japanese Noh drama is a case in point.) Their being difficult to master, either in performance or in appreciation, is not an intrinsic quality. Reading and writing are extremely difficult to master and yet most advanced industrial societies have almost universal literacy. Like bicycle

riding, reading is so thoroughly mastered that it becomes effortless. The same goes for some kinds of writing. The same argument holds with regard to musical instruments. Consider the 1903 musical culture casually depicted in the movie *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Minnelli 1944). The family is bourgeois provincial, supported by the lawyer head of household. The two high-school-age daughters are competent pianists and singers. At one point their mother, playing an old ballad, shifts it down to the husband's vocal range quite *extempore*. This is not presented as a remarkable accomplishment but as quite unremarked and unremarkable.

We are not sure whether semiotics, musicology, psycho-analysis and other sophisticated interpretative techniques are likely to spread beyond academe. We would however want to maintain that their esotericism is often no more than a matter of some familiarity and a smattering of education. There is nothing especially difficult about them and were the society interested in their universal diffusion along with literacy, we can see no intrinsic barriers. This is so obvious, that it is described in a comedy (*Born Yesterday*) and a musical comedy (*Bells are Ringing*), both from Hollywood, not the centre of high culture.

With these sketchy remarks in hand about the familiar general social facts about the arts in our world we can set out the agenda for the rest of the chapter. First we will look at the ways in which philosophers have brought out the social character of art and what they made of it. Then we shall look at the artist as individual and the public or publics which receive their work. Then we shall take an extended look at those two structuring categories, high and low. The question is whether they any longer express more than snobbery and historical nostalgia, and what elements of truth they contain. (For logical reasons, every falsehood contains some truth.)

b) The Leading Social Theories of Art

Already Plato raised the question of the social responsibility of the arts. He said, briefly, that some music is macho, some effeminate. Modern examples would be military marches versus teary ballads. Plato commended the social value of the former and pointed to the social damage that could be done by the latter (*Ion, Republic* Book X*)*. Plato's discussion is clever. It implies that there is only one dimension to the social responsibility of art and artists, and only one measure. That dimension is, art *vis à vis* society at large. The measure is the damage or reinforcement of the *status quo* or its values or of the general consensus on what is desirable. It is immediately apparent that there are other dimensions to social responsibility. Since no society is homogeneous there will always be multiple facets to any given case. Among these would be social responsibility to the traditions of the arts themselves, including, possibly, telling truth to power. The measure of the *status quo* is easy to deconstruct: the *status quo* is never a unity and never static; so any presentation of it as such is a fabrication in order to get the measuring exercise to come out in a particular way.

Before continuing, we should perhaps say that Plato's texts are so brilliant that maybe we should be tilting at the way he is read rather than at him. As we do not want to pose as Plato scholars, our discussion of Plato and the arts should

refer to Plato as he is received, not to the true Plato. And this is what we have intended to do here.

One further response to the one-dimensional notion of the social responsibility of art and artists whould be to claim that there is a responsibility to art as such, and to beauty and pleasure as such, and that this too is a social responsibility of sorts. Plato did not deny the existence of beauty as such, whether explicitly or by implication. It seems clear that he never intended to deny the existence of beauty, despite the fact that he argued against different views of it that were extant in his time. He took as an example of socially objectionable artworks the greatest and most significant Greek poet, Homer, whose works were close to being the Greek equivalent to Scripture. Plato recommended proscribing Homer's works or passages from them, on account of their social influence that he deemed negative. He was not oblivious to their artistic merit. Indeed it was their merit that gave them that ability to influence that he deemed dangerous. Whether he intended to proscribe the works themselves or only rhapsodic public performances of them is open to discussion. It would be consistent with *The Republic* to permit private access to them by some chosen individuals who were over 40 and worthy to study the socially most dangerous art of dialectic.

Obliviousness to artistic merit may be more the case with Marx, or at least with some leading Marxist students of aesthetics, including Bertold Brecht, who saw in art nothing but propaganda and in great art nothing but great propaganda. The use of art for propaganda purposes is not at issue. No one denies that some art, good, bad, and indifferent, functions as propaganda. When we remember that the word "propaganda" comes from the earlier name of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, the *Sagra Congregatione de Propaganda Fide*, the sacred office for the propagation of the faith, it is hard to overlook the fact that almost all religious art, including some magnificent cathedrals and church music, functions as propaganda. It is even possible to take the view that all art is propaganda willy-nilly. What is under discussion here is the view that talk of art and beauty is mystification; what we call art is sophisticated propaganda and nothing more! This view is preposterous. (It is not unusual that the obviously true and the obviously false are easy to confuse.)

Though the claim that art is no more than propaganda is false, it has merit. This merit was brought out by Tolstoy. He observed artists lost in their work and having nowhere to turn for help. The remedy was to view art as having social utility: it leads the artist to create the art for the community that commissions it. When an artist has to come up with funereal music or dance music, Tolstoy observed, the choices are made before the performance begins. He makes it amply clear that his discourse is not sociology but art theory, aesthetics, because he manages to squeeze out of it proposals for what should count as good art and what should be its mode of production. Unless we remember this, theories such as that of Tolstoy would seem to be off the point at issue, since the question is not whether art has social utility, and not even whether it must have it, but whether there is no more to art than its social utility.

It is therefore very important to notice that there is some important truth to Tolstoy's theory yet that it is unsatisfactory all the same. It is true that artists are often lost because they are alienated, to use the proper expression even though he did not use it, and that taking the social utility of art seriously offers direction and guidance to all creative artists. There is leeway here: artists may be conservative and support the régime in which they live, and we will all expect the art which they produce to be conventional. Or they may be radical and fight the régime and produce innovative art (Pelles 1963). The totalitarian régimes of the twentieth century, Communist, Fascist, and Nazi, all took this for granted. Nevertheless, the equation is false. Not only were some influential radical artists politically conservative (for example Arnold Schoenberg); but, in the opposite case, while support of a totalitarian régime makes one a conservative in that it imposes on artists the obligatory style of these régimes, there were artists who supported totalitarian régimes and were innovative (Picasso[5]; Sartre). There is no doubt that when a work of art is commissioned, many artistic decisions are pre-empted, but this can be a challenge[6], which is shown by the fact that every so often a work of art is commissioned, the artist fulfils the commission contract and yet the commissioning party reneges or otherwise rejects the work. Paul Wittgenstein (pianist brother of the philosopher) is a paradigm here: after losing his right arm in WWI he paid for works for piano for the left hand which he commissioned, but for his own aesthetic reasons he refused to perform them.[7]

Plato, Marx, and Tolstoy made a point that Becker takes for granted: artists create for their society, not for themselves and not for any individual. They use a given idiom; if they create a new one, it must gain public acceptance for their work to register at all. A question that engages many a modern art theoretician, including Sir Ernst Gombrich, is, why and how art idioms evolve and why and how they become popular.[8] Taking art to have social utility gives rise to two serious problems. One we have already mentioned: of the actions that

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5. Picasso was censured by the French Communist Party to which he belonged for his sketch of Stalin.

6. Karl Popper explained in his autobiography (§11) the appearance of counterpoint in the West as the result of the challenge that emerged from the demand to stick to Gregorian chants.

7. "Between 1918 and 1921 Wittgenstein dug through musical archives in search of selections that could be arranged for the left hand. He found little, but his wealth enabled him to commission works by some of the foremost composers of his day. In addition to the Ravel concerto, Wittgenstein bought pieces from Richard Strauss, Benjamin Britten, Paul Hindemith, and others, not all of which he found suitable. When Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev sent him a specially written concerto in 1931, Wittgenstein promptly returned it with the following note: "Thank you for the concerto, but I don't understand a note of it, and shall not play it." Wittgenstein and Ravel feuded for a time over alterations the pianist had made in performance of the Concerto for the Left Hand, but Wittgenstein eventually conceded that the work should be played as it was written. Wittgenstein's musical tastes ran to 19th-century pieces, which posed some problems for him when he dealt with modern composers." See http://www.trivia-library.com/c/biography-of-one-armed-pianist-paul-wittgenstein-part-2.htm.

8. Gombrich's view is that there is a logic of the situation on Vanity Fair. Whatever the reason for innovation in style, it polarises opinion and hence makes the *status quo* a choice just as much as the innovation. Some innovations succeed in becoming dominant norms, others do not. Reasonable prediction of success is impossible. Retrospective explanation of how success was achieved requires the retracing of particular historical trajectories (Gombrich 1968, 1974).

yield a given social utility, which of them is art? For example, even if all art is propaganda, certainly not all propaganda is art. What propaganda is art, then, what not? Second, which utility is specific to art, or does art enter all socially valuable endeavours? To the second question the reasonable answer is, indeed, all actions can be performed more artistically or less artistically. This is very commonsense, yet it has led to very remarkable results, first emphasised by Gombrich, not earlier. (Even Tolstoy missed it!) It is that art is a veneer over whatever is done competently enough to begin with. In particular, the fine arts are the veneer, the gloss, developed by artisans at the peak of their craft. This idea, it is important to notice, as Gombrich does, is the very opposite of the Romantic theory of art: it is, as he puts it, the theory of art with a small a, not with a capital A.[9] Gombrich thus effected a radical change in a central problem of aesthetics, that of the demarcation of art: what is art? There were two classical Greek answers: art is imitation of nature and art is a cause of pleasure (of a special kind!). Are these two different? If they are different, under what conditions?

The Romantic theory of art of art with a capital A was meant to supersede the classical theories.[10] Art is a creation of genius, it says, that transmits social messages from the heart of the genius to the hearts of the (national) audience. Hence, great art must excite. There is much wrong with this theory, which is hard to take seriously, despite its popularity and despite its being espoused by great thinkers (Coleridge, Schelling, Schopenhauer). We will encounter it repeatedly in this book. Suffice it to observe at this point that it does not demarcate art, but great art. When defenders of the Romantic theory notice this, they fall back on the idea of the social utility of art, art as uplifting. They thus wrong-foot themselves, since lots of poor and unexciting art is uplifting: galleries, libraries, shops of religious souvenirs, movie theatres, and TV channels, are all full of uplift.

It is only one step from noticing the social utility of art to giving a social characterisation of it. The paradigm is the provocative idea, advocated by the philosophers Arthur Danto and George Dickie that, in a first crude approximation: any piece that hangs on the wall of a museum is *eo ipso* a work of art. In practice this is almost useless: the museum curator who wants to know what work to purchase cannot consult the walls. At times able and honest curators really do wonder whether an item is a significant work of art as they contemplate purchasing it for their museums. Suppose a curator consults the said philosophers: should this work be hung on the wall of the museum? If it is, comes the answer, then it will be art. But the curator wants advice. Danto and Dickie were well aware of the circularity and seeming vacuity of the first approximation of their "institutional theory of art". Each tried to distance himself

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9. This is in parallel with Popper's rejection of science with a capital S in favour of science with small s; although Popper is in this respect in agreement with Bacon, he is very much in the minority on this issue.

10. The *locus classicus* for us is still Lovejoy 1924 (232-233): "When a man is asked , as I have had the honor to be asked, to discuss Romanticism, it is impossible to know what ideas or tendencies he is to talk about, when they are supposed to have flourished, or in whom they are supposed to be chiefly exemplified."

from crude, simple formulations, and to point more to the art world as a whole or art worlds as wholes, or to theorising within the art world as the sources of advice for the curator. Their critics try to show that the objections to the original, crude, scarcely articulated first version of the theory still haunt their most elaborated versions.

As Danto and Dickie are proto-sociologists, as it were, we would expect them to refer to work of some sociologists of art and literature. They do not. This is noted by Howard Becker (1982) and Richard L. Anderson (2000). One might also expect them to mention some social institutions. They do not. They say nothing about canonical artistic institutions such as standard school literature anthologies, staple repertoires of orchestras, chamber ensembles, and soloists, opera and ballet companies. Canonical anthologies and the staple repertoire demarcate worthy art but, it has to be admitted, not art as such. It is Becker who does that — at least at some level of his discourse. He notes that art worlds, as he calls them,

> typically devote considerable attention to trying to decide what is and isn't art, what is and isn't their kind of art, and who is and isn't an artist; by observing how an art world makes those distinctions rather than trying to make them ourselves we can understand much of what goes on in that world (Becker 1982, p. 36).

Becker takes a highly catholic stance, treating maverick, naïve, folk, and mass art as art worlds, i.e., art.[11] We, however, do not wish to avoid the question at hand by shifting to the observer role. The art worlds do not judge equally good all answers to "what is and isn't art". Possibly the better answers can be generalised and we can then have a critical discussion about them and about the consensus about them.

Why, then, is the Romantic theory so popular? Our guess is: just because it speaks of great art and because it ascribes to it a capacity to cause great excitement and to yield social value. There is ample evidence for this explanation: Aristotle's theory of catharsis is likewise attractive and for the not very good reason that it speaks of excitement. The word "catharsis" is an odd case, testifying to the poverty of aesthetics as a field, and even of art criticism as an institutional activity: Aristotle used this word twice, and twice he did not explain. One meaning of this rare word that scholars can discern is purgation, a medical term. It comes in this context: Aristotle endorses the theory of art as pleasurable, and mentions an obvious criticism: tragedy evokes sympathy with pain, not the pleasure that is so characteristic of comedy. In other words, were Aristotle's theory true, then comedy should count as a higher art form than tragedy. This conclusion Aristotle could not admit. How then did he square his

11. Becker's sociological detachment and catholic inclusion of such things as quilting and cowboy art seem to have irked the reviewer of the book in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* who more or less dismisses Becker as a sociological philistine. The author of the review did not treat the reader to any arguments against Becker's scepticism (Kavolis 1982). The reaction to Anderson's inclusion of sermons, tattoos, topless dancing, and yard art into his anthropological study was less hostile but still negative. Dilworth maintains that it does not follow from Anderson's evidence that his subjects engage in their activities for aesthetic reasons, hence it is possible to explain them as merely utilitarian (Dilworth 2000).

evaluation of tragedy with his theory of art as pleasurable? To this his answer is, ah, but tragedy leads to catharsis. And catharsis is socially valuable (pace Plato). This does not explain why tragedy is more valuable than comedy but, given that pleasure is socially valuable and catharsis is socially valuable, at least they are on a par.[12] Aristotle's text on comedy is lost. As to the Romantic theory, it has no place for comedy at all.

As the Romantic theory of art is a theory of Great Art, it fails to demarcate art as such, but it may still be valuable as a theory: great art as great because it excites. (It does not speak of art as exciting; see the end of this paragraph.) The kind of pleasure that it deems specific to the aesthetic experience is a sense of elation, where time stands still. If you have never experienced it, you should do something about it, as you miss something worth having. In the meantime there is nothing that can be done about it, and you have to take it on faith that people do experience it and that the greatest art assessors recognise works of art by observing themselves undergoing the aesthetic experience. Often art experts make historical judgements ─ as to whether a certain work of art is genuine or not ─ by relying on that sense of beauty and its pleasures that they expect of a great work of art. This shows that even as a theory of great art the Romantic theory is wanting. It tells us no more than that great art stirs us, which is no news (see Ch. 4).

There is no squaring of this characterisation of great art with Gombrich's theory of the artist's art as the outgrowth of the artisan's craft. In Gombrich's view the demarcation of art as such is impossible, that art as such is anything well done, that great art is anything especially well done ─ including a piece of research, incidentally ─ and mere art is anything in between, perhaps anything that aspires to be great art, who knows? So we can only recognise a great work of art when we see it, not characterise it in general terms. What we would like to add to all this is that there is something specific to art, and it is that it is entertainment. Thus, a piece of research is rightly deemed artful only to the extent that above and beyond its value as a piece of research it possesses beauty that is quite entertaining. This is offered not as a critique of the views of Gombrich, or of anyone else other than the Romantic theoreticians who take Great Art as too important to be viewed as entertainment.

c) Artist, Genius, and Public

Social facts about art vary with the scale and the developmental stage, as well as the history of the society in which it evolves. The individual is where art begins

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12. Our discussion here is unavoidably oversimplified. The classical scholar Gerald Else remarks: "The isolation and difficulty of the catharsis-clause are indeed notorious; for the word … does not occur again in the Poetics. But critics and philologists are not the men to be daunted by lack of evidence: the mass of writing about [catharsis] is almost in inverse proportion to the extent of the visible material (Else 1963, p. 225). Else's own theory is very hard to gist. He tries to reconcile the contradiction we have noticed between the claims that art delivers pleasure and tragic art delivers pity and terror. Else argues that catharsis is part of the dramatic machinery, that a horrific impure act, such as parricide, is shown by a plot twist to have happened in ignorance and that this purifies the protagonist from our condemnation and releases instead pity, which Else calls "tragic pleasure" (ibid., 439).

and the social facts on the individual consist of biography, something we shall avoid as much as we can. Instead we look at how the individual is seen by philosophers and sociologists. The theory that most emphatically stresses the individual is Romanticism. It is the Romantic view that the truly innovative artist must be ahead of the crowd, so that the public cannot possibly understand them so that they must suffer neglect. Indeed, failure to be understood and neglect are stigmata of authenticity and thus (!) of importance. By contrast, the classical view is that an artist without an audience is no artist at all. The Romantic view allows for the hope that a neglected artist will be amply compensated by future generations, perhaps posthumously. The classical view leaves this matter unexamined. It is clear that neither theory deals with the following, commonsense view: a true artist appeals to the best in their audiences, and the poor artist sings to the gallery. (And the very best manage to do both.) It is also clear that it is easier to appeal to what the public already likes than to struggle for the right of an innovation to its place in the tradition: after all, most innovations do not make it, and often enough for good reasons. And so the matter is very complex, involving interaction between artists and their audiences — an interaction that Gombrich was the first to praise. It is also very clear that the appreciation of a work of art demands a reconstruction of this interaction, and there is no saying as to the limits of such a process. In other words, the new, historical, and critical attitude to art leaves these questions open-ended.

The Hegelian version of Romanticism makes one seek not the common but the future-oriented art, the art that is scarcely comprehended in its day, the art accessible only to artists and to individuals geared to understand emerging futures. Since on the whole today's *avant-garde* art will be properly understood only in the future, we do not know what the future bodes for any of today's *avant-garde* artists, not even that their works will survive their own demise. *Avant-garde* artists, no doubt, often comfort themselves that their unpopularity today will be amply compensated posthumously; but this, we know, is often just a vain hope. A story by Max Beerbohm mocks artists who suffer torture from self-doubts, from not knowing that their output will be appreciated by future generations. In that story a poet sells his soul to the devil for a future visit to the British Museum library, where he seeks a copy of his own poems and fails to find it.[13]

The Hegelian Romantic idea is future-oriented. In some versions it offers a criterion of good art in the challenge to artists: good art is the very outcome of compliance with the demand to compose for the future (and be misunderstood and neglected). In other versions of this criterion, the failure of the contemporary art-consuming public to understand a work of art is but the test of artistic success, not the guarantee for it. Romantics also support the contrary idea. They challenge the public to see today's good art as a variant of tradition or even a mere reproduction of it and to judge art as good only if it is past-oriented. The future-oriented version demands of the public too much; the past-oriented demands of it too little. Both ways, art loses its intrinsic challenge to the

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13. Sir Max Beerbohm, "Enoch Soames", in his *Seven Men*, 1919; now also in a separate 2004 edition.

challenge of history (future or past as the case may be) and then it is art no longer. The challenge to the public, we say, is a part of the challenge to the artists themselves. We mentioned as an example the narrative arts par excellence, the narrative art that is informative in one way or another. It can be challenging when it conveys entertainingly some serious, significant information, when it is aimed at different publics, and when it pushes forward and tries to be progressive. Though we oppose progressivism (demanding progress, and judging art by its progressivism), we do support efforts to achieve progress; and we emphasise that the narrative arts can be genuinely progressive — but only when artists succeed in engaging their public. In particular, in order to engage their public they may choose to offer intriguing narrative thought experiments. In that case they express the concerns and the views and values of the society in which they live, and thus they do not constitute the narrative art of the society of the future. This is particularly so when the message is important but not much can be said of its importance except to exhibit it in a narrative, as in the case of monstrous historical events.[14]

So, one of the points about the idea of art as a challenging luxury is the idea that good art is, among other things, an intriguing interaction between artists and their intended public. This idea should be trivial; unfortunately it is not. Naturalist writers on art — those who judge only by its faithfulness to nature — overlook the interaction between artists and their publics. They do not present the ongoing business of art as a challenge to artists. Only the criticism of naturalism that Gombrich has launched makes it so. As naturalism is impossible, striving for it may indeed be a challenge, and public responses comprise a measure of the challenge. Public response may express agreement with the artists who find their efforts relatively satisfactory; obviously, most students of aesthetics and of art disagree, as do most art-critics, as they find naturalism in principle not challenging enough.

Just as the naturalist theory of art overlooks the role of the interaction between artists and the public so the Romantic theory of art takes it seriously. And so it should, since it takes the social dimension of any activity as inherent to the value of that activity. Surprisingly or not, however, it avoids speaking directly to it, offering obliquely two different conceptions. Each of the two conceptions is a corollary of a different version of the Romantic view — conformity to current society or to the made-up society of the future — the conformist and the futurist. According to the conformist variant, clearly, art is for consumption, even for consumption by ordinary, simple folk. Supporters of the conformist version of the Romantic theory have to endorse the Platonic theory of art as the means of integration of society and so as speaking to the general public. They may deplore the Stalinist terror with which Communist governments implemented the Platonic theory, but even so they cannot reject it without rejecting the whole of Romanticism. Supporters of the futurist version of the Romantic theory of art have more leeway here; while they may approve or

14. Marxist aestheticians manage to conflate the present and the future: they demand of artists to divine future values as they consider their own values to be those of the society of the future (see Ch. 3).

disapprove of the artist who has big crowds, they must keep their highest approval for artists who have none — on the understanding that tomorrow is another day: an artist may draw a big crowd, but good artists should do so only in the fugitive future. Jam yesterday and jam tomorrow, said Lewis Carroll, but never jam today. Somerset Maugham was shocked to discover that the same literary snob crowd that had adopted him as a struggling young artist jettisoned him unthinkingly as soon as he made his mark (Maugham 1938, §§32-3). Unfortunately, being a professed snob, he never overcame the shock.

We deplore the Romantic tendency to condition critical approval on the artist having no public. Still, we recognise that as part of the general Romantic concession to rationalism. Classical rationalism suggested that mere repudiation of all truths by convention (Descartes' "custom and example") will bring salvation. Such thinking underlay the French Revolution. Unable to sustain its own achievements it sank quickly into a reign of terror and to the tyranny of a military officer. The Romantic criticism of classical rationalism was therefore just: common people were not ready for autonomy and could not act autonomously as they did not know how to act.[15] They needed guidance, the Romantics concluded. But in this very argument against the demand for autonomy they admitted that autonomy is a virtue. They likewise admitted that progress is valuable. They concluded that only the genius can be autonomous, and that great art is the fruit of the autonomous mind. So the criticism that the Romantics launched against the classical rationalism of the Enlightenment Movement is partly correct, but it does not make Romanticism correct, especially not its despair of reason. We endorse the criticism that the Romantics launched against the Enlightenment Movement without giving up rationality.

What makes for Romanticism proper is its Reactionary politics. Not only do the Romantics observe that common people are heteronomous; they prefer to keep them heteronomous. They therefore propose to insure that only very few ever aspire to autonomy and try to act autonomously. Romanticism therefore describes autonomy as most difficult to achieve: the autonomous, they say, have no roots in today's society; they are alienated; they are lonely, they have to undergo trials by ordeal. Like the biblical heroes Moses and Elijah and Jesus they have to stay in the desert for a long time and to suffer hardship and loneliness — and be tremendously talented and inspired to boot. They then qualify for the task of forging the future and they reap the adulation of generations to come. The idea that suffering should inspire genius is appalling enough in itself; on top of it, Romanticism leaves the poor genius with no clue as to what to do after surviving the ordeal and gaining access to inspiration, yet it must be inspired and excellent. This is a sure recipe for tortured failure. No less for tortured success. Torture, it seems, is mandatory (Dostoevsky, *House of the Dead, Brothers Karamazov, etc*.; Praz 1933, passim).

So be it. At least this is a complete theory of the individual artist — as long as it is understood that nothing significant can be said about the means for the acquisition of talent and inspiration. How then do things look from the

15. It is also unfair to demand upright behaviour in a collapsing society — even by the most autonomous.

viewpoint of the public? Sooner or later, we know, the public learns that it has had this or that genius in its midst; it regrets its past failure to understand their contributions and their neglect; and it learns to adore these contributions and worship their originators. How? No answer. No hint of an answer. The nearest to an answer that was ever given by any Romantic thinker was very roundabout: the new society is forged in the arena of power politics, whether on the battlefield (Hegel) or the barricades (Marx) or wherever the arena happens to be. The artists who belong to the right political party blow the bugle to usher the battle that ends in victory. The new powers-that-be reward the barely known artists who have supported them and they instruct schools to teach the new. Anyone who complains that this is a caricature will be kicking at an open door. For a caricature it surely is, yet anyone who can is more than welcome to correct it and to describe differently the Romantic answer to the question at hand. For our part, we have tried but failed. We think our answer is a joke, but then we have little reverence for Romanticism. Marx's version of Hegel's Romanticism is a bit less ludicrous, since he replaced generals with the new ruling class, since the victor learns to appreciate the new art whilst struggling. But can the revolutionary class create art as a part of the class struggle? Yes; the paradigm for this surely is *La Marseillèse* (on the questionable assumption of Marx that the French Revolution was nothing more than a manifestation of class struggle). But the reader is invited to choose any great work of social and/or political protest. The question remains, can one compare this great anthem with Beethoven's works? And can one compare *The Internationale* with a sonnet of Shakespeare? Well, the Marxists say, Shakespeare and Beethoven were the mouthpieces of "the rising bourgeoisie". Yet we admire Shakespeare's *Henry V* for its impartiality, and the image of members of the victorious French army in the Vienna concert-hall as Beethoven premiered his *Emperor Concerto* is incongruous, if not also faintly ludicrous[16]. Nevertheless, it is uncontested that Marxism did inspire artists to create militant art, such as the sketches of Käthe Kollwitz and the works of London, Hammett and Chandler (discussed elsewhere in this book). Let us close the discussion of this point by confessing that we know of no other Romantic answer to the question at hand, namely, how does the public develop a taste for past *avant-garde* art?

As to our own answer to this question, we follow Gombrich who finds great use here for the mutual challenges of artists and their consumers, be they patrons or the public at large. This gained proper attention first in his prolific writings. Not only was he among the first[17]; he also argued against the accepted

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16. J. Michael Allsen, Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Music Department notes: "If tradition is to be believed, the designation "Emperor" dates from the first Vienna performance in 1812, when one of Napoleon's soldiers, overcome by the majesty of the concerto, cried out: "c'est l'empéreur!" The name stuck, though it is certain that Beethoven, whose short-lived admiration for Napoleon had long since passed by that time, would have disapproved of the designation."

17. We qualify Gombrich's priority because of some remarks made by Maugham the previous year. He offers as examples Fielding and Dickens who wrote their masterpieces under external constraints, adding, "It is news to me that the artist who knows his business is hampered by the limitations that are imposed on him" (Maugham 1952, p. 185). The observation is a criticism of

view. The accepted view was this: typically the artist is uppity and the patron and the public are pests. According to the accepted view, run-of-the-mill artists should be taught to know their place and be left to their own devices; meanwhile, exceptional artists should resist all pressure to conform. Since for any exceptional artist of merit there are ever so many run-of-the-mill ones, how are they to recognise their merit? The answer is that self-confidence is of the essence. And so, all deviants should be bullied, which has a corrective result for the run-of-the-mill and for the exceptional it is a test, an ordeal, to prove their mettle. So bullying the deviant is always the right policy. Yet Romantic art historians inconsistently grumble about the blindness of patrons and of the public. Instead of grumbling they should say, since so many artists are uppity, how are they, their patrons and the public at large to know who is a really good artist?

This is not a rhetorical question, and it is addressed to Gombrich and his followers as well. They too have to answer it. For they do recognise artists with merit. Yet the terms of their answer are different from any possible Romantic answer. They do not mix up criteria for recognition with the transcendental question of what art is good. Rather, they observe that the artist and the art critic and perhaps the theoretician too, interact beneficially with the public, to the mutual benefit and education of all parties involved. Artists, art critics, patrons and all sorts of speakers for and against and about art share this educational interaction, they all meet in the process of disseminating the new ideas, idioms, and whatever else is required for art appreciation and for the enjoyment of art, old as well as new (Gombrich 1950, Ch. 15, first two paragraphs). The public opens up to new art through a readiness to give up old prejudices and to learn the new idiom which admits of new possibilities (Gombrich 1968; Gombrich 1974 951, 953). This is very important for the appreciation of the new and of the old: new art makes old art acquire quite a new look: old art is reviewed and re-evaluated in the light of the new. As Jorge Luis Borges says, everyone makes their own past ("Pierre Menard"; "Kafka and his Precursors" in Borges 1962).

Naturalists do not see any problem here, though it is plain that the problem is pressing, as artists do try to reach the public and they do meet with difficulties that they wish to surmount, and often fervently so. The answer of the Romantics is better in that they see the difficulty, but they have no way to overcome it, especially as they have no criterion with which to discriminate between good and poor works of art, except, perhaps, in the fact that the good one gets recognised sooner or later, or, rather, only later. The empirical facts are plenty and they show that there is no guarantee that good art will be recognised and that recognised art will be good. On the contrary, there are different kinds of public and different kinds of recognition. Before discussing this we should note that the struggle for recognition of many artists in our society is largely due to the influence of Romanticism on art. Also, this very fact causes great confusion: when one judges the art of the past, one judges the works that were selected by a whole tradition whose idiom one follows with relative ease due to one's

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Kant and Roger Fry, not a solution to a problem, as with Gombrich. The priorities of Maugham and of Gombrich are for somewhat different claims.

education and training. By contrast, when one judges contemporary art, one does not have a filtered set and one does not recognise the idiom of the new art with relative ease ─ particularly when artists strive to be working for a future public that presumably their ingenious output helps forge.

d) The Diversity of Publics

Let us then turn from these distinctions that hardly hold and move to distinctions that are sheer common-sense, namely, those between different degrees of education, different degrees of challenge, and the different kinds and styles of art. When discussing the interaction between artists and publics these are always taken into account.[18] Art critics are all well aware of them, as one can scarcely ignore the fact that what they say may be very familiar to one public and utterly new to another. Also, most art critics are painfully aware of the fact that one kind of writing may impress one public and will have no impact on another. They usually feel very much at home with publics that are receptive to their kind of writing, and only with them. They thus function well within their cultural *milieux*: they face no challenge from their public. Challenge is as good for critics as it is vital for art.[19]

The art critics in question are not of one kind. The ones depicted here, however, are the majority. The opera critic does not review rap music. The specialised critic takes it for granted that the general public is uneducated and unchallengeable. The fact that they prefer this or that kind of low art seems to these cultured art critics insignificant, and they scarcely know the difference between different kinds or styles of mass culture. They cannot tell one reality television show from another and they dismiss them all as all too poor for consideration. Clement Greenberg could not tell one Russian realist from another. One of the best known American literary critics of the twentieth century was Edmund Wilson. His judgement that no detective novel can be of any artistic merit was a profound insult to Raymond Chandler. There are those who dismiss even Borges, one of the greatest writers of his century, on account of his interest in, and contributions to, the detective and western literary genres.

What this amounts to is a view of culture that is intolerable, both socially and politically. It is the super-Romantic view of the public as divided into two, the uneducable masses and us. It is unacceptable both as an anti-democratic attitude and as empirically refuted by ample facts. The super-cultured super-Romantics will have to claim that the level of education of the masses is constant or explain the rise in their level of education. It is clear that the level of education of the mass in the Western world has greatly improved over the years. The presently expected level of literacy of ordinary people was practically

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18. Those who consider the social sciences branches of psychology tend to move from individual psychology to social psychology in the hope that this leap is unproblematic. Our example shows clearly that even the most individual aspects of social psychology, such as shared tastes, cannot escape institutional analysis without severe loss to the point where all similarities between people become mysterious.

19. Quite a few leading performers of the classical music repertoire are delighted to visit Israel because they find there a public unusually well versed in tradition and unusually uninterested in innovation.

unknown in the nineteenth century. That teaching literacy is indeed a cause for a rise of the level of education, including the level of artistic education, super-Romantics will admit. They will even admit that the affluence of modern society bespeaks the rise in the level of education, that the very availability of art and of communication media raises the level of its consumption. But they still deny that the masses can be educated. Just look, they say, at the television programmes, the paperbacks, and the tabloids that they choose to consume. What value is literacy when the literate choose nothing but junk?

True; some cultivated people do genuinely are starved for culture in the midst of plenty of it. This counts for very little, however. There is frustration almost everywhere, and it reflects not much more than that the frustrated are unimaginative and willing to blame others for their lack of imagination rather than to admit their own shortcomings and either try new ways or altogether desist. Moreover, the low tastes of audiences should challenge critics. Critics who preach only to the converted thereby avoid challenge and encourage complacency; they are as starved as other cultivated people, although for challenge rather than for art.[20]

The many different kinds of art offer challenges of different kinds and degrees. Art critics and even artists often ignore this obvious fact. It is well-known that listening to a complex fugue by Johann Sebastian Bach is difficult in a different way from listening to a piece of contemporary music is, especially if the contemporary piece is light. The same goes for reading light and serious verse, or light or serious novels. Some serious novels are written in a style that is not problematic and not challenging, except that following the line of thought requires a high degree of concentration and sophistication. Other serious novels utilise hackneyed motifs to teach their readers new idioms. Clearly, if the public wants help in overcoming difficulties in listening to a piece by Bach it should be helped differently from the way it should be helped if it wants to overcome difficulties listening to Edgar Varèse or to Alfred Schnittke.

There are two questions here. Why do some people request help in matters artistic and others not? And where do they receive the help they are after? These are central to any approach that is concerned with art as an integral part of society. It is ironic that the view of art as integrated and integrative was first advocated by Romantics, but it was the Romantic élitist philosophy that blocked the development of a view of the growth of aesthetic education. The question of education is of course central to every society, but the conservative, not to say reactionary, traits of Romanticism tip the balance in favour of the view that one learns only the traditional way, in traditional schools, and nothing more. This is why Jarvie had to use as a counter-example to this such an obvious fact as cinematic literacy and its being essential for the ability to enjoy a movie: he showed that there is education for this new art form acquired outside school (Jarvie 1970). This makes the super-Romantics consider movies as obviously

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20. Georg Lukács noted that critics are often frustrated artists. He deemed this is unnecessary as criticism is a specific art form. He did not say, however, that art is a challenge, nor what the challenge for critics is. We do. See Jarvie (1967; 1970) on the role of art critics as a challenge to them.

non-art, not a serious art, not a good art form, an item about which it is better to stay ignorant. Fortunately, their numbers are rapidly dwindling. Their last resistance is to declare art only old classic black-and-white movies that few are familiar with. Élitism can be maintained with little effort.

Dwindling or not, these critics polarise art to élite art and mass art. That this is an error we have already indicated: the tradition of church art as mass art amply refutes it. The super-Romantic answer to this criticism is that the Middle Ages were different, and culturally superior. This answer is awful. Gombrich stresses that stained glass in churches and sequences of paintings are the mediaeval equivalent of comic strips, comic strips for the ordinary, mostly illiterate church-goer (1950, Ch. 6, end of second paragraph). Still, there is no need to assert that the later public is always better: the fact that Bach's great church cantatas were heard in church by ordinary citizens is evidence to the contrary. They were able and willing to make a great effort listening to this music. Further evidence is the fact that Michelangelo's and Leonardo's and Raphael's works were as much admired by ordinary contemporaries as was the work of Donatello before them. Vasari tells the story of a merchant who came to pay for a statue by Donatello and haggled with him; when the artist angrily broke the statue the merchant was full of remorse and offered ample compensation, but Donatello was adamant.[21]

e) The *avant-garde*

Is the phenomenon of *avant-garde* art new? Is this the cause of the difficulty to comprehend artists? Is this difficulty new, then? It is hard to say; there is too little evidence and much of it is tainted. If *avant-garde* art is new, what is its cause? Is it the rapid growth of modern art or is it the influence of Romanticism ─ perhaps both plus the decline of naturalism in so many parts of the arts? Is the decline of naturalism the result of the invention of mechanical means for replication, or is it the decline of classical rationalism? How if at all does the alienation of the *avant-garde* artist affect *avant-garde* art? How does *avant-garde* art influence art in general? Let us offer a few observations on these matters.

Gombrich, to repeat, takes a wait-and-see attitude to the avant-garde. He explains what it aspires to do, shows some influences it has had, but then stands

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21. Giorgio Vasari *Lives*, Donatello: "There is a story told of a Genoese merchant who, by the mediation of Cosimo, prevailed upon Donatello to make a bronze head for him. When it was finished, the merchant coming to pay him thought that Donatello asked too much, so the matter was referred to Cosimo. He had it brought to the upper court of the palace and placed on the wall overlooking the street, that it might be seen better. But when he tried to settle the difference, he found the merchant's offer very much below Donatello's demand, and turning to him he said it was too little. The merchant, who thought it too much, answered that Donatello had worked upon it for a month, or a little more, and that would give him more than half a florin a day. Donatello upon that turned upon him in anger, thinking these words too great an insult, and telling the merchant that he had found means in a hundredth part of an hour to destroy the work of a year, he gave the head a sudden blow and knocked it down into the street, where it was broken into many pieces, adding that it was evident he was in the habit of bargaining about beans and not statues. The merchant repenting, offered to give him double as much if he would make it again, but neither his promises nor Cosimo's entreaties could make him consent."

back. We find this approach very congenial. Why the rush to judgement? We find it hard to explain the attempts of contemporary analytical philosophers of art and aesthetics to settle the issue of the *avant-garde*. Led by Arthur Danto, they try to keep up — as if compulsively.[22] Our historically informed presentation shows that attempt futile. Two other pieces of writing which have influenced us deserve mention.

Tom Wolfe's *The Painted Word* (1975) is a description of the relation between *avant-garde* artists and the art world, especially the critics, in New York from the end of the Second World War to the time of its publication. It chronicles the movements Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Op Art, Minimalism, and Photo Realism. Wolfe identified and described an interesting fact: first, painters innovate, then critics interpret. Then painters agree with critics and take up their discourse, and again. Wolfe astutely observes how the institutions of the art world work. It is quite a small world and much of it works through face-to-face interactions and networking. Wolfe's intention is both satirical and informative. He aims to show how this painter-critic cycle of interactions led to Conceptual Art, which was a form of art disappearing into writing, or up into its own fundamental aperture.

Wolfe is as philosophically astute as he is sociologically observant. Besides being a very funny piece of writing, his essay has delightful illustrations. To our surprise, this work of Wolfe's was not reviewed in the major journals of either art history or aesthetics. The first major discussion of it is by the redoubtable David Davies, who uses it as the keynote of his interesting book *Art as Performance* (Davies 2004).

Sassower and Cicotello (2000) take a rather wider historical view of the *avant-garde* and are something of a corrective to Wolfe's extreme scepticism. They see today's artworld as part and parcel of today's capitalist system of consumption to which it is bound and against which it rails. But the audience for its railing is always part of the system of consumption. Hence the *avant-garde* is in some ways a performance of a role prescribed and accommodated within the system. Sassower and Cicotello avoid the suggestion that the whole performance is mere sham; they refuse to view all the *avant-gardistes* as gulling themselves and their public. We want to resist this tendency too: if not good sense, then at least our historical orientation compels us to do so. It is not wise to predict what will last or even what will be remembered for some time. Prophesying the future is a game for charlatans. Some works that are now in the mainstream began as *avant-garde*. Most works from the *avant-garde* have disappeared more or less without trace. And some works that are still lasting were never of the *avant-garde*. There is nothing to be done about this and little more to be said.

Consider the question, is *avant-garde* art new? This is a new question. *Avant-garde* art as the subject of discussion was a product of Romanticism, of the Romantic philosophy of art. It was popularised, perhaps even invented, by Richard Wagner, who said in the middle of the nineteenth century, great art must be *avant-garde*. The instances of *avant-garde* art were either contemporary or

22. Keeping up-to-date has many facets from philosophy (historicism) to vulgar psychology (vanity).

went back to earlier decades, to the beginning of that century. The Romantics did not explain the fact that mediaeval artists were all highly traditionalist regarding style, or else they fantasised about that period as highly integrated.[23] To take this unserious chatter a bit seriously, it means that the *avant-garde* is the product of alienation. This Hegelian idea is explicitly (or nearly explicitly) stated by Marxians such as Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Their idea makes better sense, but is still not serious enough, since many conventional works of art are products and expressions of such alienation. Nor can one declare all *avant-garde* art alienated in any sense, since some of the older *avant-garde* art expresses a sense of alienation, including such unusual cases as the deep despair beneath Mozart's joviality (he was *avant-garde avant le lettre*), and some *avant-garde* art expresses a very different social sense, such as social integration and the joy of it. Indeed, one is hard pressed to say whether Beethoven expresses his alienation or his triumph over it, as Karl Popper notices in his autobiography.

Yet one should not rashly declare that these discussions are aimed at the question, is *avant-garde* art new? Writers are at times hostile to *avant-garde* art and so they tend to dismiss it and so they care little about its origins. At times they are hostile to the theory of *avant-garde* art, and so they tend to discuss any work of art on its merit and forget its being or not being *avant-garde*. At times they favour *avant-garde* art and so they insinuate that *avant-garde* art is the standard. This is amazing, and we should confess that the question did not occur to us before working on this book, since we took it that every work on the progress in the arts, including Gombrich's masterpieces, covered this question and more. They do cover more, as they do discuss progress in the arts, but they tend to ignore *avant-garde* art as such, as *avant-garde*. Moreover, Gombrich tended to suggest that the decline of naturalism is the result of the invention of artificial means of reproduction that reproduce images better, such as the camera and the tape recorder. Whatever is the *avant-garde* philosophy, he seems to have suggested, the logic of the artist's situation dictates new kinds of experimentation, so that what innovations we do have are hardly ever due to the *avant-garde*. (There are significant exceptions, though, all early twentieth century.)

Part of us longs to agree: whatever one thinks of the *avant-garde*, they are a part of our heritage ─ for better and for worse. And our suggestion that art has to be true to itself leads to the conclusion that *avant-garde* art should be truly *avant-garde* and just as the creative artist understands the term, provided it is not so vulgar as to lose all ability to challenge and provided it is not too manipulative. We suggest in all earnestness that one of the worst defects of Wagner's output is not only the crassness, haughtiness, and insolence, but in addition so much presumption ─ a vulgar presumption of *avant-garde*. (Thus when we hear a Wagnerian movie sound-track we do not take offence, since we

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23. Romantics loved integration ─ social and intellectual ─ as it bespeaks a conservative system and even heteronomy. And, to the extent that all culture and education were under control of the Church, integration and heteronomy were indeed the rule there. (But as Peter Abelard, for example, fits the paradigm of an *avant-garde* thinker and artist, Romantics have trouble with him. They are not lost for an answer, though.)

presume that Wagner's ghost does.) He challenged us to allow him to be manipulative. In this respect he gave the *avant-garde* its bad reputation. What then is true *avant-garde* art, what are its origins and what are its artistic merits? This question, in its turn, rests on the view that the art is not in the style but in what one makes of it, so that we take it for granted that there is good and poor this, that and the other, including good and poor *avant-garde* art. And as a matter of course, nothing less.

Most significantly, even if somewhat paradoxically, *avant-garde* art is a matter of tradition. Like realism, Romanticism is false but traditional so that one who belongs there can (perhaps should) try to be true to it. *Avant-garde* art is a product of the last two centuries of art, when art developed intensely, ferociously, savagely. (Not in vain was a school of *avant-garde* painters called by a critic "*fauve*" ("savage"), and they at once proudly adopted this epithet.)[24] The need to produce something new was often confused (understandably, though falsely) with the need to produce something shocking. Joe Orton is one example, when he shocks theatregoers by suggesting that some hoodlums crush a baby with a big rock just for fun (*A Day in the Life of Joe Egg*). This kind of art, we already said, is manipulative, and so no pleasure. Let us add another observation, and it is that the shock wears off fast if we are willing to undergo the experience repeatedly. We are so used to Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps*, that we are amazed to hear about the eruption of audience indignation at its premiere (Stein 1933; Stravinsky 1936). Here there is a generally endorsed thesis, which the *avant-garde* artists and their opponents equally endorse, and it is that the idiom of the *avant-garde* work of art has to be learned before the value of the work of art can be properly appreciated. The question, then, is, why bother to invent a new idiom?[25]

We do not have an answer. We do not even know what *avant-garde* art is. One of the loveliest pieces by George Orwell is a debunking of Salvador Dali as an *art nouveau* painter in an *avant-garde* disguise. Orwell was particularly glad to debunk Dali, whose anti-rational philosophy he deplored. Orwell was as much of a classical rationalist as possible, but he knew that naturalism is an untenable philosophy of art, so he opposed all discussion of style as irrelevant to the business of art (Orwell 1944). The best of style, he said, is so transparent, it is like a clean widow pane: it is equally invisible.[26] This is lovely, but it is neither sufficient nor true. It is insufficient because there are many ways of being transparent. And it is not true, since some of the best examples in line with Orwell's proposal are sheer *avant-garde*. Think of Eric Satie and some of T. S. Eliot's best. Are Satie and Eliot genuine *avant-garde*? It all depends. We do not know whether we can call the revival of ("authentic") ancient music *avant-garde* or not, and we confess that we tended to view Elvis Presley as an *avant-garde* artist even though he did not do much more than cleverly mix different popular musical styles as he found them. Also, there are different matters of style. F Scott Fitzgerald's writing was as transparent as Orwell could wish, yet his

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24. The story of the label "impressionist" is similar, except that Zola, who lampooned the movement and named it, was also sympathetic to it at the same time.
25. Gombrich devoted his intriguing 1974 to this question, raised already in (Gombrich 1968).
26. Orwell 1946a: "Good prose is like a windowpane." Cp. Also his 1946b.

