

What is Art?

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At the turn of the Twentieth Century, and after fifteen years of cogitation, Count Leo Tolstoy published his polemic **What is Art?** (1898. Penguin 1995) Although it is a question that has occupied the minds of philosophers for millennia, Tolstoy's answer is at least unusual in that it leads him to the conclusion that none of his own work, with a couple of minor exceptions, were art. He was not alone. Nor, he contends, was the work of Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Goethe, or Ibsen. Nor was the music of the late Beethoven, Wagner and the Romantics. Liszt, Brahms, Strauss and Berlioz are also dismissed. And nor was, in the plastic arts, Raphael, Michelangelo's 'absurd Last Judgement' and The Impressionists. As it happened this was Tolstoy's 'last judgement'. If he had he witnessed the path taken by art in the Twentieth Century, his excommunication from the church, in 1901, would have been but the beginning.

Tolstoy. Art is Communion.

The reason for Tolstoy's wholesale dismissal of contemporary art was his sociological understanding of how art had evolved. A transformation described by the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim - who also began his research in the sociology of religion in 1898 - is a continuum from the sacred to the profane. Putting to one side the Greeks, in the Christian era art arose in the bosom of religion. Although Durkheim did not specifically address the question of art, his theory would include art within the sacred. Just as religious belief was formed through collective rituals, art is also found in the intersection between the sacred and the profane. With its own particular prescriptions and proscriptions, art is another form of 'communion'; part of the cosmology and taboo's of everyday life. For Tolstoy, the argument is presented in this way. "The activity of art is based...on (the) ...capacity of people to

be infected by the feelings of other people.”
(Tolstoy.1995:38). Think of laughter, or
expressions of sorrow. Art is also an affective
expression that is infectious; it must elicit a
reaction because it is ‘a means of communion
among people’. If it is not affecting, ‘the
expression will not be art.” (Tolstoy.1995:37)

By stressing the notion that art, as with
language, arises socially, as a ‘communion’
between participants – the artist and the
audience – Tolstoy rejects, in a quite long
critique, two traditions stemming from German
Idealism. He is against the subjective
intuitionism of Kant, and his followers. This
posits that beauty is something within the mind,
as a ‘disinterested pleasure’ devoid of practical
usefulness. He is against Hegel’s objectivist
notion – “...still more foggy and mystical...if such
were possible...”(Tolstoy.1995:33) – that art is
part of a *Zeitgeist*: a ‘Spirit of the Times’.
This is something that manifests itself in
different forms in different Ages. Although

socially based, and not reducible to the mind, the inevitability and 'objectivity' of the dialectic is dismissed.

The ethical underpinnings to communion come from Tolstoy's interesting and unusual amalgamation of Christianity with Anarchism. His naturalistic translations of the Four Gospels excised the divine, the supernatural and the miraculous, and leave a tract on 'brotherly love', benevolence and sympathy. As the Anarchists might further point out, this is a form of sociality, in the form of 'Mutual Aid', the very opposite of egoism. In this, Tolstoy was a follower of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), from whom he borrowed the title of his book **War and Peace**. After Tolstoy's death, the ethics of Anarchism was developed by Prince Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921). This was a naturalistic ethic emancipated from religion, and building on Proudhon's notion that 'property is theft'.

Even though the Gospels and Christianity are central to Western culture, Tolstoy wants to make the more general sociological point that it is from religious traditions that an ethical standpoint arises. From this communion, different though it might be in different cultures, judgements in art will be made.

The appreciation of the merits of art – that is, of the feelings it conveys – depends on people's understanding of the meaning of life, on what they see as good and evil. Good and evil in life are determined by what are called religions.
(Tolstoy.1995:42)

In short, it is from a religious understanding of the sacred that art is judged. For the Greeks, "...in earthy happiness, in beauty, and strength..." For the Roman's and Chinese, "...sacrifice...for the good of the nation or the glorification of...ancestors..." For Buddhists, feelings "...which elevates the soul and humble the flesh."
(Tolstoy. 1995:43)

Although this might sound like another case of cultural relativism, Tolstoy is equivocal, because he also believes in cultural universals.

Great works of art are great only because they are accessible and comprehensible to everyone. The story of Joseph, translated into Chinese, moves the Chinese. The story of Shakya-muni (stories about the Buddha) moves us. The same is true of buildings, painting, statues, music.
(Tolstoy.1995:81,my elaboration)

Considering the Western artistic tradition, Christianity rejected all hedonistic and pagan art. Good art depicted sermons, prayer and the life of saints. The gradual rise of the profane gathered pace with the Renaissance in the fifteenth century. A perversion of Christianity replaced Icons with portraits of Princes, Popes and wealthy patrons. And it was no coincidence that this involved the rediscovery of the Greeks. As Tolstoy understood it, the elevation of hedonism heralded the profane.

Having recognised pleasure – that is beauty – as the

standard of what is good,
people of the upper classes
of European society returned
in their understanding of
art to the crude
understanding of the
primitive Greeks, already
condemned by Plato.
(Tolstoy.1995:48)

In **The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life**,
(1912. English translation 1915, George Allen &
Unwin. Second edition 1976) published just before
the First World War, and his own coincidental
death, Durkheim contends the central problem for
contemporary society is the decline in the sacred.
Because the profane cannot provide the foundations
for moral regulation - cannot provide a coherent
answer to 'the meaning of life' - the consequence
is normlessness, what he termed anomie. This theme
of alienation from the sacred, is central to
Tolstoy's polemic on art. It also takes centre
stage in **Anna Karenina** (1877), where the climax is
anomic suicide. As Tolstoy saw it, the feelings of
his aristocratic circle

came down to three very
insignificant and
uncomplicated feelings: the
feelings of pride , sexual

lust, and the tedium of living, And these three feelings , with their ramifications, make up almost exclusively the contents of the art of the wealthy classes.
(Tolstoy.1995:61)

Anna's tragic end was a precursor to the tragedy for art. The anomic causes were the same. There is the pride in the paintings of Popes, Kings and Dukes. In novels and dramas, there is sexual lust. 'With no exception', 'adultery', 'nakedness', 'lust arousing descriptions', 'erotic mania'. The tedium, the meaningless of life, is all that is left. The contrast to this decadence, as portrayed in **Anna Karenina**, is the semi autobiographical Konstantin Levin. At one with the peasants on his estate, he is the harbinger of Tolstoy's own feelings of communion. On a visit honouring the recent marriage of his daughter, Tolstoy joins the 'labouring man', a man of 'unperverted taste', not a cultured man whose 'sense of artistic perceptions is atrophied' (Tolstoy.1995:115). In **What is Art?** Tolstoy describes the contrast in these terms.

