

The *Wednesday*

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Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford



Editorial

The Relevance of Art

We had a very interesting debate last month on what art meant for members of *The Wednesday* group. Several members gave their answers to this question, which were based on their experience of art or their philosophical understanding. The debate was initiated and directed by our artist member Mike England. The contributions to the debate were very illuminating and interesting, and some are reported inside this issue of the magazine. Here, I wish to give my response.

Art in my view is governed by two views, objective and subjective. They are not necessarily opposed to each other. From the objective point of view, there is the ontological element which is related to the force that drives life in all its forms. From this perspective, art, or beauty in general, is the general characteristic of life. The harmony of natural beauty has dominated the artistic scene, as a standard, until modern times.

But the beauty of nature in colours and sounds is not only appreciated by humans. It plays a role in the vital attractions within nature and is part of life-force and regeneration. Responses of other creatives to beauty may be unconscious, while in humans it has an added layer of culture. Other creatures do not ask what is the meaning of beauty (and art), but actually embody such a beauty. Humans have a distinctive conceptual and conscious awareness in their appreciation of art, although concepts and consciousness often get in the way of appreciating art. We seem to have a lot of information about a work of art, whether a painting, a music, a film or a poem, and a large capacity for theoretical distinctions and analysis. But all these divert attention from the direct, intuitive, aesthetic experience of art. The question about the meaning of art could fall prey to these considerations, and masks what we really feel in front of a work of art in the core of our being. For example, we find ourselves moved by a work of art, a song, a poem, a film, a piece of music heard for the first time without the weight of information and analysis. My friend Barbara Vellacott, in all her poetry presentations to the group or her poetry classes asks the audience to register their direct sense of the poem, entering the experience of poetry, before

entering into intellectual debate about the poem.

On the objective side of art, Nietzsche thought that what determines the value of a work of art is the natural force that promotes it and the service it offers to a way of life. Has the work of art been done from weak or strong instincts? Does it promote life or is it life-denying? The question of the meaning of art turns out to be what art does for us and for life. Nietzsche was vehemently opposed to the theory of art for art's sake, famous in his days. He thought that the forces of life work through the artist, as an individual, to enrich a way of life. A similar theory, but from a totally opposite philosophy, changes this natural vitality into social practice. This theory was known as Social Realism and dominated the scene in a large part of the world for nearly a century. But is it only social-political needs that drive art? Here comes the other aspect of art, the subjective need.

We, as individuals, do feel the need to live in a beautiful world, real, actual or imaginary. You can turn this into a transcendental condition, that to have a healthy life, is to have a world of beautiful shapes, colours, movements, images, words and sounds. These may or may not be readily available in the environment around us. Art opens a window for us not only on a beautiful reality but on possible ones. Marx once said of religion that it is 'the soul of soulless conditions'. I think this is also true of art. We require of our environment, for example in design and architecture, that it is beautiful. Art caters for this requirement and supplies solutions. The social world may be limited by factual conditions, but art speaks of a higher world, a world of a beautiful future that is worth living. It shares with revolutions a dream of human flourishing and vitality, in a different future.

The idea of art changing reality was always important for me. Art allows us to have utopian dreams, and to seek salvation. Some art, especially novels and poems, and also some selected films, offers great roads to wisdom. They expand our lives and visions and introduce us to so many people and cultures.

The Editor



Winslow Homer's *The Cotton Pickers*

Art is the Imitation of Life

PETER WOOD

Aristotle's definition still applies: 'Art is the imitation of life'. This could be understood to give a fundamental criterion for evaluation.

The word 'art' obviously has many meanings, but Aristotle was not referring to the 'art' of curing fish nor in this piece does the word refer to the 'art' of motorcycle maintenance.