Tender is the Night is challenging in its disruptive transitions from paragraph to paragraph in a manner that decidedly enhances the power of the novel. We can describe the artist who avoids challenges as non-*avant-garde* without fear of contradiction. We heard a pop or rock composer confess that he was situated in a very comfortable position, between the *avant-garde* and the rear-guard of the profession. But then, much of *avant-garde* art is hardly more than allowing oneself to be influenced. As Gombrich said, much of the western *avant-garde* painting is a matter of letting Japanese art influence one's art greatly (1960, 21), and the same can be said of the music of Debussy, which was influenced by Balinese gamelan music. We shall also mention the great *avant-garde* art of the sculptor Jacob Epstein which imitates African primitivism. For what it is worth, *avant-garde* traditionally means experimentalism in style. An experiment, being truly experimental, may have all sorts of surprising results. One thing can be said then in advance: it cannot be good art if it is not a challenge but a way to provoke and manipulate audiences, or merely a way to draw attention.

This is how the integration of art into the fabric of society takes place: not as Romantic philosophers say, not through obedience to aged traditions and not through blind rebellion against them, and not through the "dialectical" combination of the two either. It takes place through thoughtful experimentation, perhaps in line with the demands of the society in which artists live as they honestly and thoughtfully understand it.

f) High Art ≠ Good Art

We have already noted the polarisation some critics self-consciously cultivated between themselves and the general public. This poses a problem that they never address: how is it that tastes come in clusters? One answer to this question is, taste is limited to a few options, often referred to as highbrow, middle brow, and lowbrow, and they naturally tend to cluster, as it is "natural" for a high /middle/low brow in one art form to be high /middle/low brow in all art forms. We shall survey these matters first structurally, and then analytically.

To take matters empirically, a few obvious background facts must be taken into account. There are different degrees of education, different degrees of challenge, and different kinds and styles of art. These differences cannot be overlooked in discussions of the interaction between artists and their publics. Before listing these differences we should consider the more traditional divisions, first, between fine and applied art, second, between the art in entertainment and in practical matters, and only then, third, between high art and popular art, or between high culture and pop culture. These three divisions are often treated as if they were identical. To put it in the style of Claude Lévi-Strauss,

art : entertainment :: fine art : applied art :: high culture : low culture

This leaves the question, how can the distinction between high and pop be identified with that between entertainment and the practical? The answer given is that only high art is real entertainment, that low entertainment is merely practical. No doubt there is some truth in that: low, pop culture is nearer to practice than refined culture, which is more detached from the real and rather anaemic. Otherwise the identification of the three distinctions does not hold

water. It forces one to view the artful gloss over an underlying practical matter as applied, and to view as fine its being mere entertainment. But these two divisions are far from being identical even if at times they overlap to this or that extent. Architecture is a fine art but more practical than entertaining. Architecture is functional but can be breathtakingly artistic on top of being functional. This is not to deny the possibility of non-practical architecture. Indeed, with the advent of virtual reality we are promised virtual architecture galore, and this will be mostly entertainment. But usually architecture is practical, and the art in it is in the functionality, or rather a gloss over it. Sometimes the realisation of the functional is art itself. (And to see the art we have to be informed of its function and of the challenge that its achievement had to meet.) At the same time as functionalist architecture evolved, another kind evolved in parallel, architecture as ornamental — in the style that culminated millennia later, in *art nouveau*. Thus, some fine art is practical. That some applied art is entertainment is too obvious for words. In particular, this category includes all graphic designs that were created for practical purposes and are viewed as sheer entertainment because their initial practical aspect is lost. These include posters that advertise commodities long dead, including the great temples of religions that have no more worshippers and the great lithographs of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Here again Gombrich was a pioneer. Recall the slight scandal he caused by discussing poster art in his *Art and Illusion*.[27]

To repeat the schema in Claude Lévi-Strauss' style,

high art : low art :: fine art : applied art :: entertainment : gloss.

As against this there is,

high art that is not fine but applied	(such as church music)
high art that is not entertainment but a gloss	(such as Gospel illustrations)
fine art that is not entertainment but a gloss	(such as architecture).

Likewise there is,

low art that is not applied but fine	(such as ballads);
low art that is not gloss but entertainment	(such as ballads);
Applied art that is not gloss but entertainment	(such as the art in dated posters).

The following sections will be devoted to the discussion of high art, and the later sections will be devoted to "low" or popular art. To begin with we shall embrace mass art within the latter and separate it out only subsequently. Let us begin the analysis with the advocates of high art, the intellectuals whom we will call the guardians of culture. The standard view among the guardians of culture is that high art is hard to understand and so it does not receive the attention and appreciation that it deserves (with a modest hint that the same goes for its advocates.) The artist's difficulty is often (but not consistently) explained by the

27. A much more extensive discussion of the aesthetics and pleasure of applied art is to be found in Bogart 1995.

Romantic idea that good art is *avant-garde*. It is often further confused with the Romantic idea that declares good art ahead of its time, so that even the élite fails to understand it at first; and later — after a generation or so — it is understood only by the élite. There are other versions that differ in detail and that we will overlook. In any of its versions, the discussion is distasteful and grossly inaccurate, to say the least. Some *avant-garde* art is easy to understand, such as the popular *Gymnopèdes* by Eric Satie and the less popular but still unproblematic *avant-garde Microcosmos* by Béla Bartók, as well as much of Debussy, including his *L'après-midi d'un faune* that did indeed cause scandal upon its first performance, but afterwards won popular acclaim almost at once, only to become an all time favourite. We have mentioned the hostility that the very same guardians of culture show to the *avant-garde*, as for example, their puzzling attack on Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps*. It is hard to credit that not so long ago writers like T. E. Hulme had to defend Jacob Epstein's right to imitate African art against the élitist prejudices of the guardians of culture. We would love to think that today matters are not so crude, and, indeed, that readiness to praise new strains of *avant-garde* art is laudable (even though at times it is embarrassingly uncritical), but not when it comes with renewed and reinforced hostility to the unappreciative masses. As a general rule, contempt should be eschewed.

g) High Art Without Condescension

Perhaps, then, not all *avant-garde* art is high art, but all *avant-garde* that is hard to understand is — or could it be that any art that is difficult to understand is high. This latter is easy to refute. The works of many *avant-garde* novelists initially met strong resistance yet soon won popular acclaim; as, for example, the works of the Americans Erskine Caldwell and William Faulkner that were soon also adapted for the movies. Even if most high art is hard to understand, this feature is incidental, and the proof is that some of the highest of high art is very easy to understand. Consider some biblical poetry, some of the loveliest Romantic lyrics set to music that reach the top of the sales charts, some films and even musical comedies that are imaginative renderings of Shakespeare, and some of Bach's music rendered pop — not to mention Mozart's all time favourite, *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*. Moreover, some of the lowest low art is hard to comprehend, such as foreign art. There is a story that when Japanese museum curators went west soon after World War II and inspected the Japanese sections of leading museums there, they were embarrassed by the collections, as they were far from representing Japanese taste at its best. Western curators were not able judges of Japanese taste in Japanese art, high or low. The distinction between high and low art in Japan best known in the West is that between Noh theatre and Kabuki theatre that, very roughly, corresponds to what we would consider high and low entertainment — low for Japanese audiences, not necessarily for outlanders, however: Noh, it is said, requires concentration and imagination from its audience the way Kabuki does not. We cannot judge.

Our standard strategy is to examine the ideas in which art is rooted then to criticise the ideas while praising the art wherever possible. In the case of the guardians of culture, identification of high art with *avant-garde* art and/or art that

is difficult to understand, we simply fail in this self-imposed task. The identification is empirically false and hardly ever helpful, much less conducive to good art, high or low. There is, perhaps, one exception: contempt for the masses may be treated as a challenge to create high art that manages to reach wide popular audiences, especially the young. We are not attracted to this idea, and so, though conceding it, we will not give examples that illustrate it. Condescension towards low art, towards its producers and towards its consumers, is distasteful. Works of art imbued with such ideas and sentiments we find equally distasteful.

The guardians of culture, the vociferous advocates of high art, give off the impression that they attend to high art as a matter of sacred duty. That is to say, they do not enjoy it. This is a pity. Also, perhaps they do not allow themselves to enjoy low art. That is to say, they would enjoy it if only they let their guard down. They should. Why not? Because they identify low art with popular art and thus with vulgarity, and as a matter of course. This identification is plainly false, as our counterexamples illustrate. We doubt that the guardians of culture are unaware of this. What they may be saying is that there should be more delta blues and less Rap, more poems and less schmaltzy titbits of popular classics like those of Liberace and Richard Clayderman. What this amounts to is the view that not enough new art displays qualities that the guardians of culture value.[28] In other words, they claim that their view is true in all too many cases. Yet it is not numbers but condescension that counts. W. S. Maugham, to repeat, felt all his life a profound sense of injury that the guardians of culture in the England of his day encouraged him when he was a nobody and referred to him with disdain when he was a success. His success was with the reading and theatregoing public and not with the guardians of culture. He never overcame the insult, and he repeatedly defended his art against them as good art, its success with the general public notwithstanding, and he even claimed that by the criteria that condemned his art the *Gospels* should be condemned too. On this he is utterly right: the guardians of culture are aware of the good things that the general public consumes but pour their wrath on the low quality art that they also consume in large quantities. Hence, guardians of culture are self-appointed preachers. There is no good excuse for their all-encompassing wrath: if the masses consume both high-quality art and low-quality art, then the success of Maugham's art by itself is no evidence as to its quality; on the face of it, then, what the guardians of culture exhibit is personal disappointment masked as a defence of high standards and as art criticism. Consumption of poor art has nothing to do with the distinction between good and poor art. The general public does often prefer poor art to good art; we will discuss this later. At this point we should observe that given this fact, it may be a matter for national concern, for educational concern,

28. In both Clement Greenberg's 1939 essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" and Dwight Macdonald's 1953 essay "A Theory of Mass Culture" the authors appear to take for granted that their opinions and judgements are unerring and that all right-thinking people will assent to them. Greenberg characterises The New Yorker as "high-class kitsch for the luxury trade"; Macdonald condemns indiscriminately all the "Lords of kitsch" and Reader's Digest. Compare Sontag's (1966) invidious comparison of the films of Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antonioni in favour of the latter. See Greenberg 1939; Macdonald 1953. For ripostes see Brogan 1954 and the especially Shils 1960. ("Mass society has aroused and enhanced individuality", he wrote.)

perhaps, but no one has ever shown that the level of art appreciation in the general public is on the decrease, nor that such a decrease is detrimental to the production of good art, high or low.[29]

In order to make the demarcation of high art relevant to the theory of art, two different strategies are available, both resting on the supposition (or the hope) that high art conforms to higher standards than low art. First strategy: we may characterise art, and then discuss its standards. Alternative strategy: a subtle shift may take place in the discussion — from the problem of demarcation or characterisation or definition of art to the problem of demarcation or characterisation or definition of good art. We find the first strategy honest and clear. Let us discuss first the second strategy, however, so as to get it out of the way.

h) An Egalitarian Conception of High Art

Compare the two questions, what is art? and, what is good art? Consider the first question. It does not raise the question of standards; it comprehends not only pop art, folk art, amateur art, and poor art, but also children's art, the art that can be found on the walls of jails and of public toilets, and more.[30] We do not think much was made of toilet-wall art, and jail wall art was noticed only in concentration camps and ghettos. Taking these into account, our characterisation or definition of art will be so broad as to refer mainly to its functions.

Art fulfils many functions. For example, church music and chamber music and concert music and piped music differ chiefly in their functions. Thus, if in times of mourning, say the death of President Kennedy, the supermarket pipes music with religious overtones, the function of that piped music is the same as on any other day, modified to suit the occasion. On our major assumption that art is a rider on any (social) function, it may acquire many functions (as many as society can provide it with). Science, whose functions differ widely from those of art, can have its functions executed artfully, so that there is the art of scientific theorising known as the aesthetic value of science. The art of scientific presentation, both in its most advanced forms and in its most popular and/or educational ones, is as varied as can be imagined. And just as Chinese writing evolved into an art form, so can scientific lectures. Whatever function of art we focus our discourse on, psychological, social, political, educational, or any other, each is given to aesthetic assessment, and artists may utilise any function as a vehicle for their own art and style, though they have to meet the challenge and modify their art to suit the occasion. But art is always extra, a luxury. Luxury, we remember, is a local matter: any item of luxury is that by virtue of its being

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29. And so, other accusations against low art are made: it corrupts the youth. Unfortunately, Popper agreed.

30. The confusion between art and high art when discussing this matter is most likely caused by a failure to distinguish between aesthetic and social matters. Art has a social status that even bad art shares, we agree with Becker. Art is socially more prestigious than plumbing. Even when we put it that way, however, the question leaps out: "more prestigious to whom? Who is speaking?" When the influence of Marxism on intellectuals is considered, the confusion is even more puzzling. Plumbing is honest labour, after all, and what should they hold in more esteem than that?

inessential, but globally luxury is a matter of the quality of life and of lifestyle, and artless life, life without luxury, is scarcely worth living. Not all luxury is art, however; for example, mere excess. For luxury to be art it has to be playful.

This raises the question, what is play? Play always is luxurious. It can be recreation, and it can be a recreational activity mobilised for other psychological or social or political functions, such as learning, entertainment, improved individual co-ordination and sociability, boosting national morale, fund raising, and more. So we have added one other essential item: art is playful and challenging too. The idea of challenge includes the idea of artistic truth and the idea of play includes all sorts of social functions. If we begin this unpacking we can hardly avoid the second question, what is good art? Trying to have our discourse stay within the sociological, we constantly bump into the aesthetic. We are discussing the categories of high and low art, trying to disentangle the social and the aesthetic without denying that the aesthetic and all its apparatus are social institutions.

To repeat, empirically, the categories of high art and low art are inseparable from the attitude of condescension that the guardians of culture exhibit for low art and for its consumers (the masses), perhaps also the complementary attitude of reverence that the guardians of culture exhibit for high art and for its élite consumers. Thus, the function of this condescension and the reverence alike is élitism, a lame justification for the status distinction that is an even more lame justification for class discrimination. The members of the upper classes, especially in democratic society, are conspicuously better educated than the members of any other class except for the learned. The accent is on conspicuousness. The leisure classes, said Thorstein Veblen (Veblen, 1899), are saturated with conspicuous consumption. It is tempting to naturalise the maldistribution of privilege in order to justify it, rather than to strive for better social and political conditions. For members of various upper-classes, high level education includes luxurious education, and high art is a greater luxury than popular art in that it requires more training in the development of taste than low art.

Art as a mark and a justification of class discrimination is mainly a matter of consumption, seldom a matter of production — as the production of art requires not only playfulness but also some reasonable level of proficiency. This is not to say that there is no such discriminatory art; art producers may produce art for the select rich consumers and then they must charge excessively high prices for its consumption and/or purchase. For, as the consumption of high art of this kind is conspicuous, it invariably includes the purchase of art works no less than their consumption. But we may simply treat this kind of art as pretentious. This suits our view of the guardians of the arts as snobs. The press and public often express outrage at the cost of pretentious rubbish, but, clearly, their outrage is proof that the function of the purchase was achieved: conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1899). There is here an amusing paradox: one mark of class-discrimination in art is the preference for originals over copies, the preference for collectors' items over the less expensive ones, and so on. Sometimes this is phoney. It is phoney art-appreciation to prefer an original to a

fake simply because it is more expensive. To show this, all we need notice is that at times a fake is artistically superior to the original. This, admittedly, is rare: great art is rare anyway, and of necessity, fake great art is more so. Moreover, regarding copies of great art, no matter by what means, and no matter for what purpose, it is much more frequently the other way around, as Gombrich repeatedly stressed: no copy fully captures the magic of a great original, and it seldom has any magic of its own.[31] But it sometimes takes a connoisseur to know the difference, whilst it takes no great expertise to know that the original costs a thousandfold more than the fake.

The deliberations offered here are not in any way novel. Even if we ignore the vast ancient industry of making replicas of famous statues, we may notice this: Nelson Rockefeller commissioned world famous artists to copy works created by top-notch artists. These were not fakes, as they were signed by the copier and acknowledged to be after their originators; they were something between copies and originals. This was especially obvious when a painting was copied onto tapestry under the supervision of the original artist.[32]

The discussion of high art has shifted towards the consumer of art. Let us visit connoisseurs for a brief while. It was they, Gombrich tells us, who created high art in the first place — quite unintentionally. It began with collectors of sketches, he tells us. Sketches, he reports, were initially creations of artists for their own consumption, as exercises, as rough drafts of works that they intended to execute, as plans for the making of art works, very much like the plans that architects make for their own works. They interested individuals passionately interested in art and able to comprehend not only finished products but also the processes of production. The reasons for such an interest may be diverse, some but not all artistic. We may be students of the process of creation in general or of artistic creation in particular; we may be art students who are interested in the analysis of a piece of art, and for this end drafts of all sorts, including sketches of paintings or statues — or of novels or of any other works of art — are at times interesting. Cartoons, that is to say sketches for frescoes, are often works of art interesting in themselves, or hints of lost works of art and of plans that the artists failed to execute. Museums standardly stage exhibitions of the preparatory drawings of artists as illustrating the development of an idea. They may also be works of art in their own right. This is the idea of art as a challenge and the idea that the connoisseur may in some sense appreciate art more than others by studying closely the process of artistic creation and how it met its challenge.

So there is a notion of high art that differs from the one that the guardians of culture promulgate. It is the art as understood by connoisseurs: high art is that which true connoisseurs avidly consume. True connoisseurs consume what they truly value, and their taste, though fallible, is the best there is, says Gombrich, echoing David Hume. If the guardians of culture identify the élite as the

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31. Walter Benjamin, in his much-cited “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), manages to capture this with his vague word “aura”, but the rest of his essay is anti-technological and bluntly irrationalist.

32. *Museum Archivist Newsletter* of the Museum Archives Section, Society of American Archivists, Volume 13, Issue 1 February 1999.

connoisseurs then there is no conflict between the two views. We are seeking, however, an egalitarian view of connoisseurship and so we would resist this identification if we can. The notion is that whatever connoisseurs consume is more likely to be high art than what other consumers consume. This is the characteristic of high art in the sense that it is directed at connoisseurs rather than at the art snob, the guardians of culture, or the collectors of expensive art works as conspicuous consumption. High art does not speak to people not well versed in the arts and/or not ready to invest effort in their encounter with art. This explains the phenomenon of high art and renders quite irrelevant to it the snobbery and the class-discrimination with which it is often associated. (It also limits the concept of high art to societies with connoisseurs, to the exclusion, for example, of the Middle Ages.) So the matter is context-dependent: the art of Giovanni de Palestrina and of Johann Sebastian Bach on record is high art and in church the ordinary public consumes it with no effort, although some will refuse to hear it at home. The high-art snob and the guardians of culture will say, the acceptance of church music in church with no effort is mere toleration due to lack of attention and so it does not count: high art in church for the masses, they say, is not high art and even not art at all. (Adorno made precisely this argument with regard to the broadcast of classical music on radio or its inscription on gramophone records. We discuss this below.)

There is some truth to all this: the public is usually indifferent to art that it does not comprehend. This is a significant empirical fact often enough ignored by the very same high-art snobs and guardians of culture who stress it when they speak in a romantic mood about the cruel and unjust neglect which their great heroes suffer. The cruel treatment comes from high-art snobs and from guardians of culture, not from the general public. When the *Picasso Bird* or the *Chicago Picasso* was first exhibited this was observed. The work is a huge, three-story high bust of a woman made of steel and placed on a pavement in downtown Chicago. When its construction was finished television journalists stopped passers-by and asked them for their reaction. Most of them did not react at all. The hostile reaction which Picasso's art met in galleries and museums early in the century was not from the general public but from art lovers and guardians of culture.[33]

While it is important to notice public indifference, it is not the whole truth. There is evidence that the church attending public does notice the music during the service. Historical documents show that Bach's audiences were quite attentive.[34] When his kind of music is used as piped music in supermarkets and such, there is immediate and vociferous complaint. The question is, why? Our answer is empirical: the public is not indifferent to high art because it knows enough about it to associate it with unpleasantness ─ usually with school, where all too often compulsory exposure is not associated with pleasure.

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33. There is a problem with the original of this work of Picasso: he sketched it, but he could not craft it, much less put it together. Is it the original then? No more than a symphony is. Similar considerations go for windows by Chagall or by Ardon.

34. Wilhelm Friedemann Bach performed once a church cantata of his celebrated father pretending that it was his. He was caught, to the shame of his whole family.

Hence, there is hope for the diffusion of high art, since education in art appreciation can be reformed. High art as the art endorsed by connoisseurs at least gets rid of snobbery and condescension ─ provided that we refuse to identify the élite and the connoisseurs. But social classification into high and low takes in more. To go into this we must come back to good art.

Let us start with the high art of which we think poorly. Let us consider works that are the best of their kind and that have rightly won high acclaim. We instance the poetry of Sylvia Plath and the still photography of Diane Arbus. We could also instance several of the films of the later Robert Altman among an oeuvre that is otherwise of exceptional merit. We were particularly struck by the misanthropy of *Short Cuts* and *Dr. T. and the Women*. We mention two other films to indicate that our aversion is not to the subject matter of human misery but to its contemptuous treatment. We have in mind Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* (1950) and Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973), both of which show the cruelty visited on neglected street youth. The misanthropic outlook can be found in the theme of alienation in *Short Cuts*, depicted, for example, in the suicide of a friendly and compassionate character, who needs to exchange impressions of the latest disturbing experiences in the neighbourhood and finds no one who can listen. This theme is a *cliché* and surely it has received some superb treatments; but Altman and Carver depict those who will not listen as culprits with no redeeming qualities.

Far be it from us to deny that there is such a thing as high art. It is our considered opinion that what we correctly call high art is art that requires much preparation and demands concentrated attention and delivers substantial and renewable rewards that make life much more pleasurable than it otherwise is.

Some such art invariably manages to throw one out of the present time and place and transport one to a magical existence in no time at all. When we were children, the very expression "once upon a time" sufficed to transfer us to magic places. It is not so easy when one is grown, yet there are some phrases like that which do it, some chords, some images, some suggestions ─ even Borges' hidden suggestion that all literacy is a quest for the secret of the universe and so it is imbued with magic powers. We do not know what ploys transfer us to magic lands, and can only offer examples. Those familiar with the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" may recognise in it this quality, especially in the movie *The Yellow Submarine*. Perhaps we should mention a few additional examples: Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* or Hoagie Carmichael's *Stardust*, especially the version sung by Frank Sinatra early in his career, or the most famous of the already mentioned Satie *Gymnopèdes*, or an *Arabesque* by Schumann or by Debussy. Everyone will have their own examples. Those who are not acquainted with the experience are thereby deprived of much artistic wealth.

Some cues get an easy hold on us and this places us in a vulnerable position, open to manipulation. No wonder philosophers since Plato have thought it their responsibility to draw attention to this. It is indeed an annoying fact. We admit that almost any poem of Walter de la Mere transports one of us at once to a magic world, yet we do not like his poetry, and find his success rather manipulative. Yet we do not feel the same for all such cases, and we are unable

to explain this, except to say that being manipulated by some art media is less objectionable than others. It is the manipulations that we have given our consent to that we do not find too objectionable. In turn, this has to do with the coarseness as opposed to the subtlety of the medium. This is not sufficient. What can be generally said and easily understood is that we are not ready to be magically transported every time we hear "Open Sesame". Sometimes we do not want to be reminded of the higher things in life, especially when we are busy frolicking, or flirting, or channel surfing, or enjoying the congenial atmosphere of some agreeable company.

This is also our explanation for the fact that some highbrows develop a sense of art as opposite to having fun: high art is on a pedestal; we put on our Sunday best and order a cab and go to a place of public display ─ a gallery or a concert hall or a recital room or merely a publisher's reception for the launching of a new book ─ anything that sets art apart. This isolates art from the quotidian, but all the same recognises the magic power of art and undertakes to make it an occasion.

The magic power of art is the high road to art for children ─ if they are not bullied into it. It also fascinates adults, and for various reasons, not least of which is that we cannot give up magic despite scientific education and its prime maxim, thou shalt not take magic seriously.

This is not always easy. So we protect ourselves by telling ourselves that the great experiences of high art come only to the deserving, only after due preparation, where the preparation includes safeguards against over-exposure (by contradistinction to the mystic experience proper, whose only mark is limitless excess). This is amply justified by facts. We do not want to show emotion in public, especially not to weep in public. Also, we do need preparation for some art: for demanding art.

Note: playfulness (of art, recreation, or anything else) does not preclude being demanding. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead was reputed to use Church histories for bedtime reading, namely, for recreation. No doubt, some art, like some church histories, is heavy going. There are two kinds of effort that may be required. One is that of the participant observer: when one reads a mediaeval text, no matter how easy it may have been for contemporaries to read it, it is still demanding. Boccaccio's *Decameron* is bawdy enough for us to assume that it was easy to comprehend, and perhaps the same holds also for the once lost and latterly found *Carmina Burana*. Yet reading them demands effort. And Bach's *The Art of the Fugue* required much effort even at the time and even from the greatest experts, as it still does.

We should admit to ourselves that when we chance upon works of art on which it is hard to concentrate, we challenge their very playfulness, and so they may end up more as exercises than art. This is how some of the greatest works of art of all time, Bach's cello suites, suffered neglect, to be reintroduced into the repertoire by Pablo Casals ─ not as exercises but as works of art proper. If we do treat a heavy piece as a work of art, we thereby declare it playful, and we thereby

stretch[35] the limits of the concept of play. The question is general, and has to do with effort: how much effort are we ready to invest, what demand for it do we tolerate? Clearly this question is given to empirical examination, as we can and will invest some needless effort, and we can hardly live a life of no challenge and no effort and no pain. So how much is the right quantity?

An extreme case of challenge, effort, and pain is *The Ghetto Diary* of Janusz Korczak, the Warsaw Ghetto orphanage manager who died in the Holocaust with the children in his charge ─ not before he tried to secure the survival of his diaries (1978). Their power is in their magic use for their author himself: he had no idea whether anyone would ever remember his life-work and he tried to hold on to the small measure of optimism required for his continued functioning and he mused on the idea that hopefully in fifty years or so he would be remembered and his investment of effort, as an artist and as a social reformer, would then hopefully win some appreciation. In his diary he describes his life and his sufferings and he says there, he could manage despite his suffering and was even grateful for what little he had. He reports (p. 164 of the English translation) that already in his youth he had this sentiment. “God give me a hard life but let it be beautiful, rich and aspiring!” [36] He was not religious in the ordinary sense of the word, and he did not mean that he welcomed hardship, but that he preferred to suffer hardship than forego the challenge of a rich and beautiful life. This is a very difficult matter. Dostoevsky reiterated the old Christian ideas that suffering is good for the soul, as it enriches our experience. We certainly reject this idea, but at the same time we also shudder at the thought of a shallow, blandly pleasant life.

We have mentioned the paradox involved in the fact that art is a luxury that is worth dying for. We propose that this is expressed in Korczak’s sentiment and is characteristic of all high art, which is imbued with seriousness ─ with an engrossing seriousness that may all too easily destroy art, and which cannot serve as regular diet in normal situations. The feeling that we should ingest high art as regular diet makes many individuals hostile to high art, and then they may easily rebel in an expression of a sense of guilt or of futility. We propose that it encourages us to fuse art and religion (as so many Romantic philosophers have encouraged us to do), which fusion is hollow and pretentious and expensive. We can view the religious experience as akin to the artistic or aesthetic experience, but this is all one needs to assume for the study of aesthetics, whatever the case for theology may or may not be. The more we understand how hard it is to be devoted to high art, the more we learn both to appreciate it and to avoid the pernicious and shallow stance of the guardians of culture.

This brings us to the danger of high art, one that should be mentioned often. It should be mentioned that Pablo Picasso, who was not known for humility, true or false, described himself as an entertainer, and James Thurber is

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35. The concept of concept-stretching was introduced in Imre Lakatos’ classic *Proofs and Refutations: the Logic of mathematical Discovery*, 1976. It is here stretched to cover a much wider field of inquiry.

36. Peter Munz cites Karl Popper to have expressed the very same idea, in almost the very same words.

such a bona fide darling because he lampoons the most sacred in art while making it amply clear that his heart is with the very highest of high art. Even his fairy tales offer this moral: the danger is real of quite unintentionally becoming too pretentious for our own good, the danger of becoming misanthropes is an expression of fake religiosity and of fake taste in art and even of fake scientific adventure. But, as his Walter Mitty character illustrates, there is art even in faking: perhaps if we are misanthropes and we do wish to express contempt for humanity, then we may just as well do this more artfully than less.

We hold with Nietzsche that all art, even the most morbid, represents and expresses the joy of life. We think this is not enough: art expresses this joy playfully. But this is not to the point now, and not in contradiction to Nietzsche, the author of Gay Science. What matters is that we do agree about this point and view as examples for Nietzsche's opinion such works as Poe's best stories, and Frida Kahlo's paintings and the two films *Los Olvidados* by Buñuel and *Mean Streets* by Scorsese.

Our point is to offer a simple, classical criterion that may decide between the judgement of the critics who praise and our own: a work of art, we have suggested quite a few times, should be capable of bringing joy. Let us add this: if it brings joy, then it should be able to do so more than once, for, repetition should enhance its playfulness. This is a particularly potent tool for the overcoming of manipulation by means of clever titillation and other tools of the trade: the manipulation wears thin, and if there is no more to the work of art than that, then it fades away; if it does not fade away, then we consider it artful and increase our appreciation of it. This is particularly true of high art as it requires much preparation, and the simplest preparation is to give it repeated attention. When experiencing a story for the first time one succumbs to its magic, and upon rereading one tries to learn how it is done, says Maugham. This way we learn to overcome the manipulative character of the shallow work of art and to appreciate the intelligent artwork all the more.

This is how some of the works highly praised by critics are remembered and others are forgotten nonetheless — as are these critics themselves. The unreliable critics often praise manipulative art just because they are themselves subject to manipulation and so are unable to warn us against it. Conclusion: they are poor critics. Yet they have an impossible preliminary task of deciding between different conceptions of art and of aesthetics and it would be unfair to expect them to do more. But philosophers can undertake to do so, at least to some extent, and with pleasure. So in the next sections we will discuss low art to see if attitudes to low art are easier to manage than those to high art.

i) Philosophers and Low Art

Before we plunge in, a digression on philosophical discussions of low art, sometimes called popular art, sometimes mass art, and sometime by labels that are actually epithets: *kitsch*, masscult, amusement art, the culture industry, and the like. Being social observers as well as philosophers, we have often focused on the social attitudes and social divisions reflected in discussions of art and in judgement about it. Mostly we found them deplorable. Now there is an admirable complement to our attitude, expressed in a strictly philosophical

survey and critique of philosophical approaches to mass art, pro and con: Noël Carroll's *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (1998) that is a *tour de force*. Jarvie has already crossed swords with Carroll over this book, finding it too analytic, essentialist despite itself, and wanting in social awareness (Jarvie 1999; Carroll 2000). Here, however, we want to take the opportunity to praise Carroll unreservedly for the first 171 pages of his book and for much of the remainder as well.

Carroll's case studies of philosophical celebrations of mass art are Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan. He finds philosophical resistance to mass art in Clement Greenberg, Dwight MacDonald, R. G. Collingwood, Theodor W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer. Having reviewed their arguments and distilling their main points very carefully, Carroll traces the problems regarding mass culture to a reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Book I "The Analytic of the Beautiful". Kant's theory of aesthetic judgement, Carroll suggests, is now used as a theory of art: that artworks function, or are intended to function, as means for delivering beauty as such, in utter indifference to all practical concerns. Carroll's idea that Kant was misappropriated in order to contrast high and low art is highly plausible. His examination of writings that are often hardly more than diatribes for the real arguments that underlie them is admirable, and its outcome is likewise highly plausible.

What is missing in Carroll is the social context. No doubt he would say, and correctly, that the social context is the high road to the *ad hominem* and hence to fallacy. But we can avoid fallacy and still help the reader to assess critically the agenda that an author is pursuing by placing that author in some social context. We may be biased against Greenberg sneering at *The New Yorker*, MacDonald at *Reader's Digest*, Adorno at jazz, popular song, and even at recordings and radio broadcasts of classical music (Adorno 2002) because we just love all of these things. But we do suggest that the hostility invites comment. It and its objects go unmentioned in Carroll's account. We bring up these examples again and add others because, whether or not the underlying error of their arguments is traceable back to misappropriated Kant, he (Kant) should not be dragooned into a campaign against these examples. Some of what we know about Kant's tastes ─ he enjoyed band music, for example, and is not known for taking an interest in paintings ─ suggest that he was no high-art snob. Maugham bluntly characterises him as "entirely devoid of aesthetic sensibility" (Maugham 1952, p. 165).

To our point. Once we view Greenberg, MacDonald, Collingwood, Adorno, and Horkheimer in their social context, we can raise more questions than Carroll does. Why should highbrows and advocates of the *avant-garde* bother themselves at all with the pleasures of the unwashed? Why would they find them sufficiently threatening to merit attack? Who will be interested in their attacks? What audience do they address? The audience for popular art? Hardly. Fellow highbrows? Not likely. Rather, their work is meant to be educational. They are addressing the middle, those who enjoy Boston Pops and *24*. Their argument seems to be that you are not cultured, not enlightened, not really interested in the arts, unless you see that the main dish is High Art, and that the pièce de

résistance of High Art is the *avant-garde*. (Carroll displays philosophical reverence for the *avant-garde*. We do not, partly for reasons that Gombrich has already spelled out in sufficient detail.) As we will argue, outside the explicit context of education, such discussions are presumptuous and better eschewed. They are no better than the complaint that the newly literate are not superliterate. We find this kind of discourse both pointless and offensive.

Carroll's philosophy of mass art leads him to a formula that differentiates mass art from popular art in general. Its main components are multiple instances, mass technology, and being designed to ensure easy, broad accessibility.[37] The first two of these serve to distinguish the mass component, the last agrees well with our own ideas that popular art, unlike high art, does not presuppose effort, still less demand it. We have an addition to all this: popular art rarely promises and almost never delivers the reward of being perennially worth revisiting. Indeed, we have made this a criterion: it is better to consider as high art works that by the above hallmarks are popular, but that deliver undiminished pleasure on repeated visits, possibly even increasing pleasure. Every reader will find it easy ─ and pleasurable ─ to remember truly popular examples, say from childhood or adolescence, that have not lost their freshness. And let us repeat Maugham's observation that the *Gospels* are full of such examples.

We do not want to offer anything as elaborate as Carroll does. We shall concern ourselves with low art, and stipulate that mass art is one of its components. It is less difficult to define low art than high. We suggested that high art is that art which is powerful and deep and that it is usually also demanding in a manner justified by its rewards. This seems to be correct but problematic, as we do not know what is deep except that it invites revisits. This also makes it clear that high art is at least to some extent more a matter of a tradition than a matter of explicit characterisation. So much for high art.

Low art, then, may be defined as art that is not high ─ not powerful, not deep, not demanding. But looking at art this way we are tempted to grade art as high, medium and low, and then we may subdivide it further, to include fair-to-middling, better-than-the-average. This is scarcely enlightening. (We will look at the area between high and low below.) Moreover, it will not do: works of art that follow the rules and the style of the classics differ radically from popular art. The poorest opera in classical style will not serve as a musical comedy: its being poor is no reason for considering it low. Nor is the distinction between classic and popular free of all oddity. Compare an operatic performance of Kurt Weil's *Three Penny Opera* aria "Mac the Knife" with Louis Armstrong's jazz-style performance of it (or Bobby Darin's swinging version). It is the difference between the opera and the musical that is here at stake, and the gray area contains an overlap where a piece can serve as both high art and low.

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37. His formula in full reads: "X is a mass artwork if and only if 1. X is a multiple instance or type artwork, 2. produced and distributed by a mass technology, 3. which artwork is intentionally designed to gravitate in its structural choices (for example, its narrative forms, symbolism, intended affect, and even its content) toward those choices that promise accessibility with minimum effort, virtually on first contact, for the largest number of untutored (or relatively untutored) audiences." (Carroll 1998, p. 196.)

j) Low Art in Context

Thus we return to the distinction between high and low in the arts that rests on the different social functions that they serve. The social role of critics *vis à vis* each of them, then, is also different. In brief, socially speaking, high art is mainly distinguished by its context, with displays of a haughty, contemptuous attitude to the masses. Such attitudes are irrelevant to the quality of the art but they serve as a guarantee for the production and maintenance of poor, pretentious art (like Wagner's musical dramas that are deemed as a must rather than as a pleasure the like of which we derive from watching *Carmen*, to use Nietzsche's *aperçu*).

Looking at these matters from an economic point of view, low art is the more popular, as it is more readily accessible than high art. High art is expensive, in many senses of expensive. The monetary price and the expenditure of time can be very high (which is not to say the same cannot be said for some popular art, rock concerts, for example). Some of the expenditure incurred is more mental than material: high art is accessed by the effort of long training and attention to it requires concentration. This does not apply to all high art; indeed, the most ambitious high artists always aim at the widest possible public, popular and connoisseur at one and the same time, and this quality is always admired and is associated with such names as Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Mozart, and Auguste Rodin. (But then even Vivaldi's unpretentious *Four Seasons* must count as both high and low.) At times art that is not so exceptional can also have this enviable quality. Nevertheless, if high art is demanding then that is redeemed by the rewards it offers. The contrast between the rewarding and the unrewarding is often made by connoisseurs, as Gombrich informs us; but though their judgement is best, Gombrich adds, it still is fallible. Hence, high art invites an objective criterion to demarcate it, and we have none to offer. But we should still stress that it is not the effort demanded that distinguishes high art but its being rewarding, despite our inability to say when it is rewarding, when not. (Again, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, or think of the CD records of Gregorian chants that hit the top of the charts and stayed there for quite a while to everybody's surprise.) Demarcation by effort would be extraneous to art, the way demarcation by reference to its financial cost is, and it would be as much élitist and harmful.

Let us cut across much debate concerning low art or popular art with an observation that is empirically corroborated: low art or popular art has its own classics. Thus one can speak with justice of classics in the low or popular arts, the all-time-favourites, such as the great fairy tales and love stories, and the popular tunes, movies and hymns. The same goes for practically all children's art and the native art that is the object of ethnographic record and anthropological study. The same goes also for art that succeeds though it falls between stools, between art that speaks to the better educated and aspires to be high rather than popular, and for art that speaks to the less educated and aspires to be popular rather than high. The word "classic", thus, is clearly used in two significantly different senses rather than in one, which is confusing: a work of art may be a classic that merely aspires to be high or it may have achieved the status of a classic even when it is intentionally composed in popular style (like *The Magic*

Flute). Both outcomes are the result of the test of time, not of any known criterion.[38] Confusion and prejudice reinforce each other; so does the confusion between the two senses of the word "classic" and the prejudice that forbids low art to achieve classic status.

Why should we pay attention to popular art, perennial or not, low-art classic or not? Are not high-art items more impressive and better illustrations of the better qualities of art? Can we not acknowledge the existence of all sorts of poor art, popular art included, and then simply concentrate on the best? Perhaps; but then, why do the guardians of culture resist? Why do they constantly harp on the poverty of popular art? In some measure the concern of the guardians of culture stems from concern with the overlap of high and low art and with the education of the public at large. We will take these two themes in turn. Yet, whatever the concern of the guardians of culture with popular art may be, we wish to present and discuss this art, to argue that the inability to enjoy low art or popular art is regrettable, though it differs from the inability to enjoy high art, which is even more regrettable.

Consider then the overlap between high and low art. Even the most refined and strict high-art connoisseurs promote some low or popular art, such as classic fairy tales, *Punch and Judy*, perhaps some clowning, some ancient parables and jokes and one-liners. Above all, we should never forget that the *Gospels*, the all-time best selling text, was initially nothing short of low-art or popular art (religious drama); the Greek of the original text is much inferior to that of the classics; this, alas, still annoys even some of the sincerely religious among the high-art connoisseurs.

This treatment of a religious text as art of sorts, this view of the religious experience as an artistic experience, is not meant to be hostile to religion, and it need not be; only the reduction of religion to art should be considered hostile. The reduction of religion to anything else is even more demeaning than the reduction of art to anything else. In particular, the reduction of either art or religion to psychology is demeaning. In the spirit of what is repeatedly said throughout this book, it should be clear by now that in our view art does at times fulfill a spiritual need, but at other times it does other things; it always invites critical aesthetic scrutiny.

The critical aesthetic scrutiny of religious art need not overlook its religious character, however. On the contrary, it is only prejudice against low art or popular art that blinds many art critics to the obvious and observable fact that popular art repeatedly addresses spiritual needs, and expresses them strongly, at times with the highest religious aspirations, firstly with religious intent proper and secondly without it. For the first kind we mention the original Reggae — Bob Marley's lyrics and rhythms and tunes — as examples of religion proper, not to mention *Misa Criolla* of Ariel Ramírez as well as other, less successful popular religious works of art, including Paul McCartney's famous dud, *The Liverpool Oratorio*. For the second kind we mention works that address and express the religious impulse, the spiritual need, without being religious proper,

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38. See the interesting discussion in Silvers 1991 that links the test of time to art historical narratives.

as does much pop music, including some heavy rock, movies like Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind, E. T., Always, Artificial Intelligence: AI*, and even his goofy *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The unalloyed religious impulse is also to be found in popular literature, such as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Richard Bach's best selling *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, and the less offensive, in its way even charming, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* of Robert M. Pirsig, as well as the mock-philosophical writings of Rabindranath Tagore or Khalil Gibran, or the hyper-trashy, very powerful, most influential *Thus Spake Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche. Like it or not, these are classics ─ works of low art that have earned this or that status of classic low art. Richard Strauss' musical work with the same name as Nietzsche's book, the opening bars of which are famous ever since their use in the movie *2001*, is such a classic too, its merits or defects notwithstanding.

This list should make us stop and think. It proves the error of overlooking low art or popular art in preference for a pure diet of high art ─ since low art has high aspirations no less than some of the highest of high art: we do not think that anyone is qualified to say that the aspiration behind *Misa Criolla* is less than the aspiration behind *Missa Papae Marcelli* by Giovanni de Palestrina ─ at least because we know almost nothing about the latter. This is not to deny for one second that Palestrina's mass is one of the greatest works of art of all times, whereas the delightful *Misa Criolla* is probably small fry. Many masses in the classical style are less interesting than *Misa Criolla* yet the guardians of culture will not deny them the status of high art, while they cringe at the very thought of *Misa Criolla* as art at all. This is sheer blindness. It is their loss. After all, *Misa Criolla* does fulfill a function that Palestrina's art cannot possibly fill. One may complain, and perhaps with some justice, that it is the inability of Palestrina's music to fulfil its role all the way that makes room for more popular church music, and that this inability lies in the shortcomings of our educational system. So be it. The same can be said of the difference between the *Gospels* and some high religious literature: the *Gospels* reach down to simple folk, and so does *Misa Criolla*. This does not place both on the same scale of success or importance, but it does exonerate any artist who seeks popular appeal. This argument, we should remember, was also made by W. Somerset Maugham.[39]

We are concerned with the religious sentiment of low art not from the religious viewpoint but from the aesthetic. The overflow of religious sentiment in the opening scenes of the movie *Ben Hur* that display the traditional Nativity play in modern mass-culture style may strike some as unpleasant; it cheapens true religion; it is highly manipulative. Not surprisingly, only religious propagandists approved of it even whilst they admitted that it was trash. The same sentimental emotional bath in Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *The Color Purple*, is different and much more impressive. In no sense are these movies great art, much less high art. Yet, interestingly, the religious sentiment there is whipped up with no reference or allusion to any established

39. David Hume confessed that he wrote to satisfy his love of fame. Joseph Priestley said, how then can we take his output seriously? This is beneath the stature of this great soul; he simply was at a loss for a proper answer and felt obliged to answer nonetheless.

religion familiar to the guardians of culture.[40] The technique is not different from that employed in *Ben Hur*, yet the context is. One need not like the musical, *Jesus Christ Super-Star* in order to see its point ─ expressed in its very title, which refers to Jesus Christ as though to a popular artist, one with top of the chart billing.[41] It is not in the least a blasphemy, nor is it so much propaganda as an attempt to bring to ordinary people, particularly the young, an idea that is usually remote for them, seeing that religion and religious art are not everybody's cup of tea. to repeat, at the times the *New Testament* was aimed very low; nevertheless it became quite inaccessible for many people, and so for them it became too high; and the musical in question makes something about it more accessible.[42]

The discussion of low art or popular art as the guardians of culture see it rests on the proposal that Romantic philosophers made regarding the attitude that the *avant-garde* artists should endorse towards the public at large. This attitude is aloofness. Better we ignore it. Clearly, there are arguments for and against the two opposing views on the interaction between artists and their intended publics. The one is that artists should always cater to the masses and the other is that they should never do so. It goes without saying that the reasonable idea lies in between: artists can appeal to the better and to the worse in the public, and they are called upon to educate them somewhat. (This, says Gombrich, includes the teaching of new idioms. This, adds Robert Cogan, is a function most suitable for the multi-media.) Now the low arts often appeal to the public a bit too much, and at times this is hard to take. In particular, it is distasteful to encounter in the media vulgar expressions of contempt for the low arts and for the mass media. Flattery is ludicrous when it is directed to the average and the lower than the average, telling them that they are better than the average; it is excessive embarrassment to find that the mass media suggest to their audiences that they are too superior to take notice of the mass media. As consumers of both high art and low or popular art we confess that though we can never have too much of high art, we cannot say the same of low art. Yet we should also confess that at times we do prefer popular art to high ─ perhaps when tired and perhaps when feeling a need that low art fulfils and high art does not. We do find popular art fulfilling different functions and satisfying different needs; the only needs we find unacceptable are the vulgar ones, especially the need to be manipulated and the need for foolish flattery. These vulgar needs can be satisfied by both high art and low. The former flatters its public by the pretence that they are educated

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40. There is an exception, though: in *Close encounters* those who go on a space mission are served final rites by clergy of the three religions established in the USA.