This singing, with shouts
and banging of scythes,
expressed such a definite
feeling of joy,
cheerfulness, energy, that
without noticing it I
became infected by it...
(1995:115) That evening an
excellent musician, famous
for his performances...came
to visit us and played
Beethoven...
(Tolstoy.1995:116)

'And yet', Tolstoy continues, reflecting on his
daughters welcome,

...the women's song was true
art, conveying a definite,
strong feeling. While the
101...sonata of Beethoven was
only an unsuccessful
attempt at art, containing
no definite feeling and
therefore not infecting one
with anything.
(Tolstoy.1995:116)

Tolstoy's criticism of 'representationism', in
art, is that training in imitation and realism
does not foster feelings of expressiveness.
Indeed, superfluous detail disrupts
infectiousness. Forget convincing illusions, the
basis for artistic appraisal is the degree of
sincerity, and the clarity in which it is
conveyed. This 'is always present in popular art',

and 'accounts for it's powerful effect'. "It is almost entirely absent in our upper class art, ceaselessly fabricated by artists for reasons of personal gain or vanity." (Tolstoy.1995:122)

Such 'counterfeit art' has three main sources. Extravagant remuneration, the art critic and art schools. Expressiveness cannot be taught. Feelings cannot be 'called up'. In music, for example, the most seductive of the 'counterfeits' is Wagner. Here representationism takes the form of the imitative noise of animals, the hammering on anvil, the dissonance of unstructured atonal themes. The extravagance and complexity of Wagner's Bayreuth productions "...precisely proves that it is a matter, not of art, but of hypnosis." (Tolstoy.1995:111) In the plastic arts, and literature, the slippery slop of pleasure inextricably leads to 'the licentiousness of sexual lust' or the violence of patriotism. (Tolstoy.1995:130). Where portraiture conveys brotherhood - the simple everyday 'feelings of merriment, tenderness, peacefulness' - Tolstoy is

accepting. He admires Victor Hugo, Dickens, and Dostoevsky. Of modern painters, he admires virtually none. "The art of our time... has become a harlot." (Tolstoy.1995:150)

With his beloved peasant's sickle, Tolstoy takes a swathe through the arts. What falls might be seen as a *reductio ad absurdum*. It is also clear that it is from a moral standpoint - from his Anarchistic-Christianity - that his judgements on what is art rest. Art is a communion between the participants in a social process, a ritual that is circumscribed by a particular ethic. In the West, if Tolstoy is to be accepted, genuine, as opposed to counterfeit, art will be imbued with brotherly love and the simple and happy joys of peasant life. To engage the audience, the artist must elicit these feelings and infect his audience with this morality. Because this theory is sociologically based, emphasis is placed on the relations - the social interaction - between individuals. The object produced - the work of art - is constituted by these relations. There is no

psychological reduction. Art is not subjective. It does not arise, nor is it judged, in the mind. But neither is it objective, in the sense of a realist investigation into the character of the object - the painting, the poem or the score. What is art rests on the social act of creation, not the thing created.

Plato. Art is Deception.

This conflation of ethics with aesthetics, of morality and beauty, is not new. Nor are questions around the artist and audience (the subjects), the social context (the relations) and the work itself (the object). These have been debated since the beginning of philosophy. It is sometimes called the subject object relation. One way to understand this is to make an excursion back to Plato's Republic. This will turn out to be congenial ground for Tolstoy, for funnily enough in Greece, at the time of Plato, it is also the profanity of art that is challenged in a strikingly similar way.

In part ten of **The Republic** (around 380 BC. Penguin, 1967) Plato constructs a conversation between Socrates and Glaucon (an older brother of Plato) on a Theory of Art. The two briefer dialogues at the end of this discussion consider that part of the mind the artist appeals, and the moral effect. Here the artist is certainly not on

the side of the gods, and the choices to be made in Socrates inquisition is between good and evil, between the sacred and the profane. Because the artist is a conjuror who can 'deceive' us with his illusory 'tricks', his appeal is to the inferior part of the mind. The best part of our mind is grounded in reality. It from calculations based on 'measuring, counting, and weighing' that opinions are judged. The artist – both poets and painters – appeal to the worst part of our mind, the "...irrational and lazy and cowardly..."

(Plato.1967:382) Because their work has a 'low degree of truth' – "... creating images far removed from reality..."(Plato.1967:383) – they are rightly refused admittance to The Republic. Morally speaking, the ideal state should resist the corrupting power of the artist. By giving free rein to the instincts of Eros and Thanatos, the effects of poetry and drama is to indulge empathy in anger, sex and misfortune. "Bad taste in the theatre may insensibly lead you into becoming a buffoon at home."(Plato.1967:384). The only poetry in The Republic should be "...hymns to the gods and

...praise of good men..."(Plato.1967:384) in 'lyric' and 'metre' alone.

The underpinnings to this moral critique - the profanity of art - is found in Plato's metaphysics, and theory of knowledge. The greater part of The Theory of Art addresses these ontological and epistemological issues. To establish the case that art is illusion, Socrates' starting point is metaphysics. An ontological distinction is drawn between universals and particulars. The universal essence of a thing is its Form. We have, for example, the notion of a bed or a table. This is the class of which there are many particular instances, but there can be only one universal Form. When the carpenter makes a bed, although he 'has his eye on the appropriate Form', (Plato.1967:371) he is always making a particular example, he can never make the universal Form.

To explicate a little, it can be pointed out 'Platonic Forms' are not without ambiguities. The

ontological distinction posits two worlds: the 'physical world', and a different reality called the 'intelligible world'. This includes 'pure thought' and 'mathematical reasoning'. The physical world is a world of particularity. As Socrates describes it, these "...particulars are objects of sight but not of intelligence, while the Forms are objects of intelligence but not of sight."(Plato.1967:271) Each particular thing in the physical world corresponds to a "...unique Form which we call an 'absolute' reality."

(Plato.1967:271). Although this might suggest these essences, or Forms, are reducible to mind – a mind understood as not part of physical reality – this is not Plato's contention. That would make the Form a particularity, part of a particular mind. As with all 'two world' arguments, obscurity remains. If distinct, how can one world relate to the other? And how can the 'absolute' be made intelligible without the use of terms found in the physical world?