To say that 'art is the imitation of life' means there is a fundamental distinction between art and 'real life', a distinction that most people would instinctively make: if this were not the case one would be expected, for example, to report to the police a murder one sees on a stage or reads of in a book. The medium of the work of art is used to represent and, in some way, reproduce aspects of life. Art's reflection of life - giving rise (at its best) to deep emotional and spiritual responses in the audience - requires patterning and intensification of concrete elements. By contrast, objects in real life are not representations of anything but simply are what we know they are - I would refer the interested reader to the celebrated essay 'Art and Objecthood' by Michael Fried, 1967. Hence, for a real-life object

there is under normal circumstances no problem of interpretation: when the cashier gives you your receipt, you may question the tally but, unless you have severe psychological problems, do not question the nature of the object. A building is an item of real life and is therefore not a 'work of art', hence architecture is not really one of the fine arts, which include poetry and fictional writing, music, painting, and sculpture, as well as other media used to represent life, such as photography in the work of the much-neglected Henry Peach Robinson, a neglect explained by the fact that he was not of 'unexceptionable class'. A urinal is an object in real life and is similarly not a work of art, even if it is turned upside down and called 'Fountain'. In this case, one might say that the title 'Fountain' means that the work is, in fact, meant to represent a 'real life' fountain and is therefore genuinely a work of art; however, if that is the case, then surely it is one of the worst pieces of art ever touted as such: is it really the equivalent of Sanchez Cotan's still lifes, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, King Lear? It is nothing but a piece of 'clever-clever', lacking any profundity or power to move - traits which are characteristic of all good, especially great, art.

A great work of art imitates life in its capacity to give rise to many different interpretations. It can be responded to in a very large number of ways and give rise to a very large number of interpretations (which, however, does not mean that one is not better than another: this is the field of critical analysis). Hence, the works of, for example, Jane Austen are interpreted by some as right-wing conservatism, by others, such as myself, as highly critical of the establishment. By contrast, Tracey Emin's bed is nothing more than a bed.

To call abstract and conceptual works 'art', as successors to Carpaccio, Leonardo, Chardin, Friedrich, Remington, is like calling Hegel and Heidegger 'literature', as successors to Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Dickens, i.e. a category mistake. But Hegel and Heidegger et al, were genuinely conceptually brilliant and original: we can hardly say the same of someone who shows us her unmade bed and then asserts: 'Look! I am a genius'.

The point of view I am expressing is hardly original, for many art critics and historians, as well as a large number of the 'ordinary public', have made similar statements, amazed at how the world can be conned by such rubbish. A cartoonist once said that 'modern art is a product of those without talent, sold by those without conscience, to those without any idea of what is going on'. A few years ago, an invisible (i.e. non-existent) sculpture by an Italian artist sold for £12,000! I wonder how deeply moving the buyer found the work. The world of painting and sculpture has its own establishment which promotes certain values - mostly postmodernism, relativism, anti-foundationalism, and the destruction of traditional human values. By contrast, when someone saw Winslow Homer's *The Cotton Pickers*, which shows the life of the black slaves in the South with deep human understanding but in a very understated and unsensationalistic way, he said he wept and could not sleep for three days. They also promote certain 'art objects', for financial gain or other objectives. As for contemporary abstract and conceptual artists, they may imagine they are revolutionary, counter-cultural, innovative etc, when really they are basically following what they learnt in their establishment-funded art schools about how to be avant-garde. Indeed, it is more than a hundred years since the anti-figurative movement began in the visual arts, so today's practitioners are hardly new, let alone 'revolutionary', as their merchandizing would have it.

Finally, as our own perceptive, talented and traditional poet - using both rhythm and rhyme! - Chris Norris wrote: 'No avant-garde but soon brings up the rear; Where now the dernier cri of yesteryear?'



A photograph by Henry Peach Robinson



Sanchez Cotan's still life

Art Creates a Newly Shareable World

DAVID FOGG

I agree that the debate about the meaning of art is a vast topic, even accepting the selectivity allowed when trying to say what art ‘means to us personally’. The quick answer is that for me it is the most important activity for the life of the mind for as long as I can remember. Trying to better understand art’s ‘meaning’, what it does and how it does it, is what drew me into philosophy half a century or so ago!

The best art (we are not supposed to talk about ‘great’ art anymore as it sounds too much like there is a canon of masterworks) creates the possibility of a newly shareable world. It negotiates the margins of established ways of making and communicating to offer works that can change and expand how we relate to things. As something that thereby creates and shapes meaning, it’s not surprising that an account of its own meaning, if such is desirable, is elusive.

The ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of art are inseparable. Ricoeur’s ‘metaphor’ as a ‘poem in miniature’ that redescribes the world, that offers meaning, as he puts it more dramatically, from a mutual shattering of elements of language and reality, is a case in point. Picasso’s ‘Weeping woman’, if it alters our experience of what it means to feel outraged grief (hence our concept of grief), is another example of boundaries renegotiated, on a different scale (compare how we process the handling of a medium, here painting, with a sense of fracturing and stress, and what it expresses from our world (emotional breakdown and disintegration), with the work needed to bring together the disparate ‘semantic fields’ of a metaphor). Both can lose their power as they are assimilated into more readily ‘public’ meanings – a clichéd image or trope; what escapes such ‘literal’

interpretations is the ‘artistic’ element; it is what makes works worth revisiting. Art is unlike everyday shaping experience, of course, in that it is already ‘minded’, it incorporates the result of someone else’s attention and judgment.

I have steered this towards visual arts, painting and drawing, and chance for specifics. It is easy to forget how far drawing is, in its depictive activity of fashioning outlines and shading with lines, from what is given in visual experience. Also worth remembering is that when trying to capture the elegance, fragility or delicacy of, for example, a long-stemmed rose, it is the quality that needs to be conveyed, hence reproduced, as much as any identifiable topic, such as ‘rose’. Move to painting and, in colour, at least we have something closer to what comprises a visual scene to work with; playschool toddlers like to start with blobs of colour from something sponge-like before marking with lines. That is a reminder of how unexceptional the practice of art is, something to be borne in mind if our aim were some kind of definition and something that is occasionally emphasised by thinkers and practitioners. Someone put the question to Picasso: ‘When did you become a painter?’ He answered, ‘When did you stop?’. Aristotle has a description of the human being as ‘that creature which delights in mimesis’. Barnett Newman: ‘The first man was an artist... Man’s first cry was a song’.

Equally focused on the everyday is a prosaic definition of art as, for example, ‘ministering to aesthetic interest by producing objects that are worthy of it’ (Roger Scruton). But what is gained by being uncontentious here is lost in its failure to inspire. We would prefer something



Cézanne

more imaginative, creative, revelatory, insightful, moving even, something more... artistic!

So passing swiftly on from aesthetic response thinking, racing past expressivist, formalist and institutional theories we can move back to philosophers for whom art has been central, including Kant – no aesthete but with art crucial to his philosophy, bridging its phenomenal and noumenal elements - and Schopenhauer for familiar but even more extravagant claims, especially about music and ‘pure, will-less contemplation’ of the Platonic forms. Following him and the other German idealists, there is Wittgenstein for whom ‘Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same’ and Whitehead whose core principle is ‘creativity’. Whitehead also claims aesthetics as the most fruitful starting point for philosophical thought. There are others like Dewey, Wollheim or Danto.

On a good day, when I am ‘lost’ in a painting (‘all you have to do is release control’, as Oscar Kokoschka says), a new melody or musical phrase will come unbidden to mind, so that what the artwork ‘means’ seeks expression in a different art form. In any case, when ‘reacting’ to an artwork and however much that is a matter of retrieving an artist’s intention, it is good to reach the level of involvement where your own eye is ‘creating’ the painting, your own hand shaping the sculpture, sensuous enjoyment and a thrilled intellect jostling in response; the Kantian reciprocal whirr of the unsettled imagination and understanding.

None of the theories or quotes I have mentioned exhaust what art does, of course, interesting as they may be. Nor have I sufficiently highlighted the old-fashioned idea, the background to many of them, of art as an occasion for bringing beauty into life so I will add that thought – a good place to leave it.

Art's Echo: Reflecting Truth and Being

DR. ALAN XUEREB

Art has always been a reflection of our deepest truths, a mirror that reflects not just the surface of life but the layers beneath it— truth, reality, and being itself. For me, art has been an extension of my relentless curiosity, which began with a fascination for cosmology and evolved through philosophy, science, and eventually art. As I ventured deeper into the question, ‘Why are we here?’ it shifted to a more nuanced inquiry, ‘What is “here”?’

It turns out that ‘here’ is a complex— filled with things we can and cannot perceive, things that science, art, and philosophy all attempt to grasp. Throughout my life, I have sought to understand the essence of this reality, driven by a profound sense of wonder or ‘*thauma*’ (θαῦμα), the Greek word for marvel or astonishment at discovery. This sense of wonder links my philosophical inquiries to my artistic expressions, merging them into one continuous exploration of existence.