41. It was John Lennon, of the Beatles, who invited the comparison when he averred that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus.

42. Christian religious authorities split over this matter. Catholics split over the retiring of the Latin mass. Protestants quarrelled over retranslations of the New Testament to make its meaning plain. It was fascinating to watch the currents at work with Mel Gibson's sanguinary *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). Even though he is a traditionalist or sectarian Catholic who clings to Tridentine Catholicism, his film was warmly endorsed by many conservative Christian groups, including the Vatican (see Lawler 2004 and, indeed, the entire, highly informative symposium of which this paper is part).

above the average; the latter flatters by its approval of vulgarity. The lowest point in all art is the sitcom collusion between the script-writer and the public: they share the sense of superiority over some characters in the comedy who are so obtuse that they get the joke long after the script-writer has explained it to the public many times.

k) Humour

Where does comedy fit into the High Art/Low Art dichotomy? Aristotle said comedy was about ignorable characters, which makes it seem lesser than tragedy, which is about noble characters. Comedy still suffers from this second class status (how much classic High Art is straight out comedy?) except in popular art. Can there be humour in serious high art? Hardly. Even in comedy it is rare. One speaks of *good humour* in art, high or low, especially in comedy. Narrative arts can express good humour in almost all healthy sensual descriptions. In all of the non-narrative arts there is much room for good humour but hardly any for humour proper. Good humour is very common in paintings, where pleasant themes can easily be depicted, but even the best painted jokes, such as those of Pieter Brueghel the elder and the arch-surrealist René Magritte, hardly raise a smile. The same holds for music, where usually good humour is expressed by jolly tunes and pleasant harmonies, by quoting folk tunes or by using vivid dance rhythms or even sound effects like wild trombone glissandos. It is thus possible to raise a smile by musical means, but hardly more. The fact that Mozart's *A Musical Joke* is, indeed, a joke, is so incredible that it should be deemed a miracle; and yet even it hardly ever produces laughter.[43]

Most comedies are popular art. One of the most popular comedians in antiquity was Menander. His works were not preserved, because, presumably, the people who made great efforts to preserve art paid attention to quality or to some other redeeming feature, and, they assumed, Menander had none. Some of his plays were discovered in recent decades, since the papyri on which they were written were recycled to make cheap sarcophagi. They were detached from their place — with the use of papyrus juice and other treatments — and they were found not very interesting, though classicists, archaeologists and anthropologists find in them fascinating everyday materials. The jokes that made Menander so popular, then, are stale: they demand too much effort since we are not as familiar with the scenes that he depicted as his audiences were, and the effort they require does not yield sufficient rewards. Much the same goes for decoding the many allusions and lampoons in Alexander Pope's *Dunciad*.

Perhaps most of today's popular comedies will likewise be out of reach tomorrow. Some ancient comedies are repeatedly revived, such as Aristophanes' peace trilogy, including *Lysistrata*, and, obviously low art as they are, these are nonetheless taken to be high art. There are other exceptions, such as the *Epigrams* of the Roman poet Martial and *A Satyre on Charles II* of the Restoration poet Rochester, and they deserve examination too. Both the Roman poet and the Restoration poet combine wit, obscenity, and lyricism in their output (though not in the same pieces). Martial was only fully translated to English and

43. The exception may be PDQ Bach of Peter Schickele and his likes. We will not discuss it.

Rochester was only fully published in the twentieth century. It was only when humour and obscenity ceased to be barriers to claims of high art that they could be embraced.

Lysistrata is so perfect, as are some other plays of Aristophanes, that it requires almost no effort to comprehend. It is a joke about how women managed to stop a war by a sexual strike, by refusing to make love to their soldiering husbands. The men tried to solicit the services of prostitutes but the organisers of the sexual strike, chiefly Lysistrata, the heroine of the play, had taken measures to frustrate this effort too. The men had no option but to capitulate, and peace was restored. The message of the play is so vivid and so contemporary that Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, the militarist Romantic philosopher of the early nineteenth century, argued against Lysistrata in his *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, perhaps his best known book. We understand her and her friends, he admitted, but they have to understand that the state needs their husbands and brothers. This is not much of a rebuttal, need one say.

Other old comedies are still fresh ─ not as high art but as popular art. Carlo Goldoni's *A Servant of Two Masters* is perhaps high art in Italy, as it is on the high-school curriculum there, but at least the classic *The Italian Straw Hat* by Eugène Labiche (filmed by René Clair in 1927) is merely popular. And we can hardly overlook Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that is still his most popular play, and Molière's many plays that are still performed to good laughs, not to mention those of Arthur Schnitzler, Georges Feydeau, and Ferenc Molnár. (They have inspired many movies.) Interestingly, the last three are recognised as entertainers turned pioneers of the *avant-garde* theatre of the absurd. Some eighteenth-century comedies are still marketable, Richard Sheridan's *School for Scandal* and Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, but they are hardly funny, only terribly good-humoured. Oscar Wilde's comedies, at this writing, are regularly revived and filmed and still get plenty of laughs. By contrast, even some of Shaw's comedies, barely a century old, are already stale. It is enlightening to go to a performance of a Shavian comedy and observe the reaction of the audience: his comedies are not deemed high art, as the guardians of culture are prejudiced against them, and the public will laugh only at the jokes that are still fresh. Most of the jokes, though they are still very good, are not so fresh as to arouse honest laughter, and even the many screen versions of his comedies are no longer appealing. The only really popular classics in this category, *The Chocolate Soldier* and *My Fair Lady*, are modern reworkings of *Arms and The Man* and of *Pygmalion* respectively, playing down the initial humour and stressing the good humour by setting them to music. The public in the theatre where Shaw's comedies are revived is a bit embarrassed at those jokes that they find unfunny, and so, for compensation perhaps, or out of embarrassment, when a joke is cracked that appeals to them, they roar with laughter. Most great movie comedies of yesteryear are dead and buried, but can still be seen on video and DVD. There is the 1939 cinematic rendering of the once very funny *The Man Who came to Dinner* by George S. Kaufmann and Moss Hart, who were then very popular and are now almost forgotten. It will arouse a chuckle now and then, but it is far from its uproarious reputation.

Similarly with the grandparents who can be seen regularly in the New York Museum of Modern Art cinema with their grandchildren at late morning shows of Charlie Chaplin's, Harold Lloyd's and Buster Keaton's original, side-splitting, silent shorts, the grandparents laughing like children and the children unmoved and stone-faced.

Consider *Punch and Judy*. This is children's entertainment that guardians of culture always deem high art, for complex reasons, to do with nostalgia that is the death of art, and with the Romantic allegation that folk art is authentic. We remember that the Romantics held both that good art is *avant-garde* and that it is grass roots, and that this tension creates problems for all Romantics, including the Marxists among them. The problem is solved by another move: the idea that *avant-garde* art violates sanctified rules, in a kind of open defiance, not to say spite: *épater le bourgeoisie*. As the bourgeoisie is shocked by earthy and anarchic folk art and also by *avant-garde* art, the two are natural allies. The logic escapes us, but then the Romantic Movement was not bound by logic or any other kind of clear thought. Humourless outrage is another matter. The bourgeoisie are mocked because they are shockable. The pretence that the artist is unshockable is bohemian myth. They are shocked by censorship, for example, and rightly so.

Let us suggest that a good joke, low or high, is always thought provoking, in some way challenging. Here is an example. There was a Rabbi who returned from the public bathhouse every Friday afternoon with his clean shirt worn the seamed side out. His wife always complained about his forgetting to turn the shirt inside out before wearing it, but to no avail. Finally she once did it for him: she turned his shirt the right way after she had washed it and before she handed it to him when he departed for the public bathhouse. Just that day, wouldn't you know, he remembered to turn the shirt inside out before he put it on. You can imagine how exasperated the poor woman was when she saw him again with his shirt wrongly turned. She naturally gave vent to her exasperation. It is God's will, he comforted her: you turned it, and I turned it, and it is still not turned.

To explain a joke is to ruin it, they say, but we will explain it all the same, as our point is not to raise a chuckle but to explain the freshness of the joke. It is not as fresh as for Jews who have to go to a public bath to wash, and who do so every Friday in honour of the coming Sabbath, and who know that the Rabbi has his head in the clouds and that it is his wife who has to take care of him and that she does so with the mixture of resentment and pride that is the standard emotional conflict for all traditional wives. But the modern audience can surmise some of this, and the feel for the dynamics between the two heroes of the joke is still very much with us, so we can feel the poor woman's inner conflict and see that the joke is interesting as it does reveal something about the conditions of life of its characters and it is funny because it plays lovingly on this infuriating conflict: though unable to resolve the conflict, it makes life a jot less unbearable. We should stress that there is small distance between such a joke and the Hassidic anecdotes that Martin Buber collected and that ever so many guardians

of culture declared high art par excellence. Indeed, there are ethnologists specialising in jokes and in riddles.[44]

We cannot resist mention of one one-liner: a classic book, says Mark Twain, is one we wish we had read. The point is too obvious, and its being an attack on the guardians of culture renders it an early warning signal about their invasion into the American scene late in the nineteenth century. Mark Twain, the American author whose works are somewhere at the head of the American high art reading list, was very dismissive of all snobbery, especially intellectual. At times this even led him astray, "not having a book by Jane Austen", he once cracked, "is a good foundation for a good library". The example is unfortunate, but the sentiment is just the one we advocate here.

Thus far we have considered low art classics, and characterised them internally, as less demanding but as answering important needs, at times the same needs as high art. We do not know if the needs answered by disco art are also answered by high art. To some extent this is so: both the concert hall and the disco dive offer opportunity to spend time with intimates but without the ability to converse. And both answer sexual needs at least in the erotic aspect, as significant aspects of foreplay. But there are other needs that disco art satisfies, and possibly some needs are satisfied only by low art, by mass culture. Up till now we have folded mass culture and the mass media into popular art. Let us now consider them separately.

l) Mass Culture

Mass culture and the mass media are mainly technological and economic developments that carry art, largely low or popular. As we stress repeatedly, everything social can be made artfully or not. It is strange that the art of recording was more advanced in popular music and in movies, so that in the early fifties one would often listen attentively to a popular record more on account of the superb recording engineering than on account of the music. Sooner or later recording engineers achieved fame and their services were enlisted by the classical record companies, especially when, due to the process of merger or otherwise, studios began to produce mixed diets of records. In Val Guest's 1960 film *Expresso Bongo* the record producer says, he has one foot in the classics, meaning in the grave, meaning, producing a classical record may be the death of a pop record studio. The film in question, incidentally, *Expresso Bongo*, is remarkable, as it catapulted a rising pop singer, Cliff Richard, straight to the top. In the self-mocking style of the movie he was made to sing an awful song in a distinctly artless manner. This did him no harm; he had become a pop star almost overnight in a manner strikingly different from the struggle that Elvis Presley went through on his way to stardom, which included a humiliating scene on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, where stars were regularly made in the fifties. Cliff Richard went on to become a well known figure in British and European popular culture, even after he proclaimed his evangelical Christianity on Billy Graham's stage. He was knighted in 1995. Interestingly, EMI assigned George Martin, a

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44. The collection of East European Jewish jokes by Alter Druyanov (1922, 1951) was a pioneering effort in this respect.

skilled classical music engineer, to record the Beatles. So the dialectical circle was completed in slightly over a decade.

Technology makes low art easily accessible. On that score, Elvis Presley's breaking the record in the record-selling business is as significant as Zane Grey's or Erle Stanley Gardner's or Dan Brown's or J. K. Rowling's books published by the million. This kind of success hits the headlines, and in the mass culture era success brings more success. This is the meaning of the great one liner, nothing succeeds like success. But the same goes for the high arts and even for the sciences. As sociologists have observed, a Nobel laureate may win a prize for having won the Nobel. This kind of success raises great envy, and the rest is the debate by the guardians of culture over the question of desert. The distinguished sociologist Robert K. Merton has labelled this phenomenon "the Matthew effect" or "the Matthew principle"[45] and "the principle of cumulative advantage". He regarded it as a guiding principle of the sociology of American academe.

Adorno, mentioned earlier in this chapter, argued that technology was a menace to classical music. He argued that the radio was no substitute for the concert hall, and the gramophone record (as the technology was then called) was an equally poor substitute, as well as a means of turning art into a consumer product. Even at the time his arguments were vague and flimsy: art was always a consumer product. More striking is his anti-technological bent. (He never considered the contribution of technology to the publication of classical texts.) Admittedly, early radio and gramophone reproductions were rather poor. But they were not a substitute for concert-going, since their huge audiences were out of reach of concerts, both geographically and financially. Some purists would hold, better no exposure to art than a reproduction. By this point readers can guess how we would dispose of that one. More to the point, technology rectified the problem. It is now possible to hear better by several criteria from high fidelity sound systems and digital disks than is possible in many a concert hall. Not to mention that recording makes possible some experiments in sound that cannot be produced in any other way, as Glenn Gould made his life-task to illustrate. But the most devastating argument is empirical. As we said, the friendliest reading of the guardians of culture is that they are self-appointed public educators. Their wrath against reproductions is meant to send people to the original, and eschew the technologically available substitute. They ignore simple empirical facts, however: the reproductions do not compete with the originals but rather the reverse: records increases concert-going, movies do not cause theatres to go out of business, television serials render their originals best-sellers.

A most intriguing case of mixed popular art and high art classic, a most Romantic case is that of John Cage. He was a composer and an *avant-garde* artist if ever there was one, and perhaps the last to draw loud jeering while he performed. He morphed into the grand old man of classical music before he

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45. In the King James Bible the text of Matthew 13:12 reads: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

died, but he had had to endure much public contempt and humiliation, and he even invited it as he ended his performances with discussion with his audiences. In one such discussion ─ in the University of Illinois in 1964 ─ he was asked point blank: are you a charlatan? He was amazed: I? a charlatan? How come? I am forty-seven years old.

Cage said, if the public hate you, they will jeer even if you sing like an angel; if they love you they will applaud even if you croak. (He did not live to see *American Idol*.) Cage took this exaggeration very seriously. He concluded that there is nothing more to art than being receptive. So he invited the consuming public to be receptive rather than ask that the producing artists and the discriminating dealers provide good stuff. He said, whenever you listen to any sound, try to discern music in it. This is valiant, but a bit tiring. The challenge that Cage takes up is very limited: it is not always rewarding to try and see art in anything whatsoever. Not only at times is it too taxing and with little reward: at times it is too easy and so no challenge at all. (Being a Buddhist of sorts, he would not have taken this criticism amiss; we do.)

m) Middlebrow Art and Its Virtues

We turn now to two kinds of art that we have overlooked all through this chapter: *kitsch* and middle-brow art. The term comes from the German *verkitschen*, meaning to make cheap. In English it has become a term of art in the world of culture. Chambers' Dictionary defines it as "art, literature, fashion, etc dismissed as being of merely popular taste or appeal, vulgar, sentimental or sometimes pretentious". The paradigm case is the art and verses on greeting cards. The paradigm contemporary artist is Thomas Kincade; the paradigm artiste used to be Liberace and now is Richard Clayderman. Its main characteristic from our point of view is that it is art devoid of challenge. An able *kitsch* artist can misappropriate the style of any art, even the most taxing and challenging, and make it unchallenging and immediately agreeable. The revolution in painting at the beginning of the twentieth century, Gombrich tells us in his classic *The Story of Art*, stems from the revulsion artists felt at such *kitsch*. They sought challenge. They were indifferent to the wide public and they did not wish to reach it by pretence. And yet, before the paint dried on their canvases, their art was imitated by others who could render it unchallenging. So much for *kitsch*, except to say that *kitsch* too has its place in the wider scheme of things. We can see that most of the *kitsch* in art may teach the public the idiom of the new *avant-garde* artists and send them to the real thing. This is a quality that *kitsch* shares with all middlebrow art.[46]

Middlebrow art is between high art and low. Examples of it are at times striking. Some high art that is not too poor can be used as middlebrow art, especially when subtleties are intentionally overlooked. Perhaps the *Bolero* by Maurice Ravel qualifies as a leading work of the middlebrow, as concert

46. A curious phenomenon that is parasitic on the *avant-garde* is half-way *kitsch*: art that borrows from the *avant-garde* in a somewhat less challenging manner and helps the public acquire familiarity with its style and appreciation for it. This way some artists gain popularity with audiences that get tired of them fast. They then sink into oblivion.

orchestras play it quite flatly. The use of the orchestra is justified, by the way, both in the fact that it is an exercise in colour, and in that it explodes with a great expression of the joy of life. Generally speaking, middlebrow art can be kitsch in that it can flatten any sophisticated highbrow piece, as the Boston Pops Orchestra does quite regularly.

This is the place to speak of the contribution of low art to art in general and to high art in particular via the middle. Bernard Shaw went into playwriting out of a wish to preach and the recognition that preaching had moved in his days from church and chapel to the theatre. He witnessed the rise of television before he died and he saw in it terrific opportunities for the education of the masses through such simple devices as puppet shows. We do not know if the makers of the justly celebrated Muppets and the designers of the terrific *Sesame Street* knew of this or discovered it on their own. Anyone who watches soaps on television today knows that the dissemination of vital information about drug abuse, AIDS, date rape, spousal and child abuse, all circulate from one soap to another with almost identical scripts. Their plot lines are often taken from movies, such as the movie *The Lost Weekend* based on the story by Charles Jackson and *The Man with the Golden Arm*, based on the story by Nelson Algren, not to mention countless "social problem movies" of the thirties to the fifties discussed lovingly in David Manning White and Richard Averson (1972). Consider also the explosion of movies and of television shows dealing directly or obliquely with terrorism after 9/11. No doubt television series and dramas and the cinema are sharing with the general public an exhilarating sense of experimentation — with feminist imagery, with new attitudes to the ecosystem, and all the rest. These are no substitute for intellectual exchange, and the error of taking art for intellectual exchanges proper is less common in popular culture than in the high arts and in high-art criticism. Trying an idea on for size is better done in the simple-hearted art of popular culture.

We should not be seduced into ascribing to the arts an intellectual function that they do not possess. We will make do by referring to Jarvie's discussion of impediments to the ability of the arts to function as rational discourse (Jarvie 1987). We will not reproduce them here but simply reiterate that there is no substitute for rational debate proper. What we are suggesting now is that the arts perform a significant function in the development of rational discourse. Descartes, Robert Boyle, and other philosophers of the Age of Reason, who viewed art as the purveyor of beauty, and beauty as mere luxury, saw in art nothing more than a nice invitation to reason.[47] This is selling it short. Art can help us develop the feel of a new idea, and this is important when the point at issue is a new idea that has to do with such intimate matters as the liberation of the oppressed in our midst, particularly women, and the liberation of

47. Descartes' discussion of his celebrated dream is still the best presentation of this philosophy. It appears in his autobiographical fragment "Olympica" that was first published by A. Baillet in 1691 (*Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. C. Adams and P. Tannery, Paris: Cerf, 1897-1913, 10: 186). Earlier, the idea was popularised by Robert Boyle who spoke against florid language (decorations have their place on the sides of the telescope, he suggested, not on the lens) and his style was the most influential in the Age of Reason, and not only in science, where it was obligatory to emulate him.

sex and the overcoming of intellectual taboos of all sorts. Taking seriously the religious sentiments and convictions that prevail in our midst, and admitting frankly, as all honest thinking demands, that religion is often the source of taboos about sex and an obstacle in the way of launching genuinely equal status for women, we have to notice the great service that some religious art renders to society simply by mixing religion with liberation from these taboos in the many movies that speak against bigotry of diverse sorts and against religious intolerance and irrationalism.

In addition to information proper that seeps through the mass entertainment system of the mass media and the experimentation with attitudes and feelings, there is the mass information system proper, perfected into art in the evening news and the late discussion shows such as that of Ted Koppel's *Nightline*. We will not go into technical detail, but will not miss the opportunity to observe new media techniques that have greatly influenced all art in different ways. One is the narrative advertisement. Since many artists have moved from the advertising profession to cinematic direction and performance, it is not surprising that the two are deeply connected, as was displayed in great detail and with great aplomb in Sidney Pollack's justly acclaimed film *Tootsie*. A significant new art form perhaps in great debt to narrative advertising art is the music video. Certainly www.nomorelyrics.net/song/89371.html is in our books not any old video clip but a piece worth notice for diverse reasons. Finally, let us mention one art form that we found mentioned nowhere, though we are sure it has been discussed by some critics, as there is an Emmy award devoted to it: the signature tune. Perhaps this is most conspicuous in kiddy cartoon shows, but we cannot skip those for *Public Television's Mystery Theater*, Henry Mancini's for *Peter Gunn*, Morton Stevens' for *Hawaii Five-0*, Ian Freebairn-Smith's for *Magnum PI*, and Iris DeMent and David Schwartz's for *Northern Exposure*, which features a mouth organ in an arresting fashion. In general the art of the credit sequence is underrated. Leaving aside some astonishing work for the movies, consider only, on TV, those for, to choose disparate examples, *I, Claudius*, *NYPD Blue*, *The Cold War*, *The Simpsons* — each electrifying in its own way.

Whatever one enjoys in the arts is for the good, says Gombrich. Except when it is harmful to others, of course. If one enjoys art that is harmful to oneself, however, then it is a pity, but it is better left alone or handled by educational means, preferably by art education. Any mind that is closed to any sort of art, good, poor, or middling, thereby loses something, and that is regrettable. But the answer to all such ills, in all cases, is the same: we need more education, and education should be gentle and kind. Art is the great healer, and popular art more often than high, though high art does so more deeply.

Despite our passionate interest in the arts, we are philosophers at heart. We take the view that all intellectual progress is achieved only when it filters down to the lowest of popular levels, that philosophers and scientists can always benefit from the way plain folks understand them. The true meaning of any idea, we happen to think, if there is such a thing, is at the very simplest level of comprehension, as crystallised in popular art, in simple imagery, in folk wisdom,

in the messages that fill popular art, and in popular science. The popular understanding of any new idea can indeed be a misunderstanding. This, in our opinion, is simply another challenge. To take up this challenge, low art is more suitable than high art and popular science more than scientific research, as it is more diverse, less snobbish, and more humane than all but the very best and truly inspiring works of art.

We hope we have conveyed our sense of delight at so much popular art, the pleasures it gives and the useful functions it can serve. There are without doubt other sides to the picture. It lies heavy upon us that our beloved mentor, Sir Karl Popper, in his final years, was wont to denounce the evils of the mass media, and especially of television. If we may indulge an *ad hominem*, this was especially piquant since Sir Karl lived in the countryside without a TV set, with a radio that was almost never switched on, and where newspapers were not delivered. He was not reticent about this lifestyle, and he seems to have become convinced that television was a great menace (Popper 1997, Ch. 7). Admittedly, all technologies have power and power is always there to be misused. It is not our impression that the material that provokes dire warnings in any way ranks against the material we have been celebrating. Quite the contrary: most of the material on television is utterly bland and banal, hardly capable of inducing dangerous social conditions, much less corrupt the souls of its consumers.

Chapter 3

MARXIST AESTHETICS, OR, THE POLITICS AND MORALS OF ART

a) Marxist Aesthetics. Marxists link aesthetic value and social value. That the arts are social is conceded, but not at the expense of truth in both play and challenge. **b) Realism: Socialist and Romantic.** In practice Marxist aesthetics was an extension and appropriation of the realist tradition already extant. The most cloying of work mixes realism with romanticism. **c) Socialist Realism.** Despite the poverty of romantic realism, and the terror behind its imposition, like any theory it could produce good art and, of course, bad. **d) A Digression on Marxism as Theory and as Practice (Tradition)**. Once the indispensability of luxury is recognised Marxism is no longer needed to give weight and seriousness to artistic endeavours. **e) Marxism Superseded**. The intellectual value of Marxism was that it insisted on connections not seen or even denied previously. It was a precursor of systemism and is thus out of date. **f) Reactionary Art.** Examples of reactionary artists and their reactionary art are given. Judgement has to proceed case by case. We do not want all art to be reactionary any more than we want all art to be politically correct. Both kinds can invite appreciation and stimulate critical discussion. Thus fascist art is not an oxymoron. Common sense and common law are good general guides.

Our treatment of art as part of society in chapter 2 has drawn on mainstream and uncontroversial sociological knowledge. The knowledge in question was partly created in debate with a powerful socio-economic theory, that of Marx. He laid great emphasis on the determining power over individuals of their relations to the modes and means of production, and of their position in the attendant class system. Like most great theories, Marx's unified and simplified many phenomena. Like most great theories (Newton's comes to mind), Marxism has been shown to be false. Nonetheless, the career of this false theory shows that discovery of falsity and waning of influence do not necessarily correlate, perhaps even the reverse. There is a large literature on Marxist aesthetics. This is doubtless in part because Marxism is an important philosophy, and what it has to say on the arts is important too ─ even in its own right. Yet the flood of Marxist literature is more than was reasonably to be expected. After all, few self-styled Marxists today maintain that Marx was in general correct, and many of those who think Marx was a great or important thinker will not call themselves Marxists (e.g. the present authors). So what it is that makes one a Marxist is something other than taking his ideas seriously. Whatever it is, to be known as a Marxist is good public relations in certain academic and intellectual circles, and so, even if one has no desire to defend Marxism, there is incentive to give the impression that one is a Marxist. Much "Marxist" aesthetics is not Marxist (it even confounds Marxist principles); the best Marxist aesthetics does not always

identify itself as such.

a) Marxist Aesthetics

The most prominent Marxist aesthetician was the literary critic Gyorgy Lukács. Some even claim him as a philosopher and a sociologist. We do not know what makes him a Marxist ─ other than his political affiliation, of course, which is neither here nor there. This affiliation, his adherence to Stalinism as a political line and as a régime (in Hungary and the USSR), led him to renounce the books he had written early in the century. He was unhappy that some western Marxists found his earlier books more interesting than his later, Stalinist ones. Today these same books (especially his *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, 1923) are posthumously reprinted, published in translation, and discussed in great detail in the remnants of left circles.[1]

In Agassi's student days he read Stalinist period Lukács with great interest. It is an interest hard to reconstruct because now he finds the books boring, confusing and ─ most important ─ servile and thus dishonest. On Agassi's reading Lukács said *inter alia* that he would have praised the existentialists, were he not a communist. Marxist colleagues would say that this reading is sheer fancy on Agassi's part. Anyway, we should not overlook the fact that young Agassi found him interesting, as others did too at the time. Why? Because he was a declared Marxist. Marxism surely was exciting. We shall leave aside the general question, why did a previous generation find Marxism exciting? But we shall discuss it in relation to art; to the arts in general and literature in particular.

What was Lukács' contribution to aesthetics? He took up the problem, assuming that art is a weapon in the class struggle, what kind of art does Marxist aesthetics support? The official answers are two or three: first, art should be for the masses, and so good artists must serve the masses with both art and correct socio-political messages. This is the vulgar answer that Chairman Mao, for example, offered. The second official answer is, realism is the right weapon for the class struggle ─ perhaps because it is easily comprehensible. The difficulty with this answer is that there is no argument to show that realism will always suggest the socialist message. The third answer is that class struggle is the vehicle of progress, and so there is a natural identity of interest between the supporters of the class of the future and the supporters of progress, social, artistic, scientific or any other. (According to the theory of progress of Hegel and of Marx, winner takes all.[2]) If so, then *avant-garde* art must be understandable by

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1. The treatment of Lukács is far from unique. Today's "Marxists" prefer to ignore Marx's mature publications and value his early (Hegelian) manuscripts notwithstanding the fact that Marx and Engels disowned them in 1848 and later; they prefer the draft of his *Capital* to his final version of it and avoid comparing them.

2. Taken as a refutable hypothesis, the doctrine that progress comes in packages is amply refuted, say by the fact that the golden age of music is much later than that of the plastic arts, or that the greatest practitioners did not come from the metropolis. Taken as irrefutable, however, it can be rescued by all sorts of excuses, such as that the metropolis attracts ambitious artists. And then an excuse can be found for exceptions like Fra Angelico, Gauguin, van Gogh, (Emily) Dickinson and Scriabin. Attempts to find an excuse for this will lead to an interesting conflict between two romantic ideas: winner takes all and he must be dead first.

those workers who support the revolution. Since these workers hardly comprehend high-brow *avant-garde* art, something is amiss. Lukács tried to show that the problem here is soluble with some sophistication and patience. We have little patience for this sophistry. Socialist realism is scarcely more than the whim of a dictator or two, hardly an aesthetic proper (see sections **b)** and **c)** below).

The point at issue is realism in the arts, a topic which will be further discussed later, as it is all-encompassing.

We will at once concede to the Marxists two points that aesthetes foolishly reject. First, art is always a social product, even though every item of art is created by individuals. Second, art always has a social and a political aspect. Both these theses resonate today, since they are integrated in the Marxist theory of art, and Marxism still has its proponents, especially in western academe ─ the last bastion of true believers in defunct ideas and causes. So we want to put a great distance between Marxism and our concessions to it. Our task is not to argue the case but to explain its importance and to explain thereby how such an impoverished theory as Marxist aesthetics seemingly still makes good sense.

The biggest disagreement between our view and the Marxist view of art is over truth. Every art, every item of art, has a social and a political aspect ─ has a message, as they say. But we fervently dissent from the view, so central to Marxism, that the message of good art is progressive and that non-progressive art cannot be good. It is hard to explain how Lukács, Brecht, Marcuse, and others could admit that they found some reactionary art impressive yet continue to cling to their view that to be good the artist must tell the truth and that the truth in question should be the truth as they themselves see it, not as the artist does. If the artist disagrees with them they see no choice: either artists should rethink matters and realise that the Marxists are right (justified self-criticism) or else their art must remain inferior (and their fate a matter of indifference). On this we find Chairman Mao's crude view simpler and easier to follow: art, he said, should be for the masses, and so good artists must serve the masses ─ as the Communists do.

The controversy about the matter of truth in the arts is wider than that: there are more views on the matter than the Marxist and the one presented here. In particular, there is the view, to be discussed first, that art has no message at all. This view is known as the aesthetes' view, or in Benjamin Constant's misleading phrase "art for art's sake". Chairman Mao has contrasted this view with the Marxist theory of art, and this is as it should be, especially when it is applied to narrative art, so-called, namely to poetry, drama and literature.[3] We have discussed art in general up to this chapter, as it is much harder to discuss messages in music than in narrative art, where messages can, and at times have to be, explicitly stated. But now the challenge is not to show the presence of

3. The name is an awkward one, as many poems are not narrative; so we may wish to call it not narrative art but verbal or literary art; but that is not very good either, as a silent movie or a ballet is narrative but not verbal or literary, whereas the impressive political pictures of Goya and the less impressive ones of Grosz are narratives. We have no better terminology to offer. Cf. Pelles, p. 149.

messages in art, whatever these may be, but the question, considering the art that carries messages, what are these and what is their aesthetic significance?

We contest the very question, namely, the very assumption behind it, as it goes against the conception of art presented here — of art as luxurious. The view of art as luxurious seems to agree best with the view that art has no message at all. This is not the case either. Let us repeat and elaborate on a couple of points. Art is play, or the playful extra added to any action that itself is non-play. Hence, art is luxurious. Some play, however, some luxury, is not art at all. What should be added to playfulness, or to any other luxury, to make it art? This relates to the rules of the game. When these rules determine its course to the full, then it may still be fun to play, but it is no art even if it is still a luxury. Thus, comparing rolling dice with poker, we see with ease why rolling dice is no art though poker is art — by comparison — if and to the extent that the poker face has to do with the game. The attitude of art to its rules is different from that of a game. It has much leeway, and so there is room for the demand that it should be true to its own rules. This ability to deviate and the demand not to, thereby presents the player with a challenge. Art, thus, has to be both play and challenge. (The difference becomes sharper when account is taken of the fact that small deviations from the rules are very common in all art and in some play, e.g., poker, but are forbidden in most play, e. g. chess or tennis.)

b) Realism: Socialist and Romantic

It is hard to discuss the influence of Marxism on the arts in the twentieth century, as it was hardly a movement, and its art was more in the realist tradition than in a tradition of its own. The realist tradition spilled over into the twentieth century, with the Marxist writer Maxim Gorky as its greatest advocate, especially since Lenin was reputed to be a fan of his and since Stalin's less than friendly attitude to him was concealed.[4] Gorky wrote such realist stories as *My Universities*; it much resembles Mark Twain's non-socialist but still very realist *Roughing It*. Both laud the school of hard knocks. His most popular story is "The Birth of a Human" (1921), and it is very affecting. A lonely youth walks on the shore of a lake in a deserted part of the country; a Gypsy caravan passes by; a Gypsy woman is in labour and cannot continue. She is left on the shore, alone, and the youth who is just passing by helps her to give birth and is filled with the happiness that accompanies a beginning. We find this story powerful, and see it as a product of realism, but hardly of Marxism. For this we have to go later into the twentieth century.

In the visual arts there was a flourishing realist tradition of painting in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century and it is not hard to understand that their subject matter often got the artists in trouble with the authorities. Thus the fact that Lenin and Stalin preferred this kind of art to the *avant-garde* could be given a political rationale: it was the art of social critics of Tsarist society and so was honourable both as art and as politics. The *avant-garde*, by contrast, was the work of aesthetes. Of course, in the romantic tradition

4. For recent evidence on their relationship and on Stalin's encounters with art and artists generally see Sebag-Montefiore 2003.

of Byron and Shelley, the aesthetes could see themselves as rebels against the existing order. But if so, then they easily fell into the category of enemies of communism described in Lenin's 1920 pamphlet, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder: A Popular Essay in Marxian Strategy and Tactics* and since then labelled "infantile leftists" (Bown 1998[5]). There was nothing inevitable about the suppression of the *avant-garde* in the USSR had it not been that it was under the dictatorial control of Lenin and Stalin.

One of the earliest socialist writers of the twentieth century was Jack London. What exactly was the background of his art is not clear. At age eighteen, a semi-literate, he enrolled in University of California at Berkeley, and twenty-three years later he was dead. His prolific output, some of it excellent and influential, was scorned by literary critics as too low-brow. He certainly had a rich background, as he emulated and even plagiarised as much as he could. He was not a consistent realist or socialist or anything else ─ he is known to have been terribly macho and a racist to boot. His stories of the fight of humans against nature were influenced by Social Darwinism and by Nietzsche's theory of the superman, which is quite remote from Socialism, but which, similarly adopted and incorporated by others, gave the whole *genre* of western Marxism a heavy romantic glow of seeming realism, feigned by the realist description of the obstacles that the hero must overcome in his ordeal on the way to salvation. In quite a number of London's stories his heroes bash their heads against fully described impossibilities, and at times they win magnificently and at other times they die heroically. The impossibilities are at times social, and the detailed descriptions of these mark the influence that socialism had on him. He wrote a story of a prize fighter who cannot buy meat on credit as the butcher thinks he will lose, and therefore he loses and is doomed to an irrecoverable loss of employment. And there is a story of a youth who desperately needs money to buy guns for the revolution, and in despair he goes into the ring to fight a powerful professional. He is bound to lose, but he clings to the image of the suffering of his companions and their dependence on him, and so he takes heavy beatings and perseveres and wins despite all odds. Very romantic and very socialist-sounding. The story was emulated by Malraux in many gruesome variations when he described the heroism of the lonely, bitter, proud professional revolutionaries in civil wars in which the communists lost ─ in China in the twenties and in Spain in the thirties of the last century ─ and which ended in blood baths. Historically speaking, the novels of André Malraux (and of Louis Aragon) are wild distortions of fact. Artistically speaking, they are pretentious tear-jerkers. They do not even match London's eye for detail. This ability to record detail faithfully, which may be called "realism of detail", is not the realism that characterises stories that recreate common experiences and the emotions of sympathy for common people that may accompany them. This latter we may call "overall realism". London's realism of details is so great that Konrad Lorenz declared him a pioneering animal psychologist. But an overall realist he was not, though, unlike Malraux and Aragon, he was not pretending to be. There are many kinds

5. Bown 1998, p. 468, n. 19 contains a short list of other works on the socialist realist period in English, French, German and Russian.

of realism in the arts, as illustrated in both the Maxim Gorky story and in the Jack London one, and even in the fictions of Malraux and of Aragon.

Perhaps this is the place specifically to address pretension, even if it is only a couple of paragraphs, since the realism of socialist realism in the socialist countries, and much of it in the west too, was nothing but pretence. There is a simple technique of heightening atmospheres. In traditional Arabic literary criticism it is called "spark-making". Just conjuring certain images from the stock of known sparkling images will do. There is more to it. There are impressive images from different contexts, even from clashing contexts. The most famous example is Gothic literature, so-called, in which beautiful and attractive love-scenes turn under the eyes of the onlooker into disgusting and revolting images of dissolving corpses. Yet some of the greatest works of art are Gothic in this sense. Some of Edgar Allen Poe's Gothic stories are terrific, such as "The Masque of the Red Death" where plague destroys a party in progress.

Gothic works do not pretend to be realistic overall, and the works that seem to be realist overall dub realism of details on to material that is not realist overall. When material that is Gothic is mounted on to realism of detail, the sharpness of its Gothic contrasts becomes sharper and so their effect is usually unhappy — particularly in the movies. Heightened realism of detail makes unrealism too much of a pretence if the work of art in which it appears is not realist overall. It is not the heightened realism of detail, nor the sharpness of the detail that is the pretence: if the work is realist overall, then realism of detail is required and honest and so its product is true and accepted. To mention an example of such realism we only have to remember any grim work of the realist school proper, whether one describing life in a mine or on the street, or even a modern realist description of life in concentration camps, not to mention death camps. The difference is so conspicuous that it is hard to comprehend its being so systematically overlooked. For example, Italian Post-World-War-II realist cinema includes such terrific realist works as *Bicycle Thieves* as well as the romantic and phoney *Open City*. (The same mixture of realist and romantic phoney realism can be found in British "kitchen-sink" realist plays and films of the nineteen-fifties and nineteen-sixties.) Failure to note the difference between them is the victory of Marxist aesthetics, explicable as the result of its popularity. Realism of detail is a part of the artist's paraphernalia and can be put to good use and bad; overall realism is a *genre* of art that is as respectable as it is not obligatory in any sense.

Romantic realism is phoney – it pretends to be serious, i.e. realistic, whilst simultaneously trading in unserious distortions. It is only one category of pretentiousness, even if a widespread one. Its phoneyness makes it the opposite of the fidelity to traditions, genre, and audience expectations that we shall call truth in art (see Ch. 5). Pretentiousness in art generally shows itself in self-importance, breast-beating, and other forms of over-claiming. It is even more common in criticism of the arts than in the arts. Critics who only study the arts feel a stronger imperative to boost the importance of what they do and say than artists, who at least have the work as their accomplishment.

Since we trace modern fake realism to the influence of Jack London, let

us speak of the positive influence that he had. This positive influence seems to be glaring in the great detective novels of Dashiell Hammett and of Raymond Chandler. They are very similar, and they are magnificent. They were written as socialist propaganda, and they exhibit the great pain caused by class society, the damage that corruption causes all round, and they contain true yearnings for a better world. The very *genre* of the detective novel seems so realistic, as it gets as close as possible to police reports and to news items. (We may remember that Stendhal's realism was marked ─ rightly or not ─ by the claim that he had taken the plot of his great classic novel *The Red and the Black* from a newspaper crime report.) But detective novels may be most realist in detail and yet not overall realist in the least; they have Gothic elements, though of the gentle kind, as they repeatedly describe the mix of glitter and corruption as the extravagant jewellery that adorns a rotting corpse; they also habitually describe some nice, friendly folks in one scene, and move swiftly to their bitter sufferings and unhappy endings. In passing the detective encounters a lovely secretary somewhere, and the next thing he learns about her is that she is brutally murdered. It is a cruel world. Yet this kind of description is realistic too, as when it describes the lovely secretary as too lonely, and her murder as covered-up because it involves some dignitaries. Likewise these stories dwell on the loneliness of the hotel detective in a seedy neighbourhood, at midday, when everyone is too busy to notice anyone, and at midnight, when he whiles away the hours. The nastiness which both the police and the private eye regularly exhibit towards him are taken in stride ─ because he is nothing but a retired policeman in need of some extra money. The nastiness of the police to the private eye is more biting, because the private eye ─ Hammett's and more so Chandler's ─ is a nice guy at heart, a romantic hero who is resourceful but stuck in a tragic, no-win situation; he must compromise because he serves both the law and a crooked customer. In the case of Hammett's *Continental Operator*, he also has to take care of a harsh boss. He is honest to the point of self-torture, and hates his compromises, and in his attempts to reduce the compromises to the unavoidable minimum he is doomed to loneliness. Hammett and Chandler present detailed pictures of alienation in the great impersonal city. Details can easily pile up and kill every art with dullness. The realism of detail[6] in Hammett and Chandler is redeemed by their Marxism, by the effect they seek. It goes without saying that Marxism is not the only way to deal with the problem.

What of Hammett's and Chandler's unequivocal Marxism? Their Marxism was a forceful ingredient, but not a necessary one: their heirs – Ross

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6. All whodunits must have some realist detail. It is the gloom of the whodunit literature just cited that clashes with the opulence of the whodunits of Rex Stout, for example, whose hero fights corruption and loathes discrimination just as much as theirs, but unlike them is a well-connected political conservative. Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers draw their readers into an aristocratic world that knows neither corruption nor talk of social reform. Marxists would call them escapist literature. This would be true of many other whodunit authors, especially female British ones, who are terrific social observers but only rarely politically concerned. Marxists differ about such works, as they have political corollaries despite their authors' lack of interest in politics – beginning with Charles Dickens. See Orwell's 1939 essay on him, "…more recently a Marxist writer … has made spirited efforts to turn Dickens into a blood-thirsty revolutionary …"

Macdonald and Sara Paretsky, can do better without it. Though Hammett and Chandler were Marxists, their output did not conform to Marxist aesthetics, in that they laud extreme honesty and express indifference to the socialist revolution. Let us take the matter of honesty first.

Honesty is the motor power of the new-style detective novel; the detective is tempted to cheat; he is in a tough spot and by minor deception he can get out of it and be highly rewarded. But this cheating in the story line will be cheating also in the sense that the quality of the art of the novel will thus lose its challenge. Chandler is much more explicit about his techniques than Hammett, and he usually includes analyses of his cases as an artistic ingredient of his presentation ─ perhaps in an attempt to win his readers' credence. In his last novel, *The Long Goodbye*, he goes all the way. The client in that novel is a person of a pleasant disposition and in a sense he is even an honest individual, but with no moral fibre: he does not possess the integrity that makes one walk a mile in an effort to save it. He gets into a tough spot and manipulates the detective to unknowingly help him out. The detective is bribed to leave things alone, and it is not against any rule; except that he thinks his integrity will be compromised if he does not find out what exactly is the situation. He finds clues, but he must analyse the case as well as the character of his client. At the end of the novel he understands, and he becomes the fall guy, the red herring that the criminals lead the police to suspect ─ which is the greatest humiliation an honest detective can suffer (according to the rules of the genre). Yet the hero is content not to have taken the bribe, he severs relations with the friendly client and he bitterly goes his own separate way. (The 1973 movie of this novel sacrificed the subtleties and had the detective shoot the client.) This is a novel that cannot possibly be conformed to Marxism, as Marxism links ethics to the class struggle, not to any individual's sense of pride and integrity. It displays the style of realism of details which we are discussing here: it takes a romantic view of the real, and so its subject-matter may indeed be the real, especially hero and victim, but all the same, its art is not realist.

The second way in which these detective novelists do not conform to Marxist aesthetics is that they never offer policies, never openly advocate a doctrine in their stories as does genuine socialist realism, Soviet, French, and any other. Propaganda was brought into art by Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells early in the twentieth century, and it was unmistakably socialist, yet they too never preached revolutionary politics. Political propaganda was more the hallmark of Auden and Isherwood, Clifford Odets, and Bertold Brecht, who is perhaps the personification of Marxist aesthetics, or, more exactly, Stalinist aesthetics or socialist realism, especially since he wrote some essays on the matter.[7] These essays were made famous when the Frankfurt school of philosophy and of social science embraced them. Paul Feyerabend lauds Brecht. Feyerabend does not divulge that he ─ Feyerabend ─ also likes some reactionary art. Since Feyerabend presents himself as "an anarchist who would not hurt a fly", let us mention one instance of Brecht's political understanding. Brecht's most famous work is his rendering of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* as *The Three Penny*

7. When East German workers demonstrated on June 16 1953 Brecht publicly rebuked them.

Opera, perhaps because of the music which Kurt Weil wrote for this play, perhaps because it is a classic work of the stage and the silver screen. As it has a seventeenth-century plot, it has no reference to the modern scene. Yet Brecht gives one of his heroines a song expressing real hostility. Bitter about the injustices she has to endure, she fantasises. A pirate ship is coming to port, and she will be put in command of it. And then at her command the pirates will round up her enemies, and she will tell them to cut off their heads, and hoopla! heads will roll. Brecht's song shows how bloodthirsty revolutionary fervour can be. Those who say they would not hurt a fly have the right to this fantasy. The rest of us have the right to be repelled.

c) Socialist Realism[8]

Today it is not contested that the socialist régimes that swore by Marx controlled the arts of their countries, as they controlled the rest, by sheer terror. Also it is not contested that they destroyed much of the cultural life and lots of cultural artefacts of their countries. All this is now on official record. Many western Marxists at the time of these depredations hotly contested both claims, concealing the fact that they disliked the kind of art that was obligatory in the socialist countries, known as socialist realism. They hardly ever defended socialist realism since they usually held sophisticated attitudes, of high culture if not *avant-garde*, whereas socialist realism is realist and folksy, embarrassingly akin to Fascist and Nazi *Heimat* art, and perhaps based on nothing deeper than the fact that Lenin and Stalin disliked abstract art and fancied themselves as educated individuals. Western Marxists usually preferred, for political reasons, to be silent about their dissent from socialist realism. The political reasons were considerations of what they deemed good for the socialist régimes and hence for the future of socialism and hence for the future of humanity.