Returning to the carpenter and his bed, Plato contrasts his enterprise with that of the artist. Now although the artist is also a craftsman of sorts, he does not make particular things – ‘real things’ such as beds – but produces reflections of real things. Metaphorically speaking, all he is doing is taking a mirror to reality. Everything he creates is an illusion, a representation of that reality.

From this ontological distinction between pure Form and reality, between the universal and particular, Socrates distinguishes between three ‘sorts of beds’, and the place of the artist in this scheme of things. First, there is the pure Form. There can be only one of these – the universal – for if there were more than one, these would be superfluous and replicate the same Ideal character. The second type of bed is the multitude of particular beds made by carpenters. In the third, the artist simply “...represents what the other two make”. (Plato.1967:374) A representation that “...stands at third remove from reality,...third

in succession to the throne of
truth..."(Plato.1967:374)

Though not of a visual sort, the poet also deals
in representations. In writing and in drama "...the
tragedians and their chief, Homer..."

(Plato.1967:375) only portray or act that which is
real. They also "...merely manufacture shadows at
third removed from reality..."(Plato.1967:376) One
would never expect Homer to provide real cures in
medicine. One would never question him on life and
death issues of military strategy, on matters of
State or of education. No schools have arisen from
his teaching. In terms of practical reality, he
has added nothing.

It is at this point in the conversation that
Socrates' Theory of Art moves from the ontology of
art to the epistemology of the illusion. Nothing
much more is said about the contention that truth
must reside in the Form, not the physical world.
Rather, a contrast is made in the physical world
between true beliefs of the craftsman and the

illusions of the artist. Because the craftsman deals in physical things, a pragmatic consideration of use is presented as the touchstone of truth. 'Quality', 'beauty' and 'fitness' in manufacture are always "...judged by reference to the use for which man or nature intend for it."(Plato.1967:378) The flute maker, for example, always defers to the opinion of the flutist. The artist, by contrast, deals in shadows and images, not right or wrong. His portrait of the carpenter require no more than holding a mirror to his image; an ignorance that requires not the slightest knowledge or appreciation of his craft.

Tolstoy and Plato were both responding to the advent of 'modern art' and it's profanity. For Tolstoy this was Impressionism and the Romantics. Cubism, Conceptual Art and the decline in the representational, was to come later. The 'modern movement' in Plato's case was also revolutionary, the invention of illusion. The critique of the profane, from a sacred standpoint, is illustrated

by a comparison between Egyptian and Greek art. In Egyptian art the depiction of figures in profile was for a sacred reason. As E.H.Gombrich sums it up.

Only the complete embodiment of the typical in its most lasting and changeless form could assure the magic validity of these pictographs for the 'watcher' who could here see both his past and his eternal future removed from the flux of time.
(E.H.Gombrich. **Art and Illusion. A Study in the psychology of pictorial representation.** Phaidon. 2012:107)

In Plato's language, they were an attempted rendering of an Ideal. Consistent with his theory of Forms, Plato would be particularly attracted to the Egyptian notion of an absence of change and degradation over time. Perfect things – the Forms – avoid the Heraclitean flux of historical decay. The pictograms – the wall painting and bar relief sculptures – of the Egyptian artists were not simply a record of everyday life, but a universal embodiment of "...a potent presence, the dead 'watching' the work on his estate ", in a

'timeless present'. (Gombrich.2012:105-6) The sacred function of Egyptian art meant *mimesis* was never the intent. The Great Sphinx was not the illusion of god, but the 'watchful guardian in her own right' (Gombrich. 2012:103) In some pictographs the enemy, or slave girls, might appear face on, suggesting the depictions were of less significant figures, not subject to this taboo. Other figures might suggest movement and life like poses. But these illustrations were never developed because they had little place in a religious tradition intent on rigid forms and the elimination of ambiguity.

The influence of Egyptian culture on the Greeks is a matter of debate. In **Early Greek Philosophy** (Adam & Charles Black.1971), Burnet argues that in philosophy it was virtually none, and in mathematics some. The situation in art, however, was entirely different. As Gombrich points out, in the sixth century BC, Greek figures, following the Egyptians, are 'stiff and frozen'. By the fifth century the legs start to move and 'their masklike

smiles softens'. By the fourth, "...their bodies receive a slight twist, so that life seems to entre the marble." (Gombrich. 2012:99) Similar illusions occur in painting, as is evident in the surviving pottery. The "...discovery of foreshortening and the conquest of space in the fifth century and of light in the fourth." (Gombrich:2012:99-100) In two hundred and fifty years the Greeks had revolutionized art. Plato looked on this 'modern movement', not as a miracle, but with despair. He "...looked back with nostalgia at the immobile schemata of Egyptian art." (Gombrich 2012:107) He railed against his compatriots who found Egyptian art unconvincing. "...Plato considered that Egyptian relief represented certain satisfied *postures*." (Gombrich. 2012:114) It was something closer to the Ideal. Consistent with it's intent, it had less room for ambiguity, and dispensed with illusionist tricks such the particularity of a perspective. Sculpture and painting were clearly part of the cultural mix of literature and drama.

Plato is critical of both. 'It is surely no accident', Gombrich goes on to argue,

..that the tricks of illusionist art, perspective and modelling in light and shade, were connected...with the design of theatrical scenery...the poet's vision and insight comes to it's climax and is increasingly assisted by the illusions of art. (Gombrich. 2012:112)

Tolstoy's arguments against 'modern art', also presupposes an objective standpoint. But is it possible to make *aesthetic* judgements? Certainly, the sociological task, if difficult, is clearer. One can objectively describe how art is socially constructed in a culture. One can add, as Gombrich has done, the psychology of pictorial representation that underlies this process. Such a theory - on the causes and effects - would address the origins and social functions of art. It would not, however, provide a basis for the aesthetic evaluation of art. It could not be used as the objective basis for a Platonic or Tolstoy polemic. It might be extended to suggest all such disputes

about merit are also socially constructed; that it is not, in principle, possible to have a theory of art as aesthetics. This is not a move that Plato or Tolstoy would happily make. Fighting against this relativistic conclusion, Plato and Tolstoy are one. The difficulty is that neither of their conceptions of art avoids the implication. In both theories, the work of art – the object – is confused with, or subsumed by, its relation. This confusion of object and relation is the genesis of relativism. It works against the development of a realist theory of aesthetics, and often reduces the debate into a morass of moral conflict. This conflation of aesthetics with morality has remained the case since the days of Plato. Tolstoy's case against modernism rests on the social relation of communion. Plato's case against modernism rests on the relation to an Ideal. For Plato, a work of art is not even a thing, only a reflection of a thing. For Tolstoy, the issue is more down to earth – there is no metaphysical dualism – simply the sociological observation that art can only arise in a milieu of a certain sort.