The Emergence of Artistic Expression

Art has always been present in my life, although my journey into it was less formal than that of my family. My father and sister, both formally trained artists, introduced me to the world of art, but my own engagement with it has been more spontaneous and personal. It was not until a profound life event—the pregnancy of my wife with our first child, Tristan (who is the co-author of the bas-relief attached to this article ‘*Kleines Labyrinth*’) —that my own artistic spirit fully emerged. This was a pivotal moment, sparking a new way of seeing and feeling the world. Suddenly, art became a natural extension of my being.

As I began to paint, particularly in what could be described as an expressionist style, I felt a paradigm shift within myself. I was reconnecting with the wonder I had felt as a child— a sensation that had lain dormant but was now awakened, setting off ripples of creativity and insight. I found myself released from the constraints of my old self, as if something wild and beautiful inside

me had broken free. I began to see art, science, and philosophy not as separate disciplines but as interconnected dimensions of the same reality. My artistic process became inseparable from my philosophical musings and scientific explorations.

A Unified Reality: Art, Science, and Philosophy

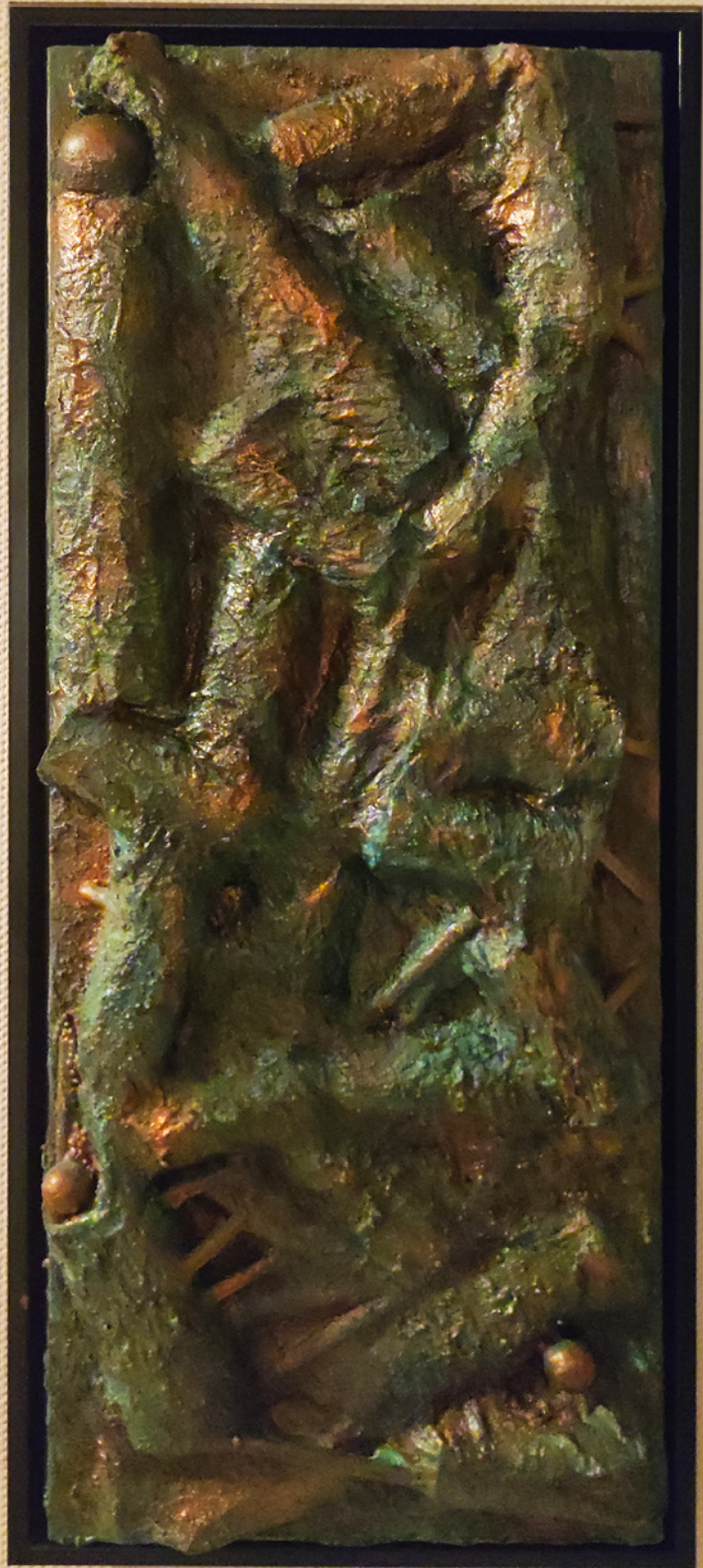
This shift in my consciousness was not limited to art; it encompassed science, particularly theoretical physics, and philosophy. At the time, I was deeply immersed in exploring concepts in physics, which echoed the same ‘*thauma*’ I experienced in my art. I became fascinated by the notion of time, which seemed to slow down during my creative process, and I was captivated by the idea that physics and art were intertwined aspects of the same reality. While I painted, I was often thinking about scientific principles, and when I explored scientific ideas, I was thinking about art. Philosophy served as the third element in this triad, providing a framework through which both art and science could be understood as expressions of the same quest for truth.