The official socialist attitudes to the arts amounted to socialist realism frankly considered as a political weapon. Hence, the western Marxists' silence about socialist realism was not disagreement but agreement, and the pretence that there ever was disagreement was not sincere except in rare cases in which disagreement was explicitly and bravely voiced, despite peer pressure, in favour of some *avant-garde* art or another. Even the few who did speak openly in favour of *avant-garde* art often preferred to play down the hostility of the socialist régimes to all *avant-garde* art. We will try to get away from this kind of dissembling as much as possible, merely adding that it had little or nothing to do with serious deliberations about the arts, and that it was poor politics.

Let us begin, then, with a blunt statement of standard Marxist revolutionary political philosophy and its relevance to the arts in general and to

8. Here is a crisp definition: "The official Soviet formula for the Communist Party's demands of the creative artist, whatever his medium. First proclaimed by Maxim Gorky and the politicians N. Bukharin and A. A. Zhadanov at the Soviet Writers Congress of 1934, this recipe has never been precisely defined, though its essence has proved to consist in the harnessing of the late-19th century realist techniques of the plastic arts (Repin), fiction (Turgenev), and the theatre (Stanislavski) to the portrayal of exemplary Soviet characters (the 'positive hero') and a rosy future (the 'positive conclusion')." Bullock and Stallybrass 1988, entry 'Socialist Realism'. For scholarly discussion see Bullitt (1976) and Reid (2001).

avant-garde art in particular. Let us take it for granted from the start that political revolutions are usually civil wars, seldom settled without much bloodshed between co-nationals, often blood relatives.

The most popular western variant of Marxism was simply an irresponsible incitement to the civil war that it calls “the proletarian revolution” or “the socialist revolution”, or, noncommittally, “*the* revolution”. Once upon a time such incitement had some rationale but it quickly lost what little plausibility it ever had. In the nineteenth century revolution was justified by being presented as a response to the appalling living conditions of the workers, the periodic trade cycle unemployment of those times, and the claim that only a civil war could overcome these recurring calamities. A revolution, Marx said, was scarcely avoidable. He attempted to act responsibly by discouraging his disciples from violence as long as it was not proved utterly unavoidable: they should first join those who try to achieve improvements by the use of peaceful means, he declared, even though their efforts are doomed to be frustrated, in the hope that this way the frustrated reformers will learn from the frustrations of their peaceful struggle that bloody struggle is inevitable. They will then be ready to join “*the* revolution”.[9] In the earlier part of the struggle Marx’s followers adhered to his advice. Contrary to his forecast, they achieved great improvements by peaceful means. Many followers of Marx then revised his philosophy or even gave up their faith in him altogether; others stuck to his view of the inevitability of “*the* revolution”, and rejected his proposal to try peaceful means first. Thus, Herbert Marcuse, the once widely cited western Marxist propagandist, declared that the achievement of improvement by peaceful means is unwelcome, as it stalls “*the* revolution”. It is not surprising, then, that he judged everything, including every work of art, as good only if he thought that it supported the cause of moving towards “*the* revolution”. Yet he made a great concession, admitting, as he did, that not all works of art that support “*the* revolution” are good. Good art, he said, must be true, and so support “*the* revolution”. Art could do so in two ways: it could expose the ills and ugliness of contemporary society, perhaps also expose hypocrisy, and it could praise the conduct of revolutionaries.[10]

The view of the arts that Marcuse espoused was already a serious deviation from Marxism, but not sufficient to make sense of refuting facts.

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9. *The Communist Manifesto* clearly expresses the expectation that efforts of the trade unions will fail: “Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lie not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers … [since] every class struggle is a political struggle.” The positive attitude of the communist party to the activity of trade unions is in the recognition of its necessity as a stage in the historical development that leads to the revolution: “In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they [i.e., the communist party] always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.”

10. *The Aesthetic Dimension : Toward A Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*: “the radical qualities of art ... are grounded precisely in the dimensions where art transcends its social determination and emancipates itself from the given universe of discourse and behavior while preserving its overwhelming presence”; “art represents the interests and world outlook of particular social classes”; “the criteria for the progressive character of art are given only in the work itself as a whole: in what it says and how it says it”; the goal of art is “the ultimate goal of all revolutions: the freedom and happiness of the individual”.

Following the precepts that Marxists recommend one can still be a poor artist; conversely, not following the precepts that Marxists recommend one can still be a good artist. (The paradigm case of Maxim Gorky was already mentioned. Some would include also Vladimir Mayakovsky, even though his poetry was futurist. This shows how ambiguous Marxist aesthetics is, also to be discussed below.) It is not very interesting to observe that many stories and poems and paintings and symphonies which extol *the* revolution are artistically poor. Most of those that were once famous are now all but forgotten.[11] It is more interesting to observe the fact that some works of art are significant despite the fact that they follow socialist realist principles. So rather than discuss the no longer lionised novels of John Steinbeck, André Malraux, and Louis Aragon, let us mention briefly the silent movie *Battleship Potemkin* directed by Sergei Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov. This movie won the praise of movie critics for decades. On its first screening (1925) it allegedly excited people to make speeches in favour of the revolution in movie houses ─ this eight years into the Soviet régime! It concerns a 1911 rebellion of sailors in the Russian navy, six years before the October revolution; it shows the appalling conditions of their lives, their courage and the courage of the ordinary citizens who spontaneously demonstrated in sympathy with them ─ only to get brutally shot down.

The movie consists of five episodes scarcely connected. One of the five episodes is terrific and made movie history: it is nicknamed "the Odessa Steps Sequence" because it depicts the popular demonstration of support and its dreadful ending as masses of people run for their lives down stone steps. It is, no doubt, a powerful scene, emulated by Hitchcock, De Palma, and many others. One can still see scenes in contemporary movies that are pastiches of it. The other four episodes, especially those reporting the conditions on the battleship, are stagy and melodramatic, but they have contributed to the success of the movie as they express concern for the conditions of life of simple people.

It is difficult to disentangle the praise directed at *Battleship Potemkin* because of the cause it served from what one might call disinterested aesthetic praise. In the decades after the film's release the fusion between those who took the art of film seriously and those who espoused "*the* revolution" was virtually complete. Eisenstein was from the generation of Russian intellectuals and aesthetes who thought they could utilise their advanced artistic ideas to serve the proletarian revolution. They were of course mistaken. The *avant-garde* was suppressed in the 1930s, and Eisenstein was far from being *persona grata*. Those who praise the film for its formal innovations were contradicting Soviet arts policy as well as overlooking the film's simplistic and caricatured view of the 1911 events, and the melodramatic and overacted manner of its showing.[12] The point we are making can be generalised. On the whole, the fact that a theory of art leads to poor results is not important: poor art is ubiquitous, and not its origins

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11. Conspicuous examples of poor-quality once-famous works of art that presumably are in the style of socialist realism are the seventh ("Leningrad") symphony of Dmitri Shostakovich; Alexander Fedayev's *The Young Guard,* 1945; and Alexander Beck's *On the Forward Fringe: A Novel of General Panfilov's Division* 1945 (and the movies based on their stories).
12. Some discussion of its relation to history is to be found in Wenden 1981.

but its poor execution is the source of its poverty. The important fact is that every intelligent theory of art can contribute to the making of good art. In line with this one can observe a number of works of art produced from a Marxist viewpoint that are extremely powerful. What is the cause of it, and is it possible to have great reactionary works of art? We come to that in section **f)** below.

d) A Digression on Marxism as Theory and as Practice (Tradition)

Earlier we argued that unlike in games, in art small deviations from the rules are very common. The challenge to conform to rules explains why natural beauty may but need not be art. When natural beauty is just there for us to enjoy, it is a luxury, but to become art something has to be done, and some challenge answered, as in landscape architecture. Similarly, culinary art requires some change of even the best and simplest foodstuffs. Yet this is not the end of the story. Not all challenge is art, we repeat: there are serious challenges and there are playful ones, and only the latter count as art. If we take up a serious intellectual challenge, scientific or mathematical or any other, we may consider art only the play part of it, and this is generally acknowledged by those who are able to participate. Even mathematical games, and these are a staple diet of mathematicians of all sorts, are seldom considered art. This is best shown by borderline cases: I hate chess, said Montaigne, because it is too playful to be serious and too serious for a game. This sentiment is not shared by avid players of chess who are always ready to show which case, which aspect, of the game is particularly artful. Perhaps this would not convince Montaigne because he was not up to it, because it demanded of him more effort than he was ready to invest. We need not decide between the pro-chess party and the anti-chess party, however, in order to see that both parties accept a criterion and they disagree only about its application. For, not all challenge is art, as both parties admit the existence of a challenge in chess. Their very dispute, or perhaps the reasonableness of this dispute, is evidence for, and perhaps also an insight into, the fact that art is some but not all playful challenge and not all challenging play.

So, though art is challenging luxury, some challenging luxury need not be art. What more needs to be said? Whenever describing a field of human activity one should always be aware of, and sensitive to, the possible tension between what that field includes according to some description of it and the tradition of it as it unfolds over time. This caution applies to art, science, and religion, as well as to games, love, mathematics, engineering, the family and anything else human. The tension is what led such writers as Martin Buber and Michael Polanyi to take the tradition in question as primary and the descriptions of it as secondary. As a general rule their position is a mistake and our critique is central to this book. Our criticism is rooted in the empirical fact, in the historical fact, perhaps even the traditional fact, that when a tradition and a description clash, as is the case with Marxism, the matter is not open and shut. The tradition can change to fit the description, at least to some extent. Indeed, Marxism has changed both the artistic and the aesthetic traditions. Only to some extent, of course, as later description may cause further changes. This fact makes far-reaching changes in art to some extent the outcome of rational disputes between the describers and the practitioners of the tradition (with the limit case where they are the same).

But, and this is at least as crucial, lining up the tradition with a description of it is not self-justifying: however good a description is, it may be erroneous, and imposing it may be a change for the worse — even if it is true! It is thus both praiseworthy that Marxist aesthetics has interacted with art to the betterment of both, and blameworthy, since soon enough its narrowness had a narrowing impact.

Furthermore, Buber and Polanyi do not take sufficient cognisance of some significant corollaries to their view that we do not know what a tradition is — any tradition. They recommend approaching the matter intuitively rather than with the aid of any characterisation, knowing full well that intuitive knowledge is not without defects. So we have little choice but to describe a tradition historically, as we see it unfold, and we do so analytically, viewing it as something that exhibits certain characteristics. When a theory of a tradition clashes with its description, it is quite possible that the historians describing it were in error. The prime example is of hidden history: historians of all sorts, social and political historians, historians of art and of science, naturally tend to ignore the contributions of members of subaltern groups, such as Jews, people of colour, and women. This is obvious only because the situation is changing. Certainly diverse activities in the field of women's studies and in similar fields have changed our view of the traditions of the arts. The exposure of those hidden histories has to leave us feeling that there are other hidden histories yet to be disclosed.

Hence, while our description of art as a challenging luxury may be in tension with tradition, that is no answer to our question. The question was, since not all challenging luxury is art, at least not all challenging luxury is good art, what else characterises it besides its being a luxurious challenge? We do not know, and let us leave it at that for a while, though this can be added as a footnote to the theory that art is a challenging luxury. Once we remember that it can be the play side of things rather than play as such, the fun side of serious things rather than mere fun, we can easily reconcile the fact that there is great fun in cheap comedy that will not be considered great art, and there is great religious art that by its very nature must remain serious all the way.

We say this because of the contrast, at least the seeming contrast, between the view advocated here, of art as luxurious, and the Marxist theory of art, which says, all art is serious in some sense, even the most escapist of art. On this the Marxists are on the money; we all feel that art is a luxury, even sheer entertainment, and we all feel that art is serious, at times deadly serious (at least the satire that makes you laugh, but then this laughter is largely what renders art — any piece of art — into satire).[13] Marxism seems to reconcile these two intuitions. This is why we took pains to explain that the seemingly conflicting intuitions are even more generally conflicting than they look, and that the conflict is resolved when we realise that despite the air of paradox, it is utterly logical that luxury is indispensable: each and every item of luxury can by definition be dispensed with, yet not luxury as such. Once the air of paradox is dispelled, Marxism is no longer called for. That art is also a challenge enables it to be

13. See Gombrich 1960, pp. 343-4, 348-58, where caricatures are so characterised.

mounted on the most serious items of our culture, including religion, science, politics, and anything else. Also, it being a challenge enables it to be mounted on the most frivolous items of our culture, including any item of light-hearted entertainment. This is another attraction of Marxism: as if by magic, it reconciles the lightness of an entertaining item with its artfulness ─ if and when it is artful, of course. Yet, again, the Marxist reconciliation is not called for, as the paradox is resolved by the clear view of art as luxury regardless of the truth or falsity of Marxism.

e) Marxism Superseded

The previous paragraph shows that the popularity of Marxist aesthetics rests on an already cleared misconception. Clear vision takes away from Marxism the reason for its popularity. It leaves open the question, popularity aside, is Marxism of any value? The answer is in the affirmative: Marxism was significant in that it drew attention to the social and political aspects of all art.[14] These aspects were not new: at the time realism, to which we will return, advocated the same idea. Marxism explained the importance of realism. The explanation, it turned out, was faulty. Yet the Marxists managed to alter our image of art and integrated into tradition the view of all art as serious and as socio-political. Even frivolous art, according to Marxism, is a serious matter. When we read the Marxist propaganda that is an integral part of the art of Bernard Shaw's later plays, of Dashiell Hammett's and Raymond Chandler's detective novels, we think of them as realist ─ they are not ─ and we ask ourselves, what makes them so great? They are simply great artists ─ and the question is, are they great just because they are Marxists? The answer is in the affirmative, and this sounds as if Marxism is true. Not so. It is simply that the Marxist art that is true to Marxism can thereby be artistically true; and true art can be beautiful, but it seldom is factually true. Nevertheless, it is a merit of Marxism that it opened the road to viewing art socio-politically. We should now elaborate on all this, beginning with the social dimension of art.

Marxists say that everything human has a political aspect to it. We have granted this. Let us expand on it and say now, without discussion and with minimal elaboration, that every aspect of human life, psychological, social, economic, political, every aspect of human life is reflected in every human event. Of course, when we speak of cigarette sales we are usually within economics and there we ignore psychology and sociology ─ such as the psychology and the sociology of cigarette smoking ─ except when as economists we bump into them, or when we tell a story ─ such as the story of a purchase of cigarettes that evolved into a love affair. Then, usually, the cigarette purchase itself becomes marginal and is used as the occasion for the lovers to meet for the first time. (An ambitious story-teller will find a way to return to the same scene.) Similarly, when we discuss the attempt to beat the bad habit of smoking cigarettes we are

14. Regarding Marxist aesthetics we echo Popper 1945, Ch. 13, second page: "A return to pre-Marxian social science is inconceivable" and yet "Marx is responsible for the devastating influence of the historicist method of thought" ─ especially since the history of art still suffers acutely from this malady.

within psychology and we ignore the economics and the sociology of smoking, unless as psychologists we bump into them, or unless we meet a case that leads to stigmatising smokers and other social discrimination against them. This can be generalised: whenever we discuss any single aspect of anything human we ignore the interaction of that aspect with any other aspect until we bump into a case where the interaction is significant enough to impose itself on our attention. The criterion of significance is that our reasoning is refuted by being shown to be too narrow. This aspect of methodology is important enough that it has a name: it is called "systemism".[15] Marxism signified because it appeared before systemism. By now systemism has long superseded and should fully replace Marxism.

Systemism agrees with Marxism that every human affair has a political side; it contrasts with Marxism in that it allows, and even suggests, that the political aspect of human affairs is at times negligible and is then better ignored, at least as the default attitude. For a sharp example, take the mundane aspects which accompany all love, even the most splendid love. Consider the clear economic side and the clear political side of love. Young excited lovers hate to be reminded of the very existence of these aspects of love, and they come up regardless of the displeasure thus incurred every time the match is economically or socially discordant. Then the young lovers hotly dispute all claims concerning the mundane aspects of their love and they protest that their love is pure, that the socio-economic and the political aspects of it are quite irrelevant. Psychologists step into the picture with an outright denial of the very possibility of pure love. Matchmakers then step into the picture and say, for your own good break up this silly liaison that you foolishly call pure love and let us find you a fitting mate, fitting socio-economically- and otherwise — let us make you a computer-assisted match, as it has been proven statistically to work best. The existence of a socio-economic aspect of love does not justify viewing matching as a merger: the same argument that exposes pure love as fiction does the same for marriage as merger. The Marxist theory of art is like the matchmaker. In other words, a minimal sense of proportion is essential for the view of love as love and of economics as economics and of politics as politics, even in the face of the admission that these aspects of human conduct are never utterly separate. Let us stress this, because much of Marxist argumentation is based on no more than the illustration that even the purest art is not utterly pure. This is a lazy way of arguing and a loss of all sense of proportion. It is like saying; we are all dirty since no one is utterly clean.[16]

Were Marxist aesthetics no more than the claim that every item of art has a political side to it, then it would be undeniable but also too banal to explain its vogue. Moreover, this would open the great and significant question about narrative art: when and how do the social and political aspects of a story signify? (There is even evidence that Marx himself was fascinated by this question.[17]) But,

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15. For a comprehensive treatment, see Bunge 1974-1989; for an introduction see Laor and Agassi 1990, Ch. 5.

16. In this lopsided manner *The Communist Manifesto* declared bourgeois marriage to be legalised prostitution.

17. K Marx, 'Debating the Freedom of the Press', in L. Baxandall and S. Morowski 1973. The collected writings of Marx and Engels on literature and art fill two large volumes in the standard

of course, Marxists say more than that art has a political side. They say that it has politico-economic causes which are what makes it worthy also. For our part, less ambitious and less reductionist, we think that though art is indeed a social product, there is a world of difference between a militant and a contemplative piece of art, regardless of the fact that either can be very good or very poor. Bertold Brecht said that all great art is left propaganda and yet he thought that the imperialist film *Gunga Din* was a great movie.[18] He did not bother to explain away the contradiction. Browsing through as many Marxist books as we had time to, we were amazed at the number which argue from the claim that art always has a socio-political dimension to the conclusion that to be good art has to serve the right cause, and that the right cause is that of the working class. At times this is done by citing *bourgeois* writers who deny that art has a social dimension. This is throwing out the baby with the bath water. The influence of Marxism is here to stay, and it was largely for the good, the foolishness (and worse) of its present-day advocates notwithstanding.

f) Reactionary Art

Admittedly, at times the value of art lies in its being politically correct, but the opposite is the usual. Folk wisdom, expressed in poetry, ballads, parables and fairy tales, invariably recommends submission to the powers that be and making the best of a bad job. All pretence to the contrary is sham.[19] There are poems and stories and plays that reflect different political persuasions, and they are at times excellent and at times horrid. Some find Fascist and Nazi art and necrophiliac art (including most Gothic art) intolerable. We will return to this fact later. Now let us stress that the art of Rudyard Kipling is unabashedly imperialistic, including *Kim* and the outstanding "The Man Who Would Be King" that were made into successful movies, and the poem "Gunga Din" that was made into the movie of the same name, not to mention the movie *Sergeants Three* with Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr., that was a remake of the movie *Gunga Din*.[20] Kipling country

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German edition. References to and quotes from literary works abound in all their writings, whatever the subject.

18. Could it have been because he had heard that Stalin liked Hollywood movies of British imperialism? See Sebag-Montefiore for Stalin's movie tastes.

19. Pelles 1965 (p. 149) goes so far as to say that "Without reference to particular situations in art and in society, facile matchings are misleading. Early Christian art, for example, was actually the contemporary pagan art of Imperial Rome. Similarly, the dramatic political events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century did not cause the formation of the art. The styles in France actually preceded the revolution in which their artists were participants or witnesses, while in England there was no political revolution at all.

In one of those retrogressive effects that plague revolutions, the French revolution actually delayed the growth of Romantic painting in France. Its leaders selected Neoclassicism as its style from among others that were current, including a proto-Romantic art. But without the profound social upheaval of which the Revolution was a violent symptom, the genesis and character of both styles would have been different."

Regarding the Soviet suppression of the *avant-garde* it seems that *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* with revolutionaries.

20. The film was nominated for an Academy Award for best cinematography, black and white. In 1999 the film was deemed "culturally significant" by the Library of Congress and selected for preservation in the National Film Registry. As the remake shifted the locale from India to the

was also depicted by the most successful of the twentieth-century story tellers, William Somerset Maugham, who was a sworn liberal, and by anti-imperialists of many colours, including George Orwell. Similarly, the plays of Paul Claudel and the novels of Georges Bernanos are powerful reactionary Catholic propaganda, but they cannot be dismissed ─ at least not on those grounds alone.

Our inventory of counter-examples cannot overlook the great reactionary poets in the English language in the twentieth century. Towering over them is the American born T. S. Eliot, who expressed at great length his views on politics and on poets and on poetry. He is run a close second by his American mentor, the fascist sympathiser Ezra Pound, by the Irishman W. B. Yeats, and by the Englishmen Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence. Incidentally, Eliot was so reactionary that as a publisher he rejected George Orwell's *Animal Farm* as too hostile to the Soviet establishment. His monumental play *Murder in the Cathedral* is less supportive of the establishment. It expresses his religious convictions, but it is also an expression of admiration for political courage and responsibility to the point of disregarding one's life, an admiration whose religious expression is merely incidental. But let us mention also his moving and forceful poem, "The Journey of the Magi". This is a searingly honest poem: it depicts the Three Kings who followed a star to Bethlehem and came to pay homage to the Holy Child in the Manger, bearing gifts. They are heralds of the new era; they are the true *avant-garde*; and they are fully cognisant of it and are at peace with it; but they do not like it in the least; rather they hanker after their own childhood, they live in the past while paying homage to a better future. This poem says, even if you admit the revolution, you need not like it.

The Viennese composer Gustav Mahler supported the most *avant-garde* of composers, his friend Arnold Schoenberg. Mahler's wife asked him once, do you like this kind of music? He admitted he did not. And why do you support it, she asked. Because it is the future, he answered.[21] Does one have to support the future? Does one have to admit it, to approve of it? At least, said Eliot in his great poem, if the worst comes to the worst, one need not ever like it. We single out this poem because it expresses a political sentiment: take away its politics, and nothing remains. It even concedes to the Marxists the idea that religion is politically not indifferent. Yet it expresses a political sentiment opposed to the heart of progressivism and so opposed to the heart of Marxism. It allows that one can accept the future and find it does not make you happy.

Arguably, a suitable expression of one's political convictions, whatever these are, rendered honestly and forcefully, is artful. According to this view, Abraham Lincoln's famous "Gettysburg Address" is a work of art. One can see where Lincoln's honesty lies, that made him a political epitome and his "Address" so forceful: the "Address" was delivered on an occasion when it would have been appropriate to exult in a hard fought victory, yet he refused the honour: a civil war, war within one and the same national society, can have no victor. (And the reason Lincoln declared the war was his view of the United

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Wild West it lost its imperialist import. The rather unpleasant politics of the Wild West were ignored. Neither Brecht nor Stalin would have found the remake exciting.

21. http://www.americansymphony.org/dialogues_extensions/2004_05season/dialogue_detail.cfm?ID=30

States as constituting one nation!). Here art is fashioned out of a strong political sentiment, and a sentiment not in the least shared by the Marxists, who promote civil-war on the pretext that the employers and the employed are two different nations.[22] These examples should be sufficient to rebut the idea that art is always subordinate to politics. There are examples of excellent works of art from both ends of the political spectrum. To say that they are excellent is not to mandate that they must be enjoyed. Reaction to and taste for a work is not the same as a judgement about its artistic value.[23] The acid test has to be fascism. In the field of film aesthetics this is a hot topic, driven especially hard by the work of Leni Riefenstahl.[24] Both of her films of the high Nazi period, *Triumph des Willens* and *Olympische Spiele* were thought at the time and subsequently to display a very high degree of film making-skill.[25] Both were documentaries carved out of thousands of hours of actuality material. *Triumph* was a hymn to the triumph of German Nazism framed as a record of the Nuremberg party rally of 1934. *Olympische* was, as its title suggests, a documentary of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Both in its prologue and in the later shooting and editing there was a blatant endorsement of the cult of the Aryan body. So the question becomes, can unabashedly fascist works be works of artistic merit? The intuitive answer, "why not?", is belied by the copious amount of ink spilled to maintain the answer "not possibly" (Cp. Winston 1981; Kiernan 1996; Devereux 1998[26]).

There are two sets of questions here. One is whether fascist art is art; the other is whether fascist art can be meritorious art. The first question is verbal and futile. A narrow use of "art" so as to exclude fascist art can no doubt be devised but it will succeed only in shifting the vocabulary of discussion and confusing matters. Some will follow the new usage and others will not. Still others will not even be aware of it. A perfect recipe for confusion. The second set of

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22. Disraeli said, England has two nations, rich and poor (*Coningsby*). Perhaps echoing this Marx said, there are only two nations, employers and employees.

23. See Jarvie 1967 for the distinction between reaction and assessment.

24. A useful survey of some recent scholarship is Tegel 2003.

25. The recent rediscovery of Riefenstahl's films of the 1933 Nuremberg rally, *Sieg des Glaubens* (in which Ernest Roehm is displayed prominently), and of the 1935 rally, *Tag der Freiheit,* has done nothing to detract from estimates of her obvious skill. See Loeperdinger and Culbert 1988 and Culbert and Loeperdinger 1992. For philosophical appraisal see Devereux (1998) and Tanner (1994).

26. Winston argues against the view of the film as an artistic achievement. If his argument is convincing, it should have closed the issue. No-one doubts that most fascist art is bad. Kiernan says that as Riefenstahl applied her skills to false, reprehensible, immoral ends, she could not produce great art. This seems to beg the question, which was, can there be great fascist art? The dispute is between parties who agree that *Triumph des Willens* is fascist and that fascism in general and Nazism in particular are Bad Things. With no mention of Winston, Devereux says that the film's beautification of evil reflects badly on those who take aesthetic pleasure in it. She compares its fascination to pornography that feminists examine in order to inform themselves about what they are against. This argument is unpleasantly moralistic and also unconvincing. *Triumph des Willens* does not depict hence beautify evil. Its visuals of parades, montages, and speeches are presented as joyful and uplifting. Our knowledge of the wickedness offscreen cannot but colour our viewing. But the general proposition that art in the service of wicked causes can only be deplored, never appreciated is far too strong and open to many sorts of counterexamples.

questions concern the relationship between two kinds of value theory: aesthetic and moral. It would have to be shown that a line can be drawn between reactionary and fascist art. We have mentioned reactionary artists whose work is uncontroversially art and canonical. Can such a line be drawn? Lines create borderline cases and borderline cases undermine lines. Those who grant that a lot of worthy art is reactionary cannot easily make an exception for fascism, which is both radical and reactionary.[27]

The second set of questions concerns the relationship between two kinds of value theory: aesthetic and moral. Plato and a long line of followers including Marx have held that morality, especially public morality, always trumps aesthetics.[28] A much smaller number, the aesthetes and the formalists, has maintained that morality cannot trump art. The most succinct slogan is from Oscar Wilde: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all" (Wilde 1891, Preface). "The Journey of the Magi" is either a well written poem or not. *Triumph of the Will* is either a well made film or it is not. The position that holds form and content are a unity tends to split into two camps. There are those, like the critic F. R. Leavis, who insist that worthy literature is worthy along both value dimensions. And there is the more commonsense view, that, without being formalist, one can discriminate one's reactions, including moral reactions, from aesthetic assessment. One can, in other words, make utterances like, "the film is brilliant but what it preaches is immoral".

This is not the whole story, even when discussion is limited to our viewpoint. We have said from the start that we oppose only one kind of art, and that is manipulative art. Taking it that Leni Riefenstahl is an accomplished artist, we may still ask whether her art is manipulative. This, however, is a question of art criticism so that we need not go into it here. Rather, we return to the more general case of the moves that comprise qualified approval — in our case, aesthetic approval qualified by moral disapproval.

Moves such as this are quite common in philosophy. There are many things said in the works of Plato that are really off-putting; yet his fans will admit those and still see him as the divinely gifted philosopher. Heidegger's thought is deeply Nazi (Bakan 1987) yet he has fans even amongst those who belong to groups victimised by the Nazis. The misanthropy of Foucault hardly inhibits the enthusiasm of his followers. (We tend to the view that élitism, Nazism, and misanthropy are all rather immoral.)

Our position is that intellectually speaking the honours go to those who separate artistic value from moral value. However, we would not deny that words and other artistic actions can be harmful and even inflammatory. The common law, that repository of practical wisdom, has a solution: freedom of

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27. Jeffrey Herf's *Reactionary Modernism* (1984) is a study of the politics of culture in Weimar and Nazi Germany that is full of illumination. Its only defects, as far as we can see, are its continuing reverence for the Frankfurt School and its failure to acknowledge J. L. Talmon (1952)
28. Our phrasing is anachronistic. "The aesthetic" was introduced by Baumgarten in the eighteenth century in a manner that suggested autonomy. It was the equally influential Ruskin in the nineteenth century who tried to build an aesthetic that reinstated the social, political, and ethical context of art.

artistic expression to the limit set by imminent danger to others. What situations are ones of imminent danger is not a given, but a matter that must be argued case by case. We hope that this is a general answer to the questions posed that makes no attempt to settle all cases in one fell swoop. Those who want to fuse morality and aesthetics are, we conjecture, either uncertain of their judgements and wish to bolster them, or trying to inscribe themselves as moral and aesthetic arbiters at the same time. (The two sets greatly overlap, of course.) We think those assessments should be kept separate to the extent possible. All impulses to moralise, including about works of art, should trigger self-scrutiny.

Chapter 4
AESTHETICS AND ITS RELATION TO OTHER FIELDS

a) Upbuilding Aesthetics. Although ancient, aesthetics was for most of the twentieth century regarded as unpromising despite its being a period of rich artistic activity, perhaps due to the lack of aesthetic theory. Bacon's demand to collect data and start afresh does not apply here. His excuse that data could only yield theory to the pure of heart has lost its force. Perhaps what aesthetics needed was not just a theory but a paradigmatic theory. **b) Aesthetics, Metaphysics, Psychology**. Metaphysics and psychology fail to enrich aesthetics because the one has no place for its entities and the other does not discriminate aesthetic pleasure from pleasure in general. **c) Anti-Aesthetics: Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder.** Beauty is in the eye of the beholder is a way of collapsing beauty and the sense of beauty and points to the psychology of illusion. There is not even a sketch of a theory of this. **d) Metaphysics and Value.** What makes beauty possible? The two leading metaphysical theories, materialism, especially atomism, and idealism, lead to two different answers to this question. **e) Nature and Convention.** The arts challenge the polarisation of truth to truth by nature and by convention and hence Plato's metaphysics of matter and form. **f) Metaphysics and Language**. The idea of the autonomy of values suggests that aesthetics is autonomous, contrary to the classical aesthetic theories that consider art beautiful or pleasurable.

a) Upbuilding Aesthetics

Though aesthetics is ancient, its literature and content are surprisingly slim. At least, this was the general view of the matter until fairly recently. Our philosophy teachers held the opinion that it is foolish to undertake to teach a course in aesthetics, for want of sufficient material. This mid-twentieth century perception of the field as impoverished is also the starting point of the three introductory volumes we discussed in chapter 1. Why was the field in this state? The short answer is that scientific philosophy had little or no room for aesthetics. Why was scientific philosophy so impoverished? The short answer is that the metaphysics that infuse modern science, materialism or its variant naturalism, has offered no convincing account of art and its value.

There are general theories about what might enrich an impoverished field of study, or bring about the maturation of a young one. The most common theory is that, in order to mature, a field of study should accumulate a large collection of empirical information on which to base itself. As it happens, there is ample empirical material about art, high and low, classical, modern and contemporary, western and eastern; there is so much material, indeed, that its study is specialised into diverse sub-disciplines, from the history of the plastic arts to the history of music, from musicology to ethnomusicology and from the study of

contemporary poetry and literature to that of native art and folklore, from the study of techniques to the study of structures. The claim that there is not enough empirical information about the arts to upbuild aesthetics thus amounts to saying that there is never enough information for any field.

Those who demand more information have answers to this refutation: there is always an answer if one is eager to defend ideas whatever the cost. One may respond that the information extant is of the wrong kind, that there still is not enough information, meaning information of the right kind. This is a serious shift in attitude: to demand more information seems very straightforward, but to demand information of the right kind is as problematic as it is question begging. One has to ask, in addition to the demand for the right kind of information, what characterises the right kind of information? Anything said in response to this question will be sheer guesswork, there being no theory to base any answer on, since it is the absence of a theory that is the problem. Consider any guess as to the right kind of information required for the development of a richer aesthetics. Suppose we endorse that guess and follow it unfailingly, yet without thereby improving the situation. What happens then? The answer is obvious: the defender of the claim that we need more information of the right kind will demand, perhaps also offer, an alternative guess as to what kind of information is the right kind. Hence, the recommendation to gather information of the right kind can be defended against all failure, and if success in our venture demands following it unfailingly, then the situation may be quite hopeless.

There is an alternative explanation for the fact that a field of study is not a mature discipline, that it does not possess sufficient theory: there are obstacles to the development of theory out of the extant data. “Philosophical analysis” and “procrastination” would be labels for this view. That there are obstacles is always true: obstacles abound. The question is, what is to be done about the obstacles? There is no reason to assume that it is easier to spot the obstacles and to neutralise them than simply to proceed directly to develop the theories that the removal of the obstacles is supposed to bring forth.

It is indeed very easy to find the obstacles with some hindsight: when a theory is developed, one marvels at the fact that the obstacles were not more easily removed. Once we have a theory, the obstacles to its emergence are thereby removed. Indeed, to understand the situation before the rise of a theory it is not enough to observe the situation without appeal to the theory; one has also to reconstruct the obstacles that it has removed. The situation is the same in the arts: we can scarcely appreciate the tremendous impact of a newly invented technique, unless we contrast it with its antecedents.

Perhaps we should set aside the question of what means will lead to a richer theory, and examine first the narrower question, what characterises a robust field of study? Before we can bring the discussion to aesthetics, we need some deep background on the question. One answer to this question is very popular: a robust field of study, a “mature discipline”, is one that operates under a paradigm. The word “paradigm” means chief example, and the idea, which comes from Thomas S. Kuhn, is that it consists of one exemplary piece of work that researchers in the field admire and imitate. Maturity is brought to a field not

by research success but by agreement to take the paradigm piece of work as a model. Imitating and applying this model, then, is what mature or "normal" science consists in. This seems counterintuitive, as it clashes with the generally accepted supposition that the research produced by the paradigm case is what brings maturity, not the existence of the paradigm as a model for research. At the very least, there must be good and bad paradigms so far as research productivity goes. The problem is that no one knows what marks a paradigm, let alone what marks a good one. We may even wonder whether every "mature" field has a paradigm. Kuhn argued by giving examples. Challenged to be less *ad hoc* he frankly admitted that it was hard to say. (He stopped using the term "paradigm" but it outlives him and his proposed substitutes[1] do not, perhaps because they are even more problematic.)

Kuhn's proposal needs some background. There was a classical characterisation of a mature field of study, and it was proposed by Sir Francis Bacon in the seventeenth century. Every field of study has some empirical information and some general principles. What is required for maturity, Bacon said, are the middle theories, the *axiomata media*, the statements that are more general than empirical observation reports but less general and all-embracing than metaphysical principles (Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Book I, Aph. CIV). This seems to us quite reasonable, but not too helpful: it raises the question, how does a field develop the required *axiomata media*? Bacon answered that first we must realise that the gap between factual information and general principles is never bridgeable, as the two may all too easily clash with one another. It follows that we must give up all general principles and ensure that from the abundance of factual information the required middle-range theories emerge gradually: the ladder of axioms, said Bacon (*loc. cit.*), should be climbed without skipping any rung. Slow but sure. This is not much of a recommendation unless one knows the answer to the central question: what brings about this steady growth? To this question Bacon gave the traditional answer: intuition is always the cause of any new idea (*op. cit.*, Book II, Aph. XIX). What is important, he said, is to control intuition so that it does not go astray: begin with factual information alone, and let intuition work slowly to help theories emerge in stages. How does this work? Simply, intuition is unstoppable, it works all by itself. This is in full agreement with the aphorism attributed to Pablo Picasso, "Yo no busco, yo encuentro." (Translation: "I do not search, I find.") .[2] But intuition is often idiosyncratic, even subjective, whereas what a discipline requires is ideas that can stand the objective light of day. How then are we to check intuition? By only allowing it to proceed slowly, said Bacon. Left to itself, intuition proceeds slowly, and the results are assuredly objective, he promised. How are we to insure that it proceeds slowly? Bacon explained: slow growth is the natural way; one develops ideas quickly because one pushes impatiently. One is impatient, he added, because one wants quick fame. If one is pure of heart, then one naturally acts humbly and so one acts slowly and then things grow naturally.

The stress on purity of heart, on humility, has echoes of magic in general

1. "Disciplinary matrix" and "exemplar".
2. http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Pablo_Picasso

and of the cabala in particular. The aim of the cabala is practical: to bring about redemption. The practical cabalist knows the magic formula or the right abjuration by which to do magic. Solomon Maimon, who grew up in a Polish Jewish ghetto and died an enlightened philosopher in the year 1800, tells in his impressive autobiography that as a youth he had tried magic; he failed. He gave up his faith in magic (Maimon 1888, Chapter 14). Yet generations of cabalists did not give up the faith; why? Because they knew how and why they had failed: they were not sufficiently pure of heart. Only the pure of heart can bring redemption, and the pure of heart are humble. But it is terribly difficult to remain humble when one is striving to bring redemption to all humanity. In the philosophy that Bacon offered to seekers of redemption he suggested that what would bring it is no magic formula but patient research into Nature and her secrets. He was well aware of the difficulty involved in any attempt to bring redemption. In the list of qualities that Bacon claimed to possess personally, which, he said, qualified him as a good researcher, he stressed humility above all. When it comes to humility, he said, he was excellent, and so he could patiently let his research mature in its own good time, slowly but surely.

Generations of readers found the philosophy of Bacon inspiring. It had a tremendous influence. This was at least in part due to his suggestion that the disposition to engage in research is natural, and that research comprises observation plus intuition, both quite natural and hence both scarcely avoidable. The idea that everyone is endowed with the ability to contribute significantly to research has great allure. Bacon stressed that the chief and most important corollary to his philosophy is the claim that everyone can contribute to the growth of knowledge; that his rules of method make research accessible to everyone, the way the compass and ruler make geometrical drawing accessible to everyone.

Our discussion has already slid into a detailed comparison between art and science. How did this happen? The answer is, we simply ignored popular confusion in this matter. The prevalent view is that art is by its nature idiosyncratic, whereas science is by its nature the very opposite. For, allegedly, without the great artist the history of art would be very different from what it is, whereas the history of science is independent of the great scientists who have contributed to it, since a scientific contribution does not depend on its history, since (scientific) truth is one. Yet everyone knows there is homogenised art (op art, computer art, and so on) and idiosyncratic scientific heroes (Galileo, Newton). This admits a role for the individual imagination in science, as well as a role for routine in the arts. Imagination and discipline are essential to both art and science. These confusions can be dispelled if we grant that in historical fact no science is utterly free of its history, especially of the idiosyncrasies of its developers, of their personal taste, and no art is utterly idiosyncratic or personal. Also, we can hardly draw the line between individual taste and the tastes popular in the society in which that individual taste evolved: most individual tastes are replicas of the tastes common in the societies in which they occur, and any innovation in taste means one that becomes popularly recognised and absorbed into the culture. This holds for art and for science alike.

Anyway, the sharp contrast between art and science conflicts with the commonplace denial that any contrast can be sharp. (“Everything is shades of gray.”) If there is no sharp contrast between art and science, then we are not entitled to the view that the one fully encourages idiosyncrasy and the other fully forbids it. Thus, clearly, much confusion bewilders public discourse on the matter. Why then bother with it? Because it is futile and even impossible to attempt to implement the alternative strategy, the one originally proposed by Bacon. His suggestion was to do away with all extant ideas, start afresh, stay on firm ground, slow but sure. We assert, *pace* Bacon and the myriads of his followers, that a field of study can be helped towards maturity by the institution of a careful examination of its most general ideas, particularly those extant sets of general ideas that compete with one another, and by trying to bridge between the field in question and adjacent fields, so as to derive understanding from these comparisons. When ideas from adjacent fields conflict with one another, matters are far from obvious. Tradition shuns moves that invite conflicts, since conflicts testify to the failure to prove. As critical rationalists we treat conflicts as opportunities to criticise perhaps all of the conflicting ideas, so as to invite newer and hopefully better ones. A prerequisite is rejecting the hyper-critical attitude advocated by Bacon. Instead we have to tolerate poor ideas and the patient critical examination of them and preserve them thereby ─ as inadequate. The alternative to the Baconian programme for upbuilding a field is not to abandon the hope to find the truth at once but to apply the historical method and hope for a slow approximation to the truth. We need to report the history of research including the errors and the criticisms that are its spine and the profit that accrues from the exercise of developing conjectures and refutations — in the style which is quite traditional but which incredibly found a place in the theory of research for the first time only with Popper. We here proceed in accord with the historical method, and so present different ideas which are significant parts of our tradition, and contrast them and discuss them critically ─ always out of respect and not just in order to expose their weakness, though we hope to overlook neither their strengths nor their weaknesses. For, in contrast to the Baconian idea of starting afresh and creating a solid tradition of true ideas, we learn from Popper that our history is that of magnificent conjectures that create newer horizons of expectations and their eye-opening refutations that puncture these expectations, thus challenging us to seek ever newer ones.

b) Aesthetics, Metaphysics, Psychology

As an example of the historical method at work, we may take the Baconian hypercritical view of research itself. Its demand that we rid ourselves of all imperfect knowledge and slowly develop perfect pure knowledge cannot be met. Hence it is an error. But it has a valuable kernel, one that was historically of paramount importance: it was aimed against the so-called “knowledge” taught in the universities at the time. This “knowledge” was mostly a confused jumble of ideas not worthy of detailed examination, because, Bacon rightly observed, they were developed out of an excessively defensive attitude, out of the determination to defend received views – mostly Aristotelian – against every criticism. Under the influence of the philosophy of Bacon, defensiveness was replaced by scathing

criticism. That it was scathing is regrettable, but it had a benign effect: it made defending ideas against criticism seem excessively self-assured and so wrong-headed and harmful, and this was to the good. The fact that Bacon encouraged a hypercritical attitude along with his commendable repudiation of defensiveness can be illustrated by later developments. The loss of defensiveness led all too easily to a readiness to give up the critical attitude itself. Science itself became uncritical. It took the twentieth-century scientific revolution to show that science had not achieved perfection or purity and hence needed to revive criticism. Bacon's view of science was eclipsed. This eclipse also opened the way for some thinkers, such as the already mentioned Kuhn, to suggest that criticism is overrated and that defensiveness in science is not so bad. Defensiveness promotes social stability, which is as valuable in the social institutions of science as it is in society at large. Still, Kuhn admitted that there is a limit to the benefits of defensiveness; when, as a result of defensiveness, a paradigm in a given field of study becomes too complicated, it is time for the leadership of that field to step in and seek a new one (or to retire and yield leadership to Young Turks). Kuhn did not say how a paradigm gets complicated as a result of defensiveness, nor did he state the limit where defensiveness turns into over-defensiveness. He offered not a hint of an answer to the question, who are the true leaders and who are not. His method is a dead end; premised on a refusal to take the critical iconoclasts Einstein and Bohr as paradigms for science.

The historical method, to repeat, proceeds by trying to connect the information in the field with the general theories in it, with the theories in adjacent fields, and with whatever else is in hand, to see how things stand. Although this is commonsense, it is seldom done, because it is fraught with problems: efforts to bring in materials from different fields of study, particularly adjacent disciplines, are bound to bump into complications. It is as if the boundaries between fields are mined. The metaphor is not so unexpected: disciplines grow as the result of confining the investigations in them to manageable units, usually by dodging some problems — at times wisely at times less so. Dodging some problems is not objectionable, as it is unavoidable, since there are always too many problems around and so there always is a need to concentrate on just a few of them. Yet the heart of research is daring, and this means that sooner or later neglected problems will demand attention.

Under the benign influence of Bacon, we have seen, criticism was deemed hostile. The influence of the philosophy of Bacon was mostly felt in scientific research, since Bacon and his disciples had hardly anything to say about the arts. (Which is not to deny that the scientific revolution had a great influence on the arts.) Criticism in science became increasingly acrimonious. In the healthier atmosphere in the arts, especially in literary criticism, it was friendlier. It is an eye-opener to compare criticism in the arts to criticism in the sciences during the period of the great influence of Bacon, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. No doubt, there was friendly criticism in science, as there was hostile criticism in the arts. Yet it seems to be the case that these were the exception: historians of science notice benign criticism with special pleasure, and historians of the arts, especially of literature, notice with chagrin the

occasional excessive acrimony among critics and between critics and their targets. This fact is clouded by further facts. First, the Romantic theory of art is that the artist — as well as the scientist, incidentally — is a genius, and initial hostility is the mark of a genius, so that it is inevitable. The other is that this Romantic theory was spectacularly corroborated during the rise of modern art and literature, where the most innocuous innovations, such as impressionist painting (especially Whistler's), experimental literature (such as the works of James Joyce), and cacophonous music (Schoenberg and Stravinsky), at first met ferocious hostility. Even so, the benign influence of the relatively friendly critics of the arts on the less friendly critics in science has to be noted. But why did scientific researchers learn friendly criticism from the arts rather than teach them hostility? Did the hostility of some more modern art critics owe anything to the influence of acrid criticism in science? How can such interdisciplinary problems be studied?