The question remains, can this impasse of relativism in their critiques be avoided.

Gombrich. The Search for Objectivity.

Two young émigré's who fled Vienna just before the Second World War, were the philosopher of science Karl Popper and the art historian Ernst Gombrich. In London they became life long friends, later knights, and members of the Queen's exclusive coterie - of twenty four - The Order of Merit. Together they have attempted to develop a realist solution to the problem of objectivity in aesthetics. Over his career, Gombrich has applied a Popperian understanding to try and avoid foundering on the rocks of relativism. Does this enable him to navigate past the shipwrecks of Tolstoy and Plato?

One obvious course is to rest the realist case on the conjectures of connoisseurship, the canons that are uncovered in the history of art. These canons are the works of art themselves. It is the object of connoisseurship - the thing the connoisseur looks at - not the subject and

relation of evaluation, that Gombrich considers. 'Canons and Values' (in E.H.Gombrich. **Ideals and Idols**. Phaidon.1979) is a copy of his correspondence with Quentin Bell, an art critic. Bell begins by pointing out that the canon must include the innovators. In the Nineteenth Century, for example, Whistler is included because of all his imitators. 'It is quite clear who is imitating whom'. Yet, and this is the crux of the matter, Bell goes on to say, "...it may not always be clear who is painting the best paintings." (Gombrich. 1979:169) Gombrich's reply to this is the admission that, even with Michelangelo's greatness, I "...select him for my canon on the grounds...of faith and hope." (Gombrich. 1979:171) Gombrich even suggests that, in the end, he might be advocating nothing more than "...a retrograde step towards an 'Academic' interpretation of art..." (Gombrich. 1979:172) This raises the issue of whose views are to be consulted in the formulation of the canon. Bell's rejoinder is this:

The trouble is that by
making the canon acceptable
to myself I may have made

it unacceptable to you. To
the true Canonist the canon
is the ark of the covenant;
I have turned it into a
public convenience, which
is not quite the same
thing. (Gombrich.1979:180)

Gombrich then admits that every generation revises
the canon. This conclusion to the correspondence
provides no answer to the relativist. Although
there is the suggestion they have avoided,
somehow, 'a complete relativism' - in Bell's words
- or a 'radical relativism' - in Gombrich's - they
are forced to admit, to quote Bell, that 'fashions
of our day and even, to some extent, those of the
past' are perceived "...though a distorting
glass...which is ever moving in front of our eyes."
(Gombrich.1979:178)

Is the canon, then, one of Thomas Kuhn's
paradigms? Gombrich thinks not; and a second
argument follows this path. He prefers to follow
Popper and see objective knowledge as based on
trial and error, on conjectures and refutations.
Just as science is 'kept on the boil' by this
process - not nobbled by the 'normal science' of a

paradigm – in the history of art canons can be seen as conjectures.

The canon is our starting point, our guiding theory about that aspect of image-making we call mastery. It may be no more infallible than other theories can ever be...

(Gombrich.1979:165)

In accepting a canon as a tentative theory, Gombrich believes he ceases to be the 'complete relativist' and 'subjectivist' and sides with tradition.

In fact we may feel that as far as the peaks of art are concerned, it is not so much we who test the masterpiece, but the masterpiece which tests us.

(Gombrich. 1979:164)

In Popper's philosophy of science, objective knowledge requires not only the bold conjectures of a canon, but also the conditions that, if met, would mean the refutation of the canon. It is not simply verifiability, but falsifiability.

Unfortunately, Gombrich does not extend his analysis to this crucial step. Undoubtedly the canon is critical, but it remains unclear on what

rational grounds it might even be rejected as a 'public convenience'!

A third attempt turns to what Popper calls 'the logic of the situation'. This was first outlined in **The Poverty of Historicism**. (Routledge and Kegan Paul.1969) In art, Gombrich unpacks it in these terms.

It is always illuminating to explore the situation in which the artist found himself, the options he had, and the decisions he made within the tradition in which he was bound to work. (Gombrich. 1979:148)

In *'The Logic of Vanity Fair: Alternatives to Historicism in the study of Fashions, Styles and Taste'* (first published in **The Philosophy of Karl Popper**. The Library of Living Philosophers. The Open Court. 1974.), Gombrich quotes Popper's description of this 'logic' as working though the social context of art, 'something like an analysis of social movements'. (Gombrich.1974:926) To illustrate this, Gombrich examines how fashions, styles and taste evolve in an artistic milieu. He

does this by telling of his experiences in Paris, early in the twentieth century. Impressionism was the dominant style. Not surprisingly, he was upbraided by his friends for suggesting shadows are grey. Walking through the Latin Quarter he readily agreed, they were, indeed, purple. Ten years later, he was then told: 'Do not paint what you see, paint what you feel'. Subsequently, one member of the group attended a lecture on mineralogy at the Sorbonne. The topic was crystallization. From this was born the "...magic word, destined to become a talisman of modern painting." (Gombrich. 1974:936) "A new theory of art was being constructed, based on the idea of crystals being primitive forms of all things."(Gombrich. 1974:936) Here was the evolution of a social movement. It was exemplified in the change in styles from Impressionism to Expressionism to Cubism.

This story of art is a very different one to the psychologism of Kant, a theory of art based on personal, disinterested, judgements. For Gombrich,

the expression 'I like it', rather implies, "I believe that is the kind of thing my group accepts as good. Since I like my group, I like it too." (Gombrich. 1974:949) Art as 'self expression', whether interested or disinterested, is 'total nonsense'. So too is art conceived 'as the expression of the age'. Hegel's historicism involves the logical progression of the *Zeitgeist*. The Philosophy of History unveils a series of discrete Ages. Without going into the mechanics of this dialectic, art is one manifestation of this changing Spirit. It begins with the architecture of the pyramids then the sculpture of the Greeks. The paintings in the Christian Age of Faith follow, but then yield, in turn, to the less tangible in poetry. The final synthesis is abstract philosophy. These historicist speculations, unfortunately, throw little light on any particular period or its evolution. The change from Impressionism to Cubism, for example, finds a simpler sociological cause.