The birth of our second child, Alea, further deepened this connection. Philosophy surged back into my life with new vigour, and I began to see all three fields—art, science, and philosophy—as not just interrelated but as expressions of a unified being. Each was a way of engaging with the world, of exploring the fundamental truths that shape our existence.

The Philosophical Dimensions of Art

The works of philosophers like Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and Martin Heidegger have also profoundly influenced my understanding of art. Each offers a unique perspective on how art reflects, expresses, and shapes reality, grounding my personal experiences in a larger philosophical context.

For Kant, art is an object of disinterested aesthetic judgment, valued not for what it teaches or



**'Kleines Labyrinth' a bas-relief
by Alan Xuereb and his son Tristan.**

represents but for the pleasure it gives in its form. His idea of the 'sublime', however, resonates deeply with my own experience—art that transcends beauty, evoking awe, wonder, and even fear in the face of something beyond human comprehension. The sublime, as Kant describes it, is a window into the limits of human reason and an encounter with the infinite—a theme that echoes in both my art and my philosophical explorations.

Hegel, on the other hand, views art as a manifestation of '*Geist*', or Spirit, and a crucial step in the development of human consciousness. Through art, Spirit becomes aware of itself in a sensory, material form. This aligns with my experience of art as a reflection of a deeper reality—art as a vehicle for expressing something more profound than surface appearances, an unfolding of the rational structure of reality itself.

Heidegger's perspective, however, perhaps resonates most strongly with my own experience. He sees art as a revelation of *Being*, a process by which truth is uncovered and brought into the light. His analysis of a Van Gogh painting of peasant shoes reveals how art opens up a world, allowing us to see the deeper reality of things beyond their surface appearance. In my own work, I have felt this process of unconcealment—the idea that art brings forth truths about existence that cannot be expressed through any other medium.

Art as a Bridge to Truth and Being

Art, for me, is not merely a means of self-expression; it is a way of engaging with the fundamental nature of reality. It bridges the gap between the known and the unknown, the visible and the invisible. Whether through the awe of the sublime, the manifestation of Spirit, or the revelation of Being, art reflects a deeper truth—a truth that cannot be fully grasped through science or philosophy alone but can be felt and experienced through creative expression.

In this sense, art is a profound and essential part of our human existence, offering us a way to explore and understand the mysteries of life. It echoes the deepest truths of our being, reminding us that we are part of something much larger, something infinitely complex and wonderful—a reality that art, in its many forms, helps to reveal.

Art as a Source of Mystery

ELIZABETH PASK

My immediate response is to say that art means a lot to me. I find that I miss art when I do not have an opportunity to engage with it in some form or another, such as my attempts to draw in life drawing classes, or when I visit art exhibitions, or have the opportunity to discuss art with other people.

Engaging with ideas from Philosophy is also a hobby of mine. It is therefore not surprising to me that ideas from philosophy have become a part of the view that I adopt towards art. For example, I regard art as being an expression of what it means to be human, and as a means for self-expression. This view has been coloured by ideas from Heidegger, and endorsed when I experience art as a source of self-awareness, and perhaps, on occasion, as source of self-knowing.

Poetry is a form of art that demands a particular kind of attentiveness. This is because our being in the world is uncovered through words. Heidegger draws attention to how all art constitutes a work of poetry because it is 'the letting happen of the truth of what is'.