The mother of all interdisciplinary problems concerns the relation of a discipline to the overarching discipline – metaphysics: what does metaphysical theory say about the place of a given discipline among the disciplines? Consider the relation of metaphysics to aesthetics. Metaphysics is the theory of the universe as a whole, and its classical examples are taken from reports in the opening chapter of Aristotle's book by that name, Metaphysica Alpha: all is water, or, alternatively, all is atoms and the void. Metaphysics generates endless strings of problems. If all is water, can there exist things other than water? The usual approach is to ask about materials other than water, like sticks and stones, and in order to account for them to develop the field of physics (which initially included chemistry). The theory that all is atoms and the void is superior to the theory that all is water, in that it assumes from the start that there are atoms of water and atoms of stone, and that sticks are compounds of sorts, containing atoms of water and of stone, and the atoms of stone in wood are made manifest when a piece of wood is burnt into ashes. This does not solve all problems; on the contrary, it selects out from the myriads of problems those that are suggested by the clash between the metaphysical claim ("all is …") and the observed facts, and it in turn generates more problems of this kind, and it arranges them in order of priority: it tells us what problems are more pressing than others. In brief, it initiates research projects that lead physics and chemistry to their highly successful present state.

But we may just as well ask, if all is water, how can there be people? Indeed, the fathers of ancient atomism must have already asked this question, as they offered an answer to it: one ancient atomist fragment says, the soul is an atom. This is too little for comfort, but it already tells us a lot about the soul, for example that it is immortal, since, according to atomism, all atoms are immortal, as well as that it is unalterable, since all atoms are: they are the simplest and most stable items in the cosmos, they are its building blocks. The question then obviously arises, since we are immortal and unalterable, why do we change? To this different answers were given, all presupposing the classical and still popular view that everyone is stuck with one single private character, that is to say with an unalterable core. In other words, our (immortal, unalterable) core does not

change, only our external details do. This is still unsatisfactory, as we use here a metaphor of a core and a shell but we do not say how these compose the soul and how they are connected, and so on. To go further into this matter takes us deeper than we want to go now into the theory of the soul, into psychology. Moreover, as any research programme may get stuck, we may be unable to go further. An endorsement of atomism, or of any competing ancient metaphysical system, does not meet with particular difficulty when bumping into a work of art. A canvass with the most glorious picture on it is viewed qua physics as just a canvas smeared with layers of ink or oil or gouache of differing colours. But what about art qua art? What is the art? How is art at all possible? Perhaps most metaphysical systems simply do not recognise art as art. The view that there is no such thing as art is usually buttressed by the view that there is no such thing as beauty. This is so well known that it has a slogan, a cliché even: beauty is in the eye of the beholder. There are other clichés, such as beauty is truth. We will take them one at a time.

c) Anti-Aesthetics: Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder

With one move from metaphysics to aesthetics we are already in the heart of our concerns, encountering one of the most popular ideas in aesthetics, or rather anti-aesthetics. But we resolved to be critical, not hypercritical: before jumping into a critical discussion of that anti-aesthetics, we should find out more about it and about its strengths. What does it amount to? What is its allure? What, if any, are the strong points for us to salvage from a successful critical demolition? But before that it may be useful to notice the alternatives to the view we wish to examine as alternatives offer ways to seek criticism by contrasting them. If there are no alternatives, we should go ahead; if there are any, then we had better list them. The trouble was that from the viewpoint of ancient metaphysics one proceeds straight to natural science and that finds no place for beauty among the elements of the universe. The idea that beauty is in the eye of the beholder is an attempt to live within the constraints of ancient metaphysics. We will see, incidentally, that this attempt is unsuccessful. Another option is to recognise the constraint as a limitation on science, not on the universe. This is the view that science is limited. Science cannot recognize beauty, beauty exists in the world; hence science cannot offer a comprehensive view of the world. (The same reasoning can be applied to love.) This conclusion is strongly resisted by most scientists and by most of the philosophers who advocate science or the scientific attitude. It was strongly advocated by some scientists, though, such as the great Erwin Schrödinger: if science has no room for beauty, he said, then so much the worse for science. He knew he was in a minority. Indeed, the hostility to his view is all too well understood in view of the fact that scientists traditionally allot to art a secondary role in our culture, causing those who extol art and devote their lives to advocating it to feel pushed around by science, and this they naturally resent.[3]

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3. In the mid-twentieth century these issues crystallised strikingly in the so-called Two Cultures debate between the scientist and novelist C. P. Snow and the romantic literary critic F. R. Leavis. See Snow 1959 and Leavis 1962, each reprinted elsewhere, and Agassi 1981, Introduction.

As it happens, those who advocate the view that science is limited usually advocate religion as well, and, more particularly, often advocate the religion of the tradition within which the advocate happens to have been born. Thus the claim that science is limited all too often is linked with bigotry. It is very hard to sympathise with a defense of art when it goes with anti-science and with parochialism. Advocacy for art too often comes in a package-deal, and the package contains some highly objectionable ideas. Can we avoid accepting the package? Rather than struggle to sift the contents of this package, we may notice that placing limits on science still leaves beauty unexplained and inexplicable. The alternative view, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, likewise puts down any effort to develop a theory of beauty. But at least it recognises the phenomenon of beauty and it thus opens the road to the study of the psychology of the aesthetic experience. This is no substitute for aesthetics proper, but then another cliché helps, half a loaf is better than none at all.

It seems, we can scarcely avoid discussing psychology when discussing art, a view that is thoroughly Gombrichian. Still, we may wish to delay this move and see how much we can do without going for help to psychology — or any other adjacent field. We may be ready to cross borders, but we may adopt the strategy of delaying doing so unless and until it becomes imperative. In this way, crossing the borders will be more compelling, and it will demand of those intent on avoiding it altogether that they overcome some compelling arguments to the contrary.

The ground was prepared already for delaying crossing boundaries: if two fields of study each centre on their own problems, they might well happen to conflict with one another, but as long as each progresses in its own way, then each may be developing satisfactorily, leaving the matter of the co-ordination between them for future researchers to consider. The reason that we suggested crossing borders was to illuminate the alleged stagnation of aesthetics in the hope of overcoming it. It is less stagnant now than it was in the mid-twentieth century, all would agree. We see some progress in the output of the analytic aestheticians, including those discussed in chapter 1. But as clarity and rigour are not ends in themselves, some of the endeavours that consume analytic aesthetics are misconceived ("what is art?"). Other of these endeavours are quasi-empirical. Regrettably, they are not pursued empirically ("how do pictures represent?" "Are there aesthetic emotions?"). And some are scholastic. How can aesthetics progress better when it seems a fact that for physics the very existence of beauty is denied — be it temporarily or for good?

Mixing aesthetics with physics looks hopeless. Our suggestion is to mix aesthetics with psychology: if we have a psychological theory of the pleasure of art, and if we view art as pleasurable, then perhaps we can develop a satisfactory aesthetics, and it will be rightly summed up perhaps by the slogan, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Before embarking on this project, we should examine what it amounts to — for example, we may try to find out what will be gained when the project is successfully executed.

Suppose we have shown that art causes pleasure. Suppose that whatever response we have to a work of art is psychologically explained. Will this be a

successful aesthetic theory? If yes, why? By what criteria? If not, how will this profit aesthetics proper? These are heavy questions, and they require attention, since we want to know the estimated worth of a weighty project before embarking on it.

One point is methodological, as it concerns the demand from any satisfactory explanation: it should cover all that is relevant and exclude the irrelevant. To do this it should explain the relevance too. Thus, there is a simple reason why the phenomenon of the aesthetic experience is more than the psychological part or aspect of this phenomenon: the explanation sought should not only include all responses to art as parts of psychology, but also explain why we respond to art differently than we do to other things. Let us explain.

When we explain chemistry as a part of physics we are not satisfied with a physical explanation of chemical phenomena; we also expect to identify what is specifically chemical rather than have chemistry be absorbed into physics with no trace. When we reduce insect behavior to that of automata, treating them as servomechanisms, we are not ready to let insects get lost among the myriad of possible servomechanisms. Commonly, we demarcate chemistry as the physics of van der Waals forces, or molecular forces. Similarly, insects are not any old servomechanisms, but ones naturally reproduced with the aid of nucleic acids, etc. The same should hold for aesthetics: even if we can have the aesthetic experience fully psychologically mapped and explained, we require that there is something specifically aesthetic in experience. The experience of beauty is possibly a kind of pleasure, but we want to specify what kind. Moreover, the experience of beauty is not the same as beauty. More than that: beauty is not the same in nature as in art. We all enjoy the sight of a beautiful sunset, but that is not the same as the artistic presentation of a sunset. Can we look to psychology to differentiate our pleasures as well as explain them?

Where do we now stand? We reached out to adjacent fields to enrich the field of aesthetics, to metaphysics and to psychology, only to be frustrated from the very start. We found that traditional metaphysics is useless as it tells us too little about beauty and about art and even about things physical. Psychology is not too relevant to the matter at hand either since a general theory of pleasure is not a theory of the objects of pleasure, nor does it differentiate the aesthetic pleasures of nature from the pleasures of art (especially as so much art is erotic yet much eroticism is artless – not to mention the difference between the erotic that is very erotic but hardly pretends to art and the erotic that is mildly erotic but aspires to, sometimes is, art, even great art). How can we enable this field to benefit from other fields?

Perhaps our glance at the other fields, at metaphysics and at psychology, was too cursory, too superficial. Indeed this is obviously so, and it should indicate to us the inconclusive nature of every point made here, of every conclusion reached. Let us go very briefly over the points made thus far and extend them just a jot. The received notion is that aesthetics was a poor field, lacking in axiomata media, and that it may be useful to try to link it with other fields in search of reinforcement in the form of both ideas and problems. The old atomistic metaphysics led to a denial of the very possibility of an aesthetic proper

— merely because atomism is the view that everything that exists occupies some space-time region. Indeed, this idea is shared by many philosophers through the ages, and it is often called “materialism” — not very accurately, but accurately enough for our purposes, so that we can employ this term here. (Atomism then is a version of materialism.) Materialism conflicts not only with faith in Heaven and Hell. It also conflicts with the existence of numbers, of mathematical entities in general, of ideas in general, and of values in general. These conflicts led to a theory called “conceptualism”, usually ascribed to John Locke, which places all the entities whose existence is denied by materialism in the human mind. (Conceptualism thus reduces all the questions of the existence of immaterial things to that of the mind: how and where does the mind exist? That depends on what kind of thing it is. Locke did not say.)

What does it matter to the student of aesthetics where numbers and symphonies reside, whether they are in the mind or elsewhere? The idea we have discussed is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and this meant that there is no beauty, only the sense of beauty, and this sense is entirely personal, entirely up to the individual who does or does not find beauty in this or that piece of art or of Nature. Yet to say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder in the sense that mathematics is in the skull of the mathematician is an entirely different idea: no one ever suggested that arithmetic is a personal affair, that when you owe me two sums of money and we add them up you and I may come up with different figures. And so one major item of metaphysics seems to be dropping out of our agenda with no further ado: wherever beauty resides, the more important question is, is it of the same status as truth? Is art as objective as science? If it is as objective, how do these two kinds of objective items differ? If it is not, how do these two kinds of objectivity differ?

Here again we took for granted that scientific truth is objective. Are matters so simple? In Ancient Greek thought we find the idea that there are two kinds of truth, truth by nature and truth by convention. A truth by nature would be a truth of arithmetic, or of harmonics. A truth by convention would be a true generalisation about Athenians, as contrasted with, say, Spartans. Perhaps this distinction will be of help here: perhaps the truth (= beauty) we are after is not the presumptuous truth by nature but the humbler truth by convention. Convention, however, is not the same as what is “in the eye of the beholder”. That position is individualistic and personal. The ancient Greeks would not have recognised this as a site of truth at all. Neither do we, but in this matter we differ from much popular thinking about the arts that stems, in some vague way, from the Romantic myth of the artist.

Perhaps researchers in the natural sciences seek truth by nature, perhaps not; researchers in other sciences may have to learn to be satisfied with truth by convention — perhaps even to prefer truth by convention to truth by nature. Embracing conventionalism possibly will enable us to avoid the pitfalls of subjectivity without falling into the pitfall of the dogmatism of one who speaks from God’s viewpoint, rightly or, more likely, wrongly. Perhaps conventionalism will lead us to see the values, institutions, and popular tastes of our own society as the only legitimate ones. Thus, we will say, it was splendid of the ancient

Greek artists to develop naturalistic sculpture but we are tired of following in their footsteps. Hence the artistic vogue for modern European sculpture — primitivist, minimalist, semi-abstract, or abstract. We think the new can be valued without devaluing the old. But for the sake of argument let us assume the modern implicitly devalues naturalistic or representational sculpture. Some resistance to the modern and to the primitive is rooted not only in ignorance and conservative attitudes, and not only in the conceit that we are the best so that other cultures can hardly contribute anything significant to ours. Some of the resistance to influences of other cultures is merely an inability to open up to the world of primitives, their lifestyles, and their art.[4] The very word "primitive", however, since it applies to pre-literate societies, insinuates a contempt that blocks appreciation of what they can contribute. The intellectual aspect of the blockage is faith in truth by nature. Truth by convention opens us to the conventions (truth, beauty) of different societies. Does this hold also for their psychology?

Were we too hasty when we set aside psychology as of limited interest? The psychology that we set aside is called "associationism". It postulates individuals having tastes and seeking the pleasures of the arts without taking into account the specific social background from which every specific individual has come. The individual of associationist psychology is outdated; it is an eighteenth century creation; it is the individual abstracted from any environment. Even in the eighteenth century psychology was more embracing than associationism, however inadvertently or inconsistently. The narrowness of associationism lies in its view of individuals as abstract entities, data-processors, not real members of real societies, whose tastes and aesthetics are largely socially dependent, and whose ideas of the role of art in society do much to determine their tastes. David Hume's 1757 essay "Of the Standard of Taste" is a tour de force in part because it presents art in its social context whilst not giving up the associationist psychology that is at the root of his theory of knowledge.

It is a repeatable observation that individuals try to trim their tastes to the socially accepted, more so to the socially obligatory. A modern individual may never be exposed to church architecture, religious paintings, especially murals, altar pieces, and stained glass windows, church music, etc.; for a medieval European they were unavoidable (perhaps unless they were Jews or foreign visitors). Exposure to church art is a great incentive to learn to appreciate and enjoy it. Even though medieval peasants generally had perhaps too little aesthetic appreciation of their houses of worship (as testified to by the rough way they treated some of them), it certainly was not lost on them, or else the church would not have paid as much attention to it as it did. As church authorities expected, piety fused with what we would call aesthetics. The experience was then uplifting and taken with no analysis and with no clear, separate awareness of any aesthetic component. The Church viewed art strictly pragmatically. The Council of Trent (the Counter-Reformation, 1545) seriously considered a ban on polyphonic music on the ground that it drowns out the words of the ritual. It is

4. The very opposite – embracing the primitive – is the subject of Gombrich's last book (Gombrich 2002).

reported that Palestrina saved the day by promising to teach his choir to sing distinctly and by developing to that end what became known as the Palestrina style of polyphony.

Psychology, then, even an enriched psychology, is not enough to enrich aesthetics. We need to import across the disciplinary boundaries not only psychology, but also sociology, including social anthropology and historical sociology. How is that to be effected? The answer may be found in viewing art as a social institution and in the way we think of the social role of institutions as we did in chapter 2.

d) Metaphysics and Value

We need to probe a bit further into philosophy and metaphysics. The main pillars of traditional philosophy are metaphysics — the theory of the real — and epistemology — the theory of knowledge. Metaphysics describes the basics of reality in that it describes what it deems the basic entities and their basic qualities. One name for a basic entity is “substance”: to quote a recent writer, “the ultimately existing substratum behind all composition and change, whose purely internal properties … are … prior to all external relations” (Friedman, 2005). The prime example is atomism. It asserts that reality comprises atoms and space; atoms are solid, and they dwell and move in empty space. The most famous alternatives to atomism are Plato’s metaphysics, which asserts that the world comprises matter and form, and Aristotle’s, which asserts that reality comprises being and becoming (or the actual and the potential, whatever these words mean exactly). These pairs of metaphysical concepts, atoms and space, matter and form, and being and becoming, are so deeply ingrained in our culture, that though philosophers repeatedly and rightly declare them hard to comprehend, to some extent non-philosophers comprehend them enough to use them freely. For ourselves, we doubt we can explain the theories they represent sufficiently accurately, or that we have to, and so we will not try.

The questions raised by metaphysics are of two kinds, one seeking its justification or foundation, and one seeking its manifestations. As to justification or foundation, the demand is rooted in the idea that sheer speculation, sheer guesswork, will not do. In a sense everyone will agree with that: to be significant, a guess has to be satisfactory in one way or another: it comes to answer some question, and the situation demands that the answer have certain characteristics. The traditional view was that metaphysical theories should be provable; after Einstein, this seems rather far-fetched, even though many students of aesthetics still say, their theories are proven, or that no theory counts unless it is proven.[5] We will not go into this folly, and move to the more interesting question, how

5. This is not easy to document. Consider, for example, the leading text of Monroe Beardsley (1958). It says, “As a field of knowledge, aesthetics consists of those principles that are required for clarifying and confirming critical statements.” This is from pages 3-4; we have to go to page 390 to find the explanation offered rather casually apropos of a different matter altogether: “A theory of knowledge is fatally incomplete without a criterion of truth”. The average reader can hardly be expected to be familiar with the fact that a criterion of truth is equivalent to a proof procedure, which means that Beardsley is demanding proof. Did even Beardsley himself notice that this is what he was doing?

does a metaphysical theory help us comprehend the world, including the world of value? For some thinkers a satisfactory answer to this question about metaphysics also answers the question about justification. Perhaps: in a sense.

The manifestation of a metaphysical theory may be its ability to explain appearances. This will render it scientific and usually it is not required that a metaphysical theory should go that far: it is deemed satisfactory if the metaphysics offers an outline of an explanation, usually called an "interpretation". Atomism is again an example. Metaphysical atomism presents the very idea of element and compound; it suggests that the different chemicals are compounds of different atoms. Scientific atomism goes further. It has to answer questions like, is water an element or a compound, and if a compound, of what elements? Chemists did this throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where competing theories of the table of elements and of their characteristics were offered, a process that ended only in 1913 with Bohr's development of his contribution to quantum theory that included the first – and only partial – explanation of the table of elements and the construction of one that still prevails more-or-less.

The questions that a metaphysical theory raises are many, and they relate to all the things we observe for which the theory offers no account. Consider colours and life, to mention two salient cases; metaphysics should suggest how these are possible and offer interpretations of them, hopefully suggesting scientific research programmes that might yield scientific explanations of colours and of life. In our aesthetic discussion, the metaphysical question is not, what makes La Giaconda beautiful, but merely, what makes beauty possible?

Atomism is a version of materialism, and from the viewpoint of aesthetics materialist theories share the same problems and so may be treated together. Taking together religious, moral, and aesthetic values, the question asked of the materialists is, how do they account for their existence in the world? Of course, some materialists do not consider values real. They may deny the very existence of values, interpreting their appearances as mere illusions. Or, they may consider them real, and so try to base them on the properties of matter, the way chemists try to base the different properties of different chemicals on the properties of atoms. A chemistry of values, if you will. The materialist who denies the very existence of values needs to suggest ways to view them as illusions and thus leads an excursion back into psychology: the psychology of illusion. Materialist psychology will then have to offer a theory of the different kinds of illusions, and take values to be a very special kind of illusion. This has never been tried. All that psychology did thus far was to reduce value to psychological characteristics such as pain and pleasure, and to view values merely as the meters of pain and pleasure: we get pleasure when we experience beauty. This is inadequate to handle cases where we appreciate works of art which we do not enjoy, and where we enjoy works of art not out of appreciation but for some personal reasons, such as nostalgia.

The strength of materialism is that it avoids the weakness of the alternatives, the non-materialist theories, namely anti-materialism and dualism. Anti-materialism, the theory that matter does not exist, does not merit serious

discussion. Dualist metaphysics, which assumes the existence of both matter and spirit, was always beset by difficulties, and the advent of Darwinian biology made it less tenable to a significant degree, but without offering a satisfactory solution: an evolved soul does not quite do the trick. The attraction of all metaphysics that assumes the existence of the spiritual is that it entails the immortality of the soul: the real is by definition unalterable and so eternal. This attraction is somewhat diminished with the realisation that eternal existence is no attraction, is perhaps even a curse (“The Immortal” in Borges 1962).

To repeat, it is excessive to expect of metaphysical theories to explain known facts: when rarely if ever they do, then they thereby become scientific explanations. But it is not too much to demand that they do not fly in the face of facts: if a metaphysical theory makes it hard to envisage life or values, this is ground for strong suspicion that the theory is on the wrong track. The expectation, to repeat, is that metaphysics offers interpretations, that is to say, that it should offer a hint as to how these facts may be explained. One of the facts that hardly any discussion of values ever took notice of is what plays a significant role in our study and it is what may be viewed as the chemistry of values. Values do interact, religious, moral and aesthetic. And they interact in diverse ways, most obviously in applied art. Metaphysics should somehow take account of values, however poorly, and also of this chemistry.

Those who suppose that there is no need to mention this should contemplate the fact that it goes somewhat contrary to the historically most important metaphysics, namely, that of Plato, who had a different theory: he viewed beauty as truth. Indeed, his theory identifies religion, politics, ethics, and aesthetics in the one idea of the truth (*Rep., Symp*.) His view of the real as matter and form nonetheless, and quite gratuitously, allows forms to possess any spiritual characteristics one likes to endow them with. Historically, this has excited generations of thinkers of all sorts. Nevertheless, it sounds rather arbitrary. The question that metaphysics faces is, how does matter give rise to life and to spiritual qualities, including values of all sorts and their chemistry? No one has tried to answer this question; no one has offered any reasonable criterion for the satisfactoriness of an answer to it. Hence the recurrent backlashes against Darwin. (Darwinism is but a powerful version of naturalism, of the doctrine that science has no need for any appeal to the supernatural. All materialism is naturalist, but not necessarily the other way around: emergentism is the metaphysics that views the mind as emerging somehow out of inert matter. Emergentism is naturalistic, but it need not be materialist.)

Leaving the basic questions of metaphysics, one can simply assert the reality of values without further ado — not out of any comprehension of what they are but out of sheer despair. This assumption is known as the theory of the autonomy of values. This theory is clear to the extent that it postpones inquiry into the material roots of values and into the question of the way they have emerged, despite the recognition of the need to explain their character and even their very existence. But naturalism without a theory of the roots of values does not offer us ways to try to comprehend their autonomy. Different sorts of values interconnect; and, to some extent, rightly or not, they are socially determined. As

it is worded here, this is obvious, but even the obvious details of this fact involve great complication. It is a desperate situation indeed. In a heroic effort to do something about it some philosophers and anthropologists attempted to move the inquiry by examining empirically the roles that values play in society (International Association for Empirical Aesthetics, see http://www.science-of-aesthetics.org/).

Here we come up against a new choice: assuming the autonomy of values, we may choose to assume also the autonomy of aesthetic values or to base these on other values, especially religious and/or moral. The assumption of the autonomy of religious values usually goes with the assumption that some religion is true, and this then legitimises both ethics and aesthetics. The move that is more agreeable to philosophers who have despaired of traditional materialism is rather to salvage from it the denial of the autonomy of religious value (and of religion) by reducing it to moral and aesthetic values (Durkheim). This move is accepted even by some religious philosophers (Collingwood). This seems to be disrespectful to religion and confuses religious values with the truth of this or that specific theology.

Leaving religion aside, there is the theory of aesthetic values as moral (Ruskin) or as intellectual (Collingwood). The arts are tools for the support of morality or science. This theory is a species of the institutional theory of the role of the arts. The alternatives to it, then, are the different theories of the roles of the arts and all their combinations. This is how the discussion of the role of art became so central in the history of aesthetics, and how it became urgent to specify one or two roles, despite the obvious fact that art has many roles, that it can serve our sense of beauty while it serves many other functions as well, and it is remarkable all the more just because it serves two or more ends even better than one at a time. The central thesis of this book is that the move of asking for the role of art and/or of beauty is a false move, since the aesthetic is the added value to anything we do for any purpose whatsoever, and in particular of entertainment as such.

To recap, the classical constraints on traditional aesthetics are expressed in two ideas: first, that all art is beautiful, and second, that the sensation of beauty is pleasurable. Neither idea is consistent with the empirical facts. The idea that all art is beautiful puts certain great works of art outside the domain of art, particularly all those that induce a sense of suffering — often known as the sublime. The aesthetic experience is varied, and the peak of it, the ultimate aesthetic experience, is supposed to be ecstasy, a kind of a religious experience. This peak experience is not delivered by pleasure. It may be the outcome of great emotional turbulence that is not necessarily pleasing or beautiful. Aristotle noted that tragedy, though it has a higher claim for artfulness than comedy, is the less pleasurable. He said that this is answered by the fact that tragedy is cathartic. “Catharsis” means purgation, and the idea was perhaps that when we are flushed of the unpleasant feelings induced by tragedy the final experience will be pleasurable. Perhaps tragedy as such is a refutation of both ideas that Aristotle advocated, and his appeal to catharsis is but a red herring. It is not clear what he had in mind, as he did not explain. But it is suspiciously an evasion of a

refutation and a refusal to re-think, understandable in the youth of aesthetics, perhaps, but less so today.[6] The worst of it is that this discussion of catharsis is very remote from the arts, as it shifts the concern from the work of art to the aesthetic experience (see Chapters 2 and 6).

e) Nature and Convention

Without saying something about what beauty is we cannot fully characterise art. We have thus far offered at best only a partial characterisation of art. How partial? Let us look at the art world and its attitudes to beauty. We have made the point that, first and foremost, art is challenging luxury. The question, then, is, who is challenged and how? This question leads us straight into social philosophy, and there the chief observation we made was, art is universal, but its style and character are not: they are traditional; art is to be found everywhere, but art found in different places varies markedly. This is a trite observation; we restate it here as a refutation of the polarisation of everything into natural and conventional, as it is natural to have some art and yet all specific art is conventional.

The objection from the ubiquity of art to the ancient polarisation of truth into truth by nature and truth by convention is not specific to art. The attempt to overcome the polarisation to nature and convention by claiming that it is natural to make conventions is quite general and already in antiquity it was used in an attempt to break the dichotomy. This attempt does not succeed, since it is not the dichotomy into truth by nature and truth by convention that is at stake, but the distinction between nature and convention, better known as the distinction between nature and culture. This distinction, between nature and culture, between the natural and the artefact, is quite primitive. It is powerful in primitive art. One of the most powerful works of primitive art is the eipc of Gilgamesh, the most popular work of art across the fertile crescent for almost a thousand years, then utterly forgotten, and recently revived by archaeologists and translated into many modern languages. It has nature and culture as its base, with its two heroes, Gilgamesh and Enkidu representing the two. The story is so moving partly because its conclusion portrays the limits of culture in nature: after Enkidu dies Gilgamesh seeks the remedy for death. After many trials and tribulations he finds it, and when, exhausted, he rests at the shore of the ocean surrounding the Far-Away at the bottom of which he had found the plant of eternal youth, a snake steals it from under his nose, and this reconciles him to his mortality.

The distinction and polarisation between nature and culture, between the natural and the artefact, then, is never questioned. It is the distinction between truth by nature and truth by convention, and more so the polarisation between them, that is specific to Greek philosophy and to its derivatives, including the modern world as we know it. What characterises recent philosophy most is

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[6] This is not to deny that Aristotle often made excuses that he could refute had he tried. The paradigm case is his excuse for the refusal of metal boats to sink although his theory of gravity demands it of them. His excuse for them is that they stay on top like needles carefully placed on water. (They float due to surface tension.) A floating needle soon succumbs and sinks, as metal boats do not. This did not concern him.

success in overcoming this polarisation: our conjectures are not mere truths by convention, and they fall short of representing nature faithfully, but they strive to and so are not merely conventional.[7] We have tried to show that realism or naturalism in the arts likewise fails as a faithful representation of nature, but efforts in this direction do have a special status. Some philosophers who wish to overcome this special status attempt to develop a truly universal language of art. We will not discuss the difficulties surrounding the wish to create a truly universal language of science; rather, let us remember that as an aesthetic, this wish rests on naturalism or realism, the false theory that true art imitates nature and so is comprehensible to all with no need for preparation, thus enhancing the siblinghood of humanity. Taken literally, this is in conflict with Gombrich's empirical observation that there is no such thing as the one, true imitation of nature, since there are different kinds of naturalism, as well as with the general fact that some art of other cultures is comprehensible without preparation even though it is idiosyncratic and does not comply with western standards of naturalism.[8] The theory that the language of art is universal, however false, can be saved by two observations. First, even if art is highly local and presents local colour, its appeal has to be universal. Second, even if the artistic idiom of distant places has to be mastered, it is far harder to master the languages and the laws and customs of other societies than it is to learn to enjoy their art and to feel kinship with them despite all barriers — of language, law and custom, and geography.

This general fact does not require a modification of our view that art is a challenging luxury. The conclusion of the line of argument here presented is that (visual) art is one means of communication. It is valid, but it leaves the art of art out of the picture: whatever art is, being a luxury, it is, of course, an easier mode of communication to master than those weightier matters that require language. Thus (visual) art is also a means of communication of sorts, and mastering it is relatively easy and profitable. Regrettably, judged strictly as a mode of communication, it is impoverished – unable, for example, to facilitate dialogue. Fortunately (visual) art is not merely a mode of communication: not any old communication is art, only that which challenges in a playful yet thoughtful way. This is what makes it different from mathematics that, we remember, is beautiful, and its art is a luxury, but it is playful only for the adept.

Nevertheless, we should now ask, what does art communicate? Presumably, it communicates local scenes, views, and values; and in the Western and the westernised traditions this includes the value of naturalism of one sort or another. The accent on art as conveying local views and values may very well be part and parcel of that Romantic view of art that has become integrated into the fabric of society. Romantic philosophers and art critics should view local art as the paradigm of art. Indeed, there is a whole branch of art studies of this ilk: the

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7. This is the thesis of Popper's ground-breaking "Three Views Concerning Human Knowledge" of 1956 (1963, Ch 3). Already his *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) presents conventions as substitutes for the unknown truth by nature; as he stresses in his "Replies", in Popper 1974, p. 1116.

8. In Ch. II of his 1960 Gombrich discusses the impossibility of this artistic naturalism; he views Constable as its last great representative.

research of the itinerant scholar, the folklorist and the ethnomusicologist. Some folklorists and some ethnomusicologists can elevate their trade into the finest of fine art, as did Martin Buber and Béla Bartók. Buber rebelled against the same Romanticism that he had followed in his early collections of Hassidic tales and shifted to recording the tales unadorned. We cannot say to what extent Bartók did the same.[9] Such a question is made particularly hard because most art critics (and other pundits) who endorse the Romantic idea of art as integrated in the fabric of society endorse it only after it has undergone a twist that was placed on it by Hegel and by Marx. (Still worse, many writers endorse the theory in its simplistic, refuted version, except when challenged, and then they shift and endorse it in its sophisticated, irrefutable version. This renders the view a myth proper.) In the name of progress the society into which art is integrated is allowed to be that of the future. Perhaps Bartók was much more of an intellectual than is usually admitted, as he seems to have attempted to integrate the two versions of Romanticism: he tried to integrate and amalgamate folk music with avant-garde music, and this is his musical fingerprint.[10] The society of the past can be integrated with the society of the future. Music critics and theorists tend to ignore or underplay this, since they usually hold the twisted version of Romanticism and so they often present his use of folk themes as a crutch for the untutored in avant-garde music, as a sort of an unwanted but tolerated rider.

f) Metaphysics and Language

Art has its language, in the sense that the language of art is essential for comprehending it, just as it is essential for appreciation to comprehend the natural language in which a poem is recited.[11] But in that sense art has its own languages, and each of these languages has its own rules, its own grammar, some familiarity with which is essential for the comprehension of the art that uses them to the extent that it does. The knowledge of some basics of the rules of perspective greatly enhances the enjoyment of Renaissance art, as does learning about the disintegration of perspective in impressionism.

The concern of aesthetics is more the language of art than the specific details of that language, and, to repeat, one may prefer to speak of the languages

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9. In his 1928 essay about Hungarian folk songs, Bartók wrote, "...from this music, we have learned how best to employ terseness of expression, the utmost excision of all that is nonessential—and it was this very thing, after the excessive grandiloquence of the Romantic Period, which we thirsted to learn" (p. 87). His opposition to grandiloquence pitted him against High Romantic composers, yet his search for authenticity among the *Volk* was true to Romantic philosophy. He wrote that, in order to capture folk songs accurately one needed recording apparatus for the nuance cannot be captured in conventional notation. The researcher needs to seek out villages remote from the railroad to get the purest forms “undistorted by city influence”.

10. It is a mark of the great artistic quality of the music of Bartók that it abides by both readings of it. The best example of this is perhaps his beautifully integrated *Microcosmos*, intended to serve more as a set of piano studies and training of the ear for modern harmonies and rhythms than as music proper. It includes both authentic folk material and original études and easily transcended its modest goals.

11. Not to deny that one can enjoy and profit from listening to the “music” of a poem in an unintelligible foreign language. But then, let us remember, one can misconstrue what one is hearing.

of art in the plural, as each medium has or is its own language, and in each medium there are different trends and historical styles, each with its own grammar. There are different questions about the evolution of styles, of their functions, of their characteristics that make them congenial or not, and finally there are questions of how in the modern world the public learns the styles, the languages, of the artists who develop them with great alacrity. One can say that artists are aware of the problems involved and they either explain themselves, as Arnold Schoenberg did in his famous classes in Vienna early in the twentieth century, or they use one part of the artistic idiom to help comprehend another, or even one art form to explain another: words and music may enhance one another, and so the incomprehensible part may be made more comprehensible by the other. The importance of all this is rooted in the question, how dependent are artists upon their public? If they aim to please, they depend upon them; if their aim is to express their feelings, then they do not. The truth, of course, is in the middle: artists and their publics challenge one another in the game of making and matching, as Gombrich has argued. There is no discussion of this in classical aesthetics, however, due to the absence there of the very idea of challenge.

The dispute over the public role of artists and over whether they aim to please or not, is linked somehow to metaphysics. Plato's metaphysics, his theory of the universe as comprising matter and form, is often understood metaphorically, in aesthetics more than elsewhere.[12] In aesthetics, matter is taken to mean content (even though the content of a symphony, for example, is not matter, as the form is shared by its diverse performances), and form means structure (and structure is a form of a form, absent from Plato's deliberations). This metaphorical reading of Plato leads to the hoary question, is art concerned more with content or more with form? This dispute is also understood in a different way as the dispute between those who take art to be cerebral (classicists; formalists) and those who take it to be visceral (romantics), where the cerebral is identified with the formal and the visceral with the emotional. All this is a remote echo of the claim repeatedly advocated here that art must challenge. How it challenges is a different question that need not be discussed, as, again, it pertains more to art appreciation than to aesthetics proper. Suffice it to demand of a satisfactory aesthetics that it allows for the significant role of discussions on art appreciation ─ including the appreciation of art as challenge. What is aesthetically clear is that much of the challenge of art is the effort to create new forms that suit new content or new needs to express some new content, some new complexes of feelings.

Also, and quite significantly, the two, content and form, are linked to other items in the artistic paraphernalia, especially the diverse aesthetic theories

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12. Perhaps this is an exaggeration and the metaphorical aspect of Platonism is ubiquitous. The theory of ideas has engaged so many commentators for so long, yet it is still open to interpretations. The major difference between the worlds of magic and of science is that the former is highly intuitive and the latter highly abstract. Where do we place Plato's theory of ideas? It may be viewed as very abstract and as very intuitive. Thus, the human body is flesh and bone, matter – mother (menstrual) blood ─ and form ─ father, (white) semen. Thus, also, thought is masculine and feelings are feminine. The (Pythagorean) male-female dualism is inherent in Plato's matter and form metaphysics, as the forms are fathers.

and worldviews that happen to accompany the diverse styles of the diverse arts through history. Discussing such links is outside the traditional field of aesthetics, as it is in line with contemporary pluralism, as well as with the insecurity and uncertainty of the contemporary world. Thus, we do not as yet have definite ideas about the new conditions that humanity has found itself in after World War II, when the awareness evolved that we may destroy ourselves and all life on earth. This situation received more interesting artistic expressions than intellectual or political ones. And these expressions became interesting because new artistic styles evolved to express them.

Chapter 5
REASON, TRUTH, METAPHYSICS

a) Feyerabend: Unreason Rationalised. Feyerabend has found a clash between the ideal of rational impartiality and the impossibility of its realisation. It does not follow that impartial reason should be given up, still less that reasons should. As a regulative idea it should serve as a goal, rather than a standard. **b) The Light-footed Attitude**. To make rational sense of scientific change, a more relaxed view of rationality is required, one that admits of degrees. **c) Education and Art.** The light-foot attitude suits both art and education, and more specifically their combination. **d) What is truth in Art?** Truth in art is not propositional truth in the logician's sense. Art can convey information but this is a marginal function. "True" in the sense of true craftsmanship or true love lead us to substitute "genuine" for "true"**. e) Love and Friendship in Context.** Art is a luxury like love and friendship are luxuries. Hence the frequent depiction of celebration of the one by the other. **f) Art as Luxury and as Necessity.** Art is always a luxurious extra case to case and a necessity as such. This resolves the constant battles with Puritanism in its many forms. **g) Truth in Art as Fidelity.** Truth in art is a matter of fidelity within limits and with exceptions. There is no external court of appeal as in science. Fidelity is always a matter of interpretation and of judgement.

It is all too obvious that rational aesthetics is not possible under the traditional construction of rationality and its view that science is the sole embodiment of that rationality. But it is not enough to extend rationality from common sense and to refuse the all or nothing approach. We have also to face down the claim that the arts have nothing to do with reason – that they embody unreason, irrationality. Historically, this view is part of Romanticism, already discussed. Being inchoate, because irrational, it does not lend itself to sustained or systematic discussion. There is, however, a twentieth century philosopher (of science, no less) who tried to give irrationalism a human face. He held that the arts and the sciences were both in need of liberation from the tyranny of rationality. He was a superb controversialist, so we can treat him as a rational stalking horse for the rampant irrationalism that treats the arts as a-rational. His name was Paul K. Feyerabend.[1]

a) Feyerabend: Unreason Rationalised

Feyerabend flourished in the latter half of the twentieth century, famous mainly for his militant anti-rationalism. His early writings were rationalistic, although not in the traditional (Baconian) sense (see Ch. 5). In his later writings he argued against rationalism very forcefully, partly by identifying rationalism with the traditional (Baconian) view of rationality and irrationality as all or nothing. The

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1. In fairness to Feyerabend, he did not allocate science to reason and the arts to unreason. One of his papers has the title: *"On the Improvement of the Sciences and the Arts and the Possible Identity of the Two*" (Feyerabend 1967).

policy that he recommends is, "*Farewell to Reason*". At the end of his book *Farewell to Reason* he says, if this is reason, then farewell to reason. Feyerabend's double message is this: at least give up the traditional (Baconian) extremist view of reason; but possibly give up reason altogether. Obviously, the first message is correct, the second mistaken.

To justify this second and stronger claim, Feyerabend needed little more than to create a lopsided picture of rationality. His technique was to view rare cases, like the case of the child who saved the city whose king was inept (*Eccl.* 4:13), as if they were the norm, or at least as if we should seriously consider the possibility that they are the norm. He stresses that though one need not endorse anything said by a child or by a defender of magic or of any superstition, to be rational one must listen to them as attentively as to anyone else. He explicitly cites John Stuart Mill to the effect that anyone may say something worth listening to, and that rationality requires of us that we listen to the content of a message without prejudice while ignoring the question, what is the source of the message and who is delivering it. There is a ready answer to Feyerabend's challenge: he demands the impossible: we do not have time to listen to everyone: just studying all the available options about rationality, for example, East and West, is a task for more than a lifetime. Now, to say that Feyerabend's proposal is technically impossible takes the implication that it is unreasonable to demand that we follow it. But his proposal also takes the implication that as long as it is technically impossible, rationality is impossible to practice.

This much has to be admitted: Feyerabend has rendered a service to rationalists by validly criticising their views with a new and forceful argument. He pushed the received idea about rationality to its limit. He has not conjured it in order to win a point. We have not yet contested this idea. It is quite traditional to see rationality as requiring that we listen to a message impartially. Our only questions should be, is it significant? is it true? etc. Impartiality is, among other things, indifference to the question, who is saying what? Thus, Feyerabend has created an argument that raises difficulties for all versions of rationalism, particularly the traditional version of all or nothing, but also to the newer, more commonsense version of degrees without extremes.

Let us take a concrete case. One goes to see a movie, for whatever reason, perhaps merely in order to kill a couple of hours while waiting for a train. (This, indeed, is why there used to be cinemas in big European railway stations.) Suppose one enters the cinema and sees at once that the movie is not well-made. It is actually boring and awkward and full of silly twists and turns. The rational thing to do is to leave the movie theatre. There must be other and better things to do — perhaps go to the adjacent theatre, perhaps read a magazine or take a nap. But wait! The movie may improve. There are a number of movies that begin awkwardly and boringly, and then they turn around and use the boredom thus created in an engaging manner. There are a few classic movies of the highest quality in which this idea is used (e.g., *Tokyo Story, Pather Panchali, Psycho*). And, anyway, twists in movies are very common, and after the twist the movie may greatly improve. One does not know in advance! Is it rational then to judge the movie poor on the strength of insufficient evidence? This question

presupposes that we can be rational only if evidence is sufficient. This is an error we have agreed to reject: the traditional (Baconian) image of irrationality and rationality as all or nothing. But according to the logic of Feyerabend's position, we do not know what is rational. Is it rational to stay in the movie theatre just because one happens to be there? Is it more rational to move to the other movie house? Why? Under what conditions? Will this give the makers of the first movie the full hearing they deserve by the canons of impartiality? Say no, and you are back in the position of embracing the traditional all or nothing view of rationality, protests to the contrary notwithstanding. Say yes, and impartiality is gone.

Feyerabend does not argue in terms of movie or movie theatre. He speaks of cultures, including the scientific culture. He says, everyone has the right to stay in any theatre, no matter how much more exciting the theatre next door. He says, of all cultures, there is one that should be condemned: the scientific culture; and it should be condemned because it is imperialistic. It insists it is the only show in town and all others should be shut down. Now as a brute fact, this holds for practically all cultures: with very few exceptions, all cultures claim for themselves privileged positions that explicitly or implicitly condemn or devalue all others. The only peculiarity of the scientific culture is that it argues for itself in a manner that is more detached than the others. And, more significantly, the home of scientific culture, the West, is powerful enough to be imperialist. Having voluntarily given up military conquest, it is met with the charge of economic and cultural imperialism.[2] What westerners should do about that Feyerabend does not say; he advises others to ignore the West and its science and cleave to their ancestral tradition. With a proviso, this was the advice of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. The proviso is that to do so one needs to borrow from the west the modern means of waging war. These, however, turn to be not merely hardware (Jarvie and Agassi 1970). The adoption of western social organisation turned Japan into a split-culture, part traditional part western. This is not a solution that Feyerabend recommends. So let us ignore his expressions of hostility to the scientific culture and his recommendations to non-westerners and to Afro-Americans. He has no business telling people to stay in their culture. Does he counsel us always to stay in the theatre in which one happens to find oneself? He does and he does not say so, and this in our opinion is double-talk. When challenged he says he opposes the imperialism of scientific culture. To the extent that one can find general fault with western culture in general, that fault is hardly imperialism. Western countries were in fact as imperialistic as any strong country was until the impulse waned after World War II. What may with some leeway be called the imperialism of the scientific culture is perhaps its excessive rationalism, its upholding science as utterly rational, incomparable, and obligatory because of its rationality. We have to agree again with Feyerabend's critique of traditional (Baconian) rationalism and insist: rationality is nowhere perfect ever, and it cannot be imposed. But what is Feyerabend's advice for one bored with one's own culture? Should one leave it or study it to the full before dumping it? Unlike

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2. Modern military excursions are often seen as handmaids to economic and cultural imperialism, hence imperialist regardless of any helping hand *rationale*.

watching a normal movie, studying any culture to the full is to devote one's life to it, and so the advice to study it first is the advice not to leave it ever.

The long and the short of it is that Feyerabend draws attention to the clash between the ideal of impartiality and the impossibility of its realisation. Thus, he forces us rationalists to reconsider the view that the (Baconian) canons of utter rationality and utter irrationality exhaust the options. These require us totally to ignore all and any manipulation, any influence that comes from the authority or the love commanded by others. Feyerabend half-says more than that: he half-claims that rationality is absurd. But when challenged on this he admits, as he has admitted to his critics, that he is only teasing. This is in line with his double-talk, as he says both that he gives up reason and that he is more of a rationalist than his extremely rationalistic opponents, since what he does is to push rationalism to its limit and show that its precepts are impossible to practice. That he does so in order to grant license to irrationalism is less important than that he does so and that consequently we can learn from him.