Hegel mistakenly thought he had found objectivity though the logic of the dialectic, but what of the 'logic of the situation'? Does Gombrich's sociology of styles provide objectivity? From Gombrich's perspective, not entirely. "We grade a work of art within a style, but we refrain from pronouncing about the value of different styles." (Gombrich. 1979:146) Gombrich calls this 'stylistic relativism', for which he has no realist answer. This is not a species of cultural relativism, however, because styles are sometimes cross-cultural. And he also disputes Peter Winch, and those who contend cultures are incommensurate. In '*Understanding a Primitive Society*' (**American Philosophical Quarterly**. 1964) Winch argued the concept of Zande witchcraft could not be translated, by Evans-Prichard, into an objective anthropology. Counter to this, Gombrich contends we have made significant advances in translating Egyptian culture, for example, and we can certainly translate and make intelligible different styles from an objective standpoint.

Take the case, again, of the change from Impressionism to Cubism. Cubism was very different to Impressionism. Quoting two different eye witness accounts of the origin of this social movement, Gombrich points out the two masters – Picasso and Braque – were neither mathematically nor philosophically literate. They painted first, and then, only later, dressed up their explanations. Leo Stein – a comrade and American art collector – put it this way.

There was a friend of the Montmartre crowd, interested in mathematics, who talked about infinities and fourth dimensions. Picasso began to have opinions on what was and what was not real, though as he understood nothing of these matters the opinions were childishly silly. He would stand before a Cezanne or a Renior picture and say contemptuously, 'Is that a nose? No, this is a nose', and then he would draw a pyramidal diagram. 'Is this a glass?', he would say, drawing a perspective view of a glass. No, this is a glass', and he would draw a diagram with two circles connected by crossed lines. I would explain to him that

what Plato... meant by 'real things' were not diagrams, that diagrams were abstract simplifications, ...that Platonic ideas were worlds away from abstractions. (Leo Stein, quoted in E.H.Gombrich. **Topics of Our Time**. Phaidon. 1991:136)

A second contemporary, an art dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, "...recalled that in 1908 Picasso had told him that he wanted an engineer to be able to construct the object depicted in his paintings."(Gombrich. 1991:136) Maybe, Gombrich further mulls,

...the search for alternative methods of representation had led him to books on isometric drawings or similar devices which he wished to incorporate in his paintings. (Gombrich.1991: 137)

At any rate, Kahnweiler translates the Cubist movement as part of the great representational project in the history of art. It was a language that could be interpreted and critically understood. With Impressionism we can accept, after assimilating the 'dabs' and 'patches', a new

way of seeing nature. With Cubism, the new
“...geometrical impression disappear completely as
soon as familiarity with the new methods leads to
the correct process of ‘reading’...”(Gombrich.
1991:139) That few have learnt this language, and
that most prefer the language of Impressionism, is
beside the point. The art historian is not
“...obliged to endorse every ideology that has ever
blossomed into art...” Indeed, “...fallacious ideas
can result in admirable pictures.”(Gombrich.
1991:141)

The social analysis of styles in Gombrich’s hands
is enlightening. It shows that, sociologically
speaking, Cubism is no more mysterious than
Impressionism; that it was part of the culture of
Montmartre and formed a perfectly intelligible
language that could be accepted or rejected. Such
analysis, however, cannot confirm the aesthetic
significance of the movement. His ‘stylistic
relativism’ unavoidably prompts him to make a
final appeal to Popper. Can his philosophy
“...restore the independence of art from social

pressures and vindicate the objectivity of its values"? (Gombrich 1974:955)

A fourth, and final, way forward is incompletely expounded in Gombrich's book, **Art and Illusion**. In Poppers philosophy of science there are no such things as pure observations. Every observation is theory impregnated. Similarly, in art, Gombrich argues, there is no such thing as the 'innocent eye'. The painter does not paint what he sees, but sees what he paints. The painter inherits, or adopts, a schema by which he attempts to capture that part of reality that is consistent with the tradition he is working within. Over time the illusions are refined or corrected. For Popper every question implies a tentative theory. For Gombrich

This description of the way science works is eminently applicable to the story of visual discoveries in art. Our formula of schema and correction, in fact, illustrates this very procedure. (Gombrich. 2012:272)

There are four elements in Popper's description of the evolution of objective knowledge. The initial problem, the tentative theory, the refinements of this theory – what he calls error elimination – then the new problems that arise from this process. The more interesting and different the new problems that are generated, the better the initial theory. These are called 'progressive problem shifts' and knowledge is said to evolve by this process. If few or no problems are generated, this is called a 'degenerative problem shift' and the theory is discarded. In failing to produce new problems, the research program is abandoned on the grounds that it does not provide a way forward.

In art, we also start with a problem. Indeed, Constable viewed painting as a science, much like the physics of his day. His problem was *chiaroscuro*. It was not dissimilar to the problem that occupied the Impressionists, just as Rembrandt, and many others before. Constable was trying to "...achieve the impression of light and depth by modulating tone..." (Gombrich. 2012:42),

what Constable called the 'evanescent effects of nature's chiaroscuro'. Part of his schema, or theory, was to change hues and introduce more green than was conventionally fashionable. *Hay Wain*, painted in 1821 and exhibited in Paris in 1824, led French artists to 'lighten their palettes'. The social movement of Impressionism, which took its name from Monet's painting *Impression, sunrise* (1872), was inspired by the bright and simplified mass of colours found in the Japanese wood block. A change in the medium was also the invention of the lead paint tube. This portability enabled *en plaine air* painting. New problems arose. The effects of light and haze, dazzle, even glare, could be explored. Monet's iconic series of twenty five haystacks (1890) painted over three seasons – summer, autumn, and winter – were re-workings and refinements to a schema that explored optical effects. This led to progressive problem shifts. Remaking involved exploring the effects of fractured brushwork, blocks of bright colours, the rendering of blue trees and red grass. This was further reworked by

the new problems of the Neo-Impressionists. Experiments with dots (Seurat) and dabs (Pissarro), horizontal brush strokes – ‘a vortex of lines’, as Gombrich describes it – (Van Gough), then the cylinders, the sphere and the cone that explored form and structure (Cezanne). Seurat’s new theory attempted to create the illusion of more luminosity by a method called pointalism. His ‘chromo-luminarist’ theory required you to step back to allow the colours to meld.

As Gombrich points out, the ‘testing’ of these new theories was first the shock, then the acceptance and delight of this new language.”... The visible world *could* after all be seen in terms of these bright patches and dabs of paint.” (Gombrich. 2012.275) It even became a case of ‘nature imitates art’. “As Oscar Wilde said, there was no fog in London before Whistler painted it.” (Gombrich. 2012.275) What began as a derisible ‘school of smudges and spots’ became a much admired progressive research program.