Meanwhile our attempt to exist within nature and perhaps to achieve a sense of 'unity' with nature, can be experienced as posing us difficulty. Heidegger has observed how this notion of unity amounts merely to an abstraction. We humans should rather look to art, since

'art lifts us (humans) with gentle hands out of and above imprisonment in nature'.

Art represents what has significance for us and indicates what can give meaning to our lives. When we engage with the art that others have produced, not uncommonly we find ourselves thinking about the artists, and what they might have been aiming to achieve. Derrida prompts us to recognise the complexity that is involved when we think about art this way. He writes of how a work of art contains a trace of the person who produced it. He uses the term '*subjectile*' to refer to something that is 'not yet given', and does not constitute an object of any knowing. We are to understand the *subjectile* as being both substance and material. Wolfreys says that it helps to think of the *subjectile* as; 'a spectral notion akin to the work of writing, which supports



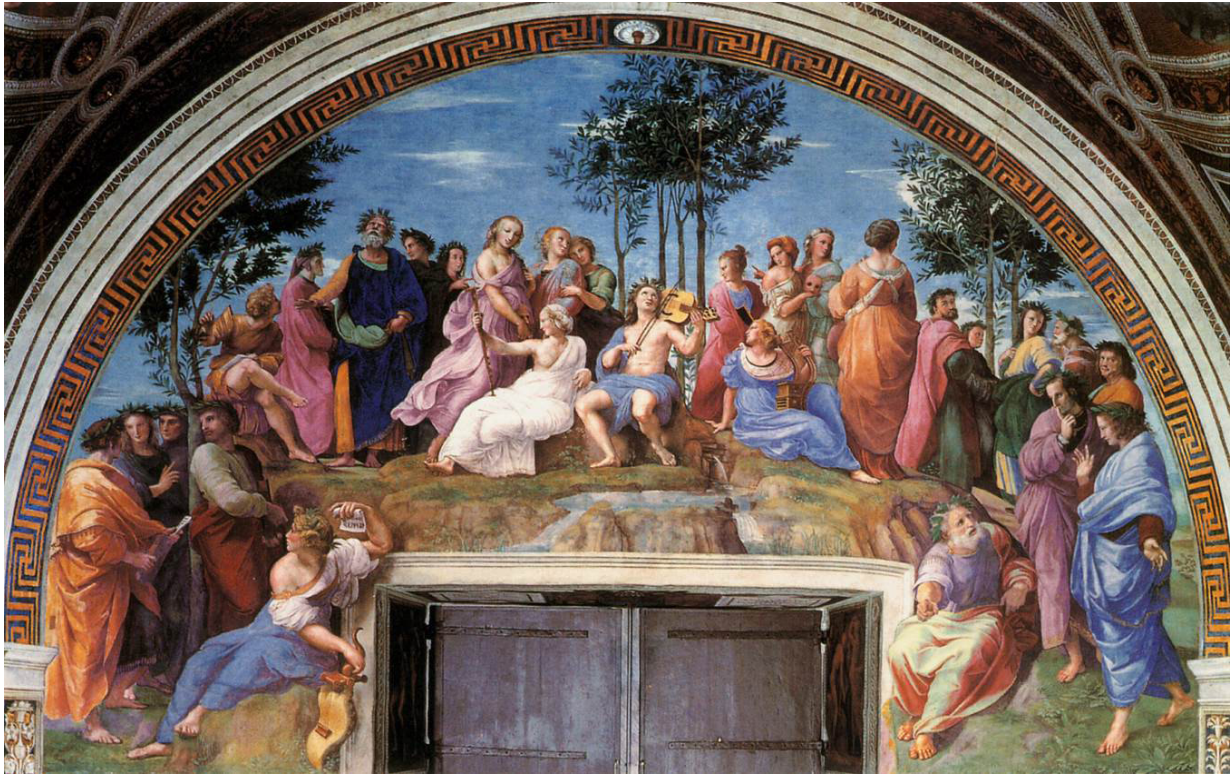
Heidegger

meaning, which places meaning as its surface movements, its temporal and textural structural, and yet which is never that meaning, never what is indirectly represented'. He adds; 'In the *subjectile* and through the play of this impossible figure everything is played out in the work of difference as that which makes possible the representation, image, meaning or being at all. And this difference this performative inscription is what makes possible the oscillation between representation and its other' (From Wolfreys Julian. Derrida, Jacques: A Guide for the Perplexed. Continuum (2009), P87).