We have to face Feyerabend's challenge. What is it rational to do? To leave the movie theatre and try another, or to wait and see if the movie does not get better?[3] There are two different answers to this question. One is that, notoriously, most theatres play poor movies most of the time, for it is much harder to make a good movie than a poor one. This judgement depends upon one's interest. If one wants a culturally forceful film, then this is probably right: it is a hard demand to satisfy. If one wants to see a light-hearted comedy, preferably a sexually titillating one, while waiting for a train then perhaps not. The author and playwright W. Somerset Maugham was impressed by the fact that soldiers on brief home-leave from the front went to the theatre to see leg-shows and nothing else. Anyway, the answer to our query lies in a second direction. What we should notice first is this: when we seek a clear-cut definite and compelling answer we are falling back on the traditional (Baconian) all or nothing picture of rationality. Rationality is much more adventurous than is admitted by the traditional view of it as actions resting empirically on secure grounds; it is too adventurous and too playful and too open-ended to be safe and secure. When a situation is dead serious, when there is no room for adventure and for playfulness, when an option has to be the best or else we are dead, then perhaps we are obliged to be as rational as possible, and act as safely and securely as possible.[4] Otherwise, we have to allow ourselves some leeway — some adventure and some playfulness. The second answer is, then, it depends.

b) The Light-Footed Attitude

When the criteria for rationality were reduced, the need to reduce them came

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3. The most important option is to change one's mind when necessary. Thus, Galileo reports that when in his youth he heard about a lecture on Copernicanism he decided not to go and then, as he was told it was an error, he reconsidered his view that it was absurd.

4 . Or perhaps not. The Cold War culture of think-tanks using the tools of as nearly complete (Baconian) rationality as possible — operations research, game theory, decision theory, mathematical modelling, creaky early computer programmes, and so on — to game nuclear war and its aftermath is nowadays widely regarded as irrational in some wider sense.

from science itself[5]: the traditional (Baconian) standards of rationality demanded that the correct theory be endorsed, and that it should be pronounced correct only after it is fully grounded. There could be no room for reconsidering its endorsement, nor for reconsidering any of the questions which it answers. But in the beginning of the twentieth century it became increasingly clear that if science is to progress then scientific revolutions in seemingly completed and stable fields of inquiry are unavoidable. Only a less stringent rationality can accommodate this. This loosening up brings with it a nice windfall: rationality becomes more pervasive. It is no longer confined to science but, as Gombrich and his followers have argued, extends to matters of art and of aesthetics. It further transpires that the inclusion of art is not a mere windfall. Play is essential for the loosened conception of rationality: we have to try things out, and we must do so playfully. The inclusion of art in discussions of rationality, and vice versa, goes deep.

We do not wish to go into the theory of rationality beyond what is required for the theory of art as rational. But as an aside let us observe this. We have discussed rationality here mainly as reasonableness in the common sense of reasonableness, which includes a certain degree of experimentalism and so a light-footed attitude to things. Commonsense is often used in philosophy as a source of rationality, and there are whole schools of philosophy devoted to it. They refer to substance, not to attitudes, and the substance is commonly received opinions uncritically transmitted. As Russell said, we do not need to endorse commonsense opinions when we endorse the commonsense attitude, at times expressed in such exaggerated slogans as, nothing is certain except death and taxes. Yet to the extent that we presented commonsense reasonableness as an explicit philosophy, we contended that it accords with Popper's view of rationality as criticism.

A common practice is to accept criticism, to take it seriously, work on it, and modify one's views, yet stick to some things rigidly. This attitude is so well known that it has a name all to itself: it is known as scholasticism or casuistry. If one does not like the name because of the fact that the original scholastics were medieval Catholic professors, who practised casuistry in their theological studies, then one can use the name "Talmudism". In this context the three words, "scholasticism", "casuistry", and "Talmudism" are synonyms. Their techniques are well known, and they were invented in ancient Greece, if not by Aristotle, then by his followers, particularly by commentators on his texts.

What is wrong with scholasticism is its heavy foot: never leave the theatre where you happen to be sitting. The best way to counter it is what the present authors have termed "the workshop mentality", meaning the art workshop, Renaissance-style (Agassi and Jarvie 1987; Jarvie 2005). The workshop is our paradigm of loosened rationality in practice, where the approach to what is learned and the appreciation of what is learned is light footed.

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5. It is strange that aestheticians are slow to follow science here. Thus, Monroe Beardsley writes (Beardsley 1982, p. 235),

> "… knowledge misdirected can lead to its polar opposite, which is not ignorance but false belief."

It is tempting to go here to animal psychology and repeat the strong thesis that the young among the higher animals learn as they play. Puppy behaviour is the intermingling of learning and play. There is a more general theory that says that all play is rooted in this very puppy-style playful learning. There is an even more general theory that says all play is learning. But this goes too far. The idea that play is initially learning does not mean that all learning is play, and so why should all play be learning?

It is obvious that not all learning is play, particularly not play with peers, and that learning can be accomplished without much play: animals too learn from seniors no less than from coeval playmates. Nikolaas Tinbergen, animal psychologist and Nobel laureate, observed that apes are more ready to learn from seniors than from peers. He suggests that this holds a lesson to humans and notices that teachers are older and better dressed than students, and so on, and justifies this by pointing to the apes. This is a puzzling slip by a wise and kind thinker. After all Tinbergen knows about puppy play, and he knows that anyway not all simian custom is recommendable, not even to simians, let alone to humans, not to mention humans in a modern democratic society. And he surely knows that parents and teachers often find themselves helpless as they compete with their children's coevals for influence.

Tinbergen is not alone. Popper, the foremost defender of rationality and of western democracy in his century, at least among philosophers, has said similar things in his *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, when he defended the right of (older) teachers to manipulate their (younger) charges (1945, Ch. 25, IV). Popper suggests that it is impossible to avoid using the romantic element in education, the use teachers do and should make of the love and admiration which their charges naturally accord them. Popper says that since children are not rational, other means must be found with which to educate them, that is to say, with which to manipulate them. Of course, Popper adds, the aim of the exercise is to make the pupils rational, to immunise pupils against manipulation. But this means that we can start from independence of mind, from rationality.

In our terms, children show lots of rationality in the looser sense. We suggest further that, if we take rationality to be a mixed strategy rather than the extreme case of utter autonomy, then we can say that at times it is more rational to listen to teachers, at times not, that in science, no less than in the arts, there are times for the suspension of disbelief. Indeed, this process of going to and fro is constant.[6] In particular, youth is often torn between following their peers and following instructors. They suffer not only from peer pressure, but also from the conflict between the natural inclination to learn from peers and the acceptance of their instructors' authority. Tinbergen errs in saying young apes and humans are always more apt to learn from individuals in authority than from peers. His

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6. Such vacillation attends anything that requires patience, such as a protracted exposition of an idea that at first seems absurd, or getting the lay of the land where a story is to unfold. The suspension of disbelief may be as important in science as in art, if not more so. Bacon's assertion that the suspension of belief is of supreme importance in research is thus not empty even if it is exaggerated. The need to prejudge is unavoidable in the process of deciding to invest or not to invest ─ to stay in the movie house a little longer ─ and so it is of supreme importance to keep an open mind and stay in playful mode.

observation holds for cases of one on one, but not for cases of gangs. Moreover, the influence of an instructor, unlike that of a parent, much depends on the classroom atmosphere: instructors who control it meet with a more receptive attitude than those who are resented — even while their authority is not challenged, since prompt acceptance is better than reluctant acceptance. All this leads to the recommendation that educators exercise light-footedness.

c) Education and Art

The parents and the teachers and the educators and philosophers who find it impossible to avoid using manipulations do not view the power of play as a form of rational endeavour. They do not see this because even when they discuss art as a tool for education, art education, and/or art, they take art much too seriously to get into its spirit. Not only is it central to art that it is play. Art appreciation is play too, and it is also a matter that is learned to a large extent — playfully, of course. It is learned in school, however, very differently, very seriously. It comes in classes devoted to art, at least to the classical literature of the mother tongue, and in classes in which learning has nothing or almost nothing to do with play, simply because learning in the western world is compulsory and made to be devoid of all play. Yet art appreciation is learned in school often incidentally to adjacent instruction, not in courses devoted to it. It is also learned from peers in the neighbourhood and from parents at home and from all sorts of passers by. What is the impact of all of this learning?

Parents and teachers manipulate their charges all the time, and admittedly this cannot be entirely avoided; yet what can be avoided is intentional systematic manipulation, administered consciously and with full knowledge. The result is never wholly successful, never quite satisfactory: parents and educators specialise in never being pleased. Nevertheless, rather irrationally, they normally cling to their techniques and only intensify them rather than allow for change. This artificial stability is deceptive and leads to the conclusion that whatever attitudes we acquire about art and its role in society are inherent and unchangeable. The teaching of art and of art appreciation and aesthetics suffers the most distortion — one need not be a philosopher or a teacher to know that no education is ever possible without some instruction in matters of art and of art appreciation and aesthetics. Thus, the popular idea that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, even were it true, is misleading, unless it is supplemented with the information that tastes are acquired, and perhaps also with some additional background information about how we have acquired our tastes. This supplementary background information is required anyhow, since, even on the assumption that beauty is merely in the eye of the beholder, it is puzzling that there is so much uniformity of taste, the kind that is so essential for the mass market — especially in art. What is the source of this uniformity of taste? The default answer is that beauty is in human nature, an answer amply confirmed. This confirmation is an illusion. The idea that the sense of beauty is in human nature is amply refuted.

The idea that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and in all of them in the same way, is not bad; perhaps it does hold for natural beauty, though not fully for

the beauty of art, not even if we are all as open to the arts as we can be. But that it is possibly true of natural beauty may be very interesting and revealing. The animal psychologist Adrian Kortland has observed what looked to him to be a gorilla enjoying the sight of a beautiful sunset (Kortland 1962); it seems that many higher animals might have a sense of beauty, such as revealed in a canine howling at the full moon; and we may just as well admit that at least the higher animals find beauty in the attractive features of members of the opposite sex, and if so, then probably this is largely a matter of natural inclination, even though to a great extent these inclinations clearly differ from species to species and even from society to society.[7]

Things look different when we consider artistic tastes, tastes in the arts, rather than tastes concerning things natural. It is clear that in that case the uniformity perceived, to the extent that it is perceived, is highly culture-dependent. Hence, presumably it is learned. How? No-one knows. Sometimes it is learned from peers, at times in the teeth of teachers and instructors, at times it is learned at home, and on rare occasions even from teachers and instructors. Roughly, taste in high art seldom comes from peers and taste in low art seldom comes from teachers and instructors. But this, too, is likely to mislead. Even if were it true, and even to the extent that it is true, it is at best a characteristic of our society only. It is certainly not characteristic of, say, Mediaeval European society, in which there was no high art or low art, but at most folk art and church art, both low. We take today almost all traditional church art, from traditional plain song and church cantatas to religious paintings and cathedral architecture, to be high art, very high, and we are quite right. But to the extent that the distinction between high and low art at all applies to Mediaeval art, it was all low by whatever criteria one may judge art to be high or low. We leave this now and return to education.

What is the role of education in the acquisition of artistic tastes? This question, we suggest, ties art to rationality. Yet rationality is partial, and the rationality of the educational system is not high. Thus, one ill-effect that education has on the population at large is dislike of whatever was transmitted to them through education, especially knowledge of this or that subject-matter, be it mathematics and science for some people, history and literature for others. The English philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, who was famous for his broad culture, wrote a book on education in which he launched a severe complaint about it.[8] He also confessed that because he studied *King Lear* in school, he could never enjoy it.[9] No doubt, he also studied mathematics in school, and that did not stop him enjoying it. No-one knows why. Perhaps he had a tolerant mathematics teacher, and perhaps he was so advanced that his mathematics teachers left him alone. This is a general fact: although gifted children may suffer much from their gifts, especially if they have very ambitious parents, they are often spared

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7. Psychologists report that people often serve as aesthetic models for their offspring; we doubt it but it must have a kernel of truth. See Little *et al*. 2003 and Fragaszy and Perry 2003.
8. "The great English Universities … should be prosecuted for soul murder" ("*Technical Schools, Education, Science, Literature*", reissued in Whitehead 1985).
9. "To this day I cannot read *King Lear*, having had the advantage of studying it inaccurately at school" (*Atlantic*, vol. 138, p. 197).

training and this allows them to stay ahead. For most pupils in modern schools, however, education is marginal and they learn there to close their minds to it. Closed minds are not born, they are made, and usually in schools.

Two popular educational views complement rather than impede each other. They are the view that we all need some knowledge of the arts and the sciences, and that we need specialised students selected out of the student population to staff the next generation of experts. The need to select justifies the inclusion in the curriculum of material that a new recruit needs to know, and the students who do best in their studies may become the new recruits. The others are offered the beginning of the course for the intended recruits, and it serves them as general information.

Of course, this is not as it should be: the general information required for non-experts is much different from that required for future experts. Truth to tell, many curricula are inadequate for either, but at least they function as selectors for prospective recruits. Moreover, it is not clear that the education system is concerned with the fact that those who fail as prospective candidates hate the speciality for which they fail to qualify: this prevents them from complaining about not having been selected. The cost for the community, however, is great. The traditional selection method through the inadequate curriculum deteriorates, since there is a growing need for specialists and since the devastating effect of the curriculum grows when everything around it improves. This does not lead to an improvement of the curriculum as it should. Instead, it leads to increasing of pressure on pupils. As a consequence, education in the arts and in art appreciation deteriorates. The result is either the elimination of art altogether from the official curriculum or increased pressure on pupils in the hope of saving from the body of pupils some who will learn to specialise as artists or as professional taste leaders of one kind or another. The latter move, of forcing art students to be artists or art specialists is so bad, that the former move, of dropping art out of the curriculum, is much the better; except that, administrators being defensive, they try to justify their exclusion of art from the curriculum by arguments that put down art altogether, and these arguments become part and parcel of the educational environment that they pollute. They provide the impression that the study of art is a sheer waste of time unless one wishes to be a professional artist or taste maker. This way the education for art becomes even more ferociously education for a practical end. And art is, by itself, admittedly not half as practical as engineering.

This is a strange error: the utilitarian attitude, to education as to any other human affair, is the demand to judge it by the measure of social utility (or personal pleasure) that it brings. Now utility is considered a measurable quantity: the expected utility of anything is the degree of pleasure it is expected to bring minus the degree of pain it is expected to bring. This explains why we purchase works of art, why we pay entrance fees for playhouses and concert halls and disco bars. Yet we do not allow students the pleasure of art, only training for professional artistic life. They spend a few years in five-finger-exercises of all sorts and learn to hate what they learn and drop out with no profit. Why? Because schools are supposed to give training for life. We find the attitude behind this

supposition misanthropic. We think one should say, the modern world is rich enough to afford the pleasure of study of the fine arts and of the arts and of the sciences, and so students should be encouraged to choose the courses that suit them best. For this, of course, schools need to establish courses in course appreciation. They should be helped to find out what courses are offered, what courses are appetising, what courses they may like and enjoy. Also, a part of art appreciation that we speak much of is learning to leave the theatre when the one finds a play boring, to stop reading a boring book, and to drop a course when it is the wrong course for any reason whatsoever. This, of course, may cost too much: possibly as a result youth will never learn a foreign language only to regret it when it is too late, master a difficult piece of mathematics, master a musical instrument, or learn to draw the human figure, all of which require application without concern about one's inner states. In general, being anti-romantic and recognising the need for the acquisition of discipline through education, we may have to negotiate compromise here. For, we are far from recommending the indulgent attitude of some progressive educators. Yet our hostility to systematic manipulation suggests that the place to negotiate the compromise is not in the ministry of education but in the classroom.

Two ideas play in what was said thus far, that art is fun and that art is a luxury. First the idea that art is fun, that whatever we do may be done in fun — indeed, should be done in fun — and then elevated to the level of an art proper. It is also important that fun here does not mean frivolity. Bach is fun. Working in the gym through the pain threshold can be fun. As can practising an instrument until one is exhausted. The second idea is that it is artificial and limited in speaking of art to confine oneself to the fine arts that are found in museums, concert halls, and theatres. Indeed, even those who do speak of art as fine art also agree that the practical or applied arts may achieve artistic heights. For some cases, it is hard to distinguish between the two: nice dwellings are built for practical purposes, yet the activity of designing them, architecture, is deemed both a fine art and a practical art. The aim of the division of art to the fine and the applied is merely to facilitate discussion; it is not a matter of intrinsic intellectual or aesthetic value. If applied arts can be arts proper, then so can any creative activity. The beauty of mathematics is a paradigm for creative activity that can achieve great beauty. Indeed, mathematicians often report high aesthetic experience, as well as fun. Those who are blocked over mathematics are sometimes told that mathematicians are scientists who are blocked from the experience of the pleasures of the arts. To say that students of mathematics also enjoy a high art seems unfair to students of the arts proper.

Our way around this impasse is to stress that art is a luxury. The opposite of luxury is either necessity or usefulness. Usefulness is used to devalue the arts in our society by demanding to know what is art good for. This question makes best sense when it refers to something we do reluctantly, not to something we do pleasurably; one does not ask, what is dancing at the disco bar good for? So when someone asks, what is classical ballet good for, this betrays their preference for disco over ballet. We do not object to this comparative evaluation, but we refuse to make it into a philosophy, as this grants some specific tastes the status of a

priori preferred ones. In other words, pragmatism is utilised as a way to decide before any debate that certain arts are unwelcome. When one is asked, what poetry is good for, one should not try to answer, any more than one should not try to answer the question, what are newspapers good for? And if in response some people present the news as more serious than poetry, we should ask them if they launch against comics and sports pages the same arguments that they launch against poetry. Pragmatic considerations are essential perhaps when we find that we try to evade doing something and cannot. Even then, we suggest, it is not enough to learn what something is good for, but also to ask, are there not other ways to do so? For example, are there blends of hard work and playfulness that will accomplish educational goals? After all, we already allow this in early education, why not extend it? We already have, to an extent, in that study is now much nicer, much more of an art than it used to be traditionally, when students were required to work much harder for fewer rewards. There is progress in teaching, and it can be studied and improved. Whatever we think is the right attitude to teaching, surely, there is too little experimentation and too little reporting on extant experiments.

The idea we have been working out here is that art is the extra effort or rather the extra achievement that is involved in anything we do. It is very much in line with Gombrich's suggestion that the fine arts develop out of the crafts. The idea is that everything we do we can do as well as required and we can do it better than required and then it deserves the label of art. We can take an example from any action that is not in the least a luxury. We say of exceptionally good surgeons that they have golden hands. What this means, and we can return to this later on, is that the surgeon is an artist, and indeed, when one faces a success in medicine that is not to be expected, namely, that is not scientifically attested, we say, medicine is an art, not a science. This sounds very unconvincing, and for a good reason. When we discuss art, or science, or anything else we wish to characterise, we have the characterisation of the activity and we have the tradition of the activity thus characterised. For example, whatever we say of science, it clashes, and even very sharply, with the idea that we try to use the subject of physics as the paradigm of science and take the subject of aesthetics to be the opposite pole, as the most unscientific subject. When we characterise science as empirical and present aesthetics as empirical, as, following Gombrich, we repeatedly try to do in this book, then the result sounds most unconvincing as it clashes with the traditional idea of aesthetics as metaphysical, cultural, even irrational and unscientific. The same goes for art. Art is traditionally equated with high art and in a pinch to low art that is its poor substitute. One forgets to think of mathematics and of medicine as arts despite facts to the contrary that are familiar in ordinary discourse. Just as we see in the traditional manner science as chiefly physics yet we are willing to admit new kinds of science and hope that they become traditional too, so we see in the traditional manner art as chiefly high art oil painting yet we are willing to admit new kinds of art like education and hope that they become traditional too.

Here we find another interesting aspect of what we found in earlier discussion. In our first discussion we met the suggestion that ideas of the form,

art is this or that, are often very intelligent and very wise, but not when pushed to the limit and the form, art is this or that, becomes the form, art is only this or that. This or that, yes, only this or that, no. We have here a peculiarity of art, and we have to ask what is it? When we ask such a question, we refer not only to the kind of art that tradition sanctions as art, be it painting or music, but anything that can be construed as art: many things can. Why? Because art is not any particular thing, not any particular function, not any particular aspect of the human mind. It is the way things are approached: the very playfulness, the very flirtatious feel, the very luxury of doing with care and love more than expected. This sounds more acceptable than the luxury of doing playfully more than expected. But playfulness is no less important than care and love.[10] Our line of thought well sustains Gombrich's attitude: art he said, is not something totally outside common experience as imagined by the Romantic philosophers, not Art with a capital "A", as he said, but something that begins well within common experience, something like arts and crafts, and when it grows it becomes something most special, something marvellous.

We have reached the most philosophically problematic aspect of art, the matter of truth in art. We have argued against theories of art as merely what produces pleasure or any other emotion, or merely having this or that social function. Our argument was to the effect that art is all these things and more: generally, speaking it is not what is done, but that it is done well, above and beyond the required, a value-added luxury. True, art is not only the luxurious addition, for often it is the task itself that is a luxury, what we call "entertainment", as in the performing arts and in the plastic arts. All art is entertainment; whether all entertainment is art is subject to dispute. We extended the category in the previous chapter to encompass all entertainment and much more. Not all luxury, however, is included: scholarship is a luxury, yet it is mostly not art (far from it), and architecture is an art even though most buildings serve functions that are far removed from luxury. What characterises art, we said, is largely its being luxurious in many ways, its being playful. And, we suggested, playfulness is not only rational; it is a vital aspect of rational conduct, of what the present authors call "the workshop mentality". This leads to a basic question: if art is play, luxury, is it not the case that art is whatever the artist wishes it to be? The immediate disposition is to answer this question in the affirmative. Art is luxury, and so it is not obligatory, and so, in principle, it does not do any harm, and so, why should any constraint be put on the endeavours of artists?

d) What is Truth in Art?

Art has no special obligations. As far as we know the only ethics and law specific to art concern copyright and the moral right of artists to the integrity of their work. Special demands are put on artists only by thinkers like Plato and

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10. In Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot*, (Asimov 1950) a robot refuses to develop a scenario of a dangerous move (space travel), but is induced to do so playfully. Asimov managed to convey weighty ideas – on education and art alike – quite playfully, by moving them into science fiction. See (Asimov 1953).

Tolstoy, who said, artistic gifts bring special responsibility, and the power of the arts enhances that responsibility. We do not think these are sufficient to put more constraints on art or on artists above or beyond the legal and moral constraints common to all citizens. As much as anyone else, artists are at liberty to act as they wish. Yet, everyone else is equally at liberty; everyone may expect of them whatever they wish. The expectations may be disappointed and one will prefer those who satisfy one's expectations over those who do not, and so one may prefer some artists just because they satisfy one's expectations. We take this to be a basic point of liberal ethics and politics. We should add that it is not commonly affirmed, that even declared liberals all too often are illiberal in matters of taste and are all too quick to condemn both artists and their public, modern *avant-garde* artists and popular artists, consumers of their art and consumers of the mass media. It goes without saying that liberalism permits the professors, priests and public intellectuals to pontificate against this or that art. At this juncture we are concerned not with the market in art, not with any demand upon artists (even the demand that they respect the truth), not with preference for or against the truth in the arts, but simply with the truth in art as such. The first question is, what *is* this truth? What is truth in the arts?

Many philosophers consider this question meaningless — in the sense that in principle no sentence, true or false, can be construed that would be an answer to it. When we ask for truth in art we do not know, say these philosophers, what we are asking for, we do not know what we are after. And this is so because there is no such thing. More than that: we may want things that do not exist, like world peace; we may want to have things that cannot possibly exist, like the ability to move faster than light. But we cannot wish to have a jabberwocky, as we do know what a jabberwocky is: when Lewis Carroll spoke of the jabberwocky he was pulling our leg: he did not take the trouble to tell us what a jabberwocky could possibly be. Truth in the arts, these philosophers conclude, is a jabberwocky. Perhaps in this vain search we do express a yearning, they may add in a conciliatory mood; it is not uncommon to be in need of something and not to know what it is, and the expression of this feeling is often a meaningless string of words that require restatement to be meaningful and express our yearning better. An example of such a restatement is the restatement of the demand for truth in the arts as an expression of a wish: we may say, "we want something, and even badly, but we do not know what it is", or "we want our art to touch us in this or that way, the way we experienced last time but not this time". And there may be many other ways of restating the matter without reference to truth.

All this may be correct for cases when we do not know what we want and yet try to articulate it. But it is not sufficient for the claim that there is never any meaning to the concept of truth in the arts, that all expressions involving that concept lack content. What argument is used by philosophers sceptical of the very idea of truth in the arts? Why should we not speak of the truth in the arts? Answer: because truth is a property of propositions: truth is a quality of putative information. Putative information can be true and it can be false; a work of art cannot. What, after all, could it mean to say "this work of art is false". False to

what? To the facts of the case? Since when is art putative information about the facts of the case? Art may use or otherwise display facts, but it is the very nature of art that its content cannot be distilled into informative propositions. If it could be distilled into informative propositions there would be no need for it to be art: the propositions would suffice. Art adds something extra, indissolubly extra, even to informative propositions.

To objections of this kind there is a very simple response: information can be conveyed without uttering a word, say, by a nod of the head or by shaking it, or by a shrug of the shoulder. The counter would be: these gestures stand for words, they are an expression of affirmation, negation, ignorance, or indifference. That is why truth and falsity can be applied. This counter will not do: there is a system of conveying of information by more complex signs, collectively known as body language. There is no adequate dictionary of body language, as every anthropologist knows. Let us consider this objection for a moment. Does the wordlessness of body language mean that we cannot discuss the information conveyed by body language and assess whether it is true or false?

To begin with, the trouble with body language is greater than mere ignorance of its dictionary. We often do not know whether a message is intended in the first place or not. This is also true of art. All attempts to read messages into a work of art are accomplished at risk. Those who the read messages into works of art risk not only misreading the works but also reading a message when none was intended. That no message was intended does not clinch the matter — at least according to some thinkers. When we discussed Marxism we saw that Marxist students of aesthetics insist that they can always find a message in every work of art, even if it is unintended and even if its counter was intended. So for the moment let us centre on misreading the message or lack of message of a work of art. Take a simple example, the telling of a true story of a bureaucrat maltreating a blameless citizen. This story may be declared a biographically true story of a certain individual. It is then a true or a false biography insofar as the details are contained in factual reports that can be checked. To the extent that the story communicates some sentiments, that communication is on a par with reading body language, only it is more subtle and can mislead in more ways. But let us say we do not know of whom it is true and we do not care much about that individual anyway. Then the informative significance may be in its being characteristic in some way. Of what? The story does not say. It tells us very little about the facts of bureaucracy in general, of course: the story may be typical, but it need not be. The author or the critic may say it is typical, and then this piece of information may be true or false. Does this make any difference to its artistic value? Again, the Marxists will say, yes. We will return later in this chapter to the question, when does the truth of the matter matter, and why.

Now all this is not at all how things work. When the battle against bureaucracy is frustrated by legal and bureaucratic means, when journalists are too cowardly to fight the bureaucrats, then a story teller may work wonders. When the censorship instituted by a foreign ruler represses the expression of national sentiments and the yearning for national freedom, then it is time for the artists to step in, and the national aspirations all of a sudden receive forceful

expression, say, in an opera about remote times and places, where different people were locked in mortal combat, allegedly a matter of national liberty. We might agree to all this but note that the opera does not contain any information about anything is particular, least of all about the national movement to which that work of art may belong. One may even go further and suggest that the nationalist sentiment of the work of art in question is artistically neither here nor there. This is obvious from the following consideration. Were national sentiment the point of the work of art, then those who do not share that sentiment will be indifferent, possibly hostile, to it, and a work that had gained great prominence during the struggle for national independence would be forgotten after the struggle is over. Some nationalist works are forgotten; others transcend this parochialism and become canonical. Their art lies in their transcendence.

As we have seen from the case of a work of art that purports to be a biographical episode, truth of information may signify in the arts, but only marginally. Not only is it possible to be more concerned with the artistic quality of a biography than with the truth of its contents; it is no secret that the truth value of some works of art is questionable. At times truth is simply not allowed, as, for example, in the case of national anthems: almost all lyrics of national anthems suggest falsehoods (as national myths). For another example, we can change the name of the person whose portrait hangs on our wall, and this may be useful if we wish to hide our ancestry, a point already noted by Sherlock Holmes ("*Hound of the Baskervilles*").

All this concerns information and the arts, at times referred to as the question of the message of the work of art. It is not that works of art do contain messages (or not, as the case may be), nor, why use art as a vehicle for conveying information rather than simple prose. It is to say that there is little interest in the truth in a work of art, where truth is a quality of items of information, simply because, when we judge a work of art we are usually indifferent to the question, what information, if any, it does contain, and to whether an item of information that it conveys is true or false. There remains the question that nevertheless, indirectly, the information that a given work of art conveys does play a significant role in our judgement of the work of art in question. We will come to this later. First we will speak of truth in art in a different sense.

In an interesting discussion of Constable, Gombrich elucidates another claim for truth in art. Constable aimed to treat painting as a science, and as a natural science at that. At first blush this may seem extravagant. But Gombrich shows that Constable knew what he was talking about just as much as he knew what he was doing. Gombrich's interpretation of Constable's ambition was that the painter sought to put on a sound basis the means of representing colour and light with oil paint on canvas. He was interested in how colour values in the visual field rarely coincided with those on the artist's palette. Variations of distance, gradient, and juxtaposition meant that a green field might need to be painted nearly yellow, or blue water gray, and so on. Truth for Constable was the truth of representation, that is, truth to our impressions of the visual world. This was a sort of information encoded in a sort of language — the language of paint.

Confronted with an obdurate logician one could, of course, capture

Constable's quest without invoking the word truth. "Accurate", "closely modelled on" and similar locutions would do (although truth may be presupposed by them). Nevertheless, such expressions as "true to life", "true to the way things are" are common enough that any agreement to constrain our use of "truth" would introduce an element of artificiality.

If we utilise this latitude, note that we speak of truth not only as a matter of information. There is such a thing as true friendship, true love, true workmanship. These are much harder to specify than true information (which is hard enough, as logicians repeatedly show). Sometimes "true" is merely an intensive; sometimes it means "the real thing" as opposed to "a fake". Whatever true friendship or love or workmanship is, it is not true the way an item of information is true. No doubt, if one gives the impression that one is a friend or that one loves, when one feels hostile, then we can speak of misleading conduct, of conduct that causes one to assume a proposition true ("X is my friend"; "Y loves me") when it is not. We can say then that conduct may mislead ─ convey a false proposition ─ the way body language can. This will not interest anyone in particular, except those who are interested in the question, how is verbal information conveyed non-verbally, and how does an actor or a con-artist make deception work? Let us set these kinds of cases to one side.

Is there no more than that to true friendship, true love, true grit, ambition, art? If anyone insists on restricting the use of the word "true" to information or, more specifically, to informative statements, we are entitled to ask why. Suppose that they have their reasons. And logicians do have their reasons: they wish to standardise the use of the word by rules somewhat more strict than followed in ordinary circumstances and for specific reasons. We should not obstruct them. So we can, in the company of logicians, drop the word "true" when applied to cases other than propositions. This is very easy. When we wish to speak of true love or of true art in the presence of a logician, all we need to do is to use the word "genuine" instead of the word "true". Also, we may ask the logician to cooperate, and instead of complaining that we use the word "true" in their company in a manner of which they disapprove, let them hear the word "genuine" when we pronounce the word "true".

What, then, is true or genuine friendship, love, workmanship, art?

In line with the idea of Gombrich that art is heightened craft, we should talk of true art after talking of true workmanship. But first a few further remarks about true friendship and true love, as they are such common themes in the arts.

e) Love and Friendship in Context

The traditional name for the study of art and beauty is "Aesthetics", meaning, the theory of sensations. The main concern of traditional aesthetics was not so much with the beauty of artefacts as such, but with our response to them, and, more specifically, with the love that they may invoke. This love could be for the objects depicted or for the works that depict them. Works of art regularly arouse sexual desire – usually for the person depicted. Plato's *Symposium* (itself one of the most beautiful books ever written), which deals with *Eros*, i. e., with love, is a classic of aesthetics. We will return to matters of response later. At this point our concern will be more with the aesthetic value of artefacts, with what makes

artefacts works of art proper (be they erotic or not), and valuable ones at that.

There is a huge literature, scholarly and artistic, on friendship and on love, true and false. It is easily misread due to the many varieties of these qualities and the great variety of circumstances in which they occur. This is so in part because of a characteristic that we have so far neglected, and that we should now notice: fear. Social anthropology presents fear as permeating almost all traditional societies in a way scarcely known in modern ones – even in war. In traditional societies fear is the norm; in modern societies it is the exception. In modern society it is easy to forget the oppressive limitation on freedom of movement due to fear; the risks involved in all travel to foreign lands and even to the next valley, due to the simple fact, true of many traditional societies and not true of modern society, that significant parts of the population treat all strangers as enemies and consider them free prey. Bible stories illustrate our point ─ that of Lot in Sodom and that of the concubine in Gibea. Whatever status we give to the Bible, we take these stories as representing the ethos of traditional societies. Of course, the Bible opposes the predatory attitude to strangers of the dwellers in Sodom and in Gibea, and it does describe it as exceptionally cruel. But there is little doubt that even as exceptions we can hardly view such events as happening in modern society. And, indeed, because they occurred, however seldom, a glorious tradition of hospitality evolved as a counter tradition, especially in societies in which travel was part of a way of life, such as societies of nomads and of merchants. Instead of the stranger being free prey, the stranger was honoured guest.

The most common traditions of hospitality are those of blood brotherhood and of betrothal. The story of betrothal best known is that of "*Beauty and the Beast*". We do not know which of the many stories about true friendship represent blood brotherhood. In modern society, betrothal is deemed passé, and blood siblinghood is taken to be a romantic childhood expression of true friendship. Of course it is not. To go one more step into social anthropology, let us notice one of the more puzzling stories of *The Odyssey*. It is that Odysseus's wife Penelope is beset by suitors while he is on his epic journey. In an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* Richard Janko used Margalit Finkelstein's work to help clarify matters (Janko, 2005, p. 6). There was supposedly an ancient practice of avoiding passing succession to the son. Instead a contest was held for the hand of a daughter, and the winner got the bride and the kingdom. The practice was sufficiently archaic that Homer does not make it clear that Penelope's suitors are after her hand so as to inherit Odysseus's kingdom (or estates).[11]

The literature of traditional societies, fiction and non-fiction, foregrounds friendship and love. This is at least in part due to taboos on talk about sex. It may be odd that friendship is linked with sex, but the reason for it is too obvious. Both homosexual love and asexual love are closely linked to sex. Homosexual love is, of course, particularly fascinating and in need of circumlocution, since in

11. Both Margalit Finkelstein and Richard Janko follow in the tradition of Sir Moses Finlay's *The World of Odysseus* that initiated the practice of using anthropological materials to throw light on the great Homeric epics.

much of the world taboos on homosexual practices are traditionally more severe than taboos on heterosexual ones, even more severe than taboos on incest and on adultery. In a discussion on the status of homosexuals in the Israeli military, an Israeli parliamentarian cited from the Bible, from the Lament of David on Saul and Jonathan, the confession that David found Jonathan's love for him more wonderful than the love of women (2 *Sam.*, 1:26). This created uproar. Yet the lament is not homosexual, as it simply says that David enjoyed Jonathan's company more than he enjoyed sex (the expression "the love of women" is a euphemism for sex). But in the uproar the protesters did protest too much — they evidently feared that reading of that text as homosexual is somehow justifiable. Today, when the fascination with homosexual practices has diminished due to easing of taboos and sanctions, we have to be reminded by art historians of it, so as to comprehend the ubiquity in the representative arts of human figures that are not clearly of boys or of girls, and the special role that boys dressed as girls had in Elizabethan theatre, and so on.

But homosexual friendship is a side issue. Much of western culture is expressly opposed to any sex whatsoever; it is generally anti-sex; and this has to be kept in mind, since the arts, especially in the Renaissance, are decidedly pro-sex. Sexless friendship was more important in the western tradition than relations bonded by sex, because in an anti-sex mood friendship was regularly contrasted with sex: there was sexual love, *Eros*, and friendship or sexless love, *agape*. To be precise, *agape* is slightly wider than friendship, as one cannot possibly be friends with members of the opposite sex, but one can have a pure love, as love without sex was called, for a member of the opposite sex, such as a sibling, the spouse of a friend, or a child.[12] Of course, the impossibility of being friends with members of the opposite sex is part of traditional, deep-seated discrimination against women that shows up everywhere. We will say nothing about it here, beyond observing that surely art has done much to challenge it and to charm women with the idea of equal rights.[13] What is important in this contrast is a very nasty idea about true love: as such it may be devoid of true friendship. True love as *agape*, then, is wishing its object well and showing readiness to make sacrifices to that end. True friendship, then, is more than that: it is willingness to be together, work together, grow up together. What then is true love as *Eros*? It is, first, lust. It is, second, the readiness to raise a family with the object of love as it is called, namely to have joint parenthood. The Romantic literature put a twist on this, both in mediaeval fiction and in the nineteenth-century. It was that true love is lust but without sexual encounter.[14] The only women with whom a man could enjoy this were nubile young virgins. For sexual outlet there were concubines and brothels. We should conclude this discussion by saying that one of the most significant results of the achievement

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12. Think of the endless literature debating the exact nature of Lewis Carroll's adoration of little girls and whether it could possibly be "pure".
13. The feminist literature includes much protest against sexist art and art that otherwise supports the subjugation of women, including "*Cinderella*"; few (like Kay Turner) notice that some art goes the other way. Consider all the stories from that of the Queen of Sheba to Queen Guinevere to more recent times.
14. Vulgar readings of Romanticism take it to be the ideology of love plus sex.

of some measure of equality for women is the modern, twentieth-century idea of true love as including true friendship between spouses.

What true friendship and true love have to do with art is obvious: they are both luxuries in the sense that long and successful and even satisfactory life without them is possible, yet such a life is pitiable.[15] This too is not irrelevant to our discourse, as the Romantic idea of true art is that the true artist has to renounce all friendship and love and be dedicated to the cause. This idea clashes violently with the idea of true art as luxurious: it is the idea of true art as all-consuming and as demanding as any other true obsession.

f) Art as Luxury and as Necessity

Let us dwell on the contrast between these two ideas, the one that true art is luxurious and the other that, on the contrary, true art is obsessive. This contrast is not new. It belongs to an ancient tradition. Plato's *Symposium* has already been held up as the classic of all classics on art and on aesthetics. No doubt its longevity is partly due to its being a magnificent work of literary art. But its art is seductive, and so should not count as a factor in rational deliberations about the truth or falsity of its ideas. What ideas it expresses is not so easy to decide, since, as usual, Plato does not present his views but offers stories, often stories of rational dialogues, in lieu of rational dialogues with his readers. The idea that art is a mere luxury is presented there first as an ode to *Eros*, where *Eros* is described as spoiled, lusty, exhilarated, full of joy, resting on plush cushions in a grand mansion. This image of art as mere luxury is rejected with disdain and displeasure by Socrates, Plato's hero and teacher, who in his turn presents *Eros* as a street urchin whose thirst for the object of his love is powerful — tremendous and obsessive (*Symp*. 203c).

Unfortunately these two views are still the popular ones. They are endorsed by the two most popular philosophies in the western world, the Enlightenment and the Romantic. They also serve wrong ends in both. The view of art as mere luxury was accepted within the Enlightenment movement which was the first modern scientific movement. It was taken for granted that reason equals science equals proof in the (Baconian) sense of rationality and irrationality as all or nothing, which soon became part of the tradition, or the received view. The Enlightenment movement did not quite know what to do with art, and it took for granted that the best use that art can be put to is to make science more attractive to people not yet converted to its cause; for the rest, they took art to be a mere luxury, and of marginal consequence. The idea that all play is and should stay marginal, is very important in all traditions and is known imprecisely as flagellism or as asceticism or as Puritanism. All of these labels are inaccurate, as flagellism is the preference to inflict pain on oneself, asceticism is the training of oneself not to desire any luxury (especially sex, of course), and Puritanism is at the very least the preference for hard work over play. Hostility to play as such, to

15. At least this is our response. We are not sure it is universal. We feel pity for the successful princes of the Roman Catholic Church but we do not know that this attitude is shared by Roman Catholics, especially those families who see it as an honour to give their sons and daughters to the Church.

luxury as such, is important and shared by many philosophies. It is expressly stated by the great mediaeval thinker Moses Maimonides, the most important and influential of all Jewish philosophers. Following Jewish tradition, he proscribed all flirtation and all fore-play and declared that only feeble minds were interested in art, even sacred art, including scriptural legends (end of his *Codex*).

It should be stressed that even though it is true that art is play and a luxury, still it is misleading in several ways. It is obvious that we do not have a clear, fixed criterion to demarcate between necessity and luxury. When we remember how people survive in concentration camps, we know that most of what we deem necessity can be dispensed with and yet some would rather die than reduce themselves so. What this amounts to is that freedom is a luxury that some are willing to defend with their lives. Freedom is freedom of choice, and choice amounts to luxury, since we can survive without freedom and without choice. So, luxury as such is no luxury but essential to our lifestyle. This or that item of luxury can be dispensed with, but luxury as such cannot be — at least in the sense that we take the lifestyle that includes freedoms and art as essential enough to be willing to fight and even die for it. So, when we speak of luxury we have to distinguish between the personal and the social aspect of the matter. These two differ widely, in reference to the arts and otherwise. Spending large sums of money for expensive medications is not a luxury when considered from the viewpoint of the sick person, but socially this certainly is a luxury, since most societies can survive the demise of all their sick people. Strong emotions are involved here: most of us do not wish to live in a society where breeding to replace the dead becomes the chief end. This option is too appalling to be taken seriously. But once we rule this option out of the question, we see the shallowness of the argument that we can give up art as not essential to life, as a luxury that can be dispensed with.

The point touched upon is very general, and it has to do with the aim of life and the aim of social organisations and other great questions that take us well beyond the arts and their philosophy. But this much can be said here. The religious tradition of the West, that distinguishes the West from the East no less than science and technology and no less than other specific cultural traits, includes specific ideas about the work ethic. The work ethic is also too broad a subject to discuss here, but we can say here that most Western preaching about work includes the curse that befell Adam as he was expelled from the Garden of Eden: in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread. This was taken by many misanthropes to mean that hard labour becomes humans, that it is good for them. Today there are few who adhere to this idea so dogmatically as to find all labour-saving devices evil. Nevertheless, we are not as free of all of its corollaries as we should be. In particular, we still take it for granted that work, play, and study are separate, that unless study or play are also work for a professional scholar or player, one's chief concern should be work, and study and play should serve work as handmaids. Thus, when a politician says, we should invest more in education because we need more engineers in the twenty-first century, it sounds reasonable, and no one counters, we should invest more in education because education is a good in itself and empowers and pleasures its recipients and

because we can afford it. So most increases in the education budget go to science and technology, not to the arts; scientific training becomes increasingly technically oriented, and even for the arts this becomes increasingly so.

The alternate idea abroad is that as much as possible, work, study and play should intermingle. Work should be fun, and intellectually and artistically challenging. Such an intermingling would involve reforms of the workplace, reform of education and of schools, and reforms of science. Those who oppose the latter take comfort from the philosophy of science of Michael Polanyi, which presents science as a tradition. There is something in this.[16] But as ardent advocates of the autonomy of the individual we do not like Polanyi's use of his deviation from traditional rationalism in his defence of the authority of science and that of its leadership. It is puzzling that Polanyi's idea of science education as apprenticeship has not led to a more liberal and playful and work-integrated view. Rather, our society does all it can to submerge and ignore the connection art should obviously have with play and love and work and learning. This should suffice as a commentary on the influence of the presentation, in Plato's *Symposium*, of the theory of art as luxury and of his objections to it.

The second theory, Socrates' theory of *Eros* as passionate, obsessive, and necessary, is the more popular theory. It dovetails nicely with the irrationalist view of art and is advocated especially forcefully by the irrationalist movement also known as Romanticism or the Reaction. Also, it is in the interest of some professional artists and of some taste leaders to defend it just as much as it is in the interest of some scientists to defend the view of art as mere luxury. Both positions are objectionable, since obviously we must use a sense of proportion here. The social prestige of science being so much greater than that of the arts, artists have to fight harder for their view and therefore it is the more popular. They succeed because science is less accessible to non-professionals than art, and because there is a feeling that there is a need of some balance. Science has its strength in one part of life, in reason; art has its strength in the other part of life, in emotion. Further, scientists tend to lump together art and religion. This is possibly reasonable, possibly not — arguments go both ways — but it is the occasion to offer another idea of a balanced view. Science is strong in the West; art and religion are strong in the East. This is a preposterous confusion that is not worth discussing. Let us ignore the attractions of the theory and stick to the theory itself for a while.

The theory of art as a necessity is exemplified by the fact that a number of leading artists are willing to starve rather than compromise their art or work in professions other than their artistic speciality. Such people, it is suggested, deem art their obsession. This is at times true, but not always, and it is certainly neither a guarantee nor a prerequisite for art, let alone for great art. Nor is it a prerequisite for great art that it should go unrecognised for a time and its originator suffer neglect, or that art created in pain should focus on pain. Still worse, Plato's view that beauty is truth is puzzling. We do not know what he meant by this, as it may be argued that he meant truthfulness rather than truth, and even truthfulness is problematic, though evidently there is in some sense

16. For details see Popper 1949.

truth in art. The situation was further aggravated when the Reaction reversed the formula: not beauty is truth but truth is beauty. Martin Heidegger said, there is scientific truth and poetic truth, and poetic truth is higher. This allowed him to stick to some falsehoods as poetic truths.

g) Truth in Art

There is a great truth in the Romantic theory of art. It is the view that art is very important. Many people will gladly make great sacrifice, perhaps even give up their lives, in order to rescue a work of art from the flames. This is certainly true and very important. Why? It is hard to say.

That it is hard to say why art is deeply important was taken very seriously by the Romantic theory of rationality. In that view, truth is not a matter of endorsing an informative sentence. The truth on central matters of life and death is to be decided by strong feelings. This theory is peddled under its new twentieth century label of "existentialism". But it is nineteenth century, and it is little more than the rejection of science as 'cold' reason in favour of excitement as 'warm' emotion, the rejection of science as superficial in favour of excitement and strong emotion as deep. There is not much to be said in favour of it. When young people hold it, they meet with indulgence and with affection; when great artists hold it, they are met with the veneration that is accorded to their profound commitment to art; when politicians hold it, George Santayana has observed, they conclude that the Romantic philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is right, that there is no place in my environment for the ugly things that my neighbour happens to be. Nevertheless, Heidegger's variation — artistic truth is higher than scientific truth — became very popular, even after Santayana was proved tragically correct and after Romanticism justified if not suggested the extermination of humans who do not and cannot grasp certain beautiful truths.[17] It is understandable that Heidegger was popular in Germany after World War II: he helped alleviate the intolerable sense of guilt, shame, and stupidity felt by many of his countrymen. Even his own ambiguous share in Nazi ideology and practice was taken as an asset. (He was tempted, like all of us.) But why did it appeal in other countries? Partly because he flattered their ignorance of science and told them that the pleasure they have in reading a poem is much deeper than others have in comprehending natural science. This flattery, like all flattery, can and should be ignored. There is a better argument in favour of Heidegger's view: he replaced the untenable traditional (Baconian) view of irrationality and rationality as all or nothing with a view that recognises the rational value that we put on art.

To discuss the idea that artistic truth is higher than scientific truth we need to know what truth in art is and why we feel strongly about both truth of

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17. See George Santayana 1968 p. 131, "A lover of the beautiful must wish almost all his neighbours out of the way . . . contagious misery spoiled one's joy, freedom, and courage. Disease should not be nursed but cauterised; the world must be made clean. Now there is a sort of love of mankind, a jealous love of what man night be, in this much decried maxim of unmercifulness. Nietzsche rebelled . . . His heart was tender enough, but his imagination was impatient." This is the same sentiment as that which Popper describes as utopian canvas cleaning. (See also his 1945, Ch. 9.)

information and truth of art. Plato's view of beauty as truth plain and simple is not helpful at all, as the question remains, what differentiates beautiful artistic truth from beautiful scientific truth? Only if we have an idea about this can we discuss Heidegger's preference for one over the other. The short answer would be that artistic truth is fidelity to a tradition, a genre, and their associated conventions. It is not absolute because artists also reject and renew tradition, genre, and convention. This is why Gombrich historicises art. What stands as continuation of the tradition, the genre, the conventions will be disputed and will be settled only retrospectively and only pro-tem. Revolutions of artists, traditions, genres, and conventions are part of art worlds. Scientific truth is not about fidelity to science. It is about fidelity to the facts of the world. It comes in units, usually sets of sentences that comprise worldviews, theories, hypotheses, equations, and so on. Each unit is weighed for its truth, or exempted pro tem as an assumption or even as a mere working hypothesis. Its task is to explain the world, and so it is measured first and foremost against the facts of the world. There are parallels to the tradition in art in that a unity that fails to cohere with the body of science may be hastily judged wanting. But there always remain the facts of the world as a court of appeal. As Gellner puts it, the wells of scientific cognition are outside the walls of the city, outside the control of all authorities. The theory hastily dismissed has avenues of appeal. As illustration let us return to the story of a bureaucrat's harassment of an ordinary citizen. We remember that the story is possibly true, but that we usually do not mind that. But at times we do mind. When? There is a simple answer and it has to do with the unity of the work of art. Let us present and discuss this unity.

Take a detective thriller again. There are many styles for authors of thrillers to choose from. The author may take what is known as God's viewpoint: the author knows all that goes on in the story and tells it to the reader in a chronological order. Concealing from the reader any piece of information in such a case is a violation of the author's own rules. The difficulty, the challenge that the author faces here is to create tension that should keep the reader spellbound. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is famous exactly because it is so full of tension even though the reader knows all that there is to know as soon as it happens. This is very difficult to bring off. So alternatively, the author can tell the reader all that the detective knows, and here the first person singular of the detective may but need not be favoured. Or the point of view of another observer may be taken, particularly that of a child or of an innocent bystander, especially a foreigner. This will make the story intriguing. What is important is not to cheat on the chosen set-up. We have here a simple matter of artistic truth; not sufficient, not intriguing, and pertaining to a rather low art form. Nevertheless, here we do have an idea of artistic truth that is close enough to scientific truth and so it is hopefully helpful.

For, the question is, why do we object to an author cheating? Certainly the cheating is not immoral. It is, nonetheless, disappointing, and in this sense immoral, though not much more than breaking a promise of a piece of cake. Moreover, some authors cheat and get away with it. We conjecture that all art includes some sort of cheating — of the kind that the public appreciates. To show

this all one need do is to consider magic. Magic certainly is not credible, yet it is allowed in some kinds of literature and forbidden in others. Even in the literature that allows magic, the problem is that with magic powers the author can do everything and that is too easy. So to have some challenge it is necessary that even Superman meets with something that limits his superpowers ─ Kryptonite. Easiness is what makes coincidences so unacceptable in plots. Yet Bernard Shaw found a way around this objection. On the whole, Shaw is a good example for our discussion, as he had one rule that he followed in almost all of his plays: he found the rationale behind any rule and tried to violate the rule without violating its rationale. Thus, since coincidences are unacceptable because they are so devoid of challenge, he wrote a play, *You Never Can Tell*, where coincidences pile up in a specific manner, and so the challenge is reinstated. Some works of Tom Stoppard, and more so all of those of Robbe-Grillet, are so bizarre, they qualify with ease as fantasies, possibly devoid of all challenge. W. C. Field's *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break* is also bizarre, yet it is possibly a bit more challenging. Shaw is in a totally different category: What he wanted to do in the theatre, he said, was to preach political sermons. So he found a simple way to intrigue his audience and he went on with the job. This made his plays too prosaic for some critics, namely not challenging enough and lacking the luxury of poetry. Also, the technique permitted him to preach the most important lesson he had to offer, and it is that people can change. It was the most sacred rule of the theatre, from Antiquity, that even Ibsen and Chekhov did not dare break, that characters do not alter. And Shaw made them change in a few plays, the most famous of which is *Pygmalion*, better known as *My Fair Lady*, but also *The Devil's Disciple* and *Androcles and the Lion*, all of which were made into movies.

As a result of the modernist assault on artistic conventions as such, the question presents itself: what rules are permitted and what deviation from them is permitted? Whatever the public will endorse, said Somerset Maugham, and illustrated it with an amusing story about a person who got a flush handed to him three times in a row. The point is that the story was found challenging but not too much. So the question is, what makes for a challenge? Were an answer to this question ever to be found, further original art would be impossible.

Sassower and Cicotello (2000) present a different answer. They argue that any deviation from artistic rules is permitted, provided the artist simultaneously insists that it is art and that it be treated on a par with other art. The *avant-garde* technique is to cause a sensation by breaking rules, especially of decorum, propriety, and subject matter, while insisting on being part of the art world whose critics, connoisseurs, collectors, and public are expected to pay respectful attention. Sensation is to block indifference. Art is both hide-bound (hence this innovation) and important (hence this innovation is important). Theirs is an excellent example of how the sociological overview can explain the behaviour of artists, or would-be artists, and of their reception. It also has the benefit that it need not try to adjudicate issues of aesthetic merit. Since a claim is being made to add to tradition, even while attacking it, the long historical view that we recommend, following Gombrich, is most appropriate.

So we better agree that good art follows some rules, and without boring the public. More cannot be said now. We also know that there is room for artists to cheat, and many if not all artist do cheat — not only in narrative art but also in other arts. What is the cheating that is used in non-narrative art? Is the matter of the choice of rules a matter of utter freedom? If not is there room for cheating too?

We do not know, but we can offer examples. When invited to design an extension to an ancient building - say a college - the architect faces a conflict. Should the old rules be obeyed and the extension designed as if it were built simultaneously with the original? Should the original be ignored and the new rules followed with no attention to the old? This last option is never right. It is taken for granted that architects do not design a building with no attention to its location. The first option is also usually quite unacceptable, and for different reasons to do with the needs of the modern user of the premises. What then is the architect to do? We suggest that interpretation and assessment of the result, whatever it is, should depend on the comprehension of this very problem. Again we see that artists have to design their works in accord with certain given conditions, but with certain freedoms to add to the given constraints, and they are expected to respect standing rules and their own claims without however being dull and boring.

Two further points. First, there are challenges to the producers and to the consumers of art and these differ. Second, artists can cheat, and sometimes get away with it but more often not. This, we have suggested, is where truth in art comes in. Artists face challenges, and at time the challenges are too great, and then artists may compromise. Or, artists can meet the challenge but not the public, and then the demand is voiced that the artist should compromise and become more accessible to the public. This is voiced by the public's representatives, or rather those who appoint themselves to this role. This is very well known, and described in detail in many works of non-fiction, including biographies, and in fiction of all sorts, including dramas, novels, and poems.

So true art turns out to be like true friendship and true love, a matter of fidelity. Here we may see that the pressures on artists to conform are very strong, and that they should not be blamed for infidelity, especially since the demands of fidelity are often excessive.

Chapter 6
THE VARIETIES OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

a) The Contexts of Art. Art comes in a variety of contexts that determine that it delivers a variety of experiences. The ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience is breath-taking beauty. **b) The Place of Aesthetic Experience.** The ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience is itself variegated. Various associated experiences and emotions are parasitic on experience with art proper. Natural beauty and various lesser kinds of art are similarly parasitic. The aesthetic experience can no longer be equated with beauty. **c) The *avant-garde* Revisited.** Breaking the confines of the beautiful was decisive for the modern *avant-garde.* **d) Narrative.** The literary arts take primacy because they are discursive. **e) The Message.** The message has artistic significance and art true to itself may be as unpalatable as any other form of truth.

> Is it possible that the intense exaltation which comes to our knowledge of the greatest works of art and the milder pleasure that comes of our more everyday dealing with art, are phases of the same emotion, as passion and gentle affection are phases of love …? Is this exaltation the orgasm, as it were, of the artistic instinct …?
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> -- West (1928, p. 196)

> Certain sensations occasioned by external causes have the power to produce in you what is known as the aesthetic emotion. But the odd thing about aesthetic emotion is that it may be produced by art of indifferent quality. There is no reason to suppose that it is less sincere, less genuine and less productive in the person who gets it from Balfe's *Bohemian Girl*, say, than in him who gets it from Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*.
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> -- Maugham (1949, p. 323)

The necessarily social character of art does not preclude recognising and discussing the value of what is traditionally called 'aesthetic experience' and which is usually held to be of immense value to both society and the individual.

a) The Contexts of Art

Art is best studied in context, its context being the art world and its own integration in society at large. Gombrich wrote of this at length. There is a standard dispute as to the question, does the understanding of a work of art require familiarity with the intentions of the artist? Gombrich says, this is the wrong question. The correct one is, what was the context in which the work of

art was created? Without some answer to this question, he says, the very ability to comprehend the work of art in question is impaired. A very funny example of this is found in Jules Dassin's movie *Never On Sunday* (1960), where an intelligent, poorly educated Greek woman sees an ancient Greek tragedy and totally misconstrues it in a manner that informs us more about contemporary Greece than about Antiquity. The sociology of art is not an external matter but a natural corollary of aesthetic considerations. Tolstoy had a point when he demanded that art strengthen the mores of society (*Kreutzer Sonata* ch. 23). But he exaggerated when he said that this is all that there is to art, since he thereby reduced the challenge that society can offer art. A changing society can offer new challenges to art, including what it considers art, for whatever reason, and these reasons themselves have to be further investigated. Such a perspective is missing in Tolstoy, who takes Christianity as a social sheet anchor.

Putting art in social context and exploring how much the latter has changed yields a corollary: the aesthetic experience that is described as breath-taking beauty — we will call this the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience — is not the only aesthetic experience there is. Different arts and different audiences, as an empirical fact, have different kinds of experience. We will therefore devote the rest of this chapter to the variety of artistic experiences.[1]

b) The Place of Artistic Experience

The ultimate aesthetic experience is enigmatic on quite a few counts. Here let us mention one strange fact: although it is an all-embracing experience that obliterates all alternative emotion, it comes in a variety of colours. It appears different when caused by a Renaissance picture than when caused by a modern one. Also, when caused by a Pissarro or an Utrillo picture it is different than when it is caused by a van Gogh. The two former artists have an immense power of throwing you at once into the experience and bestowing on you a profound sense of peace and tranquillity that the latter neither could nor wished to impart. We may view such powers as parasitic on the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience, and not confuse them with the emotions that may also be viewed as parasitic on the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience. These emotions happen more frequently than the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience and they are neither identical with it nor minor replicas of it, though they may appear in its stead. There are a few such experiences.

The first is the experimental experience: when we read a new author or listen to a new composition or go to a gallery to see a new artist or a new art school, we are participating in the social experiment initiated by the original artist, and this is what make social any artwork, however individual and however experimental. We may find ourselves where we do because we are in search of the ultimate or sublime experience. But, to repeat, this is the great difference between experimenting and going over the classics, particularity going over a

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1. This alludes to *The Varieties of Religious Experience* of William James (James 1902). Since there is no clear boundary between religion and art, universally admitted since the rise of Romanticism, the novelty of our discussion surprises us. The romantic view masks the varieties of aesthetic experience as unimportant.

familiar classic text, remembering that we had a primary aesthetic experience and expecting a repeat performance. As already mentioned, art lovers often resent artistic experimentation as it has a low yield of the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience, and they compare that low yield with the high yield of canonical works, ignoring the fact that at the time, when the old art was new, its yield was lower than it is nowadays, after the filters of time. They ignore not so much the fact that contemporary art is offered unfiltered whereas the old is filtered; they ignore the fact that when we experiment with contemporary art we are participating — as audiences — in the process of artistic creation, and we are thereby able to sense the thrill of the experiment.

Thrill of the experiment is different from aesthetic experience. We can see this in a work of art that conveys this thrill, such as a novel (Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence*) a play or a movie (*Pollock*; *Frida*) about an experimental artist. The artistic merit of the repetition of a popular item in small variations is that there may be improvement from item to item, too small for later generations to care about, but interesting enough to contemporaries. Here the economics of art, based on the popularity of an art item that renders it profitable to repeat in variation, the experimental aspect of art, the idea of progress, and the very possibility that the public can participate in the experiment, all collude in a manner that is obvious enough not to require elaboration. Nonetheless it is seldom noted.

Another parasitic experience is the lower-level sense of beauty: a work of art may be beautiful and distinctly enjoyable without leading to the ecstasy of the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience. This is a simple empirical fact; most of the experiences associated with the consumption of art do not reach the ultimate level, yet anyone who was ever blessed with that experience will always be an art lover in the sense of always remembering it and waiting for its return.

There is also the very opposite pole to the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience, and we can call it the primary one: the child enjoying the sound of an expression, the colour of a toy, anything, really. We are not much removed from the child when we enjoy simple friendly natural surroundings that are not nearly as impressive as a striking sunset or a panoramic view. Also, the experience of a panoramic view varies greatly. Think of a panoramic view on a mountain road and compare it to that seen from a mountain-top reached the hard way. We know too little about the bodily and the mental mechanisms associated with physical effort but it is well-known that the body does create its own stimulants and opiates that can indeed make the sense of achievement and of the panoramic beauty blend in a powerful way on the foundation of these cerebral chemicals and the sentiments with which they are associated.

The borderline between natural beauty and art is a daunting topic, beginning with the discussion of *objets trouvées*, of found art, like beautiful pebbles or pieces of wood that are placed on the mantelpiece together with other, not too strikingly artistic odds and ends. Gombrich says, found art is art by virtue of its being found and picked up, and even then it is not much of art, as it is parasitic on art rather than a response to some challenge. He says the same about the art painted by an ape or by a computer and even of a snapshot selected

from a pile. This line of thought is slightly dangerous, as it slides towards the naïve institutional view of Clement Greenberg, Arthur Danto, and George Dickie already mentioned, that anything selected by a museum (or a connoisseur) is thereby sanctioned as art and so it is art proper. This move makes curators the real artists and the artists their tools. Yet the art of curators is different: their art is of finding and deciding on which art items to select. This becomes obvious when they are in doubt: then they want to know what to select rather than be flattered by the opinion that they are unquestioned authorities. The circularity of the naïve institutional view results from overlooking the fact that selection is secondary to creation and reflects the social ambience in which curators operate no less than their proficiency as selectors. Curators display this proficiency in their organisation of museums; unfortunately, many curators who have artistic sense on the matter of organising museums can hardly use it, as many museums are too poorly endowed. But it should not be overlooked that the laying out of a museum is an art — as any interior decoration can be, though in a different manner and hopefully more significantly so. People who have visited museums that are very well organised have no trouble seeing the point and the point refutes naïve institutionalism.[2]

As the context of a work of art determines what is the challenge and what is the luxury involved, one can easily see the art in different artefacts and appreciate them differently relative to their excellence in being whatever they are. Thus the art in a piece of reportage depends on its being an excellent piece of reportage, and those not familiar with its background will find it hard to appreciate its art even if they are great art connoisseurs. This is most conspicuous in the case of great scientific papers. Clearly some scientific papers are great works of art, yet most art lovers are not aware of the fact. It is a familiar fact that Galileo was a great literary artist, and some of his statements are cited because of their striking beauty, but most historians of literature do not notice. The early papers of Einstein excel as literary masterpieces on top of being scientific ones, and certainly most art lovers will not understand them and so they will not appreciate their beauty. Yet science is used in some art, such as science fiction, especially fiction that has little to do with science other than the

2. It is interesting that George Dickie was more concerned with secret art, that is, art kept in a bottom drawer or made by a naïf with no conception of the art world. He thus reformulated institutionalism in a passive voice to allow for such cases. We prefer to bite the bullet. In the same way that Popper showed that Robinson Crusoe could not possibly be doing science (except perhaps to the extent that he still was a member of his society), a parallel argument shows that secret art is not art at all. (The art put on display once and then hidden in the bottom of a pyramid or a secret grave, says Gombrich, is still art just because its service when put on display involved all sorts of traditions that sanction it for this very service.) Presentation in the art world is necessary rather than sufficient. All that this requires is that we differentiate two roles that are usually fused in one person: the actual creator of the artefact from whoever positions it in the art world. This is hardly innovative: agents, dealers, connoisseurs and other talent-scouts and talent-spotters introduce latent, potential, and putative artworks to the art world. Until works are positioned in the art world they have not "arrived" as works of art. Dickie's error was to treat institutional positioning as sufficient rather than necessary. This makes the institutions infallible. We would consider that consequence a *reductio*.

general ethos of science.[3] How much does this art and the artistic experience associated with it differ from the art of cross-word puzzle making or solving? The very question, we say, is so very important as it is the admission that there is no sharp division between the arts and the sciences. Let us show how important all this is.

George Orwell demanded of style that it be invisible, like a clear window pane. This is commendable, yet there is no doubt that some excellent stylists do not abide by it. We prefer Orwell's view to the view of rhetoric as a great art form, though we cannot deny that even a piece of rhetoric or oratory can be beautiful. That some stylists excel in the very idiosyncrasy of their style and are style artists is hard to deny. Orwell was a journalist, however, so it is clear that his maxim as particularly fitting for his own craft. Contrast this with the idea that the purpose of art is to bring about contemplation, as advocated by R. G. Collingwood, one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, who wrote two impressive but rather difficult books on aesthetics. Clearly, the idea that art is contemplative is close to the idea of art as devoid of all style, even though the style of a work of art may be what provokes contemplation. Contemplation is caused, we suggest, by a kind of challenge, and there are different kinds of challenge, leading to contemplation, intense or not so intense, as the case may be. Orwell and Collingwood were both high-brows, and this book suggests that there are other legitimate kinds of aesthetic experience and other legitimate kinds of art that invoke them. Hence we oppose high-browism. Collingwood complains bitterly that Bernard Shaw does not challenge his directors and actors, as he mounts detailed stage directions on them that tie their hands.[4] We do agree that some strains of modern art are over-prescriptive, and so seek to suppress the spontaneity of the performers. It comes about due to a pragmatic contradiction in the Romantic theory of the artist as a genius whose inner feelings are the contents, the message, of a work of art. The genius who composes competes with the artist who performs for the same kudos. In fact they are co-dependent.[5] When the performer loses spontaneity the play element of the work of art is lost, and so the performance becomes increasingly mechanical, which serves neither performer nor author. Fortunately there is much more leeway than meets the untutored eye. Directors and actors often ignore Shaw's

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3. Jules Verne dismissed H. G. Wells with contempt: "he invents". These days we consider Verne an adventure-story writer, hardly a science-fiction writer, just because the science he employs in his fiction is real enough. Likewise, comparing Michael Crichton's *Andromeda Strain* (1969) with his *Twister* (1996) the former leans towards science-fiction the latter towards a science-based adventure story.

4. Collingwood may also have been turning into a virtue a contingent historical fact. Shakespeare towers over English language drama. As a matter of historical fact, however, the copies of his plays are flawed in many ways including stage directions. None of them is authentically from the author's hand in the way that the plays of Shaw are. Maugham showed a better sense of proportion when he mentioned the defect of elaborate stage direction in passing ("The Rise and Fall of the Detective Novel").

5. It is strange that Baroque composers left much room for the performers of their works to express themselves, whereas such hyper-romantic ones as Gustav Mahler wrote detailed instructions. Perhaps, however, this is only an expression of the idea that composers fill too much emotional space to leave room for performers.

prescriptions. He knew it, and it could be that the stage directions are more for readers or for reading groups.

Collingwood's high-browism is all of a piece with the traditional literature on art that discusses almost exclusively beauty, natural, artificial, and sublime — the ultimate artistic experience. This suggests that all artistic experiences are those of beauty, and that the ultimate or sublime artistic experience is merely an intense sense of beauty. Gombrich does not discuss aesthetics as such, but merely the psychology of art. We go further and distinguish between the artistic experience and the sense of beauty. The thesis that the two are indistinguishable is empirically refuted. There are artists who excel in sheer beauty; Praxiteles, Raphael, Murillo, Haydn, Keats. But beauty itself is no guarantee of great art, as testified by a whole genre of examples, called Kitsch. Whatever *Kitsch* is, it clearly is parasitic on art, as Thomas Kulka suggests, so that it carries no challenge and so is poor art (Kulka 1988). That should not be over-generalised: there are examples of beautiful yet inferior art that are not quite Kitsch, in that they are not quite parasitic. For our taste, works like the poetry of Walter de la Mare and *The Lord of the Rings* cycle of books and movies are such, as well as Wagner's intolerable *Siegfried Idyll*, Arnold Schoenberg's youthful *Gurrelieder*, Olivier Messiaen's *Tourangalila Symphonie*, not to mention the stunning opening scene of the famous box-office success *Ben Hur*. Works that belong to this category are at times called saccharine; this epithet signifies beauty devoid of challenge and thus inferior art.[6]

As we saw there is massive beauty that is poor art, let us mention great art that is not intended to be beautiful in the sense that the works of Praxiteles, Raphael, and Haydn are. We have mentioned Jacob Epstein's *Ecce Homo*. We should mention also the famous *Guernica* of Picasso — except that we do not think it is great and suppose that political considerations led to exaggeration of its artistic value such that no authoritative critic dares to correct.

There are two genres or art that intentionally shun beauty, the Gothic and the German expressionist. Gothic art is a mix of the enjoyable and the repulsive. It is usually visceral, and so manipulative: the vampire pouncing on the innocent heroine in her bridal clothing is the paradigm. It is hard to find good works in this genre, but we do have ready-made examples in the better works of Edgar Allan Poe, such as "The Masque of the Red Death". The celebrated Charles Baudelaire, author of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, admired Poe; this collection of poems of his is a pretentious piece of Gothic that is better ignored. German expressionism is a movement that is hard to characterise, but that has certain qualities that make it easy to spot, as its works include arty distortions, such as the inability to draw a house without making it look like it is tipping over, so that it easily elicits the sense of claustrophobia that so strongly emanates from the silent movie *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. *Caligari* was canonised at a time

6. The operative words here are "devoid of challenge". An artist can take it as a challenge to refute any such claim and thereby produce a masterpiece. Thus, in the present case, the production of *Kitsch* that is art informed both Modigliani and Chaplin. But such challenges are hard to meet and so they may lead to a lot of failed art. This invites more toleration than it is the wont of art critics to show. Also, the challenge to refute this idea has produced lively, lovely pieces that comprise terrific pastiches of *clichés*. Example: A*ll About Eve* (1950).

when the notion of films as art was derided by the professors and priests. The distortion common in German expressionist pictures is shared by all of Marc Chagall's works, but he is not an expressionist and even less is he German. The peak of German expressionist drawings is images of fun scenes distorted to make them look repulsive, not quite in a Gothic way and not in the way of, say Honoré Daumier. Georg Grosz is famous for drawing decadent capitalist society. Whether they like it or not, no one in their senses will say his work is beautiful the way even a minor Baroque sketch or melody is beautiful.

German expressionism has its counterpart in literature, before World War I and after World War II and in between. The works of Günther Grass are the latest works in this literary genre. In music there is something of German expressionism in the mature works of Arnold Schoenberg such as his very famous, eerie and dramatic *Pierrot Lunaire*. No one suggests that he wanted to write beautiful works, and he certainly did not try to shock his audience the way his disciple Alban Berg did in his *Wozzek*. His *Refugee from Ghetto Warsaw* testifies to his ability to stay remote from any Gothic or otherwise Romantic art. This work, together with Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet to the End of the Days* are paradigms for impressive works of art that are not meant to be beautiful in the least. We think that this is true also of Schubert's *Trio opus 99* and more so his *Trio opus 100*, but this is a controversial matter.

We have mentioned that Adorno and Marcuse emphasised the ugliness of modern art. Freud already detested modern art for its alleged ugliness. But absence of beauty, in the sense of Praxiteles and Raphael and Haydn is not necessarily ugliness. There are artists who do seek the ugly because they think that realism demands that reality should be copied unadorned, and the real world is surely full of ugly things.[7] Then some artists, especially Andy Warhol, wanted art to be as boring as reality can be. Already Borges poked fun at this idea, suggesting that true realism demands that art should be like a map on a scale of one-to-one. Rebecca West had anticipated him when she wrote: "We feel impatient with Royal Academy stuff of that sort [exact representation] because really the makers of it ought to have learned by this time that a copy of the universe is not what is required of art; one of the damned thing[s] is ample" (West 1928, 131).

Nevertheless, there are those who seek ugliness in order to celebrate it; they may hold incorrect aesthetics, they may try to be shocking, they may be simply poor artists. The significant modern trend in the arts is to seek aesthetic quality, though not beauty in the sense of Praxiteles and Raphael and Haydn. Such work may be favoured or dismissed for alleged ugliness; until the identification of the aesthetic with the beautiful is abandoned, they will be misunderstood. Here is a clear example of how art critics could correct an error and thus help the public open up to new kinds of art experiences. Here, also, we can see the value of the narrative arts as mediator and critic: it is the narrative arts that help audiences notice that a work of art can be engaging and interesting and thought-provoking without being beautiful in the traditional sense. The theatre of

7. The paradigm is artistic photography, and a leading artist is Diane Arbus. We find it difficult to share the prevalent admiration for her work.

the absurd is an example, and the cinema equivalent testifies to the ability of ordinary publics to follow it. The literary genres that are typically modern likewise do not aim at the aesthetic experience that is beauty in the traditional sense even if they do aim at the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience. Hence, the traditional central thesis that the ultimate or sublime aesthetic experience is an intensified experience of beauty is empirically refuted by the ability to find this experience while looking at the painful works of the twentieth century painter Chaim Soutine or of Francis Bacon, or by reading a stirring poem of e. e. cummings or a terrifying one by Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon on war, or by watching a play by Pirandello who tried to put his whole audience on the stage to make them feel the horrors of an empty universe.

c) The *avant-garde* Revisited

We need a different theory of the *avant-garde*. The Romantic theory assumes that geniuses with ambition are leaders and so they are in the forefront. This is empirically refuted: leaders are often conservative and untalented, and the *avant-garde* are at times not leaders and less ambitious. Romanticism confuses the individuals whose works are models with the leadership. Both the arts and the sciences have leaders, and these usually have pretences to being contributors and role models, but this pretence does not often outlast them.[8] The *avant-garde* themselves are often too busy with their work to consider the needs of their community of artists. Like scientists, *avant-garde* artists experiment. Their experimentation may succeed and put them in the forefront and render them role models. The experiments may concern forms, especially when new art forms are present, like the camera or the electronic sound effect or digital sound or visual effects. Experimenting with form may be fruitless, it may be decadent; it may also be very fruitful. Experimenting with contents often means seeking expression that is artistic but does not aim at the beautiful. This is the true *avant-garde*.

What is the cause of the phenomenon of the *avant-garde*? We still do not know whether it is new or old, but we suggest that, even if it is not quite new, only today is it conspicuous in the arts because of the influence of Romanticism, because new art media are available, and, most significantly in our opinion, aesthetics has broken out of the confines of beauty. Art can still be beautiful, even if not by intent, but only in the twentieth century were art forms tried with special regard not for beauty but for other qualities.

This raises again our view of antecedents. To find predecessors to artists is not to deprive them of their originality. The great though non-beautiful art of Bosch and of Brueghel was always admired, yet it was twentieth-century *avant-garde* artists, not they, who have broken away from the popular identification of art with beauty. And it was modern aestheticians with barely an antecedent, especially Gombrich, but also Maugham, who broke away from the aesthetics of

8. It is obviously harder to succeed as a pretentious scientist than as a pretentious artist. So let us add this. Of the two pairs of thinkers, Louis Pasteur and Claude Bernard, as well as Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein, all were great rôle models but only two, Pasteur and Bohr, were leaders in the romantic sense of holding court (as well as in the sense of the philosophers Michael Polanyi and Thomas Kuhn).

art as beauty in the traditional sense of beauty. Beauty is not only in the eye of the beholder, but it looked to be so as long as aesthetics limited the aesthetic experience to one kind. The variety of artistic experiences is a challenge to rethink aesthetics, to challenge the idea of its separateness or restriction to the fine arts, to come to terms with its pervasiveness.

Its pervasiveness, from everyday life (think, personal grooming), through work, the sciences, the arts, invites a rejection of any claim that aesthetic experience is rarefied, confined to the fine arts, or requires a special, disinterested, attitude. Aesthetic experience has grades and it has different components.

d) Narrative

There is another and cruder pay-off from the arts. That is the cognitive content of art, and especially of narrative art. The narrative arts and/or the verbal arts have a privileged place in reflection on values in the arts. This special place is explicable just as the result of these arts being closer to explicit statements of the consensus about views and values, in particular the public views of the value of art — as integrated in the fabric of society in which they are born, as offering the myths of that society, to use the ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss again, since myths, for him, are stories with morals.

An example would be the efforts of Guy de Maupassant to help people to be more open by telling them about the suffering that secrecy may cause. Take his very brief story "The Necklace". It tells of a woman who lost a valuable necklace that she had borrowed and who consequently spent years of her life quietly paying off a loan that she took to replace the necklace — only to discover that the necklace she had lost was fake. She could not confess the loss before it was made good, but by then the information she received in exchange for the confession, namely, that the necklace was fake, came too late. For a comic variation on the story see Max Ophuls's stylish movie, *Madame de …* (1953).

The message is not the whole story, nor is it its impact. There are other de Maupassant stories with the same moral, ending happily or not, that are not as impressive. One that ends happily and is charming yet not that impressive, is the one about a woman who hides from her husband her having had a child before marriage until she can conceal it no longer, and when he hears about it he says, bring the child to live with us, of course. This is not all there is to the stories just summarised. A summary of a story is not that story but another story. Borges specialised in telling summaries of stories instead of stories, and even instead of novels, and he thereby invented a totally new genre, akin to Charles Lamb's stories of Shakespeare but much superior to it. The proof of its novelty is that however superior Borges' art is, it does not displace other, more detailed art, nor is it supposed to.[9] More verbose art forms transmit not only different art, but also different messages.

Narrative art is central to life in every society. It is true for low art, with ballades, pulp novels, and movies as its modern paradigms and for high art, with

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9. This may be a slight exaggeration, given that Borges was highly critical of *War and Peace* for its sprawling details.

poetry, and the classics as its paradigms. What makes the classics, for example, more significant for art lovers than classical sculpture, is their being verbal, just like the lyrics of a pop ballade: the words are blunt and carry a message, often philosophical, even though starkly simple, about love and friendship, about truth and justice, and about the meaning of life, no less. There is a strong argument, a very strong argument, against all this: if you want to send a message, was Hollywood's unforgettable and correct maxim, call Western Union. No doubt, this argument is forceful and just: using the artistic medium to send a message may easily make a work of art mere propaganda, and propaganda may be cheap, even if it carries a message about love or friendship, about truth and justice, and even about the meaning of life. But look at the cheapest and at the most expensive verbal arts and you will see that they all concern just these themes; love and friendship, truth and justice, and yes, the meaning of life too. But it is not the message that makes a work of art, or else we could, indeed, sing telegrams and recite dry passages from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in public poetry sessions. This does not mean that art does not have messages, only that the art that conveys impressive messages need not be impressive. Can art be devoid of messages? We need not answer this question here (we take it up elsewhere in this book): one way or another we have to admit the empirical fact that the narrative and the verbal arts do regularly have messages.

As a mere message, a piece of prose or poetry or drama should be simple, and at times its very efficiency as a message is exactly what may make it art. And then we will reread the message, or re-enact it, not for its being a message but for its being so well put. For this we have to see the challenge and the great success in having met it: a laundry list may be as efficiently put as we can imagine without being a successful surmounting of any challenge. But a brief report in a most prosaic language describing horrors on a battlefield or daily life on a peaceful farm may do the trick. The reason for this must be obvious: an artist can easily take this as a challenge and produce artistic laundry lists. Dylan Thomas did this admirably in his *Under Milk Wood*, where he describes commodities on the shelves of a small food store in a small village.

The challenge is at times too obvious for words. When in Offenbach's *Bataclan* Zeus all of a sudden becomes invisible, the challenge of how to make the audience accept this fact is too obvious. For our part, we consider tremendous even the minor, silly hide-and-seek moves in plays by Molière that on the printed page seem impossible to perform convincingly but that, when well staged, send the audiences into uncontrollable laughter.

Perhaps the most obvious fact about art as message is observable when analysis is undertaken of any great work of art that frankly carries a message. Take the libretto of Mozart's *Magic Flute*, officially by Emanuel Schikaneder, but in fact in close collaboration with the composer. It does manage to convey a philosophy; the philosophy is that of the Enlightenment, and it is conveyed more in symbols, in emotional words, than in straight descriptions. Indeed, on one point, the hostility of the Enlightenment movement to prejudice, the authors lack a symbol and speak directly of prejudice — in addition to their objections to hate,

revenge and all that. But the high point of the metaphor is their reference to the gods, more specifically to the ancient Egyptian gods. It enables Mozart to introduce decidedly religious music without reference to Christianity. This, incidentally, contrasts nicely with Beethoven's already mentioned use of a Christian text as merely dramatic (his *Missa Solemnis*). Mozart conveyed the view of the philosophy of the Enlightenment as a religion or a religion-substitute: it is the religion of the siblinghood of humanity, we are told, and we are told a surprising lot about it in this libretto, though it is rather stilted (and, famously, inconsistent). Also, the libretto explores no less a motif than the view of the Enlightenment movement towards simple people (Papageno) who are not so educated as to understand or care for its messages (Tamino). By reference to Egyptian gods rather than the usual Greek ones, allusion is made to the Free Masons, as in the reference to the movement as an order. The reference to the religion of the Enlightenment through the use of a given religious symbolism as metaphor is very interesting and important and certainly not invented in that libretto, but the opera was a powerful vehicle for conveying this idea, together with the idea that the religion of the Enlightenment movement is that of the siblinghood of humanity, i.e. universal love and friendship. Finally as to love proper, carnal love between a man and a woman. The libretto raises what no one discussed before, the question of the attitude of members of the movement to their spouses: it is to be preferred that the spouse of an initiate should also be an initiate. We do not consider this the doctrine of the Free Masons and it still is not. But it probably was Mozart's faith, his own message of the meaning of love.

e) The Message

The message is not something unknown to audiences that has to be imparted to them in the manner say, of documentaries and semi-documentaries. Narrative and verbal arts tell us stories that we love to listen to, in as many variations as the story tellers can invent. This is why it is the art of telling that matters, and it is the subject-matter that gives the story its initial colour. The art of telling demands that we are told well in advance of the presence of a gun before it is used (Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*), and that the story of the presence of the gun be told not just in order to familiarise us with the fact but as a story illustrating something else, and then the story of the presence of the gun in the beginning and the story of the use of it in the end be linked somehow in a grand narrative that lends the play its unity and coherence. But if it is just a story of a killing or of a suicide we will not care for it; it must be of a certain sort, be it heroic or cowardly, rooted in high morals or greed or jealousy. And so the stage is set in a manner that mobilises the audience's moral sentiment rather than informs it — but a message is there all the same, a message that colours the aesthetic experience.

The point of this discussion is as follows. Hollywood's impatience with screenwriters who excuse the poverty of their scripts by boasting of having messages to convey is understandable. This, however, should not blind us to the fact that there are informative scripts that are artistic, nor to the fact that scripts do have messages, and even powerful ones, but are not so much means of communicating the messages, or vehicles of the messages: art works utilise their

messages for artistic ends.[10] Thus, the thirst for national liberation can be expressed in an opera like Aida, and the art of the opera should benefit from it. Otherwise it simply has a poor libretto. The artist describes a situation of stress, be it war or conquest, familiar to the audience or not, and then the stress is lifted in a dramatic manner. Just imagine: peace; peace on earth; no more war. This is the stuff that dreams are made of.

So much for the message of verbal or narrative art. The question before us now is, do the non-verbal or non-narrative arts have messages? Can they have messages? How? We observe that critics do seek messages in any work of art that they appreciate. They see in paintings illustrations for narratives. This is no doubt at times obviously a part of the art. Religious art is an integral part of art, at least in the West, and its aim is always to convey some message. This is true not only of mediaeval and renaissance art, but also of a modern statue of the *Virgin and Child* portrayed as members of ethnic minority groups such as *Our Lady from Soweto*, or even the new significance given to an old statue know as *The Black Madonna of Montserrat* (whose dark colour may be due to soot from candles lit in her honour).

Let us mention briefly one more example. There is a painting by Edvard Munch, less famous than his *The Scream*, but no less impressive, perhaps because Munch was a drunkard, of a man standing alone in the middle of a bar, lost (*In der Schenke* at The *Städelsches Kunstintitut und Städlische Gallerie Frankfurt/Main*). There is no need to elaborate on it; it is the kind of picture that reminds one of the alleged Confucian saying, one picture says more than a thousand words.

Two interesting points may be quickly made about the design of clothing-fashion. First, the art form in question is deemed base for two related but opposite reasons, its celebration of sex and its sexism. Alas, too many serious art critics oppose its sex, not its sexism. The feminists among them should oppose its sexism, not its celebration of sex as such. Though feminism is not necessarily positive in its attitudes to sex, a negative attitude to sex spells an anti-feminist attitude — not necessarily, but in contemporary Western tradition.[11] And so there are and should be changes in the fashion industry in the feminist direction, and this does and should offer ever more interesting challenges to clothing designers and to the exhibitors of clothing for both genders. That this is a straightforward matter is clear — at least by comparison with the traditional blatant sexism of so many art critics and aesthetes. Sir Kenneth Clark says in his famous monograph *The Nude*, the human body is a subject of so much artistic presentation because it is ugly. He does not mean that some people's bodies are not gorgeous. He means something that requires a sociological analysis before a useful aesthetic

10. Funnily enough, this very impatience, and the very thesis that art needs no big messages, is the message of a Hollywood movie, the 1941 *Sullivan's Travels* by Preston Sturges. Its message is that making simple folks laugh is more than enough as an artistic aim. It thus expresses the view also offered here.

11. Perhaps also in Islam. We are thinking of its treatment in the writings of Qutb. See these two sites, accessed 13 October 2005.
http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1253796
http://www.nmhschool.org/tthornton/mehistorydatabase/sayyid_qutb_on_women.htm

analysis of his work can begin. He says that the challenge of artists is to beautify rather than celebrate. Why? Why not be honest as Dürer was with his famous drawing of his mother, old and naked? Why do we find art in the unflattering representation of Dürer's mother, or of Rembrandt's mother, or of Whistler's no less famous mother, or of Degas' aunt (*The Bellelli Family*)? Why do we feel no conflict in the appreciation of these unflattering images together with the appreciation of the highly flattering figures of Rembrandt's wife Saskia and of the odalisques of Ingres? Because in each we find a different challenge, and we find a different kind of a challenge when we see a representation of natural beauty and a representation of its having faded away or of its absence. The comparisons between Rembrandt's early, lavish painting of Saskia and his later painting of the rustic Hendrickje perhaps shows that our natural receptiveness to natural beauty makes greater the challenge of appreciating the art of representation of faded beauty than of beauty. But this is only an aspect of the situation. Many pictures of Toulouse-Lautrec represent quite unattractive, quite faded beauties, and they have their irresistible charm that makes it possible to love and appreciate his art even with little challenge, so that he speaks to popular audiences as well as to the high art lover. Clark had a strange inability to accept the view that art is a challenge to be met honestly; and that deficiency distorted his work as an art critic and art historian.[12]

12. The depiction of obvious beauty has its own challenge, one that Renaissance artists, especially Raphael, faced in a way very different from that of modern ones, such as Ingres and Klimt and the young Picasso. Since, clearly, relying on the endowments of the model is not too challenging, traditional aesthetics is obviously false, its popularity over millennia notwithstanding. It is the representation, not what is represented, that has the aesthetic qualities that interest us.

Chapter 7
THE RATIONAL UNITY OF ART, AESTHETICS, AND ART APPRECIATION

a) The Rationality of Some Art Appreciation. The claim that art appreciation is merely erotics and that anyway rational argument is merely rhetorical persuasion is contested. **b) Criticism versus Flattery**. Art appreciation can be rational especially when it eschews flattery and manipulation for arguments. Argument strengthens self-esteem; manipulation undermines it. There is serendipitous rationality in the networking and traditions of science. **c) What Makes an Influence Rational**? It enhances autonomy. The historical method and the internal/external influence distinctions. **d) The Story of Art**. Primarily a history of art as such rather than theory, it nonetheless opposes relativism. Like the too rigid internal/external distinction, intentions are not the whole story but are illuminating in some cases. **e) Concluding Remarks**: Our disagreements with Gombrich re. progress and beauty.

In chapters 1 and 4 we observed that despite ample raw material ─ artistic works and information about art and about its techniques, history, analysis and so forth ─ the theory of art itself, aesthetics, though ancient, is still very slim, or was so until comparatively recently. We claimed this was largely due to the demand that aesthetics be firmly founded, either in more facts or in *axiomata media*. The demand for more facts is unreasonable, as we have confusingly many facts already. The different axioms available fail to contribute to the field. Some positively impede its development. Clear evidence for this is the fact that the axioms of the materialist picture of the world ─ which identify the world with the physical world ─ leave no room for souls, let alone for beauty. Beauty, consequently, was declared by materialists to be outside all inquiry, its study being akin more to theology than to science. (Materialism and its close kin naturalism are very popular with professional philosophers.)

A different and more specific axiom says that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. As this is a psychological claim, it can be replaced by a sociological version: beauty is a social institution and social institutions serve functions. We have mentioned, finally, that the fact that a curator consults experts about art shows that, even if the sociology is correct, it does not begin to shed light on the phenomena of aesthetics, namely, the demarcation of art and of beauty, isolating the aesthetic as a mode of experience, and making sense of its central notion of beauty. We suggested that the failure of these approaches leads us to adopt another: to look at art historically, by offering a series of ideas, proceeding to inspect them both for their merits and for their shortcomings, and without concern for any crossing of disciplinary boundaries ─ indeed, while attempting to

develop an interdisciplinary approach to it.

We will now proceed to discuss the fact that art appreciation is a central aspect of art and of its development, that therefore the historical method is inescapable. This fact was at the centre of Beardsley's *Aesthetics* – perhaps the founding monograph of analytic aesthetics (Beardsley 1958). The point is that since art and art appreciation intertwine, the views of art appreciators current at different times were influential. We can scarcely comprehend the art of different times and places without attention to the different theories of different kinds with which they coincided. The histories of aesthetics, of art, and of art appreciation intertwine. In the rest of this chapter we will elaborate on this obvious point, on the unity of art and its theory.

a) The Rationality of Some Art Appreciation

Classical Marxism asserts that theory and practice are one, action is primary.[1] Art, being action, would be primary. Aesthetics, being theory, would be secondary. This is too strong but there is something to it. What it evaluates we merely describe: one person may excel in art and another in the theory of art still another in the appreciation of art. Nevertheless, if we take the slogan to mean no more than that our comprehension of the one is greatly impeded unless we recruit the aid of the other, than we can say that this slogan is particularly telling in aesthetics.

Art and aesthetics intertwine in ways that are prosaic and devoid of any intellectual interest: museum curators influence art in many different ways simply by putting into focus whatever kind of artefact they think deserves public attention. This stimulates artists, as well as those who commission and support their work. (An example would be the impact of exhibitions of chinoiserie and japonoiserie around 1900. Gombrich 1950, 397) A more interesting way in which art and aesthetics intertwine, is via what is known as art appreciation. The existence of art appreciation is prima facie an argument against the theory that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Like any argument, it can be avoided. The fact that art appreciation is at times rational is a refuting argument that is harder to avoid. Still, the possibility and rationality of art appreciation can be challenged. It was challenged by Susan Sontag, an important and once famous public intellectual, now in eclipse. She said, there is really no such thing as art appreciation; what is called "art appreciation" is not a matter of explaining things, much less a matter of rational debate about a theory or about a work of art or a style in art, but merely a matter of pointing: a person enters a room and is ignorant of the fact that there is in the room a work of art, even if it is legendary. Their oversight may, however, be easily corrected: look here, you are missing something that you may enjoy and it is right under your nose! This, she said, is all that art appreciation, so-called, consists in (Sontag 1966, *passim*). She offered a slogan: we need not the hermeneutics of art, but the erotics of art. In other words, for the enjoyment of a work of art explanation is neither needed nor useful, certainly not the explanation of what is not obvious. Hermeneutics, the art of explaining the obscure, cannot deliver the pleasures of art. For the

1. For an excellent exposition of this Marxist doctrine see Macmurray 1933, Ch. II.

enjoyment of a work of art or an art style or a new art form all that is prerequisite is to open up. As to those not open to something nice, we may make them a suggestion, make them an offer, start to flirt with them. More cannot be done, and art defies words. One picture, as Confucius is ever so often misquoted to say, is worth a thousand words. More than a thousand words, according to Sontag: words cannot approach what pointing at a beautiful item can; at most words may also serve as pointers.