If Gombrich had developed this Popperian analysis of problem shifts within an artistic tradition, he might have been more clearly in a position to revise his 'stylistic relativism'. Styles could be analysed and compared on how progressive or regressive the tradition turned out to be. Refutations would fall under considerations of technique. What reworking or revisions are made? In science, this is error elimination. In art, this is refinement to the schema. Particular artists could be considered in terms of what questions they are addressing, if they come up with new solutions and then further questions, or if they degenerated into addressing the same old problems and coming up with the same old solutions. No error elimination, no fresh problems. On these grounds, I think Quentin Bell would be on stronger ground in making out his case for the merit of Whistler over his imitators.

Popper. Art and Self Expression.

Many commentators have extolled Paul Cezanne in the rise of cubism. To quote Edmund Capon, once long time Director of The Art Gallery of New South Wales, he is "...arguably...the most influential figure of twentieth-century Western art."(Edmund Capon. **I Blame Duchamp**. Lanter. Penguin. 2009:173) Small wonder a Cezanne was his last major acquisition for the gallery. Capon further observes Cezanne was neither Impressionist nor Post-Impressionist. Their problems of changing light were not his. According to Capon, Cezanne speaks of sensation and feelings,"...two complimentary instincts informed by mind and by intuition."(Capon.2009:173) On this reading, there are only some small steps to Tolstoy. This is not a starting point for a Popperian understanding of art. Karl Popper puts no weight on feelings in his analysis. "The expressionist theory of art is empty."(Popper. *Autobiography*, in **The Philosophy of Karl Popper**. 1974:48) Self-expression, emotion, is trivially true of all human behaviour, and it

is not a distinctive characteristic of art. It is obviously true that the artist can be emotionally moved by his work, that he might strive to convey this emotion to his audience. Indeed, the artist might even harness this emotion as a kind of test to the "...success or fittingness or the impact of the (objective) work..." (Popper.1974:52) But it is always the work itself, the object, that elicits these emotions, and to confuse affect and object is to fall into the relativistic confusion of Tolstoy. When the subject and relations of emotion are elevated, it is a slippery slope to irreconcilable debate over emotive response and intuition. An investigation into the object – the work of art itself – is exchanged for the stock in trade of the subjectivist.

Capon is on surer ground when he explores this object – the composition, structure and harmony – and remarks that Cezanne "...dissected, disassembled and then re-assembled his subjects – and in doing so imbued the individual components with extraordinary strength, logic and credence."

(Capon.2009:174) This is another way of describing Popper's process of error elimination. An alternative interpretation on the meaning of 'sensation' for Cezanne might elaborate this realist point.

At the end of his life, in a series of letters to the young painter and critic, Emile Bernard, Cezanne talks of his paintings as 'experiments', as 'research in nature' and as a 'proof of theories'. Like Constable, his labours appear as science, 'I believe in the logical development of what we see and feel through the study of nature, never mind about the techniques' of painting.

(Letter to Emile Bernard, 21st September 1906, in **The letters of Paul Cezanne**. Edited and translated by Alex Danchev. Thames and Hudson. 2013:373)

Roughly along the lines of the British Empiricists, Cezanne assumes sensations come from nature. They are sense data that comprise our perceptions. The problem for the artist is to capture this nature. This is what he means by the '*realisation of nature*'. 'In order to make

progress in realisation, there is only nature, and an eye educated by contact with it.' (Letter to Emile Bernard. 25th July 1904. Danchev.2013:342) Even in his letter to Louis Aurenche, where emotions are mentioned, it is the 'sensation of nature' – where the object enables perception – that is 'the necessary basis for all artistic conception'. Certainly he goes on to say 'our emotion is no less essential', but this is not something that is spontaneous, immediate or easy. It 'is acquired only through very long experience'. (Letter to Louis Aurenche. 25th January 1904. Danchev.2013:332) It is for this reason that, although Cezanne's admits '*sensations*, are my stock-in-trade' (Letter to his Son. 15th October 1906. Danchev.2013:381), this does not lead to Expressionism, but a schema of a different sort.

That Cezanne left many of his works unfinished is well known. The experiment failed; he could not re-assemble these to the satisfaction of the schema; he could not achieve a '*realisation of nature*'. To more clearly show his importance, a

comparative study of the unfinished with finished works would be instructive. Such analysis might show under what conditions his 'mosaic theory of representation' works – where the shapes cohere into a 'convincing whole' – and under what conditions the schema fails and they are left unfinished. There is one reference in his letters to this problem. In explaining his theory of perception to Emile Bernard – a member of Gauguin's Pont-Aven School, and later a Symbolist – he remarks

“...the *sensations colorantes* that create light are the cause of abstractions that do not allow me to cover my canvas, nor to pursue the delimitation of objects when their points of contact are subtle, delicate; the result of which is that my image or painting is incomplete.” (Letter to Emile Bernard. 23rd October 1905. Danchev 2013:355)

Amusingly, and treading on Bernard's toes, the letter ends with a pointed dismissal of the neo-impressionist's penchant 'that outline (everything) in black, a defect that must be resisted with all one's might'

Further exploration on these themes, no doubt, could draw out the distinctiveness of Cezanne's schema. In his still life painting, the overcrowding of surfaces, tilting of flat planes, the mixing of perspectives, and how this was assimilated and adapted by Picasso to produce radically different problems around ambiguity. Following Capon, Jeffrey Smart could be seen as a counter point to this problem shift. In his work we find a very different notion of ambiguity. Edmund Capon has remarked that although his realism comes from the High Renaissance of Piero della Francesca, he also follows Cezanne, where

...subject matter is merely the building blocks of composition
...Like Cezanne, Smart's real interest is to put the right shapes in the right colours in the right places. (Capon.2009: 184)

Unlike Picasso's ambiguity, stemming from form, in Smart's case

We...find it slightly disturbing and hard to believe that practical and mundane fixtures, like roads and railways, should

be elevated to the status of
semi-mystical icons.
(Capon.2009:185)

Picasso and Smart are two very different
developments from Cezanne. A Popperian method of
problem shifts could explore why Picasso's
research program turned out the more progressive;
why a neo-della Francesca realism is regressive.
Or, possibly such an investigation would draw a
quite different conclusion. Either way, such an
analysis would be a path that leads away from
Gombrich's stylistic relativism.

Anderson. Art and Values.

Even though the analysis of problem shifts is a promising way forward, Gombrich leaves it only as a suggestion. It was never systematically worked out. He remained troubled with the relationship between facts and values, and how this impinged on objectivity in the arts. Popper's first formulation of this problem is mentioned in **The Open Society and its Enemies.** (Vol. 1 Plato. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1969) Discussing Plato, on nature and convention, a dualism arises with '...the impossibility of reducing decisions or norms to facts.' (Popper. 1969:63). G.E. Moore had labelled the confusion of facts with values 'the naturalistic fallacy'. Like most English philosophers in the first half of the twentieth century, Popper appears to accept this doctrine. His summation was, "...it is impossible to derive a sentence stating a norm or a decision or, say, a proposal for a policy from a sentence stating a fact." (Popper. 1969:64) The principal rested on the validity of the argument. It is invalid to

derive an *ought* (norm) from an *is* (fact). "...I believe in the impossibility of reducing decisions or demands to facts." (Popper. 1969:211) There was, however, a qualification, because Popper also goes on to say "...they can, of course, be treated as facts." (Popper.1969:211) And again, "Our dualistic thesis then becomes...proposals are not reducible to facts (or to statements of facts, or to propositions) even though they pertain to facts." (Popper.1969:235)

This dualism has always been a problem for aesthetics. The area for study is the norms of beauty. If these norms were not matters of fact, how could they be discussed objectively? Popper's positive resolution to this impasse was to sidestep the dualism by contending it is still possible to investigate the problems of aesthetics in the same manner that it is possible to investigate the problems of science. They both follow the same path of problem shifts in the evolution of objective knowledge. As to the dualism itself, he always remained equivocal.

Toward the end of his life, in a reply to the pleas from Gombrich, all he could do was to quote Gombrich back to himself. The dualism is addressed only in metaphor. It is the story of a Berlin professor writing against the Nazi purges at the universities. Upon publication of his protest, he spends the night with friends listening to chamber music – the place of value – whilst waiting for the Gestapo knock at the door – the facts. Fortunately, it did not come. And Popper concludes: “I cannot think of a better illustration of the place of value (chamber music) in a world of facts (the knock at the door)”. (Popper.1974:1180 *‘Reply to my Critics’* taken from Gombrich’s address *‘Art and Self Transcendence’*. My elaboration.)

Facts and values reside in the same world. “...Art has a place in this world of facts...”.(Popper. 1974:1180) But there remains an implied conceptual, ontological – it is not at all clear – distinction. By following Popper, this distinction precluded Gombrich from developing a theory of

aesthetics. He always thought his descriptive accounts ultimately rested on evaluations, or norms, which were not in some way matters of fact.

The realism of John Anderson – Challis Chair of Philosophy, Sydney University, 1927-1958 – argues against this, and other dualisms. In ethics, this means a purely descriptive study expunged from prescriptions. A *theory* of ethics is an account of what is the case. Certainly the moral world is full of prescriptions, and other relations, but these are simply described as part of the rich social fabric, and should not be confused with an objective description of ethical qualities, such as sociality, the productive ethic, and other examples Anderson explores in his account of the good. Moral demands, and other abstract relations connected to these qualities, remain the subject matter of sociology. The source of relativism in ethics is the confusion of these relations with the object itself. This is the main reason why a positive science of ethics has not come about. The naturalistic fallacy is avoided in this position

because the speech acts involving norms and decisions – prescriptive and proscriptive utterances, for example – do not enter into the account. Ethics is not a study of what ‘ought’ I to do, but what ‘is’.

Anderson’s position in aesthetics is an extension of his arguments against relativism and dualism. It could be taken as the basis for a positivist argument against Tolstoy’s reduction of a work of art – the object – to its social context – the relations of communion. It could also be the basis for an empiricist argument against the dualism of Plato, and also the implicit dualism found in the realism of Popper and Gombrich.

Anderson’s papers on aesthetics are brief. They are collected in **Art and Reality**. (1982. Hale and Iremonger) It is through arguments against the positions he is exposing, that he works out his own alternate theory. Most of the more detailed analysis deals with literature, where the tenant of his theory of art – the development of theme –

is more obviously and clearly applied. This is because literature and music occur over time. Music, for example, relies on the memory of the listener piecing together the elaborations and transformations of theme. Depending on the complexity, much re-listening may be required for familiarity, and ultimate enjoyment. Plastic arts, however, primarily occur in space. Although they too must have a theme, the notion of development is more problematic. Anderson has very little to say about painting, and it is not at all clear why 'wholeness, harmony, and radiance' might lead him to admire Cezanne, say, over his contemporaries.

The foundation of Anderson's aesthetics is taken from James Joyce. (**A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man**. Penguin. 1968) Here Stephen briefly enumerates

...the qualities of universal beauty..." "Aquinas says...*integritas, consonantia, claritas*. I translate it so: Three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony, and radiance...". (Joyce. 1968:211) First, "...the aesthetic image is...self bounded and self

contained...you apprehended it as one thing. You see it as one whole. You apprehend its wholeness. That is *integritas*." (Joyce.1968:212). Second, "...you apprehend it as balanced part against part...you feel the rhythm of its structure...you feel now that it is a *thing*...the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious. That is *consonantia*."(Joyce. 1968:212) Finally. "You see that is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance ...the *whatness* of a thing."(Joyce. 1968:213)

Anderson says little about wholeness, harmony and radiance. For Anderson's purposes, a better synonym of *integritas* might have been integrity, as wholeness suggests an investigation into how the art object is integrated. Anderson has more to say on the second, harmony. In painting this might have related to the balance of the composition. Anderson, however, stresses the structure of the work and this leads to his central concern, the development of theme. A work of art

...must not be simply a collection of bits and pieces. It must be built round some *theme* forming what I have called the structure of the work. In the case of literature and music this theme

is often enunciated quite early in the work by a significant phrase of words or notes; in the plastic arts by a significant shape, or mass by focusing on which we get the structure which has been built up around it. (Anderson. 1982:265)

Of the theme, the artist may be vague or even confused. Like the unconscious mind that manifests itself in dreams, he might not even be aware;

"...and it is here that the discerning critic can help us, so long as he is free as possible from the vices that beset so many people concerned with the arts e.g., sentimentalism, romanticism, representationism..." (Anderson. 1982:266)

The structure and theme of a work of art is summed up in Joyce's aesthetics.

The significant phrase in music is repeated with variations in pitch, in volume, in rhythm etc., just as the significant shape in the plastic arts (the square, the oblong etc.,) is repeated in various ways...yet all working together to form an articulated structure of 'wholeness, harmony and radiance'...". (Anderson. 1982:267)

Such elaboration is only a very incomplete skeleton of a positive theory of aesthetics. Not much is established in the plastic arts. It would require a Gombrich, an art historian, to add flesh, and many more bones, to Anderson's argument. In Mathew Arnold's words, it would require a very much better acquaintance with "...the best that has been known and thought in the world'."(Anderson. 1982:268) Such a theory would be based on contingent identity statements on "...what has been considered beautiful throughout the ages, what has stood the test of time."(Anderson. 1982:268) Without more explication, in the plastic arts Anderson does not get us much beyond David Hume - a connoisseur's understanding - or Gombrich - notions of the canon.

Conclusion. Progress and Regress in Art.

Inspired by Johann Sebastian Bach, Karl Popper was a writer of fugues. If progressive problem shifts in music did not stop in 1750, they certainly did not extend much beyond the death of Mozart, in 1791. So far as music is concerned, Popper's alarmist response to modernity has a similar tone to Plato and Tolstoy. The basis of his critique, however, is not moral outrage. There is no conflation of aesthetics with morality. As a realist, he would also have no truck with Tolstoy's relativism; and Plato's idealism is systematically rejected in **The Open society**. This astonishing position of Popper is based, rather, on an erudite understanding and training in music. One of the two oral exams for his Ph.D. was on its history. Arising from his musical experiences in Vienna, and his views on the 'poverty of historicism', the idea of progress in music became problematic for Popper.

The Hegelian dialectic, and the inevitability of progress, was adopted by Wagner, introduced into music, and presented as a 'spirit of the time'. On Wagner's own estimation, he was 'ahead of his time', the 'unappreciated genius', and only understood by the connoisseur. Popper disputes his expressionist music as progress, just as he was critical of the anti-expressionist movements that opposed it, those of serialism – atonal twelve-note music – and *musique concrete* – synthesizers and recordings from nature. Although these were reactions against Romanticism, they are rejected as having no recognisable melody, harmony or rhythm.

Poppers understanding of music, outlined in his autobiography, proceeds as follows. In music, according to Popper, the discovery of polyphony was peculiar to Western civilization and just as significant as the other great human achievement, the rise of science. It occurred sometime between the Ninth and Fifteenth Century. We cannot be sure because counterpoint singing and harmony might

have been an accident, or mistake, made by the church congregation. This was then introduced as a compatible second melody that could be sung in conjunction with the original. The oddness of Popper's position is that this progressive problem shift, something that occurred over 500 years ago, is sufficient. Unlike science, "In music such inventions as counterpoint revealed almost an infinity of new possibilities and problems."(Popper. 1974:54) Evolution is somehow circumscribed. This is because, in music,

There is always the danger that newly realized possibilities may kill old ones: dynamic effects, dissonance, or even modulation may...dull our sensitivity to the less obvious effects of counterpoint...(Popper.1974:54)

Since J.S. Bach, the problem shifts in music have been regressive.

What I really accuse many of the 'modern' musicians of is their failure to love great music – the great masters and their miraculous works, the greatest perhaps that man has produced.

The modern musicians he speaks of were The Schoenberg Society, in Vienna. They began as

Wagnerians, then set about to oust Wagner, "...as if someone had smeared the score of *Tristan* while the ink was still wet." (Michael Hall. **Leaving Home**. Faber and Faber. 1969:32) Popper had been intimately acquainted with this modernist movement. However, like Tolstoy, he came to believe that Wagner was "...the main villain of the piece." (Popper. 1974:55) Returning to Plato, Popper suggests the poet or musician is likely to be either a 'skilful deceiver' or 'genuinely inspired by the gods.' (Popper. 1974:51) Bach was on the side of the gods, Wagner, and those after him, the skilful deceivers. The explication of expressionism in the modernist movement follows.

If we take the theory of inspiration and frenzy, *but discard divinity*, we arrive ...at the modern theory that art is self-expression, or more precisely, self-inspiration and the expression and communication of emotion. (Popper 1974:51-52)

Anderson is in agreement with Popper at this point. Expressionism, "...the interpretation of works in terms of the soul-states of the *artist* may be regarded as a particular form of

romanticism.' (Anderson.1982:56) And romanticism, for Anderson, is a veil for the error of illusions. Like Popper, he condemns this as 'extrinsic appreciation', of trying to "...estimate works by something outside the works themselves."(Anderson.1982:57) As with Popper, he readily accepts emotions are present in art, but the objectivist point is that "...the artist and his audience are emotionally moved *by the work of art.*"(Popper. 1974:52) It is "...the musician struggling to solve musical problems..."(Popper 1974:53) that moves us, and it is upon these problems, or themes in the structure of the work, that aesthetic judgements are made.

Although Gombrich shares his friends prejudice in music, as a historian of art he would be hard pressed to accept Popper's errant views on problem shifts. He accepts that his own 'conservatism' in music is 'dogmatic'. He likes recognisable tunes, and he dislikes 'contemporary experiments'. In this sense, Popper and Gombrich's repugnance of the modern, is a return to Plato and Tolstoy.

Certainly, the profanity of Twentieth Century art is more difficult to navigate than Bach's sacred fugues, but neither Popper nor Gombrich are really in a position to deny progress. Gombrich admits as much when he says,

...I must grant the possibility that, despite the historicist nonsense talked by Schoenberg's champions, there are fascinations in the serialist game which long efforts and familiarity would reveal (Gombrich.1974:953)

In the plastic arts, of course, Gombrich is the happy chronicler, neither conservative nor dogmatic. The striking feature here is that in the Twentieth Century, mimesis has been "...rejected as a worthy aim of art."(Gombrich.2012:XV) The history of art has been an evolution from sacred pictographs to profane photographs. Today the importance of the discovery of photography 'can hardly be overrated'. (Gombrich.1991:148). The old illusions of the artist – his niche in society – are now better provided by the entertainment industry, posters, advertising, film, even 'virtual reality'. Plato was always wrong in

denying the artist was a maker of things. Even then, architecture and sculpture would have been hard for him to explain. Today, however, and starting in the late Renaissance,

The claim to be a creator, a maker of things, passed from the painter to the engineer – leaving to the artist only the small consolation of being a maker of dreams. (Gombrich.2012:83)

In the Twenty First Century, even if this is the boundary of art, Freud's **The Interpretation of Dreams**, published at the beginning of the Twentieth, is a very large canvas to fill.

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