With the above in mind, I suggest that art can be regarded as a source of mystery. It is a mystery because art's method towards illumination is not achieved through the provision of truth and falsity. We are rather brought to think, and through our reflections, to learn something of how we are inclined to view our world. Art's message is a source of further understanding of who we are in being human, it is therefore an important resource for our emerging being within the world.

When Things Fall Apart

EDWARD GREENWOOD



Raphael's Stanze

Art in Ancient Greece was regarded as *mimesis* or imitation of persons and things. Plato's Idealist ontology led him to depreciate this because he thought the truly real was the world of forms and art could not reach it. It was as though we were all watching a film and mistook it for reality. We needed to turn round and walk out of the cinema into the sun. Plato had a second objection to art. It arose from his 'stiff upper lip' doctrine which anticipated the Stoics. It favored discipline and the repression of emotion. Aristotle's doctrine of the *catharsis* of pity and fear was the right refutation of this doctrine.

In his poem 'The Art of Poetry' the Roman poet Horace put into circulation the 'picture poem' doctrine 'Let your picture be a silent poem and your poem a speaking picture' a doctrine that was to be very influential on the neo-classical poetry of the eighteenth century.

In Florence of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the revival of the interest in classical antiquity and the development of perspective produced classic art. The best example is not the manneristic Michelangelo of the Sistine chapel, but Raphael's delicate portrayal of the muses in the *Stanze* just behind it.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the German writer Gottfried Lessing reconsidered the difference between poetry and the visual arts with particular reference to the late antique statue of the *Laocoon* which showed a muscular man wrestling with a serpent. Lessing put a particular emphasis on time. The sculptor or painter had to focus on a crucial moment whereas the narrative of the poet could move through time.

In the twentieth century art went into the crisis we call modernism. William Barrett in his excellent book *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* wrote 'The century from Manet to Matisse may figure in future art histories as a period of impoverishment and decline, whose works cannot stand beside those of the old masters, or it may figure as a period of such abundant creativity that it can be matched only by the Renaissance during the fifteenth century'. He himself was inclined to the latter view. The Dadaists drew a moustache on the Mona Lisa. 'Cubism is the classicism of modern art'. The two best poets of the twentieth century Yeats and Eliot have said that 'Things fall apart' and 'I can connect nothing with nothing'.

Why I Dance with the Shadows

In the quiet chambers of my mind,
I cultivate my own garden,
where blooms of opinion flourish,
untamed and unpruned by another's gaze.

I wander through the forest of poetry,
each line a pathway of calls,
each stanza a shadow,
and I tread lightly,
unfettered by the weight of approval,
casting aside the echo of disapproval,
for what is art if not the pulse of my own heart?

Here, in the realm of paint and brush,
I find joy in the overlooked,
the smudge of colour on a forgotten canvas,
the silence in a brushstroke,
while others chase the fleeting fame
of the grand and the celebrated.

Famous vistas stretch before us,
yet my eyes find wonder in the nook,
where the wildflowers kiss the crumbling stone,
and the sun spills its gold
on the quiet curve of an unseen path.

I am drawn to the unsung,
the places where magic lingers
in the air, unseen, unheard,
for beauty, I believe,
is a personal alchemy,
crafted from the essence of our own being.

Let the world chase its accolades,
while I dance with the shadows,
in the spaces where others pass by,
for here I find the extraordinary
woven into the fabric of my own perception,
and there, I stand,
a solitary witness,
to the art of what matters to me..

Poem by *Scharlie Meeuws*



Artwork by *Nicola Meeuws*



Don't Look Now

Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.

Many of the deformations and stereotypes, transformations, and catastrophes which can assail the optical world in films afflict the actual world of psychosis, hallucinations, and dreams.

Thanks to the camera, therefore, the individual perceptions of the psychotic and the dreamer can be appropriated by collective perception.

Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'

12



CHRIS NORRIS



1

Best not attend too closely, parse each clip.
Let scenes pass unremarked, unanalysed.
Film's own advice: give consciousness the slip!

If you lose track at times, don't be surprised:
It's suchlike jolts that films alone can spring.
Let scenes pass unremarked, unanalysed.

They miss the point who never miss a thing.
Watch too intently and your thoughts go wide.
It's suchlike jolts that films alone can spring.