There is some truth to Sontag's observations. Hurrying along in a gallery, visitors can gain from a guide who can quickly move them from one great masterpiece to another, bypassing the second best. Even if one is not in a rush, one may feel unable to absorb more than a limited amount in a museum, at least that is our experience, and then one is grateful for guidance and help to focus attention on a few choice items. But is Sontag correct in her view that there is no more to art appreciation? Is there no possibility for museum guides, for example, to debate between themselves as to the question, what items are more worthy of the attention of new visitors? Contrary to Sontag's claims, such debates do take place, if not between guides, then between researchers who transmit their diverse views to teachers in schools who train guides and transmit to them those arguments for and against competing views that impress them as reasonable. This involves essentially the same question of choice as the one which editors face who have to abridge a given text. There are, as a matter of empirical fact, alternative abbreviations of books, whether literary or artistic, not to mention that books on art are of necessity selections, and while they may all include this or that masterpiece, their contents diverge a great deal all the same, and the divergence is, in fact, accompanied by rational discussion about choices. What could Sontag say to these facts?

The logic of the situation is one we have met before when we discussed Feyerabend's observation that we cannot know what to select in order to learn until we have acquired knowledge of the whole bulk from which the selection is to be made. This varies Socrates' paradox of learning. Sontag's view, then, is no exception here: most of the positions discussed have a kernel of truth and the debate is always as to the question, do they capture the whole truth? Or do we possess counterexamples to them? No one will deny that beauty is pleasing (even the beauty of disturbing works of art), that it has social utility, that it can also serve as propaganda (pleasing or disturbing, for the establishment or for the opposition). The question is, is beauty only pleasing? Is art nothing but propaganda? And now, is art appreciation only pointing at the beautiful? We may also ask, is art appreciation always and only erotic? Is it never also rational? Not to any degree? Sontag's claim about the limits of rationality in art appreciation has been formulated more generally.

Once upon a time two twentieth century philosophers, Stephen Toulmin and Rom Harré, contended that there is no such thing as rational debate, there are no rational arguments, all there is to an allegedly rational exchange is persuasion, and the nicer side of this is what Sontag calls erotic (Toulmin 1958; Harré 2002). Persuasion may be accomplished, they continue, by the use of language, rational or not, by the use of body language, flirtation, bribery or threat, or by many other

means: there is little difference between rational and irrational means, as they either both do or do not achieve their end, which is persuasion; the only thing that matters to a lawyer arguing in court is to win, and means are always less relevant than the ends realised.

No doubt this is also true as far as it goes ─ or as far as the law permits lawyers to manipulate the court. When all we want is to satisfy our hunger, junk food will do; but this is not to say that all food is junk just because any food may satisfy hunger, nor that the satisfaction of hunger is the sole aim of dining. This is equally true of tasteless food: military cooks love to say that taste is unimportant as it is sheer luxury, that in view of the unhealthy disposition to overeat, tasteless food may even be healthier than tasty food. Anyone convinced by this argument that military cooks employ, may also be convinced by the same argument when military band leaders employ it.

Since Sontag speaks only of the nicer side of persuasion, we may ask, what would she say of its repulsive side? She did not discuss that because it has no place in the framework of her account, which is on aesthetics in the democratic world in which she lived. But as she did not pay any attention to the politics of aesthetics in that account of hers, we may ask, what would her response be to a scene from Orwell's *1984* in which torturers successfully force Winston Smith to think of a portrait of Big Brother as the most beautiful work of art? If she is consistent she would have to say, that is just as acceptable from the aesthetic point-of-view as erotics proper, even if possibly from the moral point-of-view things may look as different as erotics are from rape. For our part we will go further and say that Toulmin and Harré and Sontag were all forced by the logic of their discourse to admit that the techniques of *1984* are effective and so are unobjectionable for the places where they are practised. This consequence, historically, is what made this kind of defence of junk food/persuasion a weapon against those who thought something should be done in the west against Stalinism, that at the very least westerners should unconditionally denounce it as unacceptably violent. Toulmin, Harré, and Sontag were not in a position to fight Stalinism, and they did not. But their ideas gave comfort to those who refused to do so.[2]

The view we are discussing is an exaggeration, but a dangerous one. It is an attempt to persuade people by rational argument that there is no such thing as rational argument, whereas the fact is that rational argument is scarce but at times it functions effectively and at times with overwhelming results. Their reasoning sounds convincing just because it applies cosily to a peaceful society where the use of argument for violent ends is scarcely thinkable. Therefore, it is flawed in the same way that the argument is flawed that is meant to persuade us that there is nothing to beauty but pleasure, in total obliviousness to Samizdat art that could cost people their freedom. It is flawed exactly like the conclusion that there is no such thing as junk food, since any food satisfies hunger. In other words, rational argument may have roles other than persuasion, in particular, art, argument,

2. It is no accident, as the Marxists used to say, that Sontag and Toulmin refused to denounce what they without doubt deplored. To pursue this would take us into the social history of so-called progressivism in the mid-twentieth century and too far afield from aesthetics.

argument about art, and art about argument (Solzhenitsyn 1968) all may satisfy and they may nourish; they may particularly nourish the soul of the independent individual who does not easily yield to manipulation; and for the independent individual there is a nourishing argument and an empty one which for a while may admittedly satisfy hunger anyway. This holds particularly for art, since we all know that in the art market there is a substantial portion of goods that are almost empty of calories. Not that goods empty of calories are objectionable: they are better than starvation and even better than the poisons that we eat and drink regularly. We object to the presence of poisons in our junk food, including not only dioxins and DDT but also excess sodium and cholesterol, not to its being empty of calories. We merely wish our friends and relations to remember the hard fact that junk food cannot serve as a full diet, even if it is always better than poison or starvation.

The view being rejected here is that rational argument is nothing but a mode of persuasion, one among many and not particularly distinct. The advocates of this view can offer arguments for it, which, by their own lights will be no more than exercises in persuasion. They insist that this is not a defect, since their argument is a reductio ad absurdum and one can do no better, even from the most rationalist point of view. The case of argument is similar to that concerning food: offering nothing but junk food/junk argument may be defended by the claim that there is no nutritious food/argument anyway, only junk, so that this offer is the best possible. How best to resist this claim? The best suggestion in the case of food is to go away and seek a place where nutritious and tasty food is available — for the flesh or for the mind, as the case may be. But then those who say there is nothing but junk food may be correct. Similarly, those who say there is only junk (persuasive) argument may also be correct. Can one show them to be in error? Perhaps. How? Can one do anything, for example, to persuade them to the contrary, to dissuade them? Of course not: this is too much to expect. A priori, if those who identify argument with propaganda wish to act consistently on their view (although they do not have to), then whatever they hear, they should take as mere persuasion. Hence there is no way to dissuade them.

Theirs is a very sophisticated attitude. It is the application of a technique that embraces all counter arguments, on which Popper conferred the helpful label, “reinforced dogmatism”. Rubber-stamp examples are the standard Catholic idea that all doubts are the products of the devil, to be dispelled by prayer; or the technique of dismissing all arguments against psychoanalysis as evidence that those who articulate them are obviously in need of the couch; or the Marxist tactic of dismissing in advance all possible anti-Marxist arguments as bourgeois propaganda.

Because we are facing a case of reinforced dogmatism, all arguments to dissuade those who think that there is no rational argument, only attempts at persuasion, will be neutered, as a matter of course, as mere attempts to persuade. There is a still stronger version of reinforced dogmatism, one that exposes rational arguments as irrational at base: to be bound by rationality in the first place, so this version goes, one needs some irrational commitment to rationality. This version is called the “*tu quoque*” argument. “*Tu quoque”* means, you too,

and it is an abbreviation for the claim, you, the rationalist, you too are irrational at heart. Toulmin and Harré employ the *tu quoque* argument as a version of a reinforced dogmatism! But their weapon is poisoned because the original idea that arguments were mere exercises in persuasion was supposed to demystify, to show that argument had a clear, rationally self-serving goal: persuasion. The *tu quoque* ploy removes this rationality from persuasion and is thus neater, although some may find it less persuasive.

As we have stated above, there are diverse responses to the tu *quoque* argument. Here we bump into a new aspect in favour of this argument. Untutored taste may not object to junk food/junk arguments yet training them to develop their tastes is quite possibly a form of brainwashing. So, is it better to leave our charges ignorant or with poor taste or should we help them to develop their curiosity and their tastes even though "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (*Eccl*. 1:18)? Anyone who sends their children into the school system of a modern society answers the latter option.

b) Criticism versus Flattery

The resort to reinforced dogmatism isolates its users. Can one breach a reinforced dogmatism? One can say to an advocate of any version of reinforced dogmatism, there are other bunkers around, other versions of the same reinforcement, yet they defend different territories. This will seldom work: reinforced dogmatism covers this argument too: the Marxist will say that the psychoanalyst uses reinforced dogmatism in order to evade the real issue, which is the class struggle, whereas the psychoanalyst will say that the Marxist uses reinforced dogmatism in order to evade the real issue, which is facing and making peace with their own inner selves. This dance is so well-known that some academics employ a version of reinforced dogmatism that takes advantage of the diversity of its versions.

We refer to the Frankfurt school, so-called, with which Susan Sontag associated at the time she wrote about art appreciation as merely an exercise in persuasion. This school combines two reinforced dogmas, the Marxist and the Freudian.[3] Its precept is that the most important thing to do is to face one's inner self so as to be able to join the class struggle (although it is a doomed cause). Clearly the assumption of this school is that doubly reinforced dogmatism is better than once reinforced. The result of this strange double reinforcement was that members of the Frankfurt school were more interested in the arts than in the sciences and devoted much energy to the arts to show that great art is both psychologically and politically highly functional. To repeat, this is indeed often the case, but here and now the view is presented that possibly it is not always the case, that possibly the value of art is not exhausted by its social and psychological utility.

Why argue this case? Need one try to dissuade the dogmatists? Is it not

3. A combination of two dogmas may easily be inconsistent, and with such monolithic dogmas as Marxism and Freudianism it must be. It is easy, no doubt, to modify one or both slightly but sufficiently to remove inconsistency. This is sometimes done explicitly, sometime surreptitiously. Either way the combined dogma is seldom spelled out. When it is, it invariably turns out to have some unpleasant and unexpected features.

better to let the sleeping dogmatist lie? W. W. Bartley, III devoted a substantial part of his career to dissecting and rebutting the tu *quoque* argument (see Chapters 1 and 4). He said, rationalists have no need to dissuade the irrationalists, but (as rationalists) they do have the need to answer the *tu quoque* argument to their own satisfaction. Let us confine our discussion to views that admit the fact that some arguments are rational, as distinct from empty talk and sheer rhetoric. Still, even if there are such things as rational arguments, the question remains, is Sontag right or is there such a thing as rational art appreciation.[4] To begin more slowly, can argument influence tastes? Is it not the fact that when all is said and done, all that remains is the beauty that is in the eye of the beholder, that no matter what I think of any artist, big or small, if I like them I will attend to their art and if not then so be it?[5]

We do not think this is true. To begin with, let us observe two repeatedly reported empirical facts. First, we do distinguish between personal liking and impersonal appreciation (response versus evaluation as Jarvie 1967 has it).[6] We may thus be attached to some sentimental artwork for personal reasons but advocate in public only works we find more impressive. Second, rational talk does alter attitudes in the arts, and often this is what helps us transcend our childhood tastes – in food and art alike.

Consider the following thought experiment. There are many individuals in our society who cannot stand opera. They are usually people who have never entered an opera house to witness a performance. But if they do, they can scarcely sit still through the overture, and when singing begins they feel compelled to leave the theatre. More commonly, they hear recorded performances on radio, on CD, or on the screen, big or small. Genuine opera haters switch off after a few seconds. Some of them may be classical music lovers, and then they may be familiar with an overture, a choral piece, an aria, and they may even like it, yet they still detest the very thought of listening to dialogue set to music that supposedly represents a flirtation or a lovers' quarrel, not to mention a final scene in which a heroine, dying of tuberculosis or lung cancer, sings her heart out and the scene goes on and on and on. Now some opera haters enjoy light-hearted musical comedy, on stage or on screen. Here is an opening for rational argument. Are they being consistent? When they are shown to their own satisfaction that all their arguments against the artificiality of opera hold just as well for musical comedy then something may happen: disconcerted,

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4. One of us, Jarvie, has consistently advocated the latter position (Jarvie 1967).

5. This ploy is not limited to aesthetics. When Wittgenstein faced the criticism that clarification is often of little or no use he replied, I like clarity. His disciples used this ploy when cornered, but not otherwise, which is a mark of bad faith. See Gellner 1959 *passim*; also Silvers 1987.

6. Gombrich: "Actually I do not think that there are any wrong reasons for liking a statue or a picture. Someone may like a landscape painting because it reminds him of home, or a portrait because it reminds him of a friend. There is nothing wrong with that. All of us, when we see a painting, are bound to be reminded of a hundred-and-one things which influence our likes and dislikes. As long as these memories help us to enjoy what we see, we need not worry. It is only when some irrelevant memory makes us prejudiced, when we instinctively turn away from a magnificent picture of an alpine scene because we dislike climbing, that we should search our mind for the reason of the aversion which spoils a pleasure we might otherwise have had" (Gombrich 1950, p. 3).

they find in themselves the readiness, even at times the eagerness, to pursue opera again, seriously, in a more open-minded mood. This does not necessarily convert them to opera, but at times it does. Even if none of them converts to becoming opera lovers, some cease to be opera haters, and all defend their view with better arguments (despite the fact that artistic indifference is always legitimate, so that it never requires any defence). In brief, the argument from musical comedy is rational and effective ─ regardless of its outcome.[7]

Art appreciation of this kind goes on all the time. Some of it is educational in the sense that it is aimed at the young who are naturally opening up to new experiences of all sorts, including new works of art, new styles of art, new art forms, and they can use and may require some guidance or another, from peers or from educators. Some art appreciation is educational in a more general sense, in the sense in which we all hope to continue our education and open up to new experiences for the rest of our lives. Indeed, we do not know where the one ends and the other begins, as they all too often come mixed, at times of benefit to both. We encounter things we missed, and we find new things. Innovative artists develop new idioms, create works of art which express new feelings and new ideas, and these may provide new experiences and serve new social functions. All this invites new audiences, but it may also bewilder and exasperate the intended audiences, and anger some of them. Art appreciation does much to ameliorate these matters, simply by explaining things, by discussing them, by responding to criticism, valid and invalid as the case may be.

The question is, what is the role of this kind of art appreciation? Sontag says, it is only erotic: it serves to open the audiences' hearts to art, art style, or art form, old and new. All the rest is neither here nor there. If Sontag is correct, then even within aesthetics her argument goes much further than she suggests: it leads to the conclusion that there is no art except what we are open to receive as art.

In an earlier chapter we gave a first, crude formulation of the institutional theory: whatever is exhibited in the art museum is art. Since some works exhibited in museums are overlooked, the theory has the consequence that something can be art but be virtually unknown. This point was forcefully made by John Cage, the avant-garde composer, in his book *Silence* (Cage 1961) and elsewhere. He said, if the audience dislikes you, you can sing like an angel, but to no avail; whereas if they love you, whatever you chant or hum will be great music to their ears. He concluded that all sound is music, all doodles painting, all articulation poetry.

There is some truth to Cage's claims (which he borrowed from the dada movement, especially from his friend Marcel Duchamp). Everyone will agree at

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7. A popular argument against rationality says, criticism need not lead to a change of mind; it may lead instead to deserting one line of argument for another, or a search for one excuse or another for evasion. Notice that this is the inverse of the view that argument is nothing but persuasion. Its technical name in philosophy is, the Duhem-Quine argument. What both Duhem and Quine argued is a point of logic: in the face of valid criticism there is always the possibility of evasion. And, admittedly, evasion is often seemingly rational, and at times even genuinely so. We suggest an equally obvious thesis in the opposite direction: the very resort to excuses is evidence that rational argument does bring pressure on positions regardless of the disappointing fact that people sometimes prefer excuses to learning from criticism.

once that the claim is an exaggeration presented more as a challenge than as an assertion. Cage claimed to have learned from the oriental philosophers to be indifferent to audiences' responses, and just as much to be indifferent to the question, is this or that piece of music of high quality or not? The role of the art appreciation expert is thereby demolished, as Cage must have known, yet he himself functioned to a large extent in the role of a populariser of avant-garde art, especially after Stravinsky died. The role of the art appreciation expert is known as popularisation or as art teaching or as art criticism, so let us call this kind of expert "taste makers" or "taste leaders". David Hume called them "true judges" (Hume 1757).[8]

When taste leaders face individuals who hate opera, for example, their role is to help overcome initial barriers and open up the issue, but no more than that. If, as a result of critical discussion, opera haters learn to enjoy opera, then the taste leader's operation was crowned with success; otherwise not. So, according to Sontag, there is no difference between methods of overcoming the barrier. There is, by her lights, no difference between the uses that taste leaders make of seemingly rational, seemingly non-rational or seemingly anti-rational means. We argue that she is in error, and that so is Cage. We argue that however rational the change of taste made in consideration to the taste of a new friend may be, the change of taste that a taste leader effects can be and often is more rational: the force of the influence of taste leaders should be and often is in the rational character of their arguments, and this stands out. Let us describe how.

Influences of all sorts abound. We persuade and dissuade all the time, we get persuaded and dissuaded, and by different methods and in different ways. Let us have one term to speak of persuasion and of dissuasion together. Let us speak of "influence" as persuasion or dissuasion. Influence may be exercised by taste leaders or by friends and relations. What we wish to point to is the repeated fact that some modes of influence makes no sense except to those who consider them rational. To do so all we need do is get away from the traditional (Baconian) view of rationality and irrationality as all-or-nothing. Once we see that rationality is a matter of degree, as we have argued (Agassi and Jarvie, 1987), a whole set of empirical facts is revealed that clearly constitute the application of canons of rationality to matters of art. For example, we see people influenced by an argument and then influenced again in a different direction or back to a previous position, and we ask them why and they answer in a manner that indicates some intellectual independence. They may, for example, say that the new argument seems to them more powerful than the previous one, and that when they converted the first time they were influenced by the best argument they knew at that time but then they met a more forceful one. Now the argument may be for persuasion or dissuasion and the new argument again may be for persuasion or dissuasion but the inner logic of this is not rhetorical; it is rational. Individuals may be unimpressed by rhetoric but impressed by reason; they may, for instance, find the argument not alluring in the least but influential by its reasoning, and

8. An influential study by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence,* rediscovered Hume for the world of popular culture and used the label "opinion leader" (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955).

they may admit this reluctantly, despite themselves. In our thought experiment of the opera hater being disconcerted by his own inconsistency we saw this play out. If one admits the force of an argument against one's view of some item as moral or aesthetic, then one is swayed or influenced by the argument. This influence is unlike the influence of rhetoric; it is the influence that rational argument exerts on reasonable people ─ often despite themselves. They say, then, I wish things were different but I can see that this is how they are and I must in all seriousness accept it and own up to it.[9]

Sontag, Toulmin and Harré can hardly deny these points. They may, however, respond by insisting that there is no difference between rhetoric of persuasion and rational influence. We show that there is a difference and moreover that they know it. The way in which rhetoric influences and counter influences greatly differs in its logic from the way in which rational argument influences and counter influences. Rhetoric scarcely signifies. To call both arguments and rhetoric "rhetoric" is allowable, but to confuse the logic of manipulation with the logic of rational argument is an error. Rhetoric is seductive, it flatters its listeners and gives them pleasure and smuggles to their minds ideas that will otherwise not be entertained. Rationality, by contrast, respects its listeners at times at the cost of discomfort. This discomfort has raised complaints ever since Socrates used to bump into neighbours on street corners and appeal to their better selves. Indeed, we suggest that the views of Sontag, Toulmin and Harré are appealing merely because they allay and assuage the discomfort caused by rational appeals to people's better selves. As to the discomfort. There is a cost to ignoring flattery. But there is a much greater, even excessive, cost to taking flattery seriously as when allowing oneself to be seduced by rhetoric or otherwise manipulated. The greatest cost of taking flattery seriously is a loss of self-esteem. This is why Gloria Steinem, for example, stresses self-esteem when advocating rationality (Steinem 1983, 125-26; 1992 Index art. Self-Esteem).[10]

The difference between arguments and erotics is obvious even if at times they share functions: at times erotics is used successfully instead of argument and at times the opposite. This is well-known and standard material for both sitcom and romance. Here is an odd situation: standard aesthetic theory distinguishes between appeal to the heart and appeal to the brain and insists that only one of these appeals is genuine. Traditional aesthetics is divided to two parties, those who see art as appealing to the heart; those who see art as appealing to the brain. When an instance to the contrary to either is exhibited, it is dismissed as a poor instance, or all appearances are dismissed as misleading. Yet every sitcom writer

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9. Ayer (1936) and Stevenson (1944) held that moral assertions were mere expressions of personal taste. The refutation is obvious: a kleptomaniac may concede that theft is immoral. A fan of folk music may recognise that nostalgia plays more of a role than artistic taste. Admitting a point despite oneself is not a criterion of rationality but it is a case where rationality is conspicuous. The point appears in Plato's early dialogue *Gorgias*, where Socrates contrasts rationality and rhetoric as bitter medicine and flattery, respectively, a view echoed in this book. And at one point Socrates says to a reluctant opponent that he can make him find his own defensiveness very unpleasant.

10. Steinem would seem to be influenced by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers.

knows that the facts of the matter are not so neat, that in particular at times ideas have sentimental appeal and at times sentiments are food for thought. If we take this obvious fact for granted, we will never fall prey to the way Toulmin and Harré present their cases or Sontag's application to aesthetics of the irrationalism which they advocate. Cage, at least, is impregnable to this objection, as he only observes, he does not appeal, and he lauds openness, without saying anything about a distinction between emotional and intellectual openness.

To clinch matters, let us amplify a bit on Sontag's application of the views of Toulmin and Harré to the case of aesthetics. This is particularly apposite, because art appreciation is supposed to be the appreciation least susceptible to reasoning: people all too often say, it does not speak to me, I do not like it/him/her and there is nothing that can be done about it. But liking is not appreciation. Moreover, at times something can be done about it, at times, as Sontag says, by pointing at something valuable, and at times by other means. People may very well open their hearts to this or that art item or art style or art form — just as they may open their hearts to this or that person — either by sharing experiences with good company, friends, relations, or lovers, or by rational debate; they may be influenced by the warmth and/or by the rational argument. Of course, it may be claimed that the influence of warm company on one's taste is never rational, and indeed, there is no need for any rational argument about it.[11] But one can just as well argue in the reverse mode. One can claim, to begin with, that opening up as a result of compliance to warm company is a strong and rational argument. Those who, like Toulmin and Harré, will say that this is their point, that this shows that all influences are rhetoric, make a simple logical error: there are characteristics of rhetoric and there are characteristics of rationality. The question posed here is, is it rational to be persuaded by argument, by good company, etc.? It should be answered after criteria of rationality are offered. If it turns out that it is at times rational to be influenced by good company, at times not, so be it. Indeed, one who is always and only influenced by good company is deemed intellectually less independent, and so less reasonable, than one who is opened up by good company, but is not totally dependent on it. To take a simple example, someone who thinks all avant-garde art is phoney, posing, bizarre, etc., falls in love with an individual who seems not in the least phoney, posing or bizarre; then they find that the person in question is an avant-garde artist. Surely it is then rational to rethink! The same happens if one learns to appreciate the avant-garde of one art form by comparing it with the avant-garde of another art form. And so on. And one may learn that the avant-garde is anxiety-causing so that one has to consider it under relaxing conditions, say, in the environment of loving, warm company. And so on.

What makes this kind of argument rational, clearly, depends on what we deem rational, and we contend that the main point of the view offered by Sontag,

11. Except that people do try to harmonise their tastes with those of their partner, or at least to find areas of irritation and to minimise them. This may seem merely affective. Yet it is goal-directed action and the goal is worthy. If the partner becomes inclined to workoholism or drug-addiction explicit rationality kicks in: tastes are seldom obligatory; rather, the partners weigh the options of trying to help and of severing the relationship.

Toulmin and Harré is not so much a rational argument as a simple rhetorical one that is rooted in distaste for reason. That distaste is their right, but it is not very reasonable. In particular, their argument, to the extent that it is an argument at all, derives from the philosophical presupposition that rationality and irrationality are all-or-nothing poles. Absent that view there is prima facie no saying what is and what is not in need of rational argument. The need for rational argument arises when there is some rational challenge to take up. Unlike rhetoric, rational argument cannot be imposed, and it carries conviction from the fact that we do take reason seriously, at times against our inclinations.

To take an example from ethics, suppose one is of the opinion that though theft is wrong, photocopying of whole books is not. A common view. When one faces arguments that show how photocopying books is theft, the effect of this may be benign. Biographies of a number of moral and religious reformers display cases in which one individual opened the perception of others in directions that led to profound reforms. Their usual and quite rational argument was that some social practice or other was inconsistent with professed principles.

In science too specific theories have been changed due to personal contacts. To mention one significant case out of many. The development of Copernicanism is a pivotal point in the history of science. Many take this to be the direct outcome of the publication of works by Copernicus and his followers. In fact his doctrine is known to have all but died out soon after its publication in the mid-sixteenth century. Things picked up only at the end of the century after a few decades of almost no public mention of his theories. The revival and development of Copernicanism to the point of no return was due to Galileo and Kepler. How did they learn about it? The story of how Galileo learned about is told by himself in his first Dialogue, where he relates the following (Galileo 1630 (1953), p. 143). He was then a young scholar and a college drop out: he had no time to go to college, and he hung out in his native Florence. An itinerant lecturer came to town and gave a lecture in an academy there. Galileo showed interest and was told that the lecture presented the view that the earth moves around the sun. Galileo decided that the speaker was a crank — which is probably true — and he decided not to waste time on the lecture. He was later told that the lecture was not lacking reason. That is all. It set him a-thinking and the rest is history. A story about Kepler is similar; he treated the person from whom he learned about Copernicanism as his teacher, and even ascribed to him a discovery which, it is said, is his own (Grasshoff 2002).

Such stories bring out the rationality of personal influences in the history of science and render science what cultural historians call a tradition. It is seldom presented as a tradition nonetheless, and for the simple reason that most historians of science presuppose the all-or-nothing view of rationality and irrationality and they take rationality to be the opposite of tradition. The historian of science who, about a century ago, first spoke of the scientific tradition, Pierre Duhem,[12] never discussed the question of transmission of interest and concern for

12. Duhem was the first to offer a fallibilistic methodology, but he still identified science with certitude. He studied medieval texts in order to fish out of them what he deemed scientific, while totally ignoring the heavily superstitious character of these texts. Something similar could be said

science: he himself was still too much influenced by the all-or-nothing image of rationality and irrationality. But it is time to ask the simple and commonsense question, what makes personal influence more rational or less rational? The theory that all influence is irrational is one possible answer to the question. In our opinion the view that all influence is rational is nearer to the truth, though once the question is asked the default presupposition for the right answer to it has to be that some but not all personal influences are rational. That formulation again invites the question, what makes influence rational? Rather than ask, how often influence is rational, we seek a criterion of rational influence.

c) What Makes an Influence Rational?

The criterion is readily available. Influence that appeals to your autonomy is more rational than influence that appeals to your vanity. To take an example, if one says, I cannot love you unless you join the political party to which I belong, that is less rational than if one says either of the following: we can be lovers and respect each other's different opinions, or, we have to thrash it out before we become intimate. We do not know which of these two alternatives is more rational, but clearly each is more rational than the demand that another yield to one's opinions as a condition for love (or friendship). Yet such demands are made by too many parents of their offspring.[13] Are teachers much better? It was Plato's view that all education is erotic, and he himself was educated by Socrates whom he learned to love and admire at a time in which he cared about nothing but horses. Karl Popper, the leading rationalist of our age, agrees with Plato and defends the use of the Romantic component in education (Popper 1945, ch. 25, IV). He does notice that the invitation to teachers to play on their pupils' love and admiration for them is an invitation to manipulate, and that as such it is not an invitation to influence rationally, but he argues that this invitation is to act rationally, since teachers have no other way of influencing their charges, children not being given to rational argument. He adds that teachers should manipulate their charges to learn as quickly as possible how to become impervious to manipulation. No doubt children should learn to become as impervious to manipulation as possible, and teachers do their job better when helping them in this than when obstructing them. But Popper's recommendation to manipulate is arguable, for it is based on an error : even infants have some disposition to act autonomously. It seems to us clear, however, that leaving aside the question of who is correct, the very discussion of the matter in so commonsense a way has by-passed the traditional (Baconian) view of rationality and irrationality as all-or-nothing and the view of Sontag, Toulmin, and Harré that there is no rationality at all, only manipulations.

All too often these philosophers look at the way arguments can move the issue to and fro as evidence of the irrationality of criticism. This betrays their

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of Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* (1954-2000) regardless of the fact that its author sees himself as progressive.

13. One way in which this demand is made is by parent groups trying to gain control over the curriculum of grade and high schools. This is much easier in the United States than in, say, France. Liberalism has an acute dilemma here: neither the parents nor the state should indoctrinate children, but the accusation each by the other is not unreasonable.

continuing quest for certainty. Science is often held to be the paradigm of rationality yet its history contains many examples of to and fro. Take Prout's hypothesis that all elements except for hydrogen are in truth compounds of hydrogen. It follows that if we take the weight of the hydrogen atom as a unit, then all atomic weights are whole numbers. The discovery that the atomic weight of chlorine was 35.56 refuted the hypothesis. But then the discovery of isotopes revealed that the atomic weight of chlorine was either 35 or 37, which revived the hypothesis. The subsequent discovery of the neutron showed the hypothesis to be at best an approximation. And so on. This story is perfectly rational to fallibilists; appallingly irrational to those in search of certainty.

The view of rational influence as just another form of manipulation obscures the basic and important difference between influence by rational argument and any other form of influence. Whether as a result of rational influence one decides to stop photocopying copyright books or not, certainly something has changed, and will not change again unless the argument that dissuaded one is refuted or unless there is a regression such as forgetting or behaving under extreme pressure. Sontag, Toulmin, and Harré may still come back and say that there is no difference to obscure, that the chief point is whether the friends or lovers or parents succeed in influencing or not, and to what extent. We contend that the difference is observable. Rational influence is open-ended: a suggestion to overcome some obstacle to taking seriously an idea or a work of art or a moral precept is rational if it leaves it to the other to think things out and more so if there is encouragement to thinking it out in an impersonal manner, according to some shared canons. This way the outcome is reversible when a new argument is found that suggests that judgement should be reversed. Individuals who are opened to the rational suggestion that violating copyright is theft will change their attitude and conduct even if they are not convinced by the argument. If they desist from the practice they will not revert to it unless they find a better argument to the contrary or unless they are under extreme pressure, psychological or social. This shows that rationality is a complex matter, much dependent on social conditions and ethos, but it also shows clearly that in many cases we can empirically distinguish the manipulative from the rational.

Even on the supposition that rationality is nothing but a form of manipulation, as a form of manipulation it may be preferable to other forms of manipulation. We suggest that it is morally and culturally superior to all other forms of manipulation. The irrationalists simply do not like the form of influence called rationality, and they convey this message by saying that there is no difference between the different forms of influence. (It is regrettably a common custom to insinuate disapproval — or is it dislike — by proposing distinctions. As all distinctions are permissible, the question is always, what end do they serve?) It is clear what Sontag, Toulmin, and Harré do not like about rationality: from the point of view of the rationalism here advocated the situation is open-ended, and they do not like things open-ended. This is why they could live with the traditional, all-or-nothing image of rationality and irrationality, and cling to it even at the cost of losing their rationalism: in the face of the refutation of the all-or-nothing image of rationality and irrationality they give up rationality, and they

justify this move by treating it as nothing more than another kind of manipulation.[14] Many historians of rational argument are now arguing historically that rhetoric plays a part in all rational deliberations. Had Sontag, Toulmin, and Harré been intent simply to show this, they would be in order; but, with the approval of many, they go further and say that hence no deliberation is ever rational, which flies in the face of much ready to hand empirical information. Were we to agree with them that there is only taste, no rational choice of tastes, even then we could and should insist that we better choose that kind of influence which is usually known as rational deliberation.

We have suggested that one may rationally change one's attitude to a work of art, to an art style, or to an art form, to a moral question, and to a scientific idea. Things get more interesting, of course, if the individual influenced to change contributes something of value to society, whether to morality, to art, or to science. Of course, if the person in question is an artist, then the change may result in acts of creative art that are influenced by rational argument. This is the point of the present chapter and of the book as a whole: art and art forms alter; changes are due to all sorts of changes of circumstances, and one major factor is the rational attitude to change, expressed in the admission that at times change is the outcome of rational debate. Even if a change is due to factors that have nothing at all to do with art but with some social change, then the translation of the social change to artistic change can be rational this or that way, to this or that degree, and the question of the details and the degree of its rationality should be open to rational historical investigation. This is the historical research programme which Gombrich started. Its most famous case study was his investigation of Constable's claim that painting was a natural science. By some standards of rationality the point of the present chapter lays itself open to rational criticism. The traditional exaggerated theory of rationality as all or nothing contains an exaggerated assumption about the world, not only exaggerations about the capacity of the human intellect, but also about physical reality. The latter is the assumption that the same cause always creates the same effect. This claim has been rejected in physics, with the result that many responded by going overboard to irrationalism. The more commonsense approach is to show readiness to give up the traditional picture of rationality and the associated stringent criteria, not all rationality as such. This brings us to the discussion of change in the arts as presented by Gombrich, who adopts more lax criteria of causality and of rationality than the tradition.

Since our concern is art rather than rationality, we prefer to offer examples from the history of art rather than to elaborate on the matter philosophically or offer examples from sociology or politics. Before we can proceed we need a brief preliminary discussion pertaining to history — of art,

14. Toulmin prefers to temper reason with reasonableness rather than declare that it is not an all-or-nothing quality. This might amount to the same thing, except that it enables him to express delight in irrationality. Thus, in his latest book (Toulmin 2001, p. 77) he declares triumphantly, with no shred of evidence, that Bertrand Russell realised that the collapse of classical physics went together with the collapse of classical epistemology and classical logic, and that this spells the total loss of objectivity. True or not, it is his delight in this alleged process that gives away his irrationalist bent.

science or any other human activity. There is a controversy between the internalists and the externalists, so-called, that permeates the scholarly literature on intellectual and cultural and scientific traditions. The internalists try to present every development as inherent in the very tradition in which it takes place. Externalism says that development it is at times the result of cultural change, at times even of a change of the social theory of culture. Marxists, who see every development as the outcome of some social forces, must be thorough externalists, of course. Externalism is at times also the expression of the desire to eliminate rationality and the role it plays in culture. Of course, some internal changes are due to rational deliberation, and the reaction of a culture to an external change, too, is at times a matter of rational response. Think only of the need to alter plastic art as the result of a proscription on the making of graven images. It led quite rationally to the development of arabesques in Islam and to the preference for abstract sculpture over representational sculpture in contemporary Israel. But, clearly, the study of the internal changes, out of internal problems and out of internal criticism, is much more decisive and interesting a case of rationality. Yet in the plastic arts and in music, it seems, all criticism, being verbal, is external.[15] The view is popular that art criticism is a response, a one-way activity that never influences art. A simple corollary to it is that if a piece of art does not speak to the critic then it leaves nothing for the critic to discuss, that in particular, critics cannot influence artists. By contrast, Gombrich and those influenced by him view all art criticism as internal to art — to all art of all art-forms. The view of criticism as external because verbal seems plausible, and is, indeed, very popular. This puzzles us no end, since it is no better than the view of conducting as external to music simply because waving the baton produces no sound.

How then does criticism influence the growth of art? The historical examples of such influences are varied, but a few major kinds are immediately obvious. First is discussion of the aim of art and the question of how well it was achieved and how better it can be achieved. Second is discussion of the aim, function, and style of art in general. This assumes that the somehow art works reflect the views of their makers about their art, especially if these makers are able. (Poor artists may find it hard to follow their own precepts.) This assumption that artists carry out their views is often denied, despite much evidence, for the reason that that evidence does not sit well with any of the theories discussed here. The evidence is of the interaction of art and non-art; moreover, the evidence by itself does not offer a theory of how art and non-art interact. The all-or-nothing view of rationality and irrationality makes criticism so powerful that it negates discussion or so weak that it can be ignored. Hence there can be no interaction between art and non-art.

d) The Story of Art

Gombrich's *The Story of Art* is primarily a history, of course, and only secondarily an introduction to the plastic arts — an historical introduction: he

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15. We consider it a telling fact that most of the identifiable movements within modernism were launched with some form or other of manifesto – words – regardless of whether or not the arts in question were verbal or plastic. See end of chapter 1.

observed that novices, young and not so young, can easily get lost in the maze of literature and detail, and his aim was to be helpful. So his work also offers both an introduction to the visual arts and a view about them. In this book we are more concerned with views about art than with its manifestations, however glorious these often are. Gombrich mentions in particular the views about art which important artists have adhered to, particularly those views which are now so outdated that the reader may not have heard of them. The outdated views are forgotten due to the traditional adherence to the all-or-nothing image of rationality and irrationality, which dismisses all outdated views as irrational and wrongly consigns them to oblivion. This is what makes Gombrich's presentation so unusual, as he rejected decisively the traditional all-or-nothing image of rationality and irrationality. More traditional writers on the history of art were incapable of taking seriously and reporting views of great artists which are palpably false. This has changed in recent times, with the introduction of irrationalism, of the theory that replaces the all-or-nothing image of rationality and irrationality with a picture of rationality in context with no false background assumptions. This theory is well-known. It is called *relativism*. It is quite extravagant: in a hyper reaction to a hyper-critical theory of rationality, it eschews all criticism of overviews. For example, according to relativism, though within a cult-system conduct can be fully rational or not rational at all, joining a cult or deserting a cult are equally not given to rational deliberation. Our view is that deserting a cult is always wiser than joining it and so more rational. Most cults have, *inter alia*, some art and some aesthetic theory, and both are so poor that some who have joined a cult leave it out of inability to adhere to them (Marxism is but one example, and by far not the worst). We will not further discuss this extravagant theory, which we deem a folly.[16] We will be content to observe that it is simpler and quite sufficient to respond to the breakdown of the hyper-critical theory of rationality less extravagantly and to replace the all-or-nothing image of rationality and irrationality by a less extravagant, more commonsense view. It suffices to incorporate in the newer, less extravagant theory of rationality the admission that a theory that is satisfactorily criticised is at times to be recognised as significant nonetheless. This admission is necessary anyhow, as it is the admission of an empirical fact: history shows that quick public recognition of criticism of popular ideas is impossible. Those who do not like this fact need to face it and think about what to do about it.

We have thus done away with the long and useless debate about artists' intentions: some say what artists think and say about their art matters and they marshal evidence to that effect; others deny this, and they too marshal evidence. This causes a stalemate and in a stalemate the tendency is to go in circles until one party capitulates. It is an unintelligent strategy; it is also inefficient. It is much better to examine the data and if they seem all right — still provisionally of course — then both parties should be declared criticised and deviation from some of their shared tenets should be attempted. The suggestion here is to deviate from the shared tenet that all falsehood is worthless. Art is more than intentions; art is more than responses to external pressure. Yet intentions can illuminate certain

16. Each of us has had his say on it elsewhere. See Agassi 1977; Jarvie 1984, 2007.

questions; and context can illuminate others. Shared assumptions that intention is a simple idea or that internal/external is a clear boundary can be challenged without abandoning those claims. This is what gives Gombrich's writings their peculiar flavour and this is how his association with Popper has helped him since the time he wrote his *The Story of Art* over half-a-century ago.[17]

Since here we endorse Gombrich's views, we do not wish to suggest we do so without qualification. It is not for us to say how significant our qualifications are, and we suppose that this holds even for our view that for the sake of this book our qualifications do not matter. Anyway, here goes. Gombrich suggested that there is one great difference between art and science, and it is that in the arts there is progress but not in the way there is progress in science. He put techniques on the side of science and told lovely stories of progress in artistic techniques. But regarding beauty, in his view, there is no progress, as the masterpieces of diverse times and places are incommensurable. We find this unsatisfactory.

What is at stake is not the matter of progress as accumulation but the comparison of single items. There is accumulation in every human endeavour that is successfully sustained. Faced with any two desirable items we deem it preferable to have both rather than only one of them, as this gives us greater choice. Where art and science differ is that in science some replacement, in some sense of the word, is reasonable and even obligatory, but not in art. The replacement in science is a matter of sheer logic: in science often one theory does and should replace another as a better explanation of known factual information. First of all, they are alternatives to each other; they cannot both be true. Truth in this sense — in the sense of adequate representation — does not obtain in art except on rare occasions (such as in beautified portraits). Even when the art object is verbal, we never ask whether the story told in it is true in the sense in which we ask of this or that scientific theory or historical report, is it true.

Here a side remark: the traditional (Baconian) view of rationality and irrationality as all-or-nothing demands that all ideas that have been overthrown be rejected as irrational. Yet it is very hard to maintain that ancient scientific theories are as irrational as any old superstition, which suggests some versions of irrationalism are worse than others. The view of Sontag, Toulmin and Harré that there is no rationality, only erotics or rhetoric, is hardly applicable to science, even though some have argued that it is. So there is today a new and very popular theory of the rationality of science, usually ascribed to Thomas Kuhn, and it uses the concept of the paradigm already mentioned in chapter 4. A paradigm, to repeat, is a chief example. Each epoch of science, says Kuhn, follows a different paradigm, and in some sense paradigms are incommensurable. We suggest that the sense in question is that the replacement of one paradigm by another is denied rationality. This goes contrary to classical rationalism and accords with both relativism and critical rationalism.[18] All this rests on the assumption that

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17. Gombrich began work on *The Story of Art* (1950) before he was familiar with Popper's views on rationality. *Art and Illusion* (1960) made use of what he learned from Popper.

18. Kuhn may have wanted to support both relativism and critical rationalism. Alas, that is impossible.

somehow a paradigm represents a set of general ideas to be taken as background. Relativism says the change of background system, the change of paradigm, is not given to rationality. We find the relativist theory of paradigms particularly distasteful, as it presents science as a patchwork of extreme rationality (within the paradigm) and extreme irrationality (outside or between paradigms) combined. What we need is a more commonsense standard of rationality that renders rationality easier to practice and perhaps a standard that allows degrees of rationality. But this is not the place to elaborate. (See Agassi 2002.)

e) Concluding Remarks

To return to Gombrich, he allows progress in techniques; clearly the techniques available now are richer than the techniques available in antiquity, but this is not to say that modern beauty is greater than ancient beauty. Gombrich adds that such comparison is simply impossible. This last sentence is unclear and we will not pretend that we are satisfied with it. The cumulative character of techniques is not a matter of replacement: we do have steamboats that replace sailboats as means of rapid transportation, but not as means for many other purposes, and proficiency in running one kind of boat is not equivalent to proficiency with the other. So in the sense in which there is progress in techniques perhaps there is progress in beauty too. This accords with Gombrich's general view of art as the outgrowth of technique better than that only technical improvements are comparable, not art.

Perhaps we are unfair to Gombrich. Perhaps he spoke not of progress in the sense of the replacement of one item by another. After all, when a draft of a work is replaced by another we sometimes see progress. The proof of it is that at times we prefer the draft to the finished product. Gombrich discusses interesting examples of this, especially some unfinished pictures of Constable, that connoisseurs judge all the better for their being unfinished. Hence we can rationally decide whether reworking is progressive or not. So what Gombrich may mean is not that there is no progress in the sense of substitutability but that improved knowledge and improved techniques are no guarantees of the achievement of greater beauty. On this he is obviously right, and significantly so.

This ties in with the general theory of progress. In the nineteenth century it was customary to speak of progress in the abstract, of cosmic progress, if you will. Today this optimism is said to be naïve, perhaps due to the tremendous disappointments of the first half of the twentieth century. Today we say, if a question as to progress is asked, the question has to be supplied with some further specifications, with description of whatever aim relative to which one is to judge progress. There is no progress in general, we think today, only progress relative towards this or that aim. All this is too logical: the approach endorsed here is less analytic and more historical. And so we have to strike a middle position: we should take not the abstract, cosmic theory of progress, and not progress relative only to some specification one wishes to make, but the historical traditions of both art and aesthetics. We should then take as our starting point the aims generally taken as paramount in the tradition under discussion. We should then endeavour to see how the ideas of art and of progress dominant in the period under discussion intertwine. We have not come that far and the present

discussion was only preliminary, clearing the ground somewhat, we hope, towards it. But let us take one simple example. That the traditional aim of traditional church music is religious propaganda has been previously stated, and as a trivial point. This is not to say that this is true of all art, and there is even a vast church-music literature that in the sense used here is not religious at all, beginning with Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and continuing down to the present day. The very fact that a significant tradition in the arts has a prescribed aim directs our discussion of both the techniques and the art of that tradition, but also raises aesthetic questions: what kind of constraints does the religious character of the art impose? Can it be beautiful? Can there be good religious art in an irreligious world? And if Ariel Ramírez' *Misa Criolla* or rock-and-roll church music brings more people to church than a mass by Josquin des Pres what will become of the great art of the past? We end, then, as befits critical rationalists, with more questions.

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