Film-censors parse yet come out goggle-eyed.
Film-buffs and cinéastes stick close-to-screen.
Watch too intently and your thoughts go wide.

Go softer-focus, skim-read the odd scene;
That's it, the open secret, free to view.
(Film-buffs and cinéastes stick close-to-screen).

Insider-talk: just ask the camera-crew;
They're best-placed to provide the handy tip.
That's it, the open secret, free to view.
Best not attend too closely, parse each clip.

2

This may remind you of Freud's talking cure.
Where but in Hollywood its mise-en-scène?
Whose but his own, the screenplay signature?

Slips of the tongue, mind, or script-writer's pen:
All complicate the flow of set intent.
Where but in Hollywood its mise-en-scène?

Each parataxis shows some psychic bent.
Wake up, look out for them? Anything but!
All complicate the flow of set intent.

The best get through to the director's cut.
Something will say: leave well-enough alone.
Wake up, look out for them? Anything but!

The film has certain meanings of its own.
They come across despite, not through, his aim.
Something will say: leave well-enough alone.

It's secondary-process thoughts that tame
What viewers might be hard-put to endure.
They come across despite, not through, his aim.
This may remind you of Freud's talking cure.



3

They'd all have you attend, those with the clout!
Look sharp, look out, remain on the qui vive!
Just start day-dreaming and they'll bawl you out.

All lapses must be strictly by their leave.
Save them for popcorn, ads, or 'natural break'.
Look sharp, look out, remain on the qui vive!

Else it's just down-time for the odd out-take.
Time idly spent means watchful moments lost!
Save them for popcorn, ads, or 'natural break'.

Attention-deficit brings future cost.
You might skip crucial frames should interest lapse.
Time idly spent means watchful moments lost!

14

Let time-and-motion guys make good the gaps.
There's ways to fill and still the wandering mind.
You might skip crucial frames should interest lapse.

Yet why should distraught viewers lag behind?
They may know best what films are all about.
There's ways to fill and still the wandering mind.
They'd all have you attend, those with the clout!

4

Shades of the class-room – teacher's sharp command:
'Keep quiet, attend, don't be distracted, you!'.
Always some stick or carrot close to hand.

The same decree: wool-gathering just won't do!
Always some mischief with distracted kids.
'Keep quiet, attend, don't be distracted, you.'

Attention soon may switch to rival bids;
Let mental focus hold the mob at bay.
Always some mischief with distracted kids.

And so with film should your attention stray:
What psychic terrors stalk unlicensed there!
Let mental focus hold the mob at bay.

Up on the screen, displayed for all to share.
How should the censors then let down their guard?
What psychic terrors stalk unlicensed there!

Let them stay private, public screening barred!
Subversive stuff, those X-marked reels they've canned!
How should the censors then let down their guard?
Shades of the class-room – teacher's sharp command.



5

The tics, neuroses, hang-ups, morbid fears,
All take brute shape beneath the studio lights
In monstrous scenes played out at death's frontiers.

Two treatments this shared horror-show invites,
Freud's talking cure, the camera's watching brief:
All take brute shape beneath the studio lights.

Let no-one think they'll offer swift relief:
At best their ministry's a gift deferred,
Freud's talking cure, the camera's watching brief.

The motion barely glimpsed, the needful word:
What chance it comes on cue, gives psyche peace?
At best their ministry's a gift deferred.

Yet it's no trivial pun, that word 'release':
A timely film, the vigil borne of hope.
What chance it comes on cue, gives psyche peace?

Couch-talk and moving image: each has scope
To track those depth-charged instants through the years.
A timely film, the vigil borne of hope,
The tics, neuroses, hang-ups, morbid fears.

The Wednesday

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Website:

www.thewednesdayoxford.com

Published by:

The Wednesday Press, Oxford

Editorial Board

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*We have published fifteen
cumulative volumes of the
weekly and monthly issues.
To obtain your copy of any
one of the cumulative volumes,
please pay online
and e-mail the editor
with your address.*

The account details are:

**The Wednesday Magazine
Santander**

Account Number: 24042417

Sort Code: 09-01-29

*The cost of individual copies is
£15 for readers inside the UK*

or

£18 for readers outside the UK

Art



Political Tracks, (2024) by *Virginia Khuri*

The *Wednesday* – Magazine of the Wednesday group.

To receive it regularly, please write to the editor: rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk